

Things are starting to look up with the arrival of August, just that little bit of a hint of what's to come. One could say that Spring is just around the corner, so one better get cracking. This is a good time to pay attention to the soil, weed it and feed it, and mulch it. If you planted any leafy green crops like mustard or lupins now is the time to dig these in before they get too big or there will be trouble for them to break down. Keep turning your compost over and use it in your vege beds if it is ready.

Now is the time to start planning what you want to plant and where it should be planted, remove any plants that have not performed over the past season and also woody plants that are declining in health.

Divide perennials and herbs and last but not least plant more spinach and silver beet. You might be sick of them but they keep producing when everything else has given up the ghost!

The first months of Spring are called the hungry gap – your garden is growing but nothing else is ready to eat, these stalwarts will help you through the lean times.

Last year I planted a few **Kumara** in my urn in the vege garden, mainly for the pretty cascading leaves, but lo and behold I had a bumper crop of red delicious tubers. And apparently they are one of the healthiest vegetables you can eat. As an excellent source of vitamins and minerals (incl; vit B6, calcium and iron) and virtually fat free, cholesterol free and very low in sodium, what's not to like.

If you are going to grow them in a container it will need to be at least 30cm deep and will require plenty of water through summer to fatten up those tubers, so they require a long, warm growing season in full sun and in free draining soil with a hard pan off 30cm under the surface. If you don't have a clay pan or solid soil layer under the soil, bury some sheets of plastic 30cm below the surface to act as a hard pan. Prior to planting blend in an organic fertiliser, but don't be tempted to feed while plants are growing, it will only encourage leaf growth as opposed to tuber growth.

Just remember **Kumara** doesn't tolerate frost or low soil temperature and is challenging to grow here without protection.

Portstone will have **Kumara** plants for sale in Spring.



So for the first time we have **Dragonfruit** plants for sale. They are a tropical climbing, succulent type cactus with aerial roots and three-sided stems. White flowers open at night and wither by morning. The fruit can be either bright pink, yellow or red and the flesh is white or red with tiny black seeds.

Best grown in a warm, sunny sheltered position in well-drained soil. You need to provide support to allow branches to hang down. The leathery, slightly leafy fruit are harvested in autumn. The fruit is high in vitamin C and antioxidants and usually eaten fresh by cutting in half and scooping out the delicately sweet crisp and refreshing flesh. It only grows to 1-2m high and will be happy in a pot.

## In Store

Our **Paeonies and Begonias** should arrive soon and the first of the Dahlias are in with another shipment in a few weeks.

Plenty of **Roses** to choose from, now is a good time to plant them.

More and more bedding will start to arrive as the weather warms up – still **\$2.99**

We have some Super Special Polyanthus for sale at **99cents** each, while stock lasts.

Also some very cool Primulas Sirococco with their wonderful frilly multicoloured blooms

Great selection of **Herbs 3 for \$15** special still on, and more perennials are on their way as Spring touches down.

## The little Market

We have gorgeous Bougainvilleas, Scarlet O'Hara, Jasmine climbers, Pukas, Rosemary, Thyme, Gardenias, Salvia, \$5 Spider plants, Garlic, Potted Mixed Daffodils, and some beautifully relaxing lavender bath salts and invigorating rosemary foot bath, all made in Heathcote Valley. And a dog that won't come when called...

## The Fantastic Five Fruit Trees to have in your Garden

Having a garden is like having your very own slice of paradise, but what could be better than having a slice of fruit right from your back garden. Let's dive into the delightful world of the best five fruit trees to have in your garden.

- **Apple Tree** - Apples are versatile, delicious and can be used in various dishes from sauces to desserts. Easily grown and low maintenance. They come in many varieties, suited to different climates.
- **Citrus** eg; Orange, Lemon, Lime. Citrus fruits are rich in vitamin C and add a refreshing flavour to drinks and dishes. You can even make your own Limoncello from the skin of the lemon
- **Peach** - Peaches are juicy and sweet, and can be used to make jam or bottle.
- **Cherries** - Not only a tasty treat but also add a beautiful touch to your garden with their vibrant blossoms. Just make sure you get in before the birds.
- **Pear** - Pears are a great source of fibre and can be enjoyed fresh or used in desserts and preserves.

If you can find space and have the room for the iconic kiwi favourite Feijoa; A delicious and unique fruit, sweet with hints of pineapple, guava and mint. Packed with essential vitamins, minerals and antioxidants that we all need. I know I said 5 Fruit Trees! But like most gardeners it's hard to know where to stop.

## Indoor area

### Orchids

We have a stunning selection of orchids in the shop at the moment. We have many different coloured Cymbidiums, these orchids have multiple flowering spikes, and are used by florists for their stunning flowers that last a long time.

We also have the Paphiopedilum orchid, often called the Slipper Orchids because of the shape of the flowers. The Oncidium orchids have a gorgeous dress-like petal coloured white and purple. No matter what way you turn, the flowers are beautiful.

Finally, we have the Zygopetalum orchid which produces fragrant flowers and can bloom up to 4 times a year lasting 3-4 weeks.

Orchids are actually easy to grow, and they make a great indoor plant. They like to be kept moist, not wet, and fertilized often with orchid plant food. Position them somewhere inside with filtered light and cooler temperatures. After flowering they can be put outside, somewhere frost and shade protected.

### Pots

Just arrived is a large range of ceramic indoor pots. These pots come in a variety of colours, black, blue, yellow, grey, light pink and white. They all have a matching saucer and come in sizes from 10cm wide up to 30cm.

### Garden Art

A great gift idea could be from our range of Beachcomber Garden Art. It is made from weathering steel known as Corten Steel, in the Wairarapa Valley. Each piece is inspired by our natural surrounds. We have different native birds, domestic birds and animals either to hang on a wall or pushed into the ground.

This month's newsletter contributors are;

**Bjorg** can be located in the undercover area looking after bedding/veges, citrus & The little Market.

**Lynnie** is our shrub and tree expert so she is outside a lot.

**Leigh** can be found within the shop.

Come say hi, we are here to help.

**Love your Garden**

