

La Trobe's Cottage Garden News 2021-2025

Winter 2025

Winter Working Bees featured the usual winter activities.



Shan plants some winter flowering primulas



Pamela lifts last season's herbs and replants



Graham trims the red geraniums



John rakes the leaves



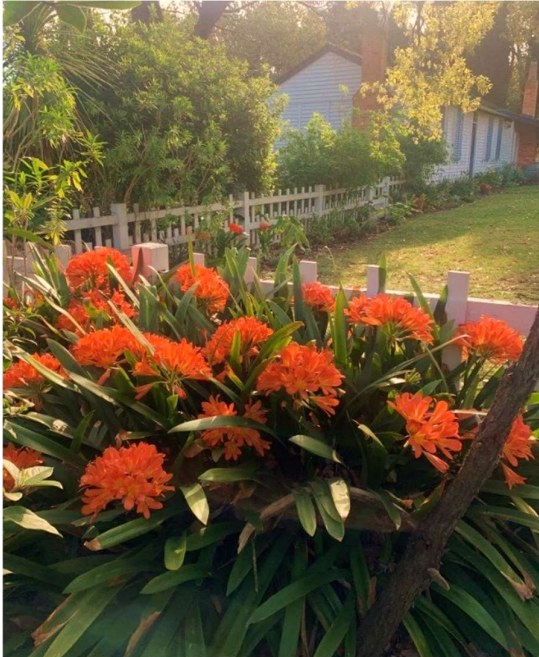
Rob undertakes the prickly job of clearing the leaves from the succulent bed



Troy and his Citywide team kept the lawns trimmed all winter.

Summer 2024 / 2025

The *Philadelphus coronarius* either side of the small gate entrance (at right) were in full flower in early summer. Our plants were grown by the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne; it was sent to La Trobe from Camden Nursery in 1851. The beautiful scent wafted over that part of the garden and welcomed visitors to the garden.



The cliveas were a vibrant orange-red this early summer, and made a great show.



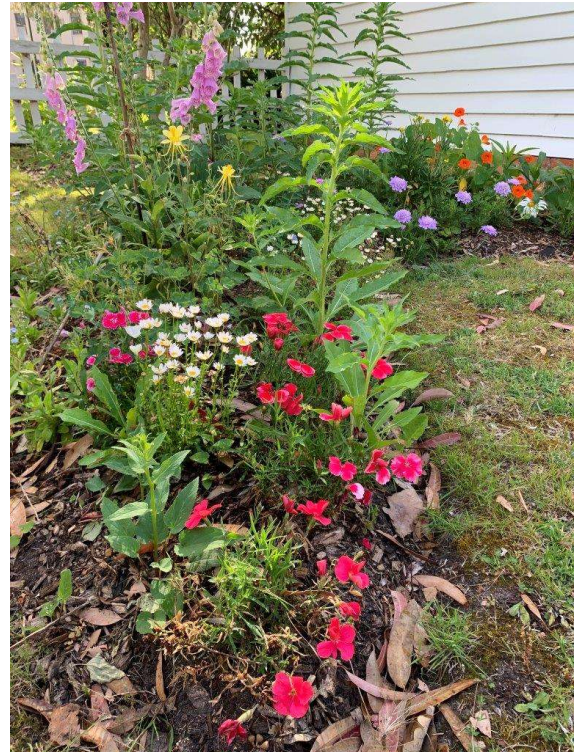
We've always had the cream/white *Lychnis coronaria alba*, planted by Sandi Pullman many years ago. It self-seeds every year. This year, a beautiful red *Lychnis coronaria* appeared in the rose bed – we were thrilled. Both varieties were available in Sydney from 1828 from the Botanic Garden.



As always in early summer, the geranium border, *Geranium x cantabrigiense* 'Biokovo' made a lovely show.



Disocactus ackermannii commonly called Red Orchid Cactus has been flowering well. This was available from Camden Nursery from 1850. La Trobe would have loved showing off its exotic blooms to his gardener friends in Melbourne.



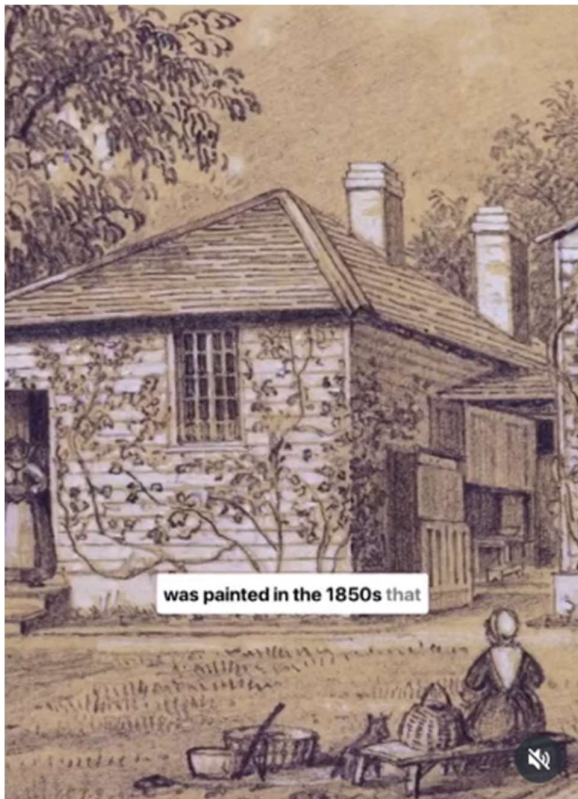
Rosa Louise Odier so pretty, and the crescent Cottage Garden bed looked good in early November.



We very much appreciated this summer the regular lawn mowing carried out by Citywide, the City of Melbourne contractors. Troy and his team seemed to enjoy keeping our courtyard garden looking trim and tidy – they not only cut the lawn but trim the edges and clear any leaves and dust from the paths.



In late summer there was a wonderful crop of apples, thanks again to the expert pruning provided by Chris England from Merrywood Nursery. Madi Ali, NTAV's Digital Content Advisor, made a feature of this for her Social Media posts. We talked about how the apple trees we have are old varieties, sourced from the Rippon Lea Heritage Apple Orchard, which were available to Melbourne Gardeners during the 1840s, and that they are espaliered, as La Trobe's were, at Jolimont. We love to promote our garden as a feature of our current site. Some visitors say they have never seen apples on trees before!



Screen shots from the Instagram posted by Madi in February.

Winter / Spring 2024

Winter working bees saw many volunteers complete winter pruning, and mulching. Darren Ball, our National Trust Horticulture Team Leader, brought a load of mulch for us and helped with some large pruning jobs.

A good turn-out for the
Winter/Spring Working Bee



Darren preparing to prune
the large Buddleia

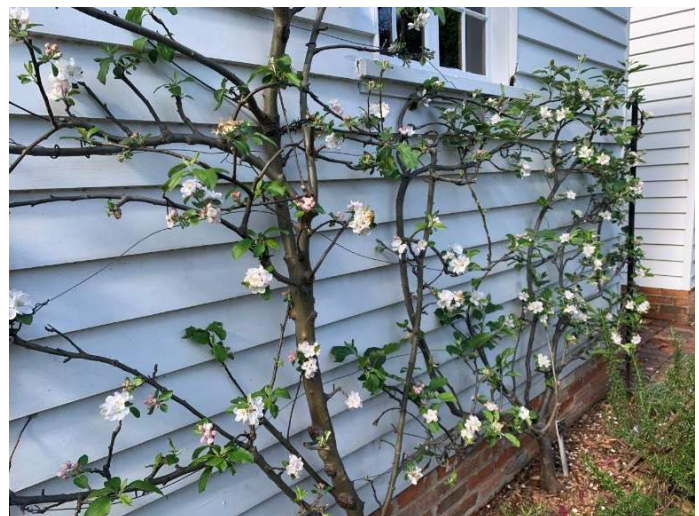


Tim tackles the mulch pile

Before we mulched we dug the rose bed and cleared it of a layer of matted roots on the surface of that bed. This was strangling the roses and would have prevented water and nutrients reaching the roots.

We were very grateful to Helen Lovell of Neutrog for a donation of four bales of Youflungdung, which she kindly delivered to La Trobe's Cottage. Graham and Helen spent a morning distributing this not only to the rose bed, but also other parts of the garden. We expect the roses to do very well this coming summer!

And harbingers of Spring – the beautifully espaliered apples covered in pretty blossom.



Summer 2023 / 2024

The flowering of the *Acacia latrobei* and the succulents heralded the arrival of summer.



The Crescent Bed – our showpiece Cottage Garden bed – looked its best in the early summer this year. It featured foxgloves, cornflowers, aquilegia, dianthus, daisies and hollyhocks!

The roses which we sourced from South Australia two years ago, following the discovery of the list of plants sent to La Trobe from Camden Nursery in 1851, are flowering! Here is 'Baronne Prevost'.



And our lovely old-fashioned hydrangeas are reflecting the colour of the Cottage shutters!

The garden created much interest from our Summer Season visitors

Winter / Spring 2023

The winter jobs got off to a fine start with a donation from Bunnings as part of their Community Activities Support program.



Chris England from Merrywood Nursery came in July to prune the apples.

Our scheduled third Tuesday working bee in August was very timely as we had heard in the days prior to this that Victoria's new Governor, Professor Margaret Gardner AC, wished to visit the Cottage on Friday 18 August. The volunteers ensured the garden looked its best, except for the lawn, which had not been mowed by Serco for many weeks. So Myron and his team came to the rescue and trimmed it beautifully the day before the visit.



The Hellebores were a very pretty sight this winter, and heralding the spring was the flowering of the *Correa lawrenceana* var. *latrobeana* (Mountain Correa), which was originally named *Correa latrobeana* by Mueller in 1853 – his specimen of it is held under that name in the Botanic Gardens Melbourne Herbarium.





We were sad to report that one of our much-loved *Acacia latrobei* (gold dust wattle) trees had to be removed. It was planted by Sandi Pullman in 2011, having been propagated by Royal Botanic Gardens (and previous La Trobe's Cottage) volunteer, Jenny Happell.

All acacias have a life: it had collapsed from the base of the plant, and there was no alternative but to remove it. There are three other *Acacia latrobeis* still in the garden.

An August delight is our pair of old variety camellias. The *Camellia japonica* 'Anemoniflora' (Waratah camellia) is very special, as we now know that La Trobe had this growing in his Jolimont garden: it was in the list of plants sent to him from Camden Nursey in 1851. Sandi Pullman had planted it in the garden, grown by the Growing Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens, before we knew of this history. She wrote in Garden News September 2013: '... 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. In the NSW colonial database they are listed as early as 1843, grown at Camden Park by Sir William Macarthur. For more information on the Waratah camellia visit the Hortus Camden web page



hortuscamden.com/plants/view/camellia-japonica-l.-var.-like-waratah.'

And this is what this webpage says:

History at Camden Park

'Like Waratah' and the rose coloured camellia are included in a number of lists of plants sold but never appear in the catalogues. Macarthur describes 'like Waratah' as a variety from China in a letter to George Anstey of Melbourne to whom he sent plants.

The other old camellia currently blooming is *Camellia japonica* 'Welbankii', again grown by the Growing Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne. It is listed as available from Camden from 1843.



March 2023

The garden is taking on its Autumn glory. The *Plectranthus Ecklonii* and the Japanese Windflowers are looking superb as always at this time of the year.



Apples January 2023

After a promising start to the cropping season, when the apples fruited well in response to Chris England's expert pruning, sadly all the apples were gone by harvesting time. While it was clear earlier on that the possums had enjoyed a few, a more sinister cause for their complete disappearance over a few days was unfortunately apparent.



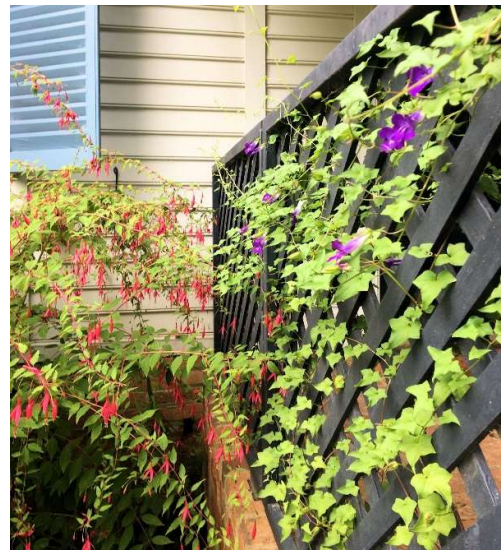
Asclepias curassavica

An interesting specimen has been planted just outside the Cottage's western fence. Robert Wright, who grows rare plants in his small suburban garden, gave us *Asclepias curassavica*, Tropical Milkweed. It is native to tropical regions of the Americas, and is said to attract butterflies. It was cultivated in the Botanic Garden Sydney from 1827, so may have been known to La Trobe.

The replacement *Muarandya* is doing well (see September 2021). Seeds were taken from the dead plant we found in September 2021, and the seedlings which grew were cossetted with all care, and one was finally planted in December 2022. It seems to feel at home as it is growing vigorously over the lattice on the front porch. Another one has been planted on the fence outside the dining room.

This is the plant Mrs Perry (wife of the first Bishop of Melbourne) saw growing at Jolimont when she wrote on 25 January 1848:

'We have only seen two creepers in flower yet, and they were both at Mr [La Trobe]'s; the one was my pet, the purple mirandia barcliana, which used to hang so gracefully from the baskets in our garden at Cambridge.'



Maurandya barclayana
March 2023



The contrasting autumn colours of the *Leonotis leonurus* and the *Plectranthus ecklonii* are providing a beautiful show just outside the fence.

A couple of big Working Bees, in February and March, had the garden all set for the La Trobe Society event on 19 March, celebrating La Trobe's 222nd Birthday. Cottage guide, Catherine Gay, provided a fascinating talk about the samplers held in the Cottage, with the garden providing a pretty backdrop.



November 2022

Our new season got off to a great start on Sunday 2 October with our Garden Day, celebrating the garden in all its Spring glory.



Babiana, grown by
La Trobe



Winter 2022

A winter's Working Bee was held on 19 July and we were delighted that Chris England from Merrywood Nursery came to prune our apples.

The roses were also pruned, and the garden tidied.



Apples pruned by Chris England
seen at right at Morning Tea



Clockwise from Chris at right:
Neville, Carolyn, Alexis, Pamela,
Ellen, John, Rob, Shan.



Neville admiring his
great work

Pamela and Rob discuss the
finer points of rose pruning



April 2022



We have now labelled all the Special Plants we have in the garden – these are plants that we know La Trobe had because they are on list of plants sent to him either from the Sydney Botanic Garden in 1844, from his friend Ronald Gunn in Tasmania in 1844, or from Camden Nursery near Sydney in 1851. The location of these Significant Plants in La Trobe's Cottage Garden can be seen in the document at www.folc.latrobesociety.org.au/documents/SignificantPlants.pdf

January/February 2022

For the first time ever, possums ate our apples. We didn't net them, however, and left them to the possums.



One of the plants sent to La Trobe from the Botanic Garden in Sydney in 1844 was *Justicia alba*. I was pleased to see this plant for sale at the Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens plant sale last December. We planted it outside the dining room and it settled in well immediately, flowering only two months later, in February.

November 2021

We had our first post-Covid

Working Bee on 9 November, to prepare the garden for the late start to our Sunday season on Sunday 14 November. By that time the roses were blooming – Arthur de Sansal, and even our new Baronne Prevost. The pot of Violas was looking spectacular.



Arthur de Sansal



Baronne Prevost



September 2021

Our *Maurandya barclayana* or as we call it 'Mrs Perry's Creeper', which has been hanging gracefully over the lattice near the front entrance, is dead. It appears that an animal has jumped onto the netting supporting its stem, and caused it to break off. Fertilizer was applied to its stump, in the hope that it may shoot, and seeds were collected from the dead plant in the hope that we may get a few small plants next spring. As Sandi Pullman had pointed out, Mrs. Perry - the wife of Melbourne's first Anglican Bishop who lived in La Trobe's Upper Cottage - mentioned seeing the creeper growing at Jolimont.



Maurandya barclayana November 2020



Maurandya barclayana September 2021

The four heritage roses (2 x Coupe' d'Hébé and 2 x Baronne Prévost) arrived just in time to get them planted before the lockdown which started on 5 August. They are just starting to shoot.

August 2021

Garden Volunteer Ellen took some photos of the (nearly) Spring garden as she walked past La Trobe's Cottage in lockdown.



Melianthus and *cordyline*



Chaenomeles (Flowering Quince)



Ipheion (Spring Starflower)

Architectural succulents

Grevillea rosmarinifolia



Acacia latrobei
(truly 'Gold Dust Wattle')

Now take a seat under the
watchful eye of the perky aloe

June 2021

The garden Working Bee on 18 May enabled us to get the garden looking its best for the opening on 23 May. Our National Trust gardener Eliasha Muldowney attended with two colleagues and they cut back some large boughs of the *Correa*, *Prunus* and *Viburnum* behind the Cottage. Then the Working Bee on 22 June was dedicated to pruning roses, apples and spireas. We were most grateful to heritage rose expert Geoff Crowhurst for attending and demonstrating how to prune these heritage plants. We lifted some Arthur de Sansal roses to make room for the Coupe d'Hebe and Baronne Prevost roses soon to arrive from South Australia. These were on the list of plants sent to La Trobe from Camden Nursery near Sydney in 1851. The Arthur de Sansal roses, which have bloomed with their deep maroon flowers for many years, are now grouped slightly closer together, in order to provide a good show.



Geoff pruning with Graham and Carolyn

We found that the ground cover *Crucianella* (now *Phuopsis*) *stylosa* (Crosswort), which had been growing in between the roses, had been suffocating the roses with its thick matted roots. This was on the list of plants sent to La Trobe by his friend Ronald Gunn in Van Diemen's Land, in April 1844. It flowered beautifully last summer, and we wondered why it isn't a more popular garden plant today. Now we know - we've had to remove it.



Tim preparing ground for new roses



Kathy pruning spireas



The list of plants sent to La Trobe from Camden Nursery near Sydney in 1851 includes four varieties of begonia. Marilyn Watson of the Melbourne Begonia Society grows these four varieties at her begonia garden in Upper Ferntree Gully and has kindly donated a plant of each variety; she planted these with Helen in late April. One of them originates from Mexico – perhaps seeds of this plant were included in those he sent from Mexico to Mme de Pourtales in 1834. We are most grateful to Marilyn; we will treasure these and look forward to seeing them develop in their new home.