

May 2, 2020

I truly believe we are currently in a state of great creativity in our lives.

We have been awakened and found amazing things within us, we didn't know even existed.

Could it be because there is more peace and quiet, less routine, fewer goods to purchase and more time to focus on the real meaningful things life has to offer!

We now know that no matter how far we have separated ourselves from the natural world, we are still part of it and will be treated as such.

Many only feel nature's gentle tug when in the garden so why don't we start there.

It's about letting the wild in, having a more harmonious relationship with our natural surroundings and moving away from activities and processes that are actually harmful and unproductive. .

Many are still stuck with themed concepts such as meadow gardens, rose gardens, English gardens, Zen gardens and sometimes pink and white gardens.

Of course there is nothing illegal about them, it's more about the maintenance processes that need to be carried out to uphold an acceptable standard. Must we always be in control ?

We do nevertheless have a licence to create our very own wild Cape garden.

I know many are still afflicted with ODS...the Over Design Syndrome.

45 degree hedges, straight lines, colour co-ordinated beds, structured veggie gardens, highly trained obedient trees and socially acceptable ornamental plants, all smothered in make up!

Is this not the time to throw away the dumpy level, colour charts, unnecessary equipment, potions and ridiculous unnatural processes, by just broadening our horizons mimicking nature?

Like all other living creatures plants want to excel, flower, fruit and reach their full potential. In order to achieve this, here is some starters advice.. Use more local or near local species that grow easily... most do.

Choose those that do well in your area and know their size and habits before planting, this will reduce unnecessary maintenance!!

If using plants from further afield make sure they are at home with our long dry summer and cool wet winter. There are of course many plants from summer rainfall areas and suitable exotics that do well.

Generally speaking all they need is good drainage and sufficient light.

No seasonal pruning, no special fertilizing and at best minimal watering.

Just take our social demands out of the equation and increase the plant social scene.

With all that said you can continue to enjoy all those wonderful exotics as many give us joy.

Ok, so what plants can we use for this wild experience There are thousands to choose from, you just have to find them.

There are many publications and gardening magazines which have informative articles on indigenous material, but you need no more than membership of the Botanical Society of SA to get into the deep end.

Don't hesitate...its not just for botanists and fundi's, it's for all and besides it is probably the most active and largest organization of its kind.

Back to the wild....Besides a basic structure of trees and shrubs, much of your wild garden will be made up of annuals, perennials and groundcover which will provide you with colour and coverage throughout the year.

Some easy and colourful examples are;

Gomphostigma virgatum, the Otter Bush has fine silver foliage with white fls and is an excellent filler in any mix.

Anchusa capensis – Cape Forget Me Not with stunning little blue flowers. Once you have it, you will not forget it, as it self seeds easily.

Selago canescens- the Bitterbush...An absolute stunner in early spring when many other plants are just waking up. The butterflies and a host of other insects go crazy for the nectar and it is quite a sight to see the traffic around these plants!!

There are the *Scabiosa*'s and many *Salvia*'s, plus my favourite wild groundcover *Cineraria saxifraga* with its small yellow blooms makes for a happy companion to *Geranium incanum*- the Carpet Geranium.

You cannot have a wild garden without a huge splash of the daisies.

Be it the *Helichrysum*s with their silver leaves, *Metalsia*'s covered in pink and white flowers, the parachute daisy- *Ursinia*, the dependable *Gazania*s and *Felicia*.... All good for the task and easy growers.

The big challenge, which takes a bit of planning is to make sure it is an all- year round affair....not just about spring.

The *Barleria*'s and *Plectranthus* are still in flower right now!!

For some it will be a sort of blind swipe, not knowing quite where to put everything, but once you have handed over to nature, success happens!

Don't panic...you can still have your favourite roses, with some lavender and other cultivated flowers, just add them to the informal mix.

So what more do we need in a wild garden where, plants, birds, insects, chameleons, lizards, field mice and moles and all work together.

No need to dream of the perfect wild garden...just let it happen.