

La Trobe's Cottage Garden News

Spring Update – September 2012

On 15th August we held the annual Friends of La Trobe's Cottage Annual Lecture. One of our guests was Anna Murphy, a PhD student in Botany at La Trobe University, who talked about *In search of three-leaf clovers: Charles La Trobe and threatened species recovery in Victoria*. Anna gave us a great talk about the glycine, explaining one of the reasons its numbers have declined was due to the gold rush in the 19th century. Unfortunately, the digging of mines and dumping the tailing severely disrupted its habitat.

To help raise its endangered profile, we wanted to grow some in the garden. Dermot Molloy of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne has been trying to propagate some seed for us, but they are notoriously difficult to germinate and unfortunately have lived up to their name. But we will try again. Anna has a contact at the Department of Sustainability and Environment who has germinated them successfully and hopefully he will share with Dermot his secrets.

What is happening in the Garden at the Cottage?



Spring is in the air, even though at the time of writing it still feels like winter. We have been busy in the garden and our efforts are beginning to show. The 190 anemone bulbs we planted are popping up and are going to look fabulous when they flower sometime in October. La Trobe loved bulbs and the daffodils we planted last year are up and some of them are flowering again. We will probably have to replace them next year as daffodils bulbs are notoriously difficult to get to flower a second year, let alone a third year. Our grape hyacinths (*Muscari* sp.) are also just starting to flower.

Our most exciting news is that our heritage roses from Mistydowns have arrived and after much searching, we also found some cacti that would have been available in La Trobe's time.

Grape hyacinth (*Muscari* sp.)

Our bare rooted roses arrived in the mail and an impromptu working bee was called, as they needed to be planted quickly. After some rearranging of Elephant-eared saxifrage, (*Bergenia cordifolia*) and irises in the bed under the drawing room window the following heritage roses were planted with the help of Jenny Happell, Joy Harley and Sandi Pullman

- *Rosa* 'Duchesse d'Angouleme'
- *Rosa* 'Arthur de Sansal'
- *Rosa* 'Louise Odier'.



Rosa 'Arthur de Sansal'

The colour range of old heritage roses is much more limited than today's modern roses. The only colours available were white, pale yellow, red (which some would call cerise) and pinkie/mauve.

In 1848 La Trobe wrote to his friend Ronald Gunn in Tasmania that cacti in his rockery were doing exceedingly well despite the summer heat. He loved his cacti and we have been looking for suitable cacti for several years. We discovered a wonderful supplier, Andrew of Cactusland, who has a stall at the Victoria Market, so off we went to the market, coming home with some treasures that Andrew had identified were available in the 1840s-50s. He also tracked down two sedums that we have been looking for over the last two and half years.



The following are our new treasures:

- *Aporocactus flagelliformis* Rats tail cactus
- *Ferocactus horridus* Barrel cactus
- *Sedum seiboldtii* Blue stonecrop
- *Sedum nuttallianum* Yellow stonecrop

Aporocactus flagelliformis

If you visit the garden, you might notice that the succulent bed is still under netting. Much to our horror, the possums snuck in under the netting and started eating our *Euphorbia milii* var. *Splendens*. Disaster, it took us two years to find it and they munched it in one night, so now it is also protected by chicken wire.

And for a special treat, have a look at the *Hardenbergia violacea* 'Happy Wanderer' which has wound itself up into the *prostanthera* (native mint bush). The beautiful purple flowers look terrific against the green of the *prostanthera* leaves. It is just fantastic the way nature does its own thing and is always perfect.



'Happy wanderer' in the Mint bush

Book a Garden Tour now –
by contacting our
Property Manager
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And finally below is a collage of our spring garden:

The Elm bed, one year on



Chaenomeles speciosa Red flowering quince



Aloe plicatilis Fan aloe



Alocasia macrorrhiza Elephant ears growing in the wine barrel