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As this eventful year draws to a close, from all of the team here at Wariapendi, we wish you a Merry Christmas and a safe, happy and healthy New Year!

It has been a year like no other so all we can wish for is peace and happiness to bring joy to our hearts.

Climate Update

Spring in review/Summer Outlook



If you were thinking it has been a more soggy damp spring than usual, you would be right, with NSW achieving nearly 3 times its average rainfall for November. The ACT and NSW broke their previous rainfall records for November by over 10%. NSW also experienced its coldest November since records began in 1900. The extreme rainfall has been very disruptive to our planting team at Wariapendi, with many projects needing to be delayed as sites were inaccessible or the soils unsuitable for being cultivated while saturated.

La Niña is set to stick around for the second year in a row meaning the wet weather across the eastern and northern parts of Australia will continue until at least the end of January. The already saturated soils could result in an increased risk of widespread flooding for many areas. Summer is predicated to be warmer than average across most of Australia, except for some areas in the south east. The above average rainfall means that areas east of the great divide have a below normal risk of bushfires, whilst west of the divide the higher rainfalls have resulted in high growth of grasses over spring, which as they dry out over summer will increase the grassfire risk for the area.

The predicated rainfall for summer will mean excellent growth rates should be achieved on plantings, however it also means that staying on top of weed control will be crucial, as weeds which normally would die off over a dry summer will benefit from the rain also. The extra moisture could also mean that plants that are used to low humidity and rainfall such as Western Australian or South Australian plants could suffer from fungal problems and wet feet while the wetter weather hangs around.

[You can find out more details about the climate outlook by heading over to the Bureau of Meteorology's website.](#)



Pest & Disease Management

Pests and diseases on plants not only look unsightly but depending on the level of infestation they could lead to the death of the plant. Prevention is always better than a cure and there are a few ways that you can boost your garden's immune system before pests or diseases strike.

Integrated Pest Management is a healthier and more sustainable approach to keeping pests and diseases at bay. Instead of reaching for the sprayer first, try incorporating some of these methods into your gardening programme.

Monitoring your garden regularly allows you to give your plants a quick health check, spot any infestations early and be able to treat before it gets out of hand. Pests and diseases often target plants that are already weak and struggling. This could be from too much water or too little, or just the wrong plant for the location. Work on increasing the health of your plants by pruning and getting the right balance of nutrients and water and replacing struggling species with more suitable ones.

Nature's pest controls - birds and beneficial insects, work to remove pests in your gardens without you even noticing. Foster an environment where they can flourish by increasing biodiversity, planting varied species, and avoiding any exotic plants which are known to harbour pests.

Avoid using broad spectrum pesticides that kill friend and foe alike, and only spray if necessary. There has been much work in recent years to develop more natural, less toxic pesticides, so do your research to find out the best approach to target your pest.

Sometimes the best thing to do if the infestation is only minor, is to prune off any affected parts of the plant and let nature do the rest.

When using chemicals always take care to read the label and apply according to the described rates. Only use chemicals that are registered for use on the specific pest/disease. Protect yourself by using appropriate personal protective equipment such as gloves, mask or respirator and eye protection. Wash your face, hands, and clothing after use, especially before eating.



Insects

Once again exotic plants play host to many of the troublesome insects that can feast on your plants. It is best to get rid of exotic plants that play host to insects such as spider mites, aphids, and whitefly. By having a balanced and diverse range of native species in your garden most problems from insects disappear. Native plants are very hardy and have evolved with resilience and have the ability to bounce back from intermittent insect attack. Unless infestations are severe, use of chemical control should be avoided, as many pests can be removed physically by hand or by pruning or even better still let the birds and other predatory insects do the job for you. Overuse of chemicals results in the elimination of the many beneficial insects that inhabit our gardens.

Many insects have natural predators, such as birds, ladybird beetles, and predatory wasps. The need for chemical control can be greatly decreased by increasing the biodiversity of your garden and encouraging natural predators to do the work for you

Snails

Not really a problem pest for native gardens. At Wariapendi around 40 years ago we had quite a few exotic plants in our gardens and snails were an ongoing problem. Being a firm believer in integrated pest control management the best strategy to combat the ongoing infestations was to get rid all the exotic plants that provided excellent habitat and feed for

these slimy and unwanted critters. Some of the worst culprits are Agapanthus, African Daisies along with a whole host of other soft leaved exotic plants. If you don't want snails to be an ongoing problem in your garden it is best to remove plants that they favour. We still have a little bit of trouble in our vegetable garden but nothing of real consequence.



Diseases

Common diseases of Australian native plants can usually be prevented by planting species local to your area and suitable for your soil and climatic conditions. Disease preys upon the weak or plants that are not suitable for climatic conditions.

Once again it is best to get rid of any plants that continually are infected by disease. Reducing habitat for diseases results in less disease in your garden. Good hygiene and adequate ventilation around your plants are also key to controlling disease in your garden.

Many fungal diseases occur when moisture levels are too high, such as in winter if rainfall or watering happens later in the day, causing the foliage to remain wet overnight, creating a perfect environment for fungus to grow. Improve ventilation in your garden by not overcrowding garden beds by planting too densely. Prune trees and shrubs to allow air movement between them. Adjust your watering routine, particularly when cooler weather approaches, to ensure foliage has ample time to dry.

Fungal diseases in the soil are more common in waterlogged soil, so make sure you are not overwatering and keep species that prefer drier soils to well-drained parts of your garden. Be careful of introducing soil fungus into your garden through imported soils, mulches and composts or new plants. Always buy soils and plants from accredited suppliers.

Disease resistance can also be a problem, where diseases stop responding to treatment

with a particular fungicide, creating harder to treat infections. Avoid disease resistance by rotating fungicide treatments between the various groups of action. At Wariapendi we prefer to use organic sprays such as Copper Oxychloride, Sulphur and organic pest oils to control disease along with a strong focus on keeping our plants healthy and happy.

Plant of the Month



NSW Christmas Bush (*Ceratopetalum gummiferum*)

Australian Christmas Bush

When people think of typical Christmas plants the first things that come to mind are probably Christmas Trees, Holly, Mistletoe and Poinsettias. At Wariapendi, we believe that there are a few Australian plants that should also become part of tradition for the joyful

season down under – the NSW Christmas Bush (*Ceratopetalum gummiferum*) and Victorian Christmas Bush (*Prostanthera lasianthos*).

***Ceratopetalum gummiferum* NSW Christmas Bush** - Growing naturally across the east coast of NSW this tree has delightful red, green, and white colours to match traditional Christmas colours. The red is provided by the flowers, which start off as white but as Christmas approaches the flower bracts turn bright red. These masses of flowers are great, long lasting cut flowers, so are fantastic for use as part of your floral arrangements for the Christmas table. NSW Christmas Bush grow to approximately 6m high, growing well in most well-draining soil types.

***Prostanthera lasianthos* Victorian Christmas Bush** – Found naturally not only in Victoria, but also across the eastern coasts of Tasmania and NSW, this large shrub has deliciously fragrant minty foliage and a stunning display of delicate sprays of white or sometimes pink flowers at Christmas time. Growing to approximately 4m tall, this shrub is a fantastic ornamental shrub to decorate the garden at Christmas.

Plant an Australian Native Christmas Bush today to bring Christmas cheer to your home and garden.



Victorian Christmas Bush (*Prostanthera lasianthos*)

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Weed of the Month



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Jasmine (*Jasminum polyanthum*)

A popular climbing plant for exotic gardeners with highly fragrant flowers (I often refer to its fragrance as a cheap women's perfume - totally overpowering). Vigorous and fast growing, this vine native to China quickly gets out of hand and spreads into surrounding trees and bush, smothering them by reducing light and restricting growth. The weight of the vine has also been known to bring trees crashing down. It is a significant weed particularly in rainforests and along watercourses. The vine produces sweet smelling, white and pink flowers in spring and summer and has deep green leaves divided into 5-9 leaflets.

New plants can sprout from stems and underground runners, so new infestations can begin in dumped garden waste. This vine is extremely difficult to remove by hand, so herbicide application will need to be considered to control this environmental weed. If you have this undesirable plant in your garden spare a thought for our beautiful natural vegetation and remove it.



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Recent Projects



It brings me so much joy to transform boring lawn areas and gardens dominated by Photinia and other exotic plants into a garden that the owners can enjoy along with bringing a positive contribution to our local environment.

As usual the only native garden in a street dominated by exotic plants. Hopefully this will be the first of many transformations to occur as this garden inspires the neighbours as it grows.

Some areas may look a little bare but there are quick growing native grasses that will soften edges as well as providing a seed source for our unique and wonderful birds.

Pest/Disease of the Month



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Webbing Caterpillar/Teatree Web Moth (*Orthaga thyrsalis*)

The small larvae of the moth pictured above form large clusters of silk webbing, droppings and leaves among the foliage of fine leaved members of the Myrtaceae family such as Leptospermums, Melaleuca and Callistemon species.

Too many people are hesitant to plant tea trees and Melaleucas due to the potential damage caused by these insects. When planting in gardens that lack biodiversity without a healthy range of birds and predatory insects you may need to control this insect for the first season or two. I find the best control is to squash the clusters of larvae with your fingers as they appear.

In gardens with good biodiversity they do not cause wide-spread damage. The clusters can be left for nature to take care of. If you do feel the need to spray it is best to use Eco-Neem Oil which is a safe organic spray.

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