

FMR MARCH 24, 2018

On we march to Autumn glory, I can feel an air of expectancy. Something is changing, and so it will without any interference from us!!

Just, what exactly should we be doing in the garden at this time?

I was requested by a listener to please go over some of the important things we should and should not be doing in our gardens.

I'll just mix it up and shake it around a bit.

Autumn is a good time to take cuttings of most plants, especially easy ground covers like all the mesems, gazanias, Plectranthus and crassula's.

They root quickly and can be planted out to add to the spring bonanza.

If the dry conditions continue, we will need to cover the ground before this coming summer, either with plants or mulch of any sort.

Taking cuttings is fun and easy but if you don't have the time then plants are available in 6 packs from the garden centre, all year round.

Keep giving compost heaps some water, even if it's now and again with recycled water.

We need to keep them slightly moist or we land up with a lot of dried out material which of course, we can use to mulch.

Add all your vegetable waste to the heap as it will help with moisture.

If you happen to be the weeding type, then pull and leave them on top of the ground to prevent evaporation or place them around special plants as mulch.

Alternatively, they can be put on the compost heap.

You might notice quite a few plants are developing yellow leaves which are beginning to fall, kind of like an early Autumn!!

Its probably the result of a hot dry summer, nothing too sinister!! Let them be!

Don't start cutting back or pruning any plants until the cooler and hopefully wetter conditions materialize.

We are so tempted to cutback scrappy semi hardwoods like lavender and daisy bushes as they start looking really tired at the end of summer.

Hold back for the cool and then prune back lightly to encourage fresh growth.

Pruning back too heavily results in fast, weak, growth which will not survive the challenges ahead.

I ask myself whether we are going through an actual drought or just experiencing a natural cycle in the weather pattern.

I see drought as an event that goes on for many seasons

Have we ever had a truly devastating drought on the peninsula like many areas around the world?

Is what we're experiencing now, not a normal occurrence for a Mediterranean area?

A wise lady said....rain is like money so we tend to spent it before we get it!!  
 We blame the weather, where we should be blaming ourselves for wasting water and taking it for granted that there will always be enough to throw around.... much like when we have too much money!!!

Our ideas about gardening are still very much based on Anglo/European traditions and culture.

Should we not be mimicking our local environment and all it has to offer.?

We use plants that are not suitable for our conditions and therefore have to use more water, fertilizer, energy, time and maintenance to ensure their survival.

Do we really need irrigation systems? Our famous floral kingdom seems to do very well without them.

Many designer landscapes are actually dependent on irrigation systems and would not survive too long without them!! A challenge for the future maybe? More thought must be put into borehole abuse as groundwater makes up 20% of the worlds fresh water supply.

Yes, it is there for us to use responsibly, not abuse continuously!!

It is imperative that the horticultural and landscape industry, including academics and teachers, change their attitude and ideas and plan ahead to a more harmonious and sustainable future that is not just based on the human requirement. We could chat about this all day but let's get back to pruning. Now might be a good time to remove dead branches in large deciduous trees while you can still see the difference.

With Autumn leaf drop looming you won't be able to tell the difference between the dead, dying and living parts!!

This is especially applicable with older trees that need new growth encouragement.

Please don't attempt to prune large trees if you don't know what tree it is.

Factors like growth speed, size, natural shape, soil and water requirements and pests all play a role in the treatment and health of the tree

If you feel the job is too big and dangerous then I recommend you visit the garden centre and they will recommend a local arborist.

It's never the wrong time to plant a tree. Plant yours today!!

In the meantime keep that positive outlook going and I shall see you next week.