

FMR OCTOBER 26, 2019

Now might be a good time to look at unruly plants which have gone ballistic after the cool wet conditions this past winter and of course our productive spring.

Ivy is a good example as it once again takes hold of anything in its path. Personally I think it is better to remove it entirely but understand that if its covering a garden wall and doing a good greening job, keeping control is vital. It can be cut right back against the wall and although a bit unsightly for a while it will cover up in no time.

Another green monster when it comes to energy and money is the lawn, an ongoing regime that needs constant attention.

There are more important and more creative things to do in a garden so I suggest you try the following.

- Keep lawn watering to a minimum...that is probably not more than 3 times a week but this will depend on soil type and grass species!

- Sandy soils need water just about every day in the hot season, clay soils might only need a good watering once or twice a week!!

- Go easy on the fertilizer and stay away from a high nitrate mix which will make growth weak and constantly thirsty.

- If you don't use the lawn then reduce it, by extending beds and planting suitable Waterwise groundcovers....it's not a difficult job and very satisfying.

Another big challenge for those lucky enough to live near the sea are plants that take the constant wind, salty conditions and at times poor soils!!

We can be grateful that plants don't rust so that's one problem out the way, but wind does dry soil out, which brings us back to the issue of correct plant material.

The basic skeleton of the garden must be constructed with really hardy trees and shrubs, the likes of Wild Camphor, Coastal Silver leaf, Dune Crowberry, Milkwood, Buddleja saligna (the false Olive), sweet pea bushes and probably the entire bunch of hardy Salvias.

When it comes to general fynbos, try and find the species that grow naturally in your area.

Many of you living on small erven will be faced with the challenge of having to deal with large old trees either in your yard or leaning over the neighbour's fence.

The big challenges are dense shade and the ton of leaves landing in your 10m² garden.

The excess leaves can of course be put through a small garden shredder and then used as mulch.

If you really value your old trees then once every 2 years, get an arborist in to thin out the crown and get rid of excess foliage and dead branches.

You will be amazed how the improved light factor changes improves the quality of plants underneath the tree.

A tree we don't often talk about is the Assegaai- *Curtisia dentata*.

A hardy fast evergreen, which I have seen it grown as a hedge as well as a handsome stand-alone tree!!

It's a local but widely distributed throughout SA, its habitat ranging from sea level right up to 1800m, so it's not too fussy.

I believe they should be watched carefully in their first few years, as they might need a bit shaping to get them perfect.

I am not one for too much plant engineering but suburban gardens often demand it.

The Assegaai is a very beautiful waterwise evergreen, but regular watering will help establish it quickly.

A quick tip....the Assegaai is mostly a forest species so it would welcome a deep hole filled with a rich composted soil mix, which will, hold water in the long term and allow those roots to get down deep!!

With November on the horizon it must be nearly time to start round no two in the veggie garden!!

Probably best to save time and get plants already established in 6packs, especially the likes of tomato, peppers and chillies, although you might be able to get some really established plants in pots.

I suppose if we talking greens we need to talk about soil food and here I would recommend an organic fertilizer like a 3;1;5, or a 6;3;4 if it's more leafy, like lettuce and spinach

Two important remindersSaturday Nov 2, please join the guided walk of the Arderne Gardens. It will be led by an enthusiastic member of the Friends of the Arderne and it is interesting and informative. The cost is R40 and well worth it.

Second reminder is the regular monthly meeting of the Cape Horticultural Society.

The venue is the Athenaeum next door to the Boundary Terraces on Campground Rd.

The entrance fee is R30. Anthony Hitchcock will be presenting Part 2 of the Gardens and Wild Plants of Italy. Definitely a must for travellers.

See you there!!