

# Bowral Garden Club Inc.

(Established in 1963)

Affiliated with The Garden Clubs of Australia Inc.

Patrons: Chris & Charlotte Webb OAM



Friendship through Gardening

## July 2020 Newsletter

### From the President



*O*k, enough of the sad face.....

*T*he other day I took a trip to Campbelltown to service my car. I had four and a half hours to fill in so took a walk to Tim's Garden Centre. It was a sunny day and I'd noticed on Tim's Facebook page that he and his son had been madly potting up new season roses. He posted this pic on FB....



I already had two 'Just Joey' in the plot, so I was sold. Two 'Blue Moon' and two 'Mr Lincoln' please. Then I saw 'Marilyn Monroe'. I had an instant attraction. I felt very Presidential! But I didn't have enough room for all five. Decisions, 'Marilyn' came home and one 'Mr Lincoln' stayed behind. The plot had been cleared of the overgrown Salvias and the new roses went into the soil that had been well and truly prepared with Seamungus, mushroom compost and other organic compost. It looks a bit bare but come Spring..... and that won't be long.

*A* lot of our members gardens have benefited from our enforced time at home and I have to say I haven't suffered too much. The cat has been happy and the wild birds have been fed well, as have I!

*T*hank you to all who have submitted their membership dues and as I have said, we will keep you informed of any changes to restrictions. At present the Bowral Uniting Church is far from letting people back in for meetings.

*S*tay chipper and warm

*Deb*



## From the Editor

There is a chill in the air as we move into mid-winter, especially with these south-westerly winds a blowing. Makes you want reach for a hot cup of chocolate and a biscuit or slice of cake. In this month's newsletter Muriel will have you reaching for those bickies as she muses down memory lane. Maryann continues her story on soils and Megan Tarrant takes us around her garden. I've also included in this month an item from Gardening Australia called 'Potty for Propagation' which I found very interesting, some of you may have seen the episode.

If you have been like me spending time in the garden cutting back/cleaning up you realise you now have space for more plantings. It's off to the nursery spending more money buying primula, pansies, poppies, stock – that's my selection with snapdragons to come when available. Whilst planting you may have noticed the daffodils are poking their heads through the soil and some brave ones already flowering, my snowflakes are, their beautiful bowed heads bobbing in the wind. When I take Daisy for her walk, the path follows alongside some bushland where the wattle trees will soon bust with yellow blossoms.

Even in winter there is still colour around in our gardens. I have a single white rose flowering, now picked and in a specimen vase inside the house.

## Roz



## Plant of the Month

### Tacca Bat Plant



Tacca chantrieri is an unusual plant in that it has black flowers. These flowers are somewhat bat-shaped, are up to 12 inches across, and have long 'whiskers' that can grow up to 28 inches. There are ten species in the genus Tacca. One of these, T. integrifolia, is commonly called the "white bat plant." T. integrifolia is similar to T. chantrieri, but has white bracts which are veined purple.

Ghoulish, whiskey bat flower plants are THE plant to add to tropical gardens for extra wow! **They're happy in pots too.** Give them plenty of filtered light, free draining soil and watch them unfold to deep burgundy bat-like flowers. The white bat plant has strange, almost bizarre flowers resembling a bat's black face with white ears and long whiskers.

Source:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tacca\\_chantrieri](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tacca_chantrieri)

<https://www.flowerpower.com.au/tacca-bat-plant-183257p>

## Muriel's Musings

The aria from La Boheme comes to mind for my hands are in the same condition as Mimi's - but I have a hot water bottle on my lap and she poor luv only had a candle flame for warmth!!

While browsing in the biscuit aisle at the supermarket the other day looking for a packet of biscuits that don't have the flavour and texture of cardboard it set me

to remembering the past pleasures and uses of biscuits - when they were made with REAL ingredients. The little ones were weaned onto a Milk Arrowroot biscuit placed on a saucer and softened with warmed milk, diluted with a dash of hot water for the milk from the jersey cows was loaded with cream. Our after-school snack would be several buttered Sao biscuits and so popular were they that Sao's were always the first item written on the grocery lists. It struck me as rather sad that a half a dozen packets of those once flaky treats were now consigned to the very bottom shelf - out of sight out of mind.



Other delights that come to mind were the Cornish Wafers that were often warmed in the oven and used as a substitute for pastry for a casserole if our Mums were running out of time. Who remembers those delicious fruit filled little Pillow biscuits that we sometimes had heated in the oven and served with custard and/or cream as our dessert!! Back again to Arrowroot biscuits, there



would always be a plate of either buttered or iced biscuits generously sprinkled with

hundreds 'n thousands at our birthday parties and finally there were Monte Carlos that would fizzle away in your mouth, Iced Vo Vos, Shortbread fingers, Lattice biscuits and the Gingernuts that were usually referred to as Dunkers as they were rather hard to bite into. So as to not risk breaking their dentures the grown-ups would dip them into their cup of tea. I wonder if I have stirred some long-forgotten memories for some of you?

**B**ear with me while I explain the reason for my 'Thought for the Day'. The past few

months of virus isolation has kept us away from family and friends but in a cluster of e-mails I received recently I came across this little gem.

*Good friends are like  
Stars ....  
You don't always see  
them,  
But you know they are  
always there.*



*Muriel*

## Gardening Notes - Maryann Hewitt

### More about Soils.

**D**ifferent plants grow in different soils, some of which are specific - and I refer to acid, neutral and alkaline pH soils. A pH measuring kit is available at nurseries and is easy to use - if you don't have one, do get one, particularly if you do not know what the soil pH is in your garden and whether it matches what you want to plant or you have a plant that is not doing well. Different microbes live in differ soils and they are the miniscule bugs that feed your plants.

**S**oil pH is a measure of the concentration of hydrogen ions in the soil solution. Low pH values (less than 5.5) indicate acidic soils and high pH values (greater than 8.0) indicate alkaline soils.

To raise the pH in soil, follow the instructions re: the volume of Garden Lime or Dolomite to use and to lower the pH use Sulphur or Iron Sulphur. Mix with your soil/compost/manures etc. watered and left for a week at least before digging over and measuring again. If not OK, add what you need to and if OK, plant!!

**S**ome plants just will not grow properly if the pH is not right, such as Camellias, Rhododendrons, Sasanquas, Ajuga, Azalea, Clematis, Colchicum, Kalmia, most Australian native flowers. Fortunately, most of our herbs and vegetables are not

so fussy and will not grow if the pH is a fair way out of measurement. Even though you have the pH at a correct reading when you plant something do check every year and straight away if you notice the plant having any yellowing or 'veins' appearing on their leaves.

### **Pruning.**

*Yes*, a few frosts; all tools sharpened and ready to go, long garden gloves ready. The sap in trees should be right down by now - if you prune before the sap is down you could destroy the tree/shrub as it will 'bleed' sap - unless you want to make some potent Russian alcoholic drink of course. No, I do not have the recipe but we did see hundreds of birches in Siberia with tins attached. This is also a good time to get up close and look for overwintering bugs on leaves and stems (treat accordingly). If you have a mulcher, use that for the smaller branches etc. Then use a composter or double plastic bag- both of which need some moisture in them. Keep in a fair amount of sunlight to heat and sweat, and regular turning - by Spring, you will have more additives for your soil!!

*Enjoy your spring preparation!!*

*Maryann*

### **My Garden – Megan Tarrant**

*When* I read Sue's story about her garden in the April Newsletter, I thought "Oh! I can relate to this." My husband and I, too, moved into a new house in Balaclava in July 2017, but what we were confronted with was nothing but miles and miles of cream



Colourbond fencing and yellow winter grass; not very pretty.

Our choice of house was determined by the need to accommodate our rather large Victorian extension table, much used for Christmas and birthdays etc. Fortunately, we found that one of our neighbours had been a landscaper, so he marked out the beds we wanted, dug up the soil and covered it with mulch.

*We* started planting around October that year. My husband Harley had decided that he wanted a distinctive tree planted



outside each window, so flowering, deciduous trees were planted about half-way between house and fence on the wider, northern side and, along that side fence camellias and rhododendrons. On the narrower, south side we planted camellias (no prizes for guessing my favourite) and azaleas; on the rear, eastern boundary we planted roses.

*The* soil, of course, was not helpful – solid clay – but at least the roses love it. Soil improvement was achieved with lots of compost, our own and Curley's. (For the first Mother's Day here I had bought myself a present – two compost bins.)

*Later*, on the north-facing side fence, we started a vegie garden and planted, surprise, surprise, passionfruit vines, producing beautiful, sweet, juicy passionfruit, now growing wild and needing to be kept under control.

*For* the front garden, we chose a lavender with a rounded shape and deep-purple

flowers as the dominant planting. We have no front fence – not necessary - and no fence between us and our lovely neighbours on the northern side – only a communal garden and a stepping stone (to get back and forth more easily.) In the last 2 years we have experimented with tulips (mostly recycled from Corbett Gardens) and these have been a colourful success.

I was conscious of the fact that we are an “older couple,” so gardens were not built up and edges were kept flat, because “older” people tend to trip on raised edging, often with dire results. So, only the vegie beds are raised to a height we find manageable. A difficulty with our house is that it is sited west-east and the house is surrounded by a concrete path so, in summer, there is no shade in the garden.



This has proved to be a problem for some rhododendrons and azaleas but, hopefully, things will improve when the trees we have planted grow tall enough to provide some shade.

So, briefly, that's our garden. Part of the horrible fencing which, on our first inspection, we said, “had to go,” turned out to be double gates and, therefore,

very useful. It's amazing what can be disguised with pots!

*Megan*

### **Potty for Propagation** (Gardening Australia)

*'Hannah has a smart idea for growing different plant cuttings in a three-way pot, which allows you to grow more in a small space. In addition,*



*different plants' cuttings develop at different rates, so having the three layers means you can put in cuttings from three different plants, while still keeping them apart!*

#### **WHAT YOU NEED:**

- 3 pots - 1 small, 1 medium and 1 large - that fit into each other
- Good potting mix
- Plant cuttings (sitting in water while you set up the pots)
- Pencil or chopstick as dibber stick
- 2 x 50cm lengths of wire, bent in a U shape
- Plastic bag to fit over pot and wire
- Large rubber band or string to hold bag in place

#### **WHAT YOU DO:**

1. Put some potting mix in the bottom of the largest pot until the middle-sized pot sits inside it with the two rims at the same level. Fill around the edge of the middle pot with mix, packing it down quite firmly when you reach half way to create a firm base.
2. Next do the same with the middle pot, adding enough mix to allow the smallest pot to sit inside with all the pot tops flush.
3. Fill the smallest pot and the gap between the two centre pots with mix, using an old butter knife if necessary to pack it down at the base. (You still want to be able to see the very tops of the pots.)

4. Plant out your cuttings into the three layers, starting on the outer ring and using an old chopstick or pencil to create holes for the cuttings to go into.
5. Water cuttings in well.

**MAKE A MINI GREENHOUSE COVER:**

To create a mini greenhouse over the cuttings, inset the bent sections of wire into the pot so they cross at right angle at the top. Cover the wires with a recycled plastic bag, holding it in place over the pot with a large rubber band or some string.

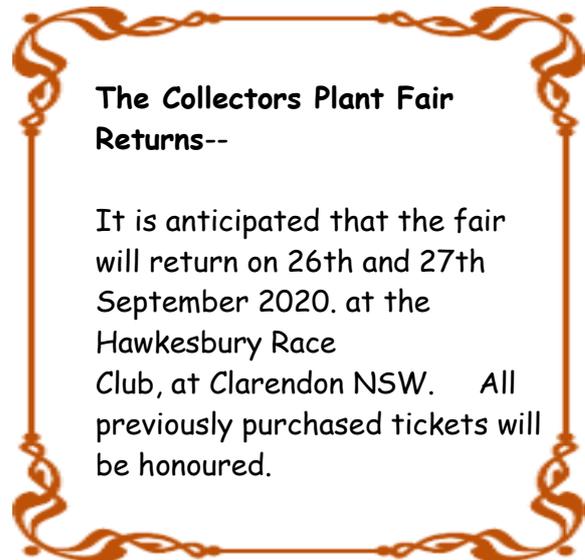
The bag creates a humid environment, which helps the cuttings develop roots. When the bag no longer has condensation inside, you know it's time to water again.

The inner pots can be lifted out to check root development of the cuttings, which can easily be separated with a garden knife.'

Source: ABC Broadcast:

Fri 19 Jun 2020, 7:30pm Series 31 | Episode 20

Published: Fri 19 Jun 2020, 7:35pm



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**Welfare Officer**

Please contact Maryann Hewitt at the meeting or by mobile phone 0431717634 to notify the Club of a member's change of circumstance and welfare. Thank you

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