

FMR APRIL 3

Yes its go go go with bulbs at the moment, what to buy, where to plant and even how to plant!!

No matter what, they are worth having in the garden or in containers and honestly are the easiest plants to maintain, I suppose because they need very little from you to thrive.

In actual fact, I think they do best without us in most cases.

There are many to choose from besides the traditional daffodils and friends- Freesia's, Babiana, Tritonia, Sparaxis, Ixia, Daubinya (red and yellow..aptly called 'Jewel of the Desert!!), the forever popular Amaryllis and the famous 'Chinkereechee'.

For those of you with ponds and water features.. its also time to think water blommetjies !

Well-known for the local dish 'water blommetjie bredie' it is the perfect water plant for large or small features in the garden.

Plant in a 30cm+ pot and make sure they are at least 10cm below the surface up to a depth of 50cm.

The white flowers and narrow leaves are an interesting feature and if that is not enough then just add fish!!

Don't wait too long to plant bulbs...now is the time!

Lack of space is no excuse as all will thrive in that patio pot!!

For a worthwhile show always plant bulbs in groups as they are quite sociable and give of their best in a crowd.

Well, on we go to rain and ask, What can we plant in our rainy season?

The choice is never ending and you need look no further than the natural environment about us.

There are many succulents, forest trees and of course all our local fynbos which can be planted now in order to take advantage of the winter rain.

The wet weather is perfect for blue pea bush, or Fountain Bush- *Psoralea pinnata* which thrives in a wet spot and flowers from early spring well into summer.

It can be treated as a bush or small tree and can get up to about 4m in height.

A worthy subject in any garden and a delightful small tree.

There are also quite a few real trees that thrive in the rainy season and I must mention one in particular;

*Metrosideros angustifolia*- the lance leaf myrtle but also sometimes called the Cape myrtle, its a medium size tree with a weeping habit and looks the part next to any pond or stretch of water..

It is a bit scarce in gardens and we could use it a lot more.

It seems as though the rain has arrived and with it cooler temperatures, but I am sure we will still be experiencing a few days in the high 30's.

Nevertheless still need to cut down on watering especially those irrigation systems that have been programmed for summer conditions.

There is no need to water every day, even in hot conditions.

I suggest you turn off your automated system during winter and just activate manually if required.

I always think the winter spring garden is the most colourful.

Pansies, viola, nemesia, snapdragons all need a sunny spot and for best results nip those first flower buds off and get them to bush out.

For colour in the shade try a combination of white *Sutera* and blue *Lobelia*, or even one of the *Campanulas* which will give you an all year round show.

The hardy *Primula malacoides* and *Cineraria* are probably the best for semi shade and flower well into early summer.

Snapdragons are great for those sunny spots as well.

It goes without saying that lots of good compost at planting is a must for success and if you feel its necessary then a helping of a balanced organic food such as 3;1;5 or similar will be sufficient.

Also get going on that winter veggie garden before it gets too cold.

Get them in and those roots settled before the lower temperatures descend on us.

Broccoli, peas, cabbage, onions, swiss chard, chinese cabbage and the rest.

Keep in mind that our sunlight hours are reduced and many areas start receiving more shade.

The majority of vegetables whether leafy or root vegetables, plus all herbs do need a full days sunlight.

Not enough sunlight and poor drainage are perfect conditions for many pests which attack weak plants and spoil the fun of growing your own veg.

You can also divide up your overgrown strawberries and plant them out in a sunny, well prepared bed or container with lots of compost some wood ash and a good organic fertilizer to help you produce large juicy fruit to accompany the double thick cream!!

An important requirement with most plants, especially in the winter months, is well drained soil and enough sun!!

That's it for this week...and remember... your garden makes a difference to all who visit it!!