



Promoting the enjoyment, knowledge and benefits of gardens and gardening

Open Gardens South Australia

Welcomes you to **Orcombe Farm**

Saturday 15th & Sunday 16th November, 2025

Eight years ago, my garden, Orcombe Farm, began with a practical goal: to create a comfortable outdoor living space and to cool our home during the scorching Barossa summers by planting around the house. When we purchased the property, there was no garden at all, just a weed-infested, exposed, sloping paddock. As a professional garden designer, it was an exciting opportunity to create something from a blank canvas, even with the challenges of no mains or bore water and only rainwater tanks to supply both the home and garden. With an average of around 500mm of rain a year, and significantly less in the last two years, every design decision had to work with our climate, not against it.

As the garden expanded outward, it began to take on a life of its own, reaching into the wider landscape and forming a living dialogue with the environment. The hot western garden glows with bold, textured succulents in a warm colour palette; Mediterranean plants tie in with the surrounding vineyards; the drying seed heads of ornamental grasses echo the nearby paddocks; and native plants now spill from the remnant bushland along the eastern boundary. Careful plant selection, from Australian natives and South African species to Mediterranean, North American, Mexican plants and succulents, has created a climate-compatible garden that survives on limited water.

But beyond the design, this garden tells deeper stories. It's a place of connection to nature, to calm, to joy. What began as bare ground is now a thriving patch of biodiversity, buzzing with birds, butterflies, native bees, and lizards. This biodiverse wonderland has been the greatest and most unexpected gift, a daily reminder that beauty and life can flourish where once there was nothing.

There's also a story of heritage. As a third-generation horticulturist, this space is a tribute to the knowledge passed down from my parents and grandparents. Now, raising my own children here, I hope to pass on that same love for the land, to instil a connection to nature that will last a lifetime.

This is a garden built on resilience. It survives South Australia's harshest droughts on stored rainwater alone, entering summer dormancy before coming back to life with the winter rains. There's just one small patch of lawn for comfort; the rest of the garden is a carefully curated tapestry of drought-tolerant plantings, woven together with paths of crushed ironstone and edged with larger ironstone rocks, both a special resource from this property. Each season is welcomed and celebrated for the changes it brings.

And woven through it all is the story of nourishment. Growing food for my family, fresh, organic, and in rhythm with the seasons, is deeply grounding. The productive patch, my

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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heart's centre, is built around the beautiful old almond tree that once stood in an open paddock. Raised wicking beds supply vegetables with minimal water, while citrus trees, a cut flower garden, and a gravel-seated area invite us to linger. Through thoughtful plant design, I've improved the microclimate, built biodiversity, and created a living, self-supporting ecosystem that uses nature to grow healthier, pest-free, organic food.

These stories of nature, family, resilience, and nourishment are what make my garden so special to me.



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.