

# Your garden

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## In my garden:



Derek McIntosh with the Acacia Pendula tree at Geelong Racecourse.

# Big beauties

FORGET the big pineapple, big banana and big potato - Geelong has its own home-grown big things.

Rather than man-made tourist traps for road-trippers our big things are trees.

Yes, trees.

And we've got six of them registered at [www.nationalregisterofbigtrees.com.au](http://www.nationalregisterofbigtrees.com.au)

The register is the brainchild of Sydney's Derek McIntosh whose fascination with trees began as a young lad in South Africa.

"Like many young boys I'd be out with my slingshot shooting birds and wondering why some trees are bigger than others," he said.

"When I came to Australia I realised that many people were misinformed about trees.

"I'd say, 'what tree is that?' And they'd say, 'a gum tree', but not have any further information, like 'what sort of gum tree?'"

Derek had harboured a longing to establish a national tree register, but was deterred by the cost. "Then the internet came along and I was able to share my enthusiasm," he said.

"Being aware of big trees is not an event, it's a process. And increasingly there is a

greater appreciation of what it costs to grow a big tree.

"It costs something; emotionally, financially, conservation wise and planning, to get a tree on the register."

With six trees registered, Geelong is spoilt for big trees.

The register includes stunning big trees in public spaces and less well known trees in forests or private gardens. Not all big trees have been planted and planned for.

Five of Geelong's trees are in the Botanic Gardens. The sixth, a weeping myall in the car park at Geelong racecourse, appears to be a random occurrence; perhaps the result of a seed falling from the back of a ute coming from the outback.

Points are awarded according to each tree's circumference, height and crown spread. Derek encourages people to nominate any tree they feel has the potential to be nominated for the register.

Explore the trees on the register or learn how to measure a tree using Derek's formula on [nationalregisterofbigtrees.com.au](http://nationalregisterofbigtrees.com.au).

## Geelong's big trees

1. Walnut tree (botanical name *Juglans nigra*) was planted 109 years ago near the Geelong Botanic Gardens office. It's deciduous with drooping flowers, native to North America and introduced to Europe in the 17th century. Its wood is used for furniture, and its hard walnut shell is used commercially for oil well drilling and abrasive cleaning.

2. Soap Bark tree (botanical name *Quillaja saponaria*) is in the Geelong Botanic Gardens. This evergreen tree with white flowers is a native to Chile. Inner bark can be reduced to powder and used as a soap substitute; its wood used in cabinetry and its scents are used in perfumes and cosmetics.

3. Weeping Myall (botanical name *Acacia pendula*) is in the Geelong racecourse car park. Native to Australia but has been grown successfully in Kuwait and Iran. Unlike many wattles, this one is long-lived with its

dense wood and elegant drooping form making it a popular tree for farm windbreaks.

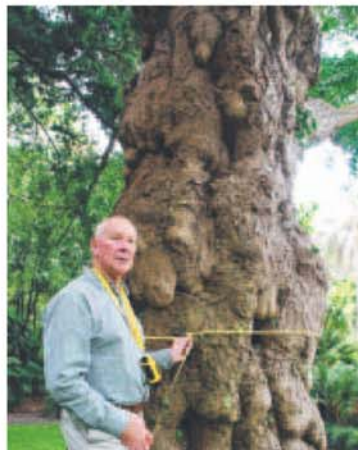
4. The 153-year-old Ginkgo (botanical name *Ginkgo biloba*) is in the Geelong Botanic Gardens. Known as a living fossil, *Ginkgo biloba* were widespread at the same time as the dinosaurs; its survival is likely due to its popularity with monks who planted them around temples in China and Japan. It has aerial roots and is reputed to help a range of ailments.

5. Purple European Beech (botanical name *Fagus sylvatica* 'Atropunicea') is in the Geelong Botanic Gardens. This is a slow-growing tree; its leaves emerge deep purple and fade to purple-green during summer with its branches sweeping the ground.

6. Box Blue (botanical name *Eucalyptus baueriana*) is near the entrance to the Geelong Botanic Gardens. It's a fast-growing tree with typically pungent foliage.



Derek McIntosh and Annette Zealley with a black walnut tree.



Derek McIntosh checks the circumference of a Ginkgo tree.

## Things to do this week

with  
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Now is a great time to plant potatoes.

## Downfalls of damp

WITH the wettest June in several years, plants that have survived in clay soils over the last decade of drier weather are sometimes finding the heavier water-holding soils not to their liking.

If you are planting into heavier soils there are a few things you can do to get great results.

Raise the garden bed by digging through well rotted compost.

Add gypsum to help break up the clay component and use liquid groundbreakers to assist in heavier soils where you already have plants in.

Remove mulch from the soil if you find plants are suffering.

Mulch reduces evaporation so if the soil is already too wet we want to allow it to dry out as much as possible so pull the mulch back from around the root system.

This also allows the sun to warm up the soil quicker and stimulate new growth as we move from winter to spring over the next couple of months.

After last weekend's heavy frost, you may notice areas of blackening on the soft growth of groundcovers and shrubs where ice has sat for sometime.

As tempting as it may be to remove these damaged areas it is best to leave them as this will protect undamaged tissues further down the shoot or stem.

Once we get past the risk of frosts we can do a clean up and feed to promote new growth.

Lily bulbs can be planted out now. Large scented oriental lilies or brightly coloured Asiatic lilies love a well-drained spot in the garden in full sun or partial shade and reward you with stunning flowers that can be left to display outside or cut for the vase inside.

The bulbs will flower year after year in the soil, just feed them and protect young growth from snails. Plant them in groups for mass effect rather than in lines.

Lilies are also suitable to grow in containers; use a bulb potting mix and keep moist.

Gladioli corms can be planted out into a sunny location in the garden, preferably in locations out of strong winds, but you will find they do best with staking to support the flowers.

Fragrant lily of the valley and the beautifully scented tuberose bulbs are also available this time of the year.

Herbaceous peony roses are another special plant that can go in from crowns. They love a dappled light position and have white, pink or red flowers.

In the productive garden, it's time to put in rhubarb crowns, red or golden shallots bulbs for a milder and sweeter onion flavour in cooking, garlic corms, Jerusalem artichoke tubers and potatoes in a frost free area.

If you are short on space then a spud grow bag is a good idea and fun for children to plant and watch potatoes grow and to harvest with joy.