

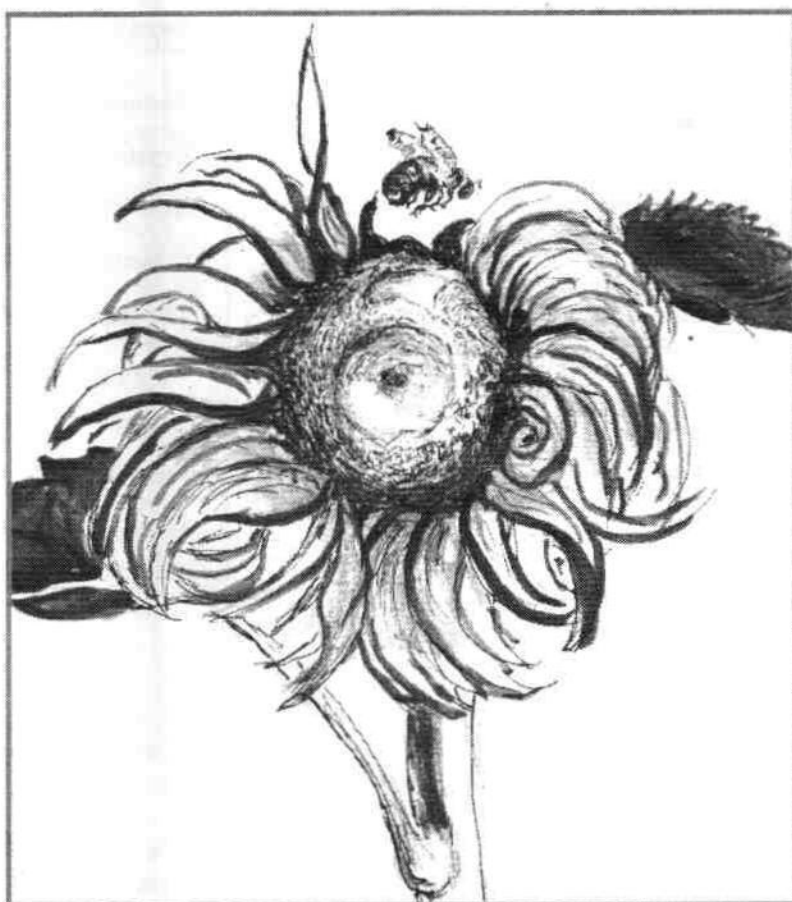


# COGS

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# QUARTERLY

**ORGANIC GROWING  
IN THE CANBERRA REGION**



**VOL. 7 NO. 1**

**AUTUMN 1999**

# COGS QUARTERLY

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Contact Margaret or John Allen

The *COGS Quarterly* is a unique medium for reaching people in the Canberra region who have an interest in organic food, gardening and general environmental issues. Our circulation is currently 500.

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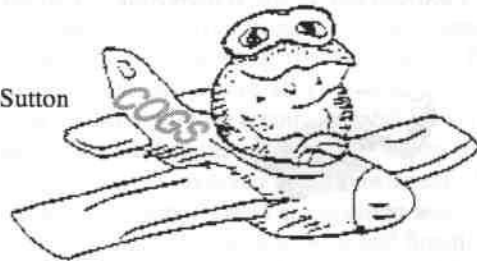
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### **REMINDER**

Monthly meetings are held on the 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of each month (except December and January).  
Our meetings are held at 7:30 pm in Room 4 at the Griffin Centre in Civic.

**~ VISITORS WELCOME ~**

## FROM THE EDITOR



Hello readers.

I hope you all had a wonderful holiday season, I know that I certainly did. In fact I feel like I'm double the person I was last year!! Here is the first verse of a ditty which I heard recently that really seems to apply to me.

*Twas the month after Christmas, and all through the house  
nothing would fit me, not even a blouse.  
The mince pies I'd nibbled, the puddings I'd taste  
at the holiday parties, had all gone to my waist.*

So now it is time to return to eating healthy food from all the lovely produce that all organic gardeners should be reaping in from now on for the next few months.

This edition of the magazine features the return of our Rural Correspondent - David Odell, who brings us up to date with all the latest events down on the farm. Also an article on the sugar substitute plant Stevia, plus Phil Moore relates his experience at the Hippocrates Health Centre. We continue with the Genetic Engineering News and much much more.



Margaret

Dear Editor

This may be of interest to COG members.

Gardening can make one feel stiff, so can running. One of my running colleagues noted that taking magnesium supplements stopped him getting cramp. I said that I rarely cramped these days, and on reading a naturopathic leaflet found that the most concentrated source of natural magnesium is in brazil nuts (of which I eat a lot). I tried a test of not eating the nuts for a week - result was cramps. After 3 days of eating 5 to 6 nuts per day cramps vanished again.

Scientific enough for me!

Martin Butterfield

### PAY TWO YEARS SUBSCRIPTION & SAVE

You can now pay two years subscription and save \$5 (\$3 concession rate).

For example: a new member can join COGS for two years for \$40 (\$24 concession rate); an existing member can renew for two years for \$35 (\$21 concession rate).

### NEW FEES FOR COGS CONCESSION MEMBERS

COGS concession members - please note that your annual subscription is now \$12.00.

For more information please refer to an article in Summer 1998 *COGS Quarterly*, or contact the Membership Secretary.

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Hello and Welcome to everyone! Here's hoping that Christmas was an enjoyable event in your home. It is always a great time of year to spend with family and to catch up with friends. In our house it is getting to be a bigger event every year, but the kids really enjoy it. This year I had two weeks off and took the boys fishing, camping and swimming. I then managed to catch up on some long unattended gardening requirements.

November was a busy month for COGS, with the Horticultural Fair being held at the start of the month. Many thanks go to all the people who volunteered their help at the Fair. It was a very successful weekend for COGS as we were able to talk to a variety of people who were interested in organic growing and organic produce.

We are getting quite a following at our demonstration garden, with people coming along to see how the garden is going and asking questions about problems they may have in their own garden. This is what *COGS BACKYARD* was set up for, a place to meet people and to show them the right way of achieving their goals and objectives. When we are able to do this, it feels great giving something back into the community.

Our November meeting was held in conjunction with a BBQ at *COGS BACKYARD*. This was well attended by COGS members and members of Permaculture ACT (PACT). The PACT display generated a lot of interest. It was great seeing so many families along with their kids, the only regret I have is that I didn't get enough time to get around and have a chat to everyone. Thanks to everyone who helped to make that day a success.

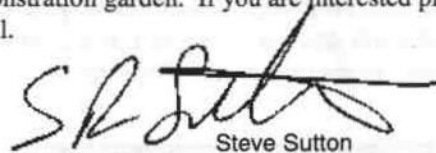
At the November Committee meeting we discussed the requirements for guest speakers for our monthly meetings in 1999 and we are now working on finding knowledgeable people to do these talks. They will be on Herbs, Worms, Permaculture, Products to use in the garden, the order of these talks depending on who we can get to talk and their availability. The February meeting will be harvest night so bring along something you have grown to show and tell us how you achieved this; or bring along something that has not quite worked out and we can put our heads together to work

out why. March is the AGM. The April meeting will be titled "The Bright Future" and we will be asking people to come along and let us know what they see as the way to go in the Organic Industry. We would like to have all sectors represented from the growers, wholesalers, retailers and consumers. It will be your chance to have a say and for us as a group to talk about the Organic Industry as a whole. If you would like to register to talk please give me a call.

With the Annual General Meeting being held in March, I urge everyone to consider putting your names forward for the committee. We have so many things to achieve, but we need to have all positions filled before we even attempt half of them. It would be great to have a couple of members doing for example the Treasurer/Membership secretary's job so that the work-load can be distributed evenly. If you would like to help out but are not confident about the technology, complexity, or amount of time involved, experienced committee members will be happy to assist so that you can become involved at your own pace. Doing some of this voluntary work is an excellent way of learning about various administrative and technical functions, so you would get benefits apart from the satisfaction of helping COGS to build up a good skill base. COGS has modern computer systems to simplify the work.

I would also like to change the way we are looking after *COGS BACKYARD* and would appreciate any feedback on this. At present the work is being done by a sub-committee of John Ross, Margaret Allen, Conrad Van Hest and myself, with help from a couple of volunteers every now and again. The above mentioned people are already doing other jobs for COGS so I would like to gather a new group of members to run our demonstration garden. If you are interested please give me a call.



  
Steve Sutton

### COGS QUARTERLY PACKAGING VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Inside the front cover is a list of people who helped out at the last "Quarterly night" - that is folding & taping the magazine, adding inserts & sticking on labels. The more people there are, the quicker this job is done.

This is done at the Environment Centre. It is a fun night and an excellent opportunity to talk about gardening!

If you can volunteer your services for an hour or so for the next session please contact Margaret Allen

### New Library Items

*Altered Genes - Reconstructing Nature: The Debate*  
(see review this issue)

*A Child's Organic Garden*  
by Lee Friar & Leigh Bradford - this book was written for children. It is claimed to be an "Australian edition" yet the seasons are still USA. Still a good book.

*Impact of Australian Broadacre Agriculture of Widespread Adoption of Organic Agriculture*  
By Else Wynen

*Natural Farming Australia* By Acres Australia

# STEVIA - SOW A SWEET SUPPLY

by Isabell Shipard, Nambour, Qld.

Often called the miracle plant, or honey leaf, Stevia, a rare plant from South America, will interest gardeners and people wanting the best in natural health. Although the sweetening substance in Stevia is claimed to be 300 times sweeter than sugar, Stevia is calorie free.

Most people love a sweet taste, whether it's in fruits, vegetables, honey, soft drinks, deserts, lollies or chocolates. However, this 'sweet tooth' habit can sometimes be a sign of severe addiction to sugar, which concerns many nutritionists, doctors, and researchers. Statistics show that a high intake of sugar in our daily lives relates to many health problems.

Growing a Stevia plant can provide a practical natural sweetening alternative, that is non-toxic to the body and has no side effects. In fact, Stevia appears to help the body in self-regulating, and the leaves are also antibacterial and antifungal.

Eating Stevia leaves, fresh or dried, is said to nourish the stomach, aid digestion, and provide supportive action to the pancreas, spleen, liver, heart, nerves and immune system.

*Stevia rebaudiana Bertoni* is a member of the *Asteraceae* family, a fast growing perennial bush 60-100 centimetres high. Leaves which are 3-8 centimetres long form in whorls on the upright stems. Small white flowers similar in appearance to heather come in clusters on the tips of the stems in summer and autumn. Stevia thrives in a rich, well-drained soil, and does well in acid soils as low as 4.5 ph.

This unique natural sweetening plant has excellent potential to be developed as a commercial crop in Australia, for use in processed foods, drinks, condiments and diet foods.

For use in the kitchen the large leaves can be plucked, or tip stems nipped off, and used fresh or dried, or made into essence. Stevia can be used to sweeten tea and coffee or other beverages such as smoothies. Many recipes that use sugar can be adapted to utilise Stevia. Try Stevia in biscuits, muffins, and slices, mayonnaise, sauces, pickles and dips, health, diabetic and diet foods, and stewed fruit (ideal with tart apples, plums or rhubarb). Chewing a fresh or dried leaf

has been found helpful to curb the cravings for sweet or rich foods and reduce the desire for tobacco or alcohol.

Another practical use for Stevia is as a face-mask, found to be most beneficial for blackheads and oily skin, acne and rashes, itchy and scaly skin. Leaves are mixed with kaolin clay and water

to make a thick paste and applied to the face. The clay has a drawing suction-like action as it dries. The Stevia has a tightening and softening action, clearing blemishes and smoothing wrinkles; and if you dare to look in the mirror at your weird green face as the clay is drying, it is sure to make you laugh, thus stimulating endorphins, the 'happy hormones' valued for rejuvenation and longevity.

Stevia has so many useful applications and health benefits for every family, a most practical plant providing natural sweetening for every home.

If you would like more information, phone Isabell Shipard on (07) 5441 1101. If you would like to taste a Stevia sample and receive a research fact sheet on Stevia, send a stamped addressed envelope to:

Shipards Herb Farm, Box 66, Nambour, 4560.

If you would like to receive The Herb Farm Catalogue with an extensive range of culinary and medicinal herbs, spices, vegetables, exotic fruits, rare nutritious edibles, non-hybrid seeds, include 11 x 45 cent stamps.

*Margaret and I obtained two Stevia plants and they are growing well in pots on our back porch. The plants may go dormant during a cold winter unless protected, so they are best grown in pots so that they can be placed under cover in winter. We will try to propagate some and keep readers informed of progress.*

...John Allen



## WANTED

Caretaker for organic house, garden and chooks on 100 acres, 92 km from Canberra

- ✓ Minimal work required, including egg-collecting and watering.
- ✓ Have a bush experience while we have a holiday!
- ✓ Short or long stays.
- ✓ Times and dates can be arranged to suit both parties.
- ✓ Food and accommodation supplied. *No dogs please.*

Phone Wendy and Julian, Pumpkin Creek (02) 4844 5270

# STEVIA - A NATURAL ALTERNATIVE TO SUGAR & ARTIFICIAL SWEETENING AGENTS

John Allen

**F**or hundreds of years, people in Paraguay and Brazil have used Stevia to sweeten bitter herbal teas. For nearly 20 years, Japanese consumers by the millions have used extracts of the same plant as a safe, natural, non-caloric sweetener. In the 1970s, the Japanese government approved the plant, and food manufacturers began using stevia extracts to sweeten everything from sweet soy sauce and pickles to diet Coke.

Researchers found the extract interesting, resulting in dozens of well-designed studies of its safety, chemistry and stability for use in different food products (*Stevia Leaf - Too Good To Be Legal?* by Rob McCaleb, Herb Research Foundation).

The following information may encourage further investigation by interested readers. **Please note that if you are a diabetic, it is important to work with your health-care practitioner when you change your diet.**

From all accounts, Stevia is a good natural sugar alternative and is a good low-calorie and chemical-free replacement for artificial sweeteners such as Aspartame (Australian Food Additive code 951), Saccharin (954), and Cyclamate (952) products, for diabetics and the general population.

Aspartame comes in products such as NutraSweet, Equal, Spoonful, and Equal-Measure. It is also found in many "sugar-free" and "diet" products, etc. Aspartame can be found in lollies, instant breakfasts, breath mints, cereals, sugar-free chewing gum, cocoa mixes, coffee beverages, frozen desserts, gelatine desserts, juice beverages, laxatives, multivitamins, milk drinks, pharmaceuticals and supplements, milk-shake mixes, soft drinks, tabletop sweeteners, tea beverages, instant teas and coffees, topping mixes, wine coolers, and yogurt.

The manufacturer claims that Aspartame is safe, however a number of independent studies have suggested problems (see the Internet sites [www.holisticmed.com/aspartame/](http://www.holisticmed.com/aspartame/), and [www.tiac.net/users/mgold/aspartame/aspfaq.html](http://www.tiac.net/users/mgold/aspartame/aspfaq.html)).

It was interesting to discover that the G.D. Searle company first produced Aspartame but later sold out to the chemical company Monsanto (Gordon 1987, page 509 of US Senate 1987). Monsanto then created the NutraSweet Company as a subsidiary separate from G.D. Searle.

## ORGANIC INTERNET SITES APPLAUDED

By Margaret Allen

ABC TV's *Gardening Australia* has a quarterly magazine called *The Organic Gardener*. The Summer 1998 edition applauds the web site of COGS and also the site of David & Kay Heaton (COGS members in Brisbane). The magazine stated:

*"Organic gardeners, who are by definition determinedly 'low-tech', have been quick to recognise the value of high tech-computers, modems and the internet-as a way of disseminating and exchanging information. The internet is a rich source of information about organic gardening and farming - and some of the best sites on the world-wide web are based right here in Australia."*

### ... about the COGS Site

*"If you are starting to explore the potential of the web for organic gardening information, you can do no better than start with the Canberra Organic Growers Society. "Indeed, by following the links on this site you are likely to reach many of the best available organic and related sites. It is a particularly well organised site with no messy frames or complex graphics to download, so it works fast."*

### ... about David & Kay Heaton's site

*"... a treasure trove of organic resources, enhanced and personalised by delightful pictures of the Heaton's garden ..."; and "... the Heaton's energy and enthusiasm is infectious and will inspire the laziest gardener".*

David & Kay's site is at [www.powerup.com.au/~dheaton/page4.htm](http://www.powerup.com.au/~dheaton/page4.htm)

*It would be good to see other COGS members put up web sites about their gardens!*

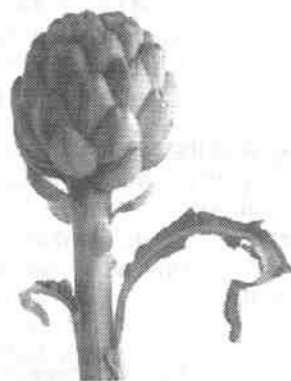
## ARTICHOKES - SOME RECIPES

Wendy Rose, November 1998

### Plain steamed artichokes.

Soak artichoke heads upside-down in a bucket of salted water to remove bugs and dirt (for approx. one hour). Steam heads whole (without cutting any leaves or they will go black). Make a jug of melted butter (or vinaigrette if serving them cold). Put a large bowl on the table for discarded leaves.

Starting from the outside of your artichoke, pull off one leaf at a time and bite the flesh off the bottom, dipping in butter or vinaigrette first. When you reach the hairy section called the choke, scrape this off and discard, then enjoy the best bit - the artichoke heart.



### Artichokes Bolognaise

Boil or steam artichoke heads till cooked (about half an hour). Pull away leaves and choke (reserving flesh from the edible ends of the leaves). Cover the heart with a layer of thick bolognaise sauce sprinkled with mozzarella. Grill till warmed through, or put in oven.

### Fried Artichoke Hearts (Fonds)

Boil or steam artichokes until cooked (when outside leaves come away easily). Make a simple batter with flour/beer/salt and pepper. Take away leaves and chokes and dip hearts in batter. Deep fry.

### Artichoke and prawn salad.

Use cooked artichoke bottoms (hearts) and puree scraped from leaves. Your own favourite mayonnaise. Fresh parsley, tarragon, chives Shelled prawns.

## ORGANIC PRODUCE NOW AT THE JAMISON CENTRE!

The Jamison Fruit Market now stocks a range of  
NASAA certified organic fruit & vegetables.

Call in and see Jim Saunders

Shop 1, Jamison Centre, Bowman Street, Macquarie ACT

Telephone: 6251 2614



## Jamison Fruit Market

## NEW INTERNET SITE FOR COGS

The COGS world wide web site is a successful medium for organic information dissemination and exchange. The original site was associated with a COGS member's personal internet account. The COGS Executive has decided that COGS should have its own internet account so that management of the web site and e-mail coordination tasks can be done by any member who has a computer with a modem. New details are:

E-mail: [cogs@netspeed.com.au](mailto:cogs@netspeed.com.au)

Web site: [www.netspeed.com.au/cogs](http://www.netspeed.com.au/cogs)



# A RETROSPECTIVE PERSPECTIVE AND WISHES FOR 1999

*Your Rural Correspondent, David Odell*



**B**uilding the new house didn't leave much time for farming activities - mainly 'maintenance' jobs - least of all writing about them so now that I'm back as your rural correspondent perhaps I can pick up from where I left off and bring you up-to-date with what's happening 'down on the farm'.

The Spring of '97 was great - if that was to be the predicted El Nino we could do with more of it - as the rains fell regularly and in just the right amounts. But the promise was fickle because the weather turned hot and dry, the grass withered and the water dried up creating a record dry Summer. There were no Autumn rains (culminating in the Bungendore bushfire on Friday 13 March 1998), which meant there was no grass growing for stockfeed over Winter. By the time we did get good soaking rains it was too late and too cold for growth except for a green tinge which could only be called a 'green drought'.

Although we had sufficient dam water we did find it necessary to buy tank water because I had emptied a couple of tanks in order to undertake some necessary repairs to the tank-stand, plug up some leaks and get things in order for the expected dry time. Still circumstances managed to catch me out and these reserve tanks remained empty when we needed them most - such are the joys of living on the land. My passion for water harvesting and building dams has often been the subject of neighbourly 'digs' at this apparent over-indulgence, but it certainly paid off during this time as we had enough stock water for another 12 months of dry weather. During a drought one can usually buy feed (at a price) but it is extremely difficult to maintain stock on bought-in water. My philosophy in building dams has been 'to put in twice as many as I think I'll really need in order to finish up with capacity half as much as I really want' - and I know of many gardens abandoned during that drought. The Spring of '98 also was glorious - even more glorious than before - as it built up on the ground-soaking, dam-filling, grass-growing, life-saving rains which put an end to El Nino but created its own problems of over-indulgence as floods and storms wreaked havoc in some areas. The trees relished these rains as they threw off the dusty foliage of the drought and burst forth with bright new growth and blossoms, creating a havoc of colour which has now settled into the more familiar shades of green. A green that has an added vibrancy and rejuvenation to it. A worrying thought has just crossed my mind - our last soaking rains were in November last year. Apart from some sporadic falls in December we seem to be following the same pattern as before, but this time, with a massive build-up of grass rapidly drying off, it doesn't bode well for the bushfire season.

Something else I have noticed about weather patterns recently is that the breaks in the settled weather occur violently with thunderous 'dumps' of rain, or hail, or wind, or (usually) all together, creating more destruction than benefit. When one asks for an inch of rain one doesn't want it all in one lump!

The early start to the growing season encouraged me back into the garden to tame the jungle that had taken over the well-ordered beds during my distraction on the house. The first priority was to get some seed blocks started so they could be underway while the 'igloo' (a plastic tunnel) was having its beds prepared for tomatoes. Because of our altitude here (860 metres) our potential frost-free growing season is just sufficient to grow tomatoes outdoors - but there are many 'ifs' associated with this. One of the main ones is night-time temperatures which are often too low to keep tomatoes moving until later in the season when one is just as likely to experience a late, or an early, frost which will wipe out production very rapidly and very dishearteningly.

Canberra region will remember the devastating late frost on 27 October which took all the early growth - remembered because it was the date of the COGS meeting at which my tomato plants were bought from the seed table and planted out the next day (and they haven't looked back since). Potatoes are a particular favourite of mine as they are a great staple and wonderfully satisfying. Chemically grown potatoes just cannot compare with one's own organic product. Just experience the difference when cutting them in half. The organic ones have a crispness that doesn't just relate to freshness. As a root crop, chemically grown potatoes take up and retain the chemicals used by the producer. Then these chemicals follow the food chain and are stored in the body of the consumer until such time as the auto-immune system is overwhelmed and unwellness or sickness becomes the norm. We enjoyed a few early self-sown Rideaux, not only for their flavour but also for their luminescent redness as they were dug from the ground. These were followed by early planted Pontiacs, also red (but more of them) which were grown under a straw mulch. This method avoids hilling and suppresses weed growth but it is important to make sure adequate moisture penetrates below the mulch as drying-out can take place very quickly and, of course, this affects the size of the tubers and the amount of the crop. Since then I have planted a bag of Kennebecks by more conventional means - a trench to spade depth bottomed by a liberal dressing of organic blood and bone and seed set out a foot apart (using my foot as the measure) and, when emergent, progressively hilled. I was always told that potatoes were 'good' for new ground and while not wishing to debunk a piece of gardening lore I've had many an opportunity to ponder on the meaning of this earthy wisdom and perhaps you can support me in this from your own experience. Leaving aside the 'no dig' method for the moment, new ground is usually dug over before planting and the potato seed, being large and robust, doesn't need a fine tilth to be prepared. Then the natural fertiliser is placed below and to the side in order to benefit the emerging roots and when the shoots appear, progressive hillings not only protect the tubers from greening in the sun but also dislodge and smother the weeds beginning to make their presence

felt. Potatoes need lots of watering, especially up to flowering, but then eased back as the haulms begin drying so to create optimum conditions for growth without causing them to 'cook' if the weather is very hot. With each working of the soil the tilth is improved and when the potatoes are lifted a further working takes place at the same time incorporating residual organic matter and fertiliser.

The advantage in growing potatoes is that one has a crop for one's efforts (instead of just working up a seedbed) and a crop which can be stored over Winter. No wonder they're a staple in the diet and 'good' for the soil!

The hens have moved on to another range as part of their rotation program and their original run has been prepared for pumpkins. Due to the drought this was left very clean but well fertilised by the free-ranging hens. So I chisel ploughed it, cleaned out the roosting shed and used the manure to make hillocks which were then covered with soil and formed into 'turkey-nest' beds large enough to support two pumpkin seedlings which had been started in the largest sized seed blocks. The hollowed out centre of the mound retaining the water to get them started. Eventually I hope to set up an automatic drip system to save the effort of hand watering as later on when the pumpkins develop they will need a lot of water to keep them moving - in the meantime some good soaking rain would be appreciated.

Another crop which has potential, and which seems to suit this area, is garlic. The kilo or so of seed propagated a couple of years ago has now grown into sufficient quantities to contemplate a paddock planting. The only difficulty being that when this was tried previously the white cockatoos delighted in going along the rows, pulling them out, testing the bulb and leaving them to die - but extra garlic plantings will need some further paddock preparation and to a great extent this depends upon the weather.

Foxes have always been a niggling problem here. I declare that we have been looked upon as a larder to be filched as part of the 'rounds' - and while Flora provided some protection by her presence she wasn't really effective so when 'the gamekeeper turned poacher' it was time she was given her marching orders. Thompson was trustworthy with the poultry but didn't like being locked up with them, especially at night, (he knows his place is to be near to me) so after much howling and many great escapes he was relieved of those duties.

After many enquiries the answer seemed to lie with the special breed of guard dog, Maremma, a large white dog used to bonding with flocks and herds, living with them under all conditions, and strong enough to fight off any predator. The bonding takes place from six weeks of age and requires a great deal of patience. Because this breed doesn't really mature until about two years of age they still act like playful puppies when they are really quite large and this can be quite intimidating to poultry when they are played with and slobbered over. They don't actually try to kill the stock but heart failure is just as effective. We bought two puppies, Rex and Bella, and tried them both with the

hens and found that they have different personalities and aptitudes. Bella could be trusted with her hens (but didn't like intruders) and could be relied upon not to eat the eggs while Rex failed on both of those counts. After a short stint of exclusion, Rex was introduced to the geese, the theory being that nesting geese were aggressive enough to look after themselves. This worked out reasonably well after he learnt not to retrieve the eggs from the empty nests.

The geese were left to their own devices in making up their breeding pairs and the ones who missed out became honorary aunts/uncles as protectors to the goslings when they hatched. By this means about twenty goslings were reared which will give a foundation for some future breeding stock as their parents are getting on in years and previously hadn't managed to breed enough for their replacement. Now that the dogs are almost two years old we hope that a lot of the teething troubles are over and that we'll have enough geese to process from this coming hatching.

And what are your wishes for the coming year? After much thought and discussion we have decided to rationalise some of the farming activities in order to concentrate more on the garden and its extension to commercial crops with the sheep and geese incorporated into this area as fringe 'mowers and manurers'. I will still be rearing started chickens during the Spring but only for those who place firm orders - so if you require chickens please let me know as soon as possible and I can let you know the details.

The Jersey cows are still favourites of mine but I have drastically reduced numbers so that they are more manageable and do not put so much pressure on the land. Even though I'm very fond of pigs as personalities, we have come to the practical decision that pigs are only profitable as converters of waste and to be regularly buying feed for them isn't very cost efficient, so they have to go. A shame really as little children rarely get the opportunity to see piglets close up - they want to call them all 'Babe' - and seem a bit distressed to associate them with bacon and ham. But that is the practicality of farming and sentiment seems to be giving way to economic rationalism.

All the best for the coming year.

.. David

## HALL RURAL CENTRE

You can purchase NASAA approved  
fertilisers

**Rock Phosphate (Jordanian) 50kg**

\$19.85 per bag,

**COF 50kg for \$27.50**

plus all your other gardening requirements  
from Richard and his friendly staff, call in  
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# SPELT

By John Allen

*I have noticed that the grain called spelt is becoming available in organic outlets in Canberra. I found out that this grain is a distant cousin of the wheat family but is suitable replacement (under medical supervision) for people who have a wheat allergy. Margaret and I have a bread-making machine, so we tried using spelt instead of wheat flour, and the resulting bread was very nice - it did not rise quite as much as the wheat bread but had a more pleasant taste than rye, which is another wheat alternative.*

*The following information was summarised from www.purityfoods.com. I also have a more detailed scientific document available called "Excerpt from Alternative Wheat Cereals as Food Grain Spelt Origin and Taxonomy" available. See "COGS Information Papers" for details.*

Popular in Europe for centuries, Spelt is used in a wide variety of cereals, pastas, crackers, baked goods, and beers. The ancient Romans knew it as "farrum", Italians now call it "farro"; today's Germans know it as "dinkel." Spelt has been used successfully, under physicians' supervision, as a wheat substitute for people who have wheat allergies. Once commonly grown in North America, Spelt was replaced at the beginning of this century by modern wheat varieties, which are more suited to the high volume production techniques currently used. Spelt's flavourful, "nutty" taste has proven to be an attractive alternative to the common varieties of wheat, so much so that spelt production has increased significantly in less than a decade.

## Spelt vs Wheat

While many people have compared Spelt to commercial strains of wheat, it is markedly different. All grains of this family are derived from grasses, some, such as Spelt, are closer to the earliest cultivated crops in the western world. Spelt's origins can be traced back to approximately 5,000 BC in the area now known as Iran. Spelt (*Triticum spelta*) is a distant cousin to modern wheat (*Triticum aestivum*). Perhaps a better description would be that spelt is a great uncle of modern wheat. Modern wheat varieties have been bred to be easier to grow and harvest, to increase yield, as

well as to have a high gluten content for the production of high-volume commercial baked goods. Spelt, on the other hand, has retained much of its original character. It retains a sturdy husk or hull which remains with the kernel, as opposed to modern wheat varieties, which have been bred to lose their husks when harvested (free threshing). This hull protects the Spelt grain from pollutants and insects. Furthermore, unlike other grains, spelt is not normally treated with pesticides or other chemicals. Spelt is stored and shipped with its protective hull intact; it is separated just before being milled into flour. Leaving the husk on the grain not only protects the kernel, but enhances the retention of the nutrients in the kernel and improves freshness.

## Nutrition Value

Spelt's uniqueness is also derived from its genetic make-up and nutrition profile. Spelt has high water solubility, so the nutrients are easily absorbed by the body. Spelt contains special carbohydrates (Mucopolysaccharides) which are an important factor in blood clotting and stimulating the body's immune system. It is also a superb fibre resource and has large amounts of B complex vitamins. Total protein content is from 10 to 25% greater than the common varieties of commercial wheat. Athletes who want to carbohydrate-load before competition will find that Spelt delivers a high level of "complex carbs" for their nutritional needs. Endurance athletes are finding the benefits of additional energy and vitality with the addition of spelt products to their diet.

One of the most beneficial differences between spelt and wheat is the fact that many wheat and gluten-sensitive individuals have been able to include Spelt based foods in their diets. Spelt can be substituted for whole wheat in breads, pasta, cookies, crackers, and cakes as well as muffins, pancakes and waffles.

*We strongly suggest you speak to your doctor on this issue if you have any questions. This is especially true for anyone with celiac, as there are some questions with regards to the gluten intolerance. This may vary greatly from individual to individual.*

## FRENCH SUPERMARKET SUPPORTS ORGANIC

*IFOAM - Ecology and Farming, May 1998*

Carrefour, a leading French supermarket chain, has developed an initiative to source organic products and market them under its own label, Carrefour Bio. To ensure adequate supply, Carrefour will support the development of 30 small organic farms (each less than 15 hectares) and offer 200 contracts to young farmers and or the unemployed. Carrefour is collaborating on the project with three banks, which are responsible for the development of business plans, financing the enterprise and recruiting farmers. The initiative was developed in response to consumer research indicating demand for organic produce and was inspired by organic gardener and "president-directeur general" Daniel Bernard. The French supermarket giant launched the initiative along with a pledge to support small-scale, more humane and sustainable agriculture.

*Source: LABELS: Linking Consumers and Producers - Vol. 2, Number 8, February 13, 1998.*

*Just what we need in Australia!*

*.. Ed.*

# THE ORGANIC PATCH

*Rosemary Scott and Deb Stevens*

"The Organic Patch" evolved from a vision I had to own an "alternative" business. I have a great concern regarding the power the huge multinational chain stores are gaining over the little consumer, and the lack of organic produce. I decided in January 1998 to revolt. Here it is December, and with the wholehearted support of my family, I have survived! Despite all the typical struggles of small business, it has been a joy to go to work each day. New produce to track down, interesting people to chat to - no two days are ever the same. The business is not about huge financial rewards, it's about working in an industry I love and believe in.

I had worked as a Horticulturist for many years and I was only too aware of chemical usage in both domestic and commercial situations. I felt there was a need for a shop which catered for the many facets of 'Organic' methodology. I wanted a shop that offered a garden design and advisory service, supplied chemical free products, and sold Organic Food.

Friends looked bemused as I explained my "flexible" business plan, and muttered comments like "Why start a business in this economic climate? She must be having a mid life crisis!"

Queanbeyan residents had lost access to a local health food store, and buying organic food meant a trip to Griffith or Fyshwick. Both centres provided a great service, but it is not always convenient when you just want to pick a few extra items.

My little business began to grow and in August I moved into an old 'corner store'. With extra floor space and full cool room facilities I have been able to expand the lines.

You can buy organic groceries, food in bulk, fresh organic fruit and vegetables, organic horticultural products and if required, arrange for a Horticultural consultation. The Butcher shop next door (Peter Lindbeck) sells organic chickens and meat.

## **Stage two of the business had begun. Enter Boldacious Books.**

Hi I'm Deb and a part of my reason for being here, sharing premises with Rosemary, is reflected in what she says about multinationals. More about that later!

After three years operating as a general bookshop in Queanbeyan we made a few big decisions and turned Boldacious Books into a niche market bookshop. We initially called our speciality rural books but in the last twelve months of operating it became evident that sustainability and lifestyle is more appropriate.

Our main subject areas are farming, gardening, craft, self-sufficiency, alternative building and energy, as well as Australia. At the end of November big and exciting things happened and as a result of these we have added health and healthy eating to the list. The exciting thing we did in November was to move from our original shop into the premises where Rosemary has the Organic Patch.

Rosemary and I shared a vision that our two businesses complimented each other and being located together would enrich the shopping experience for our collective customers. Judging from the response of our customers it is already evident after such a short time that we are on the right track.

I am a fierce champion of independent bookshops, small Australian publishers and distributors. During the past few years the overseas book trade has seen the creation of huge multinational companies both publishing and retailing books. There is no doubt that some of the changes flowing on from these monopolies will give great benefit to the consumer. On the other hand choice of books will be limited under the guise of bulk. Lots and lots more books but not necessarily the great books that small Australian publishers do so well, especially in our specialist area.

Since the change to our range of books I have noticed that roughly 90% of what we sell is Australian published. There are still books published overseas that are the best in their fields and I will never give those up. It does excite me to see such tangible proof that Australians want Australian books for Australian conditions. If we can sell more then maybe this will encourage more people to write books on subjects not yet covered in an Australian context.

Believe me; the list of subjects in desperate need of good Australian information and experience is formidable. From alpacas, olives, lavender right through to biodynamics, the market is there for local material.

Anyhow I got a little carried away there, back to business. Boldacious also sells books at field days and agriculture shows as well as selling on the Internet for 18 months ([www.boldacious.com](http://www.boldacious.com)). Please visit our site and give us feedback and constructive criticism. The more feedback we get the better we service our customers. With gardening and farming books we cover the range from biodynamics and permaculture through to some conventional. I deliberately stock the latter as there is information that all styles of agriculture need. More importantly it allows us to spread the word of sustainability.

*Rosemary and I have great ideas for our little oasis, all aimed at providing a unique and friendly shopping experience. Make sure you come out to visit us sometime at 21 Cooma Road in Queanbeyan.*

## **CORNY TRICK**

A good trick is, once the corn cob has been pollinated (the corn cob tassels have gone brown and you can feel the cob forming) cut the top flower off. This will let the plant concentrate on feeding the cob of corn. The cob should grow larger and sweeter.

*David Heaton*

## SEED SAVERS

www.seedsavers.net

Each *COGS Quarterly* will contain an extract from *The Seed Savers' Handbook* by Michael & Jude Fanton, from the Seed Savers' Network in Byron Bay. This issue looks at broad beans. The handbook can be purchased from COGS for \$20 per copy plus \$2.50 postage. You can order a copy at the monthly meeting or send an order with cheque to COGS.

.. Ed

"Without seed savers' networks, seed exchanges and local seed banks, we gardeners would have lost most of the seeds developed by our ancestors. It is a public scandal that these seeds have now been patented or subject to legal controls. It is also scandalous that large multinational corporations have gained control over our main food plants by seed patenting"

Bill Mollison

*Seed saving is even more important now because traditional varieties are being threatened by the actions of multinational companies involved in genetic engineering.*

... Ed.



## BROAD BEAN LEGUMINOSAE

*Viola fava* - vicia was the name for vetch in Latin and fava for the broad bean itself.

**Origins:** Broad beans have been cultivated since prehistoric times in Europe. They were unearthed in the ancient city of Troy and found in Egyptian tombs and with Bronze Age artefacts in Switzerland. Their exact origin has therefore been hard to determine. It is recorded that the Romans used them as voting tokens and that they reached China by the first century AD. Before the explorers brought the common bean back from the Americas, the only bean that Europeans and Middle Easterners knew was the broad bean. Folk (or primitive) varieties grow in the Sahel, the southern part of the Sahara Desert, in poor agricultural lands.

**Description:** Broad beans are a hardy bush. They are also called Horse Beans, and in northern Africa, where a smaller version is common, Tick Beans.

**Cultivation:** Broad beans respond well to the addition of compost and moderate soil moisture. May to July is the best time for planting in most areas. Prune the tops when the bushes are half grown to encourage branching and try these as a salad green or spinach.

The beans are best planted in double rows or blocks because they support each other. In New Zealand, many experienced gardeners surround their double rows of long-pod types with stakes, fix a rigid rail on top and tie strings around the plants. It makes harvesting easier, considering each plant might have five stalks which often fall over each other. Broad beans can be cut back to the ground after a sub-tropical winter and be expected to shoot again. Saving the Seed: Broad beans are partly self pollinated and partly cross-pollinated. Several hundred metres is a fair isolation distance to ensure purity if you happen to be growing more than one variety.

The first pods to form are best for seeds. They are to be found at the base and are larger than subsequent pods. Allow the pods to dry on the bush and choose those from the most vigorous individual plants. Such refined steps cannot be taken on a large scale where a whole field is combine-harvested and threshed.

Shell out the beans and dry on a rack until a bite on the seed will produce only a little mark. Thresh and store in a loose knit bag. The bean seeds will not need any winnowing.

**Storage:** Seed can last for up to ten years but only if kept in conditions with low humidity and constant temperature. Properly dried beans stored in an airtight jar and put away in a cool spot for four years have a ninety percent rate of germination. But only half of them would germinate if kept at room temperature. There are 1000 seeds to the kilogram.

**Usage:** Broad beans are not always seen for sale as a fresh vegetable, so growing them at home is the way to ensure you have this taste sensation. They can be picked at different stages of growth to give different dishes. The dry beans ferment vigorously to a very palatable wine. A paste of one or two powdered dry beans and water left to ferment for a day or two is a traditional starter for sourdough bread.

A tea made with the dried flowers will work for some types of migraines. In France, two powdered dried beans are taken with wine on an empty stomach to dissolve stones in the urinary tract. A small percentage of people with Mediterranean ancestry have a genetic inability to digest fava beans and become ill by eating them.

**On the Lookout:** For colder areas, there are the long-podded types with up to eight beans in a pod. They are hardy and are ready for planting from early to late autumn. Examples are Early Long Pod, Polar, Acquadulce and Longfellow which produce up to ten beans in a pod.

Red Epicure is grown for its chestnut flavour and colour and is hardy and heavy cropping. The Windsor or Broad-Pod beans will not survive winter in frosty areas but will die back and shoot from the roots in spring. Their pods have up to five beans in them and they have a pronounced flavour. The dry seeds of Green Windsor are pale green and hold their colour when cooked.

Scarlet Cambridge has a deep burgundy-coloured bean. The Sutton is a bush with many branches and white-seeded pods that mature early. Dwarf broad beans are useful for windy areas: Cole's Early Dwarf is one of the many good English types and bears all its pods just above ground level.

The Geneflow Journal (1989) mentions that cultivars collected in Sicily, Portugal, and Cyprus show a great diversity of type and landrace. Wide variation was evident in respect of the size and shape of the seeds as well as the earliness of the crop.

# SO YOU THINK YOU KNOW SOURDOUGH?

John Castley

It should come as no surprise to readers of COGS Quarterly that with a few notable exceptions, bread sold as "sourdough" in Canberra is little more than your run of the mill yeasted dough with the addition of something sour to make it fit the stereotype (did you know that a genuine sourdough doesn't even need to be sour?). In writing this article, I found myself torn between the conflicting goals of popularising and demystifying sourdough baking (after all, I'd like more people to share the enjoyment) and conveying the high degree of skill, intuition and knowledge required to make good sourdough bread.

I'm still not sure where I stand on this. I was going to start by saying that there is no right or wrong way to make sourdough bread, and that there are only ways which are truer to established traditions and can stand up to the scrutiny of those with a sensitive palate and a feeling for authenticity and aesthetics. But the fact is that anyone with the right motivation and well-developed intuition can (and has) developed their own authentic tradition. Secondly, there definitely are wrong ways of making an authentic sourdough bread. Lack of hygiene and a poor understanding of the sourdough process can lead to bread which smells and tastes "off". But rather than rant about this, I will try to describe for you the characteristics of the real thing.

Let's start with some categories. Drawing from discussions with John Downes, widely recognised as Australia's high priest of sourdough, I propose three categories of leavened bread: straight yeasted bread, bread we might call complex fermented yeast bread and, finally, sourdough bread.

Straight yeasted bread is simply bread made using commercial yeast, a single strain of the ubiquitous *saccharomyces cerevisii* which was originally used for brewing and which is now used in 99% of all yeasted breads and pastries. Straight yeasted bread generally undergoes a short fermentation, for today's factory bread about one to one and a half hours.

Complex fermented yeast bread involves the use of very small quantities of commercial yeast, coupled with long slow fermentation. This allows the dough to develop complex flavours and, in some cases, wild yeasts and bacteria. Breads in this category include those from the Italian and French traditions which make use of yeast "sponges" risen over night. It also includes the plethora of potato and other non grain-based leavens common in European households until the last century. European traditions still value these breads and a few boutique bakeries in Australia make them well.

Sourdough bread can be distinguished from its cousins by the following

1. It is made from a starter culture (a leaven) containing a range of bacteria, yeasts and moulds which form a complex and self-regulating ecosystem. I say self-regulating because, properly tended, a leaven maintains a pH level which nurtures the growth of beneficial agents but excludes pathogens which could be injurious to health. John Downes points out that the handful of bacteria strains increasingly used to treat digestive problems are the very bacteria which form the core of any good sourdough culture. Most of these are variants of *lactobacillus* (originally a yogurt culture) and include *lactobacillus bulgaricus*, *lactobacillus casei*, *lactobacillus plantarum* and others. The difference is that, instead of growing in a medium of milk, they grow in a medium of flour and water.

2. A sourdough culture actually "digests" the dough. Anyone who has made a dough with a genuine sourdough leaven will know that, after about 24 hours, it will begin to dissolve into a liquid mush.

This is because the protein and complex carbohydrates in the dough are being digested by the army of bacteria, yeasts and moulds in the leaven. Contrast this to a complex fermented yeast bread or a yeasted bread, where the yeast acts only on the sugars and simpler carbohydrates in the dough, exhausting itself within a relatively short period and collapsing in a rubbery heap. The upshot of this, some claim, is that sourdough does much of the digesting for us, releasing nutrients that would remain "locked" within a yeasted dough. Another upshot is that the complex microbiological interactions in a sourdough create flavours that are simply not possible using only commercial yeast (and certainly not imitable by the addition of a souring agent such as vinegar).

3. A well-made sourdough bread has a complex aroma, normally slightly sour with a clean aroma of grain. It will have a denser texture than most yeasted breads, though a skilled sourdough baker can turn out surprisingly light bread. I do not want to be too prescriptive here. The fact is that there are many authentic sourdough traditions producing breads of varying flavour, texture and appearance. Once you get a feel for the hallmarks of a good sourdough, you pick it no matter which tradition it comes from. Bread made with commercial yeast, on the other hand, has a predictable "yeasty" aroma which most people will recognise - kind of sweet and musty, like you can smell the sugars fermenting.

... Continued next page

## COMPOST TIP

Place composting material in a wire mesh circular frame. After the compost matter settles down you can remove the mesh and start another one, or remove the mesh and reload the compost matter back into the mesh. Do this once a week and after six weeks you should have good garden compost.

David Heaton



Continued from previous page ...

4. A **well-made** sourdough bread normally has a more robust crust, especially if baked on the floor of a traditional bakers oven. Yeasted breads tend to have a more brittle crust (which can be delightful - don't get me wrong).

5. Finally, I'll go out on a limb, totally unqualified to make such assertions. A **well-made** sourdough bread is highly nutritious. You eat it, you digest it, you feel good.

You'll notice I have emboldened the term "well-made", and I do this pointedly. My friends call me a food fascist and I mostly plead guilty. A badly-made sourdough is an abomination, worthy of forgiveness but rarely of eating. A well-made sourdough in Australia is a very rare thing, so if you find it, tell your friends (and me!).

There is more and more good information out there on sourdough - if you're a netizen, check out the Internet news group [rec.food.sourdough](mailto:rec.food.sourdough) for some really great discussion and advice. Next issue (if they'll let me) I will do a comprehensive review of books on sourdough. In the interim, if you're interested in sourdough and want more information, email me at [castley@dynamite.com.au](mailto:castley@dynamite.com.au) or leave a message with John Needham at Mountain Creek Wholefoods (see advertisement on page 8). We'll do our best to answer your question or point you in the right direction.

Books currently in stock at Mountain Creek which would be worth reading are:

**The Natural Tucker Bread Book**

John Downes, 1983  
Soft cover/128 pages  
\$19.95?

*The first of it's kind in Australia and, as such, a piece of history. Good information, though some fundamental omissions.*

**Laurel's Kitchen Bread Book**

Laurel Robertson, 1984  
Soft cover/447pp  
\$22.95

An excellent book on baking in general. Informative section on Flemish desem bread, an established sourdough tradition.

**World Sourdoughs from Antiquity**

Ed Wood  
1996  
Soft cover/185pp  
\$29.95

A very worthwhile reference book explaining sourdough from a microbiological perspective. Occasionally spurious in his theories on the origins of baking, Ed Wood does have great information for those with a scientific mind. A bit disappointing on the recipe front.

More reviews next time.....

Note: Terminology has been used loosely. For those with an eye to detail, I use sourdough culture, leaven and starter culture interchangeably. Basically, I am referring to a batter of flour (in my case freshly ground organic wheat) which has been inoculated with some of the "mother", or mature culture, from a previous leaven. Like yogurt or ginger beer, the culture must be nurtured and fed regularly or it becomes overly acidic, exhausts its food supply and generally goes bad.

## ORGANIC WORKSHOP IN CANBERRA

An important workshop was held on the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> of February in Canberra.

The workshop is an initiative of the Organic Federation of Australia (OFA). The Commonwealth Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (AFFA), in its role of supporting emerging industries, has provided financial support for the Workshop.

The Workshop has provided an opportunity for all stakeholders in the organic industry to raise issues concerning the industry and develop strategies to develop the domestic and export potential of the industry:

Representatives of the Commonwealth and State government departments have had the opportunity to provide an overview of their current activities in the organic area as well as provide information on programs which could be utilised by the industry.

A number of key areas have been identified by the organic industry for discussion in the workshop:

- activities, programs and priorities for State and Commonwealth governments
- increased conversion to organic/biodynamic production systems
- R&D activities, programs and priorities, educational activities and future development
- advisory and extension activities and future development
- export activities and future development
- communication strategies between government and industry

The workshop has provided a unique opportunity for both industry and government to assess where the industry is now and work towards identifying future priorities and strategies to reach the industry goals.

Participants in the Workshop were asked to complete Action Plans for the industry addressing the key areas outlined above. These Action Plans were collated and provided a basis for the Workshop's discussion of industry priorities and strategies.

All costs of the workshop met by the AFFA.

COGS was representative at the workshop. A report on proceedings will be in the Winter edition of the *COGS Quarterly*.  
... John Allen

# THE VALUE OF WEEDS

*The Soil Association of the UK*

"WEED" says the Concise Oxford Dictionary, is a "wild herb springing where it is not wanted." A nice definition and most people would agree although few would recognise weeds as 'herbs'. Nevertheless, the word 'weed' has been corrupted from the Anglo-Saxon word 'weod', meaning herb or small plant.

From earliest childhood, most of us have been taught to exterminate every weed we see in our gardens. Not from a natural hatred of that particular plant, but simply because it is uninvited and "springing where it is not wanted". There is usually some reason why weeds appear in a specific place and the observant gardener should be able to recognise these signs. Once you come to terms with the fact that every garden will always have weeds (if the soil is at all fertile) and that there is a great deal to be learned from observing them, the problem can be approached in quite a different and indeed, in a much more positive way.

How do they come? Their seeds arrive in a variety of ways. Birds bring them; the wind carries them; they stick to our shoes and cling to our clothing and use many other subtle methods to ensure their survival. They are some of the most persistent and determined plants there are, and in many cases the seeds lie dormant until conditions are just right for them to germinate. Soil that has been dug or disturbed in some way, reveals and brings to the surface weed seeds that may have lain dormant for many years.

Perennials multiply both by seed and by vegetative reproduction. Most of the annuals multiply by seed but some also propagate vegetatively. For example, the seeds of the common chickweed, one of the commonest and most persistent of weeds, will germinate at any time of the growing season and when its stems are cut or severed by the lawn mower, each small piece is capable of rooting afresh and making new plants.

There must be some rational explanation why weeds still persist in springing up time after time, without any encouragement, and in spite of all the efforts made by people and their machines and chemicals to destroy them; while other plants have to struggle to survive in spite of all the skills and cossetting that mankind gives them. Ralph Waldo Emerson said: "What is a weed? A plant whose virtues have not yet been discovered. "Let us take a closer look at some of our weeds and find out more about their virtues and uses.

Always remember that a weed is a green plant, with all the characteristics and qualities of such a plant. The ability to utilise the sunlight, to provide food for animal and mankind, and to fulfil the vital function of feeding the soil population. When the soil was being formed, a process that took billions of years, everything that had once lived was returned to the soil. It was by this cycle of life, by following the very important 'law of return' that the fertility was built up and maintained in the soil. In the top six or nine inches of a fertile soil, in which the plant roots mainly grow, is an enormous soil population working and living in symbiotic harmony with the plant life above. These workers are



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<http://www.telegraphics.com.au/kurra/>

## COGS INFORMATION PAPERS

### Gene-Free Food List

A large range of food products in Australia now contain genetically engineered (GE) ingredients. Certified organic and bio-dynamic foods are free of GE ingredients.

The *Australian Gene-Ethics Network* has released a comprehensive list of GE-free foods. The latest version of this list is now available on the Internet at:

[www.nor.com.au/environment/genethic/foodlist.html](http://www.nor.com.au/environment/genethic/foodlist.html)

### Organic Products and Resources

A list of retailers of organic products, and a list of places where you can purchase organic fertilisers and other garden materials.

This information is also on the Internet at:

[www.netspeed.com.au/cogs/cogret.htm](http://www.netspeed.com.au/cogs/cogret.htm)

[www.netspeed.com.au/cogs/cogres.htm](http://www.netspeed.com.au/cogs/cogres.htm)

### Excerpt - Alternative Wheat Cereals as Food Grain Spelt Origin and Taxonomy

Refer to the article on Spelt on p12. This paper contains some more scientific information.

#### COGS members only:

For printed copies of any of these papers, send a note with a stamped, self-addressed, business-size envelope to:

COGS Information Papers

PO Box 347

DICKSON ACT 2602

*Please include your membership number*



essential in helping to maintain the fertility of the soil because they provide food for the growing plant, which in turn provides food for both animals and humans. Following the 'law of return', plants, animals and humans provide food for the bacteria in the soil. This cycle of life, this natural decomposition of all animal and vegetable wastes, takes time, and so humans speed up the process by making compost. And there is no better contribution to soil fertility than an abundance and variety of weeds in the compost heap.

If plants, which have appeared naturally in an area, are constantly removed and not returned in some form, the fertility of the soil will suffer because these same plants have been instrumental in building up and maintaining the fertility of that area. The appearance of certain plants, or weeds, is very often significant in pointing to some imbalance in the soil. The presence of weeds may indicate poor drainage, lack of aeration, or some deficiency; but whatever the reason, they should be returned to the soil, either via the compost heap or by hoeing and leaving them to decay on the ground. Weeds are usually plants which have adapted themselves to poor soil conditions and their flourishing may be an indication that the soil is deficient in some essential nutrient.

Many weeds are deep rooting plants which penetrate to the sub-soil and bring to the surface valuable elements not available to the shallower rooting plants. The decomposition of their leaves and stem enriches the soil, returning the trace elements and minerals taken up by the plant and adding fibrous matter. Weeds contain trace elements of varying amounts, some may be rich in one particular element while others may contain only a trace. But whatever the quantity, all the nutrients have been taken from the soil. If there is a good reason why the weeds should not be hoed and left to decompose in situ, then the natural and logical way to return these nutrients to the soil is via the compost heap. In this form they are much more readily available and acceptable to the growing plant than any of the chemical substitutes.

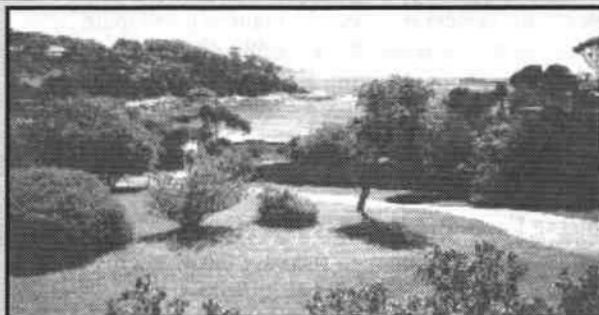
As well as being a storehouse of nutrients, those weeds which have long tap roots, or which are otherwise especially deep rooting, act as sub-soilers, aerating the soil and helping with drainage. How many times have you seen coltsfoot and dandelion thriving in heavy clay, the kind of soil that is sometimes difficult to put a spade into! These are two of the best sub-soilers; coltsfoot with its penetrating mass of creeping rootstock, and the dandelion with its long tap root. When the ground has been sufficiently aerated and the fertility built up, they will tend to disappear only to reappear elsewhere where conditions warrant the same service.

Weeds are capable of lessening the impact of heavy rain upon the ground, and provide shelter and food for small animals whose excreta help to fertilise the soil. In the hot weather weeds provide shade and cover from the sun and

help to keep the surface of the soil moist. Hoeing them and allowing them to remain in situ is even better and helps to conserve the moisture.

Somebody once said that the soil lies in wait for us to make a mistake, but it is more often the weeds that lie in wait, because whenever they appear they tell a story. The type of weed and where it grows can indicate lack of humus, drought, mineral deficiency, lack of aeration and so on. The wise gardener would do well to take note of the appearance of certain weeds in his or her garden to discover if they are an indication of any special fault. There is a good deal of truth in the saying that weeds growing in a particular place are those beneficial to its fertility. In other words, weeds in a garden are rich in the particular minerals that the soil may lack.

However, let it be quite clear that these signs or indications of soil fertility or deficiencies, are general and not specific. Many other factors may influence the growth of certain weeds so these indications should always be taken as general.



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# INCENTIVE AND SUPPORT SCHEMES FOR ORGANIC PRODUCERS

*Summarised from Going Organic Oct-Dec 1998, By Robyn Neeson*

*Robyn Neeson is the Alternative Farming Systems Officer with NSW Agriculture, Yanco NSW 2703.*

A range of Government assisted schemes are on offer which may assist organic producers. Robyn listed a few of these here. Whilst these schemes are relevant at the time of writing it is important to realise that they may come and go with Government policy

Many schemes are more likely to be available to groups rather than individuals, so it is worthwhile bringing these schemes to your local farming group's attention. Nearly all natural resource incentive schemes give priority to projects or activities which have been identified to be compatible with catchment objectives. So contact your local catchment management group to find out what these objectives are.

## 1. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND EDUCATION

### Farmbis

Assistance to farmers by way of a grant to participate in activities that will enhance their farm business management skills. It is also about changing attitudes to learning and coping with change.

*Contact: NSW Rural Assistance Authority;  
Toll free: 1800 678 593*

### Enhancing Farm Productivity

To help you borrow money to increase the productivity of your farm enterprise, leading to its improved sustainable long-term profitability.

*Contact: NSW Rural Assistance Authority;  
Toll free: 1800 678 593*

### Group Training Scheme

To increase farm productivity and thereby develop a more profitable and competitive farm sector by funding group training and/or professional advice activities.

*More information contact: NSW Rural Assistance Authority;  
Toll free: 1800 678 593*

### Farm Assessment Scheme

To help farmers assess their management and financial position and to reach an agreement with their bankers on how any problems identified will be addressed.

*Contact: NSW Rural Assistance Authority;  
Toll free: 1800 678 593*

## 2. NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

### Water Reform Incentives

The Irrigated Agriculture Water Use Efficiency Incentive Scheme is a part of the Government's Water Reform Structural Adjustment Program and will provide \$25 million in financial assistance to irrigated enterprises over a five year program commencing 1 July, 1998. The scheme will provide financial assistance for:

- development of Irrigation and Drainage Management Plans
- adoption of water use efficient irrigation technologies
- the provision of professional advice for crop water use monitoring

*Contact: Your local NSW Agriculture Irrigation Officer;  
NSW Rural Assistance Authority. (Toll free: 1800 678 593)*

### Conservation incentive schemes

Conservation incentive schemes are available to promote the protection of native vegetation and wildlife. A range of schemes are in operation throughout Australia.

## 3. NATURAL HERITAGE TRUST PROGRAMS

The National Heritage Trust is a Commonwealth Government initiative. The programs funded under the Natural Heritage Trust are:

### Bushcare: The National Vegetation Initiative

Bushcare encourages vegetation management, where native vegetation is conserved for its intrinsic ecological value, managed for biodiversity conservation and enhanced for sustainable production. Working with community groups, land managers, industries and government agencies at all levels, Bushcare will invest more than \$350 million over the next four years on three main fronts:

- to conserve, enhance and sustainability manage remnant native vegetation;
- to greatly increase and improve revegetation activities; and
- to encourage the integration of native vegetation into conventional farming systems.

*Contact: Bushcare Communications Section;  
Phone: 1800 671717; Fax: (02) 6250 0286*

### Endangered Species Program

The Endangered Species Program is administered by Environment Australia, and is delivered through the Natural Heritage Trust. The Endangered Species Program has been established with the goal of protection and conservation of Australia's native species and ecological communities in the wild. The program is delivered through a range of projects which are implemented through State and Territory conservation agencies, community groups, and other organisations.

*Contact: Mr Bruce Male, Threatened Species and Communities Section,  
Biodiversity Group Environment Australia Phone:  
Fax: (02) 6250 0214; Email: bruce.male@ea.gov.au*

### **Farm Forestry Program**

The Farm Forestry Program aims to encourage the incorporation of commercial tree growing and management into farming systems for the purpose of wood and non-wood production, Incentive and Support increasing agricultural productivity and sustainable natural resource management. Farm forestry has the potential to provide substantial environmental benefits, including greenhouse gas reductions and enhanced biodiversity, as well as landcare, regional development and employment benefits.

Contact: Jim Stevenson Ph: 02 6272 5611; Fax: 02 6272 4875; Email: jim.stevenson@dpi.gov.au

### **National Landcare Program**

Projects which contribute to an integrated program of sustainable management of land, water, vegetation and biological diversity are supported by the National Landcare Program (NLP). The NLP encourages on-ground action which will result in integrated and sustainable natural resource management at the farm, catchment and regional level. The focus is on approaches which are efficient, sustainable, equitable and consistent with the principles of ecologically sustainable development.

Contact: The NLP Contact Officer,

Community Landcare Section, Land and Water Resources Division, Department of Primary Industries and Energy. Canberra ACT 2601. Ph: 02 62715474; Fax: 02 6272 5618.

### **National Wetlands Program**

The program promotes the conservation and wise use of wetlands across Australia. For the first time, under the Trust, the National Wetlands Program will support community-based projects to help conserve internationally listed Ramsar wetlands, and wetlands of national importance.

Contact: Further information is available from Countrylink on 1800 026222.

### **4. NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS**

A number of non-government organisations can provide assistance in the area of natural resource conservation. These include:

*Greening Australia: Greening Australia Limited, Building 6, CSIRO Complex, Banks Street, Yarralumla ACT 2600.*

*Ph: (02) 62818585; Fax: 02 62818590;*

*Email: general@greeningaustralia.org.au; and*

*Australian Trust for Conservation Volunteers; 15 Lydiard Street North Ballarat Vic 3353. Ph. (03) 5333 1483;*

*Fax (03) 5333 2290; email: info@atcv.com.au*

## **COMPANY AIMS TO BLOCK SEED SAVING**

*Reprinted from IFOAM - Ecology and Farming, May 1998*

Every now and again, something comes along that shines a light on the real interests driving genetic engineering. Delta and Pine Land Company's (DPL) new system for preventing farmers replanting seed is as pure and brutal an illustration as we are likely to get of the supremacy of the profit motive in biotechnology, for the point of the system is profit and nothing else.

*David King, GenEthics News, UK reports.*

DPL has announced that it has been granted a US patent on a genetic system which prevents seeds from germinating in the next generation. Farmers who buy such seeds will be able to produce a crop, but will not be able to sow seed saved from their harvest in the next year. The system has been dubbed "Terminator technology" by groups such as the Rural Advancement Foundation International (RAFI), which says that it threatens farmers' independence and the food security of over a billion resource-poor farmers in Third World countries.

Until now, the best system that commercial seed companies had for forcing farmers to buy seed each year was to sell them hybrid crop varieties. Hybrids cannot be re-sown by farmers, because the next generation of seed has a lower yield: but they have the advantage that they tend to have higher yields than conventional varieties. (It has not been proven that yields comparable to hybrids could not be achieved in ordinary varieties, if sufficient research were done.) But the DPL system has no fig leaf of increased yield to justify it: it is purely and simply a system to increase seed companies' profits at farmers' expense. The genetic system, which was developed together with the US Department of Agriculture, is complex, and involves three separate genes. It culminates in the killing of the second generation seed just before it would germinate. The company hopes that the system will stimulate plant breeders' interest in crops such as wheat, rice, cotton and soybeans. Unlike crops such as corn, which are sold as hybrids, seeds from the above crops can be saved by farmers for re-planting or even sale to other farmers (known in the US as 'brownbagging'). This makes them less attractive to seed companies, since farmers are not forced to buy seed from the companies each year. DPL's stock rose sharply on news of the patent, and it reported much interest from seed companies in licensing the system.

While we might expect something like this from private industry, it is scarcely credible that the system should have been developed with funding from the US Department of Agriculture (USDA). It was not so long ago that the role of national departments of agriculture was to support the efforts of public plant breeders, who aimed to produce quality crop varieties for farmers. Now, it seems the USDA sees its primary function as protecting the dividends of US seed company shareholders. As the USDA's Melvin Oliver, the creator of the DPL system, states, "Our system is a way of self policing the unauthorised use of American Technology."

# CRYSTAL WATERS PERMACULTURE VILLAGE

By John Allen

When we were last in Queensland, Margaret & I visited the Crystal Waters Permaculture village. Morag Gamble and Evan Raymond talked with us about the village and we had a look at it from a couple of vantage points.

Crystal Waters is the world's first permaculture village. It is a community designed for about 250 residents and was established in its present form in 1988. It is situated at Conondale near Maleny in SE Queensland, at the head of the Mary River, and is about one and a half-hour drive from the northern outskirts of Brisbane.

The land is in a sub-tropical area but sufficiently elevated and away from the sea to have low temperatures and occasional frosts during the short winter period. The rainfall is fairly high, about 1500mm and occurs mainly in the 'wet season' between January and April.

The terrain consists of river flats, mostly grassed, undulating slopes where the residential lots are grouped in clusters, and steeper timbered hills at the rear. The property has an area of about 260Ha but because of its shape, somewhat boomerang-like, the internal road from one end to the other is 4.5km long.

There are 83 residential lots, and 2 lots covering commercial and industrial needs. These lots comprise the Village, Visitors' Camping Area and the Community Buildings Area.

The development is a registered Group Title under the Body Corporate and Community Management Act (1997). The legal aspects of the community are covered by two structures.

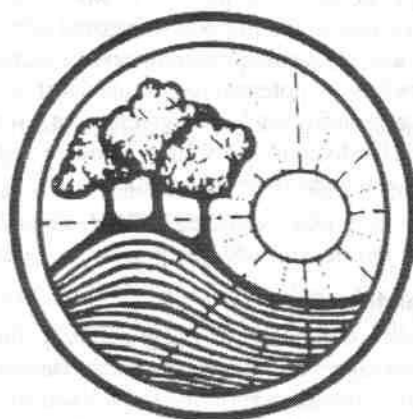
The Body Corporate and Community Management Act covers the freehold residential lots and the common land, and is governed by local by-laws. These by-laws are the only criteria for selection of lot holders - the residents select themselves by accepting that they will abide by them when they take over the title. Some lots are leasehold and are owned by the co-operative.

Crystal Waters Community Co-operative Limited is the

## DEMONSTRATION ORGANIC FARM

Work under way at Victoria's Rutherglen Agricultural Institute and at several on-farm sites in Victoria and NSW is designed to answer some of the questions confronting organic farmers and give conventional farmers looking to convert to organic methods the confidence to take that step.

See *Acres Australia*, November 1998 for the full story.



entrepreneurial body. It owns a number of leasehold lots, also the Village and Community Buildings area, and Visitors' Camping Area lots. It also owns the present developments on these latter parcels of land.

Crystal Waters is probably a unique development because it was not done by speculative developers. Speculation is taking risk for profit. The four designers, who were effectively the developers as the operational arm of Permaculture Services Limited, set up a Trust Fund and encouraged would-be residents to lodge sufficient money in the Trust to pay for the development. When the appropriate number of people had lodged sufficient funds, the risk was removed. The four designers took only recompense for work performed and the left-over money, approximately \$250,000, which would normally have been the developers' profit, was handed over to the co-operative to establish the Community Economic Development Fund. It was later used for construction of buildings in the Visitors' Camping Area and the Village.

Currently, there are 200 people in the village, ranging in age from 0-87 and all from different backgrounds. Each household is responsible for dealing with its own waste. Wet composting systems are used for the toilets - food scraps go in these as well.

Only 500 litres of water a day are pumped from the river for agricultural use

They plant rain-forest species in buffer zones where no land use is allowed - land use is not allowed near creeks. They also have wood plantations - use of Casuarina for fire-wood and other timber for cabinet making

The main crops are citrus, avocado, sweet peas. They also have sheep for wool, wood turning, bread making. Major pests in the area are wallabies, kangaroos and bandicoots.

They have open days and guided tours, and they have various types of accommodation.

Crystal Waters Permaculture Village  
MS 16 Maleny, Queensland 4552

## NEW OPAC STANDARDS

When the new OPAC standards take effect, from 1 May 1999, organic producers will need to review their current sources of seeds, seedlings and vegetative reproductive material. The standard states the following in section 3.15:

"Seeds and vegetative reproductive material should be from plants grown in accordance with the provisions of this standard for at least one generation or, in the case of perennial crops, two growing seasons.

Where an operator can demonstrate to the approved certifying organisation that material satisfying the above requirements is not available, the certifying body may support:

- i) in the first instance the use of untreated seeds or vegetative reproductive material or, if this is unavailable,
- ii) the use of seeds and vegetative reproductive material treated with substances other than those included in Annex IC".

What does this really mean to the organic grower? From May 1, 1999, you will be required to use seeds, seedlings and vegetative reproduction material grown using organic methods. Of these three,

the biggest challenge will be in sourcing organically grown seedlings. Currently the majority of seedlings used are from commercial nurseries which in most cases use treated seeds, fungicides and soluble fertilisers. From May 1, growers will have to ensure that their seedlings are grown using organic methods. The BFA Certification Review Committee (CRC) would like to encourage all growers who use seedlings, to produce their own or to encourage a local nursery to become certified for the production of seedlings.

The use of seeds that are treated with a fungicide or other non-allowed inputs, can only be used as a last resort, and will require the approval of the CRC prior to use. The CRC realises the difficulty of obtaining organic certified seeds, seedling and vegetative reproductive material, but would encourage growers to start investigating alternative sources so they are not caught out when the new regulations come into effect.

*Bob Raabe (From BFA News - October 1998)*

*(1) Organic Producers Advisory Committee (part of the Australian Quarantine Inspection Service)*

Australian

*Bushfoods*

Starter Kit



If you are interested in growing or using bush foods - the Bushfood Starter Kit is an invaluable resource. Cost is \$38.00 posted anywhere in Australia.

For further information:

Abm  
38 Mountain View Rd  
Maleny Qld 4552  
Ph: 07 5494 3812  
Fax: 07 5494 3506  
email: bushfood@hotmail.net.au

Visit the Bushfoods site -  
<http://www.hotkey.net.au/~bushfood/>

### DAMAGE TO SOIL BY HEAVY TRACTORS REDUCES CROP YIELDS

The damage heavy tractors inflict on soil can reduce crop yields by 80%, according to trials by German scientists.

Researchers showed that heavy tractors reduce the density of small invertebrates such as worms and arachnids, which contribute to soil fertility, by as much as 80%.

The research also showed that ploughing breaks up the water-filled channels that give soil its springiness and mechanical strength, down to a depth of 30 cm. Plants were unable to push roots into this compacted subsoil, and suffered more in dry weather because of this. Water could not penetrate the subsoil, and more ran off the surface, increasing erosion.

Some wheat fields in Bavaria have lost 20% of their yields from compaction, while 30 million hectares of soil in Europe is "completely degraded by soil compaction".

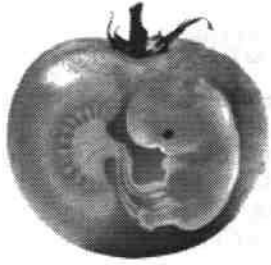
*New Scientist 27/6/98 - Reprinted from Going Organic Oct-Dec 1998*

### GE COTTONSEED OIL

An article appeared in the Sydney Morning Herald of December 12, 1998 under the headline *Guess What You've Been Eating* (author: Ben Hills). It stated that oil crushed from the seeds of transgenic cotton in Australia has been sold for human consumption, and the residue fed to livestock. The oil is used in take-away shops and restaurants, and is blended to make products ranging from margarine to mayonnaise and cake-mix.

GE cotton either already contains, or may soon contain the following: (i) the INGARD® gene by Monsanto (for protection against major caterpillar pests, greatly reducing the need for pesticide spraying); (ii) the Roundup Ready™ gene by Monsanto (allows growers to reduce their reliance for weed control on herbicides that persist in the environment). (Source [www.pi.csiro.au/austgrowingfut/cleangreencotton/cleancotton.htm](http://www.pi.csiro.au/austgrowingfut/cleangreencotton/cleancotton.htm))

Note that GE cotton is also sprayed with pesticides. In 1996/97 there was only a 52% decrease in pesticide use on the new GE cotton compared to the conventional variety in Australia (CRDC 1997; Forrester & Constable 1997). ... *John Allen*



## GENETIC ENGINEERING NEWS

*There is a great deal of news on the GE front, including some good news for Australian consumers. Contact me if you would like more detailed information. If you are on the Internet (and a COGS member), let me know if you would like to be included on an e-mail list for the latest organic information.*

... John Allen

### HEALTH MINISTERS DECIDE

*ANZFSC Press Release*

The Australia New Zealand Food Standards Council (ANZFSC) met in Canberra on 17 December and made a number of important decisions about the safety of the food we eat.

ANZFSC consists of Health Ministers from the Commonwealth, each state and Territory and the New Zealand Associate Minister for Health. It is chaired by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Federal Minister for Health and Aged Care, Senator the Hon. Grant Tambling.

The following important decisions were made.

Health Ministers, by a majority vote, have asked ANZFA (the Australia NZ Food Authority) to require labelling of genetically modified food where it is substantially equivalent<sup>1</sup>, by developing a draft amendment to the Food Standards Code which takes into account the need to:

- (a) label if the manufacturer knows the food contains genetically modified material; and
- (b) if the manufacturer is uncertain about the food's contents, they must indicate that the food may contain genetically modified material.

If the manufacturer knows the product to be free of genetically modified material there will be no requirement to label the product however it may be labelled as free of genetically modified material.

Health Ministers asked ANZFA to develop for their further consideration a definition of the term genetically modified food, recognising that there are many food ingredients such as sugars and oils which can be made from genetically modified plants but are not themselves genetically modified.

Early next year, Ministers will consider the draft amendment to the Food Standards Code proposed by ANZFA.

(1) An earlier recommendation by ANZFA was to label GE foods only where there was substantial difference to the non-GE equivalent.

### ROUNDUP ADS "MISLEADING"

*Brisbane Organic Growers Newsletter, August 1998*

The Swedish National Council on Marketing Ethics has found Monsanto guilty of making false and misleading claims in its advertising for the herbicide Roundup. The council, which aims to ensure companies follow rules set up by the International Chamber of Commerce, says Monsanto has claimed that the herbicide will "disintegrate immediately" in contact with soil. Monsanto has also made

unethical claims regarding the safety of Roundup, the council says.

In a similar case in November 1996 in New York, Monsanto agreed to immediately cease and desist from publishing any advertisements that claim that Roundup is safe, non-toxic, harmless or free from risk. In the New York case, Monsanto also signed an agreement that it would not use words such as "biodegradable" in advertisements for Roundup. Monsanto also had to pay \$50,000 to the New York Environmental Protection Agency, which had tried for five years to stop certain Roundup advertising.

### WHEN IS A FOOD NOT A FOOD?

*From "Seeds of Destruction", by the Environmental Research Foundation (Annapolis, MD, USA)*

In the USA, Monsanto's New Leaf Superior potato is, itself, legally registered as a pesticide with U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) because it has been genetically engineered to poison any Colorado potato beetle that might eat even a tiny portion of it.

The label on a bag of Monsanto's pesticidal potatoes in the supermarket lists all of the nutrients and micro-nutrients in the potato, but fails to mention that the potatoes have been genetically engineered or that they are legally a pesticide. Food labelling is ordinarily the responsibility of FDA<sup>2</sup>. An FDA official told the New York Times that the FDA does not regulate Monsanto's potato because FDA does not have the authority to regulate pesticides. That is EPA's job!

A Monsanto official (rBST producer) recently told the New York Times<sup>1</sup> that the corporation should not have to take responsibility for the safety of its food products: "Monsanto should not have to vouchsafe the safety of biotech food," said Phil Angell, Monsanto's director of corporate communications. "Our interest is in selling as much of it as possible. Assuring its safety is the FDA's<sup>2</sup> job," Angell said.

(1) Michael Pollan, "Playing God in the Garden," New York Times October 25, 1998, pgs. 44-51, 62-63, 82, 92-93.

(2) FDA - United States Government Food and Drug Administration).

### GE MORATORIUM IN DENMARK

*From Jesper Grolin, Denmark, 27 November 1998*

According to Danish newspapers today, a one year moratorium on the planting of genetically modified plants has been agreed between the Ministry of Environment and Energy, the Farmers' Association, Danish Industry and the two Danish companies directly affected, i.e. Danisco and DLF Trifolium.

## PRINCE JOINS ATTACK ON GE CROPS

*The Times (England) Thursday 29 October 1998*

Production of genetically modified crops could harm food quality and cost jobs, the Prince of Wales said yesterday. The Prince, presenting the 1998 Organic Food Awards at an all-organic banquet at the Savoy Hotel in London, said that while Austria, Sweden and Denmark would have 10 per cent of their farming organic by 2000 Britain could only hope, at the current rate of progress, to achieve 1 per cent.

Demand for organic food so far outstripped supply that about two-thirds of organic produce sold in Britain was imported.

"This must be a wasted opportunity at a time when it is forecast that 15 per cent of farmers will cease farming this year," he said. It is 14 years since the Prince first argued for the benefits of organic farming. He said yesterday: "I shall never forget the vehemence of the reaction."

"Much of the criticism had come from those who regarded agriculture as an industrial process", he said, "where production was the sole measure of success." "The only difference today is that they see genetically modified crops as the means of achieving their aims.

"I know from a very large number of letters that I am not alone in not wanting to eat any genetically modified produce: " The Prince presented an incisive juxtaposition of the qualities of organic and genetically modified food. He said: "While the demand for organic food outstrips supply, we know that 77 per cent of consumers do not want genetically engineered crops grown in this country.

"Consumers can choose whether or not to buy organic produce. Genetically modified ingredients will deny us choice.

"Organic farming provides major benefits for wildlife and the environment. The best that can be said about genetically

engineered crops is that they will be monitored to see how much damage they cause."

He added that while organic farming provided high quality and premium prices, genetically modified crops were only designed to provide high yields and did not always succeed in that.

## AUSTRIA SPAR DECISION

*Food Bytes #15*

In October SPAR and all of Austria's major supermarket chains declared that they will not sell GE-derived products and intend to take them off their shelves.

## GE BACKLASH BOOSTS ORGANIC SOY PRICES

*Acres Australia December/January 1999*

Prices of between \$US650 and \$US900 a tonne are available for organic soybeans, with demand exceeding supply by an estimated 50,000 tonnes a year, about twice the current world production, according to Adam Willson, District Agronomist at Taree, in NSW. He said that demand for organic soybeans was being driven by consumer backlash against genetically-modified foods and Japan's "insatiable" demand for chemical-free food. He indicated that Australia was well positioned to supply organic soybeans.

## NZ SUPERMARKET TAKES THE LEAD

*Clive Elwell*

According to radio news, the national program at 5pm 15 December, the owner of New World supermarket, at St Martins, Christchurch, is intending to label his food as GE/non GE. Although he admits this will be a struggle to access the information. He is taking this action as a result of only FIVE people approaching him! There is a lesson for us.

## ORGANICS IN AUSTRIA

After the successful introduction of organic food to kindergartens, schools and hospitals in Vienna, Austria, the city is now providing organic food for senior citizens' homes.

The project is run in conjunction with the largest organic farming association in Austria, ERNTE-Verband.

A three-year testing phase in 20 senior citizens' homes indicated that organic products have higher qualities, support health, have not resulted in higher costs and are a contribution to keeping Austrian farming families on their farms. A wide range of products are now being delivered to the homes of about 10,000 people, and they are reportedly well received by the senior citizens.

*Source - Ecology and Farming, the IFOAM magazine*

## SENIORNET

*Chronicle, 1 December 1998*

SeniorNet, an initiative designed "by seniors for seniors" was recently launched at the Council on the Ageing. SeniorNet aims to provide senior-specific training, increasing Internet awareness and decreasing computer-induced anxiety.

As their mobility decreased, the Internet allows older people to stay in touch with the world and pursue life-long interests such as genealogy. It also enables them to keep in touch with family members, especially grandchildren, through e-mail.

For more information phone 6247 9791 or visit the SeniorNet site at [www.netspeed.com.au/seniornet](http://www.netspeed.com.au/seniornet)

*Senior COGS members could think about joining up with SeniorNet and try to encourage interest in organic food in that network ... Ed.*

# THE HIPPOCRATES HEALTH CENTRE (HHC)

Phil Moore

**T**wo weeks respite from the modern pace at Hippocrates Health Centre in southern Queensland left me with a feeling of groundedness and wellness which I haven't felt for many years, if ever.

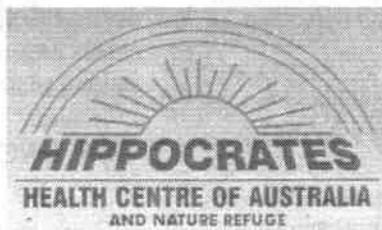
Based on the work of Anne Wigmore in America, the centre offers a program which aims to initiate rest and regeneration of body, mind, and spirit. **BODY**

**CLEANSING** (enemas, juice fasting, steam baths), **WHEATGRASS JUICE** (being rich in minerals, vitamins, and enzymes), **RAW FOODS** (fresh fruits, vegetables, sprouts, greens, and nuts), and **GENTLE**

**EXERCISE AND MEDITATION**, are all part of the daily program. There is time in between to do what one pleases (and

perhaps what one hasn't yet made time for when at home!). I read books, slept, walked the local bushland, swam in the salt-water pool, had another sleep, took advantage of a great selection of health-related audio tapes. I found comradeship in others who to a greater or lesser degree were feeling the dynamic effects of this intestinal and bodily *tour de rigoure*.

Know thyself! One great place to deepen this process is indeed via the great interface with the world - our intestines.



Via direct experience and the comprehensive lecture series given each week at HHC, one begins to really feel and understand the consequences of putting different qualities, quantities, and combinations of foods and liquids into our sensitive and dynamic systems. Uncanny parallels can be found between the principles of good compost making, and those of keeping ones body robust, dynamic, alive, and healthy. At all stages during the program one is encouraged to take on the responsibility for ones own health.

Competent staff are available for individual assistance with all aspects of the program, and ones response to it, whether one is there simply for a "break"

or be dealing with a debilitating illness. Amidst the laughs over breakfast by those going through a shared experience, I listened to the anecdotes of people who were literally feeling new hope of recovery from various ailments and illnesses. I know that the rich lecture program, rest, and actual bodily experiences of two weeks at HHC has taken me a whole lot closer to the full recovery from glandular fever and post-viral fatigue.

*For further information:*

- Ann Wigmore, *The Hippocrates Diet and Health Program*, Avery publishing Group, New Jersey, 1984
- Ronald Bradley, Director of the Hippocrates Health Centre, Elaine Avenue, Mudgeeraba (Gold Coast) Qld 4213, ph (07) 5530 2860.
- Karen & Phil, Organic Energy ph (02) 6295 6700

## The Allergy Centre

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

**Consultations by appointment**

**Kaye Green N.D.**

Allergy testing

**Irene Hess-Oates**

Medical Herbalist, Iridology & Clinical Nutrition

**Ian Cocks, Dr of Osteopathy**

Osteopathy, Musculo-Skeletal Therapy, Nutritional & Environmental Medicine.

**Contact: Costas Kounas**

**Shop 3 Jamison Centre**

**Bowman Street, Macquarie ACT**

**Ph: 6251 2670, Mobile: 0418 620811**

## Positions Vacant

### Supper Convenor

We all enjoy a cup of herbal tea and cake at the monthly meetings - but we are still looking for volunteers to help prepare the supper. It would be great if two or three people could share the supper job.

*Contact John or Margaret Allen.*

### Flier Pilot/Assistant

We are seeking a volunteer to either take on the job of producing the monthly Flier, or to assist Steve Sutton.

*Contact Steve Sutton*



# EAT YOUR GENES



Book Review

## EAT YOUR GENES

By Stephen Nottingham

Reviewed by Rosemary Stanton, Nutritionist

Food safety scares resulting from modern agricultural methods - like salmonella in eggs or BSE in beef-continue to cause deep public concern. But the biggest changes affecting the food we eat are the result of genetic engineering.

This book describes the techniques used to genetically modify crops and livestock. It explores the food industry's commercial motivations and examines the potential ecological and health risks, the ethical issues, and the likely impact on developing countries. The author argues that the promises held out by genetic engineering of ending world hunger and making possible a more eco-friendly agriculture are far from being fulfilled.

Never before has Science been likely to have such an impact on our lives. After all, we are what we eat. Here is an issue every thinking person needs to apply their mind to. Consumer choice, health and safety, the environment, the freedom of traditional breeders and growers to improve major food crops, and justice towards the Third World are all at stake. As public debate about the desirability of genetically modified food mounts, this is the book to help you think through what is involved.

A sane and sensible book - not to be dismissed, whether you side with political and commercial interests or are more likely to be

swayed by consumer and environmental concerns. Stephen Nottingham takes a balanced and rational approach, discussing the advantages of genetically engineered foods and then looking at possible problems.

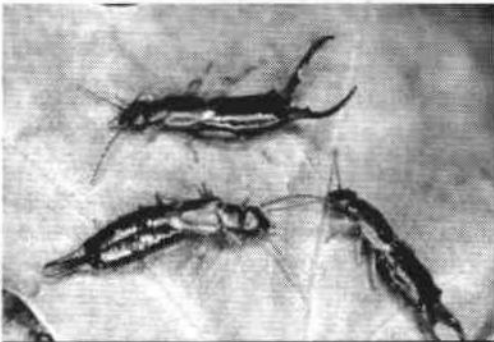
Dr. Stephen Nottingham is a biologist who specialises in crop protection. He has worked in research teams in both the UK and the USA and is now a freelance consultant and writer.

**Eat Your Genes is now available in the COGS Library**

### BENEFICIAL EARWIGS

*Acres Australia, November 1998* contains an article called "A Plague in the House that may be useful in the Orchard" by Tim Marshall.

Tim's article reveals that Earwigs can be effective predators on a range of soft-bodied insect pests, however they need to be controlled because in large numbers they become pests and can attack growing plants, especially tender growing tips, flowers and fruit. They can also invade homes.



### COGS FLIER BY E-MAIL

If you are a COGS member and on the Internet then you should consider receiving the COGS Fliers by e-mail.

32 members are currently on the Flier e-mail list.

- ✓ *Receiving the Flier by e-mail* helps busy volunteers because each copy of a printed Flier has to be folded, taped and labelled. All e-mail Fliers are dispatched with the press of a button.
- ✓ *Receiving the Flier by e-mail* saves members funds because we have less printing and postage costs (E-mail dispatches are free of charge).
- ✓ *Receiving the Flier by e-mail* can save paper as in most cases you don't need to print it out, or you can print only the bits you need.

#### What format is it in?

The flier is sent as .DOC and .RTF attachments, and is also in-line text in the e-mail message, so you will be able to read it no matter what system you are using.

#### How to register

New members - tick the "Send Flier by E-mail" box on the membership application form.

Current members - send a request to:  
cogs@netspeed.com.au

# AUTUMN VEGETABLE PLANTING GUIDE

## Brassicas

Late plantings of Brassicas in March may be successful, but usually summer plantings are more reliable. It is too late to grow from seed. Take care too with the varieties chosen, for example it is too late to plant savoy cabbages, but the smaller, bald headed varieties should be successful.

## Peas

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

## Lettuces

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

## Onions

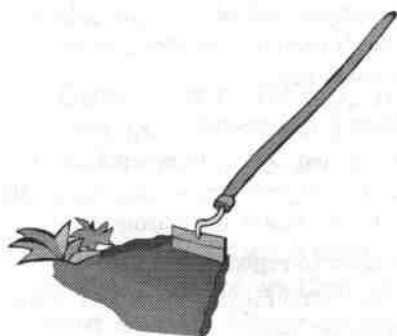
Early varieties can be sown in April to early May, to be harvested late spring to early summer. Mid season varieties are often sown late autumn early winter, and long-keeping varieties in winter. However, the timing of mid or late season varieties is well worth experimenting with by making successive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

## Leeks

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

## Spring Flowers

Remember that many spring flowered plants are best planted in autumn, so that they can establish before the winter cold, and then start growing in the early warmth of spring. Stock and poppies can be planted from seedlings in March and perhaps early April; others such as Virginia, Stock, Candytuft, Larkspur and Sweet peas can be sown direct throughout autumn.



## Green Manures

Autumn is the time to plant green manure crops, which can be dug in in spring, at least 4-6 weeks before planting your summer crops.

Benefits of green manure crops are:

- They provide valuable nutrients for successive crops
- They provide organic matter for soil micro-organisms to break down
- They provide soil cover in Winter; and
- They help aerate the soil

Green manure crops suitable for planting in Canberra:

### Legumes:

Broad beans, field peas, lupins, sub clover, tic peas, vetch

### Non-Legumes:

Barley, oats, rye

N.B. Legumes are very useful as they fix nitrogen in the soil. Flowering crops need to be dug in before flowering; cereal crops before producing a head of grain.

### Autumn Vegetable Planting Guide

	March	April	May
<b>Broad Beans</b>		S	S
<b>Broccoli</b>	T		
<b>Brussel Sprouts</b>	T		
<b>Cabbage</b>	T		
<b>Cauliflower</b>	T		
<b>Chicory</b>	ST	T	
<b>Chinese Cabbage</b>	T		
<b>Corn Salad</b>	ST	T	
<b>Endive</b>	ST	T	
<b>Garlic</b>		S	S
<b>Kale</b>	T		
<b>Kohlrabi</b>	ST	T	
<b>Leeks</b>	T		
<b>Lettuce</b>	ST	ST	
<b>Peas</b>	S	S	S
<b>Onions</b>		S	S
<b>Turnips</b>	T		

S = Seed sowing

T = Transplanting

N.B. 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.

# ABOUT COGS

## GENERAL INFORMATION

The Canberra Organic Growers Society Inc. is a non-profit organisation started in 1977 with the aim of providing a forum for organic growers to exchange information and encourage society to adopt organic growing methods.

COGS is part of the broader organic movement. As stated in the back of our newsletter, "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."

The alternatives are: "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."

## MONTHLY MEETINGS

Meetings of members are held in Civic at the Griffin Centre, Room 4, at 7.30 pm on the fourth Tuesday of the month, (except in December and January). Each month a different speaker discusses organic growing or related issues. For example:

- Marketing Organic Produce
- Backyard Self-sufficiency
- Bees and Worms
- Natural Control of Insects on Native Plants
- Permaculture in the ACT

After each talk a light supper is available. At all meetings, there is a produce and seed exchange table, information table and a bookstall. Members may also borrow from the COGS library (currently two books may be borrowed each month).

*Visitors are welcome (donation).*

## FLIER AND QUARTERLY PUBLICATIONS

Each month, all members are sent either a *COGS Flier* or *COGS Quarterly* (except December and January). These publications inform members about the speaker at the next meeting, and any other activities coming up. They also contain articles on organic growing as well as tips specifically for the Canberra region, such as a monthly planting guide.

## COMMUNITY GARDENS

COGS currently operates 6 community gardens in the Canberra area at Mitchell (called the Northside Garden), Curtin (called the Cotter Garden), Erindale, Charnwood, The Oaks Estate, and Theodore. Members may obtain a plot(s) at one of these gardens to grow organic produce for home-consumption.

These gardens provide a wonderful opportunity for people to garden with other organic growers- to share their expertise and hopefully learn something new at the same time!

The ACT government has supported the establishment of these gardens through giving us licences to use unused government land, and the setting up of these gardens has been greatly assisted by grants obtained from the ACT Office of Sport and Recreation.

Each garden is administered by a garden committee, which is elected annually by the plot-holders at the garden. At each garden, plot-holders may be required to contribute to the cost of water for the garden, and may also have to pay other small expenses to cover incidental costs (such as bulk purchases of straw, or hose and tap replacements)

## INTERNET

COGS has an extensive web site devoted to organic growing. The site contains many of the COGS papers on organic growing, certification information, a page for children, links to related organisations and information sources, picture gallery, the latest on genetic engineering, about Canberra, and much more.

*Email:* [cogs@netspeed.com.au](mailto:cogs@netspeed.com.au)

*Web site:* [www.netspeed.com.au/cogs](http://www.netspeed.com.au/cogs)

## OTHER ACTIVITIES

From time to time COGS organises other activities for its members. For example we arranged an open day at an organic farm at Gundaroo and a visit to Jackie French's property in Araluen. Seminars and workshops are also conducted.

## COGS HARVEST NIGHT

**The February meeting is harvest night!**

Bring along some produce that you have grown. Share your successes and failures with others. This is a great opportunity for new members to ask advice about organic gardening.

**When?** Tuesday 23 February at 7:30 pm

**Where?** Room 4 at the Griffin Centre in Civic.



## PERMACULTURE ACT (PACT)

PACT meetings are on the first Tuesday of the month

7.30 pm at PCHQ Kingsley Street Civic.

(South east corner of the building that the Environment centre is in)

## Biodiversity & Human Survival in Australia

Professor Harry Recher, Department of Environmental Management

Edith Cowan, Uni. WA, Chairman National Biodiversity Council, & presenter of the ABC-TV program "Wolves that Fly"

**Manning Clark Theatre 3, ANU, Acton**

**Wednesday 17 Feb 1999 7.30 PM**

Australians for an Ecologically Sustainable Population - (02) 6247 1142

Nature & Society Forum - Heysen Street, Weston - (02) 6288 0760

## CIT Garden Show

(Previously known as the Horticultural Fair)

Sat 30-Sun 31 October

9-4 pm

Canberra Institute of Technology  
Unwin Place, Weston

## Book your site early!

- ~ Garden exhibits
  - ~ Plant sales
  - ~ Demonstrations
  - ~ Public seminars
  - ~ Plant clinic
  - ~ Plant propagation
  - ~ On-site public parking
  - ~ Promotion through TV, radio, newspapers & direct marketing
  - ~ Sites available to showcase your products, services, ideas, equipment
- Exhibitors please phone  
(02) 62073715 or  
0418 231236  
for more information**