

Happy 10th birthday garden

by Joy Cook

This year marks the tenth anniversary of gardening in Riverview Crescent, Tathra. The garden has come a long way in ten years. There have been several setbacks, a severe storm that did a very heavy “nature’s prune”, a severe attack of Myrtle Rust, and the death of a few prized *Eucalyptus caesia* trees and a much loved *Eucalyptus forrestiana*.

Overall I would say nature has greatly rewarded me for my efforts. Those wonderful Australian plants like paint strokes on a canvas, have been an integral part and inspiration in the creating of our garden landscape.

I love being outside gardening, and spending the best part of my day ‘worrying’ the garden. I like nothing better than to stand idly in the garden space and picture in my mind how an area could be improved. I have learnt over the years that many hours of thought given over to an hours labour, give a better result than many hours of impulsive action. I am also a keen bushwalker, and enjoy my time in the bush where I observe the way plants grow in their natural habitat. A lot of my inspiration comes from my time spent bushwalking.

The Bones of the Garden

Initially we were presented with a steeply sloping, western facing block covered with Kikuyu grass.

The biggest step forward, and the step that set the grounding for the garden in its present state, was the hard landscaping.

This involved the creation of the pond, bringing in and positioning of rocks and creation of mounds to help hold water on the block in dry weather and to slow down the flow of water when heavy storms hit.

Hopefully the landscaping will remain the foundation, even when what is planted on top, changes.



The Meat on the Bones.

The plants that I refer to as ‘The Meat on the Bones’ are not necessarily the most flamboyant looking plants, but the ones that survive without too much fuss. These are the ones I use over and over again. They usually behave well, all seasons of the year, enjoy a prune and don’t suffer too badly during inclement weather and when nibbled at by the wallabies.

As the garden has aged I have learnt to be more selective with the plants I choose. They may not be the showiest of plants but they fit in with their surroundings and companions, and generally survive when planted with other plants with the same needs. eg. Plants that tolerate wet feet all planted together in damp areas, usually where the enviro cycle outlets are situated and plants that tolerate long periods without water, in the drier and higher parts of the garden, definitely far away from the reach of any spray from the enviro cycle. The ‘meat on the bones’ plants are:

Acacia cognata,

Agonis flexulosa nana (dwarf form)

Ammobium alatum

Astromyrtus dulcis

Astrastomyrtus inophylla

Baekea virgata (dwarf form)

Banksia blechnifolia



<i>Brachyscome multifida</i>	<i>Brachyscome segmentosa</i>
<i>Brachyscome melanocarpa</i>	<i>Brachyscome basaltica</i>
<i>Causarina nana</i> (dwarf form)	<i>Chryscephalum ramosissimum</i>
<i>Chryscephalum alatum</i>	<i>Crinum pedunculatum</i>
<i>Doryanthes excelsa</i>	<i>Grevillea lanigera</i>
<i>Grevillea sericea</i>	<i>Grevillea 'Moonlight'</i>
<i>Grevillea banksii</i>	<i>Grevillea 'Superb'</i>
<i>Helichrysum rutidolepis.</i>	<i>Lomandras</i> (Various forms)
<i>Scaevola 'Purple clusters'</i>	<i>Syzygium</i> (several types)
<i>Thryptomene saxicola payne</i>	<i>Themeda triandra</i> (prostrate form)
<i>Westringia longifolia</i>	

Clothing the Garden.

Others that I use as fillers (these I consider to be the dressing up plants) may not be as reliable but they add a bit of excitement to my gardening and present the opportunity to introduce new species. Just as we humans change our clothes with fashion to give us a different appearance these plants allow a change of mood in the garden, giving bright spots on bleak days, light in shady areas and the odd splash of colour with their flowering. They herald the changing of the seasons and add interest in unexpected places and an alternative food source for the wild life. They reflect the impulsive side of my personality. As they are usually small plants, if they do die, they do not leave a huge gap to be filled. They feed my need to create and give me endless pleasure searching for them when I go on nursery crawls. The most conspicuous dressing up in the garden at the moment comes from,

Epacris impressa
Epacris purpurascens
Epacris longifolia
Actinotus helianthus
Olearia lanuginosa
Dampiera trigona
Dampiera teres
Dampiera 'Mallee mauve'.
Leucophyta (Cape Leeuwin form)
Veronica formosa (blue)
Ptilotus exaltatus
Pycnosorus globulos
Eremophila nivea
Eremophila (prostate purple flowers)
Psuedanthos pimiloides



Change in the rainfall over the past two years has had a big impact, many correas died, they could not cope with being drowned in inches of rain after having adapted to eight years of drought. The removal of two large gums will offer new opportunities or challenges.

Our garden has six outlets for the enviro cycle, (all sewerage and greywater is put onto the garden). It has to adapt to periods of heavy water logging when visitors come, or after heavy rain and long periods of drying out when we are away for weeks on end and there is no output of grey water from the house.

The gums obviously would have soaked up huge amounts of this grey water. One area where a tree has been removed has thrived, as it is on the highest contour of our block. The other is at the lowest, and has always been a little prone to water-logging and prolific weed growth even with the gum soaking up huge amounts of water. This I imagine will be the challenge to conquer with the next wet spell, and over the coming months.

I had made a deliberate decision to keep the streetscape of the garden unobtrusive, no bright colours allowed there- I wanted it to look like it belongs to the local environment, being predominately green.

As you go up the block the plants get a little more lively and colorful. It is when you get to the very top that the yellow plants start to dominate. I am not a lover of yellow in the garden, I call yellow plants extroverts, loud, demanding attention, taking control of the view, making one focus on them immediately.

Chrysocephalum ramosissimum grows exceedingly well near the enviro cycle outlets. It has become one of the 'meat on the bones' of my garden, and as much as I would love to remove this yellow flowering plant, to create a more peaceful setting, I doubt I will ever be able to find another plant that adapts so well to the huge variations in moisture that it copes with.

Over the years I have learnt that the way I want the garden to appear, is not always the way the garden is able to cope, so sometimes I have to swallow my stubborn streak, and say Happy Birthday Garden, happy birthday *Chrysocephalum ramosissimum* you have served us well for ten years.