

Aloe's a good buy

GARDENS are once again blooming following recent rain, but green thumbs continue to make water-conscious choices when buying plants.

Hundreds of keen gardeners queued outside the *Gardening Australia* Expo in Brisbane yesterday to see the latest developments in drought-resistant plants.

One of the popular attractions was a flowering aloe vera plant being displayed by Michael Dent from Aloe-Aloe Horticulture at Tamborine.

Mr Dent said he started his business a year ago and sales were skyrocketing.

"We've received huge interest in the plants," he said. "We're selling a lot in Victoria and throughout Queensland, and we've released three new varieties this year."

Mr Dent said people remained water-conscious when buying plants and liked the aloe vera varieties for their low-maintenance, flowering qualities.

"These are the perennials of the future. Sustainability used to be a buzz word, but now it's essential," he said.

Vourn Lutton, 31, of Wilston, in Brisbane's inner north, said the recent rain was her inspiration to get back in to the garden. "You can plant something now and know it will actually grow," she said.

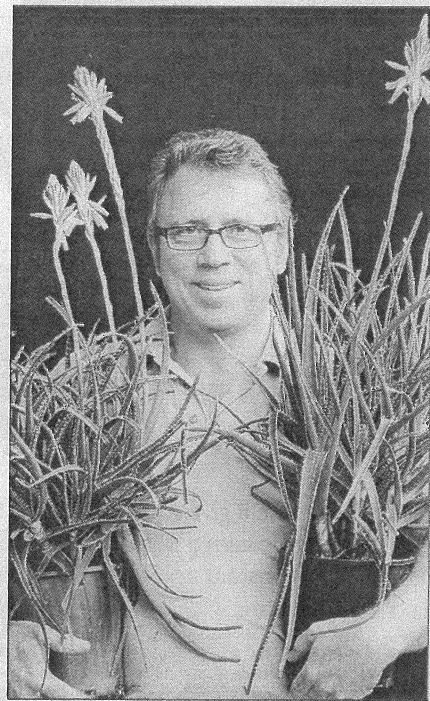
Her friend Vanessa Smolders, 29, of Rosewood, was using the wet weather of the past month to try her hand at organic food gardening. "I've got a one-year-old daughter and I want to be able to grow healthy food for her," she said.

Chelmer resident Kate Smolders, 29, said she was looking forward to getting back in to the yard after months of dry weather.

"I've always loved gardening, and with the rain and the Brisbane City Council just changing its rules on sprinkling, it means I can get back out there," she said.

The gardening expo continues today at the RNA Showgrounds in Bowen Hills from 9.30am to 4.30pm. Tickets cost \$15 (adults), \$13 (pensioner/Seniors Card holders), \$34 (family), \$6 (children aged five to 16), and free entry for under-5s.

Anooska Tucker-Evans



DROUGHT-PROOF: Michael Dent with aloe vera plants. Picture: Jeff Camden