

October 16

I would guess, this is the time that many proud homeowners are attempting to get their lawns back into prime condition.

After our good rains maybe it's just a matter of keeping them looking good

We all know that lawns need a lot of water and attention to look perfect.

The question is, will we always have enough water?

The weather might be kind to us for a few seasons but the chances are we land up in trouble when extended dry periods come around again.

Whether you have a borehole or not, we cannot afford to water lawns unless they are very small or made up of waterwise species that can do with the absolute minimum.

What is the alternative, if we don't want large areas of bare earth which in turn contribute to more evaporation, unwanted weed growth and in some cases a potential dust bowl.

Some of the most natural and practical gardens I have ever seen, do not have a blade of grass and instead are mulched throughout with coarse chips and shavings.

This creates a flowing access to all parts of the garden, requires no maintenance and always looks good.

It's a natural compost factory and probably only needs to be topped up annually, compared to a lawn that needs water and weekly maintenance at a high cost.

The odd weed that pops up is easily removed and if you need to plant additional shrubs, trees or groundcover it's an easy process.

Push the mulch one side, dig the hole, plant and push the mulch back around the plant base.

Besides mulch, gravel, peach and apricot pips there is the living alternative of groundcover, of which there is a huge variety in all shapes and sizes.

Not all cope with heavy and constant foot traffic but combined with a coarse mulch the ground cover will give an interesting dimension to your Cape Mediterranean garden.

There is a lot of literature available on Mediterranean garden design which encourages us to be in our gardens and not on top of them!

If you feel that a patch of grass is essential then use one of the very hardy varieties of Kweek or Couch grass- *Cynodon dactylon*.

This fine leaved indigenous grass requires minimal water and maintenance, ideal for water scarce areas.

It can be planted by seed or plugs, and with little water to start off it develops into a good hardy lawn.

Many of us are looking for unusual fruiting trees, besides the usual deciduous fruits and citrus varieties, that do well in our climate.

There are many, but one in particular is the much sought after Pomegranate plant which many believe is a difficult to grow exotic fruit.

They originate in the Middle East and India but have been grown in Mediterranean areas for many years and are becoming a popular farming crop in the more drier parts.

There are many cultivars available today which I cannot advise about but I am told that the cultivars 'Wonderful' and 'Spanish Ruby' are the preferred varieties found in nurseries.

Pests are minimal but basic feeding with a balanced fertilizer is recommended.

They perform best in a sunny position with well drained loam soil that's not too sandy, and don't like wet feet!

They can be pruned around end of July, initially not too heavily, more of a thinning out to allow in quality light and air movement.

When mature they flower and fruit on new shoots so pruning is necessary to encourage new growth!

They prefer well composted, slightly acid to neutral soils.

Plants take about 3-5 years to fruit which is usually late summer to Autumn, so patience is required as with most fruit trees.

They are classified as self pollinating in that they do not require another tree for pollination but the bees do the actual work.

They generally don't like too much wind but if you have a fairly protected spot, why not give this super fruit a place in the garden.

Another alternative is the hardy and waterwise edible olive.

There are many popular varieties some self pollinating.

Pruning is minimal and all they need is thinning out to allow in light by simply removing water shoots and creating a nice open shape.

Maybe you don't want another tree in the garden so why not something special and different in a pot.

Right now... I am thinking Blue Berries!

They are self-pollinating, but planting up a few containers with different cultivars will help with improved fruiting.

They need a well-drained acid potting mix and under very hot conditions they might appreciate a bit shade around midday, especially during our scorching mid-summer months!!

They will also need to be watered well under these conditions.

They are a very rewarding and healthy fruit and judging by the shelf price it might be a very worthwhile project.

We are expecting high temperatures this summer and the only way to keep the ground cool and moisture level up is to get the mulch on top.

In the meantime.....Stay cool and I look forward to our chat next week.