

Through the Garden Gate – notes prepared by Christine Windle of Garden Gate of Inverleigh Nursery

I hope you will enjoy a stroll with me through the garden gate as we talk about sustainable gardening.

We refer to sustainable gardening principles as we make decisions about and develop our home and nursery display gardens. Recently I talked to year ten students at Grovedale College about planning and maintaining sustainable gardens in a school setting. They had worked in groups to develop different types of gardens and we donated some suitable plants from our nursery. Preparing for the talk and selecting the plants made me realise that there are many aspects to sustainable gardening and many different understandings of what it is.

Sustainable means that something is able to keep going. In sustainable gardening I am considering all aspects of the environment and the involvement of the gardeners as well. Environmentally we need to consider our gardens as systems within a wider environmental context. Sustainable gardeners use practices that allow them to use and adapt to the local and wider environment and which result in a positive impact on the environment and the creatures and plants that share it. Their gardening has a sustainable focus for the present and the future.

It includes such things as thinking about transport miles when sourcing materials and in creating your own food gardens, using alternatives to chemicals that have a bad impact, learning about and providing for the needs of local native fauna such as birds and lizards, planning micro climates so that some more fussy plants will thrive, increasing biodiversity by planting a wide range of plants and understanding your rainfall, heat and cold limitations. It may also include working on reversing some things which happened in the past, such as the stripping of top soil which seems to be a common practice in new housing estate developments. Building up a garden with compost and other organic matter to support your plants and other organisms by providing nutrients and water holding capacity is a very valuable contribution to sustainable gardening.

I also look at sustainable gardening from the point of view of the gardeners – will they be able to ‘keep going’? We need to think about how much time, energy and money we are able to enjoyably devote to working in the garden and about the benefits in lifestyle, health and wellbeing that we would like for ourselves, our families, our pets and the wider environment. In the planning stages, and indeed as we go along, we need to take into account the circumstances, interests and capacity of the gardeners.

Having a sustainable garden does not mean that every plant has to be an indigenous one, although planting some indigenous plants in a garden contributes to benefits for some native creatures and enhances the biodiversity of your garden within the context of the wider environment. Other plants such as exotics and natives from other areas can contribute food and shelter sources to fauna as well and may be the ones that a gardener loves and which keep him or her ‘going’.

Until recent times, my ideas about sustainable gardening were a bit fuzzy. It helped me to read about the principles of sustainable gardening rather than just to have a list of what and what not to do. Sustainable Gardening Australia's online notes, 'Cuttings' for June 2014 included a link to a list of the current principles underlying sustainable gardening. If you would like to read more, go to their website www.sgaonline.org.au and type 'sustainable garden design' into the search box.

If you would like to have a copy of the sustainable gardening planner that I prepared for the year ten students, drop in at the nursery, 77 Dundas St Inverleigh (on the Winchelsea Road) or email me at gardengateofinverleigh@gmail.com Until next time, happy gardening.

Copywrite
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