



# C.M.G.C. Newsletter

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Mob. 0432 159 412

Dear Members and friends,

As I write this it is the first day of Spring and there is warmth in the air and the sun is shining through my window. What bliss after the last cold months of weather and lockdown.

It's been quite a month. I had started preparing seedling boxes and had two large polystyrene ones full of potting mix sitting on the ground when that amazing storm hit Melbourne. I happened to be looking out my kitchen window and saw the force of the wind lift the boxes up as if they weighed nothing, dump the soil out in mid air and land in the middle of our fish pond. If I hadn't seen it I wouldn't have believed that's what happened. The rest of my seedling boxes, also loaded with soil, were deposited all over the back garden. What a mess! Gardening can be so unexpected at times.

For the garden lovers, the rain this year has resulted in some of the most spectacular camellia and magnolia displays that I have ever seen, regarding the size and quantity of the blooms.

Sadly there's still no news about how clubs like ours will meet again in the future or when that might be. The minute we hear anything positive, we will report it to you.

Should you lose your newsletter, or wish to show it to other members or friends, you will be able to find it on our website [www.cmgc.net.au](http://www.cmgc.net.au) under the heading "News and Trips".

With the depressing extension of Stage 4 lockdown, we hope that you will emerge intact and ready to enjoy all that Spring has to offer in the garden.



Warmest regards, **Fiona Lynch** **CMGC President.**

**Below:** Spring has finally arrived with a burst of colour and warmth.



## What members are up to in their gardens.



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**Peter Digaletos has grafted a new pomegranite to his old non-productive tree. Pic. 1.**

**Yvonne McBean is growing maroon ixia. Pic. 2**

**Jill and Rob Thorpe are growing red peas in their winter veggie garden. Pics. 3 & 4**

**Jan Case is growing beautiful veggies and herbs. Pics. 5 & 6**

## September Speaker - Jill Bryant - Topic: Herb Trees

When I first saw the topic for this month, I asked, "What are herb trees?" My thoughts went to a vertical garden of herb plants, but no, not at all.

**Jill Bryant** is a passionate lover of trees with fruits that are either edible or useful. The more unusual that they are, the more Jill likes them. Her back garden is full of pots of trees from all over the world, some of which she has raised herself from seeds. She is a strong conservationist who is deeply concerned about water wastage, and catches most of her grey water for use in her garden. Amongst her favourite herb trees are:

**Hovenia dulcis, the Japanese Raisin Tree.** This hardy tree comes from Asia and is found across Eastern China and from Korea to the Himalayas. It prefers a sunny position on moist sandy or loamy soils. (Pictured right)



According to Jill, the edible fruits of this tree have some unique properties - they inhibit the absorption of alcohol and lessen the intensity of hangovers!!

**Diospyros nigra, or Chocolate Pudding Tree.** This black sapote is a species of persimmon. Its names include chocolate pudding fruit, black soapapple and zapote prieto. It's a tropical fruit tree native to Mexico, Central America, and Colombia. Sapote refers to any soft, edible fruit. (Pictured right)



The fruit can be heated and when served with cream has a soft velvety texture and tastes like chocolate pudding, with only half the calories!

There are many herb trees that can be talked about such as bay, curry leaf, carob, coffee, ginko, etc. We hope that when our meetings can resume again; we will reschedule Jill Bryant as a speaker. Then we can listen to her vast knowledge on these trees, their qualities and their meaning to us.

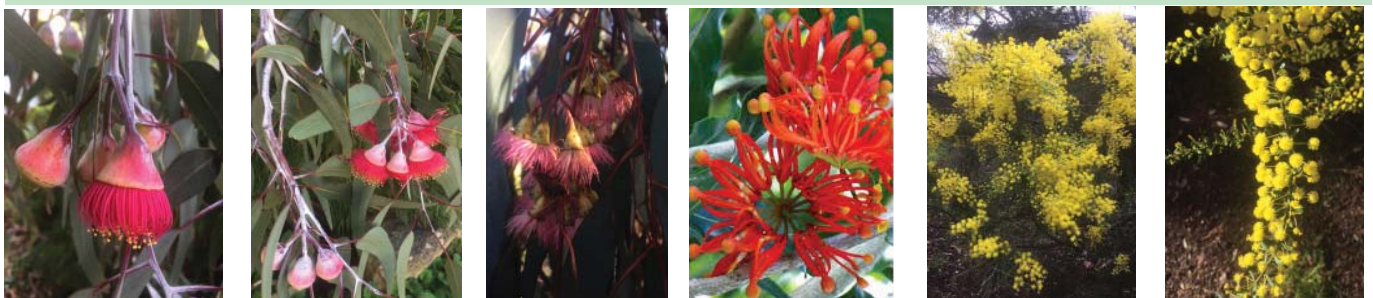
As I was about to ring off, Jill asked me, "Do you know which tree aspirin came from?" No, I didn't, but it turns out that it's a willow tree.

*Willow bark comes from the willow tree of the Salix species. The bark contains salicin, a compound similar to aspirin. Salicin is metabolized in the body to create salicylic acid, the precursor to aspirin. This herbal extract has long been used in native and folk medicine to relieve pain, inflammation, and fever. (Wikipedia)*

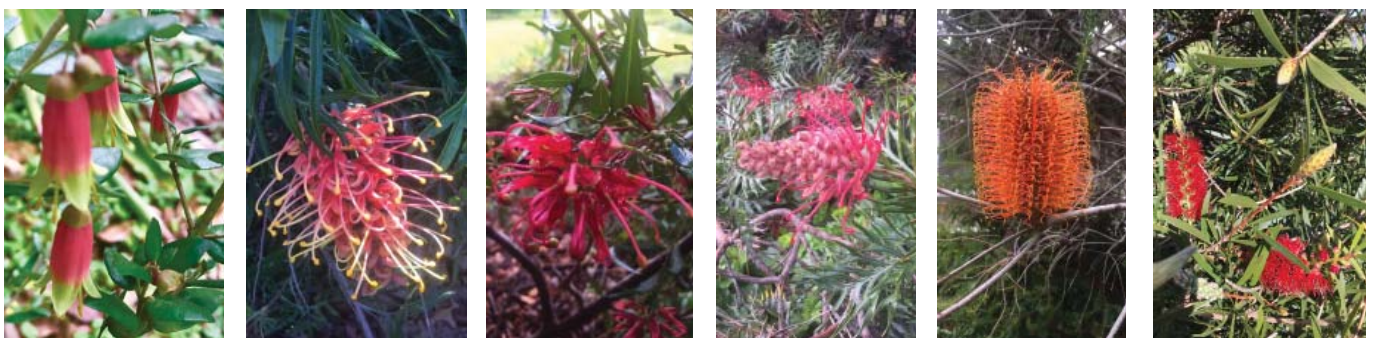


## Passing Shots - Australian Natives in Flower -

by Fiona Lynch



All but one photo were taken whilst on dog walks within 300 meters of my home in North Balwyn.



## Gardening jobs for September/October

by Fiona Lynch

At last there's warmth in the air and the nights are not so cold, so it's a good time for planting flower and vegetable seedlings, or starting from seed. If you haven't already got out with your shears and secateurs, now is the time to tidy and shape the bushes and trees in your garden before the Spring growth really takes off. Rose bushes in particular need to be pruned and shaped.

Many seedlings can be raised now, but more tender varieties such as capsicum, cucumber, eggplant, pumpkin, tomatoes and zucchini should be covered with glass, clear plastic, or raised in propagating boxes. (See below) There's plenty of time yet before they need to be planted outside.

Many herb seeds can be sown now and September is still a good month to plant crowns of rhubarb and asparagus, in addition to seed potatoes.

There are also many flowers you can grow from seed now, such as marigolds, salvias, petunias and sunflowers. You can include some old favourites such as asters, delphiniums, foxgloves, cosmos, snapdragons and dianthus for colour and variety.



## Make your own seedling boxes

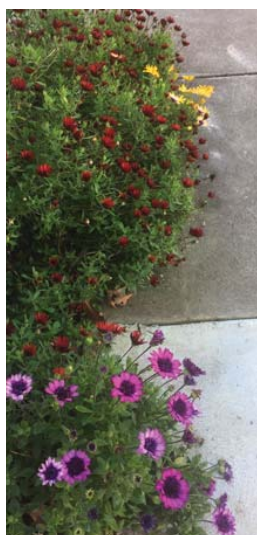
Plastic meat trays from supermarkets make brilliant seedling boxes. Simply heat a long steel skewer in a gas flame till glowing red and poke holes all over the base. Sandwich two trays together as shown and using hot skewer create a slit through both for a hinge. Use a cable tie to hinge the boxes. Cut off ends, load box with quality potting mix, use a chop stick to make holes, put in seeds.



## Ethical community pruning -

by Fiona Lynch

When I think back to the gardens I remember in the 50's and 60's, they were an amazing collection of this and that. Why? Because ethical community pruning or sharing was the norm at the time. People didn't have the money to go to expensive nurseries for plants, so they got cuttings or self-seedings from their friends, or did a little ethical pruning on their walks and then propagated the cuttings that they had collected.



### So what does "ethical pruning" mean?

When plants from private gardens spill out over fences or across footpaths, (as pictured left) into public spaces, they become part of the public domain and it's okay to take small cuttings from them. Even better if you can get permission, but not so easy to do during Covid.

Local parks may not fall into this category and are often carefully watched over by the "Friends of the Park."

I took the cuttings pictured right off footpaths in the first lockdown, planted them into propagating potting mix and every single one of them rooted. They are now planted out in my garden after removing mountains of oxalis weeds.

As with raising your own seedlings, it is immensely satisfying and rewarding to propagate your own plants from cuttings.



# The Firewheel Tree

by: Fiona Lynch

**This extraordinary Australian native tree is a member of the protea family and its natural habitat is north of the Nambucca River in NSW through to the Daintree in FNQ.**

However, I became aware of it when we bought our property in Inverloch and I found one growing very successfully on our back fence. I had no idea what it was, so had to look it up. Then I noticed that my neighbours in North Balwyn have a huge one growing in their front garden, which has seeded another one a few houses up the road.

Known as one of Australia's most spectacular rainforest trees, it's handsome when not in flower with its waxy leaves, and striking when in full bloom with spectacular, bright red, whorled flowers, which cover the canopy in summer.

There is a huge specimen in the Maranoa Botanical Gardens in Balwyn and they use it for the Garden's logo as shown below.

Firewheel tolerates a wide range of soils and conditions including dry periods, once established. It grows in an erect fashion up to 40 meters high and has a trunk diameter of about 75 cms. This is a highly ornamental and sought after tree for tropical gardens. However as I have witnessed, it's not averse to growing very happily in Victoria.

The famous Australian artist Margaret Preston loved these flowers and used them in her paintings, as shown below right.



## The Violet *By Jane Taylor*

**Down in a green and shady bed,  
A modest violet grew,  
Its stalk was bent, it hung its head,  
As if to hide from view.**

**And yet it was a lovely flower,  
Its colours bright and fair;  
It might have graced a rosy bower,  
Instead of hiding there,**

**Yet there it was content to bloom,  
In modest tints arrayed;  
And there diffused its sweet perfume,  
Within the silent shade.**

**Then let me to the valley go,  
This pretty flower to see;  
That I may also learn to grow  
In sweet humility.**

*Contributed by Jill Thorpe*

