



Promoting the enjoyment, knowledge and benefits of gardens and gardening

# Open Gardens South Australia Welcomes you to **The Glades**

Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> & Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> October, 2026

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It all began in 1980 with the purchase of a very plain 4- year-old ranch style home that seemed to be totally lost in an acre of Adelaide Hills virgin bush.

Tending towards the eco-sensitive conservationist type at the time, I looked upon our block of bush with an enthusiastic expectation and a sense of responsibility.

During our first two years of occupation, I delicately cut winding pathways through the vegetation in order to make the most of the expected winter-spring floral display. In fact it was my first opportunity to observe many of the bush-beauties in flower. Tetratheca, hibbertia and correa to name but a few of the stand-outs.

Unfortunately, the joy was short-lived, for the advent of our first summer with its increasing temperatures and decreasing humidity rapidly curtailed the floral abundance as the cool, moist earthiness and the softness of mosses underfoot were rapidly replaced by hot, dry, dusty leaves. Disillusionment grew as I watched the introduced grasses and dandelions invade the bush from the edges of my paths. Indeed, I had erred badly.

Disappointed with my first plunge I was now also struggling out of my depth. Could it be that my own gardening goals and purposes still remained undefined? Hmmm! After all, my total knowledge of plants and their horticultural care could be written on the back of a not very large postage stamp . . . Didn't know the difference between a dogwood and a catkin. So be it.

My dream garden was surprisingly quite different. Turns out I was inclined towards a rather more structured arrangement with defined garden beds. I also wanted a functional garden that included lawns, water, rocks, winter sun and summer shade.

After compiling something akin to a child's Christmas list to Santa I needed to dig-in (possibly just a tad premature). And yet I still had no idea about the basics of garden design.

What was the nature of elegance, and how did one produce harmony? I wished I knew! Quite apparently, I needed to *"phone a friend"*. Brown was known to be capable, Jekyll and the Japanese landscapers were utterly dependable and of course there was Edna W. Well, I believe she loved Erigeron, (seaside daisy) so we can pencil that one in for starters.

Too often had I discounted the importance of "a space", a significant bit of bare ground. In fact, an integral part of garden design. Spaciousness enhances freedom of the soul. I also noticed that interest and anticipation could be created by increasing the height and density of the planting on the inside of a tightly curving path and then opening up the space after rounding the bend. Discovering a thicket of date palms in the desert could be just as exciting as encountering a grassy, sunlit patch in a forest. Ah-ha, the unexpected within predictable flows!

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**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://opengardenssa.org.au/>

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Establishing a suitable balance between the excitement of anticipation and a sense of tranquility seemed to be an important consideration. The natural flow of water, the identifiable repetition of key species throughout the garden together with suitable rock placement, harmonizing floral groupings and limiting the number of tree species all seemed to help. In summer, bright, warm, sunny areas may be best appreciated if one could also relax in dappled shade.

It was a grand day when I discovered (from another book) that a beautifully constructed garden curve on a plan as viewed from directly above as from a drone, can never look the same when laid out on the ground, for a gardener perceives the apparent tightening or fore-shortening of curves at ground level. In other words a curve is correct when viewed standing at ground level and from both directions.

Once I had the large scale drawing of my proposed landscape, I was able to begin planning my planting arrangements. By cutting up paint colour cards into small squares, roughly matching the paint colour to the foliage or flower, I was able to gain a useful appreciation of colour and flows through the garden. With my plan attached to a piece of caneite, I put a list of chosen plants down the sides of the plan and pinned a colour sample alongside the appropriate name. I could then distribute additional pins of colour onto selected locations. Being particularly inexperienced in this caper, it took me a few days to appreciate the serious flaws in my “grand design”. With the exception of the middle of winter (July), when only the gracious catkins of *Garrya elliptica* sway about in their unequalled glory, it seemed that separate plans were really needed for every other month as well. I tried to take these multi-dimensional issues on board with some difficulty. So, exasperated and not a little miffed by my short-sightedness, I simply grasped the nettle as it were and planted out intuitively. So be it!

From another book I read: “Be bold. Use BIG rocks!” With a strong, initial garden structure it’s more likely to maintain its unique form and essence as the plants grow.

When all is said and done my garden is entirely an artificial construction. It has been created solely from a personal desire to achieve a beautiful and enjoyable living environment. I gratefully appreciate and acknowledge the significant contributions from all of our family and friends who were patient and trusting enough to let me bumble along, re-appraising and re-building my not-so-good ideas and generally doing my own thing.

So, am I happy with the outcome? Too right I am! I love it.

And if others may find some measure of interest or tranquility, or even just a tiny bit of inspiration therein, then my enjoyment is bountiful indeed.

DAVID WILKINSON 2026