

Ziebell's Farmhouse Garden

Located within the historic Westgarthtown Pioneer Precinct in the City of Whittlesea, Ziebell's Farmhouse Garden was first established in 1850 by the pioneering German immigrant family that bears its name. About 1200 square metres in size, the large informal gardens combine flowers, roses, shrubs, fruit trees and a vegetable patch. A semi-formal flower garden forms its centrepiece.

The garden was opened twice as part of Open Gardens Australia and we are honoured to be invited into Open Gardens Victoria's inaugural program. The 165-year-old Ziebell's Farmhouse and garden are owned by the City of Whittlesea and managed by volunteers from the Friends of Westgarthtown. The farmhouse and outbuildings are included on Victoria's Heritage Register.

Ziebell's Farmhouse and heritage site is of national and state significance. The garden features a 130-year-old Cécile Brunner rose and a rare Queen of Sheba climber. Over 400 plants have been recorded. The more than 60 rose varieties include rare and historic roses, a number of which were imported by the Ziebell family in the 1800s. In Spring the garden is an explosion of colour.

Since 1995, volunteers have formed the backbone of the garden restoration project. Aside from the sheer magnitude of labour required, the single greatest focus has been ensuring the garden remains faithful to its origins. Many of the volunteers are descendants of the Ziebell family, including the project's visionary Sylvia Schultz who provided the required experience, knowledge and guidance until she passed away in 2014. Garden Coordinator Gillian Borrack has overseen the documentation of the garden including a comprehensive Conservation Analysis and Management Plan to preserve its authenticity. Gillian also coordinates the combined volunteer and council maintenance support of the garden. The garden is supported by a self seeding regime which is carefully maintained, by selective management, so that delicate seedlings such as love-in-the-mist, poppies, larkspur and delphinium are not overwhelmed by larger more prolific plants such as calendula, forget-me-not, violet and poor man's orchid. Seeds are also collected each year.

Most people say their favourite part of the garden is the aspect from the large L-shaped verandah of the farmhouse. From this location you are sheltered from the prevailing northerly and westerly winds and can enjoy the shade and colour provided by the lush ferns, fuchsias, roses and many annuals of the central garden. From the 1850s through to the present day, all who have worked in this garden have at some stage found sanctuary here from the heat of summer, or bitter cold and rain of winter.

More than 165 years ago a pioneering family set out to create a haven that reminded them of their homeland. The result was this garden. We hope not only its beauty, but also its symbolism inspires visitors: an enduring reminder to the dreams of an immigrant family to forge a new life in a foreign land. It is a wonderful example of the power of a flower garden begun when the major task of the Ziebell family in the early 1850's was to provide shelter, food and establish a sustainable farming enterprise.

Opening information

Saturday 3 & Sunday 4 October 2015

10.00am – 4.30pm

Supervised off street parking will be available in German Lane, Lalor. Walking paths and signage to Ziebell's Farmhouse indicate the direction of Ziebell's Farmhouse, as well as the Thomastown Lutheran church and cemetery. Both the cemetery and church will also be open.

Complimentary Ziebell's Farmhouse Garden Guide, Ziebell's Farmhouse Guide and Westgarthtown Heritage Walk will be available at the entrance and will enhance your understanding of the oldest surviving German built house and garden in Victoria.

Sausage sizzle at the entrance gate. Tea, coffee, and refreshments available.
Plant and Book Stalls