

La Trobe's Cottage Garden News

Spring Update – September 2013



The cottage with its new lattice

The lattice made by Australian Lattice Timber looks tremendous and has been specially made to replicate the old fashion type. Thanks to Max Joffe, who painted it charcoal to match the veranda posts and front door. It blends in nicely but it is still visible from a distance.

Winter is supposed to be a quite time in the garden when gardeners reflect, think about new projects and not much happens. Well, not so with us as we have been really busy for the past few months. With the help of Citywide, we constructed a temporary leaf compost heap, the lattice is up on the front veranda and has inspired us to put some more along the small front garden dining room veranda, the garden bench has been installed and Gardening Australia is hoping to visit.



Pelargonium cucullatum Tree pelargonium



Our beautiful new garden bench

We are so lucky, our garden bench has just been installed and it is very comfortable to sit on. It was made by Alastair Boell who is a talented craftsman and fine furniture maker. Alastair graduated from The University of Melbourne with a Bachelor of Education (Arts & Crafts) and from the North Bennet Street School, Boston, USA with a Diploma of Cabinet and Furniture Making. He kindly donated his time to make a copy from the sketch by La Trobe's cousin, Edward La Trobe Bateman, *Part of lower rockery at Jolimont, 1853*. The wood came from a Monterey cypress (*Cupressus macrocarpa*) that was blown over in a storm in the King's Domain. It is fantastic the tree has returned to the Domain in a new form. If you would like to see Alastair's work visit <http://www.mgfw.com.au>

What is Happening in the Garden at the Cottage?

Lorraine Finlay our Volunteer Property Manager suggested we put in more flax (*Phormium tenax*) which was a brilliant idea. We were going to plant the original species, but when Sandi our Volunteer Garden Coordinator saw how big the original plant gets she had second thoughts as in time the plants would have swamped the cottage - they grow up to 4 meters. So it was decided to put in a cultivar 'Pink Ribbon'. While we are trying to only use plants that were available to La Trobe, sometimes with heritage gardens you need to be flexible and adapt to what is practical. It was not a pleasant gardening day; it was freezing, windy and wet, but with the help of the Citywide gardener Kevin, we dug out the dull old *Viburnum tinus* along the side path and planted lots of new flax. Once they have settled in and grown up, it will look more like the garden as it was at Jolimont.



Newly planted Flax

Also, in the same bed we have finally planted two *Camellia japonica* 'Anemoniflora' (Waratah camellia) grown for us by the Growing Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens. They are only tiny but in years to come will look spectacular with their waratah shaped red flowers. For more information on the Waratah camellia visit the Hortus Camdensis web page hortuscampden.com/plants/view/camellia-japonica-l.-var.-like-waratah. In the NSW colonial database they are listed as early as 1843, grown at Camden Park by Sir William Macarthur.

The bulbs that Hancock's kindly donated to us have sprung up and are flowering beautifully. Combined with the purple flower of the *Hardenbergia violacea* 'Happy Wanderer' the garden looks stunning. Next year we hope to put in more yellow jonquils because they are so bright and cheery at the end of winter.

Mentioned in Garden Despatches

Finally, the old possum netting over the succulent bed needed to be replaced. We do not know what the possums did to it, but big holes had appeared and it was time for some new netting. Last year the netting cut off the lovely red winter flowers of the aloes, so when we replaced it with the help of Rick from Citywide we put in taller stakes to lift the netting off the flower spikes. Because Rick put in sturdier taller stakes it looks more permanent and funnily much better.

We had our first crop of heritage apples, all four of them but we do not know what happened to them. They were about as big as a golf ball but they disappeared. We do not know whether they were stolen or eaten by possums. Chris England from Merrywood Nursery in Baxter (Mornington Peninsula), who is one of the leading espaliers in Australia, kindly agreed to visit with a view to pruning the apples; however, all Chris needed to do was put in new stakes and tie down a few stems. So, our heritage apples are doing well; they may not end up in an "S" shape as in the sketch of the kitchen block by Edward La Trobe Bateman, but that will be acceptable nevertheless.

Sandi's Garden Chat



Buddleja salviifolia Sage bush

The *Buddleja salviifolia* (Sage bush/Buddleia) is an average bush for most of the year but in very late winter/early spring it is bursting with flowers and the perfume is to die for. Buddleias are also known as the butterfly bush and yet I never have seen a butterfly anywhere near one. Well, that was about to change as I was in the garden in late August and it was about 4.30pm in the afternoon and all of a sudden I noticed the air was full of Common Brown Butterflies and the buddleia was covered in them. I think they were eating the nectar from the flowers. It was the most beautiful thing to see.

You never stop discovering and learning things in horticulture. Recently I learnt that the early 1840s garden was a very good example of the Gardenseque style. This is a style that liked to show each individual plant at its best. After talking to John Hawker who is the Horticulturist for Heritage Victoria, I learnt that the early 1850s garden was a style called Romantic - designed so that the industrial worker could forget their dreary life and there was nothing that would remind them of everyday life. Paths were slightly overgrown, walks were gravel or dirt and there were many different types of plants. The Romantic garden was a place where emotions overtook reason and was designed to appeal directly to the soul. This style is poignant to La Trobe as we know he often escaped the stresses of his job by working in his garden.

The Friends of La Trobe's Cottage are celebrating spring and our regular Sunday afternoon openings began on Sunday 6th October. Come and see all our new improvements and enjoy a guided tour through the Cottage. You will even be able to sit on our lovely new garden bench and enjoy the tranquillity of the garden.

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Grevillea rosmarinifolia
subspecies *rosmarinifolia* syn. *G. Latrobei*
Rosemary grevillea



Anemone sp. Anemones



Acacia acinacea syn. *Acacia latrobei*
Gold-dust wattle



The Elm Bed in summer



Eremophila maculata Spotted Emu bush



View looking towards Dallas Brooks Drive



Moving the wine barrel in preparation
for installing the garden bench



Some of our Gardening volunteers