

NEWSLETTER

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FEBRUARY MEETING

Our first meeting for the year will be **February 24th**. So come one, come all. We need to follow the Government regulations. Everyone must wear a mask while inside the hall.



BRING A CUP

Just a reminder members, if you would like a hot cup of coffee or tea at the end of the monthly meetings, you must bring along your own cup.



MARCH NEWSLETTER

From the March meeting the Clubs newsletter will be available at the general meeting. If you cannot attend, we will be posting after the meeting to your home address.

NEW VARIETY OF APPLE

Archie Thomas, who lives in the Nadder Valley in Wiltshire England, stumbled across a solitary windfall apple on a wooded trackway alongside a large area of ancient woodland near his home this month. The apple, which Thomas said was “unlike any I’d seen before”, had come from a lone old apple tree in the hedgerow with a large number of fruit on it.

Apple trees grown from seed are all different, so cultivated varieties, are propagated by taking cuttings from existing trees and grafting them on to rootstock to ensure the new tree and its apples are the same. Apples have been cultivated in this or similar ways for thousands of years.

Thomas, who works for the wild plant and fungi conservation charity Plantlife, was keen to identify the unusual apple he had found in a little-visited spot to see if it was a known cultivar, or a new variety he could name himself.

“Excited by the pale and mottled oddity, I set about trying to get it identified with a view to perhaps one day being able to name it. That was the dream but I did half suspect it would turn out to be something much less exciting than it is.”

After what he described as a “wild apple chase”, with many fruit experts flummoxed by the find, he received help from Plantlife colleagues and was then pointed towards the Royal Horticultural Society fruit identification service at RHS Wisley.

The RHS fruit specialist Jim Arbury inspected three of the apples and informed Thomas it was not a planted cultivar, but a new variety that he could propagate and name.



Arbury said it was “a very interesting apple”. It is clearly not a planted tree, but a seedling that could be a cross between a

cultivated apple and a wild *Malus sylvestris*, a European crab apple, he said.

“It tastes quite good. It’s a cooking apple or dual purpose, you can eat it, it’s got a bit of acidity but it’s got some flavour, and some tannin, which is what you have in cider apples,” he said, adding it could be used with other apples for cider.

He said most chance apple trees were from Bramley’s Seedling cooking apples grown in gardens or orchards, or sometimes from supermarket apples thrown out of car windows and now growing alongside roads.

But he said the apples sent by Thomas came from a tree that could be 100 years old or more and was not the result of a dropped modern supermarket apple. Thomas admitted he may be biased, but said he thought the apples tasted great. “Tart but not wincingly-so, and with enough sweetness to eat raw.” They speak of the terrain of Wiltshire; unimproved chalk grassland and chalk streams,,” he added.

As for the name, Thomas said he felt pressure to get it right: “I have too many ideas. My seven-year-old son wants me to call it Cristiano Ronaldo but that’s not happening. My wife, Hannah, is the apple of my eye, so she’s in contention.”

Dr Trevor Dines, at botanical specialist at Plantlife, said: “Archie has joined a small and select group of people that have discovered something entirely new in our natural world.

“I absolutely adore apples and Archie’s new find is breathtaking. And what a romantic origin, unearthed deep in a wood with ancient roots. We can only speculate how it arose, but that’s the joy of botany – you never quite know what you’ll find, or how it

got there. These sort of mysteries only serve to deepen our love of the countryside.”

CLOUDEHILL GARDEN

Two members visited Diggers Cloudehill Garden and Nursery in the Dandenongs in the first week of February. Both were impressed by the stunning gardens and large number of flowering plants.



Jeremy Francis bought the garden and began making Cloudehill in 1992. Cloudehill design derives from Italian renaissance gardens, English art and craft gardens and from contemporary meadow gardening. Compartments threaded along axes incorporate themes such as ‘expectation and surprise’. Several garden rooms were at their peak.



One of the highlights was in the first garden room visited. *Puya alpestris* is a native of Chile and looks like it has dropped from outer space. With supernatural shades of aquamarine and electric acid-yellow as well as spikes that can reach as high as 4 metres. Surviving both snow and desert conditions this plant is a splendid survivor. It can take 5 years to flower so patience is needed but the reward is well worth the effort.



Puya alpestris

WHAT’S GOING ON?

Here we try to explain why sometimes things go wrong in cooking.

Why do egg whites foam?

If you try to whip plain water into a foam, you won’t have much luck. Bubbles that form in plain water quickly pop. That’s because water molecules stick together. Water molecules are electrically attracted to each other. They won’t spread out to form a bubble film unless you add something that lessens the attraction.

An egg white is about 90% water and 10% protein. The egg-white proteins are long chains of amino acids that fold and curl into more or less spherical tangles. When you beat an egg white, these proteins uncurl and stretch out. When the proteins uncurl, they expose amino acids that were hidden in the centre of the tangle. Some of the amino acids repel water; these are *hydrophobic*, or water-fearing amino acids. Some of the amino acids are electrically charged and are attracted to water; these are *hydrophilic*, or water-loving amino acids.

As you beat the egg whites, you also whip bubbles into the mixture. The water molecules and egg-white proteins bump around, jockeying for position. The water molecules are attracted to each other and to the hydrophilic amino acids on the proteins. While trying to get close to each other and to the hydrophilic amino acids, the water molecules squeeze the hydrophobic amino acids out. The best place for the egg proteins is on the surface of the liquid, with their hydrophobic amino acids sticking out into the air.

The surface of each bubble film becomes crowded with egg proteins. The water molecules are forced apart by these proteins. Since the attraction between water molecules decreases with distance, the water molecules don't stick together quite as well—they can spread out and make a bubble film.

Separating the water molecules so that they spread out in bubble films is only one step in making a meringue. The chicken egg contains a mixture of proteins that makes meringue possible. Some of the proteins form bonds with each other to create a stable network that keeps the bubbles from popping. When the meringue is in the oven, another protein—*ovoalbumin*—

forms bonds that cause the meringue to stiffen.

Why does the temperature matter?

Egg whites at room temperature can be beaten to a foam more easily than cold egg whites.

Why is this dessert called Pavlova?

This dessert is named after Anna Pavlova, a famous Russian ballerina. Born in St. Petersburg in 1881, Pavlova overcame humble beginnings and physical setbacks to become the most well loved dancer of her time, worshipped all over the world. This delicate dessert was created in her honor. Her most famous role was in *The Dying Swan*, a ballet that was choreographed especially for her. She died at the age of 50, of pneumonia. She is famous for her last words. Moments before her death, she said, “Bring me my swan costume.”

Why can't I use a plastic bowl?

Fat interferes with the formation of a good foam—and fat clings to plastic. No matter how carefully you clean a plastic bowl, odds are good that a bit of grease remains behind. It's preferable—and easier!—to use a glass or stainless steel bowl to produce a fluffy meringue. Egg yolks also contain fat, so when you separate the eggs, try to make sure that none of the yolk ends up in your egg whites.

Is there any advantage to using a whisk?

We've gotten the best results from using a whisk with many thin wires. It may be because the whisk incorporates more air into the foam than a beater does.

Why not add sugar at the beginning?

Adding sugar at the beginning can double the time you have to whip the egg whites to get a foam. That's because the sugar molecules

get in the way of the egg proteins. With sugar molecules in the way, it takes longer for the proteins to find each other and form bonds.

When meringue is cooking, sugar helps keep it stable by bonding with water molecules and preventing them from escaping as water vapour. Delaying the evaporation of water from the foam helps keep the foam stable until it stiffens.

Why add vinegar?

Adding vinegar (or any other acid) can make the foam less likely to suffer the consequences of overbeating—lumpiness, loss of water, and collapse. These undesirable consequences result from too many bonds forming between the egg proteins.

When you add an acid to a mixture, you are essentially adding some positively charged particles. These positively charged particles are hydrogen ions—hydrogen atoms that have lost an electron. The hydrogen ions hop onto charged portions of the proteins and leave them uncharged. Proteins that are electrically neutral are less likely to react with other proteins.

Uh oh! My meringue shell broke! How can I save this dessert?

If your meringue shell gets too stiff and breaks apart, you can still make a tasty dessert. Just chop up the fruit that you had intended to put on top, whip the cream, break the meringue into large crumbs, mix it all together, and call it ambrosia!

Can overbeaten egg whites be salvaged?

“All is not lost. As long as you haven't added any other ingredients, you can usually resurrect a foam by adding an extra egg white and beating just until the mixture looks glossy and forms peaks again.”

CHERRY BARS



1 cup butter, softened
2 cups sugar
1 teaspoon salt
4 large eggs
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/4 teaspoon almond extract
3 cups all-purpose flour
2 cans cherry pie filling.

GLAZE:

1 cup confectioners' sugar
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/2 teaspoon almond extract
2 to 3 tablespoons whole milk

LETS MAKE IT-

Preheat oven to 180°C (350°F). In a large bowl, cream butter, sugar and salt until light and fluffy. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Beat in extracts. Gradually add flour.

Spread 3 cups dough into a greased 40x25x2.5cm baking pan. Spread with pie filling. Drop remaining dough by teaspoonfuls over filling. Bake 35-40 minutes or until golden brown.

Cool completely in pan on a wire rack.

In a small bowl, mix confectioners' sugar, extracts and enough milk to reach desired consistency; drizzle over top.

COMING EVENTS

March 6th & 7th, 10am to 4pm.
Ferny Creek Horticultural Society,
Plant Collectors Sale & Garden
Expo. 100 Hilton Rd Sassafras.
Free parking, entry \$5.

March 6th to 28th, Ballarat
Begonia Festival. To celebrate this
much loved festival for an
extended period over 3 weeks and
4 weekends. The Ballarat Begonia
Festival will be celebrated over an
extended period in 2021 from 6 -
28 March. A free festival in
Ballarat CBD and Ballarat
Botanical Gardens. Festival
activation will be dispersed
throughout the CBD in support of
local business, rather than centred
at the Ballarat Botanical Gardens.
The creative display of Begonias in
the Conservatory will continue to
be a festival favourite. New festival
highlights include an illuminated
garden, floral installations and a
pop-up garden display by local
artists and suppliers.

March 24th to 28th. The
Melbourne International Flower &
Garden Show. Royal Exhibition
Building & Carlton Gardens.
Wednesday 24th March 9am – 5pm
Thursday 25th March 9am – 5pm
Friday 26th March – 9am – 9pm
Saturday 27th March 9am – 5pm
Sunday 28th March 9am – 5pm
Tickets adults \$30, concession \$26
<http://melbflowershow.com.au/>

MEMBERS NEWS



HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU

February: Elisabeth Mercuri &
Pratima Francis.

We wish you all a wonderful
celebration.

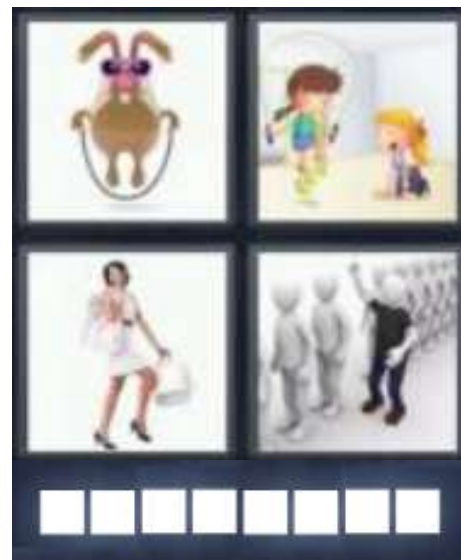
FIND THE WORD

Well, how did you go with finding
the word in the last newsletter? The
word is –

ASSEMBLE

The word this month has 8 letters.
What could it be?

Look at the four pictures for the
clue. Answer next newsletter.



MONTHLY COMPETITION

February 24th:

One Container Marigolds, 3-6
stems, One Variety, C.V.A.

March 24th: One Pot/Container
Succulent/s One variety.

MONTHLY MEETING

February 24th: Kathleen Tants -
Weed and Pests.

March 24th: John Pinniger -
Heritage Fruit Society (Petty's
Orchard).