

# About Over 50 Aussie Floral Expo



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Monthly Newsletter

December 2009

Hello from Toowoomba in Queensland Australia - Welcome to our very first monthly A-F-Expo Newsletter.

The Australian Floral Expo is a brand new website dedicated to the display of Australian Plants, Flowers and Gardens. The Head Office is in the beautiful Darling Downs district of South East Queensland in the city of Toowoomba, famous the world over for its annual *Toowoomba Flower Festival* held in September. Our monthly newsletter will bring you news and tips on growing plants and flowers in the harsh Australian climate as well as recipes for the kitchen and for the garden - yes we feed the plants well here.

## ***This Month In Toowoomba***

In our little corner of the world drought is the big topic as Toowoomba has not been this dry for over 100 years. Farmers are very concerned for if rain does not come soon, there will be no summer crops.

Dam water levels here are way down. The local council reminds us that each person should only use 140 litres of water each day; that is for all their needs.

So how do we keep our plants in our gardens alive and well? Fortunately some of us have water tanks. In our case, we use our tank water for the garden and for washing the car. However when things start to get dry we need to conserve water as well therefore the only way for this is to use a bucket or watering can. When we have had some rain and the water tanks are full, I will use the hose to give the plants a good drink once a week. Otherwise they have to survive on the watering can giving them that much needed H<sub>2</sub>O. Some days it has been so hot that the buds of the Roses are scorched from the intensity when temperatures reach over the thirties. We are very fortunate here in Toowoomba though as the humidity is not a problem like it is in Brisbane.

Still it takes a lot to keep the plants alive under such conditions and we need to check around the garden each day. If the day before was a scorcher, than some plants may have gone from alive and green the day before, to dead and brown the very next day. Older, more established plants, with their roots deep in the ground, are survivors.

Therefore you need to perform 'first-aid' on those that are just hanging in there. Sometimes water will be enough to help however other times you will need to trim the plant, then give added help in the form of seaweed liquid added to the water. This liquid has Vitamin B in it, which helps the plant over the stress period. It is also very handy when you are transplanting a plant from one place to another. I also have a tonic that I prepare every week, to use during the summer. More about that later. This summer I am not planting out a lot of young plants as I normally would due to the extremely hot weather. Rather I am concentrating on what is already in the garden and maintaining what we have. I will try and see if I can successfully grow some salad vegetables nevertheless I will have to keep a close eye on them.

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## ***This Month In Our Garden***

Taking a walk round our garden this month, I noticed that the Hibiscus are performing well under the circumstances. They thrive in the heat however I gave them a good trim in spring to remove the dead wood and also placed some compost round the plant. I also added a fertiliser in the form of a tonic I make. If you keep your plant well-fed this way, the pests are less likely to make a lasting impression. It could be beneficial to add a wetting agent to make sure that the water soaks into the soil.

### ***'Ritzy' Hibiscus***

One of the Hibiscus that has started to flower well is called "Ritzy". It blooms well and the flowers are a bright orange, which stands out and is very attractive. The bush grows low to average height and needs to be watered well during November - May. When the Hibiscus is flowering use a fertilizer rich in potassium and mulch well with manure and compost. It likes full sun and also likes to be protected from the wind.



## ***The Vege Patch***

My vegetable garden is a bit poor this year nevertheless we recently had a good supply of onions. They were planted near the roses and they performed well, while the roses thrived with the onions as neighbours. The snow peas gave us a constant supply for weeks and now we are growing Lebanese Eggplants. The plants growing and producing well, however we need to make sure that it has water every second day, also keep the fertilizer up to it. It is a vigorous plant producing plenty of small delicious fruit, which is long and slender. See below for my special Eggplant recipe.

### ***Vege Hint***

***If you pick the fruit of the Eggplant regularly it will prolong the harvest.***



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Finally, I will add the recipe for tonic that I have been mentioning. It is based on the comfrey plant. Comfrey has nutrients that make plants thrive - Potassium and Nitrogen are two of its elements. One needs a few of these plants in the garden so that they can be used constantly. Keep plants in an area where the water drains as they like their roots damp. The plants go dormant in winter, then come to life in spring through summer. It can be used in the compost to help the matter break down quicker.

### ***Comfrey Liquid Plant Tonic***

Place a good handful chopped comfrey leaves up into a large bucket that has a lid then pour 2 litres of worm liquid on top.

Add a dash of seaweed liquid, a pinch of epsom salts, some eggshells (good for compost heap as well) and fill the bucket with water.

Stir and then place lid on the bucket.

Each day give the liquid a stir.

In summer the brew is ready to use within the week.

When ready, pour from 1/2 to 1 litre of this liquid into a watering can, add water and use on the garden. Use on Roses, Gardenias as well as fruit and vegetables weekly during the times the plants are active.

### ***Well, that is all for this month.***

Below I will include the "Hearty Beef and Eggplant Dish" recipe. This recipe is gluten free and soy free. If you omit the cheese it is also dairy free. This will serve 4 people. You can substitute grated cheese for goat's feta cheese as some people can take goat's cheese when not able to digest cow's cheese. There are two photos - one is of the dish with grated cheese, the other dish is with the goat's feta cheese on top. ENJOY!

*Welcome! Sit Back, Enjoy a Cuppa and Browse!*

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## **Hearty Beef and Eggplant Dish**

### **Ingredients:**

500 grams minced beef  
1 large onion (chopped)  
1 x 400 gram tin diced tomatoes  
2 tablespoons tomato paste  
1 dessertspoon vegeta gourmet stock powder  
Salt and pepper to taste  
1 dessertspoon minced garlic  
200 grams noodles ( for gluten free use rice noodles)  
Sprinkle of Italian herbs  
4 small lebanese eggplants ( sliced) can peel of skin if desired.  
grated cheese or feta goat's cheese (as per taste)

### **Method:**

Brown minced beef in frypan, add chopped onion and tin of diced tomatoes. Stir through.

Add vegeta, salt and pepper, minced garlic and Italian herbs. Cook on a low heat for 5 minutes.

Add the noodles and cook for another 3 minutes. Turn off heat. Place in large dish to serve.

Peel and slice eggplant, (to prevent fruit browning squeeze lemon juice into water) place sliced eggplant in water for a few minutes. Leave in this water when you micro-wave for 3-4minutes or till firm round edges, softer in centre. Pour off water. Arrange eggplant slices over the top of the meat dish. Add cheese and it is ready to serve.



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