

Portstone

GARDEN CENTRE

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Newsletter for February

GOJI BERRY plants (*Lycium barbarum*) are flavour of the month as far as 'superfoods' go. These berries, native to Tibet, China and India, have been cultivated for centuries by herbalists. They are packed full of antioxidants and minerals, and they boast natural disease-fighting properties. The fruit can be eaten raw, juiced, dried, used in sauces, yoghurt, ice cream, fruit salads or just about any recipe that fruit is used in. The plants aren't much to look at though, they're scrubby deciduous perennials with egg-shaped orange-red fruit that look like miniature tamarillos. An easy to grow shrub that likes full sun in a well drained site or in a container. It may require some support, can be grown as a standard or espaliered. Goji berries ripen from spring until late summer in the second or third year and are frost hardy.

FEIJOA are an increasingly popular tree for the home garden; not only does it fruit, but it is highly ornamental as well. The pohutakawa like flowers put on a beautiful display around Christmas time and contrast nicely with the silver of the underleaf. 'Unique' is deservedly a popular selection, with an abundance of early season fruit with excellent eating qualities. The fruit are medium to large size with rough skin and soft, juicy, smooth flesh. Unlike most other varieties of feijoa, it is self-fertile so it doesn't require a second tree for good pollination. It's great for organic gardens because it's affected by few pests and diseases.

The **VEGETABLE** garden will have some gaps now, as the spring plants are finishing. Time to plant for winter harvesting, are brassicas (cauli, broccoli, cabbage & brussel sprouts). Dot leek plants around the brassicas to help deter pests. Plant celery and coriander now, they grow better in the cooler autumn weather. Silverbeet, spinach and lettuces will have time to get well established before winter slows their growth. Sow carrots, beetroot, parsnip, swede and radishes. Feed with your choice of fertilizer, but a good organic option is sheep pellets, so easy to use. Prune raspberries once fruiting has finished, remove old and dead canes, then tie up fresh new growth.

LAWNS- If you are planning on sowing a new lawn this autumn, start preparing the ground now. Cultivate the soil then spray the weeds that come up. Repeating this process will reduce the number of weeds in the new lawn. Then you will be ready to sow in March/April.

Summer flowering annuals still have another 2-3 months flowering left, so keep them 'dead-headed' to maintain health and vigour. Also there is still time to plant more if you want to take advantage of summer stock being sold at bargain prices.

SHRUB OF THE MONTH - TIBOUCHINA A large evergreen shrub with dark green leaves, large rich purple flowers with whiskery stamens. The flower buds are large, reddish and hairy.

SPRING BULBS are in store now, freesias and anemones.

Portstone Garden Cafe is now **OPEN**. Congratulations to Sharon and Brian Smith formerly of Eastcoast Cafe, Ferrymead. They have created a welcoming environment where you can enjoy delicious food and great coffee. Specialising in gluten free food.