

## Learning about Gardening

How did you learn about gardening? This is a question that I am often asked and I always say that I am still learning about gardening. My job gives me plenty of opportunities on a daily basis, observing and propagating plants, researching, and talking to our customers. This week a customer was able to give me the names for some unknown plants, another told me how tall her plant from our nursery had grown over a few months and another related his experience of overwintering capsicums.

This is for capsicums in pots – once they have finished fruiting for the year, move the pots to a spot protected from frost and too much rain eg tucked in under the eaves on the east side of the house. Keep the potting mix moist, but not wet, so the roots don't rot. The leaves and thin branches will drop off. In spring you will get new growth so, at this point, start to water them and give them a feed with a liquid fertiliser such as a seaweed product, worm wee or compost tea. The plants will be way ahead of first season plants and, according to my customer, will produce a larger crop earlier. I would add that it would save a lot of work if the plants grew in the overwintering area from the start, remembering that they will need sunlight and water in the growing season.



Learning from more experienced gardeners is very helpful, since they will have stories of what they did wrong as well as what they did right. The trick is to make sure the information is valid for your area and plans. I visited an open garden and was inspired by a hillside of glowing geraniums. 'Easy care and glorious,' said the owner. I just had to have one. Geraniums are hardy, aren't they? They don't need much water. So, assisted by my husband, Keith and my son, Rohan, we cleared and planted an exposed area on a rise facing east. My geraniums grew and they did flower 'gloriously' in the summer. Unfortunately they were all burnt off in a winter frost and few revived. Lots of work to learn that lesson! If only someone had told me.

I love gardening shows on TV and books full of pictures – lapping up practical tips and interesting ideas to spark my imagination. The internet is also a great help – just remember to check the source. I was once confused about covering a ground cover with thick straw in winter, until I realised that the British website I was on was giving advice for snow covered Yorkshire.

Workshops are a great way to learn. We run gardening workshops at our nursery to give information, inspiration, skills and the benefit of our experience and local knowledge. Our autumn garden workshops will be practical, informative and fun. You can ask questions and relate what you are learning to your own garden, learning from the presenter and the group. Last year's workshop participants found them to be excellent value. I love hearing about how what they learnt and practised has inspired and enhanced their gardening. Check out our ad in this paper for our workshops and ring to book in.

Hope to see you at a workshop or in the nursery one day. Happy gardening!

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