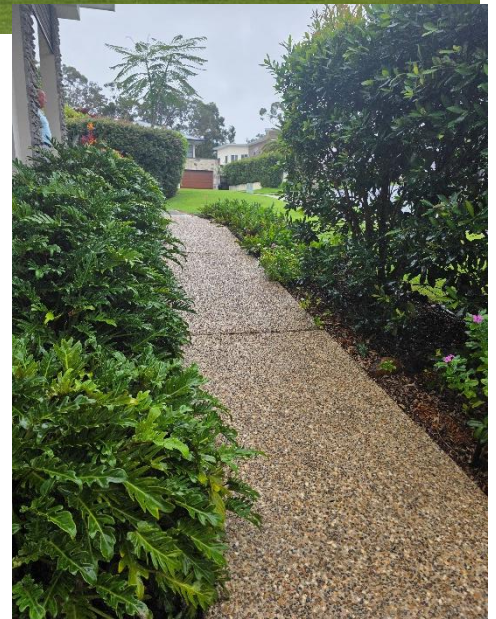


April Home Visit - Tony's Garden



After Cyclone Alfred forced cancellation of our March Home Visit it was great to get a lovely sunny day (unlike the next very wet day when these photos were taken!) for our visit to **TONY SHARRY'S GARDEN** at Robina. Situated on a corner block the first impression you get is how the use of large hedges helps create privacy for the main garden areas at the top side and back of the house.



The other first impression, at least for those who are not gardeners, is the illusionary idea this is "an easy care garden". The path that takes you from the front porch around the top side, lined with ***Philodendron xanadu*** (above right) helps give that impression. In part because there (and again at left) the repeating of the same plant adds impact. In fact of course this is a garden that is meticulously cared for and that is based on considerable thought. Tony's 'work space' and his very healthy looking raised vegetable garden both help show how much effort goes into creating that illusion of 'easy care'.





In every garden we visit there are always some specific 'things' that draw special attention. In this case, beside that front path just before it turns into the top garden, is a very healthy patch of **maiden hair fern** or **Adiantum**. There are some 250 species of this fern and it has a reputation of being 'fragile' and sometimes hard to grow. This patch very much proves that is not the case. When it is planted in the right spot it spreads easily and (as left) looks great – especially as in this case when planted below the brightly coloured leaves of a variety of different **Crotons** whose colours and big solid leaves contrast beautifully with the fragility of the ferns. Tony has to constantly cut it back to prevent it invading the path it is so happy here.

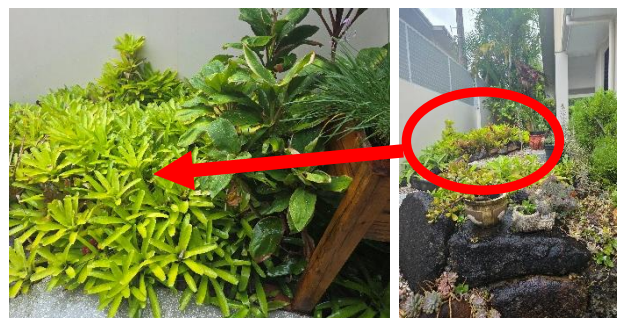
Just around the corner was another highlight, a large patch of 'Dwarf Elephant Ears' or **Englerarum montanum**. Usually, people position this plant in and among other tropical plants where it can get lost. Here it has been left as an island of its own and allowed to spread to cover a large area totally unencumbered by other plants. It is much much better for being displayed in that way. As the wider shot below shows however it is cleverly surrounded by variegated leaved plants and that hard surface of the path that combine to make this patch of green 'pop'.



Further on, near Tony's work bench is another plant of great interest, namely a **Mussaenda** – a plant commonly known as the Bangkok Rose. Native to the African and Asian sub-tropics they come in a wide variety of types.



On that work bench side of the house is another good example of how 'mass planting' of the same species can achieve a dramatic effect. As seen below right the land here slopes down and a stone terrace wall and steps take your downwards. Such spots are often very difficult to find the right plant for but here a very common **bromeliad** has been used to great effect. Broms are very hardy, require little soil if any at all to grow well and clump easily. Here the result is like a carpet of green that not only compliments the plain wall behind but contrast well with the other plants around it. Though difficult to see in the photo far right the use of different succulents in and flowing over those rocks is another simple but effective technique to copy.





Smaller treasures were dotted all over the garden. This pot of shade loving **Alocasia**, at right, is just one. (Look for the 'Nobilis', 'Amazonia', 'Ivory Coast' or 'Ebony' varieties among others of this species). Also attracting a lot of attention was the flowering nodding violet or **Streptocarpus caulescens**. Suspended high on a stand this one is visible from inside the house and brightens up the space very well. A couple of more recent additions were two **Plumeria obtusa** commonly known as Singapore White spoon leafed frangipani.



Yet another example of mass planting was a collection of very healthy looking **elkhorns** clumped around a tree that shades the work bench area. They always add interest, as do the **crotons** mentioned earlier. There is a great collection of different types, mixed with a couple of **cordyline**s, beside the path in that front garden.

Apart from just having a nice morning among friends the purpose of our Home Visits is to learn from other gardeners and if Tony's Garden teaches anything it is how to mix different plants of all types but to not be afraid off 'mass plantings'. Thanks to Tony for welcoming those who came out for the day. It was a great place to visit and a very nice get together.

