

# The Hose

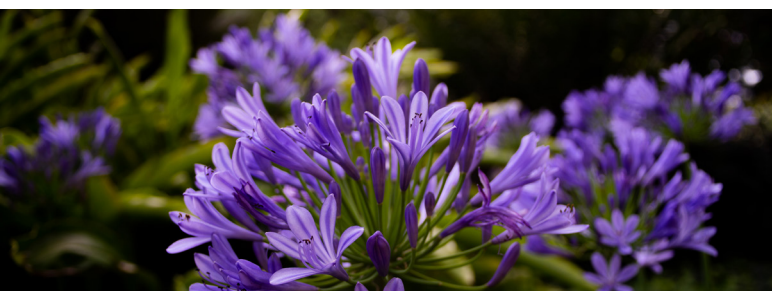
By Fiona Sullivan

The mass of agapanthus was as high as mid-thigh and dense. Somewhere in there lurked the tap, the only outside one on the property. The logic of a distant plumber had put it on the other side of the house from the main garden. Quite near the garage but down a tall rock wall, it was hidden in the front garden where an elegant mountain flax fought off agapanthus. Lily of the Nile, that scourge of the suburbs which innocent flower lovers' plant, even on farms, where it sneaks down banks, smothering natives.



I'd bought a hose, thirty metres long to stretch round the house. That man in the hardware store, who might be a little blind or perhaps even deaf, helped me. He holds his head on an angle and knows everything. The type who would be bullied at school for being different. The more you wait the more he tells you, and if you ask the right questions his gardening knowledge and that of bits and bobs, is profound. So, I got out my Japanese flax knife, which he had ordered in for me and which had been creatively renamed Garden Shark and set to. As I battled a way towards where the tap had once been sighted, I sorted the flax which was good for harakeke mahi, perhaps dinner mats, from that to be bundled for starting the fire.

Agapanthus are fleshy with white poisonous sap oozing and slippery, the pile grew bigger and wider and tricky to walk around. They have thin white roots which comprehensively inhabit the garden and which everyone assures me will, each and every one, grow into a new plant. They're quite easy to saw off with the shark so I left the main stems to cut after the rain. A job that will include immediately painting them with poison which they will drink and die within sixteen days - suckers.



I have a Gardenia for that space, it's desperate to get out of its pot. The permaculture way would be to leave the agapanthus' root system in the ground to add fibre and nematodes to the soil but I'm not sure that's good when it might contain poisonous residue. Must ask the man.

In exploring the uncharted depths of my front garden, I found a beer bottle and wondered if a teen had hidden it from his mother, a Lemon and Paeroa can with plastic straw, ditto, and then the stalwart decrepit ring of an orange balloon. This brought to mind kids' parties and then Covid and how it's changed our options and how my kids are out there in the world. How all our kids are, and will they catch it and be changed, worn out, tired with laboured breathing? Are they worried and frustrated? Mostly the latter probably, it's mothers who worry.

Thinking about empty airports and people isolated at home with no job, and how crowded Venice was when I came through before the pandemic. About my friend stuck in her fifth floor Berlin apartment while my biggest problem is merely agapanthus.

Anyway, the hose! I'd bought a middle range one and avoided spending hundreds on a pre-wound spring-back model in a smart case, as I realised that you could put the kit together at a fraction of the cost. Plus, there was no room for such a setup in this garden. The man in the shop said "fill the hose with water and lay it out straight in the sun for at least four hours. Then it will lose its memory and never coil up and annoy you ever again." So, I did that, spent ages battling the coils and got it lying straightish down the driveway, pulled out of the way of the neighbours' cars. At the end of the day it laid easily into an oval in the messy half cleared bed, securely connected to the tap. It had sprung a couple of micro leaks in the fray and I bought some plumbers tape, but the only comment from my new friend was, 'Good luck with that'.



The agapanthus, I crammed into two black plastic bags as I don't want them attempting to sprout in the compost. One of the bags is too heavy for me to lift into the car so it's lying in the sun with the plants inside dying, I hope.

That afternoon I met a friend for lunch and, rushing off late, forgot to change my top. After oysters and champagne in an unexpectedly affluent restaurant, plus other delicious things, she asked if it was great slashes of snot down my front or, "perhaps you vomited on the way, Fi, and didn't want to tell me. Although you don't smell."

Agapanthus, ghastly things, another dangerous legacy.