



Welcome to our garden

The Friends of Westgarthtown have prepared a Garden Guide for the gardens at the Ziebell Farmhouse in the hope the information provided would enhance the enjoyment of this historic precinct. It is available to all visitors to the Ziebell Farmhouse. The map on the inside of the Garden Guide indicates the garden layout as well as listing the permanent plants located in each section. The reverse side uses a timeline to summarize the evolution of the garden from the 1850's through to 2010, accompanied by a description of each garden section as indicated on the map.

This supplement to the Garden Guide was originally produced by the Friends of Westgarthtown to support the development of the Garden Guide itself. It has been made available on our website to provide further information on the Ziebell Farmhouse garden. It is planned to be refined over time and kept up to date with changes that occur. A full list of plants identified in the garden will be added before the end of 2010.

History of the Garden

1850's

The story of the Ziebell Farmhouse Garden is based on documents, anecdotal stories handed down, and oral digital recordings made of the last generation of the Ziebell family who lived in the farmhouse, worked in the garden and on the farm. We know the Ziebell Farmhouse gardens remain today much as they were in the mid 1850's. The historic garden provides tangible evidence of the love of beauty and culture, which endured through Westgarthtown's evolutionary years as well as a rich insight into the lives, and interests of Christian and Sophia Ziebell and their nine children. They arrived in 1850 and immediately set about building their home and outbuildings and establishing their farm. The existing vegetation was cleared in order to build their home. A new landscape replaced the old, in order to gain a livelihood from the land. The farmhouse was built of stone drawn from the surrounding paddocks, with a shingle roof using timber from the indigenous Drooping She-oak woodlands that grew prolifically on the volcanic plains grasslands. In all probability, timber from other indigenous vegetation such as yellow box, acacia and black wattle trees were used as well. The medium and lower storey vegetation, as well as ground covers, climbers, grasses, tussocks and small plants indigenous to volcanic plains grasslands, were often left in rocky areas where the land was used for grazing rather than crops. Initially, their home was shared with many of their adult children, some of whom later built their own houses nearby. The farmhouse Christian Ziebell and his sons built was the largest of the dwellings in the original settlement of Westgarthtown, on the most extensive landholding. The Ziebell Farmhouse and remaining outbuildings stand today as a monument to the human qualities which enabled hardships to be overcome in the quest of a particular dream. Surrounded as they were in an alien and hostile environment, they created a haven for themselves and their family, and their simple flower garden added a tangible beauty to that dream of settlement in a new country.

Revisiting Germany five years later at the age of 58, Christian Ziebell left Melbourne for Liverpool aboard the James Baines in March 1855. Departing Hamburg aboard the Helena on 13 October 1855, he arrived at Port Adelaide on 23 January 1856, presumably then sailing on to Melbourne. Christian had returned to Germany to acquire seeds, plants, cuttings and trees, as well as tools, furniture and other items needed in the new settlement. He took with him many requests from other Westgarthtown settlers to fulfil their needs as well as his own. Christian also used his knowledge to encourage other German families to migrate to Australia. We believe Christian was aware of the Wardian case, a relatively modest invention that revolutionised the shipping of plants around the world. From the 1840's onwards these miniature glasshouses containing living plants travelled as cargo on the decks of the ships that traversed the globe. Ships travelling back to Europe from Australia took many specimens back to England from the colonies. In 1853 the inventor of the Wardian case, Nathaniel

Ward sent a copy of *On the Growth of Plants in Closely Glazed Cases*, inscribed 'To Ferdinand Mueller, Director of the Melbourne Botanical Gardens', which is held in the Archives of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne.

The original vegetable gardens and orchard were designed to produce all the vegetables and fruit that this large family and additional workers needed to enable them to be self-sufficient. Vegetables were preserved for out of season use by pickling and salting, while fruit was bottled, or used for jams and jellies. Surplus seasonal fresh produce was sold at the Victoria Market along with regular sales of butter, cream, eggs and smoked meats. In the first few years we believe herbs and small vegetables also mingled with the flowers, but as time went on the herb and vegetable gardens were greatly expanded along with the orchard, and the flower garden completely took over the areas adjacent to the house.

Christian and Sophia Ziebell were followed by their son August and his wife Auguste as the resident farmers. They in turn were followed by their son Carl and his wife Dorothea. Carl Alfred Ziebell died in 1940 and his widow Dorothea lived on in the farmhouse for the rest of her life. When Carl died, there were three unmarried daughters still living at home while engaged in work in inner Melbourne. A fourth daughter, Sylvia Adams had returned to the farm in 1936 when her husband died suddenly at Griffith, near their farm at Goolgowi, 49 kilometres west of Griffith in New South Wales, leaving her a widow with four small children. Her daughter, also named Sylvia, had previously come to live at the Ziebell farm with her grandparents as a six-year-old in 1932 to allow her to attend school in Melbourne.

1950's

By the 1950's only two daughters, Verona Ziebell and Sylvia Adams, remained with Dorothea at the farmhouse. They continued to tend their beautiful gardens with the help of other family members from time to time. In all Dorothea lived at the Ziebell farm for fifty four years and her contribution to the garden as we know it today was immense. She and Carl passed their love of gardening on to their ten children who, as they left the farm, all established their own productive gardens with orchards, vegetable and flower gardens. They took slips, seedlings, cuttings and seeds from their family home, and this has enabled the Friends of Westgarthtown to re-establish many plants that had been lost. After Dorothea's death in 1969, aged 96, Sylvia Adams looked after the gardens with the help of her daughter, Sylvia Schultz, until Sylvia Adams' death in 1990, aged 90.

While the original site of the orchard and vegetable gardens was converted to housing in the 1970's, the flower gardens remain today much as they have existed over the past one hundred and fifty five years. In the 1950's, fuchsias replaced the grape vines adorning the verandahs, and two tree ferns replaced the loquat tree, reflecting that a garden is a living growing creation, never finished, never perfect, and always requiring constant attention.

The house and garden were neglected in the 1990's before being purchased by the City of Whittlesea in 1993. Since 1995, the Friends of Westgarthtown have worked tirelessly to restore the garden to its former glory. The Ziebell farmhouse garden is unusual in that over its first 145 years members of the Ziebell family cared for it, and in the past 15 years a 5th generation direct descendant, Sylvia Schultz, has supervised the restoration.

2010

The Ziebell farmhouse used an 'L' shaped plan with external doorways to the main bedroom, the kitchen and the entry hall. This resulted in the enclosed garden adjacent to the east and south verandah. In the cool and calm of this space, protected from the fierce north winds, two tree ferns currently shade the verandah, while the old Cécile Brunner roses seem to be always blooming and the wisteria, oleander and hydrangeas give structure to the enclosure. With morning and early afternoon sunlight, watered in earlier times with reused dish and bathing water, conditions are ideal to nurture treasured, delicate and scented plant specimens. Numerous windows and doors are generously dispersed, framing spectacular views of the garden from all but the north windows. The house seems almost to have been built around the garden.

The timber picket fence around the garden has been restored and a similar fence erected along the Gardenia Road and Ainwick Crescent boundary. Some arbours have been restored and a modern watering system put in place. Although the original vegetable garden and orchard area was far more extensive than it is today, we have nurtured new plantings of the same varieties of apricots, plums, peaches, pears, lemons, mulberry, elderberry, cherry and apples. The old orchard had herbs and vegetables growing amongst it and the water provided for the vegetables and herbs also kept the fruit trees moist. This conserved water, which even then, was a very precious commodity. Water used in household tasks was also reused with care in the garden.

It is worthwhile noting that the garden reaches a peak during spring that is seldom matched during the remainder of the year, albeit there are always many plants to delight and intrigue. The garden is not a 'digging' garden because the many bulbs, rhizomes, corms and underground rootstocks can be damaged if forks or spades penetrate below the surface. While we try to keep the beds full of plants to deter weeds, in a good season they certainly appear and are best tackled by hand weeding. Once the self-sown seeds have emerged and new plantings are completed, the bed is mulched to protect the soil and plants.

Spring, with its outburst of profusion, is an amazing period of transition. The summer is normally quite dry causing the earth to crack. The roses, numbering over fifty, continue to revel in these conditions, while annuals are allowed to go to seed, for collection later. The guelder roses after their impressive displays in spring and cool shade cover in summer, finish the year with a splendid montage of varied reds and browns in autumn. The lingering days of winter are enlivened by the warm glow of golden yellows and wandering scents of the daffodils, jonquils and violets.

Dorothea Ziebell encouraged her young granddaughter Sylvia to help with the garden, and Sylvia's knowledge and love of gardening has endured to this day, 78 years later. Over all this time she has helped with the care of the Ziebell garden. Firstly she helped her grandparents, then her aunts and later her mother. Sylvia's interest in the garden continued after her marriage, and she regularly returned to help her mother and grandmother maintain it until the farmhouse was purchased by the City of Whittlesea in 1993. Her knowledge and dedication is extraordinary and has provided a clear and articulate link over the past 95 years from Dorothea Ziebell to the present day. The oral stories Dorothea passed on to her granddaughter Sylvia contained memories of her own childhood as the daughter of Christian and Sophia's youngest child Caroline who arrived at Westgarthtown in 1850 aged 10. Caroline continued to visit the Ziebell farm up until her death in 1919 at the age of 79.

Since 1995 the gardens have been restored by members of the Friends of Westgarthtown, under the guidance of Sylvia Schultz, a fifth generation Ziebell descendant. The Ziebell Farmhouse garden moves forward again with the production of the Garden Guide, helping visitors to the Ziebell farmhouse and garden to enjoy not only the precinct itself, but to have an understanding of the history behind its evolution. With Sylvia as our guide, the Friends of Westgarthtown have endeavoured to preserve the essence of the garden with its seasonal rhythms through the spring, summer, autumn and winter, recording the garden design, and nurturing it so that it will endure and enable its many visitors to enjoy the vision begun 160 years ago.

Enclosed Central Garden

The enclosed garden adjacent to the house is the original flower garden. The verandah provides a sheltered retreat from the hot northern sun. Some original specimens remaining are ferns, Cécile Brunner rose, and a tree peony. The verandah was festooned with a range of small ferns such as maidenhair in pots and hanging baskets. This garden opens from the southern and western verandahs. Basically square in design with a central circular garden bed and four paths on the main axis leading back to the verandah or paths except for southern axis, which stops under the wisteria pergola. This garden is divided in the plan into Garden A, B, C, D and E.

Garden A, is the enclosed circular garden, and in the centre is a 'Queen Elizabeth' rose, a particular favourite of Dorothea Ziebell and one of three growing in the garden. Apart from the roses the rest of the circular garden is seasonal. In the summer cactus dahlias flourish, surrounded by many old fashioned columbines of varying colour combinations: double white, blue pleat, pink pleat etc. Pink and white nerines, daffodils, Dutch iris, lupins, larkspur, petunias, lobelia, primula, violets, Chinese forget-me-nots, kiss-me-quick and violas are all planted seasonally in a circular pattern.

Garden B, is the northwest section of the enclosed garden. The most shaded of the five areas, it is home to the two tree ferns with their understorey of ferns, cane begonias and old fashioned, highly perfumed purple flowering violets. Fuchsias, azaleas, rhododendrons and hydrangeas exist happily alongside border begonias, lilies, Christmas lilies, the winter flowering hellebores, and the summer flowering verbena, delphiniums and border pinks. Closer to the ferns in semi-shade, sheltered from the wind and free from frost the cinerarias, Brazilian plume flower (Justica), crested iris, picotee and plantain lily all blend well to provide late winter and early spring display.

Garden C, the northeast section, enjoys more sun and the 130-year-old Cécile Brunner rose on the eastern edge thrives here. Hydrangeas, begonias, hellebores, pelargoniums and fuchsias enjoy the shaded areas near the verandah, while foxgloves, pentstemons, perennial phlox, forget-me-nots, carnations, picotees and delphiniums thrive in open sun. Borders of grape hyacinths, violets, red nerines and lachenalias add colour in the spring. In the northwest corner there is another Brazilian plume flower, with its pink hooded flowers on upright branches shading the Lily-of-the-Valley. A swan bush, tree peony and a Christmas Lily add interest while bedding begonias and primroses border the southwest edge.

Garden D, the southeast section, also enjoys full sun and is home to a second very old Cécile Brunner rose and oleander tree both close to the eastern fence. The Cécile Brunner rose is in the northern end of this section and the oleander in the south. A little west of the oleander is an English lavender and west of that again is the old wisteria. North of these hollyhocks grow clumped together in the background behind perennial Russell Lupins with their long spikes of flowers. Red and white valerian flower on fleshy grey-green leaves in front and closer to the circular path than the penstemons with their large open bell shaped flowers. Hollyhocks also bloom beside the Cécile Brunner roses on either side of the path dividing garden C and D. A white peony in the northwest area of this garden stands beside the seasonal picotee and grape hyacinths, which border the circular path. Forget-me-nots, calendulas, poppies, bluebells and belladonnas emerge seasonally to provide contrast and colour.

Garden E, the southwest section in semi-shade, is home to more fuchsias, hydrangeas, pelargoniums, clivias, English lavender, and hellebores. It also contains a beautiful pink tree Peony, freesias, daffodils, amaryllis, love-in-the-mist, kiss-me-quick, and forget-me-nots. In the southwest corner a Queen of Sheba climber with deep pink trumpet flowers profusely every summer. A hardy Salvia 'Indigo Spires' blooms in the centre of this section providing a gentle colour contrast.

Additional Gardens

Garden F, to the south of the hand gate entrance off Gardenia Road, has a number of climbers including a yellow Banksia rose, two orange Tecoma, a potato vine as well as a pittosporum and photinia trees at the southern end of the bed. Yellow day lilies flower in summer, while daffodils, snowdrops and white arum lilies bloom in both winter and spring, along with old-fashioned blue hyacinths in spring. On the west side of the picket fence orange cannas, blue iris, a ginger lily and grape hyacinths bloom seasonally. To the east of the path daffodils, arum lilies, Austin roses, and a pink tree peony are interspersed with forget-me-nots, and other flowering perennials. A beautiful Doris Downs rose planted by Augusta Ziebell from a cutting climbs over the large arbour to literally cover it in masses of pink roses in summer. A patch of small white jonquils flower in late winter in the south east corner, and a group of pink watsonias flower in Spring in the south of the bed. A Queen Elizabeth rose grows in a small bed to the south.

Garden G, a circular bed is home to a variety of cactus dahlias, bedding dahlias and hollyhocks in late spring and summer making a striking patch of colour. Orange and yellow calendulas take over for the rest of the year interspersed with forget-me-nots helping to keep the bed colourful throughout the year.

Garden H, to the east of Garden F, runs south of the brick path leading into the garden from the Gardenia Road entrance. In spring it has a border of yellow pokers, spring stars and bright pink thrift flowers. The west of the bed contains clumps of arum lilies and red and white nerines flowering in winter and early spring, while jonquils and daffodils brighten the area south of the path. In the centre of the garden Michaelmas daisies, yellow and white roses, as well as a long row of English lavender flower for long periods. To the south of the bed three guelder roses traditionally supply autumn colour for the farmhouse and church interiors. Groupings of blue flowering agapanthus, arum lilies, red japonica, another Queen Elizabeth rose, and a Sunny South rose are interspersed with bedding and cactus dahlias, belladonna lilies, forget-me-nots and calendulas.

Garden I, a narrow garden bed along the Gardenia Road fence, contains bearded iris, red-hot-pokers, a red rose and a bird of paradise. At the corner of Ainwick Crescent there is a large lemon scented gum tree, and the bed continues along this street where five pittosporum trees, a remnant cherry plum tree, red nerines, cannas, a pink flowering crab apple tree, more bearded iris, calendulas and perennial stocks provide interest and shade throughout the year.

Garden J, runs along the eastern boundary of the garden. Fruit trees replicate the early species that were lost when the original orchard garden area was sold for development. To the south we have planted a two-way pear: Packham and Winter Mellis, while moving north a three-way apple tree: Jonathon, Golden Delicious and Granny Smith, a Lisbon Lemon and a Morello Cherry. Sharing this bed are many roses, two of which - Christian Dior and Pascali - were particular favourites of Dorothea Ziebell. Borders of pink and white nerines, lambs' ears, pink and orange gazanias, blue mint bushes, salvias and calendulas complete this section.

Garden K, the section running north from Garden J, contains more fruit trees. There is a two-way peach tree: Hales Haven and Anzac, two apricot trees: Divinity and Moorpark, two plum trees, both two-way: Angelina and King Billy as well as Green Gage and Cobb Golden Day. Roses again surround the fruit trees reflecting the Ziebell family's ongoing interest in the species. Many pelargoniums are spread throughout this area and provide a colourful display for most of the year. English blue lavender defines the eastern edge of the north bed, and provides a heady perfume for months, while two camellias shelter the western border. Massed plantings of daffodils provide a bright glow to the garden after a cold and relatively drab winter season. In late winter snowdrops, arum lilies and jonquils bloom while in spring the black arum lily, delicate stems of Solomon's Seal flowers and grape hyacinths all intrigue and delight visitors. The delicate flowers of the May Bush echo the coming of spring. Annuals and perennials are used to make a border on the western edge of this garden and can change from time to time. Some of the selections frequently used are violas, lobelia, love-in-the-mist, poppies, larkspur, begonias, primula, forget-me-nots, foxgloves, violets, snapdragons, stocks, columbines, bearded iris, shasta daisies, marguerite daisies, and hollyhocks that continue to bloom through spring and summer. A large New Zealand Cabbage Tree dominates the north west corner near the bath house.

Garden L, this section stretches from the eastern end of the Bath house through to the eastern boundary. The southern boundary is home to the two grape vines representing the very early plantings from the 1850's settlement, with a Black Shiraz and a Rhine Riesling. The north section is almost completely covered by a black-fruited elderberry replicating the original orchard plantings. Blue agapanthus planted underneath the elderberry completely fills this area, while the remaining area is grassed, with rhubarb and arum lily plantings on the southern edge.

Garden M, a relatively small area, contains a herb garden with flat leaf Italian parsley, curly leaf parsley, peppermint pelargonium, rosemary, yarrow, common mint, Jerusalem sage, marjoram, silver lace plant and a small bay tree.

Garden N, another small section is dominated by a Hicks Fancy mulberry, not only replicating the original tree, but in exactly the same position. This area also contains gooseberry plants, curly leaf parsley, iris, cannas and our composting area.

Garden O, the northern area of the garden, opens out to the Westgarthtown Reserve. This small garden to the east of the path is dominated by the well/tank and is backed to the east by a nandina and three varieties of bamboo. To the north, a row of zonal pelargonium flower all year while arum lily, calendulas, iris, and violets fill the area surrounding the well. The small bed to the east, south of the Smoke house contains a pineapple sage, lemon verbena, violets and quite often summer plantings of violas.

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