



Promoting the enjoyment, knowledge and benefits of gardens and gardening

Open Gardens South Australia Welcomes you to **Fiddlestix**

Saturday 26th & Sunday 27th October, 2024

Welcome to the third Open Garden at Fiddlestix, our garden named for the 'stuff & nonsense' that you'll see in abundance as you wander around.

For those of you who haven't visited before – we started the garden in 2015, nearly 10 years ago! There was nothing here except scrubby bushes, weeds, poor soil, kangaroos, emus, rabbits and lots of stones! We didn't have mains water, so I started with a rubbish bin with a tap on it to water, until we eventually connected to mains water – what a relief that was! Now we rely on an overhead watering system from our bore and rainwater. Everything, initially, was planted with a guard, to protect it from the roos and rabbits, until we eventually fenced off the main garden completely. The roos still come and check every night that we have shut all the gates – we have occasionally forgotten and will find their calling card on the lawn the next morning. With the dry start to 2024, we are finding that the roos are very hungry and are eating plants that they don't usually touch!

Our biggest issue was, and still is, the soil and the rocks! We have worked hard to improve the soil, purchasing truckloads of garden soil, adding compost, worm castings and using manure from pigs, horses, sheep, chooks and cattle....thank goodness these are all available from local farms!

I also use quite a few Neutrog products to try and improve the microbiology of the soil and fertilise the plants. We have 4 worm farms, compost bins and a large compost trench (behind the chook yard) which Mike dug with the backhoe and is turned and emptied twice a year.

Stone ridge runs under much of our property, so any hole dug is with the backhoe or jackhammer! I have admitted defeat in the main garden and now, if I hit stone when I dig, I plant something in a pot – consequently, there are now quite a few pots around the garden! Lucky for me, I am regularly gifted unwanted pots from other gardeners. Every hole dug produces stones, of all shapes and sizes. I have used them in landscaping, defining paths, gabion walls and structures, the labyrinth and recently, to outline a big goanna – look out for him across the track.

I try and recycle objects found in op shops, tip shops and dumps. Mike and I both enjoy finding 'treasures' in junkyards or farms and repurposing them in the garden – you'll see what I mean!

Over the years, I have slowly worked out which plants will survive in the garden, namely daisies, iris, pelargoniums, natives, penstemon and buddleja, osteospermum and some of the hardier salvias. Most plants that grew in my Grandma's garden, will grow in mine! Many of the plants have been propagated by my nearly 90 year old mother, who I am deeply grateful to, for having passed on her love of gardening to me.

Succulents also play a big part in the garden – there are so many different shapes, sizes and colours and they seem to survive and thrive in our conditions and I love that they don't require a lot of water.

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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The garden now attracts a large array of birds – our favourite would have to be the cheeky little wrens, whose numbers have grown significantly since we started the garden, due to the diversity of plantings, giving them refuge from predators. ‘Thaddeus’, our grey shrike Thrush, also serenades us with his melodious call. Other welcome visitors to the garden are the little pygmy possums, frill neck lizards and heath monitors, whose numbers have also increased over the years. Not so welcome are the snakes, sightings are few and far between – but I am aware that they may be present.

Across the Zebra Crossing, we have our veggie patch, which provides us with fruit & vegetables for much of the year. Excess is cooked up and frozen or preserved or given away. It feels pretty satisfying to be able to pick produce that we have grown ourselves, after working hard to build raised beds and improve the soil over the years. The chooks are next door, providing us with eggs, compost and a way to get rid of weeds and food scraps. Plus, they are quite entertaining! They have a swing, jungle gym and logs to climb, as well as a very comfortable chook house, but they love being free range in the afternoons.

We have also planted many new trees in this area, mostly natives, but I also enjoy the challenge of growing ornamentals, which are not always recommended for our area, sometimes with success, sometimes not! Our trees are rapidly changing the look of our landscape as they grow taller and fill out and we’re slowly getting to the park like environ that we’re striving for.

A few months ago, we started working on our pond area. The hole has been dug for several years and used as a dumping ground for weeds, so it has been great to finally make a start and see what transpires!! Will it be finished??

Please feel free to wander along the designated paths in this area and check out the Labyrinth, Great Wall, Cactus garden, goanna and other features over the track.

We have many places in our garden to sit and enjoy all that we have achieved, regularly having a wine in the wine garden, pod or bushie area. Our garden is very important to us, providing many physical and mental benefits, challenges and wonder that anything grows in such a harsh environment.

We hope you enjoy your visit to Fiddlestix and if you take something away with you, that’s a bonus.

Cheers

Helen & Mike