

**14th October 2005**

Spring, in the Blue Mountains in general and Leura in particular, is usually heralded by three things – the display of cherry blossom, the Leura Spring Festival, and the influx of tourists. This year remained true to past experiences - the tourists came, the festival went smoothly, and the cherries - what a display. Here at Mullengandra the season started with the 'Great Whites' – the two large cherry trees which, in the past, have tended to be a little spasmodic and usually rather transient. This year they have been absolutely covered with blossom, albeit for a short time. The large single flowers tend to shatter at the first hint of wind (and winds we have had) – but as a rather wise friend mused “the petal of a cherry will always fall in the right place.” True to his word, the carpet of petals below the big trees was quite arresting, almost as spectacular as when on the trees. Then came the Kanzan, along with the little Ukon cherry (too small yet to be notable). Kanzan had quite a beautiful display of soft rose pink flowers on copper foliage, comparable to past years, but made even more striking by its location – in front of a pale trunked Eucalypt. A simple, beautiful combination of both colour and texture (and I think a rather unplanned pairing). Mine, however, was nothing compared to the Kanzan cherries that line most of the streets of Leura, and the rather famous avenue down the middle of Leura Mall. This year these were breathtakingly beautiful, and are still in full bloom in spite of the wild weather we had last weekend - wild enough to end the Leura Street Fair earlier than expected, when a number of the street stalls took to the sky! The piece d' resistance, in my garden at least, would have to be the Mount Fuji. This was my last cherry to flower, and with its shape and position, is absolutely spectacular when in full bloom. This year it is more floriferous than I certainly remember from the two previous years living here and, as my neighbours have volunteered, for longer than they can remember.

The tulips I reluctantly planted in April have performed well and have made a welcome addition to the summer border. However after accepting an invitation by my neighbour to visit a local garden called 'Cherrydell', and seeing its spectacular display of tulips, (which are reorganised and changed annually by the owner), I felt both inspired and a little embarrassed by my own modest collection.

The next phase of the spring bloom to come at 'Mullengandra' will be the mollis azaleas. The soft orange and apricot hues flowering on fresh lime green foliage, against the new shoots of the copper beech hedge and in a sea of forget-me-nots is, to my mind a most pleasant if somewhat unusual colour combination. It will be an interesting exercise in ensuing years when I add the herbaceous border to this backdrop, for which I am hoping to use a palette of Australian sunrise & sunset colours. The forget-me-nots will be removed within the next week and the colour scheme will change again as the French lavender starts to flower, adding a soft mauve to the mix.

I was excited Last Saturday to find, whilst walking through the Leura Street Fair, a perennial nursery selling unusual varieties. In amongst the many plants I found tubes of the little wood Anemone nemorosa – pretty double, deeply cut flowers with green brush edges. I also unearthed Epimedium rubrum - a great little ground cover that seems perfectly suited to my garden, where there is an abundance of dry shade. Normally rather difficult conditions for ground cover perennials, but perfect for this very sturdy little plant. As the weather warms up the herbaceous plants throughout my garden are breaking the ground – always an exciting time as one expectantly watches to see any increases in size and vigour from the past year.

So if anyone needs me, I'll be in the garden...