

Downsizing from large gardens to a courtyard Vertical Garden. A talk by Anne - Yarra Yarra member (July 2015)

Anne is a member of our group and has many years of experience with making beautiful gardens both large and small. Her first 2 houses were large, approximately 2 acres, her third around 800 square meters and now she lives in a small apartment with a vertical garden.

She began her talk by telling us about the construction of the Eltham property in Bridge Street, the home previous to where she is now. The construction was done by Robert Boyle, a local landscaper, Anne had complete say in the plans and it took 3 months with extensive use of rocks to retain it and once finished, she said it looked *downright ugly*, just a mass of rocks. But what a transformation once the plants established.

The block had 3 large *Eucalyptus polyanthemos* and Anne had a blank slate otherwise. The property faced north and Anne planted small to large sized shrubs from the house up so she always had the northern sun into the house. Many of the plants self-seeded all over the block to wonderful effect e.g. Flannel Flowers. Anne is a great photographer and showed many beautiful photos of her plants, particularly close ups. She created a slide show of the photos that played on a loop when the house was for sale – this was quite a bonus apparently to a great outcome.



A pocket Dendrobium speciosum

pocket frames, no soil. All the frames were planted up at Fytogreen a few months earlier and then arrived *en masse* and were attached to battens along the fence. Within an hour a blank wall is transformed into a green layered garden. The watering system, computerized, was then installed, a drip line top,

In moving, Anne had to downsize considerably. So as to not be without her usual diverse garden, even in a small space, she chose to have a vertical garden and thereby transform a plain wooden wall into a green wonderland. **Fytogreen** was the company who made her vertical garden. She told them she wanted natives and not variegated ones and Fytogreen's resident expert Erik van Zvilikom designed it. Anne's plants included *Lomandras*, *Dianellas*, *Bulbinas*, *Pittosporum*, *Viola*, *Adiantum*, *Goodenia*, *Cordyline* & *Dendrobium speciosum*.

The plants are planted into Florafelt pockets in 12



Outside the vertical garden wall

middle and bottom programmed to water 4 times per day for 2 minutes each time – provided you keep the tap on! On a regular basis Aquasol is injected into the water for feeding the plants. The plants are arranged such that those at the top will form a canopy and thereby protect and shade those underneath. In the summer the area is a heat trap and Anne is hoping her planting design will help to mitigate that. There are 136 plants. She even has 10 Moreton Bay figs which apparently will bonsai.

Garden visit:

What an amazing feature to have, with such established growth, in such a small area. Perfect for its location, it is difficult to imagine anything else being able to fill the space so successfully - 136 plants listed on plan. As per her usual standard this garden has been well thought out by Anne. As well as giving Anne a green wall to look out on, it also cut out a lot of the light from cars going in and out of the underground car park. We also admired Anne's choice of plants and the growth in her small garden on the outside of that courtyard fence, all less than 12 months old. We look forward to hearing about her experience during summer with her vertical garden too. We believe it will do well given the experience of the designers.

Report by M. Ford - July 2015

