

NEWSLETTER

Registered Address: P.O. Box 1004, Preston, 3072.

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PRESIDENT:
BILL SAUNDERS

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Information:
Phone: (03) 9478-0269

E-mail:
prestongardenclub@hotmail.com

Web Address:
www.prestongardenclub.org.au



FEBRUARY MEETING



Our first meeting for the year and a good start under COVID restrictions. Wearing face masks and social distancing was observed.



The members enjoyed the nights speaker, who had a lot of interesting information which everyone found useful and could apply in their garden. From the many questions, lots of little hints to be had.



CONSERVATORY CLOSED

The Fitzroy Gardens Conservatory is closed and under repairs. In February 2019, a glass panel in the Conservatory roof broke and fell to the floor. City of Melbourne closed the building for safety as it was unknown why the glass broke.



Now February 2021, 2 years later, the whole roof has been assessed by engineers and a contractor is now in the process of removing the glass and replacing rotted wood. The works should be completed by May this year, we hope! In time for the winter Tropical display. As a major floral tourist attraction, will again be open to the enjoyment of people visiting the Fitzroy Gardens.



After the roof work is finished, the walls will be given a clean and painted where required. Ready for the public to enjoy the floral displays again.

CHELSEA FLOWER SHOW

For the first time in the 108-year history of the Chelsea Flower Show, it will be postponed and will take place in the autumn instead of spring, due to the worldwide pandemic. The Show will now run between 21-26 September 2021.

With the coronavirus rate currently as high as it is, the Royal Horticultural Society has a responsibility to exhibitors and everyone involved in the Show, visitors, partners, volunteers and staff, to delay the 2021 RHS Chelsea Flower Show to later in the year, when millions more people will have been vaccinated and it is more likely that the levels of infection will have reduced substantially.

In addition to the autumn event, once again will hold the hugely successful RHS Virtual Chelsea Flower Show online during the May Show week (18-23 May), which millions of people across the UK and around the world tuned in to enjoy last year.

GARDEN GALA

Over 12 months ago members of the gala sub-committee had been working to organise our first Garden Gala day in April 2020.

The planning and organising for this event was coming together. Unfortunately something called a Coronavirus put a stop to everything.

With the uncertain future about Covid rules and lack of member support there will be no gala event.



TWO KINDS OF PLANT PEOPLE



OMG, MY PLANT IS DYING

OR



I THINK I CAN SAVE IT!!!

GREEN FRONT GARDENS

There is growing evidence that being in natural spaces – whether while gardening or listening to bird song – has a positive effect on mental health. Being in nature is also linked to improved cognitive function, greater relaxation, coping with trauma, and alleviating certain attention deficit disorder symptoms in children.

However, most of these studies have specifically looked at the effect of public green spaces, rather than private gardens. During a time when many people are at home due to COVID-19 restrictions, private garden spaces have been the most accessible green spaces for those who have them. But do these small green spaces have the same benefits for our mental health?

Although conducted prior to the current pandemic, recently published study has shown that having plants in domestic front gardens is associated with lower signs of stress. Given that front gardens are increasingly being paved over by developers, we wanted to chose to look at front gardens specifically to understand what their value and impact was both mentally, socially, and culturally. Front gardens are also a bridge between private and public life. Because they're visible to neighbours and passersby, they may be able to contribute to the wellbeing of the community, too. Our experiment evaluated physiological and psychological stress levels before and after adding plants to previously bare front gardens in Salford, Greater Manchester. We took measures of participants' cortisol concentrations (sometimes referred to as "the stress hormone") in their saliva, as well as self-reported perceived stress. Participants ranged in age from 21 to 86 and 64% of them were women.

We added two planters with ornamental plants – including Petunias, Violas, Rosemary, Lavender, Azaleas, Clematis, and either an Amelanchier (snowy mespilus) tree or a dwarf juniper tree. These were chosen for their ease of maintenance and familiarity to most people in the UK. We also provided the 42 residents with compost, self-watering containers, a watering can and a trellis. The research team did all the planting to ensure that all the gardens were similar. Participants were given advice on how to maintain and water their plants and were permitted to add further plants or features. The new additions were as low maintenance as possible.

Over a period of one year, we found that having plants in previously bare front gardens resulted in a 6% drop in residents' perceived stress levels. This scale measures the degree to which situations in life are considered to be stressful by taking into account feelings of control and the ability to cope with stressors. The 6% decrease is equivalent to the long-term impact of eight weekly mindfulness sessions.

We also found statistically significant changes in participants' salivary cortisol patterns. Cortisol is the body's main stress response hormone, which can activate our "fight or flight" response, and can regulate sleep and energy levels. We need cortisol every day to be healthy, and typically concentrations peak as we wake up, and taper down to their lowest level at night. Disturbances to this pattern indicate that our bodies are under stress. We found that 24% of residents had a healthy daily cortisol pattern at the beginning of the study. This increased to 53% three months after adding the plants, suggesting better mental health in these participants.

Reasons for these changes can be explained by what participants told us during interviews. Residents found that the gardens had a positive influence on their outlook on life, with strong themes developing around more positive attitudes in general, a sense of pride, and greater motivation to improve the local environment. The gardens were also valued as a place to relax.

These aspects are likely to contribute to people's personal resilience to stressful situations – and over time, have had an effect on their physiological response to stress, as measured by the cortisol concentrations. A small addition of a few plants in the front garden was a positive change to their home environment and the street.

All these wellbeing benefits of green spaces are understood to be based on two environmental psychology theories: attention restoration theory and stress reduction theory. Both psycho-evolutionary theories are based on Wilson's biophilia hypothesis that humans have an innate affinity with the natural environment.

Attention restoration theory proposes that exposure to natural environments restores our ability to concentrate on tasks that require effort and directed attention. Spending time in natural environments demands less "brain power" so to speak, as we don't need to focus as much on specific stimuli or tasks nor on suppressing distractions. Nature also provides us opportunities for reflection. Stress reduction theory proposes that natural environments provoke instantaneous emotional responses and fewer negative feelings than non-natural environments.

Our study's results show the importance of even small green spaces for reducing stress, and may be important considerations in

local planning, urban development, and health and social care. Integrated thinking between the built environment, environmental and health sectors is necessary.

The findings from this project also support the social case for more street-facing gardens and green spaces. For example, biophilic building standards, environmentally focused urban strategies, and walkable street initiatives could be significant ways of achieving this. Importantly for landscape architects and other professionals working with designed green spaces, there is scope for considerable impact on human perceptions, health and wellbeing.

For residents who have a front garden space, planting designs can be low maintenance without taking up too much space. Container plantings may be most appealing for renters. But for those without access to an outdoor space, there is some evidence that indoor houseplants also provide mental health benefits.

Lauriane Suyin Chalmin-Pui

COTTAGE PIE RECIPE



Ingredients:

- 1 Kg ground beef
- 2 onions, finely chopped
- 3 carrots, chopped
- 3 celery ribs, chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 200g mushrooms
- 45 mL (3 Tbsp) flour
- 15 mL (1 Tbsp) tomato paste
- 250 mL (1 cup) red wine, or beer (optional)

500mL (2 cups) beef stock
30 mL (2 Tbsp) Worcestershire sauce
30 mL (2 Tbsp) Marmite
Few thyme sprigs
Salt & pepper to taste
250 mL (1 cup) peas
250 mL (1 cup) corn

For the mash
1.5 Kg potatoes, chopped
250 mL milk
25g butter
200g old cheddar, grated

Method:

Preheat oven to 180°C (350°F).

Brown the ground beef in an ovenproof cast-iron pan, do this in batches if you need to.
Remove beef and set aside.

In the same pan fry the onions, carrots, celery, and mushrooms until soft.

Stir in the tomato paste, and cook for a minute or two.

Stir in the garlic, and flour.

Pour in the red wine, if using, and boil to reduce slightly before adding the beef stock, Worcestershire sauce, Marmite, thyme, and beef.

Bring to a simmer and cook, uncovered until the gravy has thickened.

Season with salt and pepper, and discard the thyme stalks.

Sprinkle in the corn and peas.

Meanwhile, make the mashed potato topping.

In a large saucepan, cover the chopped potatoes in salted cold water, bring to the boil and simmer until tender.

Drain and then mash with the milk, butter, and cheddar cheese; then season with some salt and pepper.

Spoon the mashed potatoes over the meat to cover.

Sprinkle on some more cheese if you want.

Bake in the oven for 45 minutes or so, until bubbly and the potatoes have browned.

COMING EVENTS

Cancelled, 2021 Tesselaar KaBloom Festival of Flowers due to the implications of COVID-19.

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/>

April 24th Saturday. APS - Yarra Yarra Group - Native Plants & Book Sale. Huge range of native, indigenous, and grafted plants at great prices. Books on related subjects. 5 plant stalls - LaTrobe Wildlife Sanctuary Nursery, Yarra Yarra member growers, Phillip Vaughan, SunValley, and Goldfields Revegetation Nursery. Location Eltham Community & Reception Centre, 801 Main Rd, Eltham. Contact ill 0430 513 433 or apsyarrayarra@gmail.com

MEMBERS NEWS



HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU

March: Hilary May, Carolyn Scott and Robert Strugnell.

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 –

SKIPPING

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

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



MONTHLY COMPETITION

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

April 28th: Bowl of Floating Flowers. No More Than 6 Blooms.

MONTHLY MEETING

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

April 28th: Pollinator Alliance - Attracting pollinators to your garden.

STAMPS WANTED

Still looking to collect postage stamps. Save them and bring along to the next meeting. Thanks in advance.

Robert