

## GARDENING

FLINDERS OPENING

## From one fine jewel to another

BY DENISE GADD

A CARTIER brooch has given new life to a garden in Flinders. The floral brooch was left to Patricia Macdonald by her English god-mother, Lavinia, while she and her husband, Ranald, were living in England.

Six years ago, the Macdonalds bought the Flinders property "The Moorings" online — with help from family and friends in Melbourne — and moved back to Australia. Before doing so, Macdonald decided to sell the brooch and put the proceeds towards the creation of a new garden at the seaside property.

The garden was an unknown factor when they bought the house. After five years in a Boston flat with only a window box in which to grow things and five years in a mews cottage in London with a dark, dank garden backing on to old Brompton Cemetery, Macdonald was excited by the prospect of gardening again. "I had no dog and no garden. I was deprived," she says.

Now she has a large space, complete with a herb patch based on the aromatic garden at Chateau de Brecey in Normandy, a productive potager in raised beds and a dog called Oscar.

Macdonald commissioned local landscaper Fiona Brockhoff to design the garden but first — in



Ranald and Patricia Macdonald in front of a staddle stone they imported from Wiltshire.

what Ranald, a former editor-in-chief of *The Age*, described as his wife's "scorched-earth policy" — some large cypress trees had to go. Brockhoff kept only an old well and water tower and some fruit trees.

Five years on, the garden has been rejuvenated with mainly native plants. Brockhoff's suggestion to choose only plants that would grow in Flinders was ignored on one front: the weeping *Eucalyptus caesia* ("Silver Princess").

"I argued forcefully for them but Fiona was right, they have been miserable," Macdonald admits.

"Usually they're beautiful trees but they looked pathetic here.

"She told me plants that grow in Shoreham often can't grow in Flinders. Her local knowledge is so great, you don't have mistakes usually."

As well as massed plantings of dark orange/red kangaroo paws, there are robinias shaped like cypresses, an agonis (willow myrtle), olives and a Manchurian pear. There are also three quince trees and Macdonald's neighbour takes the fruit away and rewards her with delicious home-made pies.



PICTURES: JOHN WOODSTRA

A mod grass sculpture by Sebastian de Mauro takes pride of place on the lawn and Macdonald has shaped the teucrums and olives to create more sculptural elements in the garden.

Late last year, several fruit trees at the back of the property were removed to make room for a guest house but Macdonald has replaced them with espaliered varieties and a new peach tree.

A cottagey garden is also in the making in that area, which houses the only rose in the garden — 'Queen Elizabeth' — a magnificent pink grandiflora hybridised in 1954 and a favourite of Macdonald's mother and mother-in-law.

Macdonald says Flinders, with its rolling hills, is evocative of the west country where she lived in England and now she has the best of both worlds: a lovely garden that suits the area and is manageable and a wonderful vegetable garden, where she spends many hours weeding and picking whatever produce is in season.

Her husband is an avid admirer of the garden but is not allowed to use it to practise his golfing pitch shots. A very small price to pay for living the good life, thanks to a Cartier floral brooch.

■ "The Moorings" is open to the public for the first time today and tomorrow under the Open Gardens Australia scheme, 14a Bass Street, Flinders, 10am-4.30pm, \$6.