

# STC *subTropical* Gardening

RRP \$8.95 inc GST  
ISSUE 19  
QUARTERLY



**Cherry tomatoes**

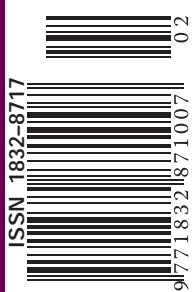
**Warm climate bulbs**

**Orchids as  
cut flowers**

**Tropical shrubs  
in Sydney**

**Organics, compost  
& bushfood**

**local advice for  
local gardeners**



**GARDENS**  
– resilient plants



**FEATURE**  
– camellias



**FRUIT & VEG**  
– for small gardens



**CALENDAR**  
– May / June / July

# WELCOME

Chill is in the air as we approach 'winter' and during these coming months we rev up the vegetable patch with edibles, hurry about doing last-minute propagation and enjoy some of the tropical plants that come into bloom as cooler weather arrives. It is a great time of the year to be in the garden... doing the obvious.

We were flooded with compliments for our *Justicia* feature so we have more for you in this issue. **Joan Dillon** discovers resilient plants for our climate, **Claire Bickle** tackles the popular camellia and **Noel Burdette** introduces the use of colour in the garden. The ever popular Garden Calendar just gets more informative with each issue, along with the vegetable, fruit, bushfood, fowl and wildlife articles.

Please do not forget to check out the online electronic version of our last issue (Issue 18). Join our e-newsletter group and gain access to the e-book. Go to [www.stgmagazine.com.au](http://www.stgmagazine.com.au)

Our 5<sup>th</sup> Year celebration of *subTropical Gardening* arrives with Issue 20. This will be a special issue to look out for.

*subTropical Gardening* – a lifetime of local advice.  
Happy reading!



Paul Plant – Editor

For more updated news about the magazine and what's happening, go to the Editor's Blog page...  
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MAY 2010

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Published by Subtropicalia Media Pty Ltd

Member of Publishers Australia (PA)

Proudly printed by Fergies, Brisbane.  
Australia. Tel: +61 (0) 7 3630 6500

Overseas Distribution Enquiries:  
[www.pansingimm.com](http://www.pansingimm.com)

### COVER

Cherry Tomatoes  
(*Lycopersicon esculentum*  
var. *cerasiforme* syn.  
*Solanum lycopersicum*  
var. *cerasiforme*)  
© Paul Plant



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ISSN 1832 – 8717

Issue 19, May 2010  
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# CAMELLIAS IN THE SUBTROPICS

01

In full bloom camellias are treasured around the world for their stunning beauty and hardiness. Brisbane horticulturist **Claire Bickle** guides us on how to best grow these plants in warm climates. Images by **Claire Bickle [CB]** and **Hugh Kunze [HK]**.

**T**he Camellia is by no means the first shrub that comes to mind when thinking about trees and shrubs that grow well in the humid subtropical regions of the world but none the less these breathtaking flowering plants do have a place in gardens in these climatic zones. Given the right soil preparation, location and care they can be grown successfully, rewarding their owners with some of the most stunning flowers that the floral world has to offer.

When embarking on the journey to grow camellias in warmer climates, type, species and cultivar must be considered. Not all varieties perform well so careful selection will ensure that there is less likelihood of disappointment.

Camellias flower throughout autumn and winter and this is when plants are most readily available to purchase. This is the time to visit gardens with camellias and attend local camellia shows to see the wonderful range to choose from and talk to local growers and experts on what are the best choices to make.

#### Botanical name

*Camellia* spp.

#### Family

Theaceae

#### Place of origin

China, Taiwan, Vietnam, Japan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Laos, Cambodia, Korea, Bhutan, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines.



A close-up photograph of several pink flowers, likely lilies, in a garden. The flowers are in various stages of bloom, with some fully open and others as buds. The background is a dense, out-of-focus green foliage, creating a bokeh effect. The lighting is bright, suggesting a sunny day.

# Warm Climate Bulbs hardy, reliable and easy

Gardening in the tropics, subtropics and warm temperate climates is synonymous with lush foliage, stunning flowers and glorious plant diversity. Yet with all these options, many gardeners are keen to grow plants that remind them of seasonal changes or of cooler climates. Horticulturist **Paul Plant** takes a look at a range of bulbs and bulbous plants best suited to growing in warm climates.



# Tropical Looking Shrubs in Sydney

Local Sydney gardeners have been growing subtropical and tropical plants in gardens since the early to mid 1800s. They are that much a part of the garden culture here [Sydney] that they are just thought of as being a plant that will grow here, with their origins forgotten as they became a basic part of the local garden centres' stock ranges.

Plants such as Gardenia (*Gardenia jasminoides* 'Florida'), Murraya or Mock Orange (*Murraya paniculata*) are a basic part of our local garden centres' range and during the warmer months the range changes to include Crepe Myrtle (*Lagerstroemia indica*), Oleander (*Nerium oleander*), Bougainvillea (*Bougainvillea* cultivars), Frangipani (*Plumeria rubra* cultivars), Ixora (*Ixora chinensis*, *I. coccinea* and

cultivars) and Pentas (*Pentas lanceolata* and *P. bussei* cultivars). New cultivars of these plants have appeared in ensuing years as the result of selections of spontaneous sports or mutations, new collections from the wild and breeding.

Many of these plants have been in and out of fashion since those early days.

The popular Ixora cultivars come from South East Asia and include 'Gold Fire', 'Coral Fire' and 'Pink Malay'. These all grow between 75cm and 1.2 metres

in height and grow successfully throughout coastal central New South Wales and northwards, flowering year after year. Ixora 'Exotica' with its larger orange flowers that turn reddish in colour as the flower ages and Ixora 'Prince of Orange', are both taller growers and are proving to be very reliable in gardens along the coast and out to Sydney's west.

Pentas (*Pentas lanceolata* and *P. bussei* cultivars), which is sometimes called Egyptian Stars, is a little known tropical shrub that it is usually planted

# SUBTROPICALIA COLLECTOR

## ORCHIDS



### Botanical

*Neobenthamia gracilis*

### Common

Neobenthamia Orchid

### Family

Orchidaceae

Heralding from Tanzania, this orchid grows naturally as a terrestrial or lithophyte on cliffs and rocky slopes.

Each terminal pseudostem is crowned with a dense cluster of small 2cm wide flowers, up to 40 per head.

Each flower has a pink speckled lip tinted with a yellow central stripe. Flowering can occur sporadically over the warmer months of the year.

Growing as a grass-like plant up to 1.5m tall with thin stalks and lineal 20cm long leaves, it is often overlooked when not in flower. The clumping habit produces a mound-like effect and hence benefits when given room to spread. This plant can also be staked to produce a more upright specimen, similar to that of Crucifix Orchids (*Epidendrum* cultivars).

Although considered a touchy plant by gardeners in cold climates, this orchid is well suited to planting in the landscape in warm climates and is remarkably adapted to the garden once established.

Propagate this plant by removing the keikis (small plantlets produced on the side of the cane) after flowering as it is uncommon in garden centres. To source this plant, visit specialist orchid nurseries or orchid societies.

### BEST GROWING CONDITIONS

- a humid climate is needed
- prefers a well composted mulched media to grow in
- filtered part sun to full sun
- keep moist in warmer months, drier in winter
- avoid frosts and salt winds.

### LANDSCAPE USE

- Filler plant in a garden bed.
- Orchid collection.
- Potted specimen on balcony or courtyard.