

## Plants and memories – the values of my soil

**Description:** sandy  
**Location:** Collaroy Plateau- above Sydney's northern beaches

### Values for this soil:

☞ My soil is the **foundation** for our **family's life and home** on the Collaroy Plateau since the 1950's.

I live on a plateau that looks down on several of the beaches known as the Northern Beaches of Sydney, NSW, Australia. These are very old photographs showing our block of land in 1952 - just as we began to clear it to build our house. My husband Bill did the hard work. This stump took ages to get out! I did the lighter work. Some of this lighter stuff was quite dry. It was most useful for the fire I would build to cook our lunch.



☞ It is **full of memories** in the trees, flowers, herbs and pots, of my children growing up, of my husband with me.



We cleared our land, built our house and then turned it into the home where we raised our three children. Our Garden was very important to us and much of it brings back wonderful memories for me.

This Liquid Amber is one of the trees in my back yard. It is more than 40 years old. It was self sown from the parent tree that also lives on my suburban block.

When my son was about 12-years old, he used to climb it to check which of the beaches had the best waves. That son now has two adult children of his own.

☞ This **enhances my life** and **gives me strength**.

The soil that is the foundation for our life on Collaroy Plateau is far more than a means of growing our food:

- ☞ it is full of memories;
- ☞ it is where I go when it is hard to cope with a problem;
- ☞ it is where I gain refreshment.
- ☞ It is where nature can heal and refresh me.
- ☞ It not only gives life to the plants and trees that live in the garden it also enhances my life and gives me strength.

☞ My backyard is my meadow - it **refreshes me**; here **nature heals me**; this is where I go to **solve a problem**

I grow herbs and flowers together and have several areas in my back yard that I refer to as my meadow. I allow a couple of parsley plants (below left) to go to seed each year and that ensures a regular crop of this favourite herb. I also allow the flowers to seed and am continuously delighted by the variety of flowers that appear in my meadow, like amongst the Thyme, below right.



☞ My soil gives life to the plants and grows **food, flowers and memories** in the garden of my home.



This cheeky possum was caught by my camera flash in a camellia tree. He knows that the pot of tomatoes on the deck below are beginning to colour – he will have devoured them by daybreak!

The camellia is called String of Pearls which we planted in it 1985 to celebrate our pearl anniversary.

☞ The **sandy** soil is **easy to dig in** or **move into pots to work from a wheelchair** on the verandah of the house.



I grow a lot of flowers, bulbs and foliage plants in pots. I began when Bill first had to use a wheelchair. He could no longer get to many parts of the garden, so I kept a constant flow of pots to move to the various places I could get him to. He particularly loved Spring with all the flowering bulbs. Although, Bill died some 8 years ago, I still plant them.

This photo shows our little front porch, where I was still able to transfer Bill from his wheelchair into an ordinary chair. Sometimes we would sit out there together having a cup of tea. Other times, Bill would sit and watch the garden, the birds in the camellias and those passing by.



## Challenges/managements for this sandy soil:

- ☞ **Grew a scrub** when we bought it for our home over 60 years ago - we had to **clear** trees and stumps off it.
- ☞ **Dry on top** – but **holds moisture underneath**, and is easily worked.
- ☞ **Poor in nutrients** for the plants we wanted in a suburban garden – but with **compost added** regularly over the years, and dead plants dug into the soil, it absorbs their nutrients well and nurtures the garden.



The soil in this area of my garden is topped by the soil from my many pots as the plants in them finish their cycle and the pots need to be replanted. While there may still be a little bit of nourishment left in this soil it will have to be built up with compost and the like before I plant into it.



This soil has been prepared for me to plant bulbs in. It is dry on top but a quick turn of a trowel shows the improvement. Hmmm a little weed I hadn't noticed, I will need to get rid of it!

This area of soil is very poor, it is at the base of a clump of Alexander Palms and over some 35 years it has been depleted by the demands of the palm.

Our FM family has been using and benefitting from Australian soils for 200+ years – for building homes, farms and livelihoods. The first aim of the IY Soils is to raise awareness of how important soil is in our lives. Perhaps you can spare a moment for your soil? And, if you would like to share your “Soil Selfies” in my on-line collection please visit <http://soils.enviroed4all.com.au/soil-selfies> for the instructions.

### Background

Ann Meredith descendant, Jeanie Clark, from Warracknabeal was delighted in late February to be invited to take a concept she had for a soils education program in the Wimmera to Berlin as a display of Australian soils for the Global Soils Week world forum in mid-April. It was a huge task to enlarge this and fast-track it from 6 months to 6 weeks – but an opportunity not to be missed if she could tap into people with their soils and how they use it across Australia.

Nan Bosler, also Ann Meredith descendant, was one of the people who answered Jeanie's requests for contributions, mostly sent out on social media. Nan's perspective of the values of her soil are a beautiful reminder to all of us about what soil is doing in our lives, unnoticed and with minimal attention, until there is something like IY Soils to remind us.

The “Aussie Soil Selfies” project asked participants to share the soil in their lives at home, work or recreational place for its uses, values and challenges and managements. Nan chose her home. This is a longer version than could be put into the display in Berlin.



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