



Promoting the enjoyment, knowledge and benefits of gardens and gardening

Open Gardens South Australia

Welcomes you to

Marybank Estate

Sunday 20th September, 2026

Welcome to Marybank Estate. The homestead and Barn were originally built in 1842 by colonist Thomas Shepherd Esquire from Scotland, a wealthy gentleman, a draper and possibly a founding member of the Princess Royal Mining Company. The estate was named after his wife, Mary Murray from Tasmania. The Shepherds moved to London in 1853 and Arthur Fox, an Adelaide auctioneer, purchased the property and 1000 acres of land. The property has remained in the Fox family ever since.

The Homestead is designed in the Georgian style with elegant French windows. The house and five acres of gardens are heritage listed, and under the corrugated iron roof are the original red gum shingles. The Barn, originally built as stables, is now a wedding venue with beautiful accommodation on the upper level.

The federation garden began as a practical one, with an olive grove, fruit trees, vineyard and a kitchen garden — we believe the Rose Garden walk was there from the start, part of the garden's original design when the house was built in 1842. Over many generations the rest has grown into a series of walks flanked by Italian Buckthorn hedges and planted with roses, hardy perennials and bulbs, as this suits its mediterranean climate. It is unique for its hills face setting, which provides vistas of Black Hill and the city of Adelaide. Large red gums provide a typical Australian backdrop to the rambling garden. The huge, very old red gum near the barn is hollow and home to countless birds and bees.

The house and garden are 184 years old, and it is easy to imagine the carriages drawing up on the gravel terrace, now a terraced front lawn, and the ladies and gentlemen alighting for the Quadrille Party held at Marybank in 1871. In earlier days Marybank exported oranges to England and grew Grenache and Pedro Ximénez grapes for the nearby Stonyfell Winery.

Most of the garden layout is the work of Dora Fox (3rd generation), who cared for the garden from 1921 to 1995 while also introducing the beautiful lawned areas you see today. "The Far Garden" and its view looking back toward Black Hill was her favourite spot.

During the twentieth century, orange groves and fruit trees were pulled out, and hundreds of bulbs were planted — iris, Belladonna lilies and jonquils being the most prolific, and Ox Tongue lilies the most unusual. Shrubs that suit our poor limestone soils are Cotoneasters and Abelias. Old fashioned climbing roses, agapanthus, billy buttons, salvia, westringia, aloes, African daisy and pelargoniums also seem to love it here. Jacaranda trees, the huge Golden Elm and Cypress Pines thrive too, with ornamental pears and plums also featuring throughout the garden.

In 1919 Marybank had grown to 1,000 acres but is now a more manageable 60. Best of all, it is still a working property. In 2006 Stuart Read from the Australian Garden History Society visited Marybank and identified two rare trees only found in colonial gardens: Schinus Polygamus (Chilean Pepper tree) and Picconia Excelsa from the Canary Islands (related to the olive tree). Both are very hardy and, like much of the garden, survive on rainfall only.

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://opengardenssa.org.au/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/opengardenssa>

The garden has to be hardy — a legacy from the days when only the precious fruit trees and kitchen garden were watered in summer by gravity feed from a spring behind the barn. The spring dried up in 1915, and later water was pumped from Fifth Creek until that land was acquired by the government for the Black Hill Conservation Park in 1975. We also lost Foxes Dam to the National Park.

A bore was sunk in the late seventies, and now water is pumped to a header tank on the hill and used for the cattle and the garden. The interesting slate troughs on the property were used for water storage before concrete and corrugated iron tanks came into use.

The current 7-acre vineyard is planted with Shiraz grapes by Sue & Chris Lloyd (5th generation). Every year a portion of our grapes are sold to Penfolds at Magill Estate, and have been known to go into both St Henri and Grange. Winemaking has been on and off here, but with consistent vintages made from 2019 under our flagship 'Marybank Shiraz', we hope that this will continue. We still hand-produce our own small-batch Shiraz, and now a Rosé too, which our wedding couples get to enjoy on the day.

Our current focus, Billy & Brie (6th generation), is a garden that flows with colour through Spring, Summer and Autumn — timed for our busiest wedding season. Dahlias, chrysanthemums, cosmos, bearded irises, strawflowers, amaranthus, sunflowers and feverfew form the backbone of it, chosen because they suit our climate and keep the colour coming right through the season. It's a bit of a tribute to my mum, Sue Lloyd, who put so much into this place before us. We want the bees and birds to thrive here too.

We've just put in a new vegie garden, with a herb garden closer to the homestead, our orchard is coming along, and we've added chickens for fresh eggs. Alongside all this, we're enhancing what's already established — working with what suits each spot's soil and position rather than against it — and making sure the paths tie every part of the garden together. Our focus is to make the garden more manageable and beautiful for future generations.

Please explore and enjoy!

Brie Lloyd