

Batchelor Open Gardens 17 Pinaroo Crescent

Welcome to 17 Pinaroo Crescent, Batchelor, thank you for visiting. I hope you enjoy your time in all three gardens that are open around Batchelor this weekend. In addition to the open gardens there is also the Batchelor markets on Sunday, and a Sports Expo on the oval sponsored by Coomalie Council. And don't miss a visit to the local Batchelor Museum where there are some fantastic displays of the incredibly rich history of this pretty little town and the local area. And if that isn't enough then there is always a visit to the waterfalls and rockpools of Litchfield National Park awaiting you.

The house at 17 Pinaroo Crescent was built in the 1950s as part of staff accommodation for the Rum Jungle uranium mine. The house next door was the mine manager's house and this house was for the assistant mine manager. There is a photo of it taken in the 50's in one of the displays at the museum. This old style tropical house was designed with Darwin's climate in mind. The banks of louvres allow for constant air flow. It's a delight to live in. As one tradesman who worked on the house recently commented, 'they don't make them like this anymore'. Underneath this elevated house is particularly cool even during the dreaded 'buildup'.

In 2012 I returned to live here after working overseas for 10 years to find a garden that was suffering from a severe case of neglect. The first major job was to deal with the many problem trees. Branches from a ficus growing next to the driveway were starting to poke through the bedroom window, the roots from another ficus growing near the back fence had found their way to the laundry drain and blocked it, a huge African mahogany was not only overhanging my house but also the neighbors, and a rain tree in the middle of the backyard was trying to find it's way in through the kitchen window. After the removal of these trees and quite a few others including some fishtail palms, I set about digging, or pulling out by hand, literally thousands of African mahogany seedlings and small trees. Many, many carpentaria palms were also dug out. The north west corner also required some major attention. A section about 20 meters by 10 meters was totally taken over by mother-in-law tongue. These were all dug out by hand. Some remnants of these plants can still be seen along the back fence line.

Once the above work was more or less completed, which took well over a year, I began planting. Determined not to make mistakes of the past, I tried to be much more judicious about plant selection, often doing research on particular plants, though I have to admit that was not always the case. One thing I have attempted with the garden is to create a colorful visual experience. I think there are some sections during certain times of the year where there has been some moderate

success with that aim. I have also deliberately not set out to create a 'garden type'. There are some sections of the garden dominated by natives, other sections featuring exotics, and there is a section I call the rain forest, but in truth that is in name only. And of course there is the 'never never corner', so named because I never never go there. Every garden has one!

The mulching regime includes 100 bales of hay annually and as well, all fallen palm fronds are cut up along with any fallen branches, leaf litter and lawn clippings. No garden waste goes to the tip.

Batchelor is renowned for its birdlife. I have certainly tried to create a bird friendly environment with many bird attracting plants, especially grevilleas, some of which have managed to survive the white ants, and other natives. A number of birdbaths have been placed around the garden, which are constantly taken advantage of by any number of species, but always dominated by the bower birds, the quintessential bath tub bullies. Just recently I have noticed for the first time ibis taking advantage of one of the birdbaths. Despite the open house policy for the birds there is an exception to the rule. Unfortunately the scrub fowls refuse to take the almost constant not so subtle hints that they are not welcome.

One of the problems of visiting a garden on any one day is that you only see a snapshot of it at a particular point in time. To overcome this issue I have created a photo album highlighting various aspects of the garden and plants when they are at the best, or close to their best, over the past couple of years. There are a couple of copies of this album on tables in the back garden. Enjoy.



DENMAR DOWNS EVA VALLEY

The house here was commenced in 2010. The pool went in around November 2011.

After this the rear verandah and paving of the pool area took place.

During this time plants were purchased and propagation of these took place.

This was because of the decision to only allow a budget of \$50.00 per month for the garden.

At this juncture the “garden” was part of the pool area only. So over the next few months plant pots kept appearing and some were planted out during the year. At that stage the pool area did not extend from the rear of the house as much as it does now. Later, two more lines of garden were added as the garden beds began to fill and hubby cursed the lines of plants in pots. Somewhere had to be found quickly to accommodate the abundance of propagated plants.

The only other “garden” at the time of commencing the poolside gardens was where the TWO coconut palms are located. These two coconut palms had self-seeded in what was, at the time of building, a compost heap.

Bananas and pawpaws were planted later, once the house and paving of poolside area was completed.

In 2014 the entertainment patio area was paved and completed with a shade cloth covering. This was replaced the following year with a fixed roof and later a small fence was added.

This then allowed for MORE garden and later a pathway, etc.

Lawns were, by then, establishing with trees being planted along the upper driveway near the house going in during 2014/5.

Another garden had created down the side of the lean to next to the workshop shed.

Another garden was then commenced opposite the “lean-to garden”

And then like Topsy in the book “Uncle Tom’s Cabin”, - the gardens “ just grewed!”

Working within the budget has been hard at times but costs of plants were reduced by exchanging with friends and acquaintances. I thank all these people for their contributions.

This method of acquisition then left some funds to be expended on tools and finally IRRIGATION!. Whilst the irrigation is still ongoing it has freed up my time a little to create more gardens. Hand watering was quite time consuming.

Nearly all the gardens are still “under construction.” Although there is over 100 different types of plants in the gardens, it is envisaged to add, perhaps, some more expensive or different specimens now that the budget has covered the irrigation. Paving used between areas of garden were laid to aid the maintenance of these garden areas and were not designed as actual pathways. However, notwithstanding that they are narrow, they can be used as such with some care.

405 Litchfield Park Road, Rum Jungle

Around 20 years ago I moved to Rum Jungle from Kununurra.

At that time the gardens were “sort of” established with a plethora of trees, especially palms.

The fishtail palms, which were particularly prolific, have been slowly culled over the last few years as they had grown to be gigantic, often competing with each other. Their remaining root systems has made the ongoing development of the garden extremely difficult which is the reason many plants are in pots instead of being planted out.

Being from Western Australia, Boabs [three] were planted and are, now, quite tall and strong. These can be found behind the bougainvillea bush as one turns off the main road to enter the property.

Mango trees are in abundance [and good shade for parking], before visitors arrive at the house gate, resplendent with a metal dragon. Crossing the left-hand side of the centrally positioned lawn and entering onto the deck of the house via a set of steps, one can walk along the verandah and look down on bird’s nest ferns and many bromeliads and statues. There are also many plants in pots scattered around the deck and verandah as well as in the main garden.

This garden has a variety of plants which are planted individually [whether in pots or not], with the garden mulched with hay and wood chip.

A feature of the garden is the ornaments and statues etc, that are dotted throughout the area and add interest and a surprise element.

As with most gardens it is a “labour of love” and also a “work in progress”

The central lawn has a perimeter of logs and rocks, gathered from close by, which delineates between grass and flower beds.

There is a nursery near the main gate where new plants are propagated, either for planting or for sale or exchange with other gardeners.

With a central lawn, surrounded by greenery, the ambience is one of coolness and tranquillity. The views from the deck suggest an air of peacefulness and relaxation. The garden has a touch of Asian, Balinese or Indonesian influence. It is a tropical paradise.