



Promoting the enjoyment, knowledge and benefits of gardens and gardening

Open Gardens South Australia

Welcomes you to Claire's Garden

Saturday 26th & Sunday 27th October, 2024

Welcome to my garden! In many ways this is a young garden, with some areas only planted out in the last 1-12 months. We moved in just over 5 years ago so I could have a bigger garden and I started work on my new garden immediately. I planted a maraya hedge and some roses in the front garden first as it was completely bare save for a lawn. My focus then moved to the back garden.

I loved the country vibe of the back garden and decided to work with what was here as much as possible. This meant saving what plants I could and then adding lots more plants to suit the various microclimates in the garden. It has also meant dealing with plants that had been left to spread rampantly and choke out others. I also really wanted a productive garden with lots of fruit trees, and have added two cherry trees, a nectarine, an apricot, a fig, a pear, a quince, a pomegranate, a mulberry and two apple trees (fuji and pink lady).

Many of the existing fruit trees were water starved and suffering from a variety of ailments. We got an arborist out in 2019 to advise what could be done to support and rejuvenate all the trees in the garden. The large tree at the rear of the house is a plum, with small dark red fruit with orange/red flesh. We trimmed it back by about a third, got rid of as much dead wood as we could reach, and the tree now fruits prolifically. I pruned and lovingly 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.

I started to think of the garden as having rooms or special spaces. The shaded, tropical area alongside the plum tree we refer to as the **Secret Garden**. There is still a lot of work to happen in this area, as my efforts have focussed on removing thousands of goddess arum lilies and white oxalis from under the plum tree. I've been replanting this area with shade loving plants, including hydrangeas, hellebores, Japanese anemones and hardy geraniums, which I've not been able to grow in previous gardens.

In autumn this year, I dug out the lawn under the walnut tree and have underplanted this area with more shade loving plants. You may notice I have a number of different viburnum shrubs in the front and rear gardens – I collect them for their beautiful flowers and growth habits, and hope to pick up a Japanese viburnum in the near future.

I am a keen collector of hardy geraniums – cranebills. 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.

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 in 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.

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I am pretty successful at propagating roses and have a number of these 'clones' scattered through the garden. The area under the gum tree at the back of the block is the **Native Garden** which is still in its infancy.

As an avid Open Gardens visitor, I was really impressed by Sophie Thompson's garden in Mount Barker and how she worked with the landscape rather than putting in costly retaining walls. I have used this approach and minimised the amount of ground works. I discovered 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 5 years.

In October 2020, I got a landscaper in to dig up some of the rear lawn to create a more defined lawn area and larger border beds. They removed tonnes of agapanthus, freeing up a huge amount of garden space for a wide range of plants. We also set up six raised vegetable beds in the **Veggie Garden**. This area has provided a real learning opportunity. I started with a mix of perennial plants like asparagus, rhubarb, strawberries and raspberries, with crops like tomatoes, zucchini, beetroot, onions, garlic, turmeric, spinach and rainbow chard. While the asparagus remains in a raised bed, the fruits have moved elsewhere for easier management and better results.

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.

In September this year my dream She-shed was built by our friend Scott, who was assisted by my partner Paul. I really love this building, the way it's a feature in the garden, and look forward to growing seedlings and hanging out there in the future.

As a result of the house renovation in 2022-23, it was necessary to remove three very large spotted gums in the front garden. They were half grown at 20m, close to the house and on top of all the septic and water pipes. They were replaced with 8 white crepe myrtles (*Sanchez*) a year ago, and while still young, these provide the framework for the **Meadow Garden**. We envisage the crepe myrtle canopies will one day meet. We were initially unsure what to do with the area under these trees and decided to create a small meadow garden with waist high flowers growing wildly as an interim solution. What you see today is mainly self-sown from last year's annuals, supplemented by ranunculi and assorted bulbs. We love this space and intend keeping a meadow garden from now on.

Somehow, amongst all of this, there is still a bloody big lawn! Improving the quality of the lawn but giving up at least some of it for yet another garden bed is next on the cards.

I hope you have enjoyed exploring my garden today. Proceeds from today will benefit the Willunga CFS.

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.