



EDITOR'S CHOICE

THE HIDDEN JOURNEY: MELANOMA UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

By Christine Lister
Brolga Publishing

Christine Lister, an avid gardener and recently retired after a long career, was enjoying her new-found life and freedom when her husband Rex was diagnosed with melanoma. This beautifully moving story is taken from her journal, as she observes the changes in the seasons and her garden that seem to mirror the changes in her world.

When Christine's agent contacted me and asked if I'd be interested in reviewing a book about cancer, I was surprised, to say the least; this is a gardening magazine, after all. But I was quickly assured that *The Hidden Journey* was also, in fact, a book about gardening. Intrigued, I asked for an excerpt. I read two sentences, and knew this was a story I couldn't refuse. Such is the power of Christine's writing. Part poet, part gardener, her descriptions of the land are truly inspirational. Here we have someone with a pure and meaningful connection with their garden, and the ability to express that connection in a pure and meaningful way. It's a powerful combination. But then, only a powerful writer could tell this tale.

Cancer. The big C. How do you even begin to talk about that? I mean really talk about it, without pretence, honestly and openly, with genuine feeling. It seems impossible. And yet, this is exactly what Christine does.

Make no mistake – this story hurts. It hits hard, right in the guts. But it's also quite beautiful, and very moving. It's a real-life love story, something rare and special. And yes, it's a story about gardening, about being a gardener, and about how meaningful that can be. ISBN 9781921221743 / \$24.99.

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I feel I have this cushion of protection around me, around us. It's a wonderful centre of calm. In spite of all that is happening I'm not deeply worried or worrying.

Yesterday I went to the nursery to buy some *Grevillea Robustas* and autumn trees to celebrate our anniversary. I wanted rich colours and different leaf patterns to break up the greeny-grey colour of the natives.

The garden is my palette. This is where I create, where I visualise what could be. I use trees and shrubs as symbols of people I love. *Grevillea Robusta*: the largest and most spectacular of all the grevilleas. Perfectly symmetrical fern-like foliage with brilliant orange brushes, a beautiful landscape tree. Stands out in a crowd. The description reads so much like Rex - it is long lived too.

Japanese maples. I've loved these trees for so long. Now they will be part of our autumn anniversary collection. Twenty-three years at Number 23. A blaze of colour will come into our lives each autumn, forever a symbol of our love, the colour of our lives.

I love the stillness of autumn. I love the chill in the air, and the slow start to the day. My life seems so full. The future is ahead of me - growth, excitement, planning for gardens, travel, financial freedom plus such good friends and support. We have worked at it, nurtured it, and now, when we need it, we are being nourished and protected by it.

We hope you liked this excerpt from the *The Hidden Journey* by Christine Lister, published by Brolga. You can pick up a copy of your own for \$24.99 from all good bookstores or visit www.christinelister.com.au for more information.