

# Western Australian Chrysanthemum Society Incorporated



## Newsletter

January – February 2021

### President's Notes

Another year is upon us. This time we are turning twenty one and like youngsters of times past we are looking forward to getting the key to the door. In our case that all depends on the coronavirus. The elimination of the hard state border was encouraging but only a supreme optimist would be booking a world cruise.

If you are in need of a resolution for the New Year then maybe "I will take better care of my chrysies" is a little safer than some others. It is not too late as some growers have suggested that the real growing only starts in January.

Inclement weather reduced the number of members who attended our November General Meeting. Those that did attend were rewarded for their fortitude with an audio-visual spectacular on the National Chrysanthemum Society's (UK) "virtual" show which was held as a substitute for their "second wave" cancelled Late Show. The new mega-flat-screen synched seamlessly with Murray's miniaturised mobile personal tech dispenser and the presentation would have been spectacular if I had worked out how to get the sound working before the presentation was finished.

Nevertheless, the quality of blooms seen was outstanding. The vibrant colours of many of the cultivars was a feature and while most UK cultivars have historically proven to be disappointing in our climate there is no reason why an enterprising breeder might not attempt to incorporate some of the better coloured ones into their own breeding lines. Unfortunately, most of our members are short of the land necessary to grow more than a few seedlings and overseas cultivars are almost impossibly difficult to import into Australia. Many members may also feel that the likely multi-year effort required to achieve the desired colour with antipodean growing and flowering performance is beyond them. However, you could get lucky in the first year and if not then that is one more reason to keep on keeping on. Fortunately, for show growers, colour preference has no place in the Australian chrysanthemum judging system and nor does it in the UK system. Those members who were not there to see the presentation live can access the same photos and videos on the WACS Facebook page. These were shared to our WACS page from the National Chrysanthemum Society Facebook page where there are also many other posts that are all well worth seeking out.

At the risk of rambling too far off topic, like our hopelessly untethered Editor, I note that we have some members that sell chrysanthemum flowers to the florists for weddings. They appear to have a strong preference for pink flowers. That is lucky, as a number of our best cultivars are pink. Some growers are unaware that the origin of the word chrysanthemum comes from the Greek khrysos, meaning "gold" and anthemon meaning "a flower". Golden yellow flowers are evidently not favoured by brides and white flowers now appear to have lost much of their traditional appeal.

The rest of the season is all arranged and the details can be found at the end of the newsletter. The only events planned for the next two months are our February General and Committee Meetings. The new 2021 WACS and Australian Championship Show Schedules are now posted on our website and Facebook.

*It is with great sorrow that I inform readers that Frank Blackwell, one of our esteemed Life Members, passed away a week prior to Christmas due to acute heart problems. I hope to be able to include a proper tribute to him in the next newsletter. This edition's Cultural Notes were written by Frank. As a retired school teacher it is no surprise that the advice given is easy to read and understand. As a loyal and trusted member of WACS it is no surprise that these Notes were willingly provided and well ahead of schedule.*

## Cultural Notes

Today many are growing using automated feeding devices and more scientific knowledge than we had just a short time ago. For that reason I will take the liberty to talk about some of the older methods we use when looking after our Chrysanthemums. I will leave the technical details of the hydroponics to waste type of technology to those of you who are more familiar with it than I am. If you want more of those details there are our mentors in the WACS support programme who I know will help when you have queries and problems to solve.

**The Pots:** All of your plants will now be in their final pots. When they were potted on you probably left space in the top for a top dressing. The top dressing mix is the same as the final potting mix and should be added during January. The timing varies, but I find that the best time is the middle of the month. If you were later in December doing your final potting leave the top dressing until four or five weeks after you finished the potting on.

**Watering:** Water in the top dressing well. After that only water on a needs basis. If you are liquid feeding then watering will occur with your feed. It is important to see that the pots drain well and the bottom of your pot does not stay too wet. Chrysanthemums have sensitive roots and will soon die back if left sitting in water.

**Feeding:** In the days of dry feeding, or alternate dry / liquid feeding there were a number of combinations of dry feed. A common example of dry feed was 2 parts blood and bone, 2 parts NPK Blue, 1 part calcium nitrate, 1 part sulphate of potash, 1 part dolomite (or similar limestone), all parts by weight mixed thoroughly and applied as one scoop (about thrive size) per plant. The plant has to be watered first and then watered in well afterwards. This was done weekly or if alternated with liquid feed fortnightly with the in between week Thrive (or equivalent) as a liquid feed according to directions. Current practice is to liquid feed at a recommended rate according to a daily or other pattern. Those using automatic systems know their relevant mixes and other requirements.

- Do not use dry fertilizers after the first week in March.
- With liquid fertilizers change to a lower N but higher K from early February.

**The Soil / Potting Mix:** Prepared Premium Potting Mixes or other growing mediums are readily available making it easier for the grower. It is important that you monitor the pH of the mix and adjust as necessary. Many of the prepared hydroponic feeding mixes are made to be pH neutral and watering techniques take this into account. The need to adjust pH or "salts" build up are minimised. (BUT, forget to monitor at your peril.). Sometimes the "sour" smell a pot gets is caused by being left too wet. Remember that sulphur will reduce pH and hydrated lime will increase pH. There are other products available to adjust pH just as there are for the swimming pool.

**Staking / Supporting Plants:** Plants need to be supported at this stage. This will enable the bloom to have a strong straight stem. Start now by keeping them straight whether you use canes, stakes or a frame you build for the plant

to grow along – do it now. Trying to straighten stems later can be an impossible task. Talk to other growers about the ways to keep the plant stem tied up straight.

**Making the Breaks:** This is a part of growing Chrysanthemums for show that each grower must develop for themselves. The changes not only occur between locations but also between cultivars. When we start growing we are given some guidelines from which we establish the best date for each cultivar for our own location. My guideline went something like this. For Exhibition Blooms that I was going to grow with only one break – make the break around Boxing Day. For All Blooms grown with two breaks the following applies. Exhibition 1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> Dec. and 1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> Jan: Decoratives 10<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> Dec. and 10<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> Jan: Anemones 15<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> Dec. and 15<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> Jan: Show Singles and Fantasies 15<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> Dec. and 20<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> Jan. Of course the list for individual cultivars in each classification demonstrated a range, including Princess Anne family second break was 29<sup>th</sup> Jan. Each time I moved I started all over again. That said, it is still a smart move to check with any other growers near you as a guide. You will learn to make further adjustments based on changes in show dates. There are some suggestions in the WACS Cultural Booklet that will start you off. We could talk about this for hours as every grower has a story to tell. When the breaks have been made allow the new shoots to grow until they are about 70mm to 120mm long at the top of the plant. Start removing shoots further down the stem then leave 3 to 5 shoots on the exhibitions and 5 to 7 on the others. Remove all other shoots at this stage, but not all at once if there are a lot of them. Always avoid stressing the plants. After the second break allow the new shoots to grow and repeat the process. You will then need to decide how many you want to leave to go on to flowering. You can wait until the buds form then remove any obvious unsatisfactory shoots. The next to be removed will be those buds that do not appear to be well formed. Finally remove the weakest of those left until you have the number you want to bloom. I have always been advised to take time and don't rush this selection process. Sometimes the vigour of the plant will help you decide how many you leave on to bloom.

With Charms I plant early and when they are established (if they do not break themselves) I take the growing shoot out. From then on I keep taking out the growing shoots to promote a lot of growth and to shape the plant. Don't ever be afraid to shape your charm earlier rather than later. Try to be consistent and nip off each plant's shoots at the same time. Stop taking out the tips by 5<sup>th</sup> March.

**Pest and Disease Control:** Keep an eye out for slugs and snails. Use baits if you have an outbreak. It can happen at any time.

A systematic spraying programme will give you best results. It allows you to be effective because much of the spraying will be preventative. Fungicides used regularly will prevent outbreaks. Rose Shield is effective and covers Chrysanthemum White Rust. Mancozeb Plus, Triforine are also effective, and there are others if you want to vary your spraying. (Spray other plants like geraniums that host rust).

Mites are annoying because they can sneak up on you. Sorcerer, Kelthane, and Abamectin 18 are all effective. You can be more effective by spraying regularly and varying the spray you use. (Spray roses and orchids as they host mites). Aphids can be treated with a range of insecticides, but a spray of Confidor (or equivalent) at the prescribed times is the best. (Spray hibiscus at the same time, they host aphids.)

Fortune 500 (and other chlorpyrifos sprays) needs great care when using, but it does deal with caterpillars and various other insect pests very effectively. You will find the various new sprays and some oldies like Malathion all have their places in a varied approach to "Nasties Control". Remember that in all cases you must follow the safety direction. Don't forget to spray under the leaves and the stems.

Read the WACS Cultural booklet and note Ted Elms comments about using magnesium sulphate and iron chelate (or sulphate of iron).

This is a very important time. Read the notes. Check other information you have. Plan carefully. Keep a record for the future. I hope these notes guide you back to planning and reviewing your practices when growing Chrysanthemums. Good Luck with your growing!

*COMPLIMENTS OF THE SEASON!*

*Frank Blackwell*

## Further Cultural Insights

You will recall from the November-December Cultural Notes that water alkalinity and the nitrogen composition of fertilisers have significant effects on soil pH. An informative article on water alkalinity was included with those notes and so, as promised, here is an article on the pH modifying effects of the nitrogen sources in fertiliser.

# Nitrogen's Influence on Growing Medium pH

Tuesday, September 12, 2017 | JoAnn Peery

The pH of a growing medium is influenced by several different factors, two of which have been addressed in previous articles: the alkalinity of the irrigation water, as well as the amount and form of limestone incorporated into the growing medium. This article will focus on the third major factor: nitrogen.

In standard greenhouse fertilizers, nitrogen is supplied as ammonium ( $\text{NH}_4^+$ ), nitrate ( $\text{NO}_3^-$ ) or urea. Each of these three nitrogen sources, when taken up by plant roots, produce different chemical reactions with differing effects on the growing medium pH. This article will briefly describe those effects on growing medium pH.

GUARANTEED ANALYSIS		F1313
Total nitrogen (N)		.20%
8.00 % ammoniacal nitrogen		
12.00 % nitrate nitrogen		
Available phosphate ( $\text{P}_2\text{O}_5$ )		.10%
Soluble potash ( $\text{K}_2\text{O}$ )		.20%
Magnesium (Mg), total		.0.15%
0.15% water soluble magnesium (Mg)		
Boron (B)		.0.0068%
Copper (Cu)		.0.0036%
0.0036% chelated copper		
Iron (Fe)		.0.0500%
0.05% chelated iron		
Manganese (Mn)		.0.0250%
0.025% chelated manganese		
Molybdenum (Mo)		.0.0009%
Zinc (Zn)		.0.0025%
0.0025% chelated zinc		

*“This is a typical analysis of the elements found in a fertilizer.*

*Notice the top three lines indicate the total and nitrogen and the breakdown of ammoniacal and nitrate nitrogen.*

*Source: Premier Tech Horticulture”*

**Ammoniacal Nitrogen (Ammonium):** When ammoniacal nitrogen ( $\text{NH}_4^+$ ) is taken up by the plant, it is converted to ammonia ( $\text{NH}_3$ ) within the root. This process results in the release of a positively charged  $\text{H}^+$  cation from the plant root. The  $\text{H}^+$  cation then reacts with the growing medium causing a reduction in its pH. The higher the concentration of ammoniacal nitrogen in the fertilizer, the greater the impact it has on lowering the growing medium pH.

Ammoniacal nitrogen can also become available to the plant through a process called nitrification. In this process, microbes in the growing medium breakdown ammoniacal nitrogen, thus releasing the  $\text{H}^+$  and resulting in a reduced growing medium pH. This process occurs most efficiently when the growing medium temperature is above  $50^\circ\text{F}$  ( $10^\circ\text{C}$ ) and the microbes are most active. Since nitrification needs warmth for the microbes to actively break down the ammoniacal nitrogen, it is generally not recommended as the primary nitrogen source during cool winter months. It should also be pointed out that plants grown with high levels of ammoniacal nitrogen, especially when growing medium temperatures are cold, can show ammonia toxicity, causing chlorosis and necrotic spotting of older leaves.



*“Mum on left has ammonium toxicity symptoms, while the one on the right is normal.*

*Notice the chlorosis and brown flecking near leaf margins.*

*Source: Premier Tech Horticulture”*

**Nitrate Nitrogen:** Nitrate nitrogen works differently by causing the release of a negatively charged  $\text{OH}^-$  or  $\text{HCO}_3^-$  anion when it is taken up by the plant root. These negatively charged anions are bases and when they react with the growing medium, they cause the growing medium pH to increase. If the fertilizer used has a high concentration of nitrate nitrogen, then it will have a greater influence on increasing the pH of the growing medium.

**Urea:** Urea nitrogen ( $(\text{NH}_2)_2\text{CO}$ ), the third nitrogen source, is often broken down by microbes in the growing medium to form  $\text{NH}_4^+$  (ammonium) and  $\text{CO}_2$  (carbon dioxide). As stated above, when a

plant roots takes up ammoniacal nitrogen, it emits  $H^+$  into the growing medium, thereby reducing the pH of the growing medium. However there is significant evidence that shows plants roots take up some urea, which has no electrical charge. Therefore, urea is considered neutral and therefore does not have an impact on growing media pH.

Plants often can only take up nitrogen in the form of ammonium or nitrate. Organic fertilizers must be broken down to one of these two forms by microbial activity in the growing medium before being taken up by the plant root. Therefore the effect of organic fertilizers on growing medium pH will depend on how the organic component of the fertilizer is broken down. However, most organic fertilizers break down to the ammoniacal form of nitrogen and therefore will cause a drop in growing medium pH.

Other than nitrification, the impact of nitrogen form on growing medium pH only occurs when the plants take up the nitrogen. If plants are very small or not growing, the plant uses little fertilizer and therefore the growing medium pH will not be affected by the addition of fertilizer.

Understanding the function of nitrogen form on growing medium pH is an additional tool in a grower's arsenal for optimizing nutrient availability. Combined with knowledge of the alkalinity of the irrigation water, a grower can choose the fertilizer formulation that will maximize plant growth. As a general rule of thumb, growing medium pH can be controlled through the choice of nitrogen form as long as the alkalinity of the irrigation water does not exceed 235 ppm  $CaCO_3$ . Once it rises above 235 ppm  $CaCO_3$  the amount of acid needed to maintain a desirable growing medium pH can no longer be provided by fertilizer source alone and acid injection is recommended.

In order to maintain optimum growing medium pH and nutrient availability, growers should test the growing medium pH of various crops on a regular basis. By monitoring growing medium pH, slight modifications in fertilizer applications can be made before nutrient problems are manifested in plant growth.

#### **A few points of interest related to the article above.**

- In the metropolitan area at least we do not need to worry too much about the temperatures being lower than 10 degrees as the average Perth minimum and maximum temperatures in August are 8 and 19 while in May they are 10 and 22 with all the intervening months higher. Nevertheless, a fertiliser predominantly containing nitrate as the nitrogen source during the colder months is likely to be a little more effective especially as half of the days will be colder than the average.
- Few, if any, growers will have scheme water with  $CaCO_3$  being above 235ppm (= 235mg/L). Water Corporation data for metropolitan and regional Western Australia shows that the average alkalinity of scheme water is lower than 235ppm in all locations surveyed. The data is included in a report which can be found at <https://pw-cdn.watercorporation.com.au/-/media/WaterCorp/Documents/About-us/Our-performance/Drinking-Water-Quality/Drinking-water-quality-annual-report-2018.pdf?rev=f1f81bcd320148e694113738fb630325&hash=69AE141BE08BF170663A3B3C862094FC>
- On the subject of manure, the article states that organic (animal) fertilisers will normally be acidifying due to a preponderance of ammonium over nitrate. This is especially the case for fresh manures. Aged and composted manures tend to lose ammonium nitrogen in the form of ammonia gas and so they are less potent and more balanced in the nitrogen source. Additionally, the majority of available manures are not a pure product, so a general analysis is not always applicable. Here is a chemical analysis of various animal

manures for those of you who are interested. Poultry manure is the highest in nitrogen by far of all those listed predominantly because, as it has come from a bird, its manure is a mixture of faeces and urine due to having a common outlet for the bowel and urinary systems which mixes the excrements together.<sup>1</sup>

	Nitrogen	Phosphorus	Potassium	Calcium	Magnesium	Organic matter	Moisture content
	(N)	(P <sub>2</sub> O <sub>5</sub> )	(K <sub>2</sub> O)	(Ca)	(Mg)		
<b>FRESH MANURE</b>	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Cattle	0.5	0.3	0.5	0.3	0.1	16.7	81.3
Sheep	0.9	0.5	0.8	0.2	0.3	30.7	64.8
Poultry	0.9	0.5	0.8	0.4	0.2	30.7	64.8
Horse	0.5	0.3	0.6	0.3	0.12	7.0	68.8
Swine	0.6	0.5	0.4	0.2	0.03	15.5	77.6
<b>TREATED DRIED MANURE</b>	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Cattle	2.0	1.5	2.2	2.9	0.7	69.9	7.9
Sheep	1.9	1.4	2.9	3.3	0.8	53.9	11.4
Poultry	4.5	2.7	1.4	2.9	0.6	58.6	9.2

### ...but wait, there's - **More Cultural Insights**

I had intended leaving this to the next edition of the Newsletter but Frank's sage advice regarding testing pH has induced me to include it now. The next few months are the most important for testing as the potting mix becomes more likely to move out of the ideal range the longer the plant has been growing in the same potting mix.

The most important part of the potting mix for testing is at the base of the pot. There should be good root growth down to the base if watering has been correctly carried out and the mix has not been kept too wet. Testing the surface soil is unreliable due to the variety of fertiliser, spray and other residues that accumulate there.



The following links will direct you to articles written by Lance Lawson and published in October 2020. These relate to testing the growing media for both pH and chemical salts. The articles explain the need for testing, the available methods of testing, how to take the readings and how to interpret the results. There are meters available to take accurate measures of pH and fertiliser strength (electrical conductivity). However, testing for pH can be done with relatively inexpensive test strips or colour indicating liquids and powders.

<https://www.pthorticulture.com/en/training-center/media-and-tissue-testing-part-1-why-test/>

<https://www.pthorticulture.com/en/training-center/media-and-tissue-testing-part-2-media-testing-methods/>

<https://www.pthorticulture.com/en/training-center/media-and-tissue-testing-part-3-measuring-ph-and-ec-of-media/>

These articles are very interesting and informative.

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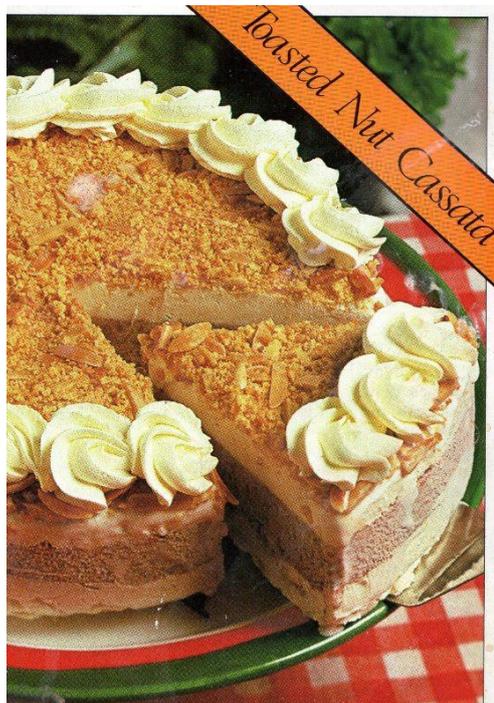
<sup>1</sup> Fun fact: This common opening, which includes the opening of the genital tract, is called a cloaca. All sharks, rays, amphibians, reptiles and birds have a cloaca. Nearly all fish and mammals do not. The echidna and platypus are monotremes (Greek = single opening) and also have a cloaca. Other mammals have a cloaca during early embryological development which then progress to become separate openings shortly after.

## Some useful points are as follows -

- An inexpensive and helpful testing method can be devised using indicator plants grown with your chrysanthemums. Various plants are sensitive to low pH, high pH, low fertiliser concentration or high fertiliser concentration. Four pots, one each of zinnias, petunias, vincas and marigolds, can give an early indication of each problem before the adverse effects will be seen in your chrysanthemums.
- If special meters are available for testing then the “pour through” method is the most suitable method for obtaining a suitable liquid sample for growing media testing by hobby growers and only requires distilled/deionised water to obtain the sample. The growing medium should be watered to saturation with irrigation water 60 minutes prior to testing. Then pour deionized water over the growing medium's surface (100ml for a 150mm pot and 350ml for a 250mm pot) and collect the liquid that flows out of the bottom of the container. The goal is to obtain 50 ml of liquid per sample. Do not exceed 60 ml as the sample will be too diluted, resulting in lower E.C. values. Once the sample is ready for testing, it should be tested immediately.
- For those growers without access to special meters then simply scraping some potting mix out of a drainage hole of the pot will be suitable for testing pH with colour change indicator powders and solutions.
- It is important to test a number of different pots before deciding to make any changes which will affect the whole chrysie patch. Sometimes a problem will affect only one, or maybe a few pots.
- The ideal soil pH for chrysanthemums is in the range 5.7 – 6.2
- The ideal growing media electrical conductivity reading (EC) for chrysanthemums is 2.6 – 4.5 mmhos/cm. Readings in the lower portion of this range would be safer for young plants and those grown with the long growing season methods that we hobby growers normally practice. Growers using semi-hydroponic methods with fairly continuous liquid fertiliser applications should not be applying fertiliser solutions at these EC levels as the concentration will increase in the pot due to water uptake by the plant and atmospheric drying.
- As mentioned in the last newsletter, excellent plants and flowers can be grown without the need to know anything at this level of complexity. Nevertheless, some general understanding of the principles is useful.

## Toasted Nut Cassata (cassata – noun: Neapolitan ice cream containing candied or dried fruit and nuts)

Looking for a recipe to wow them at New Year's or Australia Day celebrations? This is perfect for a hot day as there is no need to turn on the stove to make it and it will cool you down when you eat it. What more could you want? Maybe someone to make it for you? Well I did have that (thanks Colleen R.) and it was delicious. Strawberries or other decorative fruit around the edges is an alternative to the cream flowers and a variety of crumbly biscuits other than coconut are also suitable.



**½ cup chopped mixed glace fruit**  
**2 tablespoons brandy**  
**300ml carton cream**  
**2 teaspoons castor sugar**  
**125g (4oz) dark chocolate**  
**15g (½oz) butter**  
**2 litre carton vanilla ice-cream**  
**1 teaspoon vanilla**  
**2 teaspoons cocoa**  
**60g (2oz) slivered almonds**  
**60g (2oz) coconut biscuits**  
**300ml carton cream, extra**

Line base of 20cm (8in.) springform pan with aluminium foil. Combine glace fruit and brandy, mix well. Let stand 10 minutes. Whip cream and sugar until thick, fold in fruit and brandy. Spread cream mixture over base of springform pan, freeze. Put chopped chocolate and butter in top of double saucepan, stir over gently-simmering water until melted; cool. Combine half the softened ice-cream and vanilla. Add

approximately half a cup of this ice-cream to melted chocolate mixture, mix well. Add chocolate mixture to ice-cream, mix well. The melted chocolate gives the ice-cream a “chocolate chip” texture. Stir in sifted cocoa, mix well. Spread chocolate ice-cream over cream layer; freeze. Spread remaining half-softened ice-cream over chocolate layer. Place almonds in moderate oven 5 minutes or until light golden brown; crush coconut biscuits lightly. Sprinkle combined biscuit crumbs and almonds over top of cassata. Press crumbs and almonds lightly into ice-cream; freeze until firm. Decorate the top with extra whipped cream. □

## Editor's Notes

OK, unlike The Donald, I willingly concede. Our President is right. Hardly anyone is interested in Latino music videos. That is apart from Latin Americans, Spaniards, Philipinos and Equatorial Guineans. All up around eight hundred million people, but Hey! What would they know?

Now that the world is turning twenty one and we have all got twenty-twenty hindsight it is time to grow up. So, here is my New Year's resolution.

### **No more song and dance in the WACS Newsletter.**

The Muslim world has already turned 42, as the Islamic calendar says it is 1442. That is the number of years since Muhammad and his followers migrated from Mecca to Medina and established the first Muslim community, an event commemorated as the Hijra. There are 1.5 billion Muslims in the world. There are several Hindu calendars so a generally accepted year cannot be given. One of the more popular, the Vikrami calendar, named after King Vikramaditya, started 2077 years ago. One scholar suggests that there was another calendar that started 8696 years ago. There are 1.2 billion Hindus. The Buddhist calendar says it is 2564, that being the number of years following the death of the Buddha and his attainment of parinirvana<sup>2</sup>. There are around half a billion Buddhists.

*Apparently Buddhist monks first brought the chrysanthemum to Japan in around 400AD. The Japanese consider the orderly unfolding of the chrysanthemum's petals to represent perfection, and Confucius once suggested they be used as an object of meditation.*

It is interesting that the Buddha (563 – 483 BC) and Confucius (551 – 479 BC) were contemporaries but there is no evidence that they knew of each other. There is no Confucian calendar but there is a Chinese calendar and the next Chinese New Year will fall on the 12<sup>th</sup> February. It will be the Year of the Ox and wrought metal, Xin Chou. The Chinese calendar does not count years in an infinite sequence and is instead composed of repeating sixty year cycles. The calendar is thought to have begun around 2637 BC. This year will be the start of the thirty eighth year of the seventy eighth cycle and it will be celebrated by more than one and a half billion people, not all of them Chinese. The Hebrew calendar says it is 5781 as that is how many years have passed since the year before The Creation, the time of which was calculated by their scholar, Maimonides. This prior year is known as "Anno Mundi" and also the "Year of Emptiness". There are 15 million people of Jewish faith. Wikipedia lists eighty six different calendars. Fortunately, not all of them are based on significant religious events, otherwise atheists would not know what day it was.

*According to sociologists Ariela Keysar and Juhem Navarro-Rivera's review of numerous global studies on atheism, there are 450 to 500 million positive atheists and agnostics worldwide (7% of the world's population), with China having the most atheists in the world (200 million convinced atheists).*

Christianity is the world's biggest religion with 2.2 billion followers and so, according to democratic principles(?), the world has agreed to adopt our Christian based Gregorian calendar for civil purposes. Agreements of this type seldom occur when people are being uncivil. Someone asked The Donald to give his thoughts on democracy for which his only response was - "It's all Greek to me."

Traditional advice is that discussions concerning religion and politics are to be avoided. The weather was considered a safe topic. However, not any more. Climate change, or lack thereof, has put paid to that suggestion. What then to write about in the Editor's Notes? Maybe try chrysanthemums I hear you say. I have previously mentioned on more than one occasion that I was running out of inspiration for new chrysanthemum related topics.

You may recall that in the 2019 and 2020 January - February Newsletters I mentioned some matters related to gender equality. This is probably now a safer topic for conversation than the weather. You will have also noted my interest in Latino music from my recommendations in recent newsletters and one of my early Notes had a section on English grammar. So, in the interests of continuity, I have noticed that there is an emerging trend among some liberal progressives in the USA to replace the term "Latino" with "Latinx", which is defined –

*as a person of Latin American origin or descent (that is) used as a gender-neutral or non-binary alternative to Latino (masculine) or Latina (feminine).*

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<sup>2</sup> Parinirvana occurs upon the death of the body of someone who has attained nirvana during their lifetime.

According to one commentator –

*Not only is Latinx “laughably incomprehensible to any Spanish speaker without some fluency in English,” as two Latino Swarthmore College students argued in 2015, its use has been formally rejected by the Real Academia Española, the official body of linguists that preserves the language’s integrity.*

We could use the term “Hispanic”, which you might think would be OK, except for the fact that it refers to all native Spanish speakers wherever in the world they may live and excludes Brazilians. Another suggestion is to use the term “Latin” but unfortunately that also includes Italians, French, Portuguese and Romanians, amongst others. What to do? Paraphrasing from Gilbert and Sullivan’s “Pirates of Penzance”, and particularly in the age of Trump - An editor’s lot is not a happy one.

As it happens, I have once again been listening to YouTube songs as a blessed relief from the troubles of the world, including the intricacies of gender neutral language, while writing this newsletter and, like most New Year’s resolutions, mine was unlikely to last. Your newish favourite Mexican female singer, 2020 Latin (they obviously didn’t consult Wikipedia) Grammy award winner Natalia Lafourcade, has a collaboration with Spanish pop group La Oreja de Van Gogh entitled “Maria”. It is very pleasant listening.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1d8mLCULOqs> (31,375,462 views, but Hey! What would they know?)

La Oreja de Van Gogh translates as The Ear of Van Gogh. It is not stated whether “The Ear” refers to his musical preferences or the one that he severed from his head. Possibly, this is left intentionally ambiguous, as is the case with some of the references in Haiku. I Googled “Van Gogh chrysanthemum”, as you do, and came up with the following two artworks. I am not sure how I failed to find them when researching for the critically acclaimed Chrysanthemums in European Art, January – February 2020, edition of this newsletter. Van Gogh wrote that –

*real painters do not paint things as they are ... they paint them as they themselves feel them to be.*

Van Gogh is regarded as a post-Impressionist and preceded your old chrysanthemum painting mate, Piet Mondrian, who wrote that –

*Art is higher than reality and has no direct relation to reality. To approach the spiritual in art, one will make as little use as possible of reality, because reality is opposed to the spiritual. We find ourselves in the presence of an abstract art. Art should be above reality, otherwise it would have no value for man.*

I am not sure that da Vinci or Rembrandt would entirely agree with him, but Hey! What would they know? They never painted chrysanthemums.



Bowl with Chrysanthemums  
1886

*The ear of Van Gogh –  
Alas, it could feel no sound,  
Except for the blues.*

Chrysanthemums and  
Wildflowers in a Vase  
1887



You will no doubt be impressed with Natalia Lafourcade as she has managed to maintain a wholesome 0% vulgaridad, 0% desnudos image due to her 100% talentos. This is despite the sexualised and brutalising nature of the industry in which she works. Those of you who can tolerate some % vulgaridad and desnudos may like the following music video from Aleida Nuñez and La Sonora Dinamita entitled “Mi Cucu”. This loosely translates as “My Booty”. The song was performed on the top of a flat tray semi-trailer travelling through the main streets of Mexico City, so it is fairly tame. Esto es música señores. (y señoras?)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7rWqk9TnLjs>

Modern day Mexico was home to the Aztecs and some of the Mayans. *Mayans excelled in mathematics, art, architecture, and astronomy.* They had a calendar and this year would be 5123. The population of Mexico is 126 million of whom nearly 9 million live in Mexico City. The crowds seemed to enjoy the performance but Hey! What would they know?

There are also 37 million people of Mexican descent living in the USA, including drug dealers, criminals and rapists.<sup>3</sup> Fortunately, it can be assumed that “some” of them are “good people”. Mind you, the USA has their own home grown problem children, including Antifa and up to one half of Donald Trump supporters, who are reputedly a basket of racist, sexist, homophobic and xenophobic “deplorables”.<sup>45</sup> Mel Brooks in his “Blazing Saddles” movie outlined the wide range of miscreants that are to be found wandering the range in the good ol’ USA.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fLpmswBKVN4>

If, in the apparently unlikely event that you enjoy either of the two Hispanic songs that I have mentioned, then I encourage you to review the similar recommendations that I have given in the last two newsletters. Yes, they are sung in Spanish, but does the infant child eschew the sound of his mother’s voice? If you can view the newsletters in

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<sup>3</sup> Thanks a lot Donald Trump.

<sup>4</sup> Thanks a lot Hilary Clinton.

<sup>5</sup> 63 million people voted for Donald Trump in 2016 of which half comprised the “basket of deplorables”. Hilary Clinton later apologised and corrected herself by admitting that the proportion of deplorables was less than half.

electronic .pdf form this is easy, as you only need to double click on the blue underlined text. This is known as a hyperlink. I was not always aware of this useful feature. In the past I have instead cut and pasted the text into the address bar of Internet Explorer. One of my children saw me doing this and advised me of my idiocy.

The federal government is encouraging the employment of young people with their recently announced Jobmaker hiring credits. This will pay businesses \$200 a week to employ people aged 16 to 29. This is a very sound policy as it is important to get young people into the work force while they still know everything.

Those of you who only receive a hard copy of the newsletter will be unable to use the hyperlink function but then you probably do not have internet access and so cannot access YouTube either. It is perplexing to some people of my generation that so much of importance, like your bank balance, only exists in electronic form. You may be comfortable with that but what about the more than AUD 100 billion of pandemic economic support that the Australian Government has injected into the economy or the AUD 26,500,000,000,000 (\$26.5 trillion) that has been promised by governments worldwide? This equates to AUD 3400 for every person on earth. That is two Apple iPhone 12 Pros each and a lot of places don't even have mobile reception, let alone 5G or safe drinking water. You may have missed this article by Gareth Hutchens from ABC (Australia) News. "Modern Monetary Theory: How MMT is challenging the economic establishment" It is available at -

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-07-17/what-is-modern-monetary-theory/12455806>

Even I am uncertain why I have included this in the WACS Newsletter other than the fact that six months later it is still "doing my head in". I am comforted by the realisation that not everyone, including me, needs to understand it. This is despite the fact that our electronic bank balance and our life as we know it depends on our esteemed political representatives guessing which bunch of economists is correct and we electors guessing which bunch of politicians is best at guessing. We need more women in politics because their intuition will come in handy.

Fortunately, chrysanthemum plants can continue to be purchased at the Distribution Day for the hard copy price of a fool's golden one dollar coin each, even if we can no longer get a penneth worth of lollies from the corner store. That is, of course, if you were lucky enough to have had a penny. Thank God for ha'pennies or else we would have had nothing.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VKHFZBUTA4k&list=RDZtYU87QNjPw&index=3&ab>

We saw a return to thinking about the good old days at the start of the pandemic when the demand for vegetable seed packets and gardening supplies sharply increased. My father in law was a post war immigrant from a poor area of southern Italy who grew vegetables until shortly before his death at the age of ninety eight. He was orphaned at eight years of age, at which time his schooling ceased and he went out to work. As a young man he was conscripted into the Italian Army during WW2. He was lucky to avoid a posting to assist the German forces on the Eastern Front where death for the troops from his region was near certain, mostly due to the cold, as they were ill equipped to endure it. He occasionally related some of his wartime experiences and provided an insight into his own economic theory, as it applies to modern industrial societies, with this succinctly delivered line –

*Germany is a very good country, they have a lot of steel, only you can't eat steel.*

He could never understand why I liked to grow flowers as you cannot eat them either. Well, they are food for the soul. So, remember to follow Confucius' advice and practice your meditations when we greet again the Queen of the Autumn. This may help you find para-nirvana<sup>6</sup>, lest your own autumn should turn to a winter of discontent.

Confucius said – *We have two lives, and the second begins when we realize we only have one.*

... but Hey! What would he know? He never knew the Buddha.

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<sup>6</sup> Fun fact: If you Google "nirvana" you will only find references to the American pop group of that name on the first four pages of results. The first link related to the Buddhist nirvana appears on page 5, immediately following a link to Nirvana by the Sea, luxurious self-catering apartments on the Gold Coast. For the Buddhist nirvana we are first directed to tricycle.com where it is defined as the condition where the triple fire of greed, hatred, and delusion, which leads to rebirth, has been extinguished.

Kurt Cobain: *Teenage angst has paid off well. Now I'm bored and old.*

the Buddha: *What you are is what you have been. What you will be is what you do now.*



Natalia Lafourcade



Confucius said –

- ❖ *It was by music that the ancient kings gave elegant expression to their joy. By their armies and axes they gave the same to their anger.*
- ❖ *Never give a sword to a man who can't dance.*

Editor, author disputed and Shakespeare said –

- ❖ *What, no song and dance in the Editor's Notes? Pfft! Make love, not war<sup>7</sup> and if music be the food of love, play on.*



Chrysanthemum  
The golden flower.

Sisters are doing it for themselves; empowering Latina song.

Mon Laferte - Que Se Sepa Nuestro Amor (En Garibaldi)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W2k7CqTAHU>

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<sup>7</sup> It is claimed by *historian Ben Truwe, who studied the matter, that the phrase (was) actually first published in an article by New York Times ("fake news") Magazine journalist Mitchel Levitas in 1965.*

## Mentors

**Ian Blackwell** – Kelmscott 0424 432 608  
**Ralph Coombes** – Maida Vale 9454 3373  
**Michael Drake-Brockman** – Pickering Brook 9293 7650  
**Carl Slusarczyk** – Mount Lawley 9272 1356  
**Richard Williams** – Inglewood 0439 103 500

## Chrysanthemum Culture in Western Australia

... a booklet written by Ted Elms. <https://www.chrysanthemumwa.com/chrysanthemum-culture-wa.html>

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## Forthcoming Events

**General Meeting** Tuesday 9th February 2021  
12 noon John McGrath Pavilion, Hensman Rd South Perth

**WAHC Garden Clubs' and Societies' Fair** Saturday 20th and Sunday 21st February 2021  
South Perth Civic Centre Hall, corner of Sandgate St and South Terrace, South Perth.

**Home Visit** Sunday 14th March 2021  
1.00pm Carl and Lina Slusarczyk's home, 6 Regent St West, Mount Lawley.

**Home Visit** Sunday 11th April 2021  
1.00pm Michael and Judy Drake-Brockman's home, 136 Merrivale Rd, Pickering Brook

**General Meeting** Tuesday 13th April 2021  
12 noon John McGrath Pavilion, Hensman Rd South Perth

**WACS Annual Show and Australian Championship** Thursday 6th – Saturday 8th May 2021  
Official Opening - 11am Friday 7th May  
Hawaiian Forrestfield Shopping Centre, corner of Strelitzia Ave and Hale Rd, Forrestfield.

**Presentation Luncheon** Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> May  
12 noon John McGrath Pavilion, Hensman Rd South Perth

## Website

[www.chrysanthemumwa.com](http://www.chrysanthemumwa.com)

## Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/chrysanthemumwa/>