



Promoting the enjoyment, knowledge and benefits of gardens and gardening

## Open Gardens South Australia

# Welcomes you to Gribble Garden

Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> February 2026

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There is nothing like the sheer joy of walking out to the veggie patch early on a summer morning, cup of tea in hand, to say hello to the garden. I feed the chooks, plan what to pick for dinner, collect some berries for breakfast and just sit and watch the bees and the blue wrens. It is such a privilege to inhabit this corner of the earth.

It's been five years since we started the vegetable garden here at 7 Linwood and every year it gets a little bit bigger and more established. Although the garden was professionally designed and constructed, I am very much an amateur gardener, still learning and making lots of mistakes.

The raised beds are doing well. The big central bed gets full sun and is full of tomatoes, capsicums, chillies and eggplants. I always get carried away with tomatoes, seduced by their beauty and variety and trying to squeeze in just one more plant. We also have cucumbers and pumpkins climbing trellises, a little patch of corn (my first try - I've always been leery because it needs so much water) and strawberries everywhere. And we got our first small crop of blueberries this year!

In the midst of all this abundance I can still see the effects of the drought, although we've had it easy compared to other parts of South Australia. Our tank ran dry last summer and the fruit trees really struggled, but we keep going.

If there's one thing I've learned in the last few years it's the importance of good soil. Our raised beds have benefited from regular additions of compost, a bit of blood and bone and worm castings and now they are a pleasure to plant. Most of the work is done before the vegetables go in and all I do during the growing season is water, mulch and add a bit of pelletised manure about halfway through. Some other areas are still needing work, though: I put a couple of raspberry plants in along the fence line, into the original ground, and I fear they are losing the battle with poor soil and encroaching tree roots.

The ornamental garden continues its slow recovery from neglect. It's a typical Hills garden and is at its best in early spring, with camellias, bulbs and flowering shrubs providing the framework. We are on a rock ridge, so it's rock and clay just below the surface. I'm not much of a flower gardener so it's been a challenge. This spring we ripped up a pathetic lawn out front and put in some paths, giving us the bones of a pollinator garden. It'll be my project over the winter to plan and plant it out with tough low-maintenance perennials.

With all the produce from the garden, we often have surplus fruit and vegetables. I like to make jams and jellies, most of which I give away, but I find that most of the harvest ends up in the freezer. I like the flavour of frozen fruits and vegetables better than bottled, although I have a feeling that my marriage depends on a steady supply of Seville orange marmalade. At the end of these notes you'll find a few techniques and recipes for keeping the harvest going long after the plants have been added to the compost bin.

I owe thanks to many people who have helped bring this garden to life for one very busy weekend, especially Jamie McIlwain and his crew from Hills Classic Gardens, the CWA, my friends at the Hills Basket Cases, the woodturners from Hills Woodworking, and many patient friends and neighbours. And, of course, Jules, without whom none of this would be possible.

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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.

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

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## Recipes

### Frozen tomatoes three ways

This is what my mum called 'cooking by the seat of my pants', meaning these are methods rather than firm recipes. The frozen products will keep for six to nine months without difficulty.

**Whole cherry tomatoes:** The easiest way to deal with the suckers. When you have a glut of cherry tomatoes, just pop them whole into a freezer bag, stick them in the freezer and fish out a handful whenever you like, to add to a soup, stew, pasta or other cooked dish.

**Roasted tomato pasta sauce:** In peak tomato season, I make a batch of this every morning with any tomatoes left from yesterday's pick. Preheat oven to 190 degrees. Halve tomatoes and put skin-side-up in a large baking dish. Drizzle with a good glug or two of olive oil and add a few branches of fresh thyme or another sturdy herb. Cut the top off a bulb of garlic (or to taste) and place cut side down in the dish and add a couple of pinches of salt. Roast until the tomatoes have collapsed and smell wonderful - this depends on how many and what variety of tomatoes you have. I often let them roast down until the tomatoes are dark and almost charry, which gives a very rich and thick sauce. Allow to cool, then pull off the skins and fish out the thyme. Squeeze out the roasted garlic flesh and discard the skins. Blend to your desired consistency (or leave it chunky), ladle into freezer bags and freeze.

**Homemade tomato paste:** This leaves the store-bought version for dead. Make the pasta sauce as above, letting it cook down quite a lot - you want to get rid of as much liquid as possible. Put the sauce through a mouli to remove the skins and seeds and turn into a non-reactive frying pan or other wide, shallow pan. Cook over low heat, stirring often, until your spoon leaves a track through the paste. The longer you cook it, the darker and thicker it will look and the richer it will taste. When done to your satisfaction, spoon into ice cube trays, freeze, then pop them into (you guessed it) a freezer bag. You can take out one or two at a time whenever you need them.

### Apple Butter

This is an old Canadian treat that isn't well known here. It's best when made with early-season sour apples (Gravenstein is the classic variety) but any tart cooking apple will do. Be sure to use a good quality apple juice, like Auldwood juice from Lenswood.

2.3l apple juice

2.7k tart cooking apples, peeled, cored and sliced

2 lemons

quantity of white sugar (see instructions below)

1t cinnamon

1t nutmeg

Pour apple juice into a large saucepan and boil until reduced by half. Add half of the apples and cook over medium heat until soft. Add the remaining apples and the grated rind and juice of both lemons. Cook until the mixture resembles smooth applesauce. Measure the amount of apple mixture and return to the pot. For every 600ml of pulp add 350g of sugar. Add the spices and continue to cook, stirring frequently, until the mixture begins to hold its shape. Pack into hot sterilised jars.

## Zucchini

I always get excited when the first zucchini are ready to pick, which just shows that I don't learn from experience. Here are two ways to deal with medium to large zucchini that do not include leaving them on your neighbour's doorstep and running away.

**Frozen grated zucchini:** Grate a medium to large zucchini and pile it into freezer bags. I weigh it so each bag has 375 g. Chuck it into the freezer and in the dead of winter, when the zucchini in the shops look dull and shrivelled, thaw a pack in a sieve over a bowl. The liquid drains out beautifully and the flesh has the perfect texture for zucchini fritters, zucchini bread, frittata and so on.

**Zucchini pickle:** Jan Boehm gave me this recipe 35 years ago and I have shared it widely. It is a mustard-type pickle that I prefer to a sweet chutney and is easy and quick to make. You will need hot sterilised jars and lids for this recipe and the next one; if you're new to preserving, I recommend you check out Kate Punshon's website (<https://www.rootsrecipesandreasons.com.au/reasons/how-to-sterilise-jars-and-bottles>) for detailed instructions.

1k zucchini

500g brown onions

250g red capsicum

500ml white vinegar

375g white sugar

2t poppy seeds

1t celery seed

1t turmeric

1t curry powder

3t mustard powder

3T cornflour mixed into 250ml cold water

Chop vegetables roughly, then put them through a blender or food processor until finely chopped. Cover with salted water (1T to 1200ml water). Leave to soak for two hours, then drain.

While the vegetables are draining, put the remaining ingredients except for the cornflour into a large pot and bring to the boil. Add the cornflour mixture and stir well. Add the chopped vegetables, bring back to the boil and cook for five minutes.

Pack into hot sterilised jars. Makes approximately nine 250g jars.