

May 9,2020

Good morning

I know the past month has been challenging.

At first it seemed like fun, then it became real and all our lives changed.

I mentioned last week that through force of circumstances, we have become more creative and are starting to rethink what we normally consider as standard or routine.

The daily menu is much more exciting, and mealtimes have become an interactive family affair resulting in a positive outcome for home schooling.

We also now understand what goes into daily housework and all the other associated chores that keep the home engine turning.

Taking the rubbish out and doing a marathon around the house after completing all those outstanding DIY chores can be a lot of fun!

There are also a lot of interesting things we can do in the garden and here I don't mean chores like mowing the lawn and weeding the beds.

Oh no! this is productive stuff, interesting, educational and very rewarding for all.

It will take us closer to nature in order to understand it better.

For starters we need to learn more about plants, their names, their characteristics and habits, plus what role they play in the environment.

For example- do their flowers, seeds or fruit attract specific insects and birds.

Do bees and butterflies pollinate them or do secretive and silent giant moths come in the dark to do nature's work.

The first task is to positively identify plants, which is quite a simple exercise.

You can refer to plant books if you have them or take a sample or photograph and ask a gardening friend. I am sure you will find a knowledgeable horticulturist at your local nursery as well.

Maybe even start a garden diary and record flowering and fruiting times.

Another route is of course via the internet.

There are quite a few interesting apps you can use for ID only but if you want to go the whole hog then I suggest you get the iNaturalist app.

This is a worldwide forum which promotes and contributes to our knowledge of the biological sciences....that includes all and anything to do with nature.

It's a big family of interested people who are mainly citizen scientists, like you and I plus knowledgeable experts who all contribute to the identification, habitats and habits of every plant, bird and gogga in your garden.

I believe it to be one of the best apps for laymen and professional alike.

There are many books available covering plants so you would have to browse a bit and decide how specific you want to get.

Besides essential plant books, there are a few other books which I find invaluable, on a daily basis.

A bird guide, which is never too far from my hands, and a copy of *The Guide to the Insects of SA*.

Both are exciting books for both adults and children!!

Instead of sitting in front of a screen we can get into the garden, catch and identify insects such as butterflies and beetles and learn all about their role relating to plants and organic processes!!!

There are also many interesting ants in the garden and in the wild which we could give a closer look to.

We walk over them, disturb their nests and generally don't pay much interest to them....except when those little red ants bite us!!

Peter Slingsby has written a fascinating book, aptly titled *Ants of SA...the Ant book for all..*

He describes his book as one for Bewildered Beginners, Excited Enthusiasts and Puzzled Professionals!!!

Right now, I call myself an Excited, Bewildered but very Puzzled Beginner and I hope to spend many years putting together the puzzle of Ants.

I am sure there is not a child on earth who does find ants fascinating!!

Ok... lets look at the more practical and DIY gardening issues.

How many gardening types propagate their own plants.

One might think it is easier to purchase all plants at the nursery and in some cases that is true, especially for difficult to grow and unusual plants, but most can be propagated at home from seed or cuttings.

You can collect your own seed from annuals, herbs and vegetables.

Other herbaceous plants, for example - daisy bushes, lavender, perennial basil, Geraniums and most succulents can be grown quite easily from cuttings.

There are always a few basic principles and guidelines to follow but success is usually guaranteed if you follow through. It's so rewarding !

Another method of propagation is by division, this usually refers to evergreen bulbs such as Agapanthus, Clivia and Dietes which most of us have in the garden!!

Now is a good time to split up those big clumps of Agapanthus and Dietes which finished flowering a while ago.

Clivia is best divided or repotted after flowering from early to mid-summer.

Your garden is the door to a wonderful world, open it, step in and become part of it.

A last request, please visit the Fine Music Radio website and find out about becoming a member of this special family. Your support is appreciated!

That's its for today...See you next week.