

## Plant thefts across South Gippsland

A recent spate of plant thefts from public garden beds across South Gippsland has disappointed community members and Council staff. Over the past month azaleas have been taken from garden beds in Welshpool, xanthorrhoea (grass trees) from Foster and, sadly, rose bushes from a memorial garden in Meeniyan. A member of the public also recently witnessed someone removing about 50 tulip flowers from the display in the roundabout in Foster.

“The theft of plants and flowers is extremely disappointing,” said Council’s Parks and Gardens Coordinator, Steve Missen. “Staff put a lot of effort into maintaining gardens across the Shire and the removal of the plants, and the destruction of flower beds, is both frustrating and costly,” said Mr Missen. “The people doing this either don’t recognise or don’t care that these gardens are for the whole community. When they steal these plants for their own gardens they are effectively stealing from their neighbours and friends.”

The cost of replacing the stolen plants is expected to be significant and will affect the ongoing parks and gardens maintenance program. “Unfortunately, we do not have the ability to keep replacing stolen plants,” continued Mr. Missen. “If plant thefts continue either the gardens will need to be scaled-back or money to maintain them will need to come from another part of our budget. One way or another, these plant thefts impact the whole community.”

If people have any information regarding the recently plant thefts, they are encouraged to contact local police.

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