

Spring 2022
Vol 31 No 252

Small Australian Native Gardens



Australian Plants

Contents

Editorial	John Aitken	311
Small Australian native gardens	Lawrie Smith AM	312
Small collector's garden	Brenda & Michael Meehan	317
A small rainforest in suburbia	Carol Guard	321
A small experimental courtyard	Lawrie Smith	324
Going small	Sarah Cains & Kristine Gow	326
Creating a small garden in suburban Hobart	Alison Moore	334
South Australia – Fleurieu Peninsula garden on 750m ²	Alison McCleary	342
Native plants for pots, courtyards and small gardens	Brian Roach	350

Cover photo: The South Eveleigh Community Building Rooftop Garden, Sydney, which features an Indigenous planting theme showcasing a variety of native edible, cultural, and medicinal plant species. Heather Miles.

Australian Plants articles

Australian Plants is published quarterly to promote knowledge of Australian plants.

Contributions and offers to produce an issue are welcome. Please contact:

John Aitken and Merle Thompson OAM
Editors, 'Australian Plants'
Layout: Lachlan McLaine
PO Box 263, Cremorne Junction NSW 2090
E-mail: office@austplants.com.au

All published materials are copyright, as directed, by the authors and photographers. Permission to reprint material must be obtained from the copyright holder.

Opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and may NOT represent official policy of the Australian Plants Society NSW Ltd

Australian Plants No. 252 Issue of Volume 31, which comprises issues 246–253. Published quarterly and available nationally in 3500 copies by the Australian Plants Society NSW Ltd

© Australian Plants Society NSW Ltd 2023 ABN 87002680408 ISSN 0005-0008

Printed by Elect Printing, Fyshwick, ACT Print post approved PP2262530037

Editorial

John Aitken, Co-editor *Australian Plants*

Gardens provide a sense of accomplishment, which enable us to express our creativity and create a special space that we can visit every day by just by walking out of our front or back door. Gardens also provide us with a sense of peace and tranquility; a place to get away from all the problems we are faced with each day. In addition, gardens attract birds, insects and other wildlife which also give us pleasure, knowing that we are having a positive effect on our environment. Unfortunately, with growing urbanisation and the need to provide more homes for the burgeoning populations, gardens are becoming smaller and, in some cases such as apartment buildings, almost non-existent.

Lawrie Smith, a former renowned landscape gardener and leader of the ANPSA Garden Design Group, has provided valuable and insightful concepts that can be applied to the design of small gardens. He has discussed the application of these principles in three small gardens, including his own. Whilst conditions vary throughout Australia the principles which Lawrie discusses can be applied most gardens.

Sarah Cains and Kristine Gow have developed their gardens on small town blocks in Bowral, Southern Highlands of NSW, where they needed to be mindful of frosty winters and exposure due to its elevation, which causes strong winds both hot in summer and cold in winter. They have created two delightful gardens, which have been extended onto the Council nature strips.

Alison and Angus Moore, bought their home in Bellerive, Hobart, Tasmania, with an established garden of exotic plants. Alison and Angus extensively redesigned the garden and replaced most of the exotics with Australian native plants.

Alice McCleary, on the Fleurieu Peninsula in South Australia, had to design her garden and select plants that would cope with a Mediterranean climate with very high temperatures and low humidity in summer, and an average rainfall of 380mm. In addition she had to cope with a huge wind problem.

Brian Roach, a former Crown Prosecutor, who turned his interests to propagating and later selling Australian native plants shares his experiences with some of the plants that he has found successful for small gardens and courtyards.

I hope that you will have as much enjoyment reading the articles in this issue of *Australian Plants* as I did.

Small Australian Native Gardens

Lawrie Smith AM

As a landscape architect and committed member of Native Plants Queensland (formerly SGAP) since 1967, my passion for native plants has informed every landscape project for which I have been responsible. This experience and knowledge has proved invaluable as leader of the ANPSA Garden Design Study Group.

For many Australians, living in a house on a small lot, an apartment in a high rise tower, in a block of flats, or a gated community, will be a fact of life as our population expands and space becomes ever more limited. There is no doubt we have been spoiled over the past century to accept that our inalienable right is to own a sizeable piece of Australia, at least a quarter of an acre or 1,000 square metres, and on it to build our home, raise a family and establish a garden. Unfortunately, those sylvan times have long gone, and today the emphasis is on small and crowded.

There are many types of 'small gardens'. Is yours existing or are you about to design one? Perhaps you have a special small 'garden room' or courtyard within your larger expansive garden? It might be a townhouse

courtyard garden? Could it be a veranda or roof top apartment garden? Maybe a vertical 'green wall' garden enriching the one metre wide sunless space between your house and the one next door?

Possibly a collection of potted plants that have been arranged closely together to form a 'garden' in your rented property? Even a really miniature garden created by a bonsai collection? Probably you have seen a small garden somewhere



A small Melbourne garden.

that has inspired you? All these small garden types and many more, will be normal for so many people in coming years.

Let's consider the main planning and design principles that apply to these small spaces. When you think about small gardens it is obvious that the same planning and design principals apply no matter what the size. Sure, there will be some modification necessary relative to size and scale, but after all a 'garden is a garden', a practical, attractive and relaxing environment that you can create and manage.

I have always considered that a good design generally starts with a problem resolved. Our problem as native plant people is that we will want to establish a true 'Australian Style' small garden - just remember the word 'scale' - our typical large forest trees will be far too large for any small garden. However the solution offers a treasure trove of small trees, shrubs and covers to select from as a replacement for that towering eucalypt or Kauri Pine. One problem resolved, there will be many others to consider.

Whatever the garden scale, memorable designs are not fussy or complex, they are very simple! Ensure that your small garden is planned as a simple design that reflects your main area of interest in native plants and a related landscape.



Colour for contrast. Arid land courtyard, Adelaide Botanic Garden

Simplicity in all aspects - hardscape elements as well as softscape elements - is even more necessary in a small garden! This means simple, integrated construction materials with a simple colour palette. Although you may consider one vibrant contrasting colour, carefully used to give impact and focus.

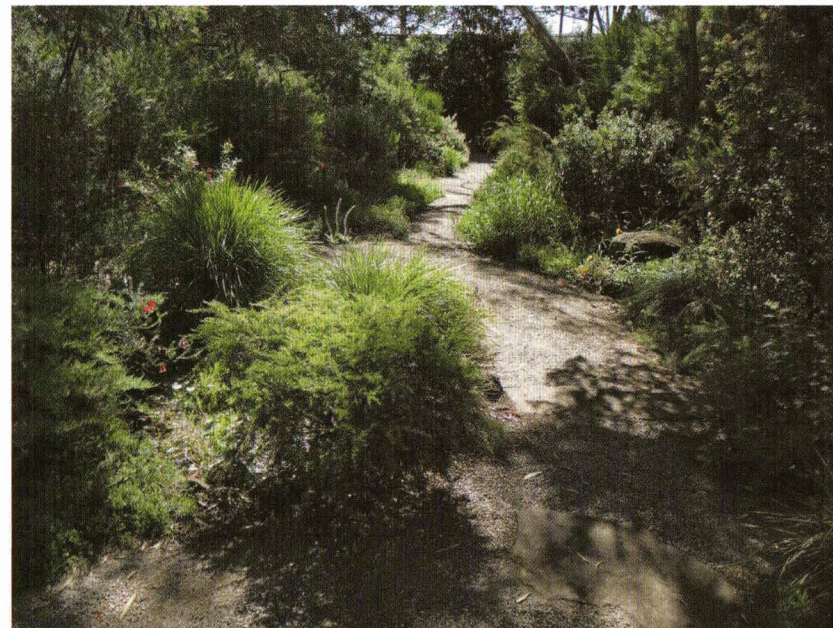


Inviting the outside in. Bev Hansen's garden, Melbourne.

Gardens created in a small space and crowded among other adjacent houses will most likely have a strong sense of enclosure without too much interaction with the surrounding open spaces. If there are positive views from the house or from the garden, no matter how narrow, be sure to plan the garden to encourage observation and give visual connection to the wider landscape – this can expand the apparent size of the garden.

The most important, even fundamental, principle is to consider the site microclimate, which is even more relevant in a small garden. First, make sure you know the direction of North! Be sure to understand the changing pattern of sunshine and shadow across the garden as the seasons revolve and daily, from morning until night. On a drawing of the garden site, record the pattern of full sun in mid-summer and in mid-winter at 9am and 3pm – from this you can derive the extent of and changes in garden exposure to full sun and full shade throughout the year, which will inform your plant selection.

In small lot subdivisions there will be minimal space for shade trees and these will primarily be as avenues in the street corridors. Small back



Above: Sunshine and shadow.
Bev Fox's garden, Melbourne.



Left: Fern shelter. Lawrie Smith,
Brisbane.

yards may have space for one or maybe two small trees, so shade structures or vine arbours may be the answer. Make sure you analyse the seasonal changing sun directions to inform placing the tree or shade device in just the right location to provide the sun control you need – do you want winter sun or summer shade over the barbecue area?

Another important aspect is air movement, where impact on a small garden can be far more severe. Be sure to plan the garden to admit cooling afternoon summer breezes but exclude or deflect cold boisterous winter winds. Remember, in high density housing situations air movement will be random and turbulent, channelled between other structures. Streets of townhouses can become wind tunnels!

Consider ways to increase the area of garden available – don't overlook that you have walls and roofs that can become 'green' by using vertical or horizontal gardens. With this comes the problem of species selection to be resolved! You will find plenty of Aussie species that grow naturally and thrive in similar difficult conditions.

These are just a few of many ways to plan a garden for a small space so that it is a fitting repository for a carefully selected plant palette. It is the plants that will bring life and vitality and with that, change over time. The principles of scale, simplicity, enclosure, views, sun/shade etc apply to influence the plant selection, layout and management.



The following glimpses of three small gardens in subtropical Brisbane will be quite different to others in say Perth or Melbourne, but there will be common design links. These outlines are not for expansive formal sophisticated gardens that you see in coffee table garden books, but just everyday garden designs that our members have created.

Vertical garden. Tropical Shade House, Mackay Regional Botanic Garden.

1. Small Collector's Garden

Brenda & Michael Meehan, Brisbane Qld

Brenda explains her garden design philosophy is 'more is more', and this is very true! She has expertly massed a wide range of species in her 800 sqm block. Her new garden has evolved following the complete removal of many exotic plants and palms from the original garden, leaving a legacy of steep boulder banks and meandering pathways to embellish.



Some aspects of Brenda and Michael's garden

Brenda has used almost every single square metre for the smallest native to the taller screens and trees. The city view to the south over the suburbs from the expansive terrace is attractively framed by the garden plants, which have been carefully chosen to block out the close views to neighbours.

In Brenda's description of her garden she says:

As with any garden there's been successes and failures and in my garden it continues to be an interesting challenge to manage too much growth, too many plants both tall and small.

During the past five years there has been extremes of hot and dry weather in Brisbane followed by recent flooding rains, resulting in an overgrown tangle of plants in several of the garden beds. I have recently made a start on reclaiming the garden to be more manageable as well as to restore views of various plants. Eight of the eleven beds spaced over three levels require much pruning, culling of excessive plantings and weeding out vigorous ground cover plants. All demanding a commitment to maintaining the plants at desired sizes in the future.



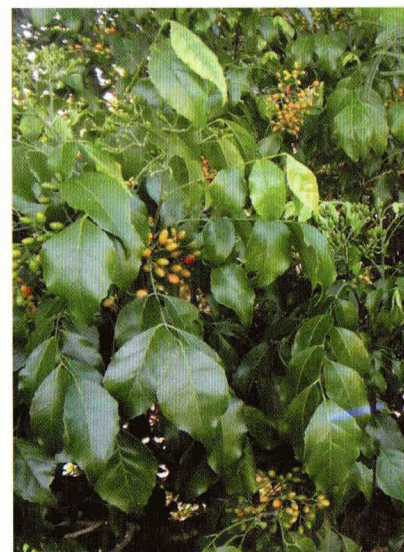
The only recognisable same plants in the above photo are *Grevillea* 'Pink Midget' in the foreground and the *Dianella* favoured by the Pale-headed Rosellas are still there. Feature plants can be seen again after pruning, with the *Graptophyllum excelsum* trimmed down to display the interesting foliage and the seed pods of *Hakea actites* and *Banksia oblongifolia* as well as the screening foliage of the *Syzygium* 'Cascade'.

Further along in the same bed are still overgrown *Callistemon*, *Melaleuca* 'Revolution Gold', *Grevillea* 'Honey Gem' and *Buckinghamia celsissima* lower down the garden. In the foreground are *Swainsona galegifolia*, *Grevillea humifusa* 'Hot Candy' and *Cryptandra longistaminea* coming into bloom next to the path.

With the summers getting warmer I've had a change of philosophy from growing small-leaved plants like *Zieria smithii*, *Dodonea triquetra* and *Sauropus albiflorus* that let the sun in to a shaded rainforest look, inspired by the success of a *Phaleria clerodendron* that is thriving in a hot north-east corner close to the house.

There's also a couple of thriving *Micromelum minutum* rainforest plants that regularly produce bird-attracting berries. The transition to growing more of these plants will be along the fence-lines because we enjoy watching the birds coming to our grevilleas in the sunnier areas.

Two screening requirements have matured over the past few years. The bed of established screening plants next to the patio now obscures the two-story neighbouring house to the north-east with tall specimens of *Petalostigma triloculare* (Quinine Berry), *Callitris columellaris* (Bribie Island Pine), *Backhousia citriodora* (Lemon Myrtle), *Backhousia anisata* and *Syzygium wilsonii* (Powder Puff Lilly Pilly). I was aiming to screen out our south-western neighbours with plants along the fence line that didn't ever grow together well enough in the narrow bed, so a more



Micromelum minutum



Hibiscus insularis

successful result has come from putting a *Hibiscus insularis* (Phillip Island Hibiscus) nearer to the patio. The yellow fading to pink blooms attract many blue-faced honeyeaters.

In a small garden there isn't space to allow plants to self-seed or sucker widely so many small plants are being progressively removed through comprehensive weeding and sheet mulching to reduce reoccurrences. Such plant specimens include: *Mazus pumilio*, *Hypoestes floribunda*, *Rostellularia obtusa*, (below) *Viola banksia*, *Salvia plebeia*, *Cullen tenax* (Emu Foot), *Leiocarpa brevicompta* (Burr Daisy), *Alternanthera denticulata* (Lesser Joyweed), *Oplismenus aemulus* (Creeping Beard Grass), *Portulaca filifolia* (Yellow Buttercup), *Cyperus gracilis* (Fairy Grass) and various low growing plants. Those remaining include: *Babingtonia virgata* 'La Petite', *Dianella atraxis*, *D. caerulea*, *D. tasmanica*, *D. 'Silver Streak'* (takes hot western sun), *Grevillea 'Soopa Doopa'*, *Goodenia ovata*, *Graptophyllum spinigerum* (Samford Holly), *Abelmoschus moschatus*, *Myoporum boninense* (Coastal Boobialla), *Pseuderanthemum variabile* (Love Flower), *Casuarina 'Cousin It'*, *Lomandra confertifolia* (Tussock Grass) in shade, as well as several ground covers over a retaining wall: *Grevillea Poorinda* 'Royal Mantle', *Eremophila glabra* and *Rhagodia spinescens* (Saltbush).

If I was starting this garden again I'd pay more attention to sizes of mature plants instead of continually planting lots of specimens to find out what would survive in the silty clay and ending up with too

many tall plants crowding each other. Another pitfall has been taking recommendations that have proven unsuitable such as planting *Syzygium 'Resilience'* as a hedge when it goes deciduous in Brisbane's dry winters. This has been disappointing and I regularly consider a replacement but it does partially screen next door's caravan.

Another issue is mislabelled plants. *Leptospermum madidum* has grown similarly to other species that do not have the usual weeping form and as not fulfilling any shade function so may be culled.



Rostellularia obtusa

My vision for our small garden is to keep neatly mulched and pruned beds alongside the living rooms and driveway containing attractive grevilleas and interesting foliage plants, maintain the south-east view to bushland over the lower fence with two feature trees and grow more shade-providing rainforest plants on the north-west side. I look forward to seeing how the garden will look when I've completed all of the current pruning and re-mulching of the beds.

2. A Small Rainforest in Suburbia

Carol Guard, Shorncliffe, Qld

Carol is justly proud of how her native garden was instrumental in developing an excellent relationship for her with all of her neighbours up and down the street. It was intended when moving to Shorncliffe more than 20 years ago that she and her husband would make every effort to become integral members of the local community. It was a very different community then to what it is today with all of the traditional 'Queenslanders' now preserved and restored to create a special heritage niche seaside suburb on this headland jutting into Moreton Bay beside Cabbage Tree Creek. While there were large shady street trees *Ficus macrocarpa* (Moreton Bay Figs) and a scattering of other species in residential gardens, the small narrow lots with the houses occupying almost the full width of the block did not offer scope for large gardens.

Carol's vision for the 400 sqm site, was to create a very special native garden, with the design philosophy - shade, trees, foliage, fruits and flowers. The rear garden of this long narrow site was planned effectively as a rainforest canopy with a diversity of understory planting.

The front garden and the footpath was planned to feature tall and medium native shrubs and bedding plants in a more formal way. It is this street front garden that attracts the community as they walk along the footpath, invariably stopping to ask Carol what plants are currently in flower. They never leave without all the necessary species details, plant society brochures, and often seeds or cuttings as well

The garden, established on the basically vacant site, began with Carol carefully selecting a dozen or so tall, slender, rainforest shade trees to create the framework of scattered trunks with a foliage canopy or ceiling to ultimately cast shade on the future understorey plants below. These developed quite quickly in the well-watered and fertile sandy loams of the bayside location. Progressively and with much research and thought, Carol acquired and planted a diverse range of species

that thrive in the filtered sun. Each plant has been carefully located in the optimum sunny or shaded microclimate position. The neighbours on each side (north and south) basically have open full sun backyards, so Carol's rainforest receives a diverse pattern of sun and shade across the garden by day and by season. This is unusual for such a small residential site.

If Carol knows that a species she just has to have will not tolerate the site conditions, she is undaunted and successfully establishes the specimens in large containers; in many cases this has produced a 'bonsai' like specimen which brings flowers and fruits down to eye level or lower. Perhaps the most eye-catching container plant was a very

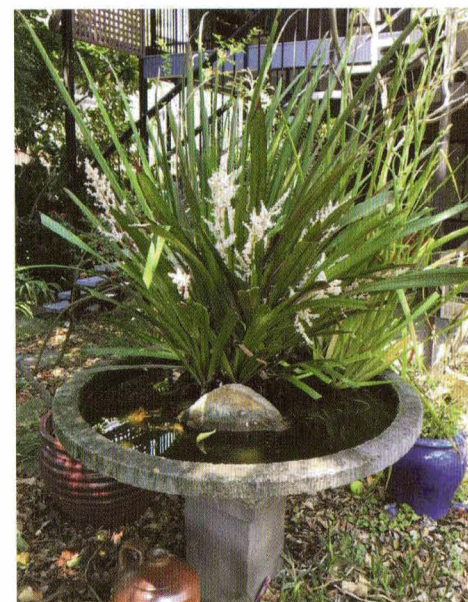


Visitors admiring Carol's beautiful footpath garden

large bowl, mounted on a pedestal in which a Stream Lily *Helmholtzia glaberrima* thrives in the shallow water decorated with numerous 'feather duster' like flower spikes. This was one of many interesting potted specimens and artefacts that give the garden many interesting focal points.



Above: A stroll through Carol's suburban rainforest.



Left: Carol's Stream Lily, *Helmholtzia glaberrima*

3. Small Experimental Courtyard

Lawrie Smith, North Lakes Qld

Now a little about a section of my new small garden, it is 5 years since we moved to 800 sqm from 5 acres after 40 years! One of the last areas of the original exotic garden (now removed) include two unusable narrow triangular sections of the concrete slab at each end of the plunge pool, to be replaced with native gardens. Visually this will provide a seamless physical and visual transition from the existing newly established native gardens inside the boundary fence, and also with those outside the fence in the adjacent parkland.

I decided to try an experiment by building a garden on top of a concrete slab (as you might do on a multistorey apartment terrace!) Ideally I probably should have used a jackhammer to remove the slab sections, but I thought that disposing of the concrete would be too difficult. I did not want anything larger than matting and small tufting plants in these two new gardens, so decided to do a 'podium garden', straight on the slab. If it works I'll be pleased, if not, it is possible to do it again a different way.

The project required fixing a treated 200mm timber beam to contain the soil at the slab edge along the fence line. Then a few selected weathered sandstone boulders were acquired to function both as aesthetic elements and a couple as stepping stones. Many bags of soil mix, potting mix and sand were purchased from the 'big green shed' and mixed together, then placed over the slab to an average depth



of 150mm. Washed gravel and river pebbles were used to suggest a stream bed but are really functioning as a surface drainage system.

Several artefacts were recycled from the original garden (just because they were there and did not look too out of place!) - a stone 'Easter Island Head' and an upright fluted black ceramic pot supporting a silver mirror sphere (once a fountain) are integrated into the background. A male Blue Wren loves to fight his reflections in the sphere to impress his ever present harem of wives! A well weathered 900mm square fibre cement box 500mm high, a sentimental object we had brought with us from our original home garden at Whiteside, was placed to contain a special focal shrub *Breynia cernua* 'Ironstone Range' emerging above a weeping foliage blanket of *Casuarina* 'Cousin It'. A weathered log round containing a *Dendrobium speciosum* was relocated to the garden as a focal point.



The intention is that the new garden will take advantage of the full morning sun and the southeast to northeast aspect, to support a colourful and textured carpet beside the pool - including *Apowollastonia spilanthoides*, *Bulbine bulbosa*, *Chrysocephalum apiculatum*, *Coronidium rupicola*, *Enchylaena tomentosa*, *Lomandra*, *Dianella*, *Viola banksii*, *Zoysia macrantha* and others. This will contrast and act as a foreground and understorey to a grove of *Banksia integrifolia*, *B. robur*, *B. serrata*, *Brachychiton compactus* and *Melicope rubra* established in a 'real' garden between the two slab gardens.

Going Small

Sarah Cains and Kristine Gow

Sarah and Kris live in the beautiful village of Bowral in the Southern Highlands, NSW. They have developed their gardens on small town blocks and have taken advantage to extend them onto the council verges. Both are members of the Southern Highlands District Group, APS NSW and Kris is a life member of the Society.

Whatever our reason for deciding to grow a garden in a small space, we quickly discovered great benefits that came with that choice. Downsizing from a big garden to something less demanding, or deliberately choosing a small garden to complement a busy lifestyle are common motivations for going small. However, when we start growing Australian native plants there are benefits for ourselves, our community and the environment.

A small native garden can be created around a house with restricted outdoor space, in a villa courtyard, or simply on a balcony where we place a group of pots. A small garden can also be made within a large garden as demonstrated by Englishwoman, Vita Sackville-West who showed the design possibilities of that choice by creating her famous (and forever-copied!) garden 'rooms'. Those of us with a desire to get our hands into the soil are unstoppable! There is always room to be found for a plant or two...or three...

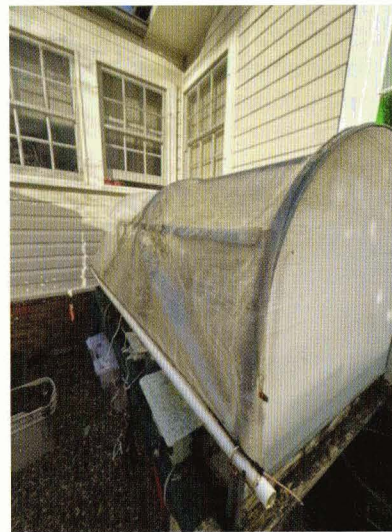
Plants, like chocolate, are super-tempting for the shopper but unlike chocolate, plant buying comes with zero guilty conscience. In fact, buying plants feels virtuous!

If you come home with \$200 worth of new shoes or a flash new dress, experience tells that on arrival home there will be shadowy moments of: 'Did I really need this? Or 'Do I even like it better than the old one?' Not so with plants!

Unpacking a haul of plants from a shopping spree, we gardeners feel nothing but excitement and the warm glow of high-mindedness.

Research is the key to sane and successful plant selection and with space tight in our small town gardens, we (Kris and Sarah) try to choose with the head and not the heart. Living in Bowral, in the Southern Highlands of NSW, we need to be mindful of frosty winters and exposure due to elevation, which causes strong winds both hot and cold. Soil knowledge is always a critical consideration. Both of our gardens are on what Kris has named 'The Flatlands', an area long ago levelled for the town's early public buildings and close-to-town houses. The Flatlands

sit below the district's highest mountain, Mt Gibraltar. Owing to levelling of the blocks, there is very little fall on the land we garden. This has inevitably resulted in the big 'hate' of so many native plants - poor drainage. In recent seasons of excessive rain our plants have been living in mud resulting in a distressing number of losses.

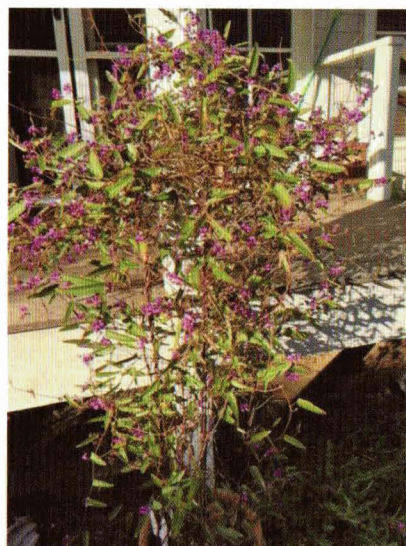


Kris has become an expert on plant selection with her ongoing study of plants suitable for small gardens. Her knowledge is ever expanding as she propagates and grows the plants she researches. Her plant descriptions and observations are entered on *Wikipedia* for the benefit of all. Along one side of her cottage she has developed a narrow corridor into a thriving production area. There she operates her heated propagator, shown on the left, producing thousands of plants likely to succeed in small, cool climate gardens. 'Kris plants' are eagerly sought by Southern Highlands APS

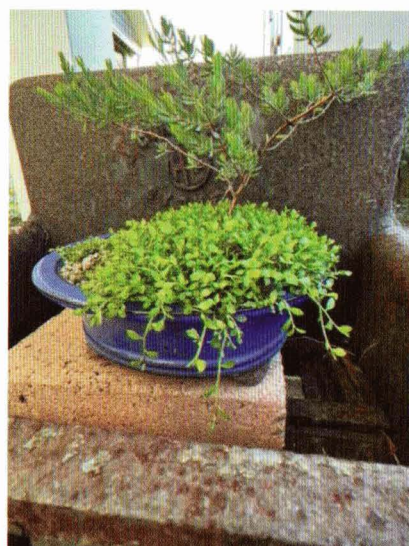
members and other locals fortunate enough to come across them. Be cautious if you plan to follow Kris down the propagation road! These undertakings, even on a small scale, demand a lot of work and inclement weather due to climate change has made the job more difficult.

Who is not guilty of ignoring wisdom from time to time - of throwing restraint out the window and buying a plant on impulse? In that moment we grasp some seductive beauty from a distant zone on the whim that it just might succeed on our patch. And sometimes it does! On these occasions we can take comfort remembering the words of another legendary English plantsman and gardener, Christopher Lloyd of Great Dixter. He tells us that when trying out a new plant, he always purchased in threes. The first plant would go in where he was sure it would succeed, the second in a spot where he felt there was a chance it would fail and the third he'd position where he hadn't the faintest idea what the plant would do. Another great piece of advice from Lloyd is to toss the rule book aside from time to time. If it's a lovely day and you feel like hopping into the garden with your secateurs and pruning a plant despite it being the wrong season - or selecting a plant with a risky future in your patch, just give it a go! Plants, he reminds us, will so often surprise you.

Those with an interest in gardening small will be familiar with the benefits of growing plants in pots and we (Sarah and husband, Geoff) have experience to share in relation to their larger cousin, the planter box. For a decade we lived at the top of Mt Gibraltar where we didn't use pots or boxes as we had plenty of ground space for planting. When we moved to town, the distance from our old garden was only 4kms but the climate at the bottom of the mountain was very different. In that short distance we had moved out of a frost-free zone (frost rolls down hill!) and now needed to learn the vagaries of gardening with heavy frosts.



Hardenbergia violaceae growing in a pot.



Bonsai *Homoranthas* sp.

Our town garden started on ground scraped bare after a building project. To gain more planting space, a design decision was made to install four planter boxes along the road front as substitute for a fence. The planters are off-set with spaces between, indicating that, yes, this is the boundary of a private area, but you are invited to visually share the garden as you walk by on the footpath. It has proved a delight to be in touch with passers-by rather than screening them off by disappearing behind a tall fence or the ubiquitous high-maintenance hedge.

There are a few watchpoints for growing in planter boxes. Don't build them too high. Ours are too high because we took our eye off the ball on the day the brickies started building them. Our punishment is that we must balance on a milk crate to carry out maintenance. Give serious

consideration to the all-important subject of drainage and use plenty of gravel in the base of the box. Cover the gravel with geo fabric to prevent fines washing down from the potting mix. This material will block drainage holes. Kris has her timber boxes lined with old carpet which serves to insulate the roots of her veggies against hot sun.



Sarah and Geoff's planter boxes complimented by planting in the council nature strip.

Make sure access to water is close and easy. Also be aware that potting mix (don't use soil in pots or boxes) breaks down quickly and boxes need to be regularly topped up to keep plants high in the box. Half full, with your plants down in a hole is not a good look!

A regime of topping up the boxes with compost, worm castings, mulch and extra potting mix keeps soil levels high and the plants seem to tolerate this well. *Casuarina* cultivar 'Cousin It' was an early inclusion in the boxes. It's unique foliage (modified stems) and prostrate form



Homoranthus flavescens

make a dramatic show against pale brickwork as it spills over the edges of the boxes. Every winter it is scorched by frost but it quickly grows new green fuzz in spring. This regular natural pruning keeps the plants to a suitable size. One of the treats that comes with planter boxes is that you can make the best of the 'spillers' - prostrate plants that love to tumble over a wall. *Meleleuca hypericifolia* 'Ulladulla Beacon', *Acacia howittii* 'Green Mist' and *Grevillea lanigera* 'Mt Tambouritha' look amazing in a north facing box partially sheltered by a roof. In the exposed boxes out by the public footpath, life is a bit more

difficult. Elevating plants sees them at the mercy of the elements, but we keep experimenting and have achieved some notable successes. In a weather-lucky first couple of years we grew three show-stopping 'Kris plants' of *Homoranthus flavescens*. With their spectacular display of golden flowers and deliciously honey-scented nectar, they wowed passers-by, encouraging many a gardener to give natives a go.

Back up on top of Mt Gibraltar, in the bushland reserve, the population of native birds and animals, though diminishing, is bravely hanging on. But in the town, the tiny clutch of native gardens present are visited by a disappointingly small range of wild creatures. We might meet a staunch blue-tongue, glowering at us with its cross little face when we're



on hands and knees and larger, more confident birds, including the strident red wattle bird and ubiquitous magpies and currawongs, will attempt to claim all of a native garden's territory for their own. Crimson rosellas venture in for a feed, too. They find water baths irresistible, even on cold mornings.

An occasional treat is a visit from an Eastern Spinebill. This bold little bird persists in braving the hazards of town life; domestic pets, car strike, lack of

Correa 'White Tips'

connected wildlife corridors and more. With an insistent volley of chimes, it announces its presence from the tallest available street tree before descending in stages to savour the delights of our correas and grevilleas.

A few insects are still to be found in town gardens and persistent spiders appear as the weather warms, dedicated to their eternal task of knitting up houses. And then there's the dreaded callistemon sawfly larvae! It would be so much more convenient if this little gobbler were an exotic pest so we could squash them conscience-free, but unfortunately it's a native insect. These critters attack callistemons towards the end of summer and can strip a plant bare in days. It seems some species are more vulnerable than others. We've had success with the lovely *C.* 'Pink Champagne' which soldiers on relatively bug free and grows into a sturdy, useful small tree. It will delight with massed, fairy-pink brushes tipped with gold - if we ever again achieve a hot, sunny summer.

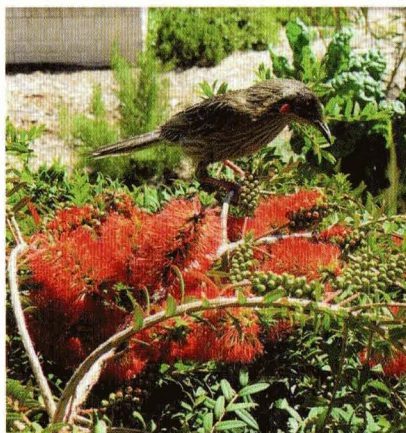
Callistemons are such wonderful garden contributors and we (Sarah and Kris both) use them in repetition, dotting them about wherever there's a space. In the controlled area of a garden, the idea of repetition is to give the nod to nature with its inclination to drop seeds about, thereby creating a community of same-species plants. It is often declared that repetition in gardens is greatly preferable to the 'one-of-everything' approach. But if you are a one-of-everything person, we say, go for it! There are no rules. Your garden is just that... yours. And expressing your own ideas is so much more interesting than copying formulaic layouts.



Sawfly larvae feasting on a callistemon leaf.

Bugs can quickly turn the Lemon Bottlebrush, *Callistemon pallidus* into a tattered mess of skeletonised leaves. We (Sarah and Geoff) decided to remove all three of ours from our town garden, frustrated, because *C. pallidus* had succeeded so well in our former garden where there were more birds to eat the bugs. Beside the bushland reserve they formed dense, wind-firm columns of blue-green foliage and produced lots of their lemony yellow flowers. In the end we decided to leave one of the town garden specimens where it stands beside the public footpath, telling ourselves its tidy habit makes it

ideal for such a position. Our story is that perhaps it might outwit the saw flies when it grows bigger, but in truth, the reason we are leaving it in place is because it's wedged into a very tight position between an old concrete-encrusted fence post and the masonry foundations of one of our planter boxes. You can't swing a pick in there, making removal look like a very challenging job!



Callistemons are not only showy but are a great way to attract birds, such as the Eastern wattle bird to your garden.

And a last word on callistemons. The hearty specimens gracing railway stations as you ride the train north from Sydney are a totally different beast. Huge, spreading umbrella canopies provide welcome pools of dense shade against hot summer sun and stocky trunks look fit to withstand a hurricane. They make our Southern Highlands specimens look squitty!

Whilst on the subject of trees for small gardens, we (Sarah and Geoff) decided that, if we are to stay in this, our seventh (likely our last) garden, we must be seriously disciplined and stay small.

The north facing front garden is a fun space where we play around, shoehorning in as many plants as we can, but for the south facing back garden we planned minimum work and planted an urban forest - just trees and clumping grasses.

We chose the Wolgan Snow Gum (*E. gregsoniana*) for our forest. This is one of those beautiful little gums that grows only about 4 to 6m in height and has a lignotuber, meaning that it is inclined to grow multiple trunks. Using just this species, we planted out the whole of our back garden. Five years down the track, the trees have stretched up to roof level and bring us endless delight as, from the house, we gaze into their complexities, gaining knowledge of their every mood, every detail and every visitor.

Now that the weeds are largely dealt with we are underplanting with clumps of wild and wonderful *Poa labillardierei* which will self-seed amongst the trees. Hen-and-Chicken fern will go into the shaded places together with a clump of a mystery fern Kris has been trying. She says it thrives in dank shade. These plants will hopefully make the forest more welcoming for wildlife.

It is notable that, in small spaces such as our forest area, deep patches of winter shade caused by the overshadowing house steal winter sunshine. This results in a soggy soil problem given our now all-too-familiar rain dumps. But despite struggling in the first couple of winters, our multi-trunked snow gums have coped well, racing gamely upwards to access maximum winter sun above our single story cottage.

In recent years, gardening has become unusually challenging and we must face the fact that changed conditions are here to stay. Drought, scorching heat and flooding rains are our new reality and old gardening certainties are no longer certain. All this is forcing us to stay alert to new truths and plan for our gardens in a forward-looking way. Given this new gardening story, it is a comfort having decided to go small.

Amongst the shockingly bad news in the five yearly State of the Environment report recently released by the new Federal Government, is that there are now more exotic plants growing on our beautiful island continent than there are native plants.

There is great comfort to be found in being involved in good work with motivated people and APS can be proud of its history of being out in front with its mission for conservation and promotion of Australian plants.

Growing these plants in even the smallest of gardens is an enormously rewarding and valuable activity.



Sarah and Geoff's front garden which spills out on to the nature strip. Not only does it increase their plantings but it also greatly enhances the streetscape.

Creating a Small Garden in Suburban Hobart

Alison Moore

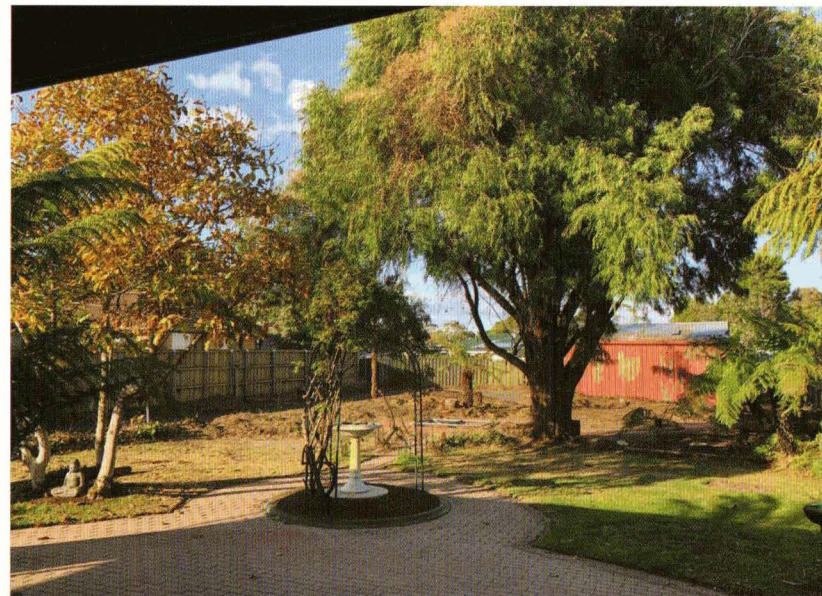
Alison was previously president of the Coffs Harbour District Group of APS NSW before she and her husband Angus retired to Hobart.

My parents were members of SGAP now APS NSW as long as I can remember with Dad being a walk leader on many N.S.W. (Sydney) outings, specifically to the Blue Mountains and Mum reliably providing delicious morning or afternoon teas. Their love of native plants was passed onto me.

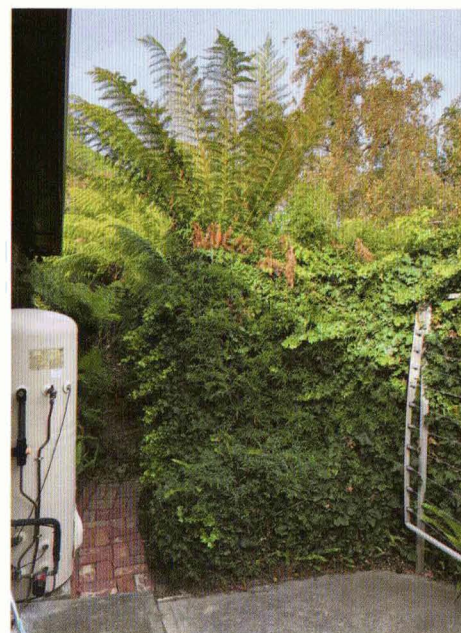
At our recent Biennial Conference in Kiama on the beautiful south coast of N.S.W., Costa referred to these morning/afternoon teas as a vital necessity in his *A.J. Swaby* address. Before beginning the tasks upon us such as; weeding, seed collecting, propagating or planting, tea and cake provides a welcoming environment to all and is the 'glue' to social interaction, relaxation and a sharing of stories enriching our lives.

However, I digress. Our third garden which we have largely created following a massive renovation post-purchase, is on the Eastern Shore about fifteen minutes from Hobart's CBD. When asked where we live in Hobart and say Bellerive, people's reaction still surprises us, it goes like this, "Oh, OVER THE BRIDGE, I don't cross it unless I'm going to the Airport"! In 1975 the Tasman Bridge was 'cut in half' by a bulk carrier and twelve people tragically died. The aftermath of this event, some 45 years later, is that people either have an aversion to crossing the bridge or it seems, they see no reason to travel to the Eastern Shore. We of course, boast of more sunshine on the East and having one of the best suburban beaches in the capital city of Tasmania plus a clear view of kunanyi (Mt. Wellington).

And now finally to our garden. Its location naturally determines various factors; amount of rainfall, wind, sunshine and which direction it faces plus an extremely porous sandy soil. The prevailing wind is WNW which can be a regular bother for gardeners, particularly during the Spring months. We have less rainfall than Hobart, although not by much; over the past three years our average is 650-700mm with Hobart being very similar at ~626mm. Hobart's weather is distinctly affected by kunanyi which is 1271m high and provides the fabulous backdrop to the city. We are on a 1500sqm internal block, two streets away from Bellerive Beach. The house is pretty much in the first third of our property. Behind the house facing south we retained an extremely large *Agonis flexuosa* (Willow Myrtle) 10m wide x 12m high, three Magnolias, one



The garden following a radical removal of ivy, dead trees and rotting fences. Circa May 2019



More ivy removal from treeferns and adjoining fence on the western side of the property. Circa May 2019.

Allocasuarina torulosa, (Forest Sheoak), one *Acacia melanoxylon* (Blackwood) and forty six soft tree ferns (*Dicksonia antarctica*).

To our consternation the rest of the purchased garden was riddled and infested with English Ivy (right up into the tree ferns, snaking around, beneath and above the rest of a mainly exotic garden, exotic creepers, fishbone fern and a lot of the weedy *Coprosma repens* (Mirror Bush), whose seedlings we are still removing.

There was also *Solanum laciniatum* (Kangaroo Apple) which we have used to our advantage. A native species

which readily self-seeds. However, we have pulled out seedlings where they are not wanted and retained others to act as 'nurse plants' combating the Spring winds. It is an attractive shrub with mauve flowers and ripe edible yellow seeds and tends to be short-lived, so our attitude is leave it be for the birds while new plantings take root.

Our soil is sandy with little nutrient and extremely porous so building it up has been a high priority. We do this by adding mulch, native fertilisers and making our own compost, which is an ongoing process for most gardeners. Angus has installed 300 drippers throughout the garden on approximately 200 metres of pipe. We have a timer attached to a fence with flap so that when we are away for any length of time, our kind neighbour turns it on through the opening from her garden.



This photo looks wonderfully inviting and is one of the reasons we purchased the house. The 4m high hedge on our eastern boundary required constant pruning in order to drive to the garage. In addition, our neighbours had no sun from 12 noon on and no view of kunanyi/Mt. Wellington. It was a mix of *Callistemons*, ivy, *Photinia*, Apple trees etc. Circa March 2019.

Our horror after removing all the driveway vegetation (initially a wonderful green screen which blocked the view of our eastern neighbours and their afternoon sun) and most of the rest of dead/dying/exotic weedery was sobering and very confronting. We now looked at what we called 'The Somme'. See the picture on page 337.

We called in an arborist who safely removed the dead, dying and unwanted trees and shrubs which were all munched up, then a stump removal person who did an inefficient job which required Angus to do a large removal follow up with crowbar, spade and a lot of perseverance.

I have a certain ability or some may call it optimism to visualise how it could be and thus we set to work on realising this vision.

Growing a new garden is naturally an ongoing process, with many pitfalls and disappointments along the way – plants dying from various reasons; too little water/too much, sandy soil/lack of nutrients, wrong location etc. but the majority of our chosen plants are doing well. Observing what is growing in our location is also instrumental in replicating those local natives growing in similar soil, wind and temperature. We have self-germinated *Chenopodium candolleianum* (seaberry saltbush) and *Atriplex semibaccata* (creeping saltbush) throughout the garden which provides a wonderfully dense ground cover. Easy to maintain as well - just remove where it isn't wanted. Both of these plants are found along the back of beach dunes and cliff edges a mere four minutes walk away.

I keep a Garden Diary which records plant labels, where purchased, date planted and general health, flowering including any 'deaths'. I find this an invaluable tool helping me to remember these details and to have a ready reference at hand for us and also curious visitors.



Removal of eastern hedge and much more by a professional arborist and which enabled us to set to work. Circa April 2019.



The driveway with *Correa alba* screen and self-sown ground cover (exotic but very well behaved). The purple foliage on the right hand side of drive past the house is *Leptospermum obovatum* 'Starry Night'. It forms an inner hedge to a lawn and shrub area outside the back door.

We have plans to interrupt the long bitumen road surface by making holes, probably with our crowbar and planting suitable prostrate plants in them.

Our plan is to have a mainly native garden which would provide us with privacy from our eleven neighbours, sitting areas, some lawn for

parties, division of areas to create interest and different heights, provide space for a greenhouse to extend our growing season, create habitat for birds, insects and mammals. At present we have a young Eastern Barred Bandicoot family in residence which is a great joy to us but also a worry with the neighbourhood cats.

A garden to enjoy and share with family and friends but also most importantly provide shelter and food for native birds and animals.

Our work continues with the next part of our project; creating a front wildlife garden specifically designed to attract insects such as butterflies and bees but also smaller birds and mammals like the Southern Bandicoot which is seeking low and dense shelter.

Some of the plants yet to be bought and/or propagated include; *Themeda triandra* (Kangaroo Grass), *Lomandra longifolia* (Mat Rush), *Conostylis* spp. (Cottonheads), small *Correas* (native Fuschias), *Xerochrysum*



Preparing for a path through the garden by removing the old foundations of a Hills Hoist clothes line and path – 620kg of concrete!

spp. (Strawflowers), *Dianella* spp. (Flax Lilies) et al. This garden will have a winding path composed of mulched tree fern fronds (we have plenty) and a sitting area for that all important pot of tea accompanied by cake.

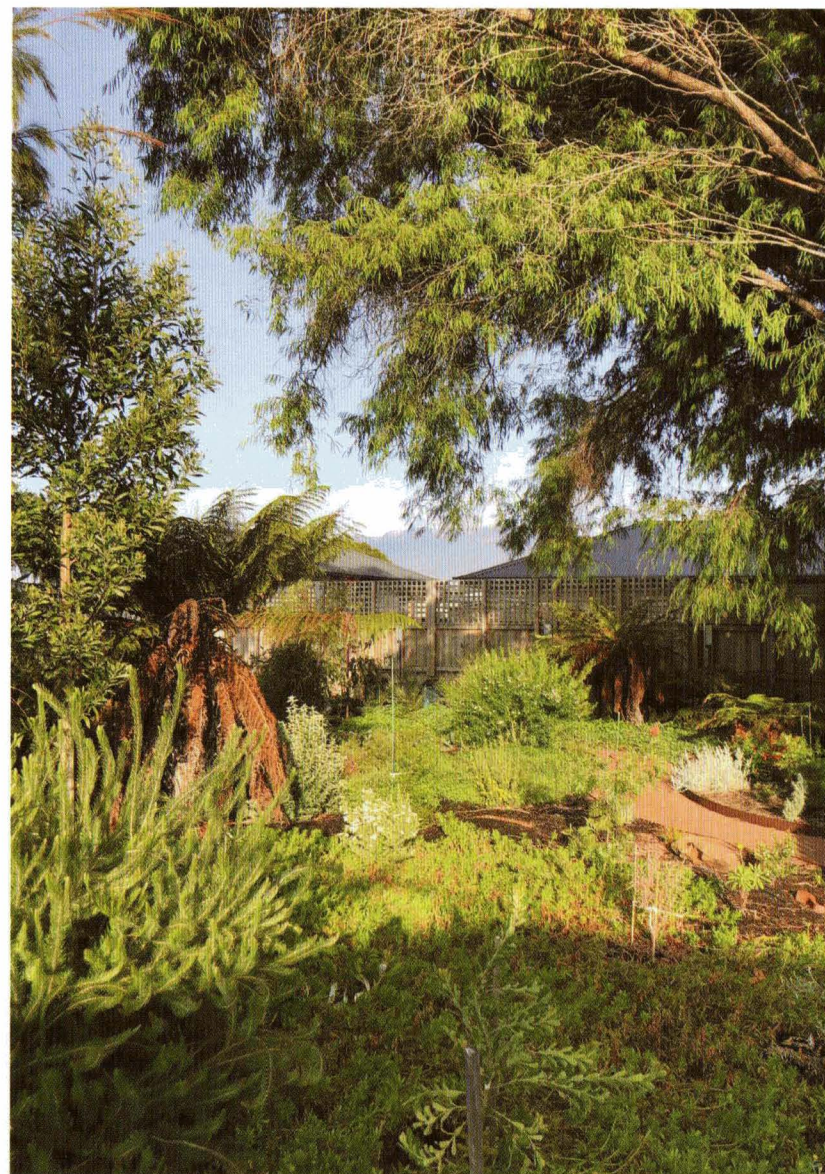
The yellow spray-painted line (easier than lugging a hose around) marks our new path. The rhubarb will be transplanted to near the greenhouse in the back garden. The feature plant surrounded by bricks is *Cercis canadensis* 'Forest Pansy', which gives us winter sun being deciduous with hot pink flowers in Spring and gorgeous Autumn shades of yellow, red and orange.



There are *Arthropodium cirratum* (N.Z. Rock Lilies) in the rear left corner which love the shade and shelter from the Soft Tree Ferns and in the right-hand back corner there is *Bulbine crassa* (Island Leek Lily) which is self-seeding delightfully.

The garden plays an extremely important role in our retired lifestyle. When we are not gardening, propagating seed and cuttings with weeding definitely coming last in the tasks, we are to be found sitting amongst the flowering plants admiring their growth, form, texture and any visiting insects and birds.

Alternatively, we are out bushwalking in Tasmania's glorious environments gaining new inspiration and joy from the best teacher, NATURE!



Rear garden with kunanyi/Mt. Wellington in the background, September 2022. (Blackwood, *Acacia melanoxylon*, Grey Form *Calothamnus*, *Calothamnus quadrifidus* in left foreground, *Myoporum*, broad leaf form, is the prostrate ground cover and the large *Agonis myrtifolia* providing shade and form.

South Australia – Fleurieu Peninsula garden on 750m²

Alice McCleary

Alice is a keen gardener with two gardens (the other is 480m² in Adelaide, with exotics), plus oversight of a large garden in Deniliquin in western NSW. She is also involved with a plant “rescue” charity which has raised \$110,000 in 15 years,¹ which was featured recently on *Gardening Australia*.

My garden at Goolwa, near the Murray Mouth, is on the banks of the Murray River and 2km from the Southern Ocean. The soil is pH-neutral sandy loam. We enjoy a Mediterranean climate, with very high temperatures and low humidity in summer, and no frost in winter. Rainfall average is 380mm. Wind is a huge issue – after the Cook Straights in NZ, the Backstairs Passage (between Kangaroo Island and the mainland) is apparently the second windiest straight in the world!

In 2012 my neighbour removed all the huge exotic pines along my northern boundary and for the first time since building the house in 1995, I had a sunny garden. This provided a great opportunity to do something different, enhancing the established natives on the southern and western sides of the block. The view of the rear garden from the upper floor window was crucial to me; many photos are taken from this perspective and show the development of the garden over time. Please excuse the window gauze in this early photo of the garden.



My immediate priority was planting wind protection. I chose three each of four types of advanced (1.5m high) trees along the northern fence line: *Eucalyptus leucoxylon* “Goolwa Gem” and *Casuarina equisetifolia* at the rear, *Banksia integrifolia* in the narrow gap next to the house as it will take hard pruning and *Angophora costata* along the front fence. I also began the new bed plantings, including *Billardiera scandens* on light wire mesh to cover the garden shed including the door! I wanted

the new garden, once mature, to completely obscure my clothes-line, garden shed and neighbouring buildings, from this vantage point.

Growth was phenomenal, and within two years this was the result.



The new beds integrated well with the older plantings on the south and west sides. Fences, buildings and the clothes line were starting to disappear.



Favourite plants from this period include Wedding Bush (*Ricinocarpos tuberculatus*), (left) and Sandpaper Wattle (*Acacia denticulosa*), (right).

¹ See *Unley Gardeners' Plant Rescue* on Facebook: www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100079234763238. We'd love to see our simple model duplicated all over Australia.

The design, however, was a bit boring and didn't give me enough to do outside, so in 2015 I decided to plant out the whole backyard and create something very special. The main design feature of my garden was to be a solar-powered "creek" leading into three small "lakes". The plantings would lead to and enhance this feature. Since I had just returned from walking in the Lake District in England, the lakes were named Windemere, Derwentwater and Coniston Water. The soil I dug out to create the creek and lakes formed, naturally, the Pennines.

Step 1: Get rid of the lawn. Being a mixture of kikuyu and couch, it took several sprays of glyphosate to fully kill the lawn, especially the couch.



Step 2: Plan and build paths, the water feature, bridges, steps, and seating. I formed a good relationship with an irrigation specialist who helped me select solar pumps, piping, valves and so on.

The critical issues with pumping water are volume of water, distance to be pumped, and (especially) height to be pumped. Having an expert work out the correct sized pumps is essential. I had a distance of about 10m from furthest pump to creek headwater, and height of 1m to the top of a mound. The creek runs for about 2m down a slope, then meanders through the lakes very slowly. Fresh water enters the system via a gravity pipe from a rainwater tank, with a float valve on Derwentwater to ensure the lakes don't overflow or run dry.



Using a solar pump meant I didn't need electricity in the middle of the garden, it was very cheap to operate and would run when I am not here. Other than annual cleaning, they are maintenance free. The solar panels can be moved easily into sunny spots, and I added bird spikes to the top to stop birds fouling the cells. It was a great moment when my pipe to the top of the creek first "spilled" using solar power!

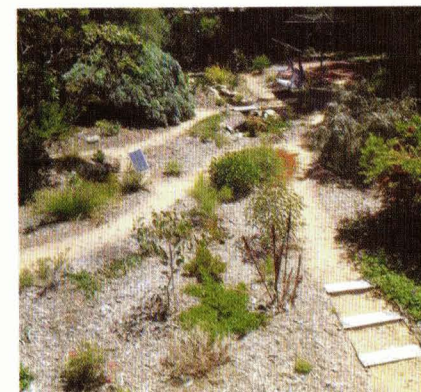
I used professional-quality butyl liner, which I measured to fit my lakes and creek exactly like cutting out a dress, then fused it all together in one continuous piece.



Step 3: the exciting bit: planting!! Most of my hundreds of plants have come from tubestock sold at APS South Australia half-yearly sales.

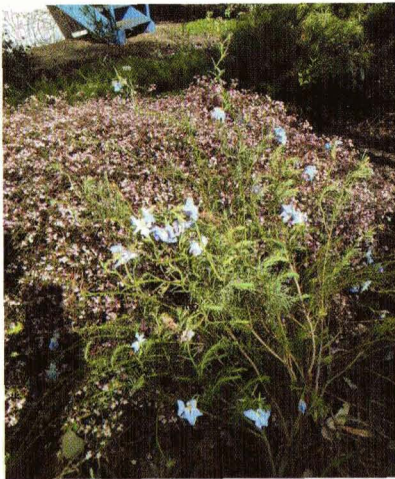
Below is the Lake District 11 months after planting, with the lakes at the centre top of the photo

Drip irrigation has been laid throughout the garden (one hour of drips per week in the warm months). I mulch with council-made mulch: it is coarser than packaged mulch so allows rainwater through better.



I wanted low plants at the back of the house so that the garden gradually built up as I moved into it.

My favourite here is *Commersonia hermannifolia* (formerly *Rulingia hermannifolia*), a feast of tiny pink flowers completely covering the small wrinkly leaves in early spring.



The lovely *Lechenaultia floribunda* (left) shows its pale blue flowers in front – who knows how long it will last at Goolwa?

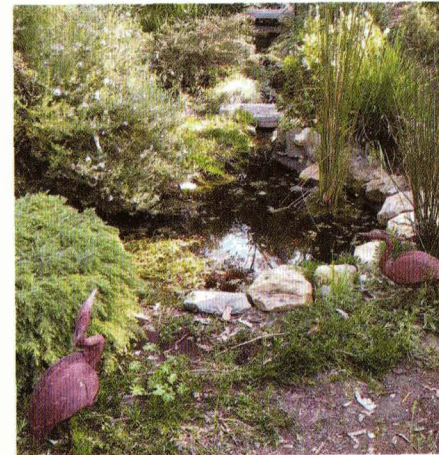
Nearby is the grasstree of the Adelaide plains, *Xanthorrhoea quadrangulata* with its square leaf profile, one of several in the garden I grew from seed. Delicately hanging above these low plants is the beautiful *Eucalyptus caesia* 'Silver Princess', deservedly popular.

On the southern boundary there is no fence, and my mature plantings here provide informal separation. These two grevilleas, yellow *G. olivacea* and *G. 'Winpara Gold'*, have grown to tree size since they were planted in the mid-1990s. They remain as floriferous as ever, over a long period. *Grevillea 'Winpara Gem'* planted at the same time grew to the same size, but then suffered several windthrow events and had to be removed. (Red *G. olivacea* elsewhere in the garden does not produce as many flowers as its yellow sister.) Old Man Saltbush (*Atriplex nummularia*) and the very flat *Eremophila biserrata* grow under the grevilleas.



In the Lake District I have used low plants too, so that the water could easily be enjoyed from the swing seat – a favourite spot on summer evenings, when the Southern Ocean, frogs and birds compete to produce the most noise.

Opposite top is Derwentwater today, six years after planting. *Westringia 'Wynyabbie Gem'* and *Melaleuca incana nana* on the left hide pump and float valve paraphernalia, and protect fresh frog spawn! A variety of water plants float on the surface, with Billy Buttons (*Pycnosorus globulus*), *Chrysocephalum apiculatum*, *Wahlenbergia stricta* and *Callistemon 'Better John'* among the surrounding plants.



The Pennines have been planted exclusively with kangaroo paws – mostly species, as the 'Bush Gem' cultivars are not robust enough for my conditions. They look magnificent in full flower – which is about 10 months a year. I lust after the new blue cultivar though, and hope I can get it to grow here.

Over about 6 years this backyard has been transformed into a haven of beauty and peace, with the tinkle of water ever-present.

From the upstairs vantage point, here is the garden today. The clothes-line and my neighbour's shed are just visible, but almost gone.

The older front garden now complements the rear very well. The *Angophora costata* on the fence line have grown well over 10 years and now provide good balcony shade, and I continue to experiment with smaller plantings under them. *Agonis flexuosa* var. *latifolia* is the dominant large shrub (centre), providing safe homes for 10+ pairs of

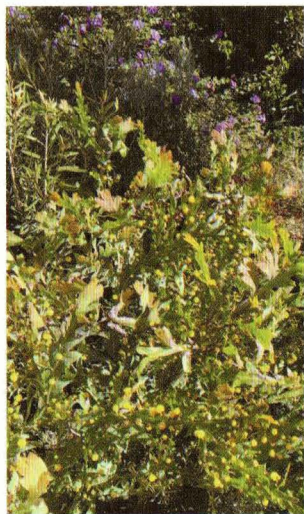


New Holland honeyeaters. The red *Callistemon* (C. 'Captain Cook') has been moved twice but finally seems happy in this spot.



[For the vexillologists among you, the flag is the Lower Murray Flag, flown by paddle-steamers below Echuca].

Looking back, there have been a few planting errors. I'm sure I have too many gums for a block of my size: Corackerup marlock (*Eucalyptus vesiculosa*), *E. caesia* 'Silver Princess', coppiced Book Leaf Malley (*E. kruseana*), Coral gum (*E. torquata*), *E. leucoxylon* 'Goolwa Gem', the yate *E. cornuta*, Dowerin Rose (*E. pyriformis*), *E. phenax* ssp



phenax, the lovely Illyarie (*E. erythrocorys*), a struggling Mottlecak with its huge flowers (*E. macrocarpa*), Tallerack (*E. pleurocarpa* syn *tetragona*), Rose Mallee (*E. rhodantha*) which has been very slow and has its first egg-sized buds now, a grafted *Corymbia ficifolia* – among others! But who can resist when they are so iconic? At some stage I may need to be ruthless though.

I also probably have too many wattles: *Acacia cognata* Fettucinci, groundcover *A. salinga* Springtime Cascade, Golden Wattle (*A. pycnantha*), Flinders Ranges Wattle (*A. iteaphylla*), groundcover *A. Stirling Silver*, the fascinating Leafless Rock Wattle (*A. phylla*), Fringed Wattle (*A. fimbriata*),

my favourite Sandpaper Wattle (*A. denticulosa*), my second favourite *A. glaucoptera* (on p.347), *A. Burgundy Cascade*, the prostrate form of *A. baileyana* but growing 2mx4m(!), Prickly Moses (*A. pulchella*), Barrier Ranges Wattle – very slow (*A. beckleri*), Gold Dust Wattle (*A. acinacea*), Knife Wattle (*A. cultriformis*), and Coast Wattle (*A. longifolia* subsp. *sophorae*). Again, they are too gorgeous to resist.



My main weed is that scourge of SA gardens, soursobs (surely *soursobis disgustingus*??). Many of my plants, however, germinate freely and have to be regularly removed just like weeds: *Dianella revoluta*, the tiny-flowered pink *Geranium neglectum*, the incredibly fecund *Acacia iteaphylla*, *Hardenbergia violacea*, climbing saltbush (*Einadia nutans* ssp. *nutans*), the little yellow *Bulbine bulbosa* (left) likes sprouting in paths (left), moisture-loving Whorled Pennywort (*hydrocotyle verticillate*) constantly wanders off into dry garden beds, and *Carex appressa* still appears years after I removed its parent plant from the Lake District.

Pests are inevitable in all gardens. The blue-leaved eucalypts seem irresistible to leaf-clumping green caterpillars, nearly killing a young *E. kruseana*. I use Confidor tablets (bulk buy online for better prices) – tucking a couple into the

soil around each susceptible tree in spring. Red spider mites decimate the white form of *Correa alba*, but don't bother the pink form! Borers killed one large *Myoporum parvifolium* (broad leaf form), but have not attacked those plants in shadier parts of the garden. Webbing caterpillars on *Thryptomenes* are cut out. Several pink pigface (*Carpobrotus rossii*) have been killed by a voracious white scale which also occurs in wild populations, but its white-flowered form is not affected.

Making this garden has been a great joy. Where once my gaze always wandered towards the wonderful river view at the front, now I mostly look to the rear green paradise I have created. Mercifully there is work to be done here for years to come!

Native Plants For Pots, Courtyards and Small Gardens

Brian Roach

Brian was formerly a Crown Prosecutor with the NSW DPP who joined SGAP, now APS NSW, in the early 70s. He had been propagating and selling Australian native plants for many years. In addition Brian has spoken at many garden clubs where he has encouraged members to grow Australian native plants in their gardens.

One of my greater pleasures as a long-time member of SGAP/APS NSW has been as guest speaker on well over 100 occasions at general garden clubs extolling the wonders of our native flora. For the most part, this has involved clubs within the Sydney area with occasional forays to country towns including Ulladulla, Kendall and Narrabri. In recent years, I've embraced the growing technology and used PowerPoint for my presentations with most clubs these days having the necessary hardware on hand and all I need is my trusty thumb drive. I have around eight topics prepared in this fashion, all dealing with our native plants in one way or another. One topic that has proved particularly popular is 'Native Plants for Pots, Courtyards & Small Garden'. Over the past 25 years or so I have been doing this, I have been very much aware of the increasing interest in our native plants within the general gardening community.

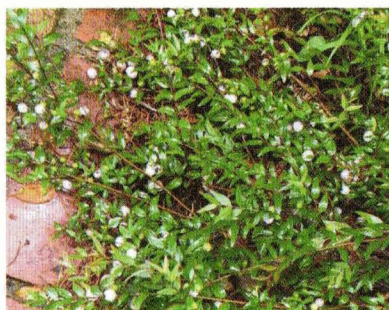
Needless to say, the particular plants I recommend within this topic are those that have proven successful in my garden at Westleigh in north-western Sydney over more than 40 years. The garden is on typical shallow soil over Hawkesbury sandstone, although over the years I have imported a variety of soils to raise the garden beds.

The plants I promote under this topic include:

Acacia conferta – not all wattles get too big for suburban gardens and this one from central NSW is a beauty growing to around 2m but is amenable to judicious pruning. It's truly stunning with its golden balls of flower in late winter.



Acacia conferta



Austromyrtus dulcis

Austromyrtus dulcis – this very hardy, low-growing plant from the mid-north coast of NSW goes under the common name of Midgen Berry although there are various spellings of that. It has attractive foliage with a reddish tinge to the new growth and small white flowers, but its greatest attribute is its edible fruit. I delight in collecting a handful of the berries around the height of summer and putting them with my cereal in the morning. This plant works well as a low border plant in sun or shade and again, is very amenable to pruning.



Anigozanthos 'Bush Pearl'



Banksia blechnifolia

Anigozanthos sp., Kangaroo Paw. The range of available 'paws' has increased amazingly in recent years. The smaller varieties with stems of 1m or less are great for compact gardens and pots. While all varieties are from WA and susceptible to 'ink disease' to varying extents in our wet summers, some are quite resistant such as *Anigozanthos* 'Bush Pearl', which in my view is the pick of them all.

Banksia blechnifolia. This wonderful, prostrate banksia from WA grows quite happily in my garden despite our acidic soils and wet summers which are opposite to its natural conditions in the west. The velvet-like new foliage in early summer is a delight followed by the most amazing reddish cones.

Bauera rubiodes x sessiliflora – This beautiful, low-growing hybrid goes under the common name of 'Rose Carpet'. *B. rubiodes* is local to the Sydney region while *B. sessiliflora* is from western Victoria. It usually only grows to around 30cm high with a spread of up to 2m and will accept quite shady spots as well as full sun.



Flowering is mainly in spring and the margenta display lights up the garden for months.

Billardiera lehmanniana, Karup. While this plant from WA is essentially a climber, it is easily kept to a small shrub if necessary with occasional pruning. It does well on the eastern side of the continent in my experience and the delightful display of white flowers with just the hint of mauve truly lights up the garden in spring and summer. Full sun to semi-shade is its preferred location.

Boronia denticulata, Pink Boronia. If there's one genus of native plants that captures the imagination of the general gardening public, it's boronia. With around 160 species, they range all of this Great Southern Land but generally speaking, they are not easy to maintain in the garden for any significant time. I have no doubt that plants are just like us homo sapiens with genetic variations dictating just how successful one can be from another. I've tried growing *B. denticulata* over the years with very limited success until recent years. I put my lack of success down to the fact that it was another plant from WA that just wasn't suited to conditions in the east. But some years ago I got some cuttings off a plant growing in the garden of Maria Hitchcock at Armidale, NSW, and hey presto! This delightful, highly perfumed plant grows to around 1.5m with masses of small, open pink flowers in spring. Best to avoid a westerly aspect but otherwise, it's a ripper.



Above: *Boronia denticulata*

Left: *Billardiera lehmanniana*

Chorizema cordatum, WA Flame Pea. If pressed to name my favourite native plant, this would be the winner. It is certainly a beauty from the west which does extremely well over on the eastern seaboard. There are a couple of different forms, but the shrubby form grows to around 1m and demands a heavy prune after flowering. The pea flowers are a stunning combination of orange, yellow and pink. It's greatest attribute in my view is that it is outstanding in the shade.



Chorizema cordatum



Darwinia taxifolia

Darwinia taxifolia. This tough, low-growing plant from the east is suitable for any small garden or pot. The upturned, red flowers are abundant and with its very prominent red stamens, I've opted to give it a common name 'Dinkum Devil'. Full sun to semi-shade and suitable to all conditions other than habitually damp spots.



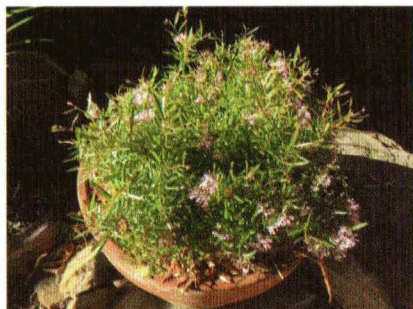
Dillwynia floribunda, the Parrot Pea. A variable plant in size but the form I grow gets to around 1m x 1m and while having a typically short flowering period as with most peas, it's brilliant yellow flowers along the stems in spring are a delight and truly brighten up a semi-shaded spot.



Grevillea 'Honeyeater Heaven'. A fairly new grevillea in the marketplace but a beauty for a small garden. Growing to around 50 x 50cm, it's made to order for tight spaces. With delightful cream and pink 'spider' flowers from mid-winter and well into spring it is suitable for any sunny or partial sunny location with reasonable drainage.

Grevillea 'Pink Midget'. This is another small grevillea growing also to around 50 x 50cm that has been around for years. With lovely, soft pink 'spider' flowers it is suitable for any sunny or partial sunny spot with good drainage. Needless to say, the honeyeater birds love these grevilleas.

Libertia paniculata, Grass Flag. Every garden needs foliage contrast and plants with strappy leaves provide that quality. This small clump grows to around 40 x 40cm with beautiful pure white, star-like flowers from late winter into spring. Not only does this plant accept quite damp conditions but more particularly, it's a ripper for the shade.



Grevillea 'Pink Midget'



Libertia paniculata

Pattersonia occidentalis, Native Iris. This is another lovely plant with strappy leaves and grows into a small clump also to around 40 x 40cm. The leaves have a bluish tinge and the contrasting three-petaled, purple flowers hold their heads high above the foliage on slender stems. This is another great plant from the west but does well over in the east. Suitable from full sun to semi-shade. It is also very easily propagated from the abundant seed it usually produces.



P. occidentalis (Lullfitz Nursery, W.A.)

Subscriptions to *Australian Plants journal*

Australian Plants may be received by membership or subscription.

Membership: Members of Canberra, New South Wales, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria & Western Australia receive the journal or elect to do so..

Subscription: \$35.00 including postage. Three-year subscription: \$105.00 Overseas subscription: \$50.00 or \$150.00 for three years.

New subscribers: Log on to www.austplants.com.au/about-membership/ and 'subscribe' using your email and receive a temporary password and pay online.

Renewals: A reminder and invoice are sent to those with an email address 14 days prior to your expiry date. Log in using your email address and request a password. You can then pay online.

Payment by Direct Deposit: Australia and New Zealand Banking Group Limited (ANZ) Account Name – Australian Plants Society NSW Ltd

BSB: 012 352 Account No 3023 01693

For other information or to pay by other means contact: Subscription Officer PO Box 3066 Bowenfels NSW 2790; apsnswmembership@gmail.com

Australian Native Plants Society (Australia) and member societies

Australian Native Plants Society (Australia) Inc. (ANPSA)

President: John Aitken president@anspa.org.au

Secretary: Rhonda Daniels secretary@anpsa.org.au; Website: anpsa.org.au

Australian Plants Society NSW Ltd

President: Heather Miles office@austplants.com.au

PO Box 263 Cremorne Junction 2090 Website: www.austplants.com.au

The Australian Native Plants Society, Canberra Region Inc.

President: Lucinda Royston president@nativeplantscbr.com.au

secretary@nativeplantscbr.com.au; Website: nativeplantscbr.com.au

Society for Growing Australian Plants (Queensland Region) Inc.

President: Roger Kitchen; Secretary: Paul Taylor: PO Box 586 Fortitude Valley QLD 4006; Email: secretary@npq.org.au; Website: www.npq.org.au

Australian Plants Society, S.A. Region Inc.

President: Greg Kirby; Secretary: Lucy Cahill, PO Box 304, Unley, SA 5061; secretary@australianplantssa.asn.au; Website: www.australianplantssa.asn.au

Australian Plants Society Tasmania Inc.

President: Jenny Boyer jennyaboyer@gmail.com; Secretary: Mary Slattery APSTsec@gmail.com; PO Box 1205 Gravelly Beach 7276 Website: www.apstas.org.au

Top End Native Plants Society

President: Russell Dempster topendnativeplantsociety@hotmail.com

PO Box 135 Palmerston NT 0831 Website: www.topendnativeplants.org.au

Australian Plants Society Victoria Inc.

President: Chris Clarke, Secretary: Chris Long: PO Box 357 Hawthorn 3122 secretary@apsvic.org.au; Website: www.apsvic.org.au

Wildflower Society of Western Australia Inc.

President: Kevin Thiele; Secretary: Kerry Smith: PO Box 519 Floreat 6014. enquiry@wildflowersocietywa.org.au; Website: www.wildflowersocietywa.org.au

