



C.M.G.C. Newsletter

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Dear Members,

What a year it's been, but most of us have survived it relatively unscathed. How we would love to be delivering you a program for 2021, but right now that's not possible. Don't worry though, given the first opportunity to resurrect our club, your committee will work to do so. For now we wish each and every one of you all the very best for the festive season.

Warmest regards, **Your CMGC Committee.**

Below - The lush greenery of North Balwyn in November. - Montage by Fiona and Daniel Lynch



Lyn Miller's Garden -

Interview by Jill Thorpe

Not all of us live in the former home of a celebrity, but **Lyn Miller** does! She lives in Donvale in the former home of **3AW** radio presenter **Martha Gardener**, who entertained and educated women all over Melbourne on cooking and gardening in the 70's and 80's.



I interviewed Lyn to find out what it's like living on acreage in this beautiful part of Melbourne and am happy to share this information in a **Q** and **A** format.

Lyn, how long have you lived here?

Since 1977 after living in England, Balwyn and Blackburn. Our three children were all at school.

How large is this property and what is unique about it?

The property is 2.5 acres being the remaining section of the original 30 acres used for growing lemon trees. The house was built by the family of Richard Meldrum (former Lord Mayor of Melbourne) as a holiday cottage in 1928. It was built with Hawthorn Bricks, which are still a feature.

What was the home and garden like when you first moved in?

The garden was old. Martha was downsizing as she was ageing and the garden had grown beyond her. There were many geraniums, blackberries and other weeds to deal with. The existing lemon trees produced so many lemons that they were left to rot on the ground. There was a lot of back breaking work to bring the garden to where it is today. Now roses, camellias and other exotics abound and the garden is a riot of colour and beauty. The house needed to be extended to accommodate our family, including a garage and a workshop for my husband. What is here today is a much larger and completely modernised home.

When did you develop your passion for gardening?

As a teenager my parents and I lived in Blackburn. My father was a fastidious gardener and his love of gardening has been passed on to me. Essentials such as bread and milk were delivered by horse and cart and the horse manure was a treasure that avid gardeners sought. We were often the recipients of the manure for our garden. Once married, my husband and I lived in England for 6 years so no gardening happened during that time. But, on returning to Australia and buying a house in Balwyn, I became an avid gardener. Later we moved to Blackburn where the garden was beautiful with a huge Liquid amber tree and a flowering cherry tree. Our current garden in Donvale is the largest and most challenging that I have had to date, but it gives me a lot of pleasure.

As a family home what's special about living here?

There's room for many special things, such as footy on the front lawn. Our children learned to drive within the property and we've hosted many events here like parties and family weddings. The rose arbours were constructed for our daughter's wedding. Even now through the lockdown, I have enjoyed afternoon teas on the terrace.



The pine trees that line your drive and are such a feature. can you tell us about them?

The pine trees were planted as windbreaks when the property was an orchard. They are very tall, about 20 meters high, and are protected by the local Council, so cannot be removed without permission. The ground beneath them is very dry but I am able to plant some species that do well. Clivias, azaleas and other shade loving plants form the understory.



I have installed lights to illuminate these trees at night, creating a feature. The pines also line the driveway with agapanthus underneath, which look spectacular when they are in flower. As anyone with agapanthus knows they take hours and hours of work to de-head after flowering. The only heritage listed tree is the large Lillypilly tree.

As one of the "Gas" girls in the Gas and Fuel Cookery Service, I worked on radio in the 70's with Martha Gardener many times, answering caller's cooking queries. She was as generous and warm in person, as she was on air.

- Fiona Lynch.

What is the soil like on your property?

The soil isn't too bad although there are clay areas and under the Pines and Cyprus the soil is very acidic, so Azaleas do well there. I have areas of lawn, rose arbours and many special species of trees. Fruit trees are also special and grow beside the lawn areas. To keep the soil quality up, I regularly feed it and compost the garden waste and add it to the soil whenever I can.

How do you manage all the chores that arise from such a lovely, big garden?

My daughter in law, who has her own garden design business, comes and helps with the basic gardening. I just keep keep moving around the garden doing what needs doing. The really heavy work needs someone stronger, but my daughter in law and I have succeeded in removing trees and blackberries. A friend comes and helps me to burn the garden rubbish before each summer.

What is your favourite part of the garden?

The whole garden gives me pleasure and each different area has something special about it. I still enjoy buying seasonal plants and finding something new. I especially love watching the seasonal changes in the garden, particularly autumn with the contrasting colours in the leaves and the changes to burgundy and orange.

Are vegetables a feature in this garden?

They certainly are. Most are in raised beds in a special part of the garden and I pick produce most of the year. Currently I have lettuce, beans, spinach and peas.

You have hens - are they contributing to your life and the life of your garden?

I love my hens, their beautiful eggs and the manure they produce which is composted and returned to the garden. I have just purchased three new hens, bringing the total to six.

Thank you so much to Lyn and Jill for sharing your beautiful garden and story with us all.



Gardening jobs for December/January

by Sylvia Stephens

Prune back common jasmine to keep it contained and looking fresh.

Stake, tie and secure, tall, leggy perennials and trim or train wayward climbers.

Prune lilac trees, then feed, water and mulch them.

Plant portulaca seedlings for summer colour in hot spots of your garden and scatter seeds of cosmos in sunny areas.

Plant coleus and begonia for colour in shady parts of your garden.

Deadhead annuals, dahlias and roses to encourage more blooms.

Plan your watering regime for thirsty plants like hydrangeas as temperatures rise.

Vegetables that can be planted in December are capsicum, chilli, eggplant, carrots, lettuce, tomatoes and zucchini.

Pictured from top are Portulaca, Cosmos and Hydrangea.



Christmas reminiscing - CMGC celebration 2019

Sadly there will be no trip or Xmas lunch this year for our garden club members, but we live in hope that such activities will resume again soon. So we decided to look back at the wonderful day we had out on 12 December 2019 visiting **Mont de Lancy**, followed by lunch at the **RACV Healesville Country Club**. Weather was suss. - but the day - perfect!

