

Winter Issue 13

May 2022

GARDENS

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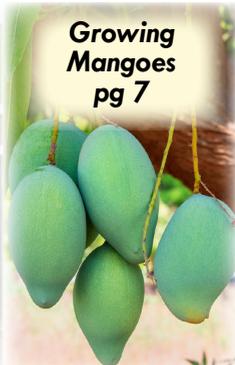
Cover: Kalanchoe flowers (Pixabay)

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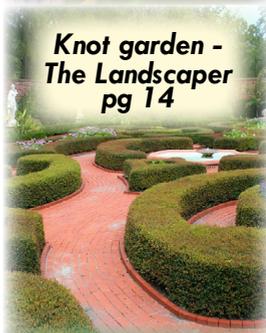
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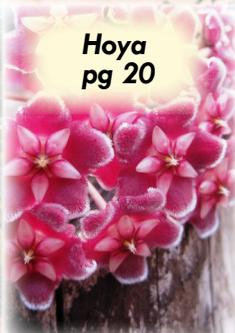
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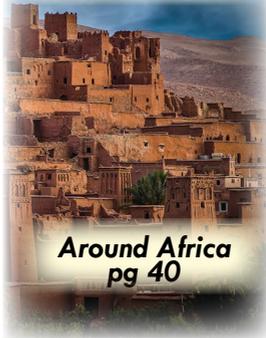
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***Otoptera burchellii* in Magagarape by S.C**

Editorial

When I wake up to a cool morning with winter just around the corner, I get an almost giddy feeling of happiness. I simply love winter in Botswana. Our gardens look better than ever after the rainy season, and without the blistering heat all the plants appear to be as happy as I feel.

It can be quite a rigorous activity making sure all your plants get enough water, and as soon as the temperatures cool down, it begins to feel like a holiday in the garden. In my garden I have a drip irrigation waste water system that feeds most of the trees and fruit trees, and a very simple Gardenia irrigation system for the rest of the garden, that I bought as a kit. If you haven't got one set up, it really is worth the investment, and saves on water and time.

Plants only really start to drop their leaves towards the end of July, so for a few more glorious months we have vibrant gardens with undemanding plants. Don't forget to check the weather and tend to those frost-tender plants in the garden, either by bringing them in or protecting them with frost cloth. May you all have a very happy winter in the garden.

S.C

Publisher: SC Gardens

Printer: Digital

Managing Editor: S.Coleman

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Subscriptions: Email gardensbotswana@gmail.com to be added to the mailing list

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All photographic contributions by S.C. unless attributed to other sources or contributors.

The views of the authors do not necessarily reflect those of the publishers.

What's on markets & events

Saturday 7th May – Farmer's Market at the Rugby Club, 10am to 3pm

Saturday 4th June – Farmer's Market at the Rugby Club, 10am to 3pm

Saturday 25th June – Winter Open Farm Event in Notwane, 10am to 4pm

Saturday 2nd July – Farmer's Market at the Rugby Club, 10 am to 3pm

Land Events: Art Exhibition on 16th May @ the Land - contact Nancy (pg 50)

Zoom Meetings: Winter colour 22nd May - 75435290

Francistown, & Palapye

Contact: Jenny - j-sm@btccmail.co.bw

Contact: Lynn -

plcfreeman@gmail.com

Win!!

**Gardens Botswana
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of your favourite
flowers**



Sanitas

The Green Diamonds of Botswana

~ feel good flowers

Everyone loves these easy to grow and generously flowering plants! Petunias, Begonias, Pelargoniums, Alyssum, Gazanias and Osteospermum provide colour to the front of borders, or can be grown just as easily in pots.

If there's one thing that makes us feel a little more joyful it is the sight of these colourful flowers in the garden. I have become a huge fan of Begonias, because there



are so many different varieties, with exquisite leaves and flowers, plus they need barely any work on my part, other than the occasional dose of fertilizer to keep them healthy and flowering. When they get a bit straggly, cut them back and give them a feed and they'll reward you with lots of flowers.

All these plants are technically perennials, however in colder regions some are treated as annuals. But if you plant them in pots, you can move them to a warmer place over Winter and won't need to wait for small seedlings to grow and flower in the Spring.

S.C (pics Pixabay)



growing ~ *Mangoes*

Mangifera indica, mango, are believed to have originated from the India-Bangladesh region. It is a large fruit-tree, capable of growing to 30 metres, and can live for over 100 years.

WHY - For the fruit, which can be eaten raw, unripe mangoes can also be used to make pickles and chutneys. Mangoes are beautiful evergreen trees, and the flowers are quite ornamental too.

HOW TO PLANT - Mangoes require well-drained soil in a frost-free site with protection from cold. Position your tree where it will receive full sun. Prepare the site by digging a large hole. Check the drainage by filling the hole with water, then see how fast it drains. Water the trees deeply and allow the top surface of the soil to dry before watering again. Fertilize the tree with a fertilizer high in nitrogen and phosphorous.



BENEFITS - These large evergreen trees provide beautiful canopies, and lots of shade once mature. Mangoes have health benefits like being rich in protective antioxidants; possibly aiding in digestion; along with helping to maintain healthy skin, hair; heart health and eye health. Mango leaves are also used medicinally. Mango leaf extract helps in managing diabetes and obesity.

PROPAGATE - The easiest way of propagating mangoes is by seed. Split open the seed and plant in a good seed starter mix.

WHERE - Mangoes are usually available throughout the country. Sanitas, and other nurseries have grafted varieties that will not take so long to fruit. *S.C (pics Pixabay)*



Julia's veggies ~ Radishes & Turnips

For the second year running we have been blessed with amazing rainfall, especially during the last two months. This has surely resulted in a general improvement in soil life and thus the fertility of the soil. We also seem to have less pests to contend with - maybe due to an increase in beneficial predator insects, such as the golden orb spider. Autumn and winter is the time to plant vegetables from the brassica family and we covered several of them in previous editions. But did you know that both radishes and turnips are from the same family?

by Julia Farmer



Pics of Radishes above; Pics of Turnips opposite page (Pixabay)

Vegetables of the Season – Radish and Turnip

These two root vegetables grow faster than other root vegetables and most other brassica. Radishes (*Raphanus sativus*) are particularly quick to grow (as little as three weeks) and their seeds can be planted either in autumn or spring so that they mature before the heat sets in. Turnips, however, are better planted in autumn/winter only. There are many different varieties of radish, with one of the most unusual being the watermelon radish, which is an heirloom variety. The most commonly known turnip is the purple-top white globe turnip.

Companion plants: Radish grow well with other brassica such as broccoli, cabbages, cauliflower and kale; lettuce, spinach, green beans, carrots, cucumbers, parsnips, peas and beetroot. While turnips grow particularly well with peas, lettuce, rocket and all members of the onion family.

When to grow: April to August

How to grow: Radishes and turnips like a rich, firm soil without any stones. Dig in plenty of compost when preparing the bed. The seeds for both are very small and germinate quickly. If there are too many plants they can be thinned out at two weeks and added to salads or used as a garnish. With radish it makes sense to plant a few each week so that you always have fresh ones. Make sure radish and turnips do not dry out during the growing season as otherwise they will become tough and woody. Mulching with leaves will help to prevent this as well as regular watering. When to harvest: Small turnips have a delicate sweet taste and are delicious sliced into salads. You can also harvest turnip leaves when still young and as it grows, leaving a few leaves on the plant.

Healthy Growing. Healthy Eating



Radishes take three to four weeks before they are ready to harvest while turnips take about two months.

How to harvest: Pull up radishes as you need them and trim off the leaves. When turnips are the size of a tennis ball they should be pulled out. If they grow larger they tend to taste woody. To store turnips, cut off the leaves and keep them in a cool, dry place.

Why eat: Both radish and turnips are loaded with fibre and rich in calcium, iron, phosphorous, magnesium, potassium, beta carotene, vitamins C and B, including folic acid. Margaret Roberts says that radish can also help to dissolve phlegm, open a blocked nose and clear sinuses as well as ease sore throats and a runny nose. If eaten with carbohydrates, such as bread and potatoes, they will aid their digestion.

How to eat: Raw radishes are often sliced and added to salads but they also make a tasty sandwich filling with a little mayonnaise or cream cheese and seasoning. Turnips are a great addition to winter soups and stews. They are delicious if roasted along with potatoes around a chicken or beef joint. I also like to boil them mixed with potatoes and make them into a tasty mash. There is no need to peel turnips, just remove the roots and slice or chop. Young turnips and radishes can be cooked with the leaves by steaming or using in a stir fry or smothered in a rich cheesy sauce.

Winter Organic Gardening Tips

- Radish are a useful companion plant as beetles are attracted to their leaves and then they leave the foliage of other plants alone. Thus if planted at the same time as other slower-growing root vegetables, such as beetroots and carrots, those plants are not attacked. The beetle nibbled radish leaves does not seem to affect the development of the radish root and when removed the radishes leave space for other root vegetables to grow. A win-win combination!
- If radish plants are left to go to seed, the pretty pink or lilac flowers attract bees and other beneficial insects. These flowers are also edible and can be used to garnish salads and dips. Once these turn into seedpods you can keep the biggest ones for your next planting.



- Radishes are also a good gauge as to your soil moisture and nutrient content. If they only produce thin roots it means the soil is not rich enough or they are not receiving enough sun or water.
- Turnip peelings and roots can be used as an insect spray – cover with boiling water, allow to cool then strain and add a little soap powder. This spray can be used on red spider mite and flies.
- Turnips can suffer from a disease called ‘clubroot’. To avoid infection practise crop rotation.

Winter Events:

Saturday 23rd April - Organic Horticulture Masterclass at Greenhouse Technologies – Part 1

Saturday 7th May - Farmer’s Market at the Rugby Club, 10am to 3pm

Saturdays 14th & 28th May - Introduction to Organic Gardening/Farming Workshops at Kingfisher Farm (to be confirmed)

Saturday 21st May - Organic Horticulture Masterclass at Greenhouse Technologies – Part 2, including optional visit to Kingfisher Farm

Saturday 4th June - Farmer’s Market at the Rugby Club, 10am to 3pm

Saturdays 11th & 18th June - Introduction to Organic Gardening/Farming Workshops at Kingfisher Farm (to be confirmed)

Saturday 25th June - Winter Open Farm Event in Notwane, 10am to 4pm

Saturday 2nd July - Farmer’s Market at the Rugby Club, 10 am to 3pm

Saturdays 9th & 16th July - Advanced Organic Gardening/Farming Workshops at Kingfisher Farm (to be confirmed)

To Contact Julia Farmer:

Email: jellyfishfarmer@yahoo.com for more details or to receive our weekly newsletter.

Also visit my Facebook Pages for more information – Kingfisher Farm, Farmer’s Natural Produce, Farmer’s Markets, Grow and Cook with Julia.



GREEN HOUSE
FARMERS ACADEMY

ORGANIC FARMING

Topics:

- The magic world of seeds
- How to plant seeds
- Caring for seedlings
- The importance of mulch
- Companion planting
- Crop rotation
- Pest and disease control
- Weed control

8:30AM - 3:30PM

21st May

P400.00

By: Julia Farmer



☎ 3910485 / 71600343
✉ admin@greenhousetech.co.bw

📍 Plot 32902, Glen Valley
Gaborone, Botswana

herb guru ~ *pineapple sage*

Pineapple sage, *Salvia elegans*

Description - Pineapple sage is a shrubby perennial native to Mexico and Guatemala. It has bright green leaves that smell like fresh pineapple when crushed. It produces attractive vibrant red flowers in summer that sunbirds and butterflies love. Pineapple sage is sensitive to frost. It needs full sun, well-drained soil and is a good container plant.

Medicinal - Pineapple sage is rich in antioxidants, and commonly used to relieve stress and anxiety. Pineapple sage is also used for high blood pressure and heart-burn.

Edible - Pineapple sage leaves and flowers are edible and can be steeped in hot water to make a herbal tea, chopped and added to salads or as a garnish. It can also be made into potpourri, jams and jellies.

S.C text & pic



forager's tips

edible plants - *Hermbstaedtia odorata*



Hermbstaedtia odorata, cat's tail, Mokgwara, is an erect bushy perennial herb, growing from a tuber. In Botswana the plants are used medicinally to treat depressed fontanelle in babies and gonorrhoea in adults (ref.). It is part of the Amaranth family, and seeds are high in protein. The roots are eaten like a vegetable, or chewed like sweet reed, and can also be boiled to drink.. (<http://keyserver.lucidcentral.org/key-server/data/04030b04-0102-4b0c-8e07-0e0105010a0f/media/Html/Amaranthaceae.htm>)

medicinal plants - *Datura stramonium*



Datura stramonium, Datura, has already featured as a poisonous plant in a previous issue, as it contains the plant alkaloid Atropine. It is quite interesting in that Atropine is a deadly poison used to treat or counteract poisoning - specifically organophosphate poisoning. It is used to treat bradycardia (low heart rate), reduce salivation and bronchial secretions before surgery, and as an antidote for overdose of cholinergic drugs or mushroom poisoning. Belladonna, deadly nightshade, *Atropa belladonna* is another famous plant containing Atropine.

poisonous plants - *Digitalis purpurea*



Digitalis purpurea, Foxglove, is a poisonous plant found throughout most of temperate Europe. There are many cultivars that make popular garden plants, and it is the original source of the heart medicine digoxin (also called digitalis or digitalin). The leaves, flowers and seeds of this biennial plant are all poisonous to humans and some animals and can be fatal if ingested. A really scary but informative book by Ray Bradbury 'A Taste for Poison' talks about the deadly effects of this plant. So do be cautious if growing it in your garden.

invasive plants - *Achyranthes aspera*



Achyranthes aspera, Chaff-flower, is a perennial, erect herb, of unknown origin, that is a common weed and can be invasive. The Maasai people of Kenya use the plant medicinally to ease the symptoms of malaria. The flowering spikes, rubbed with a little sugar, are made into pills, and given internally to people bitten by mad dogs. The leaves are applied externally to the bites of scorpions. It is used in Ayurveda, and has many uses, but it does invade the space of other indigenous species, and needs to be removed manually.

the Landscaper ~ *a knot garden*

Knot gardens were first established in England in the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, and are the diva designs of the garden world. Sophisticated, high maintenance and jaw-dropping. Noted for their extraordinary intricacy, these gardens are constructed to resemble Celtic or geometrical knots. Designs may include raised or low beds that intersect to form the prescribed pattern, and can include decorative stone, gravel or paved areas.

They work incredibly well in small garden spaces, and were traditionally made up of different culinary herbs and aromatic plants, but now commonly include hedges like a parterre. So, if you're looking to create a complicated but beautiful herb garden, then this could be for you. Exacting symmetry is essential. You can fold these gardens on either axis with them lining up perfectly.

S.C (pics Pixabay)





laurus spp.



buxus spp.



thuja spp.



lavandula spp.



geranium spp.

*top 7
plants
for a
knot garden*



rosmarinus spp.



artemisia spp.



Tall borders in the garden

I love depth and mystery in the garden. One that's filled with different colours and textures, nooks and hidden areas. In Botswana, gardens are quite often flat with hardly any different levels, and they need tall borders to create that interest.

Tall annuals, perennials or grasses not only add depth and shape to a garden, when included among plants of other heights, they can camouflage things you might want to hide too, like an ugly wall or fence. Shrubs can be predominantly green, and so adding in colourful borders around them can really elevate your garden into something spectacular.

When choosing different plants for your garden, try to select a variety based on flowering time, so there is always something colourful from spring through to winter. Plan your composition, planting in varied drifts to add intrigue. Know your plants, and the eventual height and the spread of your plant, and leave space accordingly, even though it may make the garden look empty at the time.

Plants to consider among the annuals are those that you can find in nurseries or grow from seed like, Amaranthus, Zinnia, Phlox, Cosmos, California Poppy, Cornflowers, Sunflowers and Fennel. Perennials that are easy to grow and are readily available are Cannas, Lion's tail (*Leonurus*), Marigolds, Lavender, Gaura, Mexican bush sage, Dwarf Mexican petunia (*Ruellia brittoniana*), Agapanthus, Spider lily, Kniphofia, Salvias, and Dietes.





Some perennials are difficult to grow in Botswana, but seed packets like those from Starke Ayres or Mayford are sold around the country and occasionally bulbs or plants can be found in garden nurseries. They can sometimes surprise you, like Cleome, Crocosmia, Dahlia, Hollyhocks, Foxgloves, Delphiniums, Gladiolus, Rudbeckia, and Acanthus. It is possible, but conditions here can make growing and maintaining these plants quite hard.

Grasses that will accentuate these tall border gardens and add a bit of texture include Pennisetum, Vetiver, and Imperata grasses. The list of beautiful shrubs to add to your garden is endless, but one that is often overlooked, and is a lovely shrub to add winter colour is *Hypoestes aristata*, which grows very easily here, and is indigenous to South Africa.

by S.C (Pics: Pixabay)





Tall flowers in your
garden help to hide
ugly walls or fences



sc gardens ~ *plant enthusiasts*

Hoya is a genus of approximately 300 tropical and subtropical, evergreen lianas and subshrubs. Native to Asia, Australasia and the Pacific islands, Hoya species are found in rainforest, coastal and cliff habitats, where they may be epiphytic or terrestrial in habit.

They have been popular house plants for decades as they are extremely long-lived, have a classic, deep green, vining foliage and produce fragrant, light pink and red star-shaped flowers. Because of their thick waxy, foliage they are often called wax plants. Give them bright, indirect light, humidity and a light touch when it comes to watering. Don't underestimate how particular they are with light and water. Even though they are drought tolerant and succulents, they need regular misting and a careful watering schedule.

I bought a *Hoya carnososa* from Builders warehouse, and kept it together with my Phalaenopsis orchids, and it began to rot within a couple of weeks. I've moved it into a brighter location among some ferns that also enjoy high humidity and now it seems to have recovered, but I'm nervous about the watering schedule. Coming into winter will be a test of whether it's in the right position or not, so for now I'm crossing my fingers. *by S.C (Pics: Pixabay)*



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dry lovers ~ *Hoya*



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indigenous

Parasitic or half-parasitic, these plants attach themselves to the host by means of a specialised root-like structure known as a haustorium. Although these plants can potentially kill or harm other plants, they are not all bad, and provide ecological benefits too.

Erianthemum dregei - (below right) the flowers and fruit attract birds. The leaves are eaten by the larvae of *Mylothris agathina* (butterfly).

Tapinanthus oleifolius - (top right) the plant is a host to birds since it is one of the few plants that flower in winter. It is eaten by browsers, especially giraffes because it usually grows high up in trees.

Viscum verrucosum - (below left) mostly found on Acacias, this plant is a leafless, densely branched shrub-like plant, that is eaten by browsers, reducing worm infestation.

Striga gesnerioides - (opp page) growing from a tuber-like haustorium, this plant is mostly a root parasite on legumes such as *Indigofera*, *Tephrosia* and *Vigna*. Bee-flies and other insects feed on the pollen but most research has been done on how to eradicate this plant rather than on what other mammals or insects feed on this plant.

pics & text by S.C





Striga gesnerioides

Mokolodi Nurseries - *Mother of thousands*

Native to Madagascar, the Mother of Thousands plant, or *Kalanchoe daigremontiana* is an amazing foliage plant, and flowers in winter. Planted *en masse* the blooms of this plant can look incredible, and they are long-lasting too.

Kalanchoe daigremontiana has small plantlets develop on the tips of leaves, and drop into any nearby soil, which make these plants potentially invasive, but exceptionally easy to propagate. If you plant them into pots you will be rewarded with gorgeous flowers without the headache of weeding the plantlets out. Other *Kalanchoe* species like *K. beharensis*, *K. longiflora*, *K. orgyalis*, *K. tomentosa* and *K. thyrsiflora* are also great choices, and available at Mokolodi nurseries.

Kalanchoe species are succulent and very water-wise, they need plenty of light, but in the hotter months, place the plant in indirect sunlight if the leaves are getting burnt.

by SC (Pic below: Pixabay; Opposite page photographs by Karin Duthie)

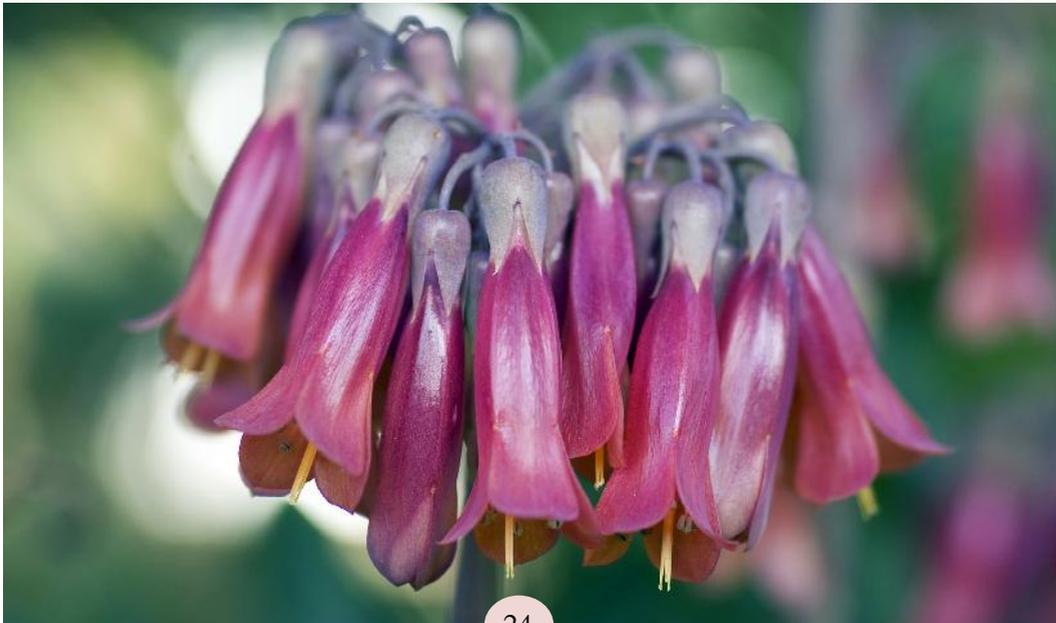
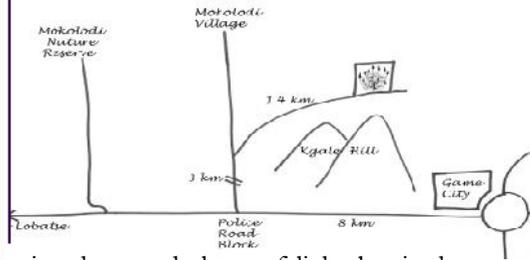


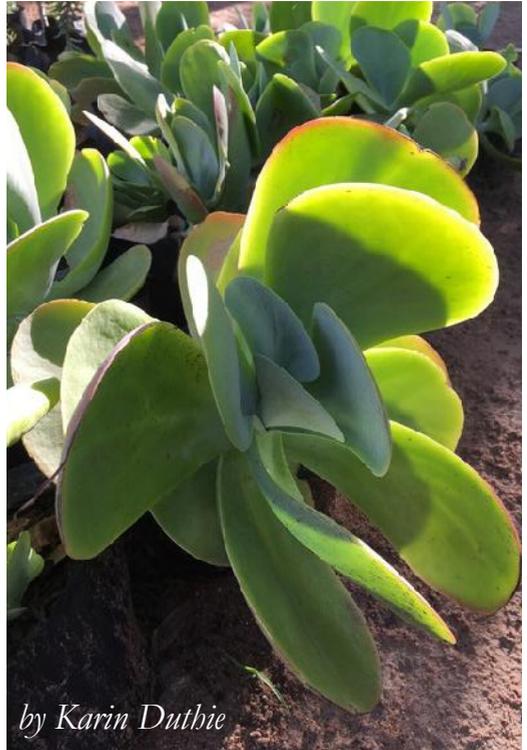
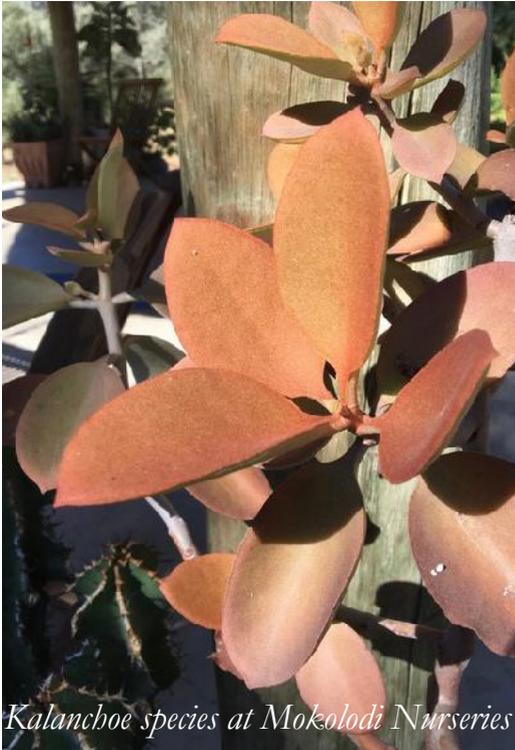
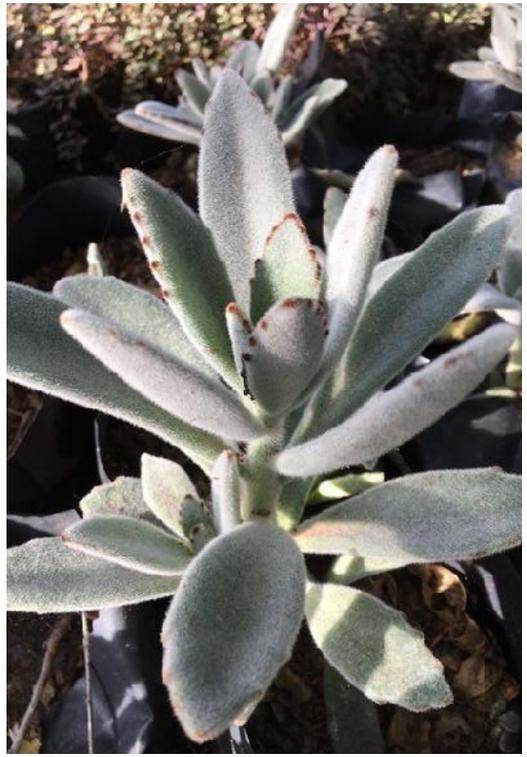
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Kalanchoe species at Mokolodi Nurseries

by Karin Duthie

garden goings~on...



FLOWERING BETWEEN MAY - JULY

- Carnation
- Impatiens
- Zinnia
- Wallflower
- Geranium
- Nasturtium
- Pachypodium
- Ageratum
- Hypoestes
- Cyclamen
- Pansies
- Aloes
- Nemesia
- Kalanchoe
- Vernonia (indigenous)

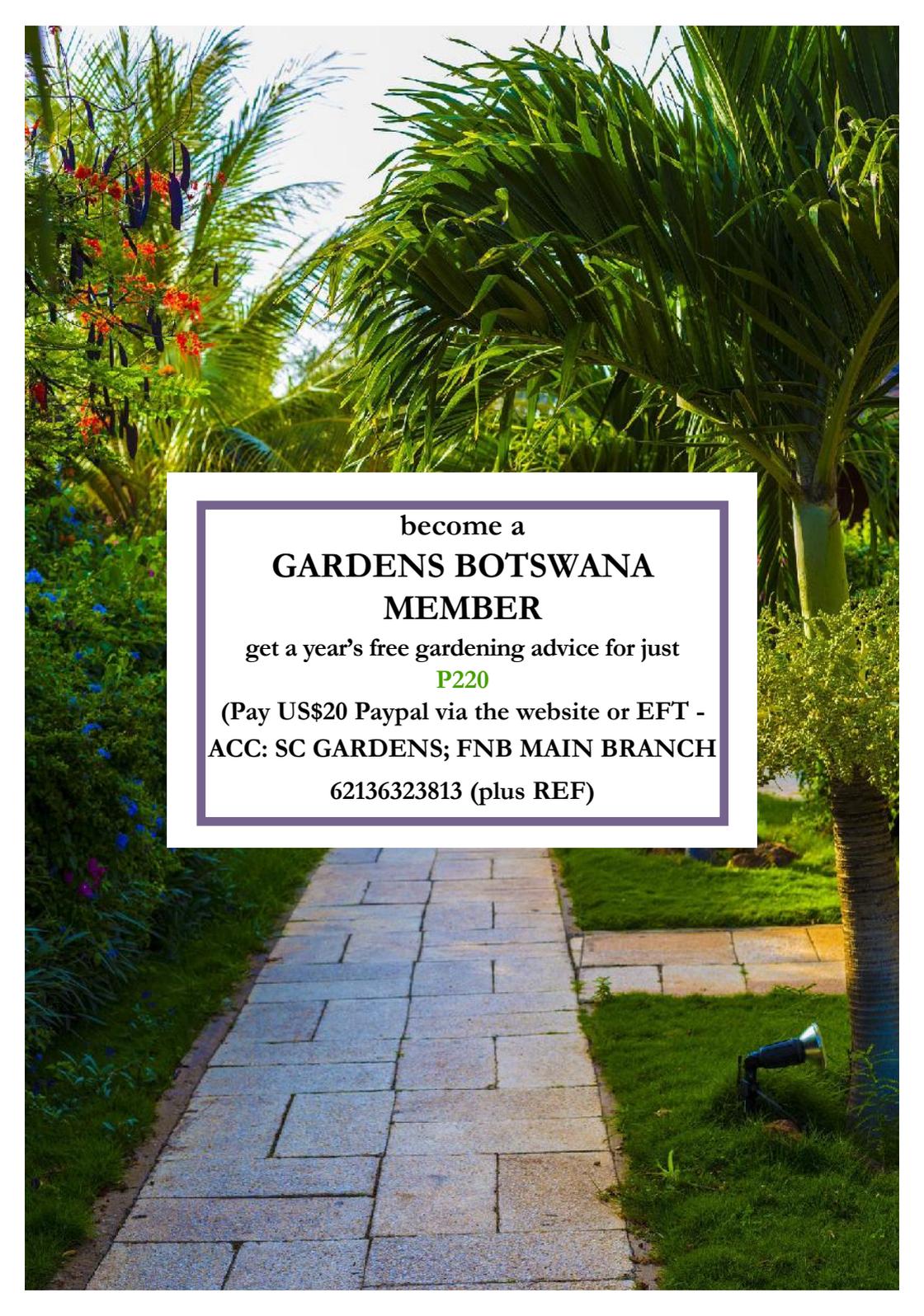
FRUITING BETWEEN MAY - JULY

- Lemon
- Apple
- Avocado
- Kumquat
- Custard Apple
- Kiwi
- Grapefruit

CHORES TO DO

- Remove heavy layers of Autumn leaves and use for mulch
- Check Aloes for signs of snout beetle infestation (black crown)
- Weed - remove any remaining weeds before they set seed
- Sow Spring veg and herbs
- Store bulbs in a cool dry place once leaves have died back
- Harvest Winter fruit & veg
- Relocate plants that might be in the wrong position
- Prune back trees and remove dead branches
- Add some Winter annuals into the garden for colour

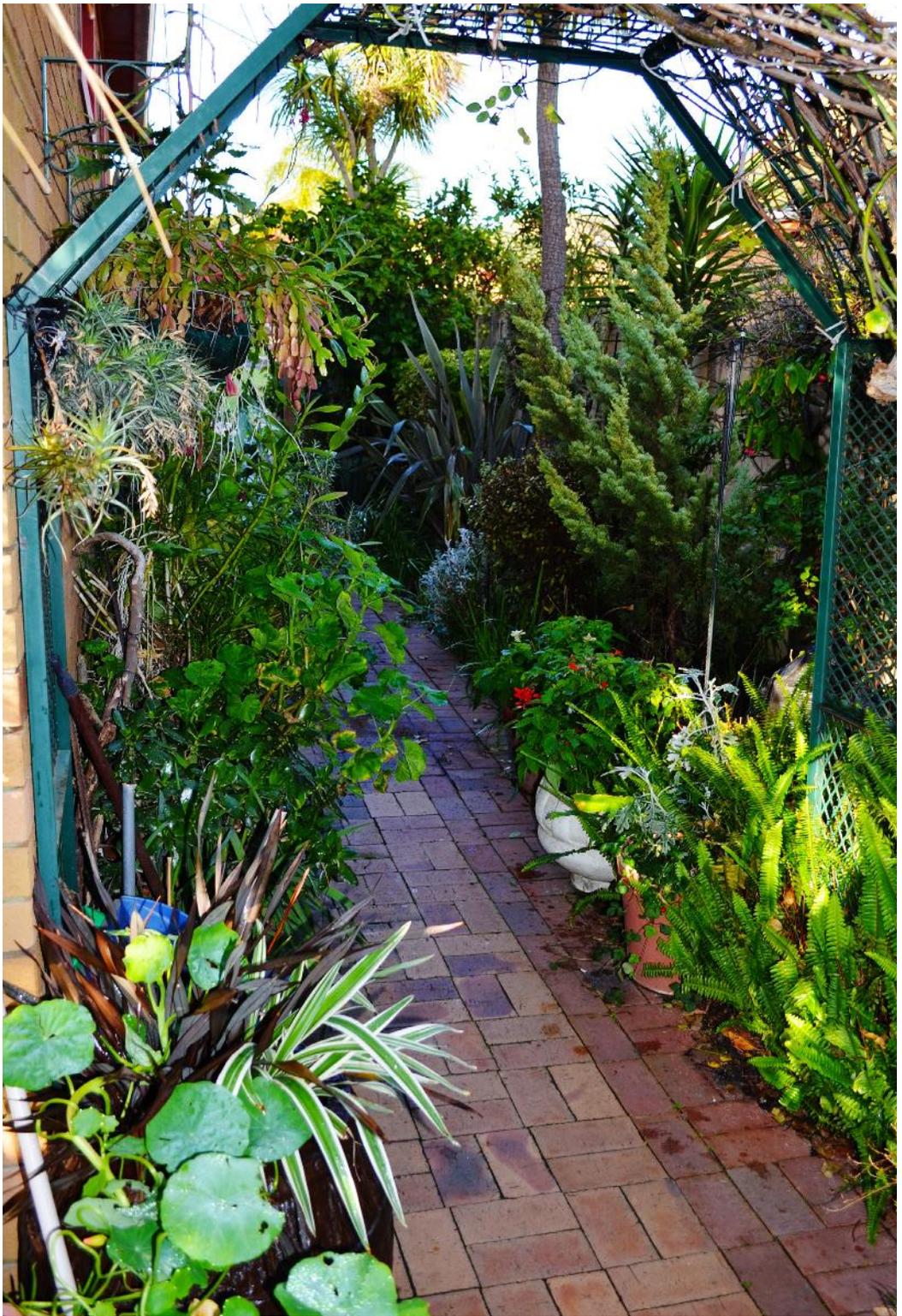
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Mimi's secret garden patch

The aura one feels when presented by a leafy pathway, hung with vines or creepers is unfailingly inviting. The pathway is important - either stepping stones or cobbles, or nature's own little winding trail, framed by arches or pergolas and trellises. Bougainvillea is especially lovely when growing up and over a preferred support, a breathtaking passage of continually repeated colour. Scented jasmines along with climbing roses are very special, depending on one's taste the English old-fashioned rose is truly magical, evoking memories of yesteryear.

Randomly filled pots or baskets add such gorgeous colour to the leafy walkway as in geraniums, petunias and all those plants that thrive in a basket swaying in the breeze. I love walking down my pathway watering the plants, giving them a refreshing break from our hot summer sun. Phormiums are planted alongside conifers, with stately yuccas providing a backdrop. Tillandsias and Schlumbergeras also vie for space along the pathways with dusty silver cinerarias, ferns and begonias. I especially enjoy the 'Wandering Jew' that has the most amazing green and purple leaves, and when it needs more space, true to its name, it continues down the pathway.

Finally I must share with you my sweet potato saga. I have a terrible habit of seeing a recipe and without making a note of the page, I rush out to purchase – in this instance – sweet potatoes, and hope to goodness the shops have them, and they haven't just vanished off the shelves. The recipe wasn't to be found and I gave away all of the sweet potatoes except one ugly long one. I suddenly saw it yesterday in my veggie basket covered in little sprouts sticking out like legs – PLANT ME it said! Well I couldn't resist, and I wish you could see it - long tendrils reaching out, each about the length of your finger. 'He' is now happily in the soil – [well, it couldn't have been a 'she' looking like that?]. The veggie garden fairies have been duly instructed to aid their growth and I look forward to being the proud grower of lots of sweet potatoes!



gardening for birds

Many species cannot tolerate our cold Botswana winters, so they migrate mostly to Europe and Central and North Africa. Sadly, several of these are our most colourful species. The good news is that some brightly coloured birds do remain with us.

The multi-coloured resident stars of the beauty-parade include Lilac-breasted Rollers, Little Bee-eaters, Crimson-breasted Shrikes, African Hoopoes and a host of others not described as “little brown jobs”.

What about Orange-breasted and Grey-headed Bush-Shrikes and Malachite Kingfishers I hear you ask? Indeed, these are all magnificent birds which have to be included. The gist of my discussion is that, although attractive migrants have left us temporarily, there are many beautiful residents to keep us involved in birding during winter. Please don't forget about Violet-eared Waxbills and Green-winged Pytilias which are also candidates for the Winter Beauty Pageant.

by Harold Hester & Photographs by Ian White
(For more information - www.birdlifebotswana.org.bw)



Green-winged Pytilia



Violet-eared Waxbill

our trees

Ochna pulchra, monyelewele, peeling plane

This tree is really eye-catching, the leaves can be incredibly yellowish in summer, and the spring foliage is in shades of fresh light green to bronze or red. In autumn the colour changes to brilliant coppery tints. It is a deciduous tree, and fairly small, up to 5m. The leaves are glossy, and the trunk of the tree is conspicuous for its varied hues of peeling bark. It has a beautiful often symmetrical roundish crown.

The fruits are also attractive, and the flowers are sweetly-scented, making this an excellent ornamental specimen for the garden. Some birds eat the fruit, but the seeds are poisonous. The ripe ones are high in fat content. It is boiled in water and the fat skimmed off the surface. This is then eaten or used as a polish. The fat is also suitable for the production of candles and soap, although the greenish brown oil is unpleasant-smelling. The wood is pale brown or light reddish, soft and grained with a curious papery feel when planed smooth. It is only used for small ornaments and in Namibia arrows are made from the stems. It is an indicator species of so-called Gifveld, that is veld where the toxic *Dichapetalum cymosum* is present, which is small and easily overlooked.

This plant is very difficult to grow. Very fresh seed must be collected and sown immediately in soil collected from the local area. It is also said that seed must be collected just before they turn totally black. Seeds seem to be parasitized often. Seedlings grow best planted out as soon as possible and thereafter they grow quickly. This tree is commonly found along the Molepolole to Letlhakeng highway, look for its yellow leaves in summer.

Text & Pics: by S C (References: Sanbi/Wikipedia)



Ochna pulebra by S.C



Palapye plant feature



Devil's ivy by Lynn Freeman

Devil's Ivy, Pothos ***Epipremnum aureum***

Devil's ivy is a low maintenance perennial evergreen. It is commonly grown as a houseplant, but outside in a fairly sheltered location is also fine. It has beautiful glossy, green or variegated leaves on cascading stems, which also makes it a good candidate for hanging baskets.

Devil's ivy is a very easy to grow, preferring medium light, but not direct sunlight. Mist the leaves to keep humidity levels up and let the potting medium dry out between watering. Fertilize every other month except when the plant is dormant in the winter. Wipe down the leaves every so often with a soft rag to remove any collected dust. Prune stems back to maintain a bushy habit.

Creatures in the garden - *mole rat*



Mole rats like the Damaraland mole rat (above), *Cryptomys damarensis*, are found in sub-Saharan Africa and are rodents that live in underground colonies. Also called blesmols, mole rats are somewhat mole-like animals with cylindrical bodies and short limbs. Mole rats are herbivorous, and primarily eat roots, tubers, and bulbs. They are quite common in Botswana, and don't present much of a nuisance to gardeners, as they tend to prefer quiet areas away from human disturbance. Although the mole rat pictured above did make his way into my garden. However, I didn't notice any bulbs missing or any evidence of plant theft.

Mole rats have greatly reduced eyes and very poor vision, although they may use the surfaces of their eyes for sensing air currents. Studies show that mole rats live to around 30 years, with few incidences of cancer, and certain species can sense magnetic fields. Despite their small or absent pinnae, they have a good sense of hearing, although their most important sense appears to be that of touch. Like other rodents, they have an excellent sense of smell. Mole rats are endothermic, having the ability to generate their own heat. In arid environments they have lower individual body masses; this reduces their need for food and improves energy conservation.

These animals prefer loose, sandy soils and are often associated with arid habitats. They rarely come to the surface, spending their entire life underground. They burrow in search of food, and the great majority of their tunnel complex consists of these foraging burrows, surrounding a smaller number of storage areas, nests, and latrine chambers. The majority of rodents in the colonies are 'workers', with only one female (the 'queen') and one male responsible for breeding. All individuals cooperate by digging large underground tunnel systems to forage for food, and if a large food source is found, it is shared with the entire colony. 'Queens' and reproductive males remain in this role for their entire life after they have achieved this position. Researchers from the Department of Zoology at the University of Cambridge have shown that in Damaraland mole rats, the contributions of individuals to cooperative activities change with age. This phenomenon is best known in colonies of social insects, where certain members of the colony may perform different tasks as they get older.

Burrowing has a negative economic impact in that it damages human property but it is also positive in that it improves soil drainage and turnover. *Text & Pics by S.C (Ref: Wikipedia)*

Agrichemist's solutions

Most soils have pH values between 3.5 and 10. In higher rainfall areas the natural pH of soils typically ranges from 5 to 7, while in drier areas the range is 6.5 to 9. Soils can be classified according to their pH value: 6.5 to 7.5—neutral. Low pH or acidic soils, have a pH of less than 6.5, and high pH or alkaline soils, have a pH of over 7.5.

It helps to know the pH of your soils because certain plants prefer either acidic, neutral or alkaline soils, and soils with very low or very high pH can be toxic.



When the pH is more than 9, the soils are considered highly alkaline and often have toxic amounts of bicarbonate, carbonate, aluminium and iron. Nutrient deficiency is also likely to be a major problem and the high amount of exchangeable sodium in these soils reduces soil physical fertility. There are a few different visual clues that show that your plants are experiencing higher pH: interveinal leaf chlorosis; tip death of new leaves; stunted or wilted leaves; spots of leaf necrosis. Daylilies, Foxglove and Lavender all grow in alkaline soils. (above)

At a low pH of less than 5, many elements become less available to plants, while others such as iron, aluminum and manganese become toxic to plants. These are the most common visual symptoms associated with low pH: stunted growth; dark green leaves tinged with red, bronze or purple; brown spots on leaves; withered, stunted or twisted leaves; leaf tip burn; blossom end rot. Hydrangea, Gardenia and Azaleas are all acidic-loving plants (below).

S.C (pics Pixabay)





Hundertwasser in den Wiesen, Bad Soden, Germany



ECO HUB *Hundertwasser*

All of us need reminding from time to time, of special individuals who have defied the ‘norm’ and brought something beautiful to our world. Friedrich Stowasser (1928 – 2000), pseudonym Friedensreich Regentag Dunkelbunt Hundertwasser, was an Austrian visual artist and architect who also worked in the field of environmental protection.

At the center of his ecological activities were tree planting and greening campaigns, the restoration of natural cycles, the protection of water and the fight for a waste-free society. He criticized the pure functionality of all areas of life, and stood out as an opponent of “a straight line” and any standardization, expressing this concept in the field of building design. The Hundertwasserhaus apartment block in Vienna has undulating floors (“an uneven floor is a melody to the feet”), a roof covered with earth and grass, and large trees growing from inside the rooms, with limbs extending from windows. He took no payment for the design of Hundertwasserhaus, declaring that it was worth the investment to “prevent something ugly from going up in its place”. In 1972 he published the manifesto “If man walks in nature’s midst, then he is nature’s guest and must learn to behave as a well-brought-up guest.”

Hundertwasser propagated a type of architecture in harmony with nature in his ecological commitment, and if you do a website search of his work you will find the most amazing buildings, enveloped in greenery. Hundertwasser used recycled materials from the local community, including glass bottles and bricks from an old building. That humankind can actually embrace the impractical (no straight lines, and uneven flooring) concepts that he envisaged and fought for shows that we are capable of seeing and appreciating beyond what we are taught. Value is not always money, but is always soul.

*by S.C (ref: <https://hundertwasser.com/en>; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friedensreich_Hundertwasser)
(Pics: Pixabay)*



Hundertwasserhaus, Vienna, Austria



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around Africa ~ *Morocco*

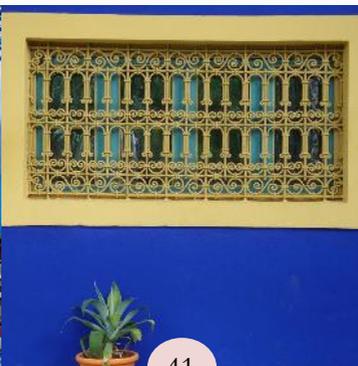


Morocco is filled with dazzling riads, kasbahs and historical medinas. Part of its beauty lies in its architecture, use of colour and design.

I visited Morocco quite a long time ago, but it is one of those places that stays with you as being really special. Oriental design from doors to windows to buildings is so beautiful to the eye, that it hardly needs any adornment in the way of plants. The use of bold colour schemes, geometrical tiles, fountains and simple plantings create stunning gardens.

Jardin Majorelle in Marrakesh, is only one of many beautiful gardens around Morocco. It attracts huge numbers of visitors every year. The French painter Jacques Majorelle conceived of this garden as a sanctuary and botanical 'laboratory', and it is filled with exotic botanical specimens from the far corners of the world.

by S.C (Pics: Pixabay)



Art in the garden ~ *tiles*



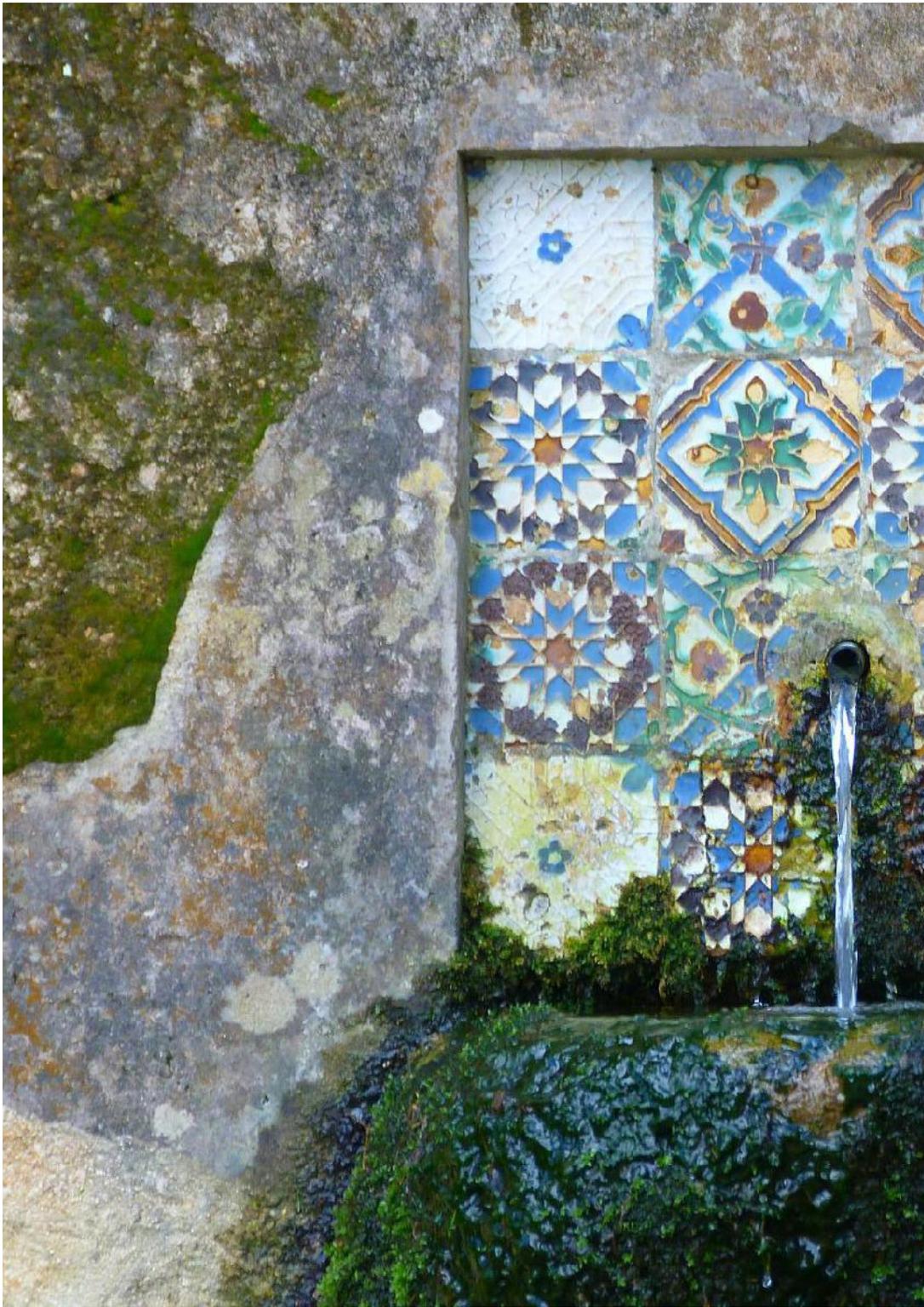
Dry climates, like Botswana's require careful water management, much like the beautiful Middle Eastern and Islamic gardens with similar climatic conditions. These regions provide a rich heritage to draw inspiration from, especially in their use of ornamental tiles in the garden.

Deserts can be dry, brown, windy places with little water, and so creating secluded gardens out of the wind, with beautifully coloured tiles, and fountains that trickle water in the heat of the day, is exactly what one would envision as the ideal getaway. A sanctuary to escape the elements.

Islamic potters created four main tile decoration techniques; lustre decoration, tile mosaic, cuerda-seca, and under-glaze painting and the tiles created with these techniques are some of the most significant and inspirational in the history of tiles, seen from gardens in the south of Spain, to Morocco, Turkey, all the way to Iran and Uzbekistan.

Their beautiful designs can only but compliment the most simple of gardens, and can be just a small touch around a fountain, pathway, or wall. S.C







The Soothmother - *Pavement specials*



I've had the good fortune to visit Hout Bay in South Africa recently, and during this visit I took the time to wander around the green and heavily vegetated neighbourhoods which creates the impression of a huge and varied garden park rather than a residential community.



Graceful Oak, Fig, Wild Olive and Yellowwood trees shelter underlying hedges of Syzygium, Carissa, Kei Apple and *Bauhinia galpinii* bushes interlaced with an abundance of colourful Hibiscus, Cape Honeysuckles, Plumbago and Bougainvillea.

The taller vegetation in general is sculpted by the frequent high winds that the area can experience for days on end. The sea mist and low lying clouds provide regular moisture to ensure that gardening here is a pleasure rather than a chore. The temperature is generally mild and kind to all sorts of plants, from succulents to tropical, allowing for an abundance of flowers and a lack of pests or plant diseases.



The most striking feature to me was the time and trouble the local residents took to beautify their neighbourhood, not just inside their private gardens, but also on the outside in any available space between garden walls and pavements to create a delight of vegetation to the eye.

This sidewalk gardening style ranges from the affluent to the humble, passing through stages of being delightfully flamboyant to simple to positively austere. All manner of plants have been used in a positive jumble that compliment each other and the area.

Yuccas rub shoulders with Fynbos and Gaura drape themselves around Aloes. Lavender and Pelargonium grow freely between Crassula and Aeonium while Strelitzias grace Agaves and Kalanchoes. Euryops decorate Euphorbia and Cacti and in between everything Sedum, Mesembryanthemum and even Petunias brighten the plantings.

Each pavement special becomes a habitat for local wildlife from squirrels, lizards, chameleons and especially birds ... allowing them to hide after providing a tantalizing glimpse of Southern Boubou, Southern Double-collared Sunbirds, Olive Thrushes, Helmeted Guineafowl, Cape Batis and even an unexpected Cape Eagle Owl.

Walking around Hout Bay has taught me how wonderful and charming a neighbourhood can be if everyone just does what they can, big or small, to make it that little bit nicer for themselves and their neighbours to enjoy together, be they human, animal, avian or reptile.

by Petra Strydom-Catterall



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Fun stuff~ mosaic stones & pavers



Mosaic can be as simple as assembling some broken plates, bowls and cups - breaking them up into flattish pieces, and then grouting them to something - a wall, paving, or stone. You can make them into patterns or be as randomly haphazard, yet amazing, as Gaudi was in Park Güell in Barcelona, Spain.

It makes for an easy project, and a worthwhile one too, as it involves recycling or reusing objects that would otherwise be thrown away.

by S.C (Pics: Pixabay)



Nancy's nook - *the meaning of flowers*

Why do we send a bouquet of red roses? What do we intend to say with the choices in our flower arrangement? The options we have in regards to the flowers and plants we offer as gifts can be traced back through time, over lands and into cultures. Depending on the land upon which we are residing, and the culture which we are a part of, different plants and flowers will bestow different meanings.

In the West, white chrysanthemums symbolize loyalty and honesty, yet in China, Korea and Japan, white chrysanthemums symbolize grief. It is a sympathy flower whose message is one of upliftment during a time of loss. However, certain European nations also use the white chrysanthemum for funerals and to decorate gravesites. This is a good reason to look up the meaning of flowers you choose to give as a present in case your bouquet inadvertently means something else, totally different to your intended message!

For a message of love in most of the world, some of the flowers to select are red roses, tulips, carnations, orchids and peonies. Interestingly, the colours of the flowers can also mean slightly different things. Let's take the carnation; lighter red shades are used to convey admiration while darker shades express deeper sentiments of love and affection. White carnations symbolize purity and luck and pink carnations are often given as a sign of gratitude.

For friendships, sunflowers, chrysanthemums, zinnias and violets convey various meanings all related to the many shades of the relationship between friends. The cheery sunflower, representing adoration, longevity and loyalty, is a great way to tell someone you appreciate them and that they are a friend for life. The sunflower also reminds us of delightful summer days and sunny memories together. An interesting plant to tell someone that they are resilient and who do not give up during tough times is a cactus, because cacti are strong and resilient plants. The Native Americans believe that giving a cactus is showing someone that you care about them and represents warmth and protection.

However, there are some flowers we should avoid giving, unless the meaning is something we actually do want to say! So if you want to say someone is childish, give them buttercups; if you want someone to leave you, send them Butterfly Weed, and if you want to reject someone and show them your disdain, then just go ahead and give them some yellow carnations. Hopefully they will get the message!

Of course not all bouquets, flowers or plants are offered with the purpose of giving a message. Sometimes we just want to give the beauty of the mesmerizing colours of nature to someone we care about or are thinking about. A small bouquet of radiant many-hued flowers can simply mean "I thought of you". And what a delight it is to receive such a thoughtful gift.

And that bouquet of red roses? Almost all around the world, they symbolize romance, love, beauty, passion and courage. A beautiful bestowal of a delightfully scented, caring arrangement of one of nature's most sought after flowers.

www.nancysartnook.com

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[Nancy Horenburg - naney@gmail.com](mailto:naney@gmail.com)



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Prep & Cook Time: 1hr 10 mins

For 6 People

Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup butter
- 1 teaspoon bottled minced garlic
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 1 1/2 cups shredded sharp cheddar cheese
- 1 cup milk

- 4 eggs, lightly beaten
- salt & pepper, to taste
- 1 & 1/2 cups chopped spinach, squeezed dry
- 3/4 cup feta cheese with dried basil and tomato/ black pepper crumbled
- 1/2 cup sliced mushrooms, drained
- 1 pie shell, slightly thawed (or puff pastry rolled out into a deep dish)

METHOD

Heat oven to 190°C.

1. In a large skillet, saute onion and garlic in butter, app. 5 minuets or until just soft.
2. Remove from heat.
3. Stir in the half of the cheddar, the feta cheese, mushrooms, and spinach. Mix well. Place into pie crust.
4. In medium bowl, whisk together the eggs, milk, salt, and pepper. Pour over the spinach mixture.
5. Bake 15 minutes. Top with remaining cheddar, continue baking 40 minutes, or until a knife inserted into the centre comes out clean.

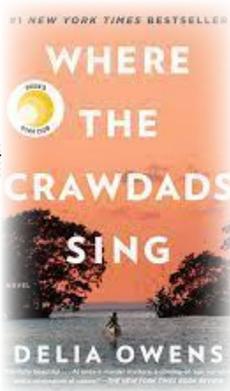
ENJOY!!!



Reviews

Where the Crawdads Sing

by *Delia Owens*



What to get my sister-in-law for her birthday? She particularly enjoys novels, so I ventured into our local book shop and asked for advice. “Get her this,” urged the shopkeeper, “I’ve yet to meet someone who hasn’t loved it!”

I didn’t think about it again until my sister-in-law gave it back to me and said I must read it. I was hooked from the first page. Stories can be such an effective way to connect people to new subjects, and how effectively ‘Where The Crawdads Sing’ by Delia Owens educates.

“Marsh is not a swamp. Marsh is a space of light, where grass grows in water, and water flows into the sky. Slow-moving creeks wander, carrying the orb of the sun with them to the sea, and long-legged birds lift with unexpected grace - as though not built to fly - against the roar of a thousand snow geese.”

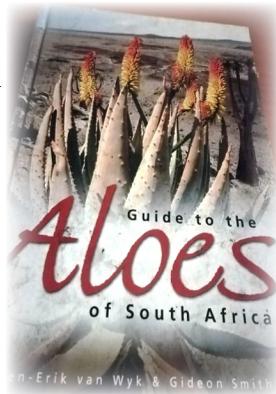
I was surprised to learn that although Delia Owens grew up in Georgia, United States, her inspiration came from Africa, where she worked for twenty-three years as a wildlife scientist in the remotest of areas, including the Central Kalahari in Botswana (‘Cry of the Kalahari’ by Mark and Delia Owens). Yet when I pondered upon it, I was not surprised at all. Africa has such a specific talent for connecting humans to their roots.

Whilst lovers of gardens and animals appreciate our connections, sometimes it needs a writer to explain how we are connected in a way most can relate to, and hopefully we learn to care.

by *Fiona Mordaunt*

Guide to the Aloes of South Africa

by *Ben-Erik van Wyk & Gideon Smith*



I have lots of succulents growing at my backpackers’ “Blue Skies” in Grahamstown. I love them. They’re easy to grow and look after, and wow, do they reward you with incredible flowers.

This tiny little *Aloe ferox* seeded itself in one of my large decorative logs that I have in the garden. I found all sorts of information in this book, a lot of which I had no idea about previously. How the gel is extracted from the leaves, or its medicinal use as a purgative drug known as ‘Cape Aloes’.

Very informative! And my guests love to pore over it too when they come back from hikes in the region. Highly recommended.

by *Sean Haydock*



Pics from all over

**Tyntesfield house,
UK**

from Lisa Rautenbach

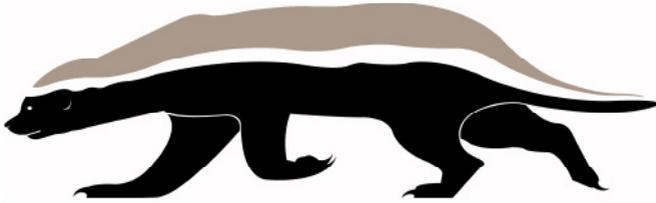


Dyrham Park, UK
from Lisa Rautenbach

Guildford, Surrey
from Sally Holborn



Dyffryn Gardens,
Wales (right)
from Lisa Rautenbach



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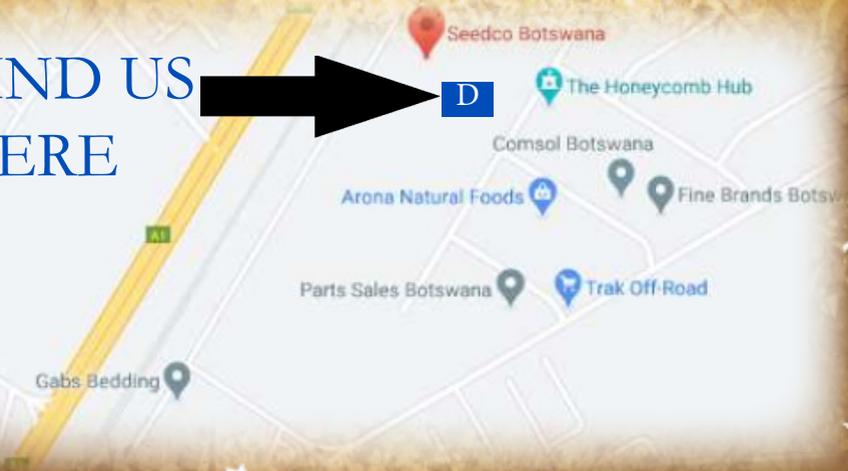
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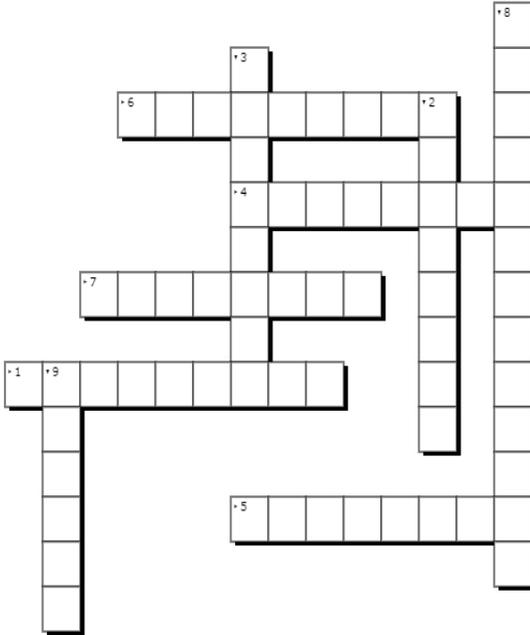
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puzzles



1. What's the scientific genus name for Mango?
2. What is the name for a plant that grows on another plant?
3. Plants that live on another plant, causing it some harm, and is adapted structurally to this way of life is called what?
4. What poison can be extracted from Datura and Nightshade plants?
5. This beautiful plant has both poisonous and life-saving properties, e.g. the heart drug, Digoxin, what is it's common name?
6. What is the genus name for a 'mother of thousands' plant?
7. Aloes commonly flower in winter and are a favourite of which birds?
8. What is the name of a famous environmental architect and advocate from Austria?
9. A low pH in the soil is good for Hydrangeas and Gardenias, and is called what?

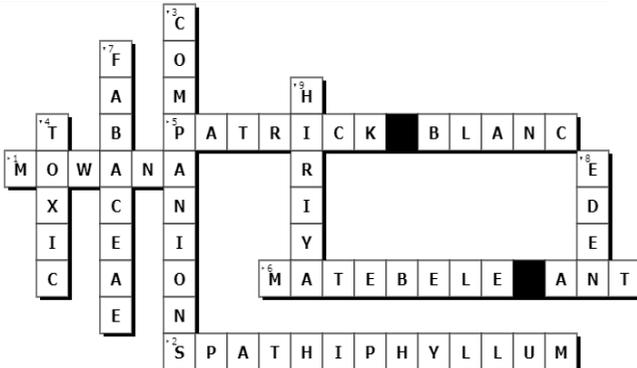
Puzzle 1 (Easy, difficulty rating 0.36)

2	4	7				1
5			1		6	
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4	1	9	5			
6	8					9 1
				9	5	8 6
	5		6			
		7		5		8
9				1	2	4

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<https://www.xwords-generator.de/en>

Generated by <http://www.openky.ca/meloka> on Tue, Apr 5 11:44:55 2022 GMT. Enjoy!

answers to Issue 12.



1. What's the Setswana word for Baobab
2. The scientific name for an air cleaning plant that is commonly called Peace lily
3. Herbs, Veggies and Edible flowers make good _____ . What?
4. Phytoremediation - is when plants extract _____ elements from the soil, air and water.
5. This man is famous for his 'mur végétal' an example is Hotel Athenaeum in London
6. This creature takes their wounded home after battle to nurse back to health
7. Nitrogen-fixing plants like Wisteria sinensis commonly come from which family?
8. The main goal of this _____ Project in Cornwall is to educate the public about the natural world.
9. The _____ landfill now known as Ariel Sharon Park in Israel, is a world famous example of landfill reclamation.

Puzzle 1 (Medium, difficulty rating 0.55)

5	3	4	6	2	7	9	8	1
9	6	2	1	5	8	4	3	7
7	8	1	9	3	4	2	6	5
6	4	5	7	8	3	1	2	9
3	1	7	2	6	9	8	5	4
8	2	9	4	1	5	3	7	6
4	9	3	5	7	2	6	1	8
1	5	8	3	9	6	7	4	2
2	7	6	8	4	1	5	9	3

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garden directory

<p>garden nurseries</p> <p>SANTAS: 3931358 MOKOLODI INDIGENOUS: 71301083/77063055</p>	<p>stone & paving</p> <p>THE SANDPIT: 71820141 DUKES: 74722214</p>	<p>lawn & irrigation</p> <p>ADVERTISE HERE!</p>
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