

April 4

Something is going on out there!

The month of March has passed but it did herald the start of cooler weather and somehow everything out there is looking greener...even with little or no water.

All seems more upright both in the garden and the wild.

Our local flora is certainly coming out of its summer slumber with bud formation and early flowers, especially with the protea family.

On and around the mountain we see some stunning plants in flower, like the Wild Garlic and even the Yellow Lobelia- *Monopsis lutea* is still going in some areas.

I wonder why we don't have a lot more of them in our gardens?

Back in the Mother City It was delightful to see how long the Belladonna-March lilies lasted this year.

They were prolific, just carried on and on and I thought to myself... they love the dryness but are they telling us something?

Like should we be preparing for a lot of rain because there is going to be a lot of seed about and it needs good water to germinate.....we shall see??

One big benefit that water restrictions have given us, besides more respect for our water, is that we have been awakened to the fact that we need to plant the correct plants... that is, if we want to give our gardens a future!

There has been a marked increase in the use of fynbos, succulents and other suitable Mediterranean plants over the last few years.

I think some of the real hardliners have had a change of heart and attitude.

Right now there is still time to plant if we want to benefit from the cooler and wetter weather.

The nurseries are well stocked with a good selection and although restrictions continue, nothing should stop you from planting a few good plants.

Bigger projects come with their own problems but right now lets move forward with little things and as I said previously...never stop planting!

We need to get new plants established this winter so they are capable of looking after themselves during the coming summer.

So...if you want to get anything in the ground do it now!!

Keep in mind, that the water demand of plants drops a lot in autumn so we can reduce frequency and alter irrigation programs even though we are still waiting for rain.

If you have lost a few plants during the last six months I am sure you are itching to get out there and replace them.

Great idea, but if you can't decide or are concerned about the same problems continuing next summer then I suggest you get some easy waterwise groundcover and fill in all the bare spots.

A simple ground cover has many jobs it does well

Firstly, it holds the soil together, prevents runoff and keeps dust out of the house

Secondly, it keeps the moisture in, so a little water goes a long way!!

Moist soil has much more microorganism activity and therefore healthier.

Importantly, groundcover like any other mulch will suppress weed growth.

Covering the ground, also protects it from the 'scofflers' who keep on disturbing the soil and encouraging weed growth

Ground cover is an easy, sensible and economically viable answer to many of our gardening woes.

I have also noticed quite a few sad lemon trees around, probably due to lack of water and food.

Depending on your soil type they do require regular watering and feeding in order to be productive.

Now is probably a good time to start paying them some attention.

Create a nice big dam around the stem and give them a good deep watering.

When it has all soaked in, feed with a soluble fertilizer, slightly higher in potassium ..like a 3;1;5.

The amount of mix will depend on the size of the plant so you might need 10 l or more on a larger tree and 5 or less on a smaller plant.

Feed every 6-8 weeks but keep in mind that some varieties fruit all year round while others just fruit in the cooler months.

In the meantime look around for those special plants, prepare well and keep in mind, that April is not a month for fools.

See you soon