

Ed's Fruit Oasis

Welcome to our garden and we hope you appreciate the beauty of a garden that has evolved rather than been planned. As such it has provided relief from our busy structured lives and a touch of magic as plants just appear.

We were the second tenants at No 15 moving in on 28/11/1978. At that stage there was an imposing Grollo house and lots of lawn. Some neglected lady finger and plantain bananas were in the back corner and in the front were cacti which needed a wide berth as they were very family unfriendly. The saving grace was a wonderful vegetable garden next door which made us realise what possibilities we had.

On that day and on each anniversary, we took photos of the garden from the same place across the road. After two years the house was invisible from the street! We now understood what gardening in the tropics meant.

Over the ensuing 40 years the garden underwent many changes leading up to the rain forest we lived in for 25 years until Cyclone Marcus came to visit in March 2018. Watching 40 years of garden collapse around you is very heart breaking, but it created a new challenge and allowed us to create a garden demonstrating what you can do in a short time.

We have aimed to support the garden with as much natural and recycled material as possible. Rocks, stumps and logs become edges and old pavers become new paths. Other stumps are shaped then used as pot stands. The log piles themselves have a dual purpose, Firstly, providing shelter for reptiles and frogs and secondly being a ready supply of material for new developments. You may chance to see a copper skink, gecko, tata or Merten's water monitor as you wander around.

We have attracted the full gamut of reptiles including pythons to the garden, frogs on mass, birds of all sorts including more than our fair share of bush hens. We wake up to the bird sounds from doves, curlews, drongos and cockatoos. At times during the day there can be 15 cockatoos perched on one spindly palm enjoying a swing.

The garden features a large chook yard (some visitors refer to it as the Taj Mahal of chook yards) with a number of very friendly hens. Please feel free to visit the chooks Children may even spot a few eggs.

There are numerous water features hidden among the plants. Some have fish and others have lilies and reeds. We find sitting by the water very relaxing.

As mentioned before, the garden has little formal structure and many of the palms and all of the paw paw trees are left to grow where they germinate. Paw paws are left until their sex and quality of fruit is determined and not many

males are kept. So as you walk around you will find many pineapples and paw paw trees between the palms. There are even three self-sown jack fruit trees.

Around the back there are raised kitchen herb and vegetable gardens. They feature the usual herbs (parsley, sage, thyme, chives, chillies and basil) as well as eating ginger, turmeric, lemon grass, kaffir lime leaves and curry leaf.

On the driveway side of the garden towards the back there is a 'soil mine' which is intended to 'buy off' the bush hens as well as create a ready supply of potting mix. The hens do use it as we intended but don't seem to get the idea that it is supposed to be trade off to leave other parts of the garden alone. A significant amount of time is spent countering their scratchings or developing new ways to frustrate their efforts to dig it all out onto pathways. In the past year at different times we have had 4 very small chicks choosing our place to grow up. Lovely but grrr.

One advantage of Cyclone Marcus was that a number of plants that had disappeared into the ground reappeared because of the light now reaching them. We now have spectacular alocassias, anthereums and calatheas.

Shrubs and other decorative plants are placed randomly around the garden to give contrasts in leaf shapes, colours and textures. The bromeliads provide a small insight into the colours and sizes available. Other plants have short displays of flowers; such as the dracinas, peace lilies, happy plants and orchids. There are hibiscus, gingers, heliconias and desert roses dotted around providing some brilliant colours at different times of the year.

Two plants of particular interest which only bloom on odd occasions are the voodoo lilies (also known as snake plants) and the bat flower plant. Both are present in the garden but are presently dormant.

The garden features various aralias including the dinner plate, common and variegated ones. There are also a wide range of cordylines of all styles and leaf colour abounding.

Spathyphilums are placed strategically around the garden as they are the first plants to wilt if the watering system goes awry. They also provide a lovely array of white flowers on a regular basis. Among other plants there are also a range of varieties of dieffenbachias, crotons, mock crotons, aggies and various lilies and cycads.

As many of you know Ed used to sell dried and fresh fruit at Nightcliff markets for 18 years. He still dries fruit and there is some on sale today as well as plants.

Refreshments are provided by the Girl Guides.