

## Irene Hastings - June 2010



I grew up in the industrial North West of England during the war and post-war years, my experience of gardening in those years was following the milkman's horse and collecting the manure to pop on the struggling rambler rose at the front door.

At 18 I left home to go to Manchester to study nursing - General and Paediatric, living in nurses' homes and eventually bed-sits - no gardening there!

Moving on to Birmingham I studied Midwifery and eventually qualified as a Health Visitor. This involved working in high immigrant areas, visiting families from mainly the West Indies and Pakistan.

The West Indians, in particular, were happy, welcoming people living in overcrowded conditions - and no gardens there either.

In 1966 I came out to Australia as a ten pound Pom and after a short spell in Adelaide I worked in Port Pirie as a Clinic Sister with the Mothers and Babies Health Association.

I lived in the attached unit, which had a back yard with a garden. I saw flowers I'd never seen before and felt sorry for the Sturt Desert Pea growing in the gravel driveway, intentionally as I later discovered - I gave it lots of water day after day and succeeded in killing it off!

I married in Port Pirie and Don and I had a house in the suburbs - I didn't get involved in gardening much, I soon had two children as well as two teenage stepsons.

In 1984 Don died and I did the weekly lawn mowing and watered the garden full of fruit trees and ornamentals, all a bit of a chore.

I moved on to Adelaide in 1985 and bought a house in Magill, working at the Julia Farr Centre as a Sister.

My children by this stage were completing their education at Norwood High.

I met my good friend Jan at work, she was on her own, too and an avid gardener and I caught the bug.

I developed a lovely cottage garden (remember when water was free, or as good as?) and I spent hours picking Jan's brains and reading gardening books.

By this time I had met Chris and we decided to move to the country in 2001.

The Magill house was put on the market and sold quickly, though not because of the house, which was in need of quite a bit of renovation by the new owners - they remarked on the 'lovely garden', which made me very proud.

We have a couple of acres out in Ashbourne, half of which houses two sheep and two alpacas and a hen run with four residents who, as free rangers, are increasingly keen on investigating any new plants going in...

The garden side is still a work in progress, since we built on a flattish block that was part of a sheep and horse paddock.

The fast growing shelter belt trees are gradually being replaced by slower growing, more attractive individuals.

So we have planted and are adding, lots of trees and large shrubs, a mixture of native and exotic, around 60 at the last count.

We have five water tanks for household use, fire fighting and the garden, there being no supply laid on, but we do seem to have plenty of water, however, and are able to indulge ourselves in a few plants one would not refer to as water-wise.

To add interest we have two contrasting soil types, beautiful loam and crummy cracking clay (not crumbly or crumbly, really crummy).

We've planted a beech tree in the clay. Why not?

As the trees grow bigger, as the years go by, it becomes more rewarding and we look forward to seeing how the property evolves in the years ahead.

---ooOoo---



• Strathalbyn Garden Club '0' birthdays •  
Gail Smith 50 and right, Anne Feast 70,  
pictured with club president Caddy Huxter.



• Congratulations •  
Anne and Jeff Feast  
of Clayton Bay  
have just celebrated  
Anne's 70th birthday  
and their 50th  
wedding anniversary.



• May Bloom Competition •  
Cut flower - Margaret Jenkins - Japanese Iris,  
Pot Plant - Hilary Collins - Mammillaria,  
Native - Margaret Croser - Eremophila Oppositifolia.