



WACS NEWSLETTER July – August 2019

President's Notes



I would like to start the new season by revving you all up with some paraphrasing of a suitable inspirational address. However, the internet has failed me, or perhaps I have failed it. So, unfortunately, I am obliged to turn my immediate attention to more serious matters. *(How sad. – Ed.)*

No, this is not a quokka. It is a groundhog. They are native to North America. They eat plants and are expert tunnel diggers. Common complaints include large burrows, and garden and crops being eaten. Fortunately it is one of the very few pests that chrysanthemum growers in Western Australia do not have to deal with, and it follows that we do not have Groundhog Day. Interestingly enough however *(to some – Ed.)*, Groundhog Day falls on February 2nd, which in southern hemisphere terms would be August 2nd. Early August is the traditional start to our new season when we cut back the stools to induce a fresh crop of shoots to strike cuttings from. Some members have been doing this annually for more than sixty years. As Ian Blackwell has observed “you just love growing chrysies”.

This year you should especially enjoy growing chrysanthemums because 2020 will see the quinquennial *(a lustrum since the last one – Ed.)* Australian Chrysanthemum Championship once again in Perth. It doesn't get any bigger than that. The new Committee will be charged with ensuring that this festival of horticultural pre-eminence is suitably celebrated. *(Perhaps a very excellent programme of pianoforte selections, and in the evening a capital promenade concert; as in 1884. – Ed.)* Prize money will be on offer! Why not add your name to the pantheon of Western Australian winners, or perhaps become WA's only two time winner. Remember, you only need five untarnished, refulgent, extraordinary blooms of staggering immensity. *(Similar to those grown by Mr George Hayman in WA, one hundred years ago. Fiftieth Anniversary booklets are still available and very reasonably priced, considering the work that went into them. – Ed.)*



Those who do not seek fame and fortune should simply recall the pleasure they gained from a garden bed or vase full of cheery blossoms.

Queens of the
Autumn.



On the subject of the Committee, **the WACS Annual General Meeting** is scheduled for the **10th September**. Up to six committee members are allowed in addition to the senior office bearers. All positions will be spilled, including those of President, Newsletter Editor and Show Secretary.

Australian Championship Selections

Ssh! This is confidential. Just between you and me. Bookies are currently offering odds on the Australian for each exhibitor of 10 to 1 for the win and 3 to 1 for a place. However, I know a guy, who knows a guy that has been following the form. Watch out for exhibitors growing the following cultivars and go all in.

Exhibition – Mount Shasta and Primrose Mount Shasta

Decorative – Rose Stoakes and Stoakes Golden Splendour

Anemone – Edith Mechen and Stoakes Cameo

Single – Dorothy Ann, Glad Eye and Stoakes Freesia

Fantasy – Seatons Galaxy and Seiko No Asa

Best of the Rest

You may be itching to get on a few others and it is also wise to bear in mind that scratchings can occur due to a variety of seasonal factors. So also consider –

Exhibition – Kokka Hare Butai, Kokka Kinzan and Kings Pleasure.

Decorative – Stoakes Vanilla, Kokka No Sachi and Stoakes Mystic

Anemone – Cloverlea Companion and Seatons Ruby

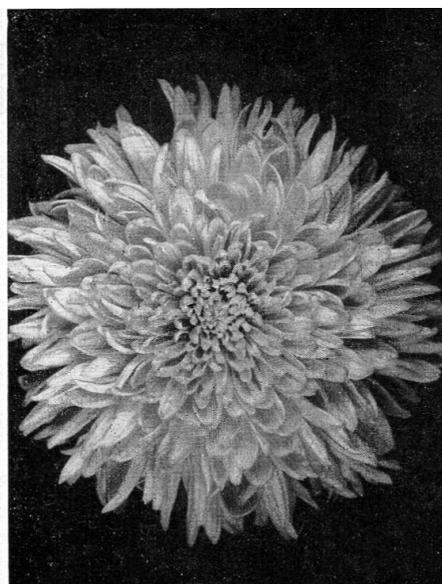
Single – Kellies Goldmine and Peter Robinson

Fantasy – Kiyomi No Yurai and Seatons Lady (the Stephen Bradbury of Fantasies)



Tell It to Someone Who Cares

I was reading the 1959 NCS(UK) "The Chrysanthemum Manual" by E.T. Thistlethwaite and came upon the attached photographs. Both flowers are from the same cultivar. The bloom on the left was flowered at a night temperature of 10 degrees and on the right at 15 degrees. The author notes that when flowered at higher night temperatures poorer flowers will result, with blooms having paler colour and florets that do not reflex properly. Perth's April average minimum night temperature is 14 degrees and the rest of the night is warmer. Hobart's April and London's October minimum night temperatures average 9 degrees.



For comparison, here is a photo from the same book together with one of my photos converted to black and white.



Symbol - grown in UK



Flame Symbol - grown in Perth



What say you Editor?
Fascinating?

On the Subject of Old Books

There are a number of historical chrysanthemum texts available on the internet if you can be troubled to search for them. This is a link to an 1885 book by F.W. Burbidge, Curator of Trinity College Botanical Gardens, Dublin.

<https://ia802607.us.archive.org/20/items/chrysanthemumit01burbggoog/chrysanthemumit01burbggoog.pdf>

It has an extensive coverage of the early European history of Chrysanthemums in addition to advice on culture.

An earlier book is *The Chrysanthemum* by John Salter from 1865. It has further historical and cultural information.

<https://ia802304.us.archive.org/10/items/chrysanthemumit00saltgoog/chrysanthemumit00saltgoog.pdf>

A much later text, *Chrysanthemum Culture in California* by H.M. Butterfield provides an explanation of the difference between the old classifications of Singles and Semi-Doubles. Singles have between one and five rows of ray florets whereas Semi-Doubles have more than five rows. (*yawn – Ed.*)

WACS Merchandise



Clare and Murray are seen here modelling this season's *à la mode* WACS polo shirt. Murray has completed his ensemble with a jaunty tither that can as easily be worn contrariwise when in a devil may care mood, or cycling at speed. *Icone de style*, Colleen, is looking especially radiant in a *très sophistiqué* tailored pinafore. Embroidered embellishments will be added later as the defining touch. Anyone desirous of being *en pointé* with the latest fashion trends should approach Colleen who can advise on sizing and price and arrange delivery from our exclusive supplier.

Cultural Notes

Although there is not much to be done in the chrysie patch in July it is still worthwhile putting a little fertiliser into the pots once in a while and scattering a few snail baits around. (Best avoided if you have pets.) The stools should be cut back at the beginning of August so that a start can be made taking cuttings at the beginning of September. A spray of pesticide and fungicide should be given to the stools at the same time.

Now is an opportune time to think about how you intend to grow your plants for the coming season. If everything went well last year then you are lying to yourself. If it didn't then think about how you can avoid the problems you ran into.

While going through some old computer documents I came across an article I wrote for the society at the end of my first year of membership. I was fortunate enough to win the State A Championship that year and the blooms were as good or better than any that I have grown since. The methods were straight forward and did not require any special chemicals or equipment. No doubt a bit of luck was involved in the good results but I reproduce the article here as it contains all the basic elements of successful growing. Compare this to the methods that you intend to use this season, determine why your methods will give better results and you should not go too far wrong.

I have based my growing methods mainly on two publications. These are the booklet "Chrysanthemum Culture in Western Australia" by Mr E. Elms and a 1964 edition of the National Chrysanthemum Society's "The Chrysanthemum Manual".

When the plants have finished flowering in May I break off the stems leaving a 25cm stump. I leave the stools in their pots and do not think about them again until early August when I cut them back to ground level and apply a small quantity of potting mix and fertiliser to the pots. As they shoot back I spray them with a pesticide and fungicide and apply some snail pellets. If the shoots are a bit yellow late in August they respond to some liquid foliar feeding to green them up.

In early September there are some shoots big enough to allow propagation to start. I snap off a 5-7cm tip cutting and bathe it in Mancozeb. I use a commercial propagating mix and pot either singly into thumb pots or multiple cuttings into 100mm pots. I continue to take cuttings until the end of September. I have noticed no difference whether using rooting powder or not. I do not take stool cuttings but have had success with some of them when sought after varieties have been obtained from other growers. I grow the cuttings in a shady spot without any special protection and make sure that they do not dry out. There are undoubtedly better methods of propagation but I take lots of cuttings and so can choose the best ones later. I do not dispose of the stools until the new plants are growing well. If any fail to propagate then I grow the stool on as a stock plant for next year in the same pot. Another possibility is to take a later cutting and grow it first crown but I have not done that so far.

Once the cuttings are rooted in October I transfer them into 100mm pots. I use a soil based growing method. Bailey's Premium Potting Mix was recommended to me when I started out and as I was pleased with the results I have continued using it. It comes in 30 litre bags or one cubic metre bulk loads. For the first potting I mix a small double handful of Richgro's Blood and Bone Plus fertiliser or similar and a single handful of dolomite lime to 60 litres of potting mix. (My hands are on the small side of medium.) I place them in rows of the same variety pot to pot in full sun. The pots can dry quickly so need watching. I usually give a liquid rooting hormone once or twice. (eg. Multicrop Plant Starter from Bunnings - \$11.90)

In November the plants are ready for potting on. The strongest growing and best rooted varieties go into 150mm pots and the less vigorous ones go into 140mm pots. Plants surplus to my needs are given or thrown away. The potting mix this time is as above except that a good double handful of the blood and bone fertiliser is added. I grow these plants with the pots touching in one large rectangular group again in full sun. I have noticed that the plants on the edge facing the afternoon sun do not produce as many roots on the hot sunny side of the pot but seem to grow just as well possibly because the leaves are not shaded.

In December I pot on for the last time. The potting mix this time has two double handfuls of fertiliser and a single handful of dolomite lime to 60 litres. Plants growing strongly in 150mm pots go into 300mm pots and all the others go into 250mm pots. These sizes may seem overly big but I place the

plants deep down so it is mainly the width of the pot that I am using. This provides some protection from the heating effect of sunlight on the sides of the pots and also allows ample room for top dressing later. I have used 200mm pots especially for some weaker growing plants but have not had many good blooms from them despite reducing the number of flowers carried. I have sometimes put two plants of a weaker variety into a 300mm pot with better results. The plants are placed pot to pot in rows about 80cm apart, again in full sun.

All my plants are flowered on the second crown bud and so are stopped for the first time in December. I separate stopping and potting on by at least a week as both actions provide a check to growth. It may be necessary to delay potting or stopping to avoid this double whammy. When I stop the plants I only remove the top 2.5 cm unless a break bud is showing in which case I stop them at least six leaf axils from the bud perhaps down to 10-15 cm from the base. Some will continue to send buds and so then need to be cut down to the ground and hope for a good basal shoot to take over which can be grown first crown. I grow the exhibition varieties three up, the incurves, decoratives and spiders five or six up and the show singles and anemones eight to ten up. I reduce this number if any of the breaks are weak. The second stop is given in January and again only 2.5cm is removed. I do not mind the plants growing tall as I like the look of a good hedge and also it seems that the biggest plants give the biggest blooms. I have not tried any growth retardants.

The plants are top dressed twice with 2cm of potting mix around the end of February and March or whenever good roots can be seen in the top layer of the soil. Some additional solid complete fertiliser is also given at the same times. If the plants are becoming yellow then I first make sure that over watering is not the cause. If not then liquid fertiliser is given both as a foliar feed and to the pots. I may also give some iron chelate if I think that may be deficient. I avoid supplementary fertilising in very hot weather. I stop feeding at half bloom stage except for the spiders for which I stop at colour show. I have not tried bloom feeding.

I purchased a pH test kit early on but never got around to using it. This is an error that I need to address as pH is very important for good growth. I think that I have been saved from disaster by the use of a good potting mix, dolomite lime and foliar feeding.

I have used most brands of liquid feed but I have included some hydroponic nutrient especially when foliar feeding just to make sure nothing is missing. I frequently add seaweed extract to the fertiliser. Many fertilisers are deficient in calcium and this is the main reason why I add dolomite lime to the mix. The buffering effect on acidity is also helpful but the use of a premium potting mix reduces the necessity for this. Last year I added half and half dolomite and gypsum. Gypsum has less effect on the pH of the soil and can exchange calcium for sodium so it may be useful in areas of high salt water such as Perth. I am not sure if it helped or not.

In the hot part of the year I hand water every evening. I set up a timer controlled drip system for when I go on holiday. Unfortunately I do not trust it to work reliably and the distribution of water in the upper layers of the pot, where the solid fertiliser top ups are located, is uneven. I obsessively pick out all the lateral shoots while I am watering and at any other time when there is nothing better to do. The basal shoots are broken off close to the soil.

I have found that the addition of a soil wetting agent once in a while helps to prevent wilting in the hot weather even when there appears to be plenty of water in the pots. Shading the sunny side of the pots would be very useful but I have not got around to it yet. However I grow my plants on an area of weeds and grass that I cut down before arranging the pots and so they are partly shaded by the regrowth which is vigorous due to the water and fertiliser run off. There are also the additional benefits of increased humidity and the reduction in reflected heat around the plants.

Once the buds appear I secure them as early as I can with safety and have not had too much trouble with cocked buds. I generally flower the exhibition varieties two up and the incurves, decoratives and spiders four up. I remove the unwanted laterals low down after the buds are big enough to ensure that those retained are nice and round. The show singles and anemones are left to carry as many flowers as there are good buds and laterals. I grew one exhibition plant one up due to an accidental breakage and the flower was one or two centimetres bigger than the others. However it was on my strongest plant and so may have been bigger regardless of that. It is painful enough reducing from three to two after all the work involved and going down to one has so far been beyond me.

When the plants show colour I put them under cover which is for me a small Alsynite covered patio and a translucent white canopied 6m by 3m demountable carport that I obtained on special from K-Mart. I rope it down well now after it blew away into my neighbour's yard during an overnight storm the first time that I erected it. Excessive shading of the plants in other locations has resulted in small and poorly coloured blooms. I tried bagging but it was too much trouble for me. Boxing might be best but I have not tried it yet.

Unfortunately chrysanthemums seem prone to many pest and fungal problems and so either a regular preventative spraying program or frequent careful inspections with prompt action is needed. I mostly do the latter. Red spider is a particularly troublesome pest and needs to be eradicated quickly. Weekly pesticide spraying is given late in the season at the first sign of aphids. I have found Confidor to be the best for this. Some powdered pesticide can be lightly puffed into the petals when the blooms are well developed if all else fails.

If I can nominate what I think have contributed most to the success that I have so far enjoyed then it would be as follows-

- 1. Taking lots of tip cuttings.*
- 2. Only growing the best cuttings and then also culling at the 100mm pot stage.*
- 3. Use of a good quality potting mix.*
- 4. Use of large pots.*
- 5. Giving plenty of water and fertiliser.*
- 6. Removal of all side growths as soon as possible.*
- 7. If growing to show then it is helpful to like the same varieties as the judges do.*
- 8. Growing several plants of the most successful varieties so that there are plenty of flowers to choose from.*

Some Useful Chrysanthemum Terms

kiku no yado 菊の宿 home full of chrysanthemums

kikudoki 菊時 time for the chrysanthemums

sono no kiku 園の菊（そののきく） park with chrysanthemums

kiku no tomo 菊の友（きくのととも） friends enjoying chrysanthemums

kiku no aruji 菊の主（きくのあるじ） owner of chrysanthemums

kikubiyori 菊日和 fine weather to enjoy chrysanthemums

kogiku 小菊（こぎく） small chrysanthemum

kiku dairin 菊大輪（きくたいりん） large round chrysanthemum

magaki no kiku 籬の菊（まがきのきく） rough fence with chrysanthemums

kikubatake 菊畑（きくばたけ） field with chrysanthemums

hyakujiku 百菊（ひゃくぎく） one hundred different types of chrysanthemums

hatsugiku 初菊（はつぎく） first chrysanthemum

shiragiku 白菊 white chrysanthemum

kigiku 黄菊 yellow chrysanthemum

Editor's Notes



Quokkas have been described as being the happiest animal on earth.

It has been said that “every woman wants to marry a golden retriever”. This one prefers a Quokka.

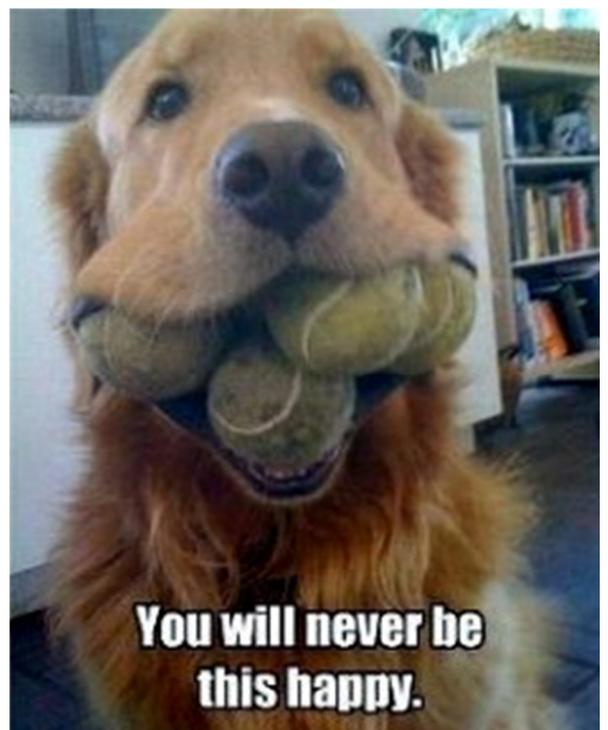
Quokkas enjoy a good laugh and are great practical jokers.

These two are pretending to be meerkats.



This one is pretending to be a hibernating groundhog.

However



Mentors

Ian Blackwell – Kelmscott 9390 2608

Ralph Coombes – Maida Vale 9454 3373

Michael Drake-Brockman – Pickering Brook 9293 7650

Ralph Foster – Armadale 9497 2420

Carl Slusarczyk – Mount Lawley 9272 1356

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Forthcoming Events

WACS Annual General Meeting – Tuesday 10th September 2019, John McGrath Pavilion at 12 noon.

Garden Clubs and Societies Fair – 14th – 15th September 2019 at South Perth Civic Centre

Distribution Day - Sunday 27th October 2019 at John McGrath Pavilion at 1:30pm

Website

www.chrysanthemumwa.com

Facebook Page

Western Australian Chrysanthemum Society

www.facebook.com/groups/chrysanthemumwa/