

**THE ARMIDALE GARDENER**  
**NEWSLETTER OF THE ARMIDALE GARDEN CLUB**  
**ISSUE NO. 581     JUNE 2020**

**MEETING CANCELLED**

Please note that the meeting of the Armidale Garden Club which was to be held on Thursday 25 June 2020 has been cancelled because of the ongoing coronavirus considerations.

However

members are invited to join together at a socially distanced garden visit at the home of David Trenerry at 10.00 AM on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> June 2020 at 13 Braebank Avenue in Armidale. Please refer the note on the following page.



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## **WE'RE BACK IN ACTION – LET'S GET TOGETHER ON SATURDAY 27<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2020.**

With the easing of the COVID-19 lockdown conditions, Armidale Garden Club members are cordially invited to a garden visit at the home of our President on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> June between 10.00am and 12.00pm. Please feel free to bring plants, cuttings and seedlings to sell, swap or give away. Tea, coffee and refreshments will be provided but members are welcome to bring a small something to contribute to morning tea. We'll meet in the garden but if the weather is inclement, we can seek refuge in David's double garage. The address is 13 Braebank Avenue (end of cul-de-sac on the right side), first street on the right after Lynches Road after travelling up O'Connor Road (past the cemetery) in south Armidale.

After such a long period of coronavirus lockdown, it will be good to get together once again for a little social interaction and gardening talk. Hopefully we'll see you there!

### **NOTEWORTHY –**

#### **Snow Day in Armidale**

It was only a light snowfall but big fluffy flakes came down in Armidale on the morning of 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2020.

And for those who enjoy seeing snow, it did settle on the ground, albeit only for a short time.



### **BIRDS IN THE GARDEN**

There are good reasons to attract birds into your garden. Apart from the simple pleasure of enjoying the sounds, colour, energy and movements of the various avian species active in your garden, certain birds also carry out a variety of beneficial tasks that will assist you in your garden maintenance. Some birds serve to pollinate plants as they move among the shrubs and flowers while others will keep plants clean of those pesky insects such as the sap-sucking aphids. Attracting birds into your garden thus has many benefits apart from simple enjoyment for yourself.

So what can you do to attract birds into your garden? Firstly, consider the actual plants that you select. Do they provide a suitable habitat, particularly for smaller birds such as wrens and finches? Thorny and bushy shrubs such as some of the rose varieties or prostrate cotoneaster provide great habitat that will protect small birds when being hounded by larger predator species as well as a safe environment in which to build nests. But it is also appropriate to consider the strata layers in your garden, from low growing plants to shrubs to trees as different birds like to habitate different height layers in your garden.

Do be aware that there are also some downsides of having birds in your garden. For example, if you grow roses, you are likely to



Red Browed Finch

lose your first flush of flowers in springtime to hungry rosellas on the lookout for a succulent food source after having just come through a cold and lean winter.

And that raises the topic of “To feed or not to feed – that is the question”. In the northern hemisphere where winters are rather severe and food sources minimal, it is quite common for people to set up bird feeders in their gardens. In Australia however with its generally milder weather, ornithologists suggest that it is preferable not to provide artificial feeding for wild birds as there are usually adequate natural food sources available all year round.



Double Barred Finch

Having said that however, conditions can sometimes vary and there may be occasions when supplementary feeding of your home species is warranted. During last year’s drought for example, there was very little natural grass seed on our block so that this co-editor built a feeder specifically for the seed eaters such as the finches. It was greatly appreciated by the red-browed and double-barred finches that normally frequent this locality. However since the rains began in last December and the kangaroo grass and wallaby grass in our paddock have flourished, the finches have largely moved away from the feeder, other than returning for an occasional top-up. If you do feed the birds in your garden, it is important make sure that “you” are not their only feed source. Do not over-feed to allow the birds become dependent solely upon what you provide as a food source.

Rather than feeding, it is much more important to provide water for the birds in your garden. A source of water – or preferably several sources of water – is essential for supporting the birds in your area as well as for attracting them to your garden. Ensure that there is a landing spot or perch near your water source so that birds can land and look around before taking a drink or a bath. The area around your bird bath should be relatively clear so that the birds can be alerted if danger approaches. The depth of water should be appropriate to the birds that use the bird bath because they have to be able to actually stand in the water as they have a splash around, say 2 cm of depth for small birds such as finches or 10 cm for larger birds like rosellas. It may be helpful to choose baths that have sloping sides or to put rocks at the edge to provide gradual access to the water. However the most important issue by far is that the water is kept clean in order to prevent the transfer of any illness or disease. Hence it is advisable to fully change the water in the bird bath every few days rather than to simply top it up.



Home Made Bird Feeder



Bird Bath



Both Finch Species Share the Bird Bath

Whether you have a large block or a small back yard, creating a bird habitat with appropriate plantings and sources of water will help to protect our native bird species as well as giving yourself a lot of pleasure and entertainment in your garden.

Story: Ray Cantrell

## PLANT OF THE MONTH

### Leucojum aestivum (Snowflakes)

The Snowflake is one of the most useful and tough of the winter-flowering bulbs. Its under-stated elegance adds immeasurably to the late-autumn, early-winter (May, June, July) Armidale garden when the trees are already bare or the last of the coloured leaves are dropping. In the northern hemisphere *Leucojum aestivum* flowers in early spring but this does not happen in Armidale, Australia.

Here, Snowflakes and the Paperwhites and Yellow jonquils are always the first of the larger bulbs to flower - *in autumn*. In my opinion, the jonquils are best kept in separate areas of the garden from the more under-stated Snowflakes to ensure they don't compete for attention. I love the Snowflakes when they are placed under Silver Birch – the white flowers and the white trunks look superb together. The points of the rich dark green leaves poking above the mulch can first appear as early as March, depending on the season, and I look forward to this early promise of things to come.



The flowering time of these bulbs can be brought on even earlier if they are watered copiously during the late-summer, early-autumn months but they are tough enough to survive complete neglect even in derelict gardens – it just means they flower later in the winter. The drought last year did cause mine to be somewhat less prolific last winter – but they are back as good as ever in 2020. If you intersperse them with clumps of later-flowering daffodils, the daffs come on after the Snowflakes have finished thus extending the period of beauty under your deciduous trees. The Snowflake bulbs are so tough – they can handle the half-shade and dry, root-competition of woodland conditions and yet still manage to flower prolifically. (I have to say though – in contrast, the daffodils may need some extra watering to do well.)



Snowflakes make 40cm high, vase-shaped, tight clumps of upright, rich, dark green, strap-shaped foliage which disappears completely in summer. These clumps bulk-up and thicken over the years. They seem to cope with neglect over decades but also respond to being lifted and divided when dormant – it is relatively easy to increase your stock over several years. They are one of the less-expensive of the bulbs, although there is one named variety (which costs more), 'Gravetye Giant', which is worth seeking out. It is about 10cm higher than the species, with slightly larger flowers.

Snowflake flowers appear on 50cm stems. Each stem can have up to eight flowers but five is the usual number, dangling beguilingly above the foliage. The flowers are 12mm-wide white, nodding, six-petalled bells, each petal adorned with a green dot. These flowers open in succession, thus creating quite a long flowering period – lasting well in the vase as well as the garden. They cope well if hit with frost and seem to bounce back well from the light snowfalls we sometimes have here in Armidale at this time of year. Plant *Leucojum aestivum* bulbs in January/February, about 20cm deep. They prefer a clay or loamy soil, disliking it too sandy or rocky.



LOOKING GOOD NOW

			
Penstemon hartwegii	Abutilon hybridium	Bergenia cordifolia	Primula vulgaris
			
Penstemon hartwegii	Helleborus niger hybrid	Osteospermum	Nemesia 'Amaze'
			
Primula vulgaris Primrose	Spirea japonica Autumn foliage	Spirea cantoniensis Autumn foliage	Camellia sasanqua 'With Love'
			
Viola odorata	Peas	Cabbages	Poppy flower bud
			
Rosehips	Helleborus niger	Narcissus 'Paperwhite'	Osteospermum
			
Cyclamen hybrid	Primula vulgaris	Iris unguicularis	Cyclamen hybrid

			
Euphorbia myrsinites	Ericaflora 'Winter Fire'	Camellia 'Fairy Blush'	Viburnum tinus
			
Bellis perennis English Daisy	Ericaflora 'Lavender Mist'	Rosmarinus officianalis Rosemary	Edgeworthia papyrifera grandiflora - buds
			
Moss and sedge	Viola vulgaris - white	Galanthus elwesii	Salvia 'Indigo Blue'
			
Osteospermum	Osteospermum with bee	Rhodanthemum daisy	Narcissus 'Grand Soleil d'Or'
			
Hardenbergia violacea	Annual white daisy?	Escallonia iveyi	Snowflake
			
Daucus carota Queen Anne's Lace	Achillea filipendulina 'Coronation Gold'	Callistemon viminalis 'Little John'	Oxalis versicolor 'Barber's Pole'

**LATE ROSES**

			
'Christopher Marlowe'	'Blossomtime'	'Sparrieshoop'	'Pax'
			
'Lilac Charm'	'Munstead Wood'	'Comtesse du Cayla'	'Soul Sister'
			
'Strawberry Hill'	'Children's Rose'	'Mirage'	'Ebb Tide'

**And as a contribution from Dar Brookes (*Many Thanks, Dar.*)**

		
Cyclamen persicum	Mahonia aquifolium	Rosa Penelope
		
Sunflower	Camelia	Vegetable Selection

## THIS MONTH – THE GARDEN IN JUNE AND JULY

*Please consider these gardening chores taking into account Armidale's current water restrictions. The suggested lists of tasks were compiled assuming more normal seasonal conditions.*

### JUNE AND JULY

- 1 Spring-flowering bulbs should be watered, particularly if dry conditions are experienced. Once the foliage emerges a liquid fertiliser can be applied. (*Note: Watering bulbs might be difficult to attain in 2020 given the current water restrictions due to the recent drought. Do your best.*)
- 2 Check shrubs and trees for scale (especially fruit trees) and apply an appropriate spray if necessary.
- 3 Remove old flower heads from roses and tidy up the bushes. Scale on the bushes can be treated at pruning time (in August-September).
- 4 Cut back chrysanthemums.
- 5 Dig over soil and leave beds in rough condition.
- 6 Do NOT prune spring-flowering shrubs and trees at this time.
- 7 Prune fruit trees – peaches, nectarines. Grapes can be pruned after leaf-fall in May.
- 8 Carry out a general garden clean-up, destroy hiding places for pests.
- 9 Plant out onion plants: "Plant on the shortest day and harvest on the longest". Select varieties for early maturing and good keeping qualities.
- 10 Start planting deciduous shrubs and trees.

## LOOKING AHEAD – THE GARDEN IN AUGUST

### AUGUST

- 1 Prune roses from the first week of August up to the first week of September. Roses should be sprayed after pruning; take care if using a lime sulphur spray as it can damage new shoots.
- 2 Plant new roses and other shrubs and trees.
- 3 Top-dress garden beds with complete fertiliser and well-rotted manure, if available. Feed daffodils with a light dressing of complete fertiliser or liquid fertiliser.
- 4 Top-dress lawn when soil is moist and water in.
- 5 Remove dead heads from winter iris.
- 6 Spray for leaf curl on peaches and nectarines. It is important that the spray for leaf curl be applied at bud swell – once buds begin to open it is too late.
- 7 Apply complete fertiliser to established shrubs and trees and water well.
- 8 Prune summer-flowering shrubs – abelia, buddleia, crepe myrtle, veronica, etc.
- 9 Hardwood cuttings of japonica, pyracantha, abelia, forsythia, tamarix, etc may be struck in sand from May to August. Cuttings can be dipped in hormone powder or honey to improve chances of good root formation.
- 10 Do NOT prune spring-flowering shrubs and trees, such as prunus, spiraea, japonica, pearl bush; forsythia, ribes (currants), banksia rose, etc until after flowering.
- 11 Divide perennials such as delphiniums, perennial phlox, michaelmas daisies, shasta daisies, heuchera, erigeron, campanula, solomon's seal, red hot poker, winter iris, etc. Avoid extremely frosty weather and water well. Do NOT leave this too late as new shoots can be damaged.
- 12 Plant out peony roses and tuberose. Strike chrysanthemum cuttings in sandy loam from August to the end of October.

And finally, this Month's Gardening Tip:



HAPPY GARDENING!

