



## Hidden gardens

but not from Erika Mordek who knows where to look

What is it about gardening that is so addictive, nay, rewarding? The weather is warming and the blossoms are opening. Digging in the dirt with one's hands; I love the feel of fresh, crumbly earth through my fingers, friable soil full of goodness. It is a time for putting out seeds, planting seedlings, watching the miracle of life proceed over a few weeks, to be rewarded with flowers and produce after a time. I visit Claire's nursery and maybe there'll be a bargain or a rarity to be had at the hospital fete.

The light is changing. I think it is already harsher than it should be. I wake earlier and spend the extra time watering and talking to the plants before hitting the drive to the capital.

Although I can see the renewal from the car windows as I whizz by, it is dry still. This lack of good rain is hampering our normal cycle. Watkins has had a tough time with his compost; in Canberra the worms came in no time. Here it has taken a year for them to appear in his long compost heap.

I came back from Sydney to work with my parents in Araluen in 1991. I didn't know anything about gardening so I started my journey by the weekly mowing of 2 acres of garden. I lost a lot of weight pushing that lawn mower in the Araluen heat. And with it came a sense of achievement — as I walked along something happened, something changed. I joined the Braidwood Garden Club and became secretary for a while. We visited local gardens, had swap meets and went on excursions far

and wide to visit gardens and nurseries. At that time, the Green Corps and Landcare were also busy planting tree hedges and copses, and as I drive today I see them all grown, some twenty years later.

Gardening is a game of patience. At the Old Courthouse in Araluen my parents and I planted many trees. Of those that remain today, I can see that they needed 15 or 20 years to make an impact.

The Talla Dancers and I have just returned from a trip to the Micronesian Island of Pohnpei. It rained every day,



### GROWING

and flowers and fruit were there in their multitudes, ready for the picking. Our hosts, Kath and Peter, drove us around the tiny island, and we could see that flowers and shrubs formed the boundaries of different regions and clans. We don't have such strong and rapid growth here.

Getting back to 1991, that was when I met Sonia and Michelle and Lesley, and we watched the BBC's Geoff Hamilton's gardening video on creating cottage gardens. Apart from dancing, gardening became our thing. Cottage gardens are such an English/European tradition. But it seemed to rain more often in those days, and our ventures in growing plants from seed and planting English cottage flowers and bulbs were quite successful.

My trips with the garden club introduced me to smaller gardens that didn't appear on the Open Garden Scheme. That gave me the idea to take photos of all these small gardens hidden behind fences. I started taking photos of friends' gardens in Wilson St and Araluen St; Fran McGrath's garden with the great rose hedge; Valerie Herbst's garden in Bell's Creek; Theresa Lindwall's garden at Ballalaba. I documented these gardens on a website, now defunct.

Nearly twenty years later, I wonder what these gardens are like. Most have changed hands, and the fashion for English style gardens has waned. I still have packets of photos of these gardens, and it might just be time to revisit and tell the world what great gardeners we are here in Braidwood. ■



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WHAT'S HE ON ABOUT NOW?

Sorry about the delay. The winter issue of *BWD* disappeared into a time warp between here and the northern hemisphere.

It was a duty and privilege to accompany my partner Alison as she took a sabbatical from the A.N.U. to work in and visit poster workshops in L.A. and New York. We had a great time and some of our experiences are chronicled in the following pages.

I missed a few local events that had me sweltering regretfully in our apartment in Brooklyn. One was the death of Tony Coote, founder of Mulloon Creek Natural Farms. The land management movement lost a great and dedicated champion with his passing.

The other event was the D&S Motors 'so long Robbo and thanks for the decades of gruff but selfless service to our motoring community, weathering rain, hail and all manner of car-related catastrophes'.

I think transferring ownership of that building to the council was a good move to preserve the site as a gateway to the huge depot space that will in time become available for a better use. I think a 'D&S Arcade' would be of great value to the town and a fitting way to remember the family who gave so much to so many for so long.

There are even more nepotic stories in this issue than usual. A friend came across the National Parks newsletter from the '90s with the Reg Alder story; Reg was my father-in-law. His grandson Leo is also featured at the end of the mag with his cheap chicken story. That's about it for another year of news, views and blues.



#### ON THE COVER:

Hollie Bakerboljkovac flanked by her daughter Kiah and husband Bolj along with Dreamer the dog.

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