

## Sept 4

Good morning, welcome to our first chat of September, the month we usually consider the first of the seasonal year.

We start with an early reminder of the Arderne Garden tour this morning.

Meet at the Claremont Main Road at 10am and enjoy an outing with a difference.

The cost is a R50 donation which goes towards the betterment of these historic gardens.

After a long impatient wait, I leave for flower country today and hope that there is still a lot to see.

It's not so much the mass displays, it's more about all those special things inbetween!

The destination is anywhere and everywhere between Cape Town and the greater Cederberg area including Nieuwoudville, Van Rhynsdorp and the Biedouw valley.

These wild areas inspire me and bring in new gardening ideas, what you might term an update that doesn't muck up my hard drive like those updates usually do on the laptop.

It would be nice to have a software program, much like Wiki but one that is only dedicated to gardening, new ideas, best practice and answers to all our questions.

We can start with an exciting and useful project this summer; a deviation from the traditional, even going a bit radical if the mood takes you.

To some it's old hat, for others it's fashionable, but let's start with the edible side of things.

Instead of fussing as to what to plant in all those open areas which usually land up with annuals of one sort or another, how about just filling them with a whole load of diverse vegetables and herbs, both annual and perennial.

This summer, look beyond the traditional veggie patch and turn the whole garden around by including exciting food plants in between all those ornamentals.

Like any ornamental, vegetables still provide you with flowers and attractive foliage that come in many colours and textures. The bonus lies in the food value!

Think about it...cherry tomatoes with their red berries, a variety of lettuce's with colourful leaves and ornamental shapes, bush beans which have beautiful white flowers and if it's a creeper you need why not a runner bean or granadilla with their stunning flowers and fruit.

Strawberries are the perfect groundcover and if you want to create a bit of depth in small spaces then the fernlike leaves of carrots and their unusual lace flowers are ideal.

Practical groundcovers include marjoram, oregano, creeping rosemary, sage, thyme and mint of which many come in a variegated or gold leaf form.

A leafier look can be attained with spinach either with green leaves or those attractive multicoloured varieties. There is also rhubarb which can get up to 50cm or more in height and a favourite is the great globe artichoke with its huge decorative silver leaves and thistle like flower heads.

You don't have to eat them, you can just enjoy their stunning ornamental value.

Artichokes are practical, ornamental, edible, unusual and excellent water wise specimens for the W'Capel!

They will get to between one and two metres in height and their silver lobed leaves are a feature of note!

They are quite substantial plants with their large leaves so they can be individually dotted around garden as perfect visual specimens.

They have the unusual and rather exotic scientific name...*Cynara cardunculus* and believe it or not, it is a member of the Daisy family.

Certainly not a dainty daisy!!

Cynara, lends itself as a beautiful girl's name as well and will certainly show up on the family tree as much as it does in the garden!!

Another very attractive plant is the Aubergine commonly called the Egg plant.

It belongs to the potato family and is one of the most ornamental and exotic looking vegetables.

It starts with white to purple flowers, which develop into a large purple to virtually black fruit, showing up well against the big green leaves.

They can grow to a metre or more in height so another good unusual specimen plant!

Smaller leafy plants like Parsley, Rocket, Pok Choy and Choi Sum are excellent summer fillers and one does need large quantities of them in the kitchen, so why not fill those gaps with them.

If you don't manage to eat them all while leafy, then enjoy the flowers!

Some of the most ornamental edibles are found in the chilly stable.

They vary a lot in size, colour and mouth burning qualities plus they make excellent pot specimens.

All veg and herbs need a sunny spot and well drained composted soil to perform their job.

Of course, mulch plays a key role in soil and plant health-

Don't believe you can get away without compost or mulch as we expect the usual high temperatures in Summer.

Don't forget the sweet basil, its fast and easy from seed, or just get a six pack or two!

In the weeks ahead I will mention some of the hardwood herbs which we need in the garden both as kitchen necessities and hardy waterwise ornamentals.

That's it for now, lets get moving, do something, and reap the benefit of the coming equinox and warm weather. See you next week