

FMR OCTOBER 5, 2019

Good morning... and all too soon... it's the start of the 10 month.

It used to be the 8th month hence the octo but then they added 2 more months, January and February.

A lot has happened to our calendar over its nearly 3000 year old history!!

Hopefully we will add more months in the years to come and have longer years with longer summers and more gardening time.

Well no matter what we name our months or how many there are, the important thing is what happens in those months.

I am told it is also the month that Confucius's birthday is celebrated.

Some say Sept, some say Oct??

One of his interesting quotes is.... *Everything has its beauty but not everyone sees it...* should we not be looking closer and find the beauty in everything?

So what does the natural realm have in store for us this time of the year.

We have had pretty good rain and last month we could feel the temperatures warming up with the onset of spring and all the growth and blossoms that went with it.

This month we settle down to a time of great activity and flowering in our natural surrounds and in the nursery if you are seeking more.

Bulbs, perennials, the protea family ...I don't have to mention them all as you see them everyday in your garden, on the mountain and in those forgotten open city spaces.

As we move from spring to early summer, many trees, some we take for granted, will be in flower, with fruit appearing from December onwards.

One such tree which I believe we can use a lot more in our medium to large gardens is the Hard Pear- *Olinia ventosa*

I have to admit that I have not seen many growing in city gardens and parks but the few specimens I have encountered were happy and thriving.

The biggest city example I saw was in the Rondebosch area, surprisingly growing in sandy soil as they prefer the rich soils in our mountain forests.

I think in the early years they and many other hardwoods were used extensively for furniture and implements, and like our local Yellow wood were virtually depleted to a certain extent.

Kirstenbosch Gardens have some wonderful specimens you can appreciate close up especially when they are in berry around December.

From this month onwards we will appreciate the many summer flowering plants both in the wild and in our gardens.

Pelargoniums are many but two favourites are *P capitatum*- the Rose scented Pelargonium which is found growing in the most neglected spots.

The other is the large stunning *P. cucullatum* which brightens up Table Mt with its rich purple pink flowers from October into mid-summer.

I think both of these are totally underrated plants which are easy to grow and requires very little attention.

P. cucullatum is one of the biggest specimens, getting up to 1.5 m but responds well to a light pruning every year after flowering.

They flower over a long period and the big bunches of bright pinky purple flowers virtually cover the plant.

Besides the effort we put into the vegetable garden and quick colour this month, I suggest a selection of summer flowering perennials scattered throughout the garden for ongoing colour.....there are literally hundreds to choose from but here are a few you should be able to find quite easily.

Anchusa capensis- Cape forget me not. *Selago canescens*- the Bitter Bush.

Chironia baccifera- the Christmas Berry with its dazzling pink flowers and red berries, can be planted in between shrubs.

If you are looking for a lilac carpet in those barren semi shady spots then go for *Geranium incanum*- the Carpet Geranium which is quite vigorous but does not take over and is easy to control.

Many of us tend to underestimate the power of the daisies, a huge family which in the main are hardy and colourful throughout the year.

Just because they are common we tend to push them aside in our selection and therefore lose out on a lot of interest and permanent colour.

Brighten up those sunny to semi shady areas with our local Wild Flax- *Linum africanum*. This neat compact bush about 30cm in height is a perfect all year-round flowering perennial and yet is relatively unknown and not utilized to its full potential.

It attracts a host of insects and is perfect for small townhouse gardens and containers. Please give it a try and you won't be disappointed!!

If you want to start the summer off with a bit of encouragement why not join an informal guided walk around the Arderne Gardens this morning at 10am.

Meet at the entrance on Main Rd Claremont and bring a flask and snack for afterwards. The cost is R40 and you will be entertained by an expert guide. I recommend this walk which takes place on the first Sat of every month.

The Cape Horticultural Society monthly meeting is this Monday at 8pm.

The venue as always is the Athenaeum in Newlands. Guest speaker is Henk Egberink who will talk on CT Trees, Treekeepers objectives and collecting further information on our champion trees.

All are welcome with a R30 entrance fee for visitors.

Well let's get to it and I look fwd to chatting next week.