



Promoting the enjoyment, knowledge and benefits of gardens and gardening

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

Saturday 21 & Sunday 22 October, 2023

41 Wilpena Street, Eden Hills

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 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 to tame the sloping block by 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. 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!

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 woodland area with established trees creating plenty of shade. We've 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 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. It's best viewed from the far end of the lawn walk (through the gates to the back garden).

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 and are underplanted with forget-me-nots and daffodils.

We wanted an entrance hall to the main garden, 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.

We wanted this to be the most English part of the garden, so that meant creating shade. We planted trees as early as we could in the plan. It's hard to believe that all these trees are at most twenty years

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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old. '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 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 delightful blossoms in spring and spectacular autumn colours.

The veggie patch includes a quince that Dave's wrangled into a chandelier cordon (like espalier but upright). He's experimenting with a cheap and cheerful way of creating raised beds using bales of pea straw, an idea he saw at an open garden. Let's see how the tomatoes and zucchini go.

The 'workers' in the beehive provide us with honey twice a year and help pollinate the garden, and the 'girls' in the chook house give us eggs. There are sweet peas and dahlias in the picking bed, plus strawberries and rhubarb.

We're trying a magnolia hybrid called *Princess Cinderella* as a hedge along the back of the annual flower beds. 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 Paniculata* 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 and pots of geraniums. The climbing rose we had around the sitting room windows struggled with the lack of sun, so we're trying climbing jasmine. It's early days.

A trio of Capital pears has grown over the roof, so we've chopped them off. We're told they will re-shoot. So perhaps 'pollarding' is the go. The *Lipstick Maple* in the corner provides enough shade for more hydrangeas and hellebores.

Our courtyard and pool area have a Mediterranean resort feel with pots of citrus, bougainvillea, dwarf oleanders and port wine magnolias. A hedge of *Duranta repens Geisha Girl* runs the length of the lap pool. We bought thirty tiny seedlings for \$1 each — hard to imagine now.

Perhaps after twenty 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.

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.