

# The Fragrant News

Winter 2009

This newsletter is issued to those who choose to subscribe via our website. If you no longer wish to receive copies email { [HYPERLINK](mailto:newsletter@fragrantgarden.co.nz) "mailto:newsletter@fragrantgarden.co.nz" } with the word "unsubscribe" in the title.

**The autumn harvest is nearly over and we have been so busy processing all the herbs and fruit time ran out to write the newsletter. There are still fruit and nuts to gather before the cold weather arrives. The almonds are now all split open so it is time to get the ladder out and harvest them. Each year the crop multiplies, as does the size of the fruit bearing trees in the garden. The picture of six boxes of fruit shows apples, quinces and pears. These are the crop of just three trees. Well into June there is still fresh fruit for the table and when that is gone then there are all the preserves to use. Hope your garden has orchard trees that are useful as well as a sight to behold. Fruiting trees can feature all seasons of the year with blossom, fruit and leaf fall adding ambience to the scene. Wintertime is the best season to plant fruit. And remember to spray all dormant trees with copper or lime sulphur- more about that next time. Meanwhile hope there are a few fine sunny days to get out and enjoy the tasks in the garden.**

## Myrtle Berries

The myrtles are ready to pick. This is a time consuming task as the berries are small and their number large. After my mother –in-law was given the special gift of some delicious chocolate covered myrtle berries on her birthday to honour her



name – Myrtle - I have experimented with the berries to discover the best ways to use them. They are extremely bitter if eaten raw. They need to be cooked first and then sweetened with sugar. The grapes have finally finished. Just as well as the leaves are dropping. The granny smith apples are being picked and these two fruit trees will be the last to have the bird netting removed. Living in the country the only way to stop the greedy birds from enjoying the fruit

means gift-wrapping each bush or tree in bird netting. (Gift wrapped for the humans and not the birds!) All summer there is a shortage of clothes pegs to hang the washing as more and more get purloined for plugging gaps in the netting. At the beginning of summer the sack needle is employed to sew the major seams together but as the wind blows and rearranges the netting the pegs are ideal to stop the birds from plundering the crop through the new 'wind' holes. Often the native white eyes are the most damaging. They can get in and peck holes all over the fruit. They seem to enjoy the juice rather than eating the flesh that the blackbirds and thrushes prefer.

We have been eating fruit from the garden since January and it has certainly helped the grocery bill with five month's worth of home grown fruit. Mandarins are getting juicy, fat and orange right now. They are such neat little packages

that are ideal lunch box fodder. The next crop that is ripening nicely is sitting on the grapefruit tree. Apparently there is a surfeit of this fruit nowadays with so many of the country's senior citizens taking cholesterol-lowering medication.



The one fruit that cannot be eaten when on such medication is grapefruit – it nullifies the effect of the drug. With a little experimentation I have invented a grapefruit free marmalade. Several friends and relations complained that they missed their daily ration of the traditionally tart jam on the breakfast toast. So, accepting this as a challenge the answer has been found. Kumquats or ornamental orange trees have tiny bright

orange fruit. They are extremely bitter and cannot be eaten as fruit. They are excellent marmalade makers though. Limes and kaffir limes can also be used but in small proportions unless a nice green marmalade is liked. Just making marmalade with basically any citrus fruit BUT grapefruit produces an excellent brew. Myrtle's Marmalade recipe is being repeated. There continues to be requests for her recipe as readers email to say they have tried the jam and have now mislaid the instructions. Anytime of the year there is an excess of citrus fruit it can be processed and then frozen. When the next batch of marmalade is required, thaw the fruit mix overnight and proceed with the cooking the following day.

## Marilyn's Grapefruit –Free Marmalade

3 oranges

5 lemons

4 cups water

6-7 cups sugar

Slice the fruit very finely and place in a non-metal bowl. Pour over the water and cover with cling film. Leave this overnight. Next day, pour all into the stockpot and bring to the boil slowly. When boiling well tip in one cup of sugar. Bring the pot back to the boil and leave to broil for 5 minutes. Tip in a further 5 cups of sugar, pausing between cups to let the jam stay very hot. Sterilize jars and pour in the jam when it is removed from the heating element. (Placing jars altogether in the microwave and heating on high power for 2 minutes is a quick trick to sterilize the jars.)

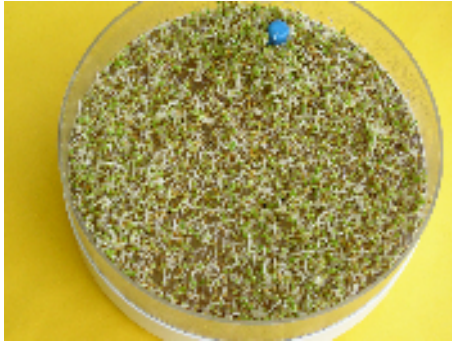
## Myrtle's Marmalade

Myrtle, my Mother-in-law, made the best marmalade ever. Her secret trick of great marmalade is soaking the fruit overnight. Slice the fruit very finely and small and put into a non-metal container. Pour over enough water to cover the fruit. Place a tea towel or cling film over to keep it covered. The next day pour the mix into a large pot and slowly bring to the boil. The mix needs one cup of sugar to each cup of pulp. As the marmalade begins to boil add one cup of sugar at a time. Leave about ten or fifteen minutes and then add the next cup. After the last cup of sugar is added boil the mix for a further ten minutes then pour into sterilized jars.

Sometimes if there is a glut of citrus fruit I make several bowls of the pulp mix and cover with water. The next day this is decanted into recycled ice-cream containers and frozen. When more marmalade is needed a jam mix is easily made up with this frozen pulp. Just proceed from the "bringing to the boil" part of the recipe.

## Growing Sprouts

In winter time the growth of plants slows as daylight is shorter and the sun's strength is weaker. While this means less fresh greens for the table they can be supplemented by growing sprouts. These days there are seed mixes that are ready for throwing in the sprouter. Some seeds are hot like mustard, radish and pepper seeds. Others are mild flavoured such as alfalfa (Lucerne), red clover, chickpea and mung. Then there are the distinctively different seeds such as fenugreek, sunflower, all the bean and legume families; brassicas such as cabbage and broccoli that have character all of their own. Basically if the seed belongs to a vegetable or herb that is edible then it is possible to sprout the seed for food. Some acquaintances now insist on sprouting all dried bean, pea, legumes and grain seeds they use in cooking. Once germination starts these seeds are deemed healthy and are then further processed. Their argument being that



many seeds can get damaged in the new processes that exist at our custom borders that insist on heat and radiation treatment of uncertified grain and seed. If the germination does not occur for my friends then the seeds are dumped. They consider such food too contaminated to be healthy. Seeds can be sprouted in something as simple as a glass jar with a piece of muslin or stocking held on with a rubber band.

There are mesh lids available that screw on and make handling easier. 'Deluxe sprout making' has custom made seed sprouters that are multi-layered and the easy to use. While expensive to buy initially, they can do long and dutiful service. My seed sprouter was purchased from a health shop in Hamilton nearly 35 years ago and it is still doing faithful service. There are complaints here if there are no seeds to put on either sandwiches, sprinkle over salads or served as a garnish on a dish at mealtimes. Seeds are marvellous, compact, sustaining food. All the energy and potential goodness of the whole adult plant is contained there in each small capsule. As soon as germination is triggered then the protein, vitamins and minerals that the seed inherited from its provenance of parent plant and the soil in which that grew is immediately available to the browser – in this case us!

It is better to start with the small seeds such as mung and alfalfa if a new initiate to seed sprouting. The larger seeds such as beans etc can be tricky and prone to fungal attacks if not carefully monitored. But don't let that put you off. Place a small amount of seed – one to two tsp in the jar and pour over hot water from the tap. Leave this to soak for up to an hour then pour off. The container can be put in the hot water cupboard this time of year to help the germination trigger being set off. After 24 hours take the container out of the dark cupboard and place on the kitchen bench. Once a day pour in warm water, gently swirl around and pour off again. Within three or four days the seeds will start growing shoots. As soon as this occurs the seeds are edible. Most sprouts are left for a further 4 or 5 days before eating. Once the sprouts are considered big enough rinse them and place in an airtight container in the fridge. EAT! (Picture shows fenugreek, left and red clover sprouts right)



## **Hedgerows.** Hedging your investment.

Using hedging in the home garden is a cheaper option to building a fence. It will take some time for privacy to be gained but with patience and good gardening practices in place it can be achieved. There are good choices from plants that are indigenous (NZ native plants). Pittosporum, Griselinia, Lophomyrtus, Mingimingi, and Koromiko are all hardy plants and can take winter wet and summer drought. Corokia is another good choice and it is best where there is lighter soils and good drainage. Exotic plants (ones from overseas) that are good include Photinia, Camellia, Lonicera, Grevillea, Teucrium and Westringia. Monotone planting (using the same variety) gives a formal tone to the garden. A hedge is a living boundary that says this is the dividing line. Some gardeners prefer to do a medley of plant types and keep this neatly clipped. This creates a more informal and casual look.



Chose wisely to select the variety that is the right type needed for the garden area. If a low hedge is needed go for Lonicera, lavender or box. There are also now dwarf varieties of pittosporum that are ideal for low hedging.

Many garden plants are placed in unsuitable situations. Corokia in its natural state reaches 2 metres high and at least 1.5m wide.

Growing ten or twelve of these in a row less than 5 metres long and expecting them to stay

lower than the 1m windowsills they are planted under is unrealistic. It will look good for a short while and then the plants will start to suffer. They are crammed too closely together and the continual clipping needed to keep them unnaturally low will eventually weaken the plants so they will die well before their time. The grey hedging plant Teucrium is also currently fashionable for a low hedge. When planted too close together and cut too low to let it grow naturally to the height and width that nature intended (2 metres plus) of course it will suffer and start to die. Do humans like to be squashed in an overcrowded lift or train? Why do that to plants?

Planting hedging in any area takes preparation of the soil. It needs to be dug over and compost added to the soil especially if the soil is clay based. This will aerate the soil and allow root development to proceed. Consider incorporating gypsum as well to breakdown the clay. The next consideration is the eventual height that best suits the section. Most hedging plants will need space which may look too far apart when first planted. But they will eventually get there and form a compact living hedge line. A common rule of thumb is to plant half the space apart that the wanted height is going to be i.e. if the hedge is to grow to 2m high then plant them 1m apart. When putting the new hedge plants in ground carefully remove the bag and place the plant into the prepared hole. If there is any thick matting of root then clip this four or five times with secateurs. Refrain from wrenching the roots apart and spreading them out. This only inhibits the plant and slows new root development. Place the plant in the ground so it is no deeper than how it was growing in its container. The trunk will be established and will not take kindly to being buried any deeper. Add fertilizer after the plant is in ground. As the fertilizer dissolves it will leach down to the new root system and be quickly absorbed.

For good advice on which plants will grow well in your garden as a hedge check with a local garden centre that is known for sound advice.

**Herbally yours,  
Marilyn and Ian Wightman  
New Zealand  
<http://www.fragrantgarden.co.nz>**

Filename: Fragrant News Winter 2009  
Directory: C:\Documents and Settings\Owner\My  
Documents\Fragrant Garden\Fragrant Newsletters  
Template: C:\Documents and Settings\Owner\Application  
Data\Microsoft\Templates\Normal.dot  
Title: FRAGRANT NEWS AUTUMN 2008  
Subject:  
Author: Ian Wightman  
Keywords:  
Comments:  
Creation Date: 26/05/2009 1:06 PM  
Change Number: 12  
Last Saved On: 2/06/2009 11:27 AM  
Last Saved By: Ian Wightman  
Total Editing Time: 180 Minutes  
Last Printed On: 29/07/2009 1:38 PM  
As of Last Complete Printing  
Number of Pages: 4  
Number of Words: 1,827 (approx.)  
Number of Characters: 10,418 (approx.)