

17th Australasian Botanic Guides Conference

Day Excursion – Gardens of the North-West



Melton Gardens is a not-for-profit and wholly volunteer-run garden. Covering 25 hectares it is situated on the edge of the western volcanic plain and contains a huge array of plants. Its patron is well-known gardening expert, Jane Edmanson OAM, and she will be giving us a short talk. The garden comprises a Dryland Eucalyptus Arboretum with more than 100 species of Eucalypt, and Indigenous Grasslands. There are Mediterranean, Californian, Southern African, Central and South American, Western and South Australian gardens. There is a walking path around the lake where Bird Sanctuary Island is home to many species of birds. ([Melton Botanic Garden](#))

50 kms north-west of Melbourne, Bolinda Vale is the historic home of the 4th baronet of Rupertswood, Sir Rupert Clarke and Lady Susannah Clarke. Built in 1878, Bolinda Vale's three-hectare garden fits beautifully into its iconic Australian landscape. It has seen significant changes yet smoothly embraces both the traditional and the contemporary where sustainability and ease of management are key. A tour of the garden, led by Lady Clarke, will include the traditional English style garden with its plantings of iris, echium, sedums and roses, and trees such as magnolias, oaks and glorious mature apple trees. Descending the homestead's bluestone steps, then walking along the path we are seamlessly transported from the traditional to the natural, where renowned designer Phillip Johnson has created a striking new landscape incorporating existing mature Eucalypts, a varied array of native plants, and recirculated water courses (solar powered) including a billabong and tiny waterfalls.

Just down the road from Bolinda Vale is Oak House, owned by Lady Clarke's daughter, landscape designer, Samantha Crawford. Integral to the garden's design are two superb examples of English oaks, believed to have been planted in the mid-19th century. Sam has used the shapes and forms of plantings to integrate the garden into the natural landscape. For example, grasses such as *miscanthus* mimic the movement of the paddock grass heads. An inspired part of the design is the central path leading from the house - taking the eye from the inside to the garden outside, down to the billabong and beyond. Plantings are a bold mix of perennials and Australian natives and include White Correa, Westringia, Cistus species, Santolina, Salvia and Miscanthus. With meandering paths linking all areas, there are plenty of opportunities to pause and reflect on this garden's tranquil atmosphere before heading back to Melbourne.

