



Promoting the enjoyment, knowledge and benefits of gardens and gardening

Open Gardens South Australia

Welcomes you to

Ashgrove Iris Garden

Saturday 26th & Sunday 27th October, 2024

Welcome to Ashgrove Iris Garden - opening for the 25th time!

Ashgrove Iris Garden is named after the row of Desert Ash trees located on the northeast boundary of the property. My garden makes a special feature of the beautiful Iris flower, however, as you will see, the garden is much more than just an Iris Garden and includes more than 300 roses and a wide variety of other plants, both native and exotic. Iris plantings feature throughout the entire garden.

Originally a cow paddock, the block originally only contained the Ash trees on the property. Following the building of the house in 1986 the first area of the garden to be planted was at the front of the house. Basically, the garden just “grew” from there, with no pre-determined plan.

The soil is a rich loam, which has been improved over many years with the addition of home-made compost and organic matter. The main difficulty with this location is the heavy frosts, which occur in the late Autumn and Spring, and the poor drainage in the lower sections of the garden in Winter. The weather is typically hot dry summers and cold wet winters. Gumeracha has an average annual rainfall of 815mm, and is approx. 339m above sea level.

The garden is predominately watered using rainwater and a bore located on the property. The fountains all recirculate water. Heavy mulching with home-made compost and pea straw helps keep the soil moist, suppress weeds and reduces evaporation during hot weather, although the pea straw does produce a crop of peas!

Garden Plantings and Structures

The Iris Garden located in the Eastern quarter of the garden contains over 900 named varieties of Iris and creates a breathtaking floral display each Spring. The Iris have been planted in a circular design to provide interest by way of pattern when the Iris are not in flower. Several years ago, the Iris Garden underwent “renovations” with the removal of the old conifer plantings and rebuilding of the stone edging. These beds are being slowly replanted to ensure a good range of plantings, based on seasonal availability, and includes climbing and shrub roses, hardy perennials, and a selection of autumn flowering bulbs to provide colour when the iris are not in flower. I aim to dig, divide and replant one third of the iris garden each year.

Iris are very hardy plants, easy to grow and once established do not require much water over Summer – a “water-wise” plant. The Iris Garden contains predominantly Tall Bearded Iris, with a selection of Summer dormant Spuria Iris located in the most Eastern corner, which require no watering at all over Summer. At the corner of the Iris Garden stands a beautiful Pin Oak (*Quercus Palustris*), a stunning sight each Spring with fresh soft green foliage.

A selection of Louisiana Iris has also been planted in the garden. These are located in the “woodland” areas with dappled shade, and receive more water than the Tall Bearded Iris as they grow well in the slightly damper areas and the dappled shade reduces evaporation. There are also a number of Dutch Iris (bulbs), Dwarf Bearded Iris, Siberian Iris and species iris in the garden.

The octagonal David Austin rose garden was planted in the Winter of 2001. The centre of this beautiful and fragrant rose garden displays an elegant fountain and a stone-built water feature. A second rose garden is located at the rear of the house, and roses also feature along two sides of the house and in other mixed plantings. David Austin roses are a particular favourite.

Open Gardens South Australia Inc: is a not for profit organisation opening private gardens to the general public. The purpose of Open Gardens SA is to educate and promote the enjoyment, knowledge and benefits of gardens and gardening in South Australia and to build strong public support for the development of gardens.

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Ashgrove has a wide variety of plants, including many bulbs, ranging from Daffodils, Tulips, Crocus, Nerines, Dutch Iris and Lilliums. Solid “green” structure is provided by the use of evergreen hedges, shrubs and conifers. Other favourite plants include the Peonies, Hellebores, Siberian Iris, Lilacs (*Syringa*), Diosma, bird attracting Bottle Brush (*Callistemon*), Camellias, Japanese Maple (*Acer palmatum*), Crabapples, Crepe Myrtle, a dwarf Liquid Amber, Silver Birch trees (*Betula Pyramidalis*), and a very beautiful Golden Variegated Maple (*Acer negundo aureomarginatum*). Hydrangeas have been planted beneath the deciduous trees. Native violets, Hellebores and Aquilegia has been allowed to self-seed and spread in selected areas as useful garden “fillers”.

A row of fruit trees, including pears, plums, peaches, apricots, and apples, has been planted on the western boundary of the garden next to “The Long Lawn”. Tall Bearded Iris have been planted beneath these trees.

A new Gazebo was built in late 2015 to replace the old structure which had the same original footprint. The original structure was planted with Hybrid Clematis and camellias around the base, and these have been relocated to other parts of the garden. The Clematis plantings are very slowly reclaiming the tiny “Summer House” – sometimes referred to as the “grown-ups cubby house”.

A row of Camellia sasanqua “Hiryu” is being trained to espalier along a simple pole and wire frame along the edge of the driveway. Frustratingly slow, this project demonstrates that gardening requires patience!

A key feature of the front garden is the large circular pond, with its simple brass fountain. The pond has been constructed using Kanmantoo Slate. This slate has also been used to edge many of the garden beds, as paving at the rear of the house, and in the fernery. The pet ducks love swimming in this pond.

A number of large urns, seating, and other structures such as garden arches and frames, and ponds have been placed at strategic points in the garden and also provide a focus when the garden can be somewhat bare during Winter. A quirky feature is the colourful mural painted on the concrete rainwater tank behind the house – the painting represents the four seasons as you walk around the tank with “Summer” being represented by two Roman columns framing a rich blue pot used as a simple water feature.

Thank you for visiting

2024 marks the 25th year of opening my garden to the public. I love my garden and I was thrilled to have my passion acknowledged in being named as the *ABC Gardening Australia's* “Gardener of the Year 2013” – 11 years on, the garden has changed as gardens do. My garden is not professionally designed or maintained; however, I do now have a gardener mow the lawns – not my favourite task so I decided to outsource the mowing. What you see in my garden is my work over many years, and I like to think it can provide some inspiration for people gardening on a budget.

Thank you for visiting Ashgrove Iris Garden, and I hope you enjoyed your time spent in my garden.

Di Michalk
Ashgrove Iris Garden
2024

The gardens that open for us are chosen to reflect a great diversity of styles and may even challenge the conventional view of what constitutes a garden. While aspects of a garden may not be to your taste, we urge you to celebrate this diversity. Please remember you are visiting a private home and show respect and sensitivity for the owners who have so generously shared their garden with you. Thank you.