

FMR January 1, 2022

Good Morning, Happy New Year and welcome to the first garden chat of 2022. Its about number 1248 since we started 24 years ago!

I clearly recall sitting on a bench with Rick Everett while he explained the need and benefits of a gardening chat, I can't quite remember whether it was my left or right arm he had twisted up behind my back, but in the end it worked. Gardening styles, methods and processes have changed dramatically since then, all for the good, I am pleased to say!

We don't have to be good gardeners, whatever that is supposed to mean, but rather good thinkers with the right attitude who contribute to nature in a positive and practical manner.

Well, here we are after an eventful year, starting all over again.

It has been an interesting summer so far.

Temperatures have not been too high which has resulted in an extended flowering season.

The Pom-Pom Tree, *Dais cotinifolia*, which can start flowering early but is usually looking great over the December period is a rewarding tree we so often overlook!

It does well under most conditions and once established requires very little from us.

There is a lot of blue around at the moment giving gardens a somewhat cool atmosphere.

The most prominent are *Agapanthus*, Lavender, *Lobelia* and the *Heliotropes* which seem to be thriving this year.

If you want those *Heliotropes* to really excel, plant them in a spot that receives full morning sun or strong dappled light.

This is also the time of the year we can appreciate a special plant and understand why we call it 'Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow'.

Its all about change and moving forward but appreciating the past, living in the present and being positive about the future!

This well known garden subject is also known to some as Morning, Noon and Night!! Or more romantically known as 'Kiss me quick'!!!

It is a native of Brazil so does exude some Latin charm.

They are flowering once again in Cape Town gardens... for some there was an early spring show and now it's starting all over again.

The only reason I can think of, is that we are having a cool summer!

It is a very floriferous plant, the flowers start off purple, a day later changing to lavender which fades to white the following day always accompanied by its a heady scent.

It is probably one of the most handsome members of the potato family, hard to believe, I know!! It has never to my knowledge become invasive!!

I have grown them in different climates all over the country and can honestly say they never let you down.

For many this is a quiet and relaxed day when we can sit back and enjoy our gardens.

Maybe you are even out there right now just being part of your gardens life! If you are planting, don't forget the compost make sure you plant with good quality broken down material.

If you don't make your own then buy the best available from the garden centre or other reliable source.

Like any plant, compost is living material so take it seriously

The comment was made the other day... if we find high temperatures a challenge then how on earth do plants cope.

We can't change the temperature but we can manage the situation with a few simple principles.

The most important is good soil management!

Don't disturb it with digging, scratching and scoffling (like a chicken!) just leave it alone and cover it with mulch or growing plant material.

By doing this we are shading the soil, keeping it cool and therefore lowering the temperature by a few degrees.

Good watering practice is essential, water well either early in the morning or in the evening....Think differently!

William James said and I quote...The greatest discovery of any generation is that a human being can alter his life by changing his attitude.

2022 seems a solid number, so lets do the right thing this year!!

Consider all aspects of the garden, not only what we see but far beyond into the natural realm.

I guess you are all a tired about my going on about the role of our gardens in the big scheme of things.... So here is a scrap more... a quote by Peter Kareiva, a Conservation Biologist...

He said 'We can set up all the reserves we want, but if we do not care where we place our cities, how we grow our cities, and how we live in our cities, we will fail in our mission to protect biodiversity'!!

To start the year off think back to what we did Yesterday, what are we doing Today, and how can we improve things Tomorrow

Wishing you all a wonderful and fulfilling 2022.

Maybe we can kick this year off in the garden.