

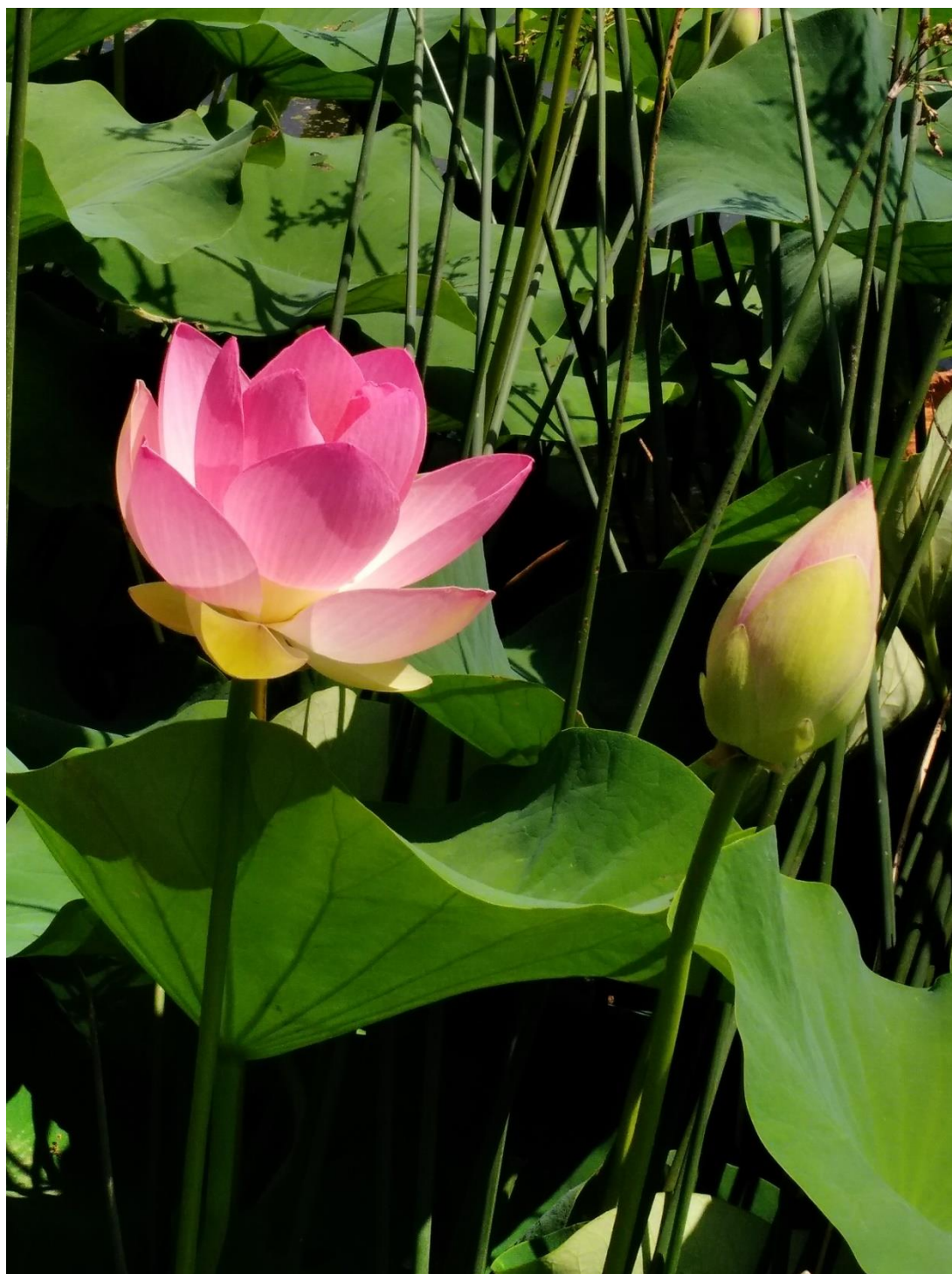


The Herb Age



AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2021

NO 428



*"The lotus flower blooms most beautifully from the deepest and thickest mud."
Buddhist Proverb*

THE HERB SOCIETY OF VICTORIA INC

PO Box 396, Camberwell, Victoria, 3124, Australia

ABN 22 261 579 261

Bank Details: BSB 633000 / Account 158914432



www.herbsocietyvic.org.au

www.facebook.com/herbsocietyvic/

Meetup group: www.meetup.com/Herb-Society-of-Victoria/

AIMS OF THE SOCIETY

- ✿ To act as a forum for all persons interested in herbs for their mutual benefit and fellowship.
- ✿ To further the education of the public in the use, value and growing of herbs.
- ✿ To promote and encourage the organic growing of herbal plants.

Patron: Penny Woodward

The Herb Society of Victoria acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which we come together as a group, share knowledge and garden herbs and useful plants.

HSOV COMMITTEE

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Past President and The Herb Age Editor	Meridith Hutchinson
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Membership Officer and Library Coordinator	Marie Baker
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Committee	Jill Bryant
Committee	June Valentine
Committee	Jan Illingworth

Committee Heather Davies

Committee Lesley Northey

HSOV MEETINGS

General meeting

is on the first Thursday of every month, from February to December, open 7.00pm for 7.30pm start.

At: Room MB10 Main Building. Burnley Horticultural College campus, 500 Yarra Blvd Richmond MelRef: 45 A12

Parking inside the grounds is often limited so, if possible please park on Yarra Blvd and walk in.

Next Meetings: See Page 4

The Hills Branch

meets on the third Wednesday of the month from February to November at 7.45pm at various locations.

Advertising Rates	Quarter page	\$15.00	Half page	\$25.00	Full page	\$45.00
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THE HERB AGE

*Official Newsletter of the
Herb Society of Victoria*

Six issues published per
year, covering:

- ✿ February/March
- ✿ April/May
- ✿ June/July
- ✿ August/September
- ✿ October/November
- ✿ December

Members' original
contributions are warmly
welcomed.

Post to:

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Email to

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2021

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THE HERB AGE

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2021

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Cover Pic.

Lotus flower pictured on the Ornamental Lake at Melbourne Royal Botanic Gardens. The RBG turns 175 this year and features in a story from Mary Dawson on page 8 and will be the topic du jour at our September event.





Our Upcoming Events

Burnley Horticultural College Campus
and Gardens, Burnley Room MB10

Parking inside the grounds is limited so, if possible
please park on Yarra Blvd and walk in.

Tea will be provided. No Supper please, during COVID restrictions.



Thursday 5th August 2021

Please be seated 7.15 for 7.30 pm Start



Let's try again!

Our postponed Trivia night is on again!

Hosted by June and Meridith

Remember - To earn an extra point for
your team, **WEAR A HERB** to the
meeting.

Thursday 2nd September 2021

General Meeting - Please be seated 7.15 for 7.30 pm Start

Guest Speaker: Lynsey Poore

Topic: RBG: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

As many will know, Melbourne's Royal Botanic Gardens turns 175 this year. Shaped from the beginning by some of the botanic greats like Baron Von Mueller and William Guilfoyle, the RBG has restored and added new gardens to inspire everyone's interest.

As a volunteer guide at the RBG, Lynsey is a wonderfully skilled and knowledgeable speaker, who will share her enjoyment of this amazing resource with us.



President's Report

G'day fellow Herbies

Winter is upon us and a slowing and dormancy of many plants (and us too)! Some herbal exceptions are coriander, which is best seed planted during the cooler months, and rosemary which is flowering profusely at the moment. Add flavour to roast veggies, include in a flower arrangement and at the end of a day indulge in a relaxing rosemary bath.

As part of the Royal Botanic Gardens 175 year anniversary many talks and events have been organised. Because of Covid, a number of restrictions have applied and therefore some done via zoom. Of course that has meant that people haven't had to travel, but it's so good to be able to attend in person. One such presentation was by Tim May, principal mycologist at the RBGV National Herbarium. He was a fun(guy) talking about fungi! They are diverse, delicious, and sometimes deadly. It was very entertaining, interesting and informative. Tim has co-authored a book "Wild mushrooming: A Guide for Foragers" with Alison Pouliot, an ecologist and environmental photographer.

Coincidentally Alison gave a talk through library zoom a few weeks later, where she shared her experiences of foraging in Australia and the Northern hemisphere, during the autumn months when most fungi are growing. To recognise the good ones use all of your senses: first, close your eyes, then smell, then touch, then taste (just on the tip of your tongue). Fascinating. And did you know that more than 30 species of our native creatures are eaters of fungi, including bettongs, potoroos and cassowaries? Please be aware when foraging that you might be taking someone else's dinner, so only harvest a few for your own dinner. (pics right include toxic fungi, not for your dinner, but very pretty!)



My local council, Whitehorse, has a tree and urban forest education program and a recent presentation was by Kat Lavers on seed saving. Kat runs a Permaculture garden called the Plummery in Altona which has featured on Gardening Australia (see: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BXzz5b7kVQM>).



The talk was excellent with lots of practical advice, helpful notes, and even hands on at the end sieving and winnowing some dried seed heads. We were given some seeds to take home and my heritage broad beans (more than 60 years old from a Greek gardener) are looking good. I'll let you know the taste difference from my regular commercially planted ones. Most vegetable seeds will remain viable for 3 to 5 years if they are kept cool, dark and dry. Don't store in your greenhouse, garage or garden shed but under your bed perhaps or in a cupboard on the South side of your house?

The Herb Age welcomes any garden visits or talks that you have attended so please forward them to our wonderful editor Meridith for inclusion in the next edition.

Keep warm and happy gardening

June Valentine, President



Membership Reminder

Dear valued members,

A gentle reminder for those who may have missed their annual subscription, that membership renewals were due on July 1st.

This year, there has been a slight increase, the first in many years, in the prices of the printed Herb Age subscription to cover increased costs. Membership prices are:

- | | |
|---|------|
| • Individual Membership - The Herb Age by post | \$38 |
| • Individual Membership - The Herb Age by email | \$26 |
| • Family Membership - The Herb Age by post | \$48 |
| • Family Membership - The Herb Age by email | \$32 |

The membership form is on the last page of the Jun/July issue or you may send your details via email to theherbage@outlook.com.

Payment options include in person at the August meeting, with cheque via mail or preferably via bank transfer. Bank details are:

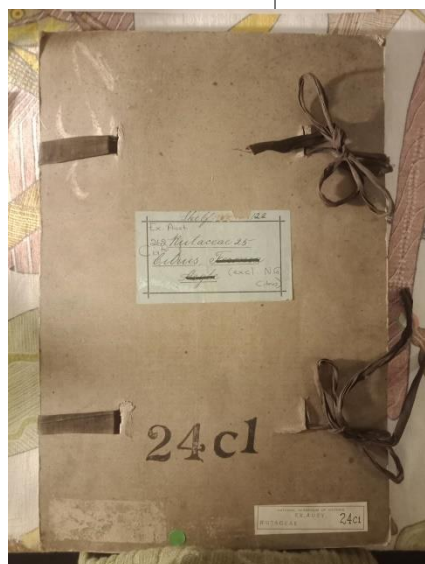
- The Herb Society of Victoria
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- Account 158914432
- Please add your name as a reference, so we can identify your payment.

We really do appreciate your on-going support, especially during these trying times.

Marie Baker, Membership Officer

July Zoomed By

So we have passed through another lockdown, relatively unscathed and hopefully you are all well and stayed safe. It was unfortunate that we had to change the July event and postpone the speaker Karen Sutherland, who happily will be joining us for our December event.



Instead of an in-person meeting for our July event, we had a Zoom catch up. The Zoom meetings have some advantages in that they are a great way for everyone to be able to contribute and converse. And so it was with our Zoom meeting on July 1st. The other advantage, of course is that there is no travel; especially good on a winter's night and when you live a long way from the city. And so we were very lucky to be joined by Penny Woodward that night, and also to see a couple of faces we haven't seen for a while.

We started with our President, June Valentine, welcoming all, including a first time participant, Josie, and providing the news updates. We then settled in for a mini-talk from Mary Dawson on her amazing adventure on pressing botanic specimens at the Herbarium, which you can read more on in her article. I am so impressed that they gave the participants antique paper presses to take home. It seems they have been digitally archiving these old pressings and documents, so they have become surplus. I have only been to the Herbarium once (actually twice as it was over a weekend), back in 1981 during the Moomba weekend. Mum had a herb display there that I was helping out on. I caught up with friends afterwards for the AC/DC concert at the Myer Music Bowl. What a weekend of contrasts!

After Mary's piece, we had a show and tell session, which is a good chance to pick each other's brains a bit! Graham showed productive plants in his garden, which Heather knew all the names of! He included a treasured tree; their macadamia, with maturing nuts being well protecting from marauding pests. The nuts take a year to form from the flower, so the same branch has this season's flowers and last season's fruit.



Penny showed us 2 of her favourite herbs from her garden. One was *Thymus nitidus* (I'm not sure I got that right when I was taking my notes, but it is also called Mediterranean Wild Thyme or Cone Thyme), which grows much taller than most thymes reaching 70 cms in height. It has a lovely peppery flavour, rich pink flowers and elegant silvery stems. At the ends of the stems, new leaves form in cluster that appear like cones. She bought it at Lambley Nursery in Ascot, but not sure if it is still available.

The other was a long leaf coriander, *Eryngium foetidum* (pic above). It a perennial with long flat leaves, belonging to a different family to regular coriander but tastes the same. It is a warm climate native, but can be kept in a pot in a sheltered position through our winter. Clearly it is at its best in summer.

For my show and tell, I had found some very old Culpepper brand essential oils during our packing for moving house; very old, but still held their fragrant integrity. It started a conversation about the great man and his work to bring herbs and medicines available to all in the 17th century. I also showed my produce, olives in brine, as our new home has a considerably aged olive tree. My olives prompted a recipe from Penny and some good advice on how to help the poor tree that is growing almost at right angles to get some light past the greedy Cyprus in it way. As an update, the Cypress is going - we have already had 2 quotes and it should be gone by the end of July.



June also told of the seed saving talk she attended. Graham invited Josie to share what she would like to know about with herbs, which started a whole new discussion. While I am looking forward to our in person monthly events, the zoom is a great alternative to share and learn.

Meridith Hutchinson

Longacres Date Update

A quick update for our planned trip to the gardens of Longacres at Olinda, the final home and garden of Australian landscape artist, Sir Arthur Streeton. The property has remained in the family and current owner the Hon. Julie Dodds-Streeton QC has kindly agreed to a garden tour for HSOV members.

Proposed date is Saturday 6th November pm. There will be a charge of \$10 per person to cover the cost of our guide (Craig Wilson of Gentiana Nursery) and a donation to a charity of Julie's choice, as agreed. We are also looking into transport and afternoon tea afterwards. We are in the process of finalising the details. More to come, but set aside the date.

My First Herbarium

The 175th Anniversary of the Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria

This year marks the 175th Anniversary of the Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria. Founded in 1846, the Anniversary is being celebrated on one day in each season of 2021 through public events and experiences that highlight some of the garden's natural, scientific, and cultural treasures.

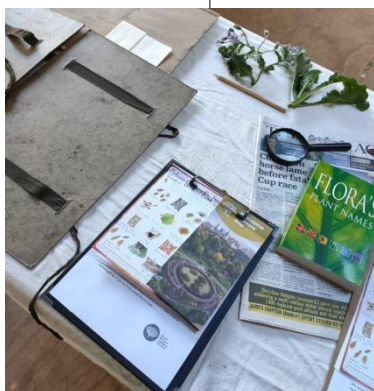


So, imagine my excitement when my daughter called and informed me that we were booked into a workshop as part of the Autumn Garden Gathering event that was held on May 22. The workshop we attended – ‘My First Herbarium’ – was an invitation to families to come along to the RBG and learn how to collect, press, and mount a plant herbarium specimen.

The National Herbarium of Victoria, located in the grounds of the Royal Botanic Gardens, is one of Australia's earliest Herbaria and the oldest scientific institution in Victoria. The function of the National Herbarium is to provide a focus for plant taxonomy and systematics in Victoria and as a rich resource for botanical information. Its collection supports the work of staff at the Royal Botanic Gardens, researchers and students at tertiary institutions, and researchers both nationally and internationally. Currently, the Herbarium holds 1.5 million pressed plant specimens from around the world including some gathered by Sir Joseph Banks on Captain James Cook's first Pacific voyage. The geographic scope of its collection is 60% Australian and 40% non-Australian.

The present Herbarium building was built in 1934 with funds provided by Sir MacPherson Robertson (yes, the Australian philanthropist, entrepreneur and founder of the chocolate and confectionery company MacRobertson's) to mark the Centenary of Victoria. An extension was added in 1988 with Bicentenary funding and the RBG website notes that a major herbarium redevelopment within the next 4-5 years will provide permanent public access to collection highlights.

On the day of the workshop a group of enthusiasts met with two Staff Members outside the Herbarium before walking us through the delightful Ian Potter Children's Garden to arrive at the workspace space beside the pond.



After browsing a selection of pressed plant specimens on display from the Herbarium collection we learned about some of the work that takes place in the Herbarium, about the collection of field plants, the process of pressing plants, and how to care for herbarium specimens. A copy of ‘How to Care for Your Herbarium Specimen’ is included here in the article for you and reproduced with permission of the RBG. Ideally, you would choose a specimen that represents a healthy part of the plant that includes roots, stem, leaves and flowers/fruit so that each element of the plant can be observed.

Before we selected a plant from the Kitchen Gardens the Herbarium gifted each of us with 100-year-old plant presses constructed from board and strawboard to take home and continue our new-found skills (image provided). They are currently in the process of transitioning to new modernised presses.

A wonderful highlight of the workshop was to see young children in the garden selecting their plants according to texture, colour, and the names and uses of different herbs. For myself, I took a cutting of Amaranth for pressing; the name derives from the Greek ‘*amaranton*’ meaning ‘not fading’ since the crimson flowers do not fade with the death of the plant. Perfect for my herbarium specimen!



The process of pressing a plant is relatively simple and begins with laying the plant inside two sheets of newspaper, which is then enclosed in strawboard, and finishing with the press itself. The ‘How to Care For Your Herbarium Specimen’ picks up on the next steps. The drying process takes approximately 2 weeks and is best left in a warm spot to assist with the drying. The final image shows the specimen ready for mounting on acid-free paper. The paper pocket holds seeds and any loose parts of the plant. See “How to care for your Herbarium Specimen” below reproduced with permission of the RBG.

Mary Dawson

How to care for your Herbarium Specimen

To prevent your plant from going mouldy, replace the newspaper with a fresh sheet of newspaper every couple of days until it is dry.

You can press your specimen by placing the strawboard under a heavy book for at least one week.

Once it is dry, your specimen is ready to mount!

Well-mounted herbarium specimens can last for many centuries. At Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria, we mount specimens on acid-free paper to help protect them over time.

We use these methods to secure a specimen to a mounting card:

- Paper strip with gummed paper
- Sew with needle and thread

The size, shape and form of your specimen will determine what method you will use to secure it to the mounting card. Sometimes we use a combination of both!

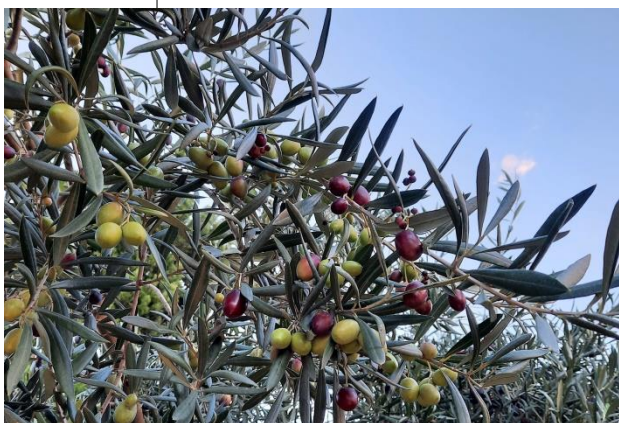
To check out some examples of mounted specimens, have a look at this website: <https://avh.chah.org.au/>

If there are any parts of the plant that come loose, you can store them in a paper pocket, mounted to your card.

Make sure you keep your field notes with your specimen to help you remember important details about your plant.

Olives in Brine with Lemon and Oregano

Ed Note: Penny passed on her recipe during our July zoom meeting, which sounds super delicious for we olive lovers! This was first published in Organic Gardener magazine in February 2020 and can be found online at <https://www.organicgardener.com.au/articles/easy-make-olives-brine>.



Ingredients:

5kg fresh olives (black or green), stalks removed
500g salt
6–8 lemons, sliced thickly
Oregano sprigs

Method:

Place olives in a large container and fill with fresh water until olives are covered. Drain and change water every day, for 10–12 days. Drain olives and place in airtight containers interspersed with oregano sprigs and sliced lemons.

Make the brine by dissolving salt in enough water to completely cover olives (about 5L). Heat gently in a saucepan until all salt is dissolved. Pour over olives, oregano and lemon slices until they are covered and seal the containers. Leave in a cool, dry, dark position for about 2 months for black olives, and 3 months for green olives. At this point, taste an olive, if it is still bitter then leave for another week or two.

Penny Woodward



What Spice am I?

- 5 points** High in polyphenols, I can help improve memory and reduce blood sugar.
- 4 points** Native to South East Asia, I grow 1 to 2 meters high, with large, long leaves.
- 3 points** Medicinally, I have been used to promote digestion and improve respiratory illness
- 2 points** I am an aromatic rhizome often used in Asian cooking
- 1 point** Spicy and pungent, I am closely related to Ginger and Turmeric

I am _____

Bath Bombs

I'm not sure, but I think Tom Jones sang about these...♪♪♪ Bath Bombs ♪♪ Bath Bombs ♪♪♪ They're my Bath Bombs ♪♪♪♪ And why wouldn't he? Not sure about you, but I can't resist a long soak in a fragrant bath with a few bubbles. Bath bombs smell delicious, are fabulous fun at bath time and very easy to make at home.

There are lots of variations to make your own bath bombs, and here's one of them adapted from the CSIRO recipe. You can also add 1 or 2 tablespoons of Epsom Salts to help with aches. If you have ever wondered what makes bath bombs fizz, all will be revealed. The chemistry behind how they work comes down to 2 simple ingredients:

- bicarbonate of soda (also called baking soda)
- citric acid powder (a common food additive, sold in the cooking section of the supermarket, which is expensive if you're making a few. Shop around for fine grade bulk packs)

Ingredients:

- Small dried flower petals or dried herbs or dried lavender (optional)
- sweet almond oil or warmed coconut oil
- essential oils
- ten tablespoons of bicarbonate of soda
- five tablespoons of citric acid
- large mixing bowl
- bath bomb moulds, muffin or ice cube trays or any mould that will hold a shape.
- one small glass jar or bowl



Method:

- Grease the sides and bases of your trays with a small amount of almond, coconut or olive oil.
- Place the citric acid and bicarbonate of soda into a large bowl. Mix the dry ingredients together well. It's a good idea to place the mixture through a sieve to remove any lumps.
- In a glass jar, mix together 10- 20 drops of your essential oil(s) and 5 teaspoons of sweet almond/coconut oil.
- Gradually pour the oil mixture into the dry mixture, quickly mix it all together with your hand. Warning - if you are too slow with the mixing, the reaction will already start and it can bomb your bombs!
- The mixture is ready when it squeezed and stays together in your hands without crumbling too much.
- Add a small amount of flower petals/lavender to the bottom of the moulds.
- Pack the mixture into the tray or mould. Press it down firmly.
- Leave the bombs in the mould or tray to set and dry for at least a day or a few days is better.
- Tap the tray/moulds and carefully up-end your bath bombs to remove them.
- Store in airtight bags.
- Run a bath, hop in and drop a bomb. Watch it fzzzzzz!



What's happening?

When the bath bomb dissolves in water, there is a chemical reaction between the citric acid and the sodium bicarbonate. The result is called sodium citrate. During the reaction, carbon dioxide is released. This causes the 'fizzing' that you see, similar to that in carbonated water.

The oils are also released during this reaction which help moisturise your skin.

Essential Oils

Always use essential oils, as only essential oils have therapeutic properties and keep their perfume well. Synthetic scented oils may be cheap, but should never be used. Your skin is your body's largest organ and what is in your bath water will be absorbed into the pores of your skin. Formulate your own blend for a wee gift to yourself or for a friend.

Have

Some great essential oils for the bath include (and there are so many more):

- Lavender, of course. It has so many therapeutic properties, calming, relaxing and gentle enough for children.
- Chamomile; another gentle oil for wee ones.
- Rose; great for mature skin.
- Frankincense; relaxing and meditative
- Lemon, orange or grapefruit; wonderfully astringent and detoxing.
- Eucalyptus; opens the nasal passages. Try a cold and flu blend of eucalyptus with sweet orange and chamomile
- Ylang Ylang
- Clary Sage
- Sandalwood
- Geranium

Have Not

Some oils should be avoided in the bath as they irritate sensitive skin (and delicate parts!) Among the oils to avoid are:

- Black pepper
- Wintergreen
- Peppermint and Spearmint
- Cinnamon and Cassia
- Clove
- Hyssop
- Oregano
- Camphor



Colour Tip

Add a few drops of food colouring when adding the oils for variety. Use gloves if adding colouring.

Substitution Tip

If you don't want to use citric acid or don't have any on hand, you can try these substitutes, but citric acid does provide the best results.

- Lemon juice
- Cream of tartar
- Cornstarch



Toilet Bombs

Why should the bath have all the fun? These little fellas fizz on contact with the water in the loo and get to work cleaning it without harsh and nasty chemicals. Just drop it in the bowl, and let it sit for a few minutes after the fizz has fizzed out. Then flush away.



Ice cube trays create bombs just the right size for this job. You make them in a similar way as above but no need for dried flowers of course. And swap the oil by using a little liquid soap (about a tablespoon) instead. Add the essential oils to the dry mixture, then a little of the liquid soap at a time until the mixture comes together. Squeezing it in your hand will leave an imprint.

For the toilet bombs, you can use essential oils that are anti-bacterial, anti-microbial and/or or anti-septic like tea tree oil, eucalyptus, lemon, rosemary, peppermint, lemongrass, orange or lavender (Lavender oil really is so versatile!)

Bombs Away!

Meridith Hutchinson

Grandiflora Von Mueller

In the township of Jamieson, near Mansfield, a Magnolia grandiflora tree has yet another Baron Von Mueller reference. Planted in the 1860's, it was part of a shipment of trees mentioned in letters from Baron Von Mueller to Jamieson Police station.



Exactly what the Baron's involvement, other than writing the letters, is a bit vague but the tree is truly a Grand Flora.

Jan Illingworth



Gods in the Garden (Part 1)

Long before the time of saints who were allotted particular caring roles as patrons, the roles were carried out by gods. In time, it seems that many of the gods must have lost their jobs to the saints. (I wonder what happened to out of work gods?) Some of them are easily recognised by us, others are more obscure. Like the saints, many gods were of local influence. Here are a few who may be of some interest to us.



Ancient Greece introduced us to Dionysus, god of nature, wine, pleasure and festivity. In time he went to Rome as Bacchus where he must have had a full time hang over.

Aristaeus was god of cheese making, shepherds, bee keeping and honey, olive growing, oil making, medicinal herbs, hunting and the Elysian winds.

Demeter was the goddess of grasses, fertile ground, grains, fruit and agriculture. She was the sister of Zeus and the mother of Persephone. In Rome she became Ceres, goddess of growing plants, patron of farmers and protector of plebeians.

Artemis was the Greek goddess of the hunt, vegetation, of wild animals and birth. She was a favourite of rural communities. She went to Rome as Diana.

Feronia was Greek and Roman and was associated with wildlife, fertility, health and abundance.

Flora was Roman, associated with flowers, spring and sex. She was equivalent to the Greek goddess Chloris. Her festival in Rome was instigated in 238 BC and her temple is still in the Circus Maximus.

There are a number of flowers in Greek mythology, daffodils, anemones, hyacinths, roses, lilies and peonies.

Viridos or Viridios was god of vegetation, rebirth and agriculture in the north of England about the time of Roman occupation, between 48 AD and 478 AD and earlier. He was probably green. In more recent times Roman style statues of Viridios have been unearthed near the town of Ancaster. A figurine (pictured next page) carved in lime stone has been dated as late Iron Age. It depicts a naked man holding an axe. He is thought to have been used as an altar piece and is thought to be Viridios, who is also thought to have family connections with the Celtic Green Man whose face was often made of leaves or had leaves sprouting from it. The Green Man appears in many European cultures, occasionally even as a Green Woman! Celtic mythology is very rich and is said to have 400 characters. (Note Picture of Viridios from <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=56682289>)

Karaerin is a Celtic god who protects animals and Nature.

The Apple Tree Man was the spirit of the oldest apple tree in an English orchard, especially from the cider producing area of Somerset.

A curious case of the lack of a special god is that of ergot, a devil would be more appropriate, anyway. The fungus *Claviceps purpurea*, that attacks grain, particularly rye, causes the disease ergotism, resulting from eating flour contaminated with ergot, that attacks the flower and seeds of the rye. The disease was known probably since Greek times, but the cause was not known until it was discovered in 1670 by the French Dr Thuillier.

Saint Anthony, a sufferer, gave his name to the condition, as Saint Anthony's Fire, or St Anthony's Holy Fire. He established the first of many monasteries devoted to the care of sufferers, as the Ignas sarex, holy fire, associated with the Virgin Mary.

All over Europe and in Salem, U.S., there were witchcraft trials, probably due to unfortunate sufferers of ergotism being accused of witchcraft. In 1788 the French harvests were very poor, so infected grain was kept and milled, instead of being discarded, and this infected many peasants who developed aggressive attitudes towards their land owners, so influencing the French Revolution.

South America is an area of remarkable hallucinogenic plants and fungi, many used in religious ceremonies and regarded as gifts of the gods. Most are regarded as pleasurable, used by sharmen during religious ceremonies, but Brugmansia, a genus of about eight species of Solonaceous plants, are under the care of an evil eagle, for the plants are all highly poisonous. Some species are no longer known from the wild, only from ancient cultivars. Some species are used therapeutically to treat rheumatism and arthritis.



All species are confined to South America. The Brugmansia with its huge bell shaped flowers and wonderful perfume in the afternoon, was for a while prohibited in gardens here on account of its psychedelic properties, but is now freely available from nurseries. One may still see occasional plants in gardens, as I did a few days ago, in full flower, but the psychedelic effects are so unpleasant that I think the plants should be left for their visual and olfactory enjoyment. A writer in 1846 described seeing the effects of Brugmansia intoxication in Peru: The native fell into a heavy stupor, his eyes vacantly fixed on the ground, his mouth convulsively closed and his nostrils dilated. In the course of a quarter of an hour of convulsions.. After these violent symptoms had passed, a profound sleep of several hours duration followed, and when the subject had recovered, he related the particulars of his visit with his forefathers.

There are a number of hallucinogenic cactuses, used since antiquity, important in religious ceremonies. The most important ones seem to be two species of Lophophore known as peyotes, whose hallucinogenic effects are strong and kaleidoscopic.

It is sometimes said that there are no psychogenic plants in Australia. Aborigines had little use for them or fungi, but a native rainforest tree, Datura lichhardtii was considered a "cheeky bugger", not to be taken. There are 16 species of native tobaccos, some are very potent, especially when mixed with the ash of certain trees, but the most popular 'drug' was (and still is) is pituri, Duboisia hopwoodii. Given to Burke and Wills during the last weeks before they died, Wills wrote in his journal that it "had a highly intoxicating effect when chewed, even in small quantities."

The dried leaves were packed in special small bags, then traded over hundreds of kilometres along trade routes from north to south and east to west. There are many deities and spirits in aboriginal mythology, but none that I have found relating to plants. Two of the most wide spread are the rainbow serpent and bunyip. Wandjina were cloud and rain spirits. Djinkgao were a group of sisters who associated with floods and ocean currents. Nogoman is a god who gives spirit children to mortal parents. Tiddalik is a frog who drank all the water in the land, and had to be made to laugh to regurgitate it.



Part 2 in next issue.

Colline Muir

What Herb am I? Answer Galangal (Alpinia galangal)

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