

Gardening Articles for week ending 7th November 2015
Written by Wally Richards.

GARDENING EMAILS ANSWERED

Every day my email box has over 100 emails, more than half are spam and unwanted, about quarter are information or from Real News sites and the balance are from readers asking about problems they are have, so for a change, I will share a few with you.

Email reads: Hey Wally, Hope all is well, Just a quick idea for your next article, Butterfly's.

Reason is that this year there will be at least 80,000 less swan plants for sale due to a large commercial grower retiring.

I am apart of the MBNZT (Monarch Butterfly NZ Trust) & just really want to get the word out there about swan plants & not only are the butterflies good for our garden but the are a wonder to see, + the extra factor is the kids love to watch them change, if you can help at all that would be great, Phil

So gardeners you better germinate a few seeds yourselves and grow some swan plants.

Likely other nurseries will pick up the shortfall as the plants are so easy to grow..

Seeds of *Asclepias physocarpa* (Swan Plant) are available from Egmont Seeds by mail order if you cant find them in your local garden centre..

Germinate in a good compost in a seedling tray and later on prick out into small pots to grow on and plant into the garden or direct sow where you want them to grow.

Space seeds out about 20 to 30 cm apart when direct sowing.

When several caterpillars are feeding on a swan plant they will literally eat themselves out of house and home. Once all the foliage has been stripped the plant will die.

That is a shame as it can be prevented by simply taking a small piece of Crop Cover and placing it over a branch or part of a branch and securing it so that no caterpillars can not eat the leaves inside.

The rest of the plant can get stripped of foliage but because some leaves are protected the plant will recover and produce more foliage.

If those aphid pests attack the plant then best control is to use your fingers to squash them so you dont harm the caterpillars using any type of insect spray.

If you dont like doing that then you can remove the caterpillars and a branch for them to feed on (place in a vase) then with all the caterpillars removed and no eggs on the plant you spray with Key Pyrethrum.

The pyrethrum breaks down quickly in sunlight so next day it will be safe to put your

caterpillars back on the plant. Do not use any other sprays especially Confidor as it lasts in the plant for months killing all the caterpillars that hatch out.

There is a predator wasp that also kills the caterpillars and to safe guard the caterpillars you can wrap the plant in Crop Cover held in place at the overlaps with clothes pegs. The caterpillars will live safely on the plant inside the cover and mature to become monarch butterflies.

Next: Hello Wally,

Passionfruit - not having much luck. We have had a vine planted now for nearly 2 years now, against the tin shed in full sun but it looks sick.

Leaves are yellow and it doesn't even try and fruit. I have fed it with citrus food, sprayed it with Sequoia to try and get the leaves green again but today I see some of the leaves are falling off.

In desperation we brought another vine last week and planted it in a large tub right next to the old one. Now it is sulking, the top half is just limp. I have done everything I can think of to revive it but to no avail.

What am I doing wrong and what can I do to rectify both of them. I am told they are so difficult to grow. We live in Lower Hutt is that a problem for them? Hoping you can help as I would hate to pull them out. Regards Mavis.

My answer was; It likely depends where in NZ you are and your weather patterns..

I used to be able to grow them easy in Palmerston North 30 odd years ago. Far better summers then and sacks over the plant for protection against frosts in winter.

Now days I have yet to grow one outside without going to a lot of trouble... Best was to grow in a container in a glasshouse then let it wander outside which worked with frost protection in the winter.

They must be very free draining as wet feet in winter kills them. The current weather is not suitable so far... (Sounds like you have watered too much)

A challenge to grow if you dont live in a nice warm part of NZ. They are heavy feeders so when actively growing, lots of chicken manure, Rok Solid, Blood & Bone and Fruit & Flower Power. Keep dry during the cool months and only prune when actively growing.

Due to lack of bees these days because of insecticides such as Confidor, you may need to hand pollinate the flowers.

Then we have: Hi there Wally, Do you have a good all round planting guide for vegetables for the different seasons ...using your particular fertilizers and nutrients?

It would be very useful in a future article.

Right now we are all thinking about putting our spring garden seeds in propagating pots or

into the garden and know that each vege seed or plant has different requirements.

I would like to use more of your products but am not sure which plants need which product.

The internet takes so much time and your products are not mentioned.

I have just read that Beans don't require Nitrogen so what do you put in the soil to grow them and what product follows on, when they are growing and established.

Then, tomatoes, potatoes and capsicums, cucumbers and lettuce etc requirements are different again.

To call and get advice on the whole spectrum of summer veges would be difficult. Hope you can put something together using your organic products and send to us all via a article.

Wendy

Initially I figured that this is a complex question but then I realised that basically for all crops all you need to do is provide sufficient goodness and minerals which means applying the likes of calcium, animal manures, chicken manure, blood & bone, sheep manure pellets,

Rok Solid, Neem Tree Granules and Bio Boost along with purchased compost not made from green waste.

Heavy feeding crops such as leeks, silverbeet and cubits (pumpkins etc) can have extra manure including side dressings of liquid feeds.

Garden Lime for all vegetables except for tomatoes and potatoes where you use dolomite and/or gypsum.

Spraying the crops with Magic Botanic Liquid every 2 weeks certainly makes a difference.

In Nature there is no special feeding of plants most flourish as long as there is not too much competition for light and food resources.

The harm is when soil life called the soil food web is harmed by chemicals including chlorine in tap water.

Just off topic but of concern is a recent study that showed that 85% of cotton sanitary products contained glyphosate according to a study by the Socio-Environmental Interaction Space (EMISA) of the University of La Plata, Argentina.

Cotton swabs, wipes, tampons and sanitary pads were also found to contain glyphosate and AMPA.

“85 % of all samples tested positive for glyphosate and 62 % for AMPA, which is the environmental metabolite, but in the case of cotton and sterile cotton gauze the figure was 100%,” Dr. Damian Marino of EMISA explained.

Glyphosate is stated by WHO as being a possible carcinogenic.

Would this account for the dramatic increase in cervix cancer in the last 20 odd years?

The reason for this is that the cotton plants are sprayed with Roundup prior to harvest to make harvesting of the bolls easier and in the Roundup Ready Cotton crops they are sprayed with glyphosate to kill competing weeds while plants are growing.

Maybe that is the reason why a number of women have adverse reactions to cotton products. Use over many years could logically lead to health issues.

There are no tests that I am aware of in NZ for glyphosate in cotton sanitary products or for cotton sterile pads used on wounds and its unlikely that under funded Govt departments would even look at the possibility of testing/checking. Maybe my old mum was right, 'Better to be Safe than Sorry'

The worlds 4 biggest producers of cotton are China, India, United States and Pakistan all use Glyphosate extensively and in fact China is the biggest manufacture/exporter of glyphosate and their customers apparently include Monsanto for Roundup formulations.

For further info see

http://www.i-sis.org.uk/Ten_NGOs_Ask_China_to_Stop_Producing_Glyphosate.php