

# SNIPPETS

From here and there



## Summer 2022

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The Maleny Garden Club extends a warm invitation to all members and visitors to attend the monthly general meetings held on the last Tuesday of each month, as per program for the year.

### Ever Wonder Why?

Why is the man who invests all your money called a broker?

### We're off to Tamborine's Spring Fair

There we stood – a gaggle of gaily-garbed gregarious gardeners greeted by a glorious morning's sunshine, and ready for any adventure Tamborine Mountain could offer. But wait a minute. Isn't a tamborine one of those circular things with little bells that you bang with your hand or your elbow? What's that got to do with gardens in spring? Dunno mate.

Oh, it's all right. Diana Begbie has explained that the musical thing has a "u" in it. So that's not for you. In that calm state of mind, we clambered into the coach, buckled up, and were soon coasting down the motorway to Tam-bor-ine.

### So much for the *allegro*. Now to the *andante*.

We left the highway and slowly, slowly climbed the steep winding road, unaware that heavy rain overnight had made the gardens very soggy and that some had closed for the day. Undaunted, we revised our schedule and turned up like a clean-up squad. Our arrival brought to the local people sunshine, joy, and shiny credit cards.

Morning-tea saw us at the Botanical Gardens, the creation of the local garden society. In the space of forty years, these 11 hectares of steep boggy land have been transformed into garden "rooms" of beauty - like the Japanese garden, the orchid house, the Wisteria walk, the Rhododendron slopes, and (my favourite) the Sooty

Owl walk, where the stream hosts a fairy tale watermill, story boards, and intersecting paths that children love to follow.

The Botanic visit shook us awake to the varied offerings of Tamborine – which is a bit higher than Maleny and a bit wetter too, and it's laid out on a much smaller plateau. This brings the bush much closer: one is more aware of the deep gullies and soaring gum trees adjacent to the orderliness of the gardens and parks.

Many of us were learning about this little plateau as we travelled around it. And what we learned about Tamborine's environmental legacy opened our eyes. It was here that Queensland's first national park was established (Witches' Falls). And many more have followed. The early residents knew that this place was special, and their actions sparked an awareness of natural wilderness and wildlife that spread out from here to enrich our appreciation of the natural world. We are grateful for their efforts to protect and preserve.

Gardens are reflections of their owners' interests and visions. A couple of examples will suffice. The Maison de Fleurs showed what could be done with a small suburban block of land. Its front yard had a simple neat design that gave a taste of what was to be found out back – order, texture, colour, peace. In contrast, the Clivea farm was a straggling property that extended out beyond a simple house into a long meadow, dominated by large bushes of dramatically coloured Cliveas. The enthusiasm of the owners was undeniable, seen in their willingness to advise us on best methods to care for the plants we had bought.

Of course, Maleny Garden Club tours are more than aesthetic events; they are gustatory ones as well. We began with morning tea sandwiches and cakes, as usual, and then progressed to dining in greater style: cutlery and tablecloths, with table service. We put on our best manners at the Manor. We drove a fair way for dinner at the Golf Club. And then we were revived next morning by the Spice of Life breakfast spread. “Mummy, how far does a seatbelt stretch?” “Ask your father”.

Whereas each garden has its own personality, I find that the best part of visiting a person’s garden is having a chat with the owner. That’s when we share their garden and understand their vision for it and its history. And our joy of gardening advances a little more.

Some of the attractions regrettably we missed, We may be over-cautious but we know when to desist.

- The skywalk: not wheelchair friendly.
- The hang-gliding: too airy-scary.
- And the motel swimming pool: forgot our togs.

A few of the colours we caught as we roamed in the gardens:



*By John Cotterell*

## How to Prevent Powdery Mildew on Your Squash Plants.

Has your squash plant been covered in a layer of white powder lately? If so, you’re likely dealing with powdery mildew – a common fungal infection that can be tricky to treat. It’s important to know how powdery mildew affects squash plants, and what you can do to protect them.

Keep reading to know how to identify powdery mildew, what causes it, how to treat it, and most importantly, how to prevent it from happening in the first place. So, if you’re concerned about this fungus ruining your garden, read on!

Powdery mildew is a common fungus that can affect [many plants](#), including squash. It causes plants [to develop a white powder on the leaves and fruit](#), stunting growth, reducing yields, or even killing your plant. Fortunately, you can take steps to prevent powdery mildew from affecting your squash plants.

### Proper Watering Techniques.

Several things [prevent powdery mildew](#) from attacking your squash plants but some stand out above the rest. One of the most important care essentials is proper watering.

Water the plants early in the day to avoid any evaporation or leaf scorch. Additionally, leaves that have time to dry before nightfall are less susceptible to fungal growth. Also, avoid overhead watering, which can splash water onto the leaves and spread the fungus. Water at the base of the plant instead.

If you follow all these watering rules, you have a better chance of keeping your squash plants safe from powdery mildew.

### Air Circulation

Another way to stop powdery mildew is to ensure your plants have plenty of air circulation. It means planting them in an open area where they’ll get a lot of sun and breeze.

Additionally, space your plants out so they’re not crowding each other. Squash plants should be planted about 4 feet apart in your garden.

**Prune overcrowded plants,** and thin out dense foliage to improve air circulation to your garden. To prune your squash plant, look for vines that are not the main stem and snip them off. Prune those that are growing in undesired places and make sure you prune the vines that have no fruit on them! This will help your plant redirect its energy towards new growth.

And, while your head first in your plant, be sure to check for pests and other infected foliage.

*Backyard Boss. 15<sup>th</sup> Sept 2022.*

What is called winter squash in America we know as pumpkin. But there are several varieties of squash such as cucumber, zucchini, yellow squash etc.

## The Stunning Helleborus Black Beauty



## Miracles of Nature



## Want noisy miners to be less despotic? Think twice before filling your garden with nectar-rich flowers.

Noisy miners are complicated creatures. These Australian native honeyeaters live in large cooperative groups, use alarm calls to [target specific predators](#), and sometimes [help raise the young of other miners](#). But they're perhaps best known for their aggressive and coordinated attacks on other birds – a behaviour known as “mobbing”.

We conducted a study investigating some of the possible factors that influence mobbing. We were interested in whether access to human food left on plates at cafes, or a high nectar supply thanks to planted gardens, might give urban miners extra energy and time to mob other species more often. We also examined whether miners were more aggressive towards some species over others.

Our [study](#), published in the journal [Emu - Austral Ornithology](#), found it wasn't cafes with access to sugar-rich food that led to more miner aggression. In fact, gardens were where we recorded the highest amount of aggressive behaviour.

Understanding mobbing is important, because this behaviour can drive out other birds and reduce diversity. [Smaller birds with a similar diet](#) to noisy miners are particularly vulnerable.



### What we found.

We found interesting differences in how miners responded to our taxidermy models and the broadcasted alarm calls.



Noisy miners exhibited aggressive behaviours for a much longer time in gardens and cafés in comparison to natural bush areas.

Surprisingly, however, access to sugar-rich food from cafes didn't yield the most aggressive behaviour. Rather, we recorded the highest levels of aggressive behaviour near garden sites.

Nectar-rich plants (such as grevilleas and bottlebrushes) are attractive to birds with a sweet tooth, and miners are no exception. Newer cultivars flower for longer, meaning miners living in our gardens may have access to an almost year-round source of food.

Ready access to these flowering shrubs may affect aggression by providing more time, energy or reward to noisy miners defending these uber-rich resources.

The type of model presented also impacted miner response.

More miners were attracted to an area and mobbed the subject for longer when the model was of a predator.

Miners showed even greater aggression to food competitor models, however. They were more likely to physically strike food competitor models with a peck or swoop compared to predator models. Noisy miners are often drawn to cafes. Jade Fountain

#### **What can gardeners do with these findings?**

Our research shows the importance of considering how gardens – whether in back yards, in parks or new housing estates – can affect local ecosystems, including bird behaviour. Previous [studies](#) have drawn a link between the types of plants humans choose to plant and the local mix of bird species.

Grevilleas look lovely but how does their presence affect miner behaviour? To reduce the risk of creating a perfect habitat for despotic miners in your garden, aim to:

1. plant multi-layered levels in your garden – that means including ground cover, small shrubs, medium shrubs and trees to provide shelter at different heights for various birds and animals
2. consider planting plenty of dense shrubs with small flowers to attract insects and provide shelter for small birds
3. use a mix of nectar-rich and non-flowering shrubs and grasses (instead of focusing too heavily on flowering plants)
4. try to avoid planting too many exotic species; opt instead for native plants [local to your area and suited to the climate](#), as these benefit native plants and animals whilst minimising benefits to aggressive noisy miners.

*Misha Ketchell, editor 'The Conversation' Sept 2022.*

#### **Trivia;**

\*A cat has 32 muscles in each ear.

\*The penguin is the only bird that can swim but not fly.

\*A cat keeps purring when inhaling and exhaling.

\*There are 35 bathrooms in the White House.

#### **Lesson in Employee Relationship**

Fred Gibb was in his early 60's retired and had started a second career in catering.

However, he couldn't seem to get to work on time. Every day he was 2, 3, 5 minutes late. However he was a good worker, really clever, so the owner was in a quandary about how to deal with it. Finally one day he called Fred into his office for a talk.

"Fred I have to tell you, I like your work ethic, you do a top class job, but you've been late so often it's a worry."

"Yes, I realise that sir and I'm working on it." replied Fred.

"I'm pleased to hear that, you are a team player. It's odd though, you're coming in late. I know that you are retired from the Royal Navy. What did they say if you came in late there?"

They said, "Good morning Admiral."

#### **Editor's Note.**

Well we have seen another year go by with lightning speed. It only seems like yesterday when we were saying goodbye to 2021

May I wish every reader a happy and safe Christmas and New Year and I look forward to seeing you all again in 2023.

May I thank John Cotteroll for your article and Di Begbie for inviting him to write it.

Margaret.

**The Club's Objectives are:** – To further knowledge and enjoyment of horticulture. – To raise awareness in the club and community of local environment and to encourage planting of local indigenous species. – To enjoy social interaction between members of this and similar clubs.

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