

KARANA DOWNS GARDEN CLUB - QUESTIONS TO / RESPONSES FROM APRIL PANEL

No.	To/ From	Question/Response
1		<p>How often should potting mix be replaced or is it OK to just top the pot up?            Buying soil from a nursery usually comes with some fertilisers etc. Should additional fertiliser and/or minerals be added at time of planting - both flowers and vegetables.            Is it always necessary to buy the premium potting mix?</p>
	Kath	<p>You need to repot your plants when the soil has deteriorated. Or when they have out grown the pot.            When I have bought in soil I always leave it rest for a week or two before planting. You can tell by the smell how much fertiliser is in there. I would plant and just used a liquid fertiliser.            Yes, buy premium potting mix if you want good results from your plants. Even using a premium potting mix I still add extra slow release.</p>
	Hazel	<p>Potting Mix - I always buy a good quality mix (usually Searles) &amp; sometimes add extras depending on the plant. If buying a lesser mix, you may need to improve the mix. Whether to replace or top up potting mix depends on a number of things. If the plant is being replaced &amp; mix has been in use for some time, then I would use fresh mix. If mix is reasonably fresh, then I would reuse but make some additions. If plant is not being replaced &amp; has been in the potted for a long time (ie years), it is best to remove the plant, replace some of the mix, check roots &amp; possibly trim, replant &amp; top up with fresh mix. Top up mix if plant hasn't been in place for a long time or if pot/plant is too large to remove. When topping up especially for large pots, I usually add extra fertiliser &amp; cocopeat to new mix. If old potting mix isn't too bad, I combine with equal quantities vermiculite &amp; cocopeat for seed raising.</p> <p>Soil - I try to avoid importing soil &amp; prefer to improve existing. However, when it is necessary, I prefer to place soil in bed &amp; leave to weather for some months before planting. Imported soil is usually highly alkaline but does improve with time. Before planting, dig over, water &amp; check PH. Does the soil look, feel &amp; smell good? Does it hold or repel water? Answers should tell you if ready to plant or action needed..</p>
	Desley	<p>Potting Mix - I spoke about my urns and large pots where I use wave spreading petunias.</p> <p>Soil - I have purchased it when we started the front garden. I usually buy the best quality and I would wait before planting to let it cool off and settle for a few months and no I would not add any fertilizer at time at planting. I prefer to wait till they make some growth before adding more.</p>

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2		I have never had much luck growing carrots so would be happy with some tips on this. Mine always are stunted and multi stemmed.
	Hazel	Carrots like most root crops like a loose, deep soil without obstructions such as stones & sticks. Rake soil to a fine tilth before planting seed. Could try baby carrots or a small, round variety.
3	Hazel	Every year my 3 year old Asparagus plants cause me stress. I always fear they have died. Currently there is not a trace of them above ground. So please explain – in very simple terms – so that even I can understand: What is the season for Asparagus & when do the plants emerge again? How much water? When to cut back?
	Hazel	Asparagus fronds usually emerge September/October & crop for 2-3 months then die back in the cooler months. I fertilise with manure, B&B, etc in August. Water well during growing season & cut back when fronds turn brown. Asparagus are heavy feeders & will take whatever you can give them but do crop for many years. Avoid cutting spears for first 3 years so crowns can develop, pick lightly for next couple of years, then harvest most spears leaving a few to 'frond-up'.
4	Hazel	I planted 6 pots of edible ginger – only one grew leaves. What could have happened?
	Hazel	Possibly planted too deeply or rotted. Delay planting until growing tips are visible on the rhizome. If large, cut rhizome into pieces each with 2 or 3 eyes and allow cuts to dry. Plant about 60mm deep. I like to add a compost/manure mix on top of soil once leaves are about 30cm high. Can be planted most months but September is ideal.
5	Kath & Desley	My Hibiscus often get Mealy Bug at this time of year - is it worth buying parasitic wasps as a control? Are there any other natural deterrents?
	Kath	Mix 10 grams of condy crystals and four teaspoons of neem oil into four and a half litres of water. Spray twice, every seven days. This is a useful insecticide and fungicide.

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6	Kath & Desley	Can you offer a suggestion why all Frangipanis have developed rust very early in the year? It appeared at least 2 months ago whereas normally it doesn't show itself until now.
	Kath	If your frangipani tree is affected by rust, it is caused after a cycle of heavy rain and hot temperatures. Make sure you rake up the leaves on the ground and put them in the bin.
7		When do you know that finger limes are ready to pick? My finger lime bush is producing its first fruit which is exciting and I don't want to ruin things by picking them too early. Do they continue to ripen once they are picked?
	Hazel	Skin changes from green to olive green/black. Not sure about continuing to ripen once picked.
8	Hazel	How do you prepare your vege. Patch for planting & what fertiliser regime do you follow to achieve maximum growth?
	Hazel	Preparation covered in talk. PowerPoint presentation to be added to club website soon. I believe soil preparation is most important & rarely fertilize after planting.
9	Kath	What is your preparation routine for Caladiums to insure maximum growth in summer?
	Kath	I have a sheet with the instruction of how to { Care For Your Caladiums}. If any members would like the instructions I would send them a copy..
10	Kath	You have won the Myrtle Halford Trophy a number of times . How do you prepare your plants to get them in top condition for display?
	Kath	When I won the trophy the first time, I would plan a month ahead with what pot plants I was going to display. I would tidy them up, shine leaves if needed, and give them liquid fertiliser. I believe in fertilizing my plants to get the best results, both in the garden and my pots.
11	Desley	How do you enrich your soil to provide maximum growth for your plants?
	Hazel	I believe Desley covered this in her presentation.
12	Desley	What flowering plants do you recommend to grow that a tough enough to take periods of dry weather?
	Desley	These are my best shrubs that I feel preform well in my garden for the dry weather - Abelia, Brumfelsia, Plumbago, Raphiolepis, and of late I have been trying a few Eremophilas. I have purchased these from Pete's nursery at Lowood, the ones that he has recommended are growing very well. I will see how they cope with all this wet weather.

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13	Hazel	<p>I would like to ask Hazel about netting vegetables and fruit to combat fruit fly and how to reduce fruit fly infestations on crops in general. Our zucchinis and squash were attacked and it is difficult to net them. We have had problems on our tomatoes and even some citrus fruit.</p> <p>When to cover fruit or vegetables?            Size of netting ie size of aperture?            Does it come in a roll or particular size pieces?            Supplier?            How to secure the netting?</p>
	Hazel	<p>Exclusion Netting - Many years ago, we bought a 300m x 6m roll of Vege-Net from NetPro in Stanthorpe. At the time, Green Harvest sold the same netting in much smaller sizes. I believe NetPro now have an online eBay store that you might like to check out. Hole size is approx. 1mm x 3mm &amp; netting gives around 10% shade protection.</p> <p>Netting Trees - We've never had to net citrus as fruit fly hasn't been a problem. We do net some other trees but keep them at around 3m in height for ease of netting. Once fruit have formed and before starting to ripen, drape netting over tree using a pole and tie netting around trunk at base of leaves. Any fruit touching netting can be stung. For large fruit, individual bags from netting could be used.</p> <p>Netting Vegetables - Net before or straight after planting. Net over a frame &amp; seal along ground with stakes laid horizontally or similar.. Frame types - igloo using wide poly pipe with ends stripped over vertical stakes in ground; two or more vertical stakes at intervals with horizontal stake secured across top. We used the igloo type for many years but the pipe would wilt on really hot days. Now use timber frame that I find easier to roll back for picking &amp; weeding.</p> <p>General Fruit Fly Reduction - In the early years, I tried various lures &amp; traps but found they trapped more beneficial insects than fruit fly. Fruit fly is only active in the warmer months so grow vegetables in cooler months.</p>
14	Hazel	<p>Could you recommend the best app for plant identification?</p>
	Hazel	<p>I've never used an app for plant identification &amp; haven't been encouraged by what I have heard or read from others.</p>

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15	Hazel	"Never fail" vegetables? This summer I seemed to have a bumper crop of every pest known to personkind, the grubs, fruit fly, possums and anything else that needed something to eat seemed to chew on everything.
	Hazel	Prefer to grow most vegetables March-November & leave beds fallow or green manure over summer. Ginger, turmeric, snake & bush beans do okay if given regular water. Lettuce also but use shadecloth. If netted - tomatoes, zucchini, eggplant.
16		I believe it to be a Rose of Sharon, common. Bush is about 5 years old. Until January the flowers were all white, now I get the odd pink alongside on the same branch about 70 millimetres apart. It is a single trunk tree, no sign of grafting.
	Hazel	It is not unusual for Rose of Sharon to change colour or have flowers from white to pink on same plant. Possibly related to temperatures.
17	Hazel	Which varieties of shelling, sugar snap and snow peas do you recommend for our area please? What height are these varieties?
	Hazel	Climbing varieties can grow to 2m; dwarf varieties approx. 60cm. Podding climbing - Greenfeast, Telephone Podding dwarf - Early Crop Massey, Erica Vale Lacy Lacy. I grew Lacy Lady for the first time last year. Planted late but coped with warm weather & many full pods. Lots of tendrils but not many leaves so easy to see pods. Sugar Snap climbing - no favourites Sugar Snap dwarf - Sugar Bon Snow climbing - Mammoth Melting, Purple Podded (pick this variety when young) Snow dwarf - Oregan Dwarf (there is also Oregan Giant, a climber)
18	Hazel	Vegetables to grow in containers - best ones to try & in what combinations?
	Hazel	I rarely grow vegetables in containers, occasionally lettuces. Use good quality mix with additions. If planting in combinations, then look for vegetables with similar requirements - water, sun, fertilizer, bugs. If using terracotta pots in full sun, then suggest sealing the pot.

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19	Hazel	Best way to water a veg garden & keep moisture in soil? Every day? Mulch is not enough to keep moisture in. What is best depth of mulch? Should Wettasoil or similar be added when preparing bed?
	Hazel	I prefer to hand water my veg garden but sometimes use drippers on soil surface under mulch. Newly planted seedlings need watering every day for the first few days to a week but, once established, watering should be less frequent and deeper. Soil containing organic matter and well mulched should retain moisture for a few days. If established plants need watering every day, I would check to see if soil is hydrophobic (impervious to water). If so, add organic matter and/or wetting agent. I don't use a wetting agent when preparing soil. I use baled sugar cane mulch to a depth of approx. 10cm.
20	Kath	I want to plant some spring annuals and perennials in pots. What are your favourites for this and in which combinations work well together? I'm looking for striking colour/s so the pots will stand out. The only colour I do not include is orange but anything else. I have pots of various sizes and can put wire frames in them if necessary. I would like long-flowering as well (don't want do I?!!!).
	Kath	Perennials - small salvias, pentas, geraniums, butterfly bush (white & pink), mandervillaa, coleus. Annuals - alyssum, lobelia blue eyes, Iceland poppies, impatiens, larkspur, candytuft, pansies, petunia, dianthus, verbena, violas, stocks, snapdragons.
21	Kath	I have a question about planting for spring flowers. I would like to plant a bed of white and yellow flowers - all shades of yellow but no orange. I would like plants of different heights and hopefully many of them will be suitable for picking for vases. What would you suggest please?
	Kath	White alyssum Snow Crystal, yellow pansy, white candytuft, yellow marigolds, white verbena, yellow snapdragons, white primula.