

Twenty riotous gardens, extraordinary plantings and green, green spaces, all set against the backdrop of the distinctive Australian landscape

# Garden Love

*Plants • Dogs • Australian Country Gardens*

Simon Griffiths

300 Illustrations

24.0 x 17.0cm

304pp

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Book



## Praise for *Garden Love*

‘As is beautifully illustrated in this book, Simon’s ability to capture the obvious as well as the subtlety found in gardens is immense’

*Paul Bangay OAM*



## Key Sales Points

- Surveys twenty glorious Australian gardens, from sprawling farms to charming cottage gardens
- Simon Griffiths is Australia's foremost garden photographer
- Brims with planting inspiration, ideas and encouragement for gardeners everywhere



I don't know how it happened, but one day I woke up and found myself living in the inner suburbs, in a boring house with a tiny garden. Feeling dissatisfied with city life, my partner, Ian, and I decided it was time for a change. We started looking for a place in the country almost straight away. The brief was simple: a small house with a decent-sized garden—not so big that we would become slaves to the garden, but with room for some trees, a few beds of perennials and a shed.

The second house we looked at, we bought. The property is in Kyneton, an hour out of Melbourne, about halfway to Bendigo and the goldfields. It's not the outback, but it's far enough out of town to feel you are in the country. Meadowbank, as it's known, is a simple Georgian cottage, built in the 1850s by a Scottish master stonemason, Alexander Rodger, who lived here with his wife and eleven children. It is a small, neat, brick and bluestone cottage, the kind of house that looks like a child's drawing: a door in the middle with a window either side, a hipped roof and a chimney with smoke drifting out of it. The house is situated on the front boundary and when we moved in the large backyard was a blank canvas just waiting for a garden.

When we first arrived, the area was in the middle of a drought and the yard looked like a dust bowl—even the copious weeds were all dead. A rusty Hills hoist was just about the only thing still standing, along with some dead silver birch trees and a big old cedar (*Cedrus deodara*). We first set about improving the soil: digging in truckloads of mushroom compost, buckets of manure from a neighbour and coffee grounds from a local café. Turning over the old soil was like an archaeological dig, as we uncovered decades of buried rubbish: shards of antique blue and white china, bottles of all descriptions, dozens of glass marbles, bicycle parts, old boots, coins, doorknobs, brooches and enough clock parts to build several clocks. (Still to this day, the strangest things turn up.)





Behind the vegetable patch, Ian's shingled studio is made almost entirely of recycled materials.



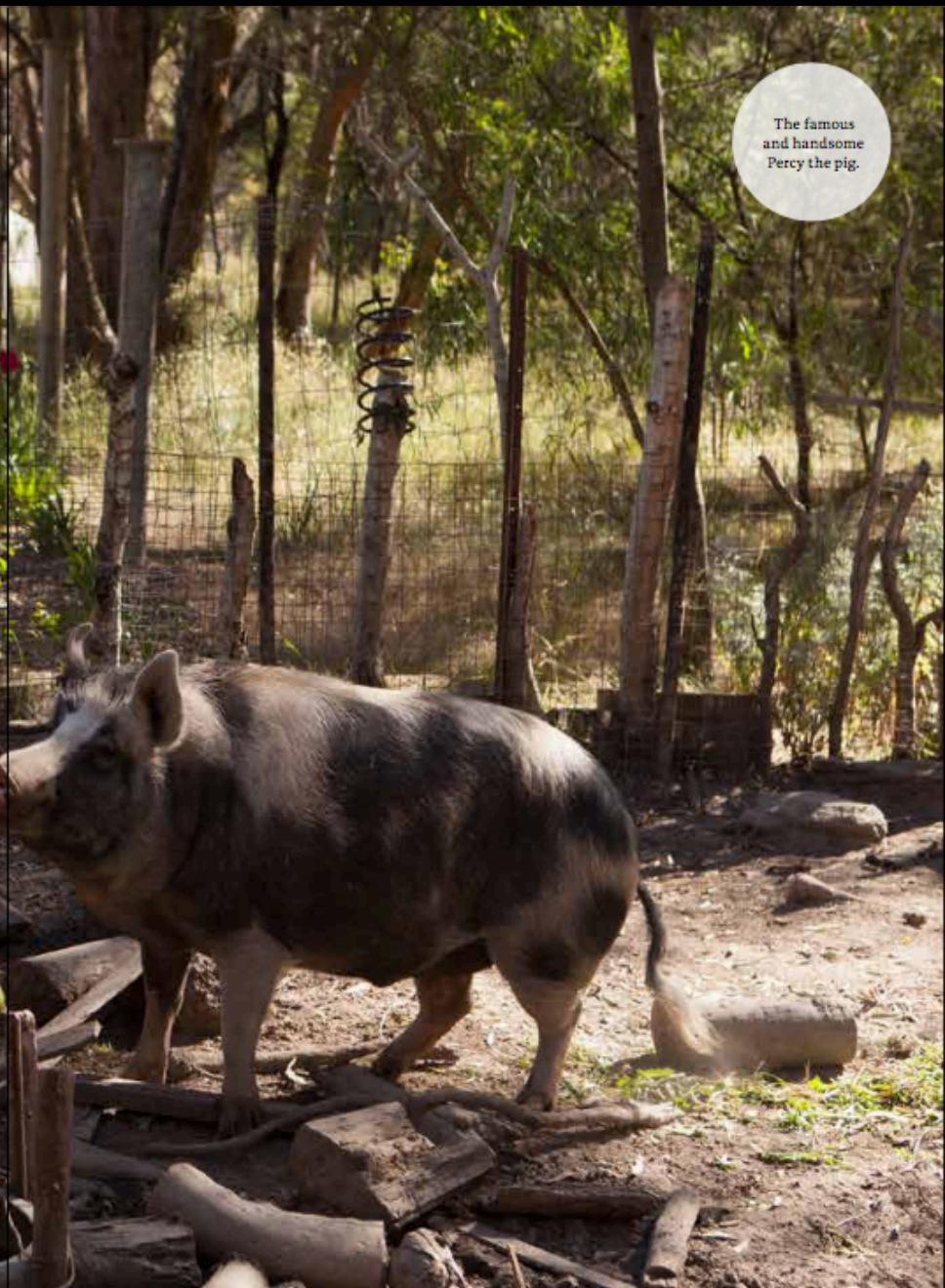


A vase of silver foliage picked from the garden.



Ian enjoys a glass of wine in the late-afternoon sunshine.





The famous  
and handsome  
Percy the pig.





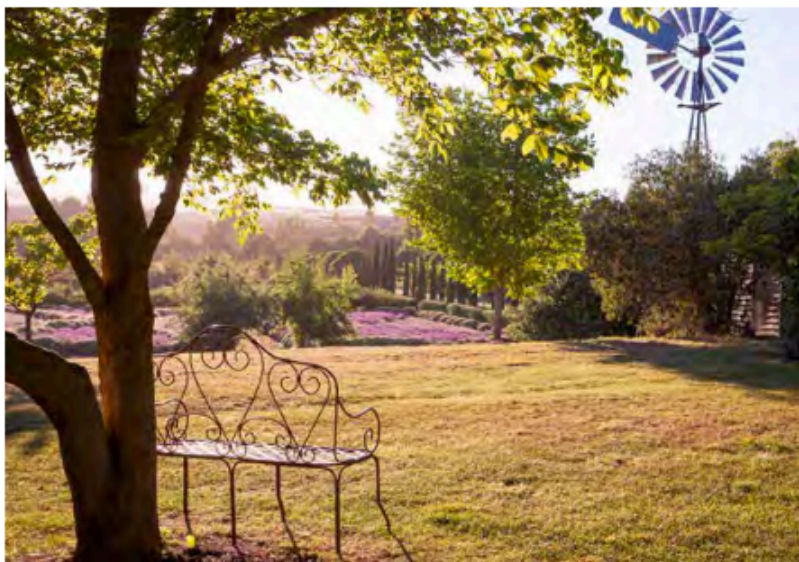
Down a winding country road is the atmosphere-laden Lavandula, a lavender farm and garden owned by Carol White. Inspired by her travels in the south of France and Italy, Carol has created a slice of Provence in central Victoria. She bought the 40-hectare (100-acre) property, which includes an historic stone cottage and barn, in the late 1980s. The house was built in the 1850s by Swiss-Italian settlers, the Tinettis, who lived here with their thirteen children and were dairy farmers.

When Carol started gardening here she had no previous experience. Through trial and error, she learnt what would grow in the area's harsh climate—a mix of cold winters and hot, dry summers. She found that even oleander (*Nerium oleander*), one of the toughest shrubs you can plant, couldn't survive the bitter frosts. To help break the 'flow' of the frost in winter, and to provide essential shade in summer, she has planted rows of trees on the land around the gardens. She also feeds the soil with mountains of sheep and poultry manure, and adds dolemite lime.

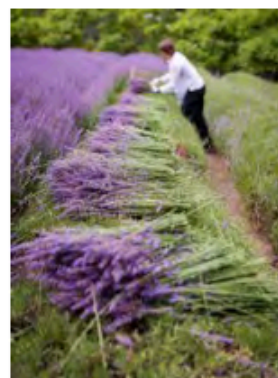
A testament to Carol's dedication, the property today includes avenues of trees, an olive grove, masses of fruit trees and shade trees, and lots and lots of lavender. Medium and intermediate height varieties of English lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia*) have been used, as they produce the best amount of lavender oil—the farm now distils its own oil to make lavender-based products.

A highlight of the year is the harvest festival, held in early January. The lavender is hand cut with sickles, then bundled and hung to dry on racks or under the airy verandah of the cottage. Some of the crop is set aside to use in the still, which extracts the lavender oil. At harvest time, the garden bustles with people enjoying market stalls and live entertainment, eating and drinking at tables arranged beneath the boughs of ash trees. This is a garden full of trees, with many quiet shady spots to sit and take in the views of the radiant purple fields and the countryside beyond.





TOP A rose-covered arch forms a focal point among the lavender plantings.  
BOTTOM The windmill is one of the few elements that reminds you that you're actually still in Australia.



Harvest time is the best time to visit.





It's difficult to believe that in 2005 this house and garden in Malmsbury, Victoria, were completely derelict. Since buying Melrose just over a decade ago, Deborah Hambleton and her partner, Rob van de Groenekan, have created a fantastically productive garden that is literally overflowing with life. The 1860s bluestone cottage has also been restored and added to.

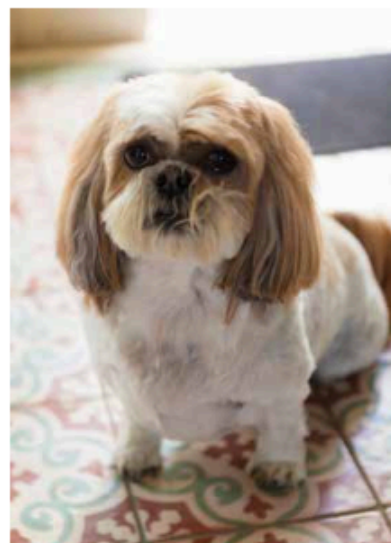
At the front of the house is a quite traditional rose garden, bulging at the seams with roses and underplanted with cat mint, lambs ears and other perennials, creating a space heady with colour and scent. Small paths meander through the rest of the front garden, weaving between pomegranate hedges and pencil pines. Within a hedged enclosure is the swimming pool, surrounded by beds of lavender, miscanthus and fairy's fishing rod (*Dierama pulcherrimum*). The plantings hug the pool so tightly that indeed some offshoots flop into the water. An elegant arbour made from bush poles (native saplings), with climbers growing up it, creates dappled shade at one end of the pool and provides a vertical element that gives the garden scale and height. A rustic pool house sits to one side, with walls made from railway sleepers and a roof of rusted corrugated iron. Behind the pool is a formal vegetable garden and a smart chook house. Nearby there's an old building that was the original kitchen, its location a reminder of the days when wood stoves were a legitimate fire risk and thus built at a distance from the main house.

The garden at Melrose is intensely cultivated and designed, every square inch carefully considered and planned. Edible plants are a major feature and the plants spilling over the front fence onto the verge include herbs, medicinal plants, vegetables and fruit trees. Dwarf quince, peach, cherry and Chilean guava trees, along with bay hedges and more vegetables, fill a large section of the garden. More fruit trees are scattered elsewhere, including pomegranate, goji berry, nectarine and pistachio. Small step-over fruit trees, grafted to dwarfing rootstock, have been planted against low stone walls, so that even the most compact areas of the garden are productive.





A seating area by the back door is showered with petals from the *Chionanthus virginicus* that shades the table in summer.



**TOP LEFT** Penny. **TOP RIGHT** The timber-framed windows of the glasshouse can be opened for ventilation on hot days. **BOTTOM LEFT** Plants on Jenny's potting bench. **BOTTOM RIGHT** An



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