



Promoting the enjoyment, knowledge and benefits of gardens and gardening

Open Gardens South Australia

Welcomes you to

THE BOWER

Saturday 14th & Sunday 15th October, 2023 10 Fourth Road, Belair

bower (noun) 1. a pleasant shady place; 2. a retreat or sanctuary

In 2007, when we bought our home, the front garden was a soursob patch with dietes and a couple of large eucalypt trees. The back garden...well let's just say it wasn't much to look at. The courtyard was a concrete slab with the classic centrally placed rotary hoist, and the 570sq metre raised back garden, what is now The Bower, was a flat, rutted wasteland covered in wireweed, hidden from the house by a breezeblock wall.

The front garden

The front garden redesign was heavily influenced by the presence of a septic tank and seepage, which was replaced with a sewage treatment system (envirocycle) which effectively recycles all the waste from the house and keeps the front garden watered all year. Bottlebrush were chosen as the main planting to cope with the constant watering, with correas, kangaroo paws, and grevilleas positioned where the water wasn't likely to drown them. An ornamental (Manchurian) pear and Brachychiton are near the house for shade, and kiwi fruit vines wind their way up to the first floor and along the handrail. The plantings have changed to cope as the bottlebrush have grown and created a dense canopy which the wattlebirds and New Holland Honeyeaters are particularly fond of.

The back garden

Never having developed a garden from scratch, my first move for the back garden was to find a garden designer, who followed our brief beautifully: no straight lines, a mix of natives and exotics, room for fruit trees and veggies, and a feeling of discovery (what I called 'rooms' and 'glimpses'). We laid the paths first, then the major structural features – the trees (fig, plum, loquat, apricot and lemon) and the gazebo – and gradually began work on the beds. We took it slowly (roughly one bed each year) as I knew I couldn't keep up with the maintenance and support of too many new plants at a time. Situated on a limestone reef, and having been flattened in preparation for a tennis court by the previous owners, the top soil is not deep, so every bed had to be raised. No mean feat when access is almost impossible! The automated watering system was an essential feature early in the establishment phase and kept the losses to a minimum.

The concrete slab on which the veggie beds now stand is a reminder of the history of the block – at one time this was apparently the floor of the stable which housed a pony. That stable is now our garden shed, and the slab is the base for our wicking beds, which provide us with fresh veggies year-round.

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>

The visitors: a garden for everyone!

The garden was featured this year in the May issue of the *ABC Gardening Australia* magazine, and was described as a 'garden for everyone'. First the birds, who nest in the two bird boxes, bathe in the bird bath, and drink the nectar from the cigar plant. The eastern spinebills and blue wrens are great favourites, with their cheeky familiarity and song. Next are the frogs who have made their home in our ponds, and who have been invited to try out the frog motel in the moat with the one remaining goldfish (lone survivor of the grey heron's fishing trip!). The possums, koalas and echidnas pass through the garden but don't make it their permanent home, unlike the blue tongue lizard who lives under the pool deck. The chickens and dogs have their own needs met in the garden too, with the area we call The Pet Patch set aside for them. The bee hotel, although small, is used primarily by leaf cutter bees, who play an important part in the health of the garden. We also share our crops with the visiting locals – the parrots and occasional fruit bats get a good feed from the Santa Rosa plum and white shahtoot mulberry which are too tall to net, but the satsuma plum and fig tree are always well netted and off limits for all but ourselves. After all, we deserve a bit of sweetness for all our efforts.

Garden access

The garden is situated on the high side of Fourth Road, with stairs and a steep driveway for access. There is unfortunately no alternative entry for disabled access or prams. Access to the back garden (The Bower) is up a further set of steps. Parents are asked to supervise young children at all times, as there are multiple unfenced shallow bodies of water in the garden. Visitors are invited to follow the winding trail through the garden, with opportunities to stop and rest in the bamboo grove, the mulberry lawn and the gazebo, where the view to the coast can be admired. Please follow the directional signs to ensure easy movement of visitors through our secluded retreat.

Garden walk-and-talk sessions will be provided by the garden owner, Sue, at 11am and 2pm each day. Orchid potting demonstrations will be provided by the Orchid Club of South Australia at 12.30pm each day. Homemade jams, tea and coffee will be available for purchase, as well as plants supplied by Tupelo Grove Nursery.

Funds raised by the open garden will be shared between The Orchid Club of South Australia, the Glenelg North Community Garden and the SA Mediterranean Garden Society.