

Canberra organic



Spring 2021
Vol 29 No 3 Issue 112

Cook community garden - celebrating 20 years

***Floriade: Reimagined* blooms again**

COGS life membership awards

Gardening in a time of pandemic

The quarterly publication of the Canberra Organic Growers Society Inc.



Editor's note

Welcome to the spring 2021 edition of *Canberra Organic*. After a wet and windy winter in our nation's capital, I am looking forward to a wonderful spring growing season. Spring for me is always a time of renewal, shaking off the winter cold and getting back out into the garden — with endless growing possibilities lying in wait.

This edition, as always, is filled with wonderful contributions from our members. In 2021, a number of COGS gardens are celebrating milestones and it has been wonderful to learn more about the evolution of the Cook community garden over the past 20 years. I've also made a note in my diary for Kambah's 20th birthday open day — not to be missed!

We offer an interesting article on the history and value of pomegranates, from which I enjoyed learning about their link with Persephone, the Greek goddess of spring. We have put out a call for your help in updating the COGS growing guides and seasonal guides, hoping that our members' expertise will allow us to expand our database of plants. We have collected some wonderful pictures of the birds and 'wildlife' in our suburban gardens. Finally don't forget to check out the weather report, in which it looks like the rain will be here until at least mid-spring.

Despite the rain, there has never been a better time to pull on the wellies/gumboots and get into the garden. Wishing you all the best for the growing season ahead.

—Rebecca Travers
(article and photo)



My union jack or tartan wellies are perfect for spring gardening, I can't wait to pull them on again!

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FRONT COVER: "Floriade" by Matt Mawson

President's column

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

I am writing this in the depth of winter. It is cold and overcast with wet conditions forecast for most of the coming week. However, whilst working in the garden I could see new buds were starting to form on the fruit trees and the promise of the renewal of spring was not far away.

Spring is also a time of renewal for COGS gardens. Our community gardens hold their Annual General Meetings during September and I would encourage all members to consider stepping forward and nominating for a position on their garden committee.

Our community gardens don't run themselves. COGS is fortunate in having a dedicated group of people in each garden who that work together to run their garden. Thank you to all those involved. If you can, please consider giving up some time to help out in your garden — it is very rewarding volunteer work.

The cold and wet conditions have meant that gardening activities in the gardens have slowed but not stopped, with a number of gardens undertaking upgrading works. It also has meant that a number of garden committees have had the time to prepare and submit proposals for funding in the latest round of the *ACT Government Community Garden Grants Program*. It is pleasing that four of our community gardens have submitted proposals for funding:

- Mitchell community garden — a shelter for a person with disabilities who regularly visits and gardens in the garden;
- Holder community garden — refurbishment and upgrades to the water reticulation in the garden;
- Oaks Estate community garden — a new fence and gate to bring the standard of the garden fencing into line with its surrounding park location; and

- O'Connor community garden — a waste food recycling system to serve the broader O'Connor community and provide compost for the garden.

Good luck to each of the gardens with their proposals.

The Infrastructure Subcommittee has been visiting all the gardens to prepare an inventory of resources in each garden and identify the greatest needs for future investment. The report from the Subcommittee is expected in August and will be used to guide future investment decisions by the COGS Executive Committee.

A very successful open day was held at the Charnwood community garden on 29 May 2021. Thank you to Teresa and your committee. Further open days are planned at the O'Connor Garden (2 October 2021), Kambah (21 November 2021) and Cook Garden (28 November 2021). The latter two open days coincide with the 20-year anniversaries of those gardens. The Holder community garden was also due to celebrate its 20th anniversary in July 2021, with an event planned for current and past garden members. Unfortunately it had to be postponed due to the recent COVID-19 outbreak in Sydney, but will be rescheduled for later in the year.

COGS gardens continue to receive far-reaching and positive exposure in the local media and online. The COGS website is a well-utilised resource and our social media channels (Facebook and Instagram) are both popular. Our Facebook page has over 3700 followers and 4000 views per month. Thank you to all the people who prepare material and put themselves forward for interviews.

All this positive exposure means that COGS and our gardens are well regarded. Andrew Braddock MLA, Greens Member for Yerrabi visited the Crace and Mitchell community gardens recently and spoke very positively of the gardens in the Legislative Assembly. His speech can be viewed at <http://aod.dpa.act.gov.au/A92854>. Peter Cain MLA,



Liberal Member for Ginninderra and a COGS member refers to COGS on his social media pages. A positive meeting was also held with Rebecca Vasarotti MLA, Minister for the Environment and Greens Member for Kurrajong at the O'Connor community garden.

The challenge for the COGS Executive Committee is how to translate this political goodwill towards COGS into firm outcomes, in particular in the development of a new garden. An additional garden to provide plots for those on the waiting list was one of key future developments identified at the planning day earlier this year.

Other developments in the past few months have included an approach to COGS to participate in the planning for a community garden at the Alexander Maconochie Centre; an invitation to participate in the Canberra Region Food Collaborative — Consulting Committee and an approach from a church group about the possibility of collaborating on a community garden in the church grounds in Gungahlin.

As I mentioned at the start, spring is time for renewal in our gardens. It is also the time to renew our COGS memberships and plot holdings. There is no change to the membership fees — \$35 and \$30 (for concession card holders) — and the plot fees also remain unchanged — \$4.20 per square metre.

Invoices will have gone out in early August and are due by 31 August. I ask that you pay promptly to make the work of the Treasurer and the garden Convenors as easy as possible. Sending you well wishes for spring. Happy gardening.

—Andy Hrast (article)

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
Charnwood	Teresa Rose — charnwood_convenor@cogs.asn.au
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Floriade 2020, outside the National Portrait Gallery (photo, Matt Mawson)



Cook community garden — celebrating 20 years

In a wonderful milestone for another of our COGS' gardens, the Cook community garden will be celebrating their 20th Anniversary on Sunday 28 November 2021 from 10am – 12pm.

The organising committee is planning on making every effort to contact foundation garden members, past convenors and current plot holders to invite them to join in the celebrations. A COGS members' meeting will be held concurrently as part of the celebration.

Cook gardener Julie Gorrell is currently preparing a short history of the Cook community garden, which will detail the early days through to the more recent developments. It will also highlight the wonderful efforts of individuals, including Keith Colls, Steve Sutton, Adrienne Fazekis and other COGS members, who were involved in the establishment of the garden and its facilities.

As an example, Janet and Ilya joined the Cook community garden early in 2002 and set about creating a very productive organic source of vegetables. They worked hard over the subsequent years enriching the soil to get the best produce — so successful that these days it has to be completely netted to discourage the local fauna. The images below also show how the perimeter plantings have grown over the years into a very effective screen.

We look forward to welcoming you in November at the Members' meeting to celebrate this wonderful milestone.

Rainfall record (2019–2021)

The Cook community garden rainfall chart clearly shows the well above average rainfall in the garden for the first 6 months of 2021. Although the abundant rain is gratefully appreciated, it has made for difficult conditions in which to garden effectively.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
2019	58	29	81	9	49	21	6	22	39	22	18	0	354
2020	12	80	99	71	26	62	38	143	51	162	67	48	859
2021	92	102	153	1	75	132							555*



(above) Janet's plot in the early days of the Cook garden (2002)

(below) Janet's fully netted plot in 2021.



The run off from Mt. Painter has been considerable and a number of plots have been waterlogged for several months. However, our intrepid gardeners have still managed to harvest good crops of brassicas, spinach and silverbeet. Good plantings of onions and garlic are also in evidence, alongside lots of action in preparation of beds for spring planting.

Garden projects

Since my last update in *Canberra Organic* I am pleased to report that we have completed the renewal of tap risers and tap fittings throughout the garden, courtesy of funding from

the *ACT Community Gardens Grant program*. This project, led by Mike Avent, has been really successful and has reduced the number of ad-hoc calls outs to Mike for plumbing assistance.

We have also nearly finished the repair and refurbishment of our pergola structure. Mervyn Dorrough and his team have done a wonderful job in replacing rotten timbers, shadecloth and repainting the structure. All that remains is to lay additional paving to provide a base for the BBQ.

Our autumn working bee was well attended and we managed to mulch all pathways between garden plots — which meant carting a lot of mulch from a pile donated by Treetops Arborist from outside the garden to the individual plots.

—Peter Weddell (article), Janet (photos)

Kambah community garden – celebrating 20 years of gardening with an open day

With a number of the COGS' community gardens celebrating milestones this year, the Kambah community garden is planning another open day on 21 November 2021, which will also mark the garden's 20th anniversary.

Kambah has held several successful open days, the most recent last October, at which the garden made about \$800 in seedling sales. More than 100 people visited the event, which also featured talks on topics such as seed saving, micro-greens, wicking beds and, in light-hearted vein, the influence of music on plant growth.

'We're hoping to repeat last year's successful formula of sales and speakers, and perhaps invite a special guest to mark and celebrate our 20th anniversary,' said Kambah co-convener Allan Sharp. 'Some of our gardeners have already begun planting seeds for the event.'



Visitors to the 2020 Open Day listening to a talk on wicking beds

The garden will also consider inviting other groups compatible with COGS' aims to participate in the event, in the expectation that this will attract people who would not normally attend an organic garden open day.

Make sure you mark the date in your diary and join together with your fellow COGS gardeners to celebrate 20 years of organic gardening in Kambah.

—Allan Sharp (article and photos)

Seedling sales in 2020 proved popular and raised about \$800



Kambah community garden — *Floriade: Reimagined* blooms again

After a successful 2020, the Kambah community garden is banking on a colourful spring, having joined *Floriade: Reimagined* again this year.

Garden members recently planted 400 tulip bulbs and the same number of annuals in pots, old wheelbarrows, and garden beds and look forward a display to equal last year's when Kambah joined the first *Floriade: Reimagined*.

The community aspect of *Floriade* was introduced in 2020 following a change in approach to *Floriade* in response to the pandemic.

This year more than 80 community groups have planted bulbs and annuals to create a tulip trail throughout Canberra.

To meet community demand, an additional 300,000 bulbs and annuals were made available this year for locals to plant, nurture and enjoy.

—Allan Sharp (article and photos)

(top) Barbara Jesiolowski with a tray of annuals

(bottom) Kambah gardeners planting tulip bulbs and annuals ready for *Floriade*





COGS Kambah Community Garden

Cnr Springbett St
and O'Halloran Cct
Kambah

20TH BIRTHDAY OPEN DAY & SEEDLING SALE

Sunday 21st November
11am - 3pm

*Program details for the day's events
will be on the COGS Facebook Page*



Mitchell community garden — the benefits I enjoy from organic gardening

While our garden was an oasis of flourishing green vegetation in March, the winter frosts have changed everything. They swept through without any consideration for the last of our pumpkins, tomatoes, chilies, beans, and leafy greens.

So, we did what mad organic veggie growers do: we cleared the dead vines and planted some cold hardy leafy greens and winter veggies. The ever-reliable garlic and onions just soldiered on and the recently planted broccoli, cauliflower and brussels sprouts just needed a little care from us.

The continued soil feeding, composting and mulching through-out the seasons shows that little extra work each season pays such well-deserved dividends. Adding those companion herbs and flowers also provides the soil with much more benefit than the effort in planting them. How easy it is when we know how, so a huge thank you to all those who write such informative garden books on organic growing and the many COGS members, recent and past, who have shared their tips over the years.

Being part of a group of worldwide organic vegetable growers is one of the most beneficial activities for us all and for those of us who have moved into retirement — it is a real benefit.

We not only gently exercise while we are growing our own organic food, but we also get to share so much of what we have learned over the years, with our garden friends — both young and old.

I am always amazed at how much can be learned from growing a tomato plant — or any vegetable really. Receiving tips from those who have grown tomatoes all their life makes my journey so much easier and more enjoyable. You cannot buy that kind of experience as it has been handed



down over the generations and it is 'hands-on' at its best.

So, I look forward to planning my spring and summer crops while I am carefully and happily looking after my wonderful crop of garlic, leafy greens, broccoli, rocket, peas and herbs. I am looking forward to my crop of broad beans producing yummy beans, as I enjoy picking them off the vine to enjoy raw while I'm gardening.

Those who know me will know that my most favourite part of growing

my own veggies is the enjoyment I get from picking a bit of this and a bit of that to enjoy raw, as they are so flavoursome — and rewarding too. Sometimes I get to try out something new from another gardener, as sharing is also so rewarding. My soups have been amazing this year with all the new tips I've received on adding different leafy greens to the pot.

Our garden members at Mitchell come from a wide range of nationalities and ages, so our range of vegetables and herbs is enormous. Just when I think something is a useless weed, someone comes up with a recipe to enjoy it. Our French gardener has many types of leaves for making new varieties of tea — well, new to me anyway!

Now in my 70's, I am so happy to see so many young people getting into the productive activity of growing their own organic vegetables. We can only hope that this activity becomes the norm for their young children and for the senior members of our society. It is one of the best healthy, enjoyable, socially interactive and rewarding activities we can spend our days on.

— Narelle McLean
(article and photos)

Mitchell garden from the air



2021–22 COGS Executive Committee

In March 2021, the 2021-22 COGS Executive Committee was elected at the Annual General Meeting. So what better opportunity than to meet some members of your Executive Committee, find out what they love growing and what they hope to achieve in their role?

Andy Hrast



Andy enjoys a tea-party with his grandchildren

President of COGS since the COVID-delayed AGM in August 2020, I have been on the COGS Executive Committee for more than 10 years. Prior to this role I have been the Treasurer (4.5 years), Vice-President and Secretary, and was Convenor at the Betty Cornhill Garden for a number of years.

My parents were keen gardeners and so it was only natural that I continue the tradition. I first took up a plot in the COGS Cotter Garden (now Betty Cornhill) in about 1980, when 3 kids, a dog and shade and roots from large trees made gardening at home impractical. I was introduced to COGS by a parent on the sideline of one of the boys football matches.

The process of gardening is, for me, as important as the produce from the garden. Gardening is the never ending 'project' of planning and doing. In

times past it was an important outlet to relieve the frustrations of work, especially Minister's offices.

I enjoy growing vegetables that are not too attractive to predators and that contribute to the household food economy for longer periods of time. I find carrots, potatoes, pumpkins and tomatoes (made up as sauce for longevity) are the most satisfying.

Retirement gave me the opportunity to take a more active role in COGS. I see my role as President as one of providing a supportive organisational environment in which the COGS Executive Committee and Garden Committees can run COGS and its gardens for the benefit of the more than 500 members. This involves an inclusive but decisive leadership and advocacy on behalf of COGS and its members to the Government and other like-minded organisations in Canberra.

Michele Barson



I have been interested in plants and gardening most of my life. Moving to Canberra in the early 1980s I finally had enough space to grow strawberries and vegetables as well as ornamental plants.

I joined COGS about 13 years ago, initially gardening at Kaleen, and moving to Cook in 2010 when a plot became available. I inherited a plot where the soil had been very well managed and enjoy growing a wide range of crops, especially asparagus, garlic and raspberries.

I have been COGS' Vice President for almost two years. I am now retired and have more time for COGS and gardening. I am hoping to work with others in COGS to make plots available to more gardeners and to improve the sustainability of our activities.

Neil Williams

My role on the COGS Executive Committee is as Treasurer. I am also the Convenor of the Holder community garden. The President, Andy, 'twisted my arm' and sweet talked me into what a fabulous opportunity being Treasurer was! Seriously, it was an opportunity to learn a new set of skills and to help out the Committee.

I am not really a gardener — my wife is. She has been a member of Holder for about 10 years. One of my passions is cooking and I love turning her fabulous produce into great meals. My wife grows lots of wonderful things, including pumpkin, zucchini, garlic, chillies, potatoes, beans, eggplants, raspberries, capsicum, corn, and cabbage.

One thing I love doing is composting — I am continually amazed at the work worms and other small insects and microbes do to turn food scraps and other organic material into beautiful soil conditioner. I do lots of composting at home and also at the Holder community garden.

Through my role in the COGS Executive Committee I hope to achieve a smooth running of our invoices and payments. The role involves sending out around 500 invoices to members at plot and membership renewal time, as well as payment of garden expenses, the largest of which is our water bills.

One of the key things I am involved in is a review of infrastructure across all the Gardens. COGS is currently in a sound financial position (something I hope to continue) and has certainty from the 10-year Licence with the

ACT Government, which should enable some investment in our gardens.

The Infrastructure Review is progressing well. We have visited all twelve gardens and are in the process of preparing a report for the August meeting of the Executive Committee. The results of the Review will be advised to members in coming months.

Rebecca Travers



My role is as the Editor of COGS' quarterly publication *Canberra Organic*. I also look after COGS' new Instagram account. I was approached to take on the role of magazine editor, as I used to prepare a newsletter for the Mitchell community garden and many years ago worked in media and communications.

One of my first memories of gardening involves growing radishes in a garden bed when I was about 6 or 7 years old. I remember being so excited when I pulled the plump, red radishes out of the soil. I've had different levels of success since then, both on a balcony garden, in a garden plot and more recently in my courtyard where I am trying to make the most of the small space.

For me, one of the things I love most about gardening is watching things grow. I also how gardening forces you to slow down, breathe and appreciate nature. I like growing zucchinis and tomatoes because I find they are really versatile to add to my cooking. I also enjoy growing herbs, as they are great to have on hand to add to dishes. I've always wanted to grow Brussels sprouts — which are one of my favourite vegetables — but

none of my attempts so far have been successful.

I hope that my role as Editor brings the stories, knowledge and ideas of COGS members into your mailboxes and inboxes. There is so much knowledge amongst our members — it's so important to share it.

Jo McMillan



The flowers at Jo's plot are just beautiful.

I have been involved with the COGS Executive Committee since 2013 after becoming Convenor of the Charnwood community garden. I then took on the role of COGS Membership Secretary for a couple of years before taking on the Gardens Coordinator position in 2015. The Coordinator acts as a point of contact for the Convenors of the 12 COGS gardens.

I have loved gardening since I was a child, growing annual flowers and pottering in mum's fern house. I joined the Charnwood community garden in 2012 and haven't looked back in terms of the variety of fruit and vegetables (and flowers) that the plot in the community garden has enabled me to grow.

While I do like to grow a few vegetables amongst the flowers, it has been the friendships made through my involvement with the Committee and the Charnwood community garden that has made gardening with COGS so enjoyable. If I had to narrow it down, my favourite thing to grow would be butternut pumpkins (with just a few flowers around the perimeter to attract pollinators).

I have been in my current role for several years now. I believe my main achievement has been to coordinate a forum where the Convenors of the 12 COGS gardens can connect with one another, share ideas and discuss issues that are common to all our garden communities. I hope to be able to give the role more of my time in the years to come.

Teresa Rose



From L to R: Holly Barnes, Teresa Rose, Jemima Barnes and Thomas Rose. That's Chardonnay the scarecrow with the red hair!

I have been a General Member of the COGS Executive Committee for nearly two years and the Convenor of the Charnwood community garden for nearly three. Being a link between the COGS Executive Committee and the Charnwood Garden Committee has allowed our garden to grow in numbers of gardeners, numbers of plots, and gather support for outreach to the wider community.

I have been gardening all my life at home and since 2012 at the Charnwood community garden. As a child, I accompanied my father to the paddocks in Western Sydney to collect cow manure. My job was to break up the manure and stir it in a 44-gallon drum. Liquid gold! I loved that job! Whilst my children are too busy to garden currently, the grandchildren love coming to the Charnwood community garden during the Queensland school holidays.

Nutrition has always been my main driver for gardening, but since joining the community garden I have found that camaraderie runs a close second. Monaro Purple Garlic is the crop I love growing most. I supply my own household and those of my three children who reside interstate. Sebago and Dutch Cream potatoes are my second favourite things to grow.

My skills lie in scientific research and education, so I hope to continue to contribute to the COGS Executive Committee where needed.

Jyl Thompson



My role as part COGS Executive Committee is the Secretary, which involves undertaking the secretariat duties for COGS meetings.

I've been gardening all of my life and particularly enjoy that gardening is meditative, creative and produces edibles. My favourite thing to grow would have to be herbs.

Through my role in the COGS Executive Committee, I hope to make a difference and provide support to COGS community garden members and the COGS Executive Committee.

Narelle McLean



My role on the COGS Executive Committee is as a General Member and my reason for being involved is to learn more about the COGS organisation and to be part of the planning and progress of the gardens.

I've been gardening at the Mitchell community garden for 7 years now, but generally I have potted around in the garden for years. For me, I most enjoy the connection with nature and growing a variety of plants myself. My favourite thing to grow would have to be tomatoes — but isn't that what most people like to grow?

Through my role in the COGS Executive Committee, I really just hope to be part of the discussion and planning for the sustainability of the organisation — especially the gardens, ensuring they are here for years to come.

Peter Rouse



I'm a General Member of the COGS Executive Committee and nominated at the last AGM, as I wanted to help out. As current Convenor at Betty Cornhill community garden, I could already attend meetings as an observer but also being a member of the Committee also gives me the opportunity put forward my point of view. I'm on the Committee to contribute where I can.

I have been gardening for about fifty years and the thing I enjoy most about gardening is eating what I have grown, nothing beats really fresh, organic produce. Picking my favourite thing to grow however, is too hard — berries, broad beans, carrots, leeks, parsnips, roses, spring bulbs and tree peonies is probably the short list.

Cathy Morison



When I joined COGS and began working my plot at the Kambah

community garden, I mentioned to the then-Convenor Neville Jackson that I had spent most of my working life in IT. Neville became the President of COGS shortly thereafter, and he asked me to give him some assistance with the web hosting and emails. From there I took on the role of Web Manager, which was expanded to include the Information Officer role at the next AGM.

My earliest memory of gardening was as a child at home, helping my Dad dig over the annual veggie plot. I have always kept a veggie plot and have recognised and appreciated the therapeutic value of gardening, and the reward of being able to grow your own food. Prior to taking the plot at Kambah, I had a very large, raised vegetable garden on our property at Michelago. When we moved into town, the veggie garden was one of the main things I missed.

Undoubtedly the most enjoyable part of gardening is harvesting! I also love working with the soil, nourishing it and getting my hands dirty. I follow 'no dig' principles as much as possible and use as much compost and organic matter as possible. This results in what, for me, is the second most enjoyable thing about gardening — delving into the soil and seeing the abundance of worms and the beautiful structure of well cared for, organic soil.

I don't think I have a single favourite thing to grow. However, over the course of my time at Kambah I have gone from trying to grow absolutely everything I can, to focussing on growing more of the things which are both relatively easy to grow and which I know I will eat. The third spring of my new asparagus bed is coming up, so I am really looking forward to finally being able to harvest most of the shoots. I also love to grow onions, leeks, beetroot, pumpkins and lots of herbs.

Through my role on the COGS Executive Committee, I hope to improve the accessibility of information on gardening in the Canberra region via the COGS website, as well as to find and share sources of relevant information from other areas. After creating the online membership form, I am hoping to eventually introduce online payment.

February 2021 ‘strategic directions’ workshop

Introduction

COGS held a workshop in February 2021 to consider the role our organisation has in the community, how this has changed since COGS was initially formed, and to establish future directions for the organisation. Before the workshop, members were invited (*Canberra Organic*, summer 2020) to offer views on future directions to the President or via their garden convenor.

Four papers, together with information on COGS’ gardens and their plots, were provided to participants before the workshop. Two papers addressed the structure of COGS — one asking if the existing organisational structure was out of date. The third examined community garden organisations in the ACT and another looked at increasing volunteering within COGS. These papers¹ are available for members on the COGS’ website. Twenty-one COGS members, including most current office holders and garden convenors plus several past presidents, participated in the workshop.

Two short presentations were made. The first was an overview of community garden operations in the ACT, identifying groups with similar interests to COGS in sustainable food production. The second outlined COGS’ history, starting as the Organic Growing and Farming Society of the ACT in 1977.

The Organic Growing and Farming Society held monthly meetings to promote organic practices and educate people about organic growing. By the early 1980s the first garden was established, the name changed to COGS and was incorporated with a constitution as a prelude to developing more gardens, as there was a long waiting list for plots.

In the 1980s COGS lobbied politicians about Plant Variety Rights and actively supported the National Association of Sustainable Agriculture Australia’s (NASAA) development of standards for organic produce.

Since 2000 COGS has focused on establishing gardens and providing



President Andy Hrast discusses the findings from the February Strategic Workshop

advice to government and others interested in establishing gardens, on community outreach and information activities through the newsletter, social media, and the Open Garden Scheme.

Participants joined one of four groups to consider and report on one of the following:

- The primary purpose of COGS (promoting organic growing or running gardens, is the constitution and legal structure still appropriate?).
- Management of COGS (financial issues, administrative loads, succession planning, volunteering).
- What do we want our gardens to look like? (infrastructure, need for more plots)
- COGS’ engagement with the wider community (education, relations with government and likeminded groups).

Each group identified the issues they thought most important and reported back to the wider group. A priority list to guide future directions for COGS was prepared, and the opportunities and mitigation strategies to address issues such as volunteer burnout discussed.

Results

The primary purpose of COGS

Overall, workshop participants thought that COGS could continue to promote organic growing and administer the existing gardens. Structural change (such as splitting into separately administered gardens) was not identified as a priority; it was suggested that more direct engagement of the Executive with gardens and their members would revitalise communication and increase member support for COGS as an organisation.

The current legal structure was regarded as fit for purpose. The Constitution needs review to clarify our objectives and ensure that it is in line with current legislation. COGS’ education and advocacy roles could be supported with an expansion of our social media presence, and by partnering in outreach activities with like-minded organisations.

Management of COGS

COGS was generally working well at a financial and administrative level. Concern was expressed about the

difficulty of recruiting volunteers to the position of Treasurer (and other office holders), and the associated workload. Suggestions to address this issue included obtaining paid administrative support (possibly shared with other organisations).

The issue of volunteering at Executive and garden levels was discussed. Ideas to increase volunteering include approaching members who had identified skills on their application forms; and mentoring of 'apprentices' in committee roles. A targeted approach to succession planning for Executive and Garden Committee roles was also discussed.

What we want our gardens to look like

A review of COGS' existing garden infrastructure (fencing, water supply, sheds, and shelters) and its condition was recommended as input to future funding decisions. It was suggested that

a standardised process be developed for funding applications.

Engagement with the community

COGS continues to provide information on organic growing to the community via well-visited website and Facebook pages; adding Instagram to attract younger visitors was recommended. COGS could expand its role in education through joint talks and demonstrations with groups sharing our interests in seed saving, soil health, food security, climate change and sustainable production.

COGS has a good relationship with the ACT Government and its bureaucracy, and is regularly consulted on community garden issues. The government recently renewed our leasehold licence for 10 years, and we have received government grants to establish and improve garden infrastructure.

ACT-based organisations which share interests with COGS include Canberra City Farm, Regional Development Australia (ACT), Community Owned Farming Enterprises (COFE), SEE-Change and the Environment Centre. It was agreed that opportunities to work together should be followed up, initially through Canberra City Farm with which COGS has strong links.

Next steps

- Publication of the workshop summary on the COGS' website and in the Newsletter
- Discussion of workshop outcomes and planning for implementation by Executive Committee
- Quarterly reporting of progress in the Newsletter.

—Michele Barson (article)
Rebecca Travers (photo).

¹ https://cogs.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/governance/2020_StrategicPlanningWorkshopPapers.pdf

Backyard gardens

'Wildlife' in an organic garden

At times and as an organic gardener, one would occasionally encounter or find interesting wildlife as part of their gardening journey.

For example, there are the occasional wild 'hares' at the Betty Cornhill Garden, and in my organic garden in Lyons a very interesting, escaped guinea pig (*Cavia porcellus*). This guinea pig was one month old when it escaped from its pen in January this year. I thought that was the last that I would see her (I think its female). Then strangely after two weeks she was calling me from the boundary retaining wall between my property and next door. She recognised my voice.

From then on, and still as I write this in July, she is alive and residing under the bushes. Together with my



The wild guinea pig, in its native habitat

neighbours Ron and Mary, we built a den for her and feed her a diet of good organic produce.

The guinea pig can be hand-fed and trusts us, but she is free (and does)

roam to other properties. Very smart and alert to predators, there are days when she doesn't return to her den between our gardens, but then the next day she is back. Maybe the reason she has survived this long is that she is a 'wild type' and nocturnal? Guinea pigs are native to South America and are believed to have been domesticated for about 3,000 years, first being kept by Incas and Mayans. They are now extinct in the wild — possibly due to introduction of foreign predators and habitat destruction. If it weren't for human domestication, then sadly this intelligent rodent would have become extinct.

So maybe for now, this original 'wild type' guinea pig in Lyons is the only one living free and roaming the neighbourhood, and may be the only one doing so in Australia?

— Michael Calkovics
(article and photo)

Charnwood community garden – in pictures

— Ange McNeilly (photos)



Mitchell garden Convenor, Narelle McLean, gives a talk at Charnwood community garden on the Mitchell garden shed build process



A stunningly healthy and unblemished cauliflower is a testament to productive winter gardening



The water in the birdbath freezes over on frosty nights



COGS President, Andy Hrast (left) and Charnwood Community Garden Convenor Teresa Rose (right) discussing the shelter build with Mr. Peter Cain MLA (Liberal Member for Ginninderra) at the COGS members' open day



Bill Ashley oiling the massive pole supports for the garden shelter. Some of the poles came from the Bateman's Bay wharf and have intricate surface textures



The Iceland poppies in Jo's plot are always a cheerful sight



Bare winter patterns made by Gita's grapevine, berry bushes and netting support arches

Gardening in the time of pandemic

For so many of us 2020 has been, and 2021 continues to be, a time of uncertainty. With the media and our daily lives still dominated by the ongoing pandemic, it sometimes feels hard to find an escape.

Whilst the ACT has been fortunate to have few infections and no cases of community transmission for over 12 months, we continue to feel the impact by being cut off from families and friends in other states or territories, or those loved ones who are overseas.

One thing that has remained a constant however, is our gardening. The seasons continue to come and go as the year progresses. Spring still brings us out from the depths of winter, summer provides wonderful growing opportunities prior to our autumn harvest and winter offers a time to wind down and plan for the seasons ahead.

As COGS members, we have been fortunate that our gardens have remained open throughout. This is a testament to the collaborative effort of our members, who have worked together to ensure a safe environment for all. For so many of us the garden is our 'happy place'.

The benefits of gardening are being felt all around the world during these unusual times. A British Broadcasting

Corporation (BBC) article entitled 'Covid: How have allotments helped people during the pandemic?'¹ has explored exactly this and for many of us gardeners, the results are not surprising.

At the same time as people in Australia were panic buying toilet paper last year, the shelves of our local nurseries and garden centres were also stripped bare of seeds and seedlings. Similar to COGS' waiting list, the waiting list for 'allotments' (as the plots are called in Britain) also swelled during the pandemic.

British journalist Laurence Cawley visited one of those allotments to "find out what these small patches of land mean to those who cultivate them."

Cawley noted that for the plot holders he spoke to, their allotments have provided health, companionship and fresh food benefits which have sustained them both mentally and physically. Like many COGS gardens, the plot holders are of diverse nationalities and this is reflected in the "richness and variety of the vegetables, fruits and flowers they grow".

One garden member Lazarus mentioned he feels closer to his mother when he is at his allotment, who is still in Malawi.

QR codes in COGS gardens

Over the next few weeks, you will notice that QR Codes will now be on display in COGS gardens. Please ensure you and anyone with you (both members and visitors) 'check in' when entering the garden. This will help keep you and your fellow garden members safe.

COGS community gardens and COVID-19

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

To ensure our gardens can continue to remain open and we provide a safe environment for

everyone, all gardeners attending a COGS community garden MUST:

- follow all directions issued by ACT Health;
- 'check in' using your garden's Check in CBR QR Code (both members and visitors);
- observe physical distancing at all times;
- be especially careful to maintain appropriate distancing in the confined space of the garden shed; and
- sanitise or wash hands with soap before using communal tools or consider bringing your own tools.

DO NOT enter the garden if:

- you have been in contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19;
- you have been to an identified COVID-19 hotspot and are subject to 'stay at home' orders;

- you have been ordered to quarantine; or
- you are unwell and showing symptoms consistent with COVID-19 — please go and get tested, don't assume it's just a cold.

No visitors are to enter the garden without a garden member being present.



An example of the QR Code from Kambah garden



He uses the quiet time to contemplate and enjoy nature by watching his plants grow.

Hashem, originally from Iran, described his allotment as a “blessing”. He noted that plot holders are already physically distanced from one another by the size of their plots, so it provided an open space to continue to have the joy of a hobby, be physically active and enjoy himself.

Plot holders Sandra and Ian also both discussed the mental health benefits they have experienced from gardening. They noted how having an opportunity to grow things can enable creativity and that opportunities to focus on something (such as pulling out weeds) can help centre you, forgetting the world around you.

Allotment holders also highlighted the benefit of the friendships they had established in the garden, providing connection and support in difficult times.

As COGS members, I think all of us will agree that the benefits of gardening far outweigh the ‘learning opportunities’ we face when we have less successful crop harvests. Our gardens are about so much more than the veggies, they are also about community, connections and the physical and mental health benefits to name a few — and this is being felt around the world.

To read the article in full, visit: <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-esssex-57438179>

—Rebecca Travers (article), Matt Mawson (photo)

¹ Cawley, L. (2021) *Covid: How have allotments helped people during the pandemic?* Accessed at <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-esssex-57438179>

COGS life membership awards — an invitation

COGS life membership appointments celebrate the importance of volunteers to the Society and the wider community, as well as recognising the considerable contributions of individuals. To date, 17 life members have been appointed (see list on COGS Members’ webpage). The last, Walter Steensby, was appointed some 5 years ago.

The Executive Committee recently discussed life membership appointments. Life membership, provided for under the current Constitution, is an honour bestowed on members whose outstanding service and contribution to COGS has provided considerable benefit to the organisation over an extended period. As a token of COGS’ appreciation, life members do not pay membership fees and receive complimentary access to the COGS magazine (they pay normal fees for plots they may have).

The Executive Committee agreed that nominations would be assessed against the following criteria:

- service to COGS over a long period of time;
- specific achievements that further the aims and objectives of COGS;
- provision of valued leadership and/or being an outstanding role model to members; and
- service reflecting favourably and bringing great credit to COGS.

Nominations can be made by financial members of COGS who should approach an Executive Committee member with information addressing the above criteria in support of the proposed life member. Only current financial members of COGS are eligible for life membership.

The sponsoring Committee member will ask the full Executive Committee to consider the nomination. Life membership awards will be announced at the next Annual General Meeting, and appointments, along with a summary of their contribution to COGS, published in *Canberra Organic*.

Life membership nominations for 2021 should be received from the sponsoring Executive Committee member for discussion by the full Executive Committee by **Tuesday 2 November 2021**.

—Michele Barson (article)

The history and value of pomegranates

Who would have thought that the pomegranate would be a reason we have winter? According to Greek myths, Persephone (goddess of harvests, grains and fertility, daughter of Demeter) was abducted by Hades, the god of the underworld. Persephone knew that she would be condemned to stay in the dark, dank underworld and would never see her land of perpetual light and warmth if she ate or drank anything.

Demeter searched the world for her and finally found her with Hades, following which she insisted that Persephone be returned to her home. But Hades offered Persephone a pomegranate and she ate 3–6 seeds (the myths vary on this point). Consequently, she had to remain in the underworld realm for part of the year causing everything above ground to wither or become dormant. When she returned to the surface everything burst into bud, for she was the bringer of spring.

Who can blame Persephone for being tempted by a pomegranate? They have beautiful scarlet flowers, followed by large, crimson red fruit with tufted ends that hang on the branches after all the leaves have fallen like glowing lanterns.

When they are ripe, they split open to reveal many glistening ruby seeds resulting from a brilliant red, juicy covering called an *aril* (an extra seed covering, e.g. a mace surrounding a nutmeg seed, or the red succulent covering of a yew seed).

The *granate* part of the species name derives from *granatum* meaning ‘many seeded’ in Latin, so it is not surprising that in Greek and Persian mythology pomegranate symbolises fertility, beauty and eternal life. The orb shape of the fruit is also a symbol of imperial power, blood and death. The *pome* part of the name refers to a type of fleshy fruit with seeds.

Persephone, goddess of spring growth





Pomegranates — *Punica granatum*

The pomegranate probably originated in the Himalayas and was cultivated in Northern Iran or Persia, around 3,500 BC, so it is a very old garden plant indeed. It spread throughout the Mediterranean, the Middle East, India and China. It reached Turkey, Greece, Italy and Carthage, and the Romans actually called it the Carthaginian apple. Its genus name — *Punic* (as in the Punic Wars) means Carthage in Latin. Because of its symbolism and its beauty, it is a recurring motif in the decorative arts.

The bright red juice of the pomegranate fruit would suggest that it shares properties in common with similar colourful superfoods because it contains anthocyanins, a type of antioxidant often found in red, purple and blue fruits and vegetables. There are many different kinds of antioxidants and they are important because they can neutralise 'free radicals' produced by oxidation reactions in the body. We need some free radicals, but too many can damage components of our cells and particularly DNA, and this can lead to some very debilitating conditions.

The arils also contain vitamins C and K, folate, potassium and sugar. The juice and peel contain punicalagins which are phenolic compounds, another group of

antioxidants. However, processing and pasteurisation can degrade the phenolic content of the juice, so if you are going to drink pomegranate juice for your health make your own fresh each day. One good thing about pomegranates is the juice literally pours from them if you cut one in half and give it a good squeeze. Be aware that the juice will leave an indelible red stain on clothing — it is as bad as beetroot juice. The juice can be a bit sour, so it is a good idea to add some apple juice.

More research needs to be done on the health benefits of pomegranates. In fact, there have been problems with people who manufacture or sell pomegranate products claiming they provide health benefits when there is little actual substantial evidence to support such claims. For example, some preliminary studies using rats and mice suggest that pomegranates could reduce inflammation, improve insulin sensitivity, and promote weight loss, and so claims suggest it could even help fight cancer or reduce atherosclerosis, but considerable research is needed using human subjects before such extraordinary claims can be substantiated. An article in *Frontiers of Plant Science: Primary Metabolites, Anthocyanins and Hydrolyzable Tannins in the Pomegranate Fruit* provides a good

summary of what is known in this area.

The edible seeds are rich in fibre and contain vitamin E and magnesium as well as punicalic acid, a type of fatty acid, which can be extracted as an oil. To remove the seeds and their arils, simply cut the pomegranate in half and score the rind several times, then whack it with a spoon over a bowl of water. The seeds will settle on the bottom and the debris float to the top where it can be scooped off. A pomegranate can contain from 400 to 1,400 seeds, but be aware if you eat too many seeds they can get stuck in the pockets of your intestine and can cause problems — so don't try to eat a pomegranate in one sitting. Put excess seeds with their arils in small containers and freeze them.

Whether or not pomegranates can cure cancer, they are delicious and look sensational sprinkled on a dish and are an essential component of many cuisines. Pomegranate molasses can be added to sauces and dressing — be aware that it is quite sour — and pomegranate juice is very refreshing. In terms of health one thing is very obvious, the greater variety and colour of fruits and vegetables we eat the better.

— Elizabeth Dangerfield (article),
Jonas Renner and Birmingham
Museums Trust (Unsplash) (photos)

More community gardens in the ACT?

COGS regularly receives enquiries from individuals, community organisations and ACT Government directorates about establishing community gardens. In the last eighteen months these have included requests for advice on proposed sites in Yarralumla, Throsby, the inner north of Canberra, Gungahlin and Denman Prospect.

At our February Strategic Planning workshop (see detailed report on COGS Members' page <https://cogs.asn.au/strategic-directions-workshop-feb-2021/>) participants noted that waiting lists for plots have increased significantly at most COGS' gardens since the outbreak of COVID 19.

As at July 2021, 81 members are waiting for plots. COGS' Infrastructure Review is looking at the potential for opportunities to increase the number of plots in COGS' gardens by, for example, extending garden boundaries and subdividing larger plots as these change hands. There is an annual turnover of plots in August at the end of COGS' gardening year, which will also help to reduce the waiting list, but may not satisfy the demand for plots in the inner north and Gungahlin.

COGS recently hosted visits to the Crace and Mitchell community gardens by Andrew Braddock, Member for Yerrabi in the ACT Legislative Assembly and one of his advisers. Andrew subsequently made a speech in the Assembly (<http://www.hansard.act.gov.au/hansard/2021/pdfs/210624.pdf>) on the importance of community gardens, COGS' role, and the need for more gardens.

At the request of a COGS' member, two of the Executive visited four sites identified in the inner north as possible sites for new COGS' gardens. The visits enabled us to test out some criteria for choosing sites for new gardens. These include:



Andrew Braddock MLA, (Member for Yerrabi) meeting with Narelle McLean (Garden Convenor) at the Mitchell community garden.

- Level of neighbourhood and community support for use of land as a community garden (neighbours generally do not wish to overlook community gardens from their houses).
- Current public use of land is minimal.
- Terrain suitability — land gently sloping to flat and not subject to flooding or waterlogging.
- Sunshine hours — six or more hours of sunshine is needed to grow a full range of vegetables.
- Existing vegetation — no tree or native vegetation removal required.
- Access to nearby reticulated water supply.
- Site access — suitable for delivery of mulch etc.
- Parking — some off-street parking (not used by commuters) or unrestricted parking available on the nearby street.

COGS will continue to provide advice and information to government on community garden establishment and will support groups wanting to develop new gardens for their neighborhoods. However, these groups need to be prepared to undertake the work of establishing a garden including the planning, contracting of earthworks, fencing, and plumbing. A summary of what is involved in establishing a community garden is available at <https://tinyurl.com/5a43jak9>.

For new gardens that want to join the COGS' network to promote organic gardening knowledge and practices, COGS can offer administrative support in addition to providing information about establishment. COGS can also assist with negotiating for a site with the ACT Government and may be able to provide some financial support.

—Michele Barson
(article and photos)

COGS also recently met recently with Rebecca Vassarotti at the O'Connor garden, ACT Greens Member for Kurrajong (inner-north electorate) who is the Minister for the Environment, Heritage; Homelessness and Housing Services; and Sustainable Building and Construction.

We discussed the role and operations of COGS' community gardens, the current COGS' waiting list for plots and the need for more garden sites in the inner north and Gungahlin.

We noted that COGS is keen to have space allocated for more community gardens during the planning process for new suburbs and considered during the redevelopment of existing community space.

The Minister mentioned that there were a number of organisations with similar interests and hoped that there were opportunities for them to work together on establishing new sites. She mentioned that the Greens were currently working on an agriculture policy for the ACT.

—Michele Barson (article and photo)



Rebecca Vassarotti MLA meets with Peter Crimmins (Chair of the O'Connor Uniting Church Council), Bev McConnell (O'Connor community garden Convenor), Neil Williams (COGS' Treasurer) and Michele Barson (Vice President) at the O'Connor community garden.



Crop feature

Growing rockmelon from seed

The sweetest rockmelons I've ever tasted in my life were grown in the deserts of far western China and Kazakhstan, where they're called 'hami' melons. So, for the first time, I tried growing rockmelons from seed this year. The seedlings came along very easily started at home on the patio.

Once in the ground, I was surprised, having grown cucurbits before, how small the leaves were. They spread across the strawberry patch. They're not particularly robust as a vine, but I was pleasantly surprised by how many large fruit I got off two plants — about 10.

Unfortunately, I only managed to harvest five for my own consumption because the mice/rats ate three of them, which meant leaving the sweetest, largest ones rotting and deflated — like my spirits this year. Ha!

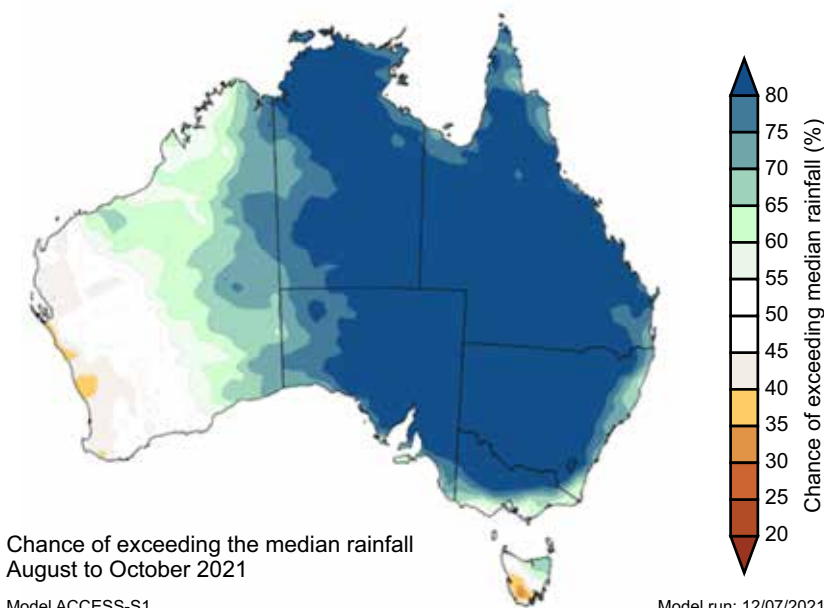
After having lost most of my pumpkin crop from waiting for them to harden on the vine, my recommendation with the rockmelons is the same — pick them as soon as they look ripe enough. Make sure you don't wait until their stems go brown and instead take them home to ripen. They're not too water hungry.

—Greta Nielsen (article and photos)

Indian Ocean conditions point to wetter winter and spring over large parts of Australia

The latest seasonal outlook from the Bureau of Meteorology's shows that a large portion of Australia has a good chance of seeing above-average rain between August and October.

This is being driven by conditions in the Indian Ocean where and negative Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) is underway. This means the waters to the north west of Australia are warmer, increasing the likelihood of above average winter – spring rainfall for much of southern and eastern Australia. Maximum temperatures are also more likely to be below average across southern Australia, while maximum and minimum temperatures are more likely to be above average for the northern tropics of Australia.



Most climate models predict the negative IOD pattern to persist until at least mid-spring.

Meanwhile, the Pacific Ocean is currently in a neutral phase, however some models are indicating that it could shift into a La Niña pattern later in the year. This prompted the US Climate Prediction Centre to issue a La Niña Watch recently.

—Andy Hrast (article)

Dam levels in the Canberra region and capital cities

	July '21	July '20
ACT storages	100%	55%
Murray-Darling Basin	68%	44%
Burrinjuck Dam	95%	43%
Blowering Dam	96%	55%
Sydney	95%	80%
Melbourne	76%	64%
Brisbane	62%	65%
Adelaide	46%	50%
Perth	42%	41%



Graeme Davis, a long-term Cook gardener, has once again been very successful at the recent Sydney Royal Easter Show. As you can see from the pictures, Graham was awarded the Supreme Champion Dahlia bloom amongst other awards, all grown in the Cook garden.

Congratulations, Graeme, on your beautiful blooms.
Graeme Davis (photo)

COGS growing guides – we need your help!

Ever seen a plot neighbour growing something unusual? Or are you growing something new for the first time? Members of our community gardens make up a diverse range of nationalities, which is reflected in the assortment of the plants which we all grow.

As I hope you are aware, COGS has a number of individual growing guides available on our website, as well as seasonal guides that suggest the best time to plant.

Over the past twelve months our seasonal growing guides have

received more than 41,000 visits via our website, and collectively our individual growing guides have received more than double that number. However, we know there are many vegetables being grown in our gardens that are not documented and this is where you, as COGS members, can help!

Do you grow something that isn't listed in the seasonal guides or individual growing guides on the website? Do you have more advice or detail we could add to an existing guide? If so, we'd love to hear from

you. We've developed a template that we'd love you to fill. The template can be downloaded from the 'Members Only' section of the COGS website, accessed at <https://cogs.asn.au/organic-gardening/growing-guides/local-grower-form/>.

We're looking for information on the background of the plant, its site and soil requirements, planting, cultivation and harvesting information and any problems we might encounter if we try to grow it. This will help us create a growing guide relating to that plant.



Hasan, originally from Bangladesh, is a member of the Mitchell community garden. Hasan grows this plant, which is known by a variety of names, including Old Man Beans, Poor Man's Beans, Hyacinth Beans, Dolichos, Lablab Beans, Rongai Beans, Fuji Mame, Butter Beans and Bouanavista Pea. These are very nutritious once cooked, with approximately 30% protein and high levels of vitamins A, B, C, potassium, phosphorus, calcium, iron, magnesium, along with heaps of trace elements.



Marionberries (a crossbreed version of a blackberry) are often referred to as the 'Cabernet of blackberries,' and are an example of a different plant grown by COGS members.

Birds in suburbia

Whilst washing the breakfast dishes early on a July day this year, a tiny, beautiful, coloured bird landed in the pot plant on the windowsill outside the kitchen window. Another bird joined in and chased the other around. They were likely seeing their reflections in the glass but as soon as the male bird alighted on top of the female, they both flew quickly away, too fast to photograph. Checking online, I discovered the birds were Spotted Pardalotes, *Pardalotus punctatus*. They are such stunning little birds and were seen for the first time in my home garden.



A Spotted Pardalote (CanStockPhoto)

Over the years, birds have made nests in surprising places — in the jasmine, in the grapevine and even in the spruce tree (that has since been cut down). However, one of the most unexpected places was in one of the four-tiered planters just outside the laundry door, where there was constant traffic. Ensnared behind carved painted wooden fish and discovered during weeding, which birds had made the nest remains a mystery.



A nest hidden behind the wooden fish

Birds are mesmerising creatures to watch, and their behaviour is equally fascinating. Yellow-rumped thornbills have often nested in the jasmine over the years,

using the same nest. However, one year a pair of thornbills usurped the nest of the current occupants, tossing out their developing eggs. The previous occupants had spent much time rebuilding the nest and the guardian male was constantly waging war with its own reflection in the mirror hanging on the garage wall nearby.



Yellow-rumped Thornbill guarding the nest.

A family of up to seven magpies have also been regular visitors to the garden, with their early morning warbling a delight to hear.



A family of magpies

Over the years, the garden has also enjoyed visits from crimson rosellas, tiny white-eyes, and the white-faced heron that found the goldfish in the pond an easy picking one winter, but not seen since.

All of these beautiful winged creatures are always welcome to share what the garden has to offer.

—Ange McNeilly (article and photos), CanStock (photo)



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



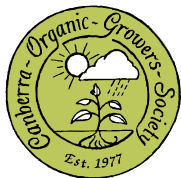
social enterprise cafe

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 Wednesday to Sunday 9am - 4pm. Friday and Saturday 9am - 8pm
Gallery Homestead, Strathnairn Arts, 90 Stockdill Drive, 2615

www.cafesteppingstone.com



spring planting guide

Spring is the main planting season in Canberra. The timing of some plantings may need to be varied depending on the particular year.

Be prepared to protect your frost-tender seedlings, as harsh frosts can occur right through spring. Make your own cloches from plastic bottles with the bottoms cut out, or use row covers for larger plantings.

Using seeds

When direct planting with small seeds — e.g. carrots — bulk out first by mixing the seeds with sand. You can help the plants pre-germinate by keeping them in moist sand for about four days before planting out (do not let them actually germinate).

When planting out large seeds — e.g. pea or corn — soak overnight in a weak seaweed solution prior to planting; alternatively, keep seeds moist between two pieces of kitchen paper for 3 to 4 days until seeds germinate, then plant out carefully. This is particularly useful if you are not sure of the seeds' viability.

Check your seed packets for their use-by date as poor germination may result from planting after that time, or plants may show a lack of vigour when the seedlings come up.

A seed should be planted at a depth 2 to 3 times its diameter, although it is better to plant too shallow than too deep.

Crop rotation

Remember to rotate the crops you grow in a particular garden bed. Crop rotation is a most important practice for organic gardeners. Successive crops should not come from the same plant families nor make the same demands on nutrients; i.e. follow heavy feeders with light feeders.

Also, successive crops should not share the same diseases or attract the same pests—this prevents a build up of disease problems, and reduces losses from pests.

There are numerous crop rotation schemes used, but try to keep to at least a 4-year rotation period and do not grow members of the same plant family in the same bed in consecutive years; e.g. tomatoes, capsicums, eggplants and potatoes are all from the *Solanum* family.

Plant varieties

It is important with crops such as cabbage and lettuce to choose the appropriate variety for the time of year. Lettuce varieties best suited to early spring are cos, salad bowl, butterhead and mignonette.

	SEP	OCT	NOV
Globe artichoke	T	T	
Jerusalem artichoke	T		
Asparagus	S	S	S
French beans		S	S
Beetroot	S	S	S
Broccoli			S
Brussel sprouts		S	S
Cabbage	ST	ST	ST
Capsicum*		S	ST
Carrot	S	S	S
Cauliflower			S
Celery	S	ST	ST
Cucumber*	S	S	ST
Eggplant*	S	S	T
Endive			S
Leeks	ST	ST	T
Lettuce	ST	ST	S
Melons	S	S	ST
Onions	T	T	
Parsnips	S	S	S
Peas	S	S	
Potatoes	S	S	S
Pumpkins*	S	S	ST
Radish	S	S	S
Rhubarb	T	T	
Silverbeet	S	S	ST
Snow peas	S	S	S
Spinach	ST	ST	
Squash*	S	S	ST
Sweet corn		S	ST
Tomatoes*	S	S	ST
Turnips (white)	S		
Zucchini*	S	S	ST

S = seed sowing; T = transplanting

* When planting these seeds before November, the seed should be started in punnets indoors and the young seedlings kept in a warm sheltered place. Plant out the seedlings once the soil has warmed and the danger of frost has passed.

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 3320**
 **Instagram 250**

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

Articles in the magazine do not necessarily reflect the views of COGS. Advertised products and services are not specifically endorsed by COGS.



(above) *Amanita muscaria*, commonly known as the fly agaric; caterpillar
(below) homage to Georgia O'Keefe; fig harvest — Ange McNeilly (photos)

