



Promoting the enjoyment, knowledge and benefits of gardens and gardening

## Open Gardens South Australia

Welcomes you to

# Hilltop

Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> & Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> May 2026

---

The garden at Hilltop has been loved & cared for by 5 different gardening families since the early 1930s including a local nurseryman & Alice Howard, a granddaughter of both the Downer & Schomburgk families: an enviable gardening pedigree by any standard. We came to Hilltop in 2008 following the loss of our Georgian homestead & garden, in the Black Tuesday Bushfires of 2005 on Eyre Peninsula.

It is the trees, the spaces between them & the vistas they frame, that define the garden at Hilltop. For this, I am immeasurably grateful to my predecessors who planted so many varied & beautiful specimens. The garden consists of many different areas & extends over 9 acres, but it is the trees, especially in Autumn, framing a secret or distant view, standing sentinel, or enclosing a special space, which are the stars of the garden.

### THE DIFFERENT GARDEN AREAS AT HILLTOP

#### Entrance & Driveway

The narrow entrance to the property is planted with photinia & gleditsia. At the fork in the driveway, you are met by a weeping cypress & a collection of magnolias before the view expands, to take in the front park on the right & the cottage park on the left. To the right is a box rondel enclosing a stone fountain. The driveway avenue of Canadian maples is underplanted with a seemingly random but very deliberate mixture of blue & white agapanthus.

#### Topiary Terrace, Sunken Lawn & Little Italian Pond Garden

The central axis of these terraces forms a line of sight from our front door & hallway. On the first terrace topiary pines are surrounded by box rectangles which are planted with catmint, lavender & rosemary. The sunken lawn provides lovely views into the woodland, before stepping down a level to the little Italian pond garden. A small stone edged pond with a charming bronze fountain is surrounded by topiary box balls which extend into the woodland.

#### Woodland

The woodland wraps around the sunken lawn & the little Italian pond garden & has several stone paths to explore. The planting includes maples, Irish Strawberry, birches, liquidambars & my beloved weeping birch & copper beech. These are underplanted with camellias, rhododendrons, viburnums, spring bulbs, hellebores, violets, plectranthus, Japanese anemones, bergenia & hydrangeas. Between the sunken lawn & the copper beech is a small secret garden with a terracotta bird bath & brick & stone paving.

#### Front Park

When we arrived at Hilltop, the view from the curved bench beneath the Himalayan Cedar to the box rondel was partially concealed. After much looking & even more courage, we removed a large cypress to create what is now one of the loveliest views in the garden. The vista was further

---

**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>

enhanced by removing the roses around the box hedge to allow the rondel to be the star. The agapanthus edging on the maple avenue was planted to hide the gravel driveway without obstructing the view across the garden. We joined 2 island beds, created a small keyhole lawn leading to a birch & hellebore walk, reduced the lawn in the back section by creating the ivy ribbons, added a garden bed of plectranthus, corea & helichrysum and then I spent a fair bit of my garden budget on 6 beautiful Milano urns. Favourite plants & trees in the front park include, forsythia, Cotinus, mahonia, euphorbias, hellebores, Himalayan cedar, pin oak, Magnolia grandiflora, Canadian beech & the rare weeping Cedrus deodara "Grahams Golden".

### **Cottage Park**

The cottage was originally built as a summer house for Alice's mother, Ada Schomburgk. We acquired it to secure our privacy, but it soon became obvious that it would be integral to the development of the garden. The block was covered in self-seeded pittosporum, hollies & hawthorn, & a band of gorse & blackberry was rapidly encroaching from the boundary. I started clearing unwanted vegetation with my Japanese pruning saw until one year Richard bought me a chainsaw for Valentines Day & the views began to emerge rather more quickly. The views from the western veranda of the cottage to the lake & through the liquidambar to the birch copse are lovely. At the bottom of the park is our stumpery fire pit.

### **Back Park & Pond**

The walk across the back of the property & up to kangaroo bend provides lovely views across the park, towards the house & of the majestic stand of candlebark gums. The large pond is edged in part with yellow Japanese iris & is anchored by a contorted willow, bamboo, a golden ash & a plane tree. By midsummer the pond is covered in water lilies. The back park has 2 lovely linden trees by the pump shed.

### **Fern Gully & Birch Copse**

Not really a gully but a lovely path linking the topiary terrace to the back park. It is edged with ferns, agapanthus, clivias, camellias & hydrangeas. The birch copse is underplanted with ivy & ferns & has a gorgeous view of the garden room. Don't miss the view that opens at the top of the path, it is one of my favourites.

### **Courtyard Garden, Courtyard, Little Dutch Garden, & Back Terrace**

The courtyard garden links the front terrace to the back terrace. The standard weeping rose is Crepuscule. Inside the courtyard are 2 mature Japanese yews either side of a grilled window. In 2020 we completed building our garden room & are developing a small Dutch garden with topiary Dutch box, clipped abelia, rosemary & lavender. A small hedge of star jasmine surrounds a sundial which was one of the few garden ornaments that survived our bushfire at Green Patch. At the other end of the terrace & pergola is a Japanese inspired garden & pond. The trees in the back garden include sycamore maple, laburnum, claret ash, Chinese elm, dawn redwood, Japanese maple & 2 gorgeous weeping Greenstead cypresses. The lumpy hedge is photinia.

Thank you for reading my garden notes & visiting my garden. We are hoping for gorgeous Autumn colour. Proceeds from today's opening will support the Breast Cancer Foundation.

Lindy Gill, Hilltop 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.