

Western Australian Chrysanthemum Society Inc.



July – August 2020



President's Notes

Old Chinese curse: “May you live in interesting times.” New Chinese curse: Covid 19, a.k.a. “the China virus”, “the Wu flu”, “kung flu” and Covfefe 19. In 1957–58 there was a global pandemic of influenza A virus subtype H2N2 which killed at least 1 million people worldwide and originated in Guizhou, China. Then it was called the Asian Flu but now it’s become personal.¹ Well, on the positive side, the Chinese also gave us chrysanthemums, which have spread to every continent excluding Antarctica as well and who doesn’t like a bit of chop suey and lychees.

(and Tao Yuanming – Ed.)

I hope that your chrysies were a welcome distraction from the troubles of the real world. As I forewarned in the last Newsletter, mine were so bad this year that they were more of an additional distress. At least I have had plenty of time to think about what went wrong and some other methods to try. Unfortunately, most often it is trying other methods that leads to problems in the first place but sometimes you have to go backwards to move forwards. The Editor has taught me to be philosophical about these things.

Despite the cancellation of our Annual Show we had the opportunity to participate in the John and Sue Morvell - Bendigo Goldfields Chrysanthemum Club inspired “Virtual” Chrysanthemum Show. Michael Drake-Brockman, Ron Atyeo and Murray Ryall submitted their photographic entries revealing some very high quality blooms. Michael was the deserved winner of the Anemone class with Edith Mechen and the Three Vases of Sprays with Yellow Ryski. Ron was unlucky to have his Primrose Mount Shasta beaten into second place by the best Kings Pleasure I have seen. The terms “deserved winner” and “unlucky” are often bandied about as a bit of puff but in this case I can state them with authority as I was the Judge. If this type of virtual show is held again I encourage you all to enter. The show report is available online on our website under Newsletters and also on our Facebook page. I have said that this report could

¹ Thanks a lot Donald.

be shown to any chrysanthemum grower in the world and they would be impressed. This is not only because of the high quality of blooms depicted but also because of the make the best of what you have spirit of triumph over adversity.² As the Queen remarked in her recent message to the nation –

At times such as these, I am reminded that our nation's history has been forged by people and communities coming together to work as one, concentrating our combined efforts with a focus on the common goal.

Hopefully next season will progress smoothly but we have no way of knowing that for sure. If there is no community spread of the virus then we should be able to resume our meetings, starting with the AGM in September. Watch out for the September - October Newsletter for the final word on that. The Horticultural Council's website says that the September Garden Clubs' Fair has been cancelled and I imagine that there will not be enough time to reorganise it, even if all restrictions are lifted.

The Editor has gone to town once again with his Notes in this edition. I have told him that not everyone has the same interests as he does and besides, even if everybody bothered to read them, which seems unlikely, with our low number of members then basically almost nobody is reading them. Nevertheless, he continues to crash on hippopotamusfully. Fortunately the AGM is coming up and his, and our, suffering may be over. Did I mention that he has a philosophical bent? He has quoted me the words of Mark Twain –

I am a great and sublime fool. But then I am God's fool, and all His works must be treated with respect.

Oh well, whatever floats your boat.

Cultural Notes

I was going to cut and paste from the 2019 "Groundhog Day" Newsletter but I have delved back further to the 2014 Notes. As the President has observed, it is not a good idea to change too much.

It is important to get your plants off to a good start. Chrysanthemums, like other plants, respond to their environmental conditions and adjust their growing patterns accordingly. It is well known that plants that have been subjected to harsh conditions will slow their growth. However it is worse than that. They have a "memory" and even after the conditions improve they will not grow quite as vigorously as they otherwise might have. So, if you want your plants to grow well, you need to have them in good condition right from the start. Good stools give good cuttings which root well and then grow into good plants which in turn produce the best blooms. A good stool is produced by a well grown plant last season and its quality can be judged by the quality of last season's blooms. Hopefully you have marked these best performing plants as your preferred source of cuttings. Regardless of that you have to work with what you have got and you need to start work now!

Most growers using the two stop (second crown) method cut back their stools hard at the start of August in order to have new shoots ready for striking from early September. Any shoots taken earlier may be unsuccessful as they can run to bud due to the longer growth period in short days. The stools should be placed in a sunny spot and be given a protective spray of an insecticide and fungicide. A little top dressing of soil and some complete fertiliser completes the preparation. Thereafter some snail bait regularly applied is a good idea.

Shoots can be taken as stool cuttings or tip cuttings. Stool cuttings are shoots with some roots attached. They can be put straight into small pots and will normally grow away well. Some very good blooms can be produced from plants started this way but experience suggests that tip cuttings, which are forced to produce an entirely new root system, will more generally produce the best quality blooms. Unfortunately there is a risk of failure with this method if the shoots should fail to form roots. To maximise the chance of success the stools should be well watered the day before, and the cuttings taken the next morning while they are still crisp. 4-5cm long cuttings should be snapped off rather than cut as this minimises the risk of transferring virus diseases from one cutting to another. Additionally, if the tip cutting cannot be snapped off then it is either not crisp enough or its stem is too tough due to slow growth. In

² *First efforts are usually judged indulgently, and the fact that a beginning is now made will be sufficient to justify congratulation, and to create a new stimulus among those who love the gentle art of flower culture in its subtle appeal to human sympathy.* Daily News, 3rd of May 1894, quoted in The Fiftieth Anniversary of the Western Australian Chrysanthemum Society booklet.

either case the chances of success are diminished. Some growers like to give their cuttings a bath in a pesticide/fungicide solution but spraying the stools a few days before should achieve the same result. Rooting is enhanced by using a potting mix which does not compact down, thereby excluding air. Proprietary propagating mixes are available and are satisfactory. The tendency for tip cuttings to wilt can be reduced by avoiding direct full sunlight (shade cloth works well) and frequent misting from a sprayer. Covering with plastic can work well but strong sunlight is a killer due to the heat generated, as is fungal attack due to stagnant air and so care is required.

After about three weeks the cuttings should be rooted and starting to grow away as seen by the tips opening out with slightly lighter green leaves appearing. Thereafter they are potted up and should grow well with normal care.

Gigantic

Most of us are looking to grow some gigantic blooms. I managed to obtain some stock of the real UK cultivar Gigantic courtesy of Ron Atyeo. Despite knowing of the unsatisfactory results over many years that growers in Perth have experienced with it, as well as with most other UK Large Exhibition cultivars, I felt compelled to torture myself by repeating the mistakes of the past. I grew four plants of Gigantic, along with my other exhibition plants, by taking cuttings at the beginning of September and stopping them for the first time at the end of November. Gigantic is generally a failure when grown here by the conventional two stop method, with the second stop at the beginning of January, so I decided to grow it without the second stop. (first crown method)

The plants mostly ran to bud in late January and all the buds could have been secured before the end of the month. I thought that this was a bit too early to have much chance of a good bloom with even the possibility that the buds might abort altogether due to our hot summers. As a result I secured one and ran the other three plants on to get later buds. These were mostly secured in the second week of February. All plants were reduced to one stem.

If you are interested enough to be still reading this then I am sure that you will want to know how the flowers turned out. Well, as expected, they were entirely unsatisfactory. The bud secured on the 25th January and pot grown in the shade house aborted as did the two run on buds grown in the ground in full sun. The surviving bud, pot grown in the shade house, produced a very miserable flower being small, stale and failing to open fully.

Of interest is that, while my Gigantic plants grew quite strongly throughout Spring, on every hot day of summer they were the first to wilt as the heat increased. This was despite them being well watered in the mornings and regardless of whether they were grown in the shadehouse or in full sun.

However, despite my disappointment with the flowers, the experience has been useful. Ivor Mace, writing in his and Paul Barlow's "Chrysanthemums – The Ultimate E-Book"³, discusses timing plants for the best chance of flowering for the required show date. He provides his stopping, bud securing and flowering dates for Gigantic for a show at the start of November, as well as those of a fellow grower 300 miles (483 km) further north. The table below shows the dates he mentions adjusted for southern hemisphere seasons as well as my dates for our show at the start of May.

	Distance from Equator	leaves on stem	stopping date	bud secured
North England	6046 km	42	23rd October	?
Ivor Mace (South Wales)	5756 km	34	20th November	1st February
Carl Slusarczyk	3551 km	28	29th November	25th January

³ It is available for download from Ivor Mace's website www.ivormace.com and priced at 10 Pounds Sterling and excellent value for 440 pages of sound advice and plentiful photographs. While written for UK conditions there is a lot of advice that is universally applicable.

Ivor's observations indicate that when grown in the south of the UK chrysanthemum cultivars will produce crown buds on stems with a lower leaf count than those same cultivars grown in the North and that the leaves will be produced at a slightly faster rate. This trend is seen to also continue with my plants grown much closer to the equator in Perth. As these leaves are being produced on stems grown during long days (too long a day length to allow flowering) the number of leaves quoted is called "the long day leaf count". The long day leaf count is the maximum number of leaves that can be grown on a stem, following a stop, before a break or crown bud will form. As described above, this number is not absolute and depends on the location where the cultivar is grown.

Another point of interest is that my sole Gigantic bloom that did not abort did not start to show colour until April, whereas photos on Ivor Mace's Facebook page show his blooms showing colour by 17th September in 2019, which is 17th March in southern hemisphere terms. This also proves the observation regarding the effect of hot weather delaying bloom development following the initiation of the bud. In fact, all buds on every UK Large Exhibition plant that I grew (five different cultivars), and secured in the first three weeks of February, were very impressive early on but then made very little further development through March and failed to produce useful blooms.

Long Day Leaf Number

Further to the above discussion, why should we care what the long day leaf number is?

Well, it is known that the potential size of a flower is governed by the strength of the stem on which it is carried. To achieve maximal bloom size the strength of the stem should be gradually increasing as it develops so that the bud is formed at a time when the strength of the plant is approaching its zenith. Whether or not this aim has been achieved can be assessed by looking at the size of the leaves, which should be increasing continuously so that, at full maturity, the largest leaves will be those at the top of the stem. This is the type of stem that UK growers refer to as a "long V". So, when growing for show you should remember the words of Winston Churchill: "V for Victory".

If our leaves are becoming progressively larger in size then the more of them that we have, the larger the last ones under the bud will become. As we have discussed, there is a maximum potential leaf number after the stop and this is the long day leaf number.

If the number of leaves under the bud is smaller than the long day leaf number then we need to make our stop earlier to allow more leaves to grow before the bud forms. If we have the full leaf count but the bud is too early to allow a good flower to develop then we need to make our stop later to get a later bud.

Another point of interest with the long day leaf count is that it ends with the production of a break bud, which when secured and proceeds to bloom is referred to as a crown bud. Some cultivars produce better flowers from a terminal bud than they do from a crown bud. One Japanese author states that tube petalled (Fantasies) and ichimonji cultivars are generally better when flowered on terminal buds. As a terminal bud is formed in short days the number of leaves on the flowering stem must be less than the long day leaf number and so the last stop must be made late enough so that the long day leaf number will not be produced prior to bud formation.

It is necessary to make a couple of caveats here. The first is that the long day leaf count does not apply to a plant grown straight up from a cutting to the bud with no stop, in which case the long day leaf count may be higher, and secondly, to a stem grown from a stop made less than six leaves below a break bud, where the resultant long day leaf count will be lower. If you want to know more about this then read Ivor and Paul's book.

An interesting aside is that the UK growers also have a saying, and that is, "too good too soon". This refers to the situation where the plants look marvellous but the blooms end up being small. The general explanation seems to be that the plant has reached its zenith too soon such that it is on the wane by the time the bud is forming, or alternatively that it has been so busy growing that it did not transfer the energy into flower production. Another possible explanation is that the heavy fertilising and plentiful watering necessary to produce abundant lush growth has reduced the need for the plant to produce the strong and active root system which is necessary to produce the best blooms at the end of the growth cycle. The John Innes Institute fertiliser recommendations of gradually increasing fertiliser concentrations in the potting mix at each repotting stage during the growth of the plant bears out this idea of not over fertilising plants, especially in the early stages.

Sub-continental Methods

You will recall that in the 2020 March – April Newsletter I included photographs of chrysanthemums grown in India and Pakistan. Their specimen plants are grown straight up without stopping from a late rooted cutting and flowered on the first bud produced (referred to as the break bud). This produces a relatively short plant single stemmed plant with a solitary bloom. The growers appear to favour many cultivars of Japanese origin, some of which are also grown here, but they also seem to have some success with UK cultivars that we have problems with.

This technique is also used in the UK to produce the lovely Late Sprays that we see photographs of. Additionally, the late Barrie Machin advocated growing other Sections by the same “short season” method, especially in order to encourage people, who might not wish to devote an entire year of their life to the task, to grow chrysanthemums. Growers in Perth have used this method, combined with growth (height) retardant chemicals, such as Alar, B-Nine or Payback, to produce dwarf flowered Fukusuke plants.

If you wish to try any of these ideas then you can use stool or tip cuttings, rooted at the usual time, to produce a “mother plant”. The mother plant is kept in a suitable condition by regular pinching of the stems to produce a well branched plant carrying a good number of short shoots which are ideal for taking cuttings at the chosen time. As I have not tried this method I cannot advise what the best time is to take the cuttings. However it is known that a plant grown straight up and flowered on the break bud will have a higher long day leaf count than the same cultivar flowering on a crown bud after a stop. So, for an Exhibition cultivar that would normally be stopped on New Year’s Day, for best results we should aim to have our break bud flowering plant rooted by about the same date. The rooted cutting will already have several rudimentary leaves formed and this will account for the extra long day leaves. In order to have a rooted cutting by early January we would need to take our cuttings in the first half of December. You can do the math for the other sorts. It is certainly possible to get useful blooms by rooting later but the potential for the best flowers will be reduced as the stem will be of lower leaf count. If you cannot be bothered growing mother plants then you could grow on your stools and keep them regularly cut back.

Ivor and Paul’s e-book contains an account of growing chrysanthemums in Kolkata India, written by Debashish Gosh.

Cascade? No. This the whole Waterfall!

On November 4, 2011, the "Guinness World Record" was certified at the Japan Chrysanthemum National Convention.

The Guinness World Record was set by Yoshiteru Nomura of Kumagaya City, Saitama Prefecture. We challenged the world record with the number of flowers on the large cliff, and achieved a wonderful record with 4,351 flowers. Nomura is a great master with 16 years of making chrysanthemums. Under the recommendation of Gunma Prefecture's Kiheihei Ishihara, a giant and magnificent cliff chrysanthemum was made. The size is 4m in length and 2m in maximum width.

These giant plants are usually flowered on plants started during the previous growing season. Night break lighting is used through the short day months of the first season to stop them from flowering. They are then grown on normally during the second growing season. If you want to grow a big Cascade over a single season then take your cuttings now. A newly emerging rooted cutting is best as it will be a month ahead of a tip cutting and Cascades normally are very vigorous rooters.

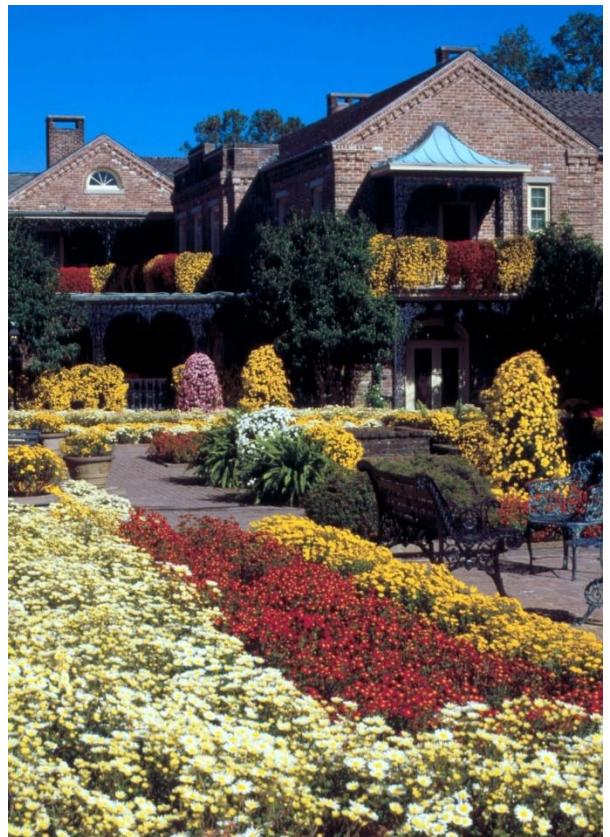


Bellingrath Gardens

Walter and Bessie Bellingrath established a home at Theodore, Alabama in 1935 which included gardens covering 65 acres (approx. 26 hectares). The gardens are renowned for their year round display of colour and in November they display the USA's largest outdoor chrysanthemum display. Of particular note are the Cascades, which in 2015 numbered 370. The gardens are open to the public and their website gives all the important details.

<https://bellingrath.org/>

A further resource <https://bellingrath.org/chrysanthemums/> details the methods that they use to produce their Cascades. Of particular interest is that once the plants have achieved their desired size in mid-September a growth retardant is applied to keep the flower stems short, which increases the density of blooms and produces a more intense colour effect.



Editor's Notes

I am fast running out of new ideas related to chrysanthemums so I thought that I should explore some culinary uses of chrysanthemums. According to one source, all varieties of chrysanthemum have edible flower petals but only *Chrysanthemum coronarium* has edible leaves. These have a mustard-like flavour when young and are popular in Asian cuisine.

Chrysanthemum flower petals are used to make herbal teas. Wikipedia states that chrysanthemum tea was first drunk during the Chinese Song Dynasty (960–1279) and is made from the flowers of *Chrysanthemum morifolium* or *C. indicum*. As chrysanthemums are able to thrive and bloom very late in the season when other plants are dying down, this led to the animist belief that they must have some medicinal properties improving the chances of living healthily into old age. Scientific analysis indicates that chrysanthemum tea is in fact rich in anti-oxidants. It is reported in the Chinese Pharmacopoeia that drinking *C. morifolium* tea could help in alleviating headache and preventing the occurrence of cold and fever. Additionally, *C. morifolium* tea is claimed to improve eye function. Recent pharmacological studies demonstrate that *C. morifolium* possesses a wide array of health potentials, such as anti-bacterial, anti-viral and anti-inflammatory capacities.

In case you wish to make your own medicinal brew this is one recipe.

The flowers are washed carefully, steamed using the water mixed with herbal decoction and dried. When fully dried, they are steamed again, and dried again. This process is repeated nine times. Water to decoction ratio can be 8:1, and the decoction is usually made of dried roots of white woodland peony, steamed and dried roots of rehmannia, dried roots of Korean angelica, and dried roots of lovage.

In case you are unwilling to go to all this trouble or are unable to find the ingredients for the herbal decoction then you can buy dried chrysanthemum flowers, “instant” chrysanthemum tea sachets and ready to drink cartons and cans of chrysanthemum tea at many oriental supermarkets.

I purchased a 100g bag of Dong Fang Hang dried chrysanthemum flower heads originating from China for about \$4. The ingredients are listed solely as *Dendranthema morifolium*. Whether or not they have been decocted is not stated. However, the nutritional information shows that they are low in saturated fats and are cholesterol free so they must be good for you! You can buy cartons of Vita Ceylon Chrysanthemum Tea 6 x 250ml for \$6 at Woolworths and Yeo's Chrysanthemum Tea products are fairly widespread and come from Singapore.

Personally I would avoid eating or making tea from any chrysanthemum in my garden due to the amount of pesticides that we use. (This may be no more than what is applied to some of the fruit and vegetables that we buy, especially tomatoes.)



Brewed Cup of Chrysanthemum Tea

⁴ In respect of the plant names referred to above, the horticultural “florist” chrysanthemums that we grow are mostly referred to in botanical circles as *Chrysanthemum x morifolium*. The x part of the name indicates a hybrid of

⁴ Literature scholars and book club aficionados are welcome to skip this science related paragraph and perhaps take the time instead to enjoy a refreshing *Camelia sinensis* infusion, or perhaps one of *Mentha piperita* or *Matricaria chamomilla* for those who have sworn off caffeine, while revisiting their contemplations on the significance of angelica and lovage in Western culture. Other readers may be unaware, as was I, that Angelica is strongly associated with the Archangel Michael and is considered to be a protective herb that has been used for exorcism, protection against evil spirits, general blessing and to be especially helpful in the defence of women, while Lovage is a widespread symbol of not only love, devotion, and the absolution of past sins, but also the tears of parting* that go hand in hand with it. (You get the drift - *birds are weeping and the eyes of fish fill with tears.) Rehmannia and woodland peony have little Western cultural significance being exclusively East Asian herbs. Of further interest, the four herbs of the decoction (peony, rehmannia, angelica and lovage) are used together in China to produce Four Things Soup and Dang Gui Four Combination (a.k.a. Si Wu Tang), which, according to one source, is *the supreme classical blood tonic of Chinese herbalism*.



Chrysanthemum indicum

two or more species. In the case of *C. x morifolium*, *C. indicum* is generally agreed to be one ancestor with the other(s) the subject of debate. Barrie Machin writing in the 1993 NCS(UK) Yearbook states that *C. x morifolium* was developed from two Chinese species, “probably” *C. indicum* and *C. zawadskii*. These two species are widespread through East Asia. Another source nominates *C. indicum* and *C. japonense* as the progenitors, despite the fact that *C. japonense* is confined in its natural distribution to Japan. For we humble gardeners it matters little, except to say that there are no large flowered chrysanthemum species, so that our modern cultivars, “of staggering immensity”, are all the result of growers selecting for larger size during more than three thousand years of cultivation. In 1961 our chrysanthemums were renamed as *Dendranthema x grandiflorum*⁵ but were then transferred back to *Chrysanthemum* in 1999.⁶



Three colour varieties of *Chrysanthemum zawadskii*.

There are many references to foods containing chrysanthemum flowers on the internet but recipes in our English language are not so easy to find. Here is one that may appeal.

Chrysanthemum Sweet Potatoes

Ingredients

6 medium sweet potatoes, peeled and cubed; 1/4 cup crushed pineapple, in juice; 1/4 cup honey; 3 tablespoons butter, melted; 1/2 teaspoon grated lemon zest; 1/2 cup chrysanthemum petals

Directions

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). Butter a 2 quart baking dish.

Place the sweet potatoes into a large pot, and fill with enough water to cover. Bring to a boil, and cook until tender, about 15 minutes. Drain.

Mash potatoes with pineapple, honey and butter using a whisk or electric mixer until smooth and creamy. Stir in the lemon zest and chrysanthemum petals. Transfer to the prepared baking dish.

Bake for 20 to 30 minutes in the preheated oven, until hot and fragrant.

⁵ Go to www.bellarmino.edu/faculty/drobinson/Chrysanthemums.asp for the full story.

⁶ It is lucky that the founders did not have the internet back in 1965 or else we might have been the Western Australian Dendranthema Society.

If you wish to consume chrysanthemum leaves as well as the flowers then you need the edible chrysanthemum, *Chrysanthemum coronarium*. Wikipedia provides some details. It is now properly known as *Glebionis coronaria*⁷ and was originally a native of the Mediterranean region and later introduced into Asia. In Crete it is called mantilida, shungiku in Japan, ai cai in China, tan o in Vietnam, ssukgat in Korea and the garland chrysanthemum in the UK.

The simplest recipe I can find is for **Canh Tan O** (Vietnamese Chrysanthemum Greens Soup).

You will need -

- 500g of Tan O
- Canh (Vietnamese Soup Broth)
- Nuoc Mam (Vietnamese Fish Sauce)

Pluck off the leaves and tender tops of the Tan O. Discard the woody bottom parts of the stems. Wash and rinse the leaves.

Heat up the pot of broth and add fish sauce to taste. Then add the greens and simmer for only a few minutes, since the delicate leaves cook very quickly. Serve with rice.

There is nothing to stop you using any other broth of your choice and adding some pieces of meat, fish or dumplings if you wish.

If you are inspired to add chrysanthemum greens to your diet then you can obtain Garland Chrysanthemum seeds from Beautanicals in Queensland.

<https://australiangardener.net.au/>



Glebionis coronaria

The Sealed Section (Only read on if you have ever thought of joining a book club.)

Interested readers of the March – April 2020 Notes will recall the discussion of Chinese chrysanthemum poetry and, in particular, Tao Yuanming, “The Five Willows Gentleman”, and his famous line - *I pluck chrysanthemums under the eastern hedge*. In the 1978 NCS (UK) Yearbook there is a reproduction of an 1891 essay entitled “The History of the Chrysanthemum” by C. Harman Payne. This includes the following passage –

eminent cultivators of the flower had acquired renown in the Far East ... and one in particular, named Tao-yuan-ming, was so eminently successful in its cultivation that the town in which he lived was henceforth known as Chu-hsien, or Chrysanthemum City.

Further research indicates that Tao Yuanming lived on a property with five willow trees down one side and grew chrysanthemums on the eastern boundary of his property.⁸ When the chrysanthemums were in flower his friends and relatives would visit him to admire the blooms and, hopefully, share some wine, which due to his rather impoverished circumstances was not always available.

If you happen to be in South Korea you can enjoy some good local cuisine at “Chrysanthemums Next to a Fence”. According to www.trazy.com -

Chrysanthemums next to a fence means the perfect flower that god created on the last day of creation. This casual rice cake café ... where the interior is clean with cozy lighting can be found at –

49 Hoenamu-ro, Yongsan-gu, Seoul.



⁷ These taxonomists are an annoying lot.

⁸ He lived out his life near Lu Mountain in the north of Jiangxi province. (about 200km south-east of Wuhan)

Chinese, Japanese and Korean people celebrate the Double Ninth Festival which traditionally falls on the ninth day of the ninth lunar month of the East Asian calendar.⁹ This occurs in autumn when chrysanthemums are in full bloom. In China it is called the Chongyang Festival. One source states that –

Tao Yuanming, loved looking at chrysanthemums and drinking chrysanthemum wine very much. ... Poets and high-level officers who were influenced by Tao Yuanming's beautiful poetry accompanied Chongyang feasts by appreciating chrysanthemums and drinking chrysanthemum wine because they felt it brought them closer to the great man. This led to the popularisation of the tradition and so it has been passed down the generations ever since.

A suitable food to accompany the festival is **Chongyang Crystal Daisy Cake** for which the recipe can be found at

<https://chinesefood.pythonwood.com/delish/recipe/95959/>

Here is another of Tao Yuanming's chrysanthemum poems entitled -

The Double Ninth in Retirement

*Our lives are short and our ambitions many...
And while one can with wine exorcize all sorrows
Chrysanthemums know how to restrain declining years.
How is it with me the thatch-cottage scholar,
Vainly watching how my time and fate decline?...
These cold-weather flowers bloom of themselves alone.
I pull close my lapels and sing to myself at leisure,
Which somehow distantly awaken deep emotions.
Even in retirement I do have many pleasures,
Even in my lassitude I still get things accomplished.*



One literature scholar writes that Tao Yuanming *exemplifies the Daoist virtues of humility, gentleness, resignation, quiescence, and contentment*. It seems like he would have been a great guy to have as a member of WACS. At the price we charge for membership even he could afford to join. In the absence of any other ideas for new social activities perhaps the Treasurer can lay on a few bottles of wine for our next home open and we can all drink a toast or three in his honour. The host will need to remember proper etiquette –

If you are drunk first, you will tell the guests: "I am drunk and want to sleep, you can go".

Tao Yuanming is so sincere and frank.

*His natural temperament is to love drinking wine
But his household is so poor, not often able to get it. Old relatives know this, so they buy it for him, and beckon him to join them.
When he drinks, he enjoys it to the fullest
Until he becomes completely drunk:
When drunk he retires with feelings of generosity and disregards formal good-byes.¹⁰*

⁹ In Chinese philosophy Yin is the receptive and Yang the active principle. It is important to have a good balance between Yin and Yang in order to avoid chaos. Nine is a Yang number and so on the ninth day of the ninth month Yang is very strong and unbalanced. So extra care is required. Rather like Friday the thirteenth in Western Culture. On this day protective activities can be undertaken to ward off misfortune, such as retreating to the mountains, adorning yourself and your home with chrysanthemums and consuming chrysanthemums in the form of rice cakes and wine. In Japan the Chrysanthemum Festival, known as Kiku no Sekku, is celebrated on the ninth of September as this is a peak time for chrysanthemum flowering.

¹⁰ <http://www.learnancientchinesepoetry.org/2018/05/31/tao-yuanming-biography-of-the-five-willows-gentleman/>

It is written that Tao Yuanming's greatest regret in life is that he had not drunk more wine. While there can be little doubt that he was an alcoholic, it is also known that he liked to write poetry while intoxicated and some of his best work was written in that state.

Merrily drinking wine is best for composing poetry. Because of this, he attracts happiness and joy.

In addition, he suffered ill health in his later life and died at the age of sixty-two. He believed that the consumption of wine and chrysanthemums had important health benefits.

Recipe for chrysanthemum wine.

When the chrysanthemum blooms, pluck its stem and leaves and ferment it with millet. On the 9th day of the 9th month of the following year, it will be ready to drink.

A very famous poem referring to chrysanthemums was written by a young Chinese woman, Li Qingzhao (1084 - 1155?), and concerns her sorrow in enduring a sudden separation from her newly married husband at the time of the Double Ninth Festival when he had to leave home at short notice to take up a distant official post in the western part of the country. This poem includes references to themes tracing back to Tao Yuanming (365?-427).

To the Tune of Intoxicated under the Shadow of Flowers

*Light mists and heavy clouds,
the whole day was haunted by melancholy.
In the golden beast-shaped incense burner,
Rui Xiang¹¹ is dying away.
In the lovely Double - Ninth Festival,
Sleeping alone the coolness of midnight,
penetrates this white porcelain silk,
and chills my pillow of jade.*

*After drinking wine at twilight
under the eastern chrysanthemum hedge,
My sleeves are perfumed
by the fragrance of the plants.
Who says I look not enchanting?
Only, when the west wind stirs the curtain,
I see that I am more gracile
than the yellow flowers.¹²*



I have made a habit of closing these Notes with some haiku, so why stop now. It is recorded that the great master Matsuo Basho (1644-1694) was greatly influenced by Tao Yuanming. You may remember Basho's haiku from the last edition which references Tao Yuanming's grass thatched cottage and love of chrysanthemums and wine -

*grass-thatched hut -
as day darkens I'm given
chrysanthemum wine*

¹¹ Frankincense. The gum of *Boswellia sacra*, a tree native to southern Arabia. It was brought to China by sea at this time.

¹² It is said that when her husband received the poem, he was so overcome with admiration that he composed fifty poems to the same tune in an effort to adequately respond to hers, but without success.



I mentioned that Basho made several long and difficult trips on foot during his lifetime. Here is another of his works.

*Fleas and lice biting;
awake all night
a horse pissing close to my ear*

However there were some compensations.

*Fragrance of chrysanthemums
and old Buddha's statues in Nara
purify and refine my soul.*

Kobayashi Issa (1763-1826?) was another revered haiku poet. His wife's name was Kiku (chrysanthemum). Like Tao Yuanming he rejected an urbane life. Here are two of his poems.

Writing crap about new snow
for the rich
is not art.¹³

In this world
we walk on the roof of hell,
gazing at flowers.

If you cannot stand to read any more haiku or conversely, are inspired to fully immerse yourself in Japanese culture, then you might like to get hold of some Fugu Sashimi. It is made of a poisonous blow fish. How much of it you should eat depends on you. I will not be eating any.

To prepare the dish, fugu flesh is sliced paper-thin, much thinner than other varieties of fish sashimi, and the slices are elegantly arranged in a circle to resemble a chrysanthemum.



Stop Press I subsequently discovered this information and do not want to re-write my Notes due to the destruction of the careful formatting that would be required.

The Sealed Section - Part 2 (Only read on if you are a budding taxonomist, an annoying pedant, bored senseless due to the requirements of social distancing or just fascinated with all aspects of chrysanthemums.)

A 2006 research paper¹⁴ states that -

cultivated chrysanthemums are generally thought to be a result of natural hybridizations among species of Chrysanthemum sinense, C. erubescens, C. ornatum, C. japonense, C. makinoi, C. chanetii, C. vestitum, C. indicum, C. lavandulifolium and C. zawadskii.

¹³

<https://princessdianabookboutique.wordpress.com/2015/03/11/11-march-1988-prince-charles-princess-diana-end-klosters-ski-holiday-after-fatal-avalanche-killed-major-hugh-lindsay/>

¹⁴ Yang W, Glover BJ, Rao G, Yang J *Molecular evidence for multiple polyploidization and lineage recombination in the Chrysanthemum indicum polyploid complex (Asteraceae)* New Phytol 171: 875–886

Very interesting. Did I mention that taxonomists are an annoying lot? They can also be helpful at times as well. A 2012 paper¹⁵ reveals that –

The Chinese Chrysanthemum species can be divided into two groups, the C. zawadskii group and the C. indicum group. The former is distributed in northern China and the latter in southern China.

So it seems that Barrie Machin was pretty close to the money. *C. japonense* is found only on the Japanese island of Shikoku and was formerly also known as *C. occidentali-japonense*. *C. japonicum*, which is the same as *C. makinoi*,¹⁶ is also confined to Japan but is far more widespread. *C. japonense* and *C. japonicum* were presumably incorporated into our horticultural chrysanthemums after their arrival in Japan during the fifth century. The bloke that postulated *C. indicum* and *C. japonense* was a bit lost but heading in the right direction.

I note the President's remarks related to these Notes and if I read them correctly his opinions can be more succinctly put in the form of a haiku.

The Editor's Notes –
Writing crap about nothing
For no one to read.

OK, I know, these Notes are not art. However, I am reminded of Roald Dahl's reworking of the poem -

The Three Little Pigs

*The animal I really dig,
Above all others is the pig.
Pigs are noble. Pigs are clever,
Pigs are courteous.*

rather like the general membership of WACS.

*However,
Now and then, to break this rule,
One meets a pig who is a fool.*

this very fairly describes the President.

The poem continues -

*What, for example, would you say,
If strolling through the woods one day,
Right there in front of you you saw*



While the President may have little regard for these pearls that I have cast before him, I am hopeful that you, noble, clever and courteous reader, will have found at least something to pique your interest. Judging by the number of cat videos that there are circulating on the internet, the President surely must enjoy this offering which I hope will also make you smile. I love the dresses.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4anek6LoMXg>

If we get out of this pandemic and can go travelling again then Amsterdam looks like a nice place to visit. The last song was a hit, so the Dutch born Kowalczyk¹⁷ girls could then afford some more up market clothes.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sB5t-NExkRM>

¹⁵ *Phylogeny of the Genus Chrysanthemum L.: Evidence from Single-Copy Nuclear Gene and Chloroplast DNA Sequences*
Ping-Li Liu, Qian Wan, Yan-Ping Guo, Ji Yang, and Guang-Yuan Rao. Published online.

¹⁶ Did I mention that taxonomists are an annoying lot?

¹⁷ They had a Polish father, like me.

If you like girl groups then you should definitely like this catchy K-Pop number.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XX5S57gGJAU>

For anyone celebrating Christmas in July there are plenty of choices for carols. Please consider these - ¹⁸

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aleidmh_C0o <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PkwUAjgZYOAA>

or you may prefer slightly more up tempo versions of the same carols,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l4QfW3WRp6g> https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1itH7ExJ_GI

or this very up tempo number. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZxF_JRhNR3Q

or this from Pavarotti's favourite tenor <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4NyIAct8w7k>

In 1987 Prime Minister Bob Hawke promised that "no child will be living in poverty by the year 1990" and was re-elected to a third term; eleven people were killed and 19 injured when 19-year-old Julian Knight went on a shooting rampage in Melbourne – (the Hoddle St Massacre); Australia finally formally acknowledged the contribution of the Vietnam War veterans with a Welcome Home parade held in Sydney; and this work of art was created at a Eurhythmics concert when they toured Australia. The camera work on this video is excellent. The performance is - *insert superlative of your own choice*.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9PNi4Oi2COo>

and one for the Vietnam veterans.¹⁹

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EMRJT2ebvAk>

Mentors

Ian Blackwell – Kelmscott 9390 2608

Ralph Coombes – Maida Vale 9454 3373

Michael Drake-Brockman – Pickering Brook 9293 7650

Carl Slusarczyk – Mount Lawley 9272 1356

Richard Williams – Inglewood 9272 6120

Contacts

President – Carl Slusarczyk 9272 1356 (H) carl.lina.slu@gmail.com

Treasurer – Colleen Ryall 9291 9257 (H) 0400 089 223 (M) colleenryall@westnet.com.au

Secretary – Michael Drake-Brockman 9293 7650 (H) michaeldb@inet.net.au

Newsletter Editor – Carl Slusarczyk 9272 1356 (H) carl.lina.slu@gmail.com

Forthcoming Events

WACS Annual General Meeting – Tuesday 8th September John McGrath Pavilion at 12 noon.

Distribution Day - Sunday 25th October 2018 John McGrath Pavilion at 1:30pm.

Website

www.chrysanthemumwa.com

Facebook Page

<http://www.facebook.com/groups/chrysanthemumwa/>

¹⁸ Avoid all versions by the innumerable banshees that insist on butchering Christmas with their intolerable improvised gymnastic screeching.

¹⁹ Note to Liz: Annie Lennox and Mark Knopfler are both Scottish.