

Tracey's garden – Angela Morgan

In 2002 bushfires swept through the districts around Glenorie, Maroota, Berowra, Kenthurst, Brooklyn, and Wisemans Ferry. Tracey and Les Fleischner's house at Forest Glen was right in the path of the fires. Les stayed to defend their house, putting out spot fires once the fire front had passed. Despite some damage, with the help of local volunteer fire brigades the house was secured, with furniture taken out of the damaged areas and stored on the verandah.

However when Tracey and Les returned the next morning they discovered that the fire had somehow reignited overnight, and their home was completely destroyed.

On an overcast Saturday afternoon in October 2024 the Sydney group of HRIA visited Tracey and Les' property in Dural, and the garden they created following this disaster.

Tracey has always loved roses, she is sentimental, attached to their beauty. But she is also practical and observant, admiring how heritage roses performed in her friends' gardens.

'They do so well, especially the Teas, which will flower for eleven and a half months, and are covered in flowers even in winter.'



I like their form and size, their flower shape – those unruly petals – and how they fit into the garden. I don't want to grow one flower on a single stem. I want big bunches to take inside. One stem of heritage roses can fill a vase, and the flowers last so well.'

Establishing the new garden took time, battling against wallabies, possums and rabbits. Planting tough plants like salvias, not so attractive to the local wildlife, gave Tracey a start. A major step forward was building a substantial fence. With this protection Tracey was able to grow her roses.

Crépuscule – growing just inside the entrance gate

The first heritage rose Tracey planted was **Crépuscule** (Noisette, 1904), a gift from a friend. Over time Tracey grew more and more heritage roses, discovering they were a better fit in her garden. This led her to join HRIA. Tracey has been a member of Creative Gardeners Club, founded by Mary Davis, for 25 years and is now the President. She was also a founding member of UNSH – the Upper North Shore and Hills group of the Rose Society of NSW. She enjoys sharing plants, knowledge and experience with her fellow members.

Tracey has been making this garden for more than twenty years. Her journey from pot plants in Leichhardt and Thornleigh, then native bushland and destruction at Forest Glen has led her here, where this garden, sheltered within its protective fences, facing north-west, allows her roses to bask in sunshine all day. Stone walls in a long curve create beds at different heights, full of a mix of roses and lovely cottage garden plants and shrubs. These beds draw the eye along and then up, where the topmost branches of gum trees are silhouetted against the sky.



Tracey grows both heritage and modern roses, with **Crépuscule** flowering at the entrance gate, and David Austin's English Style Roses **Tamora**, **Crown Princess Margareta** (on left) and **Pat Austin** (on right) all welcoming us on our visit.



Garden beds line both sides of the driveway and a path and lawn lead to the shady verandah in front of the house (*below*). A white wooden archway and supports for pillar roses add height and interest. The apricot-coloured David Austin rose **Bathsheba** grows on a pillar, and **Fourth of July** (red-striped Large-Flowered Climber, 1999) gives a completely different effect on the arbour. (*Below, R. & far L. respectively*)



Orlaya grandiflora (white laceflower) gives an edge of frothy white flowers along the path and cool splashes of white throughout the garden.



Amongst the heritage roses thriving in Tracey's garden are a wonderful plant of Alister Clark's **Squatter's Dream** (Hybrid Gigantea 1923) (*on right*), while Lamarque (Tea Noisette 1830) and a white species Banksia rose display their vigour and abundance covering sturdy timber pergolas. Covering another pergola, the 1925 Hybrid Musk



Photo: Angela Morgan

Cornelia was covered in hundreds of blossoms on our visit, making a glorious display. Tracey also grows that other beautiful Hybrid Musk **Buff Beauty** (1939), and the Tea roses **Monsieur Tillier** (1891) and **Comtesse de Labarthe** (1857)

(often sold as 'Duchesse de Brabant') with her exquisite cupped pink blooms.



Cornelia – on the pergola and close-up

On Tracey's wish list are **Blush Rambler** (Rambler 1903), **Étoile de Lyon** (Tea 1876), **Irène Watts** (China 1895) and **Mrs Dudley Cross** (Tea 1907). Tracey says the Tea roses and Hybrid Musks do the best here.

Tracey learned gardening wisdom from the experienced gardeners in her garden clubs. Advice is passed around, plant combinations admired, successes and failures observed. Cuttings are shared and gifted plants pop up in friends' gardens.

Tracey believes that it is important to keep old varieties, for their history, and because they are often stronger and flower better.

'Old varieties of roses, and other plants, should be available so people can learn about them, and grow them.'

Thank you, Tracey and Les for welcoming us to your garden and for sharing your story with us, from the lows of the bush fire disaster, to the highs of your delight in successfully growing so many beautiful roses.

Unless otherwise acknowledged, photographs are by Susan Wade.