

**BLOOMING TASMANIA FLOWER AND GARDEN FESTIVAL
SOUTHERN LAUNCH
SPEECH BY HER EXCELLENCY PROFESSOR THE HONOURABLE
KATE WARNER AM, GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
ROYAL TASMANIAN BOTANICAL GARDENS, 22 FEBRUARY 2016**

Thank you Jane, and good afternoon everyone. I am delighted to have been asked to be here today to assist in launching and promoting this Festival.

The concept of a Blooming Tasmania Flower and Garden Festival is a fabulous one, for all sorts of reasons. To begin with therefore may I add my thanks to those sponsors who have been named; and to the venues hosting and associated with the Festival this year in Launceston in September.

My thanks also to David Reid, Horticultural Coordinator here at the RTBG, who has organised today's event and who kindly issued the invitation to me to talk at this launch.

When David invited me to speak today, he suggested that I might want to share some of my thoughts with you about gardening from a personal point of view. Also, in the context of the Festival, how I perceive the theme "Tasmania My Garden" and what it might mean to me. So that is what I will do.

My mother was a keen gardener, and she redesigned a beautiful garden at our house in Davey Street. She was helped by a garden designer and flower arranger, Kitty Henry, who lived in a rather dilapidated house in Sandy Bay with a large conservatory/flower room, interesting plumbing and an enchanting woodland garden. This garden has gone unfortunately, subdivided and built upon. My godmother, Judy Lewis, also had a beautiful garden, Mawhera, also in Sandy Bay. Unusually for the time, Judy trained as a gardener at Burnley Horticultural College in Melbourne, and she created a gorgeous garden for her family of six children. So when I married and moved to Valleyfield, I embraced the idea of having a garden. My first job was to tackle the tall couch grass which had invaded all the garden beds

around the cottage and to clear the paved path. After days of digging out couch I planted some daisies and a few punnets of Sweet William seedlings. The sweet Williams grew vigorously but were mainly magenta and dark red and clashed horribly with the yellow daisies. This combination is best forgotten and I am sure it made Gertrude Jekyll turn in her grave but the memory is preserved in the background of a photograph of my daughter Emily taking her first steps. Over the next few years we gradually got rid of some twenty or so scraggly radiata pines which had been planted around and between the two houses at Valleyfield. A few treasures beneath had survived, a stunted Magnolia Grandiflora and some old bearded iris. And here, 40 years ago, I created my first large garden bed, with everything I liked from my childhood: forsythia, winter sweet (*chimonanthus praecox*), a pale pink sasanqua camellia, a mollus azalea, pink apple blossom Japonica, a Cecil Brunner and an Iceberg rose.

Thirty years ago or so Dick and I moved to the main house at Valleyfield and I suddenly had a much larger challenge. However, gardening at Valleyfield has two advantages, wonderful soil (mostly) and a river at the bottom of the garden with an endless supply of water. And I should mention the wonderful trees framing the garden. In the 1880s, the Shoobridges planted a selection of some fifty exotic trees, a giant sequoia (redwood); a bunya pine (*Araucaria bidwilli*) and a deodar cedar, these three all impossibly close together but creating a marvellous canopy. They also planted a weeping or funeral cyprus, cabbage trees (*Cordyline australis*) other unusual conifers and a couple of European ash trees. Interestingly, these trees were part of a consignment of trees ordered by the Royal Society, some of which were ordered for the Botanical Gardens. We have a photocopy of the original list, which lists the trees, their purchasers and the prices. The garden is bordered by a row of poplars to the east and west, the river to the south and the Lyell Highway and a hawthorn hedge to the north. Dick's father added maples, golden ash, silver birches and a lot of camellias to the garden, all of which are now mature trees.

If I were take you through the garden, bed by bed we would be here for a very long time! So I will limit myself to our two most ambitious projects - what we call Monet's garden and the espaliered garden. Our Monet's garden is a copy of the Grande Allee at Giverny, with six arches spanning an

avenue with parallel beds leading to the river with climbing roses over the arches starting with red then pink and ending with white. And the espaliered garden is a square bordered by sides each of trellised grapes; espaliered Bechtel crab apples; espaliered pears and apple trees and an apple step-over on the fourth side. Now our daughter and her family have taken responsibility for Valleyfield and its garden. Perhaps I can now claim that not only is the beautiful garden at Government House my garden, but as well 'Tasmania is My Garden'!

It will come as no surprise to you that I enjoy Flower and Garden Festivals of all shapes and sizes. I have been lucky enough to go the Chelsea Flower Show and the Hampden Court Palace Flower Show but I also love flower stalls at fairs and markets. I think Blooming Tasmania's concept of broadening the definition of garden to include gardens for food and school gardens; aboriginal cultural heritage, national parks, gardens under the sea and so on, is an inspired one. As a keen bushwalker, I am well aware that in our national parks we have the most amazing natural gardens. Walking along Crater Creek on the Crater Lake circuit, climbing Mt Oakleigh off the Overland Track, walking on the Twilight Tarn circuit in autumn or winter, cascades of wild white clematis on the Three Capes Track, all provide wonderful botanical experiences. And closer to home we have Fern Tree, Mount Wellington, Collins Cap and Collins Bonnet to cite just a few examples. Promoting our nature and wilderness through events such as this is an excellent plan. For me it is incredibly sad that so many people go through life without experiencing what our State has to offer in terms of both wilderness, parks and gardens and without being struck with that joyful thought 'Tasmania is My Garden'. For this reason I do welcome the idea of expanding the Festival to other locations, and including more Open Garden and State trails.

I now have much pleasure in launching the southern component of the 2016 Blooming Tasmania Flower and Garden Festival.

Thank you.