

Dear Garden Clubs of Australia Southern Tasmania Zone Members,

It's time to reactivate your gardening enthusiasm and immerse yourself in the pleasures of smelling fragrances, tasting freshly-grown produce and tidying your garden and pots. Go online and search gardening catalogues and visit your local nursery for little gems to enliven your yard, pots or balcony.

However, please remember my advice in my last newsletter about being sun safe and wearing protective gardening gear.

Cheers for now, *Heather Pryor*



Bulbs are Bulbilicious!

You probably haven't thought about autumn and spring bulbs since last year and you may not have had any reason to unless you have been receiving those deliciously tempting catalogues from bulb nurseries lately. Give yourself a treat and think about indulging in some colourful bulbs for your tubs and gardens beds and delight in discovering treasures amongst the huge range of varieties available.



Traditionally, **anemones** are thought of as spring-flowering bulbs, but if you stagger their planting from early summer until late autumn, they'll flower thought winter too. Scatter 'St Brigid' varieties (left) among your perennials. They are excellent as cut flowers if watered well before picking.

In the Victorian language of flowers, white anemones symbolise sincerity, while the other anemone colours represent anticipation – this is because the anemone flowers

close up at night and open out again in the morning.

According to Greek mythology, Adonis was killed by the gods due to their jealousy over his love affair with the beautiful goddess of love, Aphrodite. While Aphrodite wept for her lost lover, anemones sprang out of the soil where her tears fell.

Remember to chill each batch of your anemone corms in the fridge for a couple of weeks before planting.



Ranunculi are occasionally confused with anemones, but are actually quite different as they come in a wide range of colours. The double forms are especially lovely.

Ranunculi have rich, bright colours that are great for mass colour impact in garden beds in sunny positions or select one colour tone as a colour feature (such as the pink at right) and bury them in vacant spots amongst your plants for pops of colour.

Ranunculi are great cut flowers and produce successions of bloom over a long period. Try staggering the planting of your ranunculi to



increase their flowering period.

Soak ranunculi well when they are first planted. Remember that ranunculi are planted with the spidery points going down. Soak each week until shoots appear then only water weekly. For best results, lift bulbs each year as they might rot in the ground but completely replace your collection after a few years to revitalise your stock.



Early **narcissus** such as jonquils, paperwhites and the vigorous 'Erlicheer' are late winter delights, flowering from late July, some weeks before the rest of the narcissus genus burst onto the scene. The smaller

forms, such as *Narcissus cyclamineus* (left) and Hoop Daffodils (*Narcissus bulbocodium*) are superb in pots or at the garden edge so that they can be readily viewed. But the queens of this family are the modern daffodil hybrids

with pastel pink trumpets or blaring red and orange trumpets or doubled petals or split corona. How could you possibly resist trying a new variety this year?



Lachenalias are an African bulb that are easy-care in containers, well drained soil or dry summer soils. They awaken in autumn and burst into bloom in later winter. Their foliage is also a visual treat with all kinds of speckling over the leaves. The old-fashioned stalwart Soldier Boys, *Lachenalia aloides*, glows in shades of orange, but there are many more modern forms to seek out to add variety to your bulb collection. See *Lachenalia viridiflora* (Sea Green Lachenalia) left and *L. purpureo* at right.

The secret of success is to realise that these plants, being virtual succulents, need only be sparsely watered each time the potting soil starts

to become dry. After the flowers fade, watering should be reduced and as the leaves finally die back in late spring, the potting soil should then be allowed to become bone-dry over summer. Only when new signs of growth appear in autumn should the same sparse watering regimen be resumed. Overwatering will cause rot.



What could be alluring than the strong, heady scent of the small-flowered, shorter-stemmed varieties of **freesias**? They are such reliable, garden treasures. Modern hybrids are taller and have much larger flowers than the species, often in bright shades. Freesias are excellent for lining paths, pots or even naturalising in the lawn. Scatter some under shrubs where you forget about them and to delight you in spring.

Galanthus (right) or snowdrops and snowflakes are an early winter joy popping their innocent heads up with pristine white blooms. 'Galanthus' comes from the Greek *gala* meaning "milk" and *ánthos* meaning "flower". It is a small genus of only 20 species in the family Amaryllidaceae. The flowers are single, small, white, drooping and bell-shaped (campanulate) with six petaloids in two circles (whorls). Plant

in very cool, shaded, slightly moist locations. Pots are a great choice as you can move them into deep shade during summer.





Tulips are regal companions in the spring garden, but for most of us, it is best to buy them annually rather than be disappointed when they die out in our hot, dry summers because they are, in a way, cooked by the conditions. But they



are the epitome of elegance in their vast range from flamboyant, ruffled and striped parrot types to pointy-petalled varieties. They need a deep cold, so ensure that you put them in the crisper drawer of your fridge (clear labelled) for 6 to 8 weeks prior to planting between May and July.



The rich, sweet smell of **hyacinths** is a spring joy. They have become a favourite for Australian gardeners for their striking colours and strong scent. Their compact growing makes them ideal for growing in pots or even in vases. They make ideal long-lasting cut flowers.

Plant hyacinth bulbs 8 cm deep in autumn and a minimum of 6 cm apart in well-drained, moderately fertile soil in part sun or partial shade. Before planting, loosen the soil and work in compost or blood and bone. Set

the bulb in the hole with the pointed end up. Hyacinth bulbs do not like to have wet feet, so make sure they are not watered too often. Too much moisture can cause rot. Protect container-grown plants from excessive winter moisture by keeping them covered or moving them to an undercover area.

After your hyacinths have finished flowering in late spring, cut back flower stalks, but allow the leaves to die back naturally in order for the bulbs to develop the sugars for the next bloom season.

When many things in the garden are preparing for their long winter nap, **Autumn Crocuses** (*Colchicum autumnale* and *C. agrippinum* - seen at right) burst into bloom. They develop from a corm, which should be planted in fertile, well-drained soil in late summer or early autumn, 4–8 cm under the soil surface.

The flowers tend to be delicate and should be protected, so situate them under shrubs or other low-growing plants in part shade. They are ideal subjects for rockeries, perennial gardens and containers. These plants often multiply naturally from offsets but can also be propagated from seed.



Blooms come in shades of white, pink, or light magenta. The cup-shaped flowers each have 6 petals, usually arranged in two whorls, and there are also double-flowered forms. The foliage is variable, ranging from grassy to broad and strap-like, and often does not appear for some months after the plant has commenced blooming.

Remember the importance of regularly feeding all your bulbs with liquid fertiliser and a seaweed tea, but most especially soon after flowering before the leaves die down.

Pick a Peck of Pickled Peppers



The striking colours of ripening capsicum in red, yellow, orange, green or purple and the glistening greens of the leaves make a dramatic and attractive statement in the vegie garden.

Capsicum is the name of the genus of flowering plants in the night-shade family called Solanaceae. The mild fruit that we safely eat are known as capsicum in Australia, New Zealand and India, and as bell peppers in the USA. The name *capsicum* may come from either the Latin 'capsa' meaning *box* or the Greek word 'kapto' which means *to swallow*.

Capsicum are native to South America and are particularly important in the cuisines of tropical Asia and equatorial America. Traces of pepper fruits have been found in prehistoric remains in Peru and Mexico, and the plants were widely grown in Central and South America by various pre-Columbian civilisations. Originally mistaken for a form of black pepper (*Piper nigrum*), the first pepper seeds were carried to Spain in 1493 by Christopher Columbus and from there spread rapidly throughout Europe and the rest of the world.

In the strict botanical use, the capsicum 'fruit' are technically berries. If you cut open a capsicum crosswise near the stem (- see picture right), you'll notice thin walls that divide the capsicum into sections. These sections are called the lobes or cells. Most seed companies describe a well-shaped capsicum as being 'blocky', meaning squarish—see picture below left.



The blocky shape comes from the division of the capsicum into lobes, and a good, blocky one will have three or four lobes.

The shape of capsicum peppers makes them great for stuffing, slicing into rings and general all-around use.



Above: Peppers showing three and four lobes or cells.

There are over 25 different types of peppers. Hot peppers, such as habanero and tabasco, are used as relishes, pickled or ground into a fine powder for use as spices and in medicine. Mild peppers or capsicum are used as vegetables. Some other peppers are only grown as ornamentals for bursts of colour.

Variants of capsicum that are spicy or hot tasting are commonly called chili peppers or simply "chilies". The most variants of capsicum have the substance capsaicin which produces a sensation of burning in any tissue with which it comes into contact and is irritant to mammals (birds don't react to it). Its purpose, within a plant, is to keep the fruit from being eaten by mammals and insects and to allow birds to eat the fruit and spread the seed. Different variants of capsicum have different amounts of capsaicin. Capsicum, for instance, has none of it, while chili peppers have varying, higher amounts depending on the variety.



Many countries use peppers (hot or mild) in their cuisines, for example, the Spanish make *chorizo*, a type of pork sausage which is called *picante* if it is made with hot chile or *dulce* when made with sweet pepper. Hungarian *lecsó* is a thick stew made with hot and sweet peppers, tomato, onion, garlic and lard. In Bulgaria, South Serbia and Macedonia, people prepare peppers in different ways: as salad; pickled in *turshiya*; fried and covered with tomato paste, onions, garlic and parsley; and even stuffed with minced meat, rice, beans, cottage cheese and eggs and then cooked.



2020 Diary Dates

Why not try your hand at exhibiting? It's quite easy and there are experts on hand to advise and support you. If you don't give it a try, you'll never understand the pleasure it can give!

There are opportunities coming soon to give it a go or encourage your family members to be involved:

Kingston Mitre 10 Dahlia Show

22 and 23 February 2020

Staging of entries is from 9.00–10.30 am Saturday 22 February.

Enquiries: Christine Dwyer 62291563, 0418127571.

Dunalley Autumn Flower Show

Saturday, 29 February 2020

Staging of entries is from 9.00–11.00 am Saturday 29 February.

Enquiries: Christine Dwyer 62291563, 0418127571.

Hobart Horticultural Society Dahlia and Floral Art Show

Friday 13 March from 1.00–6pm.

Saturday 14 March 10.00–4.30pm. Hobart Town Hall. Donation entry.

New and novice exhibitors welcome. Set up Thursday evening and Friday morning before 10.00am.

Launceston Horticultural Society 2020 Show Dates

18 and 19 April – Autumn Show

13 and 14 September – Early Spring Show

7 and 8 November – Late Spring Show

All Shows held at St Albie's Hall, 46 Margaret St, Launceston. Small entry fee.



Eve's Garden

**14 Petty Street
West Hobart**

**Open on Sundays
between 10am – 4pm.**

**Why not support a local
gardener!**

Visit: Facebook @evesgardenwesthobart for updates and featured plants.

For more information, speak to Liz on (03) 6234 5113.

Cooking herbs \$3.50; vegetable and flower seedlings \$3.50; cottage plants available @ \$6.00 each.

St David's Cathedral Floral Festival Blooming Church 2020

Left: Lenah Valley Garden Club display.
Below right: Claremont Garden Club display.
Below left: Kingston Garden Club display called 'From the Ashes'.
Bottom right: Hobart Horticultural Society Floral Art Section display by Val Mudge.



(Mrs) Heather Pryor

Southern Tasmania Zone Coordinator, GCA
 6 Hickson Place, West Hobart TAS 7000

Email: irishaven@hotmail.com
 Ph.: 03 6231 8493