

September 25

Good morning! A quick reminder of the Arderne garden tour coming up next Saturday, 2nd October. If there are no more hiccups, they will continue happening on the first Saturday of every month. As always meet at the entrance on Main Rd Claremont at 10am. The cost is R40 which goes towards the upkeep and improvements in the garden.

After spending time in the nursery, I ask myself, are we in a rut when it comes to choosing plants or are we just been ill advised by parrot horticulturists and sales people who recommend the same old thing, day in...day out.

Could it be that garden centres and growers have a stock list they just top up every season without considering the huge range of suitable plants that should be on the shelf!

I'm not sure whether its fashion, ignorance or a can't be bothered attitude because some are difficult to grow but we need to become more creative.

Do we have to use the same plants time and time again just because we know them and they grow easily?

We need to change our way of thinking and open our minds to the fact that all those plants out there in the wild need to be available in the nursery.

We should not be differentiating between plants in the wild and in the nursery.

I visited a most beautiful home a while back. Unusual architecture dominated with natural elements and a well laid out garden.

The garden was 90% local plants but guess what had been planted on the boundary to screen the neighbours? A Leylandii hedge!!

Of all the hundreds of suitable plants to choose from, the designer had to use an unsuitable conifer to do the job.

Was it necessary to create an 8-10 metre high mono culture feature which not only hid the neighbours but blocked out the much of the morning sun, essential for the mix of local plants in the garden.

Besides been a maintenance nightmare it did nothing for bird and insect life!

A practical alternative would be an informal mix of local plants that would have attracted wildlife and been maintenance free.

Diospyros whyteana- the Bladder nut, Buddleja auriculata- Weeping Sage, Dovyalis caffra – The Kei apple, some Polygala myrtifolia- the Blou Kappie, Honeybell bushes and the sweet pea bush Podalyria calyptrata....its as easy as that.

If you are getting a designer or contractor in to do your garden then ask questions, look at alternatives and get references. A wise move is to get in an independent horticulturist or knowledgeable plant person who can advise you on plant material and environmental considerations beforehand.

Rather spend a little on getting professional advice before landing up with a very costly mistake in the future.

Its not too late (if you can still find them) to pop in some summer flowering bulbs like Amaryllis, Dahlias, Begonia and the Tuberose with its intoxicating scent.

An unusual and different easy to grow plant which I find makes for a good eyecatcher is the Pineapple Lily, *Eucomis autumnalis*, which will flower in Autumn.

Although a summer rainfall species it does well here if planted in well drained soil.

Last but not least are the bulbous Arum lilies or Calla lilies which have great appeal.

They come in yellow pink and shades thereof and are most sought after.

A little chore you can do now is have a close look at your citrus trees.

They are probably still bearing, but as soon as the main crop is over start removing all dead and diseased wood plus those little superfluous twigs and small branches that are non-productive.

To improve light intensity, you need to open them up and at the same time improve air circulation.

Winter rain, poor light and badly drained soil will promote scale and aphid activity which also results in black sooty mould...so now is the time to clean them up and if need be, a dose of balanced fertilizer or foliar feed to keep them strong.

Don't start cutting back summer flowering ornamentals, wait for them to flower and then prune.

A reminder...the Posberg Flower reserve closes end of the month so make plans to get there soon, otherwise wait another year.

For enquiries please phone the reserve directly on 022 7722144

Its always a good idea to phone in advance to check on flower activity, how busy it is and the best time to go. Do it soon.

Let's just go back to basics when selecting plant material and think of suitability and practical aspects.

There is the perfect plant out there for you and your garden so let's not dally about and make an effort to find them !!