



Promoting the enjoyment, knowledge and benefits of gardens and gardening

# Open Gardens South Australia Welcomes you to **Fifty Shades of Green**

Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> & Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> September, 2024

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Welcome to “Fifty Shades of Green”.

For over 30 years we lived in the Adelaide Hills, immersed in a beautiful environment of green countryside. When we decided to move “down the Hill” we naturally wanted to find a green and shady garden, with big trees to replace those we were leaving behind. On viewing this property we immediately fell in love with the garden, only to discover that it had been designed by our very great friend, Virginia Kennett!

That exciting discovery was 7 years ago. The previous owners had lived at this property for over 50 years, and in 2010, at the time of the millennium drought, employed Virginia Kennett to redesign the garden. At that time, we understand that the garden had more lawn and many exotic and thirsty plantings such as roses and ferns. Virginia arranged the garden so that there were different ‘rooms’, connected by extensive stone walling and a large, split-level wooden deck which adjoins the original veranda of the house and connects it to the green space. She also selected water-wise plants that were more suited to the soils and the dry Mediterranean climate. To show how Virginia’s vision has come to fruition we have placed her original photographs from 2010 in front of the current beautiful displays of mature plants.

On arriving at ‘50 Shades of Green’ the first feature seen is the massive sterile olive hedge. When we bought the house the hedge was overgrown, so we employed Kurt Wilkinson to work his magic on it. This resulted in it being reduced to a line of bare sticks! In the last 5 years it has regrown to give us this magnificent hedge. On passing through the gate the dominant feature is the large shade-giving trees. Then the ‘rooms’ start to be revealed. Much of Virginia’s original planting is still in place, resulting in plants with strong structure and varying foliage texture. These features have been extended with new plantings and the addition of more native species and other flowering plants to attract local fauna, particularly the smaller birds. We are delighted to occasionally host a passing koala.

The first ‘room’ entered is the fire pit area. This is defined by two long curved seats, a signature feature of Virginia’s designs. One corner of this area was recently badly damaged by a large fallen branch so is now being rehabilitated. The next area is the slate garden with tiny dymondia plants between the pavers. Two sides of this area were bordered by a westringia hedge which recently died. We have just replaced the border with a stand of recycled wooden fence posts and planted a mixture of natives

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**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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to form a loose connection between them. The next two areas are the lawn and decks. These features, along with the fire pit make wonderful entertainment places for young and old.

At the head of the driveway are two beautiful forest pansy trees. These are stunning trees all year round with dark winter twigs followed by amazing pink blossom and then burgundy leaves which change to green. With great anticipation we are waiting for the blossoms which, hopefully, will be on show at the time of the Open Garden.

Following the path across the front of the house, there are 3 magnificent Madagascan flax plants behind the jacaranda, and a mixture of succulents and ground cover plants. Through the gate is a kidney shaped swimming pool surrounded by trees and ground cover plants, with a borrowed backdrop of verbinas. On passing through the far gate there is the kitchen courtyard with yet more agaves (as you will have seen they grow well here!) and something completely different – geraniums! These are a small reminder of the English heritage of one of us!!

Another feature of the garden is the totally hidden working area with 2 garden sheds. The only indication of this other area of the garden is a slate path leading through cliveas, agapanthus and pittosporums, and past the bougainvillea. We can pot and potter in isolation! See if you can find it...

When asked by the Open Garden team how we defined the garden we described it as 50 shades of green, and this has become its official name! As visitors wander round the garden it may become obvious that this could be an underestimation! There are so many leaf colours which change throughout the year. The colour and structure of the leafy plants is enhanced by a variety of succulents. We had never considered planting succulents but now really appreciate them. We are happy to let them grow and fill in all over the place and even become large architectural features, although sometimes very spiny! There are many other plants randomly scattered around the garden, our policy being “if you want to grow there, then you are welcome”!

We so enjoy sitting on the veranda looking down the garden gently sloping away from us in all its green glory. We do hope that our visitors will enjoy this view, and all the different features offered by this garden, as much as we do.

Thank you for visiting “50 Shades of Green”.

Caroline and Mark