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# *sub*Tropical Gardening

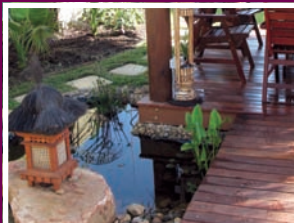
*and landscaping in warm climates*

**ISSUE 5**  
QUARTERLY



**local advice for  
local gardeners**

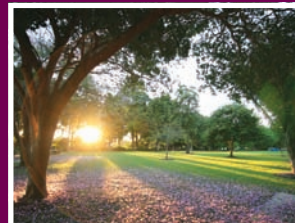
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# LETTERS

*to the Editor...*

Send your letters to us!



I have a Moses in a cradle plant (*Tradescantia spathacea*) but cannot get it to flower. Could you please let me know what I need to do for them to flower?

R. Kendle – Swan View

**Editor:** *This plant tends to flower throughout the warmer months of the year here in Brisbane. Plants need to be mature and I find stressing them with less water over an extended period forces them into flowering. Flowers are small and bundled into bracts at the base of leaves. Flowers however are attractive to bees and pollination should not be a problem.*

The first few magazines are just wonderful – just what Queensland needs!! Keep up the good work.

L. Brindley – Hervey Bay

Your magazine is fabulous. It is appropriate, not just to tropical Australia but to the tropical World in general.

Everything in the first two issues applies to Florida’s tropical and subtropical areas. As a long time plant collector in South East Asia I am more than impressed. I am flabbergasted that the magazine limits itself to tropical Australia when it is so relevant to the tropical world. Congratulations.

B. Frank Brown – Florida, USA

**Editor:** *Thank you Frank. We recognise that we are gaining more support and subscribers from locations like yours and are working towards more international gardens and content as we grow.*



I have enclosed an image of my ponytail palm (*Beaucarnea*) whose flowers I cut off half a year ago. From around the cut stem seven new shoots appeared. Should I let them all grow or reduce the number to one or two?

P. Danzer – Gatton

**Editor:** *It is common for the pony tail to create numerous new shoots after being ‘pruned’, although the growth tends to grow from the stem rather than the flower stalk. It is up to you regarding how many shoots to keep.*

**If you want a strong single stem that naturally branches, remove all but one shoot. Otherwise you will create a very bushy multi-stemmed garden specimen.**

Silky Tools **Pocketboy** saw range have precision cutting teeth and are available from all good retail outlets.



Behind the dam, groves of trees provide a shaded area to meditate. The birches are complemented by drifts of autumn crocus (*Zephyranthes candida*). A table and chairs encourage you to sit and relax in this attractive area. A tree lined creek bounds the very bottom of the garden.

What is the secret to this garden? Barb says it is the organic matter such as compost and manures that she and Rex constantly incorporate into the soil. Recently she has found a reliable source of stable manure which has been a great coup for the garden. Barb also uses a range of organic products that have improved the performance of many plants, particularly the roses.

Barb practices 'cut and drop'. Prunings from plants are cut up and added straight back to the soil. Barb adds some compost, hay or fertiliser on top of these clippings which keeps the garden looking tidy.

So what's new this year in the garden? Barb has planted many more roses throughout the garden – the old fashioned china and tea roses. There are also many more salvias. Some of the larger and more rambling types have been moved to the orchard area near the drive to make room for these plants. Barb's favourite roses are 'Monsieur

Go to [www.stgmagazine.com.au](http://www.stgmagazine.com.au) to see a 360° panoramic view!



Tillier', 'Mrs B R Cant' and the climber 'Lamarque' that has fragrant white flowers.

As well as being a keen gardener, Barb Wickes is a well known gardening personality in Queensland. She was a former Queensland coordinator of the Australia's Open Garden Scheme, a past president of the Queensland Herb Society and more recently a founder and current president of the Perennial Poppies Group. She also designed and coordinated the immensely popular kitchen garden at the Nambour Garden Show on the Sunshine Coast over the last 2 years.

Barb is author or compiler of 3 books: Old Roses, Salvias, and the Herb Cook Book.

All three books will be on sale at the Wickes open garden during their session. 🌿

The Wickes garden will open as part of Australia's Open Garden Scheme on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> of November 2006. Refer to pg 52.

Dombeya flower – the red blossoms hang down in large clusters.



# Garden Maintenance

## – DIY garden activities



Paul Hoffmann

MAIH – Brisbane  
Horticulturist

With summer now here, it's a great time of year to be out and about enjoying your garden. Dust off the cob webs and get out there. There is a lot of work to do.



If you haven't already done so, now is the time to start a compost bin in your garden. A multi-stage open bin is shown here, ideal for large properties.

### Start a compost bin

It's a cheap and easy way to recycle all your garden and kitchen scraps into a rich solid additive that your plants will love. You could also make a compost tea with the juice from your compost bin.

### Have fun with worms

Another great way to recycle your household veggie scraps is with a worm farm that the whole family can participate in. Once set up it will keep turning your veggie scraps into beautiful compost for years to come.

### Spread compost

Add your compost into your garden by simply placing half a shovel around each plant and fork into the existing soil. Then you will have more room in the compost bin for all the spring and summer garden waste.

### Prune the tropicals

If your cordylines are getting too tall, then now is the time to give them a prune. Cutting them in half will encourage two or three new shoots to grow from the original stem. If this is done every few seasons, you will eventually create a stronger denser plant with a candelabra effect. Don't forget you can replant the top half to create another new plant.

### Divide and conquer

Increase your plant numbers by propagating them with a technique called division. This is ideal for plants such as clumping plants such as calatheas, mondo grass, liriop, moses in the basket, heliconias and gingers. All these plants can be spilt up and spread around your garden, or given to friends and neighbours.

### Protect the roses

New growth means aphids. Spray with the Yates Roses Gun to keep them away. To encourage a long lasting floral display give your roses a good nutrient boost. Apply two handfuls of Thrive rose food around each bush, then lightly cultivate into the surface soil. Re-apply the mulch.

# Healthy Gardening: Allergies

## Bees and Wasps

Stings from bees and wasps can be common amongst gardeners.

The normal reaction for most people is immediate pain followed by a red mark for a few days.

A mild allergy reaction results with swelling between two joints lasting for up to 24 hours.

Hives or widespread itching across the body should seek immediate doctor consultation for assessment.

Anaphylaxis (breathing problems) and/or collapse are the most serious of symptoms and a desensitising program is highly recommended. Consult with your physician.

### Garden Safety Tips:

- control clover from the lawn
- destroy wasp hives immediately



## Pollen

Pollen from pasture grasses and weeds are the main cause of allergies in Australia. This includes domestic garden lawns.

For this reason it is essential that garden lawns are mowed regularly and council authorities have a duty of care to maintain parks and public land.

A range of allergy causing trees include spore-producing conifers (such as the native she-oaks and cypress pines), silver birch, olive and privet.

By contrast, the pollen of flowering plants is generally large and sticky. It does not blow very far as it tends to require birds and bees for pollination. Therefore, when people complain that scented flowers cause their allergies, it is usually due to chemical irritation from the volatile oils (perfume) that makes them sneeze rather than the pollen. These plants however will attract bees which may then cause allergic reactions.

### Garden Safety Tips:

- mow the lawn regularly
- avoid spore-producing conifers



## Ants

A range of native ants (such as green, jumper and bull ants) and exotic species (such as fire and electric ants) can cause allergic reactions to many people.

Symptoms of their stings include swelling, itchiness and even pussy sores.

Consult your doctor for treatment.

Also contact the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries immediately if you suspect you have these exotic ants (Call Centre: 13 25 23).

### Garden Safety Tips:

- identify the ant species with help from local state government
- avoid playing and teasing ant nests

### For more information:

[www.allergynet.com.au](http://www.allergynet.com.au)

[www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au)

[www.acaai.org/public/linkpages/Gardening\\_and\\_Allergies.htm](http://www.acaai.org/public/linkpages/Gardening_and_Allergies.htm)

[www2.dpi.qld.gov.au/health/18498.html](http://www2.dpi.qld.gov.au/health/18498.html)

[www2.dpi.qld.gov.au/fireants](http://www2.dpi.qld.gov.au/fireants)

# Final words...



Since the 1980s, the goal of sustainability has become the framework for balancing environmental and human needs, and rightly so – it is a guiding concept which transcends fashion, political cycles and planning horizons, and requires us to use and renew resources for the sake of future generations. The concept of sustainable resource use applies at all levels, from the broadscale South East Queensland region to individual households and gardens, and nowhere is this more evident than our current water crisis. Environmentally responsible landscaping requires effective soil preparation, mulching and delivery of water to the root zone, as well as selection of appropriate plants and avoiding potentially invasive species.

Plant selection is also a key component of sustainable landscapes, taking into consideration the long term dynamics of growth and change, the size and shape of trees which may last 100 years or more, and the variability of our climate over decades of El Nino cycles. The current imperative to select drought-resistant plants needs to be tempered by the likelihood that the long drought will be followed by periods of above-‘average’ rainfall. The plants which deal best with this variability tend to be those which have evolved in ‘dry rainforest’ environments, and Queensland is fortunate to have an excellent range of native species with these characteristics, for example lacebark (*Brachychiton discolor*) and tuckeroo (*Cupaniopsis anacardioides*).

However even ‘tough’ plants can be sensitive if grown in gardens with luxury inputs of water and fertiliser, or can succumb to pests and diseases when grown in avenues or massed displays of single cultivars. We need to incorporate a wide range of plant species and structural layers, both for biodiversity and for long-term robustness. Sustainable parks and gardens require a diversity of plant material, all carefully selected to perform well in local conditions.

Alan Chenoweth  
BAgrSc, GDLA, FAILA, FPLA, MAIH, MPIA, MEIANZ, MASLA  
Registered Landscape Architect, Certified Environmental Practitioner  
Director Chenoweth Environmental Planning & Landscape Architecture P/L



## YOUR FINAL SAY...?

Our team is keen to hear your comments.

Yes – we are human too, so if you find any errors such as plant botanical names being incorrect, we really would appreciate being told. Besides, in this industry we are all constantly learning.

Contact details: [info@stgmagazine.com.au](mailto:info@stgmagazine.com.au)

**subTropical Gardening**  
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NB: Please photocopy this page if you wish to submit your comments.

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