

TOPIC : WHERE HAVE ALL THE FLOWERS GONE & ALOES

GUEST SPEAKER : MICHAEL DENT

MALENY GARDEN CLUB MEETING : 26 MAY 2015

- Michael was born in South Africa and settled in Australia 30 years ago. His favourite plant is Hydrangea. He presented a number of Hypotheses regarding his topic -
- **HYPOTHESIS 1 :**
- There is a lack of flowers in Brisbane streets – no birds or bees
- Biodiversity is so important
- In his book published 17 years ago, Trevor Nottle stated that ‘we Australians have horticultural baggage - an obsession with growing milder climate plants from where ancestors came
- Australia has flooding rains and drought
- **HYPOTHESIS 2 :**
- People with black thumbs struggle to grow flowers from mild zones. They give up and concrete their yards or move to town houses
- Others plant their gardens, don’t tend them and wonder why everything dies
- **HYPOTHESIS 3 :**
- Landscapers put in 4 Yuccas to contrast with grey pavers and gravel and say that’s it, that’s the garden
- They need to look at a wider palette of flowering plants
- **HYPOTHESIS 4 :**
- Garden Centres are disappearing through lack of patronage, reflecting our behaviour of moving away from flowers
- **HYPOTHESIS 5 :**
- Why are there no flowers ? Young people are not gardening. There are so many competing interests for the attention of young people today
- The situation will be much worse in 20 years
- **HYPOTHESIS 6 :**
- Because native Australian plants are Australian, some think they should grow anywhere. However, many are suited to and proliferate in their zone only eg Kangaroo Paws in Western Australia
- Many road plantings don’t survive in South East Queensland because wrong plants are used
- Poinsettia is the floral emblem of Brisbane but it is from Mexico – why not a native flower?
- **HYPOTHESIS 7 :**
- Expectation is that gardening is difficult. We complain about hard work – not wanting to be a lazy gardener
- A weed is a plant that has mastered survival under all conditions – the only drawback is weeds don’t grow in straight rows
- **HYPOTHESIS 8 :**
- We fight Nature in our gardens eg we use water crystals

- The sensible thing is to use plants which have adapted eg Bromeliads with a water tank in the centre. Also Aloes – they don't need water crystals etc
- We need to work with Nature using best fit plants for a particular zone, tough, drought resistant eg Begonia, Euphorbia, Strelitzia, Agapanthus, Crucifix Orchid, Talbralgea. Coleus stores water in the stems
- ALOES :
- Aloes grow from Darwin to South, West and Eastern Australia and are exported to the Middle East
- Graham Ross from TV's Better Homes and Gardens recently filmed Michael's garden of 300 types of Aloe – 700 species world wide
- They are slow growing plants – related to Kniphofia and Agapanthus all lilies from Africa
- They survive the tropics in raised beds
- They are good hedging plants, vibrant and colourful with long lasting flowers to which birds are attracted
- They flower from January to August – peak flowering in Autumn and Winter
- They are great in pots – don't use cheap potting mix – water and feed regularly
- They are not desert plants and are not related to Agave or Cactus
- They are not dangerous plants eg no thorns like Roses and Citrus – only soft margins on leaves
- They can be mixed in with Camellia and Euphorbia for variety in garden
- They need free draining soil and love sunlight – not much flowering in shade
- Raise the bed in clay conditions
- Fertilize in Spring
- Aphids and Mealy Bugs can attack - esp an unhealthy plant in shade. Can use Confidor when not in flower
- 34 Aloe varieties now in Australia from mini to tree size – clumping varieties can be divided
- There is no such thing as a family of succulents
- Aloe is a lily from Africa – not all flower significantly
- Aloe species grow in South African Mountains in snow, inland and on the coast
- Different species perform well in their own zone
- Forget Vera which is quite separate and used for hand cream and other purposes
- As gardeners, give them a go – don't give up

“Aloes – blooming beauties for a sunburnt country – colourful, sculptural and sustainable”.

For further information view Michael's web site <www.aloe-aloe.com.au>