

April 11

Good morning.....its still a busy time for some.

Planting, seed sowing, getting bulbs in and on top of that preparing for the Easter long weekend!!

A very busy time on the roads so my advice...stay put in the garden and plan another weekend away when the roads are quieter.

Here at FMR wish you all a happy and safe Easter

I heard the comment that bulbs are always such a hassle!

It obviously came from a non-gardener because all bulbs, whether evergreen or deciduous, are easy to grow and in most cases a one off purchase.

You've heard the saying...'one egg has all the nutrition and benefits of a whole chicken'! I cant say that for the chocolate variety....

Well the same goes for a bulb...everything you ever wanted in a plant can be found in a bulb...! Leaves, flowers, seeds and in some cases... food!!

Compost can be added to poor soils before planting, but bulbs in general can be just popped in to a reasonably good loamy soil.

The big thing with bulbs is not to overwater!

Sometimes I think we are overloaded with technical jargon on what plants need and this alone can put us off carrying out the easiest of tasks.

There is nothing more simple and rewarding than gardening in all its forms from the first seed you sow to maintaining a prize rosebush or planting a wild Cape garden!

Don't make it complicated or you will never enjoy it.

If we don't get early rain and restrictions continue then stick with the following principles

- Don't mow the lawn to low (you probably don't have much right now)
- Don't over fertilize with high nitrate fertilizer, especially if you don't have ENOUGH water to really soak it in to root level!!
- Use organic fertilizers if you have minimum water, they provide food and improve soil structure
- Don't till the soil...this just encourages weeds, evaporation and erosion
- For some reason we want to start cutting certain plants back in autumn Sure, you can prune most of the late summer flowering shrubs but don't cut back those that flower in spring as you will be removing their flowering wood.....
- Evergreen bulbs like Agapanthus and Dietes can be divided now to benefit from the coming rain
- Replenish your mulch before the winter rains arrive. This improves percolation, prevent weeds and keep soil warm for optimum growth

- If certain plants have died due to lack of water then don't replace them with the same plant, rather choose a local that will survive future restrictions and fit into our weather conditions.
- When planting, compost is a priority as well as mulching afterwards.
- All plants need water so water well after planting and regularly until the plant is established... do not overwater!!
- Lastly, if you are unsure about certain plant requirements, get some sound advice from an experienced horticulturist and save on time, energy and money.

One plant I see thriving all over the city and in coastal gardens is the Coastal Silver leaf- *Brachyleana discolor*.

It is also known as the Wild Silver Oak but I always find that confusing as it is not an oak and actually belongs to the Daisy family.

It is a versatile plant which can be used as a screening shrub, hedge or even a small tree usually not growing higher than about 4-5 metres.

It needs minimum water once established, takes all the wind and grows in any soil.

The silver leaves are a feature in any setting and I have seen interesting multi stemmed specimens trained into practical little shade trees.

I highly recommend then for small to medium sized gardens and especially useful in new gardens as they are fast growers.

If it's a big local evergreen you need for shade and birdlife then look no further than the Wild Peach - *Kiggelaria africana*.

Sometimes under extreme conditions it will drop some leaves but It is a fast grower with a good spreading habit.... so it does need space.

The small flowers are followed by an orange and black seed which is relished by many birds.

A reminder that the Cape Hort Soc has a number of interesting talks coming up in the months ahead.

For the full program and latest news about their meetings please phone the secretary on 021 531 5713 for full details or go to their website [www.capehorticulturalsociety.co.za](http://www.capehorticulturalsociety.co.za)

Have a great week and remember ...your garden plays an important role in our city environment. Good bye.....