

ND 1634 G-PE
Faggetter, Pat

Snake repellent, smelling salts, food and drink...

Back to the herbs

MRS PAT FAGGETTER is planting a herb and scented garden around the old pioneer Schwerkolt Cottage at Mitcham. Entirely her own idea, the garden she is trying to create is the type she believes the pioneers would have grown.

So far it has taken Mrs Faggetter 18 months to plan the garden and plant about 50 cuttings around the cottage.

She has been helped in this project by another Mitcham resident, Mr Lionel Jones.

The stone cottage was built by August Schwerkolt in 1865. It was occupied by his descendants until 1963, when the Nunawading City Council acquired it to restore it to its original state.

The council now maintains the cottage and grounds.

Sage, horehound, bergamot, rosemary, lemon balm and eau de cologne mint thrive in a little nook just outside the door of the pioneer kitchen.

How handy Gran Schwerkolt would have found this garden. She would have just had to open the door and pluck a twig of sage for her stew, or a leaf or two of eau de cologne mint for her bath.

Mrs Faggetter said the scent of the lemon balm combined with eau de



Mrs Pat Faggetter inspects a healthy Mitcham lavender plant which she has included among more than 50 herbs and scented plants in the garden she has planted around the old pioneer Schwerkolt Cottage at Mitcham.

cologne mint was a popular form of smelling salts.

Ladies of the day would wear a small sachet of these plants hidden in their tucked and frilled bodices. When the parson was a bit long-winded they would pinch the sachet releasing the perfume to keep themselves awake.

Mrs Faggetter has also planted a wormwood hedge plant along the

fence at the back of the garden where it would have been originally planted — to keep snakes out.

This plant was also used as a tonic tea to drink when feeling depressed or worn out. It also acted as a flea repellent if placed under the mattress, and was used instead of mothballs in blankets.

The garden sports a

healthy angelica bush, the stalks of which are often candied and used in cooking. This originally was used for a tonic drink.

Beside this grows a plant known as feverfew — used as an effective cure for the relief of headaches.

A borage plant in bloom shows off its dainty edible blue flowers. Its leaves make a fine salad ingredient.

There are also Italian lavender, rue — a bitter herb used on insect and, in particular, bull ant bites — and lemon verbena, once dried and used for teas and in sachets for perfume.

Growing abundantly among all these is the Mitcham lavender — a delicate bush with a delightful perfume.

Mrs Faggetter said one of the first herb gardens ever established in the colony at North Blackburn featured a lot of Mitcham lavender. The plant was first shipped there from Mitcham in England in the 1850s.

Filling one corner of the garden is a bed of old-fashioned roses, the petals of which were used as the basis of pot-pourris.

All the plants have come from Mrs Faggetter's own two-acre garden in Mitcham where she grows more than 100 different types of herbs and scented plants.

She admits this aspect of gardening has fascinated her for a long time ... and she loves to cook with herbs.

One of her favorite recipes is far a herb butter which she says is delicious on savory biscuits and crackers to nibble with cocktails and drinks.

A tablespoon of mixed herbs of own choice (excluding sage) is mixed into a quarter of a pound of butter with a dash of black pepper and a squeeze of lemon juice. This is then spread on the biscuits.