



Promoting the enjoyment, knowledge and benefits of  
gardens and gardening

# Open Gardens Australia

Welcomes you to the gardens of

## **Bickleigh Vale Village**

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### **Badgers Wood**

**Devon Cottage** Light refreshments, crafts and plants

**Downderry** Light meals and refreshments

### **Mistover**

**The Barn** Light refreshments, crafts and plants

**The Sheilan** Crafts and plants

### **Wimbourne**



ABC  
Radio

**Open Gardens Australia** is a self-funding, not for profit organisation dedicated to promoting the enjoyment, knowledge and benefits of gardens and gardening in the Australian community. To encourage the gardeners of the future, children under 18 are admitted free of charge at our open gardens. All of our income comes from the entry fee and part of each fee is dedicated to funding community garden projects. Since 1987 over \$1,100,000 has been given to projects across Australia. Our garden owners also raise funds for charities and \$4,840,000 has been given to worthwhile causes. **Copies of the Open Gardens Guide are available from [www.opengarden.org.au](http://www.opengarden.org.au), iTunes Store, all good bookstores & newsagents, or by phoning (03) 9682 8227**

## **A Little on Edna Walling and Bickleigh Vale**

Edna Walling (1896 – 1973) emigrated to Australia in 1914 and completed her horticultural studies at Burnley College in 1917.

Edna Walling's childhood in the Devonshire countryside in England inspired her creation of the Bickleigh Vale village in Mooroolbark. Those Devonshire walks taught her to love 'low growing plants, mauves and soft greens, mossy boulders and gritty pathways, and closely nibbled turf' and simple stone cottages.

Sometime between 1919 and 1921 Walling purchased 3 acres of rolling cow paddocks at the foot of Mt. Dandenong, where she could build a cottage of 'charm and personality' using local stone, timbers and recycled materials. The result was her first house 'Sonning', named after an English village. She selected trees to give "an appearance of completion and restfulness. Meanwhile she worked as a gardener at Dame Nellie Melba's Coombe Cottage at Lilydale.

In the early 1920's she bought an 18 acre allotment next to 'Sonning', which she named Bickleigh Vale after a Devonshire village and drew up 1 and 2 acre allotments. Prospective owners had to agree to a cottage and garden of Edna's making.

She oversaw the construction of 16 cottages and gardens between the early 1920's and into the 1940's. By 1934, Mistover, Hurst, Downderry, The Barn, Lynton Lee, Corner Cottage and Sonning had been constructed. They were separated by simple farm fences with picket gates for neighbourly access. These are still used throughout the village.

In 1978 the Bickleigh Vale Village was recognised by The National Trust and declared a "Classified Landscape. It is also recognised as "an area of special significance" by the Yarra Ranges Shire. In 1988 Devon Lane was renamed Edna Walling Lane in recognition of her creation of Bickleigh Vale Village and her contribution to Australian landscape design.

In 2005 Bickleigh Vale was included on the Victorian Heritage register as a historical landscape of horticultural and architectural significance to the State of Victoria.

### **Walling's Philosophy**

The goal at Bickleigh Vale was to create an environment in which houses and gardens related harmoniously with each other as well as with the natural environment; and within which like-minded people

could appreciate and preserve this village concept. The spirit of Edna Walling still exists within this community today as residents consciously aim to protect and maintain the common features of the area, which make this a place of such special significance to so many.

Walling had a number of design principles which she applied to her garden designs. These are very much in evidence at Bickleigh Vale. Walling felt one should create "rooms" or different areas within the garden. The simple bare bones of the design should be visible in winter. The most important colour is green, but one should be sensitive to foliage and texture. Trees should be planted in copses and groundcovers allowed take over. Gardens should be mulched and not overwatered. Gardens should be allowed to grow naturally; where possible they should be left alone, and where pruning is necessary, it should not be overdone,

Much of the philosophy she espoused has since been revived by others with the revival of the cottage garden. But her emphasis on foliage and the colour green remains unique.

## **The Plantings**

At Bickleigh Vale, Walling blended native and exotic plants and built cottages nestling into a landscape characterised by repeated plantings of a wide variety of her preferred groundcovers, shrubs and trees. When residents replant today, they do it with one eye on her writings so that the character is preserved.

Walling favourites common at Bickleigh Vale are:

Trees - Crab-apples, birches, hornbeams, hawthorns, plums, ti-tree, apricots, oaks and elms.

Shrubs – various viburnums, kolkwitzia, (the beauty-bush), berberis, buddleia, (the butterfly-bush), japonica, cotoneaster, forsythia, spirea, magnolia, mock-orange and mint bushes.

Groundcovers/flowers - Yarrow, brachyscome, erigeron, forget-me-not, periwinkle, thyme, veronica, bell-flowers, foxgloves, penstemon, snow-in-summer, Japanese windflowers, ajuga, aquilegia and herbs.

In Spring – drifts of bulbs

## **The Future**

The challenge today for owners as caretaker is to maintain the gardens in changing climatic conditions. Many ancient trees were stressed by the drought, dropping limbs and dying. Now others are

struggling to hold their roots in the ground because of so much rain. Also there is the issue of “weeds versus heritage” as many of Edna Walling’s favourite plants are now on the Shire of Yarra Ranges weed list e.g. Agapanthus, Erigeron, Cotoneaster, Vinca Major and Hawthorn to name but a few. Residents are now thinking about succession planting to replace senescent trees.

Since Edna Walling left Bickleigh Vale in 1967, residents have worked together to maintain the roadside vegetation. In 2009 they became affiliated with the Victorian Environmental Friends Network to become “Friends of Edna Walling”. They also received a grant from Heritage Victoria and have worked with the Shire to rejuvenate the roadside vegetation. This year residents have planted over 500 trees, shrubs and ground cover plants and bulbs

The residents’ aim is to preserve the environmental vision of Edna Walling and her Heritage Village – which is the only one of its kind - for future generations.

They are currently working to raise funds to set up an interactive “Edna Walling Walk” for visitors.

### **Further Reading**

<http://www.bickleighvale.com.au/>

<http://www.abc.net.au/walling/designer/>

[The Vision of Edna Walling](#) - Tricia Dixon & Jennie Churchill

[Letters to Garden Lovers](#) - Edna Walling

## **The Gardens**

### **Badgers Wood**

Badgers Wood was constructed in 1937 on a large allotment that was sub-divided in 1977 to allow construction of another house, now called The Spinney.

In 1980, the original cottage at Badgers Wood was substantially, but sympathetically, extended by the producer Simon Wincer (The Man from Snowy River, The Cup). At the western end of the house significant elements of the original cottage and Edna Walling’s ‘signature’ features have been retained – a high-pitched roof, an stone chimney and low-set windows, allowing the garden to be brought ‘inside’. These elements continue through into the extension with the

new lower level rooms being nestled into the garden. The pool is also a new addition, having been built in 1983.

Throughout Badgers Wood local stone has been used extensively – for the front dry-stone wall, paths, steps, and the pool surrounds, often softened with violets (*Viola*), forget-me-nots (*Myosotis*), and babies-tears (*Erigeron karvinskianus*).

The garden exemplifies Edna Walling's use of mass and void, with the creation of garden rooms. Significant trees include the well-established hawthorns (*Crataegus* species) at the front of the house, a large golden elm (*Ulmus glabra* 'Lutescens') in the lower half of the garden and tall eucalypts and a weeping elm at the western side of the house. Lower/middle storey plants include japonica (*Chaenomeles* species), azaleas, numerous hellebores, bulbs, camellias, roses, wintersweet (*Chimonanthus praecox*) and wisteria. As the seasons progress new 'surprises' are always appearing, giving an ever-changing view from inside.

Anna and Mike, the current custodians, have been at Badgers Wood for only 12 months and, having seen the garden through its seasons, are just commencing their journey to keep alive Edna Walling's vision for the integration of garden and home. Anna and Mike hope to bring out more of the garden's woodland cottage feel. Many areas have seen significant growth in plant material over the years that sometimes hide stone structures or signature plants. Anna and Mike have their work cut out for them, but hope their role in the continual renewal of Badgers Wood will be something that Edna Walling would be proud of.

### **Devon Cottage**

Devon Cottage was originally part of the adjacent property "Sonning", Edna Walling's first home in the village. Built in 1956 the rustic stuccoed English cottage hugs the ground as if growing out of the garden. Flagstone paving sweeps around the cottage from the outside through French doors into indoor areas. The sprawling woodland garden features an original stone birdbath made by Edna Walling, a bulb lawn and a huge *Parrotia Persica*, said to be one of the largest in a private garden.

Favourite Walling trees include oaks, hornbeams, hawthorns crabapples, aspens, pin oak and silver birch, which together provide a leafy canopy. Curving paths softened by ground covers of ivy, erigeron, campanula, plecranthus, and vinca minor lead to shady garden rooms enclosed by walls of greenery with moss lawns, another Walling signature. Garden beds include Japanese anemones, hellebores, spireas, vibernums, berberis, japonica, forsythia, magnolia, kolkwitzia, ajuga, forget-me-nots, rhododendrons, azaleas and camellias. Jan and Allan have lived at Devon Cottage since 1993 and like the rest of the village it is always a work in progress.

### **Downderry**

Downderry was originally built as a small cottage by Edna Walling for her mother. It was built in the early thirties, The landscape then was open bushland; the cottage nestled into the gentle sloping land, featuring a stone chimney and a balcony with French doors opening onto views of the garden. Stone steps led up to the front door and veranda. A garden was established including dry stone walls and some of the signature trees. Later Brian and Jan McKeever purchased the property. Brian, a newly qualified architect and having grown up in Bickleigh Vale, worked with Edna in extending the cottage to cope with a young family. The garden was added to with some of the trees being planted for the children's birthdays by Edna.

Other owners have added to the house and garden, with all maintaining the Walling philosophy. Some of the significant trees in the garden include Copper Beech, Elm, American Scarlet Oak, Lime, Cypress, Hornbeam and Malus . The present owners, Alan and Maryann and family, have lived at Downderry since March 1994. Maryann has restored and extended a large part of the garden and stone walls.

### **Mistover**

The Heritage Listed Property and Gardens of Mistover were designed, created and built by Edna Walling. Mistover was one of the first cottages to be built in the Bickleigh Vale village with the first owner and occupier being Grace Mary Hughston who took up residence in 1934.

It would seem that Mistover was typical of many homes built in this area and sold as "weekend getaways", and were constructed with very simple and practical designs. A number of extensions have taken place over the years by previous owners, which have been in sympathy with the ideas and philosophies of Edna Walling. The present owners have

occupied Mistover for two years and have further updated parts of the house and garden and are committed to continue the traditions and legacy of Edna Walling.

The garden consists of large Liquid Ambers on the northern side of the house, as well as a large Camphor Laurel and a number of Camellias and Rhododendron trees are also featured. Unfortunately many Eucalypts have been lost over the last years due to the extreme conditions of a number of drought and wet seasons, however work is in progress to rectify this decline with new underplantings of small shrubs.

We believe that the gardens of Mistover reflect the ideas of Edna Walling with her fondness for having shades of green on green. Ria and Richard thank you for your visit and we invite you to have a photograph taken at the Edna Walling mural.

## **The Barn**

The Barn was built in 1928 as a shed for Blanche Scharp, friend and colleague of Edna Walling. It was one of the first homes built upon the Bickleigh Vale acreage, an investment Edna made to preserve her beloved Mooroolbark landscape. Blanche's requirements for her two acres were to have a stable for her horse, garage for her car, workshop, storage and a man's room upstairs. Blanche named her shed 'Good-a-Meavy' but all came to know it by its nickname "The Barn".

Edna lived at The Barn from 1951 for 16 years. She renovated the original shed and painted it the palest shade of pink. When she left for Buderim, QLD in 1967 she divided the Barn into 4 half acre blocks. Today the Barn still exists on just over 1 acre.

In Edna's time the garden of the Barn is described as native grasses and trees, with an outdoor patio to the north. She reported mowing the lawns only twice a year! Since Edna, it has been home to many happy families, giving children a wonderful freedom to explore and create. The garden is in a constant state of evolution with the loss of some aged trees there has been sensitive replanting of Edna's favourites. The tennis court and large extensions to the house were added in the 1980s.

Paul and Jen have lived at the Barn for just over two years. Armed with energy and enthusiasm they have pulled out overgrown areas of jasmine, ivy, cotoneasters and privet to add some sun-kissed vegetable gardens, fruit trees and perennial beds. With the loss of the fine old

gum tree to the north of the house, wonderful northern light has entered the garden. It has also exposed a view to the northern neighbours, which is being replanted with Crepe Myrtle, natives, perennials and bulbs. Many plants for new beds arise from cuttings of neighbours and sharing of these is a delight of the village. To the west of the tennis court a trellis of archways which will allow some rampant roses to ramble has been uncovered, together with a secret spot of paving to enjoy a cup of tea. Whilst things look somewhat spartan down here, truckloads of deadwood and briars have been removed and it will all spring forth with life renewed to again fill Edna's garden rooms with structure. The fresh earth will be filled with cuttings and groundcovers, and some cornus and pears will be added to the amalanchiers. There is a section left relatively untouched where rose, honeysuckle, clematis and jasmine climb and jolly together and reach for the sky. The next adventure will be to tame the jasmine and remove some deadwood in coming seasons.

It has been said that people who first lived at Bickleigh Vale wanted to retain its beauty; that's why they had chosen to live there. Some 75 years on the sentiment certainly rings true today.

### **The Sheilan**

Each time Edna Walling subdivided the land which she had purchased in the early 1920's, she sold lots to "like-minded people".

In the 1930's, such a person, Miss McGeoch, a single lady of Scottish ancestry and Nursing Sister at Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital, purchased the land which is now at No.5 Bickleigh Vale Road. An agreement was negotiated with Edna Walling which allowed for the construction of a Scottish Crofter's Cottage. So "The Sheilan" (Scottish for "Resting Place") was built, with the small cottage at the front gate already being on the title. Edna Walling had the overarching say in the construction of the cottage and was involved in the building of the two stone chimneys and garden landscaping.

Nestled in an acre of mature gardens the property has a combination of mature exotic and indigenous trees, shrubs, perennials and ground cover plants. The small front garden is quite formal with plantings of Azaleas, Roses, Edna Walling Crab Apples, Camellias, Spirea, Bamboo, Liquidambers, Yellow Jasmine, Weigela and Japanese Maples. In contrast, the extensive, predominantly green, shaded back garden consists of hidden steps and winding paths which lead from one garden room to the next. The back patio overlooks a natural swimming pool



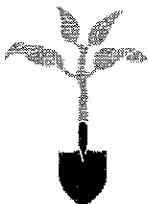
and waterfall, built in Edna Walling style. The current owners, Peter And Lois Dolphin, have been here for seventeen years

## **Wimborne**

Our house was built in 1940 by the Ronald Taylors shortly after they were married. They asked Edna Walling to come up with a design and then modified certain aspects, such as the height of the ceilings. This was not so easy as Edna was very particular about her designs. Mrs Taylor had worked with Edna for some time and bought the block in 1938 for £1,000. Because materials were hard to come by during the war, the bricks were recycled from a house that was being wrecked in North Melbourne. Edna specified that the rest of the house be clad in Californian redwood and the roof was of iron due to the shortage of slates and shingles. Mrs Taylor and Edna designed the garden and we have early photographs showing some gums and old fences but little else. When the Taylors left Bickleigh Vale in 1948 there was still no electricity connected. Stories of Edna's great love of Bickleigh Vale abound and we know that when it was installed two years later she met the SEC at the front of Bickleigh Vale Rd with a shotgun, just to make sure that they did not damage anything!

The house and garden have had only four owners since then, and we have been here for just three years. So we have watched with fascination as it has revealed itself to us. The garden is about an acre and a half and has many large trees so most of it is quite shady. We have begun to replace what the drought and old age have taken. It is a lovely garden to live in and we are constantly surprised by things that seem to just arrive with each new season. Wimborne is typical of Edna Walling in that it has lots of separate garden rooms, joined by mysterious paths leading to a pond or a wilderness or lawn.

When our friends come to visit they often say that it is like a separate reality. The people who live here feel very lucky to be its caretakers and we love to share it with the many admirers of Edna Walling's great vision.



## **OPEN GARDENS AUSTRALIA**

Open Gardens Australia is a not-for-profit organisation that opens private gardens and organises garden-themed events for public enjoyment around the country.

Our aim is to promote the enjoyment, knowledge, and benefits of gardens and gardening in the Australian community, and to build strong public support for the development of gardens across the nation.

### **Finding our Open Gardens**

- **Open Gardens guide**

The Open Gardens guide, published each August, contains all the information necessary for planning garden visits around Australia for the next 12 months. The guide is available from all good bookshops and newsagents, and it can be purchased from our website

- **Open Gardens website**

Our website gives information about us, calendars of garden openings, special events and our Giving Program. You can also purchase the guide, event tickets and merchandise using our secure online ordering facility. Visit us at [www.opengarden.org.au](http://www.opengarden.org.au)

- **Open Gardens App for iPhone and iPad**

The brand new Open Gardens iPhone and iPad App lets you find all of the gardens and special events right around Australia. Search by date, suburb, state, or find the gardens closest to wherever you happen to be with 'distance to me'. The App gives you the full garden description, as well as directions to the garden and mapping on Google Maps. [www.opengarden.org.au](http://www.opengarden.org.au)

- **ABC Radio**

The ABC is a key supporter of Open Gardens Australia. Details of garden openings are broadcast each week on ABC Radio's local network in both metropolitan and country areas.

## **How does the community benefit?**

Our garden owners donate around \$350,000 annually to charities and local causes, and through our Giving Program we provide grants for garden projects right across Australia. Visit our website for details.

## **Contact Us**

For all enquiries or if you are interested in opening your garden, contact the National Office.

Address: PO Box 940 Woodend, Vic. 3442

Tel: (03) 5424 8061 Email: [national@opengarden.org.au](mailto:national@opengarden.org.au)

Website: [www.opengarden.org.au](http://www.opengarden.org.au)

## **COMING EVENTS**

### **Eulinya** - Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> September

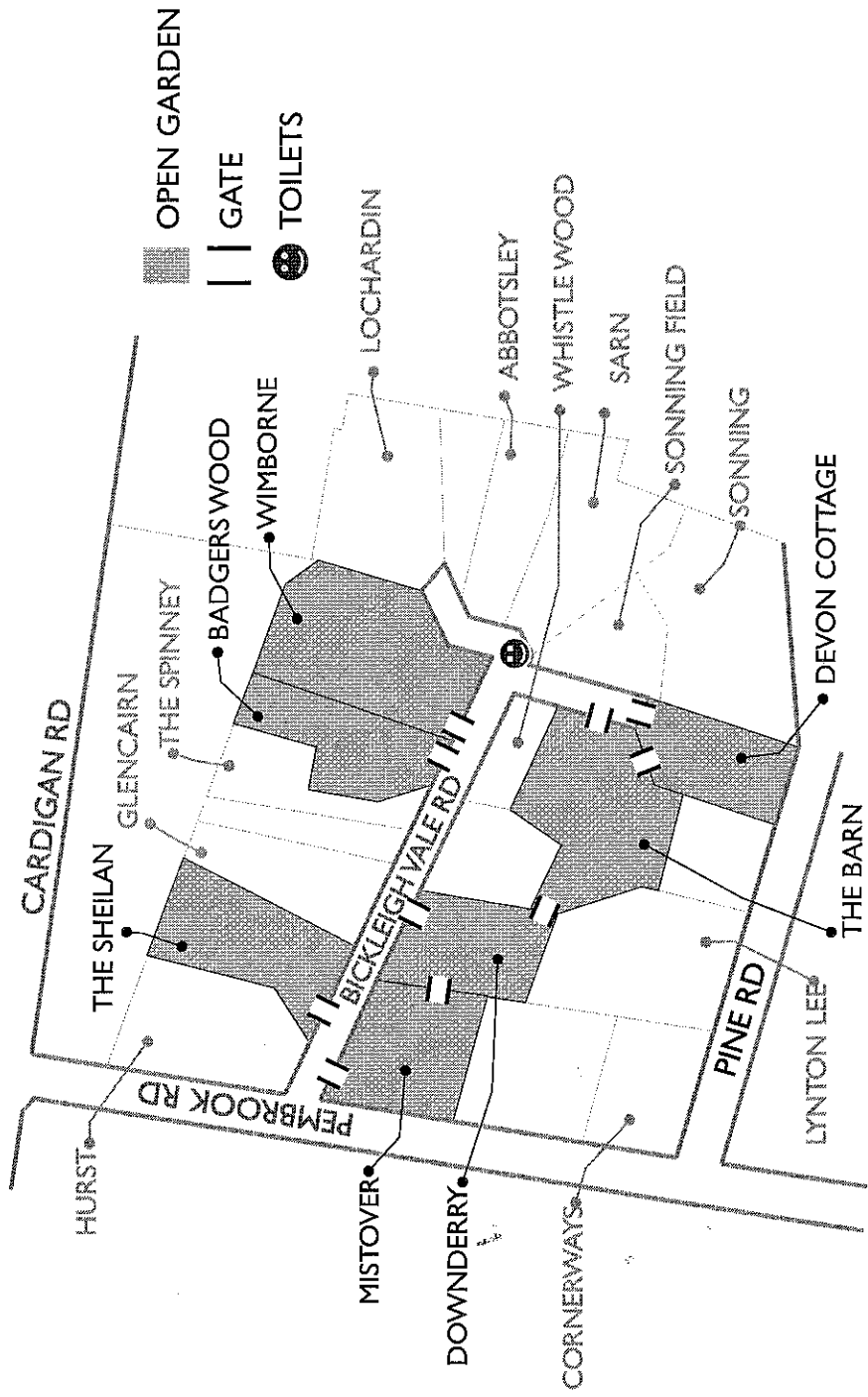
The magnificent garden of Mr and Mrs Fox in Toorak, with wisteria-covered pergolas and distinct garden rooms.

### **Illyarrie** - Saturday and Sunday 22- 23 September

A Balnarring garden full of rare and beautiful Australian plants including many Western Australian species

### **The Melbourne Club** - Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> September

A rare example of a nineteenth century city garden



OPEN GARDEN

GATE

TOILETS

CARDIGAN RD

HURST

THE SHEILAN

GLENCAIRN

THE SPINNEY

BADGERS WOOD

WIMBORNE

MISTOVER

DOWNDERRY

CORNERWAYS

LOCHARDIN

ABBOTSLEY

WHISTLEWOOD

SARN

SONNING FIELD

SONNING

LYNTON LEE

DEVON COTTAGE

THE BARN

BICKLEIGH VALE RD

PINE RD