



# Earth, Wind and Fire: Celebrating the Magic and Beauty of Plants on the Hobby Farm

*Alf Rapisarda*

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**Earth, Wind and Fire: Celebrating the Magic and Beauty of Plants on the Hobby Farm** Alf Rapisarda 'Earth, Wind and Fire' documents the development of a five acre hobby farm in Little River, 50 km south-west of Melbourne. Activities and anecdotes are recorded using cartoons, some humour and a storytelling approach. From the beginning there has been a spirit of experimentation, allowing important challenges to be met. Along the way, past experiences are mentioned and some gardening advice is given.

The book attempts to reflect the chaos and uncertainty experienced on the land and is not designed to be a comprehensive guide on gardening. Drawings have been done in the 'old chalk and talk style,' typical of lessons during my former secondary teaching career. I also rely on readers who enjoy using their imagination as only a small number of colour photographs have been provided. With so much information available at our fingertips on the net, it is a simple matter to access extra information and images on every topic. Scientific names for less common plants are given in order to allow for easy access. The first 12 chapters deal with the main tasks carried out when developing the farm. It has been necessary to utilize a wide range of horticultural principles in order to attain some success.

Chapters 13 to 20 describe the crops grown and how they have progressed since they were planted. The well known fruit crops are discussed, but I feel there is a place for some plants that in my opinion will become important crops in the future. They are mostly from outside Australia; however the magnificent quandong, a true Australian gem, is featured in this section. Those interested in buying sometimes expensive plants such as date palms or pistachio nuts, need to carry out a detailed study for their individual situation.

Chapter 21 deals with general ideas and issues related to the purchase of a hobby farm. These thoughts do not relate directly to my farm. If a desire to buy a hobby farm is held, the points mentioned may be of some use. For the majority of readers who would not be interested in owning a hobby farm, it may assist in appreciating the lifestyles and issues affecting people associated with the land. Chapter 22 gives my personal thoughts and impressions about the future of horticulture and agriculture and chapter 23, the final chapter, gives some reflections about our relationships with plants.

## About the Author

During his life Alf Rapisarda has shown an inherent curiosity towards the natural world. He worked as a teacher and nurseryman where he met a wide range of gardeners who provided many useful lessons. On retirement a hobby farm on the outskirts of Melbourne has allowed a lifetime in contact with plants to come to a conclusion.

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