

April 10, 2021

Today has always been quite a day in world history.

Like any other day, a lot happened but a real interesting event was the creation of Arbor Day established in 1872 in Nebraska USA.

About 100yrs later National Arbor day was established in South Africa which we recognize in September of each year.

We do tend to neglect the history of trees which have been so important in the development of our modern world.

Sadly, throughout the world we only started planting trees commercially after natural reserves had been devastated!

Enough history, lets get back into the garden

The first week in April has passed but it did herald the start of cooler weather and somehow everything out there is looking greener and cleaner!!

All seems a little more upright and fresh both in the garden and the wild.

Our local flora is certainly coming out of its summer slumber with bud formation and early flowers especially with the protea family.

Out on the mountain we still see some stunning Mimetes in flower and I wonder why we don't have a lot more of them in our gardens?

Our common Mimetes cucullatus also known as the Rooistompie, flowers for many months and like them all, is totally waterwise.

With the rainy season coming up we do need to pay attention to our soil

You only have to look at the water flowing down streets after good rain to see the loss of top soil from suburban gardens.

The reasons are simple: -

- We continually disturb the soil through digging and scoffling

- We don't cover and protect exposed areas with plants or mulch

Our urban gardens form part of a much bigger environment, which we don't often realize, and bad practices can have a far-reaching negative impact.

Well so much for all the negatives, lets look forward to a very positive and productive winter.

I am sure we can ease up a bit and expect some good rain, but let's stick to mindful water usage.

Our gardens, like the wild, will survive only if we are wise with our choice of plant material.

I would like to recommend a special tree, a useful shrub and some easy ground cover to assist with soil management

The well known tree is the Keurboom - *Virgilia oroboides*.

For those starting a new big garden from scratch, then this is the number one contender.

It is a fast-growing evergreen with an average height of about 12-15m, which will give you some dappled shade after about 3 yrs, if not sooner.

Under good conditions you will have a full size tree after 5 years.

Due to its fast growth habit it has a rather short lifespan of about 15yrs but one can take advantage of this by planting slower growing trees nearby.

The Keurboom which is a pioneer tree , will act as protection during its lifespan allowing the slow growers to develop and take over a more permanent role.

Another big plus is the large bunches of scented flowers which appear from spring into early summer!!

It is a highly productive tree in nature as both its flowers and seed attract a variety of birds, insects and other animals.

My shrub this week is *Coleonema album*- the White Confetti Bush, often confused with the pink Confetti bush, both in the Buchu family.

The white Confetti is denser and sturdier than its cousin and rarely gets higher than a metre so an ideal container or small hedge specimen.

It is naturally found on Table Mt, starts flowering round about now and goes right through to Mid-summer.

It is a must in our gardens both at sea level and higher and can be pruned back lightly after flowering.

Ground cover is an essential component of any garden and I will mention a few you can plant right now before the rain arrives!

Ground covers generally are easy to propagate and need little to thrive.

Succulent plants like *Bulbine*, *Crassula*, *Delosperma*, *Ruschsia*, *Othonna* and many others fill the gaps and flower well .

An absolute favourite for semi shade is *Plectranthus verticillatus*, which covers quickly and pushes out zillions of white fairy flowers at this time.

Some call it the gossip flower and yes..... it deserves a lot of talk!!

It doesn't like too much water preferring to be on the slightly drier side.

I really do encourage all gardeners to plant more groundcover if nothing else to keep the earth cool and hold our valuable top soil!

Well on we go into our most exciting time of the year.....keep at it

From me Sandy Munro

Good bye until next Saturday