



Sue and Steve Proeve.



Life at *Ledbury*

Picture your dream house, then picture it again without mains water or electricity.

That's exactly what Sue and Steve Proeve had to do when their search for a place to build their dream home led them to a picturesque water reserve of 4.75 hectares in the heart of Eden Valley.

It wasn't their intention to be self sufficient, but faced with a \$120,000 charge to access power alone, then solar panels, dams and rainwater tanks quickly became an attractive option.

Today, at their completed home, Ledbury Gardens, it is even more appealing in reality. Not only are there no water and electricity bills, but there's the added satisfaction that goes hand-in-hand with survival in a material world.

Solar panels on the garage roof provide power all year round—even ticking along for five continuous days without Eden Valley sun. Three large rainwater tanks provide water for the house, while the excavation of a 600,000 litre dam was also a priority. A composting toilet conserves the precious resource while grey water is filtered through a fully approved, permanent system and used to irrigate a native woodlot.

Despite all of the energy savings, the star attraction of the Proeve's eco-friendly home is the two-storey, poured earth structure, which they designed and built themselves.

But the spotlight may shift to the garden once it is fully established. Already the vegetable patch and orchard are well underway, providing an insight into Sue's flair as a garden designer. She has recently achieved her accreditation and will start her own business, Ledbury Garden Design, in the new year.

There's no artificial fertiliser here, just plenty of biodynamic 501, trailer loads of chook manure from Rosie's Eggs and tangles of pea straw. These base organic ingredients produce fantastic produce, which can be tasted and purchased direct from Ledbury Gardens at the Barossa Farmers Market.

Vegetables and herbs make good planting companions, and Sue has articulated her preference for creating patterns throughout the garden—radishes, lettuces, radishes, lettuces—which will be transformed into the golden hues of pumpkins, sweetcorn and sunflowers come autumn. This is when Ledbury Gardens will be opened to the public for the first time as part of Australia's Open Garden Scheme.

There is little doubt that garden lovers will be vying for a vantage point with those who come to peek through the windows



of the eco-friendly house. Fortunately for those planning to attend, Ledbury Gardens comes with dozens of vantage points—views to and from the dam, the climbing rose winding its way up a pergola slash, historic thatched shed, and the rustic workshop complete with its own solar panels.

Back by the house, the Mediterranean garden is proving that it can survive without special treatment, while any step trodden on the sawdust paths in the terraced vegetable garden and orchard will reveal new treasures.

The silky bantams are almost invisible, but their quaint European-inspired home is a delightful feature—as are the stone borders, the recycled gates, fences, sheds and pergolas and several eye-catching sculptures, each with their own unique vantage point over this stunning patch of Eden.

Ledbury Gardens will be open to the public on March 8-9, 2008. For further details visit www.opengarden.org.au