



LEURA HOME GARDEN CLUB INC.



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Meetings: 3rd Tuesday of each
month at St. Alban's Church Hall,
Leura commencing at 9.45am

It is with great sadness that we need to tell you of the sudden death of Pamela Gleitzman on the 25th July. Pam had been a member since 2006.

Social and Touring.

Wednesday 23 August: Magical Mystery Tour. Bus \$15.00; pay today. M.tea and lunch at own expense.

Depart: 8.30 am Leura Bus Bay.

Wednesday 20 Sept: Cowra Japanese Gardens. Bus \$20.00

Pay today or next Meeting. M.tea and lunch at own expense.

Depart at 7.30 am at Leura Bus Bay.

Please contact Richard if you book on a trip and then find you are unable to attend, as there are often waiting lists for the trips.

Please do not arrange a replacement. Richard's contact details:

richardlandon45@gmail.com 0458 239 259.

Garden Rambles.

Suspended during the winter months.

Today's Speaker :

There will be no Speaker today, as we are having our Harvest Festival Morning Tea, with nibbles provided by the Committee.

There will be a small charge of \$2 for both Tea/Coffee and food.

Club Meeting 18 July 2017

Attendance: 55 **Apologies:** 12 . We welcomed two visitors:
Philip Gleitzman and Patsy Hollis.

Correspondence:

Copies of all correspondence are shown on the pamphlet table.

Leura Garden Festival

In an effort to reduce the use of new plastic bags at the Plant Sales, Richard has requested any smallish or medium boxes, clean plastic bags with handles (such as Supermarket bags) and clean newspapers. If you can help with any of these please bring to August or September Meetings or drop down to Plant Sales during the Festival. He can also pick up any donations.

Garden Clubs of Australia:

Ann advised there was a Zone Meeting the previous Saturday which she was unable to attend. She will report on it next Meeting.

Welfare:

Ann advised that she has sent cards to Ted Burke, Judith Fritz and Emily Darley.

Trading Table, Hospital Garden and Railway Garden.

Merle Hansard thanked Ellis Davidson for his donation of lemons to the Trading Table. She also advised there was currently a short break over winter from working in the Hospital garden while Daniel Murphy was continuing with watering.

Roz Sing advised she had had a meeting with the Station Upgrade contractor regarding water supply to the Railway Garden. Water for the Railway Garden was currently coming from the next

door Vet business as the existing water pipe is damaged, with the contractor bearing the cost. When they leave this arrangement will stop and Sydney Trains has not committed to continuing the water supply. Roz noted that the Club has tended this garden for the last 30 years and the garden is on Railway land. Discussion with Sydney trains are continuing.

Library:

Maureen Bailey advised of a new book in the Library: *Secret Gardens* by Claire Masset.

This month in your Garden:

Lorraine McMiles gave an interesting talk on aloe vera of which, she noted, there are around 250 species in the world with most in Africa. Lorraine passed around specimens and described the cultivation and care of this plant and its medicinal properties.

Raffle: (with a prize donated by Birches of Leura). The raffle was drawn by Liz Benson with 1st prize going to Liz Fox, and 2nd prize won by Rosemary Bilton.

Speaker:

Ann introduced Liz Benson, noting she has been a founding member of the Central Blue Mountains Garden Club and the Blue Mountains Bird Observers Club. She worked as a High School science teacher for 30 years and had recently retired from the National Parks Service as an education officer and guide at the Royal Botanical Gardens, Mt Annan and Mt Tomah.

Liz noted that of the 700 species of birds in Australia, 500 are based here. Among them are 50 species of parrots, 66 species of honeyeaters and 20 species of finches. There are also bird migrations from Tasmania to Queensland in Autumn with these birds returning in Spring. On both occasions the birds fly over the Blue Mountains.

She showed how landscape can affect the numbers and types of bird species. For example, monthly surveys of birds at Mt Annan over the last 20 years had shown an increase in bird numbers through more plantings in number and variety. Liz described how plants and birds relate to each other, the need for a variety of plants in a garden to suit a variety of birds. She also provided advice for the design of gardens to attract birds which covered shelter, water, food, nesting spots and protection from predators. Liz accompanied her talk with a fascinating collection of slides of a variety of birds and bird-attracting plants.

Ann thanked Liz, on behalf of the members, for a very informative and interesting talk.

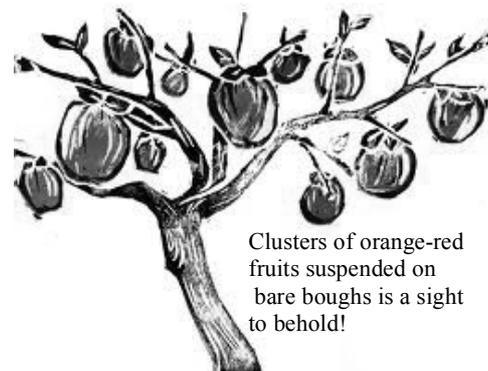
Back Page:

Chân has brought us a fascinating article about a little-known fruit: persimmons.

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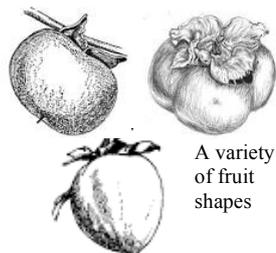
Persimmon

Persimmons make very attractive fruit trees for the home garden. They don't grow too big, they produce sweet, juicy fruits, and in autumn their leaves turn a magnificent colour. I just love watching falling leaves from my persimmon tree still laden with un-harvested fruits on a chilly autumn day - clusters of glowing red lanterns against the background of twisted dark, almost bare branches - a rather forlorn and most beautiful sight! And when the harvest is over, the skeleton 'sculpture' of the tree is yet another feast to the eyes. (Just my bad luck; persimmons are a favorite food of possums. I haven't had the pleasure of seeing clusters of red globes on my tree the last several years!)



Clusters of orange-red fruits suspended on bare boughs is a sight to behold!

Persimmon belongs to the *Ebenaceae* family where there are well over 400 species of deciduous and evergreen species. Some species are a source of valuable ebony timber (*D. ebenum*), a hard black wood used in traditional Korean and Japanese furniture, the others are grown for their handsome foliage and edible fruit, which include the date plum (*D. lotus*), the American persimmon (*D. virginiana*), the Japanese persimmon or kaki (*D. kaki*), the mabola or velvet apple (*D. discolor*), and the black sapote (*D. digyna*).



A variety of fruit shapes

The fruit of the persimmon is a joy to look at, with a rough, leathery calix at the stem end. It grows to about the size of an apple, starting out yellow, then a wonderful orange, red, as it starts to ripen from late autumn. Like the tomatoes, persimmons are not typically considered to be berries, but in terms of botany morphology, the fruit is in fact a berry. In Australia, the species that we are most familiar with is the *Diospyros kaki*, which means 'food of the gods', commonly known as the kaki or the Japanese persimmon, whose wild ancestor grew in China. The tree has long been very popular in China, Japan and Korea and is now widely cultivated in other temperate regions of the world, one variety cultivated in Israel and marketed as 'Sharon fruit'. The tree is not just harvested for the fruit, in Japan and in some areas of China and Korea; persimmon tea made from the dried leaves is an addition to the brewed beverage list. It is believed the English name 'persimmon' is a phonetic rendering of 'putchamin', used by American Indians to name their native species American persimmon (*Diospyros virginiana*).



Leaves for brewing tea

Persimmon fruits are unpleasantly astringent if consumed before their pulp turns almost to puree. This is due to the high levels of tannin in the fruit. However, there are some non-astringent varieties in today's market. Basically, there are two types of persimmons: **Astringent**: when unripe, the fruit has an unpleasant taste that will disappear as it matures. The fruit needs to be eaten when very soft and mushy. Do not eat the fruit even when it looks ripe as it may still contain water-soluble tannins that give a bitter and furry taste. Some of the better known ones are Nightingale: conical shape, very sweet and juicy when ripe, most often seedless; Hachiya: large conical fruit, very flavorsome and ripens late in the season; Flat Seedless: a large vigorous tree with pale seedless fruit. **Non-astringent**: as the name suggests, there is no astringency; the fruit can be eaten at various stages of ripening. The more known ones are Izu, a semi dwarf tree and the earliest maturing variety, Fuyu, a main commercial variety, and Suruga with very sweet reddish fruits. The variety fuyu is ready to eat even though it exhibits all the signs of unripe fruits such as pale colour and hardness. These fruits are actually quite sweet and crunchy like an apple. Within these two types, there are many varieties.

There is a third type, less commonly available, the pollination-variant non-astringent persimmons. When fully pollinated, the flesh of these fruit is brown inside and the fruit can be eaten when firm. These varieties are highly sought after in Japan and the East. Tsurunoko, the 'chocolate persimmon' has dark brown flesh, Maru, the 'cinnamon persimmon' has spicy cinnamon flavor, and Hyakume, the 'brown sugar', are the three best known.

In the West, persimmon is regarded as a fresh fruit, eaten out of hand or used in culinary. In Asia, the custom has been to dry them for storage and used them when out of season. The fruits may be strung up to dry in the sun and wind or sliced and dried on rooftops and eaten out of hand or stewed much the same way as dried prunes or apricots.

On a personal note, eating a fresh persimmon always brings back some sweet childhood memory for me. We were told that according to folklore, the severity of approaching winter can be predicted by cutting open a persimmon seed and looking at the shape of the kernel inside. Soak the seeds in water for about one hour to soften them. Gently pry apart the seed's outer shell to reveal the shape inside. The seed will display one of three symbols: A *fork shape* indicates a mild winter. A *knife shape* will indicate a cold icy winter (where wind will cut through you like a knife). A *spoon shape* stands for a shovel to dig out the snow. We had such fun trying to crack open the seeds! What a let down now that many persimmons are seedless these days!



Fork, knife and spoon shapes

But I must confess I love the seedless variety, it is quite delicious, both in taste and in flavour, and life is certainly so much easier for the cook when she/he prepares persimmon puree, compote, jam, fruit shake, ice cream and etc. using the seedless variety.