



Promoting the enjoyment, knowledge and benefits of gardens and gardening

Open Gardens South Australia

Welcomes you to

ESTELLA

Saturday November 30, Sunday December 1 2019 38 Cross Road, Myrtle Bank

Welcome to my home and garden 'Estella'.

The site is a generous 1200sq metres which is one of several reasons I purchased the property. In my early years I always liked this house even when it was painted white with all the woodwork 'mission brown'! Although I moved into Estella in 2004 my first years were spent on extensive work inside the house – I also enlarged the pokey north facing windows to catch the winter sun and provide good views of the garden. Having a north facing rear garden was a must for me – the winter sun streams into most rooms of the house and the rear garden receives sun all year round.

There are 3 zones to walk through:

Front- there is no on-street parking so I have created space for up to 6 cars to park and be able to leave without the need to move cars. The carpark walls were created not only to define the parking spaces but to allow me to get plants established before the very mature plane trees extended their root systems up to compete for moisture. Plantings have been chosen mostly for their full shade/low water requirements and to provide a solid and simple green framework to offset the busy architecture of the house. The verandah courtyard is enclosed with repositioned wrought iron gates and closed off with a dry stone wall out of which I have plumbed a gentle water feature which runs 24/7. From my previous garden I brought 25 mature box plants which I had propagated and are now 25 years old. I had hundreds of metres of hedging in that garden and I carefully removed these plants without any damage to the hedges! They are now repositioned in all three zones of this garden – some are standards and a few are cone shaped and I like the way they punctuate my hedges. I don't mind all-green gardens because there are so many shades of green but it's a bonus when there are also flowers.

The rear garden - divided into several zones, it is the main 'room' of my home! I take joy in hearing the sound of running water and 'reflecting' in the pool area, I love walking around my recycled brick paths to check fruiting progress, tasting my ever-present 'Ngami' cumquats which are delicious as is, picking herbs and vegetables for the kitchen or flowers and foliage for the house. Recently completed is the recycled chook house and collecting eggs is a delight! My 3 year old Schnauzer, Hugo also loves the various spaces and is forever exploring!

Side courtyard – this is the third zone you will find by walking towards the back rainwater tank past the utility area into the long courtyard which runs down the entire eastern wall of the house. This zone is lovely for outdoor cooking, cooling off on hot evenings and provides an interesting outlook from the kitchen and dining areas.

Open Gardens South Australia Inc: is a not for profit organisation opening private gardens to the general public. The purpose of Open Gardens SA is to educate and promote the enjoyment, knowledge and benefits of gardens and gardening in South Australia and to build strong public support for the development of gardens.

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

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

My plants are mostly Mediterranean - many are grey leaved, blue/mauve flowering with low maintenance needs eg. rosemary which flowers in winter and spring in these soft colours but I also have the more vibrant cultivar named 'Blue Lagoon'. Blue flowering Ceanothus is another and is planted back and front producing an abundance of blue flowers at the same time as the pale lilac coloured Teucrium fruticans blooms.

I was never a big fan of succulents until I discovered the diversity of their colours, leaves, shapes, and sizes and how eminently suitability they are for low maintenance vertical walls! My son Angus designs and makes all manner of vertical walls so he has positioned one on my west facing house wall and the plants are flourishing despite the incredibly severe weather they are subjected to. He has created a watering system which sprays from the top and then drips down through all the levels to a reservoir at the bottom then it is piped back to the pool – all of this with the flick of a switch!

I water by hand as I don't have other irrigation so my garden has to be water efficient - last summer I only watered the front outer area 4 times. The courtyard there is south facing and misses out on afternoon sun so has a different micro climate suited to more needy plants. Here I enjoy watching over some special potted plants - a cut leaf maple, 2 Brushfield's Yellow and a Champagne camellia gifted to me 25 years ago by a friend.

Drought years, water restrictions and cost of water encouraged me to work on self-sufficiency so when I was planning the front garden with its 2 existing huge water-guzzling plane trees I decided to form raised beds to allow the new plants to develop before the tree roots started competing. With Unley Councils support I installed 2 large rainwater tanks, front and rear to pick up the storm water and was able to bury pipes in the old swimming pool which holds 80,000 litres – very handy to have so much rain water on hand!

Underpinning a lot of my work in the garden has been utilising recycled materials. When I renovated the house I de-nailed old timber, stored and then reused it in the construction of our chook house and the vertical wall. The chooks' roof timber and tiles came from a nearby house demolition as did most of the brick pavers, with donations from friends added to the mix! Unwanted cement lintels, curbing and stone have been used in constructing the dry stone walls which circle the back garden and an old door has been recycled as an outside gate. As well a pair of wrought iron gates were welded end to end to make a trellis for my lovely 'Leander' climbing rose, I added to an old tank stand to create a 2metre high wall to close off my clothes line area and an old bath doubles as a container for potting soil or at other times as a large ice bucket for parties! But most importantly the disused swimming pool has become a pond and its pump an aerator.

Open Gardens South Australia is aiming to significantly reduce its impact on the environment and we hope you support us in this endeavour. Please return your garden notes as you leave so they can be reused and recycled.

The gardens that open for us are chosen to reflect a great diversity of styles and may even challenge the conventional view of what constitutes a garden. While aspects of a garden may not be to your taste, we urge you to celebrate this diversity. Please remember you are visiting a private home and show respect and sensitivity for the owners who have so generously shared their garden with you. Thank you.

Hedges - I was determined to plant native hedges and at the front chose lillypilly. It is doing fairly well given that for two thirds of the year it is in the shade of plane trees. However I have removed most of the smaller 'Bush Christmas' cultivar because new growth was continually nibbled by black beetles. I don't like spraying so I finally decided to transplant most of them to the rear garden and have replanted at the front with Japanese box. I have also used this to replace Pittosporum 'Miss Muffett' as she was continually attacked by sucking insects which spoil the healthy growth.

Down the side I have planted *Teucrium fruticans* – an absolute hero! At most it is watered 4 times a year and it copes! Next I have *Murraya paniculata*, also with low water and low maintenance requirements. *Escallonia ivelyi* provides a little extra privacy above the perimeter courtyard wall directly in front of the house. I couldn't reach The Chinese star jasmine with my hose but despite receiving little water it has still flourished!

In the rear garden I have planted *Westringia 'Jervois Gem'* which I like for the softness and colour of its foliage. To separate the ornamental area from the fruit trees, vegies herbs and seasonal bareness I've used one of the improved cultivars of lillypilly and it's doing its job well. The last significant hedge is pink rosemary which sometimes gets away from me – it seems to grow faster than any of the others! I think each hedge is important in providing strength of shape and to define their specific positions in the garden.

I have 36 fruit trees tucked into the garden – I get giddy finding them all so it may be a few less or more! Puzzle of the day – find them! There are 9 cumquats (plus 2 others to be potted up because they are struggling!), 3 limes, a lemon, 4 mandarins, 2 tangelos, a grapefruit, 6 plums, a persimmon, pomegranate, quince, 4 olives, a grapevine, peach and a nectarine with a peacherine planted in the same hole.

Water Features are a very important element in gardens and they are so easy to set up! The front courtyard fountain is built into a wall and I have another spraying from an ornamental pot in a large pool. Outside the living room window is another in a pottery bowl and this goes nonstop.

In designing the garden my wish list included good garden views from the house in all seasons, low water and maintenance requirements, pleasant places to walk, sit, read or play with my dog, produce from fruit trees, vegetables and herbs and my chooks.

It has given me much pleasure being able to blend all this into my garden!

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