

THE COGS

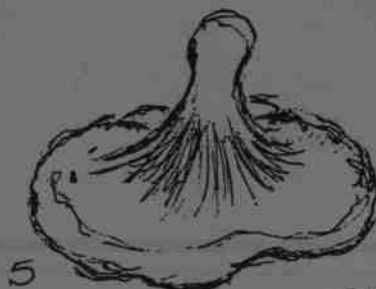
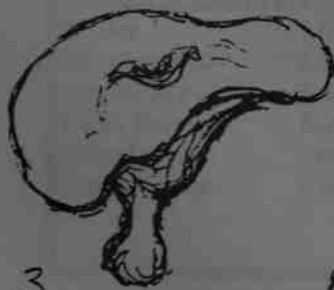


QUARTERLY

VOL 5 no. 2

ORGANIC GROWING IN THE CANBERRA REGION

WINTER 1997



Joan Suckie

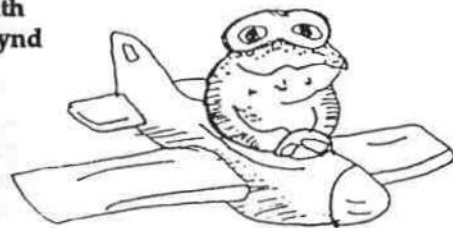
COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND HELPERS

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Secretary:	Margaret Allen	258 9004
Treasurer:	John Allen	258 9004
Membership Secretary: (Acting)	John Allen	258 9004
Editor - Magazine:	Joan Cordeaux	201 5105
Librarian:	Chris Lourandos	254 7320
Seed Librarian:	Leslie Thompson	241 6125
Public Officer:	Joan Buckie	286 5695

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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John Ross
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John Allen
Joan Cordeaux
Chris Lourandos
Alex Brown
Steve Sutton
Joan Buckie
Ann Smith
Rachel Wynd



COGS FLIER:

Pilots: Steve & Michelle Sutton 292 5609

MONTHLY MEETINGS:

Book Sales:	Murray Dadds	281 6065
Produce Table:	-	
Supper Convenors:	-	
Librarian:	Chris Lourandos	254 7320

COGS REPRESENTATIVES:

Conservation Council - Ann Smith & Alex Brown
Environment Centre - Ann Smith & Alex Brown

ENQUIRIES ABOUT ORGANIC GROWING:

Elizabeth Palmer 248 8004

GARDEN CONVENORS:

Cotter	Michelle Johnson	231 6219
Charnwood	Margaret Allen	258 9004
Northside	John Tuxworth	257 5441
Oaks Estate	Megan Cousins	297 8489
Theodore	Steve Sutton	292 5609
Tuggeranong	Christine Carter	231 5862

REMINDER: Monthly meetings are held on the 4th Tuesday of each month (except December and January.) Our meetings are held at 7.30 pm, Room 4, Griffin Centre, Civic.

*****EVERYONE WELCOME*****

COGS QUARTERLY

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Preferably on Apple Macintosh diskette - Contact Editor (Joan Cordeaux) for details on 201 5105
email: jcc@comserver.canberra.edu.au

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EDITORIAL WORKING GROUP:

Editor:

Joan Cordeaux

Layout:

Joan Cordeaux

Illustrations:

Joan Buckie: Mushrooms
George Micallef: "Children's Corner" & Library books
Lydia Waldron "Flier Logo"

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Joan Cordeaux

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Joan Buckie

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.

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front cover

'Mushrooms' drawn by Joan Buckie

Mushrooms (supplied by Marjatta Asa) which our Guest Speaker, Dick Windsor, used to illustrate his talk "Mushrooms - folklore and culture" at the AGM.

1. GYMNOPIUS PAMPEANUS (naked cap) NOT EDIBLE
- 2,3,7,8 PAXILLUS INVOLUTUS (turning in) NOT EDIBLE
4. BOLETUS SCABER (rough mushroom) EDIBLE?
5. CLYTOCYBE INFUNDIBILE FORMIS (funnel-shaped mushroom) EDIBLE?
6. LEPIOTA GRACILENTA (slender scaly-cap) EDIBLE
9. AGARICUS BISPORUS (cultivated mushroom) EDIBLE

President's Report

Dear Members,

Your new Committee for 1997 has met and begun this year's work. I am pleased that we still have some experienced Committee members aboard as well as some active new members to give the Committee renewed vitality and enthusiasm.

It promises to be a fun year. One enjoyable chore will be to find ways to celebrate our 20th anniversary. This was on our agenda for the last meeting, but had to be held over. We had a long list of other items to deal with first! We will discuss it at the next Committee meeting and hopefully plan some activities for Spring-Summer.

One important item discussed at the meeting was the possibility of COGS having a demonstration garden in the ACTEW Xeriscape Garden at Weston. We have been considering this for some time and have now made the firm decision to go ahead. A sub-committee consisting of John Ross, Steve Sutton and myself has been set up to plan and coordinate the establishment of the garden. Once set up, we hope this garden will be an ongoing project. For me personally, for COGS to start such a challenging project seems the ideal way to celebrate the anniversary. Not just look back, but make long-term plans for the future which call on our members' combined knowledge of organic growing in the Canberra Region to show the general public how successful organic methods can be.

The garden should showcase our "best-practice". It will be fully organic ie it will adhere to the National Standards for Organic Produce and only use approved certified organic substances. I know these can be difficult to source, but as a demonstration to the public of an organic garden, we have to set a high standard.

Our land allocation in the Xeriscape Garden is 15m x 15m - not too large to maintain but large enough to demonstrate a range of practices common in organic growing:- composting, green manures, liquid manures, companion planting, and the principles of crop rotation, no-dig gardening and alternatively, double-dig gardening.

However, the first thing we need to do is give our garden a name. I'm sure we can come up with something better than "The Demonstration Garden"! The Henry Doubleday Association have called their demonstration garden in Sydney "The Earthcare Garden". A great name which highlights a fundamental principle of organic growing. But its about People-Care too. Growing fresh, nutritious food free of artificial chemical residues for healthier people. Can anyone suggest a name for our garden which embraces both aspects of organic growing? Put on your thinking caps and see if you can come up with a name - and let me know.

We realize there will be a lot of work to establish and run the garden and we will be needing help from our members. The task will be much easier for the core group of volunteers if everyone can help in a small way. Each year could each member consider donating:-

- * 1/2 day for a working bee at the garden or
- * 1/2 day to come along to help out when a workshop/practical demonstration is held or
- * materials or
- * seeds or seedlings or
- * help with preparing leaflets, signs etc ?

We will be putting updates on progress at the garden in our Fliers and Quarterlies, so please check for specific requests for help.

We want most of the garden ready to plant in Spring. Some sections may be developed later. So, the first request for help! To start the project we will be having a two day working bee on the 21st and 22nd June from 9.30am to 3.00pm. We want to construct the edging around the perimeter of the garden, to dig over some garden beds and set up no-dig garden beds as well. We will have marked out the beds before the working bee. If you can come to the working bee please contact Steve Sutton (ph 292 5609) who can tell you in more detail the specific jobs to be done and tools you may need to bring. We do need to know who is coming so we can coordinate all the activities. There will be a sausage sizzle each lunchtime for the all day workers, and a chance to talk about what we have planned and offer your suggestions.

I will show you our final design for the garden in the June Flier - hope you like it! - and discuss more of the aims of this garden. The demonstration garden will clearly be a major focus for us this year. It will give members the opportunity for some hands-on work with COGS and to showcase organic garden to the public. Please join in.

Happy Gardening,
Michelle Johnson

The Internet Column

By John Allen

Email: jallen@pcug.org.au

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



Let me know if you are on the Internet and if you would like me to forward organic E-mail received. The content of these messages varies considerably from people seeking assistance/information to others who just want to chat about their veges. The number of messages is currently not high (3 or 4 each month). It is a good opportunity to make some organic friends elsewhere in Australia and overseas.

New Information on the COGS home page

- * Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont
- * Mother Earth Organic Mushrooms, New Jersey
- * Toxic Deception - How the Chemical Industry Manipulates Science, Bends the Law, and Threatens Your Health
- * Organic Gardening - Natural Insecticides - from New Mexico State University
- * Go Organic! Information from the Department of Horticulture, University of Missouri-Columbia
- * Wamboin Worms
- * More information on genetic engineering

This Month's Interesting Site

Raised Beds for the Backyard Gardener

From an article by Rich Tomsu, of Rich Organic Farm, USA

<http://www.erinet.com/rharen/raised1.htm>

Raised beds present an ideal method for growing vegetables. Some advantages of raised bed vegetable production include:

- 1) Earlier and later harvests, thus extending the growing season. Because the soil in raised beds is 6-12 inches higher than the adjacent soil, it drains quickly and heats up rapidly in the spring. Seeds and some transplants can gain a 2-6 week head start;
- 2) Efficient use of space. Vegetables are placed in a triangular grid pattern so that each vegetable receives only the space it needs. Garden space (weeding area) can be reduced by as much as 50%;
- 3) Improved soil structure. Soil compaction is greatly

reduced because the beds are never walked on after being tilled. Compaction slows the growth of plants. This also allows you to walk in the garden when the soil is wet because traffic is limited to the walkways between beds. This is ideal for carrots and other root crops that require extensive root penetration.

4) Efficient use of compost and organic fertilizer. Since compost can be spread just in the bed area and not in the space used for walkways, less is needed. The addition of compost increases the organic content of the soil and greatly improves the soil health. To construct beds, rototill or dig until the soil is well loosened to at least six inches. Place two parallel strings four feet apart over the area to be planted, and shovel the loosened soil on both sides of the string onto the raised bed area. Add an inch or two of compost, and rake level. The result is a four foot raised bed that is 6-12 inches higher than the adjacent paths. Walkways between the bed should be a comfortable 18 inches wide. The beds can also be three feet wide, which is useful for easier reaching or certain single row crops such as tomatoes.

Some growers using raised beds frame their beds with wood. While ordinary rough cut wood is the least expensive choice, it will rot out in a few years and need to be replaced. Eight inch cedar boards, which are rot resistant, are a better choice. Cedar is very expensive, but its cost is generally covered with the very first crop. [in Australia, a cheaper alternative would be Australian hardwood from 2nd hand building suppliers or Revolve. Ed.] Do not use pressure treated wood because the toxic wood preservative, chromium copper arsenate, will leach out and contaminate the soil. Steel corner brackets make the sturdiest frames.

Raised beds, either framed or unframed, offer so many advantages that it is surprising that more backyard gardeners do not use them. I have over 50 cedar framed raised beds on my farm.



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From USA Today, March 6, 1997

Genetically altered food: Buyer beware

By John Fagan Ph.D.

[The following article refers to Americans and Europeans but is relevant to Australians too. It won't be long before we see a rapidly increasing range of genetically altered foods in Australia and it is important that we push hard for strict labelling standards. You can help by writing to the Minister for Health, your local member, etc. stating that you are concerned about the possible food safety issues with these products and you want such foods labelled so that you can choose whether to buy them or not. You can also help by raising community awareness of the issues. Ed.]

There's a war on in Europe, and most Americans have hardly heard about it. It concerns the safety of something very basic to human life: our food. Why are we so uninformed while European consumers are up in arms and their governments are taking swift action against the uncontrolled introduction of genetically modified foods?

Mention genetically altered foods to most Americans, and you will get a blank stare. A genetically cloned sheep has stolen the headlines. Yet with each passing day, we are filling our grocery carts with these foods in ever-increasing percentages without our knowledge or consent.

In Europe, shiploads of these products have been halted at borders. Supermarket chains and food producers have banned these products from their shelves or promised consumers that they will label these foods conspicuously. In fact, several nations are enacting stringent labeling requirements.

What is at the core of the fear about these new foods? And should this concern derail work some claim will increase agricultural efficiency and reduce world hunger? Scientific journals and leading scientists have joined in the chorus to urge definitive research into the possible risks in advance of mass use by humans.

Scientists have altered foods by inserting into them genes from bacteria and viruses. Many more such products containing foreign DNA from insects, fish and even humans are in the R&D pipeline and soon will be headed for our dinner plates.

Foods altered through genetic engineering often contain proteins and other components that have never before been part of the human diet: proteins from bacteria and viruses and, in the future, proteins from insects, scorpions and people. There is no way to predict whether those foods are safe to eat. The only way to tell is to test them rigorously. Yet our government does not require such testing.

The risks are not hypothetical. Any unbiased scientist familiar with the technology will admit that genetic engineering can give rise to unanticipated allergens and toxins. Already we have seen this scenario in action. In 1989, a dietary supplement, L-tryptophan, caused 37 U.S. deaths and 1,511 non-fatal cases of a disease called



eosinophilia-myalgia syndrome (EMS). The Centers for Disease Control linked these cases to tryptophan manufactured using genetically engineered bacteria. A study published in Science in 1990 confirmed that the tryptophan was contaminated with a toxic "novel amino acid" not present in tryptophan produced by other methods.

How could this problem have been prevented? Routine food-safety tests could not have done the job. They can only detect the presence of toxins or allergens known to be present in common foods such as shellfish and peanuts. Such tests on the genetically altered tryptophan would not have registered a blip. Only biological and clinical tests on humans would have revealed the truth. Unfortunately, these tests were not done. Moreover, they are still not required for other genetically engineered foods. Advocates maintain that the risk from any given genetically engineered food is small and argue, therefore, that it is unnecessary to carry out stringent safety testing.

This view is not scientifically responsible. Thousands of these foods products will be brought to market over the next several years. When we do the math, the small risk that any given product will produce unanticipated effects translates into virtual certainty of harm when many new genetically engineered foods have become part of the diet of large populations over extended periods of time.

What is the solution? Given that billions of dollars have been invested in developing these products, we cannot exclude them from the market. Nonetheless, consumer safety must be protected. Here are three suggestions to address both issues:

(1) Safety testing must be made more stringent. The only scientifically valid approach is to feed these foods to human volunteers and see how they respond. Such testing is required by the FDA before new foods or additives produced by other methods can be marketed. Why should genetically altered foods be an exception?

(2) All genetically engineered foods must be labeled as such. Safety testing can never give us a guarantee with 100% certainty. For example, tests extending over three years may fail to detect harmful effects that require five years to emerge. Mandatory labeling gives the consumer choice in whether to accept that risk. Health officials can also better trace the source of any problems if the products are labeled.

(3) The public must be properly informed about the benefits and risks. Informed choice by consumers will protect the integrity of the biotechnology and food industries and maintain confidence in the food supply.

Dr. John B. Fagan is a molecular biologist who has conducted research using recombinant DNA techniques.

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*

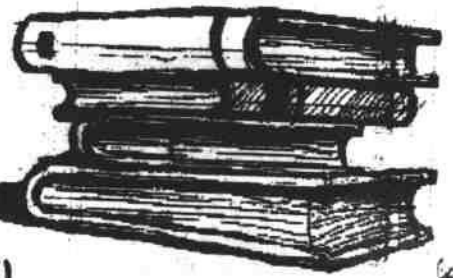
*Contact: Costas Kounnas
Shop 3 Jamison Centre, Bowman Street, Macquarie A.C.T.*

Ph. 251 2670, Mobile: 0418 620811



LIBRARY

(BROWSE FOR A WHILE)



In the COGS LIBRARY, (under the stewardship of Chris Lourandos) we have 318 Books of which 15 are now overdue (bring them back folks - we want to keep Chris happy).

As your new Editor, I have 'browsed' the following magazines/newsletters/newspapers which COGS subscribes/receives and I found most interesting. These will be put into the library system shortly. Enjoy!

Joan

Bordeaux

GRASS ROOTS April/May issue Magazine

Contents:

- * Suburban Food Forest
- * Thatch a roof
- * Ducks as pets
- * Backyard Sugar Production
- * Simple Quilting
- * Family Board Games - Preserves and much more

THE ORGANIC FARMER (ORGAA)

Contents:

- * New Hot Line for Organic Industry
- * Are modern fruit systems sustainable?
- * Eat seasonally - Eat locally
- * Marketing at a retail level

GOING ORGANIC NO. 30

(Official journal of TROPPO, the Tweed and Richmond Organic Producers Organisation)

- * Focus on growers
- * Coping with carp
- * Mix'n Match Orchard
- * Why we went organic
- * North Coast Sheep
- * How to prove to the tax man you're a primary producer.....

BRISBANE ORGANIC GROWERS INC. NEWSLETTER APRIL 1997

- * "Connie's Corner - "Strawberries"
- * Why become a certified grower
- * Fruit Fly
- * Paper mulch
- * &.....much more

THE ORGANIC GROWER Vol. 21, No. 2

- * The Potato Experiment
- * Compost Pile Ventilator
- * Vegetable Growing
- * Organic Matters
- * &.....much more

ACRES AUSTRALIA

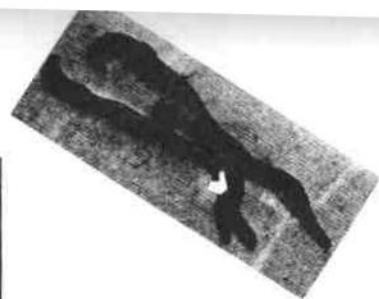
The national newspaper of sustainable agriculture
Vol 4 No.2

- * Grazing - Lessons from Africa
- * Biodynamics - Taking the message to India
- * Pest Management - Caneland rats retreat
- * Landcare - in the Desert Uplands
- * Permaculture - The international conference
- * Organic Farming - Cattle and fruit in the Macleay Valley
- * BFA NEWS - Merger on the back burner
- * ENVIRONMENT - Heavy metal pollution dashes seaweed fertiliser venture (article about a couple who run a 4-hectare property in the Deua River Valley)



ORGANIC LIFESTYLE (Tasmania) Vol 1, No. 4

Basic Organic Growing
Free workers for your garden plot
Feeding the World with organics
Beautiful Berries
Nutritious Nuts
Organic Lifestyle Definedand more



WORMS

Worms are very successful compost workers and voracious eaters. Worms will consume their own body weight per day in food and may double in numbers every two months. One mature pair of red worms has the ability to multiply to 1500 in one year.

Worms are able to breed at the age of 2 to 3 months. They reach full maturity at around 12 months. Worms are hermaphrodites. That means that each worm is able to produce young after the mating process. After the mating process the worms produce capsules or eggs. Each capsule is capable of producing 2 to 20 young worms. Provided with the correct environment capsules have the ability to hatch within 14 days, but the process can take up to five weeks.

Worms will thrive if you provide them with an appropriate environment. Worms require moist, temperate, dark conditions. A worm can live for a period of 2 years up to 20 years given ideal conditions.

Worms turn waste material into a hygienic, non-toxic, nutrient-rich odourless product called castings or Vermicast. This product can be used as a natural fertilizer in your garden. Vermicast is capable of retaining three times its own weight of water. It can be stored for long periods and still retain its quality. A study on Vermicast has concluded that this product contains 5 times more nitrogen, 7 times more phosphorus, 12 times more potassium and 1 _ times more calcium than the original soil and will not harm the most delicate plants.

Bedding material for your worms should be loose and crumbly so it does not become compacted. Worms will breed best when the bedding material is kept at a consistent temperature. The optimum temperature range is between 18 and 25°C .

To enable you to control the moisture level within your composting bin regular light watering is recommended. Watering will depend largely on the climate. The best guide is to squeeze some bedding material in your hand and no more than one or two drops of water should drip from it. Protection should also provide for your worms from the rain. If your composting bin becomes too wet your worms may drown.

Worms will eat almost anything that has once lived. Some materials are preferable to others particularly organic waste. If you want to include grass clippings as food for your worms make sure you place the clippings in garbage bags for at least two to three weeks before introducing the clippings to the worms.

The food you supply to your worms should be in small particles. This makes it easier for the worms to consume. I feed my worms on organic waste from the local fruit markets. I feed the waste through a mulcher making it easier for the worms to eat.

This diagram shows several worm egg or capsules and their actual size in comparison with a paper clip.



This is a diagram of a worm egg or capsule



How much do you feed your worms? This will depend on the type of food you have been supplying your worms, age and breeding rate of the worms, and the age and quality of your bedding material. However the best guide as to food quantity will come from the worms themselves. When feeding your worms you can keep topping it up as the worms devour it, be sure to check at least once or twice a week.

You should not allow the contents of your compost bin to become heavily compacted. This may occur as a result of overwatering and/or not enough aeration. If you do not have a large well established population of worms aerating your bin you must aerate the bed for your worms. Gently insert a garden fork into the contents of the bin and loosen. Do not use a spade or shovel. It is likely that a worm will die if cut in half.

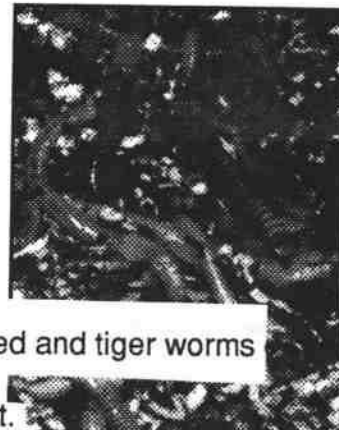
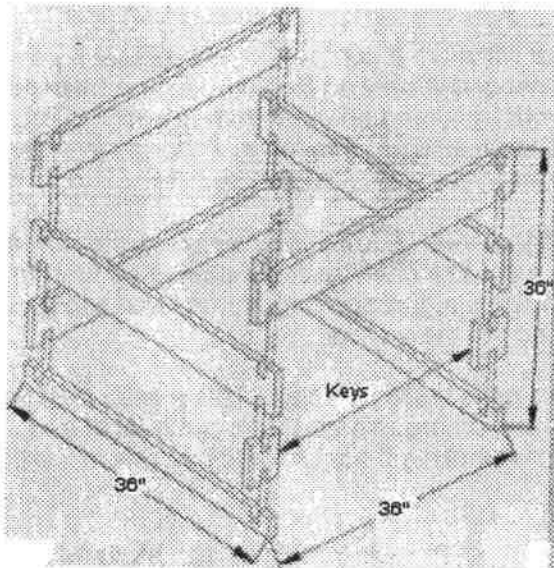
Worms are extremely sensitive when exposed to light. If exposed to light they will burrow to get away from it. It is recommended that you cover the top of your composting bin with some old carpet underlay or hessian bags. By covering the worms this also extends the worms surface feeding time.

You should also monitor the pH level of the contents within your composting bin. Test your bedding regularly to make sure that the pH level falls within the recommended range of 5.5 to 8.5, with 6.5 to 7.0 (neutral) being the most suitable. You will be able to obtain a pH testing kit from your local garden centre.

I can supply a detailed fact sheet on how to construct and maintain your own vermicomposting bin for a small fee of \$5.00. I can also supply composting worms.

I can be contacted on 2589024 during business hours in relation placing orders and pricing of worms.

The diagrams below show how to construct a basic composting bin. There is a before and after shot.



This diagram is show a picture of red and tiger worms
doing what worms do best.

COGS OWN CORNER

During the April Committee Meeting it was decided that COGS become a Member of the Seed Savers Network and the wheels are in progress.

For those of us who aren't familiar with the Network, here's a short run-down.

The Seed Savers Network is an Australian non-profit organisation, founded in 1986 to preserve the diversity of our cultural plants. Its activities include a newsletter, seed exchange, seed bank, frequent workshops and the publication of a best selling handbook on the subject, The Seed Savers Handbook, as seen in our Library.

Seed Savers' major aims are

To develop and promote: educational programmes for the preservation of open-pollinated (non-hybrid) seeds and the genetic diversity of plant varieties; seed banks for non-hybrid plant varieties; and

To provide: open-pollinated seed stock to individuals, groups and communities.

As a 'Club' Member, we are able to purchase the Seed Savers Handbook in bulk for resale, we will receive ongoing information and training regarding our seed bank and we will also receive larger packets of seeds than are sent to ordinary subscribers, (or several small of each variety), as well as copies of the Network's regular publications. For instance, the Seed Savers Spring Newsletter is available early each Spring, in which is a long list of what seeds other members have to offer as well. The last publication saw 1,100 varieties of useful plants offered. The Seed Bank constantly receives seeds from gardeners and farmers and distributes them to keep them in cultivation and culture. I will bring you more info once we have been accepted as a Member.

"COGS OWN" seeds are still available at our monthly meetings, as well as through the mail if you can't make it. An updated list will be in the next Flyer, but call me if you need to beforehand.

Our Seed Bank is still IN NEED and Weston is on its way!!!

Regards, Leslie Thompson Phone: 241 6125 E-Mail: stephenr@dynamite.com.au



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New Organic Industry HOT LINE

To cater for the rapid expansion of the Organic food industry in Australia the Organic Retailers & Growers Association of Australia (ORGAA) had introduced an 1 800 "Organic Hotline" phone number.

A spokesperson for ORGAA, Chris Alenson said that this was an exciting move for the industry which would enable consumers Australia wide and others involved in the industry to have their say on wide ranging issues to do with the production and sale of organic produce.

The organic industry in Australia had an uncompromising approach to on-farm quality production standards which guaranteed consumers minimal residues and produce of high nutritional quality produced using sound environmental management practices.

Mr Alenson stated that the 20-30% growth seen in the American and British organic markets could soon be seen in Australian markets as new producers came on line to supply a public which was becoming more educated to the benefits of organic food. It is estimated that the industry might currently be worth over \$80 million.

The range and quality of organic produce had increased not only in the area of fresh fruit and vegetables but also in dried and packaged goods such as cereals, grains, flour, nuts, dried fruits, meat and dairy products.

Mr Alenson said that it was important for consumers to recognise that producers have gone to some trouble to produce food under a strict code of operating standards which prohibited synthetic pesticides and fertilisers from the production process.

The guarantee of authenticity for consumers was the accompanying certification logo that this produce carried into the market place.

Mr Alenson said that ORGAA to further ensure consumer confidence in the organic industry had been implementing a retail trading scheme which required retailers to label and display produce in accordance with the nationally recognised organic standards. A list of certified retailers could be obtained by ringing the 1800 'ORGANIC HOT LINE' number. The success of this scheme can be seen with outlets now certified in Adelaide, Sydney with more outlets anticipated soon in other states.

The organic/biodynamic industry has been working closely with State and Federal governments to facilitate the growth of the organic industry and this was evident with the recent exemption from pesticide dipping of tropical fruit being transported to the southern states.

Organic food and fibre production in Australia offered enormous benefits to Australia's agricultural industry through the production of clean food while preserving the nation's resources of soil and water. Domestic and export markets would reap the benefits of this growth industry.

Further Inquiries : ORGAA 1 800 356 299

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Random Garden Hints for Organic Gardeners

There are many little things an organic gardener does automatically once they become "Organic."

For instance, we automatically pick off snails and slugs from our plants. We do not automatically run for the snail killer, because to have snail killer in the house means that we have actually been to a garden centre and bought the stuff, and I, for one, after forty years of organic growing, cannot bear the smell of chemicals in that section of the garden centres.

I find I can no longer go to the markets for fruit and vegetables, because the chemical smell nauseates me, and utterly spoils my pleasure in the sight of so much beautiful produce.

Over the years, I have found many little ways of dealing with the pests which seem to do their best to deprive us of our garden produce.

When I transplant seedlings of the cabbage family such as broccoli, cabbage, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower, Kohl Rabbi or kale, I take pieces of Southernwood with woody stems and push 4-6 in around each seedling. I still need to examine the plants fairly often to make sure there are no tiny yellow specks on or under the leaves. I rub these eggs off with my fingers, as otherwise they will hatch into tiny, almost invisible green caterpillars, and these turn the leaves to lace, which cuts down on the plant's growth ability through photosynthesis.

Many of us say, "Oh, I haven't time for that sort of thing." But stop and think for a minute. All day you have been rushing to do the things that you need to do to earn a living. At lunch time you have a quick cup of coffee, drink it down maybe with a sandwich, and you're off again into all the things you have to cram into your day.

"I am a busy person," you say to your friends with some pride. I find, however, that after some weeks of spending practically all my time on 'business', I feel frazzled, and that's when picking caterpillars or just pottering in the garden can be a very peaceful thing to do, even though to someone else it may seem a waste of time.

One of the things I do is to pot all my plants before transplanting them in the garden. This means that they get the benefit of manure and seaweed in the bottom of the pot, then well made compost on top and potting soil of my own mixing around the plant. By the time I put the plant in the garden, it is strong enough to withstand most of the insect attacks.

For small farmers this takes too much time, and there is always the danger of not finding time to put the plants out when they are ready to go, and staying in pots sets them back. All vegetables need to be kept growing fast, so that they will be tender and tasty.

Soil blocks are much better for the farmer. They do not take up much room, and the plants grow better when started in them. If gardeners can buy a soil blocker, and learn how to use it and how to make the soil blocking mix, and take the time to actually DO it, they will find it the best method of all.

Snails come to mind again.

My method with snails is this: when I first put little plants out I surround them with several small containers one third full of this mixture:

1 teaspoon of Vegemite

1 teaspoon of salt

1 teaspoon of sugar

Dissolve in a cup of boiling water. Add a cup of cold water, possibly two.

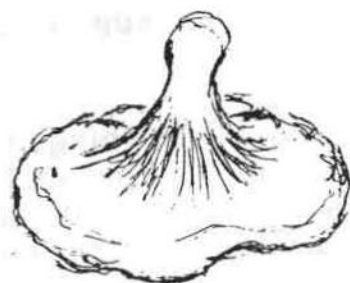
This mixture attracts snails and especially slugs, which crawl down into the container to drink it. They drown and become pickled, and a delectable morsel for my chooks.

However, there are plenty which do not get to the bait, so after rain or watering, I go out with a torch and a container, and collect as many as 170 in one evening, when they are rampant. They especially like the lawn mowings which I spread in my pathways, and also the metal edges of my beds, and are easy to collect from these places. The top is screwed on tightly and next morning the chooks think it's Christmas!

Incidentally, spraying or watering with seaweed fertiliser and also application of boron can often stop frost damage.

Gardens can reduce stress, so pottering in the garden can be good for you!

Good gardening, Betty Cornhill



LORIENDALE ORCHARD

OPEN DAY - 5 April 1997

Owen & Noreen Pidgeon hosted the 7th Annual Apple Day at Loriendale Orchard on 5 April. It has become something of a showcase for the organic industry, in production of choice apples and other fresh fruit.

The day was fine and warm. As the sun shone brightly in the sky, some 800-900 people arrived in the early afternoon to sample fresh apples and listen to some marvellous Irish music and the Canberra Youth Singers.

The best tasting apples this season were the Canadian Spartan and the Australian Bonza, so by the end of the day, all supplies were sold out. Any amount of Snowies and Cox's Orange Pippin could have been sold, but supplies this year were extremely small. The remaining small Royal Gala apples had been kept for the Open Day, for the purpose of juicing. Crowds milled around the 19th Century style apple press while some 120 litres of fresh juice was pressed. A very sweet juice indeed.

Of course, the apple pies and apple jelly sold out by mid afternoon. Devonshire teas had to stretch a long way for the crowd, some who came from Gunning, Yass, Tharwa, Griffith and Sydney. Many were amazed that apples could be grown without the dangerous chemicals for codling moth. The pheromone ties worked extremely well this year. The biggest problem in recent months has been birds, solved in part with the purchase of wide, white bird netting (from New Zealand)

Loriendale Orchard will continue to supply an increasing range of varieties of apples in coming years. Clive Winmill of Badgers Keep in Victoria will promote Loriendale as one NSW/ACT outlet with a wide range of antique and modern apples. The new season will commence at Christmas with cherries.

See you all next time.

THEODORE COMMUNITY GARDEN

Steve Sutton

Over the winter a small shed was erected to house gardening tools, this has saved us carting the tools to and from the community garden everytime we wanted to do some work on our plots. Having the shed has made it so much easier for the members and I would at this time like to express my sincere appreciation to all the members who donated both their time and materials in the construction of the shed.

Some compost bins were also erected from tin and these are being utilised extremely well by members. A large wire compost bin was also built, this is continually being filled with leaves and lawnclippings, once they settle down the process is then repeated with the wire bin being filled once again; we have currently repeated this process approximately six times with the outcome being we now have about half a metre of good compost which is currently being used on our plots.

On came spring and with heaps of enthusiasm the plot holders planted their vegetables, watered them daily and generally maintained the upkeep of their gardens. Then just as the gardens were coming to life with the seedlings sprouting through the soil and the plots starting to look great the middle of November arrived and with it a frost that burnt our pumpkins, corn, tomatoes, etc. With our hearts broken we replanted hoping that the season would still be long enough to obtain some good crops but fearing that this would not be so. I am pleased to report that we did get some good crops out of most gardens, the only difference being that they were a bit later than normal. The hot dry weather we had in January and Febuary I feel was a major contributing factor to this.

The Theodore Community Garden has monthly meetings these are held on the first Sunday of every month except January. These meetings give us the opportunity to have chats about how our plots are coming along it also enables us to help each other solve any problems that we may be having. On these occasions it has also been the practise to mow the common area and to keep it tidy. At two of these meetings a family BBQ was arranged, these were a success and enjoyed by everyone, especially the children.

A big welcome to our new members, who may you find the garden an enjoyable, relaxing place to both garden and socialize. In term two this year Calwell High School is using two plots in the garden in conjunction with a course they are running. It's great to see some of the younger generation taking an active interest in the garden; caring for the soil and getting an appreciation for organic growing. Let's hope that enough notice is taken and learnt, so that they may pass on any information they do learn to relatives and friends ensuring a better understanding of organic growing. Thanks to their teacher Damien for all the time he has put into this both in and out of school hours. In summary we have had a very productive year which I have enjoyed greatly and hope that next year will be even better, at this time I would like to express my thanks to Ivor, Frank, Leone and Peter for all their help in running the garden.



CALWELL HIGH SCHOOL JOINS COGS

My initial contact with COGS came through an open day at Theodore Community Garden. I had been encouraged by Lisa Maddern, a colleague at Calwell High School, to take the plunge and see what was going on, with a mind to school involvement. On that Sunday, in spring of 1996, we met Steve Sutton and discussed the possibilities of students becoming gardeners and the long term benefits that could come from learning such a life skill.

Like many worthy ideas, this one floated off into the back blocks of my mind where it bided its time and waited to germinate. It emerged from its slumber in March of this year as I grappled with too academic a course of study for the majority of the students in my Environmental Issues class. I knew I had to get them out of the classroom and into the environment. That's when I remembered the community garden and everything grew from there.

Having lost Steve's phone number, I rang COGS and obtained Michelle Johnson's number; through her I reached Steve and it was immediately obvious that as the idea had lay dormant within me, it had been nurtured by him. It was as if he was waiting for the call.

The energy that has greeted our involvement has been wonderful. Plans were immediately made for a winter garden patch. (The timing was poor, but it will lay the foundations for rich soil in spring; in the future the unit will run in the second half of the year.) A compost heap and worm farm were also planned for. Excursions were suggested to the ACT Parks and Gardens Worm Farm at Belconnen Tip and to an organic farm in the region. The school's Principal, Anne Dash, greeted the program with enthusiasm and agreed to the school joining COGS.

The students welcomed the developments. We began a study of soil degradation in Australia followed by work on modern farming practices contrasted with organic procedures. We allocated two lessons per cycle as time spent in the garden; this equals three visits every two weeks. Some keen gardeners have emerged and the first plot is on its way, as is the compost heap and the worm farm. The excursions are about to happen with Steve as our bus driver. **It's a breath of fresh air.**

Damien Hedley



Organic LifeStyle

by Dr Don Gray

That was the title of the talk I gave at the Organic Festival on March 2nd., and I'm printing it for those who were not able to attend, but also so that those who did hear me can have a full outline of the points made.

The word "organic" has different meanings to different people. For instance, to a chemist it means those substances which contain carbon in their molecules. To another person the word organic can mean "natural", and you might say "well, that sounds reasonable". I'll comment on how that word "natural" is used in the food industry later. To Pam and myself ORGANIC doesn't mean either of the two ideas I've mentioned. To us, ORGANIC means: **health giving and completely free from all such things as synthetic pesticides, synthetic fertilisers, or any chemical injections or additives, such as antibiotics, hormones, or growth regulators.** By the way, hormones and growth regulators are not only given to animals, but are also used in fruit and vegetable production. I think most who came to the ORGANIC Festival agreed with this third meaning.

Now for the word "Lifestyle". Well, that's pretty straightforward isn't it? If someone refers to his or her hairstyle, my encyclopaedia tells me they are meaning that type of hair-do which reflects their own attitudes and values. In similar manner, ORGANIC LIFE-style should reflect the attitudes and values of all who **practise** living the organic way.

Now you may be beginning to see the way my thoughts are heading. It's the putting together of the true meaning of those two words ORGANIC and LIFE-style which will completely change a person's direction. Their whole way of life will be changed - no longer fitting in with the very unhealthy lifestyle which has given Australia unenviable statistics showing heart disease, strokes, cancer, chemical sensitivities, Alzheimer's disease and so on, in epidemic proportions. Here in Northern Tasmania we have had quite a lot of publicity telling of the very high

incidence of high blood pressure and heart disease, as well as cancer, and I won't dwell on those illnesses, or on chemical sensitivities. The first three issues of *Organic Lifestyle* contain articles on environmental illnesses, which **always** include chemical sensitivities.

Now what about Alzheimer's disease? Why should I particularly mention that? Well, the Alzheimer's Association, which is based in Chicago, says this disease is now the fourth leading cause of death for people living in western industrialised countries, which of course, include Australia. Heart attacks, strokes and cancer are the first three killers. The number of people showing early signs of Alzheimer's in Australia is rapidly on the increase, and it can show up in anyone in middle-age and beyond. But don't think Alzheimer's STARTS in middle age. There is good evidence that the seeds of the disease may be sown in what treatment a baby gets in its first few months of life. What causes this disease? There is now little doubt that aluminium in the brain is implicated. You may remember Sydney Water Corporation's 1995 decision to stop using Al in it's water plants, (replacing alum with ferric chloride) because of a research report they funded. You may have read that Albury City Council NSW, also recommended in 1995 that an alternative for alum be found.

If you are really serious about those words ORGANIC LIFEstyle, you won't use water that is loaded with chemicals, such as chlorine, fluoride and aluminium. (By the way, those three are just a start: according to the guidelines issued by the National Health and Medical Research Council more than 50 chemicals can be used to 'purify' water supplies). The ideal answer to the water problem is a home distiller. But they are costly - about \$800 to \$900. If anyone wants to set up a good small business, then produce a home water distiller to sell for about \$500, and I believe people who now spend over \$400 on reverse-osmosis water filters would buy a distiller instead, treating themselves to the purest water known.

Still on the subject of aluminium,

where else is it commonly found apart from town water supplies? The answer is - everywhere, because it is the most abundant mineral in the earth's crust. The big chemical firms have been quick to extract it and it's not surprising therefore to find aluminium in many items in common use. Some of these you will know, others you may not know. For instance, aluminium is in antacids such as Gaviscon, it's in many brands of buffered aspirin, douches, anti-diarrhoeal agents, anti-ulcer "remedies", many toothpastes, and anti-perspirants, as well as, of course, in aluminium cookware, lightweight camping utensils, and aluminium foil. In foods, it's found in frozen cake mixes, self-rising flour, processed cheese, pickling salts, baking soda, many table salts, anticaking agents, and it is used as a food starch modifier.

Obviously, if you agree with our definition of "ORGANIC LIFE-style", you won't use **any** of the items I've just mentioned. You'll seek out the healthy non-poisonous alternatives -- and they ARE there!

Notice I haven't really said much about FOOD yet, but that's coming, because the next item I'd like to mention is the link between coffee drinking, Alzheimer's and aluminium. Something in this may be of use to you, or to a friend or relative. Coffee drinking is an addiction, and of course coffee contains caffeine, a white crystalline alkaloid, which acts as a temporary stimulant to the brain and artificially lessens fatigue. But here are ten other things caffeine does. After one or more cups of coffee, the stomach temperature rises 10 to 15 degrees. The secretion of hydrochloric acid in the stomach increases 400%. The salivary glands double their output. The heart beats faster. The lungs work harder. The brain blood vessels narrow, while those in and around the heart widen. The metabolic rate increases (you use up more calories per minute). The kidneys make and discharge up to 100% more urine. The body cells respond by a greater tendency to mutate (to change form) with the potential for cancer. Finally, as coffee is the major dietary source of cadmium, the body gets an extra amount of this toxic metal.

It's that 400% increase in the secretion of hydrochloric acid that links coffee drinking to aluminium and Alzheimer's. I'd like to quote part of a letter that tells how it affected one person's life: "My mother was a Registered Nurse during her professional life. She spent several years as nurse at the Alcoa Aluminum plant in South Texas. Today she turned 87 - but isn't around to appreciate it - except physically. She was a bright, witty, and fun-loving person once. Aluminum can come into us from so many evasive sources that it is usually hard to track. She actually worked where it was refined. Also, no one else in her family has developed Alzheimer's. I read somewhere once that the aluminum is not toxic or as toxic unless combined with an acid. My mother was also a very heavy coffee drinker.... She lives in a nursing home and still gets along pretty well physically, but she just doesn't know her own children and grandchildren." That's the end of the quote. The letter was written to an American doctor who has done a lot of research into the subject.

Now going back to what I said at the beginning - I said that, for us, the word ORGANIC means **health giving, and completely free from all synthetic pesticides etc.**. If that is accepted, then there is no such thing as ORGANIC COFFEE, because it's **not** health giving, even if it is grown without synthetic pesticides etc.. And that principle, that it should be health giving, can be applied to other items which are now accepted as standard organic produce, such as tea for instance. Please think about that.

Let me also comment on the word "natural". As it is used by the food industry, including the health food industry, "natural" means nothing more than the fact it's not a man-made item. If, for example, you go into a health food shop and see a box marked "natural raisins" it definitely does NOT assure you the raisins have been grown organically. Make sure you see certification from one of the organic bodies on the box. The general rule is: If something isn't stamped ORGANIC you can be pretty sure it ISN'T organic! There are many small growers who have never registered

with any organic body, but if you are buying from someone like that be certain they do not use any synthetic pesticides etc., and that their crops are grown on ground which has not previously been sprayed.

One of the hardest jobs I have with people who come to me for treatment is to get them to see that, when I prescribe an organic diet, I mean a **100% organic diet**. I have stressed that point in each of the first three issues of the magazine. I also have a handout with the title **BASIC GUIDES FOR HEALTHY LIVING**. The first guide says "Use **ALL** organic foods. It makes no sense to add more poisons to your body, when it is trying to eliminate the poisons it already contains." One of the standard excuses I hear is that a person couldn't get some food that he or she particularly likes, so, just this once, they bought the sprayed supermarket produce. When a person is on the road to recovery from illnesses like chemical sensitivities, their body is very quick to react to such insulting substances! One man told me recently that he had been feeling much better, so he allowed himself the luxury of one piece of shop cake. I don't think he will do it again, because he told me it made him feel ill for several days. Now that incident tells us clearly two things. One, the chemicals that are used on and in our food today are **very** powerful - and the government regulations regarding the Maximum Residue Limits (MRL), which are the legal limits of pesticide residue which are allowed in a food, go up and down like yo-yos. I'll take peanuts as an example, because they are used in many food products. In 1989 it was found that Chinese peanuts sometimes contained 20 to 100 times more residue of a specific organochloride insecticide (BHC) than Australian peanuts. Between 1989 and 1991 the MRL were variously set at 0.05ppm, 0.01, 0.02, and finally, in 1991, at 0.1ppm, a five-fold increase on the last figure which is mind boggling, to say the least. That particular insecticide has now been banned for use on Australian crops. This should tell you that the legal limit from the start should have been ZERO!

Now the second thing that the story

of the man who was ill from eating just the one piece of cake tells us is very interesting. Many of you reading this will have what are called "masked allergies". Your body has adapted to having chemicals introduced into it through certain foods, or drinks, and the actual withdrawal of those would make you feel ill. That may sound strange, but let me give you an example. I have a friend who is a coffee addict. He is convinced that all those multiple cups of coffee he has through the day are making him alert and clear-headed. If that coffee was to be withheld, what would happen? He would have a real downer, and a splitting headache for possibly a week. Reintroduce the coffee, and his headache would go, and he would feel great again, making him think that after all, coffee really is a good thing. Is the coffee doing him good? No, it's doing him harm, but his body has adapted to it. Please think back to the 10 side-effects of coffee I gave earlier. I would say that about three-quarters of you who are reading this would have masked allergies. Why? Because I believe most of you will be eating **SOME** food that contains harmful chemicals.

Now briefly, just a mention of Genetic Engineering (GE). Already shipments of GE soybeans are in the hands of food manufacturers in Australia, as well as in Europe. April 21 to 26 has been set aside for a global protest, and action is planned for several Australian centres. For more details please contact us, or Bob Phelps, Director, Australian GeneEthics Network c/- ACF 340 Gore St Fitzroy, 3065. Tel:(03) 9416 2222 Fax: (03) 9416 0767.

Soybeans are used in 60-65% of processed foods, including, of course, infant foods. There is no way of telling whether GE beans are in what you buy, because there is no legal obligation to give that information. There is, however, one safeguard you can take, and that is, simply, to buy ORGANIC produce. No organic body will allow Genetically Engineered foods, either in organic production or handling systems. So there is your safeguard once again. Go Organic!

Postscript! The Festival stall selling organic cereal coffee had such a rush that they sold right out of it!

Asparagus

Prepare your bed before you buy the crowns to plant late Winter - early Spring. Since this is a perennial which can last for up to 20 years it is well worth the effort of establishing properly. It needs good drainage and can be planted very successfully in a raised bed. It likes compost and well rotted manure. Seaweed is an excellent mulch.

The crowns are planted in a trench, but with the roots straddling a ridge. Cover so dormant shoots are about 4cm below surface.

Do not harvest spears the first year, and only harvest for a few weeks the second year. Remember this is a longterm investment!

Broad Beans

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

Kohlrabi

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

Lettuce

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

Onions

Mid season varieties are often sown late Autumn early Winter and longkeeping varieties in Winter.

WINTER VEGETABLE PLANTING GUIDE

	JUN	JUL	AUG
Asparagus		T	ST
Broad Beans	S		
Kohlrabi			S
Lettuce			S
Onions*	ST	S	S
Peas			S
Rhubarb			T
Silverbeet			S
Spinach			S

S = Seed Sowing

T = Transplanting

NB This table is a guide only, please observe the seasonal weather patterns before deciding when to plant, as there will often be distinct differences in weather from one year to the next. The microclimate of your garden will also influence the times when you plant.

OTHER POSSIBILITIES

Growers may wish to start a number of crops in late winter rather than early Spring if the winter is mild or if they have a sheltered garden bed. Such crops include Artichokes (Globe and Jerusalem), Beetroot, Cabbage, Carrots, Potatoes and Radish.

Frost-sensitive vegetables such as Capsicum, Eggplant and Tomatoes can be started early in August but may need a heated glasshouse or warm spot to germinate and will almost certainly need protection when planted out.

Don't forget the soft fruits!

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

strawberries: plant certified stock or propagate from runners (not from plants more than 2 years old however) in a soil enriched with compost or well rotted manure. On old plants remove the old leaves and burn or throw them in the garbage in case they are infected with a virus.

Berries:

raspberries, youngberries etc can be planted and old canes removed. Remember these bear fruit on canes grown in the previous year only.

Currants: These are easy bushes to grow in Canberra as they withstand very cold weather and don't mind heavy clay soil. They produce a fruit rarely available commercially. They need to be pruned in winter to remove dead wood and allow for good air circulation.

Gooseberries: Like similar conditions to currants.

However, the timing of mid or late season varieties is well worth experimenting with by making successive plantings to determine the best time in your specific locality.

Peas

The yield from peas planted in August could be diminished if there are severe late frosts affecting the blossom.

Rhubarb

This is a perennial, but plants generally only produce well for a few years, and then fresh plants need to be started from subdivided crowns planted late winter or early spring.

It is very hardy, but it is a gross feeder.



Organic TuckerBox



SIMPLE SOUPS

With winter just around the corner (at least here in Tasmania) we can start thinking about a nice bowl of hot soup.

The Oxford Dictionary defines soup as a liquid food. We would add that soup made from healthy wholesome

ingredients is very nutritious. However, we would like to add a note of caution for those who might be soup addicts!

To eat food that has a high liquid content on a daily basis is not a good practice. The digestive juices

are diluted and cannot do a thorough job of digesting the food. So, when making soup, make sure it is thick enough to chew!

The following recipes are family favourites, and are also quick and easy to make.

PEA SOUP

- 2 cups of cooked marrowfat peas
- 1 egg plant, cut into half inch squares
- 2 cups of diced pumpkin
- Sea salt
- 4 cups of water

METHOD

Cook the egg plant and pumpkin in 2 cups of water until tender.
Blend peas and salt in the remaining 2 cups of water., then add to the cooked egg plant and pumpkin.
Heat and serve.



Have you ever forgotten to pick your own zucchinis for a day or two, then found to your horror that, instead of

those small succulent delicacies, you have an assortment of oversized zucchinis resembling stone-

age clubs? Don't despair, all is not lost! The following recipe is one way of using those large zucchinis.

ZUCCHINI SOUP

- 2 cups of grated zucchinis
- One and a half cups of water
- 1 cup of soy milk
- Sea salt to taste.

Method

Bring to boil, zucchinis, water and salt.
Simmer for about 15 minutes.
Add the soy milk and heat for another 5 minutes.

Sprinkle with finely chopped raw cabbage, tomato and onion, or just eat with home-made bread rolls, spread with sesame butter.



PUMPKIN SOUP

- 4 medium sized potatoes, chopped
- Half a medium pumpkin, chopped
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 1 teaspoon of sea salt
- 6 cups of water.

Method

Boil the onions in 2 cups of the water until cooked.
Add all other ingredients and cook until the potatoes and pumpkin are tender.
Cool slightly, then blend until smooth.
Serve with croutons (see below).



LETTUCE SOUP

- 1 lettuce, chopped
- 2 cups of peas
- 2 large potatoes, chopped
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 3 cups of water
- Add sea salt to taste

Method

Cook all ingredients for 15 minutes.
Cool slightly and blend.
Serve.



CROUTONS

Put several thin slices of home-made bread on oven rack and bake until thoroughly dry (do not brown).
Remove them from the oven and rub

fresh garlic over the surface.
Return to a moderate oven and bake for approx. 10 minutes.
Serve with any soup.

Method:
Cook all ingredients for 15 minutes.
Cool slightly and blend.
Serve.

These recipes are from the book *Organic Tuckerbox*, which will be available later this year.
Every ingredient used is 100% organic

I would like to say a big 'thank you' to all those who
have helped me to produce my first
COGS QUARTERLY - my heartfelt gratitude

Joan Cordeaux - Editor

COGS NOTICEBOARD

NEXT MEETING: Tuesday, 27th May, 1997 at 7.30 pm, Room 4, Griffin
Centre, Civic.

The Library, book sales and produce table will be available. Join us after
the Guest Speaker's talk for a lovely cup of herbal tea/cake.

*****EVERYONE WELCOME*****

Guest Speaker:
Peter Waterhouse on "Genetic Engineering on
vegetable crops"

Next Committee Meeting: Tuesday, 20th May, 1997 at the Environment
Centre, Civic.

We would like to thank our last Guest
Speaker - Alwynne Garden who talked
*****: about 'Herbs' which was most interesting
- report in next issue.
(Editor)

**DIARY DATE - JUNE MEETING - Guest Speaker on 24th June will be
Leanne Burton on "Wonderful Worms". Join us if you can.**

SHADES OF PATRICK

Once upon a time there was a stock and station agent who arrived at a farm and was met at the gate by a pig with a wooden leg, which escorted him to the homestead. Somewhat surprised, he asked the farmer why the pig had a wooden leg.

"Great pig, that one, GREAT pig!" replied the farmer. "Last year when we had bushfires, the fire reached the house while we were out, but the pig got the dam pump going and hosed the house down, and saved everything we've got."

"But how does it come to have a wooden leg?"

"Well, I'll tell you, last Christmas one of the kids fell in the dam, but the pig pulled him out and gave him snout-to-mouth resuscitation - saved his life. GREAT pig!"

"But the wooden leg....?"

"Oh, it's interesting, a couple of months back that pig surprised a burglar in the house. Bailed him up, tied him to a chair, and called the police. Better than insurance, that pig!"

"But how does it come to have a wooden leg?"

"Well, cripes," said the farmer, "if a pig's that good, you wouldn't want to eat it all at once, would ya?"

REMINDER:

Xeriscape Garden
two day working bee on
21st and 22nd June
from 9.30am to 3.00pm.

give our garden a name.