



## TAFE NSW Ryde School of Horticulture

TAFE NSW Ryde School of Horticulture teaches landscaping, horticulture, green keeping and environmental studies. As well as the classrooms, laboratories and computerised glasshouses, its 25 acres of landscaped grounds provide living classrooms.

Once the lands of the Wallumattigal people, Ryde TAFE was part of one of the first land grants in the area – dating back to 1792. Originally known as Longford, it was purchased from the descendants of the Long family by the Department of Education in 1946. Before that, the first school of horticulture had been established as part of the Sydney Technical College in 1936. Twelve years later, the school moved to Ryde. Ryde School of Horticulture opened in 1956.

Kate Low, in 2025 the Director of Horticulture and Land Management for TAFE NSW, studied at Ryde, following in her mother, Faye's, footsteps, who started studying Horticulture at the Ryde School in 1970 (when Kate was six). Kate recalls:

I spent three years being dragged around gardens and on excursions. When we were sick, if mum had TAFE, we would have to sit quietly under the table during classes. Mum planted half the study list in our garden. If we could remember the botanic names of the plant overnight, in the morning it was ours to 'own'. I owned most of that garden.

Mum's teachers included Mr Rowell (Ray)\*, Peter and Judy McMaugh, Neil Black, Bruce Stringer, Graham and Sandra Ross, Mr Leonard Vinck (bonsai) and many other luminaries.

When I finished school, I studied landscape architecture, but then returned to Ryde and also studied horticulture and then bush regeneration. I was a recipient of an Australian Garden History Society scholarship for my undergraduate thesis on the gardens of Betty Maloney and Jean Walker ('Naturalness with order: the bush gardens of Betty Maloney and Jean Walker', *Australian Garden History*, vol. 2 no. 6, May/June 1991, pp.3-9).

\* See John Rowell's tribute to Ray here: <https://www.smh.com.au/national/plant-lover-broke-new-ground-in-teaching-20110915-1kbn6.html>

If you have a story to share about the Ryde College of Horticulture, please contact Francesca Beddie, editor of *Australian Garden History* and producer of *Ticket to Ryde*:  
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To find out more about the Australian Garden History Society, go the website  
[www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au](http://www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au)

## Timeline showing the development of the Ryde School of Horticulture, courtesy TAFE NSW

<p><b>The rich history of horticulture education and training in Sydney</b></p> <p>The Ryde School of Horticulture was established in the 1950s as part of the Sydney Technical College and has evolved over time to help form one of the faculties of the Northern Sydney Institute, part of TAFE NSW. With nearly 3,000 enrolments in Horticulture and Environmental Management in 2013, Ryde Campus is the largest provider of horticulture training in NSW.</p>	<p><b>1938</b> FIRST GARDENING AND HORTICULTURE CERTIFICATE TAUGHT</p> <p>The School of Agriculture at Sydney Technical College in Ultimo delivered the first horticulture certificate course in Australia.</p> <p><b>1941</b> SYLLABUS OF INSTRUCTION</p> <p>"The Gardening and Horticulture Course is a useful and practical course for persons of either sex engaged or interested in gardening and horticulture principles and practice."</p>	<p><b>1948-53</b> PREPARING THE SCHOOL OF HORTICULTURES MOVE TO RYDE</p> <p><b>1954</b> "The notable progress in being made at Ryde in the direction of making the area with a view to a good development... for the purpose of safeguarding the experiments and valuable plants and equipment."</p> <p><b>1955</b> TWO NEW ALUMINUM CLASSROOMS WERE ERECTED AT RYDE</p>	<p><b>1956</b> 186 STUDENTS WERE ENROLLED AND ATTENDED DAY AND EVENING CLASSES AT RYDE</p> <p>Popular classes were Greenkeeping, Floral Art, Home Gardening, Australian Wildflowers and Bonsai. Fees for the certificate courses were £3 per annum or £3 and 6 shillings per term.</p> <p><b>FIRST FIELD DAY HELD AT RYDE</b></p> <p>Following trials of several places on the bowling green, hundreds of greenkeepers, club managers and sporting associations from all over the state, attended the first field day.</p>
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<p><b>1963</b></p> <p>A tennis court, practice wicket and a putting green were constructed with the spoil from where the bowling green was levelled.</p>	<p><b>1975</b> CONSTRUCTION OF FIRST PERMANENT MASONRY BUILDING BEGINS</p> <p>The new building, now known as the Acadia Building, was erected, housing teachers, a conference room, library, laboratory, all auxiliary services and several classrooms.</p>	<p><b>1989</b> OPENING OF THE Teloepa Centre FOR HORTICULTURE THERAPY</p> <p>"It offers hope and inspiration to the physically disabled, the intellectually disabled and the elderly."</p>	<p><b>2010</b> RYDE IRRIGATION PROJECT COMPLETED</p> <p>As part of the Federal Government Stimulus Package, works to attain 85% water security and redevelopment of soils, plant and identification and irrigation facilities completed.</p>
<p><b>1974</b> ENROLMENTS REACHED 1,200 STUDENTS</p> <p>Land is purchased at a West Epping site for a new branch school.</p>	<p><b>1982</b> THE SITE'S NAME CHANGES TO RYDE COLLEGE OF TAFE</p> <p>Amalgamation of Ryde School of Horticulture and the School of Catering and Hospitality.</p>	<p><b>1993</b> CLASSES THAT GAINED POPULARITY IN THE 90s WERE BUSH REGENERATION, TREE SURGERY, LANDSCAPE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION</p> <p>"The Ryde College of TAFE is dedicated to be the largest environmental horticulture training establishment in the Southern Hemisphere, the College serving five horticulture."</p>	<p><b>2013</b> ENROLMENTS REACHED 3,000 STUDENTS</p>
<p><b>1974</b> ENROLMENTS REACHED 1,200 STUDENTS</p>	<p><b>1985-86</b> STAGE 3 BUILDING CONSTRUCTION UNDERTAKEN AND OPENED IN 1988</p> <p>This included the construction of Berkeas, Oulitis, Denthoris, Eucalyptus and Flinders buildings. The new facilities included specialist soils and plant laboratories, glasshouse facilities, a tissue culture lab and design studios.</p>	<p><b>1991</b> THE PLANT KINGDOM RETAIL GARDEN CENTRE OPENS</p> <p>The Centre was to serve as a model nursery where the public could buy plants propagated by the students.</p>	<p><b>2015</b> DEGREES OFFERED AT RYDE CAMPUS</p> <p>The Northern Sydney Institute is developing a degree program to be delivered from Ryde Campus. The degree will be a direct pathway from the Diploma of Landscape Design, meaning students can leave Ryde Campus with a Northern Sydney Institute Certificate, Diploma and University Degree.</p>
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## More about those featured in *Ticket to Ryde*



Dame Elisabeth Murdoch AC, DBE, was the inaugural Chair of the Australian Garden History Society upon its formation in 1980. She stood down from that position after a year and subsequently accepted the role of Patron, a position she held until 1989. The full interview and transcript are available at:

<https://www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au/publications/dame-elisabeth-murdoch-ac-dbe/>



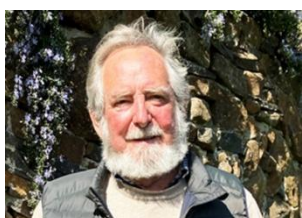
Shirley Stackhouse OAM was *The Sydney Morning Herald* gardening contributor for more than 30 years. As well as writing gardening advice, she illustrated the column with her pen and ink drawings of flowers from her garden. The full interview and transcript are available at:

<https://www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au/publications/shirley-stackhouse-oam/>



Lindsay Campbell is an influential figure in Tasmanian horticulture and garden landscape design. His practice reflects various cultural and geographic influences from around the world, particularly Japan, China, Spain and Patagonia. His gardens are designed to be environmentally appropriate using plants that fit harmoniously with the local conditions. The full interview and transcript are available at:

<https://www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au/publications/lindsay-campbell-2/>



Bob Cherry enrolled at Ryde Horticultural College at the age of 16. In 1972, he founded Paradise Plants, a nursery at Kulnura, located 50 miles (80km) north of Sydney. At its peak, it was one of the largest wholesale nurseries in Australia. Bob's passion for plants led to many overseas trips collecting seeds and plants, notably from China. The full interview and transcript are available at:

<https://www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au/publications/bob-cherry/>



When interviewed in 2020, Ian Carroll was Head Gardener of Oldbury Farm, Sutton Forest, NSW. This interview was part of a series on head gardeners in the Southern Highlands conducted by the Australian Garden History Society in collaboration with the Berrima District Museum. The full interview and transcript are available at:

<https://www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au/publications/ian-carroll/>