



Promoting the enjoyment, knowledge and benefits of gardens and gardening

Open Gardens South Australia

Welcomes you to

Urumbula Garden

Saturday 23rd September, 2023

Urumbula is the Nukunu name given to the Aboriginal Plant Use Garden at John Pirie Secondary School. The word refers to a long songline in Nukunu culture.

The garden was begun in 2018 as a project to engage aboriginal boys with a project to teach them many horticultural skills as well as learning about plants in aboriginal culture. Initially the work involved a lot of site preparation as it was a flat piece of degraded land with tons of building rubble just below the surface. The boys enjoyed the physicality of the site work and developed skills in teamwork, endurance, leadership and landscaping. Tons of garden loam, sand, pebbles and large rocks were carefully placed before the planting began.

We chose to design the layout around 3 environments – a dry creek bed, a rocky outcrop and a desert sand dune. Weaving through each space, there is a pebble creek bed. Initially plants were chosen which have natural distribution in one of these environments, but to include some plants we wanted in the garden, this plan has been compromised lately with recent inclusions.

We have been able to identify 14 categories for which plants are used and have at least one plant to represent each category, although often there will be multiple examples. The categories are food, shelter, medicine, fire, dyes, traps, tools and weapons, fibres, fish poison, indicator plants, washing(soap), seasonal activity, spiritual, and drugs.

Urumbula includes a yarning circle around an open firepit backed by a large mural called Connections. Recently we have added two solid redgum outdoor settings. Classes can now use the garden not only to learn about culture but as a tranquil, peaceful space to have lessons in any subject.

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://opengardensa.org.au/>

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All of the plants in Urumbula have a use by Aboriginal people, although the use of a particular plant may change from locality to locality. Many plants, eg Eremophilas, have multiple uses. Urumbula is not a provenance garden, it is a botanical showcase, growing plants from a wide range of plant families and localities across Australia.

In recent times the tasks have shifted from construction to maintenance and sharing the knowledge. Students conduct tours and we are developing an outreach programme, a nursery, bushtucker cooking demonstrations, a social media presence and public speaking programme.

Our 2023 Open Garden is the first time we have provided the opportunity for the public to visit Urumbula. We have regularly provided tours to school students from across the region and of a wide age range. In addition, we have had visitors from town councils, garden clubs, politicians, government departments, town businesses and organisations.

For the Open Garden we have put together merchandise including live plants and satchels of native cooking ingredients as a fundraiser for a new secure shade house we need.

Enjoy your visit and be sure to chat the many hosts in the garden.