



## From The Editor

In this edition of HortInsights, we take a look at some emerging developments in Australian horticulture, with the Melbourne Royal Botanic Gardens' new Masterplan and developments in advanced-technology horticulture for urban food and plant production.

It's a fascinating time to be in horticulture and there are boundless new ideas coming from across the world.

David Thompson  
Engagement Manager  
Australian Institute of Horticulture

## What's inside?

01 From The Editor

02 Exciting New Developments For The Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria Melbourne Gardens

04 Biological Succession

09 Horticulture: The Next Wave Of High-Tech Horticultural Thinking

11 Small Scale Ecosystem Endures In A Bottle For Over 60 Years

12 Destination Horticulture: Mt. Cuba Center

16 Nong Nooch Tropical Botanical Garden

18 Mitigating COVID-19 Risks When Returning To The Workplace



Gold Sponsors



**Fitzpatrick & Co**  
Insurance Brokers  
An Aviso Group Partner



Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria Melbourne Gardens. Image/rbg.vic.gov.au

## Exciting New Developments For The Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria Melbourne Gardens

By David Thompson, Engagement Manager Australian Institute of Horticulture

**The Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria Melbourne Gardens has released its new Masterplan 2020-2040 to prepare for a new future at the gardens. Attracting more than two million visitors a year to Australia's garden state, the Gardens' Masterplan opens up new opportunities to integrate heritage and culture with scientific facilities, placemaking and visitation services, and an eye on a warming future for Melbourne.**

### A New Underground Herbarium

Recognising the crucial importance of its botanical and herbarium collections, the Gardens will create a new belowground Herbarium to house the 1.5 million specimens in the State Botanical Collection, overlaid with rooftop plantings to suit a low water-use and fully-exposed settings.

This program will safeguard and protect the growing State Botanical Collection—the ark for Victoria's flora—from pest, disease, fire and flood in a purpose-built vault deep beneath the ground.

It will inspire ever-increasing numbers of visitors and Victorians with the plant knowledge, collections, programs and stories of RBGV, and share the vivid cultural stories of Traditional Owners at Melbourne Gardens as the gateway for nature in Melbourne.



The plan for the belowground herbarium. Image/ rbg.vic.gov.au

## The Awe-Inspiring Birrarung Gate

The Masterplan also unveils the creation of a new gate where the Yarra River would have once flowed into the Gardens, designed to encourage visitors to enter into the vista of the Lakeside Conservatory and the Ornamental Lake.

Drawing heavily on Aboriginal heritage influences, the Gate will celebrate indigenous plants, animals, the country and its people, stories of which are deeply embedded in the place.

In the Design Statement, key principles integrate the use of plantings, hard landscaping features such as sawn basalt and flamed timbers, and the connection of the Gate to trails and view over Melbourne provide for an inspiring location at which to conduct Welcome to Country celebrations and Aboriginal experiences.

## A New Arid And Dryland Garden

The new arid and dryland garden design will build on the success of the volcano area and its naturally rocky, creviced features.

Using a mix of dryland forest plant types from Australia and abroad, the dryland garden will showcase the landscapes and architectural forms of dryland and arid planting, which work well in the dry heat of Victoria.



Artist's impression of the Birrarung Gate. Image/ rbg.vic.gov.au



The new Arid and Dryland Garden design. Image/ rbg.vic.gov.au



Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria Melbourne Gardens. Image/Neil Parley Wikimedia Commons.



## Biological Succession

By Ian (Tig) Crowley MAILDM MAIH RH MAHMC Images/ Tig Crowley

**In a joint submission by associated landscape industries to the 2020 New South Wales Independent Bushfire Inquiry, we outlined the necessity to advance succession. Advancing biological succession means progressing a series of changes in composition and complexity of an ecological community in order to provide climate stability.**

Increasing biodiversity means increasing the diversity within, as well as between, different species of living things – plants, animals, fungi and microorganisms – including diversity of age, state, longevity, behavioural traits and so on.

As biodiversity increases, succession advances and thus creates an efficient functioning ecosystem.

Life on earth began around 3.8 billion years ago through a biological process called primary succession. 'Primary succession' refers to the original colonisation of an environment by living things (microbes, plants, birds, insects, animals) that initiate biological evolution.

Lichens attach to lifeless rock and slowly break parts of it down to mineral soil. Once there is soil, other 'low succession' lifeforms appear and gradually succession advances.

It can take millions of years from the initial lichens on barren rocks to become a complex environment supporting 'high succession' or climax communities.

Secondary succession refers to an instance of biological succession that occurs in an area where primary succession has already taken place – and there is established soil. Normally, secondary succession happens when an environment has suffered some catastrophe, such as severe fire, or human impact, such as over-clearing, tillage, or urban development – anything that renders bare soil.

Primary succession is distinguished from secondary succession, which is the recovery of an existing biological community after a disturbance sets back the community's ecological structure to an earlier stage. With good planning, and appropriate preparation and actions, secondary succession can advance rapidly.



**LOW SUCCESSION ENVIRONMENTS**

**HYDROPHOBIC LANDSCAPE**

- Fire
- Species loss
- Temperature extremes
- High evaporation/evapo-transpiration
- Regular drought
- Wind
- Storm damage
- Dust
- Air contamination
- Run-off
- Flooding
- Erosion – soil loss
- Water contamination
- Imbalances/disease
- Poor nutrient levels
- Detrimental solar energy flow

**WATER ACROSS THE LANDSCAPE**

EMITS CO<sub>2</sub>

**CLIMATE EXTREMES/VOLATILITY**

**HIGH SUCCESSION ENVIRONMENTS**

**HYDRATED LANDSCAPE**

- No fire
- Abundant habitat/refuge
- Moderate temperature
- Effective transpiration/condensation
- Occasional dry periods
- Wind abatement
- Habitat stability
- No dust
- Clean air
- Little to no run-off
- Little to no flooding
- No erosion – building soil
- Clean clear water
- Balance/health
- Effective nutrient cycling
- Beneficial effects of the sun

**WATER INTO THE LANDSCAPE**

SEQUESTERS CARBON

**CLIMATE STABILITY**

Table 1: This table illustrates the characteristics and propensities of low and high succession environments.

I like to think in terms of fire-retardant and fire-resistant environments.

We need diversity of (predominantly perennial) species covering the ground, understory as well as varying canopy. It is as much about ‘conditions’ as it is about plant selection.

Once established, these plants help create ‘good conditions’ that stay moist more consistently – further increasing biodiversity and advancing biological succession. This all leads towards creating an efficiently functioning biological ecosystem.

It is only when the ecosystem is functioning efficiently that we see the effective alleviation of ‘natural disasters’ and the consequential effects on our climate.

To achieve this on the required scale needs a decision-making process and methodology to deliver fire-retardant/fire-resistant environments – blending ‘high succession’ species into our sclerophyll-dominant landscapes.

Most fire-retardant/resistant species are ‘high succession’ plants and share many of the following features:

- They moderate temperature (cooling in summer, warming on winter nights and mornings).
- They tolerate both sun and shade.
- They have advanced xylem, making them more efficient at pumping water and nutrients.
- They photosynthesise more efficiently.
- They have highly advanced, often multi-layered, deep root systems.
- They provide habitat and soil stability, preventing landslip, and are less likely to fall in high wind.
- They are edible, forageable and herbaceous, providing food for animals to recycle.
- Their ‘drop’ breaks down rapidly and is consumed by the soil (microbial breakdown →humus→organic carbon).
- They are long-lived and/or multiply freely (in the suitable ‘conditions’ they help to create).
- They out-compete and create conditions that are not suitable for ‘lower succession’ plant communities or ‘weed’ invasion.
- They are fire-retardant and/or fire-resistant.

Neil Marriott has compiled lists of fire-resistant (plants that will not burn in the face of continued flame) and fire-retardant plants (plants that will not burn in the first wave of a bushfire, but may burn once dried out) for the Australian Plants Society (APS), taking into account the experience of APS Victoria members - many of whom have properties in areas that are fire-prone or have been affected by bushfires.

Refer to Tables 2, 3 and 4 for abbreviated lists of plants suitable for eastern Australia. To see the full lists, go to the APS (Victoria) website.

### Fire-Retardant Plants

BOTANICAL NAME	COMMON NAME
<i>Acacia fimbriata</i>	Fringed Wattle
<i>Acmena smithii</i>	Lilly Pilly
<i>Ajuga australis</i>	Austral Bugle
<i>Alyxia buxifolia</i>	Sea Box
<i>Angophora costata</i>	Smooth-barked Apple
<i>Brachychiton populneus</i>	Kurrajong
<i>Coprosma hirtella</i>	Rough Coprosma
<i>Corymbia maculata</i>	Spotted Gum
<i>Cyathea australis</i>	Rough Tree-fern
<i>Dianella revoluta</i>	Black-anther Flax-lily
<i>Dichondra repens</i>	Kidney-weed
<i>Eremophila santalina</i>	Sandalwood Emu-bush
<i>Ficus macrophylla</i>	Moreton Bay Fig
<i>Ficus rubiginosa</i>	Rusty Fig
<i>Hymenosporum flavum</i>	Native Frangipani
<i>Myoporum acuminatum</i>	Boobialla
<i>Solanum laciniatum</i>	Large Kangaroo Apple
<i>Solanum simile</i>	Oondoroo
<i>Viola hederacea</i>	Ivy-leaf Violet

Table 2: Abbreviated list of fire-retardant plants.

### Fire-Resistant Plants

BOTANICAL NAME	COMMON NAME
<i>Atriplex nummularia</i>	Old-man Saltbush
<i>Atriplex rhagodioides</i>	Silver Saltbush
<i>Atriplex semibaccata</i>	Berry Saltbush
<i>Carpobrotus glaucescens</i>	Bluish Pigface
<i>Carpobrotus modestus</i>	Inland Pigface
<i>Einadia nutans ssp nutans</i>	Nodding Saltbush
<i>Enchylaena tomentosa</i>	Ruby Saltbush
<i>Eremophila debilis</i>	Creeping Emu-bush
<i>Hakea salicifolia</i>	Willow-leaved Hakea
<i>Melia azedarach</i>	White Cedar
<i>Myoporum parvifolium</i>	Creeping Myoporum
<i>Rhagodia candolleana</i>	Seaberry Saltbush
<i>Rhagodia crassifolia</i>	Fleshy Saltbush
<i>Rhagodia parabolica</i>	Fragrant Saltbush
<i>Rhagodia spinescens</i>	Hedge Saltbush
<i>Sarcozona praecox</i>	Sarcozona
<i>Scaevola calendulacea</i>	Dune Fan-flower
<i>Scaevola hookeri</i>	Creeping Fan-flower
<i>Sclerolaena diacantha</i>	Grey Copperburr
<i>Sclerolaena spp</i>	All Copperburrs
<i>Selliera radicans</i>	Shiny Swamp-mat
<i>Zygophyllum apiculatum</i>	Pointed Twin-Leaf
<i>Zygophyllum billardierei</i>	Coast Twin-leaf
<i>Zygophyllum spp</i>	All Twin-leaf Plants

Table 3: Abbreviated list of fire-resistant plants.

### Other Native Plants

BOTANICAL NAME	COMMON NAME
<i>Alpinia spp.</i>	Native Gingers
<i>Archontophoenix spp</i>	Alexandria/Bangalow Palm
<i>Austromyrtus spp</i>	Midgenberries
<i>Backhousia citriodora</i>	Lemon Myrtle
<i>Brachychiton acerifolius</i>	Illawarra Flame Tree
<i>Brachychiton discolor</i>	Lacebark Tree
<i>Brachychiton rupestris</i>	Bottle Tree
<i>Buckinghamia celsissima</i>	Ivory Curl Tree
<i>Castanospermum australe</i>	Blackbean Tree
<i>Citrus australasica</i>	Native Lime Bush
<i>Cordyline spp</i>	Native Cordylines
<i>Cupaniopsis spp</i>	Tuckeroo/Tamarind
<i>Dendrobium spp</i>	Orchids
<i>Doryanthes excelsa</i>	Gynea Lily
<i>Elaeocarpus reticulatus</i>	Blueberry Ash
<i>Eupomatia spp</i>	Bolwarra
<i>Helmholtzia glaberrima</i>	Creek Lily
<i>Ficus spp</i>	Fig Trees & Vines
<i>Lepidozamia spp</i>	Burrawangs
<i>Macrozamia spp</i>	Native Cycads
<i>Microlaena stipoides</i>	Weeping Grass
<i>Myoporum parvifolium</i>	Creeping Boobialla
<i>Stenacarpus sinuatus</i>	Firewheel Tree
<i>Syzygium spp</i>	Lilli Pillies
<i>Toona ciliata</i>	Red Cedar
<i>Waterhousea spp</i>	Lilli Pillies
<i>Xanthorrhoea spp</i>	Grass Trees

Table 4: Other native plants to be considered when planning a fire-retardant/fire-resistant environment.



In addition, there are many non-invasive exotic plants well worthy of consideration.

Many deciduous trees provide effective summer shade and have highly valuable leaf drop that provides food for animals and a generous bulk of 'viable litter' for microbes that is soon integrated into soils.

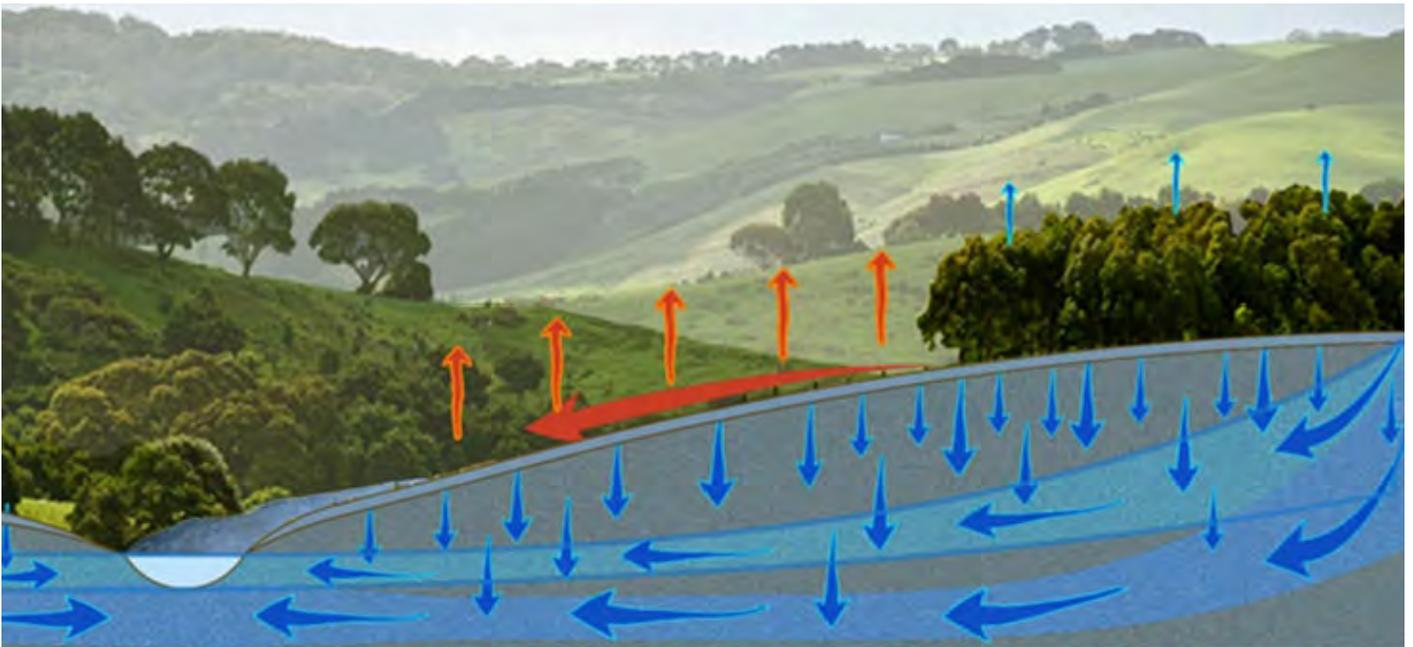
In agricultural and natural landscapes and in gardens, if the soil surface is covered and there is reasonable vegetative cover, the soil will retain moisture.

This means much less evaporation and the mitigation of temperature extremes, both hot and cold, creating climate stability.

We need to manage the vegetative cover we have - plan for and take actions that increase biodiversity and advance succession. Over a relatively short period of time we can create environments that will not burn.



To the left is an abundant cover and diversity of species while the right has bare soil. The difference results from how the landscape is managed, and in terms of temperature extremes the difference is profoundly significant. Image/ Stefan Zturisav @ovis. 21 Patagonia, 21 July 2020.



**WE NEED THE WATER TO GO INTO ↓ THE LANDSCAPE and NOT ACROSS ←→ THE LANDSCAPE**

An efficient water cycle is essential in order to have an effective nutrient (and carbon cycle), a beneficial solar energy flow and an ongoing succession of community dynamics. We cannot have one without the others.



Left is a deep carbon rich soil profile - stored, stable and resilient. Right has a volatile 100 mm of topsoil, dependent on regular rainfall. These two core soil profiles were taken on the same day, from one side of a fence to another. The difference in water holding capacity and temperature/climate mitigation is the result of different landscape management. Image/ Dr Christine Jones [www.amazingcarbon.com](http://www.amazingcarbon.com)

*Ian (Tig) Crowley of Tig Designs is a landscape designer and Registered Horticulturist and has been involved in regenerative agriculture and land management for over 25 years. [www.tigdesigns.com.au](http://www.tigdesigns.com.au)*

### **Bushfire Inquiry Submission**

‘Natural Ecosystem Regeneration’ is the basis for a 2020 New South Wales Independent Bushfire Inquiry submission – an initiative by Tig Designs, in association with AILD, the Australian Holistic Management Co-op (AHMC) – Land to Market Australia™, and the Australian Institute of Horticulture (AIH).

The submission outlines the implementation of regenerative methodology and management practices for better landscape function, biosecurity, public protection and climate stability.

It recognises that large-scale application of Natural Ecosystem Regeneration requires particular tools and focused investment to achieve the desired outcome, and that in order to achieve true sustainability the execution of

any program/s must be financially and socially beneficial as well as culturally enriching.

It puts forward that the supporting bodies are well-positioned to provide additional knowledge along with professional skills for landscape design, consultancy, planning, management, mapping and monitoring for efficient ecosystem regeneration.

It is their intention to provide and promote long-term business opportunities and enterprise creating meaningful employment in urban and regional areas of Australia.

The submission does not represent any political, religious or industry-based lobby groups.

### **Further Information**

Australian Plants Society (Victoria)  
Tig Designs  
Land to Market Australia™  
Australian Institute of Horticulture  
AILDM  
NSW Bushfire Inquiry

<https://apsvic.org.au/>  
<https://tigdesigns.com.au/>  
<https://landtomarket.com.au/>  
<https://www.aih.org.au/>  
<https://www.ildm.com.au/>  
<https://www.nsw.gov.au/nsw-government/projects-and-initiatives/nsw-bushfire-inquiry>



## Hortitecture: The Next Wave Of High-Tech Horticultural Thinking

By David Thompson, Engagement Manager Australian Institute of Horticulture

**Australia's horticultural research and development corporation, Hort Innovation, recently announced the formation of a new partnership to advance the state of high-tech urban farming horticulture with partners RMCG, the University of Technology and US-based Agritecture.**

The growth of advanced urban food production systems is gaining speed across the world with massive interest in systems that supply high-volume greens in stacked decks with LED lighting, or vertical systems that use hydroponic growing media on walls.

In Singapore, Aerofarms has partnered with Singapore Airlines to grow microgreens and salad greens adjacent to the airport for low-mileage catering supplies.

So far, though, much of the interest has centered on edible produce innovation.

Hort Innovation CEO Matt Brand said, "Bringing such technology to Australia will attract capital and new entrants to the sector with new ideas, approaches and mindsets.

It gives us the opportunity to grow more from less and to keep demonstrating the good work that Australian growers do, day in day out, providing food to families both here and overseas."



For ornamental horticulture, high-tech production opens up possibilities around new thinking in landscape design and amenity horticulture.

“The opportunity we have in horticulture is to enable people of all interests and backgrounds to apply innovative thinking through horticulture based around their own interests”, says Michael Casey MAIH RH, who has worked extensively in greenwall horticulture and educational gardens.

“For students that love technology, we have the potential to install sensors that quantify plant-related data and use computing technology to visualise plant and crop performance.

For students who love media and photography, there are endless ways to showcase the beauty of plants in the urban growing environment.

For future chefs, that access to locally-produced, high-quality plant products including not just traditional greens but also edible plants and flowers can open up innovation and ideas for amazing food experiences in their futures.

This is how we can bring new ideas and new people into horticulture”, Michael says.

The convergence of new ideas and advances from overseas into Australia makes horticulture ready for a bright future. The way we produce food, greens and plant products will continue to be influenced by horticultural technologies, apps and integration with cloud computing.

The Australian Institute of Horticulture is continually scanning for new advances and new ways to prepare our members for a new kind of future.



# Small Scale Ecosystem Endures In A Bottle For Over 60 Years

By David Thompson, Engagement Manager Australian Institute of Horticulture

When he was 27 years old, UK man David Latimer decided to create a terrarium garden.

He took some potting compost and part-filled the jar, then dropped in a common Tradescantia and added some water.

Now 87 years old, the terrarium garden is still going strong and has not been opened for more than 40 years!

It is the living definition of a self-sustaining ecosystem, maintaining everything the plant needs to stay healthy and photosynthesise to produce its own foods.

With just sunlight, the terrarium ecosystem recycles its plant matter and reuses the water that the plants transpire and condense inside the jar.

David explains that it's low-maintenance and easy to grow but obviously not very interactive.

"It's 6ft from a window so gets a bit of sunlight. It grows towards the light so it gets turned round every so often so it grows evenly", David says.

"Otherwise, it's the definition of low-maintenance. I've never pruned it, it just seems to have grown to the limits of the bottle."

"It's actually incredibly dull in that it doesn't do anything but I'm fascinated to see how long it will last!", he says.

He hopes to pass on the 'experiment' to his grown-up children after he is gone.



S.CO.UK

David Latimer with his Tradescantia in a bottle. Image/ bnps.co.uk





Mt. Cuba Center Image/ Beverly Hurley

## Mt. Cuba Center

By David Thompson, Engagement Manager Australian Institute of Horticulture

**The town of Wilmington, Delaware, USA is the home town of newly elected US president Joe Biden and known to garden lovers for its historic gardens and horticultural attractions. Mt. Cuba Center near Wilmington, once a private estate of businessman Lammot du Pont Copeland and wife Pamela, is now a non-profit native plant botanical garden and research centre dedicated to conservation, education and garden display.**

In 1935 the Copelands bought over 100 acres of farmland near the village of Mount Cuba and began developing their home. Being the overseer of the project herself, Pamela felt that if people could see the beauty of native plants in their natural surroundings, they would be inspired to join the efforts of preserving the countryside.



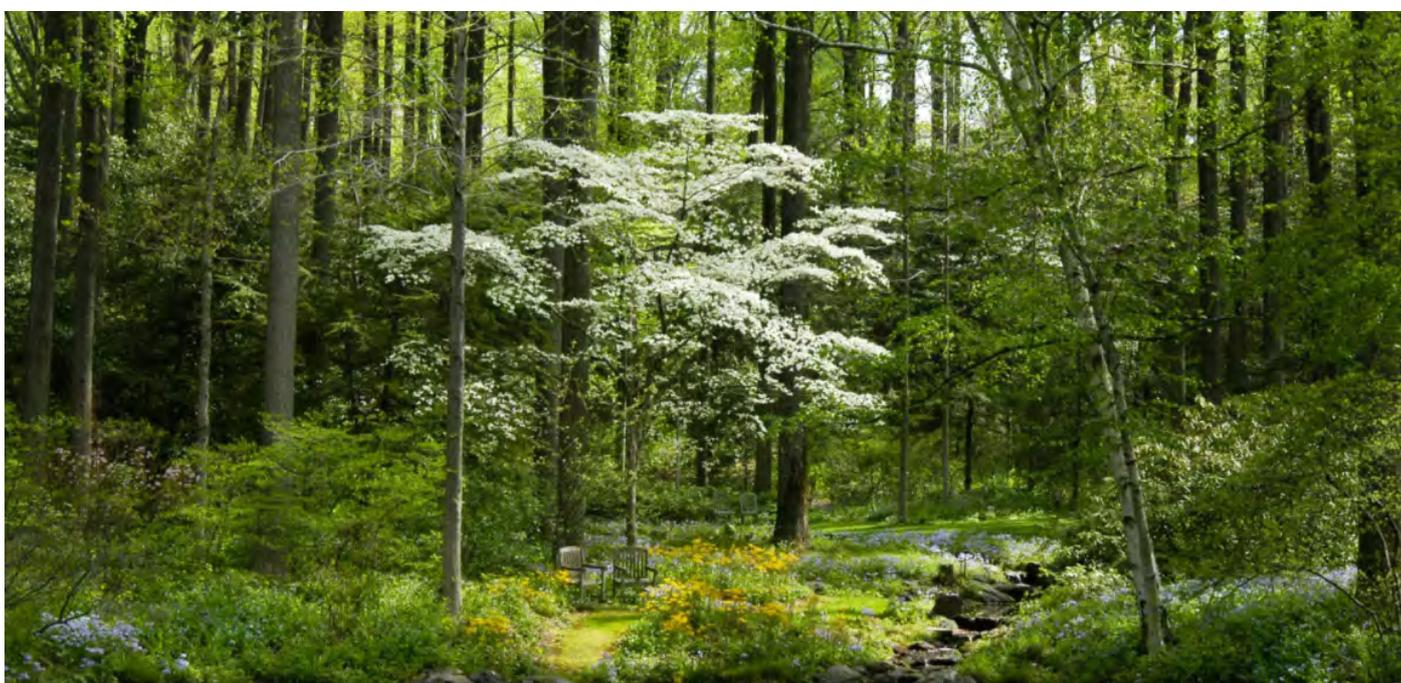
Mt. Cuba Center main house. Image/ mtcubacenter.org

In 1949 planning started for the extension of the formal garden and well-known landscape architect Marian Coffin was commissioned to complete the Round Garden.



The Round Garden Mt. Cuba Center. Image/ [mtcubacenter.org](http://mtcubacenter.org)

In 1950 the Copelands bought nearly 18 acres of adjacent land that later became the site of the Naturalistic Gardens. In the mid-1960s landscape architect Seth Kelsey started the extensive development of these gardens.



The Naturalistic Gardens Mt. Cuba Center. Image/ [mtcubacenter.org](http://mtcubacenter.org)

The Trial Garden is a 1300 square metre garden with the purpose to evaluate plants and to find out all they can about disease resistance, hardiness, bloom time, floral display and attractiveness to pollinators to be able to inform potential consumers of plant suitability in their yards or to provide performance data to the nursery industry so they know what plants will be successful to grow to keep their customers happy.



The Trial Garden Mt. Cuba Center. Image/ mtcubacenter.org

The Mt. Cuba Center greenhouses are utilised to identify rare varieties that only grow in the wild. Those seeds are then propagated in the greenhouses with the purpose of finding out how to grow them. It is estimated that thousands of rare varieties of plants are grown in the Mt. Cuba Center greenhouses every year.



Greenhouse with rare native plants. Image/ mtcubacenter.org



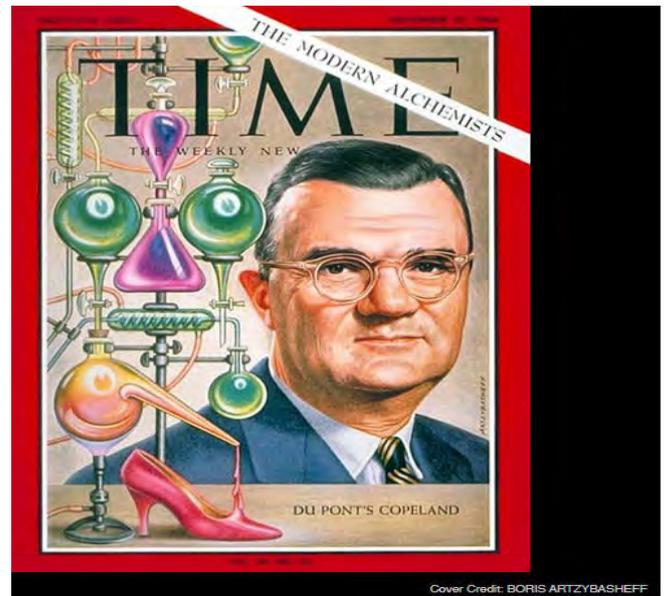
Mt. Cuba Center. Image/ Mt Cuba Center via Wikimedia Commons

Mt. Cuba Center comprises 50 acres of gardens and 500 acres of natural areas, and with the merge of Mt. Cuba Center and the Red Clay Reservation in 2018 the conservation efforts comprises a total of 1083 acres.

With its formal gardens, naturalistic gardens, trial garden, natural lands and greenhouses the Mt. Cuba Center’s purpose is to improve the ecological sustainability of Delaware and the world.

It was declared the best botanical garden in North America in **USA Today’s 10 Best Readers’ Choice Awards 2020**.

It’s easy to see why people would choose this incredible botanical garden as their favourite.



Lammot du Pont Copeland on the cover of TIME magazine on November 27, 1964. Cover Credit: Boris Artzybasheff



Image/ Mt. Cuba Center via Wikimedia Commons.



Pamela Cunningham Copeland in the Round Garden. Image/ Mt. Cuba Center via Wikimedia Commons.



## Nong Nooch Tropical Botanical Garden

By Annette Irish FAIH RH0008 Images/ Annette Irish

**Nong Nooch Tropical Botanical Garden is located an easy 163 km drive South East of Bangkok, outside the bustling older tourist destination of Pattaya Chonburi Province Thailand. It is not just a ‘garden’ but a vast themed Garden of 240 hectares opened to the public in 1980.**

One could say it is the Tansacha family’s ‘garden folly’, the matriarch Nongnooch having a vision to establish a botanical conservation precinct to match other world renowned gardens.

Her son Kampon Tansacha took on that challenge in 1983 and surrounded himself with specialists to oversee the collections.

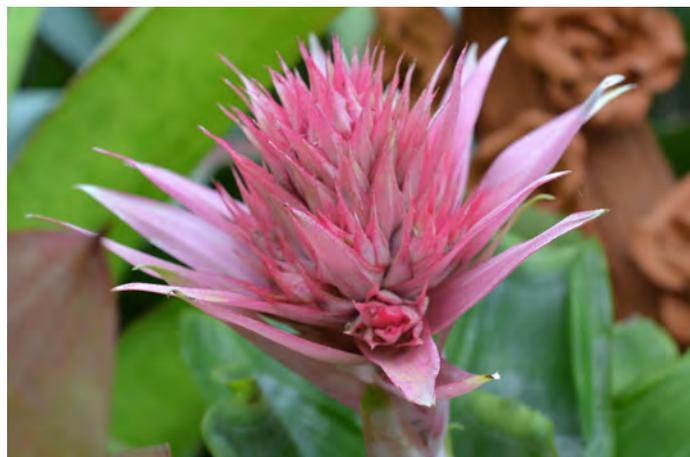
He set up major research projects, a cycad gene pool and instigated conservation programs all of which are curated by Anders Lindstrom, respected Cycad researcher and author.

He has developed long term ‘plant lovers’ partnerships with a number of Australian plant people including Stan Walkley of Plantation 2000 and Anton Van der Schans, Singapore ex-pat Cairns horticulturist.

Kampon has spent years collecting heritage and ancient specimens from around the world, often sending out horticultural scouts to find and purchase living collections to ensure they are kept intact for the benefit of other plant enthusiasts.



For the crazed botanically inspired horticulturist the collections, many touted 'as the largest in the world', include Cycadaceae, Zamiaceae, Heliconiaceae, Marantaceae, Zingiberales, Arecaceae, Cactaceae, Orchidaceae, Bromeliaceae, including a stunning *Dracaena* (syn. *Sanseveiria* spp.) collection and other rare and unusual species.



Architecturally the gardens include features that are beautiful, quirky, interesting, sometimes replicas and many attractions to entice tourists, botanists, designers and horticulturists.

Collections of garden art, animal art, ants running up walls, pottery collections, dinosaur valley, animals wandering the grounds, even a heritage car collection provides a garden destination and experience to satisfy all members of the family.



The site houses a bustling community of specialist artisans who carefully produce most of the art and sculptures seen in the gardens.

A conference centre, accommodation and fabulous restaurants provide for a wonderful horticultural destination. If planning to go ensure you allow two days to really take in all that the gardens offer.

If you don't think Pattaya is your sort of town other accommodation can be found close by, and this enables you to visit some of the beautiful temples, gardens and interesting fishing village destinations of the Chon Buri region.



The gardens can't disappoint as they provide so many options to meet and excite the senses and certainly is a garden no-one can forget.

**Annette Irish FAIH RH is a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Horticulture and former President.**





## Mitigating COVID-19 Risks When Returning To The Workplace

Provided by Daniel Holmes, Fitzpatrick & Co Insurance Brokers

Research by professional services firm PwC shows many businesses are gearing up to support staff towards a partial or full return to the office. But how people work will now be very different.

According to its research, 50 per cent of organisations surveyed say staff will expect higher protections at work when they return to the office, while 67 per cent have established ways to track the location of their staff and remote ways of working.

PwC's investigation shows businesses are designing workplaces that enable social distancing in the lead-up to staff coming back into the office.

They are remodelling office infrastructure by fitting desks with plexiglass shields, creating space between workstations and investing in tools like collaboration software. They have also put in place sanitisation protocols and scheduled more stringent, regular cleaning of premises.

Vanessa Giannos, founder of The HR Experts, says it's a good idea to step up office cleaning so surfaces are disinfected every night.

"Provide hand sanitiser and antibacterial wipes and ensure everyone has their own headset. If the business is still hot desking, ensure everyone thoroughly wipes down their desk, keyboard and mouse with disinfectant wipes."

**“Every business will have its own protocols, and it's essential to follow health authorities' advice”**

Giannos says a tag team approach is one way to maintain social distancing, with different teams working different shifts.

"Any vulnerable employees should remain working from home." She also says this time can be an opportunity to build the business's culture. "Encourage people to find new ways to connect, collaborate and support each other."

### **Cover Counts**

Insurance also has a role to play as people transition back to more usual working arrangements, says Michael White, Steadfast's broker technical manager.

For instance, businesses face a potential liability should a staff member or visitor to their workplace contract COVID-19 as a result of being exposed to the disease while there.



Even before that, businesses have responsibilities to ensure their staff are protected should one of the team's relatives, household members or even someone who works in the building comes into contact with someone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19.

Every business will have its own protocols, and it's essential to follow health authorities' advice.

But firms should be ready to require staff to work from home should they be exposed to someone who has the virus.

"Businesses must ensure their workers' compensation policies are up-to-date and reflect any changes that have happened in the

business. This includes making sure payroll declarations are correct," White explains.

"It's often the only way firms that suffer an insurable event are able to pay their expenses and wages. Banks are often reticent to lend to businesses that don't have any income after a disaster, especially if they already have significant borrowings," he adds.

The message to small businesses is not to forget your broker when times change. Because it could make a real difference should one of the business' risks come to fruition and the proprietors are relying on their cover to continue as a going concern.

**Important Notice - Steadfast Group Limited  
ABN 98 073 659 677 And Steadfast Network  
Brokers**

This article provides information rather than financial product or other advice.

The content of this article, including any information contained in it, has been prepared without taking into account your objectives, financial situation or needs.

You should consider the appropriateness of the information, taking these matters into account, before you act on any information. In particular, you should review the product disclosure statement for any product that the information relates to it before acquiring the product.

Information is current as at the date the article is written as specified within it but is subject to change.

Steadfast Group Ltd and Steadfast Network Brokers make no representation as to the accuracy or completeness of the information. Various third parties have contributed to the production of this content.

All information is subject to copyright and may not be reproduced without the prior written consent of Steadfast Group Limited.



# DIAMONDS IN THE DARK<sup>®</sup> CREPE MYRTLES

**Diamonds in the Dark<sup>®</sup> are a revolutionary new range of Lagerstroemias. They feature flawless near-black foliage that emerges in early spring, followed by masses of vivid blooms from summer until first frost.**



Lavender DITD<sup>®</sup> Best Red<sup>®</sup>



Lavender DITD<sup>®</sup> Blush<sup>®</sup>



Lavender DITD<sup>®</sup> Crimson Red<sup>®</sup>



Lavender DITD<sup>®</sup> Lavender Lace<sup>®</sup>



Lavender DITD<sup>®</sup> Pure White<sup>®</sup>



Lavender DITD<sup>®</sup> Purely Purple<sup>®</sup>



Lavender DITD<sup>®</sup> Shell Pink<sup>®</sup>



Lavender DITD<sup>®</sup> Mystic Magenta<sup>®</sup>



Lavender DITD<sup>®</sup> Red Hot<sup>®</sup>



[DiamondsintheDark.com.au](http://DiamondsintheDark.com.au)

# Business Sponsors



## Evergreen Infrastructure

Evergreen Infrastructure specialises in green infrastructure solutions for the urban and built environment. Our work is steeped in a commitment to respond to global environmental issues by reimagining more sustainable lifestyles in both private and public spaces.

[VISIT WEBSITE](#)



## Magnetic Media Productions

We are visual storytellers. We offer exceptional video production and photography to help capture your business' story and tell it to the world. We craft targeted social media campaigns with our visual content at the centre of the message.

[VISIT WEBSITE](#)

# Write for AIH

We welcome contributions to HortInsights from professionals, members and students in the horticulture industries.

Writing for the Institute offers an excellent way to share your views, knowledge and expertise with a passionate audience and you can be attributed CPD points

While we are unable to pay for content submissions, our editorial promise is that if your submission is accepted for publishing, we will endeavor to repurpose it widely, for our website, social media or other public media channels.

## These Guidelines Will Help You Provide The Right Format To Be Published:

- Articles should be a maximum of 500-600 words. A more concise article with a definite aim and strong take-home messages will help our audience use your expert information well.
- Please provide sources and references if you cite or refer to others' information in your article.
- Please provide 1-2 quality images. Photographs must be large enough to be used in a range of publications with a file size of between 1 and 5 MB (megabytes).

We reserve the right to make editorial, grammatical and stylistic changes to text and images.

HortInsights is published six times per year.

### Dates and deadlines:

#### April 2021

Text and images due: 20th March 2021

Delivery: 1st April 2021

#### June 2021

Text and images due: 20th May 2021

Delivery: 1st June 2021

#### August 2021

Text and images due: 20th July 2021

Delivery: 1st August 2021

# hortinsights

 [aih.org.au](http://aih.org.au)

 [members@aih.org.au](mailto:members@aih.org.au)

 (02) 8001 6198

## Next Issue: 1st April 2021