

GARDEN NOTES

ILLABUNDA

The garden at Illabunda has developed by observing the natural landscape that was revealed through weeding and tidying the bush block. When we moved to the property, the old pole house was in risk of falling down and the land had been cleared with a bobcat. The initial cleanup involved burning huge heaps of vegetation and rubbish that had been pushed into the surrounding forest. Two large barbecue areas, a playground, an old toilet and an outdoor shower had to be removed. Only then could the weeding be started. The area had been used for sheep grazing in the past – along with a rabbit plague – so the weeds came from introduced pasture grasses.

The challenge was to bring back the bushland. We began by planting a collection of native and indigenous plants. We chose plants that could survive wet cold winters and dry periods in the summer. As the weeding progressed some indigenous grasses and rushes presented themselves. This gave us the direction for developing the garden by following what grows naturally.

The garden has now been going for six years and the results are rewarding. Even though we are collectors of Australian native plants, the local indigenous plants have become our great interest. The plant community is Banksia woodland and is now endangered.

Illabunda is located on a sandy spit with the soil being either yellow or grey sandy loam. It has a significant, remnant old-growth forest of *Eucalyptus viminalis* ssp. *pryoriana* (Coast Manna Gum). The long driveway winds through *Banksia integrifolia* bushland towards Anderson Inlet.

Closer to the house, grassy areas open up around huge, sculptural eucalypts which are underplanted with garden beds featuring a wide range of Australian plants: thomasiads, correas, stylidiads, grevilleads, acacias (including two *Acacia leprosa* 'Scarlet Blaze'), and many smaller banksias (including *B. baueri*, *B. speciosa*, and *B. praemorsa*) that thrive here.

There are also groves of young casuarina and Moonah (*Melaleuca lanceolata*) and a large fenced productive area with raised beds. An extensive nursery area produces many of the 7,000 plants that are added to the garden each year. Around the house, with its views towards the inlet, are sculptures, potted plants and grasses. Planting extends into the inlet walk at the rear of the property, to reinstate the indigenous species wherever possible.

The garden is not 'manicured' or 'designed' but it has been carefully developed to enhance the natural qualities of the site, emphasise the significant old trees and create a garden with a distinctive Australian – and coastal – feel. We hope that the garden will illustrate how both people and nature can work together to create a beautiful space that all creatures can share.