

PRETTY AS A PICTURE
Walk the grounds of heavenly Heatherly, a rural Victorian garden where reverence and new ideas have reaped gorgeous rewards; select your new-release roses and choose a tree to bring autumn into your garden.

Photograph by Claire Takacs

Mist rises from the lake at Heatherly as dawn breaks, casting a red glow over the grass. In spring this area is strewn with snowdrops.

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A FAMILY AFFAIR

Over 40 years, two generations of the Leckey clan have worked to create a magnificent country garden in Victoria.

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In central Victoria, near the township of Alexandra, lies Heatherly, a picturesque property where past and present – and the handwork of two generations of gardeners – blend superbly.

William, Richard and Martin, space to play, plus trees to shade the boys' bedroom and line the driveway. The trees transformed the empty paddocks and inspired Barbara to shape ornamental beds around the house.

Heatherly, a 400-hectare sheep farm, was bought by Barbara Leckey and her late husband John 40 years ago, partly as a business and partly as a weekend retreat. Barbara's initial plans for the 0.4-hectare garden were practical: a lawn to give their three young sons,

Building them up from straw, sheep manure and soil from the nearby river flats. She filled them with perennials, bulbs, and shade-loving plants such as scabious and agapanthus. Soon she had planted the first of her beloved rose bushes. The Leckeyes also invested >

Heatherly's verandah is adorned with grapevines and 'Pinkie' roses with 'Rainbriar' – a rose bred in Germany in 1936 with rich pink globular flowers – at front. The garden bed in front of the house includes iris, yellow phloxes, daylilies and grey-coloured lamb's ears. A large Indian beech tree (Castanea ligustrifolia) faces the house.

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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP The fountain at the centre of the gravel forecourt was designed and built by William as a present to his mother 15 years ago. The utilitarian outbuildings have been decorated with 'New Dawn' roses, which are underpainted with succulents. A 'William Shakespeare' rose. Here, succulents grow in a container created out of discarded machinery. The feminine charm of the 'Pinkie' rose. **OPPOSITE TOP** The verandah is shaded by a large Acer negundo grown from a seedling brought by Barbara from their Melbourne garden. **OPPOSITE BOTTOM** Georgie with Labrador Heidi.

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Trees are star attractions while climbers festoon the tennis pavilion – which was milled and built from a fallen red gum.



< in water storage, creating a lake to the east of the house to water the lawns and for fire protection.

In 1998, youngest son William and his wife, Georgie, took over the running of the property. Georgie, founder of Heatherly Design Bedheads, loved the pretty garden – not least because all the roses were in bloom. She valued the past generation's contributions and realised that any changes to the garden needed to be subtle, rather than radical.

Today, the garden presents as an amalgam of old and new with three main vistas from the house.

On the north side the view is to the post and rail fence at the far end of the wide lawn; on the east side the vista takes in a large ash tree and extends to the sundial garden and a driveway, and the third, most dramatic view, is to the recently redesigned forecourt.

"Initially this area was lawn and gum trees but the trees had grown too large for the space and parking was limited," says Georgie. They asked landscape architect Ben Scott to help and she says it was his fresh eyes that made them believe such a dramatic change would work. >

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The view across the lawn to the north with the old post and rail fence and paddocks in the mid ground.

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'Pinkie' has been grown from cuttings and festoons the north and west verandahs. The periwinkle blue seat and stand were inspired by a visit to Stonefields, landscaper Paul Bangay's garden in rural Victoria. **OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT** Georgie and William's children, Hugh, eight, and Ella, 10, and family pooch Heidi walk back from the lake. The shady tennis pavilion, which was milled and built from a fallen red gum on the property. The drinks tray holder is a recycled crayfish pot. A decorative stand custom designed by Georgie sits beside the front door.



< At the far end of the forecourt, a line of chandelier pears has star jasmine as groundcover. "Eventually the trees will block the view of the shed and cars. We'll have a lovely vista from the front door across the fountain to the lake with the Cathedral Ranges in the background," says Georgie. Trees, such as a magnificent Catalpa near the tennis court and oaks sheltering the dog kennels, are star attractions while climbers – wisteria and ornamental grapevine – festoon the tennis pavilion.

"We produce green tea so we thought it was appropriate to have a hedge of Camellia sinensis in the garden," says Georgie. A row of silver complements the glossy green hedge, creating a visual link with the wooshed and silver poplars in the distance.

Roses thrive at Heatherly. They survive the cold winters, the frosts in spring and the recent drought. "Many of them are single old-fashioned ones that produce fabulous hips in autumn," says Georgie. There are more than 100 varieties, mostly heritage roses, in the garden, ranging from 'New Dawn' to the more conventional 'Iceberg'. Some standouts include the rarely seen 'La Belle Sultane', planted by Barbara many years ago.

Taking it all in, it's not hard to see why Georgie and Will describe their property as a garden within a garden within the beautiful Acheron River valley. H&G

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