

Your Garden In April

By Sue McDougall,
Horticulturalist & Gardening Personality

Fill the garden with autumn colour this month!

With gardening inspiration all round, cooler weather and the easing of restrictions across most of the country, it's time to celebrate the garden. Whether it's a pot or two on a balcony or an expansive backyard, autumn is the ideal time to update corners, garden beds or a few pots.

Five tips to enjoy flowers inside and out

Create a cut flower garden and enjoy fresh flowers inside all year round.

Follow these easy steps to success:

- Spend a little time planning and selecting varieties that flower at different times of the year. Choose plants that have a long flowering time and give you the best value.
- Foliage is important. Plant varieties that have hard leathery foliage, are waterwise and form the background of the garden. These plants should respond to a regular prune and last for an extended length of time in a vase. Plant the following varieties for fillers in a vase - dwarf olive, upright rosemary, grey cineraria, wormwood, magnolia, sage, juvenile foliage of eucalyptus varieties and leather fern. When planting new plants, remember to water them in with **Seasol** to aid plant establishment.
- Choose a sunny position to create a picking garden. To get the best from annuals and perennials dig in lots of compost and fertilise with **PowerFeed with Troforte Flowers, Fruit & Citrus**. This formulation delivers quick and slow-release nutrients and beneficial microbes which improve soil fertility and promote gorgeous blooms.
- At the end of the season leave some flowers on the plant to develop seeds. Harvest these flowers as they start to fade and place in a paper bag. Allow to dry out and then store in an airtight container for the following season.
- Regular picking will encourage strong bushy growth and result in more flowers.



Plants for a colourful combination in a pot

If establishing a picking garden in pots, select a sunny position and large containers. The more soil around the plant roots the better they will perform. Look for companion combinations and plant multiple varieties in one pot.

- Lavender, Salvia and Primula
- Sage, Cosmos and Sweet Pea
- Coreopsis, Rosemary and Grey Cineraria
- Pansy, Calendula and Larkspurs
- Gladioli, Carnation and Stocks
- Cornflower, Dwarf Dahlia and Stasice



Chocolate Garden

Chocolate surrounds us through the month of April and creating a chocolate garden may be healthier for you than tucking into a few too many eggs this Easter.

Chocolate Mint - smells exactly like an after-dinner mint and is ideal for a living gift and growing in a large pot.

Chocolate Cosmos - has the chocolate vibe, smells like chocolate and gorgeous dark foliage. Grown as a perennial in most areas of Australia it will also thrive in a large pot.

Chocolate Daylily - while it doesn't smell like chocolate it has a dark flower the colour of chocolate. Every part of a daylily plant is edible.

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Flood affected plants

With at least 1/3rd of Australia's population experiencing severe weather including heavy rain and flooding over the last few weeks it equates to many gardens that have been flood affected. Minimising damage is a priority once water levels recede. Remove mud and silt from foliage to give plants the best chance possible to recover.

Damage from flood waters may only be evident in a few months' time. Symptoms from waterlogging include – yellowing of leaves and burnt foliage, die back of branches and defoliation. As plants start to shoot often there is reduced leaf size and premature leaf drop. Gradual decline is common and secondary infections can cause the ultimate death of plants.

How plants cope with waterlogging will depend upon length of time spent underwater. If roots have been exposed replace soil as soon as possible to reduce amount of time exposed to the air. Apply **Seasol** as a foliar application every fortnight to strengthen cell walls and build up the plant's resistance to disease. Drenching soil with **Seasol** solution will be beneficial for many varieties, native included. Lift any potted plants that are sitting in a sauce of water and have been out in the weather off the ground. Potting mix needs to dry out.

If plants have survived in pots its recommended to remove soil and repot with fresh premium potting mix. Water in regularly with **Seasol** to strengthen damaged root systems.



Small space verge gardens

The range of Australian plants available to purchase has expanded over the last few years. Plant breeders are selecting cultivars for compact growth habits and extended flowering. Follow these simple rules of thumb to create a gorgeous verge garden:

- Think of quality and not quantity. Look at selecting varieties that go together and replicate over the space. The guide is less species, more of each. Plant varieties in odd numbers to replicate a 'natural' look.
- Focus on foliage as well as flowers. Foliage adds interest to the garden all year round and contrasting foliage creates a further dimension.
- Boldness draws the eye to an area. This may be a bright coloured or contrasting plant at the edge of the verge.
- Features such as low logs or rocks will take on extra scrutiny, so choose carefully and when placing in the garden ensure they look good from all angles.
- Create a sense of scale. When selecting plant varieties ensure they will fit the area. When planting a verge select varieties that only grow to 500mm high.
- Most plants in a verge garden are viewed at close range - make every selection count.
- When landscaping with rocks place in a natural configuration, often this means burying 1/2 - 1/3rd of the rock and ensure they are the correct scale.
- Garden lights installed to highlight features add an extra dimension to a verge area and will create a sense of space particularly if the outdoor living space is at the front of the property.

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