



Promoting the enjoyment, knowledge and benefits of gardens and gardening

Open Gardens South Australia

Welcomes you to

St Ann's

Saturday 12th & Sunday 13th September, 2026

WELCOME TO ST ANN'S!

It has been over 12 months since we moved into St Ann's, and we continue to be delighted by the changing seasonal colours and the many beautiful surprises blooming throughout the garden. While the chilly, wet winter has put a hold on teddy bear picnics for our five daughters - Adelaide, Madeliene, Dianna, Georgia and Sophie - the games of hide-and-seek continue.

You may have caught St Ann's in the Winter edition of *SALIFE*, where photographer Ben Kelly captured the garden in all its seasonal beauty, and Jade Woollacott wove its story around his beautiful images. It was very special to see the garden's beauty, history and character so thoughtfully captured in its new era with our family.

A HISTORY OF THE HOME AND GARDEN

The first recorded structure on the original 1854 land grant was a stone 'shepherd's cottage', built around 1860. This was extended to become a four-bedroom cottage in the 1870s, before the building was extensively transformed in the late Victorian era to become the gracious two-storey home you see today. In the early 1900s, the building was used as a private school and, over the years, has been home to several prominent citizens, local doctors and two Members of Parliament.

St Ann's previous owners were keen and knowledgeable gardeners and, over their ten years of residency, meticulously recreated the garden following the Renaissance ideals of order, balance and harmony. Established trees and existing shrubs were cherished and incorporated into the new layout, while many more choice plants suited to the Hills' microclimate were added.

Japanese and English box, viburnum species, photinia, lilly pilly and several other varieties of hedging plants were used to enclose garden rooms, line paths, add definition, and provide contrasting colours and textures of foliage.

The garden around the Orley Avenue entrance features mainly white-flowering plants. There are camellias, sweetly scented Magnolia 'Teddy Bear' and Rhododendron 'Fragrantissimum', although the lower-growing Helleborus foetidus, also known as the 'stinking hellebore', is anything but pleasantly scented! The very old tree is an Australian blackwood (Acacia sp.), while the large dome is an olive tree that was cut to the ground and reshaped into a sphere.

There are countless trees here, and some are thought to be amongst the oldest in the Stirling area. A Lebanese cedar is believed to be 180 years old, while its slightly younger cousin, a blue cedar, was planted around 120 years ago. Other species include ornamental chestnuts, many maples, magnolias, hawthorns, dogwoods, flowering cherries, cercis, pin oaks, liquidambars, poplars, ashes and oaks. Together, they provide shade and shelter for the understory of spring bulbs and shade-loving plants.

On the upper lawn terrace, a pair of original Victorian Coalbrookdale cast-iron seats featuring a nasturtium design are positioned to provide views of the house. From here, a stairway and central path lead down to the bottom of the garden and a gate that was likely once the pedestrian access to the nearby railway station. To the left, when looking down the steps, is the sunnier and more formal side of the garden: a series of terraces, each enclosed by hedges and with its own distinguishing character.

Steps lead to a Japanese-inspired area, where an old water tank converted into a pond is planted with water iris. Nearby, a couple of young trees are in the early stages of being transformed into sculptural, cloud-pruned forms. A privet hedge clipped into a wave shape divides this level, while on the lower side of the next terrace, a tall photinia hedge provides the backdrop for classical statues representing the four seasons.

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The next level down is a gravelled area, also enclosed by photinia hedges, with layers of viburnum and Japanese box hedging adding contrast. The minimalist planting creates a Zen-like space perfect for quiet contemplation. The lowest terrace is lawned, where several roses and sun-loving plants take advantage of the more open aspect.

The area on the other, western side of the path is less structured and has a lovely woodland ambience. Rhododendrons, azaleas and camellias are mass-planted throughout the garden, but here, beneath the canopies of the many tall trees, they are joined by hydrangeas, tree ferns, hellebores and other shade-loving plants.

Paths wind up the slope and back towards the house and upper lawn terrace. Bordering the path leading to the house is an elaborate parterre of criss-crossing Japanese box hedging, with a line of naturally pyramid-shaped *Picea glauca* 'Albertiana Conica' providing a distinctive feature.

OUR RECENT ADDITIONS

Over the past 12 months, we have begun adding a few touches of our own. 'Chicken City', which the family has affectionately nicknamed the 'Chicken Taj', was built using several ornately carved doors we brought back from India. Each of our five daughters has her own chicken to care for.

At the entrance, we have laid a new sandstone forecourt and installed a pair of restored eighteenth-century English gates. A beautiful old ponytail palm has been planted to complement the entry turrets.

Post-and-rail fencing now runs through the garden and orchard, dividing the property and giving our German Shepherd, Rex, plenty of room to play. We also sourced original nineteenth-century English cemetery fencing, which we have repurposed to create a physical boundary between the hedges and the garden dining area.

We have added 11 stained glass panels to the front of the house, made by the talented team at The Glass Foundry Leadlight Designs, Stirling. The subject of each is Marcus's favourite flower the iris, presented in an art nouveau design.

At the bottom of the garden, we have recently planted three weeping mulberry trees which, in years to come, will grow together to share a canopy and form our own mulberry grove. Two new Indian tables, intricately inlaid with lapis lazuli and agate - and requiring sixteen men to manoeuvre them into position - now grace the garden and terrace upstairs.

We have also introduced a range of new trees, including acers, weeping cherries and ginkgos, to bring additional seasonal interest. A working herb garden is flourishing in the sunlight alongside the chickens and fruit trees.

REFRESHMENTS

Tea, coffee and scones and other baked goods will be available for purchase on the upper balcony, which offers lovely views over the garden. Access is via the stairs adjacent to the parterre garden on the western side of the house. For anyone with mobility issues, our volunteers will be very happy to carry refreshments to the seating on the ground-floor verandah.

ST ANN'S, A TREASURE TO SHARE

Our garden here is quite special to us, and we love sharing it with others. As well as opening St Ann's with Open Gardens SA, we have hosted two events celebrating local history and talent. Our first event raised funds for the National Trust, and we were enchanted by a performance from Adelaide violinist and Ramsay Scholar, Anna Freer. Our second event, an autumn soirée, raised funds for the Boileau Foundation and featured a magical performance by Adelaide Symphony Orchestra Principal Harp, Jessica Fotinos.

We are very grateful to the previous owners for establishing St Ann's superb garden, and we love watching it evolve and reveal something new with each passing season. We hope you enjoy our garden!

Stephanie and Marcus Bastiaan