

## Farm Gate Trail Round Up – 20<sup>th</sup> November, 2004

Susan Fennelly 4575 4095

### IN SEASON ON THE TRAIL

Good Morning Simon, Delicious peaches and nectarines and plums as well as delicious Mulberries and strawberries and a large dash of spectacular colour....

### This week I spoke with Riva and Jim Dale, from Geranium Cottage, 828 Old Northern Road, Middle Dural.

A bit of background info ...

Riva immigrated to Australia 40 yrs. ago from Malawi in Central Africa via England where she met and married Jim and with their two young sons, settled in the Hills District where you will find them today.

#### **How did they get started?**

Riva has always been quite passionate about Geraniums and Pelargoniums and has always had a wonderful garden and noticed how the vibrant colours of Australia were so much like home in Sth. Africa. In the mid 1970's they lived in Dural on a 5 acre block, Jim was making documentaries for television (Butterfly Island was a well known one) and Riva, who was actually an accountant by trade, decided to turn her hobby into a small wholesale and retail nursery from the backyard.

#### **So how many acres do they have now?**

This farm would have to be an ideal example of turning a small acreage into a fantastic enterprise. They now have 3 acres at Galston where the plants are grown under cover & this is Gary's responsibility, their son, who from an early age had been studying singing and drama, would earn his pocket money helping out on the farm. He became so engrossed with the plants that he gave up a promising musical career and put his heart and soul into the growing.

Gary negotiated a contract with Europe's premier breeder P.A.C in Dresden, Germany (in business for 180 yrs) and now Geranium Cottage are Australia's leading specialist grower of Geraniums and Pelargoniums with Gary being recognized as an acknowledged authority on these plants. In 1999 they purchased a lovely heritage cottage on a couple of acres on Old Northern Rd. at Dural and that is where you will find them today. This year they restored an old barn within the grounds and that is where you'll also find lots of products made from citrus grown on the property. (jams etc.)

#### **Geraniums are one of those plants that just grow like crazy?**

Yes, in Australia we just let them grow and grow... but ideally they should be trimmed to stop them getting leggy but as they flower all year not many in Australia seem to trim them. They originally came from Sth Africa and were taken to Europe back in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. In Europe over the winter months they are dormant and never grow to the size they do here. Riva says they hate wet feet and do like a feed although cover a slow release fertilizer especially if it is in a pot!

I have a new respect for geraniums (or pelargoniums as they truly are) after visiting these enthusiasts!!!

## Events

**Tutti Frutti** is celebrating its first birthday this weekend, and on Sunday besides the balloons & birthday cake they will also be opening the rose farm for the first time to let visitors wander through and enjoy the fragrant roses (Sunday only).

You can also pick up their homemade jams, pies and of course that yummy ice-cream made from their own fruit!

**Louisa Atkinson Day**, Next Sunday 28 November 2004

Born in 1834, Louisa lived for just 38 years dying shortly after childbirth in 1872. Within this short time her considerable intellect, talent and energy yielded a string of firsts for Australian women.

Louisa is credited as the first Australian born woman to have a novel published (in fact she wrote six novels in her brief life) as well as the first female newspaper columnist with a serial '*Notes from the Country*' that ran for 10 years in the Sydney Morning Herald.

Apart from her literary prowess, Louisa is acknowledged as a world-leading botanist discovering new plant species in the Blue Mountains and Southern Highlands regions. She was also an acclaimed naturalist and advocated bushland conservation at a time of rapid land clearing. How much was she ahead of her time?

Her last novel was 'Tressa's Resolve' which will be published through Mulini Press for the first time – 132 years after being written.

For anyone wanting to join in this day of tribute, bookings can be made by phoning Jan Allen on 4567 3017.

### Update on fruit and veges in season

We have juicy – yellow and white flesh **nectarines** & the yellow and white **peaches** and **Valencia oranges, plums** and of course those delicious **strawberries and mulberries**.

In the way of veges – There are zucchini, capsicums, bok choy, lettuce, spring onions, cauliflowers, silverbeet, cabbages, rhubarb, fresh olives, cucumbers, beetroot, mushrooms and tomatoes.

You can also pick up some native bush foods, duck & eggs, meat from the butcher, wine, fresh flowers, crepe myrtles, geraniums and of course all the associated products like honey, jams, pickles and preserves.

Get into summer **herbs** for your pots or garden - there are plenty available in pots along the trail.

For the latest update of fruit and veges in season from our farms and to download any of the seasonal itineraries as well as the whole map, go to the website

[www.hawkesburyharvest.com.au](http://www.hawkesburyharvest.com.au)

If your listeners haven't been able to download the map from the website they can call into the Visitor Centre at Clarendon (opposite the RAAF Base) and pick up a copy.

All the information on the Farm Gate Trail will be on the website or from Hawkesbury Valley Tourism Office at Clarendon on **4588 5895**, where along with the Farm Gate map, your listeners can pick up the notes of today's roundup. Or **visit our website go to [www.hawkesburyharvest.com.au](http://www.hawkesburyharvest.com.au)**

### **Best Days to Drive the Trail**

Friday or Saturday are the recommended days for self-drive tours of the Farm Gate Trail or, if you prefer not to drive, take a guided tour, all the details are on the back of the map.

### Vegetables on the Trail

Tomatoes, lettuce, beetroot and rhubarb, sweet potato, leek, green capsicums, cauliflower, broccoli, zucchini, cabbage (savoy & plain), silverbeet, bok choy, Lebanese & gherkin cucumbers; parsnips, butternut, jap & Qld blue pumpkins, both red and white radishes, potatoes, flat and swiss brown mushrooms

### Fruit on the Trail

Valencia Oranges, Nectarines, Peaches, Plums – Penrith Valley Oranges, Enniskillen Orchard and Orange Spot  
Seville Oranges – Hawkesbury Estate  
Pajeros Strawberries – fresh and frozen – Strawberry Farm, Vineyard, Galston Strawberries  
Mulberries – Enniskillen Orchard

### Other Produce – Food & Wine

Wine, port including white port, aleatico; Verjus; Goat cheese & yoghurt; baked crisp breads including lavosh, honey, apple juice, free range eggs, ice cream with real fruit, fruit rollups with fruit fresh from the orchard. Jams, pickles and sauces and the range from the native bush tucker foods. Peking ducks, also sausages, breast fillet, Maryland & whole ducks; abattoir and butcher – large range of beef, pork and lamb, goat, venison and ostrich. Spring Water and Silver Perch.

### Other Produce – Fibre & Flora

Koi and Goldfish, silver perch, field roses, pelargoniums and geraniums, alpacas & alpaca products such as jumpers, scarves etc. Open gardens and galleries with pottery, paintings and bowls and platters.

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