



Promoting the enjoyment, knowledge and benefits of gardens and gardening

Open Gardens South Australia

Welcomes you to

The Garden at Balmae

Saturday 12th & Sunday 13th September, 2026

The Garden at Balmae... where to begin? My husband Hamish and I purchased the property in spring of 2018, a few months after we got married. Our 18 acre block had been in different hands over the years since the homestead was originally built in the early 1900's (the original stone part of the house you see today). The block was part of the farm surrounding us before subdivision, owned by the Hamilton family and called Balmae, an ode to their Scottish heritage. Hence, 'The Garden at Balmae' was born.

We were rather enthusiastic in the early days, and after sighting one brown snake too many decided to clear much of the overgrown garden surrounding the house. We kept the bones, the beautiful jacaranda tree, English buxus hedging, Giesha Girl tree path and established viburnum tinus. Plug by plug we planted out the kikuyu lawn and set to establish the rosemary hedge and iceberg roses you see today.

After completing our house renovation in 2020/21, we had our first child. It was as I was pushing Peter around in the pram, trying to find shade wherever possible that my passion for gardening really grew. I dabbled in the veggie patch, removing some trees that formed part of the original orchard we were lucky to have and enlisted Hamish to help construct my plans. Bed by bed, the veggie patch has grown. The original bed is between the outhouse buildings and the apricot trees. The veggie patch now has 15 beds. Much of it has been planted to accommodate the conditions. Tree roots were heavily invading any raised bed in the ground, so we adapted and planted these beds out with roses to provide picking over the summer months. Flowering annuals and productive perennials have done better in these also. We then moved much of our productive produce to raised wicking beds, with closed systems for no roots. These have worked really well, and we hope to keep expanding with these down the track. The Duck House was another addition, and makes for a really nice experience to be able to hear them quacking away while we potter.

The other conundrum I had was having shade for the children to play on the lawn. I had my first summer at home on maternity leave, by then pregnant with our second and my frustration was brewing. The original pine trees gave shade late in the evening when our kids were already in bed. The next part we established was under the mallees and itchy tree. Hamish was convinced to go on the rotary hoe and four large beds formed here, initially built by building up with compost and pea straw. It features some evergreens for structure but mostly wanting to get as much colour and flowering plants in as possible. Alas, the hot dry winds and tree roots made this process somewhat difficult, so a lot of this style of garden has been trial and error.

In 2025 we expanded our lawn area under our established jacaranda, and planted another on the opposite side of the house with some ornamental pears to hopefully provide balance

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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and some shade down the track. The other major part of the garden was Hamish removing over 100 pine trees where the canola is planted that you see today. Planted for quick windbreaks after the second world war, we found they were competing heavily for water and nutrients and sterilising the ground wherever the needles lay. We miss the shade, but since removing them both the ornamental and productive garden has really taken off. We hope to replace these down the track with native and less invasive species.

Much of our garden philosophy here is simple, you either work hard or you're out. Conditions can be tough, particularly with our harsh winds and small children (sometimes the biggest pests) and we try hard not to be a plant hospital. Plants that can be picked for flowers time and time again and dug and divided to continue to expand have been a priority. We like to call these staple plants workhorses, and without them we would not have the garden that we do.

Our favourite part of the garden is ever changing with the seasons. In summer we are out almost every evening playing in water under the shade of the mallees. In winter we spend more time in the veggie patch getting the spring flowers and produce ready. The many chairs we have scattered about, Hamish and I often sit on at sunset to chat and catch up about our day. It forces us to slow down, be patient, get off our phones and clear our heads. After having five children in four and a half years, we would be lost without the outdoor space that it provides. Our hope is that by opening our garden, it shows that with a little hard work, a willingness to put a plant in the ground and have a go (and a husband adept at operating almost anything) we will inspire others to get outside and create a haven. Hamish is also sick of me chewing his ear off about plants so I needed to find a new audience (haha).

See you in the garden,

Linda.