

formal gardens

History

The groundwork for Centennial Park's formal gardens was laid by the Park's first Director, Charles Moore. It was no easy task. The land set aside for the park was semi-wild swamp, scrub and rock and the efforts of Moore's staff were hindered by winds, drought, floods, sandy soil, damage from straying stock and vandalism. The failure of many plants led Moore's successor, the energetic and progressive Joseph Maiden, to experiment with native plantings. Maiden also believed strongly in the Park's educational value. Early in his tenure he declared that he wanted an artificial plantation exclusively devoted to Australian plants, duly labelled'. Maiden used the promontories Moore had established around Busby's Pond as the main sites for his horticultural experimentation. By 1910 the native flower garden he had established in today's Column Garden contained 661 species, all labelled for students and park visitors.

Column garden

The Column Garden takes its name from two sandstone columns erected on the Busby Pond promontories in 1890. These two columns were from the demolished portico of the old Australian Museum. Today one column stands in the Column Garden and the other on the promontory to the garden's west.

Rose garden

Maiden planted a Rosarium on this site in 1909. It has been a favourite of park visitors ever since. On one Sunday alone in 1917 an estimated 20,000 people passed through its fragrant rows. Ironically, admirers traditionally have been the biggest threat to the Rose Garden's survival. Over one two-week period in 1916, thieves stole a bed of roses with over 90 varieties. Theft, pests (rabbits and birds) and difficult weather conditions remain challenges for the cultivation of roses in the Parklands today. The Rose Garden was recently renovated and many new varieties of plants such as Olympic Gold, Brass Band and Blueberry Hill roses were added. Old favourites such as Peace, Peter Frankenfeld and Double Delight were replanted.

Frog Hollow

Another formal garden area is Frog Hollow. Originally the site of an open drain, Frog Hollow was established around the turn of the century. It is currently home to nine circular garden displays planted with coloured and patterned foliage to provide year-round interest for visitors.

Parkes Drive

Maiden established his grandest flower bed scheme along Parkes Avenue (now Parkes Drive) in 1911. Beds 'some 30 feet in diameter, others measuring 50 feet long and 18 feet wide' flanked the avenue, with round beds positioned much as they are today at the Busby Pond promontories and Frog Hollow. Today's displays balance modern tastes with the spirit of native and exotic plantings pioneered by Maiden.

Wetlands Interpretive Maze

Located on the northern edge of Duck Pond, this display uses interpretive signage, sculptures and native garden beds to tell the story of water use in Centennial Parklands. It also describes how wetland habitats work and how we can protect them.

Centennial Parklands Café

This area was re-landscaped in 1996 to create a modern interpretation of the sub-tropical lushness of the early 1900s using a mixture of colour, texture and foliage. The orange-flowered African tulip tree, which blooms in spring and summer, is a favourite with visitors.



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