

Jan Muller - July 2010



Gardening!!! I always believed that I was born with two brown thumbs, while my older sister had two lush green thumbs, inherited from our mother.

We lived on a dairy farm at Meadows, so we had a gorgeous supply of good bore water, plenty of rain-water (they say it rains at Meadows for six months of the year and the other six months the rain drips out of the trees) and a continuous supply of cow manure. We used the grey water for flowers and shrubs.

The front garden was beautiful, with a mauve wisteria spreading the full length of the front verandah, roses surrounding the lawn, lots of bulbs - daffodils, snowdrops, freesias and jonquils, with blue and white agapanthus lining the driveway.

Our back yard was a delight, with many trees - fig, mulberry, almond, peach, apples, pear and many citrus trees.

There was a banana passion fruit vine over a trellis, gooseberry, red and black currants, raspberries, strawberries, loganberries and blackberries - both cultivated and wild.

Dad ploughed the ground with the Fergie tractor, Mum planted the plants and sowed the seeds, while my sister and I weeded, scraped the paths, helped with the watering and picked the produce.

As well as the back yard, Dad ploughed a small paddock and turned it into a vegie garden for potatoes, tomatoes, carrots, parsnips, beetroot, asparagus, beans, peas, pumpkin, bush marrow (stuffed were delicious), rock melons, water melons, cucumbers, sweet corn and more.

We all helped to make preserves, jams, sauces and relish, using produce from the garden.

Word spread around that visitors to the Filmer's farm never left with an empty car, as my parents loved to share fruit, vegetables, milk and cream.

My sister's boy friend, visiting one weekend and to make a good impression on our parents, asked to help with preparations for the evening meal.

Mum gave him a bucket and fork and asked him to dig some potatoes. After quite a while he came in saying there were no potatoes, but on checking it out, Mum found a whole row of beans dug up.

However, he became a much loved son-in-law, even though he didn't know the difference between beans and potatoes!

As for my garden, while teaching on Yorke Peninsula I met and married a man who loved gardening, so consequently when we lived at Maitland, Warooka (where our first son was born), Stenhouse Bay (where our second son was born) and then Meadows, there was always a great vegie garden - my man dug, planted and staked, I weeded, watered and picked.

The boys were not very interested in the garden, but enjoyed cutting the acre of lawn on the ride on mower at the Meadows property - their own gardens have been quite a picture, so something has rubbed off from their Dad.

In 1989, when I moved to Strathalbyn on my own, I inherited a lovely garden, there were plenty of shrubs, ornamental trees, a peach and a lemon somehow I seemed to be able to kill many plants.

Since retiring (thought it would be a quiet lifestyle, but not so, it is very busy and very enjoyable) I have changed and keep altering the garden to make it easy care.

GUESS WHAT, my brown thumbs are turning green!

The biggest change was to replace the dead lawn in the front under the palm tree with gravel, extend the beds and edge them with rocks and have loads of soil brought in to mix with the clay.

I have not planned the layout, but just planted whatever takes my fancy.

I now enjoy planting cuttings, bulbs, seeds and new plants, mainly from friends, markets and the Garden Club.

I am collecting succulents, some in pots and some in the garden, but the vegie garden is not too brilliant, so I am building up the soil with compost - that's my story!

I have three small rainwater tanks for the garden, plus two large tanks connected to the house, so the garden gets a mixture of rain and mains water.

There are two significant trees which I treasure, a palm in the front which gives me shade in hot weather and a huge golden ash in the back yard, which is a lovely shape and the grandies love climbing it.

I stand under it and say "I own a tree."

When I was a child I said that I'd never live in Strathalbyn, because it was too hot, dry and dusty, but now I love the area and I am blessed to be living where I am.

A plug for Ross Roses:

In their 2010 catalogue I found a 'Buffalo' rose - my family has been searching for many years for this rose, which my ancestors brought out from England in the Buffalo.

After the Garden Club on Friday I went to Willunga and bought two roses, hopefully they will give me many years of beautiful pink blooms.