

# GARDEN NOTES

## G AND J'S GARDEN

### 2 RAOUL PLACE LYONS



#### HISTORY

**Background:** Established in 1966, the large corner block is situated on a rocky ridge with unique views both south to Mt Taylor and north to the city. Dominated by a large gum in the front yard, it's positioning has allowed for very large gardens at the front and side, complemented by a private small garden at the rear.

My late husband and I purchased the house in 1988, and the garden at the time was largely neglected with few plantings and just a few gum trees. The only gardens were pebble rocks covering black plastic.

Our idea was to create different spaces/rooms in the garden with a feeling of flow between the areas. However, new to Canberra we did not appreciate the difficulty in establishing gardens in a cold, dry climate. Wow did we learn fast! Our first task after removing the plastic and pebbles was to landscape, paths were established and rock retaining walls built to create flatter gardens and prevent water runoff.

**Site Challenges:** The soil here was pretty much clay and on the ridge line we were very exposed to strong winds. We began mulching the soil using lucerne, hay, shredded paper, anything we could find to improve the soil. Our constant battle is with the 3 large gum trees on the property. Summer sees us spending most of our time picking up leaves and gum nuts and tidying around them. The front slope and garden is dominated by a beautiful eucalypt, which creates challenges in finding plants that can grow under its canopy.

#### Fulfilling the vision:

Sadly, after a lot of work on the garden and landscaping my husband Richard passed away suddenly in 2001. Two years later John and I met and formed a relationship. He moved in with me and enthusiastically (amazing what love can do!) took over the garden. I have him to thank for the garden we see today.

#### FEATURES

**Front Slope:** The front slope has aimed to provide a flow up to the house while using plants that work on the sloping block. This has included grasses, salvia and hedging to provide a level of interest to what would otherwise be a large, plain slope. These plants have also been selected based on trial and error experimenting with what grows under the large gum. The box hedge also helps to direct focus to the urn at the top of the slope.

**Front Garden:** We aimed to create a small shady sanctuary outside the front door. We planted the golden elm to provide a canopy over the area as well as the weeping cherry tree. Previously we also had water features and creeks, however we've removed them due to high maintenance. We experimented with various plants but mainly kept to the exotic and English plants which we loved. The Camellia hedge provides great separation and privacy, and nicely frames the water feature.

**Side Garden:** The East-facing slope and soil on the side garden has been a constant challenge. Gradually the previous lawn has been replaced with gardens based on finding which plants work with the morning sun. The paperpark is one of the few remaining original plants.

The Chinese elm provides a fantastic source of both shade and shape to the garden. Subtle rock walls help to soften the slope and provide their own small garden spaces.

There is quite a mixed collection of plants with hellebores, daphne, conifers, some maples, and various natives. We use agapanthus quite a lot in difficult areas as we feel they're great space fillers.

**Back Garden and Deck:** The huge rear deck is the result of an above ground pool we used to have here in the 1990s, with the deck now covering two large water tanks. The large shade sail helps keep away gum leaves from the large tree and protects the pots on the deck. The potted plants include a collection of bonsais, some up to 50 years old. We also have a number of Japanese maples in large pots, as well as smaller pots which we use for some perennials, colourful annuals and also orchids.

While the rear garden is small we have worked to retain different sitting areas for relaxing in the garden, including up on the deck and on the old tiled area to the side. This leads to a recently established vegetable garden replacing an old chicken shed and gazebo.

We back on to a reserve which gives a feeling of space to an otherwise small back yard. We have taken advantage of this and planted 3 Manchurian pears as well as various natives and agapanthus. This we consider as a fire break against possible grass fires.

## GARDEN OWNERS

John and I find endless enjoyment in the garden, there is always something new to see and it helps to keep us both fit and active.

We hope you enjoy visiting our special space in Canberra.

Geraldine and John