



Promoting the enjoyment, knowledge and benefits of gardens and gardening

Open Gardens South Australia

Welcomes you to

Highcroft

Saturday 4th & Sunday 5th November, 2023

We (Chris and Maureen Hightet) bought our property in 1987. The property is now 120 acres of undulating but rocky terrain. We sold some of the acreage to “downsize” 4 years ago. There was no garden to speak of when we bought the property. A few gums had been planted around the homestead in the mid-70s, and a few very old and tired cypress were growing along the driveway and in the ‘roundabout’ area between the shearing shed and the homestead.

We were not interested in gardening at all. Both my husband and I worked in Adelaide and were very busy just commuting and taking our then teenage children to school in Adelaide. We were very busy at the time trying to re-fence the property and restore the homestead and gain some sort of order after years of neglect.

However, something happened about 14 years ago when I retired from work. I started to get a little bit interested in gardening which grew and grew until it became a passion. I wanted more area to garden and Chris suggested I take over the paddock next to the house where we kept our two donkeys, Rosie and Blossom. This area was 1.5 acres and had two large gums but nothing else. However, it does have a spectacular view of Mt Beavor and the Bremer Valley.

I started by planting a few conifers in the north-east corner of the paddock. I was very much a novice when it came to gardening but very keen to learn and absorb any information or advice. We are extremely lucky as Chris has all the ‘boys toys’ including a Bob Cat, excavator and tip truck. Chris followed the contours of the sloping paddock and made paths with the Bob Cat. This gave the garden generous paths around the garden with room for two people to walk side by side and have a conversation while walking around the garden. Large rocks that I can only describe as similar to an iceberg, ie small on the surface and huge underneath, were moved by the excavator. Some were kept to use as seating and can be seen around the garden. I, meanwhile, collected smaller rocks, of which there were many, to edge the borders of the beds. Beds were whipper-snipped and then the planting started.

I started by planting the hedge of *Juniperus chinensis* “Spartan” on two side of the garden to give privacy from the roadway. I then worked back from the northern boundary, planting each bed as I moved further south. To plant a garden of this size initially could have been very costly and so I gratefully received cuttings and donations from family and friends, plus lots of visits to the ‘sick’ areas of any nurseries I visited. I had already realised that I would not have a lot of water for irrigating the garden. We live in an area that is in a rain shadow and our annual rainfall is 450mm – 600mm. I thought it was best to keep to drought tolerant and Mediterranean plants. This decision has proved to be lifesaving for the garden, especially 2015/2016 when we had very little winter/spring rainfall and a very hot dry summer. A severe test for all the drought tolerant and Mediterranean plantings. I have always heavily mulched with pea straw and this has helped reduce the baking heat on the soil and keep in what little moisture the plants receive. It has also encouraged lovely fat worms to help enrich the soil.

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>

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Unfortunately, after the drought came the Cudlee Creek bushfire! Fierce fires almost destroyed our property completely. Our neighbour's house burnt to the ground. We lost 7 kilometres of fencing (this included internal fencing) trucks, bobcat and for me, the devastating loss of 1/3 of the garden. With the generosity of friends and sometimes complete strangers we cleaned up, re-fenced, replanted and repaired. Parts of the garden are now only 4 years old, but I am delighted by the growth and look forward to this part of the garden maturing. Gardens are never finished, are they?

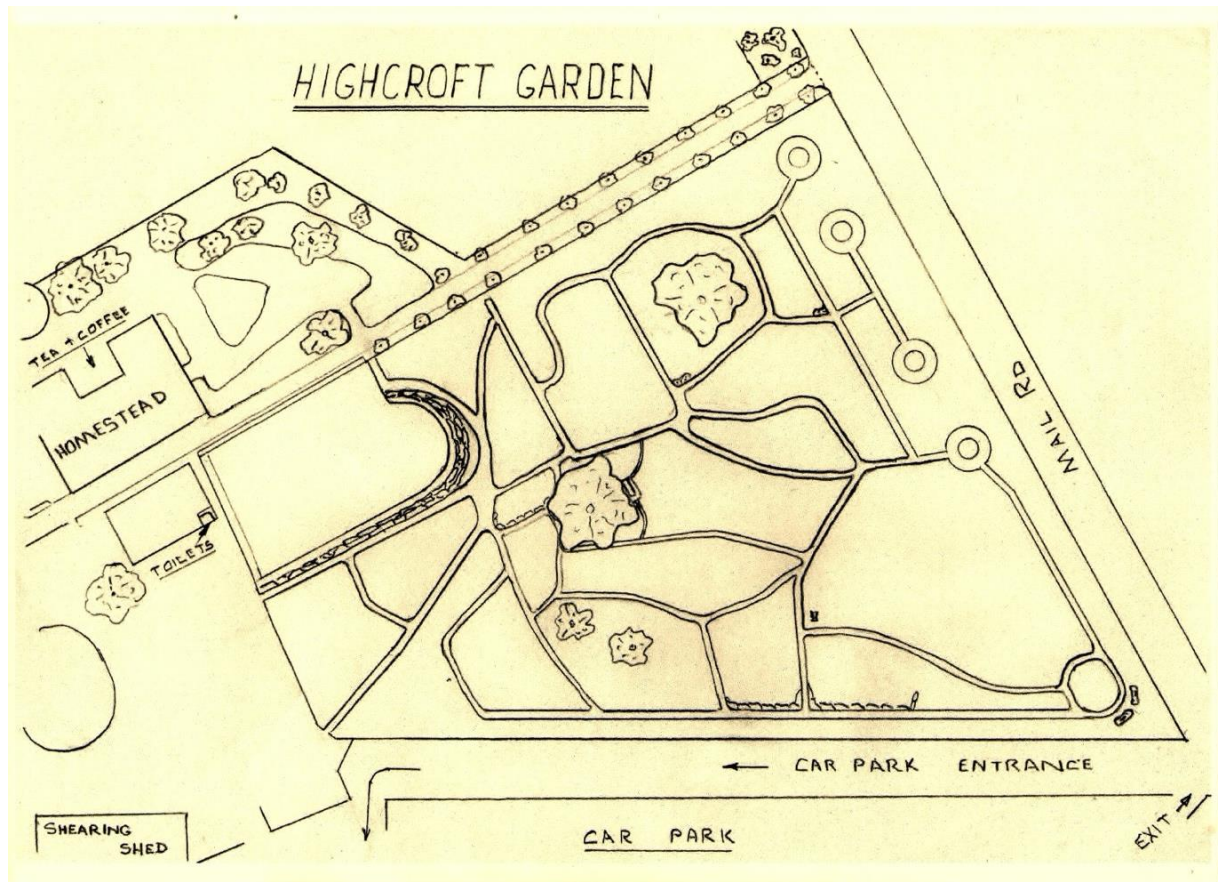
We have galahs & cockatoos that love to eat the roses, rabbits that burrow plant roots looking for water, hares eating the bark of trees and kangaroos flattening anything that gets in their way.

Chris is a man of many talents and one of his talents is building stone walls. The high wall, supporting the top lawn, was built by Chris with the help of the Bob Cat. It took three months to build and I think it is one of the most attractive parts of the garden. I call it 'The Great Wall of Harrogate'. We are so lucky to be able to re-cycle the rock dug out of the garden and a lot of it was flat rock. What a bonus! Chris has also built all the wonderful arbours and gates that can be seen in and around the garden.

Please be aware that this is a rural property with uneven surfaces, prickles, sharp things and fauna. We ask that you do not drink from taps as the water is sourced from the dam.

We hope you enjoy your visit to Highcroft Garden and for those who have visited before, we hope you enjoyed seeing how the garden has grown and developed since your last visit.

Maureen & Chris Hight
Highcroft Garden



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.