

Friendship through gardening

NEXT CLUB MEETING

Thursday 3rd February 9.30 for 10am

FRIENDSHIP GARDENS

Saturday 5th February 10am-1pm

RETFORD PARK VISIT

Tuesday 15th February from 9.30am

HELPING HANDS WORKING BEE

Thursday 17th February 9am

Find the latest news on:



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Contributions welcome

From the President

What a great end to our year. We hope you all enjoyed our Christmas Party and your own festive season. Thanks to our fund-raising activities we were able to cover most of the expenses of the Christmas Party and we're hoping to be able to raise even more through our Trade Table and a Market Stall this year.

We're very excited to jump into 2022 with a list of excellent speakers lined up, plenty of Friendship Gardens to visit, some new and inclusive activities and outings, and a workshop program that will get you involved hands on with experts in their gardening fields.

Next month (March) is our AGM. I'd personally like to thank all the 2021 Committee Members for all their hard work in a somewhat trying year. Trish Badami (Treasurer), Robin Coombes, Lyn Curry and Dale Hancock are stepping down from the Committee and they will be greatly missed. Therefore, we are seeking new Committee Members, particularly someone to replace Trish as our new Treasurer. The position isn't challenging, but it is important. Trish is more than happy to show the new Treasurer the ropes, so please have a think about joining us. We can't have a Garden Club without a Treasurer!

Likewise, if you think you'd like to be involved with the Committee, nominate yourself, we're not a bad bunch and it will give you the opportunity to have a vote on our club's direction and the activities we are planning.

I'm very excited to get back to our face-to-face meetings. We will be holding the February meeting under Covid guidelines. I think we're all pretty used to them - wearing a mask, social distancing, food handling and good ventilation. We look forward to seeing you on Thursday 3rd February 9.30am for a 10.00am start!

UP-COMING SPEAKERS

February – Rick Shepherd, Head Gardener, Retford Park.

We are very excited to have Rick Shepherd as our first guest speaker for 2022. He'll be talking to us about how he has applied sustainable management principles to the gardens. As we are getting to the end of summer, he will discuss the importance of autumn leaves and developing fungi and good compost. Rick will show us how he creates natural habitats for the local wildlife, how to minimise your carbon footprint through the use of battery powered equipment, and good water, weed and pest management.

We're visiting Retford Park on Tuesday 15th February (pre-booked tickets only). If you haven't booked a ticket for our tour, you can have a guided tour of the house and/ or gardens another day through the National Trust.

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.au/places/retford-park/>

Rick believes Retford Park and its gardens are significant "because it is a rare example of an intact agricultural village. The mansion, workers' cottages, stables, even a schoolhouse all within the curtilage of manicured gardens and cattle pastures."



March – Hamish Dawson, Bowral Beekeeping.

Hamish is the only certified Flow Hive Ambassador in the Southern Highlands and runs dedicated monthly workshops at his Bowral apiary alongside honey tastings and experiences. He'll be talking to us about all things bees and the important role they play in the health of our garden. He'll also have information about the courses he runs and how you can get started with a Flow Beehive Kit. A sweet addition to our AGM.

Ted Ayers – President.



Trade Table and Library

We're having our library and trade table this coming meeting. There's plenty of new magazines to borrow and a bumper collection of plants to purchase. There are shrubs, bearded iris, daisies, succulents and more. Get in early and grab a bargain!

Q&A and Suggestions Book

As a group of gardeners, we've all learned a few tricks over the years; how to control pests, when to prune a particular plant, how best to maintain your kit. And, as a club, we're all about sharing. That's why we've decided to increase the scope of our **Q&A Sessions** at the meetings. If you've got any questions, problems or issues in your garden, email them to us anytime during the month: gardenclubbundanoon.president@gmail.com and we'll endeavour to find you the answer.

Or, you can bring your question in to the meeting and write it in the Q&A book, we're bound to have someone in the room who can help you out with an answer.

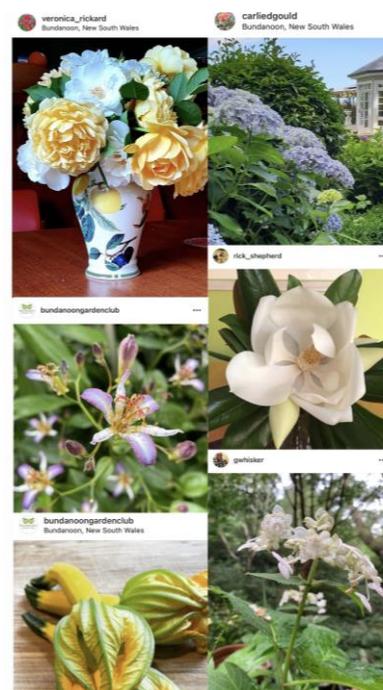
We're also introducing a **Suggestion Book**. So if you have any great ideas about what you'd like to see added to our meetings, or suggestions on activities or outings we could organise, let us know. The book will be at the Welcome Table. You can also email me if you'd prefer: gardenclubbundanoon.president@gmail.com

SNAP SNAP – INSTAGRAM FUN



We love our gardens, and we love sharing, and Instagram is a great way to share photos and short videos of what's happening in our gardens. It's free and easy to use. You can also "follow" your favourite gardeners like Monty Don, Costa, Simon Rickard and more. The Garden Club's Instagram (search: bundanoongardenclub) has over 380 followers from around the country and the world.

If you'd like to see your photos up on our Instagram, just email us gardenclubbundanoon.membership@gmail.com with the shot and a few words about the photo. If you're already on Instagram, just tag us (write @bundanoongardenclub in the text of your post) and we'll post your photo on our Instagram. If you need any help, see Alison or me at our next meeting.



Ted.

CHRISTMAS PARTY 2021

At long last we enjoyed a party at John and Kaye Hines' beautiful property at Penrose! It had been a long-time coming! Covid-limits and the weather held off and allowed us to proceed with our 2021 Christmas Party. After such a long time apart, a cancelled Christmas 2020 and a cancelled 50th Anniversary of the Club, and months of isolation, we were able to get together to celebrate. The day was grey and cool, and that inspired John to fire up his massive fire-pit to keep us cosy. Great company, music, and drinks were complimented by an outstanding array of tempting titbits, all created by members and the committee (not to forget those wonderful Lions Club sandwiches). Speeches were kept to a minimum, but the laughter and fun was not. Guests were free to roam around John and Kaye's amazing garden with its huge pond, magnificent roses and the romantic chapel covered in Virginia creeper. A wonderful day was had by all, with light rain falling just as we had packed up and were leaving. Thank you again to John and Kaye, the very best hosts. Thank you to all who worked so hard to make the day a success whether through fund raising (\$1,264 from the Exeter plant sale alone!) or on the day. **Ted.**



Friendship Gardens Saturday 5th February

This month we have three lovely and very different gardens to visit, all close together around Greasons Road. Some members will have visited Peter Rezek's beautiful roses last year, but the second flush together with the colourful flower beds are well worth a second look. Jenny and Peter Hamill's new garden is a designers' dream, beautifully manicured with amazing growth for a new garden thanks to perfect growing weather this summer. Christine and Barry Rowell-Miller's property is a wonderful meander among a variety of trees, plantings, open spaces and Barry's sculptures.

To be Covid safe we request that you wear a mask and observe the 1.5m rule as much as possible. Your entry and exit from each garden will be recorded, so please wear your name badge. There will not be any morning tea. Please note that visitors must not bring their dog.

4 Greasons Road – Peter and Linda Rezek

Linda and I moved here in December 2016, making the escape from Sydney, with very little knowledge of cool climate gardens. The first 2 years were a period of discovery as we got to know the locality and community, environment and our garden. The structure of the garden was in place with many wonderful plants, the theme seeming to work best for us being a concentration of Roses and Perennials to provide interest and colour all year bar the depths of winter. The full sun aspect to most of the garden only encourages that focus. A cottage garden feel has developed from that.

The clay fill soil, thankfully free draining, required the addition of copious amounts of compost, which in turn has allowed the free seeding of annuals and perennials, such that we have a fresh supply of plants every year; dahlias, aquilegias, larkspur, foxgloves, lupins, delphiniums, Clary Sage etc. We have doubled the number of roses, mostly adding Heritage Roses, and are always on the lookout for new plants that 'fit in'. The previous driveway has now been landscaped, the Manchurian Pears removed, and a large pergola built to eventually be adorned with climbing roses to provide a shaded space to enjoy the garden. Which is what it is all about.



'Charlotte Grove' 4 Larkin Close – Jenny and Peter Hamill

'Charlotte Grove' garden has a mix of colour throughout the year. With roses, hydrangeas, lavenders, crocus, salvias, bulbs and flowering lawns it is a garden with surprising features.

Comprised of discrete areas including a small orchard, formal courtyard, sunken fire pit garden, secret garden walk, mini-vineyard and veggie patch it is linked by sweeping green lawns. Each area is complemented with seating.

We purchased the 2700 sq. metre property in 2018. In 2020 we commenced the reconstruction of the garden. With the assistance of a local landscaper a design was implemented to ensure easy maintenance and gardens areas to take advantage of the highland's climatic conditions. After completion of the ground works at the end of 2020, we planted out the property with a mix of natives, European deciduous, perennials and edibles.

While the garden is less than 18 months old, the abundant rainfall allowed the garden to evolve quicker than expected.



‘Bonnie Doon’ 46 Greasons Road – Christine and Barry Rowell-Miller

There is limited parking up at the house, so if possible please park before the road works and walk to the entrance which is shortly after the traffic lights (which seem to stay red forever so if driving proceed if nothing is coming and the drive is almost immediately on the right.)

We purchased 4 acres of treeless farmland in Greasons Road in 2000, and straight away started planning, and slowly but surely began planting and getting things going. We moved from the city in 2006, and rented in the village while our straw bale, passive solar dwelling was constructed.



We relocated an existing small dam to a much larger dam at the entry to the property, realising that the water flow from the village was significant. At that time from us to Ferndale Road there was only one other dwelling and 4 dams.



We worked on planting a pretty even mix of native and exotic species. Some placements of exotic plantings were specific to supporting passive solar, e.g. deciduous near the home. The house is specifically placed for maximum sun in winter and minimum sun directly into the house in summer.



Water for the property, other than rain, is from the 96000 litre water tank, the large dam and from a bore. Eight tap outlets around the property enable easy access to water as needed around the garden, especially in the planting years and for ongoing maintenance etc. Overflow from the tank and a couple of locations are directed to the dam. Enviro cycle sprinkler system is moved around as needed. Power is from panels on the workshop roof.



The last number of years has seen the garden flourish noticeably - likely a number of reasons e.g. drought then fires then floods and lots of rain. We have intentionally planted a significant number of plants on the northern boundary recently due to the 16 house subdivision under construction. As the gums at the front of the property have grown, and their beautiful tall trunks can be seen through to the property, so to speak, (so much more traffic etc. ahead) we have 12 callistemons ready to plant.



Unfortunately, due to family commitments we will not be at home on Saturday, but just as we do, please enjoy wandering around the property.

Veggieman – February 2022 – David Humphrey – 4883 6634

You can have too much of a good thing, and we have. Rain!!! Not nearly enough sunshine!

Raised veggie beds have saved my crops from drowning, but the yield is certainly below par.

Time to prepare for planting brassicas. They like firm ground, so lightly fork in some blood and bone and add some lime to 'sweeten' the soil, and if it is not too wet, plant your first crop for an early harvest.

Beetroot	Sow seed	Harvest from April
Broccoli	Start undercover in seed trays and plant out in 4-6 weeks	Harvest from April
Brussels sprouts	Plant out (transplant) seedlings	Harvest from April
Cabbage	Plant out (transplant) seedlings	Harvest from March
Carrot	Sow seed	Harvest from May
Cauliflower	Sow seed	Harvest from May
Celery	Plant out (transplant) seedlings	Harvest from May
Chives (also Garden chives)	Sow seed	Harvest from April
Collard Greens	Start undercover in seed trays and plant out in 4-6 weeks	Harvest from April
Florence Fennel (also Finocchio)	Sow seed	Harvest from May
Kale (also Borecole)	Start undercover in seed trays and plant out in 4-6 weeks	Harvest from April
Kohlrabi	Sow seed	Harvest from April
Leeks	Start undercover in seed trays and plant out in 4-6 weeks	Harvest from May
Lettuce	Plant out (transplant) seedlings or sow seed	Harvest from April
Mustard greens (also gai choy)	Sow seed	Harvest from March
Onion	Start undercover in seed trays and plant out in 4-6 weeks	Harvest from August
Parsley	Sow seed	Harvest from April
Radish	Sow seed	Harvest from March
Salsify (also Vegetable oyster)	Sow seed	Harvest from May
Shallots (also Eschalots)	Sow seed	Harvest from May
Silverbeet (also Swiss Chard)	Plant out (transplant) seedlings or sow seed	Harvest from March
Spring onions (also Scallions)	Start undercover in seed trays and plant out in 4-6 weeks	Harvest from April
Turnip	Sow seed	Harvest from April

Lots still can be planted in February while the soil is still warm. Give plants as much light as possible, shield from heavy rain and protect from cabbage white butterflies!



Shoots, Roots, Fruits – NPK. Say it out loud... and repeat. This is your gardening mantra to successfully feeding your plants!

If you have ever grown huge tomato vines with very few fruit or planted flowers and ended up with plain green bushes then this mantra may just help you master your garden!

There are three main nutrients your plants need to grow and fruit, they are:

Nitrogen(N), Phosphorus(P) & Potassium(K)

Your plants will need different ratios of these nutrients based on what you are wanting them to do. For example, if you want vegetation growth (shoots) then you need Nitrogen as this promotes leaf growth. If you're wanting to fuel root growth, then Phosphorus is what you're after. Lastly, to promote good fruit, vegetable and flower growth you will need Potassium.

In theory, soil should contain all of the nutrients your plants need to thrive but in reality, differences in pH, soil type and previous use of the soil cause deficiencies, this is where fertiliser comes in handy.

Packaged fertilisers outline their NPK ration on the pack... but making sense of what's best for your needs can be difficult.

Let's take a look at a general purpose liquid fertiliser: 12 : 1.4 : 7. This means there is 12% Nitrogen (N), 1.4% Phosphorus (P) and 7% Potassium (K), a total of 20.4% in the mix, the remainder of the solution is most likely made up of trace elements and other beneficial soil conditioning elements. Don't be fooled into thinking bigger numbers mean a better fertiliser though, when it comes to fertiliser, there is such a thing as too much of a good thing! Pumping nitrogen into your soil may result in plants growing leggy and weak rather than standard sized and strong.

Soil pH

Adding nutrients to the soil can't be done in isolation, your soil pH plays a role in how nutrients can be utilised by your plants. Below is a table displaying the availability of the key nutrients by pH. The thicker the bar the more available the nutrient is at that pH. A soil pH of between 6 and 7.5 is optimal for most plants to thrive. However there are always exceptions, so be sure to check what your specific plant variety prefers. Before adding anything to your soil we suggest testing your pH so you know what you're working with.

A note on Australian Natives

Australia natives for the most part prefer well draining acidic soils and don't like fertilisers high in Phosphorus. We recommend the use of a specific native fertiliser for natives.

In Summary:

- N = Nitrogen = Shoots (Vegetation, Leaves)
- P = Phosphorus = Roots
- K = Potassium = Fruits (Fruit, Vegetables & Flowers)
- Know your soil pH before you add anything to the soil.
- Know what pH and nutrients your specific plant varieties prefer so you can select an appropriate fertiliser.
- Your local Garden Centre should be able to assist you with selecting an appropriate fertiliser for your specific needs.

Retford Park

Our long-delayed visit to Retford Park (originally 24th August) is rescheduled for Tuesday 15th February. All members that have booked have been notified, and an email with the final programme will be sent out soon.

Our February meeting speaker is Rick Shepherd, Head Gardener at Retford Park, so not to be missed by members on the visit.

A reminder that you can view the Gardening Australia programme with Costa and Rick Shepherd here:

<https://www.abc.net.au/gardening/factsheets/bold-and-the-beautiful-retford-park/13343422>

12 conservation victories of 2021



As another year draws to a close, we're taking our hats (and boots!) off to the conservation experts who have made a difference for our threatened species in 2021.

Despite lockdowns, flooding and ongoing recovery following the 2019-20 bushfires, there are plenty of reasons to celebrate and feel positive about the future for our native plants and animals.



The team at Saving our Species has worked tirelessly again this year, alongside our incredible partners, to deliver positive outcomes for threatened species right across the state.



We hope these conservation wins help you to feel merry and bright for a better 2022!



https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/news/conservation-victories-2021?fbclid=IwAR38nHWT2Pa98xfFSU3rH_xOktBRrbBcvCvyPjEzJhY_5qpSE8xanWbMv88

As global temperatures increase and extreme weather events become more common, can gene editing help to tweak our food plants so they can cope with the changes?

At first glance, it looked like any other plant that can be found growing in the corners of offices or on the windowsills of university laboratories. But this particular tomato plant, grown in 2018 at the University of Minnesota, was different. The bushy tangle of elongated leaves and small red fruits were characteristic of a wild species of tomato plant native to Peru and Ecuador called *Solanum pimpinellifolium*, also known as the red currant tomato. A closer inspection, however, made the plant's uniqueness more apparent.



This particular plant was more compact, with **fewer branches but more fruits than the wild tomato**. Its fruits were also a little darker than was usual, a sign of increased lycopene – an antioxidant linked to a **lower risk of cancer and heart disease**. It had, in fact, been designed that way.

The plant was created by geneticist Tomas Cermak and his colleagues with the use of Crispr gene editing, a **Nobel Prize-winning technology** which works like a "cut and paste" tool for genetic material. The technique is now revolutionising agriculture and helping create crops for the future.

<https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20211207-the-tomatoes-at-the-forefront-of-a-food-revolution>

Our Plant Stall at Exeter Markets

The plant stall was initiated as a way of raising funds for a Christmas Party, free to club members. After months of not being able to hold meetings, a party would be a great way of ending a difficult year on a positive note.

A number of members set to work to propagate plants – there were salvias, plectranthus, penstemon, hydrangeas, assorted daisies, linaria, rose campion and lots more. With thanks to Faye Dillon, Trish Badami, Ted and Cat Ayers, Veronica Rickard and Carlie Gould the plants were carefully watered and nurtured over the winter months. Despite a few losses, by spring they were healthy and ready for a bumper sale day.



A quick count, we had several hundred plants for sale! The call went out for help to transport them to Exeter on Saturday December 6. After sorting and pricing – Dale Hancock and Pam Tippett collected trays full and with the loan of a ute from Ken and Trish Jessop the plants were safely delivered.

Tim and Glynnis Charles kindly lent their marquee which they had ready and set up by 7am. Our space was near the Exit but next to a commercial nursery stall with quite



beautiful hydrangeas and other mature plants. No time to worry about the competition, we put up signs and set about displaying our locally grown plants ready for the market opening.



COVID regulations meant only 3 people could man the stall, so Ted and Cat Ayers and Tessa Spencer donned aprons ready to talk to people as they dropped by to

inspect and hopefully purchase a locally propagated plant or two.

Lots of club members came by and selected a plant or two for their garden, but there were plenty of locals and visitors from further afield who supported us too. The result – we raised \$1270 for the Christmas Party. There were a few plants left that are ready for the Trade Table at this month's meeting. Perhaps you might be tempted?

Tessa.



Slugs and Snails

Like all gardeners I derive pleasure and joy from my garden. I also benefit from the generosity of gardening friends who share their garden produce with us. But there is a cloud over these pleasures, a cloud that has delivered record rain and seething masses of snails and slugs that devour my plants.

Last year, after some research, I thought that I was on to a winner in the battle between these invaders. I carefully placed glass jars on their sides, drizzled some beer into each and angled the jars so that any rain would not get in. I was onto a winner, or so I thought! Each morning I collected numerous snails and slugs who had met their end in the beer in the jars. I also read that vegemite diluted in water would do the trick. It is the yeast that attracts in both beer and vegemite. This would be much cheaper I thought. I continued my reading and found yet more information. So powerful is the yeast attraction that slugs and snails will travel up to two hundred metres to feast on a yeasty delicious drink. I was attracting all the horrors in the neighbourhood to come, free of charge, eat my plants and party in my garden.

My efforts were thus diverted to my old ritual that many of us use; the so called 'snail patrol'. If you are not familiar with this then I can explain the simple rules. One goes out at night when it is dark and with a torch to locate the snails, pick them up and dispose of them. I used to squash them underfoot with my wellington boots. I have abandoned this as the eggs can still survive and hatch. Now I put them in the council green bin. One of my friends feeds hers to the resident blue tongue lizard.

Though I persist I am not happy with this snail patrol method. It means going out at night and though it is summer it is often cold and more often and to the point it can be teeming with rain. I am investigating various other methods at the moment and I will share the research over the coming months. I plan to look at;

Pellets that kill – organic or non-organic
Barriers that distract
Plants that repel

If you have any suggestions, please do get in touch and I will share these with the club in a future edition of the bulletin.

Lyn Morehen - tallulah1938@gmail.com

Seasonal Kitchen



ONION JAM

We had a great onion harvest. They've been drying nicely and now is a good time to cook up the surplus.

The great thing about this recipe is that you can cook up small portions to use 'as you go' or multiply the ingredients and freeze to use in winter. Amazing to eat on a toastie with cheese. Really great with ham



Photo: Marina Oliphant

TIPS:

Slice your onions evenly. This helps for even caramelisation and cooking time.

Give this as long as you can when cooking down so the flavours amalgamate, and the sugars and vinegar can turn into sweet and tart jammy goodness. Also, the longer the onions swelter in the butter and herbs initially until very, very soft, the greater the depth of flavour.

Store in an airtight container in the fridge for a few weeks or if tightly sealed the jam can also be frozen, just be sure to store in a freezer-proof container.

INGREDIENTS - Makes about ¾-1 cup

- 4 red onions, halved and thinly sliced
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- Large pinch of salt
- ¼ cup brown sugar, plus extra to taste
- ¼ -½ cup apple cider vinegar

METHOD

Place a medium saucepan over medium heat. Add the olive oil, wait until the oil takes on a shimmer, then reduce the heat to low and add the onions. Sweat until white, translucent and soft.

Add the salt, sugar and a quarter cup of vinegar and continue cooking over low heat until a dark, jam-like consistency is achieved (about 15 to 20 minutes).

Taste to check for a balance of tartness and sweetness and adjust the sugar and vinegar as needed. Transfer to an airtight container.

Cat.

From our Treasurer

Hello Everyone

Let's hope 2022 will be a better year for all. So happy we are going ahead with our February Meeting.

BGC Opening Balance 21st December 2021

Rediaccess Account was \$ 16,023.99

Income \$ 25.00

Expenditure \$ 1,769.43

Balance as at 21/1/22 \$ 14,279.56

Add: Petty Cash \$ 135.00

Add: Trade Table Float: \$ 45.00

Funds held as at 20th January 2022 \$ 14,674.56

Less Payment due for Retford Park Visit.. \$1,011.00

Our Christmas Party expenses were \$1,948.83.

I will be stepping down in March so if you are available, please don't hesitate to Nominate. Very energetic and innovative Committee this year - you'll enjoy it! (My family have relocated to Southern Highlands and time will be spent with growing grandchildren).

See you on Thursday.

Trish Badami.

MEMBERSHIP FEES ARE DUE

Just a reminder that Garden Club Membership fees are coming up for renewal in March. Due to the Covid lockdowns and our inability to hold meetings for the last part of 2021, the committee has decided to waive any renewals for members who joined since June 2021. All other members need to renew their membership either before-hand or at the March Meeting which is also our AGM.

You can renew by making a Direct Deposit to our account of \$25 per person: Bundanoon Garden Club BSB 802-101 ACC: 358047

In the deposit description section, please include the code - RNW and your surname e.g. RNW Ayers



If you're a new member, you can also print and fill in your Membership Form and drop to Alison Ayers at the Membership Desk at our next meeting. Click this link to find out more:

<https://www.bundanoongardenclub.com.au/membership>

Murphy's Laws of Gardening

"Finally a sheltered corner of the orchard helped jacaranda mark XIII to survive the crucial years and the long awaited flowers burst forth."

<http://anpsa.org.au/APOL3/sep96-5.html>

A very interesting article - thanks to **Penny Pilt**

Eating the rainbow



Dieticians are urging Australians to eat a "rainbow" diet to boost nutrition, and new colourful breeds of vegetables are becoming available to make that task easier.

https://www.abc.net.au/news/rural/2021-12-26/summer-holder-colourful-auliflowers/100668678?utm_source=sfmc%e2%80%8b%e2%80%8b&utm_medium=email%e2%80%8b%e2%80%8b&utm_campaign=abc_rural_roadundup_sfmc_20220114%e2%80%8b%e2%80%8b&utm_term=%e2%80%8b&utm_id=1802125%e2%80%8b%e2%80%8b&sfmc_id=239420891

Encouraging native bees



So much goes on in our garden that we don't know about. In quiet moments, in flowers and shrubs, often unseen insects are buzzing around, pollinating, eating other bugs, serving as food for larger creatures such as lizards and birds, being a valuable part of our local environment and also part of the wider biosphere.

https://www.organicgardener.com.au/blogs/encouraging-native-bees?utm_source=newsletter_20220111&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=weekly_newsletter_two

Soil Blocks – Starting Seedlings Organically

Soil blocking is a sustainable way to start seedlings. Efficient, easy, fun and great for growing strong healthy seedlings, soil blocks are used in large-scale horticulture in Europe and are gaining popularity elsewhere. Soil blocks are small self-contained blocks of lightly compressed soil that allows seedlings roots to be air pruned and allow plants to re-establish quickly following transplanting due to minimal root disturbance.



<https://www.sgaonline.org.au/soil-blocks-starting-seedlings-organically/>

How to take care of indoor plants in hot weather and heatwaves



We all know how important it is to slip, slop, slap during the warmer months.

But how do you keep your indoor plants happy over summer, and especially during a heatwave?

We asked Melbourne plant store owner Samantha Roxas and Brisbane horticulturalist James Mudge to find out.

<https://www.abc.net.au/everyday/how-to-take-care-of-indoor-plants-in-hot-weather/100640610>

February In Your Patch

BY SGA

Because it is warmer than summers 10 years ago, you might need to change what you normally do your garden. Maybe in February in your patch some of your summer crop is having a little bit of a last hoorah, you may find the tomatoes, eggplant and capsicum and still chugging along. In any case, it's time to start thinking about preparing your garden for autumn planting. This month's newsletter has loads of tips and ideas of what to do NOW that will ensure your patch is ready to go. Wait until the heat of the day is off and then spend some lovely time in the garden.

Weeding

Weeding is a great job to do at this time of year. Cut down the competition between your tasty treats and these space invaders and tidy up your patch. It may sound tedious, but it's incredibly rewarding!

Mulching

Top up the mulch on your vegetable patches, herb gardens and ornamental beds. This is especially important if you are heading away or caught up in the bustle of back to school. A hot summer tip is to mulch after watering the patch, to a depth of about 7cm. Keep mulch clear of plant stems, especially young seedlings. Choose sustainable, low environmental impact mulch (this means different things in different areas), one that will enrich your soil as it breaks down.

Planning



Time to think about what wonders you will whack into your patch come April. Preparing beds and plots now means that

when autumn planting time rolls around, your garden will be ready and waiting. Removing spent plants, clearing areas of weeds and topping up organic matter is an excellent February job. A nail rake, some good organic compost and lovely sustainable mulch is the perfect recipe for productive patches of the future.

Watering

Water smarter at this time of year and always first thing in the morning. A nice, deep drink a couple of times a week is far more beneficial than frequent, short watering.

- It is still fairly warm around these parts, but there are a number of incredible edibles ready to go in now. Try lettuce, spinach, leek, silverbeet, and some Asian greens towards the tail end of the month. Broccoli, leeks and spring onions could be worth a shot when the nights get cooler.
- Add some colour and movement to the patch, and pop in some of these little pretties: stock, dianthus, viola, pansy, verbena and ageratum.
- Tidy up the garden by removing spent flowers and flower spikes from perennials and annuals.
- Dahlias and chrysanthemums may need staking and/or the ties checking to ensure they are not cutting into stems.
- Continue regularly trimming evergreen trees and shrubs to keep them neat, particularly hedges, buxus balls and mop-tops.
- Give most herbs a miss just now, but, if you're really keen, get rolling with parsley and watercress.
- Garlic is good to go once the weather cools a touch.
- Watch for thrips and aphids on flowering plants. Pyrethrum spray will control them. Don't forget to spray the undersides of leaves as well as the top surface.
- Top up mulch on your veggie patches, herb gardens and ornamental beds. A hot summer tip is to mulch after watering the patch, to a depth of about 7cm. Keep mulch clear of plant stems....especially young seedlings. Choose sustainable, low environmental impact mulch, one that will enrich your soil as it breaks down.
- Plants feel the need for a feed at this time of year. A seaweed tea or low environmental impact liquid fertiliser is perfect, especially for the seedlings shoved in at the tail end of last year. Apply to the soil early in the morning, and in the concentrations mentioned on the packet.