

Hakuna matata means no worries in Swahili.

The name reflects our African connections and the relaxed feel that we hope having created in our house and garden. This is the second time we have opened the garden through the Open Garden scheme, the first time in 2009.

When we moved into the house in March 2003, the garden was dominated by *Carpentaria* palms and golden canes. It did have some well-established trees, like the frangipanis and a couple of nice feature plants like the cycad in the front yard. There were very few other plants, and the back garden was all grassed, with an iconic Hills Hoist as a feature where the pool is now.

This was our first house and, having lived in apartments in London before moving to Australia, it was the novelty of having space to play with that inspired me to start gardening. I had no prior experience, and the first few years were a matter of trial and error as I worked out which plants were happy where. The soil was not great quality and choked with palm roots. I couldn't tell you how many tons of Shoal Bay mulch has been spread on the garden over the years, but I now have rich garden beds that the plants love and only needs a good mulch once a year. I now mainly use mahogany bark mulch (courtesy of Pete at [Ace Arbor Services](#)).

The garden has changed significantly over the years as we have added to the original house – firstly with the addition of the veranda and pool. Then, as the family grew, we built the granny flat which is known as The Pavilion. When we're not using it for visitors, [we rent it out on AirBnB](#) and our guests always comment on the garden as one of their favourite things about the place.

The most recent additions were the GIANT shed at the front of the house and the fire pit where the old shed used to be in the back yard. The fire pit design is inspired by our time living in Southern African, we love cooking over the coals and when you sit by the fire on a clear dry season night you don't feel like you're in the suburbs at all.

We moved interstate for a couple of years in 2018, we were unlucky with some of our tenants during that time and the garden was virtually destroyed, and in mid-2020 Power and Water had to rip out the entire back garden bed to replace the sewer pipe. So most of what you see in the garden (except for the big established trees and Bismarck palms), has been replanted and nurtured over the last 3 years. I propagate some plants (like the dracaenas), others come mainly from [Paradise Nursery](#). Alana and her team are always knowledgeable and helpful.

The garden has evolved without a grand plan in mind, but I wanted to create a tropical sanctuary, a sense of privacy and I plant to complement the architecture. Lighting is important - the feature plants and statues are lit up at night. I garden by instinct; I don't know all the names of the plants (especially the latin ones!) but I know what they need to thrive. I love all the different colours and patterns of foliage available in tropical plants. It is not a water-wise garden, it needs a lot of water to keep it looking its best. It also needs a lot of work; I am in the garden every weekend which I find really therapeutic – although probably more so in June than in November!

We hope you enjoy the space as much as we do, thank you for visiting.

Nick

September 2023

p.s. apologies for the gnomes, a friend of ours sneaks in and plants them in the garden.