



GARDEN NOTES

JONES STREET GARDEN

Welcome to our garden.

Our house has a very simple but wonderful history. We are only the second owners – the original owners were Italian migrants who built the house in 1954. From the moment we saw the house with its deep back garden, remnant chook shed, old sheds, fruit trees, wood stove in the kitchen, cellar and extensive original vegetable garden, the potential of 3 Jones Street already existed within the walls and earth of the house.

That was 20 years ago. The garden has changed over time. If anything, it has moved gradually and gracefully towards its full potential as an oasis both visually and productively.

One of the first things we did when we moved in was pull up large areas of concrete, plus a large brick barbecue. If only we had known where we would be heading with outdoor cooking, I don't think that barbecue would have been removed! The wood-fired barbecue, the wood-fired oven and the new addition of the Tandoor oven are wonderful and essential additions to the garden. They seamlessly have become a part of our life. As with many things, the more familiar you become with something the easier it is to do. This is the case with wood-fired cooking – given that we have been using the wood-fired oven for 10 years – the barbecue being a more recent addition is used regularly all year.

One of the important aspects of our garden is that while the basic structure and essence of it has not changed in 20 years, individual areas have evolved as we as a family have evolved. The second most important thing I feel is the length of time that we have been here. To see the garden mature and to benefit from that maturity is such a pleasure.

The fundamental productive and sustainable aspects of our garden have been in place from very early on. We reinstated the original chook shed within the first year, adding a large chook yard. The chooks provide us with eggs but they also provide the compost for the veggie garden, and for mulching for the rest of the garden. There are water tanks down the side of the house and rain bladders under the extension. We divert cold water from the hot water service into the bladders under the house; the hot water only comes through the taps once it has reached 45 degrees. We have surrounded the house in vines – Glory Vine and Virginia Creeper. Despite what many may think, they are not a lot of work to maintain and the benefits they provide are enormous. Very little direct sun hits any wall or window of the house.

The veggie garden footprint has essentially remained the same since we moved in. There is often a mini-battle each year between ornamental plants vs. productive plants but the balance seems to be just right most years. The key to a good veggie garden for me is not to over-plant any one type of vegetable, and by keeping the numbers small and sowing often we have a continual supply of salad vegetables in particular. Herbs are an integral part of all our meals and in recent years they have started to dominate the tone of the veggie garden. Some herbs such as Thai Basil, Holy Basil, basil and coriander are continually sown during their growing months. We grow a variety of unusual herbs such as perilla, epazote, turmeric and curry leaves. Many of the herbs such as the coriander, perilla and epazote self-seed in the garden. Mint is allowed to run riot as it is used regularly and is controlled by being pulled out where it is not wanted and given to the chooks.



Fruit, particularly berries and citrus, are a very important part of our productive garden. My cooking and the adventures I have with different cooking styles and cuisines ultimately determines what I will and will not plant each session in the garden. I have tried galangal and ginger numerous times, thinking this year they will work, but they did not survive past winter. Surprisingly the tumeric does very well in a pot.

My love of plants is apparent throughout the garden. I love texture and colour, particularly coloured foliage which provides continual colour. The variety of plants is extensive, ranging from old fashioned begonias, delphiniums and Sweet Alice, through Japanese pines, dwarf piceas, soft grasses, to hawthorias, opuntias and an eclectic range of succulents. It sounds like chaos, but the plantings are grouped together to make sense. I plant to explore how I feel about plant combinations – my garden is the place in which I can feel my way through design ideas. While the main structural plantings are static, the rest of the garden often changes. There are so many plants out there, how does one choose the right plant for the right situation? – by exploring all the possibilities. My love of plants has resulted in a ridiculous number of potted plants. Pots are often thought of as high maintenance but if you choose the right plant for the right situation pot plants can be very easy.

The most important addition to our garden in recent years is the bees. Since the bees have been present in the garden I have had more raspberries than any other year since they were planted. The bees make the garden feel more abundant and healthy. The garden is literally buzzing with sound. Their very nature is rhythmic and they have created a new and wonderful type of 'clock' in the garden. Their response to changes in weather, sun or cloud cover, rain or warmth, or time of day, has worked its way into my consciousness and fundamentally affects how I see the garden and the way in which I work in it. Unless the bees are 'bearding' on the outside of the hive, there only seem to be 20-30 around the outside of the hive at any one time. But in the height of spring and summer there are thousands of bees in the double hive, possibly up to 400,000. The wonderful fragrance of honey pervades the air on warm days.

The water bowls around the garden are utilised by the bees and are an absolute necessity.

Another important element in the garden is the sculpture throughout the garden. Sculpture changes how one experiences a garden. A properly placed sculpture creates another dimension to a garden, giving the area more weight and focus.

We live in a small house in suburbia but our garden provides us with a richness and earthiness that allows us to enjoy living simply but abundantly.