



Promoting the enjoyment, knowledge and benefits of gardens and gardening

Open Gardens South Australia Welcomes you to **The Garden at Wilpena Street**

Saturday 18th & Sunday 19th October, 2025

We bought this house in 2003 and dreamed of creating a romantic English-style garden. We inherited a tennis court in disrepair and an overrun block that sloped steeply in two directions. So, we embarked upon our 'ten-year plan' to build the garden ourselves with the help of friends and a few contractors for the big jobs.

A designer drew up a plan based on our ideas, guiding us on levels, using retaining walls and steps to form garden rooms. This involved some serious excavation work. We will never forget the day a giant earthmover took away everything. Everything. The block was completely bare, not a tree nor a blade of grass in sight. And no topsoil (wrong move). We were starting from scratch! Looking at the garden now, it's incredible to think that nothing is more than 20 years old.

Twenty years later, there are eight different levels. Rob has brought in 150 tons of topsoil by wheelbarrow, our stonemason has laid 180 metres of retaining walls, and Dave has planted more than 1,100 hedging plants. We've laid three lawns, planted 64 trees, laid hundreds of pavers and built a fishpond.

As you enter the garden, you walk through a shaded woodland area. We've laid paths and created an oval lawn, and planted hydrangeas, camellias, and other shade-loving small trees and shrubs.

Everyone asks us about the stunning *Purple Mist Flower* called *Bartlettina Sordida*. While we don't mind that it's named after botanist Harley Harris Bartlett, *sordida* means dirty looking — a little unflattering for such a stunning plant. It's like a giant ageratum.

We have several urns providing points of interest around the garden. The largest and most dramatic one is 'The Urn' by the oval lawn. It was a challenge getting it in the right spot and vertical; it needed its own footings and weighed three tons.

The trees include a stunning golden maple, *Kelly's Gold*, and a *liquidambar* in the front border, chosen to help drink the water that runs off the property in this direction.

The rose garden includes the *Children's Rose* against the house, and we've just planted a new rose called *Dearest* below. On the other side of the path, the roses change from pink to yellow.

We wanted an entrance hall beyond the gates, so we created a green and white-themed fountain garden. There's a *Japanese Box* hedge and *Honesty* beneath *Hedgerow Maples*. We're still experimenting with the second hedge, so they're not all the same.

Straight on is the lawn walk, the length of a cricket pitch, in a subtle tribute to Ian and Greg Chappell's great uncle, Doug Richardson, who once owned the house. Rumour has it that the boys practiced their bowling and batting skills in this garden.

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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We wanted this to be the most English part of the garden, so that meant creating shade. We planted trees as soon as possible in the plan. 'The actor', a bronze we commissioned to represent Rob's desire for a statue in the garden and Dave's love of theatre, stands beneath a grove of *Ginkgos*. Further east, there's a *Chanticleer Pear* and a *Gleditsia* behind the Victorian cast iron bench at the far end, which lines up with 'The Urn' - you can check it if you like, but we're not moving either of them!

On the south side, four *Oakfield Spires* have blossoms in spring and spectacular autumn colour.

The veggie patch includes a *quince* that Dave's wrangled into a chandelier cordon (like espalier but upright). He's experimenting with wicking beds, which are producing masses of lettuce and veggies already. There's a bed with *rhubarb*, one with a variety of *strawberries* called *Tioga* from California, which is ideal for the South Australian climate, and there are *sweet peas* and *dahlias* in the flower picking bed by the greenhouse.

We're trying a *magnolia* hybrid called *Princess Cinderella* as a hedge along the back of the annual flower beds. It's slow going. Rob enjoys popping mix-and-match annuals around the lawn for a splash of summer colour, including foxgloves and poppies.

Two *crepe myrtles* frame 'Gin and tonic' corner where we like to pause and reflect on what we've achieved at six o'clock after a long day's gardening!

A *Murraya* hedge screens the pool, and two *Robinia* trees provide fresh lime green foliage. These trees are popular with the local parrots, who are determined to strip the top branches each spring.

The circular courtyard has a weeping mulberry underplanted with annuals, a *Lipstick Maple* in the corner providing enough shade for more hydrangeas, pollarded *Capital pear* trees and a climbing *jasmine* that frames the French doors.

Our pool area has a Mediterranean resort feel, complete with pots of *citrus*, *bougainvillea*, and a *Duranta* hedge that runs the length of the lap pool. We bought thirty tiny seedlings from a clearance sale for \$1 each — hard to imagine now.

Perhaps after 22 years of hard labour, it's time to sit and enjoy, mow the lawn, pick veggies, and do a little weeding here and there. Not very likely. There's always something to do, which is perfectly fine if there's a G&T afterwards.