



NEWSLETTER November – December 2017

President's Notes

I hope that you have all been busy in the chrysie patch and that your plants are off to a good start. I am back from a month away in Italy and Croatia on my first big trip post retirement. You do not see a lot of chrysanthemums in the shops in Italy as due to their natural tendency to flower in the Autumn they were traditionally used to decorate the graves on All Saint's Day (1st November) and so they are not always well received as gifts for the living. However I did see a few very nice Dutch grown Charms in the markets selling for about \$15. This photo was taken in Rome in late September.



I am told that the Distribution Day went quite well although sales were a bit down, which is partly due to me not being there to buy any. Probably a good thing as usually my eyes are bigger than my garden! A number of members have now obtained some Paclobutrazol dwarfing chemical and it will be interesting see and hear about the results at the end of the season. I am hoping to see a few Fukusuke plants at the show.

When I got back to Perth it was straight out to the garden to find that my rooted cuttings had grown on and looked OK. Unfortunately, before I left, a lot of my stools were not sufficiently advanced to be able to take cuttings and as a result I only have about two thirds of the cultivars that I want for show blooms. Interestingly many of those that were too small are now too tall and either have or will soon be producing buds. As a result I will need to cut them back hard and wait for a new lot of shoots. That should take another two or three weeks and then about three weeks to root them. By then it will be about mid-December. All is not lost however as the Large Exhibitions and other cultivars that usually have an early stop can be grown without stopping and flowered "one-up" and the others can be stopped once only in mid to late January at the usual time for their second stop. There is a tendency with late rooted plants to grow them in smaller pot sizes as they do not grow into as large plants as those rooted earlier. However small pots are difficult to manage in our hot climate as they dry out very quickly and so a better option is to put three plants into a 250mm or 300mm pot (10 or 12 inches). Another use for late rooted cuttings is to sell them at our May Show or February WAHC Garden Clubs' and Society's Fair. In this case they should be grown on in 125-130mm pots and while the flower size will not be up to that required for exhibition blooms they will still produce good saleable results.

Cultural Matters

For a change we have had a reasonable winter and we have made a good start to the season with a successful presence at the W.A. Horticultural Council Fair 9th & 10th September. It was particularly noticeable that the standard of cuttings for sale had improved from our first experience at this event last year. Being so much earlier than our own Cutting Distribution Day (22nd October 2017) has meant that contributing members have had to take cuttings up to a month earlier than normal. One of the potential problems that can arise from taking cuttings so early is that there are a number of cultivars that are prone to get ahead of your stopping and timing schedule and from my experience within the mentoring program this has indeed happened this year. There is nothing new about this phenomenon and once you have learnt which cultivars are the trouble makers you can ensure you take another later batch of cuttings of these in future. Another useful strategy is to take off the top half of the ones that have gone to bud early forcing them to hopefully send up new shoots from the base of the cuttings. I had to do this with 5 or 6 of mine this year successfully securing fresh new growth that is now suitable to grow on for the next year's show.

From mid October it is time to pot on into 130mm pots. That is about 6 weeks from taking cuttings under the time frame for preparing cuttings for Distribution Day. I think most growers now days pot on into Baileys Premium Potting Mix saving them the hassle of preparing their own. As with the John Innes system in U.K. you may care to put a little more fertiliser in the mix for 130mm pots but I can assure you that I have successfully potted on without doing this. This success is predicated on the fact that you do not let them run out of food either by giving say a half strength liquid feed if you think this is necessary or by ensuring they are potted on into final pots within a further 6 week period. This brings you to the end of November or beginning of December. Again when potting on to 10 inch pots you will need to provide additional fertiliser in the mix. This is usually blood and bone + slow release fertiliser and make absolutely sure the pH is in the right range to start with say 6.8 to 7. Remember, on a pH scale of 1 to 14, 7 is neutral and the fertilisers we use will certainly bring it down. You do not need to put in more fertiliser than is required to keep them going until you start your regular feeding program. This should be in place by the time the plants have been in their final pots for 3 to 4 weeks. Ideally I try to have them in their final pots by the time I take the first break. Exhibition cultivars I stop around the beginning of December and Decoratives and fancy cultivars by mid December. To give yourself a fair chance all of this should be done and dusted well before Christmas.

From this stage on you need to be vigilant when it comes to pests. The first break you may get away with a bit of slippage but the second break is more crucial. So make sure you keep up with your spraying to ensure you don't lose any of the growing tips before you take the second break in accordance with your stopping dates for each cultivar.

Once the plants are in their final pots staking becomes an ongoing job. During the first few weeks in their final pots they will settle down and establish a good root system. To do this they will exhaust most of the fertiliser in the pot and if not fed will begin to reflect this in the colour of the leaves and growth. Hence I have recommended a feeding regime begin approximately 3 to 4 weeks after final potting. Most reputable fertiliser products can be used successfully both solids and liquids. There is no hard and fast rule to the types of fertiliser you use either solid or liquid or alternate use of each. It is a given that you keep your pots in balance both with regard to fertiliser salt build up and the pH of the mix.

Chrysanthemums like routine and don't like to be messed around or neglected. They like to be progressing forward all the time, waxing and waning won't help your cause. The number one rule is to grow only as many as you can give proper attention to, and no more.

A high success rate is what we should be aiming at and all the stages during the year should be approached with this in mind. You want the best results from all the hard work during the year.

Ian B.

Forthcoming Events

General Meeting – Tuesday 14th November at 12 noon in the South Perth Rotary Hall

Committee Meeting – Tuesday 21st November at 12 noon in the South Perth Rotary Hall

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

Richard Williams – Inglewood 9272 6120

Contacts

Treasurer – Colleen Ryall 9291 9257 (H) 0400 08 9223 (M) colleenryall@westnet.com.au

Secretary – Michael Drake-Brockman 9293 7650 (H) michaeldb@iinet.net.au

Newsletter Editor – Carl Slusarczyk 9272 1356 (H) carl.lina.slu@gmail.com

Website

www.chrysanthemumwa.com

Facebook Page

Western Australian Chrysanthemum Society <https://www.facebook.com/groups/chrysanthemumwa>