

La Trobe's Cottage Garden News 2021-2023

March 2023

The garden is taking on its Autumn glory. The *Plectranthus ecklonii* and the Japanese Windflowers are looking superb as always at this time of the year.



Apples January 2023

After a promising start to the cropping season, when the apples fruited well in response to Chris England's expert pruning, sadly all the apples were gone by harvesting time. While it was clear earlier on that the possums had enjoyed a few, a more sinister cause for their complete disappearance over a few days was unfortunately apparent.



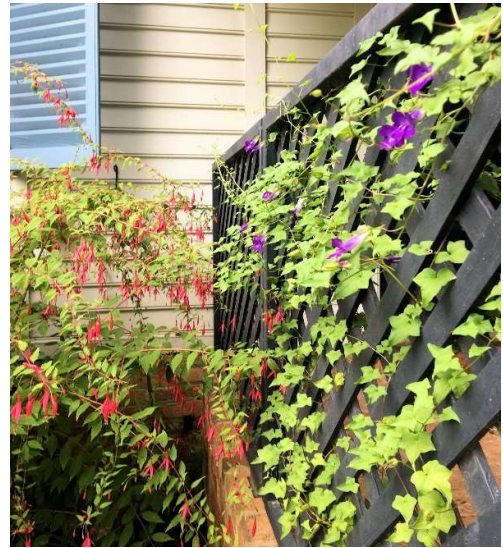
Asclepias curassavica

An interesting specimen has been planted just outside the Cottage's western fence. Robert Wright, who grows rare plants in his small suburban garden, gave us *Asclepias curassavica*, Tropical Milkweed. It is native to tropical regions of the Americas, and is said to attract butterflies. It was cultivated in the Botanic Garden Sydney from 1827, so may have been known to La Trobe.

The replacement *Muarandya* is doing well (see September 2021). Seeds were taken from the dead plant we found in September 2021, and the seedlings which grew were cossetted with all care, and one was finally planted in December 2022. It seems to feel at home as it is growing vigorously over the lattice on the front porch. Another one has been planted on the fence outside the dining room.

This is the plant Mrs Perry (wife of the first Bishop of Melbourne) saw growing at Jolimont when she wrote on 25 January 1848:

'We have only seen two creepers in flower yet, and they were both at Mr [La Trobe]'s; the one was my pet, the purple mirandia barcliana, which used to hang so gracefully from the baskets in our garden at Cambridge.'



Maurandya barclayana
March 2023



The contrasting autumn colours of the *Leonotis leonurus* and the *Plectranthus ecklonii* are providing a beautiful show just outside the fence.

A couple of big Working Bees, in February and March, had the garden all set for the La Trobe Society event on 19 March, celebrating La Trobe's 222nd Birthday. Cottage guide, Catherine Gay, provided a fascinating talk about the samplers held in the Cottage, with the garden providing a pretty backdrop.



November 2022

Our new season got off to a great start on Sunday 2 October with our Garden Day, celebrating the garden in all its Spring glory.



Babiana, grown by La Trobe



Winter 2022

A winter's Working Bee was held on 19 July and we were delighted that Chris England from Merrywood Nursery came to prune our apples.



The roses were also pruned, and the garden tidied.



Neville admiring his great work

Pamela and Rob discuss the finer points of rose pruning



April 2022



We have now labelled all the Special Plants we have in the garden – these are plants that we know La Trobe had because they are on list of plants sent to him either from the Sydney Botanic Garden in 1844, from his friend Ronald Gunn in Tasmania in 1844, or from Camden Nursery near Sydney in 1851. The location of these Significant Plants in La Trobe’s Cottage Garden can be seen in the document at www.foltc.latrobesociety.org.au/documents/SignificantPlants.pdf

January/February 2022

For the first time ever, possums ate our apples. We didn’t net them, however, and left them to the possums.



One of the plants sent to La Trobe from the Botanic Garden in Sydney in 1844 was *Justicia alba*. I was pleased to see this plant for sale at the Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens plant sale last December. We planted it outside the dining room and it settled in well immediately, flowering only two months later, in February.

November 2021

We had our first post-Covid

Working Bee on 9 November, to prepare the garden for the late start to our Sunday season on Sunday 14 November. By that time the roses were blooming – Arthur de Sansal, and even our new Baronne Prevost. The pot of Violas was looking spectacular.



Arthur de Sansal



Baronne Prevost



September 2021

Our *Maurandya barclayana* or as we call it 'Mrs Perry's Creeper', which has been hanging gracefully over the lattice near the front entrance, is dead. It appears that an animal has jumped onto the netting supporting its stem, and caused it to break off. Fertilizer was applied to its stump, in the hope that it may shoot, and seeds were collected from the dead plant in the hope that we may get a few small plants next spring. As Sandi Pullman had pointed out, Mrs. Perry - the wife of Melbourne's first Anglican Bishop who lived in La Trobe's Upper Cottage - mentioned seeing the creeper growing at Jolimont.



Maurandya barclayana November 2020



Maurandya barclayana September 2021

The four heritage roses (2 x Coupe' d'Hébé and 2 x Baronne Prévost) arrived just in time to get them planted before the lockdown which started on 5 August. They are just starting to shoot.

August 2021

Garden Volunteer Ellen took some photos of the (nearly) Spring garden as she walked past La Trobe's Cottage in lockdown.



Melianthus and *cordyline*



Chaenomeles (Flowering Quince)



Ipheion (Spring Starflower)

Architectural succulents

Grevillea rosmarinifolia



Acacia latrobei
(truly 'Gold Dust Wattle')

Now take a seat under the watchful eye of the perky aloe

June 2021

The garden Working Bee on 18 May enabled us to get the garden looking its best for the opening on 23 May. Our National Trust gardener Eliasha Muldowney attended with two colleagues and they cut back some large boughs of the *Correa*, *Prunus* and *Viburnum* behind the Cottage. Then the Working Bee on 22 June was dedicated to pruning roses, apples and spireas. We were most grateful to heritage rose expert Geoff Crowhurst for attending and demonstrating how to prune these heritage plants. We lifted some Arthur de Sansal roses to make room for the Coupe d'Hebe and Baronne Prevost roses soon to arrive from South Australia. These were on the list of plants sent to La Trobe from Camden Nursery near Sydney in 1851. The Arthur de Sansal roses, which have bloomed with their deep maroon flowers for many years, are now grouped slightly closer together, in order to provide a good show.



Geoff pruning with Graham and Carolyn

We found that the ground cover *Crucianella* (now *Phuopsis*) *stylosa* (Crosswort), which had been growing in between the roses, had been suffocating the roses with its thick matted roots. This was on the list of plants sent to La Trobe by his friend Ronald Gunn in Van Diemen's Land, in April 1844. It flowered beautifully last summer, and we wondered why it isn't a more popular garden plant today. Now we know - we've had to remove it.



Tim preparing ground for new roses



Kathy pruning spireas



The list of plants sent to La Trobe from Camden Nursery near Sydney in 1851 includes four varieties of begonia. Marilyn Watson of the Melbourne Begonia Society grows these four varieties at her begonia garden in Upper Ferntree Gully and has kindly donated a plant of each variety; she planted these with Helen in late April. One of them originates from Mexico – perhaps seeds of this plant were included in those he sent from Mexico to Mme de Pourtales in 1834. We are most grateful to Marilyn; we will treasure these and look forward to seeing them develop in their new home.