



Tasmanian Garden Group

ABN: 292 645 71427



December 2023



Dear TGG Members,

Wishing you all an especially happy and joyous Festive Season! Please take care to be safe and sun-smart when outside, especially ensure that little ones are sun-protected with their delicate skin. If adult skin takes about 15–20 mins to burn, imagine how quickly a child's skin can be affected.

This is a good time of year to visit your local nursery for Christmas treats for yourself or friends. Take a look at the hydrangea section and see if there are any new varieties in bloom which need a home in your garden or balcony. Nurturing a garden is very therapeutic physically, emotionally and even spiritually — enjoy every sunny moment.

Cheers for the Festive Season, *Heather Pryor*



Timely Reminders for Your Summer Garden

- Transform leggy, straggly **natives** by pruning now. This will encourage them to be more compact. (Remember that they would usually be 'pruned' now by animals grazing on them.) This will assist them to develop new growth and live longer. Try this with grevilleas, and especially trim your **bottlebrushes** that have finished flowering to avoid ugly seed pods.
- **Mulch is essential** at this time of year, especially with water restrictions and also if you plan to have a holiday elsewhere. Water deeply, lay down 4–6 sheets of newspaper (to suppress weeds) and lay your mulch on top. Sugarcane mulch is respected as it provides protection from summer heat and winds and later, very slowly, breaks down over autumn and winter providing nutrients to the soil.
- Don't forget to plant **summer annuals** for a colourful display such as phlox, marigolds, zinnias, petunias and lobelias, etc. Marigolds are a wonderful choice to plant in your vegie patch to help prevent plant-parasitic nematodes from attacking roots. Typically, vegies do not thrive when affected, are paler than normal, and may wilt in the heat of the day. Root knot nematodes (*Meloidogyne*) are the most damaging species in the home garden, because the galls or root knots that they create block the transport of water and nutrients through the plant.



- From now until Mother's Day, lift and divide your **bearded irises**, such as 'Leda's Lover' pictured left. They love being divided and putting into a different location or soil that has been refreshed. Remember to keep the rhizome exposed to the sun and winter frost and trim off the leaves of rhizome divisions so that the plant focuses on developing new roots and not keeping its leaves upright.
- Take **cuttings** now of shrubs such as rhododendron, azalea, daphne, buxus and viburnum. Try to include a very small amount of the old wood. Place in a cool, shady location and cut any existing leaves in half to reduce moisture loss. Cover with a clear plastic bag.
- Keep tying up your **dahlias**. In January, they will need plenty of water to push out stronger growth and flowers. This is the time to fertilise again

with sulphate of potash, blood and bone and sulphate of iron. Then mulch with sugarcane mulch or straw to keep the moisture in. If you are going to exhibit your blooms on a show-bench in March, remember to disbud to gain larger and choicer blooms.

- Feed your **azaleas, pieris and camellias** in late December and check the mulch. Camellias absorb moisture through their leaves as well as the roots, so water regularly and spray the foliage gently in the evening.
- Check any **grafted plants** (roses, passionfruit, fruit trees, etc.) and either rub off or pull out any shoots emerging below the graft. It's better to pull them off rather than cutting so that you damage the shoot and prevent it from simply keeping on growing.
- Give your **lawn** a Christmas treat as well by applying seaweed mixture to help it withstand summer heat.
- Check **lilypilly** bushes (see picture right of their eye-catching fruit) for lumpy leaves caused by egg-laying pimple psyllids and trim them off.
- Check the moisture in your **pot plants** and perhaps water a little more often. Remember to replace potting mix in your pots every 2–3 years to keep them vigorous.
- **Deadhead** your roses and other bushes in the cool of mornings or evenings.
- Prune **banksia roses** now. Remove any dead or twiggy growth.
- **Spruce up your yard** and wash down paths, paving and even garden furniture. Use a high pressure hose to save scrubbing.
- **Regularly liquid fertilise** everything in your garden, especially perennials and most especially, your vegies. Invest in a bottle of *PowerFeed* and mix it with *Popul8* (a new liquid soil enhancer made by Neutrog). The bottles will last for ages. Just a capful of each in a 10L watering can and pour over everything in your garden to develop stronger roots, better cell growth in leaves, larger flowers and more flowering and fruiting.
- **Native orchids**, such as *Dendrobium kingianum* like a free-draining mix, but they will also thrive in cool rock crevices or forks of mature trees. Liquid feed with mild *Seasol* regularly.



Timely Reminders for Your Summer Vegie Garden

- The warm weather now means rapid growth. **Tomatoes** planted now often yield better and are healthier than those planted earlier. Trim off lateral growth and lower leaves on your tomatoes to keep them off the soil to avoid fungal diseases. Tip prune them when they reach the top of the stake and keep tying them to avoid wind damage. Ensure that your tomatoes do not dry out, so mulching is a good idea.
- Early December is still a good time to **plant many vegies**: eggplants, capsicums, melons, pumpkins, sweet corn, beans, trailing cucumbers and bush cucumbers, zucchinis and squash.
- **Scarlet runner beans** freeze better than any other bean by retaining its crispness. December is still a good time to plant some.
- **Watering** is essential throughout summer. Vegies, like lettuce and celery, must have regular moisture daily. Mulching is highly recommended.
- **Turnips and swedes** planted now will develop rapidly in limed soil.
- Once your **peas and broad beans** have finished, dig the nitrogen-rich plants into the soil.
 - **Silverbeet** planted at the end of January will become a valuable winter vegetable.
 - Tidy up in the cool of the morning and **remove breeding places** for mosquitoes and hiding places for spiders.
 - Get ready to **net your fruit trees and berries** to prevent creatures from stealing them at night and your tears in the morning.
 - Prune **raspberry canes** as they finish fruiting by removing every cane that has borne fruit. Cut them to the ground.



- **Spray your stonefruit**, apple, crabapple, cherry and pear trees with pyrethrum and White Oil to control Pear and Cherry Slug. You could also dust the slugs and leaves with wood ash to dry the slug's skin out.
- After fruiting, thin and shorten the main branches of **currants and gooseberries**.



Smarter Kitchen Tips

No mess grated cheese: Cheddar cheese and mozzarella can become soft and fall apart in your hands while you're grating it. To solve this problem, put the cheese in the freezer for about 30 minutes before you start grating.

Leftover wine? Freeze any remaining wine in ice cube trays instead of letting it oxidise. That way you'll always have some handy for deglazing or making a flavoursome sauce.



Fresh eggs? If you want to know whether your eggs are past their best-by date, put them in a cup of unsalted water. If they sink, all is well. If they float, don't eat them.

Try dental floss as a knife: Cutting creamy or very soft cheese with a knife can result in a gluggy mess on the knife. Instead of a knife, try using dental floss, or heat your knife in hot water to make it slip through the cheese.

For extra crispy baked potatoes, try using baking soda. Before you pop your cut potatoes in the oven, boil them for a few minutes with a little baking soda. The alkalinity of the water will break down the surface of the potatoes, which then creates a delicious crust while they roast.

Microwave your lemons: When you juice a lemon, or especially a lime, there always seems to be juice in the fruit that won't come out. If you heat citrus in the microwave for only 20 seconds, you can squeeze out up to 20% more juice.

Perfect sliced meat: It's not easy to cut thin slices of meat, even with a well-sharpened knife. Placing meat in the freezer for half an hour makes it firm enough to make slicing a breeze.

Easy golden syrup or molasses: Sometimes measuring golden syrup or molasses is frustrating because half of it gets stuck in the measuring cup. Coat inside the cup with a little oil to help the syrup slide easily off the cup's sides. This trick works well with honey and peanut butter, too.

Give your chicken a rest! Carving the meat straight after a chicken comes out of the oven will release the juices and dry the chicken out. A whole chicken should be left to sit, wrapped in aluminium foil, for around 10–15 minutes before it's carved.

No Room for a New Plant?

A good gardener always finds a new spot! Try some of these location ideas:

- Find a large jar or old aquarium and make a terrarium.
- Create a 'floating' shelf and hang a number of small potted plants at eye-level.
- Place potted plants on one side of an open staircase and use trailing plants to cascade down the side.
- Pop a small shelf above the toilet cistern or your bath and use that valuable space for something beautiful.
- If you have a fireplace that is no longer functioning, liven it up with small and medium-sized plants. You can even add lighting inside it to create a magical effect.

- What is a bathroom without a plant? This humid location is a must for pot plants.



Plump Fresh Blueberries



Do you enjoy fresh fruit straight from your garden? If you are thinking of adding blueberries to your garden, now is the time to start planting. They are a particularly great option for small gardens as they grow well in pots or containers.

Blueberries are available in a range of varieties including evergreen and deciduous varieties, some being ornamental with foliage that turns beautiful shades of reds and pinks in autumn. Blueberries need a sheltered spot with full sun to partial shade, and acidic soil (around 4 to 5.5 pH). For pots, you can choose a good quality potting mix specifically made for acidic plants like azaleas.

Soil is a key factor. Blueberries require good drainage and a soil rich in organic matter, so adding some compost, peat moss and Neutrog's *Seamungus* pellets to the planting hole before planting will be very beneficial. Create a planting hole that is about 15cm wider and deeper than the root system and water well after planting.

Blueberries are self-pollinating; however, cross-pollination with compatible varieties produces a better crop, creates larger berries and larger yields. But remember that both varieties of blueberries involved in cross-pollination need to have the same bloom times to be successful.

Fertilising is recommended in early spring before the leaves have begun. This gives the fertiliser time to be absorbed by the roots of the blueberry before it enters its active growth stage during summer. Feed new plants once in early spring and again in late spring. Fertilisers specifically designed for acid-loving plants, such as Neutrog's *Kahoona*, are ideal for blueberries. Such fertilisers also enhance the growth and flower development of acid-loving plants such as camellias, gardenias, azaleas, rhododendrons, and so a container or pack will last a long time and can be spread quite widely and also it does not have a short shelf life.

The higher potassium to nitrogen ratio within such fertilisers plays a crucial role in enhancing flower development, whilst the boosted levels of iron and magnesium help maintain healthy green foliage, aiding in preventing the yellowing leaves which are often seen in late winter and early spring.

Crisp, Succulent Capsicum

Coming in five colour shades, different shapes and sizes, and far more than 10 varieties, *Capsicum annuum* can still be planted now in full sun in well drained soil. Why not grow some different varieties for fun? Be careful to check the seed packet as some of the varieties are quite hot on your tongue. Maximum capsicum sweetness occurs when they are ripe.

Plant your capsicum when the warm weather has set in. Capsicum can be grown in larger pots, however, they prefer to be planted in the ground. Remember to stake plants to assist with strong winds and the weight of growing fruit. Fertilise well on planting and monthly thereafter with organic pellets and regularly with a liquid fertiliser to encourage good-sized capsicums.

If the weather is extreme, cover them with some shade cloth to avoid sunscald on the fruit.

Capsicum plants will wilt when the soil is dry in order to manage moisture loss. However, it's best not to wait for signs of wilting before watering because this will stress the plant and limit or slow down fruit production. Give your plants a deep soaking during extended periods of hot, dry weather. Adding a layer of straw or similar mulch to the top of the soil when planting will help to retain some moisture. If you're growing capsicums from seed, you should expect to wait around 4 months before you'll have fruit ready to harvest, while purchased seedlings take about 3 months.

Here are some different varieties that you might care to try:

Mini Bell: compact bushes (to 50cm), abundant fruiting, very suited to pots.

Golden Marconi: orange-yellow, prolific, Italian heirloom variety with very sweet fruit.

Antohi Romanian: early cropping, sweet and crisp, Eastern Europe heirloom with 10cm conical fruit changing from yellow through to red as they ripen. Excellent for pots.

California Wonder: the classic red form of bell capsicum. Thick, succulent flesh.

Diamond Look: a white form of classic bell capsicum.

Rose Blindness



Shoots that fail to produce rose blooms are known as "blind". This can occur more often in summer. The actual cause

is unknown but could be linked to environmental factors such as adverse weather conditions like frost damaging the shoot tip, poor soil fertility or the plant being grown in an excessively shady area.

Some rose cultivars are particularly prone to this problem, especially hybrid tea rose 'Peace'.

To assist with the problem:

- Cut a blind shoot back by half to a strong bud to stimulate further growth. This should produce flowers later in the season.
- Improve growing conditions by feeding with a proprietary rose fertiliser and mulching.
- Ensure roses are grown in a sunny, open position.
- Remove a proportion of older wood to encourage new growth, leading to better flowering. This is ideally done with annual pruning in winter.

Happier Houseplants

- Clean your plant's leaves regularly – wipe down the leaves with a soft, wet cloth.
- Monitor the roots – If you slip the plant out of its pot and see 75 per cent or more roots (versus 25 per cent potting mix), then it's rootbound and needs repotting.
- Water from the base especially the soil is very dry or hydrophobic (won't take any water) – place your pot in a filled sink, old ice cream container or dish for about 15 minutes. This allows the soil to pull moisture up through the pot's drainage holes.
- Light is critical to raising happy, healthy plants. Figure out whether your windows provide bright or low and direct or indirect lighting, and then pair your plants with their proper place. Light that is obstructed or filtered (as through a curtain) is indirect. If the foliage starts to bleach out or develop brown crispy edges, the plant is likely receiving too much light. If the plant fails to put on new growth or the leaves lose their vibrancy, try increasing the duration or intensity of light for the plant.

A Nutmeg History



Christmas time is when we enjoy many spices in our recipes, however, most of us have no clue about the history of one of our favourite spices, warm, sweet nutmeg (pictured above).

Both mace and nutmeg are derived from the nutmeg tree (*Myristica fragrans*), which is native to the Moluccas or Maluku Islands, once known as the Spice Islands of Indonesia. The pit of the fruit that grows on the nutmeg tree is nutmeg, while the covering on the seeds of the fruit is mace.

Nutmeg is a lot less costly than mace due to the availability of the pits versus the arils of the fruit. Mace is often preferred in light dishes for the bright orange, saffron-like hue it imparts. Nutmeg is sold in powdered form or in individual nutmeg kernels where a fine rasp is used to grate the powder so your spice is as fresh as possible.

Spices were important to Indonesian people long before the 16th and 17th centuries when Europe got into the spice trade. In the 1510s, the Portuguese became the first Europeans to arrive in the region. In 1621, the Dutch East India Company caused a war to take control of the main island, Banda. When Europeans clamoured for these delicacies, the company became excessively wealthy by marking up the items as much as 60,000%.

Historical uses and nutmeg lore

Nutmeg is anti-inflammatory and anti-bacterial, so it was used as a preservative and the powder was sprinkled on wounds was to prevent infection, however, we know today that it isn't powerful enough to be very effective.

Historically, spices were (and still are) in high demand. No refrigeration meant that meats often developed unpleasant odours before they were cooked and personal hygiene wasn't a high priority. It was even once believed that bathing frequently could attract evil spirits or the plague.



Most European towns had an odour problem because instead of a sewer system, chamber pots were simply dumped in the street. The warm and pleasing odours of spices like nutmeg, cloves and cinnamon were strong enough to mask the stench, so wealthy ladies carried pomanders (see one example left) that contained spices and orange peel. Towns even burned nutmeg and cinnamon in the streets to cover up odours when royalty was scheduled to visit.

Nutmeg was once considered a potent charm. Sprinkle some in a woman's shoe and she will fall in love with you. Carrying a nutmeg in your pocket wrapped in a green cloth assured the bearer an advantage at the gambling tables or games of chance. Nutmeg wrapped in a purple cloth would give the person success when faced with legal matters.

Nutmeg uses:

Today, we mainly use nutmeg in baked goods (such as the cheesecake below) and sweet drinks, however, in days past, it was considered a spice for savoury cooking. Many meats and stews had nutmeg added and it is still used in India and Indonesia in this manner. Nutmeg is also used in milk-based sauces, in some pastas and with vegetables like spinach and pumpkin.

Growing nutmeg:

The monopoly of the nutmeg islands was finally broken in the mid-19th century and it now thrives in tropical climates with high humidity in India, Sri Lanka, Grenada and in the Americas. The trees are dioecious, meaning that there are distinct male and female trees.

It takes about eight years for the trees to reach maturity and start to bear fruit, so many growers use grafted trees to can control the genders of their trees and speed growth. They have glossy, evergreen leaves and can grow to 20m tall.

So when you are enjoying this Festive Season's delicious flavours in eggnog, spiced cakes and cookies, remember a little of nutmeg's history.



Summer Statement Plants for Your Garden

A flowering plant that's big, colourful or surprising and is impossible to ignore creates a focal point in your landscape. Why not consider these showstoppers:

- ♦ Virtually any **hydrangea** variety will add drama to your yard. *Hydrangea paniculata* (pictured left) is a different form that grows massive cone-shaped flowers which bloom on new wood and put on quite a colour show: Flowerheads emerge as white or green in mid-summer, fading to gentle pink or red as the season draws to a close.

- ♦ **Dahlias** bloom from late summer through to autumn. They're striking in cut flower arrangements where they can hold their own for nearly a week. Bloom colours range from sumptuous tangerine and electric

purple to the prettiest pale pinks. There are several different forms from pompon (see right) to dinner plate-sized dahlias which have enormous blooms that can measure 20cm across.

- ♦ *Anigozanthos* (**Kangaroo Paw**) love a sunny position in your garden as long as they're planted in well-drained soil. There are a range of varieties with varying flower colours. Their lovely green foliage adds a little height and cover to bare areas and their delightful flowers will brighten up your garden during spring and summer.
- ♦ *Acacia implexa* (**Hickory Wattle**) has stunning dark green foliage and pretty cream, pompom flowers in summer. This wattle is also drought and frost-tolerant once it becomes established.





Creating Colourful Containers for Sun or Shade

Planting colourful containers is a great way to add visual joy and impact to your balcony, front door or garden. Express your individuality and decorate your outdoor space as you would indoors using containers.

Containers are a great way to brighten up our living space and just about everyone has room for a couple. It doesn't matter if you have a large property, a villa or a unit, finding a spot for a container or two is possible.

However, planning a container garden takes thought, but most of the preparations rely on good commonsense.

Choosing your containers wisely

Just because you can pick up a container and pop it into your boot when it is empty, doesn't mean that that it can be easily moved once it is full of soil and plants. If moving the container after it is planted will be necessary, remember to choose the size and potential weight carefully. Or pot it up on

Above: Add some impact to your garden, villa or balcony.

location.

Container gardens need drainage, your pot needs a couple of holes in the bottom as the roots of your plants could rot from too much water.

Some gardeners select decorative resin containers because they look impressive, are relatively inexpensive and are lightweight enough to move easily. A large, resin container will hold a great collection of plants, or can even be a home for a tomato plant. Glazed ceramic containers are gorgeous but are more pricy and quite heavy, however, they make a fabulous statement.

Terracotta containers are timeless, having served generations of gardeners for many years and come in a wide range of sizes. Plastic containers are the most inexpensive and come in a range of sizes and colours. They are lightweight and easy to move, however many have a limited lifespan because the UV rays of the sun deteriorates the plastic.

Potting mix choice is important

The biggest no-no is simply using soil from your garden. Once you have selected your container, it is time to choose the potting mix. There are a number of different sorts and your choice will depend on what kinds of plants you want to use. Cheaper is not better in this instance. Bargain basement potting mix often lacks much that container plants need to thrive.

For most annuals and perennials, a good quality, commercial potting mix with water maintenance crystals added is a good choice. You might mix a bag of composted manure in with this to provide some nutrition without overfeeding.

If you are planting cacti or succulents, select cactus soil mix or stir vermiculite into the potting mix. This will drain faster for those plants that prefer those conditions.

Choose your plants wisely

The fun part is choosing the plants for your containers, however, this requires some thought and planning too. Annual plants bloom all summer, set seed and die. Perennial plants often bloom for a few weeks and then rely on their foliage as a point of interest. If you mix annuals and perennials, remember that the annuals will need to be replaced each season, so consider choosing either all annuals or all perennials for mixed containers.





Above: Colour with shade-loving plants.



Are your containers sitting in mostly sunny conditions or mostly shaded? Sun-loving plants include salvias, marigolds, most herbs, petunias, zinnias, sweet potato vines, amaranth, cockscomb, and many others. Shade-loving plants are impatiens, begonias, coleus, caladiums, clivia, many ferns. If you are making a mixed variety container, ensure that all of the plants enjoy the same conditions.

Read the labels to see sun requirements and estimated height and spread.

Colour selection is where your individual tastes show. Some people like pastels, others prefer different shades of the same colour, while others like something bright.

A good recipe to follow is something taller for the main interest, a trailing plant to spill over the edge and a plant that contrasts for some visual punch.

Planting your containers

Planting your containers is the final step and most rewarding. Cover the drainage holes with onion bag mesh or shade cloth. This keeps the soil from washing out the bottom and onto your path or balcony. Some people swear by adding a layer of rock or gravel to the bottom to encourage good drainage.

Fill the container with your potting mix to 15cm from the rim and organise the arrangement of your plants. Remember to give them some growing room. This will give you a good idea how full to fill your containers. But ensure that you leave at least the top of the soil 3cm below the rim to allow water to pool before it soaks in. If you fill the soil to the top, the water will pour straight off the edge.

Once you have the plants arranged the way you want them, remove them from their nursery containers and tease the root balls a little to loosen the roots. Place into the container and fill around the plants with the potting mix. Water in with a mild mix of seaweed fertiliser.



Above: Try grouping pots together of same design or colour.



Containers add impact to your outdoor spaces

Remember that container plants tend to need more water than their counterparts in the ground. Potting mix tends to dry faster because the pots are warmer than the ground, so they do require a bit more attention than in-ground gardens. The extra care is worth it with the pleasure that they'll give both you and your visitors.



Summer Kitchen Tips



Thinking of baking a cake for the Festive Season?

Try these tips to prevent fruit and cherries from sinking to the bottom of the cake.

Make sure the pieces of dried fruit aren't too large otherwise they'll sink from their weight. If you haven't marinated them or boiled them, dust them lightly with flour first before stirring them into the mix to help suspend them.

If you are baking with glace cherries, you need to quarter them and dry thoroughly on paper towel before baking. The

syrup contains a runny liquid which can totally ruin a bake. Once cut, dust them with ground almonds or flour to help suspend the cherries in the cake mixture.

Do beetroot stains turn you off cooking them?

Wear rubber gloves to prevent your hands from staining when preparing them for boiling, or afterwards when stripping the skins off. When chopping or grating beetroot, use a plate rather than a chopping board as boards are usually porous and will easily stain by the beetroot juice.



Are you sugar savvy?

Sugar is not just a sweetener, it can also stabilise, add texture and act as a leavening (rising) agent in cake baking. Standard sugar is granulated whereas castor sugar has been processed further to have smaller crystals and will result in a lighter bake when making cakes, especially sponges.

Similarly, light or dark brown sugar will alter the flavour of your cooking and the texture as they are both heavier and more dense.

Full-fat or low-fat cream cheese?

When carrot and walnut cake/slice recipes state using full-fat cream cheese for the icing it will stay firm on the top of a cake or slice. If you use a low-fat version, the icing can often just run off the cake, especially in warmer weather. Also use a good brand, such as *Philadelphia*. The cheese and butter also need to be at room temperature and use a good quality butter as cheap ones can be watery.

Similarly, when a recipe states to use a full-fat cream cheese in cheesecakes, use it as the low-fat version would affect the cooking time, setting time and texture.

Need more lemon juice?

Microwaving a lemon on high for around 20 seconds will produce more juice. It will also be warmer and softer than straight from the fridge or cold room, making it easier to squeeze.

Tastier gravy

If you know that you are making gravy tomorrow, keep the water from boiling your vegies to add extra vitamins and flavour rather than just using tap water.

Trouble making meringue?

Egg whites can easily fall flat when making meringue. Firstly, clean your glass bowl with a wedge of lemon. Then wipe with a paper towel. This will help remove any last traces of fat from previous cooking that could taint your work.

Meringues won't rise and spread in the oven for two reasons. The first reason is the sugar was added too quickly to the egg whites and therefore insufficient air was incorporated. When mixing your meringue, add the sugar a tablespoon at a time and count to 10 between each addition.

Also it's easy to bash air out with many a cook's bad habit, that is banging the beaters on the side of the bowl to get the mixture out. Use a spatula instead and be gentle.





Above: *Clivia miniata*.

Growing Clivias from Seed

Clivias were named after Lady Charlotte Clive, the granddaughter of Robert Clive, also known as Clive of India. The name 'clivia' should therefore be pronounced to rhyme with 'hive' (Clive + e + a) and not as in 'liver'.

Unless you plan on collecting seeds and growing even more clivias, it's worth deadheading them after they finish flowering. This is because clivias put a lot of energy into their seed and this can limit the performance of the bulb the following year.

Growing clivias by seed is an act of patience as they are slow-growing plants. From the time a clivia seed is planted, it can take several years before the plant reaches maturity and starts to produce flowers. They like temperatures over 20° to germinate, so summer is the perfect time to plant your seeds.

Clivia seeds can take a few to several months to germinate, so be patient. Seedlings take 1 – 2 years to reach a size where they're ready to be potted. Mature clivia plants will often not flower until they're 3 to 5 years old, and some plants can take up to seven years before they first bloom.

Clivia seed planting is a battle against fungus. Here are the steps to take:

- ♦ Leave the seedpods on the clivia plant until they change colour to yellow or red and are soft.
- ♦ Split the pod open and rub off the pulp.
- ♦ Remove the seeds (which will look like peas).
- ♦ Wear rubber gloves and wash the seeds clean of pulp in a weak solution of bleach and water and then put into a dish of fungicide and to prevent fungal infection. Leave it to soak for a few minutes.
- ♦ Fill a container with cactus mix or African violet potting mix and soak it thoroughly.
- ♦ Many of your seeds will probably have a dark spot – plant them with this spot facing upwards.
- ♦ Press your seeds into the top of the soil and do not bury them.
- ♦ Cover the top of the pot with plastic wrap.
- ♦ Keep the pot in a warm, protected, and ventilated spot out of direct sunlight.
- ♦ Keep it only lightly moist.
- ♦ The roots should emerge from the seeds before the leaves.
- ♦ If the roots start growing upwards rather than down, poke a hole into the soil with a stick and gently tuck the roots down into it.
- ♦ When the seedlings appear, water and fertilise regularly, but do not overwater or let the soil dry out completely.
- ♦ As they are a woodland plant, choose a location that is shaded with only dappled light.

Below: *Clivia miniata aurea*.



2024 Diary Dates!

Claremont Flower Show Group Lily, Rose & Summer Flower Show Saturday 13 & Sunday 14 January 2024. Claremont Community Hall, 41 Main Rd, Claremont. All exhibitors are welcome. Entry fee. For further details: "Claremont Flower Show Group" on Facebook or website: claremontflowershowgroup.org

Sheffield FlowerFEST 4 and 5 February 2024 at the Sheffield Town Hall, High Street Sheffield from 10am–3pm. Entry is \$4. This is a good old-fashioned flower show with local flowers in bloom including roses, dahlias, lilliums. All entries welcome. Click on kentishgardenclub.com.au for entry details and program.

(Mrs) Heather Pryor

Tasmanian Garden Group Coordinator
6 Hickson Place, West Hobart TAS 7000

Email: irishaven@hotmail.com
Ph.: 03 6231 8493 or 0480 177 107