

The Garden Clubs of Australia Inc



Newsletter No. 2

ABN 74 058 867744

www.gardenclubs.org.au

'Friendship through Gardens'

Secretaries: Please email this directly to your committee & members.

Reward Your Members

The GCA provides a number of awards which are available to affiliated clubs and their members as follows:

- Outstanding contribution by an **Individual to GARDENING and/or HORTICULTURE.**
- Outstanding service by an **Individual to GARDEN CLUBS OF AUSTRALIA INC.**
- Outstanding service by an **affiliated Club to the COMMUNITY.**
- Outstanding service by an **Individual to the COMMUNITY.**
- Outstanding service by a **Member of an affiliated Club to the ENVIRONMENT.**
- Achieving excellence by an **Individual in FLORAL ART.**
- **Young gardener** of the year award for under 30 years of age.
- Outstanding service of an **individual to their club: Ann Williams Clark Medallion**



Nomination for these Awards can be made by your club on the attached forms in this email. The Awards are judged by an independent panel and presented at the GCA AGM in September. <https://gardenclubs.org.au/awards/>



What they say...

My personal journey is to understand more about our GCA affiliates by calling club secretaries and presidents. What I have found is how similar the message is across those 90 conversations so far. We have amazing, dedicated, everyday individuals, doing their very best to bring together like minded-people. I apologise if I haven't contacted you yet but with 730 organisations it will take me a little time.

One chat I had recently was with the **passionate president Helen Wylie from Murilla Garden Group**. Helen is only in office for a two-year stint, as their club's constitution dictates, but for those two years she is determined to make a difference.

"It is about respecting the pioneers, those who built the garden group's solid foundation. **We need to continue to build on those building blocks.** When I became president, I said I will take it on but we need to change the way we do things but we need to do it with respect.

We need to continue to **grow the community**. Have contact with the people, be kind and be innovative. I have the respect of the people and they let me try it my way. But I am the first to admit if I am wrong.

People think that to open your garden it needs to be spectacular. They have a high expectation of what the garden should look like. They worry about the imperfections like the pile of rubbish in the corner.

With this lockdown we have encouraged members of all ages to share their garden via video on our Facebook site. Some take a little persuasion and I have to teach them how to do it but as they are in control of the video, they can miss the messy bit. You can see their **confidence grow** as they showcase their garden.

One of the ladies who shared her garden said she'd had periods of feeling down with the restrictions and was using words like depressed and alone. After all the positive feedback she received from posting photos of her garden, she just felt so **positive, energized and part of a community**.

With elderly and young mums feeling particularly isolated, it is important that we are part of the ramping up of the community. We have been through drought, floods and this isolation and we are still in drought. When our garden group gets together, we look at gardens, have a short meeting and a cuppa but it is really

a **confidence builder**. You see people blossoming, being funny, cracking jokes. It is not just about gardens, it's about **personal growth**.

People who know me will tell you about my garden of pot plants and, with the drought, I was losing them. I had offers from people to bring a truck two hours from Taroom to pick up my pot plants to save them for me. I even had people potting up plants, thinking of me and the specific plants I had lost. I get **overwhelmed with all the positive comments**.

Being a president is about being **in touch with community**, asking for feedback, informal feedback. I walk around the garden group meeting to see if the people are interacting, how can I make garden group interesting, and how we can meet their needs.

The generalized philosophy of garden clubs, values and beliefs needs to be fluid and innovative. Garden group transcends gardens, it is about relationships and it epitomises what we are all doing."

Editorial blooper *Our Gardens Magazine*

Hopefully by now all clubs and subscribers have received their copies of the winter issue of *Our Gardens* with the beautiful magnolia on the front cover.

However, I must confess that, due to an editorial oversight, I missed including the ad for Swagman Sprayers in the magazine.

This was particularly unfortunate because winter is such an important time for spraying, with seasonal examples such as post-pruning rose spraying and clean-up applications of fungicides and horticultural oil to fruit trees etc.

Charlie from Swagman first developed his sprayers for commercial users but in recent years has



introduced a fabulous home garden version. And, with Swagman being an Australian company, you can get support and spare parts. I have personally found my Swagman Sprayer wonderful as its battery-powered operation takes the hard work out of spraying in my garden.

Sorry, Swagman, for my oversight!

www.swagmansprayer.com.au

Judy Horton (Editor - *Our Gardens Magazine*)

P.S. Has your club found creative ways to keep in touch during the Covid 19 shutdown? Please send a short description (100-150 words) with one or two captioned pictures to carolyn.dawes@bigpond.com by 1 June for the spring issue of *Our Gardens*.

And don't forget that anyone can subscribe to *Our Gardens* and have the magazine delivered direct to their mailbox. \$20 for 4 issues. Contact: subscriptions@gardenclubs.org.au

Judy Horton

Business End of the Deal

- Just checking you received your club insurance certificate in the mail!
- Have you returned the voting ballot for the constitutional changes?

Let's Get to Know Our Clubs!

With 730 clubs across the Australian territories it would be great to know a little more about our members. If you would like to feature your club story, let me know. Let's face it. We are really great big sticky beaks.

Hills Green Thumb Garden Club

Since January, Hills Green Thumb Garden Club in South Australia got together with Mylor Garden Club to propagate plants for Adelaide Hills bushfire gardens. Propagating is an excellent excuse to get out in the garden during isolation.



This is just stage one; 3000 plants were given away by contactless kerbside pickup over the Anzac Day weekend. It was a great club activity. Stage 2 is 100 bare rooted fruit trees bought from \$3500 donations in June. Stage 3 in September is another 3000 plants for distribution. Stage 4 hopefully following our open garden is citrus trees for our 87 families. There are plans to supply tools to Kangaroo Island residents in the near future, as it is not possible to give them plants because of biosecurity



issues. Garden clubs can all do this for our bushfire families who have been forgotten since COVID-19.

The project will be finalised at end of 2020. It has been so nice to do something positive in this awful time and these lovely families have appreciated the gesture. Many have received no financial help and gardens are not covered by insurance.

Sue Smith. Hills Green Thumb Garden Club, SA.

Murilla Garden Group, Qld – Age is no barrier



The Murilla Garden Club was established in 1991 by a group of local ladies who shared a love and passion of gardening. Word spread and soon there were large numbers of men and women travelling from all over the Murilla area to meet and appreciate their local gardens. This gave us a chance to share your knowledge and creativity with others and to learn about gardening in our harsh climate - finding out what plants work and which ones don't! However, the garden club is far more than just visiting beautiful gardens, it's about men and women, of all ages, coming together and socialising whilst also getting away, in many cases, from the stresses of farming and day to day life.

President Helen Wylie put the call out on their Facebook page *“Would love to see your #mggisoprojects. Have you created a new garden? A new garden feature? Artistic creation? Deck accessory? Post your project. Small or large we would love you to share.”*

Well, let me tell you, they page is 'going off'. Members Jennifer, Sue, Janice, Bec, Emma, Kylie, Kate, Susie, Polly, Hayley and Glenda were spurred on by President Helen's #mggisoproject. Check it out.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/602737206482961/>

To Facebook or Not to Facebook!

There are some wonderful stories being shared on the GCA Facebook Groups, with home gardens featuring interesting projects, guest speakers sharing their personal gardening stories and wonderful photos of people's passion for gardening. Here are the links.

GCA Club Activities: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2249602565338673/>

GCA Gossip Group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/562479981146811/>

Welcome

The Management Committee of the Garden Clubs of Australia would like to welcome **Christine Souter**, a new Zone Coordinator for **Country Victoria** and **Robyn Russell**, in northern Tasmania. Christine and Robyn look forward to meeting her clubs in the near future and enjoying "Friendship through Gardens." Please contact Glenys Bruun glenysbruun@bigpond.com if you are interested in joining our gardening family.

Conversation Starters

Here's an idea to get you started from the GCA "Ideas for club activities" booklet.

How important is Biosecurity for Australia?

- Why should gardeners be concerned?
- Pests e.g. fire ants, exotic beetles etc.
- Importation of exotic diseases what are these diseases. e.g., myrtle rust
- How should we regard import controls at Airports, ports, and mail?
- Biosecurity areas within Australia. Why is there a need for this aspect?



How Relevant is a Garden Club During Isolation?

Elizabeth Dobson, GCA Committee, President of Stirling & Hills Garden Club. www.stirlingandhills.com.au

Isolation has clarified what is important to us. What do we miss and what can we do without? Do Clubs remain relevant?

Our club is all about gardening. We talk as much about plants as we like and no-one changes the subject. Everyone has something interesting to say and it is possible to make really good friends. We meet experts, have friends to go on trips with and yet there is no pressure. We participate as much or as little as we like. It reinforces a sense of identity.

Initially it was expected that we would be in 'Iso' till September, maybe even Christmas. So, the questions for our garden club were: would members remain connected to the club and how can we provide support and relevance?

We needed to speak together 'face to face' so we bought a subscription to Zoom. This enabled us to maintain our monthly 'formal' meetings, weekly catch up chats and committee meetings.

Surprisingly, our meeting seemed relatively normal and included;

- *Short formal business
- *Discussion about upcoming events
- *Question and Answer Session
- *Online Raffle
- *Online Voting for the Show bench
- *Speaker
- *Quiz

Raffle

The website became a key communication tool. It was used to set challenges, post our show bench photographs, advertise give away plants and post photographs of what we were doing in our gardens. Email allowed us to quickly share ideas about online opportunities in the rest of the world.



We found that events could be adapted. For example, our annual cuttings swap is a highlight for our club. Instead of meeting in a room we spread the hundreds of cuttings over different areas outside. It meant driving to a few venues but we all got new cuttings to propagate and yet managed to stay within the guidelines.

For those who don't have the technology to be involved, we kept in touch, had check-up visits, phone calls and sent letters.

The isolation may be shorter than we anticipated and we will return to normal meetings soon. However, there are indications that our approach was useful. We asked members to pay the annual fees due in March but made it valid for 2 years. Most people quickly renewed their membership and we had 4 new members join in April. People enjoyed the activities and well over 60% contributed in some way. Many comments were made agreeing that the activities added a normality and human connection when it was needed.

The challenges have **bonded the group** in a new and different way. We will continue using some of the new ideas even when we can meet again.

Kind Regards
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