

Autumn 2022
Vol 30 No 1 Issue 114

Canberra organic

**Kambah community garden —
our next generation of gardeners**

**The private pleasure of
keeping a gardening journal**

Not another zucchini

The quarterly publication of the Canberra Organic Growers Society Inc.

editor's note

Autumn is just around the corner and after the wet summer courtesy of a La Niña, we have seen great growing conditions — both for our plants and the weeds. Autumn is a great opportunity to reap the rewards of the summer growing season and plan for our winter crops. This year's autumn edition of *Canberra Organic* is again filled with interesting articles, recipes, and stories from around the COGS gardens. Featured articles include the abridged version of the final

report from Georgia Lavers, an ANU student, who undertook a research project into participation in community gardens. This is alongside a thoughtful article from Deborah Hamilton on the private pleasure of keeping a gardening journal and lovely story written by one of our younger gardeners, Georgia, who loves gardening at Kambah with Grandpa Ken.

As another year on the COGS Executive Committee draws to a close, I'd like to take the opportunity



to thank those who help me with the development of the magazine. Walter, Ed and Jenny provide a critical eye when it comes to proofreading and Terry helps with the distribution (both electronic and paper) and Matt assists with graphic design. Thank you for all your help. Without volunteers, COGS wouldn't be able to function as an association and if you can, I encourage you to consider nominating for one of the positions on the Executive Committee at the Annual General Meeting to be held on Sunday 27 March 2022. It's well worth it.

For me, I've *finally* moved into a house with a garden! So, I'll be using the climate wise guide (pg. 15) to start planning my garden. The possibilities are endless and I'm so excited. I look forward to sharing them with you in the next edition.

In the meantime, stay well and enjoy the beautiful colours of autumn.

—Rebecca Travers
(article and photo)



Charnwood community garden visitors making the most of the impromptu pond caused by the storm (photo by Joanne McMillan)

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As I write this in mid-January, it is raining. This is typical of the current summer. It is wet and the temperatures have been benign, making it an excellent growing season. I am hearing reports of some good summer crops already being harvested.

The rain has meant that we have been able to avoid the need for watering, saving a lot of time. Time we instead need for weeding! The weeds are also enjoying the growing conditions.

Most of our gardens are looking great, however a couple have experienced flooding and water-logging due to the local topography. I feel for the gardeners at the Charnwood community garden who experienced the full brunt of the severe hail storm in early January causing massive damage to crops.

An issue all gardens that have grassed area are experiencing is the need for regular mowing to keep the rampant grass growth under control. It's a major job and I ask all gardeners to support their Convenors and Garden Committees by joining in working bees and taking their turn on mowing rosters. The old adage of 'many hands make light work' is very true.

There have also been reports of more rats than usual in our gardens this summer. This is a common problem.

I recently had the opportunity to visit a community garden on the south coast of NSW and near the top of their list of garden issues was the damage caused by rats. I understand and have personally experienced the frustration of having crops decimated by rats. Unfortunately, there is no easy solution.

Late last year, COGS was approached by the Gungahlin Uniting Church about the possibility of taking over a small derelict community garden associated with the Church. In line with desire expressed at the Planning Day to increase the number of gardens to address waiting lists, the COGS Executive undertook a due diligence on the existing garden at the church including the possibility of extending it. Unfortunately, the existing garden was considered too small to be viable and any expansion would have been prohibitively expensive.

The COGS Executive is continuing to pursue with the ACT Government the possibility of additional gardens. A meeting has been held with the Minister for the Environment and one is scheduled with the Minister for Planning and Land Management. I remain hopeful that something will eventuate from these meetings.

A major activity of the COGS Executive Committee during 2021 was to undertake a review of the infrastructure in our gardens and identify priorities. It is pleasing that based on those priorities a new shed and shelter has been built at the Erindale community garden and funding for a new fence has been approved for Oaks Estate. I look forward to other gardens coming forward with funding proposals during the coming year.

The review of the COGS Constitution is progressing well and I expect a draft revised constitution and explanatory notes to be circulated shortly to all members for comment, prior to consideration at a General Meeting in mid-2022.

COGS has also been invited to contribute to the development of the ACT's Urban Agriculture



policy called the Food and Fibre Strategy and we will be providing a submission.

The COGS Executive Committee at its December meeting agreed, following a call for nominations from members, to confer Life Membership on three members: Conrad Van Hest, Narelle McLean and Richard Horobin in recognition of their outstanding work in support of COGS over many years. They will be formally presented with their life membership at a ceremony at the COGS Annual General Meeting and they and their work will be featured in the winter edition of *Canberra Organic*.

There is a notice on this page advising details of the COGS Annual General Meeting. This will be the opportunity for the current Executive Committee to report on the past year and for the renewal of the Committee with election of new members. Please put the date into your diaries and attend if possible.

There will be formal advice of the Annual General Meeting sent to all members including forms for nomination for positions on the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee has overall responsibility for the management of COGS and operates on volunteer basis. Please consider nominating for a position on the Executive Committee. If you are interested in nominating for a position do not hesitate to contact me for more information:

andy.hrast@gmail.com
or 0408 247 360.

I look forward to seeing as many people as possible attending the Annual General Meeting.

Happy gardening.

—Andy Hrast

Annual General Meeting

Canberra Organic Growers Society Incorporated

2.00 pm

Sunday 27 March 2022

COGS Charnwood community garden,
Lhotsky Street,
Charnwood

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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O'Connor	Bev McConnell — occonnor_convenor@cogs.asn.au

It's always springtime in this corner of Betty Cornhill garden (photo: Matt Mawson)



Crace community garden

A sense of community

We have a wealth of knowledge in the Crace community garden, just as I'm sure there is in others too. If you want to learn, just ask. Pictured here are two of my favourite garden encyclopedias — Bob and Hung, in front of their gardens. While they, like me, prefer to garden in the early morning, we are all very different types of gardeners. Bob runs a very neat and organised traditional garden with the best carrots I have ever seen. Hung is more ambitious and experiments with mulch, dead snail concoctions and has the best garlic chives, asparagus, and Vietnamese broccoli. Diversity in the garden is valuable. It materialises in a variety of gardening techniques, plot layouts, crops, that can be appreciated by everyone.



(left) Bob grows the best carrots I've ever seen; (right) Hung (pictured with Rosetta's dog Lady) likes to experiment with mulch and dead snail concoctions



Creative gardening ideas

This year my husband Dominic and I wedged a low arch (made by a former gardener) between the climber walls to create an elevated arch for the beans. Wow, what a success! I no longer need to venture into a forest of climber beans and come out with rogue bean leaves plastered all over me.



The runners have grown both along the wall and over the arch, where it's easy to find the beans and pick

them before they go stringy. I have had so many that I have topped and tailed some, blanched lightly, cooled and packed in freezer bags for the winter.

We've been enjoying them quite simply just boiled, strained, and dressed with olive oil, salt, a crushed garlic clove, and a bit of chili to taste. The seeds are from my father-in-law and my grandparent's borlotti beans, so the idea is to actually leave them go to seed and enjoy them also in plates of hearty pasta e fagioli — so yummy (the recipe for this is more complicated but can be found easily by doing a google search).

—Rosetta Romano (article and photos)



(above) Rosetta preparing the beans; (right top) Rosetta and Dominic's arch of beans; (right bottom) A pile of topped and tailed beans

Kambah community garden — our next generation of gardeners

Hi, I'm Georgia and I live in Kambah. I sometimes help my grandpa (Grandpa Ken) tend his plot at the Kambah community garden. I also help him with his home garden plot and I've been doing this since I was about four years old.

One of the pictures shows me standing beside a lavender plant, which I planted about three years ago. It's now the biggest plant in the garden. I'm just about to experiment with a bean seed pod which Grandpa grew recently. I want to find out the best way to grow these vegetables; for example, how long can you keep a fresh seed before you re-plant it?

Apart from gardening, I like to write stories so I decided to combine the two and see what I could come up with.

Sometimes it got a bit boring during COVID and I began to wonder what it would be like to do something I hadn't done before, and this is where the idea came for this story.

— Georgia (article and story) and Grandpa Ken Fraser (photos)

Gardening purpose

Once there was a girl called Daisy. She was a really good hockey player but also very mean. She would yell at other players for not being able to score goals.

Once, after a game she went home and watched a hockey match on TV.

Her dad came in and suggested that she do something different. Maybe gardening?

Daisy replied, "No, go away, I'm watching hockey."

Next day Daisy got home sweaty, tired and sad because there were new people in the hockey team who were better players than her and they were teasing her.

Then Daisy went into her dad's office and asked if she could try gardening. "Yes, of course you can," he replied.

By the next year, she had a beautiful blushing garden. She was growing foxgloves, gladioli, tomatoes and beans.

She found that gardening made her happier, so she quit hockey and moved on to live a happy life.



O'Connor community garden — a thriving community in the inner north

There has been 1044mm in the garden rain gauge over 2021 and the O'Connor community garden is thriving as a result. Sited on two disused tennis courts at the O'Connor Uniting Church, the garden and its narrow paths have turned into a green walled maze in places.

At present, the zucchinis in the garden are practically doubling in size overnight — and of course the favourable conditions have attracted an avalanche of bugs and caterpillars. One sustainable organic control method used in the garden is wildlife friendly, narrow gauge insect exclusion netting. There are well constructed igloo netting structures on some plots that blend in well with the surrounding urban streetscape.

The past year has seen several infrastructure and other improvements funded by COGS. With the agreement of the church, a large ash tree overhanging the garden was pruned to the limits allowed by ACT Government regulations. Productivity has noticeably increased in several previously shaded plots. The ICON town water taps and standpipes in the garden have been upgraded, and some irrigation leaks repaired.

Reflecting the shared values of the church and COGS, and given its privileged inner-north suburban location, the garden goes 'outside the fence' to help with the problems of food insecurity experienced by vulnerable members of the community. Despite the constraints of COVID lockdowns and the demands of their own plots, a small group of volunteer plot holders have come together as a community and worked hard to develop and maintain dedicated outreach beds in the communal areas of the garden. Beds were constructed/upgraded with replacement timber edging and topsoil, and star pickets and wire trellis — all funded by COGS. Volunteers have prepared and planted the outreach beds with corn, beans,



A wall of green at O'Connor

tomatoes, eggplants, spring onions and other vegetables for donation to Companion House.

The garden AGM in late October last year was well attended. At the AGM, plot holders identified an Open Day and a new garden shed as priority activities for 2021/22. Plot holders also agreed that the incoming committee should follow up concerns expressed at the meeting about absentee plot holders, the length of the wait list, weeds on paths and other invasives in plots, and quality of path mulch.

O'Connor is small garden in a popular location, so plot vacancies are rare, and the waiting list is long. However, the recent arrival of several enthusiastic and energetic young, and not so young, members is revitalising the garden. This is now reflected in the 2021/22 garden committee. As well, the garden will elect a new Convenor soon.

It's all looking very promising for a successful joint COGS and O'Connor Uniting Community Hub Open Day, scheduled for Saturday 23rd April 2022 from 10am – 4 pm. There will be garden displays, community stalls, a sausage sizzle and a mobile coffee van. The garden is planning to showcase the diverse range vegetables and herbs grown at the garden and to highlight sustainable organic growing techniques, e.g. composting, natural pest control, no-dig gardens and water saving systems.

— Bev McConnell (article and photos)



Wildlife friendly, narrow gauge insect exclusion netting at O'Connor community garden

Erindale community garden

I'm pleased to share contributions from two new non-plot holders at the Erindale community garden, Rodolfo and Claudia. Rodolfo joined us in October and Claudia in December 2021. We very much appreciate their enthusiasm, ideas, knowledge and help with all kinds of jobs in the garden.

Having additional help makes all the difference in keeping on top with any necessary repairs and infrastructure upgrades like building new trellises, setting up garden beds, repairing garden edges, putting in posts and garden hose hangers, making a big timber framed compost sieve, planting, weeding, pruning our berry hedges and watering and anything else that needs attention.

We have been fortunate because of the COGS infrastructure review to build a new shed and shelter. We have also established several community plots and decided to buy two 300L mini water tanks and have set them up on recycled cement blocks. Heavy rain received after Christmas has filled our tanks twice.



Erindale's new shelter provides a great place to work and gather.

In these difficult times during the COVID pandemic, our Erindale community garden provides us with a space and a sheltered area, where we can safely meet and spend time together outdoors. It's lovely to be able to socialise, enjoy each other's company and share some fun, food and laughter and of course the

produce of all our efforts. We share what we grow.

Rodolfo, Claudia and also Chris, who joined us at the Erindale community garden in September 2021, have all become much valued members of our small garden community.

—Didi Sommer (article and photos)



recipe

Roast pumpkin and chickpea salad

Looking for something to make with all those pumpkins? Why not try this tasty salad — perfect as main meal or as a side dish to accompany roast beef or salmon.

Ingredients

- 1 kg of pumpkin (butternut, jap or similar pumpkin)
- 400 g tin of chickpeas, drained
- 2 clove of garlic, crushed
- ½ tsp allspice
- 4 tbsp olive oil (or your favourite oil)
- 3½ tbsp of lemon juice
- 3 tbsp tahini
- ½ cup coriander, chopped
- ½ small red onion, finely diced (optional)

Method

1. Cut the pumpkin into 2cm cubes, place onto a baking tray, drizzle with 2 tbsp of oil and sprinkle with allspice and 1 clove of crushed garlic.
2. Roast in the oven for around 30 mins at 180°C, until soft and starting to brown. Take out of the oven and let it cool until just warm. Mix with the chickpeas in a bowl.
3. Mix the remaining ingredients together (1 clove of garlic, crushed, 2 tbsp oil, lemon juice and tahini) and then spoon over the pumpkin and chickpeas. Add ½ cup of chopped coriander and serve.

—Neil Williams (article)

My name is Rodolfo and I was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, many years ago. My mother language is Spanish, but all my ancestors are from the region of Modena in the north of Italy. I moved to Australia in the late eighties and after spending some years in Melbourne I settled in Canberra.

I joined COGS some months ago, mainly as a (non-plotter) volunteer in the Erindale community garden. Notably I must be the black sheep in the block as I am not a devoted gardener. Most of my life I was an inner-city slicker and an engineer by trade. However, in my youth I had the opportunity to live in a farming community (maybe not that organic at the time ... sorry) where I was jack of all trades and master of none. Yet this was a period of my life when I learned so much and which I treasure most.

Some friends introduced me to COGS and the Erindale community garden and I found a great group of people and a most interesting place (so valuable assets in these COVID times). I then thought of this as a great opportunity to exchange some of my practical hardware skills for the opportunity to learn the art and magic of gardening. Since then, I have been involved with several odd jobs to improve the garden infrastructure (I can't help it, I am an engineer) and also helping the gardeners here and there and learning how plants look in real life.

I once heard that the Department of Education in Italy ran a survey in primary schools asking the kids (among other things) how many legs a chicken has. Not surprisingly many responded that some have four and some have six (because that is what comes in the package...). Although I know that a chicken has two legs, I sometime am fascinated to see that some of the veggies I buy in the supermarket are, in real life attached to a plant and even to flowers! And by the way, I did plant tomatoes in the past, but I never



Another garden structure finished — Rodolfo and Claudia are happy with the result.

saw rodents eating the pulp of the stems and not the fruit.

Who knows... I may one day become a devoted gardener!

— Rodolfo Ferrari (article)

* * *

Iam a new member of the Erindale community garden and I want to thank my two friends who encouraged me to be part of this small and enthusiastic group.

I realised that working in the garden helps me to overcome the current times of the pandemic, allows me to meet new people,

socialise without major risks and it also can be very beneficial to keep me active and in good spirits.

For me, this is a great opportunity to learn about different varieties of plants, bees and pollination, how to grow your own fruit and vegetables and having access to organic produce. This is as well as solving problems such as pest control, exchanging ideas, developing new projects and above all enjoying a good time together.

This experience is giving me the opportunity to work for a more sustainable life, and a better future for our grandchildren.

—Claudia Woods (article)

Charnwood community garden — déjà vu!

It's déjà vu! Charnwood gardeners again faced with a confronting scene. On the evening of 3 January 2022, Convenor, Teresa Rose, sent the following email:

"I hope that your homes and home gardens fared better than the community garden after this afternoon's storm. It is 8 pm and I have just returned from the garden. There has been severe damage to beans, potatoes, tomatoes, flowers, cucumber, corn, zucchini, pumpkin, and other plants. Fruit tree nets, supports and bean trellises have been blown sideways. The garden is underwater. Drifts of ice remain on the ground. Fortunately, there are no trees down."

It was in January 2020 that the Charnwood community garden had been hit by two severe hailstorms and this recent hailstorm two years later was just as devastating, if not more so because plants were not sufficiently robust to withstand such an onslaught. Driving to the garden the following day through a suburban road littered on both sides with fallen trees and branches, I was very thankful that the storm had once again missed Giralang, as it had done in January of 2020. The before (11 December 2021) and after (4 January



Charnwood's new shelter is finally finished

2022) of Joanne McMillan's plot show the devastation!

The damage to garden plots was disheartening to see. The hailstones and strong winds had indeed stripped, shredded, torn, flattened, and snapped plants and damaged many of the supports. Some of the vegetation would recover but some was beyond saving and once again, the tenacity and resilience of Charnwood gardeners was tested.

The COVID-19 pandemic, subsequent lockdowns and inclement weather all served to delay the building and completion of the Charnwood garden's rustic shelter. Convenor, Teresa Rose, managed the project, built by plot holders Peter Polkinghorne, John Hankinson, Richard Trevanion, Bill McDevitt, Peter White and Bill Ashley with assistance from Ian Rose and building and engineering advice obtained from contracted experts. erecting the six giant posts was no mean feat and this structure is sure to withstand even the severest of storms in the future!

A big thank you goes to all those involved in the building of this shelter which is a useful, welcome and valuable asset for the garden. The final inspection and building was approved on 24 January 2022. Hooray and congratulations to Charnwood gardeners for their extraordinary efforts, including the third fundraising sausage sizzle at Bunnings on 4 December 2021!

— Ange McNeilly
(article and photos)

Joanne McMillan's plot, before (left) and after the January 2022 hailstorms



Cook community garden

Cook gardeners are welcoming the warmer weather in the New Year and can see the waterlogged conditions of the previous months dissipating, which means we can finally get our plots producing. You can see from the photos how one particular plot has transformed over the past few weeks of good weather.

Due to the big wet and COVID restrictions, our 20th Anniversary celebration of the Cook community garden has turned into a 21st celebration to be held on Sunday 20 March 2022, 10.30am–12.30pm. It should be a very happy occasion and good for the new gardeners to learn about how the original garden came into being and to acknowledge those who made it happen. In the meantime, a lot of work will be done to get weed growth under control and clear debris from the recent storms. The garden lost quite a few perimeter screenings which will be replanted as soon as possible.

— Peter Weddell (article and photos)



(above) Lorenzo's waterlogged garden – October 2021
(below) Lorenzo's thriving garden – January 2022



Cook Community Garden rainfall (ml) 2019–2021

	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	79	50	138	49	204	122	1197
Ave	68.8	90.3	74.8	48.2	41.0	75.9	53.5	78.2	81.8	95.7	97.9	86.3	



In memoriam – Mary Flowers

Mary Flowers has left us, aged 100 years and nearly 7 months. What an advertisement for organic gardening and organic food!

Mary was one of the original gardeners in the first Cotter Garden (along with COGS founder Betty Cornhill), when the garden was located besides the previous, narrow Cotter Road. Around 35 years ago, the gardeners were told that they would have to move immediately, as the Cotter Road was about to be widened. This was done eventually, three decades later! They carted their good soil to where the older part of the Betty Cornhill Garden is located now, near the Yarralumla Woolshed, and re-established.

Mary continued to in the community garden into her late 80's, until she no longer had the energy for the sometimes-heavy work. Her tree onions and asparagus are still shared among the gardeners, as is much of her knowledge about the plants which volunteer there. Mary's speciality was her 'green drink', edible leaves blended with apple juice, on which she fed her doubtlessly healthy grandchildren. They probably are passing this health kick to the great-grandchildren.

Mary was a much-loved member of the COGS and Betty Cornhill communities, and we send our thoughts and best wishes to her family at this time.

Mary Flowers, an original gardener at the first Cotter Garden, passed away on 25 January 2022 at the age of 100



from the archives

Autumn 2006

With such a rich history and a wealth of knowledge held by COGS and its members, it's time to dive into the archives and we explore some of the articles from magazines in days gone by. In this edition, we look back to autumn 2006 and the development of the O'Connor community garden in "A new community garden is born in O'Connor."

A New Community Garden is Born in O'Connor



*Alan Robertson turns the first sod—for the water pipes at O'Connor community garden
Photo by Adrienne Fazekas*

The Uniting Church in O'Connor (UCOC) had been looking for some time for a socially and environmentally friendly use of their two long-disused tennis courts at the rear of the church property in Jarrah Street, O'Connor. A church member with contacts at the Dickson garden suggested that COGS could be invited to develop the land as a community garden. This idea met the church's objectives and, following a number of meetings, an agreement was reached on 12 December 2005 for COGS to establish a community garden on the disused tennis courts.

UCOC has provided the land, at no cost to COGS, for a period of three years, with three year extensions by mutual agreement. COGS is providing up to \$2,000 to assist in the establishment of the garden and will meter the water used and pay the appropriate proportion of UCOC's water bill. The garden will be operated in accordance with COGS' garden policy and rules and any local rules established by the garden committee. All plot holders are required to be members of COGS and to pay the set plot fees.

Despite the busy time of the year pre-Christmas and the heat, work commenced on trimming overhanging trees, stripping out unwanted vegetation, mowing weeds, marking plot boundaries, and installing a water meter, water lines and garden taps. By Christmas Eve the garden was ready to accept members and ten were enrolled before the end of January.

The garden covers an area of approximately 1,000 square metres, quite small by COGS standards, and is fenced with a high chain wire fence. It has been divided into fifteen plots of 45 square metres each. This plot size is not large compared to some COGS gardens but it is believed to be adequate for an individual or couple to manage and is expected to result in intensive garden production at a high standard. In addition to the fifteen individual plots there is a strip around the perimeter totaling about 120 square metres that will be used for communal fruit trees, berry canes, herbs and so forth, for the growing of climbing annuals such as peas and beans on the fence, and for small individual plots for perennials such as asparagus and rhubarb.

The soil consists of imported reddish clay loam covered with a thin sandy layer for the court surface. While the clay is likely to be very gluggy if disturbed, it is quite free draining and is expected to provide an excellent surface upon which to build up garden beds and for deeper rooting plants such as fruit trees. To our great surprise several earthworms were dug up during the trenching for the water pipes. It is expected that most gardeners will use some form of no-dig garden utilising hay, straw, manures, compost and imported soils. A number of methods of removing or killing existing weeds are being trialled. Chipping the weeds has, unfortunately, proved to be time-consuming and wasteful of the thin sandy top layer. Solarisation, where the ground is thoroughly wetted then covered with black plastic sealed at the edges, has proved effective in killing all green plants. Whether it has killed the ungerminated bindii type seeds, remains to be seen. The third method being tried is simply covering the ground with a thick layer of newspaper and building garden beds up from there. By Australia Day we had our first vegetables in the ground. A good effort in only a month from commencement.

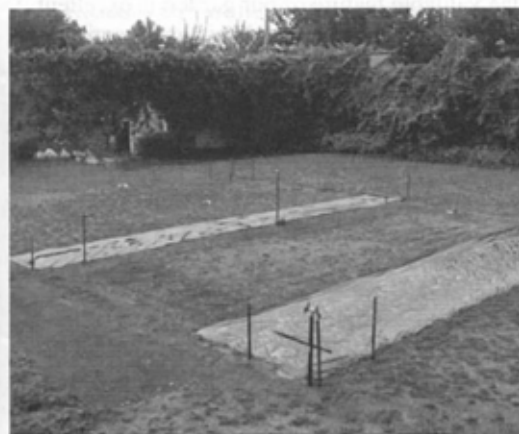
Much work remains to be done to have the garden fully operational. The most immediate communal

work project is to strip the weeds off the former tennis court surface so that, in a relatively short period of time, we can achieve a weed-free, mow-free garden. Achievement of this aim will, no doubt have other COGS gardeners, who struggle with weeds interminably, green with envy. Other urgent work includes repairs to the fencing, the installation of a garden shed so that garden tools and hoses can be purchased, and the stripping of unwanted ivy and ornamental grape vines off the ground and fences so that the perimeter garden beds can be developed.

A number of garden plots are currently being held for possible use by local schools and groups attached to the church. Once these needs are ascertained and met it is expected that the few remaining plots will be quickly filled by residents in nearby suburbs who are unable to meet their gardening requirements at home. The O'Connor community garden is an exciting new development for COGS and it is expected to result in a showcase organic garden that can be used to further COGS' aims in the wider community.

Alan Robertson
O'Connor Community Garden Convenor

Below: Alan, Adrienne and Keith laid the water pipes in the former tennis court. Photos by Keith Colls



Above: Solarisation with black plastic in some very high temperatures has been successful in killing deep-rooted weeds that would be otherwise difficult to remove. Photos by Alan Robertson

The private pleasure of keeping a gardening journal



Collage: Matt Mawson

Keeping a record of life has been something we humans have engaged in for millennia — we have passed stories down, painted on rock walls or written a journal, diary or log.

If you've ever struggled to remember a great idea, express yourself, do some problem solving to help decide on a course of action, found you need to debrief after an intense experience or want to record and reflect on events in your life — journal writing can be really beneficial — and it is easily accessible.

Journals take many different forms and no matter what type of journal you keep or how often you write, the benefits of writing in a journal are many and can be immediate.

Keeping up a journal can potentially change your life. For years I kept a personal journal and every so often in re-reading those, I am reminded of how life has changed, how I have changed and learnt, and I see patterns over the years that are grist for the mill of my work in progress as a human being. Keeping a journal has always been a rather patchy affair for me, usually prompted by a either

a high or low time in my life, when I was celebrating or really struggling and needing to express myself — in private.

Then a couple of years ago, after not keeping a journal for several years, I decided I would only keep a gardening journal and only write about my garden — what was growing, what I'd planted, what I needed to do next, ideas, dreams, harvesting and processing harvests. I draw little plans of where I will plant things, crop rotation plans, companion planting — it is my secret pleasure. Adding to my gardening journal is something I look forward to around once a week over a morning tea or coffee. It's not exactly onerous, but it is my private pleasure.

When I started keeping a gardening journal, I deliberately chose a very small book to write in to keep my entries focused and concise, but very satisfying none the less. The small pages give some discipline to my writing and help me pay attention and not drift off topic. And like gardening itself, the journal mirrors my sense of accomplishment by recording what starts as an idea but

evolves into a fully-fledged living reality.

Over time my garden journal has become a record of transformations — of lifecycles from seed to harvest, dinner table and harvest gift. It's a record of experiments, successes and failures, lessons to apply next season, and of 'things I'll never plant again!' It's also a chance to grieve when a beloved plant comes to the end of its life, and a chance to record the joy of planting something new so the cycle can start again. It's a record of the struggles along the way and of problems solved over time — ultimately, it's an expression of the cycle of our own lives but through the rewarding and very grounding lens of gardening.

Based on my experience I can only recommend keeping a personal gardening journal — it is both practical and self-affirming. I certainly notice a definite boost to my sense of wellbeing after I add to my gardening journal. So perhaps give it a go? It might be just the tonic you need in these interesting and challenging times.

— Deborah Hamilton (article)

Climate-wise garden designs

With the variable climate that comes with living in our nation's capital, it can be challenging to design a garden that can withstand the summer drought and the winter frosts.

To help, the Suburban Land Agency of the ACT Government has developed a booklet 'Climate Wise Garden Designs' in conjunction with local landscape architect Edwina Robinson to design beautiful gardens that residents can use as inspiration for their own homes.

Initially designed for those who are landscaping blocks associated with newly built homes, their advice can be translated to anyone who wants to do more with their home garden.

'Climate Wise Garden Designs' discusses what being climate wise looks like, details our climate in the ACT, provides advice on how to create a healthy garden and what to consider when planning your garden (for example, sunshine, wind, soil and shade).

The booklet also includes designs that focus on three themes — the climate wise garden, the edible garden, and the low maintenance garden — providing sample plans for both gardens and courtyards.

When asked why the Suburban Land Agency developed this book, they state "one of the Suburban Land Agency's sustainability priorities is to support resilient communities and a resilient natural environment. We want our new suburbs to be green and lush, creating habitats for local



birds and bees, and support residents to plant beautiful, cool gardens that function as an outdoor room.”

For more information or to download the booklet, visit: <https://suburbanland.act.gov.au/news/our-climate-wise-garden-designs-booklet-is-here/882>

—Rebecca Travers (article)

Canberra Organic magazine inventory

COGS is currently developing an electronic record of past editions of the COGS magazine *Canberra Organic*. These are being digitised and added into the members portal on the COGS website.



We are looking for help from COGS members in locating copies currently missing from our collection.

Copies of *Canberra Organic* that we are seeking are:

- autumn 2001
- winter and spring 2002
- autumn 2003
- autumn 2005
- winter, spring and summer 2007
- winter, spring and summer 2008
- autumn and winter 2009
- spring 2010
- summer 2013.

If any members also have copies of the magazine prior to 2001, we would also love to see them.

If you can help with copies of any of the editions listed above, please contact Cathy Morison via email at information_officer@cogs.asn.au. Copies would be scanned in and returned to you once they have been added into the portal. Thank you.

Not another zucchini

Zucchini — to plant or not to plant? The case to plant them — they are a lovely and generous vegetable. The case not to plant them — they need space to spread out, I turn around and there's another one there, I get too many at the same time, I can't give them away. This year, the decision was taken out of my hands. I planted them, and they didn't grow. But hey, I'm in the Crace community garden, and guess what? For the past couple of weeks, the share table has got them in all shapes and sizes. Thank you to my fellow gardeners, for your generosity.

Can I do something with them now, so I don't pay high prices for them in winter? Sure! Here are a few ideas. Wash and cut down the centre longways and remove the soft flesh from them. No need to peel, just grate them — either in the Thermomix on speed 3 for 4 seconds or otherwise using a good old-fashioned grater. Place in a colander and press them down to remove excess juice. Alternatively, place them in a clean tea towel and roll up like a Christmas cracker, and twist and twist until there's no more juice. If you have a favourite zucchini slice or cake recipe, then measure out the correct quantity of zucchini and place in freezer bags.



Some other ideas include:

A lovely side dish — cut it up into cubes, salt lightly, and roll in plain flour. At this stage you can put in freezer bags in single layers, or fry a few of them at a time in a frypan in hot canola oil, turning when golden. Drain on draining paper before serving, and garnish with parsley or basil.

Zucchini scallops — cut into slices, salt on both sides and lay out in a single layer allow to drip for an hour or so. Dip both sides in plain flour. At this stage you can put them in a tray and freeze, and once frozen put them in a freezer bag to keep them frozen, or fry a few at a time in a hot frypan on both sides until golden on high heat in canola oil. Drain and serve just like that. The kids love them!

Finally, you can also use it in one of my favourite zucchini cake recipes. It makes enough to give to family, friends and neighbours — a large 30cm round cake.

—Rosetta Romano
(article and recipe)

Mrs Reale's Zucchini/Carrot Cake

- 3 cups zucchini/carrot, grated
- 4 eggs
- 1 cup canola oil
- 1 cup walnuts, chopped
- 2 cups self-raising flour
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 1 tsp vanilla
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- 1 tsp ground ginger
- 1½ cups raw sugar
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tsp lemon/orange rind

Beat the oil and sugar, eggs, cinnamon, and the rest of the ingredients together in a bowl (except the zucchini). When well-mixed, add the zucchini. Place in a lined cake tin and bake at 180°C for 45 minutes (or until skewer comes out clean).

Tiny Tim tomatoes

Tiny Tim tomatoes are bushy, prolific and tasty. Usually. This season my tinys have decided to stay tiny, and after nearly three months in my Charnwood community garden plot they have grown to be only 15cms tall and produced three tomatoes in total. They were nice but three tinies don't make a punnet.

Growth hormone flashed through my mind but that is probably not organic, risky to the consumers and I am tall enough. Oh well, there is always next season — no more Tiny Tims or Grape tomatoes, it's Beefsteaks for me in 2022.

—Peter White (article and photo)

Peter's Tiny Tims stayed tiny this season



Plant profile: carrots

Carrots used to be white. They were grown for their leaves and seeds, much as their distant relatives, parsley and coriander still are. The chemical compounds that give carrots their vivid colour, carotenoids, are usually used by plants to assist in the process of photosynthesis. Carrot cousins, such as parsnips and turnip are mainly white.

Carrots originated in modern-day Iran and Afghanistan. They contain around 32,000 genes (more than humans), of which two recessive ones contribute to a build-up of carotenoids. It's thought early farmers selected colourful carrots to differentiate them from wild ones. Around 1,100 years ago purple and then yellow varieties emerged, followed another 600 years later — thanks to further selective breeding — by the modern orange form, which has lots of beta carotene. The modern preference for orange carrots has led to the breeding of varieties with ever more vivid shades; today's carrots have 50% more carotene than those of 1970. Interestingly cooked carrots release a lot more carotene during digestion than raw carrots.

There is a claim that orange carrots were bred by the Dutch in honour of William of Orange, the leader of a 16th-century revolt against the Spanish Habsburg monarchy. The conspicuous display of orange carrots in markets was deemed to be a gesture of support for the exiled descendent of William. Almost all modern European carrots are descended from a variety originally grown in the Dutch town of Hoorn.

The triumph of orange carrots over other varieties was fortuitous. The orange carrot is more nutritious, with a high amount of Vitamin A, which contributes to the health of the eye. That spurred another myth, popularised by the British during the second world war, that eating carrots gives night-vision. (The story was intended to keep the



Carrots come in a variety of colours

Royal Air Force's development of radar technology hidden from the Germans, who were led to believe that carrot consumption was behind the accuracy of British pilots).



The carrot also had an important role in the D-Day landings. The BBC transmitted immediately before D-Day on 6 June 1944 the following message: “Les carottes sont cuites, je répète, les carottes sont cuites” (The carrots are cooked, I repeat, the carrots are cooked) as a coded message to the French resistance that the invasion was imminent and to start sabotaging railways and telephone exchanges.

In 2018, world production of carrots was 40 million tonnes, with China producing 45% of the world total.

The main cultivars are commonly classified by their root shape. The four general types are:

- **Chantenay:** The roots are shorter, they have vigorous foliage and greater girth and tapering towards a blunt, rounded tip.
- **Danvers:** These have strong foliage and the roots are longer than Chantenay types, and they have a conical shape with a well-defined shoulder, tapering to a point.
- **Imperator:** This cultivar has vigorous foliage, high sugar content, and long and slender roots, tapering to a pointed tip. Imperator types are the most widely cultivated by commercial growers.
- **Nantes:** These have sparse foliage, are cylindrical, short with more of a blunt tip and a high sugar content. While they attain high yields in a range of conditions, the skin is easily damaged, they are brittle and do not store well.

—Andy Hrast (article and photos)

The history and virtues of rosemary

Rosemary has for a long time being associated with remembrance, especially for those who have passed away. In *Romeo and Juliet* Friar Lawrence tells the Capulet family to “stick your rosemary on this fair cor(p)se, and as the custom is, and in her best array, bear her to church”. Even today, Australians wear a sprig of rosemary on ANZAC day to remember those who fell in World War One. As a result, rosemary is associated with improving memory; I will come back to that later if I don’t forget.

Rosemary originated along the coast of the Mediterranean because it is a tough plant that thrives near the sea in rocky and sunny positions. This explains its genus name — *Rosmarinus* — which means *dew of the sea*, and hence its common name — rosemary. Actually *Rosmarinus* is no longer the plant’s genus. In the past, plants were largely classified according to their appearance and structure but now scientists can establish more accurate relationships between plants using molecular genetics.

So rosemary, in a genus of its own (with a few cousins) since the botanic naming system of Linnaeus was devised in 1753, was reclassified as a salvia in 2017. Instead of being *Rosmarinus officinalis* it is now *Salvia rosmarinus*. There is nothing more certain in this world than change. So we have lost officinalis which means of the shop — in other words dispensed by ancient herbalists. Don’t worry — rosemary by any other name would smell as sweet as the scent of rosemary is unforgettable.

Rosemary has a long history and apparently was mentioned in a cuneiform text on a stone tablet written in the Middle East. It was used by the ancient Egyptians in their burial rites and also by the ancient Greeks and Romans. Pliny the Elder (the one killed by the eruption of



One of the many rosemary hedges in Crace, ACT

Vesuvius in 79 AD) writes about the herb in his *Natural History*. The Romans probably brought it to England. The remarkable plant-loving Charlemagne encouraged the growing of rosemary in the gardens of monasteries and farms. It also spread to China at the time of the Han Dynasty.

Joan of Valois, Countess of Hainault, sent cuttings to her daughter in England, Queen Phillipa, wife of Edward III, in the 14th century. She described the virtues of the herb in the letter accompanying the gift. Phillipa planted it in the garden of Westminster Palace. After this

rosemary became naturalised and its properties described in English herbals. At this time Hungary water, an alcohol-based perfume distilled from rosemary, became popular in Europe. European settlers later took rosemary to the new world.

Many varieties of rosemary have been developed and in Crace, the suburb where I live. The various forms have been used extensively in landscaping gardens and parks; as hedging, hanging over walls, or as ground covers. Rosemary blooms over a long time and bees love it. There is nothing nicer than snapping



Honeybee hive with rosemary – COGS Community Garden Crace

off a sprig of rosemary and inhaling its heady and stimulating aroma.

Rosemary leaves can be used for tea, and as a tincture, and as an essential oil diluted with other oils for topical applications. As an ancient herb, rosemary has been credited with many medicinal properties such as improving memory, relieving muscle pains and spasms, stimulating hair growth, helping indigestion, supporting the circulatory and nervous systems, and even fighting cancer. Despite it being such a common and ancient herb there is not a large body of reliable evidence from scientific studies on humans of its efficacy.

We do know that rosemary contains a number of phytochemicals, including rosmarinic acid, camphor, caffeic acid, ursolic acid, betulonic acid, carnosic acid, and carnosol. Phytochemicals are chemical compounds produced by plants

which help to reduce fungi, bacteria and plant virus infections and help to deter insects and other animals from eating them.

Preliminary studies show that aromatherapy with rosemary essential oil can be helpful for short term memory and stress. Carnosic acid may reduce damage to the brain by free radicals. Studies also show that rosemary may help to slow the spread of some cancers and have antimicrobial properties. Rosemary is also high in manganese which helps the body form blood clots.

This seems very encouraging but as with many medicines, more is not necessarily better.

For rosemary this is particularly important as it has some powerful effects and the concentration of active ingredients in herbal preparations may not be known accurately. Large quantities of dried rosemary leaves can cause serious side effects,

including vomiting, spasms, coma and fluid on the lungs. As a safeguard, no more than 4–6g of dried rosemary leaves should be used per day. Rosemary essential oil should not be taken orally as it can contain 10–20% camphor and is toxic. There are a range of other serious side effects from taking high doses of rosemary supplements including interfering with the effectiveness of blood thinning drugs.

Rosemary is a wonderful plant, and it may help improve our memories and have other benefits as well, it is just that it is a very strong plant, in more ways than one, and needs to be used judiciously.

There's rosemary, that's for remembrance; pray you love, remember.

- Ophelia in *Hamlet*, Act IV, Scene 5

—Elizabeth Dangerfield
(article and photos)

Participation in community gardens in the ACT region: ANU Research Project – abridged version

1. Introduction

Community gardens have been around for hundreds of years, dating back as far as the eighteenth century in Sheffield, England (Flavell, 2003). However, whilst they have been commonplace across European countries, their popularity has only recently increased in places like America and Australia (Blakemore, 2016). The surge in popularity can be attributed to the fact that community gardens produce a wide range of benefits for participants (Booth *et al.*, 2018; Torres *et al.*, 2018); from improved health and well-being to an enhanced sense of community connection (Lovell *et al.*, 2014; Lee and Matarrita-Cascante, 2019).

Traditionally, community gardens were predominantly in the form of allotments (Flavell, 2003), however they have diversified to include other formats such as laneway gardens and rooftop gardens. Given this diversity, Kurtz (2001:656) defines community gardens as “tangible arenas in which urban residents can establish and sustain relationships with one another, with elements of nature, and with their neighbourhood”. Whilst community gardens can exist in rural areas, they are typically a feature of urban locations due to the decreased amount of space to garden at home (Kingsley *et al.*, 2019). With over 55% of the world’s population living in urban areas in 2018 (United Nations [UN] Department of Economic and Social Affairs Population Division, 2018), the need for community gardens is only increasing.

The population of Canberra, ACT is anticipated to double within the next 40 years; however, with limited space to grow, the city is likely to see a shift to higher density living (Allen, 2021). Accordingly, residents in the ACT region will be less likely to have their own outdoor space at home, increasing the requirement and demand for community gardens. With the known benefits

of community gardens, and a heightened need for community gardens due to a shift to higher density living, it is important to understand who currently participates and what factors influence participation. This knowledge is paramount to garnering the success of community gardens and improving them into the future.

Furthermore, this knowledge can be used to understand how broader, more diverse participation can be encouraged.

Accordingly, this study sought to address the following research questions:

- i. Who currently participates in community gardens within the ACT region?
- ii. What factors influence participation in community gardens?
- iii. How can more diverse participation be encouraged in community gardens?

Understanding the above research questions is important to help guide future urban planning and development efforts to ensure they meet all the needs of the local community; particularly surrounding the establishment and maintenance of community connection with nature.

2. Scope and methodology

This study focused on community garden participation in the ACT region. For the purpose of the project, the ACT region was defined as including Canberra and its immediate surrounds (e.g. Queanbeyan). Towns extending further than 30 kilometres from Canberra City were not included due to time restraints of the project.

To address the research questions, the project involved a series of components including conducting a

literature review, online survey, and individual/group interviews. Upon completion, all results were compiled and analysed to inform the final report.

3. Key findings

Community garden participation

The survey garnered relatively equal response from both community garden participants and non-participants. In many situations, one might expect to see limited responses from individuals who do not take part in the specified activity due to a perception that it is not applicable to the individual. However, in this case, we saw 10% more responses from non-participants. Given that **94% of non-participants indicated they would participate or would consider participating in a community garden in the future**, the high response rate may speak to a high demand for community gardens. It suggests that individuals see the value and importance of community gardens.

There were clear trends in who participates in community gardens across the ACT region with participants being primarily female (63%) and 90% of all participants identifying as having a moderate to high socioeconomic status. This aligns to the literature which indicates **participation from women of high socioeconomic status is more common**. These findings also align to the reports of the interviewees who suggested it is more common for women and well-off individuals to be involved.

“I like to do the carpark test. There are usually expensive cars. The sort of people who are struggling don’t join the gardens. If you can’t get food on the table, you won’t invest in a small plot. It is very much a middle income, upper group.”



Holder community garden

The survey also revealed that most participants were of an older age group (primarily 55 to 74 years old), once again aligning to the literatures claims that **community gardens tend to attract older people more than younger people**. The existing literature also suggests that at a certain age (typically 70), participating in community gardens becomes less viable (Lee and Matarrita-Cascante, 2019). In the ACT region, it appears participation drops off at a slightly older age, as 10% of participants were over the age of 75. However, whilst participation seems to continue into older age groups, participation from younger age groups was limited, with **no current participants younger than 35**¹.

“I feel like it is still kind of an old person’s sport – we were the minority as young people. I don’t think it is a mainstream thing. You have to be a keen bean if you are young and willing to be around older people.”

¹ This statistic is based on the survey responses gathered in the research project and therefore may not reflect ACT community garden participation in its entirety.

Almost all participants stated that they were from an English-speaking background. Whilst interviewees mentioned that they know of people in their community garden from different backgrounds and who speak different languages, there was a consensus that the **majority are from an English-speaking background**.

“I wish it could be more diverse. I wish it reflected a wider community base and could be across a bigger community.”

Factors influencing participation

In terms of motivations for participation, it is clear that motivations have shifted from the traditional provision of food to the desire to grow healthy and organic food. Most participants listed a **desire to grow their own food and a love for gardening as their main motivations** for joining a community garden. However, it is interesting to point out that whilst most individuals joined their community garden to grow their own food and pursue their love of gardening, **many choose to stay due to the community and social aspects they provide**. This demonstrates the inherent value of community gardens and their ability to bring individuals together.

Major barriers were viewed by survey respondents as a **lack of understanding about how community gardens work** (i.e. responsibilities and commitments), and a **lack of communication/promotion from community gardens**. Interviewees identified **long waiting lists** as the largest barrier.

All interviewees agreed that community garden communication and promotion with the broader ACT region is poor. However, they said this is intentionally so based on the long waiting lists that prevent new members from joining. With the presence of waiting lists, it is unnecessary to promote the gardens and would only cause further disappointment when individuals attempt to join and find they are unable to. One interviewee, who is in a management role with COGS stated that:

“We do a lousy job of promoting ours intentionally due to waiting lists. We promote in other ways such as our quarterly magazine, but our objective is to correspond with local politicians to increase our gardens.”

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This points to a **broader problem of not having enough space in pre-existing community gardens and a need for new community gardens.**

Encouraging diverse participation

The top strategies to increase participation included **increasing the number of community gardens in the ACT region and improving communication and promotion from community gardens to the broader public.** There is clear relationship between barriers and strategies and arguably an order in which they can be addressed. As demonstrated by the interviewees, as well as comments in the survey, **diverse participation cannot be improved and increased until more community gardens are implemented in the ACT region.** Until that time, community gardens are unable to communicate and promote themselves due to the waiting lists that exist.

“More of them I say! Particularly with the way Canberra is going with urban density. On an intellectual level I agree with that but on a personal level I don’t agree. I might feel differently if there were beautiful community gardens.”

Another popular strategy amongst interviewees and some survey respondents was that **community gardens should be aligned with schools, preschools, or playgroups to further involve children and young people.** It is positive to note that these suggestions were not only put forward by younger individuals, but also by older participants who would like to see more participation from younger age groups.

“I feel like young families and young adults without kids is an area that could be targeted to increase participation. Everybody I know loves the idea of their kids playing in a veggie garden.”

4. Conclusion

Overall, participants and non-participants alike, agreed that **the number one strategy to increasing diverse participation, is the development of more community gardens across the ACT region.**



Betty Cornhill community garden

Upon this occurring, the next best strategy would be to enhance and improve communication from community gardens themselves.

Ultimately, this research project demonstrated that **there is a high demand for community gardens within the ACT region.** To allow further and more diverse participation to occur, **more community gardens need to be developed.**

—Georgia Lavers (article),
Matt Mawson (photos)

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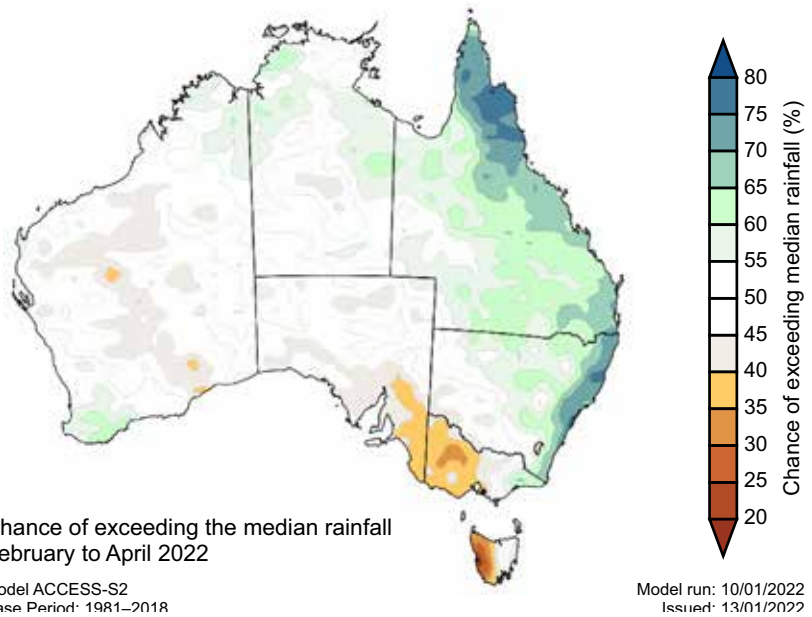
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La Niña continues

The Bureau of Meteorology's outlook issued 18 January 2022 says that the 2021–22 La Niña is near or at its peak.

The Bureau says that climate models suggest that conditions will likely return to neutral early in the southern hemisphere autumn. Autumn is the typical time of the year in which La Niña or El Niño events decay and return to neutral.

Cooler than usual sea surface temperatures are persisting in the central and eastern tropical Pacific, with warmer than average waters to Australia's north. Cooler sub-surface water remains in the eastern tropical Pacific, supporting the cooler waters at the surface. However, these cooler



Dam levels in the Canberra region and capital cities

	Oct '21	Oct '20
ACT storages	100%	97%
Murray-Darling Basin	91%	55%
Burrinjuck Dam	92%	70%
Blowering Dam	94%	73%
Sydney	97%	93%
Melbourne	90%	75%
Brisbane	71%	59%
Adelaide	61%	55%
Perth	55%	42%

sub-surface waters are starting to warm.

While showing some fluctuations from transient tropical weather, the atmospheric patterns are broadly typical of La Niña with decreased cloudiness near the Date Line, and trade winds close to average or slightly increased

February to April rainfall is likely to be above median for parts of northern

and eastern Australia, while below median rainfall is likely for parts of south-east Australia. Maximum temperatures are likely to be above median for most of Australia, although southern parts of the east coast are likely to be below median while minimum temperatures for February to April are likely to be warmer than median Australia-wide.

—Andy Hrast (article)

COGS Community Garden Watering Rules

With the warmer months ahead, gardeners are reminded that all plot holders must abide by the COGS watering rules. The rules are based on the ICON Water Permanent Water Conservation Measures and include extra requirements specifically for COGS garden plot holders as follows:

- The use of sprinklers is not permitted in COGS' community gardens at any time.
- Watering must be by:
 - a hand-held hose fitted with a trigger nozzle;
 - a bucket or watering can; or
 - a drip irrigation system.
- Plants must be watered without causing pooling or runoff.



- Tap timers are not to be used.
- Nozzles must not be removed while watering.
- Unattended watering is not allowed.
- Filling trenches is not allowed.

Thank you for your assistance with adhering to these rules.

Crimson Rosellas

I grew up knowing these beautiful red parrots as Mountain Lowries. My father grew up in the high country, and I assumed that was the local name for what we all know as the crimson rosella (*Platycercus elegans*). In fact, it would seem that they are known by many names, depending on where you are from — the Red Lowry, Pennant's Parakeet, Campbell Parakeet, Mountain Parrot or Mountain Lowry.

They are widely distributed on the eastern and south-eastern parts of Australia, and their colour can vary depending on their location. "Orange birds are restricted to the Flinders Ranges region of South Australia, while yellow ones are found along the Murray, Murrumbidgee and neighbouring rivers (where yellow birds meet red birds they hybridise, producing orange offspring)."¹

In Canberra, they provide a beautiful flash of colour in the trees, from the juvenile green to the adult crimson and blue. They are a regular visitor to the many seed trays that are found in suburban gardens, but they are less inclined to become 'humanised', preferring to remain at a distance.

Feeding these birds, along with the other native seed eaters, does bring garden owners joy, however "... constantly ensuring that bird feeders are regularly filled with seeds (however delightful it is to witness) will only make those species who visit, reliant on the human intervention aspect and not fully utilise what your garden has to offer in the way of natural food sources. Finding the right balance is key. Seeds in bird feeders should only be placed on an average of once a fortnight in the summer and maybe only once a week during winter when natural food sources are scarce and should only be seen as a supplement to their natural diet and not a main form of nutrition."²

While they are very accepting of the treats we leave for them, their natural diet includes seeds of eucalypts, grasses and shrubs, as well as insects and some tree blossoms.

I have found that one of the best ways to attract crimson rosellas to your garden is to provide a regular and safe source of fresh water. During our typically hot, dry summers this will attract many avian visitors — not just the crimson rosella.

Planting native flowering trees is another way to bring this beautiful and vocal species to your garden. They loved the large casuarina tree that we had at the back of our garden. On some of the scorching days in past summers, they were even accepting of a spray of water from the garden hose to cool their feathers.

Like most other parrots, these birds are reliant on hollows in trees to make their nests and raise their young. It was while studying the nesting habits of the rosellas that researchers discovered that this species has a strong sense of smell and will sniff out nesting



Hand drawn Crimson Rosella
(*Platycercus elegans*).
Reference photo by David Cook

sites that have been used by other Crimson Rosellas. "It's exciting to know that Crimson Rosellas do in fact have a sense of smell and make use of it, as they are very smelly birds. Often, when we handle the birds, it takes a lot of effort to wash out the smell from our hands and clothes. Even museum specimens which are over 30 years old still have this distinct odour."³

I suspect that most of us admire this beautiful parrot for its appearance, rather than its smell. It is a welcome addition to your garden and represents an extension of the Australian bush into our everyday lives.

— Cathy Morison (article and drawing)

¹ <https://australian.museum/learn/animals/birds/crimson-rosella/>

² <https://www.aboutthegarden.com.au/best-plants-to-bring-birds-to-your-garden>

³ <https://www.australiangeographic.com.au/news/2014/08/birds-can-smell-their-own-species/>



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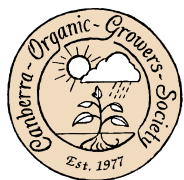
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autumn planting guide

Brassicas

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

Peas

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

Lettuces

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

Leeks

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



Onions

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

Spring flowers

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

Green manures

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

Green manure crops suitable for planting in Canberra are:

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

Non-legumes: Barley, oats and rye.

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

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

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

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

S = seed sowing; T = transplanting

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

What's on



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.

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**Our social media community
is growing every week.**

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

You're invited to
Canberra Organic Growers Society (COGS)
and
O'Connor Uniting Community Hub
Open Day!

Open Garden displays, community stalls,
sausage sizzle, mobile coffee van

Saturday 23rd April, 2022

10am to 4pm

O'Connor Uniting Church
Cnr Brigalow, Jarrah and Scrivener Sts,
North O'Connor

Charnwood community gardeners

—Jo McMillan, Ange McNeilly and Teresa Rose (photos)



*(above) Tess digging her parents' plot with her mother Melissa looking on
(below) Richard and Peter working on the shelter post holes*



*(above) Young Finn watering grandparents John and Philippa's raspberry plants
(below) Sunita preparing her new plot by eradicating couch*

