



GROWTH INDUSTRY

Sprouting from one woman's small seed of an idea 25 years ago, Weeding Women is celebrating its silver anniversary.

GARDENS ARE MEANT to be places of enjoyment, but for many of us they represent plain old hard work. The great outdoors is such a huge part of our lives here in Perth and thanks to one business, thousands of yards, flowerbeds and veggie patches look their very best.

Founded 25 years ago, Weeding Women has put more than half a million hours of hard work into 165,000 local gardens, where thousands of plants now thrive and 7,500 cubic metres of mulch has been spread – enough to fertilise Patersons Stadium more than five times over.

Borne out of frustration at not being able to find a good gardener to help her at home, writer and mother-of-two, Colleen Sheehan founded Weeding Women in October 1989.

“The men were so slow,” she says. “I was so frustrated I decided to finish it off myself, paid a couple of friends to help me, and we did a great job in no time. That was the birth of Weeding Women.”

Colleen's team of gardeners grew from two to 20 in just a fortnight. Literally



from the ground up, the business quickly blossomed to become an iconic West Australian brand.

“Our growth was like a runaway train,” said Colleen. “We could employ 50 more gardeners for most of the year. It's that busy.”

Weeding Women today looks very different to its early roots. The former small home business – now a highly successful franchise operation – runs smoothly from its



GREEN FINGERS
Above, Colleen Sheehan has made Perth's untidy gardens beautiful again with her army of Weeding Women, right, for the last 25 years.

unpredictability of climate change.

From Quinns Rocks to Mandurah and out to Perth's hills, some 180 gardens every week are infiltrated with Weeding Women's army of gardeners. Collectively, they spend 600-plus hours a week tackling much more than weeds. They dig, trench, edge, fertilise and cultivate, plus prune, shape, rake, sweep, plant, mulch and more. Each maintenance job takes, on average, three hours.

Originating from diverse backgrounds, they include teachers, nurses, hairdressers, environmentalists and stay-at-home mums.

"Their common thread is a passion for creating beautiful gardens, regardless of how hot, wet or dirty the job is," Colleen says.

"The culture is one of teamwork and perseverance. We love getting our hands dirty, so our clients don't have to and they can simply enjoy their gardens."

Weeding Women care for gardens of every shape and size, from yards, flowerbeds, pots and pathways to rural properties, holiday homes, commercial gardens and everything in between. Their clients are busy career people, families, FIFO workers and retirees, as well as local businesses. **PL**

To enquire about Weeding Women for your garden, or for franchise enquiries, phone 1800 24 74 84 or visit weedingwomen.com.au.



WIN

A Weeding Women's gardening package - four hours of professional garden maintenance valued at over \$350. Visit PRIMOLife's Facebook page for more details. WA-entrants only. Closes October 31. *Good luck!*



WEEDING WOMEN'S
Top Tips for Spring

- * Spring is an important time to apply wetting agent, to fertilise and to mulch garden beds before the heat of summer kicks in. Spring is also a great time to get pruning and planting.
- * Garden maintenance should be done once a month, regardless of the style of garden. Alternatively, doing a little bit all the time is good. Leaving a garden until it's overgrown and thick with couch grass will result in time-consuming and unenjoyable work.
- * Perth gardens need to be able to withstand long hot summers, so checking reticulation regularly is important, as is choosing appropriate plants. Natives and desert gardens can be stunning and in many cases, people simply need to re-educate themselves to take advantage of waterwise garden options. Regular application of wetting agent and a thick layer of mulch is essential to help with this.

headquarters in Osborne Park with a fleet of 12 vehicles and more than 12,000 clients.

A team of 42 staff includes a base network of 25 gardeners, four franchisees with two gardeners each, plus support staff of nine in administration and management.

Weeding Women entered the industry just before the 'garden boom' hit Australia. Burke's Backyard had started a weekly gardening program on television and Gardening Australia began shortly after. The business weathered the recession of 1990/91 and later, the booms and busts of mining and the ravages and.....