



## deryn thorpe DOWN THE GARDEN PATH

Never fear, the insect cavalry is on hand to do battle with the wretched aphid plague

There is a mighty battle between good and evil going on in my garden with the courageous predatory bugs fighting valiantly against an infestation of aphids.

Sap-sucking bugs seem to have exploded with the warm weather, with aphids feasting on my roses, especially the tender new shoots.

It normally takes about two weeks after the aphids start multiplying for the good predatory bugs to appear on the scene.

While it is tempting to get out chemical controls I know that if I can hold off, that the good bugs will arrive.

While insecticides and lower-toxic solutions such as garlic sprays are sometimes necessary, the problem is that they don't discriminate and kill the beneficial insects along with the pests.

I enjoy getting out into the garden

with a magnifying glass and watching the predator bugs in action.

At first there is just a handful of winged crusaders and their tenacious larvae preying on the bad bugs.

But as they feast on the sap-suckers they build in numbers and get the upper hand.

There are two main groups of beneficial insects – the predators that attack and eat the adult or larvae of other insects, and parasites that lay eggs on or in other insects.

Working in my garden are ladybirds, lacewings, parasitic wasps and hoverflies. The ladybird larvae look like mini crocodiles and eat more aphids than adults. The larvae of lacewings are voracious predators, too, and are often called trash bugs because they put the remains of their prey on their backs.

However, my favourites are the parasitic wasps because they leave



behind evidence of their conquests.

The adults feed on pollen but lay a single egg inside the body of the aphid. It's fascinating but gruesome because when the egg hatches the larva consumes the host from the inside.

After pupating, a wasp emerges from the shiny brown aphid corpse which

stays on the leaf, providing me with evidence that in my garden the good bugs are winning the battle!

Deryn Thorpe visits homes for garden consultancies. Phone 0405 473 960 or email [dthorpe@amnet.net.au](mailto:dthorpe@amnet.net.au).

Ladybirds and aphids battle on China Doll roses. Picture: Deryn Thorpe



City Farm in East Perth will host Sue McDougall's workshops.

## WHAT'S ON

The annual **Perth Heritage Days** event is on this weekend and there are plenty of attractions for gardening enthusiasts. John Viska, founding member of the Garden History Society of WA, will present a talk on colonial kitchen gardens at the State Library tomorrow at 11.30am, East Perth community garden City Farm will host Sue McDougall's heirloom vegetable workshops at 11am and 2pm on Sunday, and visitors to its sister farm Gladstone Street Farm can learn how early settlers' husbandry methods can be a successful way to garden today (noon-5pm on Sunday). For more details and bookings visit [heritageperth.com](http://heritageperth.com).

The WA Fern Society is teaming up with the Palm & Cycad Society of WA for their **annual display and plant sale**. There will be plants for sale from members' collections, including rare and hard-to-find species. It's on from 9am-4pm tomorrow and Sunday at the Cannington Exhibition Centre in Cannington. Entry is free.

With a waterfall falling into a natural koi pond, a wildflower parkland, a dry creek bed and a fern garden which winds its way to a hidden gazebo, **Kwela Gardens in Banjup** is a stunning bushland oasis that's also incredibly sustainable. Melaleucas shelter delicate exotic plants, citrus trees and vine fruits provide bountiful harvests and an array of wildlife – including lizards, skinks, bandicoots, birds, butterflies, bees and frogs – makes its home in the five-acre (2ha)

garden. It will be open to the public for Open Gardens Australia from 10am-4.30pm tomorrow and Sunday at 23 Muir Court, Banjup. Devonshire teas and a sausage sizzle will be available. Entry costs \$7 (kids are free) with profits to the Cancer Council.

Cross a few green thumbs' names off your Christmas list on Sunday at the final **Friends of Kings Park native plant sale** for this year. It is on from 8.30am-noon and there will be a big range of end-of-year bargains among the almost 9000 plants on offer, including many that are not commonly available from nurseries and 11 species or cultivars never before offered for sale by FOKP. It's on at the Exhibition Ground at Kings Park. See [friendsofkingspark.com.au](http://friendsofkingspark.com.au) for a full list of the plants that are available.

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