

## FMR DECEMBER 4

Over the past few weeks I have been involved with preparing, planting and watering grass which made me think more about this space that plays such an important role in our gardens.

Everyone wants a nice looking lawn but at the same time rather hassle free not requiring require too much time and energy.

I don't know why but many, especially new home owners suddenly have the urge to plant or lay more lawn this time of the year!

Its probably all about our social life over the holidays like

Family entertainment and children's activities with little thought as to the long term.

I have noticed quite a few vendors on the roadside selling instant lawn and wonder if they offer good advice to those who have never ever laid instant lawn.

For instance...you need to make sure the ground is fairly level, prepared with some compost and 2;3;2 and importantly that the lawn is rolled making sure the roots have good contact with the soil.

Dont forget surface drainage and lastly, dont let the grass dry out, so regular watering during this stage is vital!

In a couple of weeks or so you will be able to start mowing if all goes according to plan!!

What grass is best? How much water is needed? How often do we fertilize, with what and how much?

The type of grass is always an important issue!

Some believe that kweek is the answer.

Indigenous, tough, waterwise and low maintenance, although not quite green enough for some.

Others prefer Buffalo, a slower grower, not so soft underfoot but the end result is good.

Then there is Kikuyu, fast, lush and vigorous but can become troublesome if not controlled and maintained regularly.

They all require management, frequent mowing, regular feeding and watering to look perfect.

I think we pour unnecessary amounts of water on lawns anyway!! .

Buffalo needs less mowing due to its slower growth habit, but it too requires regular water to look good and remain soft underfoot.

It is more of a coastal grass and prefers a humid atmosphere.

At this point one lands up looking closely at kweek or couch grass- *Cynodon dactylon* which comes in various strains or forms from old fashioned Skaaplaas to various strains like Cape Royal, Gulf Green and others.

It is the toughest of the lot and requires less attention if you don't require a bowling green but, like any other creeping grass its job is to be invasive! It certainly is ideal for the more neglected sites like holiday homes and other big open spaces where there is little water and no necessity to mow weekly. If given the right care it can turn out to be the best of the best in suburban gardens, so give it some credit when deciding what lawn grass to use.

Lawn is a major aspect in most landscapes but keep it to a minimum. Getting off the lawn, It is a great time of the year to appreciate the many scents and aromas given by flowers and leaves alike.

Plants like Helichrysum, Pelargonium and our favourite Buchu bring a special and lasting scent to our gardens.

I think of what the Peppermint Pelargonium does for me when I crush a leaf and inhale.!

We don't need an over scented garden but we can plan to always have something around with a sweet scented flower or aromatic leaf.

Its also that time of the year we are looking for a cool spot in the garden.

It seems everything is cool in our conversations but how cool can you be if you don't have shade and more to the point how cool is life without trees??

No doubt it is all about trees, the question being what trees do we use?

The ultimate feature, is a small garden forest.

It doesn't have to be the same type of tree but it works better if they are all get to more or less the same size when mature.

I once saw a really spectacular mini forest of *Canthium inerme*, commonly known as the Cape Date or more so the BOKDROL because of its likeness to a bokdrol.

Other trees you can group in a mini forest include many of the smaller *Searsia's* (Karee), *Loxostylis alata* – the Tarwood, *Tarchonanthus littoralis*- the Wild Camphor, and *Grewia occidentalis* – the Crossberry.

Besides the shade, its all about the many stems that create interest.

I still see some amazing *Bougainvillea's* in flower, in pots, tumbling over walls or covering fences!

We buy them as creepers but like so many other sturdy creepers they can be kept shrubs or small stand-alone trees.

They are perfect waterwise plants as once established.

An important point is that they don't like root disturbance and often don't survive after a shaky transplant.

They make for great Christmas decoration and of course gifts.

That's it from me, goodbye and stay cool!