

TOPIC: "HIBISCUS"

GUEST SPEAKER : CHRIS NOBLE - HIBISCUS WORLD, CABOOLTURE MALENY

GARDEN CLUB MEETING : 28 NOVEMBER, 2017 UNDER THE OLD WITTA SCHOOL

Chris said he had not met such lovely country gardeners before coming to Maleny. He started growing plants in the family veggie patch in the '60s. He then studied for a degree in applied science and believes that plants talk to you – he is a plant whisperer. He started a wholesale/retail nursery in Melbourne. After a time he shut the retail side to focus on wholesale selling to supermarkets. He moved to Queensland in 1991 and fell in love with the people and the State – hibiscus grow better here.

- Fertilizer – why so called? Reasoned if added to infertile land, call it fertilizer
- In Brazil jungle is cleared to plant two crops then land is infertile. Then realised by adding fertilizers (manures) could sustain soil nutrition
- Two types of fertilizer – organic and artificial (chemical). Person who uses both does better
- NPK – nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium (potash). N for the leaves; P for roots, starchiness and toughness; K for fruit, flowers, disease and frost resistance
- Deficiencies in trace elements can be corrected by S-Ca-Mg - sodium, calcium, magnesium sulphate(Epsom Salts)needed for photosynthesis. Mg attaches to chlorophyll to increase it
- Legumes – peas and beans –produce their own nitrogen and need phosphorus and potassium. Farmers follow these crops with lettuce as soil has plenty of nitrogen
- Organic fertilizers break up clay soils and bind sandy soils to produce bacteria
- N is a by product of coal – add sulphuric acid. Nauru phosphate is derived from bird poo. K is mined from ancient former sea beds and lakes and also from burning hardwood forests
- Ammonium sulphate is mixed with weedicide by farmers – N 12, P 5, K 15, S 5+TE
- Calcium nitrate N 15, C 26 reduces acidity. If one element is missing, plants will suffer – poor growth. KRISTAFLEX YARRA COMPLEX fertilizer is available from Elders. Aquasol and Thrive will do the same job. Chris uses slow release PLANTACOTE available in 4, 6, and 16 months strengths. He mixes together 5g of each at planting.Also organic matter comprised of either fowl, pig, sheep, cow, donkey or horse manure and Blood and Bone fertilizer
- Some Lot Fed cattle have Urea in their food so NPK is very low in manure e.g.1.1.1 but has lots of Trace Elements. Fish and Seaweed fertilizers have lots of Trace Elements like calcium, magnesium, sulphur, chlorine and sodium, but low nitrogen
- Organic matter and sulphurs acidify soil. Mushroom compost has lots of salt and will burn plants especially grevilleas – counter with dolomite or garden lime
- Organic matter is negatively charged and fertilizers are positively charged. When fertilizers are liquefied they are attracted to organic matter in roots. Don't over fertilize or use erratically. Balanced, regular dosage is best and avoids bleaching
- Chris grow hibiscus in 100% coir peat. SAND USED IN MIXES ADDS NOTHING – no nutrients Plants need air around roots – coir peat allows this but sand does not
- If compost is not turned over regularly it becomes anaerobic, rank
- Heat in compost heap is caused by friction caused by build up of bacteria moving through.

Chris distributed a pamphlet 'How To Care For Your Hibiscus' containing helpful information on Hibiscus Choice, Site Selection, Soil, Soil Preparation, Planting & Feeding, Pruning, Pest & Disease Control. He sells his special blend of Hibiscus Food at a good price.

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