

# Gardening

ABC

## AUSTRALIA



TV show  
6.30pm  
Saturday

March 2017

CREATE A  
BEAUTIFUL  
NIGHT  
GARDEN

**AUTUMN JOY**  
Sedums keep  
the flower  
border going

# Think BULBS!

It's time to plan your display

**CHOOK  
SPECIAL  
PART 2**

*Healthy crops:*

- Crunchy cabbage
- Delicious beetroot
- Tangy tamarillo

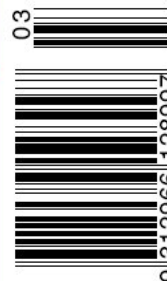


**COSTA GEORGIADIS**  
Beyond the eggs:  
how chooks teach  
children about life



**MICHAEL MCCOY**  
The first step to  
designing your  
dream space

ONLY \$6.99





See our full  
catalogue included  
in this issue

## Springtime Favourites Collection Offer



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50 RANUNCULI MIXED



50 MUSCARI ARMENIACUM



10 DAFFODIL YELLOW



50 SPARAXIS MIXED

Enjoy our most popular bulbs that will suit every Garden, providing gorgeous spring color in a small amount of space. All at unbeatable value.

5 varieties separately labelled (valued at \$70.00)  
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Our entire range is also available to shop ONLINE at [www.gardenexpress.com.au](http://www.gardenexpress.com.au)

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## editor's letter

As this sultry summer powered on, it became obvious to me that I had been a little wilful in my recent selection of plants and where to put them. While the camellias fretted and faded in their western position (yes, I know, duh!) and the hydrangeas yelled out every day for water, I did notice one bed coping better than the others with the heat. It contains climbing roses and a mix of flowering perennials. The lesson: grow more of these!

We have a flowering perennial as plant of the month this issue. It's one of John Patrick's absolute favourites: sedum, also known as stonewort. There's the popular 'Autumn Joy' with its dusty pink flower heads that turn coppery as the seasons shift, but there are other cultivars to muck around with, too, and all of them are hugely useful mass-planted in the flower border. Check out John's story with design tips and plant combo ideas on page 14.

For more design advice, head to Michael McCoy's new series on page 52. Each month, he'll explore another fundamental of garden design, giving you the tools you need to create a space that really works. And how do you make a garden that glows (and smells good) when the sun goes down? Find out on page 32, with expert advice from landscape architect Arno King.

Part two of the chook special starts on page 40, with a piece from Costa on his introduction to gardens, hens and the whole food-scrap cycle. And remember, it's bulb time! Don't let March and April slide by without stocking up. Starting on page 26 are lists of bulbs that flower from winter to late spring, so that with some clever planning, you can have five months of rolling colour. Think big and plant as many as you can afford - you won't regret it.



*Janet*

PHOTO ALLY JACKSON

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# Create a garden your family will enjoy all summer long

At the world famous garden of **HERONSWOOD** we have been growing tough summer perennials that survive 40°C and look good from December until April for 30 years.

Rarely available in nurseries, these first class, toughened perennials are available to Diggers Club members online and at our garden shops, located in our gardens. Unlike “potted colour” our perennials thrive year after year. Come and visit our gardens, enjoy lunch (inside historic Heronswood house) and shop in beautiful surroundings.

If you want to create art by planting, join our Club — it’s just \$49 for one year!

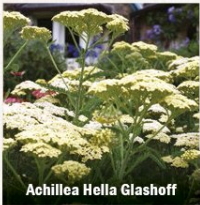
Diggers Perennials ▶ Aerial view of Heronswood, Dromana ▶



Pink Evening Primrose



Delphinium Blue Sensation



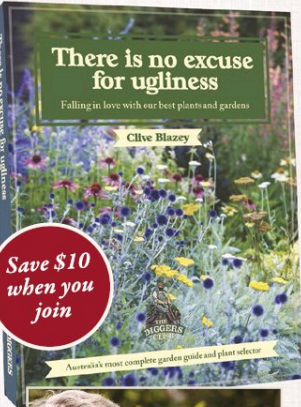
Achillea Hella Glashoff



Agastache Blue Fortune



Pink Statice



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when you  
join

“I was inspired to write my new book, *There Is No Excuse For Ugliness*, to help people create a summer garden that is cool and refreshing during the hottest of Australian summers,” says author Clive Blazey.

Clive and the Diggers staff created the gardens at Heronswood and St Erth after travelling the world in search of the best plants and gardens. The **PLANT SELECTOR** is Australia’s most complete list of herbs, perennials, roses, bulbs, annuals, trees and shrubs that are anything but commonplace and includes detailed growing descriptions for gardeners from Cairns to Hobart.

This is a book for both the beginner and the experienced gardener that explains the basics of garden botany for gardening success. **RRP \$29.95** (just \$19.95 with a two year membership).



Clive Blazey



## Pick up your plants at Diggers Garden Shops



**HERONSWOOD DROMANA**  
105 Latrobe Parade, Dromana, 3936, VIC  
Garden Shop: 03 5984 7321

**ST ERTH BLACKWOOD**  
189 Simmons Reef Road, Blackwood, 3458, VIC  
Garden Shop: 03 9751 0584

**CLOUDEHILL OLINDA**  
89 Olinda-Monbulk Road, Olinda, VIC, 3788  
Garden Shop: 03 9751 0584

**ADELAIDE BOTANIC GARDEN**  
Schomburgk Pavilion, North Terrace  
Adelaide, 5000, SA  
Garden Shop: 08 8232 8671

# Join THE DIGGERS CLUB

We are Australia’s most popular garden magazine and our club has more members than our leading AFL club. Our members are inspired by visiting three of Australia’s finest summer gardens with espalier orchards and sub-tropical food borders full of heirloom produce.

We trial and grow more food plants and summer perennials than any other supplier in Australia. We can show you how to grow heirloom vegetables, space saving dwarf fruit trees, and rare herbs like capers and wasabi, all delicious varieties, full of fibre and free of nasty chemicals. If your garden looks dull and drab in summer we can help you create a garden you will be proud of.

## Eight magazines a year

Innovative, informative and provocative ideas about how to be self-sufficient in a tiny mini-plot space or country orchard, whether your garden is in tropical Darwin or cold Hobart.



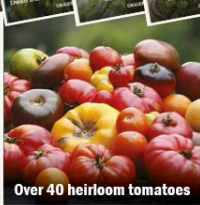
Over 30 different berries



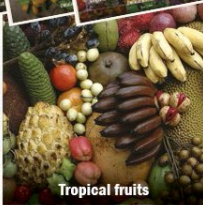
Biggest citrus range



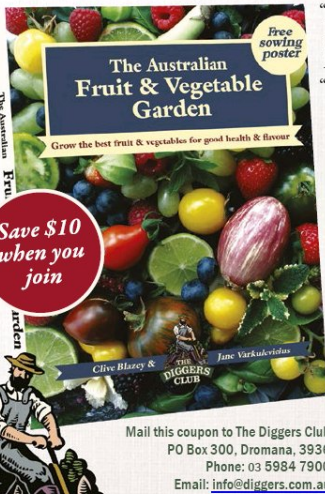
Dwarf avocados too!



Over 40 heirloom tomatoes



Tropical fruits



Save \$10  
when you  
join

“Just 5 hours gardening a week is all it takes to grow your tomatoes, avocados, citrus and flowers, if you follow our advice from our best selling Diggers book *The Australian Fruit & Vegetable Garden*” says founder of The Diggers Club Clive Blazey. “Grow heirloom fruit and vegetables organically — our varieties are full of fibre, never tasteless or bland like supermarket produce. All plants are sent directly to your door from our mail order nursery.”

## Membership options

- ☐ One year \$49.00
  - ☐ Two years (SAVE \$29.00) \$69.00
- Special book offer when you join for 2 years!**
- ☐ *The Australian Fruit & Vegetable Garden* (RRP \$39.95) \$29.95
  - ☐ *There Is No Excuse For Ugliness* (RRP \$29.95) \$19.95
  - ☐ Book postage \$8.95

Total \$

**3 easy ways to join! Call 03 5984 7900, visit [DIGGERS.COM.AU](http://DIGGERS.COM.AU) or use the coupon!**

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MARCH

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on the cover

Daffodils – flanked here by white polyanthus – are a spring classic, but you need to plan ahead and plant your bulbs in autumn. See our story on page 26 for how to have five months of rolling colour.  
**Photo: The Garden Collection**



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by Ally Jackson

# what's new

Here are some of the latest plant and book releases, plus a selection of new products, which can be found in nurseries or online

**1** Best suited to semi-shaded areas, the coral bells hybrid *Heuchera* 'Dolce Brazen Raisin' adds colour and interest with its dark maroon foliage and soft pink blooms, which appear in mid-summer. Plants are pest and disease resistant, and will spread if fertilised in the warmer months. [provenwinners.com.au](http://provenwinners.com.au)

**2** *Convolvulus mauritanicus* 'New Blue Moon' has been bred with a more dense form than its predecessor C. 'Blue Moon', giving it improved weed-suppression capabilities. It boasts the same prolific flower display as the original groundcover favourite 'Blue Moon', and is happy in well-drained soil in garden beds or baskets. Plants are waterwise once established. [pga.com.au](http://pga.com.au)

**3** The flowers on *Hibiscus* 'Cherry Cheesecake' look good enough to eat – they reach up to 20cm in diameter and bloom from mid-summer until early autumn. The plant forms a large clump of bushy, dark green foliage, and prefers a position with full sun or semi shade. [provenwinners.com.au](http://provenwinners.com.au)

**4** Bring the garden to life after winter with the silvery mauve *Crocus* 'Vanguard'. Bulbs do well in sunny spots and well-drained soil, but also tolerate light shade, such as under a deciduous tree – especially in temperate zones. Once established, each bulb can produce up to four flowers. [tesselaar.net.au](http://tesselaar.net.au)

**5** The large-cupped 'Sunlover' daffodil has a deep orange, ruffled centre (or corona) that sits proudly amid its lemony yellow petals (or perianth). Flowering early to mid season, the bulbs should be placed in soil prepared with well-rotted organic matter a few weeks before planting. [tesselaar.net.au](http://tesselaar.net.au)



## on the shelf



**1** These contemporary Raw Earth Hanging Planters are made from stained porcelain with a matt finish, and look at home both indoors and out. There are two sizes and five colours available in the range. [angusandceleste.com](http://angusandceleste.com)

**2** Help protect yourself from bites with YaMate All Purpose Spray. The organic insect repellent contains citronella, plus six essential oils and two plant extracts. [loveoilco.com](http://loveoilco.com)



**3** Natural Soil Improver Premium Biochar is carbon-rich and ideal for adding to top soil or potting mix. [farmhousedirect.com.au](http://farmhousedirect.com.au)

**4** Fiskars IsoCore Mattock is designed to significantly cut the impact of vibration to your joints and ligaments, reducing the potential for injury. [fiskars.com.au](http://fiskars.com.au)

**5** Keep any opened wine or juice bottles airtight with Zeal Reflecting Nature's Crocus Bottle Stoppers. [vgminternational.com.au/stockists](http://vgminternational.com.au/stockists)



## books

**Caro & Co: Helping Kids Find Wonder in the Everyday** by Caroline Webster

Sally Milner Publishing

This practical book contains more than 250 simple and inexpensive nature-based activities that can be enjoyed with children aged two and upwards. The projects are informal yet educational, covering concepts such as numbers, colours and shapes – and are designed to motivate children to get outdoors.



**Vertical Gardens** by Leigh Clapp & Hattie Klotz

New Holland

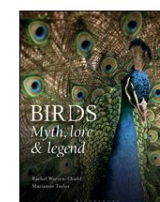
Find out how you can develop and customise your own vertical garden. Step-by-step instructions show how to create large and small vertical spaces – plus there are useful explanations of the many products available on the market. Traditional methods of vertical gardening are also covered, such as how to espalier, and ways to use hanging baskets to great effect.



**Birds: Myth, Lore & Legend** by Rachel Warren Chadd & Marianne Taylor

Bloomsbury

Discover the legends associated with more than 80 different bird species from across the world. Stories of their significance are retold alongside beautiful images, explaining how some birds have become associated with superstitions surrounding the weather, religion and luck.



**Pets on Holiday** by Gareth Brock

Hardie Grant

Thinking of taking your furry friend on your next holiday? This guide makes it easy to find places in Australia that will welcome Fido with open arms. Divided into states and territories, each chapter uses symbols to highlight pet-friendly places to stay and their varying pet policies, covering all budgets from caravan parks to luxury holiday cottages. It also includes details of nearby spots where you can eat and take them out for walks.





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## on the Grapevine

We keep you up to date with all the latest headlines, happenings and events in the gardening world



### garden releaf day

Garden centres around the country are helping to celebrate the third annual Garden Releaf Day on Sunday March 19 this year, with fun family activities and prizes. The Garden Releaf program promotes the health benefits of spending time in gardens and around plants, and last year raised \$70,000 for Beyond Blue. The focus this year will be on the health benefits and garden appeal of blueberries. For more information and to find out what activities are planned, visit [gardenreleaf.com.au](http://gardenreleaf.com.au)



### EARTH HOUR

This year's Earth Hour marks 10 years since businesses and other Sydneysiders first turned off their lights for an hour to increase the awareness of climate change. The campaign, co-created by WWF, has now been adopted by more than 172 countries and includes 7000 cities and towns worldwide. To get involved and support a cleaner and safer environment, switch off your lights on Saturday, March 25 from 8.30–9.30pm local time. #JoinTheFuture

PHOTO MARCIA HOSKING

### cleaner & greener

Over the past 26 years, Clean Up Australia Day volunteers have moved the equivalent of 331,000 ute-loads of rubbish to the tip, and the effort is growing each year. To do your bit on March 5 (February 28 for businesses and March 3 for schools), register as an individual or community group at [cleanupaustraliaday.org.au](http://cleanupaustraliaday.org.au)



### GARDEN DESIGN TALKS

The inspirational Garden Design Series, hosted by the Royal Botanic Garden Sydney, is back for 2017. The line-up includes four national and international designers working at the forefront of public and private garden design. Learn how to view landscape through new eyes and use plants in different ways in your own garden by attending one of the talks. Visit [rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/Full-Series](http://rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/Full-Series) for more information and booking details.



# what's on in March



## tell us about your event

The June calendar deadline is March 6, 2017. Send event details (date, opening times, location, cost and phone number) to Shows, Gardening Australia, nextmedia, Locked Bag 5555, St Leonards NSW 1590 or email [shows@gardeningaustralia.com.au](mailto:shows@gardeningaustralia.com.au)



## Queensland

### 4th Annual Begonia Show

9am–4pm. Auditorium, Brisbane Botanic Gardens Mt Coot-tha, Mt Coot-tha Rd, Toowong. (07) 5502 2579. \$4. View colourful displays, including hybrids from Queensland-based growers, and buy varieties of begonias not readily available at nurseries.

### 11th–12th Ipswich Garden & Plant Expo

Sat 8am–4pm, Sunday 8am–3pm. Ipswich Turf Club, 219 Brisbane Rd, Bundamba. \$10. [0437 110 789](tel:0437110789). Listen to guest speakers, including Costa Georgiadis, and nose around more than 100 stalls selling plants and gardening products. Food and free parking available. [plantexpo.com.au](http://plantexpo.com.au)

### 18th–19th Full Bloom Plant Show

9am–3pm. Carrara Markets, cnr Gooding Dr and Manchester Rd, Carrara. (07) 5579 9388. Free. Explore displays and stalls filled with bromeliads, orchids and succulents. Meet more than 100 local growers, listen to talks by gardening gurus and purchase plants – all while enjoying music and refreshments.

## South Australia

### 12th Autumn Garden Festival

10am–4pm. Clare Showgrounds, Horrocks Hwy, Clare. [0424 505 850](tel:0424505850). \$7. Take a look around more than 60 plant, trade and food stalls, and listen to talks from guest speakers, including Jane Edmanson and Kim Syrus.

### Autumn Orchid Show



## Victoria

### March 29th–April 2nd Melbourne International Flower & Garden Show

9am–5pm (closes 9pm Friday). Carlton Gardens & Royal Exhibition Building, 9 Nicholson St, Carlton. (03) 9864 1111. \$27. Get inspired by award-winning floral displays and boutique show gardens while attending workshops, meeting landscape designers and perusing products and plants. Be sure to drop into our stall!



## Tasmania

### 5th Native Plant Workshop

1.30–4pm. Inverawe Native Gardens, 1565 Channel Hwy, Margate. (03) 6267 2020. \$30. Join the head gardener on a walking tour of the garden, sharing techniques and tips he has learnt the hard way, from plant selection to care and maintenance. Booking essential.

## New South Wales

### 9th–11th Autumn Orchid Show

Thur–Fri 8.30am–5pm, Sat 8.30am–3pm. Jessie McMillan Hall, 16 Wollumbin St, Murwillumbah. [0416 114 007](tel:0416114007). \$3. Enjoy plant displays and stalls, and glean expert advice from members of the Tweed District Orchid Society.

### 11th Rose Growing Workshop

10.30am–3pm. CWA Rooms, Winifred West Park, Main St, Mittagong. (02) 4244 3765. \$30, including lunch. (02) 4244 3765. Open to growers of all levels, this workshop includes advice on planting, pruning, disease, pests and general care. Booking essential. [nsw.rose.org.au](http://nsw.rose.org.au)

**11th–12th Goulburn Rose Show**  
Sat 11am–5pm, Sun 10am–4pm. Goulburn Soldiers Club, 15 Market St, Goulburn. [1800 353 646](tel:1800353646). \$5. The festival showcases thousands of named roses, and includes a hotly contested rose competition that is open to all. Buy plants, garden tools and crafts, and wander around an art exhibition.

### 26th Rose Growing Workshop

10.30am–3pm. Wyee Community Hall, cnr Wyee Rd and Hue Hue Rd, Wyee. [0422 157 353](tel:0422157353). \$30, including lunch. Find out about different rose varieties and their ideal growing conditions. Booking essential.

## Victoria

### 4th–5th Cloudehill Festival of Flowers

9am–5pm. 89 Olinda-Monbulk Rd, Olinda. (03) 9751 0584. \$10 (free to Diggers Club members). Tour Jeremy Francis' picturesque gardens at Cloudehill. Wander through spectacular flowering borders, and talk to the garden's plantsmen.

### 4th–5th Gunyah Open Garden

10am–4.30pm. 22 Lochinvar St, Pascoe Vale South. [0472 997 880](tel:0472997880). \$8. Meander through an urban food garden filled with fruit, vegies, scented herbaceous borders and edible flowers. Choose plants to buy, and listen to garden talks at 11am, 1pm and 3pm. Refreshments available.

### 11th–12th Plant Collectors' Sale & Expo

10am–4pm. 100 Hilton Rd, Sassafras. (03) 9755 1882. \$5. Meet expert growers from nurseries based in the Dandenong Ranges and rural Victoria, and browse stalls selling plants, tools, books and botanical art. Refreshments available.

### 18th–19th Tugurium Open Garden

10am–4.30pm. 8/10 Centenary Ave, Macedon. [0472 997 880](tel:0472997880). Discover the rare and unusual plants within Stephen Ryan's garden, including the Plant Trust's collection of *Acanthus*, *Sambucus* and *Osmanthus*. Refreshments available.

### 25th–26th Garden Open Days

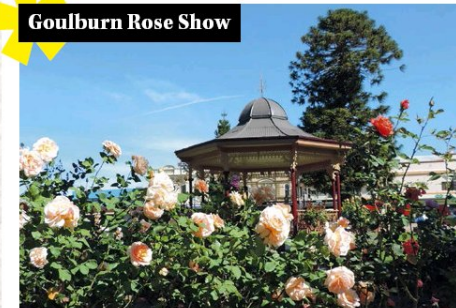
10am–4pm. Yarrabee Native Garden, 50 West Gateway, Lara. [0421 428 448](tel:0421428448). Explore more than 2ha of gardens, featuring a mixture of natives and exotics, plus a dam, waterfall and three ponds. Buy refreshments, plants, jams and outdoor sculptures.

## Australian Capital Territory

### March 18th–April 17th Art in the Garden

9.30am–4.30pm. Visitor Centre, Australian National Botanic Gardens, Clunies Ross St, Acton. (02) 6250 9588. Free. The garden's three botanical art groups present their annual exhibition of work, which focuses exclusively on native flora.

### Goulburn Rose Show







# Bundles of JOY



Flowering sedums, including the much-loved 'Autumn Joy', are an asset mass-planted in herbaceous borders, writes JOHN PATRICK

**H**igh in the Teesdale valley, well west of north-east England's defunct pits and ship building, sit stone farmhouses – their roofs covered with tiles carrying sheets of the bright yellow sedum, *Sedum acre*.

In my early 20s, I botanised here while contributing to *Flora and Vegetation of County Durham*, never realising that these farms continued a tradition stretching back to at least Roman times – giving the name *Sedum* to this huge genus of several hundred plants. It comes from the Latin *sedo*, meaning to calm or allay, and its presence on roofs was intended to calm the effects of lightning. Today, this tough succulent is still used in rooftop gardens.

Of greater interest to the Australian gardener is a group of sedums or stonecrops based around the tall and showy sedums, ice plant (*S. spectabile*) and orphine (*S. telephium*) – which are commonly used in herbaceous border displays. These are not officially sedums anymore as they have been reclassified in the genus *Hylotelephium*. However, since they are closely related, many of us still pass them off as sedums.

I've been besotted by these marvellous plants for years. They have rich qualities for gardeners, including dramatic changing flower colour that varies from cultivar to cultivar, good drought tolerance and a genuine ability to perform passingly well in even the poorest soils. They also attract butterflies and, provided you are willing to love decay, have a beautiful bronze winter skeleton that looks like intricately sculpted, weathered steel and extends their display to eight months.

I should say, that these stonecrops don't suit all tastes. A client of mine exclaimed that she and her husband loved their new garden except for the masses of pink broccoli! Their flowers do have a vague similarity to that delicious vegetable.

## Planting & care

These sedums grow best in southern states where humidity is low, and they tolerate cold winter conditions. Plants enjoy being in a sunny position on soils



that are not too rich and fertile. Wet, poorly drained soils are anathema to these plants. They tolerate an amount of dryness, though in my experience, if this comes as the plants are nearing their full height of 40–90cm, they can flop across the path or other plantings.

Similarly, heavily fertilised plants become lush and tend to collapse, especially under the weight of heavy rain. This adds to the benefits of not growing them too lushly, although their fat, succulent leaves are quite beautiful in their own right and offer a simple means of propagation. Plants grow easily from leaves that are poked into open sandy soils and kept moist.

Their growth cycle is fascinating. Through early spring they appear as ground-level rosettes of pale-green foliage, which forms a low mat. Should you wish to divide plants, then this is a good time to do it.

Simply use a garden fork to lift a clump, then divide the head with a sharp knife into three or four smaller plants. Set them back into your garden in groups – they always look best in large masses rather than individual plants – spacing them about 30cm apart. This is a good tactic to follow every three years or so, since old plants become less tall and display reduced flowering. ►



## At a glance

**common name**

sedum, stonecrop,  
iceplant, orphine

**botanical names**

*Hylotelephium spectabile*  
syn. *Sedum spectabile* and  
*H. telephium* syn. *S. telephium*

**plant type**

perennial

↑ 40–90cm

↔ 40–80cm

☀ full sun

🌱 spring  
🌻 summer to  
mid-autumn



■ suitable

### STRIKING FEATURE

From top Sedums are perfect planted en masse in a border, and they flower for many months; combined in beds with other perennials, sedums always stand out, even when their flowers and foliage die in winter. Previous page, from left Soft pink blooms of 'Autumn Joy' in summer; 'Autumn Joy' flowers darken to a rich copper red in autumn.



"They have a beautiful bronze winter skeleton that extends their display to eight months"

With the evolving season and increasing warmth, they send up their pale green spikes. Catch them early in spring and you can remove their growth tip to encourage more branching and a greater density of flowers. Eventually you will see the development of pale green flower buds on a plant 35–70cm high (depending on the cultivar), and these open gradually to flowers of the softest pale pink.

Different cultivars develop different colours, but broadly their pale pink display darkens with age into deeper, bolder colours, and the strongest heads grow to 10–12cm wide, containing numerous individual small flowers. It is at this stage that butterflies reveal their greatest appreciation, their open wings contrasting with the massed pink flowers.

Judging the moment when these flower heads are at their best is difficult. My wife loves their coolness in the heat of summer, but I enjoy them more when their heads, at their broadest and noblest, start to die off. They develop gorgeous deep maroon colours of a hue difficult to describe precisely. From here, the onset of autumn sees them becoming increasingly mahogany, bronze and rust. As the flowers die, the foliage also loses its soft green sheen, and simply the plant's gaunt bronze stems and heads remain as stark skeletons. At this time,

in cold places, frosts decorate the heads with ice or a layer of snow, bringing an attractive further dimension to the form of the garden.

### creating a display

Showy sedums look best when planted as extended drifts and informal masses, positioned near to the front of plantings – where you can easily inspect insect activity. They could also be used casually to edge a gravel pathway, where they can bridge plantings in the border with those that have escaped the boundary.

Their strong, round shape makes them well suited to combining with plants revealing linear foliage form, such as grasses and clumping, strappy-leaved plants. Or you may prefer to grow them with loose plants that razzle dazzle and bring a lively contrast to their somewhat stolid form. Perfect here would be the fast-growing, pink-flowering gaura (*Gaura lindheimeri* 'Siskiyou Pink') or drifts of the enigmatic chocolate cosmos (*Cosmos atrosanguineus*), with its glistening dark maroon flowers providing a fascinating contrast to softer pinks of the sedums.

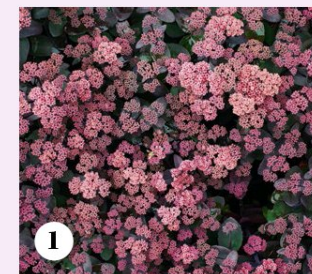
Add to this mix the purple cone flower (*Echinacea purpurea*), with purple daisy flower heads creating a dramatic layered effect at about 1m high. Much taller, and worth including, is the pinky purple



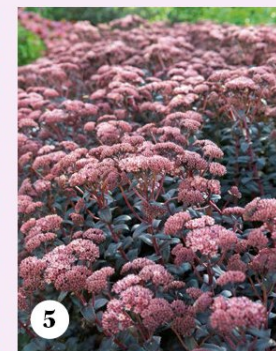
flowering Joe-pye weed (*Eupatorium purpureum*), complementing the symphony of pinks for which sedum can be the main theme. Add to the sense of theatre with flowing grasses, such as some modestly scaled *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Gracillimus' or the deeply coloured purple fountain grass (*Pennisetum advena* 'Rubrum'), to contrast with the more stolid sedums.

Getting back down nearer the level of the sedums themselves, try geraniums such as *Geranium endressii*. This boasts pale, magenta-pink flowers, and typical geranium foliage – a notable contrast to the form of sedums. *G. maderense* is breathtakingly beautiful both in foliage and flower, and its silvery appearance is a great foil for sedums. Talking of silver foils, *Artemisia canescens* is one of the very best silver-leaved plants, and it produces incredibly fine linear foliage that is perfect for softening an edge at the front of sunny borders.

For more colour at the front, consider thrift (*Armeria maritima*), a tough little perennial that comes in a range of colours that complement sedums. When it comes to linear contrasts, there are many that fit this bill. I rather enjoy seeing sedums clustered around the up-thrusting silvery grey leaves of *Yucca recurvifolia*, which also offers attractive spikes of waxy white bell flowers that grow to about 2m tall. GA



1



5

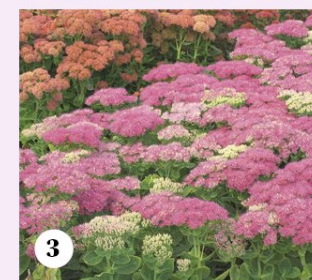
## John's top picks

**1 'Xenox'**  
Rounded, compact plant covered in clusters of tiny, deep, smoky pink flowers. Succulent foliage darkens from bluish green to burgundy over the season.  
↑ 45cm ↔ 45cm



2

**2 'Autumn Joy'**  
Among my all-time favourite perennials, with baby-pink blooms that age to purplish pink and finally bronze in autumn. Even the dead stems in winter are attractive, so resist the temptation to cut back.  
↑ 40–50cm ↔ 40–50cm



3

**3 'Meteor'**  
Flattened heads of showy, bright pink flowers that age to deep rose atop stems of fleshy, pale, grey-green leaves.  
↑ 40–45cm ↔ 40–45cm

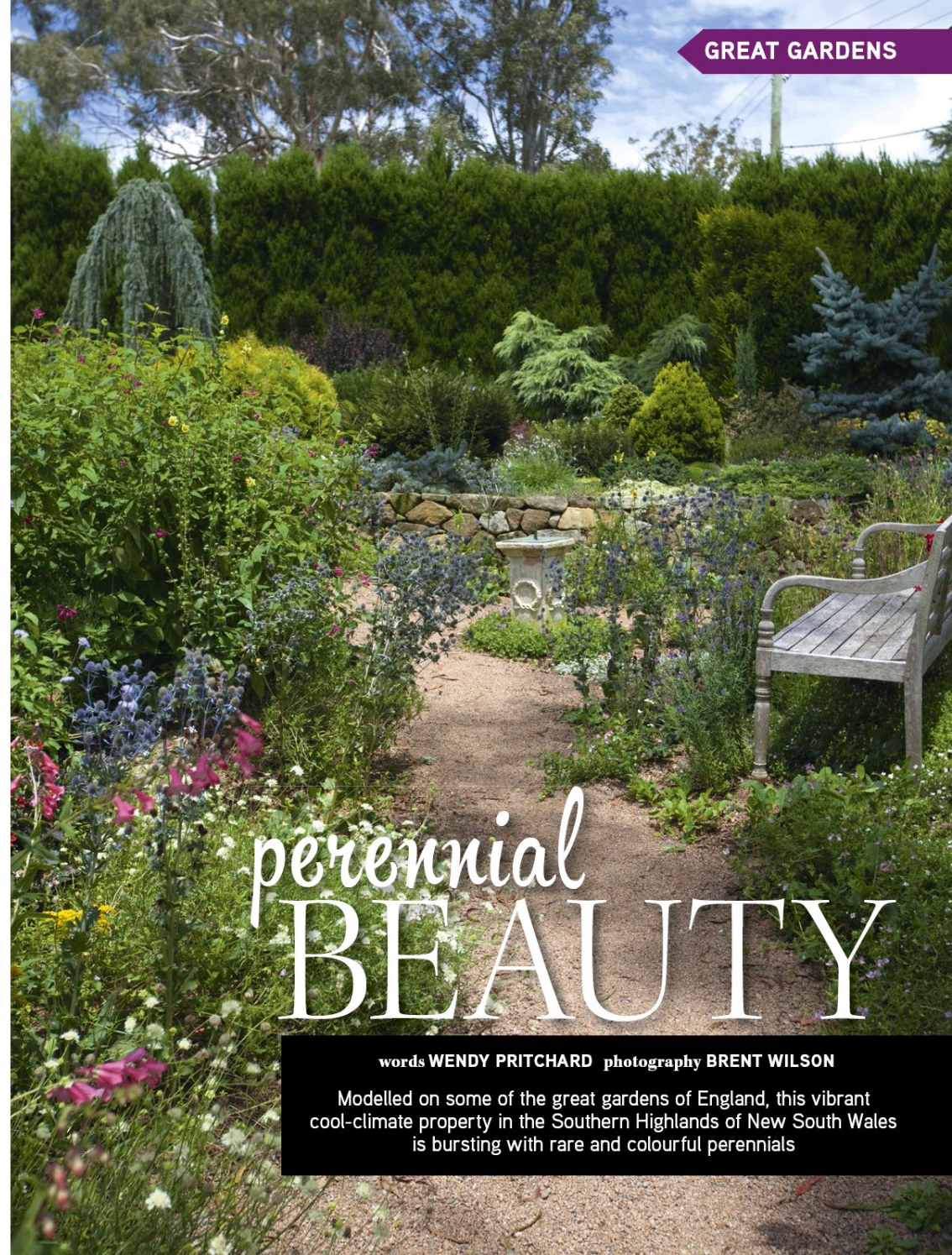


4

**4 'Matrona'**  
Tall, stiff burgundy stems and waxy grey-green, purple-veined leaves with large heads of pale pink flowers that age to crimson.  
↑ 90cm ↔ 80cm

**5 'Purple Emperor'**  
Features dusty-rose flowers that are large and umbrella-shaped, and contrast with fleshy, purplish black foliage. Also provides interest in winter.  
↑ 40–60cm ↔ 45–65cm





# perennial BEAUTY

words WENDY PRITCHARD photography BRENT WILSON

Modelled on some of the great gardens of England, this vibrant cool-climate property in the Southern Highlands of New South Wales is bursting with rare and colourful perennials



When Julie and Craig Hulbert first saw their 0.4ha block in 2000, there was little on it except for grass and a few eucalypt trees. Today, 'Perennial Hill' is an extensive cottage-style garden filled with design themes and motifs that were consolidated by a tour of English gardens in 2012. Rustic pathways of crushed granite and compacted earth, circular garden beds, formal box hedges, woven poplar screens, fountains, sculptures, dry stone walls and cute touches, such as the upturned flowerpots on fence posts, are all a nod to the English gardens the couple visited – 42 of them in five weeks.

Here in Mittagong, in the Southern Highlands of New South Wales, the soil is rich and volcanic, and this helped persuade the couple to buy the property. "Having good soil gave us a headstart, and it meant we didn't have to truck any in," says Julie.

The first planting was a screening hedge of Leighton's green cypress (*Cupressocyparis leylandii*) down one side of the property that fronts onto a busy road, cutting sound and visual pollution. Next came the construction of the house. Inspired by French farmhouses, the house is situated in the middle of the garden and has a distinctive provincial



#### ROOM WITH A VIEW

Clockwise from top left Woven hurdles form a screen and arched opening, delineating some of the garden 'rooms'; the area around the French provincial-style house has been divided into sections using dry-stone walls and clipped *Buxus* hedges, adding interest with different levels; the dry-stone walls are softened with pots and informal plantings; the use of curved pathways and round beds adds depth to the garden; cypress hedges form a dark green backdrop for mass plantings of brightly coloured perennials, making this a lovely place to sit and reflect on the beauty of the garden. Previous page, from left A brass bell surrounded by echinacea, and bright yellow rudbeckia provides an interesting focal point; a weathered timber seat is positioned near a sundial in this corner of the garden.

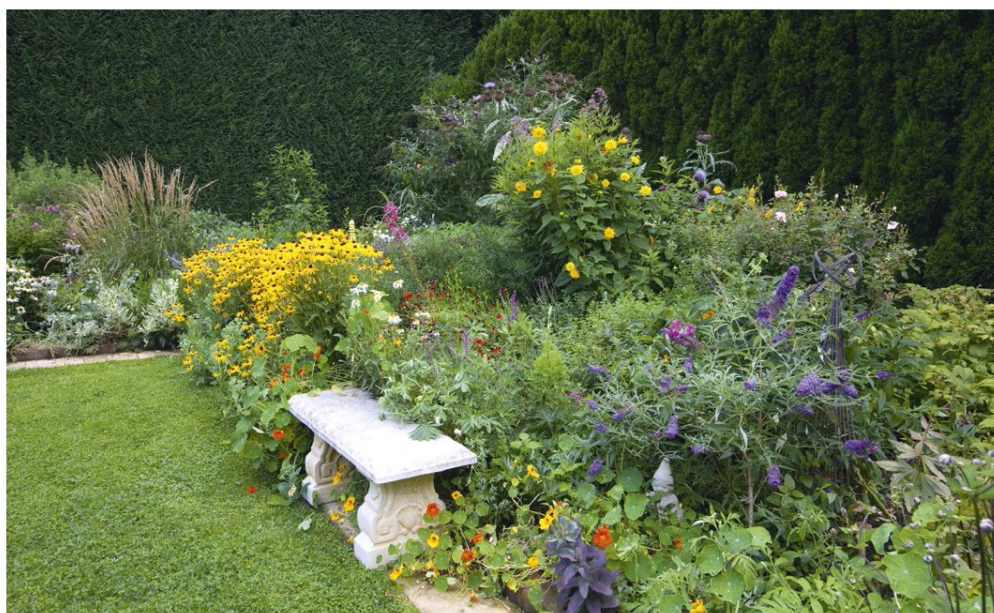
"The majestic world of herbaceous perennials opened up to them"

feel with its dark terracotta paintwork and covering of Boston ivy (*Parthenocissus tricuspidata*).

The garden commenced in 2001 after the couple finished building their home. As it happened, there was an Australia-wide drought at the time, which made the going tough, but it helped Julie and Craig appreciate the good seasons when rain was plentiful. Moving from a temperate Sydney climate to the cooler region of Mittagong required a new palette of plants, the needs of which they quickly picked up.

Julie explains that, thanks to the move, the "majestic world of herbaceous perennials" opened up to them, alongside drought and raising three young children. "I spent a lot of time driving kids to sport, rather than in the garden, so we lost some plants." But Julie and Craig learnt from the experience and now the garden plays host to a "mini botanic garden" featuring a wide diversity of plants.

With a stonewalling course under his belt and a knack for building things, Craig built all the dry-stone walls using local sandstone. He also constructed ►





"Craig constructed woven 'hurdles', which are popular in the UK"

woven 'hurdles', which are popular in the UK. Craig uses two UK willow substitutes for these screens – Lombardy poplar (*Populus nigra*) and white willow (*Salix alba*). The walls and hurdles create 'rooms' within the garden and, with the dense curtain of pencil pines (*Juniperus chinensis* 'Spartan'), make an attractive textured backdrop for the plants.

### shared loves & labours

Craig and Julie have done all the work themselves. "Sometimes it can be overwhelming," Craig says, "but it's immensely satisfying." They are organised with their watering regime and keep a chart that shows each section of the garden – the rockery, conifer, shrub, topiary, French parterre and rose gardens, to name a few – to ensure nothing is overlooked. Buxus hedges are watered via drip systems, however it is necessary to hand-water most areas due to the differing water needs of individual species. Julie counts this as a chance to check in with all the plants in the garden.

Both horticulturists, Julie and Craig complement each other with their knowledge. A lover and keen collector of rare and unusual shrubs, as well as conifers, elderberry (*Sambucus nigra*) and wood sorrel varieties (*Oxalis* spp.), Craig is interested in growing more 'woodland' plants in the shady areas.

Julie is a fan of bellflowers (*Campanula* spp.), lungworts (*Pulmonaria* spp.) and salvias, and her favourite part of the garden is the 'perennial island', which looks spectacular in mid to late summer with its lively, bold display of echinacea, rudbeckia, wallflower, salvia and grasses. It was inspired in part by The Bressingham Gardens in England, where the couple saw summer perennials in large island beds. Other favourite sources of inspiration are Hidcote Manor Garden in the Cotswolds, Christopher Lloyd's creation, Great Dixter, in East Sussex, and York Gate Garden in Leeds, which Julie describes as one of the best 0.4ha gardens in Europe.

Passionate about collecting and promoting rare and unusual plants, Julie says, "We want to show people that English-style gardening can extend well beyond the spring period, when bulbs, blossoms, azaleas and rhododendrons dominate the garden. For us, spring is the beginning of the gardening year, not the end of it! Despite the challenges that summer presents, there is much more scope for growing beautiful perennials that will continue to flower well into autumn and beyond." **GA**



### ON DISPLAY

Clockwise from main: Rudbeckias shine in a perennial bed around a water feature; this domed woven willow has been positioned to support a newly planted clematis; a formal topiary Buxus sempervirens, with pots clustered at its feet, is thrown into sharp relief by the blond dry-stone wall.



### come & see it

'Perennial Hill' is open to the public each weekend in October, November, January, February and March, the first two weekends in December, the Autumn Open Garden weekend (Apr 22-23) and during the Tulip Time festival (Sept 12-24). Visit [perennialhill.com.au](http://perennialhill.com.au) for more details.



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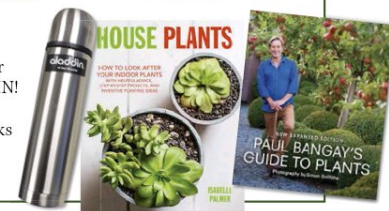
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# 5 months of BULB COLOUR

Following a strategic bulb-planting plan in autumn reaps rewards later in the year. JENNIFER STACKHOUSE lays out a schedule of beautiful bulbs to plant for a succession of flowers from July to November

## July to August flowers

Jonquils, paperwhites and daffodils (pictured) are all part of the bulb group known as narcissus. These large bulbs are planted in autumn for flowers that begin in winter. As well as brightening winter gardens, narcissus are fragrant, particularly yellow jonquils and white paperwhites, and tolerate a wide range of climates, from the subtropics to the coldest mountain climates.

In cool and temperate parts of the country, narcissus can be planted to naturalise under deciduous trees and shrubs or on embankments, or to add a burst of colour in areas that are bare in winter, such as the rose garden.

In many parts of southern Australia, particularly Tasmania, roadsides and fields are painted yellow in late winter and early spring with narcissus. In the subtropics and warm temperate zones, daffodils need to be treated as annuals.

The narcissus forms that bloom the earliest have stems with clusters of small flowers. Daffodils flower later, mainly from August until late September. For early flowering, select the yellow 'Soleil d'Or' jonquil or the creamy-white double and highly fragrant 'Erlcheer', which lives up to its name by flowering in late winter. For later flowering, select the poet's narcissus.

## Other bulbs for winter

These bulbs (which include corms and rhizomes) begin flowering in winter in the subtropics but may bloom several weeks later in cold zones. ● anemone (*Anemone coronaria*) ● clivia (*Clivia miniata*) ● crocus (*Crocus chrysanthus*) ● freesia (*Freesia x hybrida*), lachenalia or soldier boys (*Lachenalia aloides*) ● ranunculus (*Ranunculus asiaticus*) ● snowdrops (*Galanthus elwesii* and Hybrid Cultivars, cold climate only) ● snowflake (*Leucojum aestivum*) ● wood anemone (*A. nemorosa*, cold climate only)

PHOTO ALAMY





## September flowers

One of the most uplifting sights of spring is a bluebell wood. It's a feature of a Northern Hemisphere spring, particularly in the UK, where English bluebells grow wild. Create a mini bluebell meadow by mass-planting bluebells under a deciduous tree and enjoy that sea of blue that says it's spring.

The easiest bluebell to grow across much of Australia is the so-called Spanish bluebell (*Hyacinthoides hispanica*). This bulb has stout stems and tiers of mainly blue but also lilac, pink or white flowers that last for many weeks. Bluebells self seed and the bulbs multiply readily, so even a small planting can become a carpet of blue (or lilac, pink or white) over time. Bluebells can also be grown in clumps among other spring-flowering bulbs.

The dainty English bluebell (*H. non-scripta*) has an arching stem and bells of blue, mauve, pink or white on just one side of the stalk. It needs a cold climate to feel at home.

## other bulbs for early spring

In subtropical zones, most spring-flowering bulbs are treated as annuals. Flowering is earlier in warm areas but starts later and continues well into spring in cooler zones. These are for early spring colour. ● anemone (*Anemone coronaria*) ● daffodil (*Narcissus* spp. and Hybrid Cultivars) ● freesia (*Freesia x hybrida*) ● glory-of-the-snow (*Chionodoxa luciliae*) ● grape hyacinth (*Muscari armeniacum*) ● ranunculus (*Ranunculus asiaticus*) ● starflower (*Ipheion uniflorum*)

PHOTOS: ALAMY, ISTOCK

## October flowers

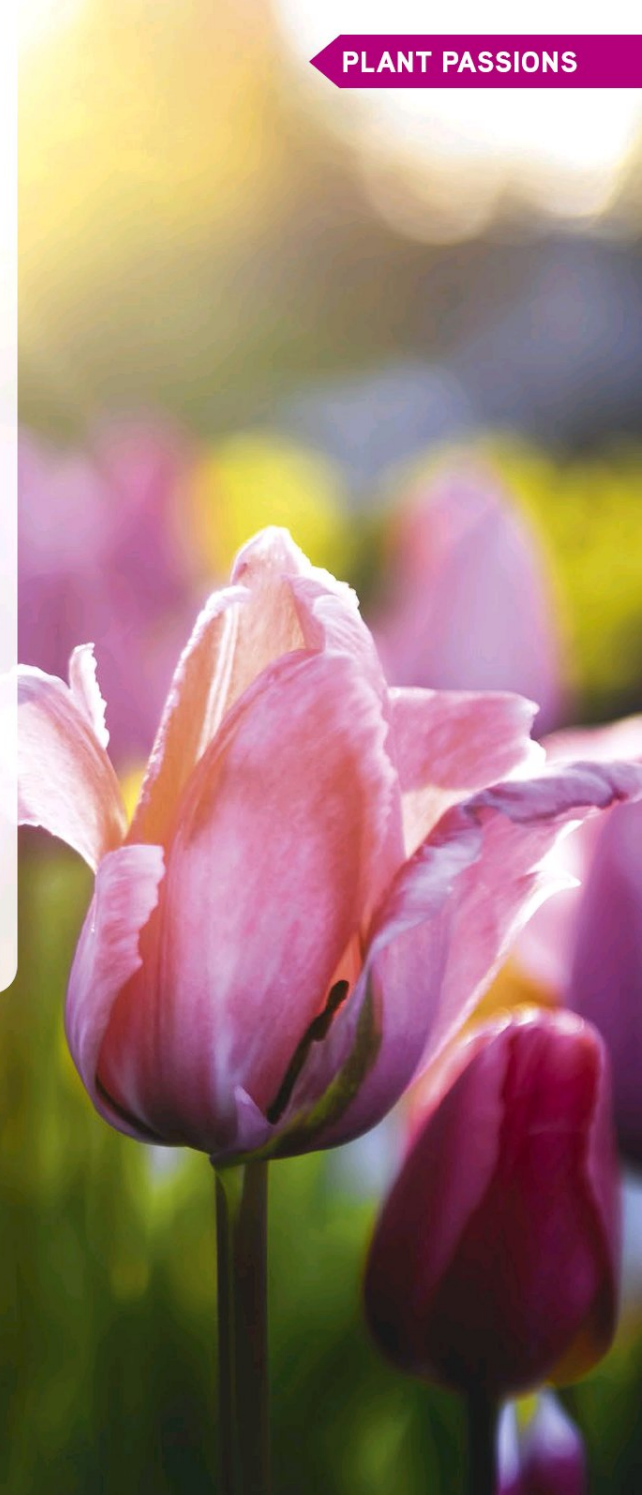
Tulips are the show ponies of the bulb world, and there are so many species and varieties that it's possible to have tulips in bloom for much of spring, but their peak flowering is in October. These boldly coloured bulbs are mass-planted for amazing floral displays in cold and mountain climates. The largest annual tulip display is at Floriade in Canberra, but massed tulips can be found in parks and gardens in many towns across southern Australia during October.

While tulips can be grown in any well-drained garden bed that gets plenty of winter and spring sunshine, they also make an impact in pots. Try mass planting long-stemmed, single-colour forms in a large pot to achieve a designer look.

Tulips come in a rainbow of colours, including red, purple, pink, yellow, orange and white. There are also bicolour and variegated forms that can be single or double. Some have feathered edges to their petals. You can find them sold by variety name or as mixed colours. For reliable flowering, especially in warm zones, chill bulbs in the crisper section of the fridge for six weeks before planting in late autumn.

## other bulbs for mid-spring

Many early-spring bulbs continue to bloom through spring, but plant these for flowers for mid-season impact. ● Dutch iris (*Iris x hollandica*) ● fritillaria (*Fritillaria* spp., cool climate only) ● hyacinth (*Hyacinthus orientalis*) ● ixia (*Ixia viridiflora* and other species) ● lily-of-the-valley (*Convallaria majalis*) ● scarlet freesia (*Freesia laxa*) ● sparaxis (*Sparaxis bulbifera*)





## November flowers

Hippeastrums (*Hippeastrum* Hybrid Cultivars) are big, brassy bulbs that flower before their foliage appears. They strut their stuff in late spring with an eruption of large trumpet flowers on thick, green stems up to 60cm tall. They grow well in subtropical and warm temperate areas, forming large clumps that can be left undisturbed for years.

Hippeastrums are available in red, pink, apricot, white or variegated white and pink, with single or double flowers.

## other bulbs for late spring

While many mid-spring bulbs are still in bloom, particularly in cold zones, add these for a burst of late-spring colour. ● alliums (*Allium christophii* and other species) ● fritillaria (*Fritillaria* spp., cool climate only) ● gladioli (*Gladiolus* spp. and Hybrid Cultivars) ● ifafa lily (*Cyrtanthus mackenii*) ● liliums (*Lilium* spp. and Hybrid Cultivars) ● species tulips (*Tulipa* species)

If you would like something a little different, look for butterfly hippeastrum (*H. papilio*), which has narrow greenish flowers shaped like butterfly wings.

These large bulbs are planted in late autumn or winter, with the neck and shoulders of the bulb above the soil. Keep the bulbs dry and frost-free while they are dormant, but begin to water once the buds appear. In cold climates, they can be grown in a protected spot during cold spells.

PHOTOS ISTOCK

## PLANTING TIPS

Bulbs that flower in winter and spring are sold during autumn. Buy bulbs that are plump and free of cuts or softness that could indicate rot.

The rule of thumb for bulb planting is to plant pointy side up, at a depth at least twice the length of the bulb. It's important to plant deeply in sandy soil and warm climates, as shallow bulbs can become hot and may not perform well. There are exceptions, but this gets most bulbs off to a good start. Bulbs that break the rules are anemones, which are planted pointy side down, ranunculus, which go in claws down, and large bulbs such as hippeastrum or soft bulbs such as lachenalias and liliums – which are planted at the surface, not buried.

Where space is tight, bulbs can be grown in plastic pots sunk into the ground. Lift after flowering finishes and allow to die back naturally in an out-of-the-way spot. This is a handy technique for daffodils and tulips, which have large, often floppy leaves until early summer.

## GROWING & CARE

Bulbs do best in well-drained soil enriched with organic matter such as well-rotted compost. They need a spot that's sunny in winter and spring but tolerate increasing shade after flowering. Cover with a 5cm layer of loose mulch after planting to keep the soil cool and weed free.

To protect emerging shoots and flower buds against snails and slugs, use an iron-based snail bait or check and remove regularly. Most emerging bulbs also benefit from an application of high-potash flowering fertiliser as they begin to grow, and regular watering if it is dry.

For bulbs that are left in the ground to multiply and re-flower the following year, it's important to nourish the foliage after flowering using pelletised or liquid plant food. Allow the foliage to die back naturally as this is the powerhouse that's replenishing starches within the bulb and forming the next year's flower. **GA**



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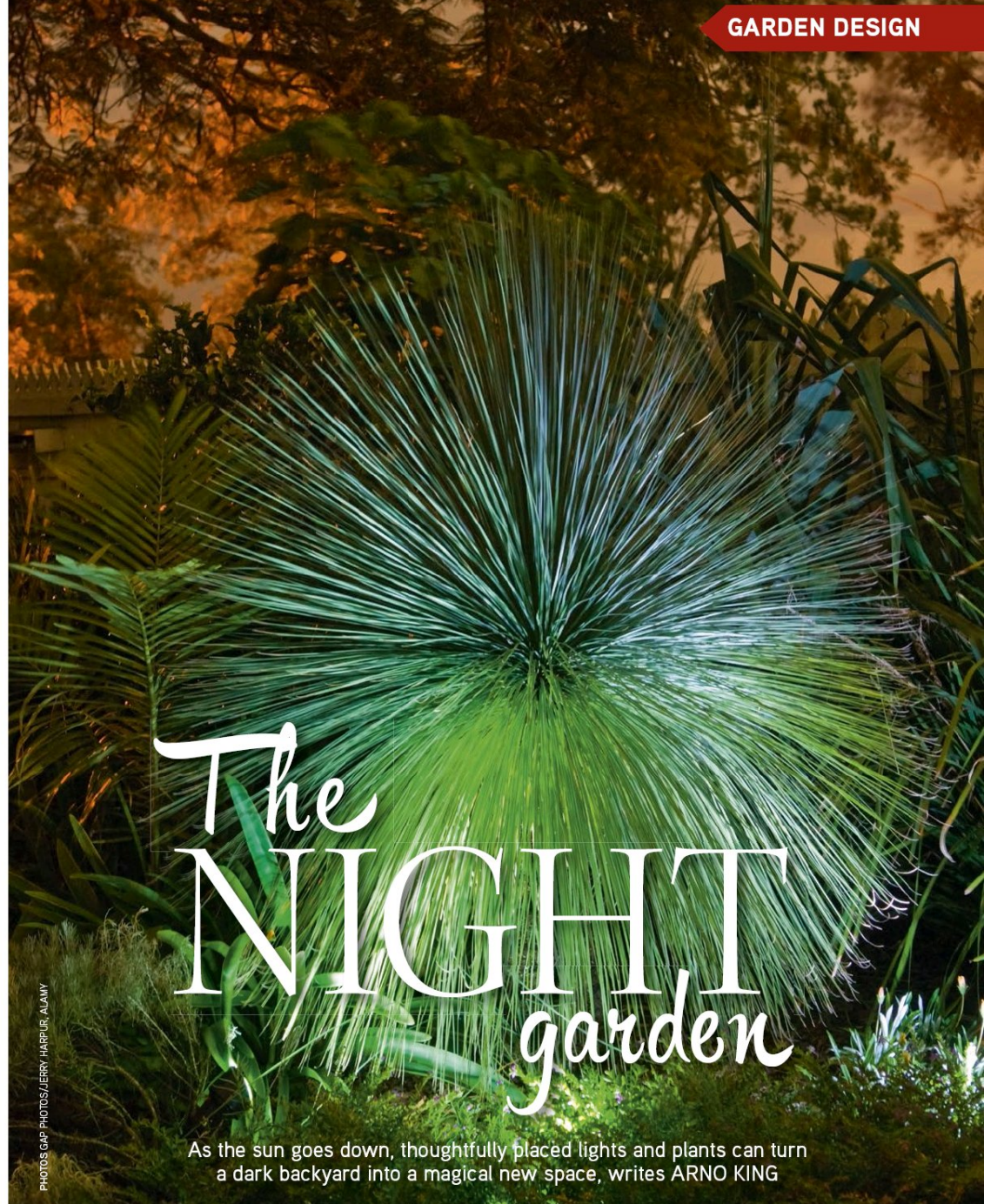


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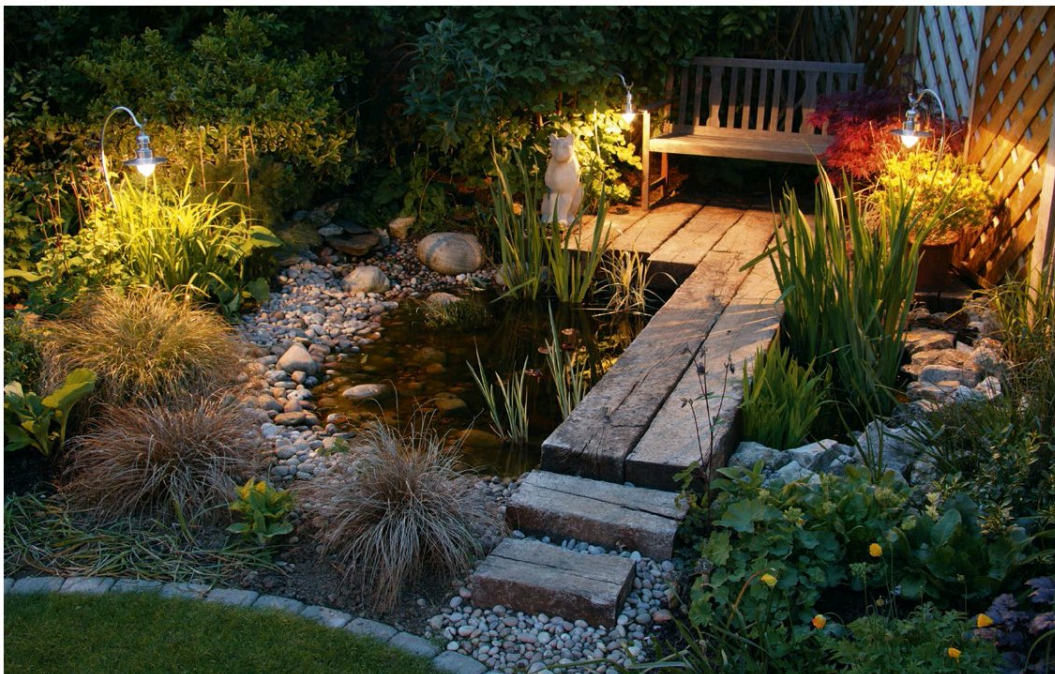


# The NIGHT garden

As the sun goes down, thoughtfully placed lights and plants can turn a dark backyard into a magical new space, writes ARNO KING

PHOTOS GAP PHOTOS/JERRY HARPUJE ALAMY





**D**o you ever yearn for a new garden, where you can try new things and enjoy the space in a different way? If this sounds like you, don't think you need to move, hock the family jewels or take on a mortgage. With a little planning and research, you can transform your space into a night garden and spend more time enjoying the backyard you already have. In a darkened environment, our senses are tuned differently, and sounds, smells and touch are heightened. We are lucky that in most of Australia we can sit comfortably outside at night for much of the year. In the central and northern latitudes, we can enjoy the night garden all year round, and in summer it is often much more pleasant to be in the garden at night, when temperatures drop after a hot day.

### lighting up the garden

We are naturally diurnal (daytime) creatures, and a little light can change how much we enjoy and use our gardens at night. Lighting can dramatically change the garden's appearance and bring specific plants, elements and features into focus. Candles, torches and temporary electrical lights are cost-effective ways to light up the garden, but they require time and effort to set up. Flicking a handy switch is a lot easier.

Many people use floodlights to light their gardens. While these are great for lighting up the veggie garden for that last-minute dash for dinner ingredients, they are comparable to lighting a room with bright fluorescent ceiling lights – they do nothing to create a beautiful, atmospheric place in which to sit and enjoy the garden. It's better to treat the garden as you would

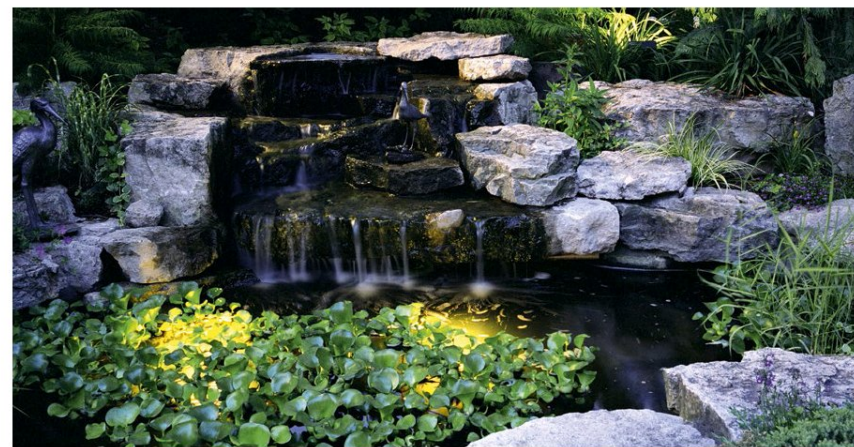
rooms inside the house, using smaller lights that provide pools of light or light up key items in the garden. If lighting is well designed, your visitors shouldn't even realise it's there.

When you're planning lighting for the garden, it pays to start by focusing on safety, such as lighting up the paths and, most importantly, steps. I like using eye-lidded spotlights recessed into the wall, which are located so they send beams across the step risers. I'm not a great fan of bollard lights for lighting paths. I prefer installing small ground-mounted lights, or hanging lights from trees and pergolas, which wash the pathways in light and are less obvious at night and during the day.

Ponds, pools and water features look amazing at night and it's almost worth putting one in to get the effect. Lights can be reflected off the surface of the water to create a natural, moody effect. Alternatively, for a more dramatic effect, submersible lights can be placed below the water's surface, making the water glow and silhouetting waterlily leaves and other items above. Silhouetting also works in other areas of the garden, particularly where dramatic or architectural plants are located in front of a wall. Wash the wall with uplights for interesting shadows. ►

*"If lighting is well designed, your visitors shouldn't even realise it's there"*

PHOTOS ALAMY, ISTOCK



### GUIDING LIGHT

**Top left** Three small lights add atmosphere, by creating pools of light in strategic locations. **Far left** Submerged lighting highlights the textures in these ornamental grasses. **Left** Submersible lights create a warm glow around this pond. **Previous page, from left** This is a great example of discreet lighting – the lights themselves are out of sight, allowing the garden's brickwork and textures to take centre stage; training a light on a feature plant creates a sense of drama.



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## reflective leaves

Many plants have furry silver-grey leaves that shimmer in the light and look beautiful at night

### shrubs

**Artemisia** (*Artemisia* spp.)

(with silver leaves) **ST W C**

**Dusty miller** (*Jacobaea*

*maritima*) **ST W C**

**Pewter plant** (*Strobilanthes*

*gossypinus*) **ST W**

**Grey barleria** (*Barleria*

*albobellata*) **T ST**

**Himalayan butterfly bush**

(*Buddleja crispa*) **ST W C**

**Silver buttonwood**

(*Conocarpus erectus*) **T ST**

**Cardoon** (*Cynara*

*cardunculus*) **W C**

### groundcovers

**Silver falls** (*Dichondra*

*argentea*) **ST W**

**Silver spurflower**

(*Plectranthus*

*argenteus*) **ST W**

**Lamb's ears**

(*Stachys byzantina*)

**ST W C**

### KEY



**T** tropical  
**ST** subtropical  
**A** arid  
**W** warm temperate  
**C** cold temperate



"Space nocturnal flowers through the garden and enjoy walking from one pool of scent to the next"

it with a spade. It's legal for householders to connect the wiring and lights to the transformer, however I recommend that you get the electrician to do this while he's there. A limited number of lights can go on each circuit, so you might have a few lengths of wiring with lights extending to specific areas of the garden. Your electrician or a lighting specialist can advise you about this.

Lighting on a large scale can be costly but the expense is mainly in the wires, transformers and electrician. It's often best to do it in stages (see overpage). My clients often say lighting is the best investment they've ever made. They're out enjoying the garden with friends and family, rather than sitting in silence in front of screens. Lighting the garden also makes many people feel more secure, particularly when their houses have large expanses of glass.

## scent of flowers

One of the greatest joys of the night garden is smelling the flowers. Many nocturnal flower perfumes are famous as ingredients in expensive fragrances – think Chanel, Dior, Yves Saint Laurent – all in your own garden. Planted around the house and outdoor living areas, they add another dimension to night-time enjoyment. Space these through the garden and enjoy walking from one distinctive pool of scent to the next.

Most night-blooming flowers are white, moth-pollinated flowers and are reflected in the moonlight. These often have longer flowering seasons than their day-pollinated colleagues.

I particularly enjoy growing night-flowering waterlilies, which stay open well into the morning. With a sweet perfume and free-flowering habit, they come in reflective whites and dramatic deep pinks and reds. ►

Uplights can also be used in focused beams to light up the trunks of trees and palms, a feature plant in a terracotta pot or an architectural plant in the garden. Providing a sense of depth is the key to creating a night garden, and lighting up distant tree trunks can complete the picture.

The diversity of exterior lighting is quite mind-boggling these days, and lights are less costly to purchase and to run. Low-voltage lights are generally used for most lighting

### BRIGHT IDEAS

Above Adding a fire pit to the garden with lighting creates a warm area to sit outdoors in winter; artemisia has pretty starbursts of silver foliage; the soft, furry leaves of lamb's ears are beautiful in the light.

PHOTOS: LEESE CLAPP; ISTOCK

in the garden, but you get what you pay for and there are many dubious brands on the market. It pays to buy only from reputable companies. I have projects with lights that were installed more than 25 years ago that work perfectly to this day, with occasional bulb replacement. I've also done a couple of projects that went many metres underwater in the 2011 Brisbane floods, and in a smaller flood. To the surprise of my clients, the lights worked perfectly when they were switched on a few weeks later.

Low-voltage lights are connected to a transformer that is installed by an electrician. The drop in voltage means the wiring is safer and you will not be electrocuted should you cut through



## doing it in stages

Develop your own night garden in phases as it becomes clear what you need, and time and money become available

- 1 Locate areas in the garden where you can sit, eat and relax at night, and furnish with outdoor seating. Add temporary lighting such as candles, flares and solar lights.
- 2 Position a few plants with perfumed flowers and reflective foliage in areas around these spots and along any paths leading to them (see *Perfumed Night Flowers below and Reflective Leaves on p36*).
- 3 Install permanent lights to illuminate paths and steps, and light up the outdoor living area.
- 4 Add uplights and downlights to the background areas of your space, which add depth to the views throughout the garden.



## BRIGHT NIGHTS

Clockwise from main: As the sun goes down these bamboo culms (stems) will become silhouetted against the light-washed wall; angel's trumpet; frangipani; white orchid cactus; ylang ylang.

## perfumed night flowers

## trees

Ylang ylang (*Cananga odorata*) T ST  
 Pak Ian (*Magnolia alba*) T ST W  
 Champak (*Magnolia champaca*) T ST W  
 Evergreen frangipani (*Plumeria obtusa*) T ST W  
 Frangipani (*Plumeria rubra*) T ST W

Climbing jasmine (*Jasminum officinale*) W C  
 Orange jessamine (*Murraya paniculata*) T ST W  
 Mock orange (*Philadelphus coronaria*) W C  
 Crepe gardenia (*Tabernaemontana divaricata*) T ST

## climbers

Rangoon creeper (*Combretum indicum*) T ST W  
 Australian wax flower (*Hoya australis*) T ST W  
 Queen of the night

cactus (*Selenicereus grandiflorus*) T ST W  
 Climbing jasmine (*Jasminum officinale*) W C  
 Madagascar jasmine (*Stephanotis floribunda*) T ST W  
 Star jasmine (*Trachelospermum jasminoides*) ST W C

## perennials

White orchid cactus (*Epiphyllum cooperi*) T ST W  
 Forest nicotiana (*Nicotiana sylvestris*) ST W C  
 Tuberose (*Pollanthes tuberosa*) T ST W



"It's wonderful to brush against leaves that are velvety or smooth, or walk barefoot on warm paving"

## sound &amp; touch

Different sounds contribute to the character of the night garden. Running water cascading into a pond can drown out traffic and other urban noise. Nocturnal animals also add interest, from the hooting of owls and squeaking of flying foxes to my favourites, the seasonal calls of various frogs, which are a barometer for future rainfall.

Our sense of touch is also heightened by night. It's wonderful to brush against plants with leaves that are velvety or smooth, or to walk barefoot on sun-warmed paving. Enjoy the textures of grainy sandstone, polished marble or smooth grass.

## furniture &amp; features

Outdoor furnishings make a great difference to evening enjoyment in the garden. Invest in comfortable couches, armchairs, dining chairs and tables. A fireplace or fire pit is a magnet, encouraging conversation while warming the immediate area, and allowing you to cook casual meals. On warm summer nights, exterior fans, freestanding or mounted from walls and pergolas, provide pleasant breezes, and misters mounted from pergolas or trees rapidly cool the area, even when it is quite humid.

The great thing about a night garden is that you can't really see the weeds, dust and mould, and the many jobs that need doing – it's a very different garden, where it's easy to relax and simply enjoy the moment. So create your night garden and you'll have a wonderful place to spend time with friends and family. **GA**



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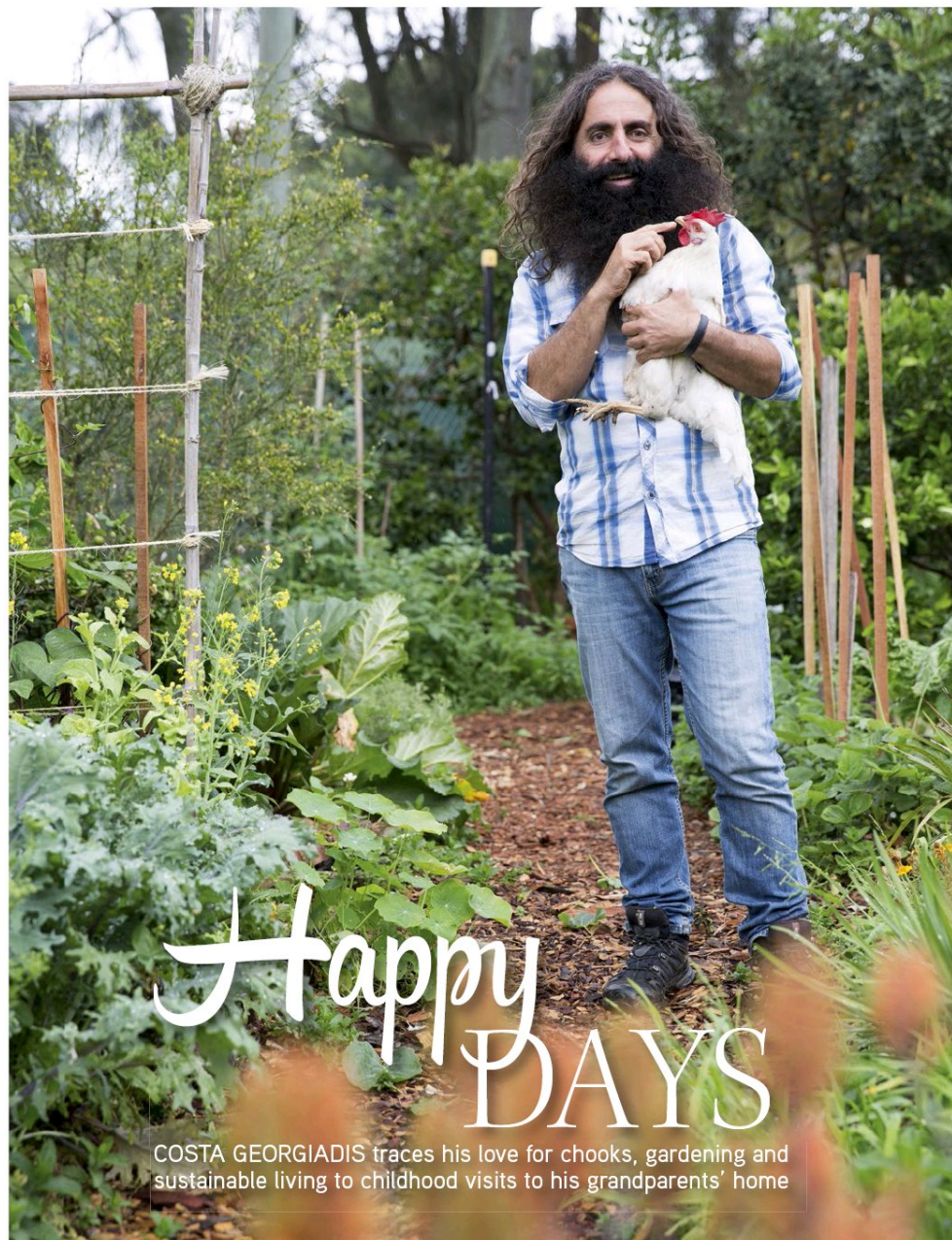
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# Happy DAYS

COSTA GEORGIADIS traces his love for chooks, gardening and sustainable living to childhood visits to his grandparents' home

**M**y introduction to poultry was through my grandfather (pappou). He'd been a farmer in Nyngan, in country New South Wales, but by the time I was born, he and my grandma (yin yia) were living in Randwick, in Sydney. Their backyard was a wonderland that set me on my path.

It was one of those deep backyards. You came out of the house, down some stairs, past a laundry, then down to ground level. There was a large olive tree, and between the tree and the house was a concreted area with tiered shelving where he had hundreds of orchids in pots, and a table and chairs.

Deeper into the garden was where my grandfather grew every vegetable imaginable, including okra, potatoes, carrots, zucchini, capsicum, chillies and cucumbers. The cucumbers were in a section with melons and other ramblers, and we loved it when he said, "Go in there and see what you can find". He put carpet under strawberries and cut holes for them through the carpet. I'll never forget what it was like to eat fresh strawberries off the ground. They were like sugar bombs going off in your mouth.

At various times, there were sweet peas and other flowers – zinnia, ranunculus, calendula and phlox to name a few. He always had pollinator plants scattered around. Flowers were valued not just for their beauty; it was understood they were critical to the garden's success. My grandfather had never been educated formally in any of that, but he knew the science because he lived it. I love that aspect of gardening – it's great to learn, or to teach others, about the principles of sustainability, but when you put it into practice, and observe it for yourself, and see all the nuances and subtleties – well, that's when the application and connection of the dots really escalates. People get excited about it. You've given them enough of a cue, and they're away.

I have strong memories of sitting there with my grandfather and listening to him explain plants and

what you do with them. I had to learn the Greek and English words. There's something about outdoor or 'nature' memories – you only need to think of them for a moment, and they come flooding back. I think it's because they involve all the senses, and it's a social and emotional thing, as well as physical.

## grandfather's chooks

Further down, right at the bottom of the yard, were pigeons, ducks and chickens. They were housed in one of those classic coops that was built out of whatever was lying around, and it just worked.

I think the work and maintenance of looking after chooks is more valuable for kids than the eggs. It connects them to the reality of life and the needs of animals, and what that responsibility means. Animals need to be fed. You can't just say, "I'll do it later".

Commitment is easy to bypass these days – there's an app for this and an app for that. But caring for other creatures, and nurturing plants ▶

PHOTOS CRAIG WALL

"Looking after chooks is more valuable for kids than the eggs"



## HELPING HAND

Main At any one time, Costa has five or six chooks in his care. Left Costa loosens the soil to expose some wriggly treats.



is a commitment, and your reward is learning about produce and harvesting, about fertile soil, and animal maintenance and husbandry. And it also gives you the opportunity to just be in the garden and let time wash over you.

One of my fondest memories about my grandfather's poultry was just how much the ducks used to poo! They always made a racket, and were great at letting you know if anyone was coming down the back lane. I remember some of the neighbour's ducks use to roam and go nuts at cars. They were literally willing to take the cars on!

In terms of backyard sustainability and frugal ways, my grandfather was amazing. He used to catch the pigeons, clean them up, feed them, then eat them. He was living the sustainability message long before the words hit the streets.

## my chooks

At any one time, I usually have five or six chooks. They have a little mobile coop, although they're pretty much free range at the moment. I just

"My chickens eat food scraps from multiple houses in the street"



## brekkie time

There's nothing I love more than a poached egg. I like to muck around with the base, rather than relying all the time on toast. Sometimes I put eggs on a spinach bed or I'll chop up a whole lot of leek or zucchini and caramelise it in the pan to get lots of different flavours involved. White pepper and some lemon gives it a bit of a zing. Using vegies as a base stretches the meal and really makes the breakfast experience, and I can add chutneys or other condiments. You can't beat your own home-grown eggs – they poach so much better. I bought some shop eggs over Christmas because we were using more than we had, and the eggs I got just didn't cut the mustard. It's very hard when your eggs are usually of home-grown standard!



### FREE & EASY

Clockwise from main Chooks love the chance to free range for tasty morsels; Costa keeps a bucket with a lid outside his house, which his neighbours fill with food scraps; Costa's sorting system on his kitchen benchtop – separating out food waste at the source saves time and resources down the track.



love going down to visit them in the morning; the more time you spend with them, the more animated they become.

You can't do kids a bigger favour than giving them the joy of going out to look for eggs. But the thing I love the most is the food-waste cycle. My chickens eat the food scraps from multiple houses in the street – scraps that would otherwise go into a bin and be taken away in a truck to landfill. The chooks transform this into the most fantastic fertiliser, which goes out onto all the vegies in the street. The vegies feed us, as well as the chooks, and then round it goes again.

Separating the scraps out for the chooks at the point of the kitchen benchtop makes it all so easy, and it's these little things that help people change their habits, and accelerate their journey into the realm of living with enough. **GA**

PHOTOS CRAIG WALL, COSTA GEORGIADES

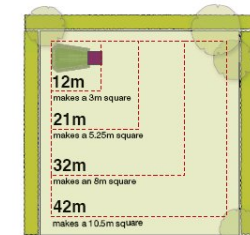


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## CARE ESSENTIALS

To keep your flock happy, there are tasks you need to do daily, weekly, monthly and seasonally. Use this calendar as a handy reference

	activity	comment
daily	Let the chooks out after sunrise	Open the door to the coop to release the flock from its night-time accommodation. If they have space, water and food they can be left in the coop until you're ready to let them out.
	Clean and refill water containers	It's vital to keep water clean and replenished. Scrub the containers and refill them. On hot days, leave out extra water containers.
	Check and top up feed	Allow about 110g of high-protein pellets per bird per day. Don't mix grains and pellets.
	Observe the flock for general health and wellbeing	If a bird seems slow, is staying away from the rest of the flock, isn't eating or has other symptoms, such as bedraggled feathers or a dirty bottom, separate her from the flock. For example, bring her into the laundry, and make sure she is eating and drinking. Sick birds can be taken to the vet. If a bird dies, remove the body and bury it deeply.
	Provide greens and kitchen scraps	Extra greens and scraps add variety to the bird's diet, particularly for chooks without access to a yard or area for foraging. Greens can be placed in a net bag and hung up as a fun backyard activity – the birds need to jump and stretch to reach their treat.
	Collect eggs	Gently clean dirty eggs. Date eggs using a felt-tip pen or soft lead pencil. Eggshells from older birds may be soft. Occasionally abnormalities occur, such as an egg without a shell.
weekly	Shut chooks into their secure night-time housing by sunset	This is vital to protect the flock from predators and ensure they are sheltered overnight. Set an alarm to remind you. On hot nights, make sure the sleeping area is well ventilated. If the weather is cold, wet or windy, ensure the coop is not exposed to bad weather.
	Check the supply of grit and top up if necessary	Hens need grit, such as broken shells, fine gravel or blue metal fragments, to assist with digestion. As they don't have teeth, they start digesting food in their crop (part of the oesophagus). The grit should be rough and no less than 3mm in size.
	Clean out or top up nesting boxes	Nesting boxes can become soiled with droppings or broken eggs. It may be necessary to do a thorough clean-up once a week and renew the nesting materials.
monthly	Clean up uneaten food scraps	Rake up uneaten food in the yard regularly as it can attract vermin. Keep a compost bin in the chook yard to easily dispose of uneaten scraps, droppings and spoiled litter.
	Check litter, clean and top up if necessary	Dry straw, hay or wood shavings on the floor of the coop absorb droppings and allow chooks to scratch about. Remove and compost droppings from under where they roost.
	Check fences and security	Ensure perimeters are keeping your hens safe. Check more frequently after strong winds and storms, or if you've sighted a fox or heard warning calls from your birds.
	Rake out the yard area to remove droppings, and top up the litter	Add the collected droppings and soiled litter to the compost heap, or pile them up somewhere in the garden and allow to age before using the material as mulch on the garden beds.

TEXT: JENNIFER STACKHOUSE PHOTOS: ISTOCK ILLUSTRATIONS: ISTOCK

### Seasonal jobs

These are the tasks that keep chooks comfortable and healthy throughout the seasons, although you may need to adjust them to suit your climatic conditions



#### spring

- There is maximum egg production in spring, and hens may become broody, sitting on their own and others' eggs. Remove the clutch of eggs, as without a rooster the eggs are not fertile. Check broody hens daily and keep removing eggs. Broodiness lasts about 21 days. Broody hens can get heat-stressed on hot days. If necessary, take the bird away from her nest to encourage her to drink water.
- Sow grains and leafy greens, including chia, sunflower and grain amaranth for grain, and silverbeet, lettuce and chicory for leaf. (See page 46 for more greens to grow.)
- Treat birds for parasites, including intestinal worms, lice and scaly leg mite with medication from a vet or produce store. Clean the coop and refresh perches. Renew litter.



#### autumn

- Introduce new layers (select pullets at 'point of lay'). These younger hens will lay through autumn and winter when the older birds stop laying.
- Expect the rest of the flock to go off the lay (stop laying eggs) and start moulting. Those who began moulting in late summer should have regrown their plumage.
- Check birds for external parasites, including lice, among feathers. Treat with lice powder or food-grade diatomaceous earth, adding it to their dust baths and sprinkling on perches.
- After moulting, clean out the hen house – it will be full of feathers – and spread fresh straw.



#### summer

- Increase shade cover with extra shadecloth, branches, fern fronds or other roofing to keep hens cool over the hot months ahead. If green, leafy material is added, renew it regularly. Consider training a vine such as passionfruit over the area for added shade.
- Add extra water containers to the yard and coop.
- On hot days, keep the drinking water cool and ensure it is easily accessible in a shaded spot. Adding a frozen PET bottle to the drinking trough chills drinking water.
- On very hot days, hose the area to keep it cool.
- Hang up a flytrap if flies are a nuisance around the coop.
- Take heat-stressed birds indoors to cool them down, and ensure they are drinking water.



#### winter

- Remove extra shade material to allow more sunlight into the chooks' yard. Seal draughts and fix leaks in the coop. Renew damaged roofing so it is weatherproof.
- Add extra litter to floor for warmth.
- Provide a supplementary morning meal of warm mash made from dry food mixed with warm water or milk.
- Expect egg production to pick up as days lengthen. Hens that have re-feathered resume laying after winter solstice.
- Mice may move into the chook shed in winter. Clean up spilled food, use vermin-proof feeders and ensure that feedbags are kept in secure, lidded bins.



# GREENS for your girls

All chooks enjoy fresh plants as part of their regular diet, writes MARCELLE NANKERVIS. Here's what you can grow to keep your feathered flock healthy

Everybody needs a balanced diet, and while feeding your chooks pellets every day keeps them going, it's not the most wonderful experience. By giving them access to fresh greens and a greater diversity of food, they become healthier and happier. In return, you receive higher quality eggs that taste better – and also save money on commercial feed.

There are lots of ways to introduce lovely fresh greens to your chickens, and depending on the size of your chicken run and the number of chooks you own, you may like to try one or a number of the following simple solutions.

## what to grow & where

Try growing perennials such as nasturtiums, comfrey, and New Zealand spinach along the perimeter of your coop or chicken run. Plant them along the outside of the fence, not inside where the chickens can help themselves – as they quickly decimate plants they get a taste for! Planted on the outside, your chickens can pluck a few leaves here and there without destroying the entire plant.

You can also use the wire fence of your chicken coop as a trellis for growing edible vines, such as grapes, climbing peas, climbing beans, passionfruit and cucumber. This will save you valuable space in the veggie garden, plus both you and your chickens get to benefit from the same crops.

Another way to give your chickens a variety of greens is by growing crops in trays. These trays can be placed in the coop until they show signs

of fatigue, at which point they should be removed and replaced with another tray. Allow removed trays time to recuperate, then offer them up to your chooks again. Grow a succession of different plants to vary their diet, and to allow crops to rest. Try sowing seed of lucerne, clover, millet and linseed. Pots can also be used, however they are easily tipped over by heavy hens.

## weeds & vegie scraps

There are many weeds that chickens love to pick at, so let them! Weeds can add a valuable source of diversity to their diet. Try feeding them stinging nettles (*Urtica dioica*), purslane (*Portulaca oleracea*), sow thistle (*Sonchus oleraceus*) and cleavers (*Gallium aparine*), instead of placing them in the rubbish or compost.

You may also like to grow or buy vegetables for your chickens, although if you do grow your own veggies, there is usually more than enough to go around. You eat the cauliflower, and they eat the outer leaves! Feed them veggie trimmings, plants that are flowering or have gone to seed, and the crops that you pull from the garden in preparation for your next growing season.

And if you don't want to clean up your garden beds by hand, let your chickens do the hard work for you. Create a chook tractor so that your chickens can eat leftover plants, and any pests that may be lurking in the garden bed. They also turn the soil, and fertilise it for you at the same time! **GA**



## Top tip

Dark green foliage is best as it contains more chlorophyll – this gives free range eggs their lovely dark yolks.

**GREEN GOODNESS**  
Clockwise from above Chooks happily eat weeds and pests lurking in the garden; try giving your birds cleavers; stinging nettles make excellent chicken feed, and can be blanched to remove the sting and used in your own cooking; try growing New Zealand spinach just outside the coop fence, so the chooks can't eat it all at once.

PHOTOS: ALAMY, ISTOCK, MARCELLE NANKERVIS



sow thistle



comfrey

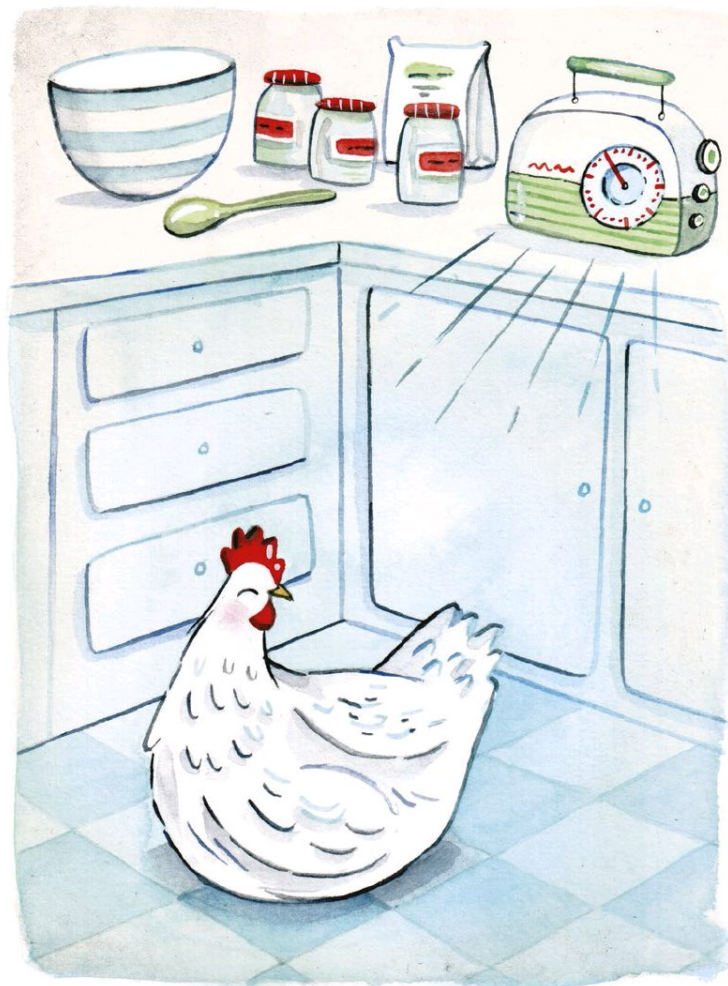


purslane



nasturtium





## the tale of Henny Penny

Sometimes, one particular chook stands out from the crowd, providing an endless source of entertainment, fascination and joy. Here, reader JACQUELINE QUALTRO shares her story

**G**ardening was a daily task when I was growing up, as was attending to the hens that Mum encouraged Dad to purchase. We were a poor family and Mum rarely bought anything other than essentials, such as milk, meat and bread. Everything else we grew – all our vegetables, herbs, fruits and berries.

Dad was not keen on keeping chickens, but Mum wanted to get a rooster and have farm hens and eggs. Within a week of their arrival, Dad strangled a hen by accident – he should have looked before slamming the hen-house door closed! We were all very upset. A couple of weeks later, he had to kill the rooster because it kept attacking me when I went to feed the hens. I was eight years old and it was extremely aggressive, leaping up, scratching me with his claws and attacking with his beak.

After all the distress, Mum dismissed her farming ambitions, and for the rest of their days the hens had free range of our 0.4ha block, scratching up bugs and worms, and living a fantastic life. Being a latchkey kid, my first task on arriving home from school was to collect the eggs from under the gooseberry, raspberry and blackcurrant bushes. What wonderful tasty, deep orange and sometimes double yolks they had – and they were big!

### full of spirit

Three of our hens lived past the age of 12, and Tufty lived for 16 years. But it was Henny Penny, the white leghorn, whom I adored. When I came across a grub while digging, I'd call out, "Henny Penny, come here!" She would lower her neck, spread her wings, and race across the garden, legs flipping out at full speed, then leap into the hole and gobble, gurgling as she did so. No need for pesticides! She would also sit on my knee and eat tiny pieces of walnut from my hand.

During the frenetic, hot summer period, when we were preserving and jamming our fruit and vegetables (as nothing went to waste), Henny Penny had a curious addiction. She'd repeatedly hop up the steps and into the kitchen, then sit quietly on the linoleum floor, occasionally cocking her head from side to side – but mostly with her eyes closed as if she was away with the fairies. We were really confused by this behaviour and spent many years trying to figure it out.

Then one year, when a song came on the radio that none of us liked, I changed the radio channel. Henny Penny immediately launched to her feet and

stomped around in a circle, clucking in a very upset and angry manner, jerking her head back and forward, and spreading her wings.

We were amazed, but we got it! I immediately changed the dial back to the previous station. The clucking stopped and she looked up at us, then she fluttered her wings and quietly resumed her snug position on the linoleum floor, eyes closed and away with the music. This was one of the biggest lessons I've ever had about animals.

### part of the family

One winter's day I came home from school to find Henny Penny collapsed on the grass outside our back door. She had made it up from the back of the

### ONE OF A KIND

Below Jacqueline's beloved childhood chook, Henny Penny. Bottom The spirited white leghorn struts around the family property in Christchurch, New Zealand in the 1960s.



garden, an amazing effort considering she was 17 years old. I cried, ran inside and phoned Mum, who was at work.

Mum was just as upset as me. She told me to go and light the fire in the lounge room, turn on the radio, get blankets to lay Henny Penny on and wrap them over her to keep her warm. I did as instructed and placed her on the rug in front of the fire. Mum assured me she would be home as soon as possible.

And so Henny Penny passed, lying in front of the fire, snuggled in blankets, with her music playing and her family nestled around her, giving her the occasional soft stroke and telling her how much we loved her. **GA**





# T is for... tamarillo



Also known as the tree tomato, this fast-growing fruit baffles many Australians. JACKIE FRENCH explains why we should get to know the shade-loving tamarillo

**G**rown as a fruit but often used as a vegetable, tamarillos have tough skins that come in red, orange, yellow or a sort of striped mauve. Few Australians know what to do with them – New Zealanders seem better informed. But tamarillos have one glorious plus: they grow in shade! Dappled shade, quite deep shade, dryish shade, damp shade. As long as the soil is fertile, they thrive and grow fast.

While seeds may take three months to germinate, even in warm weather, you should get fruit the first year and certainly in the second. They bear from mid-summer to mid-winter in cold to cool climates (they need protection from deep frost, but overhead trees can help) and all year round in tropical and subtropical areas. Even in our freezing winters, there are usually a few fruits high up on the tree.

Shop-bought tamarillos are usually red. Orange ones may be more cold hardy and yellow ones do best in hot climates. Grown side by side here, the red ones are definitely sweeter, although the flavour and sweetness of different cultivars may vary. There's also a dwarf yellow variety with fruit that looks like a cluster of berries.

## growing & harvesting

Take a cutting from a productive tree, if possible, or sow seeds. Plant out seedlings when they are at least as long as your hand. They can grow to 3m tall but usually stop at about 2m and spread about 2m wide, making them a neat garden plant.

A decade is a reasonable life span for tamarillo, as the branches and stem become woody, and the plant becomes unproductive. Pruning can extend

its life a bit, but trees grow so fast that it's better to have another tree or two coming along in a shady place where nothing much else will grow.

Keep moist, and feed well. The better you feed and water tamarillos, the sooner they fruit and the bigger the crop. Pick as soon as the fruit are fat and fully coloured, whatever colour this may be.

The skin is thin, but tough. The inside looks a bit like a cross between a tomato and a kiwifruit. Peel

**HANGING OUT**  
Clockwise from above  
Tamarillo fruit is tangy  
and varies in sweetness;  
fruit hangs like earrings  
from the branches; the  
tree grows 2–3m tall in  
a neat square shape.

*"You should get fruit the first year  
and certainly the second"*

and slice into salads or fruit salads, though be aware they may stain other ingredients a rich red, or top pavlova with tamarillo instead of kiwifruit. They make superb jam, excellent chutney and are delicious eaten fresh as part of a cheese plate, with walnuts and a good blue-vein cheese. Once you start using them, a hundred uses spring to mind.

And this is a good thing as tamarillos give you lots of everything. Lots of fruit, and lots of plants, because birds eat the fruit and germination seems even more efficient after the seeds pass through a bird's digestive system. This means you should net trees if you're near a moist forest, where they may spread, and never grow them near rainforest. A plant that grows too well is called a weed.

But when they're grown in your garden, these productive dangling occupiers of otherwise bare shady spots are a true delight. **GA**



PHOTOS ALAMY, ISTOCK, PARISETTE





# think SPACES



In this new series, MICHAEL McCOY examines one by one the structural and conceptual components of garden design. This month, he explains why you should first of all consider not features, but spaces

**W**hen you're mapping out a garden in your head, or in your dreams, or with hoses snaking around on the ground, the single most influential bit of information to keep at the forefront of your consciousness is that good gardens are about spaces, and not about visual features. Now stay with me on this one.

I love flowers, I love rare plants, and I love well-designed garden structures. I've built a career on knowing a large range of plants, and am obsessed with mastering their use for best effect. But none of these important aspects of garden design take centre stage when I first put pen to paper, or when the garden is taking shape in my head.

The underlying question that I'm asking of my imagination, from the very start, is not how this garden is going to *look*, but how it is going to *feel* as I enter it. What do I want my deepest, gut responses to be? I'm currently of the belief that these initial feelings are heavily influenced by the scale and proportions of the garden's spaces, and how enclosed or exposed they are.

In fact, I go so far as to believe that we have almost bat-like capabilities to detect our boundaries, and therefore the shape and size of the space we're in – and we can make an instant assessment of how safe or otherwise we feel in it. After all, there was a time when our survival depended upon these senses! I'm convinced that this assessment is done and dusted before we've really registered what we're actually looking at.

## size & scale

For me, planning a garden starts from the front or back door, or a major window. The simple enquiry is: what size space do I want to enter, or look out into, given the space I'm stepping out, or looking out from? There's no formula, so follow your intuition.

You'll certainly know when it's wrong. You don't, for instance, want to step out of your back door into a space the size of the MCG. The size of the area you enter should be scaled in line with the room you've left behind, and the size of the garden.

## SET THE PACE

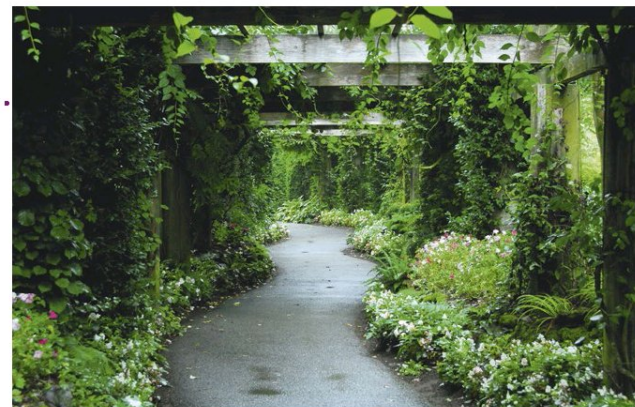
Clockwise from main  
A tiny 'clearing' along  
the path invites you to  
sit a while; enclosure on  
all sides and no visible  
end point contributes  
to a sense of mystery  
and exploration; the  
green swathe of lawn  
firmly points the way.

For example, if your outdoor area is expansive, the first outside space should be larger than the indoor space you just left. But if you're hemmed in by other buildings and boundaries, as in an urban terrace situation, the first space you move into may end up being smaller than the room you're coming from.

## shapes & movement

Consider, also, the shape of your spaces. In the roughing out stage, I purposefully design some long and some narrow areas to encourage people to move through or walk along. Then there will be areas that are wider, and therefore 'slower', encouraging a pause, and possibly a sit. In the same way that water or air speeds up when forced through a narrow valley, and slows when it widens out, the speed and direction of our own movements can – and should be – deliberately manipulated. As much as possible, I attempt to alternate, or provide a balance between, these 'dynamic' and 'static' spaces.

So, having worked out the first space of the garden, I'll map out the ones that extend out from it, and how I'm going to move between them – either through narrow or wide openings, or



"Planning a garden starts from the front or back door, or a major window"

long tunnels (such as an avenue). With the spaces roughed out, I mentally shade all the infill between them, and tell myself that it's into these shaded spaces that all the planting goes, and all the other features I want to tuck in. The empty, open space is sacrosanct. The planting, and any other built feature I want to add, will collectively create the walls of (and hopefully imply the ceiling of) the spaces that I'll ultimately hang out in, in my garden.

## prepare the stage

If you're having trouble separating the detail of what you're seeing (in your mind's eye) from your gut-response to the space, or comparing how it looks to how it feels, think about a good

garden and mentally throw a huge white sheet over it – so that it becomes a simple, white, 3D sculpture. Without the distraction of flowers and features, you can focus on the sense of enclosure the garden offers, and how it prompts your movements through it.

It's not that what you see in a garden – the colours and textures of its plants – are irrelevant. It's just that it's not the first thought when designing one. I have, at times, slaved over ridiculously demanding planting with great feats of horticultural wonder in mind, and having achieved them, found myself curiously dissatisfied. After a lot of soul searching, I've concluded that it was my overall layout that was at fault, and no amount of floral brilliance was going to overcome a poorly proportioned design.

This focus on spaces may seem irrelevant to a gardener's love of growing flowers, or the DIY landscaper who enjoys a weekend constructing a sleeper retaining wall or a built-in barbecue. But when these garden spaces are right – when they feel really good – all our floral, botanical and building efforts are magnified in their punch and power. At its simplest, it's about setting the stage upon which your favourite stars will perform. **GA**

Turn over for details about a new garden design show on ABC.





# sneak peek

Michael McCoy is coming to our screens as host of the ABC's new garden design show, *Dream Gardens*. We talk to him about his latest project and what we can expect

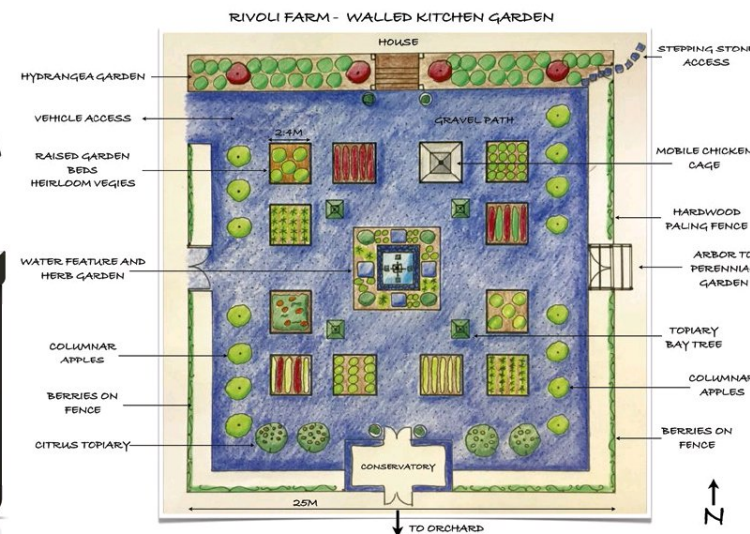
## Tell us about your new television series, *Dream Gardens*

Each episode follows the creation of a single, professionally designed garden, with all the ups and downs that inevitably face a creative project subject to the vagaries of weather, shifting budgets, multiple (and sometimes conflicting) client requests, and other unforeseen challenges.

The gardens are as diverse as the clients and the climates from which they emerge, and are often the result of years of dreaming by their owners. It's the role of the professional garden designers and landscapers to clarify the dream, then turn that dream into a reality.

## So is it a bit like the house design show *Grand Designs*?

Yes, except there's something fundamentally different about handing over a garden, compared with handing over a building. When a builder or architect presents a completed building, it's the equivalent of a young adult – fully formed, and ready for dressing as the owners wish. When a garden designer hands



over a garden, it's like they're passing on a designer baby. This immature creation has to be nurtured, fed and disciplined as the owner sees fit, guiding it into adulthood. When the landscaper leaves, it's not in any way a completed product. The handover is the start of its history.

## As a designer yourself, have you enjoyed seeing other designers at work?

I've loved every minute of this process. I've been frequently delighted and personally challenged by the way each of the designers has addressed the creative opportunities or difficulties of each site, and have often had to confess (to myself, at least) that I wouldn't have thought up the same solution in a million years. What's more, I've been really reassured by the humility and generosity of both the designers and the landscapers involved. There's been a notable lack of ego, despite interviewing some

PHOTOS ANGELA SKERMAN, ISTOCK

of the biggest names in the business. Everyone who works in the industry seems to love the industry, and has a deep personal investment in the quality of what they're providing.

## Is it mostly just about big gardens, and big budgets?

No, but it's abundantly clear that professionally designed and installed gardens don't come cheap, and size and cost don't go hand-in-hand. We look at generous country gardens through to tight city courtyards. No viewer will have an identical site, budget or vision for what they want. But watching other people's visions come to life helps inspire and fuel our own dreams. **GA**

*Dream Gardens* premieres on Thursday, February 9, at 8pm on ABC. And the *Gardening Australia* crew is back from Saturday, March 4, at 6.30pm. Double the gardening fun!





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# the Harvest beetroot

**Botanical name:**  
*Beta vulgaris*

A herbaceous, biennial plant with a swollen edible taproot – which is most commonly red – and a rosette of edible green leaves with red-coloured stems

## Varieties

Aviv, Bull's Blood, Burpee's Golden, Chioggia, Cylindra, Derwent Globe, Detroit Red, Early Wonder, Egyptian, Snowball

## Planting & care

Beetroot like a sunny spot and are best sown directly into soil, in the place where they are to grow. Prepare the patch well by digging in plenty of compost or well-aged manure along with a good handful of organic fertiliser, such as blood and bone, every square metre. Mound the soil to improve drainage. Sow seed in drills 1cm deep, in rows 30cm apart. The corky 'seeds' are actually clusters of two or more seeds. After germination, pinch out excess seedlings and thin the rows to create 10–15cm spaces between plants. Thinnings can be transplanted or eaten as microgreens. Keep the crop evenly moist to ensure good root development – as inconsistent watering can lead to the roots cracking and rotting. Feed your crop with diluted liquid seaweed and fish emulsion fortnightly.

## Harvesting

Start picking sweet, tender young 'baby beets' when the roots are 3–5cm wide. Continue harvesting as needed until the roots are the size of a tennis ball – older roots are woody and less flavoursome. The leafy tops can be harvested from about six weeks onwards. Pick outer leaves first, and keep four or five leaves on the plant for continued growth.

Turn to page 64 for beetroot recipes.



# keep a cool HEAD



Cabbages thrive in cool conditions, producing tight heads of delicious leaves in different colours, shapes and types. TINO CARNEVALE explains how to grow a healthy crop

**H**umans and cabbages have shared a common history for a long time. Kale is a very old form of cabbage, but here I will be focusing on some of its great grandchildren, the modern, headed cabbages in the *Brassica oleracea* Capitata Group.

It's easy to think it's we humans who have gained the most from the human-cabbage relationship. But if you think of the time we've devoted to cabbages, with generations of breeding and selecting the strongest, biggest and best, they've done all right too. They are biennial plants, but we grow them as annuals, harvesting before they mature and set seed.

Capitata means 'headed', and there are three main types in the group. The most widely grown are the white or green types, which can be bluish green, grassy green or yellowy green. This is split further into three subgroups, determined by the shape of their head – conical, drumhead and ball head. The other less commonly grown types are

Savoy, with their looser heads and distinctive crinkled leaves, and rubra or red, which have tight heads and deep purple glossy leaves, and are just as beautiful in a flower border as a vegie patch.

## growing & harvesting

The best cabbage heads are grown in cool and moist conditions. In cool areas, they can be grown throughout the year, while in hotter areas, they are best grown in autumn and winter.

I prefer to raise plants from seed in trays rather than sow directly in the ground. Seedlings can be planted out after about a month, then you'll be able to watch them expand. They are available to buy as seedlings, but select your cabbage plants carefully, and look for signs of stress – pale leaves, leggy growth and insect damage.

Select an open, sunny position where their giant leaves can make the most of the sun's rays. Sweeten acidic soils with garden lime or dolomite to help prevent calcium deficiency and club root, a common disease problem. Give them a rich, well-drained soil, and when I say rich I mean triple-choc-mud-cake rich, with a healthy serving of compost and well-rotted manure, plus a good sprinkling of a complete organic fertiliser. They can grow to the size of a small moon, so need a fully stocked pantry and deep drinks when it's dry.

Harvest when the heads are firm and have developed to the desired size. Pull up the whole plant then trim off the unwanted outer leaves, so it's ready for the kitchen.

## pests & problems

With their hefty nature and voracious appetite, cabbages are prone to nutrient deficiencies. When soil is lacking in calcium, the young leaves deform and the edges may look slightly scorched – the



## Tino's top 3 varieties

**JANUARY KING** Large-headed, Savoy-type heirloom from old England with attractive bluish green leaves and purple edges. Great for growing in winter.

**SUGAR LOAF** Small, loosely packed, conical headed cabbage, ideal for small spaces, with a sweet flavour that works cooked or raw.

**GOLDEN ACRE** Fast-maturing, ball head heirloom that produces small, round, compact heads of medium green leaves. Performs well in warmer conditions.



older leaves tend to collapse completely. If you have ever had hollow stems in your cabbages, then you need to add boron to your soil. Many Australian soils are boron deficient, particularly where I live in Tasmania, so I have to keep an eye out for this.

Iron and magnesium deficiency look fairly similar, with both causing a yellowing of the leaves while the veins stay green, but a lack of magnesium affects the older leaves first – while iron deficiency shows up everywhere on the plant. If your soil is low in phosphorus, the older cabbage leaves start to look purple, which can make diagnosis a little challenging if you are growing a purple variety. With follow-up applications of organic fertiliser every six weeks or so, you should be able to provide the phosphorus cabbages need.

Many creatures will see your cabbage crop as an all-you-can-eat buffet. Grubs and caterpillars are common uninvited dinner guests, but can be stopped by covering crops with fine exclusion netting or spraying leaves with a commercial organic deterrent. Slugs and snails can decimate seedlings and ruin the quality of mature cabbages, so be prepared to maintain appropriate baits, particularly in moist conditions. Aphids seriously reduce plant vigour so you'll need to hose them off if they are present, or apply a soap spray.

My general advice is to ensure your plants have everything they need – adequate food, water, a good position and soil that drains well – because a healthy plant is better able to look after itself. I grow most of my cabbages over winter, as many of these pests are less active during that period.

Diseases, such as powdery mildew, downy mildew, rust and leaf spot, may be an issue in wet weather. If you see any foliage that looks diseased, remove it, carefully wrap it up and dispose of it in the rubbish bin to help prevent it spreading. **GA**

## At a glance

**common name**  
cabbage

**botanical name**  
*Brassica oleracea*  
var. *capitata*

**plant type** biennial,  
grown as an annual



■ suitable

☀ full sun  
↑ 30–60cm  
↔ 40cm–1.5m

🌿 autumn to early  
spring; all year  
in cool areas  
🕒 after 2–3 months

**IT'S A WRAP**  
Left, top to bottom this healthy green, ball head is showing no signs of nutrient deficiency; red cabbage; Savoy cabbage has pretty, crinkled leaves. Top January King can lose its purple tinge when boiled, so try lightly steaming the leaves instead. Above Sugarloaf cabbage is ideal for growing in small spaces.

PHOTOS ALAMY, ISTOCK, FRIMA WALSCH





**T**here's nothing like a change of season to stimulate some serious action in the vegie patch. Autumn is like the beginning of a new gardening year, a time when we say farewell to the last of the summer crops and welcome all those wonderful winter vegies that provide a steady supply of fresh, nutritious homegrown produce through the cooler months. This includes all the brassicas, such as cabbage and cauliflower, the pea family including snow peas and broad beans, as well as onion and leek, and a huge range of delicious leafy greens. In the tropics and subtropics where winters are mild, you can also grow things such as tomatoes and cucumbers, which like the warm conditions.

The good news for first-time vegie growers is that the cooler months can be one of the easiest times of year for growing. There are generally fewer pests and diseases to deal with and, since it's cooler, the soil doesn't dry out as quickly, so the plants are less stressed. There's never been a better time to make a start!

If you're in an area where winters are cold, you need to plant early this month to ensure plant roots are well established in the soil before the ground gets too cold. If it's still hot where you are, prepare the ground but hold off planting out heat-tender winter vegies for a month or so (see *Too Hot to Plant*, overpage).

### old & new

If you've got an existing patch with a few summer vegies that are still cropping, keep picking and enjoying the harvests, but once each crop is done, pull it up and prepare the clearing ready for planting. For every square metre, tip on a bucket or two of compost or aged manure (more if you can spare it) and a good handful of blood and bone, and then lightly fork it in. ►

### GET GROWING

Top left As summer crops finish, pull them up to make way for planting winter vegies.

Above Add compost, well-rotted manure and organic fertiliser to the vacant spots in your vegie patch then fork and rake it in.

*"Say farewell to summer crops and welcome wonderful winter vegies"*

# vegie patch makeover

Now is a good time to set up a new vegie patch or recondition an old one, ready for planting your cool-season vegies, writes PHIL DUDMAN





*"The cooler months are great for growing vegies in containers because mix doesn't dry out so quickly"*

When you're starting a new patch, try to find a spot close to the house where you're more likely to give it regular attention. Most vegies grow best with six hours of direct sun a day, but if you don't have that luxury, there's still plenty you can grow. Leafy greens, carrots, beetroot, leeks and popular herbs, such as parsley and coriander, will thrive in as little as three to four hours a day.

Good drainage is important, so avoid boggy areas. If you have a heavy clay soil, improve drainage by building a raised bed, mounding soil or creating a free-draining 'no-dig' garden on the soil surface (see below). There are plenty of prefabricated raised beds to choose from, or if you're handy with tools you can make your own from timber or recycled bricks. They all look great, and help to keep your soil and mulch materials in place too, which leaves a tidy finish. If you don't have the time or budget to install raised beds, don't worry, just mark out your area and get growing.

The ideal bed width is 1–1.2m, which allows most people to comfortably reach the centre of the bed, and 2–3m is a good length. Any longer and it's a hike to get to the other side. The pathways between beds need to be at least 75cm wide to comfortably manoeuvre a wheelbarrow, but 1m is better.

### no digging required

I don't mind the cardio workout you get with a little light tilling, but these days I'm less inclined to torture my delicate torso pounding hard earth with a spade or mattock when establishing new vegie beds. I'm a big fan of the 'no dig' method because it doesn't jar your joints. Best of all, it creates a highly fertile growing medium and you can use this method to build new beds or recondition existing ones.

It's basically building compost directly at the site where you're growing, building up a wide range of organic materials in a sequence of thin layers that



### too hot to plant

In some areas, conditions are still too hot in March for planting out delicate winter vegies into the ground. Instead, you can start sowing seed in punnets of seed-raising mix or growing seedlings on in pots ready for planting out in a month or so (in the tropics, sow seed in April). Just find a cool spot to place your containers. It needs to be somewhere that gets a few hours of morning sun, with protection from the midday and afternoon sun.



### growing in containers

The cooler months are great for growing vegies in containers because the mix doesn't dry out so quickly. Lettuce, spinach, pak choy and other leafy greens do really well, as do beets, carrots, shallots, radishes, potatoes and dwarf peas. These all need a container that's at least 30cm deep and 30–40cm wide. Cabbages, broccoli and cauliflower will grow in containers too but their roots need plenty of room, so just grow one plant per pot, and use a pot that's 40cm wide or larger. Fill containers with a premium potting mix that has some fertiliser added. Keep the mix moist and apply a liquid fertiliser every 7–10 days.

**PATCH WORK**  
Left A lot of winter vegies are highly ornamental and look great in both beds and pots. Below Raised beds improve drainage and are easy to make using untreated, recycled timber.

are repeated, like a lasagne. Use what's available – grass clippings, fallen leaves, weeds, shredded paper and cardboard and chopped up prunings. If you need to bring in extra organic material, pick up some cow or sheep manure, lucerne, straw, or tree-lopper's mulch. Variety is the key. It's also worth sprinkling some blood and bone every few layers, as well as rock mineral fertiliser, to provide additional nutrients. You need to give the layers a good soaking as you're building them up.

For new beds, start by totally covering the ground to smother the grass, overlapping sheets of newspaper about 10 sheets thick, then build your layers to a height of 50cm or so. This sounds like a lot, but it slumps quickly. On existing beds, pile materials straight on top to about 20–30cm high. Top the lot with straw mulch, and when you're ready to plant, make pockets in the mulch layer, fill them with compost and plant into that. **GA**

For more on growing winter vegies, see the *Sow & Plant* guide on p70 and Tino Carnevale's story on growing cabbages, p58.





## cooking with... beetroot

A delicious, versatile vegetable, beetroot is equally at home in cakes, dips or coleslaw, adding vibrant colour and sweetness

### beetroot blitz chocolate cake

serves 16

- 1 cup roughly chopped boiled beetroot
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 1½ cups plain flour
- 1 cup cocoa powder
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- ¾ cup caster sugar
- ½ cup apple puree
- 3 eggs
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- ¾ cup sunflower oil
- ½ cup dark chocolate chips
- icing sugar, to serve

- 1 Preheat oven to 190°C. Lightly grease then line a 24cm-round, spring-form cake tin with baking paper.
- 2 Finely chop beetroot in a food processor. Add all the remaining ingredients except oil, chocolate chips and icing sugar. Process until smooth, scraping the sides of the bowl as you go. Scrape down sides once more and gradually add oil. Stir in chocolate.
- 3 Spoon mixture into cake tin. Bake for 45–55 minutes, or until firm to touch. Cool before turning out. Sprinkle with icing sugar.



### feta & beetroot dip

- 2 medium beetroots, trimmed
- 4 tablespoons walnuts
- 40g reduced-fat feta
- ½ cup low-fat Greek-style yoghurt
- 2 large carrots, peeled, cut into sticks, to serve
- 1 large cucumber, cut into sticks, to serve

- 1 Preheat oven to 180°C. Line 2 baking trays with baking paper. Wrap each beetroot tightly in foil and place on a prepared baking tray. Roast for 35 minutes. Place the walnuts on the other prepared tray and lightly toast for last 5 minutes of beetroot cooking time.
- 2 Unwrap beetroot and discard foil. Rub off the beetroot skin and discard. Chop the beetroot; place in a food processor with walnuts, feta and yoghurt, and blend until smooth. Refrigerate until ready to serve.
- 3 Serve the beetroot dip with carrot and cucumber sticks.



### pork with beetroot coleslaw

serves 4

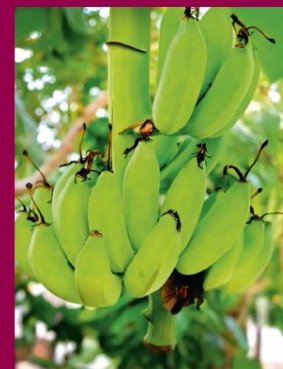
- ½ cup quinoa, rinsed, drained
- 2 teaspoons fennel seeds, crushed
- 2 teaspoons caraway seeds, crushed
- 4 150g pork loin cutlets, French trimmed
- 3 medium beetroots, trimmed, peeled
- 1 large green apple, cored, cut into thin matchsticks
- ½ red onion, thinly sliced
- ½ medium red cabbage, trimmed, shredded
- ¼ cup roughly chopped flat-leaf parsley
- 1½ tablespoons white balsamic vinegar
- 1 tablespoon wholegrain mustard
- 2 teaspoons olive oil

- 1 Place quinoa in a medium saucepan with ¾ cup water and bring to the boil. Reduce heat to low, cover pan and simmer for 12 minutes, or until water has evaporated. Leave to cool.
- 2 Meanwhile, combine fennel seed with caraway seed and sprinkle evenly over pork cutlets. Season with black pepper.
- 3 Set a large non-stick frying pan or grill pan over medium-high heat. Add pork to pan and cook for 4 minutes per side, or until done to your liking. Transfer pork to a plate and cover loosely with foil to keep warm. Leave to rest for 3 minutes.
- 4 Grate beetroot roughly and squeeze out excess moisture. To make coleslaw, place quinoa and beetroot in a bowl with apple, onion, cabbage and parsley. Set aside.
- 5 For the dressing, whisk vinegar, mustard and olive oil in a small bowl. Add the dressing to reserved coleslaw and toss lightly to combine. Divide the coleslaw among plates and serve with grilled pork.



These recipes come from previous issues of *Healthy Food Guide*, and are developed in consultation with a dietitian. [healthyfoodguide.com.au](http://healthyfoodguide.com.au)

## Pick me now



● **Banana** The fruit (above) are ready when they've filled out and turned light green. Seek the help of one or two adults to support the heavy bunch as you cut the stalk with a sharp knife. Store in a cool, shady area to ripen.

● **Eggplant** You can harvest and eat the fruit undersized, or wait until they've reached full size. The fruit's skin should be shiny – if it's dull, it's overripe. Lift the fruit gently and cut the stem with sharp secateurs, taking care of the thorns on the stem.

● **Fig** Pick figs when they have fully ripened on the tree and they'll be sweet and delicious. Ripe figs are plump, hanging down as though they are ready to fall. They should come away from the branches with a gentle touch.

### Also in season

- apple ● avocado ● capsicum
- cucumber ● ginger ● grape
- guava ● kiwifruit ● lettuce
- lime ● nashi pear ● onion
- pawpaw ● pear ● pineapple
- plum ● potato ● pomegranate
- pumpkin ● quince ● radish
- rhubarb ● silverbeet
- spring onion ● tomato
- watermelon ● zucchini

PHOTOS: iSTOCK, MELANIE JEWELL, MARK O'NEARA, RECIPES: CHRISSEY FREER, SARAH SWAIN, SPROUT



# a month in the Garden

**50 jobs**  
to do in  
your action  
planner

March

## your planner



**Top tip**

Fertilise maidenhair ferns with fish emulsion mixed at half strength.

### top job

#### cut back geraniums

**G**eraniums (*left*) and pelargoniums put on a lot of growth in summer, and by the end of the season they often become leggy and overgrown. If you live in an area where summers are wet and humid, the foliage can also be severely affected by disease, which looks untidy. What they need is a good prune, and autumn conditions are perfect for the job because there's enough warmth for plants to quickly re-establish before winter. Just wait until the worst of the summer heat has subsided to avoid unnecessary stress on your plants.

You can cut geraniums and pelargoniums back by at least a half, even a little more if necessary. Use a sharp, clean pair of secateurs and work your way around the plant, cutting the stems just above a node or leaf joint. If you see any small side-shoots appearing on the stems in the area you want to prune, cut just above them – this ensures even quicker regrowth and recovery. Remove any dead or diseased material, too, and place it in your garbage bin, not the compost.

Once you have finished pruning, feed and water the plant to encourage new growth. Potted geraniums and pelargoniums respond well to some additional attention (*see p73, Service Container Plants*). Any healthy prunings can be used to propagate new plants, and they will strike readily now. Prepare cuttings 10–30cm long and remove most of the lower leaves, then plant them into pots filled with propagation or potting mix. Put them in a warm but shaded spot, and keep the soil moist but not too wet.

PHOTOS: ISTOCK, ALAMY



#### IT'S TIME TO...

- Tidy your summer-flowering perennials, removing any dead leaves and flowers
- Sow sweet peas in a sunny spot this month, but wait until next month in warm areas
- Trim lavender bushes lightly to maintain their shape, but don't be tempted to hard-prune as this can kill them
- Check and turn your compost regularly to help it break down, and add water if it's dry
- Continue deadheading your dahlias to encourage more blooms
- Start transplanting evergreen shrubs and small trees in cool areas, but wait a month or so for cooler temperatures in warm areas
- Sow seed and plant seedlings of cornflower (*below*), nemesia, primula, cineraria, poppy, snapdragon and stock
- Spike compacted lawn areas with a garden fork to encourage better growth
- Prepare ground for planting new lawns – turf rolls, lawn seed and runners will establish well in autumn as temperatures start to cool







## DO IT NOW

- Sow calendula, alyssum and paper daisies directly in soil, where you want them to grow
- Top up mulch (*above*) after some decent rain to hold in that lovely moisture
- Cut back kangaroo paws hard when they have finished flowering, and remove any diseased foliage
- Trim salvias if they have become untidy, then water and fertilise them to encourage more flowers
- Take cuttings of native groundcovers, such as scaevola and brachyscome
- Order spring-flowering bulbs and prepare soil ready for planting by digging in well-rotted compost and animal manure
- Fill large containers with seedlings of pansies (*below*) for a colourful show this winter
- Level any uneven lawn areas with a light topdressing of sand or sandy loam



## step-by-step decorate your own pots

Create a series of monochrome pots to mix and match in a courtyard or balcony, or to give away as presents

1. You'll need a selection of terracotta pots, a small tin of white gloss acrylic paint, a small tin (or spray can) of black gloss acrylic paint, two paint brushes (or a brush and a small roller), a roll of masking tape and a pot-sealant product – use this to seal the inside before you begin. If using old pots, make sure they're clean and dry before painting.
2. Paint pots on the outside and about 10cm down inside the rim with white paint, making sure paint doesn't gather in the drainage holes. Allow to dry, then apply a second coat. Wait for paint to dry completely before applying masking tape, so the paint doesn't peel off when tape is removed. Wrap strips of tape around the pots at various intervals, creating a good seal so the black paint doesn't bleed underneath.
3. Use a clean brush or roller (or spray can) to paint the exposed areas with black paint.
4. Once the black paint has completely dried, carefully remove the tape. Fill pots with potting mix and your favourite container plants.



## top job

## water & feed camellias

Now that flower buds are forming on camellias, a little extra care will help support your plants and reward you with a super show of autumn and winter blooms. Start by focusing on watering. Early bud drop is common with camellias, often caused by a lack of moisture in the ground, so if you haven't had any rain of late, give soil around your camellias a deep soaking, and follow up every 10 days or so if dry conditions continue. Take the opportunity to feed your bushes with one of the many camellia fertilisers specially formulated for their needs. Finally, if the mulch is getting thin, top it up to about 3cm deep. Aged manure, straw, compost and sugarcane mulch are all good mulches for camellias.



## wake up cyclamen

Colourful florist's cyclamen (*Cyclamen persicum*) are delightful potted plants to display indoors throughout the cooler months. They die back in spring before their summer dormancy, which is when most people throw them out, but if you hang onto yours they should reshoot for you in the early autumn, providing you keep them dry during the dormant period (too much water over summer can cause their corms to rot). When they reshoot, re-pot them with fresh mix, then add some fertiliser and start watering again. This will really bring them back to life, and you should enjoy lots of their beautiful flowers again this winter.



## your planner



### autumn planting

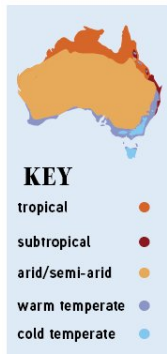
Most things do well when they're planted in autumn – trees, shrubs, groundcovers and fruiting plants – because their roots establish quickly in warm conditions, settling plants in nicely before winter and the following summer. March can

still be quite hot in some areas, so if that's you, wait a few weeks until things cool down. Water well after planting. Check plants regularly to see if they need another drink, then reduce the regularity of watering as they settle in and temperatures drop.

### sow & plant...

#### IN MARCH

Asian greens  
bean (French)  
beetroot  
broad beans  
broccoli  
brussels sprouts  
cabbage  
carrot  
cauliflower  
coriander  
cucumber  
leek  
lettuce  
parsley  
potato  
radish  
rocket  
silverbeet  
sweetcorn  
tomato



### prune mangoes

Mango trees grow into giants if you let them, but with annual pruning you can keep trees at 2–3m high, while decreasing the incidence of anthracnose. This disease affects foliage, flowers and fruit, severely reducing your crop. The best time to prune is soon after harvest. Aim to open up the canopy, particularly the centre. This increases airflow and allows sunlight to penetrate the canopy, which helps to dry all surfaces after rain and reduce disease problems. Encourage lateral growth by removing vertical branches, and cut out any dead or diseased material. Finally, go over the canopy and lightly trim the tips to encourage lots of fresh growth and flowering sites for next season. If you have a large, overgrown tree, it's possible to cut the branches back hard, then train regrowth to establish a smaller productive tree. This type of heavy pruning should be done in winter by a qualified arborist or tree pruning professional.

### tidy up

Bury or bag any fallen fruit to reduce pest and disease build up.



### tomatoes in the tropics

As the tomato growing season comes to an end in the south, it's just getting started in the north. The mild autumn and winter temperatures of the tropics and subtropics are perfect for growing tomatoes, and there are far fewer pests and diseases to deal with now compared to summer. So, if you live in these balmy parts of the country and are dreaming of growing perfect Beefsteak or Rouge de Marmande, get busy planting!



### pest watch!

Look out for damaging caterpillars on strappy leafed plants, such as clivea and crinum lily, and spray with spinosad.



### EDIBLE GARDEN

- Prepare vegie beds by removing the last of the warm-season crops and enriching the soil with compost and aged manure
- Preserve excess fruit and vegie crops by bottling or freezing them (*above*)
- Order rhubarb and asparagus crowns, ready for winter planting
- Sow and plant winter vegies (*see Sow & Plant, opposite*), but be prepared to shade tender seedlings on hot days
- Give your fruit trees a good soaking if conditions are dry
- Treat citrus trees for scale by spraying thoroughly with horticultural oil
- Cut spent raspberry canes to ground level
- Keep maturing sweetcorn (*below*) well watered to ensure plump and juicy cobs
- Start your winter herb garden by sowing seed of coriander, oregano and farragon





## your planner

### TROPICAL

- Trim shrubs and vines that have put on a lot of growth over the season
- Transplant or plant palms (*right*) while soil is moist and easy to dig
- Remove excess banana suckers but keep a small one, a mid-size one and one in fruit
- Lift, divide and replant arrowroot, cocoyam, taro and lemongrass, and then feed, water and mulch
- Water chestnut bulbs are nearly ready to harvest – wait until they are about 2cm wide
- Sow or plant dry-season herbs such as oregano, thyme, sage and lavender – grow them in pots so you can move them to a protected spot when there is heavy rain about
- Use shadecloth to shelter delicate seedlings from the hot sun until they are big enough to fend for themselves
- Fertilise citrus, mangosteen, jaboticaba (*below*) and other fruit trees to replace nutrients leached away in the wet season, and top up the mulch if it's looking thin
- Take cuttings of bougainvillea 30cm long and then plant them in pots of sandy, free-draining propagation mix



### look out!

**Citrus leafminer** attacks new foliage. Prune off the worst-affected growth and spray remaining foliage with horticultural oil in the cool of the day.



### top job

#### service container plants

**M**arch is a good time to give all your container plants, indoors and out, a routine service. Start by making sure the root ball is well hydrated. Potting mixes commonly become water repellent over time, particularly in hot weather, so it's worth applying a wetting agent to the surface of the mix or, if the pot is small enough, submersing it in a container of water for 10 minutes or so to completely soak the mix. Consider feeding them as well. Container plants are watered a lot over summer, which leaches nutrients out of their mix, so they need a top-up of slow-release fertiliser. Some plants will have outgrown their pots over summer. Pot these up into a slightly larger container, or loosen up the mix and carefully remove some of the old root ball before returning it to the original container. Backfill with a premium potting mix and water in with liquid seaweed. If you are pruning roots on sun-loving plants, move them to a semi-shaded spot for a couple of weeks to allow their root systems to recover.



#### dig & divide

Autumn conditions are good for digging up and dividing clumping plants, such as clivia, liriopse, lomandra and dianella, and it's a great way of increasing your plant stock for free. If the ground around the plants is dry, give it a good water a day or so ahead to soften the soil and hydrate the plants. Drive a sharp spade into

the soil around the plant about 10-15cm out from the base, severing the plant roots. Once you've dug out the clump, use a sharp knife to cut and divide the mass into smaller divisions. Before you replant them, trim off any ragged roots and cut back some of the outer leaves to reduce moisture loss.



#### trim & shape

Hedges and topiaries need a tidy up now to bring them back into shape after summer growth. Consider setting up a string-line along the length of your hedges to act as a pruning guide. This doesn't take long, and it will help you achieve a sharp, professional finish. Always taper the sides of your hedge so that the base is a little wider than the top. This gives the lower growth greater exposure to sunlight, which helps to maintain thick foliage growth from top to bottom and avoid unwanted bare patches. Once you have tidied up, apply some fertiliser and water it in.



# garden guests & pests



Sugar gliders and other wildlife can struggle to find shelter in tree hollows, but nest boxes are a good alternative, writes LEONARD CRONIN

Tree hollows are in short supply throughout Australia, and that means there is a dire housing shortage for a lot of our native animals. Possums, gliders, parrots, bats, owls, frogs and skinks use tree hollows for shelter, roosting or breeding sites. It takes more than 100 years for trees to develop hollows large enough to support native wildlife, yet these old trees are becoming increasingly rare as they are removed for urban development, roads, farming and forestry operations.

One way to compensate for the lack of hollows is to install nest boxes. To demonstrate their effectiveness to our local community, we secured a grant to purchase and install nest boxes at our son's primary school. We attached them to trees within the school grounds, and talked to the children about how important tree hollows are and the types of animals the boxes might attract.

Just a few weeks later, we checked the nest boxes and, to the delight and amazement of the whole school community, we found a family of very cute sugar gliders huddled together in a leafy nest in one of the boxes.

Sugar gliders are very social animals and share nests in suitable tree hollows with up to seven family members. They emerge at night and launch themselves from the treetops, gliding between the trees using a flap of skin stretched tight between their extended fingers and toes. They feed on nectar, insects and sweet acacia gum, and eucalyptus sap licked from gashes made in tree trunks.

Sugar glider families live in and defend a territory of up to 2.5ha. The dominant male marks family members and territorial boundaries with a scent produced by glands on his forehead, chest and the base of his tail. Intruders without the correct smell are chased away. When young are 7–10 months old and able to forage for themselves, the males and some young females are forced out of the family territory. Suitable habitats are scarce, and few survive, so it's great to have provided a home for one family of sugar gliders.

An owl nightjar, a possum and microbats have since taken up residence in other nest boxes. The next step is to install nest box cameras and transmit real-time images to the classrooms.

**HOMEMAKERS**  
Below Ecologist Dr Brendan Taylor installs a nesting box in the school grounds. Bottom A family of sugar gliders enjoy their new home.



Len gardens in the Northern Rivers, New South Wales



what's that whiff?



Not all flowers smell sweet and many stinky ones play tricks on pollinators, writes MARTYN ROBINSON

When there's a bad smell in the backyard, it's easy to think an animal has died behind some bushes. This may be so, but before you start rummaging, check the flowers. Some have a downright nasty odour in order to get pollinated, such as Persian carpet flowers (*Edithcolea grandis*) and starfish flowers (*Stapelia grandiflora*). There are many species in the *Stapelia* genus and nearly all of them have a smell that ranges from dead prawns to dead mammals.

So what self-respecting bee or butterfly visits one of these flowers? The answer is that bees don't, but flies do! The plants smell like the things that flies love to lay their eggs on. However, it is a cruel deception, for while bees receive nice nectar in return for spreading a flower's pollen, the poor flies get nothing at all – there isn't a rotting corpse inside for them to lay eggs on. Many go ahead and lay their eggs anyway, and it's not uncommon to see fly eggs in *Stapelia* flowers or lots of tiny maggots wriggling about, but they soon starve to death as there is no rotting meat for them to eat.

The kings or queens of this bunch are the *Amorphophallus* plants (above left), which are famous for producing the largest inflorescences (flowering parts) in the world. The Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria sometimes announces when one of its *Amorphophallus titanum* plants produces its huge blooms. These are not true flowers as they're an inflorescence that contains hundreds of tiny flowers. The true largest flower in the world, the vine *Rafflesia arnoldii* (above right), is also a carrion-odoured stinker.

Australia also has some native species of *Amorphophallus*, such as the elephant yam (*A. paeoniifolius*), which is not as large as *A. titanum*. And we also have some smaller relatives, including *Typhonium brownii*. So it's always worth having a look or sniff around as there could be a rare little stinker growing in the bush near you.

Martyn gardens mainly on Sydney's Northern Beaches



Have you found something interesting in your garden? Send us a photo and Martyn will ID it. Email [yoursay@gardeningaustralia.com.au](mailto:yoursay@gardeningaustralia.com.au) with 'Creature' in the subject line.

**Sugar glider**  
*Petaurus breviceps*

PHOTOS ALAMY, ISTOCK, LEONARD CRONIN



# mites, bites & creepy-crawlies

If you notice your pet scratching or losing hair, it's important to act quickly, otherwise they will be suffering – and you may find yourself itching as well, writes DR PETER KIRKPATRICK

**V**ets see lots of interesting cases coming through their doors, and some make your skin crawl... literally. Our furry friends can suffer from a number of nasty skin bugs and bites, which can be distressing for them and, in some cases, for you too.

Try to make a habit of regularly inspecting your pet's coat, especially if you notice her scratching or discover patches of hair loss. It's important to address the problem quickly, before any parasites spread to you and your home.

If you notice lumps or bumps that aren't bites, or in hair-loss areas, consult your vet as soon as possible. While many can be benign, the sooner you know what the problem is, the better.

Here are some of the common bugs and other irritants that affect our pets.

## mites

Humans and pets both have naturally occurring parasites called *Demodex* mites that live on the skin. In very young or immune-compromised animals, these little mites can overgrow, causing hair loss over the body, especially around the eyes and face. Pets, particularly dogs, need weekly treatments over many months to resolve the infection.

While not as common as *Demodex* mites, scabies mites can also affect humans, so it's important to start

treatment as soon as possible. These cause a lot of itching, which leads to hair loss and, in some cases, infection.

Cats can also have mites. It's common for our feline friends to suffer from ear mites, which overgrow in the ear canal and cause irritation, inflammation and discomfort. Treatment for this is fairly straightforward if it's caught early.

## fleas

Now is the perfect time of year to ensure your pets and your home are flea-proof to avoid infestation. During the hot season, fleas lay hundreds and hundreds of eggs, which can lay dormant in different life stages for many months. If you fail to act when you find fleas, and don't regularly wash and vacuum your pet's environment, you may get a nasty surprise later in the

year. These unsavoury parasites can also pass on tapeworm to your pet (and you), and even cause anaemia if you end up with a bad infestation.

Some pets suffer from 'flea allergy dermatitis', which is caused by a reaction to the flea's saliva when it bites. This results in itchy, inflamed bumps, which can become infected after scratching. If your pet has bites and is suffering, it's wise to have them seen by your local vet as soon as you can, to avoid the need for further or stronger medication.

## flies

The summer months often see our pets pestered by flies, which can result in irritating bites around the nose and particularly the ears. These can easily become infected and sore, so prevention

*"Now is the perfect time of year to ensure your pets and your home are flea-proof to avoid infestation"*

PHOTOS ISTOCK

is the best course of action. When flies are about, apply pet-specific fly repellent to avoid a trip to the vet.

## ringworm

People commonly assume ringworm is a worm, but it's actually a fungus. Although it's not a creepy-crawly, ringworm can spread very easily to humans and other pets, so early intervention is crucial. It appears as a round or scaly circular lesion on the skin, and owners often find multiple lesions on the body.

Your vet may prescribe anti-fungal tablets and topical creams or ointments to treat ringworm, and you should meticulously clean your house to remove any spores and infected hairs from the environment. **GA**



## Fan of innovation

NEW

GARDENA has a long history as a manufacturer of Nozzles and Sprayers and is a leading innovator when it comes to watering. The GARDENA range offers quality Nozzles and Sprayers that adjust to your needs for every application.

### GARDENA Comfort Bed Sprayer

Features a focused spray and the new and innovative fanned soft spray for gentle watering of delicate flower beds. Frost tolerant and UV protected.



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# letterbox

Readers share gardening experiences, top tips and photos. Enter our competition to win a Holman bed and water pack



## spider surprise

I love being a tropical gardener as everything grows fast and is so luxuriant. The wildlife also tends to be fast and luxuriant – especially the spiders. Fortunately, spiders don't worry me as I have a great sense of respect, timidity and fascination for them. A while back, I had an urge to build a set of steps to my shed. They would be free-form, and made of slate, stones, small logs and lots of mud. I am not a cement girl, but I can move very large, half-buried beams that have sunk into the ground, abandoned after some

building job. Under one of the beams was a creche of exquisite proportions. I had exposed a huge female tarantula, which had woven a web over herself and her eggs. She was nearly as big as my hand, but much hairier, and lay as still as my breath. I backed off to grab my camera and crept back as quietly as I had left. She didn't move, but I suspected the sudden daylight might upset her, so I took a few shots and delicately replaced the beam. She was gone the next day, eggs and all.

**J Starck, Kuranda, Qld**



## join us on Instagram!

Our Instagram followers' vegies have been growing at a furious speed this month! One of @auntymarsy's tomato plants took over the garden and pulled over its supporting stakes, while @v.ferraro discovered how quickly a zucchini balloons when left for a couple of days. Tag #gardeningaustraliomag to show off your pics or, for more inspiration, simply follow @gardeningaustraliomag.



## feed the birds

Leonard Cronin's article (January issue) prompted me to write about our experience with feeding native birds. They love our native trees and bushes, and they feed on the mixed grain food we give our free-range chooks. Every day a family of native ducks comes across the road to feed in our garden. It's amazing to see the traffic stop for them.

**L Morrissey, Strathdale, Vic**

PHOTO: ISTOCK



## happy families

I have enjoyed watching this wagtail family in my garden. The parents have had a very busy time warding off the many currajongs, magpies, butcherbirds and kookaburras in order to raise their three babies.

**K Klan, Toowoomba, Qld**

## top pots

Here's a handy tip. Black plastic pots are diabolical in summer, increasing soil temperature too much and sometimes burning the roots, so I double-pot any vulnerable plants. I simply place a smaller pot inside a larger one and fill the gap with straw, which keeps the inner pot a lot cooler.

**R Slade, Pakenham Vic**



# WIN

## 1 of 2 bed & water packs



## raise your spirits

The latest generation of Holman Modular Raised Garden Beds helps gardeners to introduce a vegie patch or new feature with minimal fuss. Assembly requires no tools, and each pack contains a watering kit. Control the watering of your new garden bed from your mobile device with the Holman Bluetooth Tap Timer. Each prize includes two 50x50cm Modular Raised Garden Beds, plus a 30m OzHose, Bluetooth Tap Timer and Brass Grip 'n' Lock hose fittings for watering your plants. [holmanindustries.com.au](http://holmanindustries.com.au)

We have two prize sets from Holman to give away, worth \$239.10 each. To enter, tell us in 25 words or less: What raises your spirits when in the garden? Write your name, address, contact number and entry on the back of an envelope and send to Raised Bed, Gardening Australia, nextmedia, Locked Bag 5555, St Leonards NSW 1590 or email [comp@gardeningaustralia.com.au](mailto:comp@gardeningaustralia.com.au), with 'Raised Bed' in the subject line, by March 12.

## A note on dianella

We had an interesting response to the story last issue about Diego Bonetto and his passion for introducing people to edible weeds and other wild foods in the urban environment. One reader alerted us to recent reports that dianella berries – widely regarded as a bush food – had caused adverse reactions in some people. As a result, the Queensland department of health has listed dianella berries as a poison. This is new information for us, and our advice is to err on the side of caution – don't eat them.

## christmas bloom

Last December, I spotted this blood lily in our local tea gardens. It was partially hidden between greenery, and I mistakenly thought it was a Christmas decoration. When I realised it was a real plant, I just had to have one. I brought it home and popped it into a semi-shaded area, but within a month it withered and died. I shoved it away with all the other dead plants and forgot about it. Then, suddenly, up popped a shoot that doubled in size daily, and then my blood lily bloomed, just in time for Christmas!

**J Greenham, Gympie, Qld**



## who is our facebook fan for this month?

Robyn Speerin from West Pennant Hills, NSW, posted a photo of her flowering cape chestnut, which fully recovered after we advised her to feed it potash in August.

Write to us...



Post your photos on Facebook at [facebook.com/ABCGardeningAustralia](https://www.facebook.com/ABCGardeningAustralia)



Got a great gardening tip or photo? Share it with us! Email us at [yoursay@gardeningaustralia.com.au](mailto:yoursay@gardeningaustralia.com.au) or write to Your Say, Gardening Australia, nextmedia, Locked Bag 5555, St Leonards NSW 1590. Please note, letters may be edited for space and clarity, and photos may be posted on our Facebook page.



# great shot!

The theme for Your Photos in the January issue was 'Two's company' and our inbox was filled with perfect pairings. This month, win three Birdies Grow Crates

**1.** Goannas visit us each summer and climb the large gum tree at the back of our property.  
J Perry, Abermain, NSW

**2.** My twin two-year-old nephews have been 'helping' us build our new rockery!  
H McKerrow, Duri, NSW

**3.** One night, I saw these wasps on a piece of string hanging in the shed.  
S Bull, Deeragun, QLD

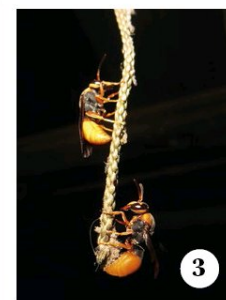
**4.** Here's a pair of baby Eastern Spinebills, not long out of their nest. Just after this was taken, one parent turned up – and the noise was incredible. As soon as the parent left, they returned to their perfectly statuesque pose.  
G McPhan, Armidale, NSW

**5.** This mother and baby enjoy a spot of supper together in our backyard.  
J Rundle, Helena Valley, WA



**6.** I found these two hiding out in my rhubarb plant as I was watering the garden. It was great to find them as it's been really dry this year, so we've not seen as many frogs as usual.  
L Martin, Armidale, NSW

**7.** Over a dozen painted lady butterflies were happily feeding on my flowering oregano plant – quite a crowd! Here are just two of them.  
L Bunning, Angelsea, VIC



**WIN**  
3 Birdies  
Grow Crates  
worth \$567



This month's theme is

*tall & handsome*



Email your best garden-related photo as a high-res attachment (1–4MB in size) to [comp@gardeningaustralia.com.au](mailto:comp@gardeningaustralia.com.au) with the words 'tall and handsome' in the subject line. Include your name, address and contact number. A selection of entries will be published in the May issue. The photo of the month wins three Birdies Grow Crates. Made from Australian cypress, the crates are modular, with chemical-free panels that are termite resistant. They snap together using patented corner spring-clips. For more information, visit [birdiesgardenproducts.com.au](http://birdiesgardenproducts.com.au)

Competition starts on 13/2/17, 00:01 AEDT and closes on 12/3/17, 23:59 AEDT. Winners will be judged on 14/3/17 at 14:00 AEDT. The total prize is valued at \$567.



# ask our experts

Our gardening experts advise on improving cucumber flavour and treating rust on gladioli, and solve your plant and insect mysteries



## sweet as honey

**Q** I grew this climber from a cutting and it has clusters of small lemon-scented white flowers. Can you please identify it?

*J Henriks, Underdale, SA*

**A** It is a type of honeysuckle or *Lonicera* species, and, although it is hard to confirm without seeing the flower, it is most probably *Lonicera japonica*, the Japanese honeysuckle. It is a vigorous, rampant climber with sweetly scented cream and white flowers. It is an environmental weed in some parts of Australia, but not in South Australia.

*Sophie Thomson*

## bitter cucumbers

**Q** I have been growing large numbers of cucumber plants in a greenhouse for a couple of summers and find that occasionally a single fruit tastes really bitter. They look good on the outside and inside, so there's no way to tell. I tried increasing water and liquid organic fertiliser, but the problem still occurs every now and again.

*P Foster, Central Coast, NSW*



**A** Cucumber bitterness is normally caused by environmental stresses, particularly hot and dry conditions. If you're heading into a period of consistently hot temperatures, protect your plants with shade cloth to help keep them cool. You mentioned that you've increased their water, which is good – just be sure that your applications are consistent, and keep in mind that your plants will need more regular dousings on those hot days.

*Phil Dudman*

## weed alert

**Q** Can you please identify this plant that has decided to pop up in many areas of the garden? I'm concerned it might be a weed.

*W Phillips, Albury, NSW*

**A** Yes, you're right, this is a weed. It's called native broomrape (*Orobanche cernua* var. *Australiana*). There are several species of broomrape

and some are very serious weeds. You need to carefully dispose of it immediately before it forms seeds and spreads. In New South Wales, it's a requirement to report broomrape sightings. Contact the NSW Invasive Plants and Animals Enquiry Line on [1800 680 244](tel:1800680244), or your local council weeds officer. The plant has no foliage as it's a parasite.

*Jennifer Stackhouse*

### ED'S NOTE

Thankfully, Wendy had pulled the broomrape out before she got our response. The weeds officer from the council identified it as native broomrape – a weed, but not the noxious variety.



## rust on gladioli

**Q** For the last couple of seasons, my gladdies have had a rust problem on their stems. I've tried planting them in different flower beds, but the same thing occurs. The other plants seem fine.

*C Sharp, Narooma NSW*

**A** Gladioli are amazing, with their colour range and elegant spikes, which have been given a bad name by our Dame Edna. Unfortunately the foliage and stems can be attacked by pests, and in your case, a fungus called rust. Spray the foliage, especially during warm, humid weather, with a fungicide containing myclobutanil. Cut the foliage back if it has been badly affected. You should lift the corms when the foliage has withered and died back, having cut off the leaves at their base. Dust with a fungicide such as mancozeb and store in a cool, dry spot before replanting in spring.

*Jane Edmanson*

Got a question?

**f** Ask us on Facebook at [facebook.com/ABCgardening](https://www.facebook.com/ABCgardening) or [ABCgardening.com.au](http://www.ABCGardening.com.au)

**e** Email questions to [experts@gardeningaustralia.com.au](mailto:experts@gardeningaustralia.com.au) or write to Experts, Gardening Australia, nextmedia, Locked Bag 5555, St Leonards NSW 1590. Please include your full name, suburb and state. Questions may be edited, and questions and photos may be posted on our Facebook page. Emailed photos must be between 1–5MB. There is no personal reply service for unpublished questions.

## insect helper

**Q** I found this insect in my garden. What is it, is it good or bad, and what does it like to eat?

*K Blackley, Bargo, NSW*

**A** This is the large brown mantis *Archimantis latistyla*, and it's definitely considered a good guy. It feeds on quite large prey, day and night. If you have a paper wasp nest in



a place where you don't want it, put one of these nearby and it will slowly harvest all the wasps for you! Otherwise it wanders the garden catching caterpillars, grasshoppers, flies, cockroaches and a range of other small invertebrates.

*Martyn Robinson*

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# take a break!

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## across

1. Fertile place in a desert (5)
4. Genus of monkey flower (7)
8. Piece of turf (3)
10. Supplied with water (9)
11. Principal ingredient of marzipan (7)
12. *Ficus elastica* or ... (6,5) (PICTURE A)
13. Arctic dog (5)
14. North American wild dog (6)
15. Western Australian centre for pearling (6)
17. Genus of gorse (4)
19. Tear apart (4)
22. Archimedes' famous exclamation (6)
23. Metal vessel for boiling laundry (6)
28. Tough pine tree now considered a pest in parts of Australia (5)

29. Constituents of a citrus orchard (6,5) (PICTURE B)

31. Where ablutions might be performed (7)
32. Seed of a South American tree, used in perfumery etc. (5,4)
33. Flowering part of a cereal plant (3)
34. Irritates, irks (7)
35. Disreputable, shabby (5)

## down

1. Willow whose twigs are used for wickerwork (5)
2. Covered with low plants (7)
3. Sections of an orange (8)
4. *Pittosporum tenuifolium* or black ... (6)
5. 1979 film set in a future Australia (3,3)
6. Simple shelter (4-2)



12 across A



29 across B



18 down C

7. Maritime rock plant used in pickles (8)
8. Sydney's bedrock (9)
9. Country singer, Slim ... (5)
14. Fruit and ice-cream in a glass dish (5)
16. Person of authority in an Aboriginal community (5)
18. Woodland fungus of genus *Geastrum* (9) (PICTURE C)
20. Framework (8)
21. Potatoes (8)
24. Come before (7)
25. Burrowing marsupial (6)
26. Delicate shade of a colour (6)
27. Western Australian tree willow myrtle (6)
28. Stroll (5)
30. Like the beach (5)

CROSSWORD COMPILED BY STEVE BALL PHOTOS ISTOCK

CROSSWORD COMPETITION TERMS AND CONDITIONS: OPEN TO AUSTRALIAN RESIDENTS ONLY. COMPETITION RUNS 1/12/2017 AT 00:01 AEST AND CLOSES 6/3/2018 AT 23:59 AEST. FOUR LUCKY WINNERS WILL EACH RECEIVE A HOZELOCK SPRAYER & SENSOR SET, VALUED AT \$120 EACH. TOTAL PRIZE VALUE IS \$480. WINNERS DRAWN ON 27/3/2018 AT 14:00 AEST AT 207 PACIFIC HIGHWAY, ST LEONARDS NSW 1585. WINNERS NOTIFIED BY TELEPHONE AND IN WRITING. PERMIT NUMBERS: NSW: LPM/17/00039; ACT: TP/17/0054; FULL TERMS AND CONDITIONS AVAILABLE AT GARDENINGAUSTRALIA.COM.AU. PROMOTER IS NEXT MEDIA PTY LTD, ABN 84 128 855 903, 207 PACIFIC HIGHWAY, ST LEONARDS NSW 1585.

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## how to enter

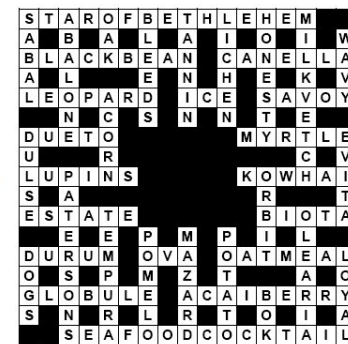
We have four sprayer and sensor controller sets, valued at \$120 each, to be won. To enter, unscramble the highlighted letters in the crossword (opposite) and email your answer to [comp@gardeningaustralia.com.au](mailto:comp@gardeningaustralia.com.au) by March 6. Put 'Sprayer set' in the subject line and include your name, address and daytime contact number.



## WINNERS

**Holman gardener's starter packs (December 2016)** M Dunn, Coffs Harbour, NSW; T Lloyd, West Haven, NSW; J Neilsen, Alligator Creek, Qld; K Purkiss, Kippa-Ring, Qld; C Rafferty, Mt Helena, WA. **Fiskars tree pruner packs (December 2016)** P Newsome, Kings Park, NSW; K Pruessner, Wattle Glen, Vic; Z Skilton, Innaloo, WA.

## solution February 2017 crossword



February's unscrambled word: variegated





Gardening Australia returns with a new series on Saturday, March 4, at 6.30pm.

## TV

### GARDENING AUSTRALIA IS BACK FOR OUR 28TH YEAR ON ABC TV!

Costa and the team will continue to bring you practical advice, inspiring gardens and handy hints, along with the country's best gardening characters and innovators.

As well as our seasoned perennials, we welcome fresh faces and new segments. We also meet *Gardening Australia* viewers who need help with their gardens, and show you how to use excess produce.

In response to overwhelming requests for a longer show, we're doing hour-long specials, and the first one's on Good Friday (April 14). So, whether you're in the city or country, are young or old, beginner or experienced, active or armchair, let's gather all gardeners and sink the spade together!

#### March 4

Costa Georgiadis visits landscaper Michael Bates' country garden, Tino Carnevale introduces the horticulturalists behind The Patch, Sophie Thomson looks at plants with silver foliage, Jerry Coleby-Williams explains the features and function of flowers, and we share tips on growing and using tomatoes.

#### March 11

Costa Georgiadis introduces our newest presenter Millie Ross (above) and helps pave and plant an entrance, Jane Edmanson visits a project growing produce for people in need, Jerry Coleby-Williams explores a garden on the Sunshine Coast, and Sophie Thomson demonstrates how to make a wicking bed.

Visit [iview.abc.net.au](http://iview.abc.net.au) to watch previous episodes of *Gardening Australia*

## radio

For details of programs on your local ABC station, call 139 994 or visit [abc.net.au/local](http://abc.net.au/local)

### ACT

ABC Radio Canberra  
Saturday 8.30–10am

### NSW

ABC Radio Central Coast  
Saturday 9–9.30am  
ABC Mid North Coast  
Wednesday 10.30–11am,  
Saturday 9.30–10am  
1233 ABC Newcastle  
Saturday 9–9.30am  
ABC New England North West  
Thursday 9.30am, Saturday 8.30am  
ABC North Coast  
Saturday 8.30–9.30am  
ABC Riverina  
Wednesday 10.30–11am,  
Saturday 8.30–9am  
ABC Central West  
Saturday 8.30am  
ABC South East  
Wednesday 10.05–10.30am,  
Saturday 9.05–10am  
ABC Radio Sydney  
Saturday 9–9.30am  
ABC Western Plains  
Thursday 9.35am fortnightly,  
Saturday 8.30–9am  
973 ABC Illawarra  
Saturday 8.30–9.30am

### NT

783 ABC Alice Springs;  
106.1 ABC Tennant Creek  
Saturday 8.30–9am  
ABC Radio Darwin  
Saturday 9–9.30am

### QLD

ABC Radio Brisbane  
Saturday 6–7am  
ABC Capricornia; 630 ABC  
North Qld; ABC North West  
Qld; ABC Tropical North; ABC  
Western Qld; ABC Wide Bay  
Friday 10–11am  
91.7 ABC Gold Coast;  
ABC Southern Qld  
Saturday 9–10am  
ABC Far North  
Friday 10–11am, Saturday 8.30–9am

### SA

Statewide  
Sunday 10.30am  
ABC Adelaide;  
1485 ABC Eyre  
Peninsula & West Coast;  
639 ABC North & West;  
ABC South East  
Saturday 8.30am  
999 ABC Broken Hill;  
1062 ABC Riverland  
Saturday 9am

### TAS

ABC Radio Hobart;  
ABC Northern Tasmania  
Saturday 9–10am

### VIC

ABC Radio Melbourne;  
Local Radio Victoria  
Saturday 9.30am  
ABC Ballarat  
Wednesday 6.40am  
monthly, Thursday  
10am fortnightly  
1602 ABC South  
West Victoria  
Thursday 7.20am fortnightly  
ABC Central  
Victoria  
Thursday 7.35am fortnightly  
Alternate Thursday 10–10.30am  
fortnightly  
594 ABC Western  
Victoria  
Tuesday 9.10am  
ABC Mildura – Swan Hill  
Thursday 10–10.30am fortnightly  
ABC Gippsland  
Monday 10–10.30am  
ABC Goulburn Murray  
Tuesday 10.05–10.30am

### WA

ABC Radio Perth; ABC Great  
Southern; ABC South West;  
ABC Goldfields Esperance; ABC  
Kimberley; ABC North West;  
ABC Midwest and Wheatbelt  
Wednesday 2.30–3pm,  
Saturday 9.05–10am

THIS INFORMATION IS CORRECT AT THE TIME OF PRINTING BUT IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE. PHOTO SIMON WATT

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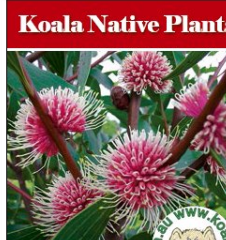
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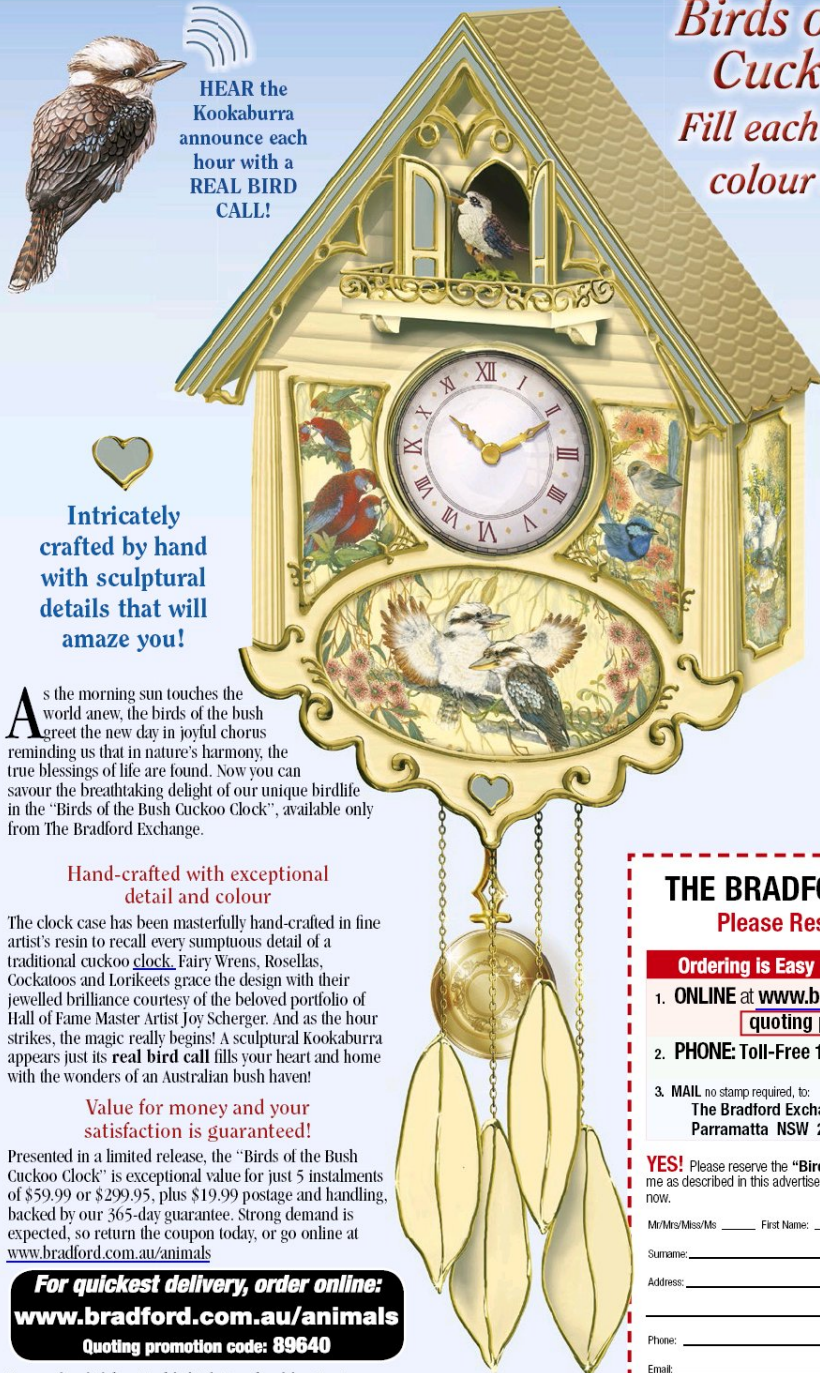
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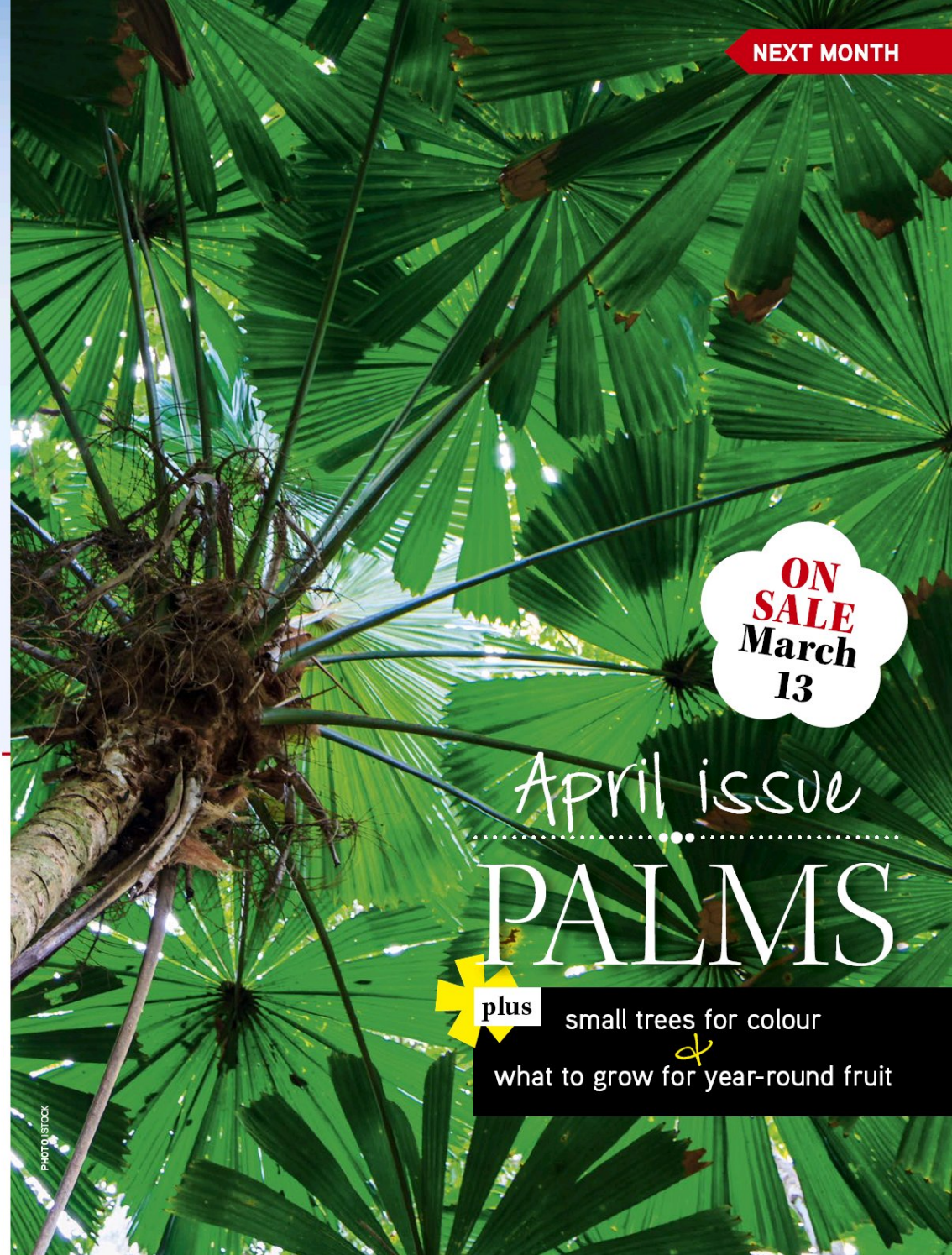
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the *big* picture

# keep it real

Artificial flowers may last forever, but nothing beats the power and beauty of the real thing, says MICHAEL MCCOY, even if it's gone by next week

One of my good friends had a bloke turn up at the front door clutching a bunch of flowers. It was their second date. The flowers were fake.

She didn't know what to think. She couldn't tell if he was taking the mickey (so to speak) or whether, perhaps, he didn't realise they were fake. The other option she considered was that he was somehow genuinely convinced that faux flowers were superior to the real kind as they survive indefinitely.

What she did know was that these objects, arranged in a pretty-ish posy, were totally worthless to her. And they spectacularly failed to communicate the positive messages that – if we are prepared to give him the benefit of the doubt – he intended.

For the whole point and poignancy of flowers depends on their transience. The same is also true in the garden. If flowers were permanent we wouldn't value them. It's their passing nature that makes us engage – that calls to our mindfulness and demands we seize the day.

Of course, this leads to a degree of frustration. Last spring I had to go away for a week. The day before I left I noticed that my standard crabapples were just starting to bloom. By the time I returned home, they'd finished. This isn't unusual. Flowering cherries are at their best for

only a few days. Tulips might give you three weeks, if the weather is fully on your side, and very few flowering shrubs are capable of doing better. Annuals are usually the longest blooming, with the best of them providing eight to 10 weeks in flower.

But in order to make sure that this fleeting floral reality doesn't generate a permanent sense of indignation, we've got to understand that it's essential to our gardening pleasure. It's possible in much of

*"If flowers were permanent we wouldn't value them. It's their passing nature that makes us engage"*

Australia's climate to achieve a garden of reliable, 12-months-of-the-year verdancy, but without these exquisite moments of transience – of these precious, passing moments – it can look a bit like a flower arrangement of nothing but the background foliage.

The 'moment' needn't necessarily be flower driven. It might consist of a few glorious weeks of autumn foliage, or a

season of light-catching seed heads, or that brief but heart-stopping phase when a deciduous tree breaks into its spring growth of glowing, translucent lime.

Change is a source of both delight and regret. Fortunately the former outweighs the latter. By the way, the second date was also the last. The flowers were permanent. The relationship wasn't. **GA**  
Michael blogs at [thegardenist.com.au](http://thegardenist.com.au)



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