



Promoting the enjoyment, knowledge and benefits of gardens and gardening

Open Gardens South Australia

Welcomes you to

Claire's Garden

Saturday 24th & Sunday 25th October, 2026

Welcome to my garden!

We moved in just over 7 years ago so I could have a bigger garden when I retired. The front garden was completely bare except for a small lawn. I planted a maraya hedge, some roses and the jacaranda tree within the first few months and then focused my efforts on the back garden.

I loved the country vibe of the back garden and decided to work with what was there as much as possible. This meant saving what plants I could and then adding lots more to suit the various microclimates in the garden. Many of the existing trees were water starved and suffering from a variety of ailments when we moved in. We got an arborist out in 2019 to advise what could be done to support and rejuvenate them and most of them have been saved.

Over time I have created a number of rooms in the garden. The shaded area to the left of and around the plum tree is the **Secret Garden**. Having removed thousands of goddess lilies and white oxalis from under the plum tree, I've replanted with other shade loving plants including hydrangeas, hellebores, Japanese anemones and hardy geraniums. In the winter of 2025 we cut the plum tree back by over 50% in an effort to save it. We understand it's about 70 years old and it had become brittle and broke easily in high winds or when heavy with fruit. We got rid of dead and diseased wood and the plum tree appears to be slowly regenerating. I was worried that the shade-loving underplantings might die over the last summer as there was hardly any shade provided by the tree. To my surprise most plants survived and the Japanese anemones flourished and grew to chest height!

I love having a productive garden with vegetable beds and lots of fruit trees. We have planted two cherry trees, a nectarine, two apricots, a fig, a pear, a quince, a pomegranate, a mulberry and two apple trees (fuji and pink lady). I pruned and tended the struggling lemon and orange trees, the small nectarine (by the plum tree) and the peach tree. They responded to this care and have been providing us with delicious fruit every year since.

We set up six raised vegetable beds in the **Veggie Garden**. I started with a mix of perennial plants like asparagus, rhubarb, strawberries and raspberries, with rotational crops like tomatoes, zucchini, beetroot, onions, garlic, turmeric, spinach and rainbow chard. I generally leave the beds over winter and replenish the soil ready for the next spring. In 2024 my She-shed was built next to the veggie patch. I really love this building, the way it's a feature in the garden, and I do all my potting and seedling growing there. We plan to build permanent nets over the fruit trees between the chicken coop and my She-shed to keep out birds that decimate the crops and also to provide an outdoor area for the chickens to range safe from the wild birds and the potential of bird flu.

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.

Web page: <http://opengardensa.org.au/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/opengardensa>

I love making produce out of things I grow in the garden, this includes the family favourite - zucchini pickle, as well as pickled onions, beetroot relish, tomato chutney, quince paste, lemon curd and lots of different jams and marmalades. Many of these are for sale this weekend, so please feel free to sample my goodies.

I am a keen collector and lover of the humble hardy geraniums. These plants are more like ground covers with simple single flowers and a wide range of foliage. With some in pots, the flowers range from mauve, pink and red through to black. There are many geraniums and pelargoniums in the garden and I am constantly on the lookout for unusual varieties. This year I have been experimenting with propagating these plants with some success. You may also notice I have a number of different viburnum shrubs in the front and rear gardens and in pots. I collect them for their beautiful flowers and growth habits.

We call the area along the western fence in the back garden the **Rose Garden**. There are three rose arbours here, planted out with *Pierre de Ronsard*, *Lorraine Lee* and *Kiss Me Kate* respectively. I love roses and there are over 150 of them around the garden and almost all of them have been selected for their scent as well as bloom. Many are David Austin roses and I also have a number of heritage roses.

The area under the gum tree at the back of the block is the **Native Garden** which is still fairly new in terms of planting. I am new to growing native plants and have looked for those that are good flowerers and lend themselves to a cottage garden vibe. The area that abuts the veggie patch is earmarked for a compost system in the near future.

The soil here is very rich loam, with a fair amount of clay and an underlay of stones. In some areas drainage can be an issue over winter. In summer these areas dry hard and are difficult to work with. We initially brought in loads of cottage mulch and compost, and topped up with pea straw, aged cow manure and mulch annually. As a result, the soil has really improved over the past 7 years.

In the spring of 2023 we created the **Meadow Garden** at the front of the garage. We planted 8 white crepe myrtles (*Sanchez*) to provide the framework for the Meadow Garden and envisage their canopies will one day meet. We underplanted the trees with a small meadow garden with waist high flowers growing wildly, with a few perennials sprinkled into the mix. What you see today is mainly self-sown from last year's flowers. This area is bordered by a plumbago hedge, two lilly pilly hedges and standard roses. Over the past year I have been battling with sap sucking bugs on the lilly pilly hedge nearest the garage and hope to win, but it's taken a big hit and still looks a bit sad.

I hope you enjoy exploring my garden today and I hope you got to enjoy a Devonshire tea, courtesy of the Willunga Evening Branch of the CWA. Proceeds from this Open Garden will benefit the 2028 Fleurieu Biennale Art Prize.