

# OUT ON A LIMB

An informative newsletter for all those with an interest in horticulture



Taller trees  
& shrubs behind

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## The Disadvantage of Monoculture

Barry Fitzpatrick



On a recent stroll around our neighbourhood block I passed a new house on a prominent and elevated corner site, where landscapers had been busy creating a garden. I had been watching the progress for a number of weeks as paths and paving were completed, a water feature was constructed and some outside lighting was installed. Finally, loads and loads of topsoil was brought in both to cover up the 'sins of the builders' with buried rubble and over-burden in the ground, but principally to create lawn areas and several garden beds, the largest of which was set adjacent to the front fence line and which bellied deeply back into the lawn area.

The lawn areas were duly planted out with something like the ubiquitous Sir Walter Buffalo, but in the large bellied garden bed at the front, the entire bed was planted out with a hundred or more diminutive plants of what I think was *Gardenia radicans*. I was rather surprised and I suppose a little disappointed that with such a low and repetitive plant profile, so little had been achieved in a position where a few taller trees and shrubs could have created a real focal point.

A day or so later I saw the proud owners busily watering their new garden. I stopped to chat and asked them if they had a particular fondness for gardenias – pointing to the new plantings. Clearly they had no idea what a gardenia was and absolutely no horticultural understanding of what had been planted.

I have no quarrel with this because the average home owner probably has little or no interest in gardening (except in spring after the grand finals have been played), nor in fact do they need to. What it did set me cogitating however, was the merits or otherwise, of the current landscaping trend for monoculture.

But why do it? After all, there is a world of choice out there with production nurseries busily producing new and improved varieties with monotonous regularity. Each time I go to a local garden centre the entrance is invariably flooded with new and interesting plants of

all colours, sizes and forms. It's a bit like a lollyshop!

Monoculture of course is far from new. I recall home gardens from my childhood days when ribbon gardening (planting successive lines of a specific variety of bedding plant such as begonias, feverfew, coleus, heuchera, pot dahlia and grey-leaved plants such as 'Dusty Miller') were mono-planted in wide circles around the perimeter of a central lawn.

Needless to say, monoculture is widely practised in agriculture and in horticultural production where it is systematically monitored and controlled.

The disadvantage of monoculture is most clearly evident in the home garden with vegetable and annual crops when we are advised not to plant the same variety in the same spot in successive years. The reason is simple enough, the same plants take up the same nutrients year-on-year, thus leaving the soil deficient in the nutrient requirement specific to that particular plant. It is also argued that monoculture promotes the spread of pests and diseases, which must in turn be chemically controlled.

To finish and coming back to the mass-planted gardenias, I suppose my biggest concern is not so much about the environment which I am unable to change, but quite selfishly I suppose, mourning the lost potential to create a garden showpiece on a prominent corner on my home patch.

Elsewhere in this issue, John Colwill writes in awe of the beautiful wildflowers of his home state Western Australia, but also raises a few bitter-sweet matters in regard to the rapidly escalating spread of weeds to the point where many visitors are actually photographing weeds instead of the famed wildflowers!

And to end on a brighter note, on behalf of all at Fitzpatrick & Co., I would like to wish all of our readers an extremely happy Christmas and a safe and prosperous New Year.

# “The sensational wildflowers of WA”

WA horticulturist John Colwill reports...



*Bee on Native  
Rhodanthe manglesii*



*John Colwill*

Best not to mention the GST to any West Australian at the moment - instead talk to us about our wildflowers of which we have the lion's share. Our Banksias, Kangaroo Paws and Lechenaultias are world famous. Not so well known is the amazing range of ephemerals that grow across much of the state - given the right conditions that is.

Let me introduce you to just one plant family, Asteraceae (Compositae of old). Most gardeners would be familiar with Pink and White Everlastings but there is so much more than that. Visit Florabase at <https://florabase.dpaw.wa.gov.au/>, use the search facility to find how many herbaceous members of that family grow in WA and you might be surprised to find there are 576 of them. Unfortunately many of them are weeds. Take those out though and you still have over 500 ranging from prostrate groundcovers to bushy plants a metre high and wide. Members of this plant family have

compound flowers - lots of small flowers gathered together in a single head, so while they are attractive from a distance they are intriguing close up.

When there is early winter rain and good follow-up falls, the seeds rapidly germinate and in as little as 5 to 10 weeks start flowering. In a good year they carpet the landscape from horizon to horizon for several weeks in late winter and early spring. Once the heat comes though they just as quickly go to seed and fade away.

In order to survive and thrive in what is a fairly hostile climate these plants have evolved a few interesting habits.

Most are phototropic, their flowers turn to follow the sun. If you're on a tour bus make sure you have the sun behind you!

Most flowers close up when the humidity rises, either when it rains or at night. Some small insects sit on the flower as it closes for a nice secure night's rest. While trapped inside the flower though, the plant pushes pollen up on to them. That's the price of accommodation in the bush!

A single plant can produce thousands of seeds that are ejected when mature. Special moisture sensitive hairs lock the seed to the soil where it has to endure temperatures of fifty plus degrees for months before the next rain.

*Rhodanthe floribunda*



If you're thinking about viewing this massed colour spectacle keep your eye on the rainfall reports. With WA's drying climate it happens a lot less frequently now than it used to, and there is another significant problem, weeds - millions of them. So many that people take photos of the weeds in bloom believing them to be wildflowers. Sadly nobody is doing anything about the weeds so it's likely that many of the ephemerals will join the threatened or extinct lists of the future.



*Rhodanthe chlorocephalum subsp. splendida* Schoenia cassiniana

## Which plant where?



A five-year research program known as *Which Plant Where?* will attempt to create an interactive database for specifiers and suppliers to assist them in choosing which plant goes best within any given environment when greening urban spaces.

The program is an initiative that aims to bring our urban centres to life with long-term, viable greenery and ensure that our built landscapes are climate-resilient and able to withstand future challenges.

Developed by *2020 Vision* as part of the 2015 Growing the Seeds tour, the initiative has drawn on the knowledge of a diverse group of stakeholders including nursery and turf growers, practitioners, developers, landscape planners and designers, as well as state and local government representatives, in order to understand the challenges that specifiers and growers face when building urban centres.

By involving and drawing upon the support of these key stakeholders, *Which Plant Where?* aims to incorporate several tools and research findings to deliver an interactive database, called the Plant Features Tool that supports end users in their project designs.

Several research and development workshops have already taken place, and *Which Plant Where?* has many more planned over the next few years to identify the key elements of plant and tree varieties, which environments and uses they are suited for, and to iron out any challenges that may arise.

In 2021, the interactive Plant Features tool will be able to comb through a comprehensive database of plantlife that can be narrowed down via a range of project and environment specific filters to suggest and confirm suitable varieties and their viability in a given project.

Tools that already exist allow for the consideration of purpose, colour, flowering, height or availability, but none of those currently available has been backed by extensive research, nor do they consider future climate scenarios, safety, location or amenity value.

Major planned features of the new tool will include filters that reflect:

- Common urban planting needs, such as rooftops, verges, water-sensitive design, parks or urban forests.
- Value-added characteristics such as heat mitigation, wildlife and biodiversity benefits, pollinator-friendliness or tolerance to urban constraints such as footpath.

The *Which Plant Where?* Initiative and tool will have a range of applications and relate to a range of industries in different ways.

For the landscape, nursery and turf industries, it is hoped that the interactive tool will:

- Provide guidelines to councils, planners, residents, landscapers and horticulturalists about what to plant
- Support local councils' climate adaptation programs
- Mitigate risks associated with poor plant selection
- Inform better local labelling of plants at a consumer level
- Help confirm crucial production and supply targets for specific varieties

*The Which Plant Where?, When and Why Database for Growing Urban Greenspace* (GC15002) has been funded by Hort Innovation with co-investment from Macquarie University, Western Sydney University and the New South Wales Office of Environment and Heritage.

For more information: [www.whichplantwhere.com.au](http://www.whichplantwhere.com.au)

Download the brochure:

[www.whichplantwhere.com.au/media/1157/which-plant-where-brochure-web.pdf](http://www.whichplantwhere.com.au/media/1157/which-plant-where-brochure-web.pdf)

# Workers' Compensation Insurance – a few things you should know!



Mick LeGrand

Many businesses out there are not aware that they have a legal obligation to hold a Workers' Compensation policy and are therefore leaving themselves open to large fines, penalties and possible litigation by not having cover in place.

Workers Compensation is cover taken out by employers to cover their workers for injury or illness that occurs due to or in the course of their employment.

Workers' Compensation covers the costs of the majority of the wages, all medical and like i.e. doctors, hospital, ambulance, pharmaceutical, other treatments and rehab required to return the worker to work in their pre-employment role or retraining and job seeking for a new role if they are no longer fit to carry out the duties required to perform the old one.

## Do I need Workers' Compensation Insurance?

How do we know if we should have a Workers' Compensation policy in place, we have received conflicting information over the years from our various advisors?

- Do you employ apprentices or trainee workers?
- Does your business issue payment summaries at the end of the financial year to anyone including directors?
- Does your business use subcontractors on a regular basis?

If the answer to any of the above questions was YES, then you must have a Workers' Compensation policy in place.

We have a Workers' Compensation specialist on staff who has over 20 years' experience in the Workers' Compensation field and is dedicated to managing our employer's Workers' Compensation and understanding what is required for their businesses.

If you have any doubt or would like to confirm that you are currently complying with your requirements, please contact Fitzpatrick & Co. on 03 8544 1600 or email [insure@fitzpatrick.com.au](mailto:insure@fitzpatrick.com.au) and we can go through your situation and advise you accordingly.

## How do I apply for Workers Compensation?

Workers Compensation in Australia is managed at a state level, so each state has a different scheme. If you contact us we can assist you to set up cover as required. If you operate in multiple states and territories you may be required to hold cover in more than one.

Article prepared by Mick LeGrand, Programs Manager, Fitzpatrick & Co.



# THE BENEFITS OF GREEN ROOFS

*Green roofs could be just what Mother Nature needs.*

Climate change is having an impact worldwide. The ramifications of intense and out of season rainfall over high-density urban areas has resulted in distress to communities and damage to environments. Instances of urban flooding have been seen recently in North America, but are also becoming more frequent here in Australia - in fact, parts of SE Queensland were subjected to in excess of 300mm of rainfall in just a few hours as recently as early October.

In many urban areas, permeable surfaces that allow water to drain freely have been replaced by hard surfaces that don't cope with heavy downpours. What's worse is that they funnel rapidly flowing water towards already under-pressure stormwater and sewerage systems that may be clogged with debris.

Many urban centres in Australia are aware that an overhaul of existing stormwater and sewerage systems is needed, but what if we could aid these systems by providing additional water catchment areas in the form of green roofs?

With rising temperatures linked to increased rainfall globally, green roofs can be retro-fitted to existing buildings or incorporated into future designs. Green roofs can also complement other green infrastructure technologies, such as permeable pavements, bio-swales and cisterns/tanks, to meet the challenges of extreme weather events co-operatively.

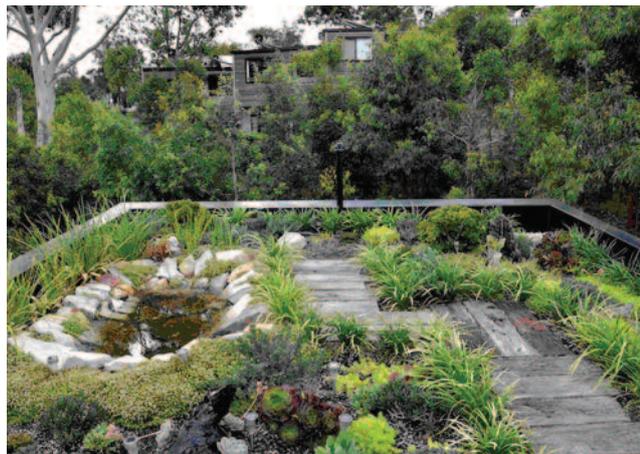
Not only do green roofs allow us to bring natural aesthetics to urban environments via plantlife, but a recent study completed by University of Toronto civil engineer Jenny Hill and co-researchers at the school's Green Roof



Innovation Testing Lab (GRIT Lab) showed that green roofs have the capacity to capture an average of 70 per cent of rainfall over a given time.

This capacity is dependent on a range of variables such as the growing media incorporated into the roof, whether or not the roof has been watered prior to rainfall, and the type of irrigation schedules the roof has in place.

While further research is required to determine how best to mitigate storm-water retention across a wide-range and size of green roof designs and incorporated plantlife, the study is promising in that it provides another frontier for which green infrastructure can help cities design for emerging climate challenges.



# New Australian Standard for turf use

After many months of investment in research and trialling by the Australian turf industry, the use of turf as an erosion control method is now officially listed as an Australian Standard.

Published recently, *AS 5181:2017 Use and installation of turf as an erosion, nutrient and sediment control measure* details the requirements for the use and installation of turf as an erosion, nutrient and sediment control measure. The Standard paper also provides guidance on turf species selection and disposal.

The Standard is now available for use and implementation in a range of industry development and planning applications across varying environments.

Achieving the Standard for the industry required dedicated effort in vigorous trials and research projects, all of which confirmed that turf is an effective erosion, nutrient and sediment control measure. The research concludes that turf is especially pertinent in construction and building situations as in other forms of development, and the Standard recognises that turf can provide a number of social and environmental benefits in built environments.

According to Turf Australia, the primary audience for this Standard includes:

- Infrastructure and property developers and managers
- Development and environmental consent authorities
- Public and private design and construction engineers, project managers and civil contractors
- Soil scientists
- Landscape architects, professionals and contractors

- Turf suppliers and turf laying contractors.

Turf Australia explains that:

“This Standard is intended to be used once a decision has already been made to use turf as the preferred method of erosion, nutrient and sediment control, and after due consideration has been given to the site and use characteristics of the specific project.”

More information and a preview of the Standard:

<https://infostore.saiglobal.com/preview/as/as5000/5100/5181-2017.pdf?sku=1919567>



## Useful links & resources:

*(Please note: some of these addresses do NOT have 'www' in front)*

- Landscape Industries Association [www.landscapingaustralia.com.au](http://www.landscapingaustralia.com.au) (includes links to all State Landscape Associations)
- Nursery & Garden Industry Australia [www.ngia.com.au](http://www.ngia.com.au) (includes links to all State NGIs)
- Australian Institute of Landscape Design & Management (AILDM) [www.aildm.com.au](http://www.aildm.com.au)
- Australian Institute of Landscape Architects [www.aila.org.au](http://www.aila.org.au)
- Aborigiculture Australia [aboriculture.org.au](http://aboriculture.org.au)
- Dial Before You Dig Australia [www.1100.com.au](http://www.1100.com.au)
- Outdoor Design Source [www.outdoordesign.com.au](http://www.outdoordesign.com.au)
- Fitzpatrick & Co Insurance Brokers [www.fitzpatrick.com.au](http://www.fitzpatrick.com.au)
- Landscape Jobs Australia [www.landscapejobsaustralia.com.au](http://www.landscapejobsaustralia.com.au)
- Plant Safely [www.plantsafely.com.au](http://www.plantsafely.com.au)
- 202020 Vision [www.202020vision.com.au](http://www.202020vision.com.au)



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