Autumn 2020
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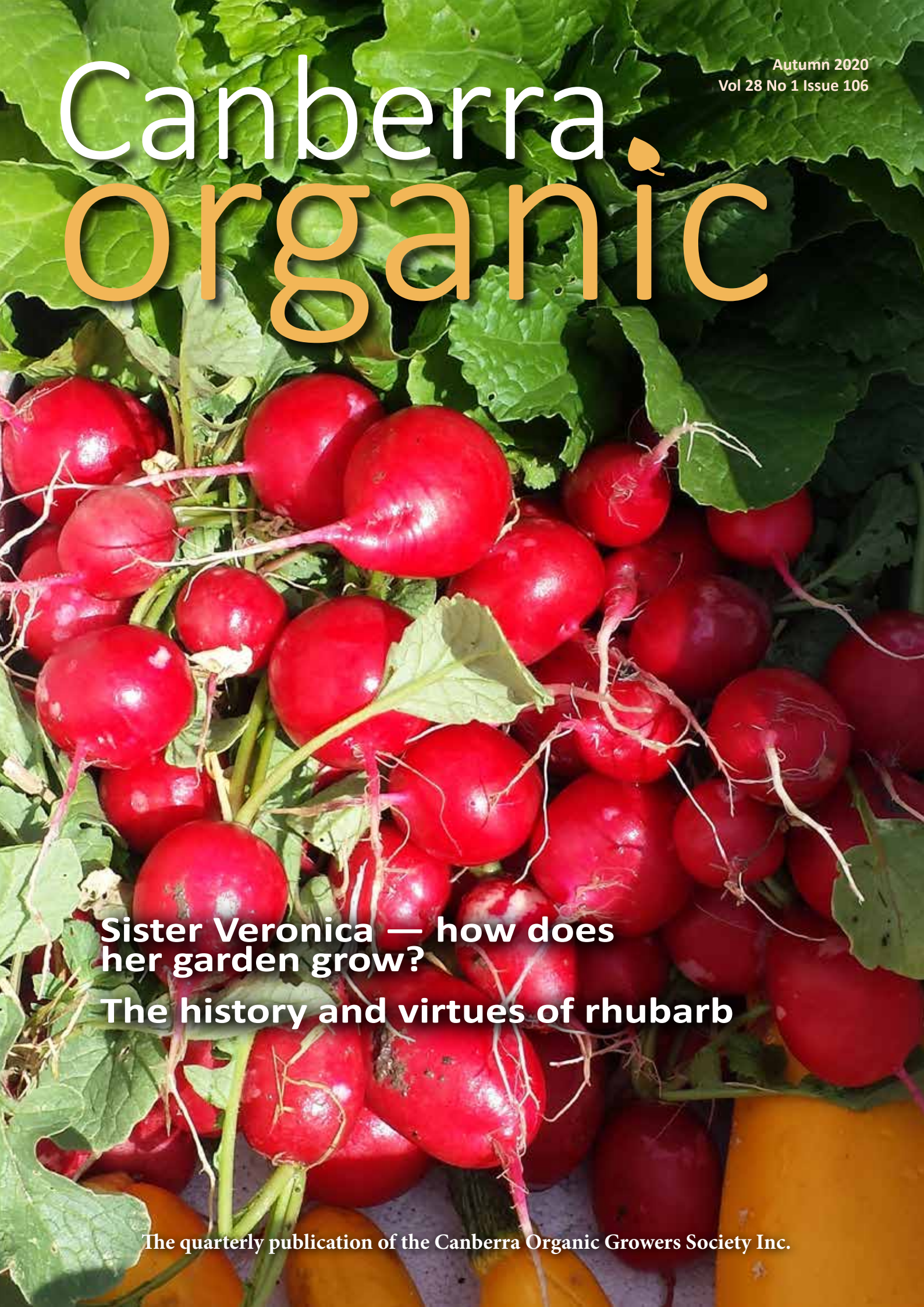
Canberra organic



Sister Veronica — how does her garden grow?

The history and virtues of rhubarb

The quarterly publication of the Canberra Organic Growers Society Inc.

President's column

Since the last issue of *Canberra Organic*, the ongoing disturbance of our local climate conditions continues to cause our members great concern. The devastation to the natural environment and the impact on people living in the areas affected by the bushfires is deeply troubling. The polluting smoke haze, continuing drought and local bushfire threats are real life concerns for the Canberra community.

The extreme weather conditions have made vegetable growing quite difficult, particularly the devastation caused by the recent hailstorm. However, our garden convenors are doing an excellent job in keeping on top of any problems and providing support for the gardeners in their efforts. In fact, despite the conditions, our gardens are looking pretty productive and will recover from the effects of the hailstorm.

As a result of these extreme weather conditions, the COGS Executive Committee urges everyone to be conscious of their role in practicing and promoting water conservation, as well as the importance of compliance with the COGS watering rules.

It's been a busy few months for COGS, with our members working hard against the heat, smoke and hail to try and grow productive crops. In October 2019, we headed out to the Wybalena Grove community garden in Cook for our Members' Meeting. Peter Campbell, the Wybalena Garden Convenor, provided an excellent overview of the history and development of the garden, as well as its continuing management. The COGS committee also discovered the very credible pizza making skills of those in attendance, as we enjoyed delicious wood-fired pizzas for afternoon tea.

The Members' Meeting program for 2020 is yet to be confirmed, so we would welcome suggestions for topics, speakers or field trips you would be interested in attending. Please contact Jo McMillan, COGS Gardens Convenor at gardens@cogs.asn.au with your ideas.

Heather Campbell's harvest at Holder community garden

I would like to take this opportunity to encourage as many members as possible to attend the 2020 COGS Annual General Meeting (AGM) which will be held on Tuesday 31 March, 7.30pm–9.30pm, at the Northside Community Centre in Dickson.

This is the occasion to demonstrate your support for COGS as the leading voice for organic gardening practice and principles in Canberra. We would love to see renewed interest from our membership to contribute their knowledge, skills and energy to participate as an office bearer or a general committee member. We certainly need to find a way to encourage our younger members to take on leadership roles.

At the AGM, the COGS committee will also be presenting some proposed changes to the COGS Garden Rules (Appendix 4) of the Constitution. The purpose of the amendments is to simplify the existing rules and to make clear our dispute resolution process, which is required by recent changes to the ACT *Associations Incorporation Act 1991*.

Notification of the proposed changes to the COGS Constitution will be promulgated to members within the required timeframe prior to the AGM.

I look forward to meeting everyone at the AGM. As usual, please bring a plate of something to share for supper, and tea, coffee and water will be provided.

—Peter Weddell
president@cogs.asn.au

(inside front cover) Charnwood community garden
Photos by Ange McNeilly and Teresa Rose

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The Canberra Organic Growers Society is a non-profit organisation providing a forum for organic growers to exchange information and supporting the adoption of organic growing methods in the community.

COGS encourages the use of natural methods to improve our soils, promote sustainability and produce fresh, nutritious food.

For information about COGS and organic gardening, visit the COGS website

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Community gardens

COGS operates 12 community gardens in the Canberra region, with the support of the ACT Government. The convenors and contact email addresses are listed below.

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Oaks Estate	Jinglong Chen & Karen James — oaks_estate_convenor@cogs.asn.au
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Annual General Meeting

Canberra Organic Growers Society Incorporated

7.30 pm
Tuesday 31 March 2020
Majura Community Centre
Rosevear Place
Dickson

Editor's note

As I write this, we are in the midst of what some media outlets are calling 'the worst bushfire season' on record. Canberra has been blanketed in thick, hazardous smoke which seems to seep into every nook and cranny of our lives. Not having been in Canberra for the 2003 bushfires, I have never seen anything like it. Add to this a destructive hailstorm which swept through the nation's capital and it's been a summer to remember, not necessarily for the right reasons.

Throughout all of this, what has struck me the most is the amazing generosity of the Canberra (and Australian) community. This ranges from the volunteers and emergency service personnel on the front line in the ACT and our neighbouring states who are tirelessly fighting fires, fixing roofs and protecting people's homes and livelihoods; through to those donating money and supplies for those currently displaced or the animals in affected areas.

It is heartening to see the amazing sense of community we have in the ACT. I encourage anyone who has any surplus produce from their summer crops (that survived the hail), to consider donating it to local foodbanks or charities seeking donations. Every little bit helps.

On a lighter note, for me personally it has been a productive growing season. Having downsized my plot at Mitchell earlier this year and focusing on just a few vegetables, I am expecting a bumper zucchini, tomato and pumpkin harvest. I'm looking forward to making chutney, passata and pickled veggies with my produce, as well as donating what I can.

My first harvest of summer

As always, the autumn edition of *Canberra Organic* is filled with wonderful articles highlighting what our members have been up. I've had such an overwhelming response to my call for articles, some will unfortunately have to wait until the next edition, but it just shows the wide variety of activities keeping our members busy!

In this edition I've particularly enjoyed learning more about the history and virtues of rhubarb, as well as keeping up to date with what is going on in the COGS community gardens and hearing the gardening journey of one of our more senior gardeners, Sister Veronica Dunphy. We also have some of our gardens and gardeners involved in the Open Gardens Canberra this autumn, so don't forget to call in and support them if you can.

It's hard to think about it in the current heat, but as we head into autumn how are you preparing for winter? What will be your focus to grow this year? I'd love to hear from you. Feel free to send your tips, tricks and articles to editor@cogs.asn.au. Contributions for the winter edition are due mid-April.

—Rebecca Travers

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FRONT COVER: Photo by Gwen Bates

The Betty Cornhill garden extension – a community effort

The Betty Cornhill community garden was established in its current location next to the Yarralumla Woolshed in the mid 1990s. The thirty or so plots in the garden cover less than half of the land licensed from the ACT Government.

COGS had been working with the land developers for some time on a proposal for a community garden in the new suburb of Coombs in the Molonglo Valley. The site identified for the garden was not well suited to the needs of a community garden and after consultations did not proceed.

Richard Horobin, the Convenor of the Betty Cornhill community garden at the time, suggested an expansion to the garden to meet the expected demand for plots from the Molonglo Valley. However, to expand the number of plots was a major undertaking, as much of the area that could be used was covered in tree regrowth that came up after the bushfire that swept through the garden in December 2001.

We developed and submitted a proposal for the expansion of the garden funded jointly by COGS and the ACT Government through the *ACT Government Community Garden Grants Program*. The proposal was successful and COGS was granted $5000 in December 2018 as a contribution to the expansion. The COGS contribution was the balance of over $8000.

BCG extension looking towards the Yarralumla Woolshed and Black Mountain

A total of 25 plots, each of 25 square metres, were able to fit into the space available. The work was completed in the last quarter of 2019 and the first gardeners took up plots in November 2019.

A big thank you to Richard Horobin, who, despite ill health, took on the role of 'project manager' for the garden expansion. During 2019 he coordinated a number of contactors to clear the land and other infrastructure works for the expanded garden. A special thank you to David Edmunds, a gardener in the 'old' part of the garden, who installed the plumbing for the new part thereby saving COGS a significant expense. Thank you also to Peter Rouse, Aylwen Gardner and many others who helped with the work of extending the garden—a real community effort.

The expanded garden is open and plots are available. Anyone interested in a plot can contact Minh Chu, the current convenor of the Betty Cornhill community garden (bcg@cogs.asn.au) or through the COGS website.

—Andy Hrast (article and photos) and Richard Horobin (photos)

The area cleared for the extension

Oaks Estate – a revitalised community garden

Mercifully, things rarely happen quickly in Oaks Estate. That's part of our history: 120 years ago, this was a corner of Queanbeyan, just a quiet part of your average New South Wales (NSW) country town. Then the politicians got involved. And Scrivener; it's all his fault really…

OK, I know what will happen if I try and summarise the next 100+ years of Oaks Estate history. It's relevant, trust me, and very interesting but, this being ostensibly a gardening magazine, our vigilant editor will get out the 'big red biro of doom' and my summary will never see the light of day. Being a young pup, she'll probably also take a dim view of the (equally interesting) additional politicking in the 1970's, so I'll jump forward to 1991, and the opening of the COGS garden in Oaks Estate on unused land beside an often-neglected park… in a suburb, or village, or whatever it is, in the ACT.[1]

Fast forward again to 2012 and the garden soldiers on. The politicians have again noticed Oaks Estate and the park is now on its second facelift.[2] Despite two major planning reviews, little else had happened. But things were starting to change…slowly.

By 2016, the ACT government agreed that a public toilet near the upgraded park would be a useful addition. And the garden kept soldiering doggedly on, now looking a little battle-scarred, especially compared to some of the newer COGS gardens, where fancy fences were provided by developers or by government grant money. In the Oaks Estate garden, new gardeners were cultivating plots that had been vacant since 2013. The garden was a good place to be, harmonious, a good mix of dedicated gardeners and others (like me) with an… um, relaxed attitude to things like weeding.

Gardeners at Oaks Estate proudly show off their new fence

But, in total, in a suburb that had seen considerable funds spent on planning and heritage reviews, the only major changes since the park was last upgraded in 2012 were the establishment of a community orchard just to the north of the garden, the building of a public toilet and 29 new townhouses being built on the block immediately to our west.

Some community members have expressed concern about the look of the garden and there have been suggestions that the garden be relocated to a nearby isolated and sloping block with questionable soil[3], no power, no fencing and no water.

Undeterred, the garden has gone from strength to strength on its current site and is now looking as good as I've ever seen it. Our second Open Day has met with another good response from locals.

More new gardeners have taken up plots and, last year, the ACT Government awarded COGS a *Community Garden Grant* for installing reed screening to soften the look of the fence and to break the force of the westerly winds. This has given the garden a wonderful facelift. The next phase will involve augmenting the screening with climbing plants, which will take time to grow but will give us a green and entirely natural long-term screening. Unless of course we get moved to the alternative site, the one with no fence, no water, no nothing.

But, getting back to the good news bit, have a look at the photos of the working bee, and of the open day. The garden looks good, the gardeners are happy and most of the locals are happy. What's not to like?

—Terry Williams (article), Jinglong Chen and Karen James (photos)

(below) The garden was in full bloom for the Oaks Estate Community Garden Open Day

1 This happened in 1905, but we definitely are not part of Canberra, as the Government tells us via a big sign on Canberra Avenue, just our side of Fyshwick. Indeed, some folk hereabouts (see below) still have difficulty with the whole border concept.

2 "One of the nicest little parks in Queanbeyan", as the Mayor unwisely described it at the re-opening ceremony.

3 It's hard to be sure what the soil is like – there are big piles of rubbish on the flatter part but it looks poor on the slopes above rubbish level.

Cook community garden

Since our last report the climatic conditions are really beginning to bite. Our perimeter plantings are really stressed and the Garden Committee is looking at ways to provide extra watering to these outer areas of the garden. Our rainfall records indicate nil for December 2019. Our gardeners are very aware of the COGS watering rules and are making every effort to minimises run off and conserve this resource through extensive mulching.

Despite the drought conditions we can report good crops of tomatoes, pumpkin and of course zucchini. Not faring so well are beans, carrots and cucumbers. We are also trying to provide water for birds and bees but being mindful of our resident brown snake population — many more encounters reported this summer.

Our November working bee focussed on weeding and mulching the orchard area, plus getting the netting over our apples and stone fruit. The usual social get together followed all the hard physical work.

Our Christmas party in December was cancelled due to adverse weather conditions which included our first experience of the smoke haze that was present over the Christmas and New Year period. We are instead looking forward to an Australia Day morning tea on 26 January 2020 as the first social event of the new year.

Late news

The violent hailstorm on the afternoon of 20 January 2020 just about destroyed most zucchini, pumpkin, cucumber and tomatoes the crops in the garden—there was some damage to the orchard netting but otherwise garden infrastructure survived pretty well. However, a downside is that the damage to produce will limit our contribution to the City Care program until regrowth occurs.

—Peter Weddell (article and photos)

(above) Summer vegetables at Cook looking wonderful

(below) Zucchini plants in great shape prior to the hailstorm at the Cook community garden

Kambah community garden

Despite the heat, the birds, bugs and the incessant smoke coverage, most of our gardeners at the Kambah community garden have managed to produce an amazing crop of wonderful summer vegetables.

A few gardeners who decided to plant a little later in spring, due to the early cold temperatures followed by hot dusty winds, have unfortunately endured the added hassle of hungry local birds and bugs enjoying a free 'picnic' each day at the garden. Thus, alas, we resigned ourselves to sharing with God's creatures until there was none left! The result is a few sad, dry garden beds 'resting' until autumn.

With the completion of our shelter earlier last year, our garden has enjoyed several wonderful barbecues. Most members have attended, bringing with them parents, siblings, besties and even the family pooch to show off our garden. These engender a lovely rapport among our members, all of whom are very happy to bring all sorts of yummies to share.

Bees enjoying a feed from a globe artichoke flower

We intend to start the year off in February with a discussion and workshop by Canberra Seed Savers. With our countryside so vulnerable to the whims of changeable weather patterns and perhaps fires, saving precious plant varieties that are adapted to the ACT's weather changes, is a very worthwhile project to pursue.

All at Kambah community garden wish all our sister/brother members around the ACT a successful and happy gardening year.

—Shirley Bolton (article and photos)

Christmas barbecue at Kambah, under the shelter

Christmas lunch at Kaleen

Kaleen community garden

Streusal all the way

Dashing through "The Farm",
in a wagon packed with kids,
books tucked under arm,
berry coated lips.

Plants and flowers glist'ning,
banter fills the air,
what fun it is to laugh and bring,
some gardening tips and fare.

When it comes to the 'silly season' and the jolly madness that is back to back festivities, family gatherings and kids causing a hoarding calamity about the food table... well... I have to confess... I'm a totally devoted and enthusiastic lover of the whole, Jingle Bells, shebang.

This years' sleigh load of party-going events was whip-started into action by a newcomer to our family's list: the Kaleen community garden Christmas gathering. Organised by Carmen, the naturally creative and green-thumbed

From the Convenor

With the lack of summer rain, recent devastating fires and subsequent smoke haze, many gardeners at the Kaleen community garden have put their plots on hold for a little while—me included! Consequently, some plots look quite sad. However, it is amazing how with much determination and TLC, plots can be very productive and flourishing even in challenging conditions. Magic mulch!

Our Kaleen gardeners are utilising innovative ideas over summer, with one gardener using orange onion bags to combat birds eating the sunflower seeds.

Autumn is usually a lovely season in Canberra and hopefully with some rain, we can enjoy the changing colours and lovely temperatures—and we actually may be able to garden like we used to! The beauty of a garden is that it can be resurrected in the milder months, so we are all looking to better times ahead.

—Joanne Widdup
(article and photo)

The beautiful shady centrepiece for the Kaleen community garden

mother-of-three, our family clan was greeted at "The Farm" by tables elegantly adorned with water jars—suffused with an array of native plants and flowers—and replete with all manner of homemade and grown food items.

While the adults quaffed and dined, the kids took to the red wagon—borrowed from our local Toy Library—like elves to Santa's production line, taking turns to daringly cart each other about the acre of growing land. Even the goats, penned in the adjacent school agricultural plot, took to the festive atmosphere with gay abandon, ensuring they had their fill of hand-picked couch and comfrey.

Of course, no festive party would ever be complete without a touch of gift giving. As the children sat ensconced about the present sack, tearing at the paper covering the newest edition to their reading libraries, the rest of the attendees got busy trading gardening tips and exchanging recipes until the setting sun signalled the 'Dashering' and 'Dancering' call to set the family members on a course for home.

Charged with the task of using any produce that still remained in the plot of our gallant and vivacious Convenor Joanne, my contribution to the gastronomic events of the evenings frivolities included a unique take on a traditional, country cooking style, slice. I present to you, my recipe for...

Gifts for the children

Santa's Streusal Slice (beet and rhubarb streusal slice)

Streusel:

½ cup plain flour
¼ cup rolled oats
⅓ cup coconut sugar
½ tsp cinnamon, ground
80g butter

Filling:

3–4 coarsely chopped stems of rhubarb
1 medium sized beetroot, peeled and coarsely chopped
1 tbsp honey

Slice base:

100g butter
½ cup caster sugar
1 egg
1 cup self-raising flour
1 tbsp coconut flour

Method

Make the streusel by mixing together the oats, flour, sugar and cinnamon. Rub the butter into the oat mix and bring together to form a dough. Place in an airtight container and freeze for 2-3 hours or until very firm.

To make the filling, place the beetroot and rhubarb in a small saucepan with ½ cup of water. Bring to simmering point with the lid on. Simmer for 20 minutes or until the fruit is soft. Cool. Stir through the honey then puree the fruit. Place the fruit mixture in the fridge until cold.

To make the base, cream together the butter and sugar. Whisk in the egg. In a separate bowl, mix together the self-raising and coconut flours. Add the flours to the creamed ingredients and mix thoroughly to create a crumbly dough. Press the dough into the bottom of a 19cm square cake tin. Bake at 180˚C for approximately 20 minutes or until golden brown. Leave to cool for 10 minutes.

Spread the fruit evenly over the slice base. Grate the streusel over the top. Bake at 180˚C for approximately 15 minutes or until golden brown. Cool, then refrigerate overnight. Using a bread knife, cut the slice into 3 cm squares then serve to your merry band of Santa's Slice loving friends.

Ho, ho, ho ... struesel all the way!

—Dianna Trudgian
(article and photos)

Santa's Streusal Slice

Mitchell garden's donations to the local community

Mitchell's donation community garden is surviving the heat, dry and smoke.

The huge amount of work establishing the garden over the last five months, has provided a tub or two, each Tuesday, to two of Gungahlin's community pantries.

Gwen very proudly takes veggies from the 'donation garden' and donations from our gardeners' plots to Communities@Work and The Mustard Seed Pantry, on behalf of our garden members. Our red ribbon sticks are placed in our gardeners' plots, next to surplus veggies, notifying Gwen that she can harvest what she would like to add to that day's donation basket.

Alison from Communities@Work told Gwen that the people coming into the pantry are very excited to get fresh organic vegetables, including kale and rhubarb (as well as many other varieties).

Gwen Bates leads a team of very generous and kind gardeners who give their time to the donation garden. She has been helped by Qiwen, Kanan, Elinor, Carly, Jonathan and Olivia to dig, plant, water and harvest.

Although it's hot, windy and dry, we all hope our bountiful donation garden continues to provide fresh, healthy vegetables to our less fortunate friends in the Gungahlin greater area.

—Narelle McLean
(article and photos)

Gwen Bates dropping off just some of the donations to Communities@Work

(below left) Mitchell's 'donation garden'; (below right)Bountiful harvests that include kale, rhubarb and silverbeet are regularly donated to both Communities@Work and The Mustard Seed Pantry

Holder community garden

Like every other garden in Canberra, the Holder community garden has been inundated with smoke, wind and heat over the past six weeks. That aside, most gardeners have adapted by covering crops to try and reduce the heat so the vegetable flowers do not burn. Despite the hot and dry weather, most plot holders are seeing some successes.

With the changes in weather patterns, we are seeing an increase in native fauna within the garden. Many different varieties of birds are entering the garden to quench their thirst, a few rabbits are back and bouncing around between plots, a real smorgasbord for them and of course, the odd couple of brown snakes have been seen meandering through in search of a feed.

In early December, Holder held a short, highly successful working bee. We managed to obtain some mulch from the ACT Government and this has been used to mulch all the Stone Pines just outside the western perimeter. The remainder was used to mulch the fruit trees throughout the garden. Everyone pitched in to wheelbarrow and spread the mulch and considering it was a very hot, windy day, the result was quite an achievement. After the working bee, we all gathered around under our new pergola to sample food that represented the wide variety of cultures in our garden and cool drinks. It was a great time to catch up, tell a few gardening lies and mingle with everyone, especially our new gardeners.

Gardeners have been covering crops to protect them from the weather

We are all looking forward to some cooler days ahead and of course, some rain, as it is a dust bowl around all the plots—however nothing at all stops the couch (I think that stuff would survive under an icecap!).

Until next time, good luck and success to all our Canberra area gardeners.

—David Rice (article and photos)

Sunflowers in full bloom at Holder community garden

Sister Veronica – How does her garden grow?

I recently moved back to Canberra after a hiatus of about 30 years and looking for the opportunity to garden organically, I discovered COGS. I joined the Dickson community garden and have been impressed by the friendliness and spirit of camaraderie of my fellow plot holders. However, the greatest inspiration of all has been Sister Veronica Dunphy. Veronica is the person I see most frequently at the garden, tending not only to her own garden, but also the communal ones, as well as the compost and worm farms.

She is one of the most accomplished and experienced gardeners I've met. Veronica can somehow transform any pile of dirt into a bounty of over-sized vegetables. She has plenty of useful advice and interesting conversation to offer. Oh, and did I mention Sister Veronica is 96? Well, practically 97. She's fit as a fiddle and sharp as a tack. I sat down with her just before Christmas and interviewed her about her life, her longevity, her philosophy of gardening and tips for fellow gardeners. The words below are hers. I've just rearranged them a little for readability. — Babette Fahey

Sister Veronica Dunphy

I was born in March 1923 and grew up on a farm in New Zealand, so from a very early age had contact with animals. It was not very fertile land, so we had sheep, milking cows, calves, lambs and pigs in order to provide enough income for the family. My parents were pioneers, who moved onto a block of virgin land, which my father had to cut the bush to build a tent and make a slab home for us. There were seven children in the end. Transport to school was riding a horse about six miles and we were miles away from a grocery shop or doctors.

From early childhood, I learned to work for a living. After I left school, I worked on the farm with my sister with my dad while my brother was away in WWII. I milked cows (which I learned aged 4), fed the pigs and calves, made the butter and made bread. My mother milked to make ends meet during the depths of the Great Depression. I had a little bucket and used to go out after she left them and sit on a little stool and pull away at the cow until she got tired of me and walked away. All those things, I guess they taught me about life.

My mother, of necessity, had to be very practical and used all the produce that was around. We had uncultivated, wild fruit trees and I collected sacks (not bags, sacks!) of apples in a dray from a couple of miles away, with just two horses. There were no motor vehicles or machinery. I ploughed with a two-horse plough, helped make and rake hay and harrowed the ground after being ploughed. I loved every minute of it! We had to work hard, but it wasn't forced upon us. I was somebody who just did what had to be done.

When I entered the church, it was definitely a calling. I wasn't influenced by any holy people or teachers. None of my family practiced a religion. I just felt good and to be in L'Arche* was to help. L'Arche is French for 'the ark' and was an invitation to live with people with disability as equals and create a home, and to help them to grow to their full potential. We never went there to be paid. We went there to live with people and to experience the value of people with disability. It's been a really interesting life. I've done so much.

I've been gardening as long as I can remember. At six or seven, I poked a garden fork in my finger, which I still have the scar from, so I guess I can say I've been gardening since then. It was a flower garden. I don't remember having a vegetable garden until I was in my late teens. I'm very grateful for having the energy and the love of nature. I love growing things. Everywhere I've been, even in the Noviceship, gardening was always there. During stressful situations the garden has been my saving grace. I think it's being in contact with Mother Earth and really loving life and everything that's living. It always fascinates me to think that a tiny seed knows what it's going to grow into. It boggles my little brain because there's so many things we don't understand and that's the mystery of life, isn't it?

In my latter years, I propagated lots of plants. When I was working in a not-for-profit conference centre, we had to maintain a very large building with nothing. I worked a big garden under trees and propagated. I developed a compost and a gentleman once came and said "I would give you a PhD for your compost". Nobody taught me things; I've just learned.

My love for gardening comes with my love of life, my love of living things and my love for connecting with people

I was overjoyed to find a community garden so close to me. I'm in a wonderful unit, but its only tiny and no room for vegetables. I tried to plant tomatoes in pots, but I had to keep moving them to keep them in the sun, and they can be quite heavy. One of the most interesting experiences I've had in the Dickson garden has been connecting with the teachers and the students of Dickson College. It's been a generational experience, connecting with the wonderful young people. It literally enlivens me! While I've gardened my entire life, this is the first time I've had peers to discuss it with. I also love being able to nurture the soil through compost, which I love. And nature, and the birds, and the worms, they are a great inspiration to me. Everything that's in the garden is a living gift. Produce that you can grow, and being able to share it is so important to me. To share what I grow is more important than how I grow it, or how hard it is.

I also love growing flowers of all different colours and have every colour imaginable. I like growing vegetables that I like to eat which are quite expensive to buy, so I can be really self-sufficient. I also like growing things that you can't buy easily in the shops. I went to my goji plant this morning and there's about half a dozen berries there, which you can eat straight off the tree. They're not something you'd eat just for the taste, but they're full of antioxidants and good for you. I'll eat anything that's good for you.

For people thinking about starting out: be prepared to get your hands dirty, to give it a lot of work, time, energy and love. No matter how much you give, you're not always going to get something in return. Your attitude is also really important. You can't just plant things and leave them to themselves. There's a lot of TLC required, as a gardener's work is never done—or never finished.

You've then got to prepare the soil. It's very important to have your soil prepared before you even start planting. It should friable, well-watered and fertilised. Check whether it needs a bit of lime, a bit of blood and bone or something else. You can test it with a pH meter and if it's normal and natural, most things will grow. Know what kind of soil you're dealing with and what you want to plant. Find out what certain plants need for their nourishment, what plants grow best in which season and when to plant.

Look at the position of your garden and the areas that get sun. If they haven't got full sun, at least 4–6 hours is good. Watering is also so important, knowing how and when to water. Don't just sprinkle on the top. Water well before you plant and regularly, and deep around the roots. Water either early in the morning or in the evening. After planting, a good mulch will help keep and retain the moisture in the soil.

Plant what you like to eat. If your garden is very small, don't plant things that stay in the ground a long time. This ensures you have turnover. Things like pumpkins and zucchini, take up a lot of room. Cucumbers, beans, peas, snow peas can grow up trellises and need staking. Know about companion plants too, because if they don't like growing alongside one another, they won't grow well.

Gardening requires a lot of giving and what you give, you get back and enjoy. Taste and smell the beauty and results. They're not always everything you want, but the love and care you put into it comes back to you in seeing things grow and enjoying the outcome. Enjoy the fruits of the Earth.

—Sister Veronica Dunphy with Babette Fahey (article and photos)

* L'Arche is a faith-based organization creating communities where people with and without intellectual disabilities share life together.

(left) A gentleman once said to Sister Veronica "I would give you a PhD for your compost"

Community gardening Australia

Wybalena Grove community garden

Nestled amongst a group of townhouses in Cook is Wybalena Grove community garden. An initiative of the Owners Corporation that dates back to the mid-1970s, the garden is a peaceful haven which provided the location of the October 2019 COGS Members' Meeting.

Wybalena Grove is a group of 105 townhouses on a large 11·4ha site that includes patches of remnant bush, open spaces and other community facilities such as two playgrounds, a solar PV array, picnic shelters, paths and other seating, a tennis court, a flat grassed playing area, a wood BBQ and a pizza oven.

The community garden had been envisaged in Wybalena Grove's rules and landscaping plans dating back to the mid-1970s, but a garden was removed in the early 1980s. Seeing an opportunity to create a sense of community along with providing greater amenity and utility from their shared common property, the plans were resurrected and the first planting occurred in spring of 2018.

The site of the garden is on one half of a pair of clay tennis courts that was under-used. The garden and the remaining single tennis court are separated with netting. There are three plot options: Small (a 'mini-plot' of one square meter), Medium (half of a 'standard plot') or Large (a whole 'standard plot', which is either 2m x 5m or 2m x 6m).

Peter Campbell working the pizza oven

COGS Members enjoying Wybalena Grove community garden

Individuals, couples and families representing about one in three units have been allocated plots in the current year. Some people have two mini-plots or a standard plot with the adjacent mini-plot allocated to their child. There is also a 2m x 5m bed set aside for growing herbs for communal use. Along the southern boundary, a 3m x 16m communal bed with fruit trees and berries was built during the winter of 2019. There are also some communal fruit trees in mini-beds and large pots.

At the October 2019 Meeting, Peter Campbell, the Convenor of Wybalena Grove, provided COGS members with a wonderful history of the development of the garden, as well as talking about the management of the site and the successes so far. This was followed by a tour of the garden on a beautiful and warm spring day and ended with delicious wood-fired pizzas to enjoy.

Peter noted "one person commented they had met more neighbours in a year of using the garden than they had in 40 years living at Wybalena Grove." He continued to say "people have interacted with others who they would not otherwise have met from separate parts of our large site. The garden is bringing the community together and providing an appreciated community facility to complement our other facilities."

Gardens like Wybalena Grove are fulfilling a function that is complementary to the larger COGS gardens—people who want to grow modest quantities can do so without needing to commit to a larger plot to which they need to drive. Residents are sharing produce informally or by a system of colour-coded stakes to indicate crops for sharing, an idea Wybalena Grove picked up from the Crace garden.

When asked for his hopes for the next 12 months at the garden, Peter replied "we are still in an establishment phase for the communal parts. Our fruit trees are still small and we have not yet fully planted out diverse berries around those. Once the trees, herbs and berries are more established, I hope that other residents who don't have a plot will nonetheless drop in to pick a lemon, a handful of berries or a few sprigs of herbs."

A big thank you to Peter and the Wybalena Grove community for letting us explore your wonderful garden and hear your story.

—Rebecca Travers and Peter Campbell (article and photos)

Jurgen's pickled gherkins

Ingredients

3.5 kg young gherkins

4 cups white vinegar

4 litres water

220g pickling or cooking salt

for each litre jar:

- 2 large cloves of garlic
- 1 teaspoon mustard seed
- 6 peppercorns
- fresh dill heads (one at bottom and one at top of jars)

Method

1. Wash the freshly picked gherkins in cold, iced water and leave for two hours.
2. Combine vinegar, salt and water and bring to a boil.
3. Fill the sterilised jars with dill heads, gherkins, garlic, mustard seeds, peppercorns and top with another dill head.
4. Fill the jar with hot brine and seal tightly.
5. Place the sealed jars into a large pot of boiling water for about 15 minutes. (You will see the gherkins gradually changing colour.)
6. Remove and store in a cool area (not necessarily in a fridge) for six to eight weeks and then ENJOY!

NOTE: These pickles keep for two to three years (but not in my house!) I adjust the recipe to suit the numbers of gherkins I pick. I usually have four to six plants going at once and then every four weeks plant another six, to try and get gherkins to fit the jars I have. Sometimes I experiment by adding a red chilli or some brown sugar and that always produces a different but pleasant taste.

—Jurgen Sadlo (recipe)
and Ange McNeilly (photos)

(top photo) Jurgen with his impressive dill plant

(bottom photo) Jurgen picking gherkins

The history and virtues of rhubarb

© Can Stock Photo / jlmcloughlin

All things old are new again. All things once derided are now acclaimed. Although I am still waiting for tripe to make a comeback (apart from its use as an art installation at the National Gallery of Australia). I notice that humble beef cheeks are considered a delicacy, along with lamb shanks. Even swedes and turnips, so humble that they use to be fed to cattle, are back in the shops, along with a vegetable that is so ugly that it should be considered inedible—the celeriac.

Rhubarb is one of those born-again vegetables although it is used as fruit. It is grown a lot in COGS community gardens, mainly because good quality rhubarb is hard to find in shops. It is delicious stewed. Being both sweet and tart, it is a taste sensation and so colourful if you grow the red stemmed variety. The red colour is due to the presence of anthocyanins. Apparently, you can eat it raw but given its tartness I have never tried this, I still remember the mouth puckering experience of eating an unripe persimmon.

Rhubarb has a very long and illustrious history. *Rheum palmatum* is mentioned in records as early as 2,700 BC in China, where its roots were used for medicinal properties. It was so valued that its export from China was forbidden, along with tea. In 1839 it was used as a bargaining chip to try to prevent foreigners selling opium to the Chinese. A letter was apparently sent to Queen Victoria warning her that the foreign barbarians would surely die without tea and rhubarb. Unfortunately, the letter was written in Chinese and ignored.

It did make its way to Europe in Islamic times, along the Silk Road in the 14th century AD. It was incorporated into the European pharmacy where its roots were used for medicine. It was an exotic and expensive plant, more expensive than cinnamon, opium and saffron. That is amazing considering how it is treated as of little consequence today.

In 1778 rhubarb was being used as a food in Europe in pies and tarts. This rhubarb could have been a hybrid of Chinese rhubarb. Rhubarb hybridises readily. Most modern rhubarb cultivars are tetraploids with four sets of chromosomes. This is not unusual in the plant family. The giant strawberries you see in the supermarket did not get that way on one set of chromosomes. Whatever the origin of culinary rhubarb, it was valued for its fleshy stalks rather than its roots. Not long after this rhubarb was being grown in Massachusetts, USA.

According to Colin H Clayton, fourth generation Australian rhubarb grower and breeder, Rheum x hybridum came to Australia from England with the first free settlers and was well established by 1840. Interestingly, all rhubarb, up to 1890 was winter deciduous, then Mr Topp of Bendigo developed an evergreen variety. It was established in New Zealand and distributed worldwide.

The leaves of rhubarb are inedible, even dangerous, as they contain large amounts of oxalic acid. Interestingly,

the stems of rhubarb damaged by severe cold should not be eaten as in these conditions oxalic acid can migrate from the leaves to the stem. Oxalic acid is a nephrotoxin, that is its can adversely affect kidney function. However, you would have to eat 4–8 kg of rhubarb leaves to ingest a lethal dose. Rhubarb leaves may also contain another toxin, possibly anthraquinone glycoside, so avoid them anyway.

Also be wary of animals eating the leaves. The soluble oxalate salts found in rhubarb can poison animals such as cats and dogs by binding with calcium in the body, causing a sudden drop in calcium resulting in drooling, loss of appetite, vomiting, diarrhea, lethargy, weakness, tremors, bloody urine, and changes in thirst and urination. Occasionally, this can result in renal failure.

Other types of rhubarb include *Rhuem rhabarbarum* (syn undulatum), *Rhuem rhaponticum*, *Rhuem officinale* and *Rhuem ribes*. Both the stems and roots of rhubarb are rich in anthraquinones which are cathartic (accelerates-defecation) and laxative (eases-defecation). The roots also contain stilbenoid compounds including rhaponticin which may lower blood glucose levels—at least they seem to do this in diabetic mice.

Most rhubarb dies down in winter, so in order to get early stems, they have been traditionally grown in forcing sheds in the United Kingdom in the rhubarb triangle between Wakefield, Leeds and Morley. Light is excluded encouraging the stems to grow ever higher. The forced rhubarb is cut by candlelight and is apparently very tender and sweet. Special clay forcing pots are used outside to protect the plants from late frosts and to encourage long stems. You can try using milk cartons or a bundle of newspaper to get the same effect.

Etymologically, the names for rhubarb come from two Greek words. 'Rheon' from Persian which was transformed to Latin 'Rheum' and 'Rha'—the ancient name for the Volga River in Russian. *Rhuem rhabarbarum* is rhubarb from Russia (it reached Russia from China). The barbarum part of the name means strange or foreign or barbarous perhaps. All that morphed into rhubarb in English.

—Elizabeth Dangerfield (article)

A Winter's tale

Down south in Tuggeranong, close to the Pole, the winters are colder than those in the balmy climes of Weston, Woden, the Wealth Belt, North Canberra, Belconnen and subtropical Gungahlin.

That's why the garlic just loves it here. As soon as the frost comes, those tiny, singular cloves planted in the autumn begin to reproduce. It's love in a cold climate.

And in the Kambah Community Garden the garlic has two 'winters' and so is doubly loved: by the climate and by Garry—Garry Winter that is, our champion garlic grower. Look at him in the picture, pleased as Punch, with his amazing November harvest.

I asked him what was his secret. He pussyfooted about, but I know for a fact from the local spies that it's bucketloads of our garden's fabulous compost, concocted by Cathy and Co.

We have summer heroes too, of course. Look, for example, at these beautiful festive lettuce ready for decorating, created specially for Christmas by our Trish. Awesome!

— Ed Highley (article and photos)

Trish's beautiful festive lettuce, ready for decorating

Garry Winter, champion garlic grower with his November harvest

Micromanaging— My adventure in indoor gardening

Part two: Crops

The first part of this article (in the Autumn 2020 edition of *Canberra Organic*) explored how I established my microgreen garden. In this second part, I will focus the different crops you can sow.

Sunflower seeds just prior to being put under lights (still with their seed heads on)

Growing sunflower seeds

The sunflower microgreen is crunchy and delicious and a very economical product. I use 120g of seed per tray and soak them prior to sowing. They are relatively slow to get started, but once they are about 6–7cm they can be uncovered and grow very quickly. You can produce 300–400gm of shoots per tray. However, while the rewards of this crop are great in both taste and volume, it is a very fiddly seed to harvest.

It is not unusual for the seed heads to stay connected to the sunflower sprout right up until harvest time. They then require painstaking removal to ensure that the crop is edible. I have found that the most effective method is to turn the whole tray upside down (supported) into a larger tub of water — soaking the seed heads and making them easier to remove. Often with a vigorous shake, most will fall off. Many a time I have considered giving up on growing sunflower seeds, but once the tray is successfully harvested, I inevitably consider the effort worth it.

Sunflower seeds just prior to harvest (after I have soaked and removed the bulk of the seed heads)

Growing peas and beans

Pea and bean microgreens are a very economical way to produce a vegetable crop that is both quick and versatile.

After trialling quite a few varieties, I now mainly grow blue peas. These I have managed to source at a local Indian grocery store by the kilo. Snow peas are also great but are much more expensive. Dunn peas can be sourced at stock feed outlets, and they also produce a good crop.

Peas require soaking prior to sowing, and they will expand to more than double their size so make allowances for this when adding them to a container. I use 220g of peas per tray, keeping them heavily weighted for the first 3–4 days, or until the roots have reached the bottom tray and the sprouts are almost 1cm high.

Faba beans are a great alternative to growing beans on the vine. They produce a prolific crop then is vigorous and easy to harvest. The sprouts are tender and taste just like a bean. I use 250g of faba beans per tray, which I pre-soak and—following sowing—cover with an additional layer of soil. I have found the faba beans that can be purchased in 1kg bags at Mediterranean delicatessens are very economical and have consistent sprouting.

Beans and peas can be harvested when they are around 10cm tall. By then, they will have multiple sets of leaves or tendrils, but they are still tender. Both are very easy to harvest and store well in the fridge. They are terrific cut up in salads and added to stir-fry or in an omelette.

Growing radish, broccoli and kale

Radish is probably my favourite microgreen. Not only are the seeds relatively cheap, they are a quick grow and the flavour is superb and unmistakably radish-like. I use 25g of seed per tray, which I decant into a spice jar and sprinkle evenly over the soil (no need to soak).

Broccoli and kale have very small seeds, so I only use 15g of seed per tray. These highly nutritious microgreens have a much more subtle flavour and are a much finer sprout.

With these seeds, the germination process is accompanied by what looks like mould. It is quite alarming the first time you see it. However, it is natural part of the germination process which we do not normally witness, as seeds sown to grown vegetable seedlings are planted under the ground. This fuzzy substance disappears (or is hidden from view) once the stalk of the microgreen starts to develop.

(above) Radish seeds displaying the lanky yellow appearance of microgreens before they go into the light

(below) Radish seeds 24 hours later

Sown at the densities described previously, these seeds produce consistent and prolific crops. While best eaten within a few days, I have kept them successfully for up to a week.

I buy these three varieties from the same provider (wholesomesupplies.com.au) and I try to buy 200-300g of each per purchase, to reduce the cost of shipping.

My set-up

After initially trialling a few trays of microgreens, I decided to invest in a decent set of shelves, ample trays and range of seeds. This allows me to have as many 10–12 trays in various stages of growth at any one time.

The upside of this is that I have a constant supply of fresh and nutritious greens. Often there is an oversupply, at which point my friends and family will get to share in the bounty. It also means that I get to spent time in my 'garden' every day, attending to the watering, covering and uncovering, inspecting, sowing and harvesting.

It is a labour of love

The downside is that it does require constant attention. To keep a crop of microgreens going from sowing to harvest means that they will need watering most days and rotating through the dark/light cycle. I stop sowing crops over a week prior to going on an extended holiday, and it takes up to 10 days to get my first harvest after I have been away.

The joy I get from growing microgreens has been a surprise. If you can imagine the reward of seeing a crop go from sowing to harvesting—a process that can take many months in the garden—every few weeks, then you can get a sense of the pleasure it can bring to the committed gardener.

If anyone is interested in dabbling in this addictive yet productive hobby, I am more than happy to share my knowledge with you.

—Cathy Morison
(article and photos)

Kale, potato and bean stew

Ingredients

2 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for drizzling

1 red onion, diced

1 stalk celery, sliced

1 carrot, peeled and diced

800g purple and pink potatoes scrubbed and cut into large pieces

coarse salt and freshly ground pepper

1 bunch green or scarlet kale (or a mixture of both to make up 4 cups) stems removed and leaves torn into small pieces

1 can butter beans, drained and rinsed

Method

1. Heat oil in a medium saucepan over medium heat. Sauté onion, celery and carrot for 6 to 8 minutes, or until tender.
2. Add the potatoes and 4 cups water. Season with salt and pepper. Bring to the boil then reduce to a simmer.

Ange's harvest of Midnight Pearl and Crimson Pearl potatoes grown from seed potatoes obtained from Farmer Doug's Gourmet Potatoes at the Hall Markets

3. Cook for approximately 10 minutes, or until the potatoes are tender.
4. Mash half the contents of the saucepan, until the liquid is slightly thickened.
5. Add the kale and butter beans, and continue cooking for 6 to 8 minutes, or until the kale is tender.
6. Adjust seasoning if necessary. Drizzle with oil before serving.

— Ange McNeilly (recipe and photo)

Pumpkin pasta sauce

© Can Stock Photo / Konstanttin

(Serves 3–4)

Ingredients

500g steamed/cooked pumpkin puréed

oil

300g mushrooms sliced

8 sage leaves and 1 tsp fresh thyme leaves

2 cloves chopped garlic

1 tbsp tomato purée/paste

¾ cup coconut milk

salt and pepper to taste

Directions

1. Cook mushrooms in a little oil.
2. When the mushrooms are almost cooked, add garlic and herbs. Stir until cooked.
3. Add tomato paste, pumpkin purée and coconut milk and warm through.
4. Season to taste.
5. Stir through pasta and add parmesan.

—Jo Kirwan (recipe)

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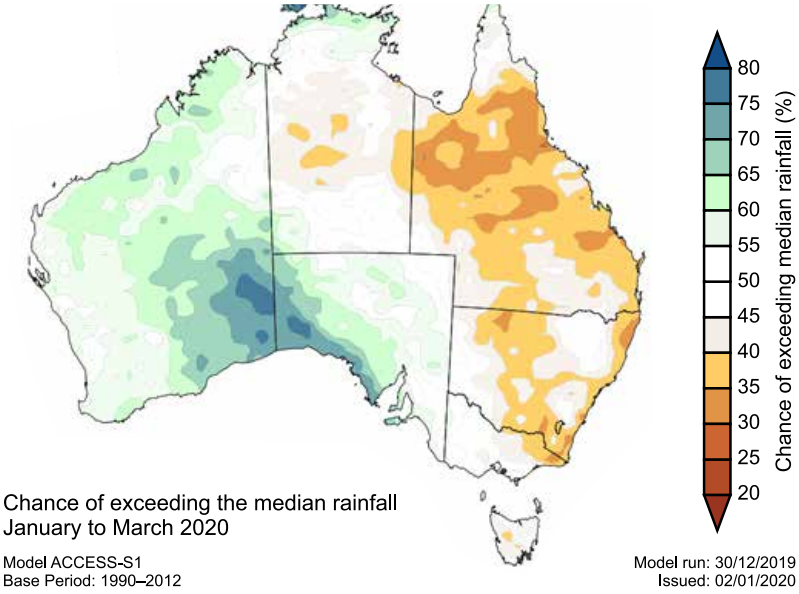
Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) returns to neutral



Chance of exceeding the median rainfall
January to March 2020

Model ACCESS-S1
Base Period: 1990–2012

Model run: 30/12/2019
Issued: 02/01/2020

The Bureau of Meteorology report released 7 January 2020 says the Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) has returned to neutral after one of the strongest positive IOD events to impact Australia in recent history.

The IOD is expected to remain neutral in the coming months and will have little influence on Australian and global climate.

However, the IOD's legacy of widespread warm and dry conditions during the second half of 2019 primed the Australian landscape for bushfire weather and heatwaves this summer.

In the Pacific Ocean, the indicators of an El Niño are neutral. However, the tropical ocean near and to the west of the Date Line remains warmer than average, potentially drawing some moisture away from Australia.

Most climate models indicate the Pacific Ocean will remain neutral until at least the end of the southern hemisphere autumn, meaning it will have limited influence on Australian and global climate.

The BOM says that at times like this Australia's climate can be influenced by more local or short-term climate drivers.

—Andy Hrast

Dam levels in the Canberra region and capital cities

	% FULL October 2019	% FULL October 2018
ACT storages	48	65
Murray–Darling Basin	32	46
Burrinjuck Dam	33	42
Blowering Dam	45	66
Sydney	44	61
Melbourne	63	61
Brisbane	56	75
Adelaide	50	57
Perth	43	50

Fowlers Vacola bottling outfit— free to good home

On offer to would-be home bottlers or antique collectors, we have the following:

Stove-top boilers

One is an older model, with metal lid. The paint is long gone so it looks ugly as all get-out but is still fit for use. The other is newer, with a plastic lid, same age as the instruction book below.

Instruction book

"Australian Preserving with Fowlers Vacola". 1979 edition, in reasonable condition for its age. The book uses metric measurements but a note in the front warns that, because of "the results of recent research," it does not give instructions for preserving vegetables or meat.

Bottles

52 x No 31. These take the size 4 lid and hold 850 ml.

18 x No 20. Size 3 lids, 600 ml.

7 x No 27. Size 3, 900 ml

4 or 5 of the monster-size No 65. Size 4 lids, 2200 ml capacity.

These will come with whatever stainless-steel lids we still have.

Please email Terry Williams (riverstreetrat@gmail.com) if you are interested in picking them up.

Canberra gardens open to the public

Open Gardens Canberra continues the tradition of private open gardens, established by Open Gardens Australia. Each spring and autumn a diverse range of interesting and beautiful open gardens are opened in Canberra, Queanbeyan and surrounds. Visit https://opengardenscanberra.org.au for more information.

Charnwood community garden

Sunday 15 March 2020 from 10am–3pm

Welcoming COGS members, families, friends and locals. Free entry

There will be refreshments and a BBQ available, as well as freshly baked goods (cakes, slices and scones), plants, seeds, fruit, vegetables and preserves. All proceeds will go back into the garden. Why not take some time out and come and relax with us!

Braddon Bounty

14–15 March 2020 from 10am–4pm

Free entry for Canberra Open Garden Members or $8 at the gate. All proceeds to Conservation Council (ACT region).

Located in Braddon, this garden is based around a philosophy of rescue, re-use and working with nature. In practical terms this means all organic matter is returned to the garden through mulching, composting and vermiculture. An organic approach is adopted to feed the soil and thus plants. Unwanted insects are reduced through companion plants, organic sprays and mechanical means.

Emphasis is placed on drought tolerant plants, while rainwater is also saved for the drier times or more water intensive plants, such as fruit trees. The garden is designed around several paths and 'rooms' using a harmonious palette of pinks to purple with a splash of yellow for good measure. There are many fruit trees on site, raised vegetable beds, a chook run and beehives.

Toilets are on site and refreshments will be available.

Global worming

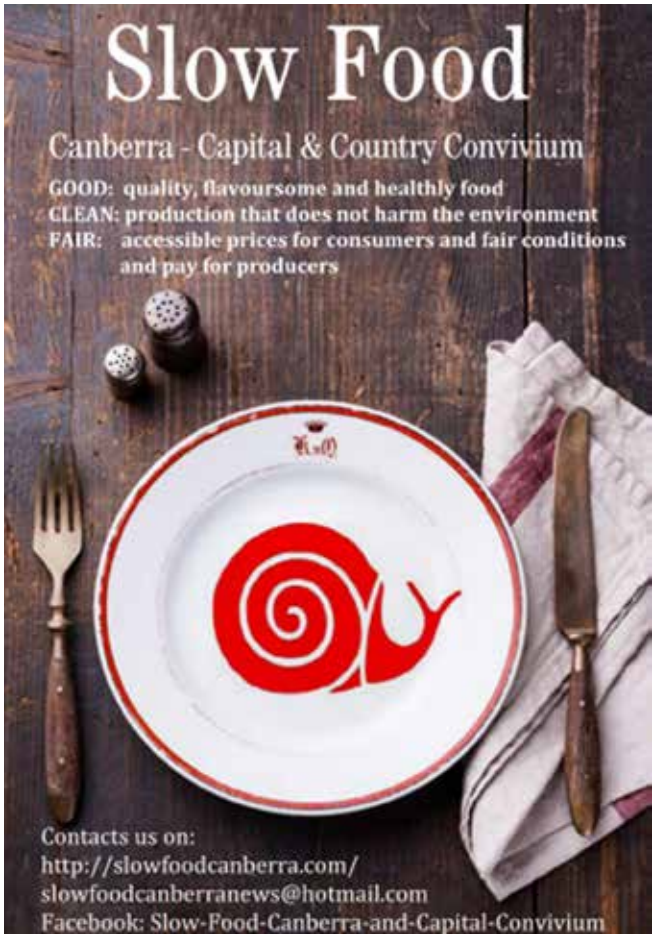
Adult WORMS for sale

The pack also includes juvenile worms and worm capsules (eggs)

1000 worms (0.25 kg) $30.00
2000 worms (0.5 kg) $50.00
4000 worms (1.0 kg) $90.00

- Pack contains adult composting worms consisting of three varieties; Red wriggler, Tiger and Indian blue
- Worms will consume over half of their body weight in a day
- Worms produce a casting (vermicaste) that is rich with nutrients and full of microbial activity

Global Worming
Bungendore Road, Tarago NSW 2580
Email: globalworming@mail.com
Mobile 0408 496 767



autumn planting guide

Brassicas

Late plantings of brassicas in March may be successful, but summer plantings are usually more reliable. In autumn, it is already too late to grow from seed. Take care too with the varieties chosen. It is too late to plant savoy cabbages, but the smaller ball-headed varieties should be successful.

Peas

Sugar snap peas may be sown in early March for a winter harvest, but the crop could be lost if there is an early severe frost affecting the blossom. Peas sown later in April–May will be ready for a spring harvest.

Lettuces

Only plant winter varieties of lettuces (cos, salad bowl, oakleaf, butterhead and mignonette varieties).

Leeks

Leek seedlings may be planted in early March for small leeks in winter, although summer plantings are more reliable.

Onions

Early varieties can be sown in April to early May to be harvested from spring to early summer. Mid season varieties are often sown in late autumn or early winter and long-keeping varieties in winter or early spring. It is worth experimenting with the timing of mid- or late-season varieties by making successive plantings to determine the best time for your specific garden.

Spring flowers

Remember that many spring flowering plants are best planted in autumn so they can establish before the winter cold, and then start growing in the early warmth of spring. Stocks, pansies and poppies can be planted as seedlings in March and early April. Others such as Virginia stock, candytuft, larkspur and sweetpeas can be sown direct throughout autumn.

Green manures

Autumn is the time to plant green manure crops so they can establish well before the frosts.

Green manure crops suitable for planting in Canberra are:

Legumes: Broad beans, field peas, lupins, sub clover, tic peas and vetch.

Non-legumes: Barley, oats and rye.

Legumes are very useful as they fix nitrogen in the soil while the non-legumes provide bulk organic matter.

Cut or dig in the green manure in spring, at least 4–6 weeks prior to planting your summer crops.

Flowering crops need to be dug in before flowering; cereal crops before producing a head of grain.

	MAR	APR	MAY
Asian greens	ST	T	
Brussel sprouts	T		
Broccoli	T		
Broad beans		S	S
Cabbage	T		
Cauliflower	T		
Chicory	ST	T	
Chinese cabbage	T		
Corn salad	ST	ST	
Endive	ST	T	
Garlic		S	S
Kale	T		
Kohlrabi	ST	T	
Leeks	T		
Lettuce	ST	ST	ST
Peas	S	S	S
Onions		S	S
Turnips	T		

S = seed sowing; T = transplanting

This table is a guide only, please observe the seasonal weather patterns before deciding when to plant, as there will often be distinct differences in weather from one year to the next.

What's on

Let's talk about gardening

Our Facebook community is growing every week.

Our page includes the latest on the events, news and gardening advice that matter to Canberra gardeners.

Just search for the Canberra Organic Growers Society and 'like' the page.

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Want to contribute?

We'd love to hear from you! Please send contributions to: editor@cogs.asn.au

	Deadline	Published
Autumn	mid-January	mid-February
Winter	mid-April	mid-May
Spring	mid-July	mid-August
Summer	mid-October	mid-November

Advertising in *Canberra Organic*

Canberra Organic is a unique way to reach people in the Canberra region who have an interest in organics, gardening and the environment.

Our circulation is around 700.

Advertising rates

Payment is to be made in advance. COGS members are eligible for the price in brackets.

Size	Issue	4 Issues
⅛ page	$9 ($7)	$30 ($25)
¼ page	$18 ($15)	$60 ($50)
½ page	$36 ($30)	$120 ($100)
Full page	$72 ($60)	$240 ($200)

Please contact editor@cogs.asn.au

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The joy of gardening

Beginners luck or hidden talent?

My husband and I recently acquired a garden plot at Kambah. I had spent several years feeding the soil of our small home garden bed, only to see the close-by gum tree flourish while the vegetable patch struggled.

Following from this I was dubious that I had any gardening skills at all, but have been pleasantly surprised at the produce grown this summer in our Kambah garden bed. While the slaters won out on the cucumbers and beans, I somehow managed a very good crop of carrots, beetroots, lettuce, zucchini and purple capsicum. I was extremely happy to find the vegetables in the photo on my return from two weeks of holiday.

I would like to give you some tips on how I grew the crop, or the very large (and tasty) carrots at least, but I would really have to say that maybe a two-week break from killing the plants with kindness did the trick!

—Christine Zygadlo (article and photos)

Requiem

breathing the dust
coughing the smoke
our land
is blowing away
and it's burning

let us say 'no'
to this present moment
pretending
that all is well
and always has been

we've always
had fire and drought
and yes
we've also had
greed and delusion

fireworks
on the harbour bridge …
ten thousand
people trapped
on the beaches

days of wrath
hellfire and ashes …
Canberra
the most polluted city
on this Earth

smoke
from burning forests
in the breeze
I hear the screams
of dying koalas

—Gerry Jacobson