

Revitalising Sharon and Vaughan's garden
February 2015

Vital Veggies did a complete garden makeover for Sharon and Vaughan late last year as you may recall from these before and after images.



Before and After the Vital Veggies makeover in 2014



Following the makeover, Sharon enthusiastically bought and planted an enormous array of summer veggies, herbs and berries, and delighted in adding her uniquely whimsical decor touches to the garden. Vaughan happily took on responsibility for garden maintenance and looking after their 4 new chooks.

With 15 garden beds full of veggies, herbs, vines and berries in the back yard, front yard, and down the side of the house, this is a deceptively large garden, and over the following few months it became clear that maintaining it was a challenge for both of them. Vital Veggies was called back in late February to assist with a clean up to get the garden back on track and also to do some further work.



Strawberry beds in the front yard

After weeding and cleaning up all the strawberry beds and passionfruit vines in the front and side gardens, we moved to the back.

The first job was to clean out the second garden bed and move the chooks house on to it. The chook house was designed and made to fit on top of the garden beds so that it can be moved every few months. This gives the soil in each bed a 'rest' and a period of chook poo fertilisation.



Chook house after moving it from Bed #1 in the foreground to Bed #2.

We trimmed and tied up the berries, removed weeds and old veggies, fixed up beds and netting, and tidied the yard.

Grapevines were then planted along the back fence, additional irrigation installed and another 4 chooks added to the brood. Sharon's work colleagues have been the lucky beneficiaries of some huge organic double-yoker eggs.

To increase ease of access to the veggie beds, we'll increase the height of 8 garden beds for Sharon in early March. Roger will make the additional beds on site, attach them to the existing ones, and fill them with more Vital Veggies soil, raising them to a height of 60cm.

To help Sharon and Vaughan manage their large veggie gardens, we'll service and look after them fortnightly from now on, but leave all the planting and decorating fun to Sharon!



Beware...

Revisiting Vaughan and Sharon's food garden at Highgate March 2015

Highgate is a prestigious eastern suburb nestled between Unley Park and Fullarton. The streets are leafy, the front gardens are manicured.

But there's one house in Highgate overflowing with an amazing abundance of veggies, fruit trees, berries and herbs. From the back yard, to the front yard, to the footpath, Sharon and Vaughan have planted an entire food forest in their suburban yard: espaliered fruit trees, climbing passionfruit, grape and kiwifruit vines, every kind of vegetable in season, beds full of delicious strawberries and climbing berries, plus edible and healing herbs in the back yard, front yard and out on the footpath!

It was last October when Vital Veggies first helped Sharon and Vaughan's to remodel their front and back yards into a suburban food forest. We installed 16 food garden beds (including a herb garden and berry garden), new paving, fruit trees, artificial turf, gravel, 3 compost bins and a movable chook house.

Following the huge makeover last year, Sharon and Vaughan enthusiastically took full responsibility for maintaining the gardens, Sharon doing all the planting and Vaughan helping to care for the chooks and the plants. We kept in touch with them, and provided ongoing advice, but they were on their own caring for their food forest now.

Despite their enthusiasm, maintaining all those new gardens took more time and effort than they had bargained for. Keeping up was a challenge, and while Sharon was overseas, the garden fell into 'slight disrepair'.



Help is on its way!

Sharon was keen to get the garden back on track and to do some further renovations to increase the producing capacity of the food garden.

We collaborated to remodel and reinvigorate the food gardens and agreed to take over responsibility for maintaining the gardens, though Sharon would still buy and plant all the veggie seedlings and fruit.

To work...

During March we spent a few days cleaning up the existing beds, then commenced work on upgrading the food gardens.

In the front yard:

We transplanted all the strawberries (well over 100 tangled plants) and raised the height of the 2 strawberry beds from 20cm to 60cm. Veggies are happily thriving in these 2 beds of super soil now.

Three small square beds were placed at the end of existing garden beds and new fruit trees have been planted here (fig, pomegranate and apple) We installed posts and trellises to espalier the trees as they grow and Sharon, always keen to fill up a spare space, has already planted some veggies and strawberries at their base.



We think the front food garden is very pretty now, what do you think?

In the back yard:

We raised the height of the four main garden beds from 40cm to 60cm and filled them up with soil. Not so far to bend over to plant and pick the veggies now!

The movable chook house was moved to another garden bed and we built another chook house – they now have 6 chickens!

After they lost a chicken during an Adelaide heat wave, Sally got the job of installing a humidifying system into the chook house to prevent this from happening again.

Whoever thought chooks would get air conditioning?

Whoever thought Sally could be so happy on hands and knees inside a smelly chook house?

This job is full of surprises!

Two of the four main veggie garden beds in the back yard now have chook houses on top and Sharon is collecting 6 eggs a day.



The four main veggie garden beds, two of them with chook houses on top.

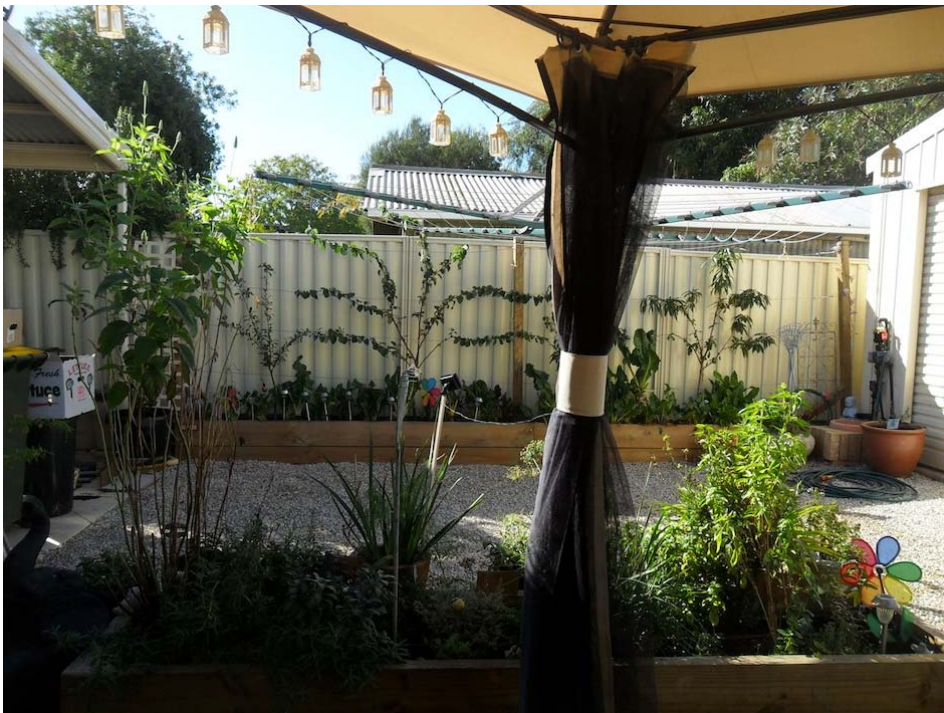
A trellis for every fence

Trellises were installed along all the side fences during the major work last year. Growing food vertically and using fences is a clever use of space, so we added another trellis along the back fence in April and planted a row of grape vines.

In the front yard the trellis is covered with passionfruit and kiwi fruit vines. In the back yard the trellises support little fruit trees (including peaches, nectarines and kaffir limes) all being trained and espaliered. Another trellis across the berry garden allows the climbing vines to be trained upwards into a stunning wall of green leaves and red berries.



The berry garden in front of the four main garden beds



Fruit trees are planted along the fence; the herb garden is in the foreground.

If there were an **Urban Farmer of the Year** award, we'd give first prize to Sharon. She is passionate about growing all her own food and her back yard and front yard are evidence of what anyone can do (with a little help from Vaughan and us!). Her generosity even spilteh over to the footpath where she's planted herbs and flowers for passers by.



The flower garden and herb garden in front of Sharon and Vaughan's house

What a gorgeous urban foodscape this is, full of fresh organic eggs, fresh veggies, fresh berries and fruit in season. A beehive and a hot house are in the pipeline too. One day we'll surely arrive at Vaughan and Sharon's to find a goat or a cow in the back yard!!!

The joy of growing and eating luscious and nutritious food is overflowing here in Highgate. And there are no prizes if you guess what Sharon does in her spare time...



Preserving!!!