



Promoting the enjoyment, knowledge and benefits of gardens and gardening

# Open Gardens South Australia Welcomes you to **Christine's Cottage Garden**

Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> & Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> October, 2024

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Welcome to Christine's Cottage Garden, I hope you enjoy and are inspired during your visit today. We purchased the property at 17 St Peters Tce in Willunga in November 2012. I have always been a passionate gardener, so my wish list included a garden with potential while Larry wanted room for a workshop. Initially described as a 'botanical' setting, the basic potential of the garden was evident. The block is triangular in shape and divided into three sections, a front, side and rear garden. There was an established maple in the front garden and a few fruit trees in the side and back garden, along with a newly planted plumbago hedge around the perimeter. The stone wall that curves through the front of the property defining the driveway was also already here.

I began working on the front and rear gardens first as we planned to extend the house into a section of the side garden in due course. Unfortunately, most of the existing fruit trees had damage due to sun exposure and disease, so most of these had to be removed. The apple tree in the side garden was healthy, so that remains. There were three Jacaranda trees on the property. One was planted very close to the rear of the house. Fortunately, it was still only a small tree, so we carefully transplanted it to a better location where it thrives today.

My vision for the garden was to create a peaceful, colourful and organic garden which would be a haven for myself, local bird life, animals and beneficial insects. The priority initially was to improve the soil which lacked organic matter and to decide which existing plants to retain. I am a firm believer in not using chemicals in my garden and that feeding the soil is a crucial aspect to achieving success. Choosing suitable plants for the appropriate positions is also very important. I spent some time during our first six months here observing when and how the sun and shade moved through the garden during the day as part of my future planting process.

Having repaired rotting fence rails in the rear perimeter fence with Larry's help, I began preparing the garden beds. Initially they were straight, running parallel to the fence. To soften and add visual interest, I set about introducing curved garden beds. This made a big difference, creating the illusion that the garden space was larger than it actually is. This combined with layered planting techniques and the park directly across the road provided a perfect back drop as a borrowed landscape.

Plants in the rear section of the garden include climbing roses along the boundary fences. Directly in front of these, I have planted a number of standard roses. The garden areas in front of the standards included hybrid tea and David Austin roses with smaller cottage garden perennials, bulbs and annuals for additional visual interest.

Many of the roses in my garden and other shrubs have been salvaged and saved from going to the green waste. I like to recycle what I can and give plants a second chance. Most have rewarded me with outstanding results.

Here in Willunga, we often have very strong gully winds, particularly in the spring. It became evident that the plants in the front garden were suffering from exposure to these winds, so I decided to erect a picket fence behind the plumbago hedge to help protect the plants. The fence also effectively unifies the house and garden into the surrounding landscape as well as providing some privacy. After much hard work digging all the post holes and painting all the pickets, the main front fence was

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completed. We added another picket fence to the northern side of the front garden, side garden and matching gates recently.

Another feature of the front garden which has special significance are the metal arbours. The one that is incorporated into the front picket fence was erected as a memorial for a dear friend who passed away. The structure is decorative with metal leaves and roses included in the design. The gate matches well although they were not made at the same time. The second arbour is located near the carport where steps provide access to the upper section of the front garden. They are the work of local blacksmith Peter Stentiford whose work can be admired at the Willunga Forge on St Andrews Tce. Another decorative metal gate he made provides easy access to enter the property by the driveway. All of these features add interest and character to the garden.

The side garden was the last area to receive some work as part of it was a building site while extensions were completed. This section has shady and sunny aspects to it, so the plantings reflect this. Clivias and camellias enjoy the cool areas under the neighbouring trees while the climbing David Austin, heliotrope and cannas enjoy the sunnier locations. Wildlife enjoy the hedge in the side garden and blue tongue lizards do a wonderful job controlling snails for me.

As you walk through the property, you will probably notice that we have numerous rainwater tanks. We also have solar panels and battery storage. Our house runs on rainwater all year. We have made a conscious decision to be as environmentally friendly as possible. This aligns strongly with our belief that we can all do practical things to look after our environment and reduce our impact.

People often ask whether I have finished the garden. The answer is definitely no. A garden is never finished. It is always changing and evolving. It is my happy place, my living canvas of colour and scent that brings me much peace and joy. My favourite place in the garden is sitting on the back veranda with a cup of tea early in the morning listening to the kookaburras and other birds singing to me while bees and dragon flies begin investigating the flowers.

I must take this opportunity to thank my partner Larry who has tirelessly assisted me with creating these garden spaces. I couldn't have done it without his skills and support. Larry's mother was a fabulous gardener and had that special gift and ability to share and impart her knowledge. She was a great inspiration to me, and we spent many happy hours together in her magnificent garden. She gave me lots of valuable advice and I miss her dearly.

It gives me great pleasure to share it with family and friends and I hope you have enjoyed viewing it today and that it has been an inspiration to you.

Thank you for visiting Christine's Cottage Garden.

Christine Pearson

**Charities:** The charities benefitting from your visit today are the Volunteers of the Willunga Farmers Market and the Willunga Recreation Park.

**Stalls:** We have pre-loved garden and hand tools for sale as well as the card and plant stalls. Visitors will need to bring **cash** for purchasing from the stalls.

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.