



Promoting the enjoyment, knowledge and benefits of gardens and gardening

Open Gardens South Australia Welcomes you to **The Knoll**

Saturday 7th & Sunday 8th November, 2026

‘The Knoll’ was built 130 years ago, in 1896 by John’s great grandfather. At one stage it was a working dairy farm. The original homestead had a typical garden of flowers, vegetables and fruit trees but this had virtually disappeared by the 1960’s. John has fond memories of visiting ‘The Knoll’ as a child and we were mindful of this when trying to establish a new garden.

We moved into the house in 1983 and spent the next 5 years preoccupied with internal renovations. For those years the garden remained a hill of kikuyu, a few straggly gums and 2 prunus trees on a predominately clay and shale soil. In 1987 we began the daunting task of establishing some sort of garden. We wanted to create a garden that invited you to slowly stroll from one area to another, that had a mix of open, sunny areas and shady, secluded spaces with a wide variety of plantings.

After seeking help from a landscape designer for a general layout, work began by bulldozing everything and bringing in tonnes of topsoil and organic matter. We were delighted to uncover a large patch of paintbrush (or blood) lilies which we saved to plant in some of the new garden beds. They still bloom every year and are a reminder of the garden in years gone by.

We pegged out the layout of the entire garden and did much of the hardscaping first. We are fortunate in that John is very handy and skilled with tools and I am happy to be the ideas girl and the apprentice worker. As the house is made from brick and stone, we decided to mirror that in the garden. Hence, we used brick for the lawn edging and steps, stone (from the many trips to Stonyfell Quarry) for garden bed edging, and gravel for the paths and driveway.

We decided to plant all the trees first to get a canopy established as quickly as possible. We chose deciduous trees – Pin oak, Liquid amber, Silver birch, Prunus, Crepe myrtle, Japanese Maple, Crab Apple, Golden Gleditsia and Manchurian Pear, many planted in groups or glades. Most are now over 35 years old and give our garden much needed shade in summer, blossom in spring, beautiful colour in autumn, and let the sun through in winter.

We have also used hedges to provide walls of green around the garden. The Abelia hedges are very tough and can be found behind the roses and along the driveway. Other hedging plants include Spirea, Lilly Pilly, Pittosporum, English box, Magnolia and along the footpath, Viburnum Tinus.

Liriope, bergenia and hellebores were chosen as edging plants for some of the garden beds. All three are exceptionally hardy and do a wonderful job of holding the soil and mulch in place, especially when the birds insist on scratching and flicking it out onto the paths each day. Each winter, we whipper-snip the liriope back to soil level. This encourages fresh, vigorous spring growth and results in better flowering throughout the season.

The garden beds are filled with a mix of perennials and flowering and fragrant shrubs. Our plant selection is based purely on personal likes and dislikes and reflects no particular theme, but hotter summers and irregular rainfall have taught us that the plants we choose must be more drought tolerant. A few firm

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favourites are abelia, nandina, spirea, and salvia. Recently, we have dabbled with the use of succulents, dotted around the garden in either pots or frames.

We don't have a large collection of bulbs, but many of the ones we do have were passed down from our parents and grandparents' gardens. Seeing the salmon-pink Forest Lily, the red-and-white Hippeastrum, and the mauve Autumn Crocus come into bloom evokes fond memories of these special people and the joy they found in gardening.

We have also tried to add points of interest around the garden. The water pot with the old pump is an ode to a disused underground tank and hand pump that John remembers being here. The ploughs and mangle make ideal frames for climbing plants and serve as a reminder of the history of the property. Look out for the succulent chair and frames, bird baths, the pond, small ornaments, the gnome garden (for our daughter who as a child was obsessed with gnomes!), obelisks, and the rusty bike to name a few. Take time to stop and sit on the benches placed along the pathways.

For many, the initial COVID lockdown in 2020 was a challenge but for us, as gardeners, we saw it as an opportunity! The area by our gazebo, under the glade of birches, was completely covered by sword fern. We spent our lockdown time clearing out most of the ferns, making a ramped path to allow easy access to the western lawn for lawn mowers etc and replanting it, to create a woodland effect. We continue to experiment with different plants that will cope with a very large neighbouring pine tree.

A few years ago, we revamped our service area around the garage. We have moved firewood undercover, extended a shed to create a potting area, built new compost and storage bays behind the garage and added a small veggie plot. We have purposely kept the area very clear to allow easy access to the compost bays and citrus trees.

The garden is watered using an automatic irrigation system connected to mains water. Earlier this year, we upgraded the system so that all 27 zones can be controlled via Wi-Fi. It has been a game changer, allowing us to monitor and adjust the irrigation remotely through an app on our mobile phones. This was particularly useful when we travelled overseas, as we were able to keep the garden watered and thriving while we were away.

Our garden is a labour of love. Apart from the 2 stone walls, all the work has been done by us, as is the maintenance of the garden. John has built all the garden structures including the gazebo, lychgate, arbour, compost bays and most of the brick steps. As any gardener will tell you, a garden is never finished, so we are constantly adding, removing and trying new ideas (many of which we get from other gardens!).

The garden brings us great pleasure. We find it beneficial as a shared interest and a wonderful place to relax, wander and entertain. Our motto when visiting other gardens is to come away with just one new idea that we could try. We hope that as you stroll around "The Knoll" you can leave with just a little inspiration for your own patch.

John and Alison Edwards