

## WICKES GARDEN

When Rex and I moved to the property in May 1998 the house had not long been completed and the only garden existing was a murraya hedge edging the outdoor living area and a few plantings at the front door. The home had been placed well on the block with a northerly outlook from all living areas and the site sloped gently from the house to a small dam that overflowed into a creek. It was easy to link the garden with all areas of the house. Having just left a Federation style home with a cottage garden in Brisbane, it was a real challenge to create a similar style garden surrounding the more formal Mediterranean home.

I had an abundance of ideas floating around in my head but how to implement them was the issue. Michael Bligh, a garden designer from Goulburn in NSW who frequently travels to western Queensland to give lectures and advice, happened to be giving a lecture at Buderim. I enjoyed his lecture and liked his style of gardening so I asked if he could give us some advice. I guess he confirmed much of what I had planned and gave me confidence to make the first steps. An oval shaped lawn area surrounded by a dry stone wall was to be the central feature. Michael encouraged me to use a central axis and this was taken from the centre of the outdoor living area – the stone steps edging the oval lawn would lead centrally to a circular garden bed surrounded by gravel paths. Across the dam the eye would focus on a feature tree – a liquidambar.

It was fine having all this assistance but who would we get to carry out the hard landscaping? Rex and I would certainly be the assistants! I was discussing the dilemma with good friend Barry Stowe from Culpeppers Rose Nursery (unfortunately this nursery has now closed) and he said he would be happy to build the dry stone walls (stone from the Glasshouse Mountains) and all the timber structures required. Over the next six months he was able to do all the construction work. The first task was to get a machine in to widen the dam and cut a dry creek bed. The creek bed was to take the run off from the neighbouring property, as that area of our property was very wet. The fill from the dam was used to build up garden beds and level some low areas. The soil fortunately was excellent but we did need to bring in extra topsoil to get the height needed. A truckload of chook manure was added to all garden beds and then mulched heavily with lucerne hay. Where grassed areas were to be converted to garden beds newspaper was laid thickly and then topped with thick biscuits of lucerne hay – after some weeks they were ready for planting.

As each area was completed I was able to design the next section of the garden. By Christmas 98 the oval of lawn was down and the borders edging that planted. Early in 1999 we planted the grove of tropical birch (*Betula nigra*) and Rex and I laid out the garden beds and paths with a stake and rope for the circular areas and hoses to define the pathways. By the end of June 99 all the construction was complete – planting had been done along the way but now it was time to complete the picture. Working full time did not give me the time I really wanted to devote to the task so I made a decision to retire early in 2000. Most of the planting structure of the garden was completed by then – just the fine-tuning was left to do.

I have endeavoured to mix sub-tropical with cold climate species and feel confident it has worked. Many of the wonderful salvias available now suit our climate so well. Some of my favourites are *Salvia elegans* purple, *iodantha*, *madrensis*, *wagneriana*, Costa Rican Blue, *gesneriiflora*, *involucrata bethelii*, *involucrata x karwinskii*, *karwinskii*, indigo spires, marine blue, *Mexicana* lime bracts, *microphylla*'s, *greggii*'s, *leucantha*, *chiapensis* and purple majesty.

Old Fashioned roses (teas, chinas and noisettes) do well although not a patch on what can be seen in southern gardens. Fragrant and recurrent species have been chosen. *Crepuscule* (noisette), *Lamarque* (noisette), *Dr Grill* (tea), *Cecile Brunner*, *Monsieur Tillier* (tea), *Carefree Wonder*, *Green Ice*, *Mme Alfred Carriere* (noisette), *Duchess de Brabant* (tea), *Bloomfield Abundance* and *Safrano* (tea) are some of my

favourites. **We fertilise regularly with organic products** – liquid fertilizers are used on the leaves of roses regularly throughout the summer to help prevent black spot and mildew.

Annuals self sow and those that do well are cosmos, Queen Anne's lace, love-in-the-mist, alyssum, cynoglossum (Chinese forget-me-not), torenia, poppy, calendula, nasturtium, heartsease, cleomes, *Malva sylvestris* and herb Robert (*Geranium robertum*).

Herbs intermingled throughout the garden include heliotrope, southernwood, yarrow, tansy, *Tagetes lemonii*, *Tagetes lucida* (winter tarragon), santolina, catmint (wonderful under roses), society garlic (*Tulbaghia violacea*), prostrate savory, calamint, lemon verbena, garlic chives and bronze fennel.

Fragrant plants feature prolifically especially around the outdoor living area. The fragrance from climbing frangipani (*Chonemorpha fragrans*) quisqualis and moonflower (*Ipomoea alba*) is stunning on summer evenings. Michelia 'Coco', frangipani, brugmansia or Angels's trumpet (in various colours), *Osmanthus fragrans*, tuberose, ginger, stephanotis, and jasmine give perfume in various seasons.

The kitchen garden is situated on the eastern side outside the laundry door for easy access. A well-drained site is very important when growing herbs and temperate climate perennials as many of them originate from Mediterranean areas. Many herbs prefer an alkaline soil so the addition of dolomite or lime to the soil is beneficial. Culinary sage, lavender and rosemary definitely benefit from a dusting of dolomite on their leaves throughout the humid months.

Among the culinary herbs and spices grown are watercress, landcress, Chinese purple mustard, *Basella alba* (Ceylon spinach), cardamom, ginger, galangal, tumeric, mustard lettuce, varieties of basil, an assortment of chillies and peppers and perennial rocket. False coriander (*Eryngium foetidum*) is a most wonderful substitute for true coriander that rushes to seed so quickly in our climate. It seeds prolifically and is available in all seasons. The curry tree (*Murraya koenigii*) is a valuable inclusion.

The addition of bulbs, corms and tubers add colour over long periods and will thrive for many years. Zephyranthes (storm crocus), Cyrtanthus (ifafa lilies), babiana, freesia, *Lilium longiflorum*, Leucojum (Snowflake), Hymenocallis, hippeastrum, haemanthus, gladiolus, crinum, crocosmia, alstroemeria, zantedeschia (Calla lily) watsonia, oxalis, jacobinia, kniphofia, daylilies, clivea, cannas and agapanthus grow well.

Rainforest plants have been scattered throughout the garden *Backhousia citriodora* hedges the vegetable garden. *Backhousia anisata* and *Backhousia myrtifolia*, *Randia fitzalanii* (native gardenia), *Cananga odorata* (Ylang ylang), *Hymenosporum flavum* (Native frangipani) and *Phalaris clerodendron* are some favourites. *Graphotophyllum exculsum* (native fuchsia) with its rich burgundy flowers and holly like leaves and *Leptospermum petersonii* (Lemon scented tea tree) feature.