



## GARDEN NOTES

### IVY LEA

Upon acquiring the acreage on the outskirts of Whittlesea, we set out to create a garden of significance for our home. In January 2003 we designed a garden to embrace the home, and completed works in 2016. The home is nestled within a substantial cottage garden of timber, stone and rust works.

Initially soil from a land cut was applied to all the garden beds to satisfy a caveat. We're certain it was the source of onion weed which we fought for years before eradication. We installed two 5,000 gallon water tanks and started planting trees – including Silky Oaks, conifers, birch and an array of deciduous trees for form and autumn colour. Additional trees, shrubs and a hedge of flowering quince were added through to 2007. From 2008 to 2010 both exotic and native trees and shrubs were added to complete the underlying structure of the garden.

In our early years, particularly 2004-05, we struggled with pest and climate: an infestation of red-legged earth mites and a summer storm almost uprooted all our birches that were only saved by staking and roping each one mid-storm!

2008 was again a difficult year with the *Acer* 'October Glory' splitting and losing half the canopy. We decided to semi-coppice to the top of the trunk, which has saved this autumn gem. The *Prunus* 'Elvins' also split but survived with heavy pruning that has impacted on the shape – however it puts on a colour show.

The next problem was drought. We entered 3A water restrictions which meant rising at 6.00a.m. to hand water and we ultimately resorted to buying water. Then another storm with 120 km/h winds ripped up the Sugar Maple, which after three years growth was gut-wrenching. The same year we were hit by a devastating hail storm. It shredded every leaf in the garden in a 15 minutes burst. Then the devastating fires of February 2009 came within a few kilometres of the township. Disaster for our garden was averted with a late cool change shifting the wind and fire direction.

But the bane of our gardening life is those damn rabbits! We've poured so much time and money into fending them off as their potential to destroy was evident. They've burrowed under trees to eat roots, nibbled ground covers, severed irrigation hoses and enjoyed all-you-eat offerings in the veggie garden! Measures we've taken over the years include fencing entire garden beds and baiting. Placing wire baskets upside down over low-level bushes, such as newly planted box, has also proved effective.

By 2010 the garden was showing signs of maturity with trees exhibiting good growth about their girth. However we again experienced a major rain event, with 121mm falling in 24 hours, including a 35mm deluge in 40 minutes! In the last few years birdlife has increased with new species, like New Holland Honeyeaters, taking up residence. Unannounced wildlife visit from time to time; kangaroos, echidnas, blue-tongue lizards, frogs, owls and eagles.



In 2013 we designed and assembled a fountain in the round-about garden bed with recirculating running water. The remainder of construction works was completed through 2016, including a gated entrance with post-and-rail timbers salvaged from Victorian Docks. The gates were handmade from cypress and heavy gauge hardware complement the chunky construction. A stone driveway with bricked spoon gutters leads to the round-about with the cast iron fountain.

The grounds are punctuated with other rustic and quirky features providing opportunities to pause and draw in the surrounds. The antics of hens amuse as they run about their handmade chicken coop. The vegie patch, enclosed in a crafted cypress picketed fence, is based on a four-bed rotation model.

There is a large irrigation infrastructure in place to water the garden. Rainwater is captured in three tanks, providing a 70,000 litre water reserve. A 32mm ring-main around the property supplies around 20 taps through the garden for hand watering and general use. The majority of the watering is accomplished with sprinklers with over 45 circuits. Valve controls allow water to be directed to any tap or sprinkler circuit from either mains supply or rain-water tanks.

**2003 plantings:**

- 7 x Silky Oaks at rear (lost two)
- 1 x Chinese Tallow (north-west corner)
- 2 x Crab Apples – *Malus ioensis* 'Plena'
- 1 x *Prunus* 'Elvins'
- 20 x birch (along northern roadside)
- 1 x Pin Oak (above rear stairs)
- 2 x Tulip Tree (lost one)
- 1 x Claret Ash (at rear centre)
- 1 x *Acer* 'October Glory' (north-east house corner)
- 2 x *Acer* 'Autumn Blaze' (front of property)
- 2 x Liquidambars (triangle bed, lost one)
- 5 x conifers (along northern roadside)
- 1 x Japanese Maple (front of house)
- 4 x She Oaks (west end of reserve)
- 1 x Spotted Gum

**2005 plantings:**

- 2 x *Viburnum plicatum* (front door)
- 2 x Pencil Pines 'glauca' (front gable)
- 3 x Oak-leaf Hydrangeas (front gable)
- 2 x Japanese Maples (front bed)
- 9 x Red Oaks (in driveway)

**2007 plantings:**

- 3 x *Eucalyptus* 'Silver Princess' (lost one)
- 1 x 'Little Snowman' gum
- Flowering quince hedge (west of arbour)
- 6 x Manchurian Pears (at roundabout)
- 1 x birch (back door, beside stairs)

**2008 plantings:**

- Viburnum hedge (behind oak and tulip trees)
- 1 x English Oak (at the front)
- 2 x Spotted Gums (at the front)
- 2 x *Grevillea* 'Superb' (front north-east corner)
- 2 x hakeas (front north-east corner)
- 3 x Coffin Bay Mallee (at the front)

**2009 plantings:**

- 1 x Atlas Cedar (top of driveway)
- Apple Blossom carpet roses (in front of pears)
- Judas Tree (beside the 'October Glory')
- 3 x *Correa alba* under gums (out front)
- Rosa* 'Camp David' (in cutting bed)
- 2 x smoke bushes (back garden)
- Ornamental grape (onto neighbours' chook house)

In its infancy the garden was featured in the *Herald Sun* across a double page spread.