

344 400 m

400 m

The Western Bed is long, as you can see, 440 yards. It was used by runners training for the 1956 Olympics, and is still used by some runners today.

In the 1870s the Western Bed was simply the edge of the gardens facing Gillies St, which was then the dirt track that led to the saleyards. There was some expectation that the Gardens would extend across the track into the Common Land on the other side, but an Asylum for the mentally ill was built there. So that did not happen.

There must have been some sort of fence or the gardeners would have been rounding up straying cattle instead of attending to their duties. But wire fences couldn't stop the strong western winds sweeping across the plain which played havoc with the early planting. George Longley was friendly with the brilliant and energetic Von Mueller of the Melbourne Botanic Gardens, who suggested Tasmanian Blue Gums as a windbreak and provided some seeds. Those trees lasted as a windbreak till 1903, but we still have 2 left. One at the entrance to the Sensory Garden, kept together with the constant care of the city arborist, and another right at the end of the Western Bed near the George Longley building.

Over the years there have been many different plantings in the Western Bed. It seems to have always been the ugly sister of the gardens. Shortages of manpower and money caused by wars and Depressions allowed it to become a rather wild place, with alder, ivy, agapanthus and day lilies used to simply fill it up.

In 1995 a new master plan was drawn up. A new fence was built, the Horticultural Society provided the rose gardens and a lych gate to celebrate some anniversary of their own, and then the Friends drew up a program for irrigation, drainage and plantings. But things happened slowly. One of our early guides told us that the curator used to say, "For goodness sake don't take anyone to see the Western Bed." Over the years the Friends and the gardeners worked together on different parts. There are seats donated by various groups. There were aboriginal totem poles which have been moved to the Wetlands. The gardens are divided into plantings of different colours and different lands. It always seems to me that this part of the Gardens is the domestic part. Here people can see interesting plants that might fit comfortably into their own gardens. The Friends are now very actively involved in the Western Bed and we look forward to seeing some of the tired parts revived.

Timeline: From Eden of Loveliness

1860s George Longley went about planting Tasmanian Blue Gums Sturt Street. Probably here too.

1903 removal of old gums, replanting with acacias and creepers.

1914 – 18 War. Few men, and little money to be developing gardens.

1937 Ground on the Western Boundary cleared and prepared for "the best of foliage and flowering shrubs." We don't have a record of what happened to them, but of course the War intervened.

1939 War. Again no gardeners, no money. Plan lay in the drawer for years.

1995 New fence, rose garden and lych gate from the Horticulture Society

Friends drew up a program to clear the Western Bed.

2001 Renovations commenced in line with the Botanical Gardens Masterplan largely funded by the Friends. The renovation continued until 2007.

The Western Bed – Views and vistas

The following list includes individual plants ,complete beds and vistas and also an indication of the time when they are at their best.

Grey bed

In terms of texture,colour, shape and variety the grey garden is a winner.

Central point is *Pyres salicifolia pendular* (weeping silver pear-summer to autumn) with elongated leaves , tiny ornamental fruit and a tidy shape, which is complemented by the long trimmed hedge in front of it of *Santolina chamaecyparissus* (lavender cotton- spring and summer).

Scattered underneath are :

festuca glauca (blue grass- all seasons except winter , when it is trimmed)

Artemisia ludoviciana Valerie Finnis, (mugwort/ sagebrush- flowers mid- late summer and cut back in winter)

Stachys byzantina (lambs' ears- flowers late spring – early summer)

Lavandula angustifolia 'Alba' (white lavender- summer)

Making up the middle ground – (in terms of size) there is:

Rosmarinus officinalis(common rosemary – flowers in summer)

Acacia baileyana 'Prostrate' (Cootamundra Wattle – flowers in winter)

Teucrium chamaedrys (wall germander – flowers from summer to early autumn)

The background is filled in with the taller species to give height to the garden:

Magnolia grandiflora 'Little Gem'(flowers in summer)

Bystropogon canariensis (Canary Island smoke bush- flowers in summer).

Acca sellowiana. feijoa-flowers in spring).

Yucca- gloriosa and filamentosa (flowers middle of summer to early autumn). *Echium Webbi* (flowers early summer)

Rose garden

Red/ yellow standard positioned against the gate on the northern side – Edith Holden named after the author of "The country woman's dairy" (flowers in summer)

White bed

Agapanthus Dwarf white Lily of the Nile 'Peter Pan White' (flowers in mid summer)

Fraxinus excelsior Pendula(weeping European Ash- leaves turn yellow in autumn)

Zephranthes candida (white rain lily- often flowers as the result of a thunderstorm in late summer / autumn)

Purple bed

Cotinus Coggygria 'Velvet cloak' and 'Grace' (Smoke bush-purple leaves and inflorescence "smoke" in summer/ autumn)

Cercis canadensis (forest pansy- pink blossom along branches in spring and purple leaves in summer / autumn)

Intermediate Bearded Iris 'Star in the Night'- (spring into summer)

Tulips –Queen Of the night (late spring)

Salvia microphylla x *chamaedryoides* 'Christine Yeo' (flowers spring through to early winter)

Aster lateriflorus 'prince' (Calico Aster -summer early autumn)

Use of more 'common ' plants:

Foeniculum vulgare purpureum(bronze fennel- clumps of airy feather foliage in summer, crowned in late summer with large heads of tiny flowers.

Salvia officinalis 'Purpurea'- (common salvia -new growth turns purple in summer)

Origanum laevigatum 'Herrenhaus' (ornamental oregano- flowers in summer)

Honeywort Corinth major 'Purpurascens' (honeywort - purple blooms wreathed in metallic blue bract in summer)

Anthriscus sylvestris 'Ravenswing' (Cow Parsley)flowering with purple blackish leaves in late spring to early summer)

Background trees:

Pittosporum tenuifolium 'Tom Thumb'(leaves blackish / purple all year.)

Morus spp (Mulberry tree- deep purple fruit in summer)

Viburnum carlesii– (leaves chocolate- purple tint / bronze in spring)

Betula Pendula Purpurea (Purple leaved silver birch-dark purple/red foliage in spring, turning to purple/dark green throughout the summer and bronze/purple leaves in autumn)

Ulmus 'Purpurea' K.Koch (Purple leaved elm- leaves and flowers purple in spring)

Hot bed

Heucher Marmelade (coral bells- summer)

Laburnum x *watereri* *Vossii* (golden chain tree- spring)

Robinia pseudoacacia (mop head acacia-flowers spring to mid summer)

Voss umbraculifera. (golden rain tree- flowers spring to summer)

Dahlia ' Bishop of Llandorf' (summer)

Kniphofia-(Yellow hot pokers- summer)

Asian section

Weeping trees

Prunus 'Snofozam' - Snow Fountains (weeping cherry- spring)

Acer palmatum 'Dissectum Atropurpure Ornatu'(weeping Japanese maple- (summer to autumn) ,

Ulmus parvifolia 'frenzy '(Chinese elm-autumn)

Plants of interest:

Paeonia lutea var. *ludlowii*.(yellow tree peony - late May / early June)

Nandina filamento (sacred bamboo fine leaved- bright berries in autumn)

Itea ilicifolia (holly-leaved sweet spire- flowering summer - autumn)

Bletilla striata (Chinese ground orchid - late spring to early summer)
Ginkgo biloba (maidenhair tree-autumn)

Australian section

Citriodora eucalyptus (lemon scented gum- all year)
Corymbia ficifolia 'vermilion blue' (red flowering 'gum'- autumn)

Monocot garden

Grasses:

Miscanthus sinensis sarabande (maiden grass-summer)
Poa labillardieri 'Suggan buggan' (common tussock grass-summer)

Trees:

Quercus suber (Cork oak -all year)
Cyprinus Tortulosa (Bhutan Cypress-all year)

Ground cover:

Haemunthus coccineus (blood lily-flowers in autumn and two huge strappy- like leaves appear after flowering)

Vistas

Looking south /north- *Ulmus pro era Louis van Houtte*' (golden elm- summer- autumn)
Opposite the monocot bed- *Pinus patula*(Mexican weeping pine- year)
Western sun shining through pale green leaves of red canna(in hot bed) summer / autumn)
From the Monocot garden looking back to the blue gum(all year)