

FMR November 16, 2019

It seems like the heat is on so let's do the right thing.

Deep watering every second or third day, depending on your soil, keep up the mulch and don't water in the heat of the day unless necessary and then do it by hand.

Don't leave a sprinkler going all day just because you have a borehole or believe you can afford a pile of water.

Nobody can, water is worth more than all the gold and saffron in the world.

Let's just say its Unpriceable!!

There is only one answer for our gardens...using plants that don't need a lot of water.

Sadly the majority of the population still believe water is always available from a tap...we generally don't think further than that!!!

For starters mulching is going to save you 20-30%, adding compost to your planting mix will keep moisture down at root level for a longer period (that's another 20% saving) and watering in the cool of the day allows for deep penetration.

Your garden only needs water when it is dry and by using a bit of garden sense you might only need to water twice a week in the hottest period.

The term Waterwise does not only apply to plants but to good sustainable gardening practices.

Yes, we choose the design aspect but in the end weather conditions, soil type and position will dictate the plants we use.

I am very fortunate to have been involved in the construction and maintenance of many gardens both large and small.

The ones that come out on top are those that require the least to look their best and goes without saying that they are also the most natural!

This morning I would like to mention just 3 plants I believe should have in every Cape garden.

A shrub, an herbaceous perennial and an all-round ground cover.

Of course there are thousands more but we have to start somewhere and we are going local and common!!

The shrub species is the Sagewood- *Buddleja salvifolia*.

It is found virtually throughout South Africa and certainly one of our most common plants, but how often do you find them in gardens.

Why not? They have stunning flowers are fast growing, attract insects and birds, require minimal water and maintenance.

They usually flower from spring into early summer but I have seen them in full bloom around June July.

The flowers are anything from white to lilac to purple which totally cover the bush.

They have a wonderful delicate scent and surprisingly I don't think a perfume has ever been named after them.....Buddleja...how exotic

A common comment about them is that they get woody after a few years and look untidy.

Yes they do, like most shrubby plants but this is remedied by cutting back after flowering every few years when it gets straggly!!

A good no hassle plant!

The perennial plant I want to mention is the 'Bitter Bush' *Selago canescens*.

It is a fynbos plant with a wide distribution but most importantly it grows right here on our doorstep and needs to be used a lot more as a garden subject.

There is little to beat it in flower with its mauvy/ pink spikes which appear in early spring.

Yes you have just missed them but if you want a show to remember next spring then get them into the ground now.

It brings a trillion butterflies and is a good companion to plants such as *Scabiosa*, *Pelargonium*, *Vernonia* and of course all the other *Selago* family.

Personally I believe it is a must have.

Ground covers are many and varied, most quite common but an essential component of all gardens when it comes to water and soil conservation.

My subject today is a well-known plant not used nearly enough as an all-rounder in the garden, pots and hanging baskets.

Helichrysum argyrophyllum – The Golden Guinea Everlasting is quite different in habit from most *Helichrysums* in that it does not get straggly but forms a nice tight silver mat.

It needs a sunny well drained spot and requires little water to perform its best. Too much water and too much food will shorten its life span which is quite a few years.

Besides you don't want it to grow too fast and lose the mat texture.

The flowers remain on the plant for months and it is seldom you see them without flowers.

It can cover quite a few sq metres and because of its bright silver leaves it reflects the heat and keeps the ground cool.

What more can you want from a groundcover!!!

If you want the same effect but a bit higher, then go for a cousin *Helichrysum cymosum*.

I do hope you find a lot of joy with these practical plants, which will add much to your garden.

Have a great weekend and see you soon.