



Promoting the enjoyment, knowledge and benefits of gardens and gardening

Open Gardens South Australia Welcomes you to **Zeitz Garden**

Saturday 6th & Sunday 7th January, 2024

We bought the block in early 1972 just as it was being sub-divided. We barely walked onto the land before we signed but thought it was lovely and within our ability to manage it. Each block had to be half an acre minimum, and because of the layout of the sub-division, ours could not be cut in two, hence we are lucky to go between the two roads.

However, the next weekend we explored it and were horrified to find that it was a bog from just below where the house is now, right up to Merrion Tce. (or Albion Tce. as it was then). The area had been owned by Kemp's Nursery and it was the site of their stock plants, and so the abundance of springs was a bonus to them. (We had the rose, plum tree and poplar tree section, in the main, as well as a wall of blackberries). But this water was the bane of our lives for many years as we had to drain over half of the block via a myriad of channels until we could establish it enough to walk on it, let alone use it. The creek too was continually flooding and taking the path material downstream, and so we widened and deepened it, then trucked in 100's of tons of moss rocks to stabilise the banks. Even in the 1980's and 90's when we put in the court and pool, we had springs to contend with, and had to put in a metre deep strip drain around the court to drain the water down to the creek. I was constantly bemoaning this, but now though, as I have to water the garden so much, I often wish that those springs were still there!

Initially the garden's development was haphazard and unplanned. The only clear idea for either of us was to plant as many tall trees as possible because that was the mantra of the 70's, and so we planted over 100 gum trees as well as many bushes which I bought from the roadside stalls that proliferated at that time. What a mistake that was. Many grew too fast in the wet and fell over, or became a danger in later years, or got in the way of renovations and had to be removed. Putting plants in any bare spot just to fill up space meant that when we actually did create a vision for the garden, many had to be ripped out. So our garden has had numerous makeovers but I'm sure that we have now established a final form.

The garden went from an unshaded, boggy mess, to an unruly forest of natives with lots of shade, especially from the 3 basket willows which were here originally. The Basket Willows were the main reason that we could have the hydrangeas and tree ferns, as they shaded most of the middle area, but when their branches were the size of trees themselves, and started falling, we cut them down which left huge areas exposed to the sun once again. This started a phase of drought resistant plants such as Pelargoniums, Geraniums, Agapanthus, Shasta Daisies, Marguerite Daisies etc. but as I had always wanted exotics I had to adopt better gardening techniques that cut down on watering.

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/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/opengardensa>

Promoting the enjoyment, knowledge and benefits of gardens and gardening.

We installed water tanks and put in lots of taps for easy access to water which allowed me to develop a cottage garden effect in some areas. As a result of all of this re-organisation my Bromeliads, Japanese wind flowers, Hellebores, Azaleas, and Fuchsias to name a few, are thriving. The many Camellias and Rhododendrons have also benefited from the deep watering in spring and summer, and they flower beautifully. The smaller tree ferns are the ones that have self-seeded in the rocks along the creek, and I have salvaged many of them over the years. They range in size in the garden now from a few centimetres to over a metre. A few of the original ones that I planted in the 70's did not survive the drought years, but the rest of the tall ones are hardy and now give shade to other plants.

The Elm trees along Merrion Tce. have been invaluable too as a source of shade but the Elm Beetle and perhaps the loss of water to their roots from the installation of the footpath several years ago have combined to put them under stress. Initially we tried to help them by spraying around the base and up the tree with "Success" and surface spray, and banding them with Horticultural Glue and Vaseline, but the two influxes of the beetles were hard to combat effectively so we eventually injected them with Confidor, which appears to have had a positive effect.

Over the past few years, I have put in many more plants and I now have Hostas, Lilliums, summer flowering bulbs, Crinum, Gladioli, Dahlias and much more so there is plenty of colour all year round. I have also planted out the bank leading up to Merrion Tce, especially with the smaller tree ferns which I have propagated.

I hope you enjoy what you see in our garden, and I hope that you can appreciate the work that was required to get it to where it is now.

Morning and afternoon tea will be available with cakes and slices, some of which will be made from my own produce. I have also potted up some plants (eg little Hellebores, Fuchsias, Hydrangeas) in case anyone wants to make a cheap start in their garden, just as I did.

Jenny and Ted Zeitz

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.