

small planting of cereal crops in that first year of settlement as '9 Acres in Corn'. We were thus following the earliest pioneers in attempting to establish a foreign planting in this ancient soil, with no doubt the same anticipation of success as our predecessors but fortunately without the added spur of the dire consequences of hunger should we fail. We were working land which was the first to be cultivated by the settlers in this new colony and we were properly in awe of the honour bestowed, perhaps unwittingly, upon us.

Our first contact with the RBG had been in the summer of 1990 when the New South Wales Begonia Society was asked for assistance with the RBG's begonia collection, and we were the fortunate nominees, thus beginning a close relationship with this most beautiful and scientifically important Botanic Gardens. For 22 years I have worked here as a horticultural volunteer developing the begonia collection and promoting this plant family by establishing it in landscape plantings. My late wife worked along with me in these endeavours until she passed away in 2005. And now, in 2011, I have reached a stage when I can no longer enjoy or undertake the physical input which has been my joy for so long and I now play but a small part indeed in the care of the begonia beds, occasionally offering a small piece of advice when called upon so to do.

Thus the Sydney Royal Botanic Gardens became, so far as I know, the only Australian Botanic Gardens to actively grow and display the *Begoniaceae* as most successful landscape plants; and maybe also the first in the world.

So when you come to Sydney, and I hope it's very soon, go down to Harbour's edge and gaze in awe at our Opera House, then come through the gateway into the Gardens – there's nothing to pay – walk round the harbour front or ride the trackless train, take your time exploring or simply sit in the sun and enjoy the Garden in the City.