

August Home Visit – Kathy's Garden



Note to self!! As our visit to Kathy Watt's garden proved on Friday the 14th if your mind says to itself "I don't think I'll go to the home visit. I've seen that garden before." – IGNORE YOURSELF! Not only was it a beautiful morning weather wise and not only did we have a great morning tea awash with delights, and not only did we have over thirty people very much enjoying each other's company in a relaxed garden setting but we got to see things we've never seen before. Every garden has things you miss on just one or two visits and every garden changes and our visit to Kathys' proved that in spades. On Friday there were a few real treats.

One of the real surprises was the ***Cordyline australis* 'Torbay Dazzler'**. (at right) This tall growing cordyline (used usually for its structural interest and two-tone leaves) sheds leaves as it reaches upwards on skinny stems. You see it a lot. Yet not one of those at the visit remembered having seen it in flower as it is here. Though not quite open the yellow flower was already looking very good. If all the stems bloom it would look great.



Another plant that most of us had never seen was the ***Jatropha podagrica*** or 'Buddha's Belly' (also known as the Gout Plant). For those who have cacti and succulent gardens or a rockery looking for a very tough dry climate plant this member of the Euphorbia family is worth a thought. The bulbous 'belly' supports a longish trunk with just a few leaves at the top and very bright red flowers with just a hint of yellow. A great dry garden choice.



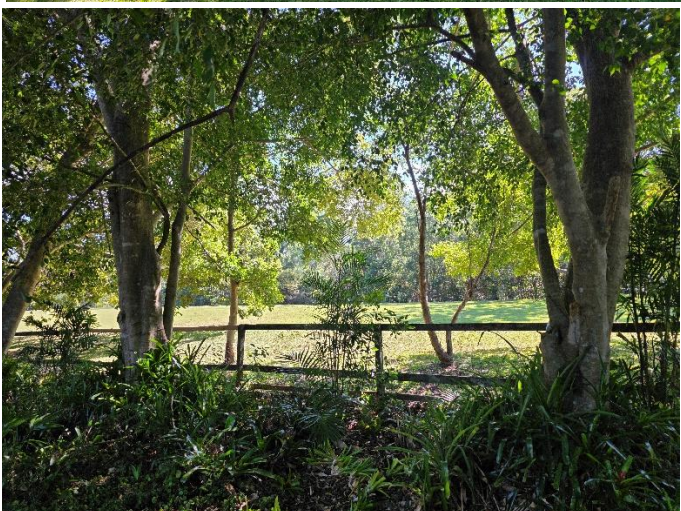
Speaking of dry gardens, Kathy's entry (at left) is a good example of such a feature. We've seen these ideas before but the three pot tower (at right) and the old wheel barrow as a succulent garden (far right) were both looking great. As you can see at left some of the hardier bromeliads really add a lot of interest to such a cactus/succulent mix.



Another fun element of the day was the chance to contrast last month's home visit to a 'they do it' apartment garden to a 'wow, Kathy must do a lot of work here' acreage garden. Both at the front (at right) and at the back there are expansive grass areas that weave in and around garden beds full of different plants (below).



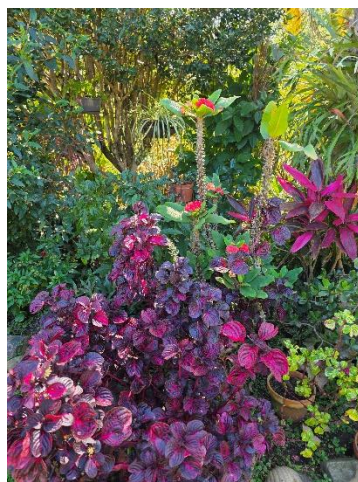
There is seating in the middle of the back yard that allows you to escape the world and look back up to the house (below right) or across the back fence to an expansive area of public space (below left). It is a very quite and pleasant place to just enjoy life.



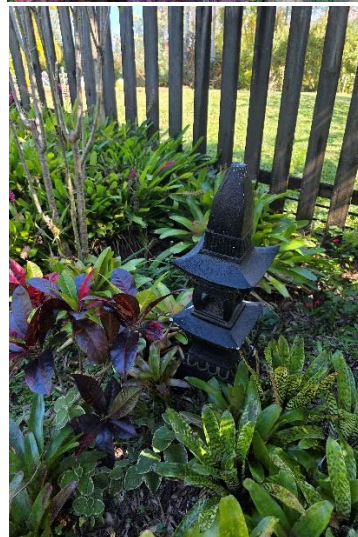
With so much space the inevitable result is a constant variation in the 'underplantings'. The result is you get nice little vignettes over and over again.



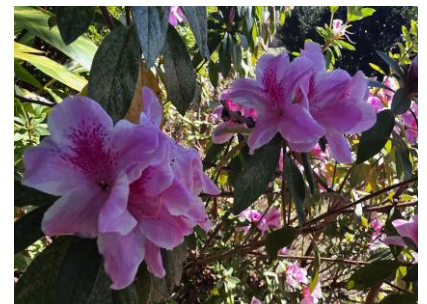
Thus (at right) you get **Iresine herbstii** or 'Bloodleaf' teamed with a colour matched **Cordyline** and a splash of red in a flowering Euphorbia. Different shaped and coloured green leaves add even more interest. Near the bottom of the garden is a very healthy looking **Philodendron guacamayo** climbing up a tree and one of the biggest **Elkhorns** you'll ever see (below left).



A dark Japanese inspired light set amidst dark leafed **Cordyline**s and several patterned **Bromeliads** is another fine highlight.



It goes without saying that despite it not yet being truly spring, in such an expansive garden there were still a lot of flowering plants to admire. At right is just a review of Kathy's large collection of **Azaleas**. Though close to the end of their peak flowering there was still plenty of colour to see. Sheltered by shade many of the **Bougainvillea** were also still looking fresh. Especially impressive was the variegated dwarf bougainvillea (*middle below*). (N.B. The 'dwarf' refers to the flowers and their bracts/leaves. The actual plant can still grow very large!)



Also in flower were a tall **Grevillea 'Moonlight'** in full bloom also attracted attention as did an **Epidendrum ibaguense** or red Crucifix orchid and a flowering white Anthurium growing 'wild' in a shady spot near the pool area.



Ignoring just flowers for the moment one of the best examples of 'colour' in the garden however is that dry climate garden beside the front drive. An incredible mix of such plants with all sorts of leaf shapes and colours (and yes, in the case of the Euphorbias, bright red flowers) gives all year round colour that entices you into the garden to explore further.



Lastly, **thanks again to Kathy Watt** for welcoming us for the morning. As noted at the beginning it was a beautiful morning weather wise and those did well to ignore any second visit fears.