

Influences on us as Gardeners

This month I hope you will enjoy a walk through the garden gate with me as we chat about some of the things that affect the gardens we create.

Our garden styles evolve from a number of influences which include practical matters such as size, time for gardening, purpose and expense, philosophical matters such as creating sustainable gardens, emotional matters such as nostalgia for a person or place, falling in love with particular plants or the ambiance we are aiming for. Gardening is always a combination of head and heart.

A chat with a friend today revealed how clearly we each remembered gardens from childhood. It is uncanny how scents and sights in a garden can transport you to other times and places.

My friend was all enthusiasm for a gorgeous tough little plant, *Ceratostigma willmottianum* (Chinese Plumbago) with its clear blue flowers and maroon autumn toning – her grandmother's beloved little blue bush. I was remembering the beautiful sea of white daisies which spilled like lace onto the lawn in my great aunt's garden and the path between walls of shrubs leading to a secluded nook in an old farm garden I visited once when I was ten. My sister is planting a lilac, our mother's favourite flower. It is a rather lovely thing to include some references to other gardens and to friends and family in our garden designs and plant selections.

And then, in times when we are conscious of the environment and creating sustainable gardens, heart must sometimes be compromised by head as we seek to find plants that will thrive in the climatic and soil conditions of our gardens. Wise plant selection will save money and disappointment.

I now look very carefully at the gardens around us to see what does well and I talk to our neighbours about their favourite and most reliable plants. I read labels carefully and look for frost and water needs information. I can usually turn away from the enticing flower that will not survive a frost and clamours for moisture.

It is no surprise then that I find myself looking out for opportunities to create little paths, use mixed plantings of native and exotic shrubs to create walls and nooks and plant seas of hardy white daisies.

Happy Gardening

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