

Winter 2021
Vol 29 No 2 Issue 111

Canberra Organic

The value of foxgloves
ACT for Bees
COGS strategic planning
Successful worm farming

The quarterly publication of the Canberra Organic Growers Society Inc.



Editor's note

Welcome to the winter 2021 edition of *Canberra Organic*. I find winter is a great time to reflect upon the successes and challenges of the spring/summer growing season, and to plan for the next. The slower pace of the garden also provides a wonderful opportunity to tidy around our plots and finally get round to those jobs we have been putting off!

COGS held its Annual General Meeting in March 2021 and elected a new Executive Committee for 2021–2022. There are a number of new faces on the Committee, who are looking forward to progressing some of the ideas highlighted at our Strategic Planning Day in February 2021. A report outlining these action items is on page 18.

As always, this edition is filled with wonderful stories from around our gardens and the wider community. I particularly enjoyed learning about the history of the Holder community garden, who are celebrating their 20th anniversary this year, and seeing photos from the early days. It's also great to see how our gardeners are repurposing items that would usually end up at the tip. I also loved reading more about our garden helpers, such as our bees and worms, in articles submitted by ACT for Bees and Global Worming respectively.

Whilst the cold winter days can sometimes make it a little harder to go outside, it's a great opportunity to enjoy the brilliant blue skies and winter sunshine that is synonymous with Canberra and enjoy the warmth of the sense of community within our gardens.

—Rebecca Travers (article)



photo by Ange McNeilly

Contents

Editor's note	page 2	"More veggies" soup	17
President's column	3	COGS Strategic Planning Day	18
COGS committee and garden convenors	4	What if COGS were ... COGG?	19
Around the COGS gardens:		Tips for a successful backyard worm farm	20–21
Mitchell community garden	5	Weather report	22
Betty Cornhill community garden	6	Gardening as resistance	24
Erindale community garden	7–9	(Queensland blue) pumpkin soup	25
Holder community garden	10–11	Winter planting guide	26
Charnwood community garden	12–13	What's on	27
The history and value of foxgloves	14	Twenty years of Holder community garden	back cover
ACT for Bees	15		
Winter herbs	16		

FRONT COVER: "Harvest", by Ange McNeilly

President's column

Fellow COGS members, welcome to the winter edition of *Canberra Organic*.

Our gardens are looking great after the wet and mild conditions of summer and autumn and I am excited to hear reports of excellent harvests across Canberra.

The COGS Annual General Meeting was held on Sunday 21 March 2021 at the Mitchell community garden, with a wonderful attendance of almost 40 people. Thank you to those at the Mitchell garden for hosting the meeting.

I am honoured to have been re-elected as President.

Thank you also to all the people who nominated and were elected to positions on the Executive Committee. The list of new 2021–2022 Executive Committee is shown at the front of the magazine. It is pleasing to see a number of new faces joining the Committee and I look forward to working together to take forward a wide-ranging agenda to keep COGS up-to-date.

A big thank you must also go to the outgoing members of the past Committee, some of whom have served in various positions for many years. COGS only exists as a result of the ongoing generosity of people who volunteer their time to take on these leadership roles, both at the Executive Committee level and at the garden level.

For those who were unable to attend, the *2020–21 President's Report to the AGM* can be found on the 'members only' section of the COGS website.

Key points in the report include the impact of COVID-19 on the gardens and the strong interest from the public that resulted in waiting lists in all our gardens. The fact that the COGS gardens were able to stay open,

I am sure, was a great benefit to many during the lockdown.

Nevertheless, there were impacts with reduced communal activity and suspension of talks, general meetings and outings. These are being renewed.

The other major highlights in the report on 2020 are the renewal of the 10-year licence with the ACT Government for nine of our gardens and the strong financial position of COGS.

COGS continues to enjoy good relations with the ACT Government and there are opportunities to build on that with Ministerial meetings planned for the coming year.

The certainty we now have following the renewal of the licence was the impetus of a Strategic Planning Day in February. It was well-attended by members of the Executive Committee and Convenors. There is a separate article about the planning day elsewhere in the magazine and a comprehensive report in the 'members only' section of the COGS website.

The Executive Committee is already moving ahead on a number of key findings from the Strategic Planning Day including an infrastructure review, communal membership, review of the COGS Constitution and the creation of a COGS Instagram account.

The Instagram account was created in response to a key finding from the planning day for the need to attract a younger demographic. Instagram is the social media platform of choice of the under 40s.

The infrastructure review will look at the what is currently in place in gardens, with a view to identifying what needs to be upgraded to bring all gardens to a similar standard. Based on the outcomes of the review, the Executive Committee will then allocate financial resources. However,



it is important to recognise it will be a matter for each garden to develop proposals for funding and undertake the planning and construction.

The infrastructure review will also provide the opportunity for Executive Committee members to visit gardens and for gardeners to raise and discuss matters with them.

COGS continues to engage with the developers of Denman Prospect on the planning for a community garden in the next stage of the development of the suburb. COGS has made a number of suggestions, as it is seen as the 'go-to' organisation by industry and government when it comes to community gardens in the ACT.

We have found that COGS is also the 'go-to' organisation when it comes to research into urban agriculture in the Canberra area. A meeting was held with Professor Shawn Somerset from the University of Canberra on a study being undertaken into the *Future of Food in the Canberra Region*. COGS members have been asked to participate in a survey in conjunction with the study and I understand that there has been good response to that request.

While the winter months may be a quieter time in our gardens, they are the busiest time in the administration of COGS with the preparation and sending of invoices to members for plot and membership fees. This a significant workload and I ask your co-operation in being decisive about your intentions with regard to plots for 2021–22 and prompt with the payment of your invoices.

During this season, it's also a great time to think about clearing and tidying up your plots, so that our gardens are looking spick and span and ready for the spring plantings.

Happy gardening!

—Andy Hrast

Correction

In the article *Charnwood community garden — In pictures* on pages 14 and 15 of the autumn 2021 edition of *Canberra Organic* (Vol 29, No 1, Issue 110) the photographs were incorrectly attributed. Photographs on these pages were taken by Ange McNeilly, Teresa Rose and Philippa Hankinson. The Editor apologises for this oversight.

Canberra Organic is the quarterly publication of the Canberra Organic Growers Society Inc.

It celebrates organic gardening, local produce, sustainability and information exchange in the Canberra region.

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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.

Betty Cornhill	Peter Rouse — cornhill_convenor@cogs.asn.au
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COGS community gardens and COVID-19

To assist in slowing the spread of COVID-19 in the community, we must do everything possible to protect our gardeners and their families.

To ensure our gardens can remain open and we provide a safe environment for everyone, all gardeners attending a COGS community garden **MUST**:

- wear gloves or use hand sanitiser before opening and closing gates, shed locks and operating taps
- observe “physical distancing” with each other (at least 1.5 metres from your plot neighbour) and minimise contact with other gardeners
- wear gloves when using communal tools, and consider bringing your own tools

- not have more than two members of a household visit a plot, and
- not bring visitors to the garden.

Please **DO NOT** enter the garden if:

- you have been in contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19
- you have been ordered to self-isolate, or
- you are unwell and showing symptoms consistent with COVID-19.

No visitors or other unauthorised people are allowed enter the garden at the present time.

Mitchell community garden on display

The Mitchell community garden was on display at the end of March as part of the autumn program for 'Open Gardens Canberra'.

We were fortunate that the rain cleared in time for people to visit and the Mitchell gardeners showed off an abundance of vegetables, flowers, native shrubs and fruit trees.

Canberra Seed Savers also took part in the weekend and brought with them their amazing variety of seeds for display and sale. They shared their wealth of knowledge about the different varieties of vegetables and how to save seeds from our own plots.

The Mitchell community garden consists of 45 individual plots, a donation garden, an orchard comprising several varieties of fruit trees, flower gardens throughout, compost bays, a large well-equipped shed with two water tanks and many bee hives.

The garden has been at its present site since 1995, after moving from Watson. Garden members range in age from 20 years to some in their late 70s. Many families bring their children to the garden to provide them with the knowledge of how to garden and where fruit and vegetables come from. Strawberries and tiny tomatoes are always popular with the kids.

Our Donation Garden is harvested each Wednesday by Penny and the fresh vegetables taken to the local Gungahlin *Communities@Work* food pantry. There is always lots of interest in the long melons, large zucchinis

The pea vine became quite a topic of conversation



The Mitchell community garden

and the many leafy greens. The Mitchell gardeners donate seeds or seedlings to the Donation Garden which is cared for by Qiwen.

Visitors displayed interest in the variety of vegetables grown throughout the garden by the diverse nationalities that make up the Mitchell garden members.

Two vegetables that became a talking point throughout the weekend were the many crops of maize and a pea vine. The maize is grown each summer by Ken, George, Caxton, Charles and Moises. It is harvested in late March and ground into flour to use in many traditional Kenyan recipes. Many gardeners cut the maize stalk halfway up — after harvesting the maize cobs — and grow peas up the stalk during winter.

The pea vine is grown by Hasan and is known by a variety of different names, including 'old man beans', 'poor man's beans', 'hbeans', 'Dolichos lablab beans', 'rongai bean', 'duji mame', 'butter beans' or even 'bouanavista pea'. Very nutritious once cooked, they contain about 30% protein and high levels of vitamins A, B and C; also potassium, phosphorus, calcium, iron and magnesium along with a heap of trace elements. The peas are also dried and ground into pea flour.

Overall it was a very successful weekend and a wonderful opportunity to showcase what the Mitchell community garden and COGS is all about.

—Narelle McLean (article and photos)

Betty Cornhill garden — one person's trash is another's treasure

“One person's trash is another's treasure” — truer words were never spoken when it comes to searching for a solution for a rambling butternut pumpkin that wants to spread east across a well-used pathway, as well as north, south and west!

Many gardeners at the Betty Cornhill Garden (BCG) — formerly known as the ‘Cotter plots’ — are committed to re-using items that might otherwise end up at the tip. Old screen doors, mattress springs, shock absorbers, metal and wooden clotheshorses/airers, fan-covers, freezer baskets... these are just some of the items that end up on the plots at BCG as part of the commitment to re-using items that were made for another purpose. These would often be discarded and destined for landfill.

The Green Sheds at Symonston and Mitchell prove a never-ending source of similar items that others might consider ‘junk’ but which when covered with a pumpkin vine or providing a snow pea with a climbing



Raised garden beds at BCG made from recycled materials

frame, look completely at home in the garden.

BCG is set in an historic area of Canberra and boasts a view of the nearby Yarralumla Woolshed with Telstra Tower as a back-drop. The

Molonglo River and Yarralumla Creek are within a few hundred metres of the garden.

Late last winter a couple of avid BCG gardeners noticed that a section of corrugated iron roofing on the Woolshed was being replaced. Keen to ensure that the old roofing was put to good use and preserved for posterity, they approached the workers and asked if they could have some of the old roofing. Within a few weeks several raised beds had been built made from pallets collected from local businesses, old fencing ‘rescued’ from skips, and the roofing. They now host a variety of fruit and vegetables ranging from tomatoes and strawberries to corn.

They tell a story... a story of the first COGS garden and its neighbour, a well-utilised historic Canberra building — the Yarralumla Woolshed. Yes, the motto ‘waste not, want not’ is certainly one that many BCG gardeners have adopted. Now, anyone for zucchini marmalade on toast and rhubarb cordial?

—Gabi (article) and Jo Kirwan (photos)

Old freezer baskets can be repurposed to protect plants



Little garden, big community: a COGS Erindale story

Although our Erindale community garden is the smallest in size of the twelve COGS gardens, over the past eight months it has grown to have a big community spirit. At our garden, we rejoice in the community we have cultivated where cooperative behaviour, friendly faces and organic growing practices are on full display. We are grateful for the bounty we have harvested; thanks to the work we have put in over the last few months.

As novice gardeners, my husband and I have enjoyed learning as much as possible from the more experienced and expert gardeners at Erindale. When we first started, we decided on growing potatoes, as we knew these were relatively simple to grow, in comparison to other edible plants. We are proud to say we harvested plenty of Kipfler and Pink Fir varieties, which are not often found in supermarkets, and they were delicious in our dinners. During March, we enjoyed harvesting the last of our potato crops; some affected by too much rain, unfortunately. However, we have been fortunate to benefit from the abundant rain for some of our other plantings!

Overall, our journey has been a very interesting one, full of lessons in caregiving, community development

Chillies at Erindale



There is a wonderful sense of community at Erindale

and managing change. We have learned about caregiving by leaving water sources for the pollinators to drink from — such as rocks with water for our bees. We have realised the importance of keeping safe by putting sharp tools aside. As well we keep our community areas clean and tidy, so our garden looks radiant.

Lessons in community development have come from learning about the ways COGS as an organisation operates, how our garden employs cooperative principles, and all the wonderful work by caring COGS volunteers behind the scenes who make our gardening possible.

We have also been learning about the shift of the seasons, how both calm and vibrant the garden can be, and how the bees and other pollinators also show cooperative behaviours! Learning about managing change has been acutely important during these changing — and at times, tumultuous — moments (from bushfire to hail to further human respiratory stressors) by observing the garden at work. We feel a sense of security and peace in knowing nature works with us and is a source of nourishment and protection.

Thus the biggest lessons, we have probably learned have not only been in gardening, but in learning how to foster social cohesion, and care for our environment and our community's development.

Our time spent in the garden helps connect us to the earth, teaching us respect for our environment, enjoying good food, and connecting with others. Our resident expert on chillies, who is originally from Korea, enjoys growing some lovely Asian greens that go into making her garden-famous kimchi — which she lovingly prepares and is kind to share with us. We love coming to the garden and watering our lavender, basil, tomatoes, chia, and other pollinator friendly plants we have grown.

With the helpful and kind guidance of our wonderful Convenor Didi, we have grown our appreciation for pollinator friendly plants, learned heaps about compost, and seed saving techniques! Thanks to our garden family and to our bees for their efforts at cultivating a community of organic practice.

— Mayra Escobedo and Peter Menhinick (article and photos)

Erindale community garden in pictures

Photos by members of the community garden



Jin with one of his heritage cucumbers



Young-Ja with her harvest of garlic chives and a bag for seed saving

Markus with blackberries from the community patch



Mayra holding one of the pumpkins from the community plot



Around the COGS gardens



A posy of herbs and flowers (pollinator plants)



Parsnips

Rhubarb



Purple lab lab beans



Holder community garden – happy 20th anniversary

2021 marks the 20th anniversary for Holder, as well as the Cook and Kambah community gardens. In this article I recount some of the early years, with the help of some of our early organic gardening pioneers. Holder community garden is still lucky enough to have five of the original members of the garden: Jane Andrews, Gerry Cullen, Jen Johnston, Lesley Pattinson, and Conrad Van Hest.

In 2001, COGS received a \$10,000 grant from the ACT Government to help set up a community garden at Holder. This money was utilised for fencing, irrigation, and a small shed. Lesley recalls seeing a COGS advert in the *Canberra Chronicle* seeking people to join — she was studying horticulture at the time, so joining COGS really appealed to her. Gerry was introduced to COGS by a former work colleague and at the time had his name down for the Betty Cornhill Garden but was happy to sign up to helping establish the new Holder community garden.

After an initial meeting in July, organised by Steve Sutton from COGS, a series of working bees got under way in August 2001. Gerry recalls that Steve was impressive in how he organised and coordinated the group to get all the tasks completed and the garden operational in a matter of weeks. Stephen Deane was appointed as the first Convenor.

Soil was the next challenge (and remains so today!) in what was a large area of couch, clay and paddock weeds. All unearthed stones and rocks, which were plentiful, became garden edging. Jane and Lesley remember many an hour swinging over mattocks and forking over their plots, as well as a shared thermos and muffins to keep them going. A load of Canberra Show manure and straw was delivered and shared with the entire garden, but one truckload didn't go far! Lesley took to collecting cow and horse manure from local places. Jen remembers being able to get tomatoes in by early October that first year.

Holder community garden sourced free fruit trees and herbs from Weston CIT for the communal areas. These



The establishment of Holder community garden in 2001

areas were harder to get established as members were spending time in their own couch covered plots, but with successive working bees these spaces became more productive.

Being 2001, the garden was still enveloped by the Stromlo Pine Forest which provided a sense of cosiness and protection from the wind. The challenges of growing organically were evident in those early years with many pests and challenging conditions including a grasshopper plague, snakes, mice, rabbits, the choughs (birds) tossing mulch everywhere, and hot windy summers with no shade areas or

trees on site. There was even a frost on Boxing Day 2001 which left curcubits and potatoes lost to a black leafy mess.

Jane recalls the friendships she has made at the garden and the community spirit — “we are there for each other to keep our gardens going, when life throws you a curve ball.”

A big curve ball hit Canberra in 2003 with the bushfires sweeping through the west of Canberra and burning down much of the Pine Forest. Some Holder garden plots were burned also, mainly on the perimeter. The fruit orchard only planted two years previously was

lost. Every garden plot was affected by the hot dry winds and smoke damage.

The fires combined with impact of the drought caused several gardeners to give up their plots. For a considerable period many were vacant. Gerry recalls Conrad, who was Convenor at the time, organising a working bee one year and only three people turning up. Conrad (featured in the Autumn 2019 Magazine) is currently our maintenance person at the Holder garden — our ‘Mr Fix-it’. He recalls that with many empty plots, a lot of things needed doing so he just got in and did it.

For some though, ‘the plot’ was a refuge where life could grow on.

With time came rebuilding and renewal, with the new suburbs of Molonglo creating new opportunities. The building of a bike path took some land at the northern end of the garden, so COGS negotiated with the ACT Government to create an extension of the garden at the southern end and a change of the entrance to the southwest, to provide a safe driveway and parking area. Extra plots were added, enabling more gardeners to join the garden community.



Holder community garden in 2021

Today, like other COGS gardens across Canberra, Holder community garden is full and there is a waiting list of new gardeners looking to join our community. Lesley notes, “the sharing of produce, seeds, love and assistance to all is the mainstay of Holder. A community of fellow gardeners is unique, and a space where we can share and care for each other. Twenty years on its still a joy to meet up with new

and old garden friends in our shared space.”

In July 2021 we intend to hold a morning or afternoon tea for current and former members of Holder Garden on site to reminisce some more. Former members can find out more details by emailing me at convenorholder@gmail.com.

—Neil Williams (article and photos)
Lesley Pattinson (photos)

Gerry Cullen, originally from Ireland, is one of the mainstay gardeners at Holder. A former principal of Lake Ginninderra College, Gerry has enjoyed fruit and vegetable gardening for over 50 years. As well as gardening at Holder, you can often see Gerry walking around Mount Taylor or cheering on the Brumbies at Canberra Stadium.

In summer Gerry likes to grow lots of tomatoes, zucchinis, and pumpkins and in winter, onions, silver beet and leeks. His rhubarb grows all year round and is a favourite spot for one of Holder community garden’s resident blue-tongued lizards. He regularly donates some of his produce to Marymead. Gerry’s tip to new gardeners would be to use a lot of mulch and don’t over-water tomatoes.



Charnwood community garden in pictures

Photos by Ange McNeilly





Charnwood community garden — radio feature



Teresa Rose being interviewed by ABC 666 radio

On 24 March 2021, local ABC radio Canberra (666) spent the day broadcasting at the Charnwood Shopping Centre. They were interviewing people engaged in the local Charnwood Community to establish what the

community was like, and how it had changed over the years.

Amongst some of the interviews that I heard were people from the local bakery, cafe, Charcoal Chicken, childcare centre, vet, Landcare and CWA. There were

many, many more interviews that were featured, as shown by the media report *'Many Canberrans know Charnwood for its bad reputation, but these locals are trying to turn that around.'*¹

Since Charnwood often gets a bad rap, it was an opportune time to speak on the radio about the Charnwood community garden, COGS and my time living in this suburb for the past forty-odd years. Discussion was lively. The radio personalities were amazed that Charnwood was indeed a well-rounded community and did not deserve the bad rap that it gets!

—Teresa Rose (article) and Matt Watts (photo)

¹ See: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-03-24/charnwood-locals-trying-to-overhaul-reputation-foster-community/100017986>

The history and value of foxgloves

I just love the wonderful names given to many common plants. Snapdragons are just daring you to poke a finger in a flower. Bottlebrush flowers just look like you could use them to scrub out passata bottles. Red hot pokers stems look like they have been shoved in fire, that is until a wattle bird lands on them to suck out their nectar and then they look like S-bends. Foxglove flowers really do look like dainty coverings for foxes' paws.

Leonhart Fuchs first used the name *digitalis* for this plant in his herbal *De historia stirpium commentarii insignes* in 1542. It is from the Latin *digitus* meaning finger (we still use it for fingers today — digits — then I assume counting on fingers and hence calculating and hence digital — from super old to super modern). He chose this term because the German for this humble plant was *fingerhut*, literally *finger hat* which means thimble. You can imagine the flowers as rather frail thimbles. Other names for this amazing plant with a more sinister overtone are *witch's glove* and *dead man's bells*. Long before the binomial naming of plants and animals was invented, people knew of the amazing toxicity of this biennial. (By the way, the beautiful plant Fuchsia was named after Leonhart (lionheart) in 1703.)

Digitalis purpurea contains a group of substances called digitalin. The medical use of these cardiac glycosides extracts from the plant for treatment of heart conditions was first described in 1785. Now they are commonly extracted from *D. lanata* leaves to give a pure form called digoxin which is used to increase cardiac contractility, and as an antiarrhythmic agent to control heart rate and atrial fibrillation. In 1998 it was approved in the USA to help those with congestive heart failure. There was some concern that it increased mortality but a systematic review of 75 studies showed this not



Digitalis purpurea

to be the case. Foxgloves also contain other substances that can be used medically such as digoxigenin which can be used as a molecular probe to detect mRNA in situ and label DNA and RNA. A very useful plant indeed.

For those that are interested, I understand that digitalis works by affecting the exchange of Na and Ca ions in cells which results in an increased calcium concentration in the cells and improves cardiac contractility. Usually, the sarcoplasmic reticulum, a complex membrane in muscle cells, stores calcium. Human newborns, some animals and patients with chronic heart failure don't have fully functioning sarcoplasmic reticula and must rely on the Na/Ca exchange mechanism. This is fine in animals and newborns,

but cardiac patients must rely on digitalis-based drugs.

Foxgloves have ultimately been involved in saving many people's lives, however they are also very dangerous if not used precisely. They can stop people's hearts as well as keep them going. Most herbalists have abandoned using the plant because of the difficulty of being able to determine the exact amount of the active compounds in herbal preparations. This is a case where the purified compound produced in laboratories is much better than an organic preparation. Do not underestimate the toxicity of foxgloves and just admire their beauty and ability to light up shady places.

—Elizabeth Dangerfield (article) and Taylor Cowling Unsplash (photo)

‘ACT for Bees’

‘ACT for Bees’ is a community organisation initially established to promote awareness of the importance of bees for our food supply and to encourage bee friendly plantings and practices.

We developed free online *Love Food? Love Bees!* Australian curriculum-aligned resources for Early Learning, Years 5 and 6 and Years 9 and 10 with Cool Australia, which is being widely used by teachers and local government organisations. Our focus now has broadened to include all pollinators.

As members of COGS know, the use of pesticides and herbicides contaminates our food supply and imperils pollinators. All gardeners understand the importance of pollinators for food production. What may not be as well known is that nearly *two thirds* of our food production is dependent on bees and other pollinators.

We are fortunate in the ACT to have over half of our land area protected as part of the Natural Reserve System¹. However, most threatened flora and fauna in the ACT are declining²

Well-pollinated strawberries. Each of the ‘seeds’ on the outside of the strawberry fruit need to be pollinated evenly and fully to form large strawberries. Incomplete pollination (insufficient pollinators) will often result in misshapen fruit.



Leafcutter bee foraging in Perennial Basil

and the 2019–2020 bushfires destroyed vast areas of habitat which are only slowly regenerating. In addition, human activity and urban development are reducing the habitat of pollinators in our suburbs. Maintaining and expanding biodiversity in urban places has therefore become a pressing priority — not only for pollinators, but for a diverse range of insects, birds, reptiles, amphibians and other animals which depend on pollinators for food sources.

In recent years, *ACT for Bees* has hosted a number of workshops to increase awareness of the importance of bees and pollinators in the ACT region. This included a workshop in April 2021 aimed at developers and landscape architects.

In February 2020, after the devastating summer that included Australia-wide bushfires which destroyed an estimated 10 million hectares of land and with more than 1 billion animals killed, we teamed up with Landcare ACT for an event at the Australian National Botanic Gardens called ‘Bees, Butterflies, Birds: Maximising Biodiversity by Supporting Pollinators’.

We are also working with a range of like-minded organisations to promote awareness of the importance of pollinators. On Saturday May 22nd, we celebrate World Bee Day and World Biodiversity Day. For further information about these events and a range of other resources, including local native bees, check out our website <https://actforbees.org>.

—Lynne Curran (article and photos)

¹ *Terrestrial plant and animal species: Threatened species lists* | Australia State of the Environment Report

² *Terrestrial plant and animal species: Threatened species lists* | Australia State of the Environment Report

Winter herbs

I recently read in *The Australian Women's Weekly: the cook's garden* that there are two schools of thought about winter. There are those people who dread it and grizzle about the cold air, and there are those who relish the battle that nature thrusts their way and are energised to achieve by the cold¹.

I'm ashamed to admit I am the first of the two, rather than the latter. When I moved to Australia 14 years ago, my only knowledge of this beautiful country was through various soap operas that were the favourites of many Brits back in the UK. I expected year-round sunshine and warmth, so winter came as a surprise — even more so, when I moved to Canberra 10 years ago!

However this winter, I have decided I want to become the second type of person and I have set about researching the winter garden. Aside from the brassicas — broccoli and Brussel sprouts are my favourites — and Asian greens, I wanted to find something else to plant in my courtyard garden that could contribute to my winter soups and stews and I was excited to see the category of 'winter herbs' mentioned in *'the cook's garden'*.

It states: *"these perennial herbs available in the winter enjoy an uncanny sympathy with the foods we crave when the nights turn cold and dark: roasts, and all those dishes that require long, slow cooking, drawing out the flavours and filling the house with rich scents and fireside warmth."* The thought of this warmed my soul and reminded me to make a batch of my winter soup, which I tend to turn to when I feel a cold coming on or a need for more veggies in my diet.

I am often hesitant to trust books that suggest plantings for winter, given the Canberra climate is very different to the rest of Australia, but it listed 'cold zones with frost' so I read on.

The book's first suggestion was bay leaves, one of the few tree herbs and it thrives in most soils and climates. Reaching up to 11m high (and almost as wide), this didn't seem like the most suitable for our courtyard. But then I remembered I had been eyeing off an area of unused garden bed outside our garage door on the common property of our complex — it would be perfect there and would be available for others to share.

The next suggestion was thyme, which I love and reminded me of the lemon thyme sugar I made to accompany my Christmas fruit mince pies. This was a definite for my list. I noted it grows well in borders, amongst rocks or in pots, but needs gritty, free-draining soil and full sun to thrive. This explains why my last batch died when the wicking bed it was growing in was flooded by the summer rains (and I forgot to pull out the stopper before going away for a week).



© Can Stock Photo / BVDC

Marjoram was the third suggestion. This was not a herb I knew much about. A relative of oregano, it tends to grow about 30cm in height, and its spread is more of a mound. The line *"Marjoram will sulk and disappear in shady spots and needs protection from cold winter winds"* made me laugh, imagining it as the 'teenager' of the herbs — until I remembered I also have been known to sulk in the cold. This one seemed a bit more challenging and I thought of skipping over it until I saw that marjoram plus bay leaves, thyme and parsley are the traditional herbs of the bouquet garni. I often use these in my soups or casseroles, so I decided this might be best in a pot that could be brought inside when it got too cold.

The final winter herb listed was sage. This instantly took me back to Northern Hemisphere Christmases, with sage and onion stuffing accompanying the turkey roast. Sage grows about 30cm high but doesn't like acidic soil or too much rain. Confinement to a pot will prevent 'wet feet' syndrome and I noted to be wary of caterpillars which will enjoy the leaves.

So now I had it — my shopping list for the next trip to the garden centre. Whilst I was aware that it was unlikely that they would produce enough for my winter soups and stews this year, I was excited to have something to nurture through the winter months that would encourage me to rug-up and get outside in the winter sunshine. Time will only tell how they will fare with the cold winter weather, but I felt one more step along in my journey to becoming the second type of person this winter.

—Rebecca Travers (article)

¹ *The Australian Women's Weekly: the cook's garden* (2010:108)

² *Ibid* (2010:108)

'More veggies' soup

I like to make this soup to ensure I am eating as many veggies as possible in winter. Sometimes I will also boil a ham hock and add the meat at the end. Either way it's delicious with a thick slice of sourdough slathered in butter and accompanied by some vintage cheddar cheese.

Ingredients

- Veggies that you love (I usually include a combination of zucchini, broccoli, swede, parsnips, carrots, leeks, celery, pumpkin and sweet potato)
- 2 litres chicken stock (or vegetable if you prefer)
- 4 bay leaves
- 1 bouquet garni
- Sprig (or two) of thyme
- Salt and pepper to taste

Method

1. Dice all the veggies and add to a large pan.
2. Add the chicken stock, bay leaves, thyme and bouquet garni and bring to the boil.
3. Reduce the heat to low, cover and let simmer until the veggies are soft.
4. Remove the bay leaves and bouquet garni, and season with salt and pepper.
5. Serve with crusty bread and vintage cheese.

NOTE: If you wish to add ham: add the ham hock to a separate heavy-bottomed pan with water covering the ham



hock. Bring to the boil and let it simmer, turning the hock occasionally. Depending on the size of the hock, it can take a few hours to cook. Once cooked, pull the meat off the bone and add to the veggie soup. You can also add a cup of lentils or barley if you want to add some body to the mixture.

—Rebecca Travers (article and photo)



Events at Canberra City Farm

Our friends over at Canberra City Farm are holding a series of events during 2021. Events being held include:

- Managing the Soil in your Backyard or Allotment – Introduction to Market Gardening
- Managing Garden Pests and Diseases – Introduction to Market Gardening
- Crop Management for Gardeners – Introduction to Market Gardening,
- Cultural Requirements of Common Food Plants – Introduction to Market Gardening.

Suitable for both allotment holders and backyard gardeners, these sessions provide useful information to assist with your gardening journey. Sessions are held at Canberra City Farm, 2 Dairy Road, Fyshwick.

For more information visit: <http://ccfarm.org.au/newsite>

COGS Strategic Planning Day — report

With the certainty of the 10-year licence from the ACT Government for most of the COGS gardens, it was a great opportunity to hold a Strategic Planning Day.

The workshop, held on Saturday 6 February 2021, aimed to develop the framework for the future direction of COGS and its gardens. The workshop took place at the Uniting Church in O'Connor and involved the COGS Executive Committee, Garden Convenors and invited past-Presidents.

The day was very successful with more than 20 people giving up their Saturday to participate. The format for the workshop involved breakout groups discussing papers that had been prepared on a range of issues, followed by a plenary session that brought together all the ideas that emerged and priorities were then discussed and identified.

Participants saw COGS as having a good reputation built on its strong financial position and administrative structures that provide it with opportunities to deal effectively with the ACT Government to progress community gardens and organic growing in the Canberra region. There was no strong desire for a major restructure of these arrangements.

The major concerns identified during the workshop were about:

- how to involve the wider membership in the running of COGS, succession planning and how avoid volunteer burnout
- meeting the demand for plots
- the lack of champions to take issues forward, e.g. the development of new gardens, and
- how to involve a younger generation.

The workshop identified a number of specific actions:

- Address volunteer burnout by making greater use of the information on membership application forms and a more targeted approach to seeking volunteers and developing an induction program for new members.
- Greater engagement of the COGS Executive with gardens.



Mini pumpkin (photo by Ange McNally)

- Explore partnerships with like-minded organisations regarding education (e.g., shared talks), administration, new gardens and further development of existing advice for groups interested in developing a community garden.
- Address the demand for plots by exploring the scope for new gardens, additional plots within existing gardens (including the scope for expanding boundaries and/or reducing the size of plot holdings) and developing a new 'communal member' membership category.
- Develop a social media strategy including Instagram to reach out to the community, especially a younger generation.
- Review the infrastructure needs of all gardens, with the view to bringing gardens up to a similar level
- Consider a more structured process for bringing forward proposals for funding (e.g., a template for funding proposals).
- Review the COGS Constitution to bring it into line with current legislation and to better reflect the role of COGS.

A comprehensive report of the day, including all the associated papers, can be found in the 'members only' section of the COGS website.

A big thank you to all the people who gave up their Saturday for the workshop and in particular thanks to Rebecca Travers who organised the day, Mike Avent who facilitated its running and all the people who put in much time and original thought to prepare papers for consideration at the workshop.

Thank you everyone, I am looking forward to what the next 10 years will bring.

— Andy Hrast (article)

What if COGS were ... COGG?

At the COGS planning workshop in February this year, Andy, our president, made the point that about 80% of the Executive Committee's time was spent on running our 12 community gardens, but that (in terms of the Constitution) this was not really our primary objective. "Easily fixed", I thought, "we could amend the constitution to get rid of all the airy policy stuff — it won't go away by itself".

Sure enough, there was the remaining 20%, in the Autumn issue of *Canberra Organic*:

'...discussions with other like-minded organisations about the possibility of developing a united position on community gardens to take to the ACT Government.'

That seems like a really good idea, but doing it will be hard work. It seems that there might be scope for our Executive Committee to do better than spend 80% of its time on things that come ultimately from allocating plots, to an expanding number of would-be gardeners. This got me thinking...

So, to cut a long story short, what would it be like if there were two separate things:

1. A group called something like the Council of Gardening Groups — or with a name that has a different

acronym, but that will do for the moment. I'll call this group COGG.

2. Any number of independent garden(ing) groups around the ACT.

How would it be if those garden(ing) groups — and I mean all of them, not just the 12 that we usually think of, but ALL of them, including the ones for residents of apartment buildings, and groups other than our own — were self-managing?

Oops, wait up! Most of them are already self-managing. I'm not joking — there are many groups that compete with us for grant funding, so we know they are legal entities, have public liability insurance and so on. (Wait!? Doesn't that mean it's only our 12 gardens that haven't taken charge of their own finances, plot allocations and so forth?)

But, getting back to the short version of the long story, what would that mean for COGG?

COGG would be an umbrella organisation representing member groups, in much the same way there are community councils representing residents' groups in various parts of the ACT. Gardening groups, rather than individuals, would be members of COGG. (Also, what if one additional member was a senior officer of the ACT Government's Suburban Land Agency? Would that work? Could it be made to work?)

How would it be if, as a broadly-based representative body, COGG

could legitimately expect government funding on an ongoing basis? That's the way community councils and other high-level umbrella groups operate.

Maybe COGG would, among other things, hold a head licence for the ACT Government land which some (8 out of 12) of our present gardens occupy. That would be similar to how the ACT's public housing is currently operated: government housing is leased to community-minded groups such as St. Vinnies, which then sub-leased to the tenants.

In such a system, COGG would have only the limited powers of a landlord, sub-licencing areas of land to (independent and incorporated) gardening groups. Those gardening groups would be required both to comply with the laws of the ACT and to observe the conditions of their sub-licences. But, and again like the landlord, COGG would not have the responsibility for either managing the day-to-day activities at the relevant gardens or controlling the activities of its (independent, incorporated, self-managing) members.

How would it be if COGG wasn't directly involved in establishing proposed new gardens? That this is what the individual gardening groups would do, however COGG with a wealth of experience could be an advisory body. If there was demand for a new garden in this or that suburb, and if there were gardeners ready to organise themselves to run such a garden, they would do so — but only if land were available. So ... how would it be if COGG could devote itself to ensuring that the ACT Government made sufficient garden space available for the community *and* had sensible agricultural policies *and* took biodiversity seriously?

And how would it be if, when COGG spoke to government, it spoke with the authority of all the member associations that stood behind it? Who knows, COGG might really be able to make a big difference.

How good would that be?

— Terry Williams (article)

Yakon (photo by Ange McNally)



Tips for a successful backyard worm farm to reduce household waste

Want to reduce household waste? Did you know worm farms are a great way to reduce household waste and produce castings for your garden, full of nutrients and beneficial microbes? In fact, composting worms are so efficient they can reduce the volume of organic matter by more than 90 per cent.

The three types of composting worms that are most commonly used in Australia are the red wiggler, Indian blue and tiger. These worms are much smaller than the earthworms that you find in garden soil, only growing to about 7.5 centimetres. Composting worms are not very good at burying in soil and much prefer to live in decaying matter.

So what is the best way to set up your own backyard worm farm?

The four fundamentals

To keep your compost worms happy, there are 4 fundamentals to keep in mind:

Temperature — Worms are much like humans in that they prefer a temperature between 18–24 degrees. Excessive heat will kill worms and cold conditions will slow them down. Maintaining a suitable temperature for a worm farm is challenging in our climate.

Moisture — A worm farm must always be moist (but not saturated). A worm farm needs good drainage. It will be necessary to water the worm farm in warm weather.

Light — Worms will always quickly burrow away from sunlight as light is lethal to them. A worm farm needs a lid or cover to ensure that the conditions are dark.

Bedding — This is the home base for the worms. When establishing a new worm farm it should have at least 150mm of bedding material. The worms will eat all the bedding material over time, but their



Cid Riley's business Global Worming operates large-scale worm farms at many sites including at the Canberra City Farm site on Dairy road

preference is to feed on the food scraps you add to the farm.

The most suitable materials to use as bedding are high in carbon and water retentive such as:

- coconut fibre block (just soak in a bucket of water)
- newspaper and cardboard (avoid glossy paper)
- sugar cane mulch, lucerne and pea hay
- aged cow, horse or sheep manure
- aged lawn clippings and shredded leaves from deciduous trees, and
- compost.

Use a variety of bedding materials for best results. A favourite of mine is a mixture of coconut fibre, shredded newspaper and worm castings or compost. The bedding should be moist but not saturated. As a guide, if you squeeze a handful of bedding material you should get a few drops of water out.

Worm farm options

Worm farms come in all shapes and sizes, from small self-contained plastic containers to in-ground systems. There are many DIY options too with my favourite being a raised garden bed modified to use as a worm farm.

You need to select a worm farm setup based on the amount of organic waste your household produces each week. The depth of the farm is important as it helps to regulate the temperature and moisture conditions. However, it is the *surface area* that is important in terms of handling food waste. For a family producing about one kilogram of food scraps each day, I would recommend a worm farm with a surface area of 1 to 1.5 metres square in size.

It is important to think carefully about the position of the worm farm. For example, it is best to keep the popular black plastic worm farms undercover or in a shed/garage. In our climate they can get too cold in winter and too hot in summer, if they are too exposed.

All worm farms need a cover or lid. This will keep the pests out (like cats, dogs, mice, flies, vinegar flies and birds) and also help to maintain the correct temperature and moisture conditions.

Feeding your worms

It is best to feed your worms once or twice a week. Before feeding, always check your worm farm first. Make sure that the farm is moist, the worms are working away close to the surface and that there are no bad smells — a healthy worm farm should smell earthy.

If your worm farm smells bad, it usually means there is something not quite right. Typically, the odour is a result of either over feeding or too much moisture in the farm. Aeration and mixing in some new bedding material will usually solve these problems.

When feeding the worms, it is best to spread the food over a large surface area rather than just heaping it in one spot.

What you should and shouldn't feed your worms

Worm farms can handle most food waste, however the smaller the farm, the more careful you have to be. For small backyard worm farms, it is best not to include too many acidic foods



Red wigglers, Indian blue and tiger worms are the three main composting worms.

like garlic, onion and citrus, as well as meat and dairy.

Larger backyard worm farms or raised garden bed-style farms are big enough to handle most food waste.

I like to think about worm farming a bit like cooking. Lots of variety and not too much of anything. It's great to have a little bit of lemon zest, but if we ate a whole plateful of lemon peel it's going to make us feel sick. It's like that with worm farms — if they get some lemon peel they'll be able to handle it, but if you completely fill your worm farm it will create problems.

Collecting the vermicast for your garden

Worm farms produce nutrient-rich castings or *vermicast* which can be collected once or twice per year and added to your garden.

There are several techniques that can be used to harvest worm castings. The most suitable technique depends on the type of worm farm that you are using. Generally, after a worm farm has been operating for 6 months or more there will be an active area

(the feeding area full of worms) and a 'mature' area (predominantly worm castings with not many worms). Aim to harvest the mature area of the farm.

After you harvest the castings, break up any clods to get the mix nice and friable and then expose to sunlight — any remaining worms will migrate to the bottom of the pile. The castings can be scraped away slowly and any remaining worms added back to your farm.

Worm farming is highly effective if you get the basics right. And it is incredibly rewarding for you and your garden.

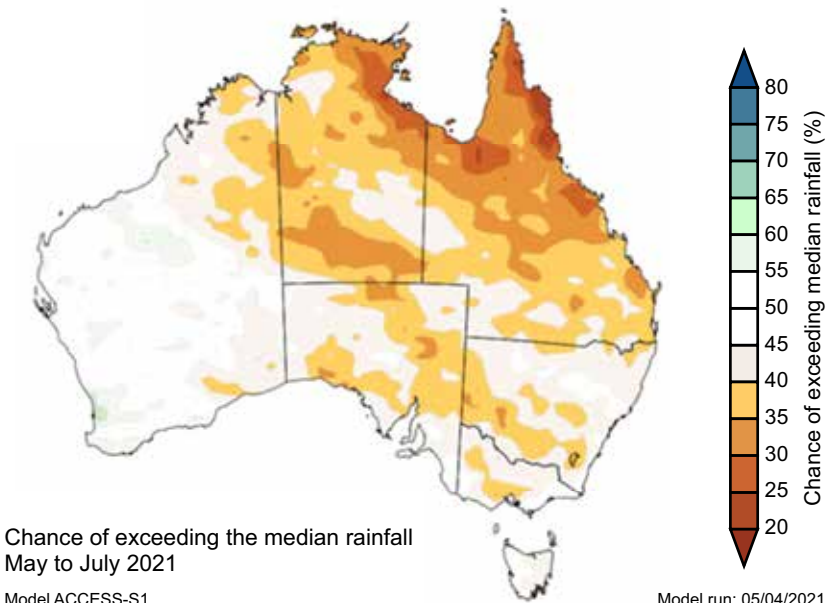
Cid Riley runs a large-scale worm farming business called Global Worming. It manages over six tonnes of organic waste each week sourced from more than sixty sites including government departments, businesses and schools. The large worm farms used by Global Worming are up to 25 metres long and 1.8 metres wide.

Follow on Instagram — @global_worming.

—Cid Riley (article and photos)

Weather outlook is neutral — neither El Niño or La Niña

The Bureau of Meteorology reported on 13 April 2021 that indicators are neutral with no sign of El Niño or La Niña developing. Climate model outlooks suggest the tropical Pacific Ocean will remain at neutral levels at least until September. Tropical Pacific Ocean sea surface temperatures continue at neutral values. Below the surface, much of the central to eastern tropical Pacific has warmed over the past few months, and is now at near-average temperatures. Atmospheric indicators are also at neutral levels. The Southern Oscillation Index (SOI) is close to zero, while trade winds are mostly near average. Cloudiness near the Date Line has increased in the past week to above-average levels, in contrast to almost all of the preceding 12 months when below-average cloudiness was a feature across the region. The return to neutral conditions in autumn is



Chance of exceeding the median rainfall May to July 2021

Model ACCESS-S1
Base Period: 1990–2012

Model run: 05/04/2021
Issued: 08/04/2021

typical of the life cycle of La Niña/El Niño events.

The Indian Ocean Dipole is also neutral. It typically has little influence on Australian climate from December to April.

All seven climate models surveyed by the Bureau suggest a neutral state is the most likely scenario through the remainder of the southern hemisphere autumn and winter.

The Bureau says that during this time, other influences, such as the Madden-Julian Oscillation or localised sea surface temperatures,

are likely to play a bigger role in affecting Australian rainfall patterns.

—Andy Hrast (article)

Dam levels in the Canberra region and capital cities

	Apr '21	Apr '20
ACT storages	100%	51%
Murray-Darling Basin	55%	29%
Burrinjuck Dam	87%	38%
Blowering Dam	78%	47%
Sydney	96%	82%
Melbourne	72%	61%
Brisbane	64%	69%
Adelaide	46%	39%
Perth	39%	38%

ACCOMMODATION AVAILABLE

WITH KEEN ORGANIC GARDENERS

This might be right for you — or someone you may know who is looking for a special place to live and call home. Our place has good energy, is kept clean with a furnished bedroom that would suit a non-smoking, humble person/couple.

Someone with a happy predisposition and a good sense of humour would fit in well — as we laugh a lot. We have a separate lounge / TV room that is seldom used. Our dislikes are dishonesty, animal cruelty, drugs, and greed.

We are keen organic gardeners and share our produce, and a variety of lovely evening meals, if required.

Four toy poodles are our special friends and entertainment — (ideally no more “babies” please).

Our home in Kaleen is spacious and in a quiet location adjacent to public transport to Belconnen and Civic.

Irene nursed for 20 years (old habits die hard), cooks a lot, has written a health cookbook, “A Wake-Up Call” and works from home as a medical herbalist and teacher, and home grooms the “babies” regularly. There is a separate entrance for the clinic.



We have shared with others in the past and a long-term arrangement is preferred. Others have described our home as a caring and peaceful place to be.

We enjoy meaningful chats, long walks, going to the coast and keeping fit.

Please contact Irene 0427 276 886 or Victor 0408 276 886



Locally made using FSC (sustainable) wood and recycled plastic

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Contact us on the web at canberaised.business.site

or Facebook or Instagram @canberaised

Make an appointment to come see our products in our display garden in Weston and decide if they are for you.

The new HerbSavers and PlantGrowers from Canberaised

Bring that elegant dash of green (or red, or whatever you fancy!) to your kitchen counter-top or window and home areas (or office) with **our new self-watering ('wicking') planters** made from a lovely range of woods. They will enhance your home for a very long time.

Grow your own herbs to cook with at your fingertips or pamper your favourite indoor plants in these. Or pop those overpriced potted herbs from the supermarket in them to double their size and get full use of them. These planters pay for themselves very quickly.

And stop worrying about remembering to water every day, or overwatering, or what will happen to your plants during your two-week holiday! What's more, the soil surface stays dry in these planters to reduce insect infestations inside your home while the roots get plenty from down under.

- Wicking' (self-watering) for the kitchen countertop and home – made from your choice of pine, acacia, merbau or rubberwood
- Elegant and functional, looks great on your kitchen-countertop and you have fresh culinary herbs at your fingertips, or houseplants beautifully presented
- Will not need watering for two weeks or more when you're away
- You can pop store-bought potted herbs into them to get maximal use – convert a \$4 plant into something bigger and longer-lasting – your HerbSaver or PlantGrower will more than pay for itself within a year if you frequently use herbs in cooking
- Sizes range from a single-herb planter to our four-herb planter



HERBSAVER ~~\$50~~ **\$40**
PLANTGROWER ~~\$150~~ **\$120**

- Can look great on your office desk or living room or any other room to add that dash of green and enhance the aliveness of your home

Planted out with a starter herb or houseplant that is in season (e.g. basil, coriander, parsley), or provided empty for you to install your favourites (planting and care instructions provided)

Prices are **\$50** for the **HerbSaver** (15 cm x 15 cm x 20/25 cm H) and **\$150** for the **PlantGrower** (30 cm x 30 cm x 30 cm), but we are offering a 20% introductory discount available until the end of May 2021.

The new BalconyBeds and PatioPlanters from Canberaised

Introducing the new self-watering ('wicking') planters from Canberaised designed for your balcony or patio – ideal for those who live in apartments and townhouses. Of course you can also put them on the deck of your home or concreted area of your front/ back yard.



These are quite tall for wicking beds (70 cm high), which means less bending to tend them. They also have greater soil depth than other planters on the market so that you can grow just about anything, including small trees (e.g. citrus). They are framed in gorgeous Merbau hardwood and have sides of corrugated steel in various colours (all wood also possible).

They are fitted with quality WaterUps™ wicking cells made from recycled plastic, and food-grade recyclable LLDPE liners as standard, and a variety of profiles and colours of corrugated steel are available. All-wood options are available in Merbau (which can be oiled), and treated pine (which can be primed and painted with a hardwearing outdoor paint).

The price of the **PatioPlanter** ranges from **\$400** to **\$450** depending on the profile of corrugated steel or wood chosen for the sides.

BalconyBed prices range from **\$500** to **\$550** for the small (depending on sides chosen) and from **\$600** to **\$650** for the large. We will deliver within the ACT.

*PatioPlanter (57 x 57 cm, left)
 and BalconyBed (97 x 57 cm, right)*

Gardening as resistance

We were pleasantly surprised to spot this small community garden in the corner of Raymond Park in inner Brisbane, right next to one of Kangaroo Point's busiest streets. The garden is one of several established by Growing Forward, who describe themselves on Facebook as ...

... a small group responding to climate induced disaster and health pandemics by growing food and gathering basic resources to distribute to people in need as a form of resistance.

Growing Forward explain that they want to create a sustainable alternative to the current environmentally destructive method of producing food.

<http://chuffed.org/project/growing-forward-meanjin-brisbane>

— Matt Mawson (article and photos)



Adult WORMS for sale

Packs include 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 wiggler, 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 Warming

Bungendore Road, Tarago NSW 2580

globalwarming@mail.com

Mobile 0408 496 767

Instagram: @global_worming

(Queensland blue) pumpkin soup

Ingredients

Approximately 2 kg of Queensland blue pumpkin, chopped into large pieces
Two large onions, roughly chopped
One tin of four-bean mix, thoroughly drained and rinsed
A good shake of curry powder
Salt and pepper

Method

Spray oil on inside of crockpot and add ingredients.

Pour in enough milk to cover a third of the pumpkins. Can add more later if needed.

Cook for a few hours on low, stirring occasionally to remove lumps.

Serve with a drizzle of cream and home-made bread.


— Sandra Watkins



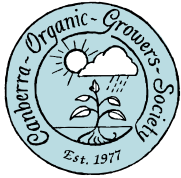
social enterprise cafe

We provide inclusive employment and practical training opportunities for migrant and refugee women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds through an innovative and sustainable vegetarian cafe located in the beautiful gallery space at Strathnairn Arts.

Come visit us and help create a society where diversity is celebrated and equal opportunity is expected!

 Open Thursday and Sunday 9am - 4pm, Friday and Saturday 9am - 8pm
Gallery Homestead, Strathnairn Arts, 90 Stockdill Drive, 2615

www.cafesteppingstone.com



winter planting guide

VEGETABLES

Asparagus

Prepare the bed before you buy the crowns to plant in late winter/early spring. Since this is a perennial crop which can last for up to 20 years it is well worth the effort of establishing properly. Asparagus needs good drainage and plentiful food and can be planted very successfully in a raised bed enriched with compost and well rotted manure. Seaweed is an excellent mulch.

The crowns are planted in a trench, but with the roots straddling a ridge. Cover so dormant shoots are about 4 cm below the surface. Do not harvest spears the first year, and only harvest for a few weeks the second year.

Remember this is a long-term investment.

Broad beans

Late plantings of broad beans in June may be very slow to germinate. Better results are usually achieved with an autumn or early spring planting.

Kohlrabi

Prepare the soil well with lots of organic matter. Needs rapid growth for flavour.

Lettuce

Plant only winter varieties of lettuces (cos, salad bowl, oakleaf, butterhead and mignonette varieties).

Onions

Mid-season varieties are often sown late autumn or early winter and long-keeping varieties in winter. However, the timing of mid- or late-season varieties is well worth experimenting with by making successive plantings to determine the best time in your specific locality.

Peas

Peas can be planted in August/September for an early summer crop but may be very slow to germinate if the ground is still very cold or wet.

Rhubarb

This is a perennial but plants generally only produce well for a few years, then fresh plants need to be started from subdivided crowns planted in late winter or early spring. It is very hardy, but it is a gross feeder and will appreciate lots of compost or well rotted manure and plenty of water.

Other possibilities

Growers may wish to start a number of crops in late winter rather than early spring if the winter is mild or if they have a sheltered garden bed.

These crops include artichokes (Globe and Jerusalem), beetroot, cabbage, carrots, potatoes and radish.

Frost-sensitive vegetables such as capsicum, eggplant and tomatoes can be started early in August indoors but may need a heated glasshouse or warm spot to germinate and will certainly need protection before being planted out in spring.

FRUIT

Winter is the usual time to plant and prune soft fruits including:

Strawberries

Plant certified stock or propagate from runners (not from plants more than two years old) in a soil enriched with compost or well-rotted manure. Remove old leaves and excess runners to tidy up the plants in winter.

Berries

Raspberries, youngberries, boysenberries etc. can be planted during winter while they are dormant.

Remember, these bear fruit on canes grown in the previous year so to prune remove all the old canes in autumn or winter making sure to leave the current season's growth for next year's fruit. Autumn fruiting raspberries bear on the current year's growth so are cut to the ground in winter after they have fruited.

Currants

Red, white or black currants are easy bushes to grow in Canberra as they withstand very cold weather and don't mind heavy clay soil. Currants produce a fruit rarely available commercially. They need to be pruned in winter to remove dead wood and around a third of the oldest branches to encourage new growth and allow for good air circulation.

	JUN	JUL	AUG
Artichokes		T	T
Asparagus		T	ST
Broad beans		S	S
Kohlrabi			S
Lettuce			S
Onions			T
Peas	ST	ST	S
Rhubarb			T
Silverbeet		T	S
Snowpeas			ST
Spinach	T	T	S

S = seed sowing; T = transplanting

What's On



COGS has expanded its social media presence!

As you may know, COGS has been on Facebook for a while but we are excited to announce we are now also on Instagram!

Keep up to date with the latest news from COGS and your fellow gardeners by following us @cogs_act

Got a photo or story to share? We are always looking for great content to feature, so feel free to either email them to editor@cogs.asn.au or send us a direct message (DM) on Facebook or Instagram.

#happygardening!

Let's talk about gardening

Our social media community is growing every week.

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

Visit us on Facebook at 'Canberra Organic Growers Society' and 'like' the page or follow us on Instagram @cogs_act.

OUR FOLLOWERS –

 **facebook 3267**
 **Instagram 157**

Are your details up-to-date? Please remember to email members@cogs.asn.au with any changes to your email or postal address, or correspondence preferences.



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.

Advertising rates

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

Size	Issue	4 Issues
1/8 page	\$9 (\$7)	\$30 (\$25)
1/4 page	\$18 (\$15)	\$60 (\$50)
1/2 page	\$36 (\$30)	\$120 (\$100)
Full page	\$72 (\$60)	\$240 (\$200)

Please contact editor@cogs.asn.au

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Celebrating twenty years of Holder community garden

Photos by Neil Williams

