

In My Garden Di Clark

IS STANDING IN THE GARDEN AND THINKING ACTUALLY GARDENING?

I seem to spend a lot of time standing and reflecting on my garden. I purchased a new home in Rosedale in July 2019 and I have been working in the garden since then, when circumstances allowed.

When I say I purchased a new home, I mean it was a new home for me. The previous owners were very keen gardeners and the house has an extraordinary garden. In one sense this is great, but in another it may be a burden that I have difficulty dealing with.

I would say that the percentage of native plants in this garden is rather small, and the dominating trees and bushes are plants of a different style. I have camellias, magnolias and quite a few Japanese maples, that have yet to prove their worth. Many perennials that I am still discovering, succulents, fruit trees, roses and bromeliads.



The presence of these plants is not a problem in itself, but the way they have been dispersed throughout the garden and their close proximity to each other is. My natural instinct is to group all the like plants together and simplify what is here. Rather than having a rose bush next to a succulent next to a giant birds nest fern, I would create separate corners of the garden where they would be better suited.

But this is when I start standing in the garden and thinking.

Do I really want a garden of succulents or bromeliads or fruit trees?

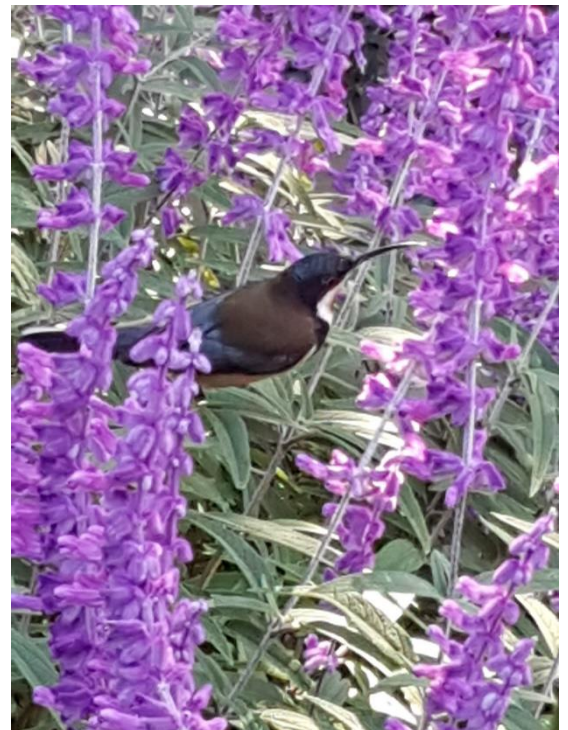
Should I bite the bullet and remove some of these plantings. I can easily remove the agapanthus, because I know they have the potential to become weeds in the nearby bush.

Do I remove a magnolia even if it has been planted too close to the path?

Do I remove the monstrous *Philodendron bipinnatifidum* and leave giant gaps along the boundary fence? The answer to that one is yes. I have waited till the neighbours are visiting less frequently and will plant something more suitable in the gap. Having a gap to fill is one of the highlights of gardening.

The next question is, where do native plants fit into this picture? I have been using native plants in my gardens for a long time now, and actively choose to do this. Some of the most beautiful gardens I have seen have been well pruned, well designed native gardens. Gardens that blend in with the house and the surrounding environment. How do I do this in my garden, which is already full of plants?

Our South East Region Group was planning a visit to my garden in May and you would of all had a chance to see what I am discussing here. I imagine Shane Doherty standing on my deck and asking if the Hibiscus (non native) needs to stay? I try to see vistas and think of all four seasons, not just the immediate shade and sun issues. I watch the birds. They don't seem to care where my plants



originated from, as evidenced by the **Eastern Spinebill** who regularly visits my perennial **Salvia**. Neither do the possums!

There is another issue that has posed a problem in this garden.

There are areas set aside for growing vegetables, which I have been using. This was becoming difficult when we were suffering from drought. I was beginning to rethink if it was a justifiable use of water.

Then when the fires were happening and we had no power for quite a while, my fresh food kept me going. Since then we have had a lot more rain, but now it's good to have home grown food for other reasons. I have dug up part of the lawn, to bring the vegetables closer to the kitchen and it felt wonderful to be creating a blank canvas for me to plant into. Perhaps I should just keep going?

There are so many issues to consider when thinking about your garden. **Shane's renovation advice is to clear ruthlessly, prepare well and have a good idea of how you want your garden to look before you start planting.** Not as easy as it sounds. But a wonderful way to spend the day. I am looking forward to a time when I can invite you all to view the garden for yourselves.