

PLANT GROUP CUTTINGS

Snippets from the September meeting held at Cuz' abode.

We welcomed Arj, Joe and Trish to the meeting. Arj said he and his father Joe wanted to set up an 'Underwater Garden'. Having seen the video, Arj asked where the best source of laterite? Most of us agreed that the best place for the gathering of the iron red clay was the western area past suburban Melbourne, eg. the Melton area.

This led to a general discussion as to whether this is a true Laterite soil area? We cannot claim a truly scientific identification specifying the purity of the clay, but we do know that the red soil in this area has a considerable iron content. We also know from experimentation that it has proved to be superior to other red soil areas around Melbourne.

(Personally, I think laterite from the Dandenongs is better, but maybe I'm biased ... Editor!)

We suggested that he contact one of our members who lives at Rockbank and who has a great pile of laterite clogging up his backyard. I believe he would welcome some reduction to his red mountain— an a phone call should do the trick... Arj's problem solved.

We were able to get a look at a great book all about ponds and their construction—being remaindered at Border's book shops around town at just \$9.95! A real bargain and the rush was on to get further copies before they all went.



Cuz handed out some tubs of "Fluorite" (a brand name). It was a plant growing medium claiming superior growing abilities. "Fluorite" hails from the USA and the price is horrendous. It looks like an ordinary crushed rock of the more colourful variety. The manufacturers claim it is superior to other substrate materials, including laterite, for the culture of aquatic plants. A comprehensive listing of the natural elements found in this natural gravel was provided. It certainly seems impressive, but is it really better? We will trial this product, comparing it with our tried and true Plant Group methods and let you know. Thanks to Cuz for providing the samples for our substrate triallers! This led to further discussion as to what constitutes the major supplier of plant nutrients in our fish tanks? Diane Walstead states that, in conjunction with a soil base fish food supplies all that is necessary. She maintains that all necessary nutriment can be satisfactorily supplied via the fish's gut. Paul jumped in here to say that growth will still be held back if there is

insufficient CO2 available. Then I jumped in by saying that excellent growth was still possible using the natural CO2 uptake that occurs automatically in every fish tank. Well that really set things off! Opinions were going around the room at a great rate. Really lively discussion. I suppose the operative principle here was Liebig's. It states that the limiting factor for growth is controlled by the amount of the least available element. In other words you can have heaps of everything but one, needed for the plant to grow, and that one element will be the controlling factor. If there is not enough of just one thing the plant will not exhibit optimum growth. (*nib. – This principle can be used to control algae growth! .. Ed.*).

Rod had some very young *Aponogeton ulvaceus* bulbs that he asked for some of us to grow on, get to flower and then hope-fully—seed. This is not an easy task as this plant is very demanding. It is also necessary to have two plants flowering at the same time for cross-pollination to occur.



Ron had some true *Echinodorus tenellus* to show us. This is the fine chain sword that is rarely seen these days. A hard plant for many as its leaves are like fine grass. Requiring lots of light, it can easily become algae bound. Still on the subject of *Echinodurus*, we do not seem to have the narrow leaf Amazon sword in our collections any more. It used to be known as *E. brevipedicellatus* but is now catalogued as *E. amazonicus*. Any one out there got one of two to spare?

An often-asked question came up again—What is the best tank size for plant growing. The consensus was that length did not matter, but maximum width or height should not exceed 24 inches or 60 cm's. This is for lighting and convenience of servicing (without having to climb in!) So be told— take heed of many years of practical experience. –

Cheers dears!
Eddie