

Nathan's Blank Canvas

April 2015

It's not often we get to design and set up a garden from scratch, especially one where Permaculture design principles are specifically requested.

During April, after a month or two of discussions and planning with Nathan, we arrived at his recently built house in Vale Park with loads of equipment, ready to level a corner area for a new rainwater tank and to map and sculpt the contours in his back yard.



The blank canvas...

Nathan has been studying permaculture in his spare time. He's aware of the beauty of working with land formations to achieve harmony and sustainability in an outdoor garden.

Nathan's house straddles the Torrens Linear Park so the area is uneven. Water overflow enters Nathan's back yard from the northern end and after rain, a naturally formed creek runs through the centre of the yard. To incorporate this natural occurrence into the design, a pond is planned for the northern end. Water overflow will enter the pond and the overflow from the pond will trickle out and wind around the yard's contours and leave at southern end.

A larger pond is planned for the southern end of the yard to accommodate water overflow from the house gutters.

Our job was to lay the foundations for Nathan's permaculture garden.

We started by removing some enormous tree roots, then levelling, compacting and spreading dolomite over one corner of the yard ready for the giant rainwater tank.



Removing tree roots with the digger

Then we dug out the 32 holes for the fruit trees and trellis posts, filling the tree holes with our super soil. The digger came in so handy for this job. We used it to pull up tree roots, move tons of soil, dig tree holes and excavate large areas where the ponds will go.



Digging out the pond hole

We also constructed a retaining wall made of concrete sleepers at the southern boundary, which now forms one side of the larger pond.

Next we mapped out and built up the swale (contour) lines for Nathan. All the tree holes follow these lines and so does the little overflow creek that will run through the yard.



Tree holes are filled with soil and natural swale lines are built up

Uh oh...the rain is coming...

The job took three full days and on the final day, it was forecast to rain in the afternoon. Soil would become mud.

You can imagine how hard we worked in the morning to finish the job early. We didn't even stop for lunch!

Then it rained...our clothes got drenched, our shoes caked up sludge and Sally was working on her hands and knees (again) carving contours in the mud.



It's over to Nathan now

We've prepared the land. Nathan now has a big job ahead of building his dream garden, a permaculture food forest complete with 2 ponds, in the middle of suburbia.

We'll keep in touch with Nathan and watch how his project progresses.

We hope he'll allow us to feature his garden in a future newsletter once it's completed.

All the best with it Nathan....