

# Bowral Garden Club Inc.

(Established in 1963)

Affiliated with Garden Clubs of Australia Inc.

ADDRESS: PO BOX 910, BOWRAL NSW 2576

Patrons: Chris & Charlotte Webb OAM

## NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2017



*Friendship through Gardening*

### For your diary February 2017

**13 February (Monday) 2.00pm: Club Meeting:** speaker Audrey Tabner, "*The Wonders of growing Fuchsias*"

**20 February (Monday) 10.30am Garden visit** Les Musgrave, 41 Clearys Lane, off Wildes Meadow Road. Please park in street.

### For your diary March 2017

**6 March (Monday) 10.30am: Garden Workshop** Mittagong Garden Centre: Phil Maher "*perennials and how to care for them*".

**13 March (Monday) 2.00pm: Club Meeting:** speaker Libby Cameron: "*The past, the present and the future at the Royal Botanic Gardens*".

### Summer jewels



*Petunias and portulacas*

### From the President

"If you have a garden and a library you have everything you need" - Marcus Tullius Cicero 106-43BC.

We, along with many, know the joys and benefits of gardening. However with this weather we have been

experiencing, I have found it too hot to venture out. So rather than the "doing", I sought refuge inside reading and studiously designing my proposed projects.

But what often happens when you are trying to get your ideas on paper, is that you get side-tracked, especially with Google, and I began instead to read about Horticultural Therapy and the scientific proof that being in the garden makes us feel better. What especially caught my eye was that "Gardening has been shown to prevent dementia in seniors. Gardening requires you to think, learn and use your creativity. By keeping the mind active, it serves as a protective measure against such degenerative diseases." Both my parents had dementia and I'm pretty sure that I am also a candidate, so I took much solace in this theory. As well as benefits for the mind, gardening has benefits for the body. If you can't get to the gym, don't feel guilty, remember that the bending, digging and stretching you do in the garden improves muscle tone, flexibility and lowers blood pressure. Indeed it has been asserted that one hour of gardening is equal to thirty five minutes of jogging.

It doesn't matter what sort or size of garden we have, we just have to make sure we have our dose of the wonder drug "gardening" for both the health of our body and mind, and relish in getting our hands dirty because the bacteria in soil stimulate the production of norepinephrine which fights depression.

"Gardening simply does not allow me to be mentally old, because too many hopes and dreams are yet to be realized" - Allan Armitage Professor of Horticulture, born 1946.

Have a wonderful year, enjoy the restorative benefits of gardening and I look forward to your participation in the 2017 activities.

Happy gardening

*Anne Curvers*

### Garden tips for February

We were horrified to see that an enormous, beautiful old crabapple tree had been cut down on Oxley Drive, just a few yards past our driveway. It was the harbinger of spring for us—*Malus floribunda*, Japanese Crabapple—with masses of pink fat buds at the end of winter opening to luscious white blossom that seemed to last for days and days. The branches were hardly visible when the tree was in flower. And what has the owner replaced it with? A Leylandii hedge! The old large house had been torn down so that an even larger modern one could be built and the Sydney garden designers decided "out with the old and in with the new". The crabapple must have been eighty years old but still in very good health and a beautiful shape with its pendulous boughs stretching down by their fence. As Jonathan Swift wrote in 1727: 'Some South Sea Broker from the City, / Will purchase me, the more's the pity, / Lay all my fine Plantations waste, / To fit them to his Vulgar Taste ...'

**Watering:** This January has not been as rainy as last year so we've been out with the hoses more frequently than in

previous holiday periods. Cricket on the lawn was wonderful though—despite the attempts of young (and old) to try to hit the ball on the roof. We mulched and mulched over the spring months and that helped keep the plants looking happy. The experts tell us that 6-8 cm of leaf litter, sugar cane, lucerne, compost, etc, is sufficient to protect most plants adequately, but if you have been brightening up your garden with pretty annuals before Christmas, one very hot day can kill the tender plants. Don't put off watering until after the sun has gone down because if a little plant is drying out by lunchtime it's not going to survive until 7pm. The heatwave in January caused consternation in our household as I can't abide to see plants suffer! Every year I decide that we really must invest in a super-duper watering system—I dream of a computer remote-controlled system of water pipes that pop up and sprinkle in all the areas at my command. By the time autumn comes round we decide that we can cope without it and prefer to spend our money on other things—like more plants!

**Home-grown fruits:** Our son brought us a big box of their figs from Canberra—they were en route to a holiday in New Zealand and brought us the figs in recompense for caring for their daft dog. They have this enormous old fig tree which produces copious amounts of figs each year. Their old plum tree is the same and even the newly planted apple trees are laden. The only watering their fruit trees receive is from the children's bath water each evening. Our daughter's fruit trees in her fenced orchard (which also houses the hens) at Willow Vale are laden too. Is it that the dogs protect them from the possums and parrots? We barely get one apple from our two trees. Do we have to rear hens and dogs to get a crop? I can't abide netting—one year we covered the two large apple trees with great effort and then spent every day undoing a little bit more to release trapped birds. Our only recompense is that we can appreciate the well-fed birds hopping all around us, enjoying the cherries, raspberries, apricots and crabapples from our garden.

**Pruning:** I shall be out and about this month with my trusty secateurs pruning the roses and generally tidying up the bushes. If there is any dieback I will need to cut back about 5cm below the dead section. The experts say to cut just above an outward-facing bud on any of the canes you want to shorten. Watch out for 'water shoots' which are the tall, sappy shoots developing from the crown of the plant (above the bud union) or from an old cane. These must be left to grow until the winter prune in late July to early September.

If it's possible to reach (and definitely not possible for me!), prune the whippy growth on wisteria and trim older stems back to three plump buds. This will ensure that there will be good spring flowering.

The lavender bushes are in need of attention—not a hard prune but just a light trim below the flowerheads. For these plants I use the shears at this time of year. The same applies to summer flowering heathers—even scissors may be sufficient to remove the faded flowerheads and about 3cm (1 inch) of leafy growth on the smaller plants. Some perennials we don't deadhead or prune because they produce ornamental seedheads for autumn and winter colouring. These include Chinese lantern (*Physalis*), cornflower (*Centaurea*), globe thistle (*Echinops*), honesty (*Lunaria*), Michaelmas daisy, sedum, sunflower (*Helianthus*) and yarrow (*Achillea*).

**Collecting seedlings and seeds:** I have to confess that I rarely bother collecting seeds but I take heart from Christopher Lloyd's comments: "Now, most seed

collecting happens in one's garden and it should be simple enough to do it at the right moment. And yet it is extraordinary how often that moment slips by when your thoughts are elsewhere and then, when you do remember (in the bath, most likely), it is only to discover that the bird has flown for yet another year." So I collect the seedlings but not the seeds; there are many tiny seedlings under the hellebores which I want to transplant to sheltered spots in the garden. You may have lots of forget-me-nots popping up all over the place or violets. We call forget-me-nots "the enemy of the gardener" and although you may love them all over your garden, I weed them out, except in a couple of designated areas. (When we first moved into this garden it was overrun with forget-me-nots and by the time I weeded them out they had masses of seed heads which stuck to my woolly sweater. They couldn't be removed by any means and the sweater had to be thrown out!) I've noticed that the winter pansies in the pots have produced lots of seedlings too. That's another job to do—potting up the little pansies and feeding them with liquid fertiliser.

**Fertilise:** All your pots, vegetables and herbs love liquid manure during summer. January was such a busy month that this has been one of many things that I have neglected to do. In February I must do better! I usually use Powerfeed but you can make your own by simply filling the foot of an old knee-high or stocking with Organic Life or Dynamic Lifter pellets and suspend it in a bucket of water for a week. Make sure you dilute the liquid before you water it onto your plants. It's time to spread compost and fertiliser all round your garden beds too—and water it in—but before you do that check whether the beds are full of weeds and get stuck into the tasks!

**Agapanthus:** This is an early warning about the old flower heads, which should be cut off before they scatter seeds throughout your garden and the neighbourhood. I know they are a problem if allowed to scatter seeds in the bushland but they have been lovely this summer. Such sturdy plants producing beautiful tall flowers, BUT please make sure you cut off the heads when they start to produce seeds and place the seed heads into polythene bags and pop in your RED bin.

It's time to propagate, propagate, propagate.

Happy summer gardening!

Meg Probyn

## From the Patch

### Carrot *Daucus carota sp sativus*

Interestingly our everyday orange carrot is not what carrots looked like in the past. In fact the original wild carrot cousins were predominately purple, white and yellow. More like our very colourful heirloom carrots we find being sold and promoted everywhere.

Carrots aren't difficult to grow in fact they prefer soil which is not too enriched. Over fertilizing will result in slender forked carrots with huge amounts of top. The main issue with carrots is achieving uniform germination. Carrot seeds take at least 10 days to germinate and prior to germination it is essential they don't dry out. I have found a useful trick is to place aboard over the seeds until they begin to germinate after which I remove the board.

It is best to sow carrots in deep, well cultivated soil which is free of obstacles such as rocks or clods, in long rows. Because the seed is so fine it can be beneficial to mix the seed with fine sand or flour which will act as a

filler and a marker to indicate where you have sown. Once the seed has germinated, after 2 weeks, prick out the row leaving seedlings which are well separated from one another.

Fertilize with a general organic fertilizer which is not too high in Nitrogen after germination and at 2 weekly intervals and water regularly.

### Pests & Diseases

There are few pest and diseases, snails and slugs may cause some damage but normal control methods are sufficient.

### Carrot Trivia

The wild carrot population seems to be clearly divided into those from the West and those from the East. Our modern carrot is a result of crossing between these two populations.

Carrots were widely known in ancient times and originated in Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan but not introduced into European garden until the middle-ages. The Orange colour of our everyday carrot is probably due to breeding in the 17th century by the Dutch and then resulting popularity of their new varieties.

Carrots are rich in Beta carotene which is a powerful antioxidant which helps in maintaining a healthy skin and disease prevention.

Carrots are rich in alkaline elements which purify and revitalize the blood.

Carrots are rich in Carotenoids which are beneficial to blood sugar regulation.

Carrots contain a phyto-nutrient called falcarinol which helps in promoting colon health and a reducing the risk of cancers.

Eight ounces of carrot juice can contain as much as 800% of your daily recommended dosage of vitamin A. Carrot juice is also an excellent source of vitamin C.

### Carrot Cultivars

'Atomic Red' A deep red non hybrid variety

'Carrot Lobbericher Yellow' A very old yellow cultivar

'Paris Market' A small round variety

'Purple Dragon' Very old Afghan purple variety

'St Valery' An heirloom 19th century French variety, long and tapering.

**Top Weight, Western Red** and **All Seasons** are also all good modern cultivars

### Other things to plant in February

Now is also the time to plant a huge number of Summer vegetables including

Beetroot, Beans, Broccoli, Chives, Carrots, Fennel, Kohlrabi, Leek, Chives, Lettuce, Fennel, Onion, Parsley, Parsnips, Snow Peas, Turnips, Swedes, Peas, Spinach and Chard.

### A Vegetable Thought

***'The most noteworthy thing about gardeners is that they are always optimistic, always enterprising, and never satisfied. They always look forward to doing something better than they have ever done before.'***

*- Vita Sackville-West*

Chris Webb

### Muriel's Musings

My dears, its early morning and I'm sipping on a hot, sweet, creamy coffee and looking out on the garden and the rose bushes and trees from the deck and I can see the dew drops sparkling on the round lacy webs that the spiders have been busy weaving during the night -

magic. The Spring was long and colourful this year wasn't it? The best display of roses and rhododendrons that I can remember. But now the weather has warmed up and the Summer flowers have taken centre stage. At our November meeting our guest speaker spoke enthusiastically about Australian native plants that we should have in our gardens - I don't have any - but I do have other Australian natives, Aladdin the wombat (his burrow is as large as a cave). A fox is often seen sauntering, in daylight, across the lawn as he heads next door to look at the 4 hens in their fox-proof pen. There are rabbits hopping about they are so cute - no they're not - like their parents they are hungry pests. The wallabies who live up in the Add to dictionary bush haven't yet finished eating the gardens up the road in St Clair St but when they have they will surely turn up here. Finally to large family of Kookaburras, who for years have resided in the trees opposite, have raised quite a few youngsters and they are now teaching them to laugh. Lessons begin as soon as day breaks and go on until the youngsters have mastered the first part of their laugh - but they are finding the second part a challenge. We hope that soon when their voices break they will get it right - in the meantime they are driving us nuts.

Our little vegie patch has become productive and the other evening we had home grown tomatoes, yellow button squash and butterbeans that Aaltje had left whole so we could drag them through the butter and eat them like asparagus spears. Over the years the pecking order for our fruit and vegies has been worked out as follows.

A 1/3 for us

Muriel Stuart

### An Undiscovered Gem

Yesterday I had the pleasure of visiting for the first time the Campbelltown Arts Centre. I went to see the highly thought-provoking *Muyran Sukumaran: Another Day in Paradise* art exhibition. After the exhibition we decided to have coffee in their very nice café. And there we discovered the hidden delight...the café overlooks a delightfully serene Japanese Garden with meditation tea house complete with waterfall and pond.



The lagerstroemias were almost finished- just a little flash of deep pink petals here and there on the ground. Black mondo edging. Azaleas all now clipped. What a joy it would be in spring!!!!!!

*Margaret Parkinson*

### MEMBERS PLEASE NOTE

Thank you to all members who bring articles to the trading table, specimens for the Show and Tell table and plates of goodies for afternoon tea, however, **please remember to take home what you brought to share.**

### Social Liaison: Jan Scott

With the increase in membership it has been difficult to keep up to date with everyone's comings and goings. Please contact Jan Scott at the Welcome Desk or by mobile phone 0418215036 to notify the Club of a member's change of circumstance and welfare. Thank you, Anne.

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|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>President:</b>                 | Anne Curvers                                                                                                                                            | 4861 3061 |
| <b>Vice-President:</b>            | Janice Scott                                                                                                                                            |           |
| <b>Secretary/<br/>Membership:</b> | Lorraine Richardson                                                                                                                                     | 4862 2677 |
| <b>Treasurer:</b>                 | Maryann Hewitt                                                                                                                                          |           |
| <b>Newsletter Editor:</b>         | Carole Scott                                                                                                                                            | 4862 4766 |
| <b>Public Officer:</b>            | Eric Paananen                                                                                                                                           |           |
| <b>Committee:</b>                 | Kristine Gow, Jan Scott, Judith Lewis, Catherine Mah, Glenys Lilliendal, Wendy Gamble, Noelene Bailey, Raymond Bradley, Margaret Parkinson, Judy White. |           |

And just because we have room some more exotic picture sent by Gordon Hopkins

Swaddled Babies (*Anguloa Uniflora*)



Flying Duck Orchid (*Caleana Major*)



The Darth Vader (*Aristolochia Salvadorensis*)

