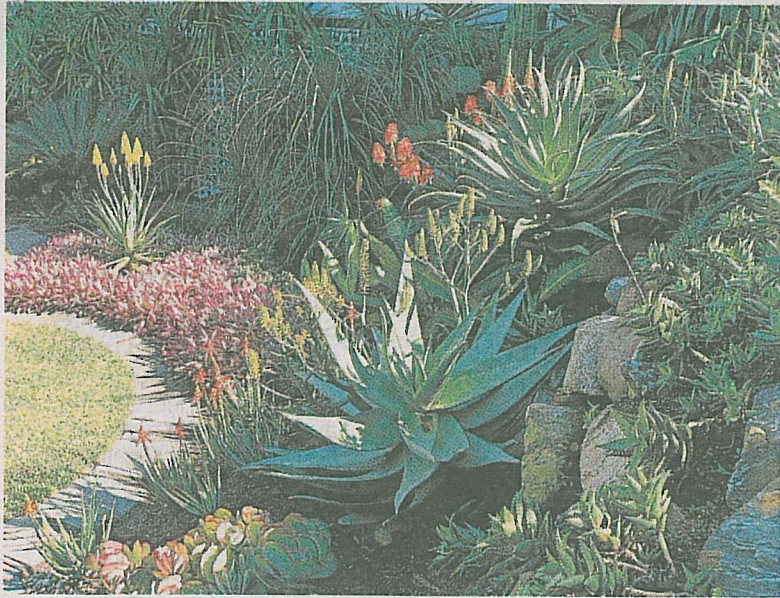


Aloe garden revives childhood love



Aloe haven: The Taringa garden of Michael and Alexandra Dent.

WHEN most people used to think of aloes, their thoughts were probably limited either to roadside aloes or therapeutic Aloe Vera.

Not any more. Aloes in nurseries now are strikingly attractive, ornamental hybrids with many fabulous attributes.

They are suitable for both hot and cold climates but, while they survive dry conditions, they benefit from a little attention.

When Michael and Alexandra Dent's Taringa House of Colourful Aloes opens with Australia's Open Garden Scheme next weekend, visitors will have an opportunity to see how these long-flowering, sculptural plants can be used in a garden.

Originally from South Africa, the Dents have lived in Taringa since moving to Australia two decades ago. Their home, once a small worker's cottage built in about 1876, was modified by successive owners.

While previously working as a chartered accountant, Michael remembered the many beautiful aloes he'd known during childhood.

"I couldn't stop thinking about how appropriate they'd be for Australian conditions," he says.

After some years of research and when stringent requirements for importation were met, he sourced several varieties from a specialist South African breeder.

In the garden, measuring 23m by 40m, dozens of types of aloes have been tried alongside several other plants. Cycad, euphorbia, tulbaghia (society garlic), rhoeo, jatropha podagrica, agave and pachypodium, all make good companions.

Rock and boulder terraces, which replicate a natural environment, have replaced a lovely, albeit invasive, Chinese elm.

The terraces form an amphitheatre around the clover-leaf-shaped lawn.

Birdlife is abundant, attracted by either the nectar or the insects that feed on the aloe flowers which are growing on plants ranging from tiny to 2m.

At the back of the property, three tiers include an intimate outdoor dining space and a swimming pool beneath deciduous trees, bordered by tropical plants.

Texture, form and colour are thoughtfully considered elements giving this landscape impressive visual appeal.

The hues, from pale cream to yellows, oranges, pinks, reds and bi-colours, are the perfect tonic for the winter blues. The sunny colours cheer up both gardens and gardeners.

Kim Woods Rabbidge

Taringa House of Colourful Aloes, 34 Woolley St, Taringa, open house next Saturday and Sunday, 10am-4.30pm, with talks on growing aloes at 11am, 1pm and 3pm each day.

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THE SUNDAY MAIL, event July 12, 2009 Page 23