

## SUMMER IN THE GARDEN

By David Maher

*“You buy some flowers for your table; You tend them tenderly as you’re able;  
You fetch them water from hither and thither; What do you get for it all? They wither.”*

As summer is often a hot, dry, challenging month in all Australian States, daily, early morning watering may be necessary for shallow-rooted plants and for potted plants, including azaleas, camellias, gardenias, orchids, young natives and for vegetable plants. For watering to achieve its maximum benefits, DEEP, gentle watering is essential.

### FERTILIZING

**Asparagus:** Feed in late summer or early autumn with blood and bone and a soluble fertilizer to produce robust crowns. Remember that the spears are not picked during the first year, that is, until the second spring after its winter planting.

**Bearded Irises:** If your plants are growing in a less than fertile soil, an application of superphosphate will help with root development during late summer and cause the roots to penetrate more deeply into the soil.

**Bougainvilleas and Hibiscuses:** Fertilize every 6 to 8 weeks with Searle’s bougainvillea and hibiscus food

**Camellias:** Progressively, from January onwards, all camellias, should receive a dressing of potash, ranging in quantity from 10 to 50 grams, depending upon the age and size of the plant.



**Chrysanthemums:** apply potash at the rate of 15 to 30 to 50 grams per plant and disbud progressively.

**Citrus:** fertilize with citrus food or old poultry manure over moistened soil and in the outer foliage area of the trees at the end of summer or early autumn; next, mulch, preferably with lucerne hay

**Cymbidium Orchids:** Fertilize from late January with Orchid Food, as flower spikes will have commenced to form and to develop in most cultivars. Additionally, give a foliar spray on one occasion during the period December to the end of to build the chlorophyll levels in the leaves.

**Geraniums and Pelargoniums** will benefit from the removal of spent flower heads and jaded leaves an application of foliar sprays that promote flowering. Avoid high nitrogenous fertilizers.

**Lawns:** Dynamic Lifter Turf Starter contains a balance of organic chemical nutrients and water-storing crystals.

**Natives:** Young plants benefit from a small dosage, say 10 to 20 grams, of a Native Fertilizer, which has low phosphorus (P = 1.6). Never use high phosphorus products on natives.

**Passionfruit and Strawberries:** are gross feeders, an application of blood and bone (4 parts) mixed with potash (1 part) at six to eight weeks’ intervals maintains foliage colour, plant & fruit.

**Roses:** Towards the end of summer in my garden, buds form for the autumn display. A soluble foliar spray of either Yates' Dynamic Lifter Seaweed Plant Tonic Food or Yates' Thrive Fruit and Flower will assist bud and flower development.

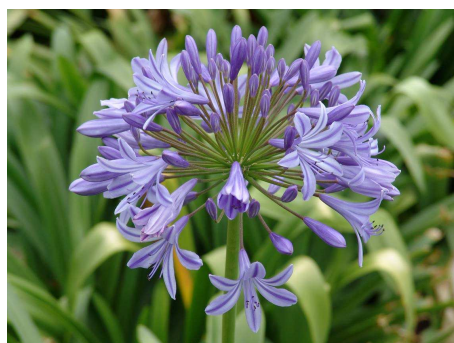
**Vegetable Garden:** Apply Yates' Dynamic Lifter Organic pellets or blood and bone to plants such as spinach, silver beet and chives that need nitrogen for the production of chlorophyll

## **SPRAYING & MAINTENANCE**

Check azaleas for lace bug, which is identifiable by the silvery surface on the leaves, and for red spider. Use Lebaycid or Confidor as a preventative measure from late October to February.

**Citrus:** Leaf miner and white wax scale can be perennial and persistent problems. These can be treated in one or two ways: 125 mls of white oil or Pestoil plus 15 mls of Malathion, or 3 teaspoons of bicarbonate of soda, plus 40 mls of Pestoil mixed into four and a half litres of water. Spraying should occur early morning or after sunset. Heavy infestations may have to be treated every two to three weeks.

Summer requires gardeners to be vigilant in the placement of plants in containers. Some may have to be moved to more comfortable positions, e.g. where they receive more water or more afternoon shade. I have had to do this with herbs in containers.



**Agapanthuses:** remove spent flower heads, fertilize and apply Baysol, if necessary. If your plants failed to flower, it could be the result of overcrowding or overgenerous shade. In either event, lift, divide and replant in autumn or winter.

**Beans:** Maintain moisture levels to assist bean development. Bean plants can be affected by red spider. Be vigilant and spray with Rogor, if detected. January sown plants will be at a stage where they will benefit from a supplement of potash – half a teaspoon to each plant.

**Camellia Japonicas:** disbud, leaving one or two buds per stem. Remove the weakest buds and retain those that are robust and have space to develop, being careful not to remove growth buds. A gentle twisting motion will remove the surplus buds without tearing away the adjacent leaf growth. Flower buds are fatter than growth buds. In order to obtain the best results from disbudding, commence as soon as a flower bud can be distinguished from a leaf growth. Camellia sasanquas should not be disbudded.

**Chrysanthemums:** Disbud heavily to produce quality flowers and spray with a fungicide if mildew is prevalent humid weather.

**Clematis:** To encourage a second or third flowering, depending on where you live, remove half of the spent flowering canes and fertilize with blood and bone and potash and then every fortnight apply a soluble fertilizer that contains a high percentage of potassium.

**Climbers:** Long, straggly growth on climbers such as wisteria should be shortened severely as this growth will not produce flowers. If pruning is completed now, it will not reduce flowering potential. If pruned in winter, embryonic flowering buds will be removed.

**Herb Garden:** maintain soil moisture, feed regularly with a soluble nitrogenous fertilizer and pinch out the growing tips of basil and remove the seed heads from chives.

**Grape Vines:** Excess foliage above the bunches of grapes should be removed. Cut just above nodes, preferably one node above the fruit. This practice assists ventilation and reduces the incidence of fungal conditions and the amount of spraying. Preventative sprays are recommended. Net the vine/s just before fruit starts to colour to protect from birds.

**Indoor or House Plants:** In extreme heat, it is a good practice to soak containers in a bucket of water; place the containers inside another pot and pack sphagnum moss between the pots.

**Kangaroo Paw** can be divided in late February/early March. Each division should consist of several shoots in order to maximize the chances of successful re-planting.

**Lavenders:** Prune and fertilize the summer flowerers - lavenders flower at different times from spring until summer and hence pruning has to be timed differently according to the species.

**Liliums:** plants that have to be re-located should be lifted now while still visible, otherwise it may be difficult to locate their precise sites. The accidental piercing of the bulbs with a fork can be a distressing experience for a plant and a gardener.

**Nectarines:** As sweetness does not improve after harvesting, pick while they are plump and firm but ripe. A red blush does not necessarily indicate that they are ripe. Ripeness can very often be detected by a nectarine aroma in the orchard. Store in a fruit bowl at room temperature until ready to eat.



**Roses:** Established rose bushes, which have been affected severely by black spot and/or downy mildew, can be hard pruned to remove almost all their leaves. Feed immediately with rose food and spray the remaining leaves and the soil with Yates' Rose Shield or Triforine. .

**Soil Improvement:** Garden beds and containers that are to be used for Spring-flowering annuals & bulbs and summer vegetables can have animal manure and/or compost dug into the top 15cms of the soil. This will decompose, attract earthworms, and improve the soil structure and the soil's water-holding capacity.

**Sweet Peas:** apply lime or dolomite in preparation for March or April planting. (March 17<sup>th</sup> is the traditional target planting date for some gardeners but it is not an obligatory one.)

**Trees and shrubs** need a weed and turf free zone of at least one metre around them in order to maximize their access to moisture and to nutrients.

**Wisteria** needs to be controlled in the January to February period by pruning out the long summer canes in the same way as you do with rampant bougainvilleas. Delaying until later could be too late as the flower buds may have commenced to form. Cut back to about the fifth nodes; to cut back any further can reduce the number of flowering buds for spring.

## **PLANTING**

**Bearded Irises** not already divided in November/December can be lifted, divided and replanted. Discard old and spent rhizomes. Retain young, fresh rhizomes from the edges of clumps. Ideally, wash the rhizomes in diluted bleach and dust the moist surface with sulphur powder.

**Plant some delphiniums** in the cooler climatic zones, that is, where the winters are cold and the summers are mild,. These will last for years in such climates. Delphiniums come in blue, white and purple and are a superb flower for decorative purposes.

**Plant Windflowers** also known as Japanese anemones, which are available in single & double white and pink flowers, in late summer and early autumn, in sites that offer afternoon shade.



**Vegetable Garden:** The seeds of winter vegetables such as broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, onions, spring onions, silver beet and lettuce can be planted from February onwards. Apply dolomite to the soil a month before the planting of seedlings. I have found Imperial and any of the red and green salad bowl mix varieties to be an excellent variety of lettuce to grow at this time of the year.

Every garden should boast some silver beet plants. In most climatic zones, it can be grown throughout the year. For an autumn crop, plant now. Yates' Fordhook Giant is my preferred variety for all seasons. Six weeks after planting, the first of the leaves can be picked. Seeds or plants are available. Moisture levels must be maintained and fortnightly soluble sprays of products high in nitrogen are recommended.

**PROPAGATION:** Azaleas, camellias, gardenias, daphnes, viburnums, buddleias and magnolias can still be propagated from tip cuttings. My preference, however, is to do this task in late December/January.

## **VEGETABLE GARDEN & ORCHARD**

Powdery mildew can affect cucurbits such as cucumbers, melons, marrows and pumpkins, and apples, roses and grapes in moist, humid February weather. Spray infected plants with Mancozeb Plus. My plants have not been affected thus far this summer but then I have given preventative sprays.

**Fruit Trees:** Ensure that fallen fruit is collected, placed in a plastic bag and discarded in the wheelie bin. There is much evidence in my City of discarded fruit on the ground that is attracting fruit fly.

**Harvesting:** In the orchard, stone fruit generally have more flavour when picked fully ripened. (The prevalence of fruit fly in the orchard sometimes has caused me to pick before ripened fully), unlike apples and pears, their flavour does not improve after picking.

**Happy Gardening**