



# NEWSLETTER

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2014

### From The President,

How has your garden survived the heat? It is very disheartening to watch all the rose buds frizzle in the hot wind and to hear the limbs crashing from the eucalypt trees.

In the more rural gardens the dilemma is whether to mulch heavily to conserve soil moisture and keep the roots cool or to scrape the earth bare to reduce the fuel load in case of bushfire. Despite being in a rural area we have chosen to mulch as there is already a heavy fuel load from the build up of leaf litter under the trees. The leaf litter is vital to the survival of small reptiles, insects and birds so it is not an option for us to remove it.

Despite the heat the garden is looking quite healthy probably because I have been more diligent and careful with watering and many of the more susceptible plants have been covered with shade cloth or double layers of white knitted bird netting. One positive outcome from the warm nights is bean set. The bean plants have grown well but as the nights have been cool until now there have been very few beans to pick.

Another delight has been the variety of birds visiting the many bird baths in the garden. The water is regularly topped up during the day, a necessity as the vigorous splashing by the birds quickly lowers the water level.

This year promises to be an interesting one for the Club members to enjoy with engaging guest speakers and trips and activities planned.

Norma Keily

## BUSHFIRE DESTROYS DIGGERS' CLUB CAFE

HERONSWOOD historic homestead was engulfed by flames on the afternoon of Tuesday 14th January after a grassfire spread through the Mornington Peninsula suburb of Dromana. The thatched roof building that went up in flames at Heronswood House last night was not just a building - it was built by the staff who run it. The CFA said the home's freestanding cafe had been destroyed in the blaze, but the main house which dates back to 1864, suffered only minor damage.



CFA incident controller David Gibbs said the property's heritage farm and gardens were unlikely to have been damaged by fire.

Flames first reached the property and popular tourist attraction at around 5.45pm, but a water bomber soon put out the blaze.

Visitors to the house who were on site at the time were not injured by the fire, but the nearby freeway was closed.

"We're pretty devastated, there's a lot of emotion in that building," said [The Diggers Club](#) chief executive of Horticulture and Operations Tim Sansom.

"A lot of it was built by our staff back in 1996, it was all hands on deck."

About 5.45pm the thatched roof caught fire, and razed the Fork to Fork restaurant and administration building.

A grassfire that started near the Mornington Peninsula Freeway in McCrae spread east and embers that landed on the thatched roof set it alight.

Heronswood founder and executive chairman Clive Blazey said the thatch, made of 3000 bundles of reeds from Tootgarook swamp, was put together by Mr Blazey, Heronswood staff and a New Zealand thatcher.

"We had non-flammable chemicals sprayed on the thatch and an irrigation system attached to the roofing. But the fire spread so quickly it was too hot for anybody to get close enough to the building to turn on the sprinklers."

"The intensity of the fire was horrific."

The main house, which dates back to 1864 did not suffer any damage, with the fire under control about 10pm.

The gardens were not affected by the fire, apart from a partial scorching of a Moreton Bay Fig tree and the garden surrounding the café. Mr Blazey said the property was insured but he suspected there was more than \$500,000 worth of damage.

But some things are irreplaceable. Mr Sansom said there were 25,000 slide images from the history of The Diggers photography that burned with the building.

The Website, nursery, warehouse and despatch departments are located elsewhere in Dromana so orders can still be placed and it will be business as usual despite the heart ache.

# STRATHALBYN GARDEN CLUB PROGRAM

MEETING DATE	SPEAKER	TOPIC FOR DISCUSSION
January 24th	John Zwar	The Waite Institute and Arboretum & Urrbrae.
February 28th	Esther Landells	Fleurieu Regional Waste Authority - Recycling
March 28th	Chris Perry	Perrys' Fruit and Nut Nursery
April 25th	NO MEETING due to ANZAC Day	
May 9th	Coach Trip	See advert for details
May 23rd	Bloom Competition	1 entry in each category per member
May 23rd	Vince Davies	Neutrog Update and Q & A
June 27th	AGM	Consider nominating for the committee
June 27th	Sophie Thomson	Spring into action""

## COMING EVENTS

### TOMATO FESTIVAL

Sunday 23rd February  
Adelaide Botanic Gardens

Tomato taste tests, cooking demos

### MELBOURNE INTERNATIONAL FLOWER AND GARDEN SHOW

MARCH 26TH - 30TH 9AM - 5PM  
CARLETON GARDENS MELBOURNE.

### GARDENS BRIDGING THE GULF

May 3rd - 4th

South Australian State Rally for Garden Clubs Australia hosted by Port Augusta Garden Club at Lea Memorial Theatre, Port Augusta. Also visiting horticulture enterprises and home gardens. Everyone welcome. Details from Shirley 8642 4013 or shirleymundy44@gmail.com

## BLOOM COMPETITION RESULTS

### OCTOBER 25TH 2013

**BLOOM** - Margaret Jenkins exhibiting one of her own Iris

**NATIVE** - Bridgette Knight displaying a branch of unidentified gum blossom from a tree that she planted down by the creek opposite her home.

**POT PLANT** - a tie between Val Phillips with a cactus and Yvette Holdsworth with a potted lily.

Congratulations to the winners and thankyou to all the members who made the effort to submit entries.

A special thankyou to the two competition convenors Yvette and Annelie and to all the bottle fillers and emptiers.



## AUTUMN COACH TRIP

FRIDAY 9TH MAY

Tentative Program

Depart 9am return 5pm

from the Strathalbyn Railway Station

### Visiting:

Windmill Hill recycling Depot Mt Barker

Mt Lofty Botanic Gardens for guided tour and byo lunch

Tour 2 private gardens in Crafers

The Depot Nursery Mt Barker

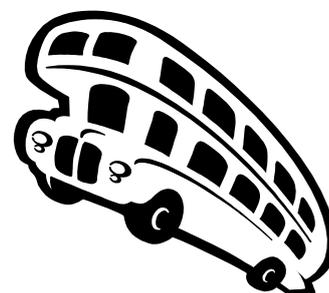
Cost TBA

Register your interest in attending at the January meeting & pay in full by

March 28th.

Family and friends

Welcome.



## OPEN GARDENS AUSTRALIA 2014

The annual Guide is now available at bookshops and news agencies for \$19.95

Most gardens are open 10am—4.30pm both days with an entry fee of \$7 (under 18 free)

**JANUARY 26 - 27 TUPELO GROVE** - 104 Bradbury Road Mylor.

Advice on growing perennials and establishing aquatic systems. Plants for sale.

**FEBRUARY 8 - 9 JOE'S CONNECTED GARDEN** - 6 Argent St Elizabeth Grove. A fine example of neighbourhood cooperation with over 250 varieties of fruiting plants, raised beds with vegetables which are low maintenance and highly productive.

## OPEN GARDENS AUSTRALIA

### TRAVELLING ALL OVER THE COUNTRYSIDE.

Do you fancy exploring a region via its private gardens? There are so many beautiful, historic, innovative and exciting private gardens in Australia and Open Gardens Australia hope to take you to see some as part of the 2014 - 15 season.

Register your interest by emailing [national@opengarden.org.au](mailto:national@opengarden.org.au) and have your details added to the "Travelling all over the countryside" database. You will be kept informed of tours being planned.



#### **SHEEP MANURE for Sale**

\$5 / bag (delivered to Strath)

\$4 / bag (collected from farm)

\$20 / collected in trailer, i.e. 6'.4'

Tania & John Richardson

Woodchester

85375011

We're happy to make your garden happy! Spread the word.

#### **GREG THE WORM MAN 0438 808 066**

Kilo packs of composting worms

Vermicast for soil improvement

Worm Farms to order

Worm Wee 3 litre & 20 litre containers

Catch me at the Strathalbyn Garden Club meetings!

# N.B.

## SIGNING IN

Members are reminded that it is important to sign the Attendance Register on arrival and when picking up your name badge for the meeting so that our record keeping for insurance purposes is accurate.

Apologies can be recorded with an A in the appropriate column.

## GOT A PROBLEM?

If you have a problem, something to share, need a cutting or seeds or scion wood then the newsletter is a good means of communication. Norma edits the newsletter and will gladly find space for your request.

Email [strathalbyngardenclub@gmail.com](mailto:strathalbyngardenclub@gmail.com) or phone 85366276.

## LUCKY DOOR PRIZE

Just a reminder that the lucky winner of the door prize has first pick from the raffle table and this can be taken before the raffle draw so there is ample time to make a choice.

## DONATIONS TABLE

If you have excess produce, too many seedlings, an excess of cuttings that have grown, bulbs, pot plants or any garden related items to share why not offer them to our Donations Table. Plant items should be labelled for ease of identification. Funds raised support the Club.

## GARDENS TO VISIT

We regularly get requests from other Garden Clubs for gardens to visit in Strathalbyn. Usually dates are planned well ahead so there is time to prepare the garden. Visitors are always complimentary and appreciative of the opportunity to view different gardens. It usually proves to be beneficial all round. Our club likes to have three gardens to visit and we charge \$5 a head with the money collected being divided up between the three garden owners. If you would like to volunteer your garden speak to Norma.

# COMPANION PLANTING FOR A HEALTHY VEGETABLE GARDEN.

Companion plants can work in a number of ways. They can stimulate root and general growth in neighbouring plants, they can disguise or mask the smell of another plant to protect it from pests and they can act as decoys. Nasturtiums, for example, attract pests like aphids away from other plants. Because nasturtiums are so tough, they can cope with aphid infestations that would seriously damage other, less vigorous plants.

Some plants are renowned for their ability to attract beneficial insects such as hoverflies and their aphid-eating larvae and those important pollinators, bees.

Radishes make great companions for many of the most popular vegetables, including peas, beans, corn, cucumbers, lettuce, parsnips and carrots. Radishes can be best friends to carrots in other ways, too, because they can help with carrot seed germination. If you sow radish seed with carrot seed the radishes will emerge quickly, breaking the soil crust and paving the way for the slower carrots.

There are plenty of other plants that can be grown as companions and many suggestions are listed on Yates vegetable seed packets. Here are some that could be useful:

- Cabbage is a great companion for beans, beets,

celery, cucumbers, onions, peas, potatoes, sage and rosemary. Tomatoes growing near cabbage family members are also said to help repel the cabbage butterfly.

- Celery grows well with leeks, beans, tomatoes and peas.
- Lettuce is a friend to beans, peas, carrots, cucumbers, onions, radish and strawberries. Don't forget, too, that lettuce is basically a domesticated thistle so anything that likes thistles will grow well with lettuce.
- Spinach, a lover of cool weather, enhances the growth of broad beans.
- Onions grow happily with beetroot, carrots, lettuce and tomatoes. They're best planted at random amongst other vegies where their strong smell will deter a range of insect pests. Even chopped onion leaves can be strewn onto the soil around other plants to deter pests.

Conversely there are plants which do not perform well when planted close to each other for example onions should not be planted in close proximity to beans or peas .

An excellent chart "A Basic Guide to Companion Planting " is available from Eden Seeds for \$10.



## WHAT TO PLANT NOW VEGETABLES

Why not plant a late summer crop of beans, carrots, cucumber, beetroot, parsnip, sweet corn, silver beet and zucchini.

A fresh planting of herbs such as basil, coriander, parsley and garlic chives will last well into autumn. It is not too early to sow seeds of broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage and cauliflower in seed trays. Once germinated thin the seedlings and keep them growing quickly with half strength liquid fertilizer.

### FLOWERS

Calendulas are the traditional marigolds of European herbal lore. When planted among vegetables they're said to deter pests like aphids and white fly. Calendula seed can be sown straight into a garden bed or sow into pots filled with potting mix. Move these into more sun as the weather cools down. If allowed to go to seed you will always have calendulas popping up.



## WATERING WISELY

Before turning on the hose Investigate the soil with a narrow trowel to find out how damp or dry it is and how far down the moisture needs to go.



If necessary and if possible scrape back the mulch from around the base of the plants to allow the water to penetrate into the soil around the root ball.

Check after watering that the soil is moist enough then replace the mulch to conserve the moisture in the soil.

Plants that have adequate soil moisture will not be as affected by the heat and will recover more quickly.

Drooping leaves on plants with large soft leaves do not necessarily indicate lack of moisture in the soil it is a defence mechanism against the heat. Over watering could cause root rot so do a soil check first.

Dripper irrigation under the mulch is the most effective way to water.

# TROY MCKENZIE FROM THE LEAF BOUTIQUE

## GARDENING IN POTS



Troy can justify his claim to knowing a bit about pots as for many years he managed Northcote Pottery and during that time visited many of the factories in the countries from which their pots were imported.

Some pots are made in moulds and then fired, often more than once depending on the glazes used. Pots from Vietnam are fired in wood burning kilns which are more primitive and less consistent in their results than gas, oil or electric kilns.

Terracotta clay pots from Italy are worth the high price tag because they are consistently well made.

Bennetts Pottery in Magill produce beautiful, hand thrown pots in natural clay colours.

Pots come in a vast array of shapes, sizes, colours and weights with fibreglass reinforced concrete which is durable, light and strong being a welcome new line in the large pot category.

Choice of colour is important as darker colours absorb the heat while lighter colours are cooler for the roots. Pots that are not waterproof need to be treated with a waterproofing spray before being used. This is a service that Troy offers his customers so that the pots and plants are not damaged by moisture being drawn out of the soil through the pot wall.

Best quality potting soil should always be used and water storage granules should be added. Most have fertiliser included in the mix but this only lasts for a few months and it usually requires warmth to activate the fertiliser. There are different potting soils for different plants for example orchids require a light pine bark with little nutrient or water holding capacity while succulents prefer a heavy sand mix.

Success with pot plants can be guaranteed if the right plant is chosen for the right pot with the correct potting soil.

The pot should be large enough and deep enough with sufficient drainage holes and the visual effect of a pot plant can be enhanced by matching the pot colour to the plant.

Dwarf fruit trees do well in pots as does rhubarb, strawberries, herbs, espaliered citrus, roses and plants which are not suited to the local soil or environment such as camellias, azaleas, gardenias and daphne.

To provide support and height frames can be inserted into the pot and so a repeat flowering wisteria or similar climbing plant can become a stunning feature pot plant. Topiaries and standards also make excellent feature pot plants.

All plants in pots need regular trimming to limit the root size and occasionally they will need re-potting into a larger pot or to have the root ball trimmed and new

potting mix added to the original pot.

Hanging baskets are a feature in the cities across Europe and often they are planted with simple but effective plants. Geraniums, bacopa, kalibrachoa, verbena, petunias and lobelia are all suitable but the choice should depend on the location of the basket. A sunny site would require a different choice of plants to a shady one. Long flowering plants that trail and can be tip pruned are ideal and a basket can have a mix of plants or just one variety and colour. Regularly dunking the whole pot in a tub of water with liquid fertiliser added is beneficial and will extend the life of the hanging basket.

The choice of pot should not be restricted to ones bought from a supplier. Old boots, kitchen utensils, baskets, boxes, tins or anything else can be used to grow plants.

Potting soil can be re-used and it can be added to new soil. Boiling water can be poured through it to kill any un-wanted microbes.

Have fun with experimenting is Troy's advice.





We specialise in:

- locally grown plants
- workshops
- garden consultations
- pots, water features, gifts & wall art
- edible gardens

We also have:

- free delivery in Strathalbyn
- kids play area

Open 7 days - Monday to Friday 10am-5pm & Week-ends 9am-5pm

27 Callington Road Strathalbyn  
Phone Troy on 8536 8767