

THE

COGS



QUARTERLY

VOL 4 no. 3

ORGANIC GROWING IN THE CANBERRA REGION

SPRING 1996



# COMMITTEE AND HELPERS

CANBERRA ORGANIC GROWERS' SOCIETY INC., P.O. BOX 347, DICKSON ACT 2602

President	Geoff Foster	238 1109
Vice-President	David Odell	238 1028
Secretary	John Ross	241 4063
Treasurer	Margaret Allen	207 4349(w)
Membership Secretary	John Allen	252 6002(w)
Newsletter Editor	Michelle Johnson	231 6219
Librarian	Annie Brent	238 1707

## Committee

Joan Buckie	286 5695
Joan Cordeaux	201 5105(w)
Marianne Humphries	
Ann Smith	

## Garden Convenors

Cotter	John Flowers	281 1460
Charnwood	Neil Fahey	258 4506
Northside	John Tuxworth	257 5441
Oaks Estate	Caroline Paris	297 4203
	Georg Rehn	297 1036
Theodore	Steve Sutton	292 5609
Tuggeranong	Christine Carter	231 5862



**COGS  
FLIER:  
Pilot**  
Marjatta Asa  
048 471 173

Seed Librarian Marjatta Asa 048 471 173

Supper Convenors (vacant)

Produce Table (vacant)

Book Sales Murray Dadds 281 6065

## Representatives to Conservation Council

Ann Smith

## Representatives to Environment Centre

Els Wynen

Public Officer Joan Buckie

## ENQUIRIES ABOUT ORGANIC GROWING

Elizabeth Palmer 248 8004

## WHAT IS ORGANIC GROWING

### ABOUT

The ORGANIC MOVEMENT endeavours to provide an alternative to the mass of toxic chemicals, fertilisers, fungicides and herbicides used in modern agricultural methods by utilising more natural means of improving and preserving our soils and to produce nutritious, less contaminated food.

## WHAT ARE THE ORGANIC ALTERNATIVES?

By enriching the soil with compost, manure, green manure and mulches we avoid disease and control pests through non-chemical methods, including encouraging the presence of beneficial insects to feed on pests, growing companion plants to discourage pest attacks, by growing healthy plants to resist pest attacks and disease and by tuning in to nature with love, harmony and gratitude.

**REMEMBER: Monthly meetings are on the 4th Tuesday of the month  
except December and January**

## COGS QUARTERLY

Published by the Canberra Organic Growers  
Society Inc.  
VOL. 4 No.3 (Issue 15)

### CONTRIBUTIONS INVITED

Preferably on diskette in IBM compatible  
format - Contact Editor for details  
Ph 06 231 6219

Contributions can be sent to:

COGS Quarterly  
PO Box 347  
Dickson ACT 2602

or  
E-mail to [jallen@pcug.org.au](mailto:jallen@pcug.org.au)

There are four issues each year;  
Autumn (February), Winter (May),  
Spring (August), Summer (November). Copy  
deadline end of month **prior** to each issue

Articles in the *Quarterly* do not necessarily  
reflect the views of the Editor nor of the  
Society, nor are the products and services  
offered by advertisers specifically endorsed by  
the Society.

### EDITORIAL WORKING GROUP

#### Editor:

Michelle Johnson

#### Editing:

Geoff Foster

#### Layout:

Michelle Johnson  
Richard Blyton  
Geoff Foster

#### Illustrations:

Joan Buckie: cover picture  
Joan Buckie: "David Odell's portrait"  
Lydia Waldron "Flier Logo"

#### Advertising:

Contact Michelle Johnson  
1/8 page: \$7 per issue in advance or \$25 in  
advance for 4 issues  
1/4 page: \$14 per issue in advance or \$50 in  
advance for 4 issues  
1/2 page: \$28 per issue in advance or \$100 in  
advance for 4 issues  
full page: \$56 per issue in advance or \$200 in  
advance for 4 issues

Postage: Lydia Waldron

## CONTENTS

<i>Biodynamics: A Growth Experience</i> by Jeremy Wilson . . . . .	4
<i>Dahlias as Herbicides</i> by Jackie French . . . . .	7
<i>Market Gardening:- Trials, Tribulations and Triumphs</i> by Michael Plane9	
<i>Heat Treatment of Tomato Seeds</i> by Jonathon Banks and Robyn Daley .10	
<i>The Certainty of Change - and how to be ready for it!</i> by David Odell .11	
<i>What is It?</i> by Michelle Johnson . . . . .	14
<i>The Internet Column</i> by John Allen. . . . .	15
<i>Featuring "Heritage Seed Curators Association"</i> by Bill Hankin and <i>"Clues for a Better Yarden"</i> by Carolyn Lukens	
<i>Vegetable Growing Notes and Planting Secrets from "Shambhala"</i> by Nelia Hyndman-Rizik . . . . .	18
<i>Vegetable Growing - Growers tell us how they grow their favourite vegetables with contributions from Nelia Hyndman-Rizik, Chris Lodi, Steve Sutton and Joyce Wilkie.....</i> . . . . .	19
<i>Growing Tips</i> by John Brummell. . . . .	24
<i>Spring Vegetable Planting Guide.</i> . . . .	25
<i>Membership Subscriptions</i> . . . . .	26

### SEALED BID AUCTION OF COGS MULCHER

COGS intends to auction their Northside mulcher to its members. To be considered your monetary offer should be placed in a sealed envelope bearing your name and membership number. This envelope should then be posted in a covering envelope to "COGS Auction" PO Box 347, Dickson, ACT, 2602 by the 13th September, 1996. Members wishing to view the mulcher should contact John Ross on 241 4063.

Meeting Notices are on COGS NOTICEBOARD  
on the inside back page

The COGS QUARTERLY is printed on 100% recycled paper

# BIODYNAMICS : A GROWTH EXPERIENCE

*by Jeremy Wilson*

This article is about my experiences with Biodynamics over the last seven years. It has been both inspiring and frustrating at times, but overall, a most positive and uplifting experience which has convinced me that Biodynamics is arguably the most sophisticated system of organic farming and gardening available.

It might help to start with a definition of Biodynamics, drawn from the Demeter Standards produced by Alex Podolinsky for Biodynamic farmers in Australia:

" 'Biodynamic' means agricultural practices based principally on the work of the Austrian Scientist Rudolf Steiner and subsequent developments derived from practical application, experience and the results of research.

Fundamental to Australian Demeter production standards is that plants are fed naturally, that is in soils with enhanced biological activity, determined by humus level, crumb and root structure, such that plants are fed through the soil ecosystem and not primarily via soluble salts in the soil water. Plants grown in this way are therefore under the influence of sun, warmth and light, and may selectively acquire the nutrients they need for appropriate growth...

It is expected that with the Biodynamic farm conversion, an equivalent development takes place with the owner/operator: observation, conscience and consciousness for Nature, soils, plants, animals, farming skills, consumer awareness."

It is a potent form of agriculture. Very small quantities are needed to stimulate the process which can transform the soil, and through this the health and vitality of the plants which grow in it, the animals which eat the plants, and ultimately humans at the peak of the food chain.

The principal components are the soil spray, BD 500, and the compost preparations BD 502 to 507. The soil spray is sprinkled or sprayed onto the soil each Spring and Autumn when there is rapid plant growth and the soil is moist and warm, and preferably with a descending moon.

The BD 500 works in association with the development of the plant roots, to form a vigorous, complex community of micro flora in the soil. This is the source of the humus colloids which release the essential soluble salts essential for plant growth. The rate of release is determined by the warmth of the plant's environment, allowing plants to be fed through a natural process, quite different from plants 'force fed' through applications of artificial fertiliser or uncomposted manure. Humus colloids create the soil structure which largely determines the health of the soil, and consequently the health of the plants living in it, and the animals which feed on these plants.

The effect of the BD 500 spray is quite specific. The soil becomes darker as soil humus levels increase and the structure improves, developing a crumb texture. The soil becomes more permeable, holding the right level of moisture for longer in dry conditions, but not becoming waterlogged in persistent heavy rain, provided surplus water can drain away. The soil also develops a fine sweet smell.

Our experience with using Biodynamics began after being inspired by Alex Podolinsky. His depth of understanding of Biodynamics combined with his ability to offer practical advice has remained for us a highly valued source of support.

Our first encounter with BD was in the vegetable garden with the compost preparations. Kate and I, with the help of willing friends built a compost heap containing a good proportion of animal manure and inserted the Biodynamic preparations 502 to 507 in the recommended fashion.

The results astonished us. The compost was strongly colloidal, smelled sweet and when added to the garden beds produced a beautiful soil and vegetables of a much higher quality than we had achieved before. Pests were less of a problem, and the soil life, particularly earthworms, was abundant.

At this time we had decided to develop a grazing enterprise based on Biodynamics. We visited some Biodynamic farms to see what we could learn. What we saw has served as a continuing motivation to develop a grazing operation which is sustainable, satisfying and produces a high quality product which is an expression of the life force central to Biodynamics.



We took up 380 acres near Yass on shale based soil which had been grazed since the 1850s. We knew there were problems caused by previous management practices, and strenuously tried to avoid adding to them while we set about converting the farm to Biodynamics. We quickly came face to face with two shocks.

The first was salt. We had read about and inspected sites exhibiting classic dry land salinity. We knew there was some on the property but had not realised how extensive it was. We were alarmed by advice from the local Soil Conservation field staff that the problem was extensive, expanding, intractable and would soon destroy the productivity of the best of our grazing land.

Soil Conservation's recommendations were chemical intensive - not what we were prepared to undertake. The Soil Conservation people were politely tolerant of our ideas on Biodynamics, but most importantly, they showed us how to recognise the early stages of salt incursion.

Suddenly we could see all over the district salt afflicted areas near the roads we travelled each day. Our spirits sank. We consulted other farmers in the BD Association led by Alex Podolinsky, and were surprised by their calm assurance that Biodynamics had overcome similar problems on their farms and would work for us. We tried to be optimistic.

The second shock came when we felt that the BD 500, so painstakingly stirred and sprayed in Spring and Autumn - when the conditions were just right - did not seem to be improving the situation. It was not merely that we had a lot at stake, or that we had put our (educated) faith into BD, but that the results we had previously experienced with Biodynamics and seen on other farms did not seem to be coming through for us.

But we persevered. Alex Podolinsky called in and gave far reaching guidance. We consulted with other BD farmers. Ron Ward at Cootamundra, who supplies much of the beef, lamb and pork to the Biodynamic Butchery at Griffith shops, called in and gave excellent practical advice.

We read and experimented and observed. We began to realise that in essence we had to farm by observation. This was quite a challenge as we had very full time jobs, three young children to raise in a Gothic Fibro stockman's cottage which was giving way to gravity. Our farming was done at weekends and at night after work. In more ways than one this was really farming in the dark.

Farming part-time like this was no picnic. We could see that it required a lot more than simply stirring and spraying out the BD 500 twice each year when conditions were

right. We had to be able to observe and perceive what was happening in the paddocks, how the pasture was responding to the climatic and grazing conditions, how the animals health was changing, and manage the place on the basis of these observations.

We had to resist our immediate instinct to focus our limited farming time on trying to spot what was going wrong. We knew this was only a small part of the picture. Far more important, and more difficult to observe are the gradual changes which really indicate how the farm is developing.

Learning to farm by observation and use of Biodynamics is a wonderful, and a very challenging growth experience. At primary school in the 1950s I had dreamed of becoming a naturalist, a quaint 19th Century term even then sidelined by Modern Science. To my delight I now realise the dream is becoming a reality through a most unexpected avenue. The whole of the farm is in a constant process of change.

Part of this is the vagaries of season, rainfall, heat, cold, wind, etc. The more difficult part is allowing for these fluctuations to observe the underlying trends in the farm's overall vitality.

To our immense relief we have seen the farm's health improve. Areas which looked mediocre or just plain sick have begun to take on a better balance. There is more grass and fewer weeds. After the drought farmers everywhere were experiencing big weed problems. Monsanto made a fortune as farmers splashed out on herbicide. We were very pleased to see we had less of a weed problem than in previous years. There is less bare soil. Extensive areas which had sparse pasture when we came six years ago now have a thick sward. The soil is darker, and more permeable. There is much less run-off after rain than our neighbours experience. Our dams which used to fill immediately during rain, now start to fill two days later as the rain percolates through the soil.

The biggest thrill has been the way the salt affected areas have turned around. The numerous areas which had been scalded of vegetation by the high levels of salt have largely grown back. Acres of desolate bare clay which were covered with a crust of white salt in summer have become covered in vegetation.

It's not high quality grass, but its the early stages of a successional change which is healing the damage and heading towards a strong sustainable pasture.

Every day we pass salt scalds near the roadside in neighbouring properties and we see no change like ours

anywhere else. We offer thanks to those BD farmers who calmly assured us that Biodynamics would fix the problem.

We can now see that the process of reclamation can be accelerated by deep ripping the soil and allowing air to penetrate and stimulate the vigorous soil micro flora which is the hallmark of Biodynamics. In these areas the soil has changed from a grey smelly sludge to a soil full of fibrous roots, with structure, dark colour and a tolerable, even attractive smell.



Where we have sprayed the BD 500, but not deep ripped to allow the air to penetrate, the primary components of the change process are clearly functioning, although the process is relatively slow.

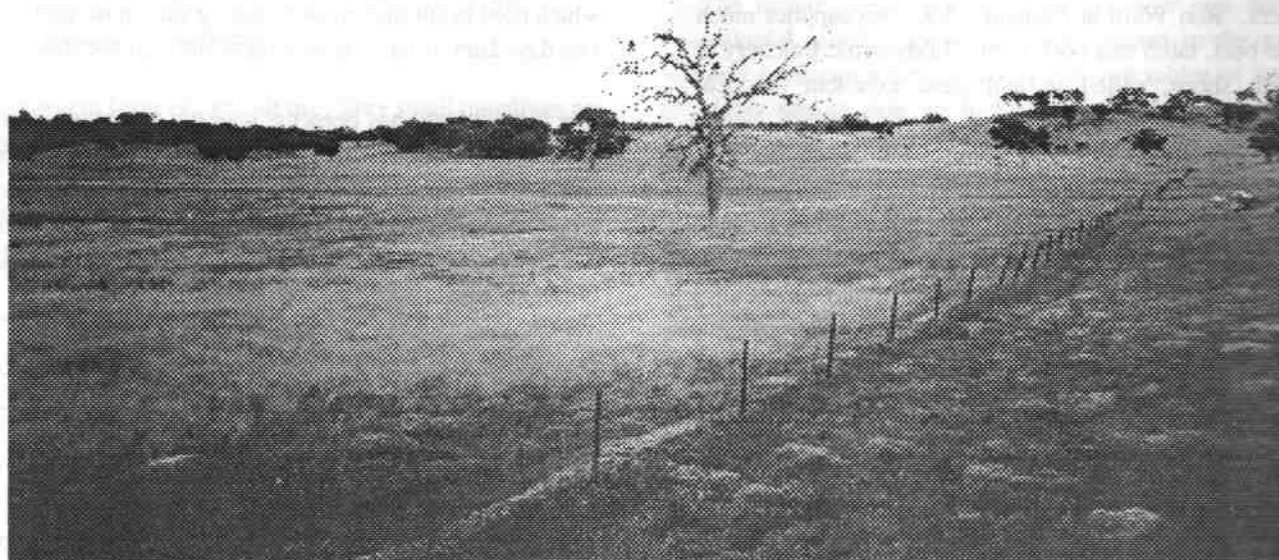
The close up photo shows how simple grasses are colonising the centre of a bare patch of salt-scaled soil, and couch grass is encroaching from the edges. The wider angle photo shows the difference between the area on the right hand side of the fence, which has been deep ripped, and that on the left which has not. Both have been sprayed with BD 500.

The other benefit for us is that the beef cattle we raise on this pasture are very healthy. We do not drench the animals, or give them any vaccinations. Their health is a testament to the capacity of Biodynamics to stimulate vitality. The beef is quite different from conventionally

raised beef and we gain great pleasure when our customers phone up to tell us how they like the taste and texture of the meat.

We are very pleased we stuck with Biodynamics as it has certainly changed the way we view life and approach the complex and demanding business of farming. We have grown personally in ways we never expected, and the best part is: it's really just the beginning.

We have a long way to go before we have the farm working at its peak as a self-supporting system which contributes positively to the ecology as a whole. And we look forward to the challenges ahead and to helping others get started in Biodynamics. Please phone me on 227,1359 if you have any questions.





# Dahlias as Herbicides

By Jackie French

## Natural herbicides and how to use them

All gardeners know that some plants don't grow well with other plants. If your vegetables are infested with couch grass, for example, they'll do badly. Most plants won't thrive under pine trees, or red gums.

This isn't simply the result of competition for water and nutrients. Plants, like couch grass, pine trees and red gums actually suppress the growth of others. They produce phytotoxic substances, either from their roots or washed down from their leaves, that inhibit other plant's growth.

This 'inhibiting process' can work in several ways. One way is to stop the seeds of other plants from germinating. This is one of the most useful ways a plant can destroy its competition, as no matter how much other plants are dwarfed they may still set seed.

Other plants stunt any plant around them- again a defense against competition. They can do this by limiting leaf size, inhibiting root growth, inhibiting the uptake of nutrients and several other ways.

Some plants only affect a certain range of plants. It is the latter effect that is the most useful in the search for 'natural herbicides'. Couch grass, paspalum, bracken, pittosporum trees, red gums, wormwood will inhibit weeds- but they'll also inhibit almost anything else you try to grow.

Over long periods, however, certain plants do develop tolerances to the phytotoxins of others. Barley inhibits many weeds, but not wheat, for example- possibly because wheat and barley have been grown together for so long. Often traditional peasant associations, like Mexican squash pumpkins and corn, make use of toxins secreted by one plant ( the pumpkins) to inhibit weeds, while the other grows uninhibited by the herbicide effect, and more strongly in the absence of weed competition.

## Using Natural Herbicides at Home

Natural herbicides, can be used in the home garden - though perhaps not in the ways you might expect. Even reproducing peasant 'companion associations' like corn and pumpkin may not give you the herbicide effect- it has been bred out of many modern commercial varieties. You can brew up very weak herbicides from home grown ingredients like pumpkin leaves and oak leaves by pouring hot water over them, and leaving them till cool- but they won't be nearly as effective as the commercial preparations- more of curiosity value than any practical help in the garden.

What can you do then?

Try to stop thinking of 'herbicides' as things that come in drums or bottles. Use your 'natural herbicides' in situ, where they can have the most effect.

Say you have a weedy patch, for example, where you want to grow vegetables or flowers. Try 'natural herbicides' to 'clean' your garden of weeds before you plant your crop.

Try a barley, oat or other grain 'green manure', either digging it in or slashing it and letting it decompose on top of the soil. Germination suppressors include all grains- oats, in particular, but also wheat, buckwheat and rye will help 'clean' an extremely weedy paddock or garden bed.

Poppies inhibit the germination of many seeds around them. This means that most of the weed seeds in your garden can be stopped from germinating if you plant the area with poppies first. Poppies for weed control need to be planted very thickly- much more thickly than you would plant them to get the best flowers.

Plant poppies after your other flowers are established, and they will help stop weeds from germinating. Poppies can also be grown as a companion plant in the vegetable garden. Potatoes also suppress the germination of many weeds around them. Many of the 'stately home' lawns were first planted with potatoes by gardeners who knew their value in 'cleaning' weedy ground.

In the vegetable garden, try cucumbers or pumpkins between tall crops like corn, broad beans etc to keep down weeds- not just by their smothering effect, but also from the substances produced in their leaves. Use crops of witloof, chicory, and all the cabbage family ( especially if the residue are left in the soil to rot) or mugwort to clean up a weedy vegetable garden.

Many vegetables inhibit the seed germination when they flower. Every winter I let our radish and parsnips go to seed - then water well and pull them up. The ground below is almost entirely weed free.

I once experimented with two trial plots of cauliflowers. The first were dug up as they were harvested, the second were simply cut and the stalks and leaves left in the ground. The plots were then left bare for a month. The plot with the stalks was still almost weed free ( only clover seemed to spring up around them). The totally bare plot was almost knee high with at least seven weed species.

What about the Dahlias?

I don't know if, in fact, dahlias have any herbicide effect at all- but like many deep rooted or thickly growing plants they can be used to stop other plants growing.

Dahlias grow from large tubers- so they have a head start on your weeds. I use dahlias as a hedge round a late summer garden to keep out couch grass. I use comfrey the same way- planted thickly in a border to stop grass encroaching. Comfrey can also be slashed about six times a season to provide home grown mulch for the vegetables it's protecting.

Comfrey and dahlias die down in the winter- but the grass stops spreading at about the same time that the comfrey or dahlias lose their leaves. In warmer areas than we have here lemon grass can be used as a permanent grass barrier- thickly planted around the whole of the garden, and

regularly slashed to provide an aromatic mulch that will also help stop weed seeds germinating.

If you have an area you want weed free, try scattering gladioli bulbs. Gladioli are excellent weed removers. They don't have to be dug in to start growing. I just scatter them in among the weeds- very thickly- then slash the weeds. The weeds form a natural mulch over the gladioli, so that you don't need to cover them with soil.

This isn't, of course, the way to grow the best, most beautiful gladioli - but you do get flowers, and they are pretty massed together. You can either pull them up as they start to die down, to use somewhere else, or leave them in the ground to multiply for a few years, till you need that patch of soil. I buy gladioli by the thousand- they are very cheap if bought in bulk - much cheaper, in fact, than a drum of herbicide would be to clear the same area- and much more attractive.

### 'Herbicide' mulches

I have tried using nut tree leaves, oak leaves, cypress leaves, pumpkin leaves as well as mugwort and bracken as weed suppressing mulches. Slash the bracken or the mugwort, or use the foliage from the trees. You have to be very careful not to place the mulch near your plants or they too may be inhibited. While these 'natural herbicides' have been successful in keeping weeds down (much more successful than companion plots with ordinary mulch), I think the extra work involved is not usually worth the result. It is however an interesting area to experiment with, and it might be worth while trying a large amount of 'natural herbicide' mulch on an area you were trying to 'clean' of weeds. At least nut trees, oaks and cypress provide large amounts of material to work with.

### Natural herbicides to avoid

Natural herbicides don't just inhibit weeds- they can stunt the rest of your garden too. Beware of sunflowers - plants grown under their leaves or near their roots don't grow as tall as others further away, and tend to flower and go to seed earlier. (This is an advantage, though, if you're growing something like beans, that you want to go to seed early- I grow climbing beans up our giant Russian sunflowers. they don't grow as tall as the ones on a trellis, but they produce beans earlier.)

Be wary of couch, bracken or paspalum under fruit trees- all inhibit plant growth. Even used as mulch they have an inhibitory effect- though I've found bracken mulch is better than no mulch at all. Keep grass out of your garden- most grasses suppress other species.

If you are growing pasture, serrated tussock inhibits white clover, bent grass and cocksfoot. Many thistle species inhibit a wide range of grasses. Buttercups and other ranunculi inhibit clover in your lawn or under trees.

Beware of pines and cypresses. They not only make the soil around them acid- exudates washed down from their leaves inhibit both the growth and germination of most other species. (Ever wondered why pine forests were so bare?). Watch out for aromatic herbs, especially

mugwort- water washing down from their leaves may contain growth suppressants. Keep other plants away from their drip line, especially if you are using them as a border for the garden.

### 'Herbicide' trees

Many trees are natural herbicides, though they are more difficult to use for weed control- most nut trees, especially walnuts, most pines and cypresses, red gums, pittosporum undulatum and many other 'canopy' trees will suppress growth underneath them. Sometimes the inhibiting effect is washed down from the leaves; at other times it is associated with the roots. We use pittosporum undulatum here to help control blackberry. I have found that avocados suppress bracken and many grasses - though not wandering Jew and a range of other weeds. I've also used wormwood and elderberry to help bracken control.

Don't try to grow other plants under 'herbicide' trees, unless you bring in soil and mulch to make an above ground garden- and even then the gardens may not do well. But they make wonderful canopies for animals to shelter under and for children to play in.

### The Future of 'Natural Herbicides'

Research into natural herbicides is growing, especially into developing cultivars that inhibit weeds and to pin point the chemicals that do so, either to harvest them to use directly as herbicides, or to synthesise them. Endothal, a U.S. herbicide used against water weed, is based on a naturally occurring growth inhibitor.

I believe, though, that it's better to regard any herbicide- 'natural' or not- as simply a bandaid- a good way to repair a particular problem once, but not to rely on. Weeds are sign of bad management. Instead we should be developing growing strategies so we don't need to actively control our weeds- minimum digging so that weeds don't germinate in bare ground; drip watering so that you're only watering your plants, not your weeds.

Instead of trying to kill your weeds, feed and water your plants so that they outgrow them. Concentrate on loving your garden - and you'll find your weed problems gradually disappear.

### FYSHWICK GARDEN CENTRE

6 Maryborough St., Fyshwick  
Phone: (06) 280 4274, 280 6432

#### OPEN EVERY DAY

Supplier of almost everything any gardener would need. Special Service and 10% discount on front store items to COGS members - please bring your membership card



# MARKET GARDENING:- TRIALS, TRIBULATIONS AND TRIUMPHS

*By Michael Plane, "Allsun Farm", Gundaroo*

Market Gardening is the production of fresh vegetables and soft fruit on a scale that is more akin to a large garden than a farm. This type of activity was traditionally found in the areas adjacent to cities and towns and the practitioners were referred to by terms like market gardeners, truck farmers, dirt farmers or small holders which differentiated them from the (in some peoples eyes more respectable) larger or broad acre farmers.

In Australia market gardening has usually been done by new comers from lands where there was a strong tradition of this type of activity. People of Chinese and Italian ancestry have been prominent in Australian market gardening and brought with them skills honed in their home lands.

Because of the heavy nutrient requirements of vegetables the best land is usually sought for market gardening. Canberra has very little in the way of rich river flat soils or market gardens and being a new city has been largely dependent on fruit and vegetables brought in from Sydney and Melbourne. However some market gardens have existed from time to time on the river flats in the area near Pialligo.

What is it about market gardening that attracts it's practitioners ? Well I can't speak for anyone other than ourselves but we find it a most rewarding activity in that the soils and climate of this area provide a real challenge. The conversion of poor clay soils with only about 50 mm of top soil into decent loams capable of sustaining vegetable production is an interesting problem and one which we have solved by using good non-inversion tillage and the addition of large quantities of organic matter.

Letting the air, water and bacteria down into the sticky red sub-soil clays is the first move, which is then followed by growing a variety of deep rooted plants and a good mixture of legumes. Yarrow, lucerne, chicory and burnet are good examples of the deep rooted plants. Lucerne is also a legume, as are clovers, vetches, peas, broad beans, maku lotus, and medics of all sorts.

The turning in of these crops (green manuring) or the harvesting of them both for their produce, in the case of peas and broad beans, and for their green matter, is the

next step. This green matter is best used to help make the large quantities of compost that organic growers use.

Compost is beneficial, no essential, as it is both antifungal and antibacterial, provides the soil with humus and supplies all the nutrients in a form suitable for growing first class vegetables. Soils that have been heavily composted develop great texture and a high field capacity (the ability to hold water). This is a real consideration in our climate. As a side bar to this eulogy on compost vegetable growers in California, where farms often have 500-1000 acres under vegetables, are rapidly cutting back the quantities of fertilisers they use and applying compost at up to 10 tons/acre/year with spectacular results.

Climate brings me to the difficulties which long and often cold and sometimes wet winters, coupled to most unpredictable springs and autumns, and short and occasionally very hot summers, produce.

It is fairly easy to deal with the cold winters and hot summers but our spring and autumn and their unpredictability necessitates constant vigilance. It is the late and early frosts which do the most damage. November and December can often have a frosty night, while frosts in the first or second week of March are well documented indeed the only month in which frost has never been recorded in Canberra is February.

We overcome these problems with season extenders - both poly tunnels and protected row covering and sometimes a combination of both. A careful watch of the weather forecast on the evening TV news is a must and I very much resent the ABC dropping our local weather forecast and rather glossing over our forecast particularly at weekends.

Pest are something that one is always expected to write about but to tell the truth they are not, with a couple of exceptions, a burden. We attribute this to growing a wide variety from all the families of vegetables with up to 30 to 40 cultivars in the ground at any time, and we are always looking for plant positive rather than pest negative solutions. Our diversity attracts large numbers of insects amongst which are always the predators and they seem to deal most effectively with the nasties.

Although our gardens are more than 10 km from the nearest vegetables we are still plagued by cabbage white moths. These are dealt with using *Bacillus Thurengiensis* and codacide oil. It works most effectively but do be warned that the BT has limited shelf life so only buy the brands that are clearly labelled with a use by date and do be careful how you store the product.

The only other real problem is with sulphur crested cockatoos. They love young garlic, flat white onions, unripe fruit and in late winter and early spring can rack havoc. No one method is totally effective but a type of humming tape that was designed in Germany for keeping seagulls of boat rigging seems the most useful deterrent and we are currently trialing a helium kite.

Slugs can be a minor problem during protracted wet spells but citrus traps seem to work well.

Marketing is the single most important factor in our operation. We decided very early on that selling through the wholesale market or even direct to retailers was not for us. We sell our vegetables directly to our customers be

they households or restaurants. The concept is "a backyard in a box".

To families we supply a family sized box (2 adults and 2 children) each week. Our contract with them is that we will supply as great a variety as is possible given the time of year, while their contract with us is to have the empty box and money ready for us to collect when we deliver and that they will understand that the make up of the boxes will vary considerably from season to season.

Many of our customers have been with us for years. They understand the philosophy of our farm and know that we will always do the best we can to provide them with first class really fresh produce and in exchange for this they give us their loyalty and understanding. For our restaurant customers we tend to grow to order but they also provide an outlet for excess produce which their expert chefs put to good use.

In summary the trials and tribulations of market gardening in this area are the poor soils and difficult climate while the triumphs are the appreciative and loyal customers who constantly remind us in the nicest way how much they like the quality and freshness of our produce.

## **ALROC EXTRAPHOS & POTASH MINERAL FERTILISER** "Gives Vitality to Tired Soils"

*A blend of:*

34.2% Basalt, 34.2% Granite, 8.55% Dolomite,  
8.55% Bentonite, 9.5% Rock Phosphate,  
5.0% Rock Potash & an Organic Catalyst

**BFA Certified**

**20 kg bags in stock**

**Other Alroc Mineral Fertilisers &  
Liquid Fertilisers can be ordered**  
**ALROC Mineral Fertilisers available in  
Bulk**

**Also in stock: COCO-PEAT BLOCKS**

**Geoff Foster**  
**RMB 649 Gundaroo Road**  
**via Bungendore**  
**Phone (06) 238 1109**

## **Heat Treatment of Tomato Seeds**

*by Jonathon Banks and Robyn Daley*

When you grow tomatoes from seed you may find the young seedlings do not grow well. The leaves may have black spots on them and germination may be poor. These problems can be caused by seed borne fungi and bacteria or protozoa. To avoid this problem you can treat the seed.

At Pialligo Apples we have found that heat treatment at 52°C for 10 minutes will give a clean set of seedlings if planted into clean soil. You will be surprised how vigorously they grow.

### **Recipe:**

Just before you plant, heat a lot of water to 52°C. Float some jam jars in the water. The jars should be about half filled with water. After the jars have reached the right temperature (about 1/2 hour) put up to one teaspoonful of seed into each jar. After exactly 10 minutes, take the jars out of the water bath, decant off the hot water, rinse twice with cold water and plant immediately.

**NOTE** temperature is most important. Too hot will kill the seeds or stunt the growth of seedlings. Too cold will not kill the disease. Time is important too. You can go a bit longer than 10 minutes, if the temperature is right, but after about 30 minutes at 52°C you start to affect seedling vigour and viability of seed.

Best of luck



## **The Certainty of Change - and how to be ready for it!**

It started innocently enough when I went to Griffith NSW to pick up some meat chickens. Richard and Maureen Billings live at Yenda, which is near Griffith, and had kept me supplied with organic wheat during the drought when I was unable to get regular supplies from anywhere else. We had built up a telephone friendship but had never actually met but Maureen had issued an invitation "to drop in for a cup of tea if ever I was going past".

It's a bit difficult "to be going past" when Yenda is 400kms from Bungendore but I thought that it would provide a welcome break before looking for a motel for the night in Griffith so armed with instructions I managed to find "Wia Wera" in time for afternoon tea.

We talked, drank our tea, talked some more, went for a drive around the farm (it took 70 kms to drive around the 10,000 acres) still exchanging points of view but by now the sun was beginning to set. They wouldn't listen to my reasons for going on to Griffith that night and insisted that I stay so tea was prepared - we were still talking - and a bed made ready for the night.

Their hospitality reminded me of the days before TV when families interacted and made their own entertainment and it seemed we had a lot to discuss before reluctantly yawning our way to bed at midnight. Before I left at 9 am we had managed to get in another two hours of conversation over breakfast before declaring that it would be better to go before we found another topic to discuss.

Richard was concerned at the state of affairs surrounding the crisis meeting which had been called for the following weekend at Dubbo by the Biological Farmers of Australia to resolve some internal matters. The BFA, as a certifying body, was of mutual concern as we both had certified farms under that logo and Richard was encouraging me to attend the meeting but I was ambivalent saying that I didn't know enough about the issues and was concerned that I couldn't spend consecutive weekends away from the farm.

These poor excuses didn't wash with Geoff Foster, our President, who had recently submitted his application for BFA certification and was keen to attend the Dubbo meeting and wanted me to come along as well. So we went.

The results of that meeting are on public record (Acres Australia Vol 3 No 6) so I won't go into those details except to say that before the vote to dismiss the Board was taken I put in a plea for a stay of execution (I was well aware of the issues by then) but the vote went ahead and was carried with the help of the locked-in proxies.

My further argument was more persuasive in that as the proxies were only valid to dismiss the Board they couldn't be relied upon to vote in the new Board and as they were ambiguous in this regard only the members present should exercise their voting rights. The results of that election are also a matter of public record.

The Dubbo meeting resolved BFA's immediate problems as it provided a forum to release tensions from some long-held differences of opinion but exposed the need to look towards restructuring to allow for growth and expansion in the future. The new Chairman, Graham McNally, is aware of this need and has set in train procedures to overcome those difficulties.

The immediate consequence of the Dubbo vote was that BFA had lost one of its representatives to attend the symposium 'Organic Agriculture: Food and Fibre for the Future' (held at the Eagle Hawk Hill Resort from 30 June to 3 July) so it was with some surprise and a great deal of pleasure I accepted Graham McNally's invitation to be BFA's alternate representative at that symposium.

I had already registered for the public forum on Wednesday 3 July but had been told that the days preceeding that forum were to be closed sessions for invited delegates only. This decision had drawn industry criticism as it appeared that academics rather than practitioners in the organic industry were to be present in a ratio of about 2:1 but, even with these misgivings, I was pleased to be given the opportunity to be involved in the decision-making process.

Following the opening dinner on Sunday 30 June the participants were briefed by Dr Brian Stynes as to their responsibilities to the organic movement as a whole. We were encouraged to:

- Develop a Vision
- Identify Key Issues
- Prioritize Key Issues
- Develop Strategies
- Develop Action Plans and
- Summarize Outcomes.

At the opening session on Monday morning Peter Core of the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation said it was RIRDC's initiative to host this seminar as it saw, and supported, growth opportunities for organics within the new and emerging industries embraced by the concept of sustainability. He saw R&D as essential for future development but, importantly, the need for communication to disseminate these findings.



He was followed by **David Dumaresq**, the convenor who presented a SWOT analysis as follows:

**STRENGTHS:** Organics was seen as established, viable, committed and clean. There is a wealth of knowledge within the organics industry and it enjoys international recognition.

**WEAKNESSES:** The organics industry is small with less than 0.2% of retail sales. It is fragmented at each level of its operation from farming through to processing and manufacturing and requires a whole industry approach to coordinate its activities. It is seen by others as exclusive with only a 'soft' approach to government.

**OPPORTUNITIES:** There is an untapped demand for organic produce within both the domestic and international markets. There is the opportunity for greater coordination and an extension of R&D.

**THREATS:** The lack of coordination and government indifference were seen as the greatest threats with industry frustration between farmers and processors to ensure a regular supply as a factors contributing to customer frustration and a consequent decline in product sales. The threat of outside competition to the domestic market was also seen as important with Watties of NZ cited as taking advantage of the lack of cohesion in Australia together with the parent Heinz company's reluctance in Australia to become fully committed to organics because of this lack.

**Ruth Lovisolo** from the Australian Quarantine Inspection Service said that AQIS had brought the certifying bodies together to form the Organic Producers Advisory Committee to develop a national standard to ensure that organic produce can be exported to Europe, however, this committee is limited in that it is unable to implement policies for the industry as it is only an advisory committee.

**John Hall** from ANZFA said the Australia New Zealand Food Authority has now replaced the National Food Authority but still develops its policy within the Department of Primary Industry and Energy. The organic agriculture industry is recognised as part of alternative systems and his Authority is keen to ensure approved quality is maintained. Grants for R&D are available especially in relation to markets and marketing and if not directly attributable to organics will spill over into this industry. He mentioned particularly 'green' labelling in this context.

Papers were then presented by the following representatives of the certifying bodies:

Don McFarlane, Biological Farmers of Australia;

Howard Rubin, Organic Herb Growers of Australia,

**Jan Denham**, National Association for Sustainable Agriculture, Australia,

Dr Graeme Stevenson, Tasmanian Organic Producers

**Kerry Ward**, Organic Vignerons Association of Australia, and,

**Chris Alenson**, Organic Retailers and Growers Association of Australia.

A representative from the Bio-Dynamic Research Institute was not present and a statement from Alex Podolinsky was given by David Dumaresq to the effect that as he would be overseas at the time he would not be able to attend and neither would he be represented.

The Panel Reviews by the Researchers, the Non Government Organisations and the State Government Representatives were united in all of the 'motherhood' issues that were pertinent to organics. They deplored the lack of cohesion and a common logo for the industry and were in agreement that there should be more on-farm R&D targetted to address the problems encountered by organic farmers. It was particularly noticable that among the State Government Representatives only those from Victoria and WA had more than just recent experience in handling their 'organic portfolio'.

The **Post Farm Sector** segment was introduced by Grant Vinning, Asian Market Research, who woke us up to the possibilities of the emerging organics markets in Singapore and Taiwan and outlined the long seated acceptance of organics in Japan. There the housewives adopt the 'Hun' cooperative buying system, the JCCU (which has 18 million members) is emerging from the retail area into the mainstream of the economy, the food service sector is expanding (eg Skylark and Dennys) and

## *The Allergy Centre*

*We have a large range of Allergy Foods,  
Organic & Biodynamic Grains, Dried Fruit,  
Nuts, Flours, Breads, Goats Milk, Meat,  
Yoghurts, etc.*

*Allergy Testing by Appointment.  
Molly Aukim from the N.S.W. Allergy Prevention  
Clinic, Chatswood, visits once a month.*

*Osteopathy, Musculo-Skeletal Therapy,  
Nutritional & Environmental Medicine,  
Traditional Chinese Medicine.  
Consultations by Appointment. Ian Cocks, Dr of  
Osteopathy*

*Contact: Costas Kounnas  
Shop 3 Jamison Centre, Bowman  
Street, Macquarie A.C.T.*

*Ph. 251 2670, Mobile: 0418 620811*

food manufacturing with Australian products (eg meat pies) is taking off.

**Jonathon Banks** outlined how the CSIRO is aiming to develop sustainable systems compatible with organic methods, especially in relation to grain, by the development of sealed storage silos. These silos provide a low cost alternative to chemical methods with none of the residue problems associated with those methods. It was interesting to find out later that the developmental work in this area had been carried out on Graham McNally's 'Kialla Pure Foods' silos at Greenmount on the Darling Downs near Toowoomba, Queensland.

**Joseph Allais, Joseph's, Fyshwick** is an organic fruit and vegetable retailer who said that from the customer's point of view it was essential to have quality and choice, the right information, confidence in the product and the ability to rely on certification standards. To enhance these aspects he would like to see an umbrella organisation to be responsible for policy matters and one logo which would do wonders for consumer confidence.

**Jonathon Ross/Andrew Cootes, Organic Foods of Australia**, said that even though OFA had only been established 8 weeks the partners were aware of just how fragmented the organics industry is, the price disadvantages of organics, the lack of a regular supply and that often the specifics of organics are lost on the consumer. They were also aware that supply had to be matched with demand, that market premiums were critical and that they had to beware of substitutions. They sought as priorities a higher profile for organics, a peak body, one logo and R&D to examine marketing for the 'right' produce with brand positioning. They also saw export driven growth as the answer to domestic credibility.

**Ian Diamond, Organic Connection**, helped us to visualise a strong market for organic produce enjoying 2% of retail sales and attracting government subsidies. This is happening internationally, especially in Europe, and a scenario which has prompted his relocation to London to capitalise on these prospects. He gave credit to AQIS for establishing those standards which have allowed the international organic market to become established in Australia.

The farmers represented an interesting cross-section of the organic industry and recounted their experiences with the frankness and candour that comes from putting one's money alongside one's beliefs. **Nicholas Chambers**, at 32 years of age, marked himself as a future leader in the industry not only for the extent of his practical experience but also for his maturity in handling difficult situations. His wit, laid back style and capacity for hard work auger well for his role as Chairman of the Interim Organic Industry Council (more on this later). **Ross Carter**, Bordertown SA has made his paper available for publication. From his comments and observations during the conference he is a person to be respected for his

practical approach. **Ray Hynes**, Willow Tree, NSW was the only BD practitioner present at the conference and recounted how on his wheat/sheep property he found a niche market for eggs from his 1000 hens which kept him solvent during the drought. He made a valuable contribution to our discussion group. **Peter Randall** a rice farmer from near Leeton, NSW contributed greatly to the success of the conference and provided valuable assistance in setting up the Interim Organic Industry Council.

Other farmers to speak were **Arne Pederson** from Emerald, Qld. who farms mixed grains and legumes (the droughty nineties), **Lloyd Pierce** who grows NT mangoes and spoke about the problems of gaining acceptance for hot water treatment for fruit fly, **Robyn Daly** from Pialligo, ACT of the difficulties of converting to organics whilst surrounded by chemical farmers and **Arthur Dakin** who is a broad-acre farmer at Nyngan, NSW.

After the 4.00pm plenary session the 5 discussion workshops followed the program to develop industry and sectoral visions and identified key issues. These aspects will be fully covered in the seminar papers to be published shortly. The Symposium Dinner provided a forum to explore the issues raised in the first day's proceedings.



### BEAUTIFUL HOLIDAY HOUSE

Just across the road from the beach at Garden Bay, over the hill from Malua Bay surf beach.

Two minutes walk to sandy beach good for swimming, snorkelling, or teaching children to swim.

House sleeps eight. Large fenced garden where children can play within sight. Pets welcome.

Cool sea breeze in summer, warmer than Canberra in winter.

\$180/week outside holidays, or \$80 for a week end by the sea. Only 166km from Canberra.

Phone Brian or Jackie on 254-4977, or Betty on 249-8323.

The morning of the second day followed the program outline but immediately after lunch proceedings took a different turn. Up to that point there had been universal agreement that the industry needed an umbrella body and a common logo before any real progress could be made but nowhere in the afternoon's program was provision made to resolve these matters.

Ms Kerry Ward came to me expressing this concern with the observation that if the participants were to disperse before a commitment in this direction was made then these hopes would remain a pipe-dream. Recognising the force of her argument I resolved that we should talk with Ruth Lovisolo to bring the matters on for discussion. David Dumaresq joined us with the suggestion that these points could be left until after the tea session but Kerry Ward was adamant they had to be discussed immediately as they were too important to be left.

The question of the common logo was agreed upon and held over for later resolution but an impromptu plenary session was convened to discuss the question of an umbrella group.

Following David Dumaresq's suggestion it was mutually agreed that it should be called the Organic Industry Council but that an Interim Council should be set up with a life of 8 months in order to bring the permanent Council into being.

At that point the discussion started to break down along factional lines. There had been some pre-conference criticism of the role of academics in convening this symposium but the wisdom of so doing became evident at this time. If left to the industry's devices the lip service paid to the notion of an umbrella body would have gone the way of previous attempts but on this occasion, due to the mediation provided by David Dumaresq, the participants from the certifying bodies were prevailed upon to adopt the common resolution and from the compromises made the Interim Council achieved legitimate status. Nominations were called for and those selected were:

Nicholas Chambers (chair), Jan Denham (NASAA), Tim Marshall (NASAA), Chris Alenson (ORGAA)(secretarial services), Andy Monk (ORGAA), Kerry Ward (OVAA), David Odell (BFA) (treasurer) and Ruth Lovisolo (OPAC) (subject to departmental approval).

The Interim Council is fully aware of the task it has undertaken.

The findings of the Symposium were put to the public meeting and all were ratified.

It was the consensus of the participants that a new era for the organics industry in Australia had begun and that thanks for these initiatives was due to the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation and, in particular, Mr Peter Peterson of that body.

It was rather strange for me personally to be engaged in organo-politics at this level even though I had been an organic grower ever since I could tell a weed from a vegetable. I have also been associated with COGS since 1982 but only during the last 12 months with BFA so the unlikely consequence of me getting some meat chickens ended up with the shared responsibility in creating a new structure to represent the organic movement of the future.

For the first time the organic movement in Australia has the opportunity to speak with one voice on sustainable agriculture, to ensure that there is continuity of supply of wholesome produce and that the consumer (you) can be assured of certification quality. It seems an awesome task but given the goodwill which pervaded the symposium I am sure the Organic Industry Council will go forward to set the standards for us at home as well as overseas.

## WHAT IS IT? CAN YOU GUESS? IT IS A PEST



Adult

The female moth is about 20mm from wing tip to wing tip (the male is smaller).

It is a greyish brown.

It is difficult to find as it hides in the foliage during the day and is active at night when temperatures are above 16°C.

Eggs are laid on or near the fruit.

In Canberra there are usually three generations each year, with the first cycle commencing in early-mid November with the first sightings of the adult moth. The third generation in Autumn produces the largest population of larvae but up to 90% can be destroyed by natural predators while looking for a hibernation site to over-winter.

The larvae is a serious pest in orchards (particularly apple orchards) when it enters the fruit

*see page 17 for answer and information on how to control it*



# The Internet Column

By John Allen

Email: [jallen@pcug.org.au](mailto:jallen@pcug.org.au)

COGS WWW Home Page URL: <http://www.pcug.org.au/~jallen/cogs.htm>



If you are on the Internet, and you haven't yet let me know, send me a message and say hello! We currently have 13 COGS members on the Internet.

## New Information on the COGS page

• <http://ecoweb.dk/english/>

Food and Ecology in Denmark - an interesting page from Denmark. Will contain proceedings from the IFOAM conference

[http://www.aaa.com.au/Farm\\_Radio.html](http://www.aaa.com.au/Farm_Radio.html)

Australian Farm Radio & Weather - contains much Aussie farm information. Includes a link to the Guide to Sustainable Agriculture Archives

## This Month's Interesting Sites

### HERITAGE SEED CURATORS ASSOCIATION

[http://www.agfor.unimelb.edu.au/LCweb/HSCA/HSCA\\_home.html](http://www.agfor.unimelb.edu.au/LCweb/HSCA/HSCA_home.html)

#### About the HSCA

"The seeds that gardeners hold in their hands at planting time are living links in an unbroken chain reaching back into antiquity gardeners begin to save their own seeds they also become part of this ancient tradition"

*Seed to Seed by Susanne Ashworth, Seed Saver publications, 1991*

The HSCA is a non-profit incorporated organisation. The HSCA was formed in 1992. We are a "Seed Saving" organisation of curators, supporters and associated organisations, who want to preserve Australia's horticultural and garden heritage. Curators are people who are committed to maintaining rare varieties of vegetables, fruits, tubers or flowers. The association is managed by an elected committee of 6 curator members. What are the aims of the HSCA?

- (1) To preserve Australia's horticultural heritage, to preserve open pollinated seed varieties and the genetic diversity of garden plant varieties.
- (2) To preserve for posterity garden seed varieties that are being or have been, discontinued by seed companies
- (3) To compile an inventory of Australian garden seed varieties

- (4) To encourage the development of a network of experienced and committed seed-saving curators to help preserve rare varieties.
- (5) To maintain a seed bank of garden varieties that will be available to members, supporters and associates of the association.
- (6) To encourage the reintroduction of traditional heirloom varieties by seed companies
- (7) To achieve these aims and objectives in general, via a policy of allowing cooperation with seed companies and of inviting seed companies to be associate members of HSCA.

#### Why heritage seeds are important?

During the 200 years since European settlement began on this continent, migrants from all over the world have continually brought with them the seeds of garden varieties grown by their families in their "home countries". However over the past 100 years, with the industrialisation and the depopulation of the countryside in Europe and America, many of these heirlooms have been lost in these countries. There has been an enormous world wide loss of horticultural diversity. This process is also occurring in Australia but is less advanced. As a result Australia has in effect become a repository of many heirloom varieties.

Also over the 200 years of European settlement, because of the different environmental conditions on this continent, settlers over the generations in many areas developed, by selection and cross pollination, new varieties that are unique to Australia. This happened both formally and informally. The Yates Seed Company to name but one example has existed in Aust

Valia since the 1850s. It has developed many unique Australian garden varieties over the past 140 years. However in recent years most of them have been discontinued

#### Disappearance of Australian varieties

Why is this happening?

Seed companies need to make a profit to stay in business. A major way of doing this is to reduce costs. An important way of holding down costs is to offer only a narrow range of varieties in seed lists or catalogues. This ensures that each company sells a large quantity of a small range of a given type of vegetable or fruit. A vast range of Australian garden seed varieties have disappeared from seed lists. In

1952 the Yates Garden Guide offered over 240 different vegetable seed varieties. Many of these were unique to Australia. In 1992 only 52 of those varieties were still available. The rest have been discontinued. More important hardly any of those left (5-6) are Australian Heirloom varieties. Meanwhile other companies have simply been taken over or gone out of business. The genetic diversity that was in their seed lists has disappeared.

#### Do you have old varieties of Seed?

Many older Australians and migrants, in particular grow traditional varieties of fruits and vegetables on their farms and gardens. We are keen to hear from such people who have these varieties of vegetables, fruits or flowers to help ensure that they are not lost forever.

#### Australian garden seed inventory

A key tool in the task of maintaining this heritage is the compilation of an Australian Garden Seed Inventory. The aim of the Inventory is to list all the open pollinated garden seed varieties that are available in Australia, whether offered by seed companies, maintained by seed banks, or maintained by seed savers like those in the Seed Savers Network and HSCA. In essence it is an attempt to make an AUDIT of Australia's garden and horticultural diversity; an attempt to find out what is still available and what has been lost. In this way Seed Savers, Seed Curators and Seed Companies will have a means of knowing what seed material needs to be preserved urgently and where rare seed material is being kept. To date we have completed draft inventories for apples, pears, apricots, tomatoes, beans, lettuces, peas and cabbages. We are also in the process of preparing Inventories for many other fruits and vegetables. We are keen to hear from individuals and organisations that want to help with this important task. Naturally HSCA members have access to all this information.

#### Inventory sponsors

Sponsors of the Australian Garden Seed Inventory Project are the William Buckland Trust, the Lance Reichstein Foundation, Diggers Seeds, Phoenix Seeds, Fairbanks Seeds and the Snowy River Seed Cooperative. Other organisations and companies who wish to assist the Inventory project are invited to contact Bill Hankin, the project coordinator and HSCA secretary.

#### Inquiries

Bill Hankin  
PO Box 1450  
Bairnsdale, Victoria 3885  
AUSTRALIA  
Tel: 051 550227 or 051 531034

## CLUES FOR A BETTER YARDEN

*Reprinted with the kind permission of Plantcare, by Carolyn Lukens, from , the World Wide Web at <http://www.prairieweb.com/plntclue.htm>.*

**CALENDULA:** repelling asparagus beetle, tomato worms, and insects in general. Use it as a trap crop attracting aphids, leaf hoppers, thrips, and white flies.

**ONION:** repelling ants, carrot flies, insects in general, rabbits, slugs, and snails.. Use it as a trap crop attracting cutworms, mites, thrips, and weevils.

**SPEARMINT:** repelling ants, aphids, cabbage butterflies, fleas, mice, mosquitos, clothes moths, and white flies. Use it as a trap crop attracting cutworms, mites, and weevils. It also attracts bees for better pollination.

**MARIGOLD:** repelling Colorado potato bugs, June bug grubs, Mexican bean beetles, nematodes, white flies, insects in general, rabbits, slugs, and snails. Use it as a trap crop attracting aphids, cutworms, Japanese beetles, leaf hoppers, thrips, and weevils.

**TANSY:** repelling ants, flies, fruit tree moths, Japanese beetles, mosquitos, clothes moths, squash bugs, striped cucumber beetles, white flies, and insects in general. Use it as a trap crop attracting aphids.

**SAGE:** repelling cabbage butterflies and cabbage worms, carrot flies, and clothes moths. It attracts white flies. Cut branches of your sage bush and place them among your cole (cabbage type) plant leaves.

**BASIL:** repelling cabbage worms, flies, hornworms, and mosquitos. It attracts bees. Plant it close to plants that need good pollination for an abundant crop.

**CHIVES:** repelling cut worms, carrot flies, insects in general, and rabbits. Chives are rarely damaged by pests and make an attractive border or divider. They are very useful in the kitchen also.

### YALLEROO ORGANIC FOOD FARM

06 236 3211

Open Tues-Saturday

Portable, self cleaning, fox proof chook  
coops \$253.00


Vegetables  
Eggs  
Chickens  
Beef  
Pork

Greenhouses  
Worms  
Alroc mineral  
fertiliser

Plan to mix herbs, vegetables, and flowers in your garden. Try smaller vegetables such as carrots, lettuce, and radishes in your flower beds. They make good dividers or backgrounds for spring flowers. After you eat the radishes it will be time to plant some annuals. You can plant early veggies in flower beds before you have your vegetable plot worked up. Both garlic and yarrow enhance the production of oils in herbs.

Don't encourage onions and peas to be friends. Onions grow better away from peas and peas grow better away from onions.

Plan now to let a few radish and lettuce plants go to seed in your garden. You may want to scatter them in a variety of places (vegetable garden, flower bed, etc.) for a primary and secondary feeding source for beneficial insects. You will be providing a lot of tiny flowers for some tiny "super" good guys. As seed pods form just snip them off or pull the whole plant out before seed pods dry to avoid a solid salad later.

A good way to place plants "close" for a beneficial relationship is to plant a row in a zig zag pattern, , for example - 4 or 5 beets per zig or zag. Then in all the "V" areas plant a cabbage plant (both sides of the row). Plant as closely as you can and most plants will have a "companion" on at least two sides.

A good way to plant "close" companions is to plant two rows close together and place a soaker hose between them. Later when you mulch them, cover the hose also to conserve moisture. Leave a walking area on the outside of the two "close rows" for harvesting.

Plant marigolds near roses for a stronger rose scent.

Asparagus plants produce a natural insect repellent called "asparagin" that discourages many pests that especially bother tomato plants. After cooking asparagus pour the cooled water around your tomato plants.

Discouraged by weeds? Put down some strips of plastic on each side of the seed row. Make it about 1' wide. Cover the edges with soil and place a board or some rocks on it to keep it from blowing. Now you need only weed in the actual row by hand. As you weed put the material on the plastic to dry out the roots, check the planted row for pests, moisture, and maturity, etc.

Not all nematodes are harmful to your garden crops. Some "good" nematodes eat "pest" nematodes.

Pumpkins do better planted near bush beans and corn but NOT near potatoes. Bush beans, corn, and horseradish do better growing near pumpkins. There is conflicting material about potatoes grown near pumpkins.

## WHAT IS IT? continued

### PEST? CODLING MOTH

Codling Moth is one of the most troublesome pests to orchardists and the home gardener. Control by the organic grower depends on understanding the lifecycle of the moth and exploiting its vulnerable stages.

#### *Destroying the larvae:*

The damage is done by the larvae of the moth when they enter the fruit, yet the larvae is very difficult to destroy organically at this stage. The following steps are very important:-

a) Inspect the fruit frequently for signs of damage (hole in the top or bottom of fruit, detritus being pushed out) and remove infected fruit. Do not compost damaged fruit! - feed it to the chooks or put it in the garbage or dispose of it some other way.

b) Pick up all fruit that drops to the ground promptly or run animals under the fruit trees.

c) Keep the general area around the tree free from rubbish and clutter which can provide good pupating sites for the larvae when it emerges from the fruit. This is critical in Autumn when the wandering larvae are looking for sites to hibernate over winter. Provide artificial pupating sites such as bands of corrugated cardboard wrapped around the trunk of the tree and then collect and destroy any cocoons. Replace with more traps. This is one of the best control methods, and determines the number of adult moths next Spring. It can be carried out in Summer also to help prevent a build up in numbers over the season.

#### *Destroying the moth:*

A derris or pyrethrum spray can be used to kill the moths. Since it is not desirable to spray either of these frequently it is essential to know when the moth is present. While we know they become active when temperatures rise above the critical 16°C, there is no point waiting to visually spot the moth as it will be hiding amongst the foliage, probably high up in the tree.

The best way to know when they are active is to set a trap for the male moth when it is flying in search of the female. In Canberra these traps are usually set out in early November. A simple trap is a small jam jar hung up in the fruit tree. The jar should contain a sugar syrup eg 50/50 molasses and water with a dash of port wine, which attracts the male moth. The top of the jar should be covered with a 1/2cm wire mesh which excludes larger moths. One or two jars should be enough in an average garden as the male moth has a very well developed sense of smell and can easily find the traps.

Traps should be checked daily. When moths are found in the trap, the grower can spray after sundown on that day.

A later spraying to catch the larvae after the eggs hatch and before the larvae enter the fruit can be effective, but the time from the egg being fertilised to hatching can vary from one to three weeks depending on weather conditions. In fine warm weather ie temperatures above 16°C, it will only be one week, but a cold snap can delay hatching until weather conditions are more suitable.

#### *References:*

1. Bennett, P. "Organic Gardening" Australia and New Zealand Book Co. Pty Ltd, 1979.
2. French, J. "Natural Control of Garden Pests", Aird Books 1990.



# Vegetable Growing Notes and Planting Secrets from "Shambhala"

*By Nelia Hyndman-Rizik*

Dear COGS,

On the basis of my produce at the Harvest Night last February, Michelle has asked me to write down how I grow several of my favourite vegetables. I would like to provide some background first on our garden. We have a small property, called "Shambhala" (meaning: hidden paradise), on a north facing hillside on the banks of the Murrumbidgee River near Hall. Fifteen years ago this property was a dust bowl after a long drought period. Today, after having planted thousands of trees, it is a forest. We have about one hundred square metres of vegetable gardens and that area again of flowers and a fruit orchard of about thirty fruit trees. We are not a commercial operation. We irrigate our gardens off the river.

What follows is some background information to accompany the cultural notes I have provided for growing good quality Corn, Tomatoes, Beans and Lettuces. While the individual cultural requirements of each plant are important to attend to, they should compliment a range of sound "back stage" garden practices:

## 1. A Strong Soil Base

Most of the work in our garden has been establishing a good strong healthy soil base. Most of our beds are based on rotted down horse manure and saw dust. Green manure crops have been grown over the years and dug in, all of the greens of the previous season get recycled back into the soil and many years of lucerne and straw bails, used as mulch, have rotted down. Often we spread a layer of old rotted cow manure and a dash of blood and bone over the beds beneath the mulch over the winter if we aren't running a green manure crop (which we are this season - sub-clover). The net result of these efforts is a very rich, living soil in which earthworms thrive.

## 2. Crop Rotation

I always rotate my crops in order to overcome disease and to allow the inherent qualities of each type of vegetable to work for my benefit. I begin the cycle of rotation with a legume, eg Peas, Beans, which fix nitrogen in the soil for the next crop. I then follow legumes with a gross feeder, such as corn or tomatoes and then I finish the cycle of rotation with a root crop which thrives on the dregs left over, for example carrots. There is an underlying logic here, which works very well when you follow it. It can also be beneficial to allow a bed to lay fallow before sowing a legume again.

## 3. A Profusely Planted Garden

The more varieties represented in your garden, the better the disease resistance of your plants - because each variety is less or more susceptible to certain funguses or insects than other.

They also come into production at slightly different times - so an insect attack won't wipe out "everything" at once. I always plant plenty of flowers and herbs in and amongst my vegetable beds, such as marigolds, nasturtiums and zinnias, in order to increase the number of bees and beneficial insect predators.

Mind you, there will not be any "beneficial" insects without their counterpart - insect "foes" - what we must aim for is a balance between them, which I think is more easily struck in a profusely planted, biologically diverse garden.

## 4. Growing Plants in their Correct Season

Growing something in the wrong season, in an open bed, even if you're out in your timing by only a few weeks, I find, is a sure invitation for a predatory attack on that vegetable - or at least a poor, sluggish performance. A plant in this situation will simply be weaker and unable to resist an attack by insects or disease.

## 5. The Use of Compost and Liquid Fertilisers.

Our main fertilisers in our garden are compost, Liquid Nettle, and Liquid Cow Manure and Liquid Seaweed if we have it (home made, not store bought - it is too expensive for the quantities we need). We make large quantities of compost constantly throughout the year using both closed compost bins and open air piles, which are turned. We make our own liquid fertilisers. We weed the Nettle from the garden and pluck it from wherever we see it growing and a large quantity of it is rotted in a 40 gallon drum of water. It is diluted 1 part Nettle liquid to 9 parts water. The cow manure liquid we make in the same fashion, only we substitute cow pats from the field. The Nettle liquid is particularly high in Nitrogen.

Happy Gardening,

Nelia

(Editor's Note: Please see the next article for Nelia's advice on growing Corn, French Beans, Lettuce, Peas and Tomatoes)

# VEGETABLE GROWING

Growers tell us how they grow their favourite vegetables:

Beans, Beetroot

Capsicum, Celery, Corn, Cucumbers

Lettuce,

Peas, Potatoes

Tomatoes

*Contributions from organic farmer, Joyce Wilkie, and gardeners Nelia Hyndman-Rizik from "Shambhala", Chris Lodi from the Cotter Garden and Steve Sutton, Convenor of the Theodore Garden*

*Compiled By Michelle Johnson*

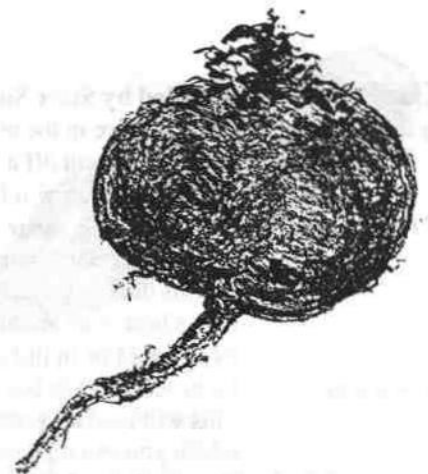
*Illustrations by Joan Buckie*

## **BEANS, French: Recommended by Nelia Hyndman-Rizik**

- Variety:** Purple King (Eden Seeds)  
Snake Climbing (Phoenix Seeds)  
Dwarf snap beans
- Description:** The first two varieties require a tall trellis (2m).  
The third variety is small, rounded and prolific
- Why a Favourite?** Prolific producer over a long period,  
fertilise soil and beans preserve well in the freezer  
- and of course, make beautiful walls of greens.
- Soil Preparation:** A long narrow mound of compost dug in with a dash of lime / dolomite  
and a trench in front of it with manure (old cow) buried in it.
- Planting Time:** Starting late October - 5 successive plantings every 3 1/2 weeks with the moon calendar
- Growing Tips:** Liquid cow manure and nettle after flowers appear every fortnight  
Use in system of rotation in garden (see preceding article)

## **BEETROOT: Recommended by Steve Sutton**

- Variety:** Globe
- Description:** Deep red round roots
- Why a Favourite?** Has good flavour.  
Bottles well (see accompanying recipe)
- Soil Preparation:** Cover soil with cow manure in Autumn,  
then cover with straw.  
Before planting pull straw off and dig in cow manure.
- Planting Time:** Plant seed in plot mid September.  
Should be ready for bottling in December.
- Growing Tips:** Keep well watered. Keep weed free.  
Quickly grown beetroot is good and tender.  
If soil preparation has been good will not need feeding.
- Source:** The Diggers Club (So36)



Another grower, Chris Lodi, also recommends Beetroot as a worthwhile vegetable to grow as it is delicious when cooked or grated like carrots. It is also rich in Iron. Chris also has observed that Beetroot needs lots of water, and also suggests thinning out after direct sowing of seed.

### **Bottled Beetroot**

**Ingredients:** Beetroot, Sugar, Water, Vinegar (Brown or White)

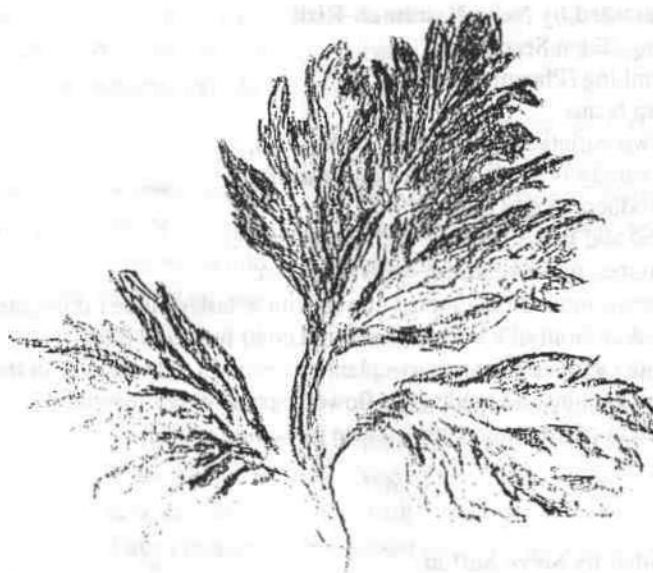
Wash beetroot, cut off leafy tops without breaking skin.

Add beetroot to large saucepan of boiling water, simmer covered for about 1 1/2 hours or till a fork can be placed into the middle of the beetroot. When cooked drain into sink and fill with cold water. Skin and slice into large jars.

Put one tablespoon of sugar on top of sliced beetroot then cover completely with vinegar, let cool, then seal.

## **CAPSICUM: Recommended by Joyce Wilkie**

- Variety:** Peperone giallo quatro "ercole d'Ingegneroli"  
**Description:** Thick walled large blocky yellow bell pepper  
**Why a Favourite?** Has performed well for us for a number of years.  
Good green, excellent if allowed an extra 3 weeks to turn bright yellow.  
Tastes good raw and roasts and peels easily.  
**Soil Preparation:** Work in plenty of compost.  
Mulch is a good idea in the middle of Summer.  
**Planting Time:** Early August.  
**Growing Tips:** Heat is essential to get them to germinate and a long growing season needed.  
Some sort of plastic cover is a good idea once they go into the ground.  
They perform very well in a greenhouse or poly tunnel and do not mind the extreme heat in the middle of Summer.  
It is essential that they get enough compost to form a good leaf cover otherwise the fruit gets sun burnt.  
A handful of wormcastings at flowering is a good idea.  
The stems are very brittle so support the plants with small stakes.
- Source:** Nano Brothers Queanbeyan and Narrabunda Grocery



## **CELERY: Recommended by Steve Sutton**

- Why a Favourite?** Great to have in the home garden.  
You can just cut off a few stalks at a time to add flavour to stews, soups and stir fries.  
You can also grow it in the garden nearly 12 months of the year.
- Soil Preparation:** Prepare a bed 1 metre square with lots of compost, well rotted manure and some blood and bone dug in.  
(If you have some old dungs around dig these in as well, because celery will not grow in soils deficient in calcium),  
this is best done about a month before planting.  
Bed should be in full sun.
- Planting time:** Plant seedlings in bed mid to late November, 15-20 cm apart.  
This will help keep weeds down, soil moisture up and self blanch the middle plants which you can then use for salads.  
If planted in cold soil, they will bolt to seed.
- Growing tips:** Water well, don't let the soil dry out as this will make the celery tough and stringy.  
Feed with a liquid fertiliser every 3-4 weeks (chicken manure tea, Dynamic Lifter made into a tea) until late Summer.  
Plants will not grow through winter, but will withstand frosts and bolt to seed in October just before you put in the next crop.
- Source:** I buy the seedlings from a nursery as I find they are hard to germinate from seed.  
Two punnets fill up the bed which gives my family ample plus a little to freeze.
- Conclusion:** Needs lots of water, soil cannot be left to dry out. If you put in the effort the rewards are great.  
Beats the supermarket stuff by a mile if not three

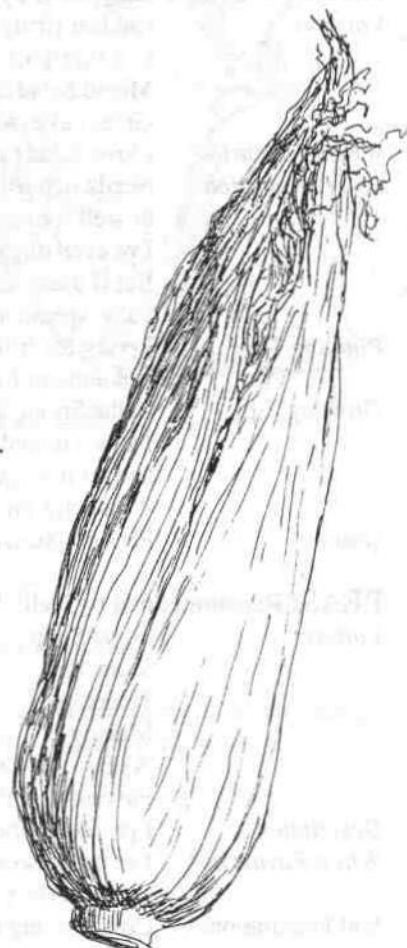


## **CORN: Recommended by Nelia Hyndman-Rizik**

- Variety:** Yates' "Iochief Improved" and Yates' "Super Sweetcorn"  
I ordinarily grow "open pollinated" varieties  
- but I have conducted a number of controlled experiments  
and am unhappy with the growth, kernel setting  
and taste of the non-hybrid corns.  
This is the only vegetable I recommend the commercial varieties for.
- Description:** Tall growing varieties (2m) producing 1 large  
and 1 medium sized ear per stalk
- Why a Favourite?** Premium quality, full creamy kernels that are very sweet and large  
The seed always germinates and grows to maturity quickly  
I get three crops in a season.
- Soil Preparation:** Either a green manure crop dug in September  
or a generous layer of compost dug into the rows.  
I have also dug old rotted cow manure in 3 weeks before sowing seed.
- Planting Time:** Start in late October - I plant by the moon  
- every 3 1/2 weeks I sow another crop  
I usually get three very good crops
- Growing Tips:** I sow my seed in blocks to improve pollination  
and to protect from strong winds.  
This is replicating the natural way in which it likes to grow

SECRET TIP When the stalks produce secondary roots  
higher up the base dump another layer of fertiliser  
ie compost - well rotted manure around the base  
for these roots to feed on.  
I also feed my corn plants liquid cow manure and liquid nettle  
alternatively every 2 weeks.

NOTE: I wouldn't recommend freezing corn as it goes soft.  
Eat it when it is fresh - or make relish



## **CUCUMBER - GHERKIN: Recommended by Steve Sutton**

- Variety:** Yates Cucumber Gherkin Pickling
- Description:** Vine
- Why a Favourite?** To be able to pickle my own gherkins  
(see accompanying recipe below)
- Soil Preparation:** Prepare bed over winter with manure and compost  
Mulch over with straw.  
Vine grows over straw keeps gherkins off the soil.
- Planting Time:** Early October
- Growing Tips:** Well ventilated spot in full sun.  
Feed with a liquid fertiliser when flowers appear.  
pick when they are 5-10 cm long.
- Source:** Most nurseries



### **Gherkins in Spiced Vinegar**

**Ingredients:** 1 1/2 litres water, 3/4 cup coarse cooking salt, 2kg gherkins

Combine water and salt in large saucepan, stir over heat until salt is dissolved; cool. Wash gherkins well, place in large bowl,  
cover gherkins completely with salt water, cover stand 48 hours.

Drain gherkins, rinse under cold water. Pack gherkins in large sterilised jar, cover completely with spiced vinegar (recipe  
below); seal.

**Spiced Vinegar:**

1 litre white vinegar

2 1/4 cups sugar

2 cinnamon sticks

2 teaspoons black peppercorns

2 teaspoons cloves

## **LETTUCE: Recommended by Nelia Hyndman-Rizik**

- Variety:** Oakleaf (frilly) and Mignonette (small dainty) for Spring  
Cos (upright)  
Mixed Salad (curly leaves)  
Great Lakes for Summer
- Why a Favourite?** I love Salads and there is nothing like fresh crunchy lettuce leaves straight from the garden!
- Soil Preparation:** Needs rich soil - plenty of compost at time of planting  
or well rotted cow manure left for a couple of weeks first.  
I've even dug it in at planting time with success  
But if using seed, better to let it sit a bit.  
I also spread a dash of lime /dolomite
- Planting Time:** Spring for frillies - late Spring for Summer lettuce  
and autumn for lettuce over the winter - Italians again
- Growing Tips:** In the Spring I always grow a big bed of spring lettuce very densely planted  
I sow a mixed lot of seed into the bed and rake it in  
and let it all germinate and thin it for salads  
it's always prolific and delicious!
- Source:** Phoenix Seeds

## **PEAS: Recommended by Nelia Hyndman-Rizik**

- Variety:** Sugar Snap  
Snow Pea  
Telephone  
Massey  
A new one "purple podded Dutch"
- Description:** Favourite of these - sugar snap and snow peas  
I prefer climbers rather than dwarf ones - always had more success.
- Why a Favourite?** I've never seen sugar snap peas for sale and they're so sweet!  
As for snow peas I've seen them for up to \$12.99/kilo so they're a delicacy
- Soil Preparation:** Compost dug into long mound, dolomite (lime)  
and a trench with cow manure buried in it dug in front of the row.  
This way the roots can feed as they wish as they grow.
- Planting Time:** Usually March (St Patrick's Day),  
but this year I experimented with a planting in April
- Growing Tips:** Feed with liquid nettle when flowers appear to multiply the flowers.  
Don't grow peas on the same spot for too long  
Otherwise make sure to regularly tie them to the trellis as they fall over in the wind  
Pretty trouble free
- Source:** Seeds are all available from Phoenix Seeds

## **POTATOES: Recommended by Joyce Wilkie**

- Variety:** Kippfler
- Description:** Small elongated finger type potato.  
White skinned with waxy yellow flesh.
- Why a Favourite?** Easy to grow. Stores well in the ground.  
Has excellent flavour and pleasant waxy texture.  
This year we did a taste test comparing them with the much praised (by chef's) Pinkfir apple.  
Our Kippflers were BETTER tasting and has exactly the same texture!!
- Soil Preparation:** Potatoes like phosphate so do well with compost made from poultry manure.  
We work over our patch with chickens in the early Spring.
- Planting Time:** Late. we plant at Christmas time and find we can harvest from April through to September  
as long as the soil is reasonably well drained.
- Growing Tips:** Plant whole or half potatoes every 0.5 metres in deep furrows 1 metre apart.  
Cover well with soil. When the plants are about 0.5m tall hill them well and hoe any weeds.  
The plants will soon be big enough to totally cover the area and any weeds will be shaded out.  
start harvesting when the tops start to die back.  
Kippflers will also do well grown under a heavy mulch of straw.
- Source:** Jo's A1 at Fyshwick Markets - get them now - he won't have any by December.

## **TOMATOES: Recommended by Nelia Hyndman-Rizik**

### *Variety:*

- a) Roma: short round bush, sundry sauce making
- b) old English variety, name unknown that self seeds every year:
  - tall lanky, requires stakes, fruit large
  - flat/round shape, supersweet taste and ripens early!
  - mid January I start picking through to May
- c) 2 varieties of cherry tomatoes (yellow and red) come every year:
  - extremely tall and need staking
  - supersweet, prolific and I eat the first one usually early January

### *Soil Preparation:*

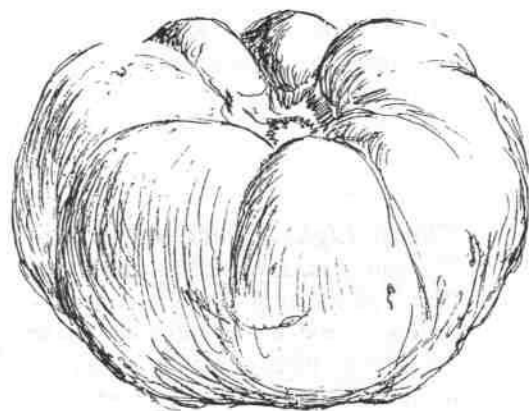
Compost, dash of blood and bone dug into the hole for each plant at planting time  
this year we are growing a green manure crop first of sub-clover over the winter that will be dug and allowed to rot for one month then the tomatoes will be planted there.

### *Planting Time:*

first fertile day on the moon calendar in early November

### *Growing Tips:*

I always prune<sup>1</sup> my staking tomatoes:  
I allow 1-2 main leaders and remove competing laterals while still small  
You should commence early in season so that cuts are not too large.  
I am careful to sterilize scissors with metho and place sulphur powder on wounds.  
Especially clean scissors between different plants.  
As soon as flowers appear I feed with liquid nettle (high in nitrogen) to multiply flowers once a fortnight.  
Also practise garden hygiene by removing fallen fruits to detract bugs especially fruitfly.



<sup>1</sup> See Peter Bennett's "Organic Gardening in Australia and NZ" for advice on pruning  
- the best book on organic growing I have

## **TOMATOES: Recommended by Joyce Wilkie**

### *Variety:*

Sweet 100

### *Description:*

A hybrid cherry tomato which forms a large sprawling bush.

### *Why a Favourite?*

The taste is fantastic and the bushes are prolific and easy to grow.  
It is an indeterminate type and so produces over a very long period.

### *Soil Preparation:*

Like all tomatoes it likes the soil to be well worked with a liberal amount of compost.  
The ground must also be limed if it lacks calcium and/or the pH is too low.  
Tomatoes need potassium so put some banana skins in the holes prior to planting the tomato plant.

### *Planting Time:*

SEED - August in a protected warm place.  
SEEDLINGS - can go into the ground in October  
but will do best if given some protection from the cold until early December.

### *Growing Tips:*

One or two plants will be more than sufficient for one family.  
This variety forms huge sprawling bushes no matter how hard you try to prune them.  
We find that they grow best woven up some rigid trellis with only a light pruning early in the season.  
The bushes will perform all season if you feed them with more compost in January.

### *Source:*

Readily available from most seed companies

**Two other favourites with Chris Lodi** are crops for the cold weather **Brussel Sprouts** (which needs the cold to develop nice sprouts) and **Spinach**, which is planted late summer to autumn and is frost tolerant. Chris recommends the addition of lots of compost to the soil prior to planting as spinach is a heavy feeder, and then thinning out the seedlings and keeping the soil moist. When cooking spinach Chris suggests that you do not add water to maintain its goodness and flavour. It is rich in minerals, especially iron. Spinach can provide fresh greens all winter.

Another vegetable for winter eating recommended by Chris, is **Leeks**, famous in leek soup, and used in a large range of dishes in winter. This vegetable does not require much work to grow. It should be sown in Spring and planted when pencil size. Remember to shorten leaves and roots before planting.

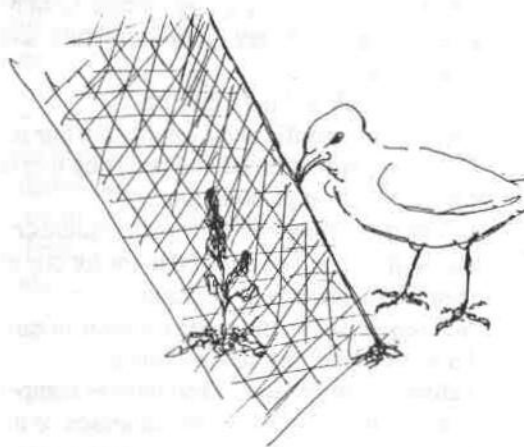


## Growing Tips

from John Brummell  
Illustrated by Joan Buckie

### ***Cheap, Light, Effective Netting***

This can be made by cutting lengthways the red plastic mesh bags for oranges, onions etc. Join the lengths with tie wire, for as long a piece of netting as you require, say two metres. Place over emerging seedlings to protect from birds. Make a "fence" or hold the net at any angle required using thirty centimetre lengths of fencing wire. To store: roll up the netting and put a rubber band around it.



### ***Dandelion Liquid Manure***

Dandelions are reputed to be rich in iron, phosphorus, calcium and other goodies, so remove them from your lawn, paths and beds with a fork or weeder - roots and all - and mash them up with your lawn mower. Put the mash in a garbage bin with water and in three weeks (in summer) you'll have your liquid manure.

### ***Save Your Back!!***

To make watering easier with a hand held hose especially when watering through leaf or grass clipping mulch, use a piece of metre long plastic tubing into which the end of the hose will fit. You can then direct the water where you want it without bending down.

(Remember, spraying plants growing under mulch is great for the mulch but little benefit to the plant.)

You can moderate the water pressure from the hose by putting some baffles in the plastic tube. A few stones wrapped in a tight roll of chicken wire will make a good baffle, and the water will come out steadily and not wash soil from the roots.



### ***Protect your seedlings***

Cut the bottom out of a two litre plastic juice or milk container, take the lid off and push the bottom of the container into the soil around your seedlings. This will:

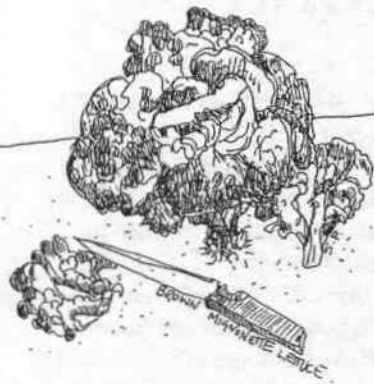
- a) protect them from heavy rain, wind, frost, birds, snails etc and
- b) create a warm micro- climate to encourage germination and growth.

Take the container off when the plant is big enough - and stack inside each other for future re-use.

## BODY SHOP SUPPORTS YOUTHAVERN

Ms Anita Roddick, founder and Managing Director of the Body Shop International, was in Australia and Canberra recently. The Body Shop is well known for its interest in ecological issues.

Ms Roddick visited Youthhaven and was impressed with the various projects especially the free range poultry run. The Body Shop has donated \$500 so Youthhaven can purchase its flock of hens.



\* When direct planting with small seeds, eg 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 4 days (no longer - don't let them actually germinate!) before planting out.

\* When planting out large seeds, eg pea or corn, soak overnight in a weak seaweed solution prior to planting; alternatively, keep seeds moist between 2 pieces of moist kitchen paper for 3 or 4 days until seeds germinate, then plant out carefully. This is particularly useful if you are not sure of the seed's viability.

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

\* 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.

## SPRING VEGETABLE PLANTING GUIDE

	SEPT	OCT	NOV
Globe Art	T		
Jerus. Art	T		
Asparagus	S		
French Beans	S	S	S
Beetroot	S	S	S
Broccoli			S
Brussel Sprouts		S	
Cabbage	ST	ST	ST
Capsicum		S	
Carrot	S	S	S
Cauliflower			S
Celery	S	ST	ST
Cucumber	S	S	ST
Eggplant	S	T	T
Endive			S
Leeks	ST	ST	T
Lettuce	ST	ST	S
Marrows	S	S	ST
Melons	S	S	ST
Onions	ST	T	
Parsnips	S	S	S
Peas	S	S	S
Potatoes	S	S	S
Pumpkins	S	S	ST
Radish	S	S	S
Rhubarb	T	T	
Salsify	S	S	S
Silverbeet	S	S	ST
Spinach	S	S	
Squash	S	S	ST
Sweet corn		S	ST
Tomatoes	S	ST	ST
Turnips white	S		

S = seed sowing

T = transplant

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

**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 make the same demand on nutrients i.e. follow heavy feeders with light feeders, and should not share the same diseases or attract the same pests (this prevents a build up of disease problems, and 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 the same members of a plant family in the same bed in consecutive years. eg the solanum family - tomatoes, capsicums, eggplants, potatoes



**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 varieties, Mignonette.

# COGS NOTICEBOARD

## **AUGUST GENERAL MEETING:**

Tuesday, August 27th, at 7.30pm in Room 4, Griffin Centre.

This is our Annual Quiz Night, so come along and test your knowledge in a fun evening. Participants will form into teams and the winning team will take home the Golden Fork Award and prizes as well.

The library, book sales and produce table will be available.

**VISITORS WELCOME**

**September Meeting:** Speakers Joyce Wilkie and Michael Plane will demonstrate the use of Soil Blocks

**Next Committee Meeting:** Tuesday, 17th September at 7.30pm at the Environment Centre. Remember Committee Meetings are usually on the 3rd Tuesday of each month.

Two members, **Joan Cordeaux** and **Ann Smith** were coopted to the COGS Committee last month. Thanks Joan and Ann for offering to help. We still have vacancies for two more committee members. Anyone interested please contact Geoff Foster on 238 1109.

**Giant Pumpkin Competition!** Any members interested in getting seeds for these monsters can contact Tony Bray on 231 0508. Tony can give you the details of the contest and maybe some helpful hints as well. Remember a member of Youthhaven, the organic community garden in Kambah won the Australia-wide competition last time!

**Mulchers:** These are available for use by COGS members.

Ring John Ross 241 4063 - Northside and Bungendore and

Richard Blyton 231 6219 - Southside

**Note:** see advertisement on page 3 for Sealed Bid Auction of a COGS mulcher.

**ORGANIC FARMING COURSE at CIT:** The course has commenced this semester with a full class! A good indication of the interest in organic agriculture in this region.

## **CANADIAN FARMER WISHING TO CORRESPOND:**

Through our Internet Home page we have received a request from a Canadian farmer who would be interested in corresponding with a farmer in this region to exchange information and ideas on organic agriculture. Anyone interested contact John Allen on 252 6002(w) or E-mail John on [jallen@pcug.org.au](mailto:jallen@pcug.org.au).

## **COGS RECIPE BOOK!**

We are interested in publishing a cookbook with the (tentative) title:

### **COOKING WITH THE SEASONS - FROM THE GARDEN TO THE TABLE**

and we would like members to collect their favourite recipes and send to "COGS COOKBOOK", PO Box 347, Dickson 2602. **OR** E-mail to Joan Cordeaux on [jcc@comserver.canberra.edu.au](mailto:jcc@comserver.canberra.edu.au), **OR** bring the recipes to the next General Meeting.

Any queries can be directed to Joan on 201 5105, or Michelle Johnson on 231 6219.

We would like to emphasise the use of fresh produce, straight out of the garden, in simple, everyday meals or snacks. Recipes for preserving produce would be most welcome too eg chutneys, relishes, sauces, jams. Please Contribute - we've had many wonderful recipes put in our magazine over the years, but there are more out there!

Ideally we would like to have this book ready by October for the Murrumbateman Field Days as a fundraiser for COGS.