



June Home Visit 2026 – The Stewart Garden

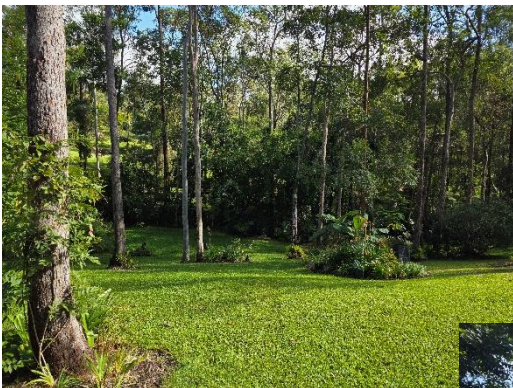


It was with relief that **KATHY STEWART** put her hand up at our last meeting to host Friday's Home Visit after our Plan A had fallen through. It was with even greater relief that the incessant rain of the last few days held off long enough for the sun to come out to really enjoy our visit to Kathy and Ron's.

Their house sits virtually hidden from the road by a mass planting of all sorts of things, including a huge crop of ***Epidendrum ibaguense*** or Crucifix Orchids. The purple one's dominate the front yard while the common orange and a red are scattered elsewhere in the garden. We last visited this garden back in 2024 and that mass of blooms was one of the things more than a few of us were hoping to see again.



What is best about re-visiting a garden is seeing things that you thought were great ideas last time. Growing **anthuriums** randomly amidst a cover of ground covers so the anthurium flowers stuck up like sentinels of colours (*top right*) was working just as well as back in 2024. Even better is seeing things you totally missed. In this category, on the footpath, is a huge ***Liquidambar styraciflua***. How many of us just walked under it last time without noticing? These large trees love colder climates than ours but just that one or two degrees less higher up sees this one just beginning to colour (*as example below right*). In full autumn colour they are magnificent. They have a lovely shape, interesting bark and when totally leafless an ethereal outline. They do really well of course up on Mount Tamborine and up at Toowoomba.



Most of all a second (or third, or fourth or ...) visit is great because you get to see the garden in a different season and with new additions and changes to both the layout and the plantings. In this case the addition of a native beehive, lovingly being guarded by an ever attentive (stone) cat was a fun addition to the garden.



The key attraction of this garden is however its sheer expansiveness. The house sits at the top of an acreage sized block that slopes downwards to a gully. Trees, surrounded by clumps of plants, dot carefully maintained grass areas. The result is a garden perfect for relaxing and 'phasing out'.





The sense of calm and relaxation the garden gives saw around thirty of us resist longer than usual an urge to return to real life. The view above (from the back porch) and views down to the gully (below) helps explain why a cup of tea and a few sweet treats went down so well.



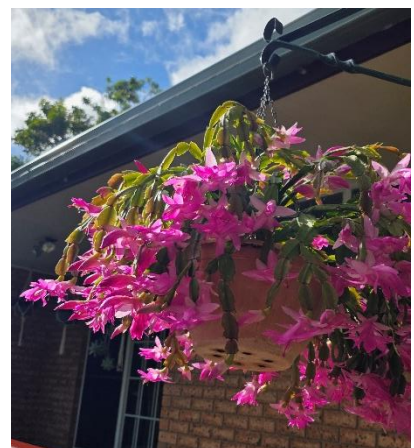
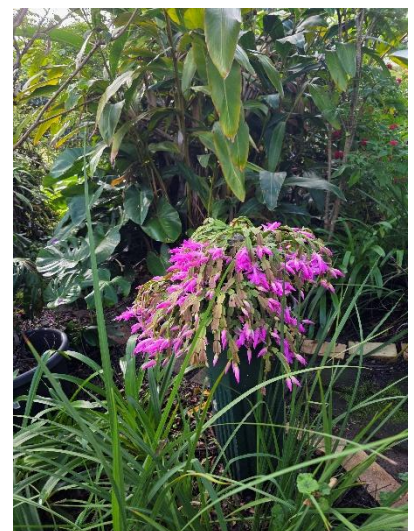
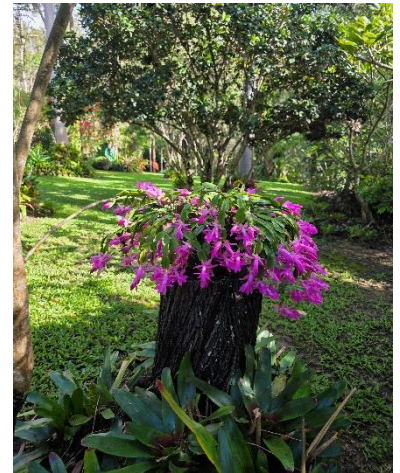
While primarily a 'green garden' those views above show there are splashes of colour everywhere. On Friday that was especially true of one specific plant that Kathy seems to grow very very well indeed.



On a low brick wall just around the back of the house we were confronted with these two beauties. "Aren't they lovely" most said – only then to be blown away by ever better examples (at right) scattered all over the garden. In combination with a large number of red poinsettias they all helped to bright up those expansive views down and through the garden. "Less is more" was never more true.



Zygocactus (Schlumbergia) or the Christmas cactus (as it flowers then in the northern hemisphere) or Crab's Claw.



Winter is never a good time for a lot of flowers in the garden but Kathy and Ron show that this does not mean "no colour". The nodding violet (called that because ever the slightest breeze makes the flowers move constantly), ***Streptocarpus saxorum***, (top right) was one great example to aim for. Going down that group on the right, the bright pink South American native **cane begonia** was also looking good. This one was barely knee height, but when they grow to full height those blooms hang down above you like a chandelier. The bright red pentas (***Pentas lanceolata***) is another plant that will flower during



Among other flowering plants for winter were the ***Aechmea fasciata***. These lovely spikey pink flowering member of the bromeliad family were out in large numbers. They last for ages in the garden and as a cut flower for vases or arrangements.

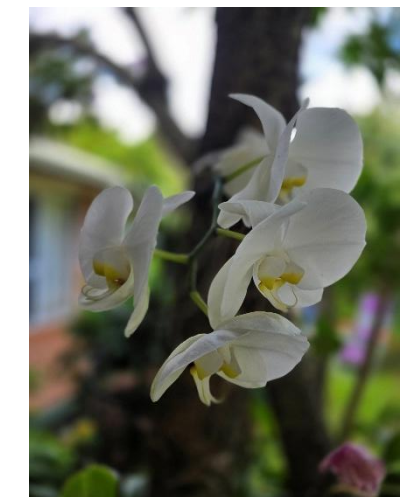


these months. Notice how this splash of red enlivens the pathway that winds through one of the denser planting areas. Surprises like the little fellow below look especially good in this area.



Also suitable for this time of year is the ***Duranta repens*** 'Geisha Girl' (below right) with its low hanging deep purple flower heads. Also consider ***Kniphofia*** or 'The Red Hot Poker' (below left).

There is a great yellow version and both send up tall spikes that add a great pop of colour to contrast with background plants.



Thus, though the major impression one gets of this garden is that, as noted above, it is a 'green garden' (left) it is nevertheless full of colour. Even just those ***poinsettias*** (above right) do so much to add interest. Finally, a very special **THANKS** to Kathy and Ron for filling in under such difficult conditions (late notice and rain, rain, rain!).