

Gardening

February 2015

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**LIGHT UP
YOUR WORLD**
Design ideas
for the garden

*easy
sneaky*
**Low-allergy
gardening tips**

GRAND LADY
Explore Dame
Nellie Melba's
stately garden

razzle dazzle

Add a splash of colour with dahlias

this issue

**MICHAEL'S NURSERY
ROADTRIP ■ GROW A PRODUCTIVE
HEDGE ■ THE PERFECT NESTING
BOX FOR YOUR CHOOKS ■ TASTY
GREEN BEAN RECIPES TO TRY**



NEW STAR: MEET OUR TALENTED YOUNG GARDENER OF THE YEAR

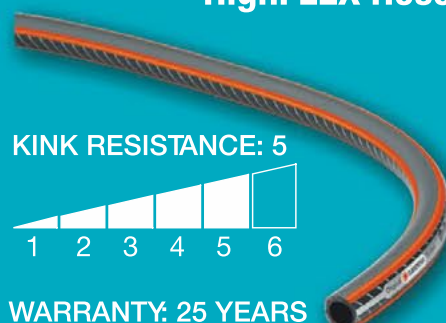
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editor's letter



benefits of summer

With all this humid heat, each of us must already have our own way to keep cool. I'd like nothing more than to dive into the crisp, inviting waters of the pool at Coombe – The Melba Estate. There's nothing flashy about it – a simple rectangle with scant detail, white sides with the most refreshingly pale blue water imaginable. What attracts me just as much is the nearby wisteria dripping with white floral pendants making quite a statement at one end of the pool. There are also the glorious surrounding gardens and grounds, both now open to the public. Turn to page 30 to see what I mean.

I also enjoy being outside in the evenings when the weather has been sweltering – doing some post-sundown garden watering. Good garden lighting makes seeing what you're watering easier. And anyway, who wants to walk into a spider web? Balmy evenings are terrific in the garden – eating, talking, playing, reading or seeing the garden in another light. We have some ideas on page 48 about illuminating gardens for best effect – for practical reasons, to add mood, or both.

At this time of year, tropical fruits top my 'must-eat' list. I revel in their luscious flavours, and dream of plucking them from trees of my own. While rambutan is one for tropical climates only, it's a fascinating plant and fruit, as you'll see on page 58. And then turn your thoughts, and the page, to page 60 to uncover productive plants for hedges and screening. Happy cool gardening!

Louise

stay in touch

Follow us on Facebook at facebook.com/ABC_GardeningAustraliaMagazine and Instagram @gardeningaustraliamag to keep up to date with the latest gardening news and to see some great photos.



let us know

We'd love to hear what you think about this month's issue of Gardening Australia, or find out what you've been busy doing in your garden. Write to us at Your Say, Gardening Australia, NewsLifeMedia, Level 1, Locked Bag 5030, Alexandria NSW 2015 or email yoursay@gardeningaustralia.com.au

Join the Diggers Club

“The Diggers Club began over 30 years ago and we are now Australia’s largest gardening club, with the most popular garden magazine and more members than Australia’s largest football club. Imagine how more satisfying it is to spend five hours in your garden growing your own flowers and food than watching the footy! We are helping gardeners from Hobart to Cairns,” says founder Clive Blazey.

Club entitlements

Eight magazines a year...

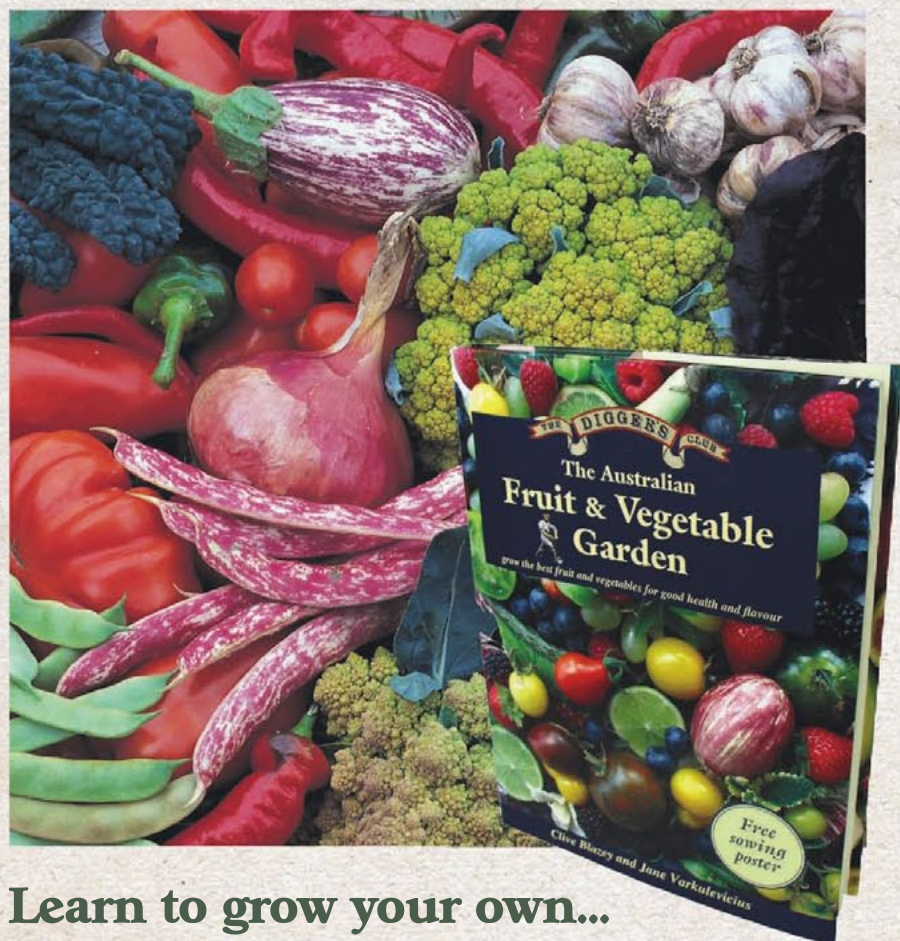
Throughout the year we’ll post you our magazines, featuring the best heirloom seeds, cottage flowers, perennials and roses to succeed in your garden. Our magazine articles are provocative and innovative, fearlessly tackling GM, seed ownership, climate change, organics and ethical food.



Your gardens to visit...

Be inspired by stunning gardens, each a living catalogue of Digger’s heirloom seeds and plants, with free entry to historic **Heronswood** house and garden in Dromana, **St Erth** in Blackwood and **Cloudehill** in the Dandenong Ranges, Victoria. Heronswood is also home to your club dining room, located in the historic house with free entry to members (visitors can purchase a \$10 day pass to the house and gardens).

Your club dining room...

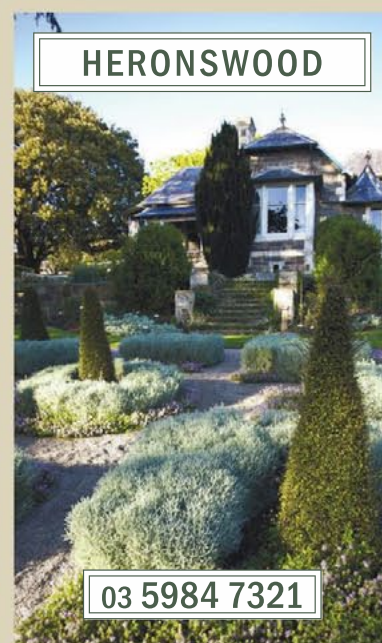
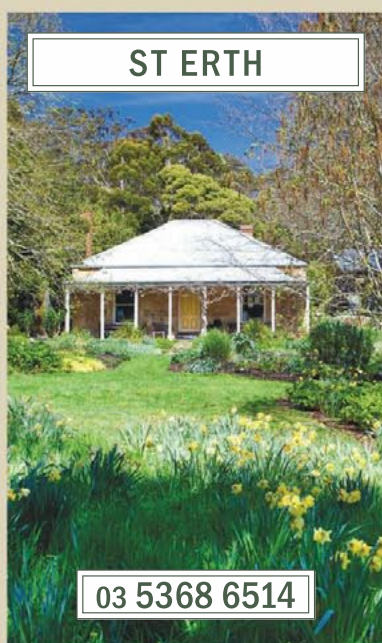


Learn to grow your own...

It’s all explained in our book *The Australian Fruit & Vegetable Garden*. Over 240 heirloom vegetables and herbs, plus 188 fruits, nuts and berries are photographed and described for all climates. From avocado to white sapote, with the most comprehensive climate guide to ensure your success. Includes three mini plot planting plans for first timers. RRP \$39.95 (just \$34.95 with a 1 year membership).

Inspirational shopping...

Visit our nurseries at these gardens, plus our shop in the **Botanic Gardens of Adelaide**. Diggers have hundreds of exclusive plants (*wasabi*, *capers*, *world’s hottest chilli*) that you won’t find at the box warehouses and members can save up to 30% on quantity purchases of seeds and plants. **Members** also receive 8 free packets of seeds each year.



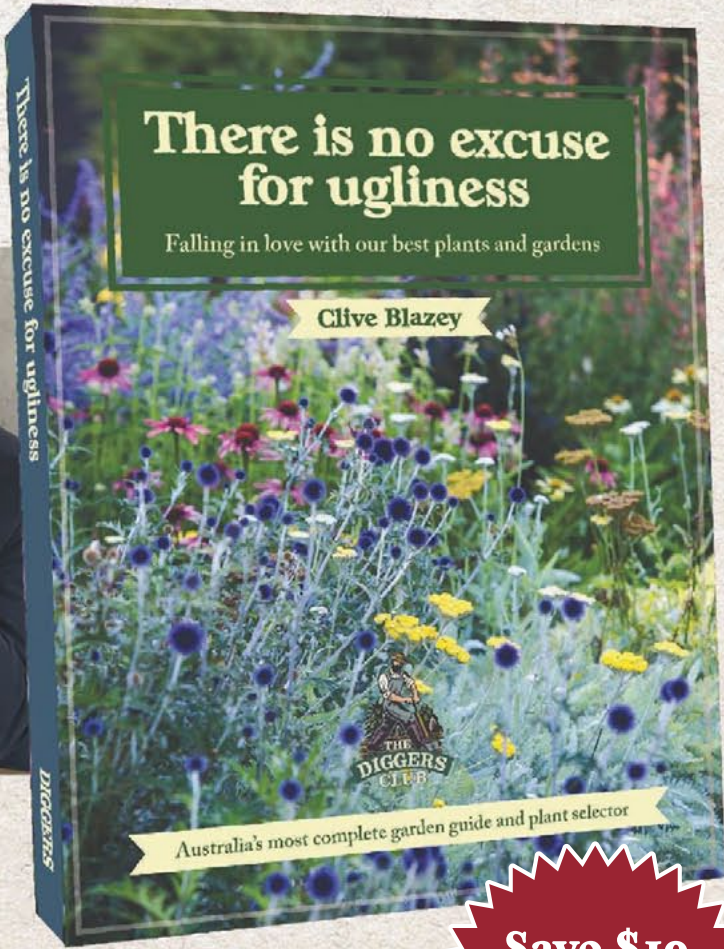
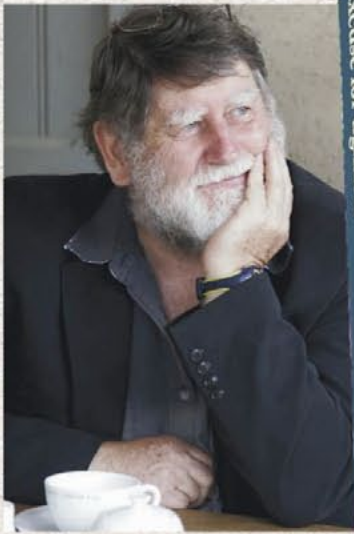
Falling in love with the best plants and gardens

“I was inspired to write my new book, *There Is No Excuse For Ugliness*, to explain why our modern suburban garden approach fails and to help people to create a garden that is aesthetically stimulating and cool during the hottest of Australian summers.”

“Create beautiful garden pictures by planting tried and proven plants that survive drought, heat waves and extreme cold,” says author **Clive Blazey**.

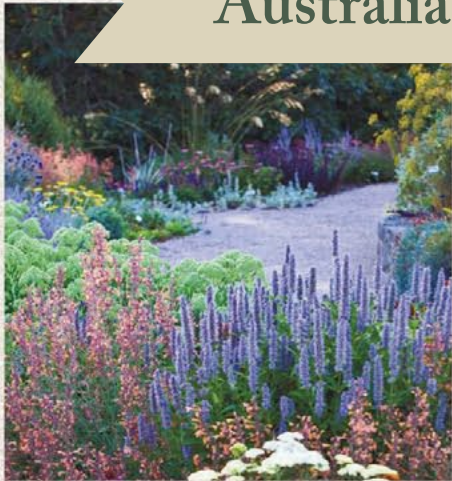
Clive was inspired by creating the gardens at Heronswood and travelling the world in search of the best plants and gardens. Over 100 colour pictures of beautiful gardens across Australia and Europe are featured to show you how easy it is to do in your own backyard. Following 36 years of trialling garden plants, 700 have been chosen that have become features at the Diggers gardens of Heronswood and St Erth and are seen in the finest gardens at Cloudehill and our botanic gardens.

Part of the book is a Plant Selector, Australia’s most complete list of herbs, perennials, roses, bulbs, annuals, trees and shrubs that are anything but commonplace and includes detailed growing descriptions. 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 1 year membership).



Save \$10 when you join for a year!

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in this issue

Leonie Norrington is busy weeding and mulching in her garden this month (page 22). She also shows us how to grow one of her favourite fruits, the rambutan (page 58).



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on the cover



Draw attention to your summer garden with bold and colourful dahlias. Their extraordinary exhibition blooms make an impact not only at flower shows, but in the home garden, too. Find out how to grow these vibrant plants on page 16. Cover photo: GAP





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48



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letterbox

Readers share gardening experiences, top tips and photos.
Send us a letter and you could win some great garden prizes!



letter of the month

The Letter of the Month wins a \$100 gift voucher from Nursery & Garden Industry Australia to spend at an accredited garden centre. For more information, visit plantlifebalance.com.au



VISITING MOTORBIKE FROG

Earlier this year at school, our grandchildren were studying the transformation of tadpoles into frogs. To help with the project we built a frog pond in our garden, and so were able to send in examples of the various stages of the tadpoles' metamorphosis. Yesterday, we found a beautiful adult motorbike frog in our garden and snapped this photo. Enjoy!

F Baumgartner, Currambine, WA

Wheelie good

I'm new to this magazine and I love it. It's a great read with handy hints. I'm sending this photo of an old wagon in my garden. I have a few old pieces scattered around. They look great, especially with grasses or bulbs planted around them.

S Gillespie, Maiden Gully, Vic



500 tonnes

The amount of garlic produced commercially in Australia each year



ARE YOU OUR FACEBOOK FAN OF THE MONTH?

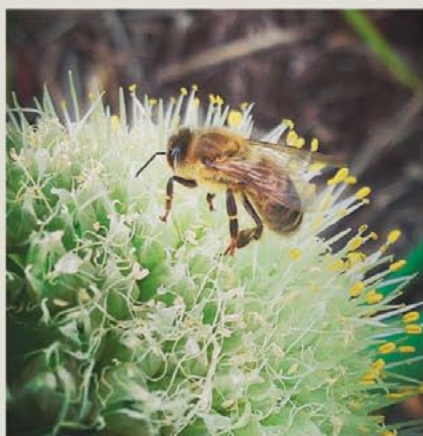
THANKS, VICTORIA YATES FOR THIS PIC OF YOUR ONE-DAY-A-YEAR CACTUS BLOOMS. IMPRESSIVE GIVEN IT USUALLY ONLY HAS JUST ONE FLOWER!

PHOTOS MARCODELGRANDE, ALAMY STATISTIC NSW DPI

Don't Just Water Your Garden!

✓ Safe on your whole garden including natives ✓ Promotes health and growth in all plants





JOIN US ON INSTAGRAM!

We'd love to share garden and nature photos with you. Thanks @p_h_o_e_n_i_x for the beautiful shot of bluebells (*above left*). Join the gang @gardeningaustraliamag and follow us for inspiration, or #gardeningaustraliamag so we can admire all your gorgeous photos.



ACCENTUATE THE POSITIVE

Michael McCoy, I also don't bother growing brussels sprout (Nov 2014). My first experience ended badly – my plants were covered in grey mites, and snails chewed off sprouts as soon as they appeared. Several crops of peas have succumbed to mould. I haven't given up on carrots yet, although the first crop looked like golf balls. I'd rather dwell on my successes: lettuces, silverbeet, capsicums, broad beans and tomatoes.

B Oliver, North Perth, WA

write to us...

Got a great gardening tip or photo? Share it with us! Write to: Your Say, Gardening Australia, NewsLifeMedia, Level 1, Locked Bag 5030, Alexandria NSW 2015 or email us at yoursay@gardeningaustralia.com.au. Please note, letters may be edited for space and clarity, and photos may be posted on our Facebook page.

RETHINKING MY GARDEN

I cracked the whip on myself this year too, Michael McCoy, and made the big decision to only grow the stuff we will eat. This is my third spring in this garden and the flowers, shrubs and roses are doing so well. But why are vegies such a battle? I've avoided lettuce as it bolts to seed too fast, and I have a feeling that the two Jap pumpkins I planted will be a big mistake. Meanwhile, the strawberries are misshapen, small or not ripening properly!

D Keller, Gerringong, NSW

Stars of the screen

Incorporate a natural texture to your outdoor areas with a reed-based screen or fence in Natureed, a high-quality product bound professionally with stainless steel wire. Not limited to fences, the Natureed range also includes cladding, barrier screens and canopies, or can be hung as a suspended ceiling. It blends perfectly with contemporary architecture, and creates a peaceful ambience. For more details, visit houseofbamboo.com.au or call 1300 665 703.

We are giving away one \$500 voucher for a Natureed product from House of Bamboo. To enter, tell us in 25 words or fewer about the view from your yard. Send your name, address and entry on the back of an envelope to Gardening Australia/Screen, NewsLifeMedia, Locked Bag 5030, Alexandria NSW 2015 or email comp@gardeningaustralia.com.au with 'Screen' in the subject line by February 8.



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EDITORIAL INQUIRIES call: (02) 8045 4862 email: ga@newslifemedia.com.au
 post: Gardening Australia, NewsLifeMedia, Level 1,
 Locked Bag 5030, Alexandria NSW 2015
SUBSCRIPTIONS call: 1300 656 933 or (02) 9282 8023
 email: subs@magsonline.com.au post: Magsonline, GPO Box 4093,
 Sydney NSW 2001 **WEBSITE** gardeningaustralia.com.au

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF Claire Bradley
HORTICULTURAL EDITOR Louise McDaid louise.mcdaid@news.com.au
COMMISSIONING EDITOR Jenny Baldwin jenny.baldwin@news.com.au
CHIEF SUBEDITOR Katrina Sichlau
SUBEDITORS Kate Barber, Susan Oong
CREATIVE DIRECTOR Mia Daminato
SENIOR DESIGNER Lili Zhan
PHOTO EDITOR/JOURNALIST Ally Jackson

ABC TV PRESENTERS Josh Byrne, Tino Carnevale, Jerry Coleby-Williams, Jane Edmanson,
 Costa Georgiadis, John Patrick, Clarence Slocock, Angus Stewart, Sophie Thomson

CONTRIBUTORS Steve Ball, Karyn Couper-Smith, Denis Crawford, Trisha Dixon,
 Phil Dudman, Jackie French, Chris L Jones, Elaine Harris, Dr Peter Kirkpatrick,
 Joanna Levadetes, Michael McCoy, Debbie McDonald, Geoff Miers,
 Marcelle Nankervis, Leonie Norrington, Imogene Roache, Deryn Thorpe

DIRECTOR OF BRAND STRATEGY Dennis Michael
HEAD OF SALES AND STRATEGY – HOMES Milena Hopkins
BRAND STRATEGY MANAGER Heather Jarvis (02) 8045 4739
BRAND STRATEGY EXECUTIVE Angela Apostolakis (02) 8045 4744

NATIONAL SALES DIRECTOR Paul Blackburn
GROUP SALES DIRECTOR PARTNERSHIPS David Rogers (02) 8045 4741
NSW GROUP SALES DIRECTORS Rachael Delalande (02) 8045 4657,
 Belinda Miller (02) 8045 4651, Sam Tomlinson (02) 8045 4676
VIC SALES DIRECTOR Kim Carollo (03) 9292 3204
VIC GROUP SALES DIRECTORS Sally Paterson (03) 9292 3217,
 Karen Clements (03) 9292 3217, Astrid White (03) 9292 3222
QLD, SA & WA SALES DIRECTOR Rose Wegner (07) 3666 6903
CLASSIFIEDS ADVERTISING Alora Edwards 1300 139 305
gardeningaustraliaclassifieds@newslifemedia.com.au
ASIA ADVERTISING Kim Kenchington, MediaWorks Asia (852) 2886 1106

ADVERTISING CREATIVE DIRECTOR Richard McAuliffe
ADVERTISING CREATIVE MANAGER Zoe Tack
ADVERTISING COPY EDITOR Brooke Lewis
PRODUCTION DIRECTOR Mark Moes
PRODUCTION MANAGER Chrissy Fragkakis
ADVERTISING PRODUCTION COORDINATOR Katie Nagy

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER ABC TV Tim Mitchell
GENERAL MANAGER ABC PUBLISHING Liz White
PUBLISHING EDITOR ABC MAGAZINES Melissa Barbagallo
MAGAZINE COORDINATOR ABC COMMERCIAL Jacqueline Forster

MARKETING DIRECTOR Diana Kay
MARKETING MANAGER Zoe Meere
BRAND MANAGER Dylan Edwards
MARKETING EXECUTIVE Alyssa Piva marketing@newslifemedia.com.au
NATIONAL CIRCULATION MANAGER Danielle Stevenson
SUBSCRIPTION ACQUISITION MANAGER Grant Durie (02) 8045 4699
SUBSCRIPTIONS MANAGERS Sue Reeman, Crystal Wormleaton

MANAGING DIRECTOR Nicole Sheffield
GROUP PUBLISHER – HEALTH & LIFESTYLE Nicholas Smith
COMMERCIAL DIRECTOR Sev Celik
GENERAL MANAGER RETAIL & CIRCULATION Brett Willis
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on the grapevine

We keep you up to date in the gardening world with all the latest news and events



PROJECT BIRDWATCH

Become a citizen scientist by participating in the Bathing Birds 2015 summer survey. Run by Birds in Backyards, the 20-minute survey aims to gather information about birds in urban areas to determine how they are faring. This year's survey runs from January 23 to February 23. Visit birdlife.org.au. Registration is now open.



2 helping hand

The popular Coles Junior Landcare Garden grants are open, with 250 grants of up to \$1000 available to set up or improve gardens in your local school or community. Last year, Blackheath Public School students (left) created a memorial garden with indigenous plants using their grant. Apply by March 27 at juniorlandcare.com.au.

3 step back in time

Explore the past with a visit to the expansive gardens of two historic Sydney houses in Balmain and Birchgrove on February 21 and 22. Noted historian James Broadbent will speak on both days, and landscape designer Myles Baldwin will speak on the Sunday. For more details, visit opengarden.org.au.



The new plant is similar to this *Hibbertia truncata*, but has finer foliage.

4 new hibbertia
A flowering shrub discovered by bushland officer Andrew Robertson eight years ago has been confirmed as a new species. Found on Sydney's North Shore, the plant has been called 'Julian's Hibbertia', after a friend of Andrew's who inspired him to choose a career in conservation.

5 top tomatoes

Get your tastebuds ready for the Tomato Festival Sydney at the Royal Botanic Gardens on February 14 and 15. You be the judge of the best tomato variety out of 20 types, or take part in one of the workshops. Visit rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au for more.



in the vault

The Australian PlantBank has won the 2014 National Awards for both Sustainable Architecture and Public Architecture, handed out by the Australian Institute of Architects. The facility houses the largest collection of plant seeds in the country and is open daily to the public. For more information, visit plantbank.org.au or call (02) 4634 7935.

by louise mcdaid

in store now



1. Revamp outdoor pieces without prepping using Annie Sloan **chalk paint**. anniesloan.com **2.** Decorate a wall with plants in this metal, **framed vertical planter**. gardentrend.com.au **3.** Use this all-in-one **Ceramic Grow Kit** as a gift or to grow your own. mrfothergills.com.au **4.** Keep feet dry and stylish in these new colours of **Gummies**. annabeltrends.com **5.** Fold away your planter in the off season with Vegtrug Poppy **raised planter** available in coloured felt. takasho.com.au



2.



3.



4.



5.



what's new

Here are some of the latest plant releases, plus a selection of books and products. Find them in nurseries, hardware stores, bookshops or online

Brighten up your garden with **Hello Wheels of Wonder**, a colourful new range of *Delosperma nubigenum*. You'll find them in stores labelled 'Hello sunshine!' in six colours: violet (*pictured above*), white, hot pink, fire, golden and orange. Planted in a mix they create a kaleidoscopic effect, or choose a single colour for a more pared-back approach. The flowers feature from August to May, but the plants look equally great without them. Plant in full sun for the best effect, and notice on cloudy days that the flowers close up. Wheels of Wonder love hot, dry conditions and tolerate some neglect if planted in the right place. They suit pots, rockeries, embankments and the top of retaining walls, where they spill over. Spreading 30–40cm, space every 35cm for good coverage. sprinthorticulture.com



Plant *Agapanthus inapertus* 'Sky' as an easy-to-grow border plant. Growing to 80cm tall with upright slender stems that have an architectural quality to them, it has delightful pale blue pendant flowers sporting a very unusual and more delicate look than regular agapanthus. But don't be fooled, it's tougher than it looks and thrives in sunny conditions in well-drained soil. Also available is a near black cultivar 'Midnight Cascade' growing to 60cm tall. These beauties also perform well in pots. australianperennials.com.au

Add a touch of subtle beauty to your garden with the exquisite *Pimelea ferruginea* 'Blush Solitaire'. The pale pink pompom-like flowers attract butterflies from spring to summer. Blooms grow on a densely growing evergreen shrub 60cm tall by 60cm wide. Its compact shape looks great with native or exotic plants. It's suited to coastal conditions as it was selected near Seabird on the coast of WA by the Plant Development team at Kings Park. www.ramm.com.au



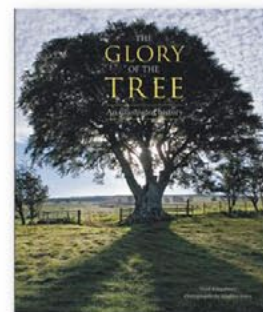
Try *Liriope muscari* 'Silverstar' as a contrast foliage plant in a border or planter box. 'Silverstar' is a new liriope cultivar with cream and green variegated foliage that looks silvery from a distance. The colour is a great contrast to green and deep-red foliage, and works well in groups or as an edging plant. It's a low grower, 35cm tall by 40cm wide. Plant it in sun or shade in almost any type of soil. Give it a cut back annually in winter to make way for fresh growth. This is an easy-care plant, tolerant of frost and drought. ozbreed.com.au

books

by kate barber

The Glory of the Tree by Noel Kingsbury, Thames & Hudson, \$49.95

This book is a celebration of trees. The author has scanned the globe to profile some of the oldest trees, those important for ecology, trees that are considered sacred, and those used for food. It also looks at trees that are adored for their beauty.



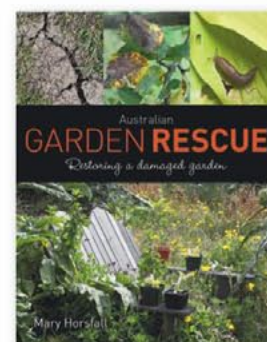
Garden Design Close Up by Emma Reuss, Thames & Hudson, \$49.99

When we like a garden, it's often hard to explain why but chances are that it has something to do with design. This book takes a look at some standout gardens and breaks them down in terms of their design elements. Get inspiration for your place or enjoy some armchair travelling.



Australian Garden Rescue by Mary Horsfall, CSIRO, \$39.95

Despite the subtitle, 'restoring a damaged garden', much of this book has preventative strategies for problems you might face in the garden. There are also sections on what to do after extreme weather events, such as bushfire, flooding and drought, and how you can fight pests, diseases and weeds.



virtual gardening

My Environment is a great government app that's very handy for gardeners. By using GPS, it lists your local weed species, as well as protected fauna and flora. It's also an ideal tool to plan weekend activities with an extensive list of wetlands, heritage properties and even shipwrecks – I can't believe how many are in my area! Once you find something that interests you, just click on it for more details or save to favourites. Compatible with iPhone, iPad, and iPod touch. Free.

let's go out

Create a relaxing outdoor entertaining space with these stylish, practical pieces





1



2



3



7

8



9



5



4



6

1. Ikea 'PS 2014' LED stool lamp in Orange, \$79. 2. Rapee 'Cabana Hibiscus' cushion in Zest, \$59.95; and Rapee 'Cabana Cove' cushion in Aqua, \$59.95. 3. 'Jumbuck' brazier fire pit, \$39, from Bunnings Warehouse. 4. Transtterior by Jamie Durie Signature rug in Geisha Green, from \$595, from The Rug Collection. 5. Papaya 'Bayou' tapered lantern, \$79.95. 6. Ikea 'Lillon' charcoal barbecue in Green, \$149. 7. West Elm chalkboard planter, \$9. 8. Peter McLisky blackened rust cacti sculpture, from \$650. 9. Anchor doormat, \$29.95, from Freedom.

plant of the month

by deryn thorpe

oh happy dahlia

While these plants are famous for their huge exhibition blooms at flower shows, there are plenty of varieties you can grow

at a glance

Common name

dahlia

Botanical name

Dahlia spp.

Plant type

perennial

↑ 30cm–10m

↔ 30cm–2.5m

☀ full sun/semi-shade

🌸 spring to summer

🌼 summer to autumn

🌺 smaller varieties



■ suitable

When my children were small, they called our tree dahlias 'Jack and the Beanstalk trees' as they watched them grow several metres in a couple of weeks, becoming horticultural giants. Our 3.5m-tall tuberous-rooted perennials towered above the garden beds, but were unremarkable specimens compared to their potential 8m-tall, bamboo-like canes!

My tree dahlia triffids, topped by clusters of lilac flowers, are just one of about 30 species of dahlia. We grow these plants, which are part of the daisy family, for their spectacular autumn and summer flowers that range from simple single blooms to extravagantly fancy flowers. They deserve a spot in gardens as they are easy to grow, thrive in hot weather and produce long-lasting cut flowers.

The plants are mostly native to Mexico, but are also found in Central America and Colombia. They are named after Swedish botanist Andreas Dahl, who tried to popularise them by introducing the tubers as an alternative to potatoes. Some varieties are still eaten in Mexico, but they failed as a food crop elsewhere because of their taste. However, they were still valued for their flamboyant flowers.

Most of the plants we grow are hybrids, flowering in a range of forms and colours (except blue). While people associate them with huge exhibition flowers, there are many varieties perfect for pots and small gardens. I mix the smaller varieties through my garden beds.

in the garden

Dahlias are mostly grown from tubers and available from August to November from garden centres or mail-order nurseries. Exhibition growers prefer to site them in positions with morning sun and afternoon shade, or grow them beneath light-coloured, 50 per cent blackout shade cloth. Plants also grow well in full sun, planted in October to November when there is no risk of frost. The dark leaf forms prefer afternoon shade in hot climates. In subtropical areas, dahlias are planted in September for summer flower, or in December for flowers in March. Plant 10–15cm deep with the crowns facing upwards about 60cm apart in soil improved with cow or sheep manure and complete fertiliser.

You can also purchase them as seeds, seedlings or potted plants. Seeds should be planted 12mm deep and 50cm apart in a full sun position in spring to early summer in improved soil, and kept moist. Seedlings germinate in 10–14 days, grow 30–40cm tall and flower in 14–16 weeks. Remove spent blooms to encourage more flowers and boost growth with liquid

fertiliser. Seed-grown dahlias are sold as seedlings, flower for a long period and are suitable for beds, borders and containers.

Potted plants appear in nurseries when they are in flower in autumn. The small shrub-like form, also known as miniature dahlia, blooms from mid-summer to autumn, dies down in winter and reshoots in warmer weather. Plants grow from 25cm–1m tall, depending on the variety, and do not need staking.

growing advice

These plants grow easily from tip-cuttings taken in spring, or by removing small cuttings with a piece of the tuber attached. Remove all but two leaves and place in a pot filled with free-draining mix. Water well and create a humid environment by covering with a plastic bag 'tent' or an upended 2L drink bottle.

Dahlias die back to underground tubers in cold weather. They can be left in the ground if your soil does not freeze or stay wet for long periods. Divide them every two years once they die back and store the cleaned clumps in containers filled with damp potting mix or sand. Plants and flowers become smaller if tubers are not divided. Separate clumps to include a small section of the old wood as it contains the buds from which the tubers will shoot. If your soil drains well and does not freeze, leave them to multiply for a few years before dividing in late winter when leaf buds are visible.

Pests include mites, aphids and thrips, which can all be treated with horticultural soap. The most common disease is powdery mildew, which is controlled with a fungicide containing bicarbonate of soda or triforine.

look-at-me blooms

If you're keen to make a splash, try growing exhibition dahlias. These are the ones you'll find on flower show benches. The extraordinary blooms will impress your friends and provide you with bragging rights. Enthusiasts grow them in dedicated garden beds but I prefer the tall and medium-sized plants (which need staking) between my bush roses. Their height and flower size determine their position as tall plants can get to 1.8m.

Small-flowered forms have 10cm-wide blooms and the big-flowered forms are dinner-plate sized, with diameters up to 45cm. They include a range of ►





"Dahlias deserve a spot in gardens as they are easy to grow, thrive in the heat and have long-lasting cut flowers"

flower forms, including single, waterlily, ball, collaret, anemone, pompom, cactus, semi-cactus, decorative, orchid and peony types. Nip out the growing point when the dahlia develops the first four sets of leaves for a bushier plant, and remove spent blooms to encourage more buds.

towering beauties

I can't go past the tree dahlia (*Dahlia imperialis*) for wow factor. The bamboo-like stems grow 5–8m high and in autumn are topped by clusters of single or double 7cm daisy-style flowers of lilac, purple or white. Tie plants to protect the brittle stems from wind gusts or trim dahlias back for a bushier plant.

Some of the long-flowered dwarf forms include 'Timothy Hammett', which grows 2.5m high by 2.5m wide and has lilac flowers, and 'Conundrum', a cream-flowered hybrid that blooms from January to early winter and grows 1.5m high by 80cm wide.

Cut the canes to the ground after flowering. Saw canes into lengths with three buds per cane, and replant or give to friends. Plant canes horizontally, 10cm deep, in improved soil. Your friends will be delighted at how easy they are to grow and, as they watch them magically shoot from sprout to tree, they can create some 'Jack and the Beanstalk' legends in their own backyard. **GA**



where to buy

Dahlias are available at nurseries, garden centres and online specialist growers. Find unusual or rarer varieties at plant fairs.





BRIGHT BLOOMS

Clockwise from left *Dahlia imperialis* 'Timothy Hammett'; *D.* 'Ken's Gold'; *D.* 'Cha Cha'; *D.* 'Villandry'; *D.* 'Bishop of Llandaff'; *D.* 'Le Coco'.

hot tip

For more info or to find a dahlia club in New South Wales, Victoria, the ACT, South Australia, Queensland or Tasmania, visit dahliasaustralia.org.au.



top 10 dahlias

- **Seed varieties** 'Figaro Mix' or 'Cinderella Mix' – wide colour range, semi-double flowers. ↑ 35cm ↔ 30cm
- **'Bishop of Llandaff'** Welsh heritage form for perennial borders with bright red flowers and dark purple foliage. ↑ 1m ↔ 40cm
- **'Le Coco'** Yellow single flowers with a red centre and dark purple foliage. ↑ 40cm ↔ 30cm
- **'Villandry'** Delbard dahlia with 15cm-wide, formal cactus blooms in pink and lemon.
- 🌸 January to May ↑ 1.4m ↔ 70cm
- **'Anne's Delight'** Formal cream 15cm-wide bloom with a soft lavender blush. ↑ 1.2m ↔ 60cm
- **'Formby Crest'** Show winning, 10cm-wide, bronze-flowered ball form. ↑ 1m ↔ 60cm
- **'Tiger Bey'** 30cm-wide, orange-red blooms flecked with burgundy. ↑ 1.5m ↔ 60cm
- **'Ken's Gold'** Yellow, waterlily-shaped flowers. ↑ 1.2–1.5m ↔ 60cm
- **'Cha Cha'** Cacti form, cerise pink blooms with a lemon centre. ↑ 1.2–1.5m ↔ 60cm
- **Dwarf tree dahlia (*Dahlia imperialis*)** 'Timothy Hammett' has single lilac flowers with a yellow centre on a dwarf tree dahlia. ↑ 2.5m ↔ 2.5m

🌸 November to April unless stated.

in my garden

photography by ALICIA TAYLOR

February is a trying time for gardening in the subtropics. It's incredibly hot and when it's not hot, it's wet, which makes it pretty uncomfortable in the garden. The trick is to get out early morning or late afternoon to do the essentials – watering when it's dry, keeping up the mulch and shading delicate crops.

phil



if I only have...

5

minutes

A simple thing I need to do on a regular basis is detail palms and tidy them up. I remove the dead fronds, chop them up and add them to the compost heap. Another quick job is to give potted plants a second drink. Round here, you can water your pots in the morning but by midday, on a hot day, they're completely dry. That second soak keeps them in optimal health.

15

minutes

I grab the secateurs and trim back lanky growth on vines such as grape, passionfruit, wisteria and petrea. During summer, they're sending off big, wild stems that hang over pathways. Winter- and spring-flowering shrubs, such as azalea, gardenia, camellia, poinsettia and grevillea are also putting on lots of growth. If I clip them now, they'll still have time to set flower again.

30

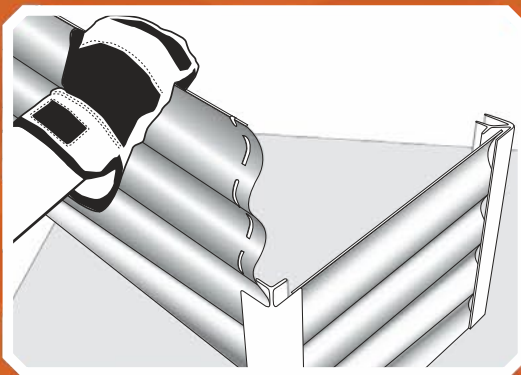
minutes

I'll thin the banana plants, which tend to grow in a clump. The idea is to cut off excess stems, so the ones left can put more energy into producing quality bananas. I leave one that's in fruit, one semi-mature, and one young shoot. I might also plant a follow-up crop of corn, which grows really well in the heat. I pile on the compost and aged manure, and pop in the seed.



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* Patent pending

this month's jobs...

The intense heat of summer hasn't abated, so there's still plenty to do in the garden for our presenters and experts



TROPICAL

"I weed, weed and, in my spare time, weed again. Green weeds are the best free source of nitrogen for compost. They go to seed next month so I get them out now. Cover large areas with black plastic to suffocate and starve them to death. Mulch with bark, newspapers or cardboard, or whipper-snip them into submission" **Leonie**



TEMPERATE WEST COAST

Heat and moisture stress really start to bite at this time of the year, making plants more susceptible to pest and disease problems. I make sure plants are properly watered and mulched to keep them in good shape. It's also a good time to take stock of the hardiest performers that best suit my garden.

Josh Byrne

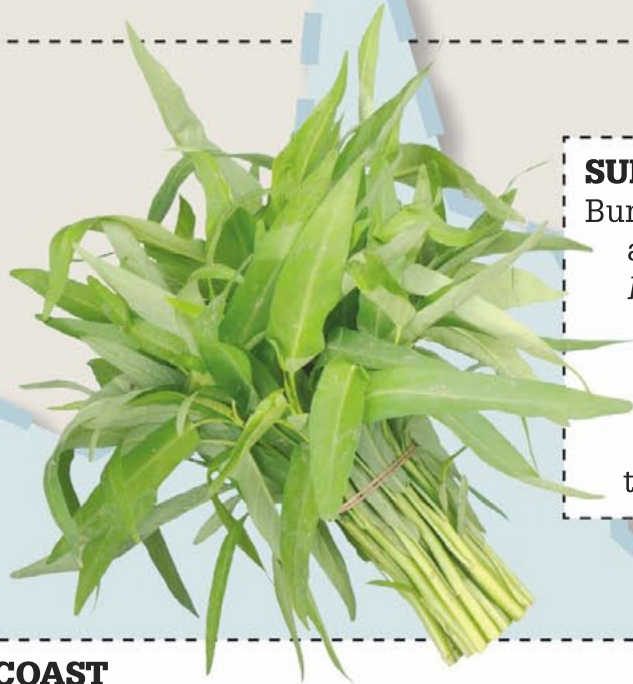
INLAND

I'll be planting a second crop of summer vegetables. Planting early ensures the plants grow quickly in the hot months. It also encourages higher yields and fewer pest and disease problems. As the temperature drops below 35°C, flowering commences and fruit sets and matures before the cooler months arrive. **Geoff Miers**



MEDITERRANEAN

In my sunny, exposed garden, February is just about surviving. I do all I can to get the garden through: re-mulching where the mulch has broken down, been blown away or worn thin, while paying particular attention to young plants, trees and pots. I also try to look on the bright side by taking note of the plants that are looking great in other gardens, despite the harsh summer heat, then add them to my planting wish list once autumn comes. **Sophie Thomson**



SUBTROPICS

Bundles of shoot tips of greens are often sold at Asian grocers. Okinawan spinach (*Gynura bicolor*), Water hyssop (*Bacopa caroliniana*), peperomia (*Peperomia pellucida*) and kangkong (*Ipomoea aquatica*, left) all easily root in a glass of water, so once roots form, I'll pot up or plant out for a thrifty way to expand my menu. **Jerry Coleby-Williams**

TEMPERATE EAST COAST

The midgen berry (*Austromyrtus dulcis*, right) is ready to harvest at this time of year in many parts of Australia and I sure hope to be picking some. It's one of the tastiest bush foods going around. It's also a beautiful ornamental with a compact growth habit and fluffy white flowers. Plant now if you don't already have one.

I'll prune back NSW Christmas Bush (*Ceratopetalum gummiferum*) and red-flowering gum (*Corymbia ficifolia* and its hybrids) by cutting back behind the spent flowers, if they're not too tall to reach. Then I feed them with low-phosphorus, native plant food to spark the new foliage growth. **Angus Stewart**



COLD CLIMATES & MOUNTAIN REGIONS

My garden is ablaze with the wow of salvias in the brightest colours; brilliant English lavender hedges and cardoons; bright yellow sunflowers; and even the still-flowering larkspurs. I collect seed from spent blooms and keep it for scattering in autumn for next year's spring flowering. I'm also picking old English mulberries each morning for breakfast. **Trisha Dixon**



COOL CLIMATES



"The first zucchini is eagerly anticipated, but by February they are my bane. Just about every meal has them! On a happier note, the helenium look amazing. In fact, the whole colourful perennial border is coming into its own" **tino**

COOL TEMPERATE

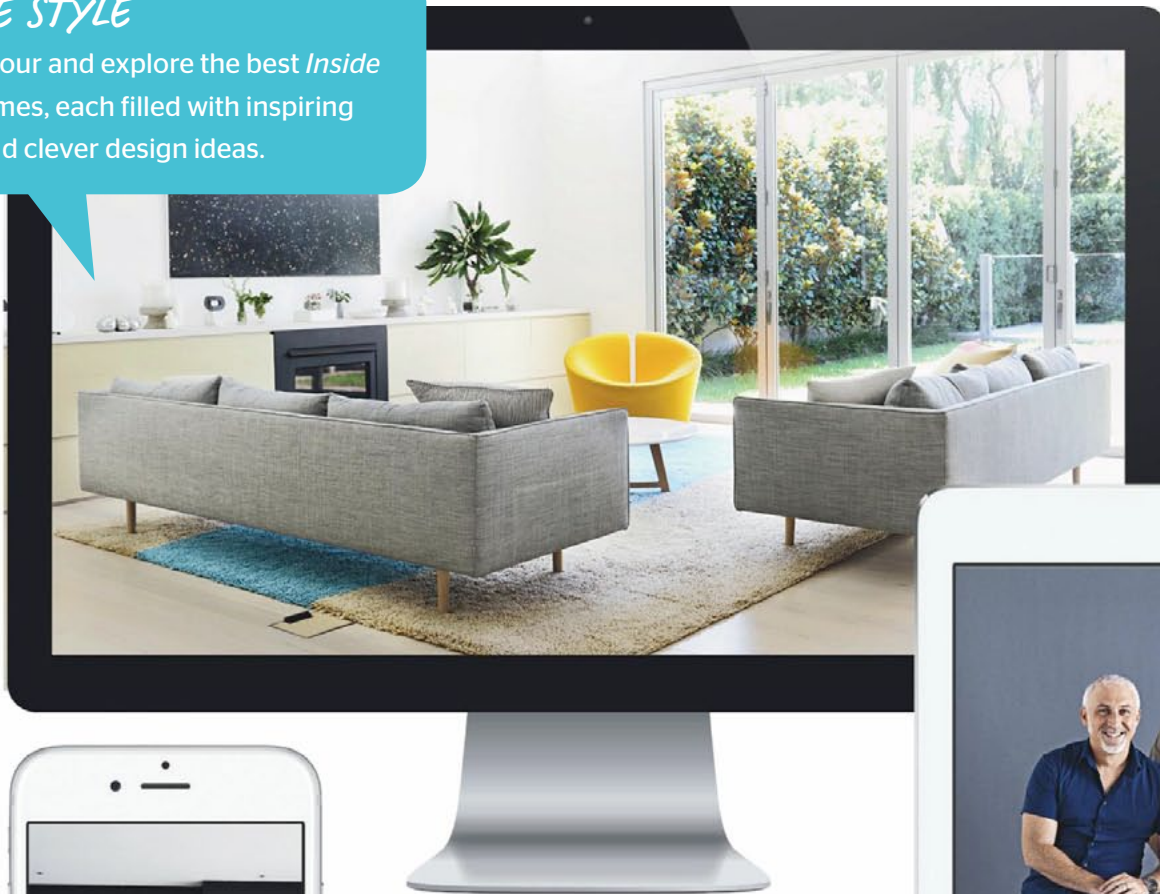
Any vegetable grower knows just how resilient harlequin bugs are. They are in great abundance now, causing loads of damage to my tomatoes and beans. With black and orange-red colouring, they're easy to spot. I'm tackling them where they breed: in tall grass and weeds. Because of their hard bodies, very few insecticides will be effective so I'm collecting the bugs by hand and dropping them into a bucket of boiling water. Another pest that abounds right now is whitefly. **Jane Edmanson**

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if you have...

It's hot out there this month, so be sure to give your garden plenty of water and some extra loving care by doing these quick jobs

10 minutes



plant

- Sow seed of winter- and spring-flowering annuals for planting out in March. Try stock and pansy.

feed & water

- Feed roses (*above*) with an organic-based rose fertiliser. Water well before and after the application.
- Water cymbidium orchids with chilled water in extremely hot weather. It helps initiate flower production.
- Feed liliu bulbs with a complete fertiliser as they finish flowering to increase their stores for next season's flowers.
- Water potted ferns regularly and give them a weak solution of liquid fertiliser every fortnight to replace leached nutrients.

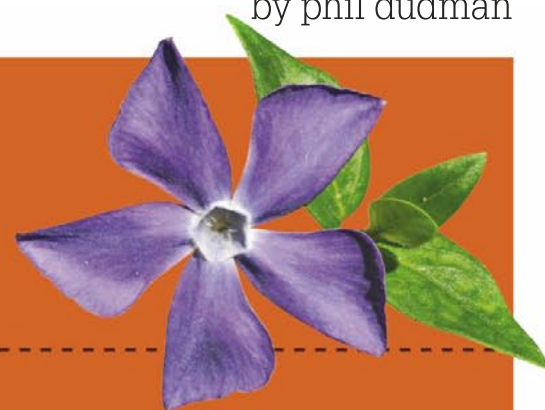
prune

- Deadhead summer-flowering annuals and perennials.
- Tip-prune winter- and spring-flowering shrubs such as poinsettia and azalea to encourage more flowers.

special care

- Rest tired and stressed hanging baskets in a semi-shaded spot while temperatures are high.

30 minutes



plant

- Fill gaps in sunny spots with colourful annuals such as salvia, zinnia, nasturtium, asters and vinca (*above*).
- Plant a grapevine or Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*) to create more shade over a pergola. They are both deciduous so will let in valuable sunshine in winter.

feed & water

- Prepare ground for planting spring-flowering bulbs by digging in compost and well-rotted animal manure.
- Ivory curl flower (*Buckinghamia celsissima*) are budding up. Water deeply to help bring on a spectacular show of blooms.

prune

- Trim lavender and use clippings to propagate new plants.
- Cut back pelargoniums by two thirds and pot up cuttings.
- Lightly trim grevilleas to shape in preparation for a flush of autumn and winter flowers.

propagate

- Collect seed of annuals such as cosmos, larkspur, honesty and late poppies for sowing next spring.
- Strike cuttings of daphne to plant out for winter fragrance.

special care

- Protect worm farms from extreme heat by moving to a shady spot and covering with a moistened hessian bag.
- Move heat-sensitive potted plants to cool, protected positions away from hot, reflective surfaces.
- Treat potting mixes with a wetting agent to saturate any damaging dry patches. Add a slow-release fertiliser to the potting mix as well to replenish nutrients being leached by heat and frequent watering.

step by step how to grow your own box of herbs for tea



1. Fill a hessian-lined crate or planter box two-thirds full with premium-quality potting mix. Ensure there are enough drainage holes in the bottom.



2. Start with the largest herbs, placing them in the planter and filling in with potting mix. Firm down as you go. Water in well.



3. Try lemon verbena, lemon balm, hyssop, chamomile, spearmint, peppermint, basil, thyme and dill; or choose your own favourite herbs.



4. Infuse freshly cut herbs in boiling water using sachets or a tea infuser. Try this flavour combination of chamomile with apple mint.

60 minutes



plant

- Fill gaps with autumn perennials such as aster and windflower (*Anemone x hybrida*). Frothy plants such as the white-flowering *Euphorbia* 'Diamond Frost' are also a great choice as they quickly grow into any bare areas.
- Direct-sow native wildflowers or plant in pots.
- Plant nerine bulbs now for wonderful autumn displays in vivid pink.

feed & water

- Give some respite to baking hot soils by replenishing mulch. Water deeply, and then spread the mulch to a depth of 5cm. Give trees a big drink, especially where the summer is long and dry.

prune

- Cut whippy wisteria canes to just above the third bud from the base.
- Prune repeat-flowering tea roses in preparation for a peak flush of blooms in April. Remove dead, diseased and crossing wood. Trim the remaining growth by about a third, cutting just above an outward-facing bud. Fertilise, water well and renew mulch.

propagate

- Some native shrubs, such as wax flowers (*Chamelaucium* spp. and *Philotheca* spp.) and bottlebrushes (*Melaleuca* spp. and *Callistemon* spp.), can be propagated from semi-hardwood cuttings. Take 10cm-long pieces from young shoot tips that are just firm enough to snap, dip the ends in rooting hormone powder and strike them in a pot filled with a 1:1 mix of coarse sand and coir peat. Keep moist and cover the tops of pots with a plastic bag.
- Take cuttings of abelia, azalea, buddleja, camellia, gardenia and viburnum.
- Propagate rhaps palm by separating healthy suckers from established plants. Choose healthy suckers up to 50cm tall. Carefully clear the soil from around the base and cut them away from the main plant using sharp secateurs. Plant the divisions into pots filled with potting mix. Keep them moist in a shady spot and feed them fortnightly with liquid fertiliser. Once roots have filled the pots, plant them out or pot them up into a larger container.
- Lift and divide congested bulbs to propagate and reinvigorate them. In warm areas, dig up clivia (right), crinum and hippeastrum. In cool areas, liberate crowded spring bulbs such as daffodil, freesia and tulip.



5 minutes

remove suckers from roses by pruning them hard at ground level



in the tropics

plant

- Sow seeds of flowering annuals in pots and punnets for planting out in autumn. Include petunia, zinnia, marigold, pansy, phlox, sweet pea (above) and sunflower for a stunning display in your garden. Seeds are cheap and are best sown while fresh, so consider planting the whole packet to create a mass display of vibrant colour this coming autumn.

feed & water

- Mozzies are breeding like crazy in the wet season. Remove breeding sites in your garden by picking up fallen palm leaves and other debris that hold water. Ensure your ponds are stocked with fish that feed on mosquito larvae.

prune

- Cut back yuccas that have grown too high.

propagate

- Strike cuttings of your favourite flowering shrubs. Take tip-cuttings in the early morning. If you're not ready to pot them up, keep in a plastic bag with a bit of water in a cool spot.
- Desert roses are easy to grow from seed. Remove the seeds from the pods and lightly cover with seed-raising mix. They will shoot readily within a week or so. Transplant to a larger pot and keep moist, but don't overwater.

special care

- Move dry-loving succulents to a covered position to avoid waterlogging in the wet.
- If you're sowing seeds, control the amount of water they receive. Small seeds can be washed out of pots with heavy rain, while other seeds, such as sweet pea, will rot.

pest alert

Be on the lookout for...

- ★ **Grasshoppers feasting on foliage.** Squash or spray with Eco-Neem.
 - ★ **Control powdery mildew on roses and crepe myrtles.** Spray with wettable sulfur in the cool of the morning.
 - ★ **Two-spotted mites.** Apply horticultural soap spray, wetting the undersides of leaves. Look for distinctive 'spider' webbing.
- For more pest and disease advice, see page 78.**

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GATED GARDEN

Two elegant stag sculptures guard the entrance to the Italian garden and pool at Coombe.



some kind of wonderful

words by MARCELLE NANKERVIS photography by VIRGINIA CUMMINS

The historic Yarra Valley estate of legendary opera singer Dame Nellie Melba is now open to the public, showcasing the work of landscape gardener William Robert Guilfoyle





RICH HISTORY
Clockwise from far left A tall hedge surrounds the gardens; Lady Vestey was christened in this birdbath; this oak is thought to be 180 years old; Daniel Johnson has been cottage manager for 12 years. **Opposite** The swimming pool is shrouded by white wisteria.

Sweeping lawns, grand vistas and an opulence that time has long forgotten, Coombe – The Melba Estate is as decadent today as it was in the early 1900s, when Dame Nellie Melba lived there. The residence was designed and constructed by John Grainger, while the grounds are the work of prominent landscape gardener William Robert Guilfoyle.

Opening to the public for the first time in mid 2014, Coombe has been in Dame Nellie's family since she purchased it in 1909, and it's possibly even more magnificent today than it was back then. In recent years it has been preserved, restored and improved, with major works preparing the estate for visitors.

The grounds comprise 24ha, with additional land for vineyards, and 2.8ha of gardens surrounding Coombe Cottage. The cottage was Dame Nellie's Australian

home until her passing in 1931, when it was bequeathed to her granddaughter, Lady Pamela Vestey.

Lady Vestey had vivid memories of her grandmother, and was well-versed on the reasons why Dame Nellie had made many of the decisions regarding the property's layout and structure. It was with this knowledge that Lady Vestey employed Daniel Johnson as the cottage manager, and the two worked tirelessly to return Coombe – The Melba Estate to its former glory.

"When I first visited Coombe, I was in awe," says Daniel. "I always knew it was something wonderful. This is the feeling I hope others will have when they visit and explore the Melba family's legacy."

When Lady Vestey passed away in 2011, Daniel took the responsibility for realising her dream and sharing this very special place with the public. ►



about our dame

Born Helen Porter Mitchell in 1861 in Richmond, Victoria, Dame Nellie Melba went to school at Presbyterian Ladies' College, where she studied many things, including singing and piano. After the death of her mother and sister in 1880, she moved to Mackay, Queensland, where she met Charles Nisbett Frederick Armstrong. The two were married in 1882 and, not long after, had a son called George (Lady Vestey's father). A couple of years later, Dame Nellie returned to Melbourne and made her debut as a singer.

In 1886, she accompanied her father to London and then Paris. It was about this time that she took on her stage name of Melba, after her hometown, Melbourne. Dame Nellie made her debut as an opera singer in 1887 in Brussels in the role of Gilda in *Rigoletto*. She went on to perform a range of roles at Covent Garden, eventually earning her own permanent dressing room. She and her husband divorced in 1900.

In the early 1900s, Melba purchased a house at Great Cumberland Place, London, which would be her home for more than 20 years. In 1902, she returned to Australia on tour, setting a world record with the profits from one of her Sydney shows. She returned to London in 1903, touring Europe and America in the years that followed.

In 1909, she returned to Australia again, this time touring regional areas as well as the capital cities. It was during this visit that she purchased an old dairy at Coldstream, now known as Coombe. She was appointed DBE (Dame Commander) in 1918 and then GBE (Dame Grand Cross) in 1927. She spent her time between Australia and Europe, before passing away in Sydney in 1931 at the age of 69.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE MELBA ESTATE (DAME NELLIE MELBA)

“I always knew it was something wonderful. This is the feeling I hope others will have when they visit”

“ Seeing people
immersed in the
magic of Coombe
is just what Lady
Vestey wanted ”

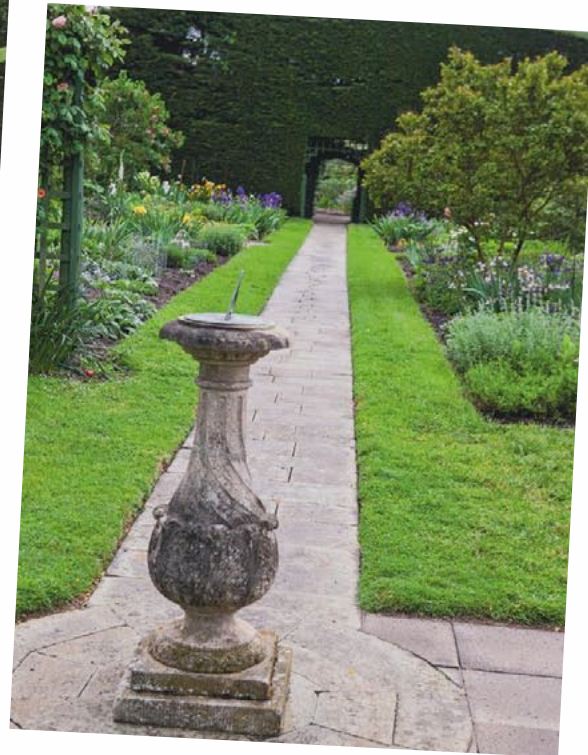




GRAND ESTATE

Clockwise from far left

Screens and hedging divide the garden into rooms; Coombe Cottage; vistas and focal points are tell-tale Guilfoyle design influences; pencil pines create a dramatic garden feature; the perennial border changes with each season.



Daniel and his team have worked hard to deliver a truly unique experience in keeping with the illustrious history of this great family. The transformation began by converting several outbuildings into a gallery, a cellar door, a provedore and a restaurant, which specialises in seasonal dishes with ingredients gathered from the property's vegetable garden and grounds.

the evolution of Coombe

The gardens have also been painstakingly restored and improved, with each generation bringing something special to the grounds. Dame Nellie oversaw the original works, carried out by William Guilfoyle, which is evident in the sweeping vistas and magnificent specimen trees.

As a strong woman with her own ideas, Dame Nellie was known for changing plans to appeal to her own sensibilities. The result is a garden that shows a humour and frivolity that she reserved for her family.

Completely surrounded by a spectacular cypress hedge and Coldstream stone wall, the garden is like something out of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, with each area revealing something new and wonderful. From the majestic large oak standing sentry at Coombe Cottage, to the croquet lawn, tennis court, rose arbor, native garden, vegetable garden, perennial border, Italian garden and famous pool, each area has its own personality and style.

Lady Vestey transformed an old bitumen tennis court into a spectacular native garden and frog pond. This is a classic example of her empathy for Dame Nellie's

wishes, all the while improving the garden for future generations. After Lady Vestey's passing, her daughter-in-law added a new chapter to the Coombe estate story by introducing the rose gardens. This addition was only implemented after consultation with Flemington Racecourse's rose expert, Terry Freeman. It's with this attention to detail that each piece of the Coombe puzzle has been crafted, and the result is breathtaking.

"Seeing children playing on the lawns, chefs gathering fresh herbs for the kitchen, and people immersed in the magic of Coombe is just what Lady Vestey wanted," says Daniel. "I feel so fortunate to have played a small part in the realisation of her wishes."

The main house remains the private residence of Dame Nellie Melba's family, who still enjoy a great deal of time at the property when in Australia.

Whether you're a history buff, foodie or gardener, Coombe – The Melba Estate hits all the right notes. **GA**

more information

Coombe – The Melba Estate is open Thursday–Monday, 9am–5pm. Coombe is located at 673–675 Maroondah Highway, Coldstream, Victoria, in the Yarra Valley. Garden tours are conducted at 10am and 2pm. Bookings essential. For more information, visit coombeyarravalley.com.au.



easy does it

An ailing body is no reason to give up gardening, but it can throw up obstacles. Here's how to garden safely within your limits with the help of some handy tools

There are lots of gardeners out there who live with, what shall we say – difficulties. Bulging discs, dodgy knees, arthritic wrists and all sorts of chronic conditions can make gardening just as much a pain as a pleasure. But it's easy to get caught up in the heat of the gardening moment. When you're warmed up and moving, the pain doesn't seem so bad, so you think, "I'll just do this one last thing and then I'll stop."

It's also easy to forget that there are some basic rules about moving, bending and stretching. Here are 10 ways to make life easier for yourself in the garden and, over the page, some tools and devices designed to help those with reduced strength, flexibility or mobility. Safe gardening!

1 Have a plan and stick to it. So, you're going to weed around the roses and plant the frangipani and maybe prune the hebe out the front. That's all. You can't then get involved in six other jobs and expect to feel fabulous the next day.

2 Raise your work area. Most gardeners find that doing jobs such as sowing a tray of seeds, or potting up something small is best done at waist height. That's why the potting bench was invented. Anything at the right height can double as a potting bench, so keep your eye out for a piece of old furniture at home you could recycle. Similarly, raised garden beds are fabulous for those who can't bend or kneel with ease.



“If life’s too short to wait for rain, and your soil is dry and compacted, consider getting an electric tiller, which churns the soil”

3 Move with your work. Keep your work in front of you, instead of twisting and leaning. Reposition yourself as you weed your way around a bed. Try to mix up your jobs, too. It might be tempting to do all the pruning in one day, but you’re risking a repetitive strain injury.

4 Pick the right tools. Choose tools that fit your hand properly and feel balanced for the way you work. Aim for a comfortable grip – squeezing too hard can strain the muscles. The best tools are those that require less input from the user to achieve the same result. With pruners, for example, there are two types of blade systems: bypass, in which both blades make the cut as they pass each other; and anvil or ratchet, which work a bit like a guillotine. The branch you’re cutting is held on the lower blade, which is flat (the ‘anvil’), and the top blade does the cutting. This means you can make a cut, rest your hand without the blades springing back into position, cut some more and rest, until you’re through the wood.

5 Keep your tools sharp. Dull shears make for dull aches and pains afterwards. You can get a sharpening file from a hardware store or, if you don’t want to do the job yourself, take your tools to a knife or saw sharpener. You’ll find mobile services online, who’ll pick up and deliver. Farmers’ markets sometimes have a tool sharpener on hand.

6 Save on heavy lifting. Always use a wheelbarrow to move heavy bags of compost or manure around. If there’s someone else on hand, ask them to lift them into the barrow for you – or do it together. I leave bags of materials on the ground and scoop out what I need into medium-sized plastic pots I can easily carry in each hand. It means more trips, but less pain.

7 Take a rest. Position a garden seat somewhere convenient. Or a milk crate. Take off the gloves and have a drink of water and sit still. Survey what you’ve done; focus on that, not on what you haven’t completed.

8 Work with the weather. Clearly, if you have a condition, such as arthritis, that responds to ambient temperature and humidity, you’re probably not going to enjoy gardening early on a winter’s morning, or going out there at noon on a scorcher. Rain always makes gardening easier, doing the watering for you, and softening the soil. Weeding and planting are best done when the soil is moist, to reduce pressure on your hands and wrists. If life’s too short to wait for rain, and your soil is dry and compacted, consider getting an electric tiller, which churns the soil, and dislodges weeds.

9 Add padding. Thickly padded gardening gloves absorb shock and vibration, and protect sore joints. Likewise knee pads – either the sort you strap to your legs, or a good quality kneeling pad. Some come with handles on each side to help you get back up.

10 Reduce your workload. Drip irrigation and self-watering containers can save you lots of time and effort. Plant choice always affects workload – think about limiting the number of high-maintenance plants you have. And, if you’re trying to do a job that’s too hard for you, ask someone for help! ►

ROBOTIC LAWNMOWERS
Are we there yet?
Yes – but they’re expensive. They cost a few thousand dollars at the moment, which is probably three or more years’ worth of Mower Man money (if you farm this job out) or a REAL lot of plant purchases! But the future looks bright.

when you’ve overdone it

Cassandra Hodgkinson, sports physiotherapist at PhysioSport O’Connor, ACT, says that if you’re in pain for more than two hours after you stop gardening, or you’re sore the next day, you’ve probably overdone it.

As a first line of treatment, she suggests:

- Anti-inflammatories
- Ice or compression on the site of pain
- Elevation
- Maintaining a gentle range of motion

If pain lingers more than a couple of days, seek medical advice. And wait until the flare has completely subsided before gardening again. In the meantime, try some gentle walking or swimming.

tools to try

Here's a small selection of tools designed for gardeners with reduced strength, mobility or flexibility, including secateurs, weeding tools, kneeling pads, and more

For more tools and solutions, contact Independent Living Centres Australia. Visit ilcaustralia.org.au.

pruning

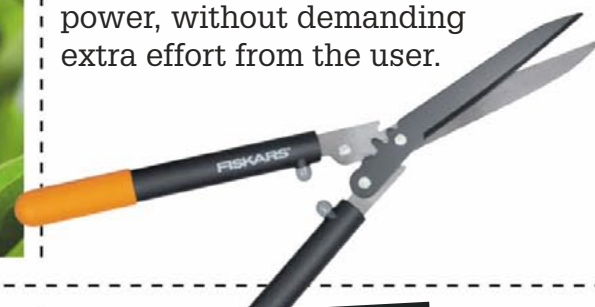


Felco 200A-40, \$140. Good for people who have severe arthritis. Ultra lightweight carbon fibre handles with a non-slip coating. The narrow anvil blade gives good access in tight spots. The cutting effort is also spread over both hands.

Gardena Comfort Bypass 8792 Secateurs, \$49.95. Ergonomic handles, and a switch to adjust how far they open, depending on hand size. There are two holding positions – one for normal cutting (up to 22mm thick) and the other for snipping thin material.



Fiskars PowerGear Hedge Shear, \$75. This is the first hedge shear to earn an ease-of-use commendation from the Arthritis Foundation. The patented PowerGear mechanism generates up to 35 per cent more cutting power, without demanding extra effort from the user.

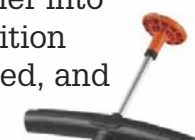
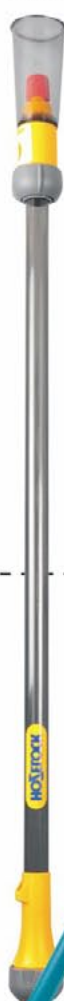


weeding



Fiskars Weed Puller W52, \$55. An upright weeder that makes life easier for those who can't bend. Push the tool into the ground with your foot, turn the dial at the top to make the four claws grab the weed, and turn it again to release the weed.

Hozelock Wonderweeder, \$34.99. Comfortably sits in the hand. Precision-sprays weeds without any bending. Pour weedkiller into top, position over weed, and lean on button at the top.



Gardena Weeding Trowel, \$39.95.

Pull out weeds with no bending. Press blades into soil around weed, twist device 180°, and lift. Press the ejector button to release weed. Best for long taproot weeds.



adapt your tools

Peta Easi-Grip Add-on Handles, \$29.90 (pack of two). Adapt your existing tools so that the pressure is off your wrists, and the hand and wrist is put into an upright, ergonomic position. On long tools, such as rakes, these handles help prevent damage that can be caused by twisting and bending. With long tools, use two – clamp one at the top of the tool, and one further down the handle.





Felco Rotating Handle Secateurs, \$122-\$129. Bypass blade system. The handles roll as you work, allowing fingers to move naturally, cutting down on fatigue and soreness. Rubber cushioning helps to prevent wrist strain. The Felco 7 (above) is for right handers, Felco 10 is for left handers, and Felco 12 is made for those with small hands.

digging & cultivating



Peta Easi-Grip Garden Fork, \$29.90. Take the pressure off wrists and hands with this tool. The grip is non-slip, even when it's wet.

Peta Easi-Grip Long Reach Trowel, \$49.90. Suitable for those with a weak grip or who can't bend or who need to sit while gardening. Use with an arm cuff to help distribute the weight.



kneeling



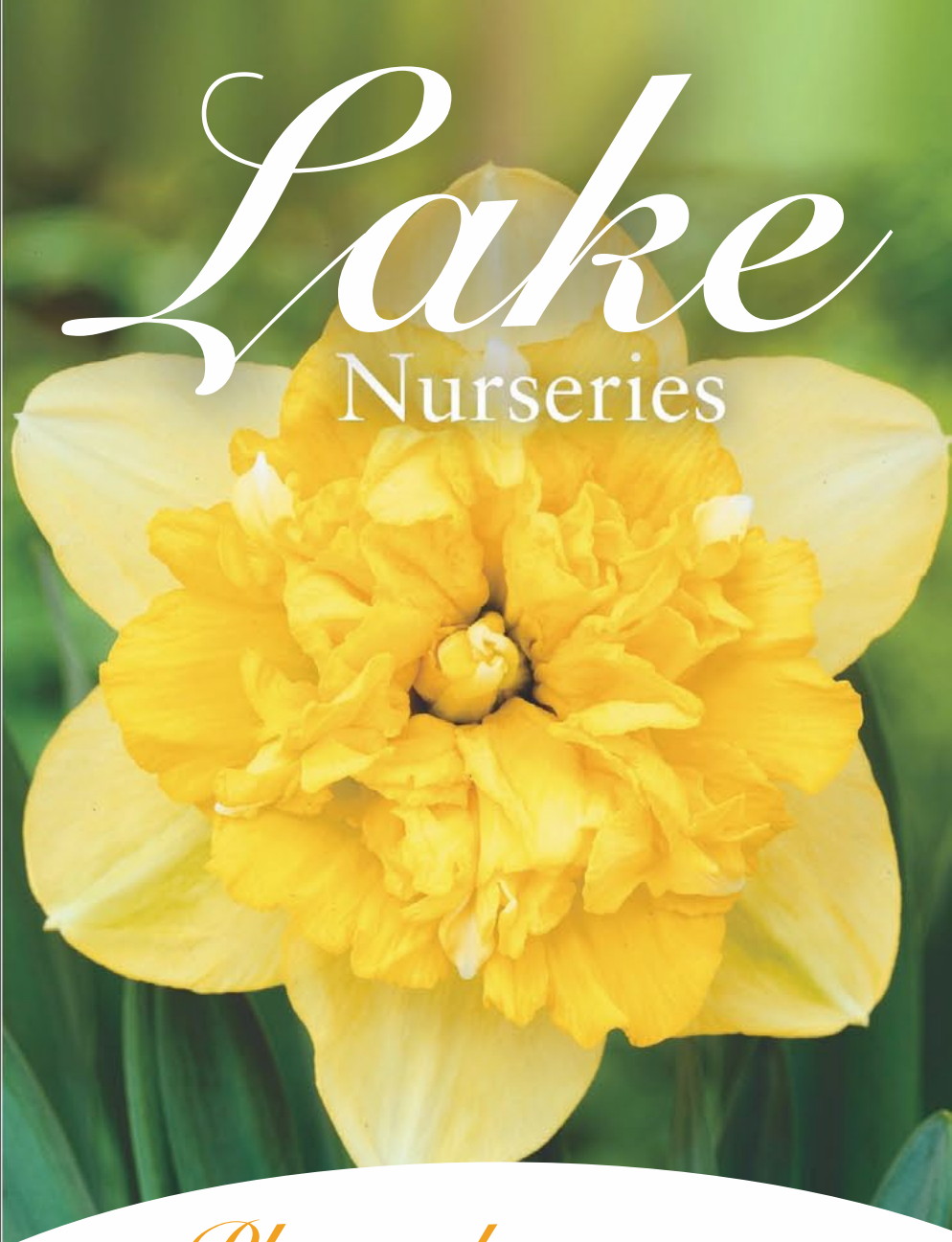
HomeLeisure Ezykneel Kneeling Pad, \$36. Steel frame with ribbed handles to push up from. Soft padded kneeling platform. Lightweight.

Ozito Garden Kneeling Pad KNP-100, \$27.95.

Use as a kneeling pad or seat. Folding legs make it easy to transport and store. It can handle up to 100kg of weight.



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breath of fresh air

Warm weather and a high pollen count are often the triggers for hayfever and respiratory ailments. Make your garden allergy friendly with these tips

As a hayfever sufferer who works in the garden industry, my allergies can be particularly frustrating. It causes itchy, watery eyes and a runny nose, and, in my case, is triggered by pollen-producing weeds in gardens other than my own.

Australia and New Zealand have among the highest prevalence of allergic disorders in the developed world, and these, such as hayfever, asthma and dermatitis, can all be triggered by plants. The Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy estimates two in five Australians are affected by hayfever or some other environmental allergy.

Hayfever, also known as allergic rhinitis, is the most common. It's the body's immune response to inhaled pollen or other allergens, which react with the eyes, sinuses, nose and airways. Pollen disperses over long

distances and can trigger asthma and contact dermatitis.

Unless you stay inside every day, it's impossible to avoid allergy triggers, but you can design a garden that's free of the plants that are known to cause these discomforts.

For people with asthma, a sensitive design in the garden is especially important as moulds, rotting leaves or air-borne pollen can set off an asthma attack.

We should all take precautions in the garden, such as using a mask and gloves when turning the compost heap or working with potting mix, and this is even more important if you suffer from an allergic disorder.

worst offenders

The simple rule when designing a low-allergy garden is to choose plants pollinated by birds, animals or insects, rather than the wind, as

these are much less likely to cause allergic reactions. But there are triggers for allergic reactions that can be set off by things other than pollen. Some people react to highly perfumed plants and others can get a skin rash by touching certain species. Common offenders include chrysanthemum, primula, poinsettia, tomato plants, English ivy and rhus trees. Photo-contact dermatitis, caused by a combination of sunlight and plant contact, is less common but can be caused by lantana or vegetables such as parsnip or celery.

Some people are allergic to the hairs on plants, such as the fine strands on forget-me-not stems or kangaroo paw, but wearing gloves usually solves this issue.

Allergies to grevillea are very common, especially *Grevillea robusta* and *Grevillea* ►

high pollen producers

alder, ash, birch, conifers, elm, ginkgo, hazel, liquidambar, maple, mulberry, oak, plane tree, pistachio, poplar, walnut and willow.

Pollen disperses over long distances and can trigger asthma and contact dermatitis





POLLEN PROBLEM

Most native Australian plants, such as this *Corymbia*, are safe for allergy sufferers.

top tips for allergy sufferers

- Use antihistamines before working in the garden.
- Garden outdoors when pollen counts are low, usually in the early morning and late evening.
- Avoid gardening on dry, windy days when pollen counts are high.
- Cover up with long-sleeved shirts and pants, gloves and sunglasses (or goggles) to protect skin from pollen and mould.
- Don't touch your face and eyes while working outdoors.
- Get someone else to maintain the lawn, as mowing throws pollen into the air.
- Avoid using leaf blowers.
- In high pollen times, avoid the garden during light rains or while using reticulation that creates a light spray.
- Change clothing after gardening, and shower to remove allergens from skin and hair.

PHOTO JENNIFER ANDERSON

"Look for flowering plants with nectar, as these plants transfer their pollen to other flowers via insects"

'Robyn Gordon', a hybrid between *G. bipinnatifida* and a red flowering form of *G. banksii*, so it makes sense to exclude these if you or a member of your family is sensitive to plants.

Some of the biggest producers of pollen are trees from the Northern Hemisphere (see box on previous page). However, you don't need to ban all these trees from your garden as some, such as conifers, poplar, pistachio, ginkgo and maple, are dioecious, which means there are both male and female trees. Simply plant a female tree as only the male produces the pollen.

Native Australian trees with troublesome pollen include the she-oak, bottlebrush, wattle and grass trees.

Most annual plants are fine to plant near the home, but avoid calendula daisies, chrysanthemum and marigold.

lawn solutions

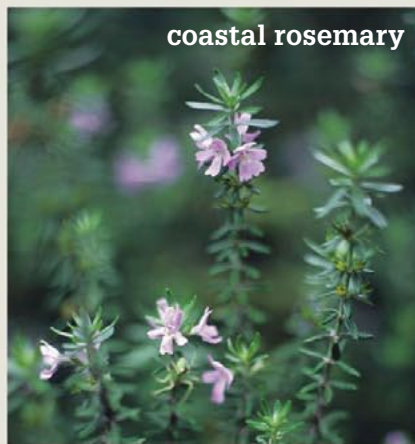
Home lawns can also create pollen problems and can be the main cause of allergies in the suburbs. Pollen in cool-climate grasses such as rye (*Lolium* sp.), in lawn seed mixes, and Kentucky bluegrass can be dramatically reduced if lawn is kept short. The exception is couch grass (aka Bermuda grass, *Cynodon dactylon*), which still releases pollen when cut low.

find out more

- Asthma Australia is made up of the seven state foundations. Contact Asthma Australia for your local organisation. 1800 278 462 or asthmaaustralia.org.au.
- Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy (ASCIA) Pollen Calendar. allergy.org.au
- Visit the Asthma and Allergy Friendly Garden at Eden Gardens, cnr Lane Cove and Fontenoy Rds, Macquarie Park, NSW. edengardens.com.au



camellia



coastal rosemary



flowering prunus



pincushion hakea



snake vine

recommended plants

- **camellia** (*Camellia* spp.) Grown as a small shrub or tree up to 10m (most are smaller) with glossy green foliage and spectacular single or double flowers in autumn and winter. Slow growing.
- **Chinese lantern** (*Abutilon x hybridum*) Evergreen shrubs 2m high by 2m wide with maple-like leaves and hibiscus-like flowers.
- **citrus** Small orange, lemon, lime, mandarin and grapefruit trees to 4m with glossy green foliage, white flowers, and fruit in winter and spring.
- **coastal rosemary** (*Westringia fruticosa*) Fine, dense foliage and small flowers. Reaches 2m high by 5m wide. Many hybrids are great for hedging.
- **flowering prunus** (*Prunus* spp.) Deciduous almond, apricot, cherry or plum trees. Growing 2–5m high with beautiful blossoms from winter to spring.
- **frangipani** (*Plumeria* spp.) Small, mostly deciduous, tropical trees to 5m high with thick, succulent stems and scented flowers.
- **grass tree** (*Xanthorrhoea* spp.) Sculptural, slow-growing, small trees topped with needle-like leaves. Flowers on a spear.
- **kentia palm** (*Howea forsteriana*) Indoor or outdoor palm with a slender trunk and drooping green fronds. Grows to 4m in a garden setting.
- **pincushion hakea** (*Hakea laurina*) Shrubby tree growing to 3m with spectacular round, red flowers with cream stamens.
- **snake vine** (*Hibbertia scandens*) Sprawling native groundcover or climber. 3–5m long with year-round large golden-yellow flowers.



Buffalo grass and native varieties, such as kangaroo and wallaby grasses, produce less pollen and are a better choice for allergy sufferers.

Always cut grasses back before they release their pollen. The right lawn can ease allergies by trapping pollen so it does not blow around, and rain or watering helps move the pollen between the leaf blades and into the ground. An alternative is to replace lawn with a groundcover such as kidney weed (*Dichondra repens*), thyme, native violet or creeping boobialla (*Myoporum parvifolium*).

If you have allergies, it's best to not mow your lawn. If you have to do it, wear protective glasses and a mask.

plant selection

There's a huge range of plants that suit a low-allergy garden. Look for flowering plants with nectar, as these plants transfer their pollen to other flowers via birds and insects. Most plants with big colourful flowers are safe as these are attractors for pollinating insects and birds.

Favourite plants include hibiscus, lavender, pansy and petunia; along with nectar-rich Australian plants such as banksia and flowering gums. Also good are foliage plants without significant flowers such as cordyline, New Zealand flax or succulents.

Team these with a low-allergy lawn and you'll be on the right track to a healthier life with a wheeze- and sneeze-free backyard. **GA**

CURSE OR SALVATION?

Paterson's curse is capable of producing more than 5000 seeds per plant, per year. **Above** Frangipani is an allergy-friendly option.



weeds of significance

Weeds produce lots of pollen, so pull them out before they flower.

■ **Asthma weed** (aka pellitory, *Parietaria judaica*) a Mediterranean weed flourishing from Brisbane to Perth, preferring chalky soils and hiding in cracks in concrete.

■ **Common ragweed** (*Ambrosia artemisiifolia*) was introduced from the US in pasture seed and has spread through Queensland and northern New South Wales.

■ **Parthenium** (*Parthenium hysterophorus*), also introduced

from the US. This vigorous weed is found in Central Queensland.

■ **Paterson's curse** (*Echium plantagineum*), also known as salvation Jane, a purple-flowered weed common throughout Australia.

■ **Wild oats** (*Avena fatua*), found in wastelands and gardens across all Australian states and territories.

■ **Winter grass** (*Poa annua*) is one of the worst offenders in home gardens and is a very common annual lawn weed, growing 3–4cm tall and flowering in winter and spring.



gardener of the year

winner!
**YOUNG
GARDENER OF
THE YEAR**



budding talent

At just 18, Ana Daw from Chidlow in Western Australia feeds her whole family with the organic produce she grows. Our 2014 Young Gardener of the Year shares her story

words by KATRINA SICHLAU photography by JOEL BARBITTA



FRESHLY PICKED Clockwise from above Beetroot ready for harvest; Frieda gets a treat from Ana; fresh silverbeet; snapdragon makes a pretty cut flower. **Opposite** Ana looks after the 250m² garden alone. **Inset** 2014 Young Gardener of the Year, Ana Daw.



For 18-year-old Ana Daw, gardening is about being self-sufficient. “My aim is to grow as much of what we eat as possible, so I plant the vegetables that my family likes,” she says. Fortunately for Ana, who feeds her family year-round with the fruit and vegetables she grows, they’re not fussy, so she can grow almost anything she wants.

“I’ve got corn, snow peas, beetroot, carrots, tomatoes, eggplant, basil, lettuce, zucchini, squash, cucumber, pumpkin, Jerusalem artichoke, globe artichoke, silverbeet, onions and beans growing at the moment,” she says, reeling off an impressive list. “I’ve also got strawberries, and the blackberry vine is full of berries.” And that’s just this season’s crops!

Not a bad effort, especially considering she mostly looks after the 250m² garden in Chidlow, Western Australia by herself. The garden – which was started by Ana’s mother, Emannuelle, 12 years ago – is now Ana’s responsibility.

Inspired by her mother and grandparents, who are also keen gardeners, Ana first became interested in growing plants at the age of three, when she was given a small space of her own to plant some flowers. As she got older, she began to help her mother in the vegie patch with weeding and planting and, over the years, gradually took on more and more of the work.

Gardening, Ana says, has taught her many things, including patience and perseverance. “I grow anything that grows easily, but if it’s harder, I keep trying until I succeed.” Beans and peas are currently giving her grief, but she’s determined to keep trying.

In addition to her produce garden, Ana also grows statice, calendula, sweet peas, geraniums, poppies, lavender, stocks, dianthus and daisies so there are always some cut flowers

in the house as well. While Ana takes care of the vegie patch alone, her younger sister, Yami, often helps with the flowers.

by the light of the moon

Ana gardens in accordance with the lunar calendar, which means her planting is dictated by the different phases of the moon. The first quarter, she explains, is for planting leafy vegetables, the second is for fruiting and flowering vegetables, the third is for root vegetables and the fourth is good for pruning, making mulch, and doing jobs other than planting. “Every year now I buy a moon planting calendar, which tells me what days

I grow anything that grows easily, but if it’s harder, I keep trying until I succeed

to plant on for the whole year,” says Ana. Interestingly, she’s found that when it’s planting time, it’s often cloudy or rainy. “If something needs to be planted, I have to do it on that day, which means even if it’s raining I’ll still go out,” she says.

An average day for Ana involves getting up at 7am, having breakfast, then letting out the chooks, and giving the cows and horses their hay. Next she heads down to the shed to milk her cow, Frieda. “I wanted a cow for the fresh milk,” she says. Ana uses the milk to make yoghurt, cheese and custard. Her sister makes ice-cream and butter, if there’s enough cream. ►

It's a wonderful thing to be able to eat food from your garden and pick flowers from the plants you've planted



Once she's done with the milking, Ana will often head out into the vegie garden and do a spot of weeding. Watering and planting seedlings are jobs that are left until later in the day.

reaping the rewards

Although she's not one to brag, Ana is almost as proficient in the kitchen as she is in the garden. Once the fruit and vegetables are ripe for the picking, she harvests them and turns her bounty into fresh, seasonal dishes. Among her culinary specialties are onion, leek, or silverbeet pie; vegetable pizza; stir-fries and curries; as well as a variety of soups, salads, pickles and chutneys.

This end result is just one of the reasons Ana loves to garden. "Gardening is very rewarding and fun. It's a wonderful thing to be able to eat food from your own garden and pick flowers from the plants you've planted, or drink your own herbal tea."

While the garden is big enough for now, Ana plans to continue growing food for her family to become even more self-sufficient. "Every year I keep planting more of everything that we didn't have enough of the year before," she says. "For example, last year I planted about 3m² of potatoes, which only lasted us a couple of weeks, whereas this year I've planted more than 20m² of potatoes so we'll have enough to last us a few months at least."

ALL IN A DAY'S WORK

Clockwise from left Large cabbages ripe for the picking; Ana hard at work; flowers, such as these daisies, also feature in the garden.

She's also had a proposition to help set up a vegie garden for someone else, with the intention of growing organic fruits and vegetables, and selling them locally. The project has a lot of potential, Ana explains, as there's a high demand in her area for locally grown produce. She's keen to give it a go.

At some stage in the not-too-distant future, Ana would like to try WWOOFing (Willing Worker On Organic Farms) to gain some experience working on other farms. Having had WWOOFers help out on the family property for the past 12 years, she would like to try it for herself. "It's been really nice growing up with young backpackers from around the world, teaching us different things from their country."

"Gardening is a wonderful skill to have," Ana says, "and the rewards you get from it make up for the labour you've put in." With Ana's ongoing hard work, there's no doubt this young gardener has a bright and productive future ahead. **GA**

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best colour

Warm white light for your garden lighting creates an inviting and comfortable effect. By contrast, **cool white light** has a ghostly impact, which may be fine for Halloween but is not so ideal the rest of the year.

AS DUSK FALLS

Lights show off tree features and extend the time the outdoor area can be used.



lighting the way



With careful planning and some clever design ideas, lights can make all the difference to a night-time garden, says JOHN PATRICK. Find out how you can make the most of them

Lighting offers so many advantages to garden owners and its use is becoming far more widespread. Illuminating your garden makes a lot of sense in our climate where the use of gardens late into the evening can be a real bonus and, in winter, views into an attractive garden from inside your home bring another dimension to domestic life.

Lighting need not be expensive, especially when you think of the capital cost over the life of the garden scheme. The key to outdoor lighting is good planning on many levels – from what effect you want to achieve, to the location of wiring and lights, and your budget.

uses in the garden

Safety is the first consideration. Lighting is invaluable in emphasising steps, or the interface of paving and water. Using lights on a front path gives guests confidence as they stroll along an unfamiliar walkway and creates a warm welcome. Lighting here may be permanently on, could be switched on when you are expecting guests, or might be controlled by a motion sensor. Possums or pet dogs may trigger lights in these circumstances, so don't assume it's the best option.

Lighting can also be enabling. For example, around your barbecue it will make cooking easier, or on a pergola it could encourage you to eat outdoors more often or stay outside for longer.

prepare now for later

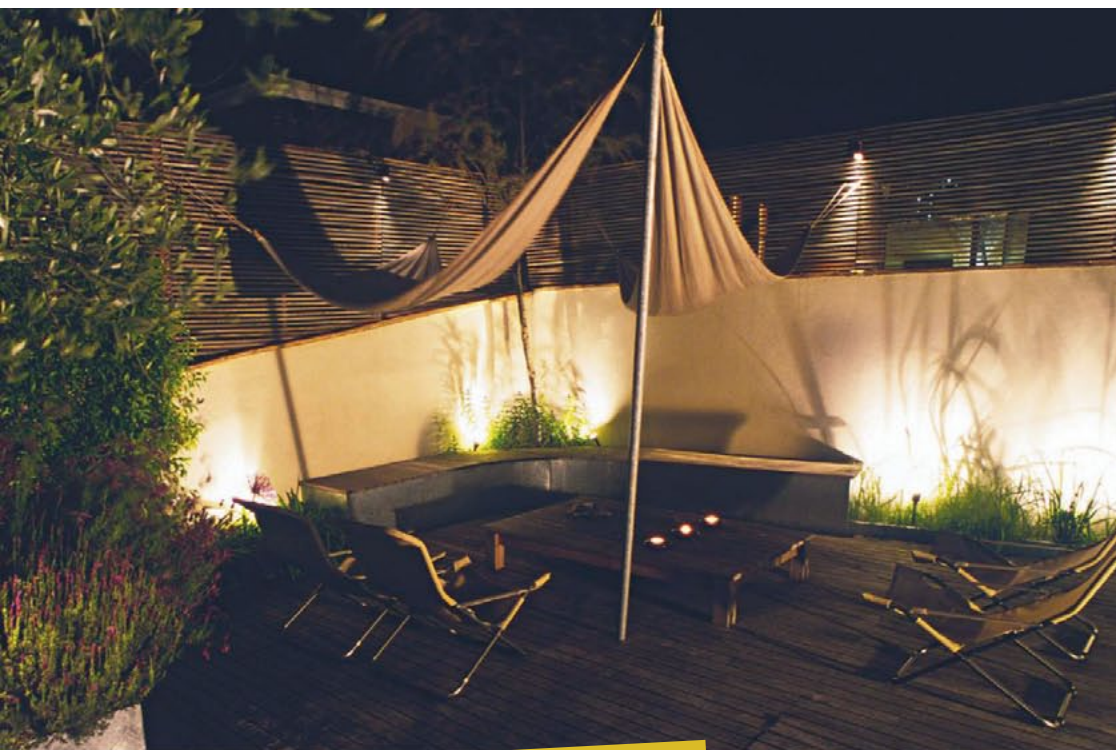
Often renovations go over budget, and lighting suffers as a result. If you're running low on cash, don't panic. You can put in a couple of spare extra switches for future lights, and put in pipes beneath drives, paths and terraces to allow lighting to be installed later.

On another level, outdoor lighting gives a sense of increased security, a comfort for people at home who can notice movement in the garden, or for those away from home in the evening. If you are away for a prolonged period, don't leave your lights on during the day as it may signal your absence to potential rogues.

Fundamentally, lighting gives your garden the wow factor. Do be careful about this though; more is not necessarily better and a few well-placed lights often have greater impact than a blinding display. Select the positions of your lights carefully to maximise the aesthetic benefits you gain from them.

Remember, too, that external lighting is not just for your enjoyment when outside. Throughout the long winter nights there's much to be gained from looking out onto an appropriately lit garden. At my place, I have three large, up-lit pots strategically located to lead the eye into the garden. Up-lighting the trunks of beautiful trees, a fountain or a well-placed urn or sculpture can bring great rewards. Position lights for impact, such as outside a dining room window where your dinner party guests can enjoy a dazzling backdrop.

After deciding the role lighting will play, look at the types of available treatments. Up-lighting is ideal for illuminating an urn or tree trunk. Down-lighting is perfect to set on your pergola or house wall to illuminate an eating area. You may wish to wash a beautifully textured or coloured wall with low-intensity, general lighting to maximise the impact of it at night, or integrate step lighting into a path as you construct it. Thinking ahead is important here, just as it is if you want to use underwater lighting to illuminate a fountain; a trailing cable at the pond edge is always a sign of poor planning. Spreading light is perfect to light a large area, such as a driveway, but concentrated light is more appropriate for an accented effect. ►



light up your paving

Plan your use of lighting carefully to integrate it with paving. Choose light fittings that can sit flush with your paved surfaces, or with constructed walls, and which are sufficiently robust for the wear and tear of being walked over, or for cars to drive across.



"Outdoor conditions are often corrosive so metal fittings are likely to be longer-lasting and more resistant"

Direct lighting is not your only option, especially where you are attempting to highlight form and shape. Lighting to highlight silhouettes can make a fabulous impact. Use of this kind of lighting around dramatic plants, such as our native grass trees (*Xanthorrhoea* species), can be fantastic. This has value in native garden schemes where a less formal lighting impact is required. By contrast, I have recently prepared a plan with sparkling, jewel-like LED lights located within a paved terrace to create an outdoor dance floor.

choices available

Lighting costs vary enormously, depending on all types of elements. The more sophisticated the scheme, the more complex the switching, and the more robust the construction materials, the greater the cost. However, a visit to your local hardware store will reveal plenty of low-cost options you can implement yourself.

Solar lighting is especially suitable in this case, as cables and sophisticated switching systems aren't necessary, and you'll be surprised by the range of lighting types available, from playful fairy lighting that might delight children and grandchildren, to more sophisticated spotlights and path lighting systems.

Be sure to buy lights made from robust metals rather than plastic, as they will be more durable, and tolerate the odd football more effectively. Outdoor conditions are often corrosive, so metal fittings are likely to be longer-lasting and more resistant. Brass, copper, stainless steel and aluminium are all widely used and highly recommended for outdoors.

Energy efficiency is a key point when it comes to selecting appropriate lighting. Halogen lighting has been popular for many years and while it's relatively easy to install with good control of light, it uses a lot of energy, with about 95 per cent lost as heat. Today, LED lights are the best option. They have a long life of 10–15 years at full brightness, give off little heat, are extremely energy efficient and have low maintenance requirements. Most importantly, they are very versatile.

Once a rare garden feature, outdoor lighting has emerged from the dark ages to become an attractive and value-adding feature of landscape design. Yet, for the cost-conscious romantic, perhaps nothing beats the flickering light of a candle or two placed on your outdoor dining table! **GA**

PRO vs DIY

Those jaw-droppingly beautiful lighting schemes that you see on television and in books are generally professionally designed. While you may be able to prepare your own design for a small garden with basic lighting benefits, if you really want to create a wow factor a professional designer offers fantastic rewards. Approach one as your house and garden design are being developed to secure integration of switching, cabling and lights within an overall masterplan. Be mindful that designers may well have an interest in selling lights. Don't be pushed into having more lighting than you need. Keep the costs down by sourcing fittings directly from your designer, whose fees may be greatly reduced knowing that product sales may result.

WARM GLOW

Path lights create a welcoming first impression. **Top left** Up-lighting is used to great effect on this rooftop.





back to basics

taking the gloves off

Most people don a pair of gloves before they start work in the garden, but there are benefits to going without. ELAINE HARRIS, who tackles her jobs barehanded because she is blind, shares the rewards and perils



Wearing gardening gloves is *de rigueur*: it's the best way to guard against bites, stings, thorns and infections. It's not for everyone, though. My 90-year-old friend Edith loves to get her hands dirty

and even pulls out stinging nettles without gloves. I'm told, the quicker you do it, the less painful it is.

For me, no-gloves gardening is essential. I have no sight, so have to see by touch and smell. There are books and courses for gardeners who are blind but I've never read or studied them; I've simply learnt by experience. Ask others in my situation how they manage in the garden and you will doubtless receive answers as many and varied as the people you ask. I can only speak for myself.

I've always loved gardens, though I didn't own one until soon after my 30th birthday. The nature walks at my UK primary school where we learnt to tell the difference between ash and oak, dock and dandelion leaves, and collected leaves for the wormery were among my favourite lessons

there is Paterson's curse to remove before I find it – you can smell it from afar. Likewise, I know when the ivy is in flower. It smells awful.

The textures of plants are one of the pleasures of gloveless gardening but blackberries, thistles and nettles are more of a challenge.

How do I prune roses? Extremely carefully. The same goes for cutting out stray brambles or rooting out thistles. My worst enemy, though, has to be the dreaded stickyweed; it clings to and burns my skin as Galadriel's rope did to the hapless Gollum. It scrabbles and scrambles over everything in spring if you let it. I curse and mutter as I harvest, then howl later.

My cure-all for such gardening ills is to soak my hands in a mixture of lavender and tea tree oils, lavender disinfectant and very hot water. I'll also use antibacterial wash, along with soap and a nail brush. This is followed by heavy, repeated moisturising and, although Chris sometimes has to wield the tweezers, it works most of the time.

Care with secateurs is essential. I'm on notice; if I cut myself again, my husband will confiscate. It's not easy when you almost slice off part of your first finger and you read braille for your job, and have just begun one of Margaret Atwood's best novels.

“The textures of plants are one of the pleasures of gloveless gardening but blackberries, thistles and nettles are more of a challenge”

– even if I did get into trouble for carrying the leaves in my skirt. I adored planting hyacinths in class, then waiting for the first shoots to emerge.

Touch and smell tell you so much in the garden. Most plants have distinctive leaves, flowers, shapes or scents. It's a case of adding to your store of knowledge as you acquire more plants. Sage and fruit salad sage may be of the same genus but their leaves and flowers have different shapes, smells and textures. Most herbs are unmistakable once you get to know them, as are sunflowers. (It was my husband Chris, not me, who uprooted our sunflower seedlings and was most embarrassed when I pointed out that they were not weeds.) Tomato leaves have their own scent, and I know

Most of my plant mistakes have been caused by lack of experience – learning the hard way that cyclamens won't survive the bathroom any more than a rubber plant lives through a Canberra frost. The only real damage I almost did was attempting to uproot a thornless rose; it had no flowers on it at the time, and I didn't realise what it was until Chris demanded to know why I was pulling it out.

On a positive note, I find that working around herbs, deadheading hebes or pruning buddleja are all jobs that leave your hands smelling glorious. Brushing against cypress, lavender and rosemary do the same, while pruning them releases the oils both into the air and onto your hands – more uplifting than chocolate, and no calories. **GA**



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"My three-year-old son, Jake, and I are picking cherry tomatoes grown from seedlings as I'm too impatient to start from seed. We're also planting leafy greens - Jake loves the seed-sowing bit and I love the leaf-picking. If only Jake ate the spoils of our labour!" ally

the **kitchen** garden

beans

Phaseolus vulgaris An annual climber or bush with edible pods

Varieties

Climbing: Blue Lake, Kentucky Wonder, Lazy Housewife, Purple King, Rattlesnake. Bush: Dragon's Tongue, Gourmet Delight.

Planting & care

Plant out or direct sow, after risk of frost has passed, into a neutral to alkaline well-drained soil. They are best in full sun, with a good

layer of mulch to protect shallow roots. An ideal crop to plant after brassicas to fix nitrogen in the soil. Stagger sowing for a continuous supply. Climbing types need a trellis or a 'wigwam' of canes to give them support.

Harvesting & storing

Climbing types have a high yield. Bush types tend to crop at the one

time. Both will be ready to pick in 8–12 weeks. Pick when young for tenderness and often for more cropping. Store in fridge or freezer.

Nutrition

A source of iron, vitamin C and betacarotene.

✦ Turn to page 62 for some delicious bean recipes.



weird & wonderful

Appearances can be deceptive. Inside the rambutan's strange, hairy exterior is a smooth, fragrant fruit

Rambutans are my favourite fruit. They look gorgeous, with their bright red or yellow leathery skin covered in long tubercles. And they are delicious. The flesh is almost translucent (my mouth is watering) and when you pull the skin apart, there's a tear drop of sweet juice dripping from the pale flesh. Pop it into your mouth and that's what heaven tastes like.

They're the perfect fruit tree for a small house garden. They're compact, evergreen and have lovely shapely branches. When they're covered with bunches of bright red fruit, they're as beautiful as a flowering magnolia.

where do they grow?

Rambutans are native to Indonesia, and 'rambut' is the Malay word for hair. In warm, humid conditions, rambutans will produce fruit twice a year, in December and June. They are tropical plants, and thrive in Far North Queensland or the Top End of the Northern Territory.

With effort, a keen gardener can grow rambutans in subtropical climates. But if temperatures drop below 10°C, they really start to suffer, so they need a warm, protected microclimate. Old car tyres, brick walls and stone mulching can store the heat of the day and help keep the trees warmer at night.

There are about 50 varieties of rambutan in Australia, so check with your local fruit tree experts to find the one that's best suited to your specific climate.

planting & care

As rainforest trees, rambutans have evolved to thrive in deep, well-drained, moist soils with very high organic matter and a slightly acidic profile (pH 5.5–6.5). So, mulch your rambutans well – then mulch them some more.

The most important element for growing rambutans is a good supply of water through the year. A mature tree will drink 2000L a week in hot weather.

Rambutans are compact, evergreen and have lovely shapely branches. When they're covered with bunches of bright red fruit, they're as beautiful as a flowering magnolia

Rambutans grow easily from seed, but at least half the seedlings won't produce fruit and those that do may produce stringy fruit that sticks to the seed. Planting a graft will ensure you get quality fruit.

As they need lots of water, rambutans have an extensive root system. Grafted trees, however, have much smaller root systems than seedlings. Some growers plant two seedlings 50cm either side of a grafted tree. Once the trees are growing

happily, they approach-graft both seedlings to the grafted tree, tripling the graft's root system. (See *Step by Step*, right.)

Rambutans have to be left to ripen on the tree. The fruit will be ready to pick 2–3 weeks after they start to colour.

It's best to give the trees a tip-prune at harvest time, taking wood along with the bunches of fruit. This will encourage new growth and, in some areas, a second crop of the season.

Like all delicious fruit, rambutans can be attacked by pests such as caterpillars, beetles, red-banded thrips, mealy bug and scale. They can also get certain fungal infections. But the most damaging pests are rainbow lorikeets.

If you want to get any fruit at all, you must net your trees. Put the nets on as soon as the flowers set. The birds are after the seed, so they'll tear the fruit apart while it's still green. **GA**



how to approach-graft a rambutan



1. Plant three rootstock 50cm apart, with the marcotted tree in the centre. Fill the hole with water, then backfill and mulch well. Spray trees with liquid seaweed to limit transfer stress.



2. Remove lower branches. Pull one of the seedlings over to the grafted tree and, using your grafting knife, mark where they match together. The two trunks must touch for at least 2.5cm, preferably 5cm, with no space between them.



3. Remove the bark from the grafted tree inside the marked section. Do the same on the seedling. Repeat this process on the other side of the grafted tree for the other seedling.



4. With each side in position, wrap the grafts tightly in budding tape 2–3 times. Also tie with string above and below the graft. Remove 90 per cent of the leaves from the seedlings. Keep well watered, and they should be morphed in about a month.

growing essentials

Common name

rambutan

Botanical name

Nephelium lappaceum



■ suitable

↑ 6–10m

↔ 3–4m

☀ ☁ full sun/
semi-shade

🌧 rainy season

📅 December
and, in some
areas, June

growing tips

■ **Mulch** Rambutans rely heavily on a mat of feeder roots working close to the surface of the soil and extending way beyond the drip line. To ensure these roots can gobble up the enormous amounts of water and nutrients the plant needs to supply us with lots of fruit, it's important to keep these feeder roots healthy. We can do this by ensuring the soil doesn't get too hot or dry out under the trees – otherwise the feeder roots will die. Maintain a layer of mulch at least 10cm thick to at least 1m outside the tree canopy. Mulching will control weeds, supply humus, keep the soil cool and, as it retains moisture, it will increase the general humidity around the tree.

■ **Protection** Rambutans detest wind, especially hot dry winds. Plant them either on the lee side of a rainforest or behind a permanent windbreak. Circle young plants with a ring of shade cloth to help protect them from wind and sun damage during their first couple of years.

■ **Watering** Rambutans need daily watering. Make sure you irrigate at least 1m beyond the drip line.

■ **Feeding** Apply a good dose of organic fertiliser at flowering, and another just before harvest time when the fruit is changing colour. Add trace elements each season, along with a micronutrient spray, or lashings of compost each month.

■ **Sprays** Feeder roots rely on their associated fungus and micro-organisms to collect water and nutrients. Be aware that herbicides and artificial fertilisers will kill these fungi and micro-organisms.

hedge of glory

Why have an ornamental hedge, when you can have a productive one instead? Maximise your growing space with these edible options

An edible hedge can be the solution to many problems in the garden, especially if space is at a premium. With their small footprint, edible hedges take up far less room than full-size trees but still produce a bountiful harvest of fruit, nuts, vegetables and berries.

Even when space isn't an issue, a hedge shouldn't be just a pretty face. It's had time and money invested into it, so it has to pull its weight and produce food for the table, too. With dwarf, semi-dwarf and standard fruit and citrus trees now available, an edible hedge of any height can be planted to suit a variety of purposes, whether that's to provide privacy, hide the compost bins, cover an ugly fence or outline a path. An edible hedge can do all of the jobs that any other hedge can do, but give you food as well.

Single species hedges are the easiest to maintain but when the whole row fruits at once, it can send people like me into a right pickle at the thought of all that preserving and freezing. Mixed species hedges, although common in

Europe, are more time consuming to prune and have some risk attached because choosing plants with a similar growth habit can be a challenge. A compromise might be to plant mixed varieties of the same species so that there will be fruit to eat all season.

An evergreen citrus hedge of orange or mandarin, with their glossy leaves, white blossom and fruit that hang like baubles, looks striking all year. Citrus are ideal for hedging as they have dense foliage but produce fruit on the outer canopy, on the previous season's growth. When the hedge is clipped every three or four years to no wider than 1.5m, shorter fruit-producing branches form, achieving maximum harvest.

Columnar apple trees, planted just 40cm apart, form a great hedging screen to about 3m tall, letting in light when they lose their leaves in winter. They offer springtime blossoms and full-size fruit, and don't require any pruning to maintain their shape.

Aerial hedges are ideal for screening out neighbours whose homes overlook yours, or blocking an unwanted view. Put simply, these are hedges on stilts and are created with closely planted single or double rows of evergreen fruiting trees, such as olive (*Olea europaea*), that are continuously pruned so the dense canopies knit together, leaving uncluttered trunks underneath. This then provides opportunities for further planting.

Even when space isn't an issue, a hedge shouldn't be just a pretty face. It's had time and money invested into it, so it has to pull its weight and produce food, too

herb border

There's no reason why herbs and vegetables should be relegated to the vegie patch when many, if tightly planted, can be used to great effect as low-growing hedges. Several years ago, curly parsley (*Petroselinum crispum*) borders were quite a trend, but this has evolved into borders of rainbow chard (*Beta vulgaris*) and variegated sage (*Salvia officinalis*). Rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*) and taller hedges of bay laurel (*Laurus nobilis*), however, have stood the test of time because they both respond so well to clipping.

height & spacing

Before selecting the best plant for the job, consider the final height that the hedge should be, keeping in mind that it will end up a fair bit shorter than the height that the plant label suggests, as this will be referring to its unhedged height. Then assess the garden bed carefully, especially the movement of the sun, as a hedge with one end in full sun and the other in shade will result in uneven growth and an overworked gardener. Similarly, the supply of water needs to be uniform, so installing a dripper system with heads strategically placed at the base of each plant is best.

Planting distances change between species but the general rule of thumb is to place them the same distance apart as the width that the fully grown hedge will be. Make sure the area is clear of weeds and other vegetation, and include plenty of organic manure as edible plants are often heavy feeders.

pruning for success

Begin training the hedge soon after planting. Tip-prune branches that grow in the wrong direction, and keep any major clipping to the time that suits the species, usually straight after fruiting or when dormant – although an occasional light prune to keep the hedge in shape is a good idea. Edible hedges don't need the crisply clipped edges of some ornamental varieties, so feel free to allow them to have a softer look. This is not only beautiful but easier to maintain. **GA**



NUT IT OUT

Nut trees, such as this hazelnut, are great as hedges.

Six edible hedges

1. basil boxwood (*Ocimum basilicum*)

Compact annual herb with dense foliage. Maintain the dome-like shape with scissors at the same time as harvesting the tiny leaves for the kitchen. Ideal around entertaining areas as basil is known to deter mosquitoes.
↑ 30cm ↔ 25cm **Spacing** 25cm ☀ full sun

2. feijoa (*Acca sellowiana*)

Evergreen hedge requiring extra water during dry spells. Produces masses of edible flowers and delicious fruit with the combined flavours of pineapple, lemon and guava. Grow two varieties to improve pollination. Select plants with tight, angled branches and tip-prune often. Watch for fruit fly. Stake plants when young.
↑ 2–4m ↔ 2–4m **Spacing** 1m ☀ full sun

3. dwarf pomegranate (*Punica granatum* 'Nana', pictured opposite)

Dense, low-growing hedge with some thorns. It's also a bird magnet. Evergreen glossy leaves with scarlet flowers starting in spring followed by bold red fruit in autumn. Frost resistant and drought tolerant, but grows better with regular water. Only requires a light, annual prune in winter.
↑ 1m ↔ 1m **Spacing** 0.5m ☀ full sun

4. lemon myrtle (*Backhousia citriodora*)

Attractive native food plant with delicious lemon-flavoured leaves used in sweet and savoury dishes. Performs best with good drainage and constant moisture in temperate to tropical areas. Regularly trim to form a screening hedge. Perfumes the garden in warmer months.
↑ 4–6m ↔ 2–8m **Spacing** 1m ☀☁ full sun/semi-shade

5. nagami cumquat (*Fortunella margarita* 'Nagami')

Small growing citrus for 1–1.5m hedge. Nagami is the only variety where fruit can be eaten straight from the tree, although all cumquats suit preserves and marmalade. Sweet-scented flowers in late spring/summer then small fruit ripen in winter. Prune to shape immediately after fruiting.
↑ 2–3m ↔ 2m **Spacing** 0.75–1m ☀ full sun

6. hazelnut tree (*Corylus avellana*)

Best suited to southern Australia as it requires cool winter, mild summer and high rainfall. Prefers light, sandy soil with a thick layer of organic mulch. Grow three cross-compatible varieties to maximise nut set and don't remove the suckers as these will fill in the gaps. Prune to shape in winter when dormant and, if adventurous, try the art of hedge laying as is done with hazelnuts in Europe.
↑ 3–5m ↔ 3–5m **Spacing** 1m ☀☁ full sun/semi-shade

recipes *to try*

These green bean recipes taste even better when using beans freshly picked from the bush or vine



kangaroo prosciutto, fig & blue cheese salad

Offer something special at your next barbecue with a balance of smooth and crispy with sweet and savoury

serves 4

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 125g baby green beans, trimmed | 100g mixed salad leaves |
| 2 tbsp olive oil | 6 fresh figs, halved or quartered |
| 1 tbsp balsamic vinegar | 8 slices kangaroo prosciutto* |
| 1 tbsp maple syrup | 50g blue cheese, crumbled |

1. Blanch beans in salted boiling water for 1 minute until tender. Drain and refresh.
2. Whisk together oil, balsamic vinegar and maple syrup, season, then set aside.
3. Arrange beans, salad leaves and figs on a platter. Top with prosciutto and blue cheese, season, then drizzle with dressing.

*Kangaroo prosciutto is available from selected delis.

MIXED GREENS WITH INDIAN-STYLE GREEN CHUTNEY

serves 4

- 1 tbsp sunflower oil
- 300g broccoli, cut into florets
- 150g brussels sprouts, halved
- 2 zucchinis, chopped
- 100g green beans, halved
- 300ml vegetable stock
- 100g baby spinach leaves
- 100ml light coconut milk
- 2 tbsp toasted cashews, roughly chopped, to serve
- lime wedges, to serve

Indian-style green chutney

- 1 onion, roughly chopped
- 1 tsp finely grated ginger
- 2 garlic cloves, chopped
- 1 long green chilli, chopped
- 2 cups coriander leaves
- 1 cup mint leaves
- 1 tbsp desiccated coconut
- 2 tsp ground cumin
- 2 tsp ground coriander
- 1 tbsp lime juice

1. For the chutney, whiz all the ingredients and $\frac{1}{3}$ cup (80ml) cold water in a food processor until a thick paste. Season.
2. Heat oil in a frypan over medium-high heat. Cook broccoli, sprouts and zucchini for 3–4 minutes. Add beans and stock, reduce heat to medium and cook for 6–8 minutes until liquid is slightly reduced and vegetables are tender. Add spinach, coconut milk and chutney. Cook, tossing, for 2 minutes or until spinach is wilted. Serve with cashews and lime wedges.





green beans with walnuts

Packed with antioxidants and omega-3, this salad provides more than a satisfying crunch

serves 4

450g green beans, topped
½ red onion, thinly sliced
½ pomegranate

2 tbsp olive oil
¼ cup (25g) walnuts, lightly
toasted, chopped

1. Cook beans in a pan of simmering water for 4 minutes. Drain, then toss with onion.
2. Using the tip of a sharp knife, remove seeds from pomegranate, holding the fruit over a bowl to catch any juices. Whisk 1 tbsp pomegranate juice with oil. Season, then toss with beans and onion. Scatter with nuts and pomegranate seeds.

For more great recipes, be sure to pick up the February issue of *ABC delicious*. – on sale January 19. Available from newsagencies, supermarkets, ABC Shops or abcshop.com.au/delicious.

pick me now



▪ **Peach** Harvest when fruit is full of colour and plump. Leave on tree to ripen for best flavour. Handpick fruit by twisting stalk from branch. Leave stalk attached to maintain freshness. Store in a paper bag in the fridge.

▪ **Radish** (above) Pull from soil when mature, about 2–3cm in diameter. Don't leave in ground too long or they become woody. Pick young leaves for salads. Store in fridge or preserve.

▪ **Strawberry** Pick fruit regularly as it ripens. This is when it's reddest, juiciest and most flavoursome. Store in the fridge. Can be made into jam, jelly, sauce, syrup and compote.

also in season

▪ basil ▪ blueberry ▪ capsicum
▪ celery ▪ cucumber ▪ eggplant
▪ fig ▪ grapes ▪ honeydew melon
▪ lemon ▪ lettuce ▪ lychee
▪ nashi ▪ nectarine ▪ onion
▪ orange (Valencia) ▪ passionfruit
▪ pear ▪ peas (sugar snap) ▪ plum
▪ raspberry ▪ rocket ▪ rockmelon
▪ squash ▪ sweetcorn ▪ tomato
▪ watermelon ▪ zucchini

by phil dudman

if you have...

Anyone with an edible garden knows it's important to stay on top of things. Here's a list of jobs to do this month

10

minutes



plant

- Sow onions (*above*), leeks and broccoli in seed trays and raise in a cool, bright spot under cover, for planting in March.
- Sow bush and climbing beans directly into loosened soil.

harvest

- Delay harvesting pumpkins until vines start dying off. Leave a 5cm-long stem when harvesting to reduce the risk of fruit rot. Separate any damaged fruit, which are prone to rot.

prune

- Once passionfruit vines have covered their allotted space, keep them contained by regularly trimming rampant growth.
- Thin overcrowded bunches of grapes by up to one third. This should improve the size and quality of the remaining fruit. Trim back the leaves shading bunches to help ripen the fruit.

30

minutes



plant

- In cooler areas, start planting autumn vegies such as broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage and brussels sprout.
- Buy kangkong (water spinach) from an Asian greengrocer and strike runners in water. Cut back regularly as it takes over.

prune

- Thin crowded thickets of banana stems by restricting plants to one fruiting stem, one half-sized stem and one baby sucker.
- Cut back a third of the oldest stems in blackcurrants (*above*) to encourage new fruiting wood for next year.

special care

- Shade vegetable crops in hot weather to avoid sunscald. Use old net curtains, bed sheets, shade cloth, and old umbrellas. Make a frame from bamboo stakes and use twine or pegs to hold the fabrics in place. Remove after rain to prevent mildew.

60

minutes

plant

- Plant grapefruit, pomelo, Tahitian lime and kaffir lime, as they establish well during hot weather. Drainage must be good, so dig the soil deeply, incorporate lots of well-rotted manure or compost and mound the soil to a minimum of 15cm high. Mulch with straw to keep their shallow roots cool. If you have poor drainage, consider planting them in large containers.

- Grow a hedge of vetiver grass (*Chrysopogon zizanioides* 'Monto') if you need a quick windbreak around the vegetable garden. It's a heat- and drought-tolerant grass from India that grows up to 1.5m tall and can be cut regularly as a source of mulch for your patch. With its deep, fibrous roots, it's great for stabilising banks too, and is easily propagated by division. The 'Monto' variety doesn't produce seed so won't become weedy in the garden.

- Rejuvenate old, diseased lemongrass clumps by cutting them back hard, digging them up and dividing them. Replant healthy looking divisions in a different part of the garden. Lift and divide mint, garlic chives (*above*), oregano, marjoram, Vietnamese mint and society garlic.

feed & water

- Moisture stress can cause fruit trees to drop fruit and be more susceptible to pest and disease attack. Keep trees moist by watering deeply, covering the soil with a good layer of mulch, such as sugarcane or lucerne, and applying liquid seaweed once a month.
- For balanced compost, add one-part fast breakdown materials such as vegetable scraps and soft leafy material to four-parts dry, fibrous woody material such as shredded plant prunings. Sprinkle over a little blood and bone, keep just moist and aerate the heap weekly.
- Prepare your patch for autumn vegie planting. Dig in well-rotted manure or compost, water in well, then wait two or three weeks before planting.

prune

- Prune stone fruit now rather than winter. Warm weather promotes faster healing, reducing the risk of eutypa dieback (trunk disease) entering wounds, particularly in apricots (*left*).



pinch out basil flowers regularly to help extend the harvest season



in the tropics

plant

- Lift and divide tired old pineapple plants (*below*). Improve the soil with compost, and then plant suckers 20cm apart.
- Order garlic bulbs for planting in early March. 'Glen Large' and 'Elephant' are good varieties for growing in the tropics.

feed & water

- Re-pot large fruit trees and move them to a protected sunny spot that provides shielding from summer storms.
- Fertilise summer vegies to replace nutrients leached by heavy rain. Sprinkle organic fertiliser pellets every two weeks.

harvest

- Keep harvesting kangkong (water spinach) or it turns bitter.
- Pick eggplants regularly before they get woody.

prune

- Cut back cassava often. It grows fast in the wet season and becomes straggly if left to its own devices.

special care

- Put an upside-down pot over emerging pumpkin flowers in ongoing rain. Hand pollinate when they are fully open. Remove the pot a few days after pollination.



pest alert

Be on the lookout for...

- ★ **Whitefly on tomatoes.** Spray the undersides of leaves with natural pyrethrum or soap sprays.
 - ★ **Scale and leafminer on citrus.** Spray the trees with horticultural oil in the cool of the day once every three weeks.
- For more pest and disease advice, see page 78.**

sow & plant...

in February

beans (dwarf)
beetroot
broccoli
brussels sprout
cabbages
carrots
cauliflowers
celery
herbs
leeks
onions (spring)
radishes
silverbeet
turnips



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subtropical ●
temperate ●
mediterranean/
inland ●
cool ●

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february

this month's shows and events

Feb 12–15 Chinchilla Melon

Festival Various locations and times, Chinchilla, **Qld.** Mostly free with some ticketed events. Melon bungy, skiing, weigh in, and melon art; as well as a pip-spitting contest and chariot races set off with a street parade, family concert and melon tasting. Expect laughs and zaniness at this popular biennial festival. melonfest.com.au

Feb 20–22 Hundscheidt's Tropical

Gardens 9am–5pm. 177 Young St, Sunnybank, **Qld.** \$10. (07) 3345 6836. Visit one of the country's most impressive tropical gardens. More than 100 species of palm provide a canopy to a series of garden rooms, each with a water feature and dotted with Balinese art. Exotic plants for sale.

Feb 21 How to Grow Mushrooms

9am–5pm. Sustainable Living Tasmania, Level 1, 71 Murray St, Hobart, **Tas.** \$200. 0418 307 294. Learn how to inoculate logs with dowel and spawn to grow your own gourmet mushies at home.

Feb 21–22 Garden Clubs &

Societies Plant Fair Sat 9am–4pm, Sun 9am–3pm. South Perth Community Centre, Sandgate St, South Perth, **WA.** \$5. (08) 9404 7835. Plant sale and advice on hand.

Feb 22 Gardening for the Future

10am–noon. Auditorium, Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne, cnr Ballarto Rd & Botanic Dr, Cranbourne, **Vic.** \$30. (03) 5990 2200. Must book. Authors of *Sustainable Gardening* talk design and plant selection.

Feb 27–28 Dine from Melba's

Garden 6pm. Coombe – The Melba Estate, 673–675 Maroondah Hwy, Coldstream, **Vic.** \$150. Must book online at melbournefoodandwine.com.au. Enjoy a three-course meal at a historic garden. *For more about Coombe, see our story on page 30.*

Feb 28–Mar 1 Melbourne Begonia

Society Show Sat 10am–4pm, Sun 10am–3pm. Senior Citizens Hall, 964 Nepean Hwy, Moorabbin, **Vic.** \$3 or two for \$5. (03) 9758 6642. Displays, and begonias for sale.

City Crop Harvest Day

FEB 1, 10AM–3PM

Adelaide Botanic Gardens, North Terrace, Adelaide, **SA.** Free. (08) 8222 9345. This is a follow on from planting day in October 2014 when the City Crop was planted with heirloom sweetcorn True Gold by a group of children 'farmers'. Come along to help the kids harvest their city corn crop and sample sweetcorn fresh from the garden. Plenty of free family-orientated activities and entertainment to enjoy.



open garden

TAS

ROSEDOWN

An exquisite rose garden set on 1.8ha. Romantic in design and relaxed in style, the garden surrounds an 1840s riverside cottage set against towering eucalypts. Walk among masses of perfumed roses, including heritage David Austin and Alister Clark cultivars. Hedged grass paths weave through fine specimen trees and vine-covered arbors in this delightful spot. [134 Hamilton Rd, New Norfolk.](http://134HamiltonRd.com.au) Feb 28–Mar 1, 10am–4.30pm. \$8.

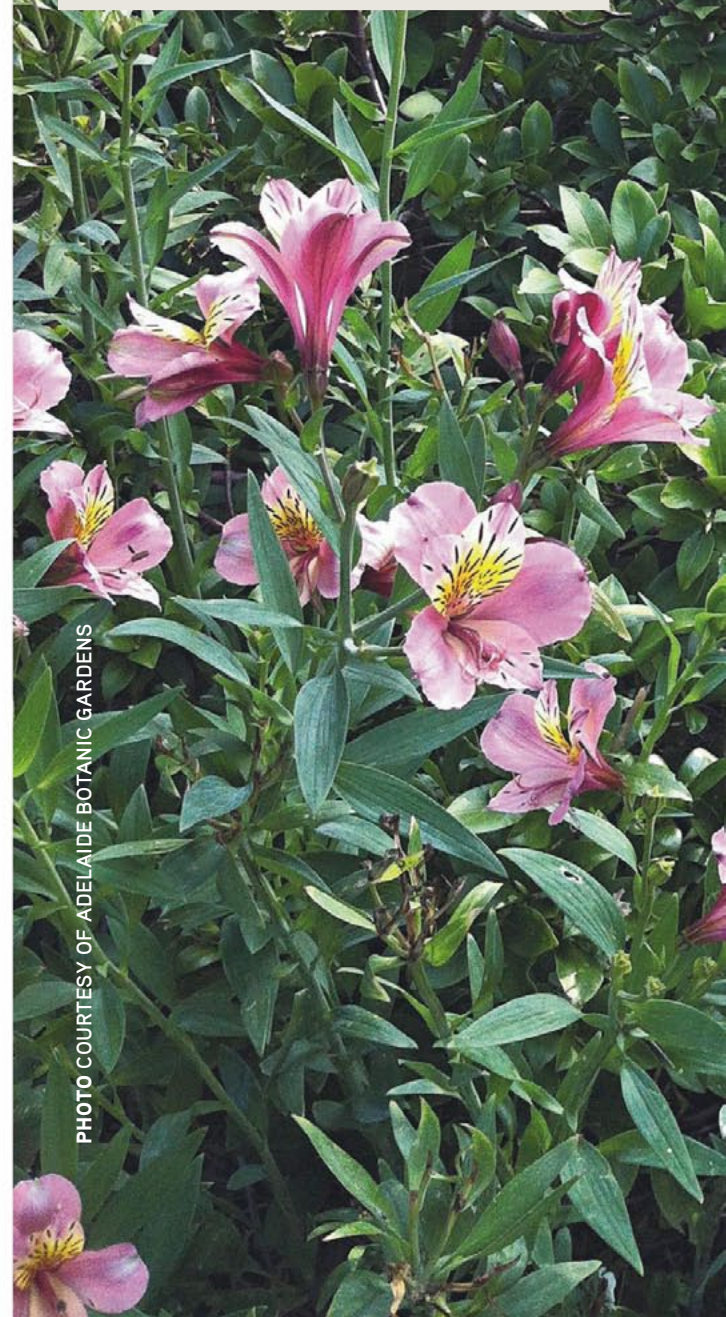


PHOTO COURTESY OF ADELAIDE BOTANIC GARDENS



tell us about your event

The May events deadline is February 2, 2015. Send details of your event (date, time, location, cost, phone number) to: Shows, Gardening Australia, NewsLifeMedia, Level 1, Locked Bag 5030, Alexandria NSW 2015 or email shows@gardeningaustralia.com.au

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great nursery crawl

Not far out of Melbourne are some great horticultural haunts, as well as foodie towns and spa country. MICHAEL McCOY is in heaven

As a great fan of the nursery crawl, this is a dream route for me, taking in a few of Australia's best perennial nurseries. It could be completed in a day, if combing through rows of labelled pots wasn't so deliciously time-consuming. Incidentally, each of these nurseries has an excellent display garden, and each sells by mail order, so make sure you grab a catalogue. The route also takes you through beautiful forest, rolling pastures and old gold mining towns, with more cafe choices than you could reasonably access, no matter how long you dallied along the way.

1 St Erth
Built on the site of the once busy, now non-existent, gold mining town of Simmons Reef, the Garden of St Erth was birthed by plantsman and garden writer Tommy Garnett. These days, it's home to The

Diggers Club. The ornamental garden is full of good trees, shrubs, perennials, bulbs and woodland plants, while the vegetable garden contains a fabulous array of heirloom varieties, and demonstrates old techniques such as espaliering. There are always seeds and plants for sale. It's \$10 entry; free for Diggers Club members. 189 Simmons Reef Rd, Blackwood.

2 Frogmore
Frogmore Gardens was for decades the home of Norgate's – a perennial nursery that kept many plants going through the years when perennials were out of favour. The name change was indicative of a total shift in thinking, which included a focus on potted, rather than bare-rooted, plants, and the creation of a large display garden. The nursery is open 9am–5pm Tuesdays to Sundays, and closed in July, while the display garden is open this year from

March 9 to April 25. Even when the garden is closed, you can see deep plantings of woodland perennials around the car park, and enticing glimpses through gates and gaps. Blackwood Rd, Newbury.

3 Trentham
Should nursery fatigue set in, wander around the tree-lined streets of Trentham, and grab a coffee or lunch in one of the excellent eateries here. RedBeard bakery (38A High Street), for instance, is built around one of the few remaining original Scotch ovens in Victoria. George Calombaris has described it as "the best bakery in the world". This recently cool town was, like so many old towns in Europe, only really preserved in such an original state because it was uncool for so long.

4 Clifty's
Just before you descend the hill into Daylesford, you'll come to Clifty's Emporium (30 Raglan St), a charmingly shabby country store with original painted window ads, selling jams and chutneys from its sagging shelves, as well as local produce and great coffee. I've never managed to be there when the extraordinary avenue of lindens on the side road is in full bloom, but I'm determined that one day, I'll sit under the vine-hung verandah, coffee in hand, and drown in its honey perfume.

5 Lambley
Nurseryman David Glenn moved his perennial nursery from the damp Dandenongs to Ascot about 20 years ago. The climate forced a total rethink of his plant palette, and the gardens surrounding Lambley are a revelation of his current thinking. Lambley Nursery and Gardens is at Lesters Rd, Ascot, open daily 9am–5pm. There are plants and seeds for sale, with vegetable seeds leaning towards current cultivars and F1 hybrids, in curious contradiction to The Diggers Club, back at the start of our roadtrip.





on the road... pack the car and go for a drive

If you're starting this roadtrip in Melbourne, it's only about 90km to your first stops, **Garden of St Erth** and **Frogmore Gardens**. Load your purchases into the car and continue to **Trentham** and **Trentham Falls**, a surprisingly dramatic waterfall, given the surrounding terrain.

It's always worth a look, but is particularly thunderous during a good, wet spring. To reach the Falls, take Daylesford-Trentham Road, past the golf course, turn right onto Trentham Falls Road, then left at the sign about 100m up the road.

After **Cliffy's Emporium**, you'll hit **Daylesford** – full of galleries, interesting stores and eateries – a serious threat to your nursery time! The **Convent Gallery** (cnr Hill & Daly Sts) is worth a look, indoors and out, and while you're up on the hill, take a drive around **Wombat Hill Botanic Gardens** (Central Springs Rd). They're quite neglected, but are unique in sitting

like a botanical toupee, right on the crest. Or dash just down the road to the spa town of Hepburn Springs. Visit the **Hepburn Springs Mineral Springs Reserve** and compare the various mineral-laden waters gurgling up through old spouts, straight from the stone-cold depths.

If you've detoured to Hepburn Springs, you might as well push on a bit to **Lavandula** (350 Hepburn-Newstead Rd, Shepherds Flat). This lavender farm is built around several impossibly charming old buildings constructed by the Swiss-Italians, who settled this area in the mid 19th century.

The garden is very romantic, being obviously loved, but wonderfully shaggy and rustic.

Back at Daylesford, join Midland Highway, and head west. About 20km along, you'll come to **The Tangled Maze** (2301 Midland Hwy, Springmount). This hedge maze is surprisingly difficult to find your way out of, and along the way, you'll stumble across some really interesting plant use.

Finally, it's on to **Lambley Nursery and Gardens**. For a different return route, you could head south to historic Ballarat. But that's another story. **GA**

travel tip

Reader Frances Witcher writes: "Have a wrap handy in the car. It can be used as a blanket if one person is cold, or used as a scarf, shawl or even bundled into a comfy pillow." Send your travel tip to Roadtrip, Gardening Australia, NewsLifeMedia, Level 1, Locked Bag 5030, Alexandria NSW 2015 or email roadtrip@gardeningaustralia.com.au.

great shot!

Our top photos of garden vistas sent in by readers for the November competition

1. My front walkway has native blue ginger, ponytail palms, elkhorn ferns and lomandra.

Judith Howlett,
Bellbrook, NSW

2. I took this photo at Tulip Top Gardens, just outside Canberra. I've been on many occasions when it opens annually for four weeks in spring.

Mary Lou Lyon,
Chapman, ACT

3. The neighbours' kids explore the crabapple walk during spring.

Kay Duncan,
Clare, SA



1.



3.



4.



5.



6.



7.



8.

reader pics
WINNER!

2.



4. The flowers by the **dam** on my property look like something from a Monet painting.
Sandy Lake,
Wapengo, NSW

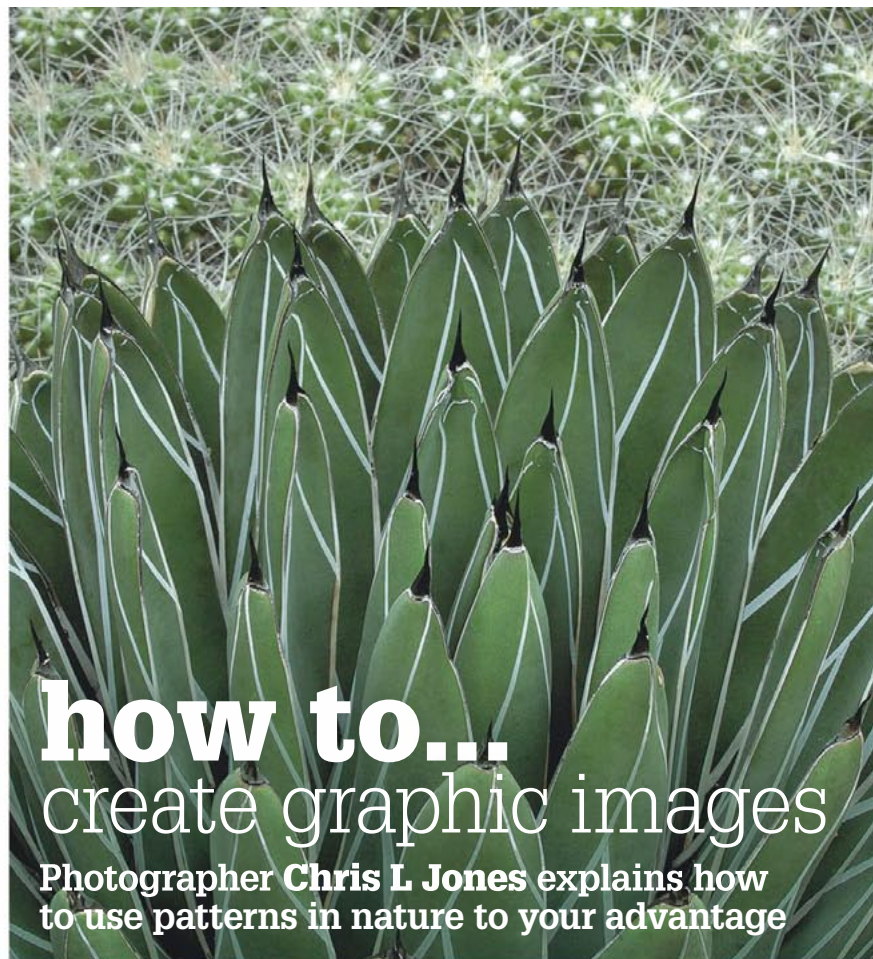
5. Here's our new **vegie patch**. We've put it near the back of our homestead so that it's easier to tend regularly.
Ning Clark,
Yass, NSW

6. This is the **view** from my yard in spring as you look down the Georges Creek valley in North East Victoria.
Bess Kearney,
Georges Creek, Vic



7. An **anthill**, surrounded by native plants, in the South African part of the Auckland Botanic Gardens.
Tony Cavanagh,
Ocean Grove, Vic

8. Since we moved to **this property** on the Gold Coast three years ago, the plants we've put in have nearly doubled in size.
Melinda Potter,
Upper Coomera, Qld



how to... create graphic images

Photographer **Chris L Jones** explains how to use patterns in nature to your advantage

Gardens are often carefully designed spaces where colour, texture and form are juxtaposed to create the maximum visual effect. Here's how to showcase this in your photos.

TIP 1

It's one thing to see all the beautiful patterns and layered planting arrangements, but another thing altogether to translate them into pleasing images. Composition demands we access an innate sensibility for what is allowed into your viewfinder and what is left out.

TIP 2

Start with static subjects with few distracting details to practise your skills. Use a tripod to carefully and exactly define your image boundaries until the image intuitively 'works' or 'pops'.

TIP 3

In addition to a tripod, a zoom lens is useful for fine adjustments needed in both close-up and vista composition when creating graphic images. In particular, use a telephoto zoom to flatten a subject's layers into simple, eye-pleasing blocks of detail and colour.

TIP 4

When taking close-ups of a leaf, flower or other patterned subject to capture their unique network of lines, shapes and geometry, attention to detail becomes more important and will challenge your skills and, in particular, your command of the depth of field.

TIP 5

Once you've had some practice on simple subjects and are feeling confident, broaden your range to include more graphic plants. Try Mexican succulents, cacti, ferns and agaves, such as the *Attenuata*. They give the artist in you the opportunity to fully express and explore your creative potential.



See Chris' photos at chrisljonesphoto.com.

by jenny baldwin

Q & A pets

Q Despite publicity about not leaving dogs in locked cars, I still see it. The dilemma is always whether the owner is coming back any moment now, or will be away for possibly many minutes. What are the signs that the animal inside is distressed, and that emergency action is required?

Miranda Meath, via email

A Animals left in locked cars is an ongoing problem and you're right to be concerned. As we head into one of the hottest periods of the year, it's important to be able to recognise the signs of heatstroke in animals, and to act accordingly if you do see a potential problem.

Humans sweat to release excessive heat from their bodies, however the only way an animal can cool itself down is to release small amounts of heat through its paw pads and through panting.

Heatstroke can occur in 10 minutes or less in animals, so check the time as soon as you find the animal. Once an animal overheats, they suffer extensive organ damage and can even die.

To identify if the animal is in immediate danger of heatstroke, look for the following signs:

- Excessive panting
- Disorientation
- Excessive drooling
- Collapse or seizure

If there are no current evident signs of distress, your first point of call is to quickly communicate with businesses in the immediate area of the parked car to let them know the plate number, make, model and colour of the car and ask them to make an announcement for the owners to return ASAP.

Once you've done this, it's a good idea to wait by the car for a few minutes to see if the owner comes back quickly.

If the animal is in obvious distress and displaying signs of heatstroke, contact your local council or local police. Be sure to communicate the time you first noticed the animal in the car, so they understand the urgency of the situation.

Once the animal is out of the car, cool it down immediately. Use cold compresses, ice, rubbing alcohol or cold water. The dog **MUST** be seen by a vet as soon as possible to re-establish fluids and support damaged organs.

TOO HOT TO HANDLE

Dogs can very quickly suffer from heatstroke when left in a car.



if you see an animal trapped in a car

- Look for signs of heatstroke (*see left*)
- Note the time you first saw the animal
- Communicate with businesses in the area
- Wait by the car for the owner to return
- If heatstroke symptoms are obvious, call the local council or local police for further instructions
- Once the animal is out of the car, immediately take it to a vet for emergency treatment

Q Is milk OK for cats? I've been told they're all lactose intolerant.
Elise Symons, Berowra, NSW

A Yes, all cats (and dogs!) are lactose intolerant – unfortunately, the classic picture of a cat with a saucer of milk is not a great match. Lactose is a sugar that cats are not able to digest, forming the perfect environment for bacteria to develop in the intestinal tract and attack the stomach. This causes diarrhoea, vomiting and other gastrointestinal problems, either suddenly or over time, and an imbalance in the gastrointestinal tract longer term. As cats don't require milk, or other dairy products, in their diet, it's not recommended to feed it to them – even though they love it! A lactose-free milk or specific cat milk is a better option, if you'd like to keep milk in their diet.



Dr P Kirkpatrick, Bayswater Vet Clinic, bayswatervet.com.au

Dr P Kirkpatrick, Bayswater Vet Clinic, bayswatervet.com.au

it must be love

Council ranger and mother of two, Jodie McGowan is a busy woman, but she can always take in one more creature in need. Sometimes, they even stay, like Max did

Max was one of a litter of four dumped at a shelter here in Dubbo. I fostered him and his two surviving siblings while they waited for permanent homes. We had them for eight weeks, and my husband, Michael, and I got quite attached to Max in particular, so we kept him. He's a beautiful red, unusual in a border collie.

He's three now, and one of his favourite things is playing soccer. We can't walk into the backyard without having to pick up a ball. He'll play with the kids for hours, using his nose to flick the ball back to them. He'd make a great goalie! The kids asked if they could take him to soccer the other week ... I said no.

Max is very placid and accepting of all the animals I bring home. The latest is Sebastian, a Pomeranian cross Jack Russell. Like Max, he was dumped at four weeks. Max is very protective of him – he cleans him and shows me where he is when I can't find him.

We also have two ragdoll cats, who are total divas, and a couple of Siberian huskies. Then there are the foster animals and the WIRES rescues, everything from kangaroos to kittens. Together with my full-time job as a ranger at Dubbo Council, and raising my twins, nine-year-old Liam and Ebony, I'm very busy!

I've been doing this job for just a few years, after spending 24 years as a PA at council. I did my

"The busiest times are when I'm hand-rearing an animal that needs two-hourly feeds. I don't get a lot of sleep"

zookeeping course 20 years ago, but it's really hard to get a job at the zoo here. I like being a ranger – no day is the same, and it's so rewarding when, say, we reunite a missing pet with its owner. But it's tough too – I've seen things people wouldn't believe. Livestock trucks tipped over with animals in pieces ... dangerous dogs ... dangerous owners. We get a lot of training on how to handle different situations and read behaviours, but it does get hairy sometimes. We work closely with the RSPCA and the police.

Jodie & Max



It's true there's a lot of work associated with having so many animals. When I get home from work, there are the kids and pets to feed and the school lunches to make,

but first I get the vacuuming out of the way. It's virtually a daily chore, because of all the fur that the ragdolls shed. And the huskies do two full sheds a year, carpeting the backyard in 'snow'. I clip the ragdolls myself, and I brush the huskies. The busiest times are when I'm hand-rearing an animal that needs two-hourly feeds. I don't get a lot of sleep.

I'd love to have Max trained so he could come and help me with call-outs, such as rounding up sheep. He already has the instinct, and uses it at home. The cats might be out the front, so I'll say to him, "OK Max, want to round up the cats?" and he'll go out and chase them and nudge them back inside. He never hurts them; he's very gentle. He's a real sweetie. **GA**



Diva number one: ragdoll cat, Holly.

Are you besotted with your pet? Do you have a question for our animal experts? Email us at pets@gardeningaustralia.com.au or send a question to Pets, Gardening Australia, NewsLifeMedia, Level 1, Locked Bag 5030, Alexandria NSW 2015.

by jackie french



best seat in the house

What are the ingredients of the ideal nesting box? Make things nice for your girls, and they'll reward you with a steady stream of eggs

When you've got to go, you've got to go. Chooks will lay their eggs anywhere, pretty much, even crammed into cages with no privacy at all. But chooks are happiest laying in quiet, safe areas with dappled light, comfortable material to crouch on and a triangular opening – a bit like laying eggs among South-East Asian jungle litter, as their ancient ancestors would have done, with shadows slanting down from the bamboo.

Your chooks won't go on strike without a good laying box. They respond more to the amount of light each day, good food and no sudden shocks. But if you want to make them happy, make things nice.

Our laying boxes used to be wooden fruit crates. But these are an endangered species, plus wood can harbour mites or fleas. Then, we used recycled computer shells – they were the perfect size, could be wiped with bleach, and their rounded edges shaded the chooks from too much viewing. But modern PCs are too small.

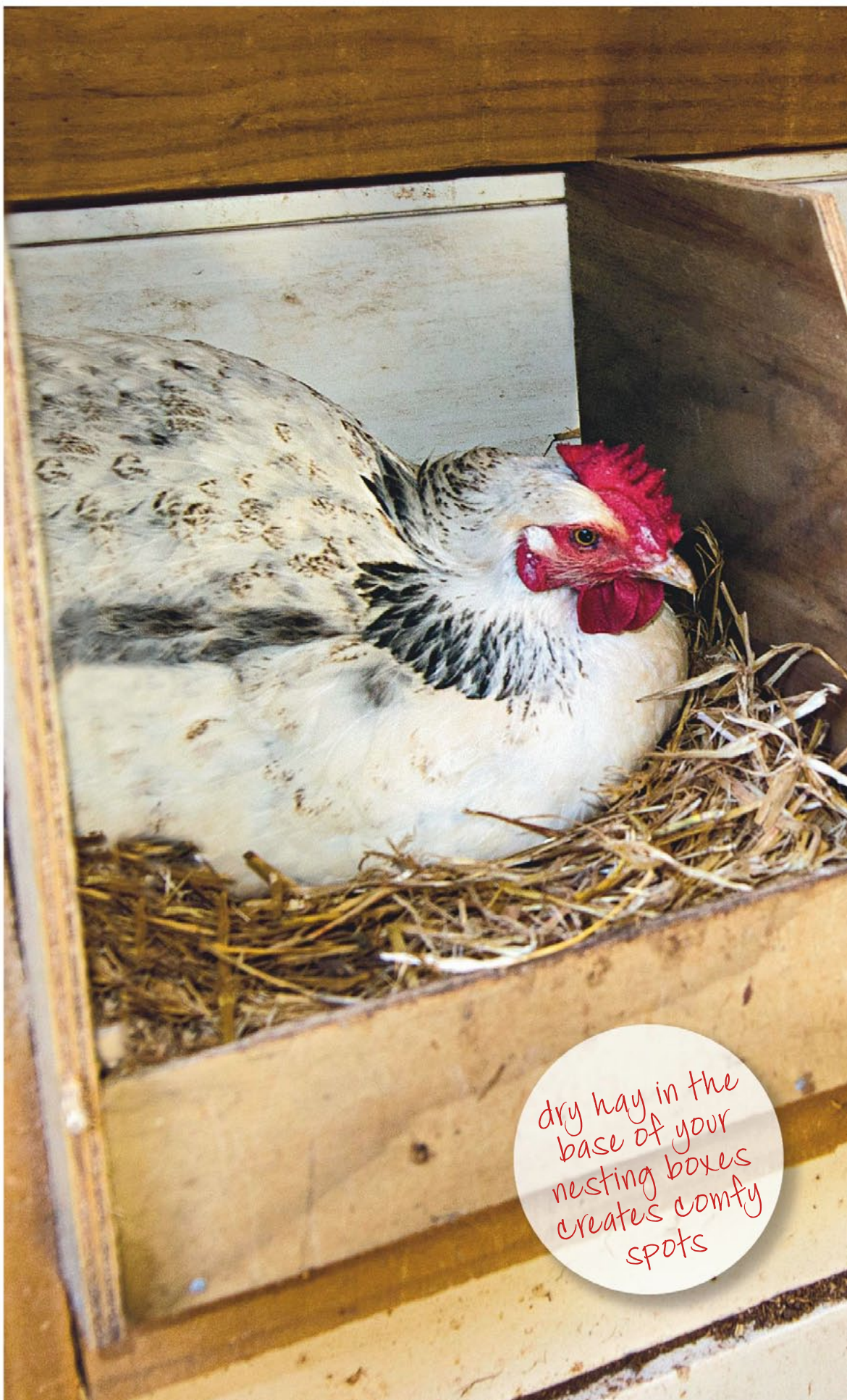
Nesting boxes can be made from large recycled plastic or metal drums, but it's easiest to buy them. Place them at the back of the hen house, private like, with enough light to see inside, for the chooks and you – you don't want to put your hand in to get the eggs if there may be an unseen snake.

The nest should be above ground, to make it harder for snakes and rats to enter, and to make the hen feel safer.

Place dry hay (not too spiky) in the base, enough for comfort and to ensure the egg doesn't break. Change it every month or so, or weekly in hot, humid weather or if mucky feet or a broken egg pollutes it.

The most important thing is choice. Six hens need at least four boxes. If they all decide to lay in one, change the position of the others to make them more tempting. A plastic egg placed in a new nest also announces that this is the place to lay.

Then watch. This is the best way to see if they're happy with the boxes. Easy to get in and out of, secure enough so they use any nest, one or two eggs daily in each one. When you get that, you know it's right. **GA**



dry hay in the base of your nesting boxes creates comfy spots

PHOTOS ALAMY, GETTY IMAGES, VINCENT LONG



Q I took a chook to the vet because her bottom beak had grown beyond the top beak, and she wasn't eating. Why does this happen?
D Overs, Bargo, NSW

A Hens' beaks can overgrow if they don't get worn down pecking on dirt, cuttlefish or even on a stone that you scatter grain on, if you have your birds caged. Only trim the beak the smallest possible amount at any one time or it may bleed.

Q We live in a terrace house in inner city Sydney, and own two ISA Browns. Our neighbours are noise intolerant. Their windows, all along the common boundary, are left open day and night in all seasons. They are complaining that the chooks make too much noise in the early morning. We have an open A-frame coop, with a covered, but not enclosed, sleeping area. What should we do to reduce noise from our chooks?

A Johnston, Redfern, NSW

A There are two problems with noise: how loud it is, and what kind of noise it is. Most of us find a crying baby distressing, but the same decibels of children's laughter would be loved. You can cut down on the noise by insulating the chook shed. It's better for the chooks, too. Double glaze any windows, and put up a double flapping curtain over the door that the hens can push through to the yard. You can also insulate the chook yard with clear cladding, which will also cut down the noise.

Try to work out when the hens make the most noise. If it's at bedtime, give them more perches to avoid quarrels. If it's after laying an egg, keep the hens in until lunchtime, so they don't have to yell loudly to find their friends. Give them a bale of hay hung up each week, to keep them amused.

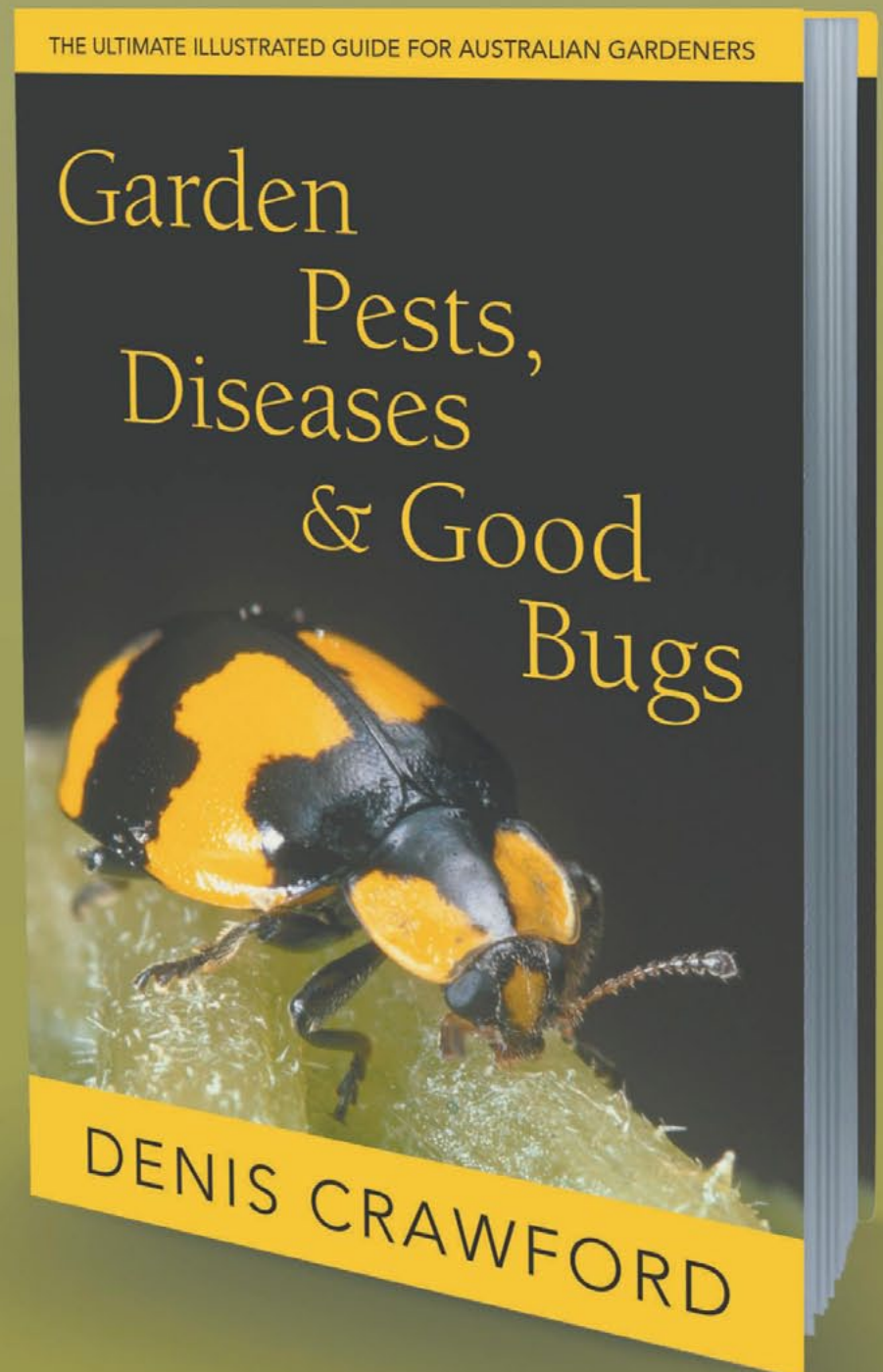
Your neighbours, however, may not like any chook noise, even if it's relatively quiet. You could be generous, and offer to pay to double glaze their windows, and give them a dozen eggs a week or an egg-rich sponge cake with strawberries. If all else fails, while keeping to all council noise regulations, take up the bagpipes.

PS To all potentially outraged Scots, I personally love the bagpipes.



Do you have a chook question? Email us at chooks@gardeningaustralia.com.au or write to Chooks, Gardening Australia, NewsLifeMedia, Level 1, Locked Bag 5030, Alexandria NSW 2015.

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stamping out reeds

Q: The large reeds in our dam are taking over. The dam is full of frogs, bugs, visiting ducks and a resident red-bellied black snake. How can I cull or kill the reeds in an environmentally safe way and without seriously hurting the wildlife?

L Clay, Bumberrah, Vic

A: There is a way to control rushes in an environmentally safe way, unfortunately it's rather hands-on. Cut all the leaves off about 5–15cm below water level to starve the plants of oxygen. Repeated cuttings will be required with the first cut in summer (January/February) and follow-up cuts every six weeks or so.

Denis Crawford

problems solved!

Email your question to experts@gardeningaustralia.com.au or write to Experts, Gardening Australia, NewsLifeMedia, Level 1, Locked Bag 5030, Alexandria NSW 2015. 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 high resolution. There is no personal reply service for questions that are not published.

bug invasion

Q: My rose bushes are covered by these insects. They zap the petals of moisture, leaving the roses crumpled and brown in days. How can I combat them?

S Colley, Miles, Qld

A: It's hard to tell exactly what these beetles are, but they're a close relative of the damaging redshouldered leaf beetle (*Monolepta australis*). They swarm in large numbers, often causing complete defoliation. Their swarming is sporadic and, once they're done, they'll move on. Your roses will bounce back with pruning, watering and fertilising. Spray beetles with pyrethrum to minimise damage.

Phil Dudman



lavender munchers

Q: Something is eating all the tender leaves of my lavender. What pests attack lavender? How can I protect my plants?

J Andrews, Caringbah South, NSW

A: Several caterpillars eat lavender, such as the woolly bear caterpillar and green leaf-rolling caterpillar. Check your plant thoroughly and remove any you find by hand or spray with Dipel, a naturally occurring bio-insecticide that will not harm the environment. Kangaroos, wallabies and rabbits also eat lavender. However, they usually wipe out the whole bush, not just new growth.

Sophie Thomson

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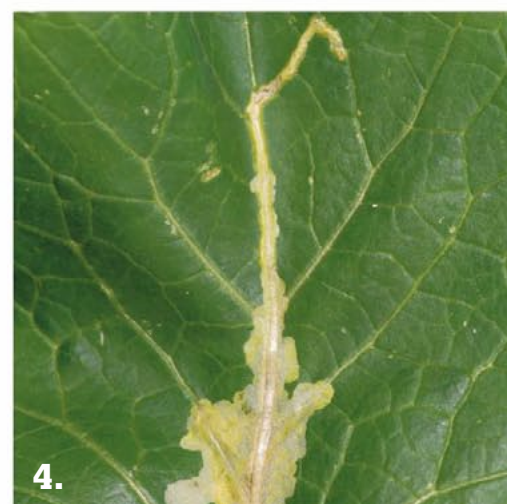


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space invaders

If you have a thriving garden, it's likely to attract living organisms, including bad bugs and viruses. Here's what to do when they arrive



1. RUTHERGLEN BUG *Nysius vinitor*

Adult Rutherglen bugs swarm sporadically in warm weather when native grasses and weeds dry off and descend on crops, orchards and gardens. They attack flower heads, and feed on seeds and new-growth sap of asparagus, beans, potato, stone fruits, strawberry, sunflower and tomato. Swarming adults only feed on nectar and do little damage to most other plants.

Prevention Control weeds as they are the main food source.

Treatment Try disrupting them with a blast from a hose. Apply pyrethrins. Follow label directions.

Enemies Damsel bugs, ladybirds, parasitic wasps and flies.

2. GREEN LOOPER *Chrysodeixis* spp.

Green loopers, also known as vegetable loopers and tobacco loopers, are common in gardens all over Australia. Adult moths are brown with conspicuous silver markings on the wings, and larvae are bright green, fleshy caterpillars with white stripes

down their bodies. Larvae attack ornamentals such as dahlia, geranium and rose, and vegetables and fruit including beans, brassicas, potato, silverbeet, strawberry and tomato.

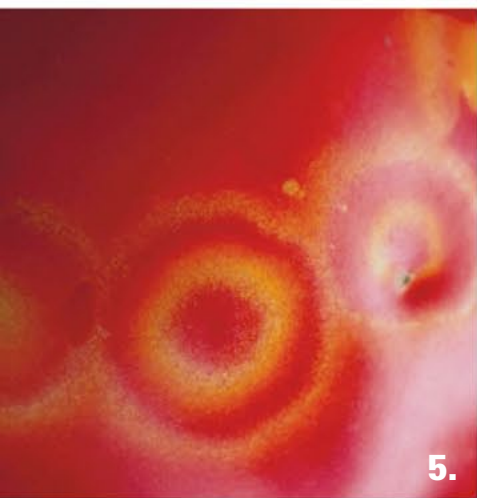
Prevention Loopers also breed in broadleaf weeds, so control weeds. Protect crops with fine netting.

Treatment Pick off large caterpillars and squash or dispose of them in a plastic bag. Apply Dipel in preference to other insecticides. Follow label directions.

Enemies Parasitic wasps and flies. Assassin bugs, damsel bugs, lacewing larvae and ladybirds.

3. CITRUS MELANOSE *Diaporthe citri*

Melanose is a fungal disease that may affect all citrus varieties. It's more common in humid coastal areas than dry inland areas. Spores develop in dead twigs and branches, and are released by rainfall and splashed onto fruit and leaves. Small, reddish-brown spots develop on fruit, leaves and small twigs. The spots are unlikely to affect fruit quality. Some twig dieback may occur.



5.



6.

Prevention Prune out deadwood before flowering, prune lower tree branches, and don't wet foliage when watering.

Treatment Apply a copper-based fungicide at petal fall. Follow label directions.

4. LEAFMINER FLIES

Agromyzidae

Leafminer flies are introduced pests that occur in most parts of Australia. You are unlikely to see adult flies, but you will see the wiggly lines (mines) in foliage caused by their larvae. Beet leafminer attacks beetroot and silverbeet, cabbage leafminer attacks brassica vegetables, and cineraria leafminer attacks chrysanthemum, cineraria, gerbera, nasturtium and vegetables including artichoke, endive and lettuce.

Prevention Control weeds as the flies also breed in weeds.

Treatment Pick or prune off affected leaves and destroy. Water and fertilise to maximise regrowth. No insecticides are registered for use against leafminer flies in home gardens.

Enemies Parasitic wasps.

5. TOMATO SPOTTED WILT VIRUS

Tomato spotted wilt virus (TSWV) is spread by thrips and can affect many plants including calendula, capsicum, chrysanthemum, dahlia, lettuce, potato and tomato. Symptoms are dead spots or bronze-brown patches on leaves, which may be ring shaped, and stems may have brown streaks. Tomato fruits develop large circular blotches, and lettuces develop brown patches and collapse. Infected plants may die.

Prevention Control weeds and thrips.

Treatment Destroy infected plants immediately. There are no chemical treatments available for the virus.

6. CASE MOTHS

Psychidae

Case moths are usually harmless creatures found in gardens throughout Australia. Cases are spun from silk to which twigs, sand, moss, lichen, leaves or bark are attached. Larvae feed on eucalypts, tea-tree, wattles, avocado, citrus, Geraldton wax and heaths. Damage is usually limited to a few chewed leaves. Occasionally larvae causes significant damage to individual trees.

Prevention Check plants at point of purchase if you are trying to keep them out of your garden.

Treatment Usually unnecessary. Pick them off plants by hand if they are causing damage. No chemical is specifically registered to control case moth larvae in home gardens.

Enemies Parasitic wasps. **GA**

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take a break

Make a cuppa and put your feet up – it's time to relax. By solving our monthly puzzle, you could be in the running to win this Searles garden pack valued at \$205



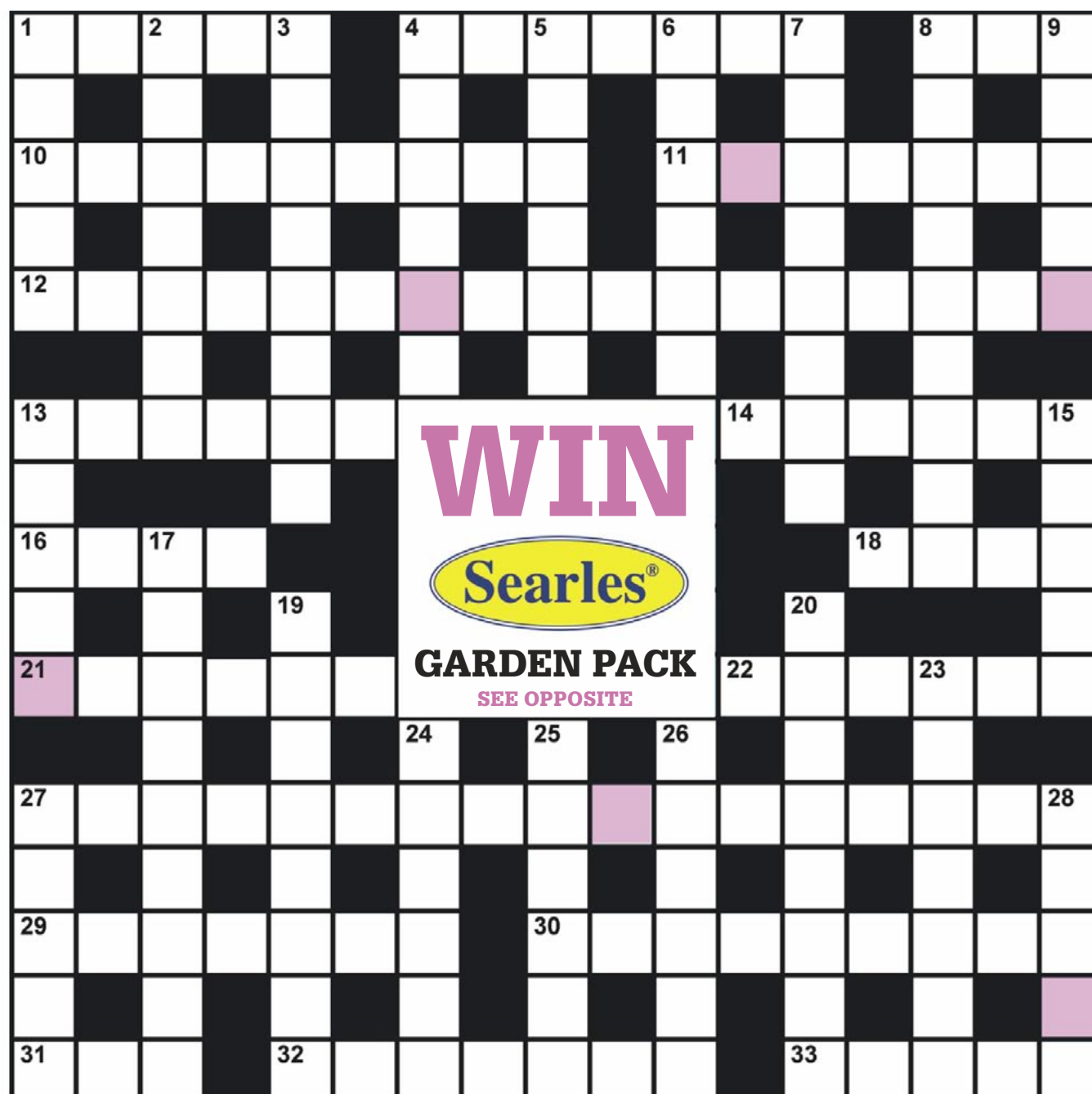
4 across **a**



17 down **b**



25 down **c**



ACROSS

1. Flowering shrub (5)
4. Trees in **PICTURE A** (7)
8. Long, slender lettuce (3)
10. Frog or toad, for example (9)
11. Happen again (7)
12. Moist dessert cake (6,4,7)
13. Excavator (6)
14. Arbors (6)
16. Nipple (4)
18. Stiff, sticky earth (4)
21. Relating to the use of plants, eg. medicinally (6)
22. Fruit also called shaddock (6)
27. Person who arranges trees, etc (9,8)

29. Orange-yellow stone fruit (7)

30. Red seaweed used commercially (5,4)
31. Turf (3)
32. Yarrow (7)
33. Small bodies of water (5)

DOWN

1. Covers with loose soil (5)
2. Plover (7)
3. Edible legume (8)
4. Window screens (6)
5. Busy, showy (6)
6. Sudden, short (6)
7. Low spring-blooming plant bearing drooping white flowers (8)

8. Red food colouring (9)

9. Thin animal (5)
13. Often fatal to trees is ... elm disease (5)
15. Authority (3-2)
17. The biennial plant, *Verbascum thapsus* (6,3) **PICTURE B**
19. Red or green pepper (8)
20. Fragments of timber (8)
23. Early variety of wheat (7)
24. Subdued colour (6)
25. Melon-like fruit (6) **PICTURE C**
26. Beauty treatment (6)
27. Slopes, lists (5)
28. Fragrant flowers of a prickly bush (5)

Solution next month

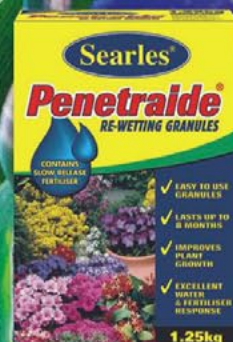
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- 2 x 1L Five In One Organic Liquid Fertiliser Concentrate
- 2 pairs of Searles leather-palm gardening gloves



how to enter

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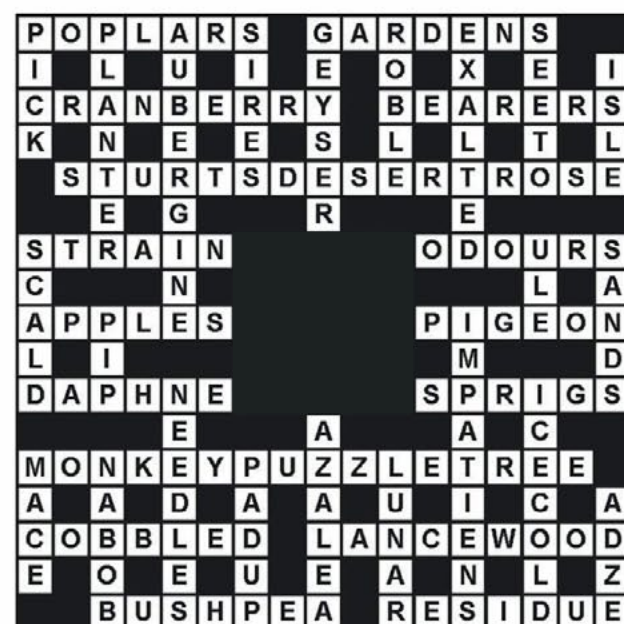
winners

Koshi wind chimes (Nov 2014) K Allitt, Qld; D Exell, Vic; V McDonell, NSW; L Munnings, Tas; V Nightingale, Vic. **Birdies Pack (Nov 2014)** L Stewart, NSW. **Ivory Coat dog food (Nov 2014)** M Lyon, ACT.

January's unscrambled word: dibble

solution

January 2015 crossword





summer zone

Gardening Australia resumes on ABC on March 7, 2015. In the meantime, check out the team's new book, *Love Your Garden*. Edited by Annette McFarlane (ABC Books, \$39.99).

This book celebrates 25 years of the show on ABC. The first section is all about meeting the presenters to find out their backgrounds, inspirations and plant passions. We also have a peek into their own backyards and some of the gardens that they love.

The next part is filled with advice from the presenters, gathered over the years, on how to plan your garden. It covers all sorts of topics from choosing the right plants for your climate to selecting those that won't harm your pets. There are plenty of tips on garden design, too.

The team also shares basics, from how to create good soil, to setting up a worm farm and starting a new lawn.

Excitingly, there's a whole section on Australian native plants and the section on exotics features favourites such as roses, camellias and bulbs.

There's also plenty to learn about propagation with tips from many of the presenters. The final part explains some of the most common gardening techniques, from weeding to mulching, and tells you how to take on some common pests and diseases that sometimes appear in the garden.

radio

For details of programs on your local ABC station, call 139 994 or visit abc.net.au/local

ACT

666 ABC Canberra
Saturday 8.30–10am

NSW

92.5 ABC Central Coast

Saturday 9–10am

ABC Central West

Tuesday 10.40am monthly,

Saturday 8.30–9am

97.3 ABC Illawarra

Saturday 8.30–9.30am

ABC Mid North Coast

Saturday 9.30–10am,

Wednesday 10.30–11am

1233 ABC Newcastle

Saturday 9–9.40am

ABC New England North West

Thursday 9.30am, Saturday 8.30am

ABC North Coast

Saturday 8.30–9.30am

ABC Riverina

Wednesday 9.30am, Saturday 8.30–9am

ABC South East

Wednesday 10.05–10.30am,

Thursday 6.15am, Saturday 9.05–10am

702 ABC Sydney

Saturday 9–10am

ABC Western Plains

Thursday 9.35am fortnightly,

Saturday 8.30–9am

NT

783 ABC Alice Springs;

106.1 ABC Tennant Creek

Saturday 8.30–9am

105.7 ABC Darwin

Saturday 9–9.30am

QLD

612 ABC 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

891 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

936 ABC Hobart;

ABC Northern

Tasmania

Saturday 9–10am

VIC

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Saturday 9am, 10am

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Wednesday 6.40am

monthly, Thursday

10am fortnightly

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Thursday 7.35am fortnightly

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ABC Goulburn Murray

Tuesday 10.05–10.30am

774 ABC Melbourne

Saturday 7.40am

1602 ABC South

West Victoria

Thursday 7.20am fortnightly

594 ABC Western

Victoria

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WA

Statewide

Wednesday 2.30–3pm

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ABC Great Southern;

ABC North West WA;

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ABC South Coast;

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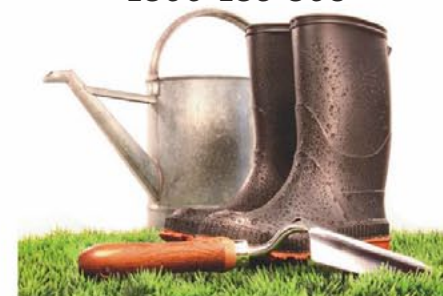
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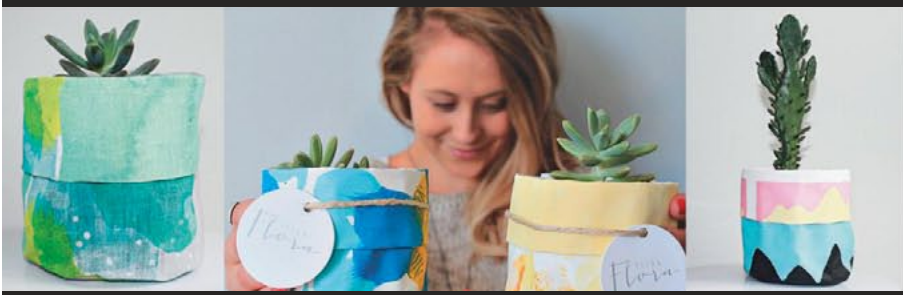
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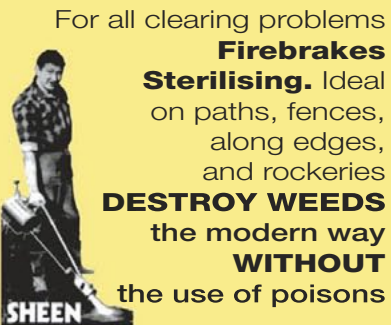


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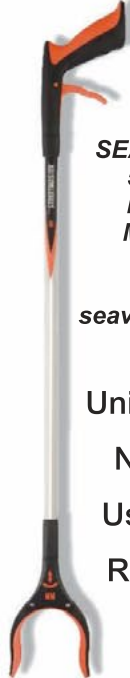


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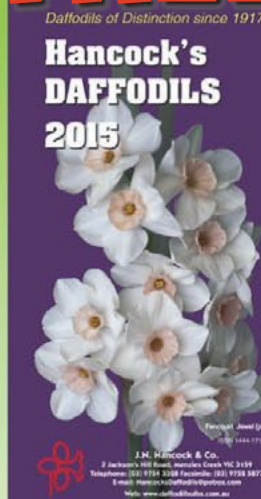
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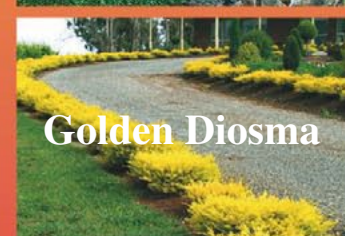
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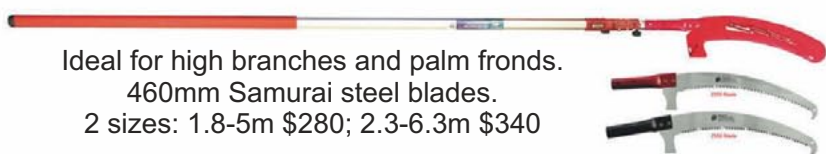
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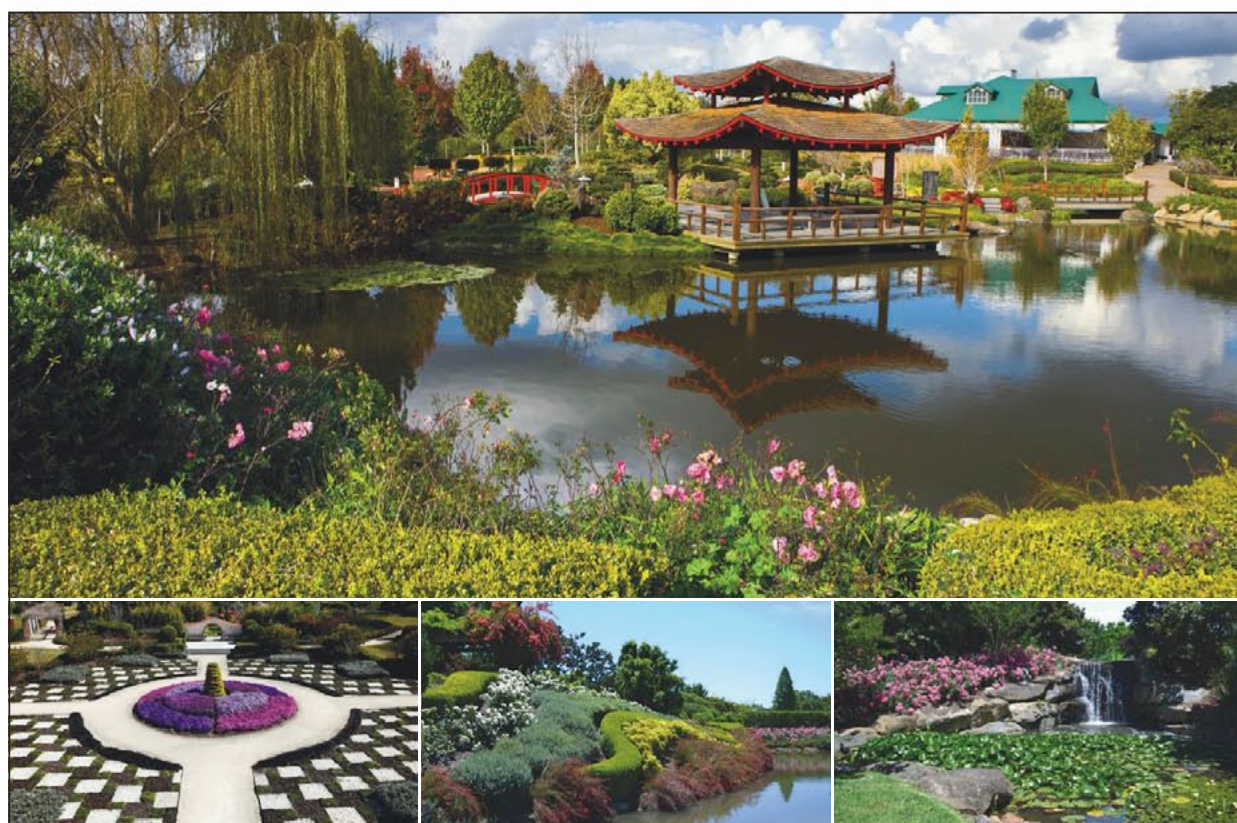
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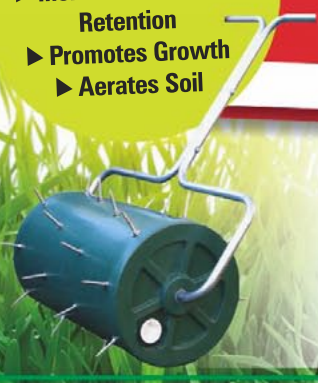
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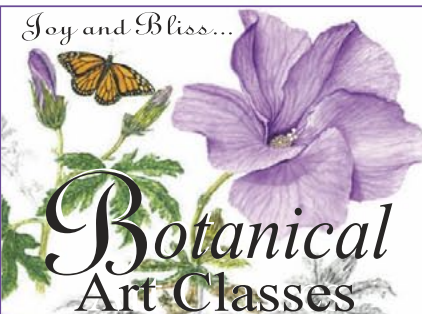
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Patch of paradise

Whether you have a balcony, courtyard or garden, it's simple to create your own stylish vegie patch with Birdies' new Heritage Garden Bed. Made from chemical-free, termite-resistant white cypress, it's very durable and easy to assemble – no tools are needed. If you get two or more kits, you can create an array of different shapes and sizes. The range is available at Bunnings Warehouse.

For more information and to see the full range, visit birdiesgardenproducts.com.au.



Beautiful borders

'Baby Pete' is a gorgeous dwarf form of agapanthus that was discovered in Australia. Perfect as a border plant, it reaches a maximum foliage height of only 20cm tall with flower stems reaching about 35cm long. Boasting beautiful blue flowers, 'Baby Pete' makes a striking display when grouped together. A low-maintenance plant, it performs well in full sun and semi-shade, and is dry tolerant.

For more information about Australian-bred Agapanthus 'Baby Pete', visit pma.com.au.



Easy does it

There's no need for sprays or chemicals with the Speedy Weedy – it makes weeding easy and fast. Simply push, twist and lift the entire weed, and then eject it by pushing the plunger. There's no need to bend or kneel – saving you from aches and pains. This Swedish-made weeder is sturdy, lightweight and comfortable to work with. Better still, the Speedy Weedy comes with a five-year warranty.

For more information on the Speedy Weedy, call 1300 137 881 or visit speedyweedy.com.au.



Pest free

New Richgro Bug Killa is an easy-to-use granulated insecticide that treats common pests on roses, azaleas and ornamentals. Azalea lace bugs are only about 3mm long, but they cause yellow or white stippling on leaves, leaf curl, browning of leaves or premature leaf drop. Bug Killa is taken up by the plant's roots, controlling aphids and lace bugs, and will protect plants for up to six weeks. 250g treats 500 plants.

For more information about Bug Killa, call 1800 455 132 or visit richgro.com.au.



sweeping plains

Not one to be caught up in gardening trends, Michael is surprised by how quickly nature-inspired planting has captured his attention

illustration by SANDRA ETEROVIC photography by VINCENT LONG

After 30-plus years of playing around in gardens, I've noticed a massive broadening in the aesthetic models that we refer to for inspiration. We've looked to the garden-design traditions of many cultures for inspiration, but what I'm exploring now are the natural vegetation types that are informing how we plant.

Nature-inspired planting has become mainstream so fast that we're tempted to think it has been around forever. In reality, it's all very recent.

British nursery-owner Beth Chatto was driven by a desire for ecological integrity when she began planting in naturalistic sweeps in rich woodland settings or gravelly Mediterranean contexts at the Chelsea Flower Shows of the 1980s. About the same time, designers in the US looked to the prairie for their aesthetic inspiration, and German designers eyed off their wild meadows, and adopted that look for their parks.

This was nothing short of a revolution. Until then, garden plants had nearly always been relegated to polite borders, usually around the edges of lawns. All this new thinking dissolved the boundary between the garden beds and the green carpet that they edged or interrupted.

It was suddenly possible to cover areas with solid planting that could simply undulate, to help define spaces and block ugly views. Even the carpeting effect of lawn, which is so essential to the appeal of large spaces, could be substituted with ankle-, knee- or even waist-deep planting.



Nature-inspired planting has become mainstream so fast that we're tempted to think that it has been around forever. In reality, it's all very recent

For the first time ever, ornamental grasses became a fundamental element in the planting. This totally changed the way we think of Australian native gardens. The whole strap-leafed thing, usually showing up as combination of poa and lomandra, now regularly appears alongside freeways, and in public and private gardens. No-one had thought of it before the 1990s.

It seems to me that there's huge, unexplored territory here, whether for natives, exotics or both. I'm virtually kept

awake at night by the possibilities of a simple, repetitive matrix of grasses and other strap-leafed plants within which a vast diversity of low-growing treasures is hidden. By the time you read this, an area will already be marked out in my garden and soil prep begun. **GA**

Michael blogs at thegardenist.com.au.

What are your favourite nature-inspired planting styles? Let us know via email to yoursay@gardeningaustralia.com.au

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