



Summer Newsletter 2024



Festive Bottlebrush for Christmas!

This Summer is predicted to be hotter and dryer than recent years – our summers’ can be harsh, and gardening can become a challenge! However, Open Gardens SA still have a wonderful program of summer gardens for you to visit – however we do open fewer gardens due to the heat as we look forward to milder conditions in Autumn. Please support our summer gardens as the owners are very generous in sharing their gardens with the public. Our Newsletter, as always, includes some interesting articles which we hope you will enjoy! And finally, the management committee of Open Gardens SA wishes you and your loved ones a peaceful and content Christmas holiday season and New Year.

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Summer Open Gardens

December 2023

Open Gardens SA takes a short break from opening gardens in December and returns in January 2024

January 06 – 07, 2024

Littlewood Farm –
Littlehampton
Zeitz Garden - Stirling

January 27 – 28

Turlatina Wirra (Peaceful
Garden in Kurna) - Seacliff

January 12 – 28

Theatre in the Garden, *The
Government Inspector*, three
locations – Second Valley,
Hahndorf, and Blackwood

February 03 – 04

PunkiPot - Strathalbyn

February 10 – 11

Joe’s Connected Garden –
Elizabeth Grove

February 17 – 18

DDS Garden - Burnside

**See details of the full
program on our website:**

<http://opengardensa.org.au/>

Open Gardens SA - Garden Owner Thankyou Function and End of Year Drinks



Our Annual Garden Owner Thankyou Function and End of Year Drinks was held on the afternoon of Sunday 03 December 2023, hosted most

generously at the home and beautiful garden of committee members Tom and Marg Wilkinson.

Our garden owners and their partners were invited to join the committee for drinks and canapes to say thank you and celebrate the festive season.



This annual event is a lovely way to celebrate the end of the year and another successful season of open gardens. The guests enjoyed the good company of fellow garden owners and delicious canapes and a selection of wine, which was generously supplied by Howard Vineyard of Nairne.

This event also provides the opportunity for our Chairperson to personally thank the garden owners for opening their gardens and becoming a part of the Open Gardens SA gardening “family”.



The Playford Trust / TAFE SA Awards 2023

For more information visit: <https://playfordtrust.com.au/>

History

The Playford Memorial Trust was established in 1983, with bipartisan support from the South Australian Parliament, to honour the memory of Sir Thomas Playford, the State’s longest serving Premier.

Its original objective, as expressed in the trust deed, was to establish ‘a fund to promote, encourage and finance research and development of projects relating to the primary, secondary and tertiary and mining industries which will be of practical use and benefit to South Australians’.

While the initial focus was on supporting PhD students

studying horticulture and aquaculture – two areas of particular interest to Sir Thomas – it has since been expanded to include advanced manufacturing and new technologies; agriculture, aquaculture and food production; water, energy and climate change; space and defence technologies; health sciences and enabling technologies; and mining and resource development.

The Board actively review the Trust’s strategic priorities to ensure South Australia’s future needs are met.

Awards

This year, 2023, fifteen awards of \$3,000 each were offered by the Playford Trust and its partners across three industry sectors. The number of awards per sector is determined by the judges.

Modern industry and new technologies – including two awards specific to this sector provided by TAFE SA.

Agriculture, agribusiness and food production – including two awards specific to this sector provided by Sandy’s Memorial Trust.



Environment, conservation and horticulture – including up to three awards specific to this sector provided by **Open Gardens South Australia** and one by the Friends of the Botanic Gardens of Adelaide to support those interested in a career in

gardens and horticulture and who will inspire others to do likewise.

These awards aim to assist students in their future studies.

While students are open to apply at any stage of their TAFE studies, preference is given to students who:

- have completed at least one semester of relevant study, and
- can demonstrate personal and/or professional growth through studying at TAFESA or elsewhere in the Vocational Education and Training sector.

Selection Criteria

A panel of representatives from the Playford Trust and TAFE SA makes the final selection. The panel’s decision is based on an assessment of the following:

- Commitment to the issues directly related to the course of study.
- Excellent demonstrated understanding of the course of study.
- The ability to work in a team and provide leadership.
- Excellent work ethic and attitude to learning.
- A commitment to lifelong learning and the values of the Playford Trust.

- Verbal evidence provided by referees. It is essential that applicants provide contact details for two referees (one of whom must be their TAFE lecturer).

To be eligible, students must be an Australian citizen or a holder of a permanent resident visa, and resident in South Australia.

Environment, Conservation and Horticulture

This year, 2023, for the category **Environment, Conservation and Horticulture**, long-standing Playford Trust partner, Open Gardens SA, funded three awards, which were presented to Horticulture students Andrew Blanc, Marlow Germein and Paul Twigg.

Congratulations to all three award winners – photographed (*opposite*) with Open Gardens SA Co-chair Victoria Winnall, at the awards night held in November 2023.

Andrew Blanc



Andrew hails from Ireland – and it’s on that green isle that his interest in all things horticultural began. As a child, Andrew would help his mother in her home nursery, propagating trees in

preparation for sale in the local area.

In 2004, Andrew visited Australia, fell in love and decided to become a citizen. For more than a decade he worked in retail and government, and then decided to ‘return to his roots’ (if you’ll pardon the pun) and embrace his love of plants, nature and the environment.

At Urrbrae TAFE, he met his fabulous new friend Roz and she introduced him to the South East City Residents Association.

Together they participated in various plantings in Victoria Park, (Paka-pakanthi) and were instrumental in creating South Australia’s first pocket forest using the Japanese Miyawaki method.

Elsewhere, this method has been shown to produce a forest 4 times faster with 100 times more biodiversity than traditional horticultural methods.

Interestingly, an important element of Miyawaki is community involvement and a citizen science program is now underway to monitor how effectively it’s working in our climate. Andrew’s very much involved, so watch that space.

Marlow Germein



Marlow’s interest in horticulture was also spawned when he was a child – but just a little closer to Adelaide.

His grandparents had a vineyard in the Riverland and he loved visiting.

He went to Urrbrae Agricultural High School and

completed his Certificate II in Horticulture in Year 11. The course emphasised the importance of the environment and protecting native vegetation, and that inspired Marlow to volunteer with the Friends of Belair National Park.

In 2021, when in Year 12, he enrolled in a Community Studies class and subsequently completed more than 120 hours of volunteering with the Friends group. His effort and commitment earned him the school’s Community Studies Prize.

Now Marlow is studying for his Cert III and, at the same time, doing a horticultural traineeship through the Maxima training group. He wants to work as a professional horticulturist – he’s on the right path.

Paul Twigg

Paul was working as a chef when he and his wife decided to buy a native flower farm at Blewett Springs. He confesses he had absolutely no previous experience in horticulture and so, out of

need, immersed himself in everything he could read and learn about plants and plant care.

Then he thought he’d better get “properly educated”, so enrolled at TAFE and says he hasn’t looked back since.



Paul Twigg with Victoria Winnall.

While it won’t be long before he has a Certificate III under his belt, he is driven to continue his study and education and so, next year, he’ll take on Conservation and Ecosystem Management.

Paul’s plant focus is very specifically Native Australian, and he wants to put his study into practice on his farm by creating both a propagation program – and a specific propagation area.

He’s keen to promote and encourage the selection of more Native Australian plants for gardens and landscapes across SA – and when that propagation area is up and running, the plan is to help contribute to the supply.

*Follow OGSA on Facebook
and Instagram*



Blue Sky Theatre – *The Government Inspector.*

A laugh-out-loud satire of small-town officialdom.



Have you booked your tickets yet? Don't delay as these tickets sell quickly!

This January, 2024, Blue Sky Theatre will present outdoor performances of *The Government Inspector.*

It's 1937 on a small Greek island, and the corrupt mayor learns that an undercover inspector is coming to investigate how his town is run.

It's not good. Not good at all. So, the officials decide to clean up their act.

When a stranger arrives, they hurriedly shower him

with food, wine, and a good time, hoping he'll pay no heed to what's happening. After all, every man has his price.

But are they bribing the wrong man?

This riotous portrait of rampaging self-destruction is a witty adaptation of Nikolai Gogol's classic comedy. We all know how badly politicians can behave, so prepare for groans of familiarity and lots of laughs.

Blue Sky Theatre's productions in gardens continue to delight each summer. The gardens open from 4pm, with the show at 6.30pm, so there's plenty of time to enjoy a picnic washed down with a drink from the bar.

Date and venues:

12, 13 & 14 January 2024

Second Valley Farm, SECOND VALLEY

19, 20 & 21 January 2024

The Cedars, HAHNDORF

26, 27 & 28 January 2024

Wittunga Botanic Garden, BLACKWOOD

Tickets are \$40.

<https://www.opengardensa.org.au/events>

Presented by Blue Sky Theatre Productions and Open Gardens SA.



Open Gardens SA
Seasonal Program

The full listing of our summer open gardens with all the details and beautiful photographs is available on our website:

<http://opengardensa.org.au/>

Our aim is to promote the enjoyment, knowledge, and benefits of gardens and gardening in the South Australian community, and to build strong public support for the development of gardens across the state.



OGSA Recommends...

We recommend you always check our website to confirm garden opening details prior to visiting. The website is an up-to-date, reliable and informative site which lists each open garden with a description of the garden, address (including a map), photographs, the availability of refreshments etc. The official Garden Notes written by the garden owner are also provided which you can read in advance or print and take a copy with you for your garden visit. Importantly, our website will always list any late additions or cancellations to our garden opening program.

<http://opengardensa.org.au/>

OGSA 2024 Summer Calendar

Entry Fee \$10 per Adult, Limited Concessions available, Under 18 free. We encourage visitors to bring cash as EFTPOS facilities may not always be available.

Open Gardens SA takes a short break from opening gardens in December and returns in January 2024.

JANUARY 2024

06 - 07 January

Littlewood Farm (The Agapanthus Farm) - 69 Easlea Road, Littlehampton

06 - 07 January

Zeitz Garden - 37 Garrod Crescent, Stirling

12 – 28 January

*Theatre in the Garden – The Government Inspector - 3 Locations:
12, 13 & 14 January, Second Valley Farm, SECOND VALLEY
19, 20 & 21 January, The Cedars, HAHNDORF
26, 27 & 28 January, Wittunga Botanic Garden, BLACKWOOD*

27 – 28 January

Turlatina Wirra (Kurna for Peaceful Garden) - 80 Myrtle Road Seacliff.

FEBRUARY 2024

03 - 04 February

PunkiPot - 8 East Street, Strathalbyn

10 – 11 February

Joe's Connected Garden - 6 Argent Street, Elizabeth Grove

17 – 18 February

DDS Garden - 46 High Street, Burnside



Littlewood Farm - Littlehampton



Zeitz Garden - Stirling



Turlatina Wirra – Seacliff



PunkiPot - Strathalbyn



Joe's Connected Garden - Elizabeth Grove



DDS Garden - Burnside



Open Gardens SA - Community Garden Grants awarded in 2023

Thanks to the great support by the gardening community of South Australia, Open Gardens SA had some funds available to return to our community. Applications were sought for up to three grants of \$3,000 each to help support community garden projects in South Australia.

A good number of applications were received and considered by the Committee. We are delighted to share the details of the three successful applicants!

Brukung Community Garden

The traumatic experience of the Black Summer Bushfires in 2019 will be in the hearts and minds of Australians collectively for a long time to come, but for the small Adelaide Hills township of Brukung in South Australia, the devastating Cudlee Creek Bushfire in December 2019, will never be forgotten. However, while it both directly and heavily negatively affected this entire community, it was a catalyst for the Brukung township to develop a unified voice and start enacting positive change.

Some community minded locals put their heads together and initiated a community-led survey to collect information and ideas from residents about what they wished to see and happen for their town moving forward. The feedback was clear that a *community garden* was a priority for the township for both social and wellbeing outcomes and that gardening and revegetation work had become a priority in the lives of many residents during their rebuild and recovery processes since the bushfire.

The site chosen for the *Brukung Community Garden* is a very uninspiring section of asphalt, in much need of development, next to the Brukung Hall. The funds will be put towards purchasing straw bales, screening for paths, plantings for windbreaks around the outside of the garden, Wicking beds, compost & soil, plants to replace lost favourites and roof replacement of propagation nursery.

Blanchetown Community Gardens

Blanchetown and their community garden were decimated in the recent flood. Their application for \$3,000 is to assist in the restoration and reconstruction of the gardens by setting up new wicking beds, creating inclusive pathways of compacted screenings to define new beds and plantings.

The gardens were established in 2012. There were 22 tank beds and various container plantings prior to the flood but they had to remove all but 3 and discard the soil in them as they had become contaminated with the flood waters.

All edibles will be planted in the wicking beds or other containers with new soil. They kept 3 existing tanks as a token from the old garden and will use them for pollinating plants. These 3 tanks need

a top up of soil, improver, compost and plantings and straw mulch and are a good place to start to get some colour back into the garden.

Grange Community Garden

The Grange Community Garden (GCG) is a new not-for-profit and organic community garden located on Military Road in Grange, South Australia. The GCG was endorsed in February 2022 by the Charles Sturt Council following a petition from Grange community members, who sought to convert vacant land beside the Grange Railway Station into a social community garden. The GCG aims to increase community cohesion and social networks, as well as support community members' connection to the environment and a healthy lifestyle through produce growing and outdoor activity.

The grant from Open Gardens SA will finance materials, tools and equipment required to construct the initial four 2.4m x 1.2m wicking garden beds, which will be leased to GCG members. The income generated in membership fees will help cover ongoing operational costs and support further investment into the expansion of the GCG.

Congratulations to all three Community Gardens – we are confident that the grant funds will be well utilised!



Plant Profile: Echeverias.

By Trevor Nottle. Photos of *Echeveria elegans* and *Blue Curly* sourced online, others by Di Michalk.

Adding the difference

The advance of Summer has many gardeners looking about for clever ways of adding a touch of difference to the ways in which they fill the hot months with floral interest. While once this was answered by mass plantings of annuals, particularly petunias and impatiens. Recalling bedding plants like petunias and impatiens were planted as ribbons along driveways and garden paths the effect was colourful, if rather dependent on regular watering and dead heading; all rather labour intensive for the average gardener and expensive too considering the quantities of seedlings needed to fill the space allocated for the ribbons of flowers.

Ribbon borders have passed over time, as have the twice yearly replanting and the expenditure involved in making such seasonal displays. There remains the challenge to find a new and fresh way to decorate Summer gardens. Why not look back again to the original idea and find other ways to achieve interest, colour and suitability in the ways plants are used?

Image below: *Echeveria elegans*.



Back when In the days Our grandparents didn't have the range of plants available that are enjoyed nowadays but they did make good use of what was available to create year round garden interest. One of the ideas they did use more frequently was to make potted displays of succulent plants, and even cacti. Without looking backwards potted plants and succulents can easily be adapted by gardeners of today. What better place to do so than a garden table from an outdoor

dining setting with the protection of overhead shade cloth? This would replicate conditions in an old-fashioned shade house; bright light but with enough shade to protect plants from scorching and burning. While many plants can be found to fill this role one family, now in the ascendant are echeverias. These silver-blue rosettes are suddenly the favourites of hybridists and commercial growers, and have been transformed into new forms by breeders. Plant hunters too, have introduced new varieties via their collections in the wilds of Mexico and South America.

A tablescape of potted echeverias is something to see. Almost everyone will see the plants bear some relationship with each other in their rosette form but there is ample difference and diversity now available to make a varied and attractive show. What is more

echeverias are hardy and care free, making them an attractive proposition for home gardeners.



The plants are very hardy, requiring watering only about every 4 weeks; more if they start to show sign of stress. Despite their reputation for toughness they will not withstand exposure to the Summer sun all day. About 3 hours will be plenty and the rest spent in dappled shade. Standard potting soil mixed 50:50 with gritty sand will suit them just fine and give the rapid drainage they enjoy. Very light applications of liquid fertiliser will see them thrive free from the over-extension of growth that overfed plants can show. Pests are few: mealy bug and looper caterpillars.



Making a tablescape is like arranging flowers – casually and easily done with no effort to follow any rule but those that suggest themselves as interesting and attractive.

Brand new introductions by plant hunters working in the field and as yet un-named by botanists are RED HOLE, RING OF FIRE, FANTASTIC FOUNTAIN, and PINWHEEL REVOLUTION. Readily available in garden centres and nurseries now. Some of these have common names that hint at the unique characteristics of the plants but don't be fooled; these names are most often those applied by plant hunters acting ahead of the botanical scientists who have authority to officially give plants their proper names, so those above are almost like nick-names – handy at the moment but not the real thing.

As an example of the diversity of form found in *Echeveria* consider *Echeveria purpussorum* which is a fairly recent introduction despite being discovered many years ago. Waiting in the wings for a real name is *Echeveria species nova* 'Zaragosa' which can be read as a possible new species not yet treated by a botanist which comes from the area around Zaragosa in Mexico. The name as given still stands as a substantial name until someone does bless it with a genuine one, even the incorrect spelling of Zaragosa. For all that it is a distinctive and attractive form.

Echeverias, having been in cultivation for some 150 years or longer, have experienced several periods of popularity as house plants and pot plants. Before the present surge they were



developed by hybridists in the 50's by Dick Wright and Harry Butterfield of California. They were bred by crossing *Echeveria gibbiflora* with *Echeveria gigantea*, two large species that produced cabbage sized 'heads' with a great variety of frills, ruffles and carnunculation (bumps/warts on the top surface of the leaves). These proved a great hit with collectors of succulent plants but can be very slow to propagate, or near impossible so their spread has been very slow. However, increasing numbers are now appearing in the marketplace. Scan lists published by on-line sellers to find BLUE CURLS (image below), RED EDGE, MAUNA LOA,



CHANTILLY LACE, PAUL BUNYAN, CAMEO, BUMPS, RAINDROPS, ZORRO. There are roughly 70 others to choose from.

The best sources will be found among the on-lines traders who specialise in succulent plants.

There are a number of such plants that are advertised as rarities. In the main these will be found to be vegetable freaks – cristate plants looking like cockscombs, variegated forms resembling plants with some disfiguring sickness,

best to eschew these as they never really give a convincing performance especially when viewed close up and their imperfections show up.

Besides these comparative rarities there are others, equally attractive that are more readily available: *Echeveria elegans*, *Echeveria albicans*, *Echeveria pulidonis* and *Echeveria secunda*. Each is sufficiently distinctive to add some differences to a table display of the plants. A decent display can be made from 10 or more plants and using old terracotta pots will create a feeling of unity across the whole.

Good growing.

Useful references:

Pilbeam, John *THE GENUS ECHEVERIA*, BCSS, Hornchurch, Essex, 2008.
Schulz, Rudolf and Kapitany, Attila *ECHEVERIA CULTIVARS*. Melbourne, 2014.



Poinsettias at Christmas

Selected information shared from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poinsettia> and <https://www.whychristmas.com/customs/poinsettia>



The **poinsettia** (*Euphorbia pulcherrima*) is a commercially important flowering plant species of the diverse spurge family Euphorbiaceae. Indigenous to Mexico and Central America, the poinsettia was first described by Europeans in 1834. It is



particularly well known for its red and green foliage and is widely used in Christmas floral displays. It derives its common English name from Joel Roberts Poinsett, the first United States minister to Mexico, who is credited with introducing the plant to the US in the 1820s.

Poinsettias are shrubs or small trees, with heights of 0.6 to 4m (2.0 to 13.1ft). Though often stated to be highly toxic, the poinsettia is not dangerous to pets or children.

Exposure to the plant, even consumption, most often results in

no effect, though it can cause nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea.

Wild poinsettias occur from Mexico to southern Guatemala, growing on mid-elevation, Pacific-facing slopes. One population in the Mexican state of Guerrero is much further inland, however, and is thought to be the ancestor of most cultivated populations. Wild poinsettia populations are highly fragmented, as their habitat is experiencing largely unregulated deforestation. They were cultivated by the Aztecs for use in traditional medicine. They became associated with the

Christmas holiday and are popular seasonal decorations. Every year in the United States, approximately 70 million poinsettias of many cultivated varieties are sold in a six-week period. Many of these poinsettias are grown by Paul Ecke Ranch, which serves half the worldwide market and 70 percent of the US market.



The Legend of the Poinsettia

There is an old Mexican legend about how Poinsettias and Christmas come together, it goes like this:

There was once a poor Mexican girl called Pepita who had no present to give the baby Jesus at the Christmas Eve Services. As Pepita walked to the chapel, sadly, her cousin Pedro tried to cheer her up. 'Pepita', he said "I'm sure that even the smallest gift, given by someone who loves him will make Jesus happy."

Pepita didn't know what she could give, so she picked a small handful of weeds from the roadside and made them into a small bouquet. She felt embarrassed because she could only give this small present to Jesus. As she walked through the chapel to the

altar, she remembered what Pedro had said. She began to feel better, knelt down and put the bouquet at the bottom of the nativity scene.

Suddenly, the bouquet of weeds burst into bright red flowers, and everyone who saw them were sure they had seen a miracle. From that day on, the bright red flowers were known as the 'Flores de Noche Buena', or 'Flowers of the Holy Night'.

The shape of the poinsettia flower and leaves are sometimes thought as a symbol of the Star of Bethlehem which led the Wise Men to Jesus. The red colored leaves symbolize the blood of Christ. The white leaves represent his purity.

The Poinsettia is also a national emblem of Madagascar.



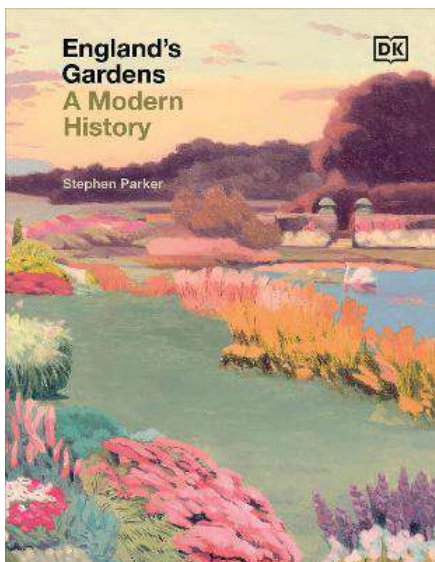
The Day has Come

Book Review – By Trevor Nottle

As the regular reviewer of books for this journal I have often wondered if this day would ever arrive. Surveying the catalogues of book sellers that arrive on-line and through the mail during the pre-Christmas period I am very disappointed to find the number of gardening books appears to have decreased while the number of recipe books has increased. This means my choices of gardening books to review are

limited. My perspective is focussed on the books I think are worth reading in the first place so I exclude the very generalised ‘plant your cabbages in Autumn’ kinds of books. I assume my readers have moved beyond such simple formulaic books of instruction seeking instead books that offer inspiration rather than perspiration. It’s the same with cookery books; the basics are left behind and amateur cooks look for inspiration from learning the mysteries and complexities of making *pâtisserie* or *bric*.

So I scanned the booklets of bookish offerings that began arriving a few weeks ago. And I found nothing, not one book that caught my eye as something that might give hope and light to keen gardeners anywhere. The reason, I think, is that books generally have become over-designed. Design has overtaken books with a balance of text and imagery. All is now full-colour photographs and plenty of tricky design with almost nothing to read. I thumbed the pages of international and local books and found them all dominated by design. Ideas travel quickly, as the books showed. Break-out boxes, inserts, boxed text, clipped and pasted snippets, biographical sketches, historical asides and all manner of other distractions take away the pleasure of reading a slab of meaty information conveyed by an author using words. The above diversions are compounded by designers hoping to change readers into ‘dippers’ who are more casual in their approach to getting information from a book. Further distractions arise from the ways in which imagery imposes its own diversions from the story and facts the author is trying to convey. Full page and double spread images break up the text along with all the other tricky smart ideas that are now imposed on books by designers.



Take for example ‘England’s Gardens – A Modern History’, a new book from the UK on sale now with high expectations of good Christmas sales. It shows all the features described above. The book, at first glance, has strong visual appeal with a retro-look on the cover and Modern semi-abstract artwork that has that ‘look at me, and pick me up’ quality that designers and publishers think is the first step in making a sale. The story goes that the book is picked up, the cover is

looked at and the back cover blurb read, the pages are flicked through; the book is colourful and bright with great eye-appeal and many illustrations. It looks good, and a sale is made. It is only later that the lucky recipient discovers the book is a masterpiece of design (style) over substance. The text, like the book is delivered in

slabs and it lacks coherence as a whole. The text is fractured to fit in with the Modernism of the design.

Australian publications, which won’t be named, follow suit pretty much to a tee, so it seems the day has come when gardening books are reduced to the picture book whims of designers and the sales fancies of publishers. What a pity.

Parker, Stephen ‘England’s Gardens – A Modern History’, Dorling Kindersley, London, 2023.



*Wishing you
and your
loved ones a
very Merry
Christmas.
Open Gardens
SA looks
forward to
sharing many
more
beautiful
gardens with
you in 2024!*





Garden Art Christmas Wreath.

Open Gardens South Australia 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.

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

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