

IN THE GARDEN

IVE ordered some *Allium giganteum* bulbs from Lambley Nursery to come up in spring and delight me with their ball-shaped heads of hundreds of soft pink/purple flowers.



TWO varieties of agastache are planted there at the moment and will get cut back in winter to allow the alliums to do their gorgeous stuff above ground. **CUT** back the bank of bog sage that hasn't been as good this year as previous ones. Usually it forms a thick wall of lush green foliage and deep blue flowers but not this summer. **TRIM** the two standard ficus that are growing beautifully in the front courtyard displaying lots of new leaves. **PULL** out the tomatoes from their pots as there's not much fruit left now. Freshen up the potting mix in readiness for the sweet pea seedlings that I'm going to plant and maybe some pansies in antique shades. **DENISE GADD**

OUT AND ABOUT

OPEN GARDENS

Today and tomorrow 10am-4.30pm. \$6. **Mon Reve**, 35 Hampden Road, Armadale. Young garden designed by Phil Johnson with grass trees and a billabong. **Fern Gully**, 25 Kennedy Street, Glen Waverley. Predominantly Australian plant garden with waterway and billabong. **Lemon Tree Cottage**, 59 Ferguson Street, Upwey. More than 130 salvias, roses and perennials in a terraced garden. **Foster garden**, 2 Elanora Court, Wheelers Hill. Well-maintained garden with box-hedged beds of annuals.

ALL IS CALM

Today and tomorrow wander through the rose gardens at the Peaceful Land of Joy Meditation Centre, Tibetan Buddhist Society, 1425 Mickleham Road, Yuroke. 10am-4pm. \$6.



TAKE TEA

Tomorrow 11am-4pm enjoy high tea in autumn to celebrate the turning of the leaves at the Geelong Botanic Gardens. At 2pm learn how to save the planet through the earth. On Monday at 6pm in the GBG meeting room, a talk by author Richard Allen on Australia's remarkable trees. Bookings for high tea, 5222 6053.

CRUDEN FARM

Dame Elisabeth Murdoch's garden is open tomorrow for the Baker IDI Heart and Diabetes Institute. 10am-3pm. Gardening talks, food. Enter from Cranhaven Road, Langwarrin. Adults \$25, children free.

NATIVE PLANTS

Learn how to garden with Australian plants on Tuesday nights over five weeks starting this week. Nunawading Horticultural Centre, 82 Jolimont Road, Forest Hill. \$50. Bookings 9842 5482.

YOUR ABC

Gardening Australia presenter John Patrick is the guest speaker on Thursday at the Friends of the ABC-Southern Bayside group at Gardeners Corner Store, 1 Centre Road, Brighton East. 5.15pm-7.15pm; light refreshments. \$12.50. Bookings 9580 6402.

GREEN FINGERS

An introduction to horticulture on Thursdays over 16 weeks starting on April 22. Wingate Avenue Community Centre, 13a Wingate Avenue, Ascot Vale. \$150 (concession \$65). Bookings 9376 5244.

AUTUMN GLORY Landscape designers are finishing off their creations and growers are aiming for perfection. It must be showtime. **Denise Gadd** reports.

Putting on the glitz

HOPEFULLY green-collar crime won't thwart this year's Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show as happened at the Torquay Allotment Association Show in Britain.

Richard Pastewski had been going for gold with his 100 prized dahlias but some dastardly person sprayed them with weedkiller just days before the show, thus scotching any chance he had of taking out the top prize.

One can't imagine such curmudgeonly behaviour being part of the Melbourne show which on Wednesday celebrates its 15th year at the Carlton Gardens.

This year's theme has a therapeutic edge with landscape designers turning to the five senses for their inspiration.

Entering the best in show category James Dawson is creating a sensory garden for the vision impaired to raise awareness of the work of Guide Dogs Victoria.

First he visited the sensory garden at Royal Talbot Rehabilitation Centre for advice from its creator Steven Wells and has now designed a garden that will be "visually bold and laced with heightened levels of smell, sound and physical texture".

Melissa Thomas has also been inspired by Wells' creation collaborating with him to build a well-being garden to promote good health through flowers and herbs.

"We're using soft landscaping rather than hard surfaces to create a good feeling in the garden," Thomas says.

"We're trying to get people to get out into their gardens and enjoy them rather than worrying about having to spend a lot of money on an outdoor room."

Celebrity gardener Jamie Durie will construct "The Nest" from woven steel and recycled timber.

It will include an elevated lounge with trees poking through the top.

World Vision will take us on a journey through the food security



issue with a design created by Little Veggie Patch's Fabian Capomolla.

Food security expert John McKenzie says the display will demonstrate simple and inexpensive ways to develop home gardens using organic techniques.

The emphasis is on permaculture — the development of self-sustaining agricultural ecosystems such as seed saving and grow bags — and its place in countries such as Sri Lanka to help people cope with their often harsh environment.

If you're looking for something unusual visit first-time exhibitor Donna Smith who will present an eclectic collection of carnivorous plants, aquatic species and truffle trees.

Smith who runs Triffid Park with her husband, Jason, exports carnivorous plants such as Venus fly traps and pitcher plants around the world.

As insect catchers these can't be beaten with the plants emitting a sweet scent to attract flies or European wasps who dive down the plants' throats to feast on the honey nectar hidden inside. And that's the end of the insects.

While carnivorous plants have tough interiors their exteriors are exquisite coming in a range of sizes, shapes, colours and patterns much sought after by aficionados.

The Smiths also specialise in truffle trees, a burgeoning business in Tasmania and Canberra, and making inroads into Victoria.

Host trees, either English oaks or Holly Oaks are innoculated with black truffle spore but there's an eight year wait for this gastronome's delight so it's a long-term project.

Sustainability is also high on the agenda at the show with award-winning designer Christian Jenkins creating a native garden complete with grass trees, gum trees and drought-tolerant plants against a dramatic backdrop of bright orange and pink perspex retaining walls.

This year there are more than 500 exhibitors ranging from: display gardens; potagers; specialist

Clockwise from above: Donna and Jason Smith in their Venus fly trap house; a permaculture garden in Sri Lanka with grow bags; everything old is new again; James Dawson is designing a sensory garden for Guide Dogs Victoria; Melissa Thomas and Steven Wells are building a therapy and well-being garden. **PICTURES: ROBERT BANKS**



grows; floral art; children's events; sustainable gardens; water storage and saving advice; growing your own fruit trees; Ikebana; new flower releases; sculpture garden; an avenue of achievable gardens; and a great hanging basket competition.

The ground floor of the Royal Exhibition Building will be ablaze with colour for the Great Hall of Flowers display as will student creations in the floral design competition.

While the show is an annual fixture on Melbourne's horticultural calendar, a permit is required for it to be held in the Carlton Gardens as it is a world heritage site.

Heritage Victoria advertised late last year and received "a handful" of negative submissions referring to public access as well as the impact of the show on the gardens.

Still on the statute books is an amendment to the Crown Lands (Reserves) Act introduced in February 2008 to "save" the five-day event, following an impasse the previous year between the show's operators and Melbourne City Council which refused to extend MIFGS's contract beyond 2008, citing turf damage and alienation of public land.

Event director Greg Hooton says the show has a licence until 2011 and is negotiating with the council to lock in a minimum five-year contract.

"We couldn't get things going until last September/October and that's not enough time to plan the event properly and attract designers to give them long-term certainty," Hooton says.



The show starts on Wednesday and runs until Sunday. Tickets at the gate or racv.com.au or 13 13 29. melbourneflowershow.com.au

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