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ISSUE 29 – QUARTERLY

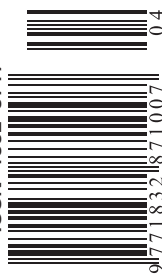
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SCENTED PLANTS

**local advice for
local gardeners**

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– flowering plants



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LETTERS



Pumpkins. Can I grow Qld Blue Pumpkins in the tropics during summer – the wet season?
Joe – Lake Placid, QLD

Ed: Hi Joe, yes you can grow pumpkins in north Queensland but they are not recommended during the humid wet summer. Seeds can be sown as late as October but then humidity of Dec-Jan-Feb-March will cause too many fungal problems for maturing plants and fruit.

However, seeds can be sown in Feb-March as the plants will grow into the 'cooler' autumn period.

WINNER – for your letter you have won a copy of 'Weed Forager's Handbook' by Adam Grubb & Annie Raser-Rowland.



Pool side. I live in Townsville. The garden soil is clay just 10cms beneath topsoil. I have raised gardens for vegies but the pool area needs some visual uplifting. I want some shrubs that will live in our clay soil. I can't raise the gardens because of paths, pool and fences so suitable plants seems the best answer. Have you any suggestions. The garden is a narrow 90cm wide.
Jean – Townsville, QLD

Ed: The difficulty with the clay soil is first to improve it with organic matter and check the pH so that it is somewhere near 6-7 pH. Shrubs will need TLC in first few years especially during the dry season of Townsville. Some of the popular pool side plants include colourful crotons, ixoras, cordylines, justicias, graptophyllums and dwarf umbrellas. You can also consider underplanting of philodendrons, bromeliads and roeas which tolerate shallow soils provided it is well mulched.

Cycads & Palms. Well at last we have a gardening magazine for Queensland, both tropical and subtropical. A friend introduced me to your magazine a while ago and now I can't wait for the next publication. Most of these types of publications and radio and TV programs give the impression that Australia stops in the northern areas of New South Wales. So much of the literature was not applicable to Queensland, especially for those of us who live in the tropics and more so for the gardeners in the likes of Cairns and Darwin. Your journal provides information for all of us in this part of the state; something we did not have before and you have had the good sense to have your articles written by experienced gardeners, horticulturists,

landscapers, etc. from the [QLD-NSW] border to Cairns.

As a collector of tropical plants, palms and cycads I have now been able to find the botanic names of many plants which before I called by common names or by the synonym from the nurseryman's plant tag. It is pleasing to see that each edition has an article on palms. Today there is a growing interest in cycads and a page on these could be beneficial to the readers and the magazine. Most gardeners probably do not realise the diverse forms and size that is available in the cycads from Australia and around the world.
Keith – Mackay, QLD

Ed: Thank you Keith for your comments. Make sure your check out the feature on native cycads on p. 26.

Roo Poo. Hello. I am trying to find out what the NPK value of roo poo is. I have been collecting it in my backyard for about a year and making roo poo brew to feed my plants. They love it. I can't find any info on the web about it. Do you have any info regarding using it as fertiliser?
Lyn – Doonan, QLD

Ed: Just like all other herbivores, kangaroo poo is ideal for garden plants. The problem is their poo pellets are relatively small compared to cattle and sheep and take longer to collect.

Unfortunately, I cannot find a reference that details NPK ratios of native animals.

If you're ever interested in identifying what the native animal poos look like, check out www.abc.net.au/science/articles/2007/09/26/2044094.htm

Alocasias. Firstly, simply the best magazine especially for us who live in the tropics. I have searched and searched but have had no luck in finding *Alocasia chaili* or any other of the jewel alocasias. Anybody out there who can help? I do not buy online or do eBay.
Katy – Cairns, QLD

Ed: Many of the more unusual plants for the tropics and subtropics can only be sourced from collectors who are normally part of specialised garden clubs or your local garden club. Please check out the listing on p. 95 for all clubs.

Maidenhair ferns

Images Don Heaton |DH| and Paul Plant |PPI|

Maidenhair Ferns hold a special place in many gardeners' hearts. They are some of the most popular ferns grown in bush houses and shaded areas of the garden. To some, they are the simplest of plants to grow, to others they are a challenge.

As a continuation to last issue's feature on ferns, this issue focuses on Maidenhair Ferns for all to enjoy and grow. There are about 200 species of *Adiantum* and many of the best can be easily sourced from your local garden centre. **STG**

More Information

www.anbg.gov.au/fern
www.anpsa.org.au/APOL9/mar98-4.html



Adiantum atroviride
(syn. *Adiantum aethiopicum*) DH



Adiantum caudatum
PP



Adiantum formosum
DH

WATER PLANTS

Following on from issue 28 we look at some additional garden plants to add to the edges of ponds in boggy areas, or grown in pots semi-immersed within the pond.

Images Margaret Vitta and Paul Plant.

River Lily

With striking scarlet iris-like flowers, *Hesperantha coccinea* (syn. *Schizostylis coccinea*) from South Africa and Zimbabwe is a favourite for cottage gardeners. For the discerning designer, other cultivars are available in pink or white. This plant is also known as Cape Lily and Crimson Flag.

Grown from a corm, it produces stiff upright narrow leaves. Flowers appear from summer through to winter. In colder climates, leaves die down during winter.

Grow this plant in a damp part of the garden or in a very moist potting mixture. It grows well on the edges of ponds.



Small River Buttercup

Dainty lace-like divided leaves are crowned with buttercup yellow flowers on *Ranunculus amphitrichus* (syn. *Ranunculus rivularis*). This small native is attractive both for its fine textural leaves and for the quaint small flowers produced during summer.

It does best in shallow soil and marginal areas, but also does well in pots that are kept moist.

This plant is underutilised locally given that it is native to Australia and New Zealand.

Common Australian Buttercup

Native to Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia, *Ranunculus lappaceus* is a low growing herbaceous perennial that grows well in damp moist positions and adapts well to garden beds. It can handle both shade and full sun provided ample moisture is available.

The leaves are dark green and generally deeply lobed. They provide an ideal backdrop to the vibrant yellow flowers which appear in spring and summer.



CUCUMBERS

Cucumis sativus

By Claire Bickle

01

Most people can name or recognise only a few of the cultivars of this versatile vegetable such as 'Telegraph' ('Long Green'), 'Lebanese' or 'White'. It's quite amazing that there are many hundreds more to chose from when embarking on the Cucumber growing journey. Seed Savers Exchange in the USA lists some 250 cultivars alone.

The easiest and simplest way to start growing the popular and some of the more unusual cultivars is by seed.

The Cucumber, which comes in a myriad of shades of green, can also be found with white and yellow skin. Some cultivars are often covered in hairs or small spines – these can be easily rubbed off if a smooth appearance is desired.

The Cucumber plant is thought to have originated in Northern India and is believed to have been in cultivation in that region for approximately 3000 years. The humble Cucumber is now widely cultivated throughout the world.

Culture

The Cucumber is classed as an annual climbing vegetable vine. It belongs in the family Curcubitaceae. It is a fast growing and easy to grow warm season crop in subtropical zones. In the tropics, grow this vine during the dry season or grow selected tropical cultivars during 'the wet'.

Usually grown as a sprawling vine, the Cucumber with its tendrils will also happily grow up a trellis or tee-pee. This is the recommended method to grow the

Cucumber as the fruit can be spoilt if left lying on the soil. It also helps to maintain good airflow around the vine, which will in turn prevent any fungal problems developing. Train your Cucumber vines by pinching out the apical bud and encouraging more side shoots.

Full sun, good drainage, a soil pH of 6 to 7.5 and compost-enriched soil are essential for maximum cucumber production. Cucumbers also require consistent watering. >

- 01 | Lebanese and Continental cucumbers are favoured for salads around the world.
- 02 | Cucumber vine with flower and fruit. PP
- 03 | Heirloom cucumber seedlings starting to emerge.