

December 18

While driving through small local towns to an appointment this week I looked at the many trees that dominate the landscape and was thankful to those special people who planted trees many years ago and those who continue to do so today.

I ask how did they all survive the last hundred years or more.

There must have been water scarce times and hardship but someone took the trouble to see that they were watered and cared for!

Do we care the same of our trees today be it at home or those lining our streets and in public spaces? Do we take them for granted? I think we do.

Do all developers and architects work around old trees while developing sites or is it more cost effective to remove them and hopefully plant others?

How many of us have adopted a tree on pavement or in a park, during hard times and made sure it survives?

Most importantly, how many of us have planted a tree this year?

We certainly have had the time!

I believe that country wide we are losing more trees than we plant and our landscape will be a lot poorer in the future.

As of today many of you are away on holiday and I sincerely hope you haven't left your garden uncared for!!

There are many friends and others out there who would really enjoy keeping an eye on your garden and spending time in it. Give them a chance!

Are you still deciding on gifts?

A good gift is Botanical Society membership which gives you free entry to all botanical gardens and a Veld and Flora magazine which is published quarterly. Not to mention a discount on book purchases.

Don't forget our feathered friends who could do with a little help now and again as well.

Interesting gifts include owl boxes, bird feeders and bird baths which all make for an productive and garden.

We are always been told what to do in the garden but never what not to do.

If you want to keep moisture in the ground then don't till the soil .

If you need to weed then pull them out by hand and lay them on top of the soil to form mulch.

If you are mowing the lawn then don't mow too short as the soil will dry out quicker. It might be a good idea to mow less often with a higher cut.

You could stop mowing all together, enjoy longer grass and just create cut pathways!

Don't prune back established shrubs too heavily. This will result in new weak growth that needs regular water to survive.

Best to delay any major pruning until cooler weather.

Don't remove established groundcover in the hot weather, even if unruly as it keeps moisture in.

Either wait for winter to replant or prune back lightly.

If you planting now use sufficient compost in the soil and mulch well afterwards.

There is a whole bunch of plants which flower this time of the year.

Obviously if you don't have them then you are missing out, but you can always get them in for next year!!

Noteworthy displays at this time include... *Chironia baccifera*- the Christmas Berry, *Geranium incanum*- the Carpet Geranium, *Monopsis*- the Wild Violets both yellow and blue, *Orphium frutescens*- the Sea Rose, the scented Wild Jasmines.

I still see *Aristea capitata*- the Blue Sceptre in flower and need I mention *Agapanthus* which abound everywhere!

A very special small tree you might see in flower is the Cheesewood- *Pittosporum viridiflorum* with its small creamy green scented flowers.

This tree by the way is perfect for small gardens and an ideal addition to the mini forest. Check it out at the nursery.

Those lucky enough to be in the garden during the holidays will certainly appreciate all the action at this time.

That's it for today...I look forward to our Christmas chat next week if you are up and about.