



Gardening Handbook

April

by Dale Harvey

APRIL BIRTH FLOWERS

Daisy

The Daisy is the flower bringer of good fortune and blissful pleasure.

It is thought that the name “daisy” is a corruption of “day’s eye”, because the whole head closes at night and opens in the morning.

The most common characteristic of all these plants is that what in common parlance might be called a “flower”, is an inflorescence or flower head; a densely packed cluster of many small, individual flowers, usually called florets (meaning “small flowers”). Often considered a weed on lawns, though many also value the appearance of the flowers. Several cultivars and hybrids have been selected with much larger flower heads up to 5-6 cm diameter and with light pink to purple-red ray florets.

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Authors introduction

An Introduction to Your Monthly Gardening Handbook



New Zealand is a clean, green, garden paradise. One of the last and best in the world. We are blessed here in New Zealand with one of the most remarkable climates of any country on Earth. It often takes a prolonged overseas experience for most Kiwis to realize that the climate, land and lifestyle we so take for granted is what people in other nations would consider to be nearly ideal: a true paradise when compared to the extremes experienced in other parts of the world.

It is for this very reason that per head of population New Zealand has one of the highest levels of truly talented creative gardeners to be found anywhere. Gardening has become part of our national character. It sets us apart and helps to develop and reinforce our high level of environmental awareness and sophistication. So if you aren't yet a gardener, give it a go. It will do you, your family, the community and the country a world of good. And if you are already stuck into the garden, congratulations!

You represent a better, more advanced alternative within modern living. And your efforts, even if they are only in your back yard, collectively are helping to inspire and lead the world into a cleaner, greener new age. If you are new to gardening or if you are encouraging a

young mind to love nature start small and simple. This way you can focus attention on learning enough about a few plants to give yourself a better chance of success. An initial small success generates pride, excitement and a desire to learn more so can make a garden lover for life.

While a big failure early on can stop an individual from ever trying again and ultimately lose a chance to experience one of the truly heavenly pleasures of life on earth. When one remembers the classic words, "We are closest to God in the garden", we start to realize the tragic significance that such a failure can have upon one's future, or how by simply planting a few seedlings for the first time one can take a few real steps toward paradise.

Over the years my experience in the garden has brought me to the understanding that the earth is a living organism, a timeless master and we are its pets. This loving earth doesn't really need us, yet we are totally dependent on it for everything. Like all good pets, we've got to understand and obey the rules of the house. No longer are we little puppies allowed to soil our bedding and rip up the furniture.

Our survival comes down to something as simple as personal hygiene on a collective, global scale.

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As we come of age as a civilization we either understand and obey, or we are put down like so many species before us. We are not saving the earth, we must save ourselves!

One of the easiest ways to serve the Living Earth is in the garden, which is a little piece of nature. The earth contains all the secrets and cycles that we know as life. So to garden is to interact with this great power which will ultimately put us on the path to understanding the secrets of life, for life unfolds daily there in the garden. And, with time, becomes easy to understand. Understanding matures into wisdom which ultimately brings reward, your own paradise. And, collectively, if we all do our part those small bits of paradise start to merge, eventually creating a heaven on earth.

If you sincerely want to improve the quality of your life and those you love ... If you want your children to grow up remembering that you helped them create a world that they could enjoy living in.

If you are searching for a meaningful, constructive way to build a cleaner, greener, environmentally balanced world or if you want better health, are trying to overcome loneliness, depression, stress, or just want a thoroughly enjoyable hobby to fill your spare time. Then it's time for you to discover gardening.

Gardening will give you something special! Surely it takes work, sometimes lots of hard work, but none of life's lessons are learned without determined effort. But stick with it!

The greatest rewards come to those who consistently demonstrate true devotion and dedication to the garden. Over time these individuals gain such wisdom that they truly become "living treasures".

The influence of such individuals through their collective contributions ultimately uplifts the overall development of the community, leading mankind toward a much better tomorrow.

A garden handbook on its own is not going to turn you into a living treasure but this book is meant to inspire you to take a few more steps in the right direction. The rest is up to you!

What is offered here are simple, easily understood monthly guidelines and snippets of information which only scratch the surface of all the exciting knowledge I'd like to share with you. Perhaps what you learn here will inspire you into the pursuit of further knowledge.

The serious gardener will want to purchase one or more good gardening books to use in combination with this diary. In this way you can expand your knowledge very quickly. The Readers Digest illustrated Guide to Gardening, the Yates Garden Guide, and Yates Garden Doctor are all excellent books to serve this purpose. And even if you are on a tight budget, don't forget that most local libraries carry a wide range of reference books on gardening. But whatever reference sources you choose, be certain they are written for southern hemisphere gardening otherwise you'll be planting everything at the wrong time!

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The best way to use this book is as a handy reference to remind you of the various gardening activities that occur through the year. Be aware that this is only a general guide to New Zealand gardening. The gardener will want to take into account local and seasonal climatic variations that can affect the timing of gardening activities. These variations can be recorded in the convenient spaces provided within each monthly calendar.

To make the handbook really work for you now and especially in the future, record all your gardening activities: dates of sowings, transplanting, harvest, and flowering; problems with disease/insects and methods that worked to control them as well as those that didn't. Also record daily weather statistics and patterns: rainfall, storms, wind, cloudiness, temperature, frosts, first summer/winter weather, etc. Don't forget to make notes about new discoveries: plants, seeds, vegetables new to you; an old fashioned cure-all remedy passed on to you by a helpful old-timer, a really effective fertiliser combination; a new way to complete a garden job more effectively, etc.

To record successfully make this a simple part of your daily routine. Once recorded over a year your diary becomes your own personal garden guide that will be an invaluable reference. When I returned to New Zealand I immediately began reading my Granddad's garden diaries. They spanned 40 years. Very quickly I gained a deeper personal understanding of the man and his relationship to the land that he so loved.

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Because he recorded his garden experiences over many years, patterns became obvious. With this information I was then able to plan and act with confidence knowing what to expect of the land and the local climate. And in this instance became alerted to how dramatically New Zealand's climate had changed between his generation and my own and was able to use this knowledge to advantage.

Seasonal variations or climatic changes like the one that has been affecting New Zealand in recent years, can easily push ahead or pull behind many garden activities by a month or more. For this reason it is best to read not only the current month's activities but also those in the months on either side. Since nature does allow a great deal of flexibility, this will give you a better idea of what major jobs are coming up in the garden, as well as reminding you to complete a project that there wasn't time to finish last month.

The serious gardener should read through the entire year repeatedly. Become familiar with the activities plantings, flowerings and harvests of each season.

This way you can plan and detail your garden well in advance which will greatly help to focus your attention toward the successful achievement of multiple garden projects running simultaneously which is what it takes to create a truly effective garden. Knowledge is power! Be aware that knowledge is constantly changing and ever expanding so do be creative, flexible and very open to the

exciting knowledge you can learn by listening to the inspirational “whispers” with which nature will guide you. Because New Zealand is blessed with such a wonderful, often forgiving climate many things will survive being planted or transplanted even at the wrong time. This is especially true when the gardener, armed with knowledge, proceeds with deliberate care.

Remember that we often learn as much from a mistake as from a success. Many new ideas come about because someone tried to do something in a different way or made a mistake. Be sure to record all that you possibly can to help insure that all your activities lead toward your ultimate success!

Throughout the handbook you will find references to fertilizers and many varieties of sprays. While I have used almost everything at some time or another, it has been my attempt to create a balanced garden paradise where there is little need to affect the environment to any great degree chemically.

To achieve this end in my own quarter acre paradise where we film the television series Living Earth for TV3, I attempt to create a healthy environment for the garden i.e. building high quality soils rich in organic fertilizers; providing adequate shelter, moisture, warmth; and planting the right plant in its appropriate microclimate. The logic being that a happy plant is usually a healthy plant.

The somewhat pampered, highly encouraged resident bird population takes

care of most of the insects. And since insects transmit a lot of disease, the birds indirectly control fungus as well with every insect they catch. Those that they don't catch are usually controlled with dustings of lime, derris and/or organic sprays like pyrethrum, pepper, or garlic. And I find that foliar feeding with many types of organic and inorganic fertilizers mixed with a fixative like Nitrosol, fish emulsion, liquid soap, or spray fix, to help them stick to the foliage will often largely deter insect attack. Insects like a good meal just like the rest of us.

If you can adversely alter the taste of their dinner even if it is with a friendly, helpful fertiliser, they'll often move on to find a more palatable meal in a less well cared for garden. But the day will come when you will need to spray. The art is to learn when, how much and what of, to knock out the problem before it can cause damage.

In my quarter acre paradise it's likely that I'll have to spray perhaps three or four times a year. At these times I am extremely careful and very thorough with all aspects of the operation.

Sprays are meant to kill off disease and pests but they work on all living things, including us, so every precaution needs to be taken in dress, gloves, hats, masks, etc. to insure your safety.

Attempt to insure the safety of your garden by spraying either very early or quite late in the day when most helpful creatures like preying mantis, lady bugs, bees, and birds are not liable to be

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actively feeding in the gardens where they could get contaminated.

Be careful not to spray water sources like ponds, bird baths, buckets of water, creeks, etc where pets or wildlife drink or where sprays could runoff and contaminate something they shouldn't. If the garden is wet when spraying this will be an advantage as the spray will bleed through the plants into places otherwise unreachable. And mixing the spray with a fixative like spray fix, fish emulsion, Nitrosol (liquid blood and bone) or even liquid detergent will help the spray solution to stick and penetrate much further and be more effective.

The person who coined the phrase, "An ounce of prevention beats a pound of cure", must have been a lover of the garden. As you discover the garden world's darker side of disease, pestilence and sprays you will come to understand just how true this is. Just like a person catching a cold, there is that first day when one is exposed to the virus.

If one is healthy, well rested and strong there's little chance of the germs taking hold. And even if they do, a good rum, lemon and aspirin drink and an early night to bed can often stop the cold before it ever gets out of control. But we all know what happens when things get out of control.

The garden is exactly the same. There is always that first day of exposure. Perhaps the air is warm, humid, very damp and the weather forecast promises more to come.

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At such moments the experienced gardener can almost feel the fungus spores exploding like cluster bombs in the garden.

In another situation, for the past three days a strong northwest wind has been blowing bugs off Queensland and dumping them over your garden. Already there are aphids on the broccoli, and there's a dusting of thrip on the roses so you know there must be a legion of invisible mites also just starting to attack. These are the times to act and prevent their spread quickly. A thorough spraying at such critical moments will usually prevent the attack from ever happening.

Use your diary to learn to anticipate such moments by recording the weather patterns and what they bring with them. You'll soon learn to anticipate when, where, and how much to spray so that disease never visits your patch of paradise. And just like Nana's chicken soup, never miss a chance to feed your garden to keep it healthy. Foliar feed your garden by mixing in a liquid fertiliser when you spray for disease and fungus. You'll help strengthen the plants to resist any pests you missed while encouraging strong healthy growth.

I compare spraying plants with people taking antibiotics, which are also poisons. Used unwisely, antibiotics are ineffective or could even cause death yet many of us owe our lives to the effective use of antibiotics. The same applies to the effective use of plant sprays. We can see the results of an effective chemical campaign and accept it as a necessary

situation. But we all hope that soon we will find a better way that will lead us a step closer to true balance and harmony with our world.

There's so very much to be learned in gardening. So if you become confused or get stuck for ideas ask a neighbour with a lovely garden; contact a professional at a local garden centre; visit a well planned garden and talk to the gardener(s); buy more reference books or ask your librarian for help or join a class or club where you will discover garden knowledge to be as abundant as the harvests you will one day grow! But whatever you do, don't give up. While no one promised you that this would be easy, we are promising you a rose garden if you are willing to work for it!

As a general rule just about anything that will grow in the ground will grow in a pot. So even if you are in a small flat or unit with a tiny concrete backyard there is a wealth of plant material that you can grow indoors or outside in containers that will still allow you to create your own piece of paradise.

As mankind races toward a new millennium in our ever changing modern world we count with regret the cost to our environment. A new generation is rising, soon to lead, that realizes, as we all must deep in the heart, that survival depends on finding a balance between our needs and those of our loving, living earth.

Already the wise are searching, looking for green solutions that blend with a modern world. In New Zealand we

already stand by the garden gate to paradise yet sometimes take it for granted! The world needs a green model to look up to and we do it best.

This is our chance to blossom into a real life island nation paradise that cares. Let's become a nation of gardeners and nature lovers and plant our nation with the plan to harvest a rainbow of colourful, natural abundance for the entire world to see.

Through tourism, direct horticultural / agricultural employment and the economic spin-offs of lodging, entertainment, food and human services we could employ all our people. We would literally be paid to live in paradise!

Creating paradise in New Zealand is a long term, epic journey and all great journeys start with a simple first step.

That's easy enough for any of us to achieve. Every day of your life promise yourself to take another step by becoming actively involved with nature.

Soon you'll have travelled deeply into paradise, probably one you've created in your own backyard.

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Mid Autumn is another really busy month catching up on all you didn't finish last month!

The weather is cooler, wetter, weedier... almost spring-like at times. But the leaves are definitely turning which reminds us that time is precious so make every garden moment count!

In a 'good' year, well planned gardens are still quite bountiful, productive and radiant with autumnal blooms.

By the end of the month these late 'summer' gardens fade or finish in all but the warmest corners, as they already have in exposed cool or droughty spots and in most of the colder climate zones.

As soon as things fade, then it is time to clear it all away to the compost pile in preparation for the Late Autumn and Early Winter garden.

In other years, prolonged climate extremes ravage many gardens which by now have long since been battered, roasted or rotted. Such 'culling' seasons are Nature's essential times to prune, cut back and shape, enrich and mulch soils plus generally uplift, improve and redesign the garden landscape in preparation for more bountiful seasons ahead.

Many of the comments made in this months' diary are directed at the Gardeners who have either been blessed with a benevolent season, or anticipated the extremes of the season and because of *for more information visit www.daleharvey.com*

that knowledge are now profiting with glorious displays and bountiful harvests. Those with less successful gardens might be best to follow along so that in years to come they also can benefit from the botanical opportunities offered by Nature's ever-changing climate.

Autumn Foliage:

Cooling temperatures, shorter days and early frosts hasten the arrival of beautiful Autumn foliage. In droughty years leaf drop may start earlier and be much less colourful. Vivid colours usually require sufficient rainfall to keep leaves fresh.

Mid Autumn colour often will reach a peak in the cooler districts and high country sites where it is time to prepare for hard frost and freezing temperatures.

In warm and (sub) tropical climates, signs of Autumn will become increasingly apparent later in the month and can last through Late Autumn into early Winter.

For those wishing to bring Autumn foliage colour to the garden or landscape, this is the best time to visit a tree and shrub nursery to buy container grown specimens with just the right shading.

Leaf colour can vary considerably even between trees and shrubs of the same variety so right now is the only time of the year when it is possible to see exactly those colours which best suit.

Trees and Shrubs for Autumn Colour:

Here's a list of a few trees and shrubs that are sure to provide a spectacular autumn show.

They include:

Acer/ Maples(vivid gold-orange-purple-red-yellow shades); Ardisia (berries); Ash (yellow/purple/deep red); Azalea(deciduous and Kurume species); Berberis/Barberry (purples/red/orange plus berries); Betula/Birch (gold/clear yellows); Cornus/Dogwood (vivid often deep red-orange); Cotinus/Smoke Bush (vivid multi-shading from clear gold-orange-purple-red-yellow); Cotoneaster/Rockspray(holy-like berries); Crataegus/Hawthorn (yellow/gold/red and orange berries); Diospyros/Persimmon (pumpkin orange fruits, yellow foliage); Euonymus/Spindle Tree and species (berries and vivid orange/pink/red foliage); Ginkgo/Maidenhair Tree (vivid golden yellow foliage); Gleditsia (gold-yellow foliage); Heteromeles/California Holly (red berries); Idesia/Wonder Tree (bright yellow foliage; orange- red to purple berry clusters); Homolanthus/Bleeding Heart Tree (variegated red-shaded foliage); Ilex/Holly (broad-leafed evergreen, black/red/gold/yellow berries); Koelreuteria/Golden Rain Tree (decorative pods, golden foliage); Lagerstroemia/Crepe Myrtle (flame reds-oranges-golden yellow); Ligustrum/Privet (black-purple berries); Liquidambar (multicoloured vivid foliage over a long season, and globe-shaped seed pods); Liriodendron/Tulip Tree (gold/yellow and seed pods); Malus/Crab Apple (an occasional flower, decorative fruits, gold yellow foliage); Nandina (red/scarlet/oranges plus red berries); Parrotia persica (many vivid colour shades in cold districts); Pernettya (bronze-red foliage, later berries); Persoonia/Australian Geebung (berries); Platinus/Sycamore (bronze, gold to yellow foliage globe-shaped seed pods); Polygonum (pink/red flowers, bronze-red foliage); Populus/Poplar (gold/yellow); Prunus/Apricot/Cherry/Plum (mostly gold and yellow foliage; Cherries (red/orange/yellow often vivid multi-tones late in the season, plus one species flowers!); Pyracantha (brilliant orange/red/yellow berries); Pyrus/Manchurian Pear (vivid gold, orange, red, yellow combinations); Quercus/Oaks (red/ russet/orange/ yellow); Rhus/Sumac/Wax Tree (flame reds/oranges); Robinia (brilliant golden yellow); Salix/Willow (gold-yellow foliage); Sarcococca/Christmas Box (evergreen with red berries); Schefflera/N.Z. Patete/Umbrella Plant (berries); Schinus/Pepper Tree (orange berries); Schizocentron/Spanish Shawl(reddish foliage); Sorbus/Mountain Ash/Rowan (red, orange, yellow berries); Symphoricarpos/Snowberry (berries); Taxodium/Bald Cypress (bronze-russet foliage); Taxus/Yew (evergreen with red berries);Ulmus/Elm(gold-yellow);Umbellularia/California Laurel (olive-like fruits);Viburnum species (berries and vivid foliage); Vitex/Chaste Tree/N.Z. Puriri (berries); Zelvoka (bronze to golden yellow foliage) and more locally.

Lawns:

Mid Autumn is yet another good month to sow or top dress lawns. The lawn perfectionist will most likely weed the existing lawn thoroughly and level uneven spots with additional topsoil.

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The easiest and least expensive way to feed and seed is to hand broadcast about 30 grams (one handful) of lawn food and/or grass seed per square metre, rake it in rather vigorously and then water the entire area thoroughly and keep it moist until autumnal rains make this unnecessary.

When weather conditions remain mild and damp the seed may germinate in as little as a week to ten days. In droughty areas and colder climates where weather is already cooler, both germination and growth will be slower.

But sowing or repairing a lawn now usually guarantees a visibly greener lawn before the onset of Winter allowing the grass time to develop a deeper root system and become well established before the rigors of Spring growth.

Transplanting Time:

This is a particularly good time to plant most Conifers, Evergreen Shrubs and Trees plus Broad-Leafed Evergreens including many Australian, Mediterranean, New Zealand and South African natives, also Hedges and Roses. These are best shifted from containers.

Cooler, damper Mid Autumn weather is an ideal time to plant container-grown Perennials, many ornamental Shrubs, Trees and Vines as well as Spring and Winter annuals. Planting can continue cold wet weather makes this too difficult. Continue to wrench, and start to shift and transplant established Perennials, Shrubs, Trees once they can be safely cut back and have become dormant.

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It is usually best to delaying shifting established deciduous species until all leaves have fallen, which indicates the start of their dormancy resting period over winter. Make sure they are well-soaked before and after transplanting.

Stake all transplants securely at the time of shifting. This helps them make a much better start by keeping the plant from wiping in the wind, possibly shifting the root ball, and damaging tender emerging new roots.

Pruning:

In climates with mild winters this is a good time to cut back and shape Summer and Early Autumn flowering shrubs like: Acmena/Lillypilly Buddleia/Butterfly Bush, Callistemon/Bottle Brush, Cassia/Buttercup Shrub, Fuchsia, Grevillea, Hydrangea, Shrub Roses, Sasanqua Camellia, Tibouchina and others as soon as they finish flowering.

Obviously, if buds are forming for the next round of flowering (like many Azaleas, Camellia, Chaenomeles, Daphne, Forsythia, Gardenia, and some Lasiandras, Luculia, Magnolia (deciduous varieties), Osmanthus, Rhododendron, Spirea, Weigela, Witch Hazel, etc.) then leave them alone or only prune back what is absolutely necessary to maintain appropriate shape and proportions. The next opportunity for serious pruning and major cutting back will come soon enough next Spring.

Hedges and Topiary are easily trimmed now, especially Broad-Leafed Evergreens and Conifers.

Shaping them now gives enough time to harden-off exposed growth before the onset of colder weather.

Caution! Refrain from pruning Deciduous Hedging, Shrubs and Trees from the time that leaves begin to colour and drop until the specimen is completely dormant. This is when sap is retreating from the foliage and top-growth and flowing back into the root system.

Pruning Deciduous species while the sap is draining back into its root system can draw air into the vascular bundles in the stems through the fresh cuts. This gravitational pull is the strongest around the Autumnal 'Dark of the Moon', the final week of the Lunar cycle before New Moon, and for a couple days following the New Moon. Pruning during that time of extremes will often result in considerably more die-back than was intended.

Compost:

Compost is one of Nature's finest fertilisers, protective mulches, soil additive and conditioner. It is nothing more than decayed vegetation, sometimes mixed with manure to which a variety of fertilisers and minerals can be added to boost its potential for feeding both the soil and everything growing in it. Transforming vegetation into compost through decay and decomposition requires bacteria and fungi, heat, moisture and time.

The bacteria and fungi naturally occur in the surrounding environment, both on the ground and in the air.

As dead vegetation becomes damp and is exposed to natural airflow, these stick to it. Once they start consuming the vegetation, bacteria create their own heat.

This enhances their natural environment, so they multiply on the vegetation which is consumed faster. Good quality compost can be produced in less than two months when exposed to ideal conditions in just the right way. But it can take much longer.

If ever the state of the compost becomes too cold or dry, the bacteria can die or become dormant which will greatly slow decomposition. In freezing situations the entire pile will remain intact and virtually unchanged until such time as warmth returns bacterial action.

Tip:

Check compost piles regularly to ensure they remain continually and evenly moist throughout the heap. Try and keep the pile moist at all times, but never sodden or wet!

Now is a Great Time to Start:

Autumn is an ideal time to create compost piles. With months of damp weather ahead that is tailor made to induce rot and decomposition. Making compost now insures a bountiful supply when it will be needed in Late Winter and Spring.

The Compost Piling System:

The traditional way is the piling system. This is nothing more than a pile of garden debris that is meant to rot down into valuable humus which is then dug into

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garden soil to improve both its quality and fertility. The pile is best placed discretely out of site in a sheltered, possibly shaded and dampish corner of the garden perhaps under protective trees or within a shrubbery border where it can quietly perk away.

Stacking:

But this need not be some ordinary pile of rotting debris: a big secret to the 'best' compost is in the stacking. The stack is created somewhat similar to building a proper camp-fire. The arrangement, order and type of material used to create the stack make all the difference to its success. Start with coarse materials like small cut up sticks, larger dahlia stems or spent annuals. Cover this with something more succulent and/or finer like kitchen scraps, deadheads of garden flowers, or leaves.

This allows air to rise up through the pile through the coarse sticks. Bacteria and fungi need this air flow. It also creates pathways for worm activity feeding off the finer debris overhead. Then the next layer should be even finer like grass clippings, leaves shredded with the mower, soil or gravels. This adds a capping of damp materials over the other layers. This seals in even moisture and retains heat created by bacterial decomposition.

Some gardeners next add an even finer layer of lime and/or fertiliser dust over this; sometimes wood ashes.

This is lightly watered-in just enough to keep the pile moist and biodynamically active.

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The Stacking process continues building up the pile. Once the pile becomes active, each new layer can be up to 15cm deep: first with another layer of coarse materials; then a softer layer of kitchen scraps; followed by something fine and so on building the pile up to as much as two metres. If correctly stacked, the pile will quickly begin to heat up as bacteria 'eat' and decompose the debris, releasing heat as a by-product to their activity.

As the heat lifts within the depths of the pile, the first layer of coarse material allows air to rise through the pile feeding the bacteria that decomposes the garden refuse. The finer layers act as a cap holding in the heat created through this decomposition. This heat is critical to the speed of decomposition.

Tip:

Covering the pile with an old blanket, board, cardboard, tarpaulin, etc will trap additional heat which will speed decomposition. If ever a pile has become too dry, dust Blood and Bone, Bone Dust, aged compost, or a special Bacterial Compost Starter over the pile and water it in. Decomposition will resume immediately. These additives are often sprinkled over new compost piles to speed decomposition.

Keep it 'Hot':

A hot compost pile can completely decompose in just a couple of months and the heat will usually cook and kill most weed seeds and fungal spores at the same time. This works to the advantage where the compost is to be screened and mixed with soil used for container plantings and

seedlings. This sort of compost is ideal as a soil additive to enrich land meant for growing high quality flowers and vegetables.

Cool Compost:

Cooler piles decompose more slowly and a bit more naturally which is much better for worm life and creating 'living' earth. Such cool compost can then be spread throughout the garden to uplift its overall fertility and quality. This is the purpose of Sheet Composting which will be discussed later.

Freezing Weather:

Wherever Winter temperatures dip well below freezing it is best to cover and enclose the compost pile so that it remains warm and active all Winter. When freezing occurs within the pile especially when combined with low humidity, bacteria go dormant or die. This tends to preserve the materials in the pile rather than decompose them. In such colder regions the materials are usually stacked in a large pile within a protective bin or box; sometimes within an out building that doesn't freeze.

Box Composting:

A classic system is to create several wooden boxes of about one metre square with air slits between the boards. Old broken down builders pallets are excellent for this. Make sure that the front panel or boards lift off so that the

compost can be easily shovelled out. It is a good idea to have the boxes raised above ground level or dig out slightly underneath them to further encourage

rapid airflow up through the boxes. Build the pile to the top of the bin. Then the pile can be covered and left to decompose.

After several months (sometimes as little as six weeks in mild climates) lift off the front boards and fork the half composted materials into the next empty wooden bin. This will mix the materials and allows the opportunity to add fertiliser, lime sand, gravel or soils to the mix. The first emptied bin is now ready to receive a new pile of materials for composting. Within a few more months the second bin should be thoroughly composted and this can now be forked out into a third bin for storage or spreading on the garden.

The first bin gets forked into the now empty second bin and the first bin starts another pile of debris. In milder climates the same process can happen outdoors as one pile is decomposed and shifted on to the next. Turning and mixing the vegetation between separate boxes and keeping them covered and damp will greatly speed decomposition.

Row Composting:

Another method which is very effective in larger farm, garden and parkland situations is to build a series of systematically stacked debris piles all in a row perhaps behind a screening hedge or along a fence line. The piles are systematically turned, often with mechanical equipment, mixing the ingredients in much the same way as with Box Composting. Dependent on climate conditions and the frequency of turning this will ultimately achieve the same end.

for more pictures and information visit www.daleharvey.com

Summary of the Author

Dale Harvey is an International Environmental Consultant, Journalist, Television and Radio Presenter, Public Speaker, Photographer, Garden and Landscape Expert, Social scientist and Community Development Officer.



Dale Harvey is well known as a Presenter for the highly successful garden and environmental show *Living Earth* on TV3. For a decade he was also the Host and Presenter for the *Art of Gardening* and *Joy of Gardening* on Auckland's Radio I plus *Environmental Watch* on Radio Pacific. For the next five years he hosted and wrote *The National Garden Show* for Radio Pacific, *The Power of Free Speech*.

During this time Dale wrote spectacular weekly garden features for New Zealand *for more information visit www.daleharvey.com*

Women's Day Magazine (Australian Consolidated Press) that were among the most widely read in the country. Dale wrote the feature copy for publication also designed and grew the gardens and plants often from cuttings or seed that he then photographed; and also researched and documented them for his media work. Dale wrote three editions of the *Yates New Zealand Garden Handbook* that sold out.

His photography and consultancy was a major contribution to the books *Fragrant Garden* and *Colour In Your Garden* published by ACP international.

Mr. Harvey's diverse and fascinating botanical career inspired and guided the botanical progress of New Zealand. For his contribution to botanical knowledge, the people affectionately honored him with the title, 'Gardening Guru' of New Zealand. Soon afterward, the country became known as New Zealand, Godzone Garden Country. Today environmental and garden tourism to New Zealand has become one of the top sources of revenue and reasons to visit there. Gardening has become the top leisure pastime and botanical/horticultural commerce is a major monetary resource for the country.

Singaporeans know Dale as an infrequent resident who researched tropical plants

while visiting his family in the city. Dale's innovative environmental/ tourism consultations enhanced Singapore's environment/ tourism project image as "Singapore Garden City", which turned Singapore into a true garden city.

He frequented Singapore because his father, a Vice President of General Electric Corp. was managing the electronic component plant based there that was instrumental in the success of NASA and our modern computer age. This provided Dale with rare opportunities to become knowledgeable in a diverse range of exotic gardening practices and cultures plus gain a keen understanding of creative international business and corporate affairs.

The Japanese Government remembers Dale for his year of service to Premier Ohira's Cultural Agency through International House of Japan as a Botanical Consultant and Environmental Craftsman. There he influenced the Japanese Leadership and Public introducing and mixing Asian and Western garden concepts to create a new garden style. This became the basis for the 'green revolution' which is presently transforming Japanese garden culture today. Mr. Harvey was a frequent Botanical Consultant for the New Zealand Consulate in Tokyo. While working in a similar capacity with the Australian Embassy, he discovered an ancient buried garden on the Embassy grounds that later became a candidate as a National Treasure of Japan!

Dale was invited by Ambassador

Menadue to become a permanent resident of Australia for his contributions to the Embassy in Tokyo. Ambassador Menadue imported Dale from their Embassy in Tokyo to assist in the early develop the Greening of Australia programme based in Melbourne.

Australians recognize Dale for his award winning retail garden centre, Toorak Jungles, in Melbourne, which was created as an education showpiece with design assistance from Mr. John Newton.

The nursery helped inspire the earliest development of the Greening of Australia Programme. He was a strong advocate for gardening in schools as a most effective way to environmentally transform the nation. Today most schools in Australia are actively involved in greening their country and the world. Dale also introduced Australians to Asian botanical traditions through informative garden tours of Japan sponsored by Qantas and ANZ Bank.

During his fascinating career as an International Environmental Consultant, Dale has advised people of many nations, races, creeds, of all social classes from many walks of life. He has developed innovative community and school garden projects to uplift the health and quality of life for disadvantaged communities. He has been a consultant for government Consulates and Embassies. He has created spectacular gardens for business and private estates. He once advised H.R.H. Charles, Prince of Wales in the development of his environmental projects and wildflower fields.

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Dale is a graduate of the University of Kentucky, one of America's leading schools of horticulture, where he completed a double masters degree in Sociology (Community Development) and Education. Shortly after this he developed his innovative "Flower Power" projects that inspired the development of the modern-day community garden movement that has today blossomed into over 100,000 community gardens in the U.S.A. and Canada.

For this effort he received a USA National Garden Bureau Award for horticultural excellence; the 4-H Community Service Award; an International Citizenship Award for Cultural Integrity from Washington, D.C. plus a U.S.A. National Parks and Recreation Award.

Harvey also received a full fellowship from the Japan-United States Friendship Commission/National Endowment for the Arts, Washington, D.C. as an International Garden Artist, Environmental Craftsman and Botanical Consultant based in Tokyo, Japan. More recently an Environmental Initiates Fund Awarded from the Auckland Regional Council/New Zealand Government for Botanical Community Projects as well as 30 awards in horticulture, arts and sciences. His experience in horticulture alone spans 60 years and 16 countries.

Dale Harvey is American born, was resident in Australia for many years where he still maintains family and business interests, and also lived in Japan and Singapore and has lived for 29 years *for more information visit www.daleharvey.com*

in Auckland, New Zealand. Dale's New Zealand connection dates from 1864 when his early ancestors moved from the United Kingdom to Christchurch. Later generations helped settle Napier, Hastings, Thames and Otahuhu as they pushed steadily north. His grandparents, Rev. H.B. Hughes and wife Ruby Lascelles retired from St. Andrews Presbyterian Church in Otahuhu to their South Auckland market garden district homestead and orchard in 1947.

This is the home of today's famous Quarter Acre Paradise Gardens. During World War II Dale's mother, Faith, met her Massachusetts-born husband-to-be Army Medical Corps Serviceman, Gilman Harvey in Auckland where they courted. After the war, the young couple immigrated to the USA where Dale was born. Dale, the first of four children, became a Kiwi-American hybrid like the hybrid flowers Dale loves to grow. The new family then returned to his Grandparents South Auckland orchard homestead.

Dale was deeply affected by his early "inspiring" garden experiences in New Zealand which were enriched and persistently cultivated well into his adult life by his Grandparents and Parents. These profoundly shaped the direction of his life. Later, his family returned to the USA for Dale's formal education.

But these memories dramatically shaped his botanical and environmental perspective and future development as he kept in close contact with his New Zealand Family and they in turn sent him

weekly clippings and letters about New Zealand's current affairs.

Dale returned to assume residence in his Grandparents South Auckland, New Zealand homestead in July, 1984 when the sudden death of his Aunt Beth left his Grandparent's property vacant. With the help of his Australian Partner, International Designer, John Newton, the homestead was redeveloped into what would later be known as the "Quarter Acre Paradise' Gardens, a working urban homestead that often features on his television programs, book and magazine features plus on their colourful and informative Website

www.daleharvey.com

and

[Quarter Acre Paradise Gardens](#)

Face Book pages.

Today the Quarter Acre Paradise Gardens are a local landmark. They create a magical garden setting for charity events, seasonal garden shows, special functions plus wedding parties visited by a variety of local tour groups and international guests. The gardens have expanded to include the neighbor's gardens featuring large conservatories, interconnecting covered walkways and shelters leading to many different themed garden rooms.

Garden displays are meant to inspire 'backyard' Gardens how to create a lot by spending just a little and using their own skill and knowledge to inexpensively create a lot more. While other special shows feature up to 100,000 fragrant blooms glowing through 50,000 fairy lights. The gardens have frequently featured in the Heroic Gardens and

Trinity Garden Festivals and are often used as backdrops for advertising and wedding photography.

These remarkable gardens have given Dale and John the opportunity to vastly expand their knowledge, understanding and careers in many directions inspiring beautiful botanical photography, very informative and practical garden books, magazine and website articles; practical celestial forecasting (planting by the Moon and constellations); a landscape/nursery business; Garden Consultations, a worldwide Internet Florist Shop; radio and television appearances; and two colourful and highly informative Websites plus Face Book pages.

In recent years, Mr. Harvey with assistance from Mr. Newton were also commissioned to create, design, implement and plan a massive botanical forest park and lakeside garden for a large events/function center and hunting lodge in Central Wisconsin. They even assisted and trained the existing lodge staff with limited botanical knowledge how to successfully plant and maintain their botanical gardens. Many thousands of ornamental specimens were planted successfully in just 5 weeks and ahead of deadline! Today the gardens are still being maintained by the same staff and have already become a tourist destination and major commercial asset for the lodge and the greater regional community

Mr. Harvey and Mr. Newton are presently collaborating on a new and improved educational website which includes upgrading the Quarter Acre

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Paradise gardens. The purpose of this website is to educate and inspire Gardeners and Nature Lovers about a wide range of botanical, environmental, gardening and nature-related topics.

This website features beautiful botanical images plus helpful and interesting garden-related articles. A monthly and weekly Garden Calendar Diary can be downloaded. It is possible to register as a regular subscriber and each month receive a helpful garden newsletter. Many products and services are available for purchase on line. Plus a beautiful Quarter Acre Paradise Face Book page gives viewers the opportunity to take a seasonal visual tour through the Quarter Acre Paradise Gardens and ask garden questions.

Dale Harvey continues to spread his environmental messages and practical, common sense solutions for the benefit of people everywhere. Dale's life goal has always revolved around doing whatever is necessary to inspire and lead interested and passionate people toward an age of enhanced botanical appreciation and knowledge, environmental paradise and peaceful prosperity around the world.