

Winter



# Canberra Organic

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## ORGANIC GROWING IN THE CANBERRA REGION

Quarterly publication of the Canberra Organic Growers Society Inc.



Turkish Turban Pepper

VOL. 7 NO. 2

WINTER 1999

# CANBERRA ORGANIC

Quarterly magazine published by the Canberra Organic Growers Society Inc.  
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## CONTRIBUTIONS INVITED

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Articles in the magazine do not necessarily reflect the views of the Society. Products and services offered by advertisers are not specifically endorsed by the Society.

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Margaret Allen

### Production:

John Allen

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### Advertising:

Contact Margaret or John Allen

The *Canberra Organic* magazine 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.

#### Advertising Rates

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1/8 <sup>th</sup> page	\$9 (\$7)	\$30 (\$25)
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COGS MEMBERS ARE ELIGIBLE FOR THE SPECIAL RATE INDICATED IN BRACKETS

### Distribution & Postage (previous issue):

John Allen, Margaret Allen, Amanda Fowler, Joan Buckie, Conrad Van Hest, Betty Cornhill, Morgan Kurrajong

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## COMMITTEE MEMBERS & HELPERS

### OFFICE BEARERS

<b>President</b>	Steve Sutton	6292 5609
<b>Vice President</b>	Vacant	
<b>Secretary</b>	Conrad Van Hest	6237 5237
<b>Treasurer</b>	John Allen	6258 9004
<b>Membership Secretary</b>	Jenny Waygood	6294 4221
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<b>Librarian</b>	Rachel Wynd	6282 7721
<b>Seed Librarian</b>	Rosemary Scott	6299 0360
<b>Public Officer</b>	Vacant	

### GENERAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Ann Smith	Laurie Thompson	Keith Colls
Rosemary Stevenson		

### COGS FLIER

Pilots: Steve & Michelle Sutton

### MONTHLY MEETINGS

Book sales:	Murray Dadds
Produce table:	Vacant
Supper convenor:	Amanda Fowler, Marie Bahr
Librarian	Rachel Wynd



### COGS REPRESENTATIVES

Conservation Council:	Ann Smith
Environment Centre:	Ann Smith
Griffin Centre:	Rachel Wynd

### INQUIRIES ABOUT ORGANIC GROWING

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Charnwood	Gerard De Ruyter	6258 5903
Northside	Rod Therkelson	6241 0995
Oaks Estate	Lynnette Taylor	6299 7479
Theodore	Steve Sutton	6292 5609
Tuggeranong	Christine Carter	6231 5862
Demonstration	Laurie Thompson	6288 7161

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### REMINDER

Monthly meetings are held on the 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of each month (except December and January) at 7:30 pm in Room 4 at the Griffin Centre in Civic (see Notices for change of venue in June & July).

~ VISITORS WELCOME ~

## FROM THE EDITOR



Hello readers.

Well as you all can see by the change of name on the cover, after much debate, the consensus was that the *COGS Quarterly* should be now known as *Canberra Organic*. If events happen that I can no longer carry on the task of editor, the next person to take on the responsibility of the magazine may decide that they wish to produce a very different magazine and/or, revert the name back to *COGS Quarterly*.

However, for the next twelve months (fate allowing) the Editor I will be.

It was good to hear from Sammy Ringer (bush foods) asking if we were interested in printing some of her articles. Well - we are featuring, in this and the next three editions, an article on Backyard Bushfoods. We also have our rural correspondent David Odell with us again, plus some delicious sounding recipes from Conrad Van Hest and Mike and Lindy Nixon. Julia Veitch has an article on container salad gardening. Our genetic engineering newsperson is keeping us up to date with events nationally and internationally (he actually appeared on Lateline on Tuesday evening 20 April, posing some questions to a Monsanto representative).

This issue also contains reports from some of the COGS Community Garden Convenors on how their gardens are going.

We receive many bouquets verbally regarding the magazine, but we would still like to hear from our readers in written form. Do you have any questions regarding gardening? Do you have any organic tips you would like to pass on to others? Also don't forget that COGS members now receive discounts when advertising in the magazine.

Happy reading and hope to hear from you soon.

Margaret

### A Little Difference

A young man was walking along the beach at dawn. Ahead of him he saw an old man picking up starfish and tossing them into the water.

At last the young man caught up with the old man and asked him,

"Why are you doing that?"

The old man explained that when the sun came up, the starfish abandoned on the beach would die.

"But the beach goes on for thousands of miles and there are millions of starfish on the beach. How can your efforts make any difference, old man?" The old man looked at the little starfish in his hand as he tossed it into the waves, he replied:

"IT MAKES A DIFFERENCE TO THIS ONE!"

Source :World Vision

Reprinted from Earthlink Directory, 1999 Edition



## VACANCIES COGS COMMITTEE

Vice President

General Committee Members

Please contact Steve Sutton for more information  
Ph 6292 5609

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Things have been hectic to say the least in the Sutton household over the last couple of months. With the extra addition to our family we have run out of room to move and a decision on whether to sell up and buy a bigger house or extend had to be made. The extending option won and over the last four weeks I have been busy labouring for Greg our builder (should be finished in about another four weeks). Along with this we have been busy bottling and freezing produce from our garden. It has been a very good growing season this year and I'm looking forward to enjoying the fruits of our hard work. I can think of nothing more enjoyable than pigging out on a lovely stew made up of things out of our own garden, when it is 10 degrees or lower outside.

Winter is the time to take things a little bit easy, but not too easy. It is pretty hard to get motivated to work in the garden when the temperature is cold, but there are other productive things you can do on these days. Stay inside and plan for the next growing season. Plan where you are going to grow what and when is the best time to plant it. Plan how much you need to grow of certain crops and how often you should be planting these in succession as this will give you a continuous supply. I can't enforce how important it is to plan to get the most out of you garden.

We have found a lovely couple by the names of Laurie and Eril to maintain COGS BACKYARD, they look forward to meeting you at the garden. The Xeriscape garden is closed to the public for the winter; opening again on the 4th and 5th of September. COGS will be holding talks on Organic Vegetable Growing on the 18th and 19th of September at

1pm and 3pm. We will also be involved in the CIT Garden Show to held at CIT Weston and the Xeriscape Garden on the 31st of October and the 1st of November. The Rose Group will be holding there annual rose pruning demonstrations on Saturday July 31st and Sunday the 1st of August (COGS will be present to field enquires about organic growing, along with representatives from Earthworks).

As you can see from the list of committee members and helpers we still have two committee members positions vacant and the Vice Presidents position as well. It would be great to have all positions on the committee filled. If anybody is interested in filling these positions please give me a ring.

I would like to commend the many years of service given by John Ross to the COGS committee, and hope to see him on the committee again when he can spare the time. John was responsible for formalising the COGS constitution and other operating procedures that helped to build COGS into the professional organisation that it is today. He has held the positions of Treasurer, Secretary and Vice President, and contributed in many other ways, most recently with the COGS Backyard demonstration garden.

Hope to see you all at one of the monthly meetings or events.



Steve Sutton

### CANBERRA ORGANIC PACKAGING VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

The list of people inside the front cover include those 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 an excellent opportunity to talk about gardening for an hour and a half!

If you can volunteer your services for an hour or so for the next session please contact Margaret Allen  
Ph: 6258 9004, email: jallen@pcug.org.au

### New Library Items

*Drying Food*, R M Gribling  
*2 Minutes a Day for a Greener Planet*, M Lamb  
*The Permaculture Home Garden*, L Woodrow  
*Earthworms in Australia*, D Murphy  
*Pest Repellent Plants*, P woodward  
*Weeds and What They Tell*, Ehrenfried Pfeiffer  
*Forest Friendly Building Timbers*, Earth Garden

### APOLOGY

COGS apologises to the retailers of organic produce at the Belconnen Fresh Food Markets for the poor quality of their advertisement in the Spring 1998 and Summer 1999 editions of the COGS Quarterly.

# BACKYARD BUSHFOODS

From the editor of *Australian Bushfoods Magazine* - Sammy Ringer  
This is a 4-part series on bush foods to appear in the *Canberra Organic ... Ed.*

## Part 1: Easy Edibles - Grow Native

I must admit to feeling a pang of envy when people speak of their fresh fruit and vegetables, picked that morning from their own backyard. How do they find the time? All that preparation and mulching and bug catching ... not to mention the numerous ailments plants seem prone to (lettuce that goes from seedling to seed overnight and capsicum which fill with water and rot). Our lifestyle simply isn't geared to the old-fashioned care and experience Grandma gave her vegetable garden.

I sympathise with every person who has planted out a vegie patch with good intentions and watched it become overgrown with vigorous weeds while the edibles fade and die.

I thought I had found the solution when I came across a wonderful little book titled *Wild Herbs of Australia and New Zealand* by Tim Low. From the delightful line drawings, I quickly realised this was a guide to eating those pesky little weeds which had adopted me. They were all there - nettle, spurge, dandelion, lantana, low weeds and high, ugly and delicate - all edible, all classified as foodstuffs of one sort or another. Alas, my enthusiasm for dock cheesecake and dandelion omelette was short lived and I returned to weeding my weeds rather than harvesting them.

For most of us, the idea of self-sufficiency from the garden is about as down to earth as airborne porkers - but there is a simple way in which most of us can enjoy fresh foods from the grass patch with a minimum of work. *Backyard bushfoods*. No witjuti grubs or sugar ants here - just a pleasingly long list of well-behaved natives which happen to have edible fruits, nuts, leaves or tubers. Trees, shrubs and ground covers which you may already have in your garden or lining the street. Plants which are superbly adjusted to our climate and soils and need a minimum of molly-coddling.

The question's often asked - "I'd like to grow a few bushfoods - which species should I choose?" The simple answer is - those species which occur naturally in your area. A visit to your local nursery should give you some clues. You could also take a walk through old parklands and see what thrives there (parks are often administered by the Local Council - and they should have a list of the species to be found).

On the other hand, there are a number of species which will grow almost anywhere so let's start with those.

Almost every garden has room for ground covers and one of my favourite 'bush nibbles' is the Midyim berry (*Austromyrtus dulcis*). This is a nearly prostrate plant which will reach a size of 1-1.5 diameter in time. It grows reasonably quickly (mine were fruiting in the second year in a sub-tropical climate) and has a very pleasing shape (spreading but not straggly). The small leaves are attractive and the berry itself is quite unusual - about chick pea size and grey with purple dots. The taste? Well, it's sweet, sort of cinnamonony and has just a touch of pine about it. This 'piney' taste puts some people off but I like it. You can eat midyims straight from the bush, add them to fruit salad, yoghurt, pavlova or almost any sweet. I'm quite partial to sun dried midyims, which retain their taste well and have about the same keeping quality as raisins.

If the midyim plant is happy, it will give you two crops of berries a year - like many of our natives, it seems to have 'good years, not so good' and the occasional bumper.

Midyims are found naturally in the sandy soils of Fraser Island and it certainly grows best there (they say the berries are about the size



of a cherry on the island) - but there are midyims growing right round the country - out at Longreach, down in Tasmania and up my way in the sub-tropical rain forests.

If you're in a flat dweller and would like a taste of the bush on the balcony, the midyim's for you. Give them a large enough pot, plenty of sun and room to droop and you should be picking berries in a year or so.

Next to the midyim, the Lilly Pilly is my favourite pick-from the bush. Yes, they are a little tart but I like that too - sort of reminds me of childhood and crab apples and sour grass. Lilly Pillies vary in size but tend to be small to medium trees.

The lovely, lilting name of Lilly Pilly is a lot easier to get your mouth round than the proper name of *Syzygium* (try saying that one fast!). There are over 60 different species of *Syzygium* in Australia and the other popular name given to them is Riberry. The fruit varies immensely from one species to the next. The sweetest is from the Magenta Lilly Pilly (*Syzygium paniculatum*) but the most popular for commercial use is *Syzygium luehmannii* (this is the proper Riberry). This is a fairly tart little creature but it bears a large fruit and has even managed to come up with a seedless variety which is now used extensively in production of jams, jellies, cordials, etc. What do you do with a Lilly Pilly? Just about anything you want. Pucker up and eat them straight from the tree. Put them in vinegar for a very elegant dressing. Jam them, jelly them or cordial them (they make a highly refreshing summer drink). Use them in chutneys, meat sauces, fruit salads, salsa...just about any dish which comes alive with a touch of tartness is fair game for the common Lilly Pilly.

Once again, it's a native that should grow almost everywhere. It's not a plant found naturally in arid areas and it doesn't like heavy frost but, given ample water, protection and a little bit of fertilising encouragement, you'll be picking in 2-3 years. For those who like their backyard in miniature, there's now a new variety called 'Mini Pilly' which stays shrub size.

Backyard bushfoods aren't likely to take over from the backyard vegie patch - but they can make an easy - and edible addition to almost any garden. There are literally hundreds of species suitable for the suburbs and even the inner city and if, like me, your vegie patch is more patch than vegie, why not try a native?

Sammy Ringer

Australian

**Bushfoods**

Magazine & Starter's Kit



The first national magazine for people who want to grow, eat, enjoy or simply know more about our native foods. *6 information-crammed issues per year - just \$24.*

If you are interested in growing or using bush foods - the Bushfood Starter Kit is an invaluable resource. *The 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 -

[www.hotkey.net.au/~bushfood/](http://www.hotkey.net.au/~bushfood/)

## ORGANIC WEED MANAGEMENT - INDUSTRY SURVEY UPDATE

There is a broad diversity of opinion in the organic and bio-dynamic grower community about the impact and cost of weeds on production. There is also widespread interest in research which will assist in weed management. These are two of the early findings to come out of the recent Weed Management Survey conducted by Paul Kristiansen, a PhD student at the University of New England, Armidale. The survey is part of a larger research project looking at organic weed management techniques.

The survey was sent to members of various certifying organisations to gain a better understanding of current weed management practices in the industry. The input from growers was also sought to determine areas of concern or interest to growers.

The overall return rate so far is 43%, with about 320 replies from all states of Australia. The enthusiasm and effort with which people have responded to the survey was very encouraging. Some people sent in extra pages of detailed information, drawings, photos, tax cheques (accidentally), weed lists and business cards. From forty years as a grain grower to 3 months growing herbs, organic growers are quite a passionate group it seems.

## COGS INFORMATION PAPERS

### Gene-Free Food List

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

The *Australian Gene-Ethics Network* has compiled a comprehensive list of GE-free foods. **The January 1999 version of this list is now available.** This list is also on the internet at:

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

### 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

- ✓ **For the GE-free Food List - also include \$1 in loose stamps**
- ✓ **Please include your membership number**

A prize of a one-year subscription to Acres Australia was offered to a lucky survey respondent who replied within three months. The winner was drawn from a random list of respondents and the lucky folks were a pair of organic nut growers from the Wiseman's Ferry area near Sydney. They have been notified and are happy to accept the prize. Thanks go to all respondents who took the time to fill out the questionnaire.

The responses are currently being compiled and will be analysed over the next month or two. It is hoped that a summary of the findings will be available in late April 1999. This will be sent to those who requested the information and will also be presented in industry publications.

For further information, contact:

Paul Kristiansen

Agronomy & Soil Science

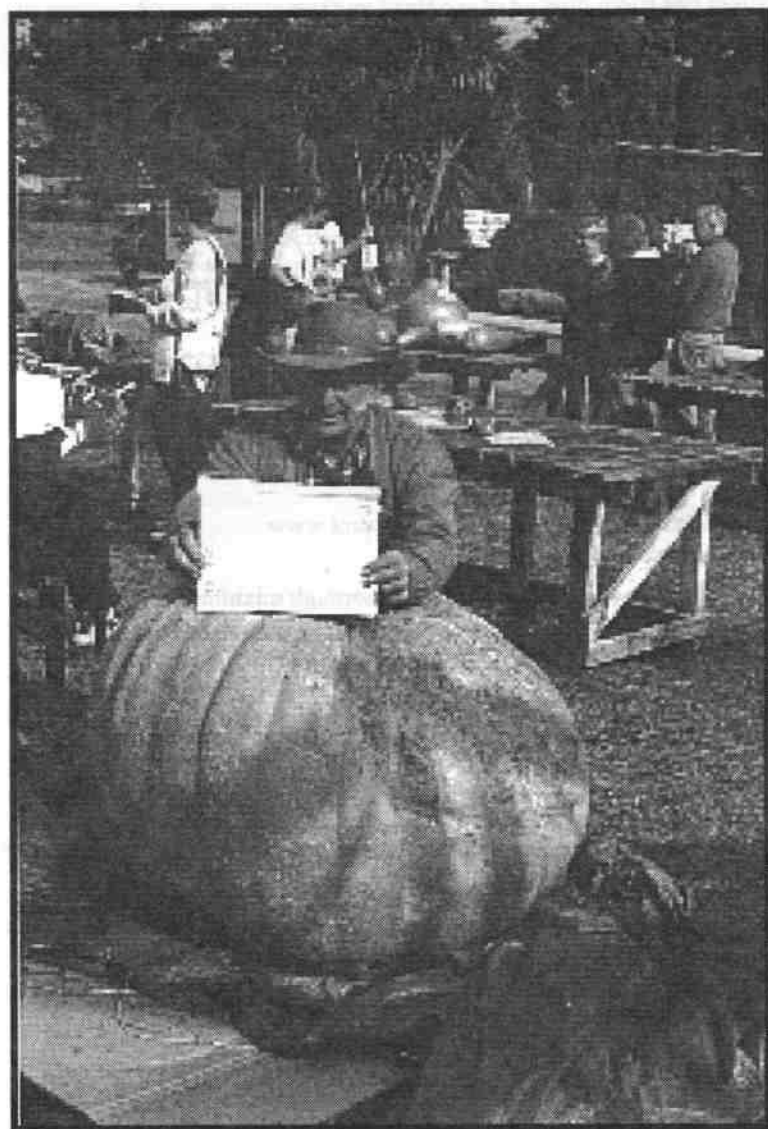
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Ph. (02) 6773-2962

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## GIANT PUMPKIN COMPETITION



YOUTHHAVEN HORTICULTURE volunteer, and organic grower, Ross Tinson of Kambah won the ACT division of the national big pumpkin competition, held at Rodney's Nursery in Pialligo, on 10 April. Ross's entry, and "Atlantic Giant", weighed 174.5 kilos ... and this was his first attempt! He won \$250. Ross started preparing his soil about a year ago with poultry manure a major ingredient.

The National Competition was won by Rodney Leadbetter of Alsonville, on the North Coast of NSW, who broke the Australian record with his entry of 268.9 kilos

Ross's main contributions at Youthhaven have been his care and extension of the Australian native windbreaks, which are thriving under his attention... and his experimentation with mineral dust in soil to enhance productivity in the vegetable beds.

*John Brummell*

### COGS MEMBERS WIN TOO!

In the other giant vegetable awards, COGS members Morgan & Lianne Kurrajong entered largest zucchini, tallest corn and heaviest beetroot (weighing 1.1 kg) and won over \$50 in prizes.

COGS members are encouraged to enter biggest produce in next year's competition.

The AGPVS can be contacted at PO Box 7032 Karingal Centre Victoria  
ph/fax (03) 9786 0337.

*Liz Dorough*

## ORGANIC PRODUCE AT THE JAMISON CENTRE!

The Jamison Fruit Market 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



# CONTAINER SALAD GARDENING

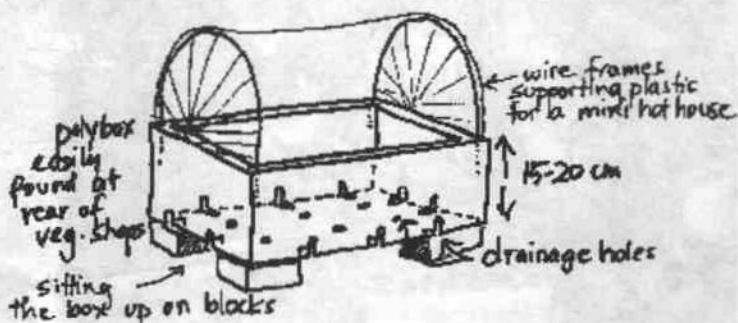
by Julia Veitch

## Why grow salad in a box?

I prefer to grow salad in the ground as I find it easier to manage. However, I do grow it in a box or two over winter, because I can keep it in the relative warmth of the laundry or kitchen. And if I had no ground to grow in, I would use a box. It is really nice to have fresh, fragrant leaves to munch on or to dress up a dinner plate.

## How to grow salad in a box

The best sort of box to use is a polystyrene foam box. The foam weighs little, it insulates, it holds water well, and it is surprisingly strong. Find one with walls about 15-20 cm high & drainage holes in the bottom & extending up the sides a little. This means the box will drain freely. Otherwise you'll have to sit it up on blocks, which in any event is a good idea. Boxes which sit directly on concrete heat up, and plant roots burn or simply won't grow down into the bottom third of the container<sup>1</sup>. Another advantage of foam is that it is easy to poke wires into so you can make a mini greenhouse:



Although I haven't experimented with a lot of different soil mixes, my most successful is a thorough mixture of:

- roughly 60% shredded coconut fibre, also called coprapeat (because it is very like peat in terms of moisture retention and fibrous material which allows good air and water drainage)
- 20% worm castings (good for rapid germination and early growth of seedlings)
- 20% compost (holds its nutrients for longer than worm castings, doesn't leach so quickly, and often has the added advantage of containing large, fibrous particles which help drainage)
- handful of rock dust

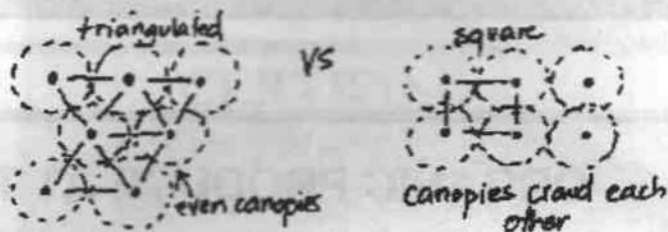
I lay a few sheets of newspaper in the bottom, to stop the mixture from dropping out through the drainage holes, then put in my prepared mix to a depth of 10-12 cm.

The most active root zone of lettuce, spinach and other typical cut-&-come-again salad plants is in the top 15 cm of soil though by the time they go to seed their roots will go down 2 metres<sup>2</sup>. Don't get worried about that. The plants I've found which tolerate container living are: spinach, lettuce, basil\*, nasturtium\*, radish, mustard, asian brassicas, rocket, red russian kale.

\*With the exception of basil & nasturtium, all these will grow through winter.

There are two ways of growing a container crop. You can either be sparing with seed, and space plants about 8-10 cm apart (they don't need a lot of space since you will be harvesting them hard); or spread seed generously for a carpet like growth of salad seedlings for baby mesclun, which are easier to cut with scissors rather than harvesting by hand.

If you grow 10 cm spaced plants, you will fit between 11-15 in the box, depending on the box size. Triangulate the plantings to make the most of what space you have (see figure at right).

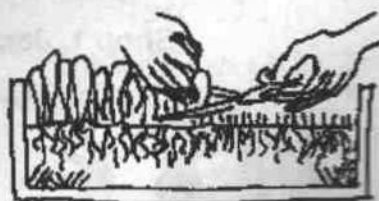


The spaced salad plants have a harvesting life of about six weeks, after which they can still be eaten, but they start really trying to go to seed, and the leaves change flavour, often becoming bitter. The closely grown 'carpet' can be cut with a knife or scissors for about three weeks. See below for harvesting methods:

### (1) spaced plants



### (2) 'carpet' plants



*What are the main problems with growing in containers?*

**Drainage:** Plants need moisture, but they must not be waterlogged or have their root constrained by compacted soil. (Have you ever wondered why the seeds you started in flats of garden soil do so badly? Because the soil, lacking spongy fibres, compacts so much). So the potting mixture itself has to be both moist and to drain, and the container must have drainage holes.

**Drying out:** Because containers are (usually) raised i.e. out of the earth, they are more prone to heating up to surrounding daytime air temperature. Joy Larkcom describes a nice seeping method of watering using a wick<sup>3</sup>.

The salad box will give you fresh greens at home or at work as the plants grow under artificial light, though more slowly than in daylight. In addition, plants are more neglect tolerant than sprouts, another indoor provider of fresh greens.

#### Endnotes

[1] Dominic Comparelli, pers.comm. 28/3/99

[2] Robert Kourik, *Designing and maintaining your edible landscape naturally*, Metamorphic Press 1986, pp-136-137.

[3] Joy Larkcom, *The Salad Garden*, Frances Lincoln, 1984 ISBN 0711203660, pp.45-46



## KIDS ORGANIC CLUB

[www.kids.organics.org/](http://www.kids.organics.org/) - Kids interactive website from Pure Organics in the UK

John Allen

*This is a great internet site.* It teaches children about organics in a fun, interactive way with Charlie, Georgie, Hattie, and Rigsby the dog. It is presented by a company called Pure Organics (UK) - "a manufacturer of organic meat and vegetarian products for families concerned with ensuring a bright future for their children."

The site has three main entry points for children, plus a special page for parents and teachers. In fact the parents page gives some good general advice about children accessing the Internet. The children's entry points are the *Organic Fun Farm*, *Organic Fact Site*, and *Organic Farming or Intensive Farming - its up to you!* There are also competitions and a membership facility.

#### Organic Fun Farm

This section has games and competitions to play. Click on an area of the picture to go to that part of the farm (farmhouse, games room, vegetable garden, cows, sheep, pigs, poultry, machinery, fields & crops, trees, plants & flowers, water)

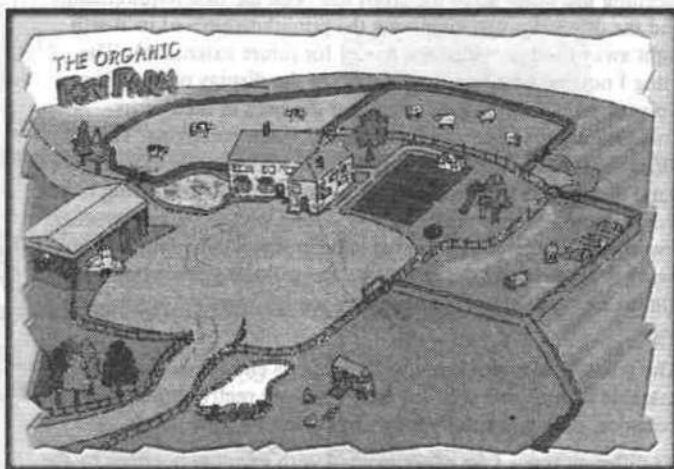
For example if you click on the vege garden, then click on compost heap, the *Compost Heap Game* starts - it asks "Can you spot the 7 things that Georgie has dropped in this big pile of compost? There are also 3 other things to look out for but these are things that you would expect to find in a compost heap. List the things you find separately, sorting out whether you think it should be there or not."

#### Fact Site

This section contains easy-to-follow information about the following topics: what is organic food, what is organic farming, soil matters, animal health and welfare, and a nutritional content chart

#### Organic farming or intensive farming - its up to you

In this section, Charlie and Georgie guide you through the main differences between Organic farming and Intensive farming.



### 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.

- ✓ *Receiving the Flier by e-mail* helps busy volunteers because each copy of a printed Flier has to be folded, taped and labelled. All-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. All files are checked for viruses by the latest software available.

#### 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](mailto:cogs@netspeed.com.au)

## AUTUMN - A TIME FOR GATHERING IN AND A TIME FOR PLANNING

Your Rural Correspondent, David Odell



It has been a good season but not an easy one! January's rainfall amounted to 84mm which carried the expectation that spring would last all summer. However February came in dry with the remainder of the hot weather, eventually yielding a miserable 12mm for the month - barely able to be calculated because of the effects of evaporation. But March restored one's faith in the elements as 76mm fell in the crucial period before Easter, allowing pastures to recover before frosts set in.

Now we have those glorious, settled, Autumn days which allow the gardener the satisfaction of harvesting the season's produce with days that are neither too long nor too hot, of enjoying the fruits of one's labours on the dinner table and the prospect of quiet evenings beside a log fire.

This puts me in mind of the parallels between the seasons and life. Spring is brash, bold and bursting out all over, summer is toil under the unremitting sun, autumn is the time for quiet enjoyment and reflection, while winter is the completion of life's purpose - but the prospect of renewal is with the sowing of the seeds for the next season and of generations to come.

Keeping the water up to the crops has been the first requirement, and the drip irrigation supplying the pumpkins proved its worth right away (and provided the model for future extension). The thing I noticed first was the increase in the display of pumpkin flowers, which meant more work for the bees in their cross-pollination duties but which also meant more pumpkins. The difference in production from just merely keeping them going with hand watering is truly remarkable and it seems we are going to get a decent crop as they really romped along with the warm weather. I won't claim that the pumpkins are carrying scrape marks from being dragged along the ground by the galloping vines but it was almost a case of stand back before a tendril wrapped around one's leg!

The potatoes also produced well giving us enough to have a saleable surplus and seed for next year - we really appreciate fresh potatoes, ones that scrub easily and cut crisply.

At different times I've experimented with growing potatoes by the 'no dig' method as it seemed the ideal solution to the labour required in harvesting, but now I have my doubts that this is a simple answer. Two problems arise - the first is that to avoid 'greening' a lot of straw is required as cover; secondly, a lot more water is then needed to penetrate the straw covering if the tubers are to thrive, and this is difficult to achieve as the mulch is very effective at soaking up moisture before it can get to the roots. The answer I feel lies in a compromise between the two methods. The potatoes are planted in the way I described in my last article and when nicely emerged they are given one good hilling - this not only supports the plants but gets rid of the weeds at the same time. Then straw mulch is placed in the trenches between the rows to the height of the hilling to provide some cover, but, importantly, to retain all available moisture. By this method not so much straw is required, moisture is kept where it is needed and the soil cover is much more effective at preventing greening than just straw on its own.

Economics also dictate that the dollars spent on straw go twice as far on this 'hill and mulch' method as on 'no dig' on its own.

Tomatoes were a real winner as they were grown in the plastic tunnel - this kept the night-time temperatures up during the crucial, early, growing period so the plants didn't get any set-backs before

the weather really warmed up. This same protection is keeping the last of the crop from the cooling that inevitably takes place at this time of year. This seems to be the way to go and put in place similar 'season extenders' so that some of the gamble is taken out of the system.

As well as finding a ready market for prime, fresh, tomatoes through the usual organic outlets I have been exploring ways of 'value-adding' the produce. The easiest way was to just reduce the cut tomatoes to a boiled pulp by removing the separated liquid and freezing the pulp as a base for soups, stews or bolognaise. To do this professionally requires an extractor which separates the seeds and skin, but for the present, blending the pulp to a puree seems to suffice. The separated tomato liquid was ideal as a medium for reducing pumpkins to pumpkin soup, or if one was feeling adventurous, for using this soup base as a starting point for a home-grown stew. The variations were many but all finished up in the freezer packaged as individual quick-start meals. I also experimented with drying tomatoes in the oven, quartering them and placing them on a flat tray with a little olive oil for five hours or so at 130 degrees Centigrade and when reduced putting them in screw-top jars with a little more oil. This worked really well but I found it useful to make sure that on each tray the pieces were approximately the same size as this ensured evenness in drying.

In my quest for different ways to preserve tomatoes, I appreciated the help given by John Allen and his search of the Internet - the sources he discovered of ways to value-add produce were extremely valuable and all will be explored in the 'planning phase' for next season.

This year I relied upon 'heritage' tomato plants grown from saved organic seed. These gave mixed results and ones which I think lowered their production potential. My observations were compared with those from another source which had also obtained plants from the same outlet - and which came to the same conclusion - the plants didn't bear as well as those from commercial outlets but, more disappointingly most of the fruits were not shaped well enough to be saleable, and could only be used for processing. This is a matter of great concern to all organic growers. Seed selection must not only be from heritage stock but must be selected for commercial application. In other words the 'best must be better', otherwise we are in danger of losing out to the multinationals on all fronts.

A Riverina grower sent me an urgent request for as many eggs as possible as he was value-adding his flour by making 'cookies', so I had to talk to the hens in a language they understood - their food! They had been laying quite well but the hot weather had not only affected their appetite but had burnt off their free-range pasture so I had to look to alternatives. This was solved by soaking and sprouting their grain and topping this off with their ration of organic blood and bone. This gave them the basics, but the real winner in keeping up egg quality and colour is their daily allowance of silverbeet - this they thoroughly enjoy. This gives the hens a 100% organic diet and at a time when they are expected to be going off they are still laying very well.

As forecast in my last article, the pigs have gone - sausages won out over sentiment - and maybe this is a sign of the changes taking place in farming today. Well, it doesn't do to get too sentimental otherwise the place would be full of pets!

Cheers for now! I look forward to talking with you again soon.

## LOCAL ORGANIC NEWS

### New market for local growers

A new market opportunity has developed for the well-established local organic producers - supplying products for value-adding enterprises. Examples of this are the supply of eggs for organic cookie manufacture, and tomatoes for pasta manufacture. These value-added producers require consistent quality and are looking for reliable sources of supply to come on stream.

### Retailing

Local organic retailers say that they are unable to obtain sufficient produce, and unable to obtain produce of good quality. They would prefer to source locally, but attempts to encourage more local growers have not yet been successful. As a result, some retailers are having to air-freight produce to Canberra from as far afield as Perth and Darwin. From 20% - 30% of produce obtained from the major wholesalers is not up to an acceptable standard, which makes it difficult to convert new customers to organics, and retain customers.

It is accepted that it is good for the consumers and the industry that major supermarket chains are becoming interested in organic produce, and that Australia should further develop the export market. However, there is concern that the small retailers will increasingly have problems obtaining good quality produce because of the focus on exports; the entry of major supermarket chains into the organic market; and the fact that Canberra is reliant upon wholesalers in the seaboard capitals. It is hoped that the Organic Federation of Australia can assist by devoting more energy and focus to developing and protecting the internal market; addressing the issues of product quality and distribution; and facilitating synergy between the small retailers (and growers) of organic produce. *John Allen*



### Beautiful Holiday House

Just across the road from the beach at Garden Bay over the hill from Malua Bay surf beach.  
Two minutes walk to sandy beach good for swimming, snorkelling, or teaching children to swim.  
Easy drive to many other lovely beaches. House sleeps eight, large fenced garden where children can play within sight.  
Pets welcome.  
Cool sea breeze in summer, warmer than Canberra in winter.  
\$190 per week outside holidays or \$80-\$90 for a weekend by the sea.  
Only 166 kms from Canberra. Take visiting friends and relatives to see the South Coast.  
**Telephone Brian or Jackie on 6254 4977, or Betty on 6249 8323 for bookings and holiday prices.**

## PESTICIDE ANALYSER FOR FOOD YOU ARE GIVING YOUR CHILDREN

*By John Allen*

Environmental Working Group - Kids Corner <http://www.foodnews.org/kidscorner.html>

At this web site you can find out what chemicals you are feeding your children and what health problems they can cause. You select the age of the child (1-5 only) and tell the site which foods you give your child. The site then analyses the pesticides in foods that your child would eat in only one day. Note that analyses are based on US food. The menu offers foods that are commonly eaten by 1 to 5-year-olds, based on US government surveys of food consumption.

Using this system, I "fed" a three year old apple juice, lemonade, bread, biscuit, cornflakes, ice cream and potato and received the following analysis:

#### Your child ate 8 different pesticides

These included chemicals with the following health effects:

- Cause Cancer - 4 pesticides
- Cause Birth Defects - 3 pesticides
- Damages Reproductive System - 3 pesticides
- Interferes with Hormones - 5 pesticides
- Damages Brain & Nervous System - 6 pesticides
- Damages Immune System - 0 pesticides

#### Your child's Detailed Results

- Apple juice - Carbaryl
- Toast - Chlorpyrifos-methyl, Malathion, Pirimiphosmethyl
- Biscuit - Chlorpyrifos-methyl, Malathion
- Baked Potato - DDE-P,P', DDT- P,P', Endosulfan Sulfate,
- Ethylenethiourea

# MEET THE COMPANY THAT WOULD PRIVATISE NATURE ITSELF

*The Age, Melbourne, Tuesday 15 December 1998*

*By Matthew Townsend (Reprinted with permission from the author)*

## **Monsanto's seed patents have horrified plant growers everywhere.**

Monsanto - the company that gave the world Agent Orange, recombinant Bovine Growth Hormones, and Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs)—is on a spending spree. The world's largest agro-chemical producer has just invested about \$6 billion in seed operations in Africa, Asia, Central and Latin America and Europe.

This might not mean much were it not for Monsanto's shareholding in the company that owns the so-called "Terminator-patent"—a process of genetically modifying plants so they produce only sterile seeds.

If Monsanto and other seed companies succeed in inserting Terminator genes into their expanding array of patented seeds, farmers around the world could have little choice but to buy non-reproducing varieties.

As the New York Times put it, "The Terminator will allow companies like Monsanto to privatise one of the last great commons in nature - the genetics of crop plants that civilisation has developed over the past 10,000 years." The technology appears to be directed towards the developing world. Willard Phelps, the Spokesman for the US Dept of Agriculture, the government agency that co-sponsored the Terminator's development, has reportedly acknowledged that the "second and third world markets are the main targets for the Terminator seed."

Seed producers are worried that developing nations are saving their patented seeds from one season to the next and thus reducing their purchasing costs. For example, Monsanto demands that its Roundup Ready seeds are only used once, and monitors compliance using private investigators. However, companies have been unable to do the same in developing countries, where patent protections are weak.

As the primary inventor of the Terminator technology Melvin J Oliver has said "Our mission is to protect American technology and to make us competitive in the face of foreign competition."

However, if Terminator seeds become established in international markets, it could devastate traditional farming practices.

The Director of the Rural Advancement Foundation International (RAFI) Mr Pat Mooney says: "Traditionally, women farmers not only save seed but they use purchased seed to cross with other breeding stock to improve and adapt the seed to their local needs. The Terminator makes all this impossible." Monsanto responds that people who don't want the Terminator seeds don't have to buy them. But in many developing nations government rules or commercial credit often force farmers to grow particular crop varieties.

The threat posed by Terminator seeds is not only economic. If the technology goes wrong, they could sterilise surrounding crops through cross-pollination. It has already been shown that genes can jump from crops into weeds, creating new species of superweeds resistant to herbicides. An experimental crop of herbicide-resistant oilseed rape in Britain had to be destroyed after it cross-pollinated nearby plants. The British Government considered prosecuting Monsanto for allegedly contaminating the environment.

There are also questions about the new seeds' potential toxicity. Martha Crouch, Associate Professor of Biology at Indiana University, says "The key to Terminator is the ability to make a lot of a toxin that will kill cells, and to confine that toxin to seeds." Yet she questions the toxin's effect on other life-forms: "How will a particular toxin affect birds, insects, fungi and bacteria that eat or infect the seeds?" Professor Crouch points out that even if the toxin is not harmful to animals, it "may cause allergic reactions and if the seeds are being mixed with the general food supply, it will be difficult to trace this effect."

The Terminator raises serious questions about food security. Indian agriculturalists, for example, are concerned that once farmers in developing countries are reliant on imported patented seeds, they may be subject to gene tampering to make their crops either less productive or to fail completely. Unsurprisingly, the public response to the Terminator-gene has been poor.

Since the Terminator patent was granted in the United States last March, concern has been expressed worldwide from environmentalists, farmers and scientists. The world's largest agricultural research network, the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research has now announced it will boycott the use of Terminator technology. The group expressed concerns about inadvertent pollination; the sale of flawed seeds; the importance of farm-saved seed to resource-poor farmers; and the potential impacts on genetic diversity.

The controversy surrounding the Terminator patent has done little to dispel the criticism that the biotechnology industry is on the wild west frontier of development, and that Monsanto is one of its principal cowboys.

*Matthew Townsend is a barrister and lecturer in environmental law at Victoria University of Technology. [mdt@ozemail.com.au](mailto:mdt@ozemail.com.au)*

*Matthew Townsend  
Barrister & Accredited Mediator  
Lecturer in Environmental Law, Victoria University of Technology*

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- Sunflower - 33kg bag \$33, <33kg \$1.30 kg
- Mung beans - \$1.30 kg
- Special Birthday Mix (formulated for maximum egg production) - 25kg bag \$25. (Use 50/50 with wheat)
- Cracked corn - \$1.60 kg
- Bird grit - 50¢ kg
- Vitagrit vitamin mineral grit health supplement - 5kg bag \$7.50 or \$2 kg

## General Animals

- Homoeopathic first aid kits - \$75
- Homoeopathic treatment for Lice & Coccidiosis - 50ml \$8
- Oats - 40kg bag \$15, Barley 40kg bag was \$17 now \$15 due to Phalaris & Rye grass seed. <40kg 50¢ kg
- Sulphur - \$2.50 kg
- Seaweed meal - \$6 kg
- Hay, Lucerne - market price varies

## Also Available

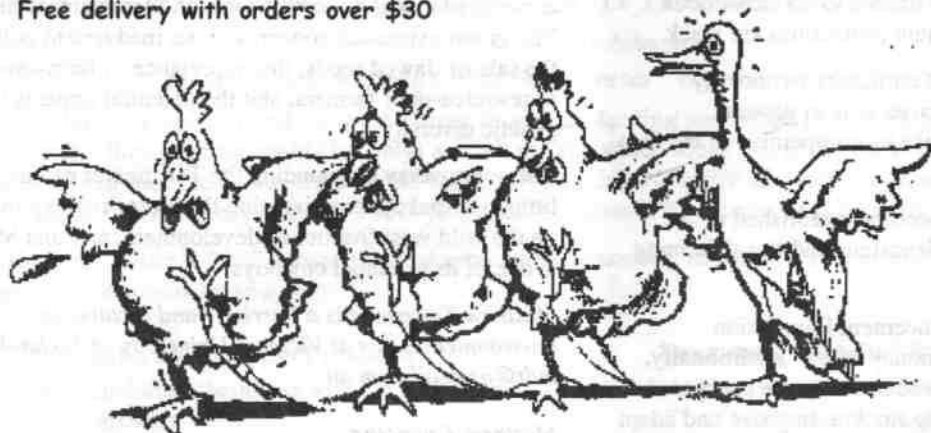
- Chicks, Pullets, Hens, Chook Houses, Waterers, Feeders, False Eggs
- Drums 44 Gallon, safely store grain, clothes, anything. \$15 ea, buy 11, get 1 free
- Hire of non-lethal mouse, rat, sparrow traps, mulcher

## For the Garden

- Biodynamic Fish Emulsion - 2.5 litres \$12.50 (reduced from \$16.50), for balancing the fertility of your garden
- Biodynamic Manure Concentrate, enough for the compost & a huge garden - 250g pack \$8.50
- Chicken Manure - 40kg bag \$15 (reduced from \$22, now same price as dynamic lifter)
- Micro Nutrient King - Liquid Seaweed Concentrate \$5 litre
- Alroc (crushed mineral rock mix) - 20 kg bag \$17, <20kg \$1.80 kg
- Blood & Bone - 25kg bag \$25, <25kg \$2 kg
- Garden lime - 50¢ kg (free soil ph test available)
- Mulch - market price varies
- Frog, Fish & Tortoise ponds built & installed from \$150, good for pest control; includes tadpoles, water, plants, etc.
- Pond Ecology kits - \$25

*All packaging is returnable for reduce/reuse/recycling.*

- ✓ 10% discount to members of PACT, COGS, BOGS, Orana School, Land-care & Environment Groups
- ✓ Free delivery with orders over \$30

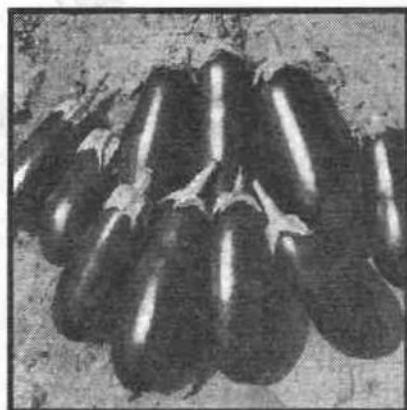


*A vibrant garden  
& happy hens*

Contact Morgan or Lianne Kurrajong to discuss your requirements  
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# FROM THE GARDEN TO THE POT

by Conrad Van Hest



*Eggplant (Solanum melongena).* This bland and subtle edible fruit of the potato family needs strong flavours of other vegetables and seasonings to complement it.

## Ling fish and eggplant ragout on a bed of alfalfa seeds

600g eggplant diced  
500g ling fish diced  
2 cloves garlic crushed  
1 medium onion diced  
1 tablespoon olive oil  
1 teaspoon fenugreek  
2 tablespoons red wine vinegar  
1 cup homemade tomato concentrate or puree  
1 cup vegetable stock  
1/3 cup alfalfa seeds\*  
1 cup water

Put eggplant in colander over bowl sprinkle salt over, stand 1 hour, wash and drain. Heat oil in the saucepan add onion, garlic and fenugreek cook till onion is soft. Add eggplant and vinegar, stir and cook for 5 minutes, next add tomato concentrate and stock simmer for 15 minutes uncovered until eggplant soft. Add the fish cook for another 10 minutes.

Bring the water to boil add alfalfa seeds simmer for 10 minutes or until the water has absorbed stir regularly.

To serve place alfalfa seeds middle of plate spoon fish and eggplant ragout over.

## Stuffed eggplant with breadcrumb crust

4 eggplants  
300g chicken mince  
1 capsicum diced  
1 long radish diced  
1 onion diced  
2 cloves garlic crushed  
3 cups tomato puree  
1 tablespoon basil pesto  
1 tablespoon olive oil  
1 egg beaten  
1 tablespoon breadcrumbs  
1 tablespoon shredded parmesan cheese  
1 teaspoon moroccan or cajun seasoning

Cut eggplant half lengthwise, scoop 3/4 flesh out and dice; in colander put flesh and eggplant shell, salt, stand 1 hour,

wash and dry. Heat oil, add garlic, onion, radish and capsicum cook until soft, add eggplant and chicken, stir and cook 5 minutes. Add tomatoes and pesto mix in and simmer for 10 minutes. Fill the eggplant shells and top with breadcrumb crust and heat in 180C oven for 30 minutes or until golden brown.

Breadcrumb crust in bowl combine egg, breadcrumbs, cheese and seasoning mix well. Left over filling can be reheated and served with pasta.

## Eggplant in coconut milk

500g eggplant diced  
8 medium tomatoes  
1 large onion diced  
2 cloves garlic diced  
1 medium capsicum diced  
200g chickpeas  
200g broadbeans  
3/4 cup coconut milk  
1/2 cup stock  
1 tablespoon olive oil  
black pepper and mixed herbs to taste

Eggplant place in colander, salt, stand 1 hour, wash and drain. Tomatoes core, place in pot boiling water until skin lifts, rinse under cold water to remove the skin and roughly chop. Heat oil in pan add onion, capsicum, garlic, pepper and herbs, cook till soft. Add eggplant mix and cook for 1 minute add tomatoes, chickpeas, broadbeans, coconut milk and stock stir and simmer 10 -15 minutes or until vegetables are cooked. Serve with chicken and rice.

## Eggplant casserole with red lentils

3 eggplants diced thin  
1 medium carrot diced  
1 green capsicum diced  
2 cloves garlic crushed  
2 medium potato diced  
50g okra sliced  
1/4 cup pepitas  
2 cups tomato puree  
1/2 teaspoon worcestershire sauce  
1/2 teaspoon cardamon powder  
1/2 cup red lentils  
2 cups water

Eggplant place in colander, salt, stand 1 hour, wash and drain. Put all the vegetables and pepitas into greased baking dish. In a bowl put tomato puree, worcestershire sauce and cardamon mix well and pour over the vegetables. Cook 1 hour or until vegetables are cooked in 180 C oven. Boil water rain red lentils, stir regularly and cook to the absorption method.

\*Note alfalfa seeds available at health food section at Coles Woden and Tuggeranong, possibly at Belconnen

# WILL PLANTS STILL GROW ON 1 JANUARY 2000?

Well, hopefully our plants will still grow!

I was checking my computer software for Year 2000 compliance and found a problem with a spreadsheet that I use to calculate the current age of all our relatives. When I simulated the year 2000 all the ages produced were negative numbers! This is a simple example of the type of problem that can occur, even on a modern computer with recent software.

## LEAP YEAR RULES

There are three general rules for determining a leap year, but one of these rules is so rare that it does not often occur. Because of this third rule, the year 2000 is a leap year.

Rule 1: Years divisible by 4 are leap years

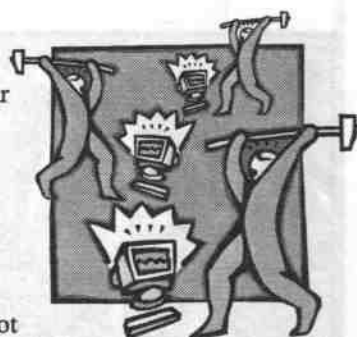
Rule 2: Years divisible by 100 are not leap years

Rule 3: Years divisible by 400 are leap years (overrides 2)

Source: [www.year2000.com/archive/dangers.html](http://www.year2000.com/archive/dangers.html)

I also tested the COGS membership and treasury systems for Year 2000 compliance. They showed no problems - I am confident that memberships will not be summarily cancelled on January 1! The systems also correctly recognise the year 2000 as a leap year, which will undoubtedly comfort people whose membership renewals fall on that date.

John Allen



## AUSTRALIA'S FIRST CONSENSUS CONFERENCE CANBERRA MARCH 9-11 1999

*Press Release from the Organic Federation of Australia, 13 March 1998*

The final report of the citizen panel into gene technology was a "cry" for democracy calling on the Australian Government to provide a process of decision making that is balanced and transparent. They expressed grave concerns about the ability of GMAC and ANZFA to make unbiased decisions. This report has the full support of the Organic Federation of Australia.

The citizen panel went on to recommend that full labelling of genetically engineered food be implemented including items regarded as being "substantially equivalent".

In addition it was recommended that no new genetically modified crops be approved until a new Gene Technology Office is established with equal and balanced representation of industry, government, consumer and environment groups and citizens such as those involved in this consensus conference.

"Such an office with terms of reference and representation agreed upon by all parties, is the only way to ensure that the best, most responsible decisions will be made," Organic Federation of Australia Chair Mr Scott Kinnear said today. "The risks associated with releasing genes into the environment that cross species boundaries, with little known consequences, must be assessed rigorously and impartially and that is what the citizens panel has called for."

"The organic industry, estimated to be worth one billion dollars per year to Australia within ten years time, is

extremely concerned about the impact on the environment including pollen drift contamination of organic crops from genetically engineered crops. Once these genes are released they cannot be recalled."

"In addition we are particularly pleased with the recommendation to investigate fully, alternatives to gene technology such as organic production systems and their further recommendation that much more research and development is required in these areas."

"The decisions reached by the citizen panel are fundamental reflecting the real issues of marginalisation of consumer interests and lack of unbiased process and decision making. The consensus conference highlighted the diverse interests present and the ability of our citizens to weigh up and address the important issues. We call on the Australian Government to head the voice of the people in fully implementing these recommendations immediately," Mr Kinnear concluded.

*For detailed information on this conference, see [www.abc.net.au/science/slab/consconf/splash.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/science/slab/consconf/splash.htm). The Lay Panel report is also available on the COGS web site at [www.netspeed.com.au/cogs/concon.htm](http://www.netspeed.com.au/cogs/concon.htm).*

A 5-part series based on material collected at this consensus conference will be on the ABC National Program "Life Matters", beginning the week of May 3, with a talkback session on May the 12th.



## ORGANIC ACRONYMS

ACCC	Australian Competition & Consumer Commission
ANZFA	Australia & New Zealand Food Authority
AQIS	Australian Quarantine Inspection Service
ASI	Australian Supermarket Institute
ARA	Australian Retailers Association
BFA	Bio-dynamic Farmers of Australia
DIST	Commonwealth Dept of Industry, Science, & Tourism
GA	Greening Australia
GMAC	Genetic Manipulation Advisory Council
IFOAM	International Federation of Organic Agricultural Movements
ISA	International Standards Organisation
NAGR	National Association of Grocery Retailers
NASAA	National Association for Sustainable Agriculture Australia
OFA	Organic Federation of Australia
OHGA	Organic Herb Growers of Australia
OPAC	Organic Produce Advisory Committee (AQIS)
ORGAA	Organic Retailers and Growers Association of Australia
OVAA	Organic Vignerons Association of Australia
RAFI	Rural Advancement Foundation International
RIRDC	Rural Industries Research & Development Corporation
SCARM	Standing Committee on Agricultural & Resource Managment
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
WHO	World Health Organisation

## WIN A YEARS SUPPLY OF CERTIFIED ORGANIC GRAINS FOR UP TO 6 CHOOKS!

Morgan Kurrajong is running a competition to find the cheapest and best way of building a chook house for 4-6 hens.

Morgan will judge the entries and provide the prize.

To enter the competition - simply register with Morgan on 6230 4846 (or email kurra@dynamite.com.au), then build the cheapest and best chook house you can to house 4-6 hens before the end of October 1999.

Results will appear in the November Canberra Organic magazine.

The prize will include organic grains and grit.

## FRUIT JUICE SALMONELLA CONTAMINATION

*Press release - National Association for Sustainable Agriculture Australia (NASAA) Organic Federation of Australia (OFA) - Tuesday 30th March 1999*

NASAA and the OFA fully support compliance with State and national laws with respect to food safety. They are fully behind the current testing regime at Knispel Bros in Renmark, SA, which is seeking to determine as swiftly as possible the source(s) of salmonella contamination in fruit juice.

The testing regime is looking at all possible sources of contamination. One of these might be liquid fertilisers because of their stickiness. Users of liquid fertilisers, whether conventional or certified organic, are the subjects of farm visits by the Health Commission. The batch of oranges concerned was supplied by several conventional citrus producers as well as two NASAA producers. All the practices of these producers (conventional and organic) including their fertiliser use are subject to intensive Health Commission scrutiny.

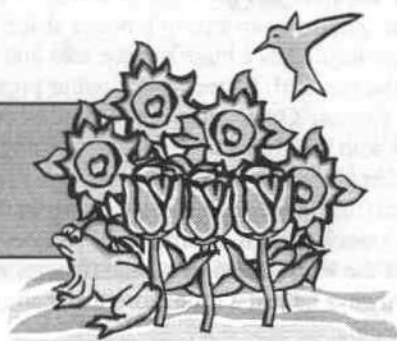
As we understand the position at present there is absolutely no proven evidence that organic fertilisers are to blame, that specifically fish fertiliser is the problem or that the practices of certified organic farmers are at fault. The OFA and NASAA seriously object to some of the media jumping to a series of completely unsubstantiated conclusions. We have absolutely no difficulty with any food producer and/or processor being completely accountable for food safety. We are not in support of some media "hype" which is based on no evidence and which "implicates" organic practices and food unfairly and unaccountably.

Once the evidence is available the NASAA and the OFA will respond promptly and accordingly.

*Since this article was written, tests disproved the theory that organic fertilisers could have been to blame. (Canberra Times 6 April 1999, P4). The SA Health Commission has just instructed that the fruit juice products Nippy's and Aussie Gold Fresh now be pasteurised.*

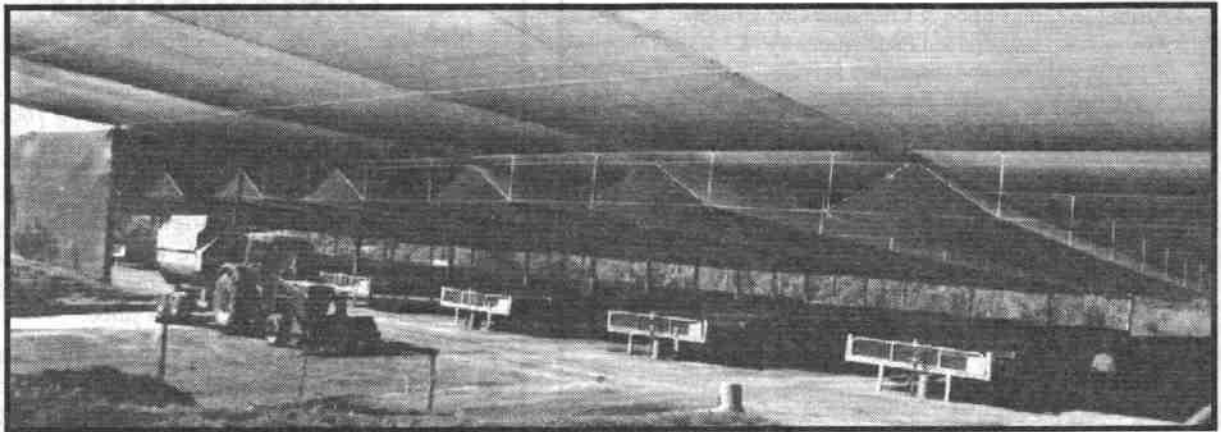
*John Allen*

COGS was sorry to learn of our Queensland member David Heaton's illness, and would like to extend our best wishes to David for a full recovery. Best wishes also to his wife Kay.



# WORMS DEAL WITH SEWAGE SLUDGE IN QUEENSLAND

By John Allen



[www.powerup.com.au/~dheaton/wormfarm.htm](http://www.powerup.com.au/~dheaton/wormfarm.htm)

**T**he Redland Shire Council and an organic waste management company called Vermitech solved the problem of what to do with 10,000 tonnes of sewage sludge a year, and also remove old sludge from land fill. Vermitech has developed sophisticated engineering and biological systems which enables the processing of very large quantities and types of organic waste in urban settings meeting the strictest environmental controls.

At the Cleveland Sewage Treatment Plant, the sludge, the residual material after household effluent has been through the sewage plant, is carted to the adjacent worm farm where it is turned into a saleable soil conditioner marketed as BioVerm. Sewage from the other four major shire plants and retrievals from land fill are also trucked in to this farm.

The worm farm covers one hectare and there are 4000 square metres of raised beds containing 160 tonnes of worms. It is the largest worm farm to treat sewage in the world. The worms are not our garden worms. The types used are African Night Crawler, Red and Tiger. They require specialised care and a carefully managed environment to transpose of the waste quickly and correctly.

The whole area is covered by shade cloth to reduce wind, protect against seed and the dreaded Ibis and of course, the sun. The beds are protected from rain by plastic sheeting. Worms retreat from light. The temperature (20°C -28°C) and moisture content of the sludge must be correct to keep them well and active.

Before the sludge is given to the worms it is mixed with zeolite. Zeolite is an amazing odour absorbing material. Each molecule has a huge surface area and 'grabs' gases from the material. Material with odour present is detrimental to the worms. Other additives, including green waste, are mixed with the sludge. Green waste is mulched vegetation and adds oxygen to the mixture, an essential for the worms. This mixture is spread an inch deep on top of the beds 3-5 times a week. This uses around 300 tonnes of sludge. As well as the worms environmental requirements their food must always be just a little more than enough to keep the beds viable.

The worm castings are collected from underneath the raised beds. (Garden worms deposit their castings on top of the soil). There are between 150-200 cubic metres harvested per week.

The primary sludge, as is the case with 'manures' contains many unpleasant substances; pathogens including salmonella, e.coli and the rest. These are rendered harmless by the enzymes in the worm's digestive system. (In a compost-heap, pathogens are killed by the heap exceeding 70°C and/or the addition of lime).

Vermitech closely monitors the final product, the worm castings. Any run off from the beds is collected and put through the plant again.

The plant has been in operation this year and has proved very successful. Not only does it eliminate the necessity for land fill but it will reduce the costs of sewage treatment by 50%. It is also producing a valuable and very saleable soil conditioner in the worm castings from which the Redland Shire will benefit by a percentage of the profits.

David Heaton, COGS member in Brisbane, has done some experiments using this bio-verm in his organic garden. For detailed pictures of the various stages of this experiment see the web sites below. David experimented with lettuce and tomatoes. He says "Parsnips and Silverbeet don't like Worm Castings".

**Lettuce** - [www.powerup.com.au/~dheaton/testpage1.htm](http://www.powerup.com.au/~dheaton/testpage1.htm)

The experience on Compost versus Worm Castings on the growth of lettuce plants (Oakleaf Lettuce) is completed. The lettuce that were fed on the Worm Casting have grown faster, larger and taller than the lettuce which was fed on Compost. The plants were in the same patch of the garden (beside each other), they were watered at the same time and had the same amount of sun.

**Tomatoes** - [www.powerup.com.au/~dheaton/testing.htm](http://www.powerup.com.au/~dheaton/testing.htm)

The experiment was terminated as they developed a disease called Fusarium Wilt. The experiment will be repeated in winter.

# GARDENING FOR GOD

By John Allen

I had an e-mail from the Clinton Heights Lutheran Church in Columbus, Ohio, USA to ask for permission to reprint some material from the COGS web site in a booklet they are putting together. I thought that COGS members who are involved with a church group may be interested in the wonderful work that this church is doing.

They operate a program called "Gardening for God" that encourages members of their congregation to either enlarge their pre-existing gardens or to start gardening for the purpose of generating fresh produce for a local food pantry. The members bring their produce to church on Sunday and it is taken to the pantry on Monday morning. The food is then distributed to the hungry in their community.

In an effort to increase the amount of food generated by the program they have put together a booklet on gardening for free distribution to participants and other churches that are interested in joining the Program. The book emphasises organic growing principles.

On a congregational level, they have tried to give a broad overview of the program and some guidelines on organising the program itself, as opposed to the actual gardening. This involves letting the congregation know about the program early enough in the year to let participants plan their gardens, providing resources to help members start and grow better gardens and actually collecting the crops and getting them to the hungry. It also offers some suggestions on how the program can be used to augment the church's youth, seniors', men's women's and evangelism programs.

On an individual level, this booklet gives some "nuts and bolts" information on how to grow a better garden. The purpose of that information is to help participants produce more food for the hungry and to provide more satisfaction for individual participants.

*I have electronic copy of the book available and can make it freely available on request. I do not have printed copy.*

John Allen

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## SAFETY TIP

Don't forget to wear gloves and other protective gear when you're dealing with organic fertilisers such as animal manures and compost. Legionella and other dangerous micro-organisms are common in these kinds of substances. Most importantly, avoid breathing in dust from the materials and always wash well after dealing with them.

Australian Better Gardens & Home Ideas, October 1998

## 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 and see them at 12 Victoria Street Hall or phone: 6230 2209.*

## ZUCCHINI FRITTERS

*Thanks to Mike & Lyndy Nixon for this recipe*

For your overgrown zucchinis or squash, which tend to be rather bland and difficult to deal with:

Make up a seasoned flour or breadcrumb mix, quantity according to how much you want to cook.

1/2 cup of plain flour or packet breadcrumbs.

1/2 to 1 tablespoon of pepper steak seasoning (we use McCormick brand). 1 tablespoon of sesame seed.

Beat one egg (from free range, organically fed happy hens of course) into a flat dish.

Slice your big zucchini or squash into flat slices about 1/2 inch or 15 mm thick, keeping the skin on of course. Dip in the egg and then coat both sides with a good coating of the seasoning mix.

Cook on a BBQ hot plate or a frying pan, using just a little peanut (or other) oil for a few minutes each side - until nicely browned. They should be like good spaghetti - al dente!

Adjust the proportion of pepper seasoning depending on how peppery you want the final product.

## ZUCCHINI NUT LOAF

*From Margaret's recipe archives*

Any salad oil except peanut or olive can be used in this recipe.

3 eggs

1 1/2 cups brown sugar, firmly packed

1 cup oil

125g nut pieces (any nuts you like)

1 1/2 cups coarsely grated zucchini (about 3 medium zucchini)

1 1/2 cups wholemeal self-raising flour

1 1/2 cups white plain flour

Combine eggs, sugar and oil in electric mixer or food processor, mix or process until mixture is changed in colour; this takes only a short time. Stir in walnuts and zucchini, then sifted flours, return husks from sifter to mixture. Spread mixture into well-greased loaf tin (base measures 12cm x 22cm). Bake in moderate oven approximately 1 hour. Stand few minutes, turn onto wire rack to cool.



## ORGANIC INDUSTRY WORKSHOP - REPORT

**O**n the 10th and 11th of February the Organic Federation of Australia (OFA) held an organic industry workshop in Canberra. Nearly 70 members of the organic industry and government representatives met to discuss options for further development of the industry. Participants funded their own travel and accommodation costs with Federal Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (AFFA) funding the venue, facilitator and refreshment costs.

Representatives from production, certification, inspection, consulting, wholesaling, processing, exporting, retailing, education & research sectors, along with state government agricultural and business development officers, federal government officers from AFFA, Australian Quarantine Inspection Service (AQIS), Austrade, Supermarket To Asia Ltd were present. Senator Judith Troethe, Parliamentary Secretary to the Federal Minister for Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry opened the workshop with strong words of support for the development of the organic industry. The organic industry is now recognised as a significant and viable part of agricultural production in this country.

This workshop was designed to move beyond the goal and strategy setting sessions undertaken in the past. It was important to go through those earlier meetings to allow this next stage to unfold. The workshop found much common ground amongst a very divergent group of participants. Assisted with an excellent facilitator we short listed the types of actions we might like to take to move the industry forward. Some of these were: communication, influencing government policy, research & development, promotion & marketing, industry management/professionalism & supply chain development. We then detailed specific actions producing a comprehensive plan for industry development.

One idea of note was an industry web site providing linkages to information of all types and levels. An automated system would allow you to select your particular interest to receive information from others and conversely to allow selection of a particular interest group to send information to. The workshop detailed the moves needed to lobby government throughout Australia to get our fair share of resources. Briefing papers need to be prepared and industry members organised to visit their local members and state ministers.

One of the promotional ideas discussed was the concept of organic harvest month, which is extremely successful in the US. This was further developed from ideas put together by a promotions committee last year. During this month all members of industry would be encouraged to promote the philosophy of organic/biodynamic production and consumption.

These ideas will require funding and there was significant discussion about how we might tap into existing government resources. For example we might like to lobby for levies paid by our growers to existing research & development corporations to be used for organic research instead of going into the larger pool of conventional research money. In

addition we may be able to set up an export group with assistance from Supermarket to Asia Ltd who are keen to help develop supply chain linkages. Many ideas will require industry contribution for example by joining and supporting the OFA. The suggestion was made for the OFA to set up a trading company to carry out many activities such as promotion and marketing. The initial funds would most likely have to come from industry in the form of risk capital.

The participants increasingly throughout the workshop saw the need for, and benefits from, a strong active OFA. There was much discussion about exactly how the OFA should operate from a board level as well as from the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and administrative level. It was suggested the OFA should move to raise funds immediately to pay for a CEO full-time if possible. Some participants indicated significant financial support may be forthcoming from them should this occur.

The OFA will circulate this plan widely throughout the industry to certified members and through any other means possible, seeking support for the suggestions put forward. This is an exciting time with participants at the workshop representing the bulk of the organic industry exhibiting a strong desire to work co-operatively together.

This plan is by no means exhaustive and can be added to as required. Fine-tuning will take place over the next month to six weeks as participants are circulated a draft for final comments.

*COGS is already an associate member of the OFA, however, the OFA is inviting individuals consumers and members of the public who are interested in supporting the development of organic agriculture to join as associate members.*

*The OFA is the peak body of the organic industry, representing growers, certifiers, processors, wholesalers, retailers, inspectors, researchers and consumers. Its role is to promote the industry, speak on its behalf, lobby governments, and allocate research and development funds. Current issues that the OFA is dealing with include:- lobbying the government to establish a domestic standard for organics (currently there is only an export standard); improving support for farmers wishing to convert to organic growing; encouraging organic exports; and countering the threat of genetic engineering. Dick Copeman, coordinator of the Consumer Food Network, represents consumers on the OFA board. For a \$30 annual subscription, associate members receive a regular newsletter and notification of events and workshops, and publications of interest.*

*For information about joining the OFA, contact:*

The OFA Secretariat  
252 Lygon St, East Brunswick,  
Melbourne, VIC 3057  
Ph 61 3 9386 6600,  
Fax 61 3 9384 1322  
E-mail: OFA@netspace.net.au

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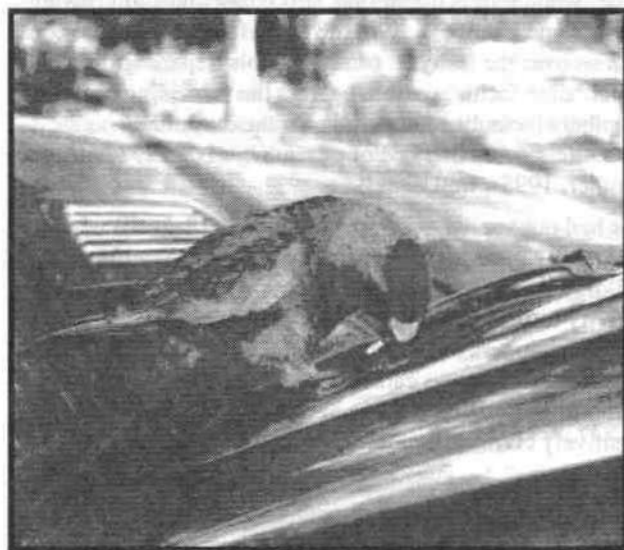
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This parrot prefers Betty's juicy windscreen wiper blades to the beautiful organic produce at the Cotter Garden!

*Photograph by Betty Cornhill 1999*

## **YOUTHHAVEN NEWS**

Youthhaven Horticulture is very pleased with the 15 x 6 metre shed which the Weston Creek Rotarians purchased and erected last year. The growers now have adequate space to store tools, equipment, and themselves on hot, cold, wet or windy days.

Experimental plantings have been made of paulownia trees and clumping bamboo to test how well they will grow in Canberra and what their economic potential is. More news on this in the future.

*Youthhaven is a Fusion Australia Project with Lions Youth Haven Inc. and St. Alban's Anglican Church of the Interchange, Woden. The project aims to meet the needs of long-term out-of-work people for satisfying and creative activity, teaching skills in organic farming, and developing pride in their abilities and achievements.*

*For more information about the Youthhaven organic farm project, contact John Brummell on 6288 2146 or see: [www.netspeed.com.au/cogs/cogyouth.htm](http://www.netspeed.com.au/cogs/cogyouth.htm)*

## **DISCUSSION FORUM ON COGS WEB SITE NOW AVAILABLE**

COGS has added a trial discussion forum to its popular web site. Anyone can post a question or comment there about organic growing. Others can join in on the discussion. Messages associated with a particular discussion thread together so that it is simple to follow any particular discussion. I would like to particularly encourage COGS members to use the forum to exchange information. The forum is moderated and COGS reserves the right to edit or delete any message posted, without notice.

*John Allen*

# COGS COMMUNITY GARDEN REPORTS

## Northside Garden

Northside Community Garden, established in 1996, currently has a waiting list for potential plot holders. We have twenty two gardeners and/or families or coalitions. Some plots are used as get-aways, others a meeting place for family members or groups of families. Most of the gardeners at our garden regularly, and they attend working bees and tend the communal spaces around the swings and orchard. This reflects the community at a glance - people move on. Lose the time they originally allocated to care for their plots, or simply lose interest.

The upshot is that we are a dynamic group and the loss of a member is always a disappointment. New members often bring new ideas both in husbandry and in group activity.

Two such members have this month at the Northside AGM, taken over the committee positions. Rod Therkelson is our new convenor, replacing yours truly. Maura O'Connor has agreed to tend our finances. Thank you both.

Maura takes over from Margie Perkins, a former member and until the AGM, the Northside's one and only Treasurer. Margie handled the grant monies for our original setup. She has not missed an opportunity to help us and I will always retain a picture of her and Anne Embry swinging picks at seemingly impenetrable soil when we were re-laying our plumbing. Thank you Margie.

The future looks good. With a new committee and a full house, Northside Community Garden will continue to be the best!

*John Tuxworth*

## Oaks Estate Garden

This is my first year in the community garden, and have only recently been elected Garden Convenor. I've previously been a bit of a haphazard gardener, and despite my dedication this year I've had various degrees of success. I've had an abundant strawberry patch, in keeping with our community patch, but all my tomatoes stemming from the purchased seedlings failed miserably, whilst those that sprang from the previous year, and plot holder's efforts, have performed magnificently! I am quite excited about the oncoming Aubergines that I have been waiting months for; I only hope they will make it to maturity before the frosts take over our little garden. It's a real pleasure to visit the garden and see the changes in each of the plots, exchange ideas with the other members, and admire the gorgeous roses as I pass Vikki's plot.

Our garden has featured prominently of recent; we are proud of our joint second prize win in the ABC Open Garden Scheme competition, providing us with funds to do some much needed repairs on our tools and premises. We are indebted to Amine, past Convenor and present Treasurer, for her representation on our behalf. The recent launch of two National Trust Oaks Estate historical brochures and draft citation, saw the Oaks Estate community and Brendan Smyth, Minister for Urban Services, gather at our local hall. Our garden was proudly represented by George, who

brought along a display of delicious produce from his patch as an example of items of significance to each of us in our local community. There was considerable interest in his display at the end of the day when he offered the veges around to the eager visitors!



To add variety to our already multicultural garden community; this year we welcomed Tom and Mine newly immigrated to Australia from Canada and Japan respectively. Together with their Australian new born, Anna, they spent many enthusiastic hours with us in the garden before their departure to QLD where they aspire to being able to pick organically grown bananas from their own trees. This move has left us with some available plots we are keen to reallocate, so if you know of anyone in the area, encourage them to give us a call and join up. We look forward to seeing you at the meetings and in our community garden.

*Lynnette Taylor*

## Charnwood Garden

Hello all COGS members and other readers. The Charnwood plot is doing fine, still going and still growing (vegies and members). We have had four new people come join us over the last year (with a couple departing due to the usual "time factor" reasons), while the remaining 'core' of members looks like hanging in for the duration (I notice from the records that one of our number is a 1992 heritage, another, 1995 - well done!).

We had our yearly AGM just yesterday (18 April) which was a very pleasant affair, sunny afternoon, handful of children running round - and of course, lots of working-bee activity too. Hoes and mattocks were wielded, whippersnippers did the rounds of the (many) overgrown edges, wheelbarrows came and went, loading up our compost bins. Well done to all, as the place now looks positively civilised again.

Tool were downed eventually in favour of an outdoor spread, then after lunch we spent a bit of time hearing feedback from each plotholder on their wins and losses, learnings and lamentings from the 98-99 growing season. Some semi-regular pilfering had occurred - at least to the plots near the fence - but overall, everyone came away with lots of yummy produce. Winter seedlings are now in or going in, so here's to brassicas et al!

Members were generally happy with our (very) basic plan of each maintaining their own plot while also putting a little bit of occasional time into developing the unused areas into plots suitable for newcomers (the compost bins are a great help in this process!). We have penned, for our own benefit,

a vision of the Charnwood garden as thriving with life of all kinds, a vital part of our community life.

We note that two new Aged Person Unit complexes are to be built in Charnwood over the next two years, so we have hopes of being able to provide many residents with access to their own little 'allotment' on our site. We also note the Charnwood shops are soon to receive a major upgrade of the public spaces, and once this is done, we intend to make up some nice posters to further beautify the area as well as alert locals to this wonderful resource in their vicinity.

We also received the offer of a large wire cage to fashion into a glasshouse (or plastic-house) or even a shade-house, so this summer could see us raising lots of our own organic babies on site! Why not come out to visit us sometime? Sunday morning is the time we try to all get down there.

Best wishes to all readers for 1999,

*Gerard De Ruyter, Convenor 6258 5903*

*PS Many thanks also to Betty Cornhill for her efforts in lining up for us one truckload of the famous Canberra Show straw/manure mix, and to Wanda Bridgland for her fine services as Treasurer over the last year.*

## The Cotter Garden

This season the Cotter Garden has continued to be a source of relaxation and enjoyment for its members as well as a supply of fresh organic vegetables and soft fruits.

Early Spring showed much promise with gardeners harvesting early crops of asparagus and peas. But many of us were disappointed when a severe frost at the end of October killed many of our frost-sensitive seedlings. Some of our gardeners now suggest that we don't plant tomatoes before the Melbourne Cup! However I found that the seedlings I had protected with plastic containers filled with water were not damaged and continued on to give an early harvest.

Subsequent replantings of tomato seedlings then gave me a staggered harvest from Summer through into Autumn. I planted some "Brandywine" tomatoes, an American

heirloom, and the plants grew into large vines with many large fruits. The tomatoes had an excellent flavour, similar to our Pink Lady, but even meatier. By early Autumn however there was a build up in the numbers of the green vegetable bug or stink bug. These pests are sapsuckers who leave hard white patches in the fruit. Last season these pests did not arrive, presumably because of the extreme heat and dry conditions. But this year they have ruined many tomatoes.

Up to now we haven't had a frost (mid April) so we have continued to pick capsicums and eggplants, but with the nights getting colder this won't go on much longer. Many pumpkin vines have already withered and the fruits are ready to be picked. I usually leave mine until the vine is killed completely by the frost, but other gardeners harvest theirs early. It depends on the type of pumpkins, since pumpkins for storing are better left as long as possible.

The frog pond we installed last Spring has been stocked with frogs we hope will help control some of the pests - frogs eat just about anything that fits into their mouths, including beetles, snails, slugs, grasshoppers and caterpillars. We need to make some permanent plantings near the pond to provide shelter for the frogs, but over Summer we planted bush sunflowers and ornamental amaranth to make the area attractive and colourful. The sunflower is unusual in that it has many small flowers. I don't know the variety. Traudi planted it originally and we have been saving the seed ever since and letting it self-seed as well. The amaranth is striking with long maroon tassels hanging down. Even now, well into Autumn, there is a wonderful display around the garden. It self-seeds so readily we should find it popping up all over the place next season.

The wildlife in the garden always reminds me that any organic garden is a community which we as gardeners share with a whole range of creatures. And the Cotter garden is an excellent example of the abundance present in such ecosystems. This is in marked contrast to the sterility of many chemical-doused gardens or farms.

*Michelle Johnson*

## ENVIRONMENT CENTRE SHOP

The Canberra Environment Centre Shop offers products that are environmentally friendly and safe for you to use.

- Bulk biodegradable household and personal
- Care products (bring your own containers)
- Wood products made from recycled or reject timber
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- Re-useable sanitary pads and organic tampons
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- Australian made fashion clothing and
- Gifts for the whole family

**The shop is at Kingsley Street Acton**

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## HISTORIC NEW BOOK GIVES POSITIVE JOBS-AND FORESTS SOLUTION

An historic new book has been hailed as a win-win solution for forests and jobs by some of Australia's leading environmentalists. *Forest-Friendly Building Timbers* is a \$9.95 consumer guide to using plantation and recycled timbers in building projects instead of using increasingly rare native forest timbers.

The book details uses and products from stumps through to rafters and everything in between.

"Now anyone with even a vaguely Green bone in their body can do the right thing by forests when next they design, build, or renovate," says the book's co-editor, Mr Alan T Gray.

"You can use your consumer purchasing power to help save the last of our best native forests," he said. Mr Gray said that as a forest campaigner, he was delighted to offer consumers a positive guide for action rather than having to depress people with bad news.<sup>1</sup>

The Wilderness Society has also supported the book and will be conducting public meetings and slide nights around Australia on the issue of forest-friendly building timbers. "This is the environmental publishing event of 1999. We hope this book will play a major part in teaching Australians that we can have timber products as well as creating sustainable jobs in the plantation timber industry and saving our precious native forests at the same time," said National Campaign Director of The Wilderness Society, Mr Alec Marr, one of the driving forces behind the book.

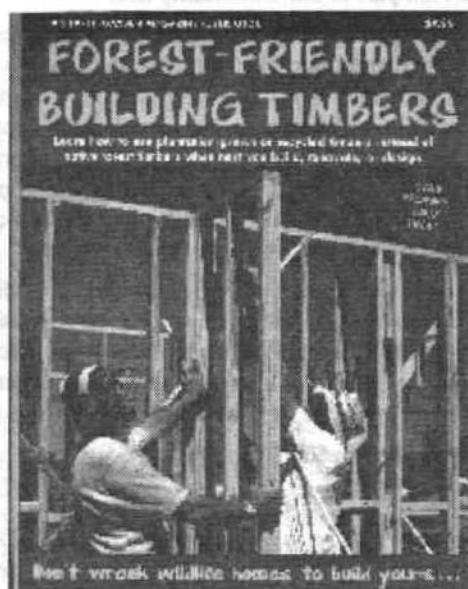
(1) Mr Gray was founding Director of the Wombat Forest Society, which temporarily ended wood-chipping in the Wombat State Forest in central Victoria in 1996. His family lives in a 'recycled' house 100 metres from clear-felled forest, with numerous photo opportunities.

**More information: Alan T. Gray (0417) 515254, or Alec Marr: (0417) 229670**

*Forest-Friendly Building Timbers* is distributed to specialist bookshops and outlets by Gemcraft Books of Burwood, Melbourne, and to newsagents by Gordon & Gotch. Naturally, it is printed on plantation-grown paper.

**ISBN: 0 9586397 01. 80 pages, RRP \$9.95. Co-editors: Alan T. Gray & Anne Hall.**

**Late news** - the National Association of Forest Industries has legal action pending against the publisher of the above book and is seeking to have it banned. While the technical information is correct there are some references to the forest timber industry which are at issue. You can still buy the book at the Environment Centre Shop, and there is a copy in the COGS library.



### COGS INFORMATION PAPERS

#### Gene-Free Food List

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

The *Australian Gene-Ethics Network* has compiled a comprehensive list of GE-free foods. **The January 1999 version of this list is now available.** This list is also 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)

#### 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

- ✓ For the **GE-free Food List** - **also include \$1 in loose stamps**
- ✓ Please include your membership number



## GENETIC ENGINEERING NEWS

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 GE and organic information.

... John Allen

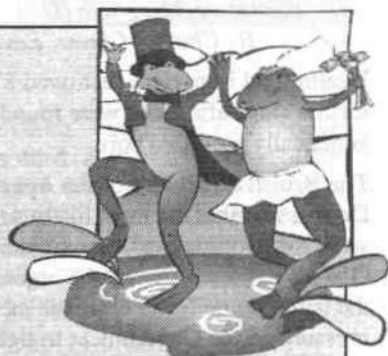
### FIRST GE-FREE ZONE DECLARED

AUCKLAND CITY, New Zealand, Democracy Services, 2 February 1999

On Tuesday, 26 January 1999, Members of the Waiheke (an Island near Auckland, NZ) Community Board considered deputation asking for the Boards support in declaring Waiheke a genetic engineering free zone and pointing out the hazards of allowing genetic engineering in food.

The Board resolved:

1. That the Waiheke Community Board supports the establishment of a genetic engineering free zone on Waiheke Island.
2. That the board encourage all businesses and individuals residing on or operating within the board's area to refrain from using genetically modified organisms in any pastoral, horticultural, viticultural, aquacultural, or other food production.
3. That the board strongly encourage all such businesses and individuals to state publicly their support for, or at the least to abide by the intent of this resolution.
4. That it be recommended to the Hauraki Gulf and City Advocacy Committees that it be recommended to the Auckland City Council that the council also becomes a genetic engineering free zone.



### PRINCE CHARLES ON-LINE FORUM

The Prince of Wales web site has a page dedicated to genetically modified food. The Prince says: "Is genetically modified food an innovation we can do without? I have already explained my own concerns about genetically modified food, in some detail, in a series of speeches and articles. But I am keen to encourage wider public debate about these fundamental issues, which concern us all, and have chosen this as the subject of my first Online Forum."

Have your say at [www.princeofwales.gov.uk/forum/](http://www.princeofwales.gov.uk/forum/)

### MONSANTO FINED FOR BREAKING U.K. GENE RULES

Reuters 24/2/1999

LONDON - U.S. biotechnology giant Monsanto Co. was found guilty and fined \$27,800 (or 17,000 pounds) for breaking environmental regulations at a test site for genetically modified crops in eastern England. [The UK Government has burned the crops (*February 1999 issue of Alive: Canadian Journal of Health and Nutrition*)].

British officials said at the outset that Monsanto, and Perryfields Holdings Ltd. of Britain breached the agreed-upon rules allowing them to set up a trial plot producing

genetically-modified organisms. The officials said that control measures to restrict the transfer of genetically-modified pollen from herbicide-tolerant oilseed rape to neighbouring unmodified crops had been partly removed. Another requirement was that the site be surrounded by a 19.8-foot pollen barrier. "The border was in place at the beginning of the trial, but part of it was later (mowed) in error by one of the contractors," Monsanto said when the prosecution was started.

Monsanto destroyed all the genetically-modified oilseed plants in the trial along with other oilseed rape within 165 feet of the trial.

In a statement immediately before the judgment, Monsanto said it fully supported rigorous enforcement of the regulations for growing the modified crops. "We have taken immediate steps to stop similar breaches occurring in future."

### ENDOSULFAN IN EXPORT BEEF: ALSO IN OUR FOOD?

Consumer Food News (incorporating Eco-Consumer)

Contamination of Australian beef with the cotton pesticide, Endosulfan, was first revealed before Christmas but little action was taken until South Korea rejected contaminated beef exports. Our politicians and media have ignored the

effects of this contaminated beef on consumers in Australia, concentrating only on the threat to our export markets. The Consumers' Federation believes that it is just as important that our domestic food is safe as it is that our export markets remain viable.

## **ORGANIC GE CHIPPIES DESTROYED**

*The Electronic Telegraph (UK) - Friday 5 February 1999  
By Charles Clover, Environment Editor*

Health food importers destroyed 87,000 packets of organic tortilla chips after they were found to be contaminated with genetically modified corn.

The British distributor of the Apache brand of organic chips, De Rit, said that the most likely source of the contamination was cross-pollination of the organic maize used in them by GM crops grown around the organic farm in Texas where the maize came from. If so, the incident will create further pressure on the Government to tighten controls on the introduction of genetic crops in Britain. William Hague, the Tory leader, called in the Commons on Wednesday for a moratorium on all introductions until further scientific studies are carried out.

## **BRAZIL TO HALT GE SOY**

*February 1999 issue of Alive: Canadian Journal of Health and Nutrition,*

Japan has refused genetically engineered soy from Brazil, forcing Brazilian authorities to halt approval for cultivation of biotech soybeans. Soy exports from Brazil to Japan total \$1.5 billion US, which is about 30% of Japan's soy imports. Consumer action in Brazil, including a lawsuit filed by the Brazilian Institute for Consumer Defense (IDEC), has also been instrumental in halting the Brazilian Ministry of Agriculture's approval of Monsanto's glyphosate-tolerant soybeans.

## **STUDY CASTS DOUBT ON GM FOOD**

LONDON, Jan 27 (Reuters) - An artificial gut designed by Dutch researchers has cast doubts on the safety of genetically modified food, *New Scientist* magazine reported on Wednesday. The computer-controlled model of the stomach and intestines, designed to mimic human food digestion, showed that antibiotic-resistance genes introduced into food could jump to bacteria in the gut.

"The results show that DNA lingers in the intestine, and confirms that genetically modified bacteria can transfer their antibiotic-resistance genes to bacteria in the gut," according to the magazine. One of the concerns about genetically engineered crops is that antibiotic-resistant genes could transfer to animals and humans and create superbugs that cannot be killed by even the strongest antibiotics.

## **AUSSIE CANOLA WIN**

Australian trade authorities announced on Jan. 8, the largest shipment of canola (rapeseed) ever exported from Australia. The \$16.5 million dollar shipment is bound for oilseed crushing plants in Europe. According to Graham Lawrence, managing director of the New South Wales Grains Board, "Europe has moved to become a major buyer this year because Australia is the only country to guarantee non-genetic modified canola." Canada has lost \$300-400 million in canola sales to Europe over the last year because government authorities have followed the US model of comingling GE and non-GE grains. This year over 50% of Canada's 13.4 million acres of canola are genetically engineered.

## **EU FOOD RETAILERS WANT GE-FREE FOOD**

LONDON, UK, March 22, 1999 (ENS) - A move by European food retail chains to eliminate genetically modified (GM) ingredients and additives from their own-brand food products is of "major significance," the European Union (EU) supermarket association Eurocommerce claimed today. Fernanda Fau of Eurocommerce was speaking after last week's announcement by seven supermarket chains that they are launching a consortium to jointly source non-GM foodstuffs.

## **FLOODGATES OPEN TO UNTESTED GE FOODS**

Australian Gene Ethics News Release, March 31, 1999

Health Ministers were last night stampeded into allowing GE foods into our food supply for the next 13 months - untested, unassessed and unlabelled. This regulation-free holiday for the Gene Tech Giants offers no benefits to food buyers, puts public health at risk, and denies our right to know what we are eating.

Health Ministers have betrayed the public's trust and allowed genetic engineering companies to flood the market with mutant foods. ANZFA will accept applications for GE food registration until April 30, whether or not the foods are already being sold here, then allow them to be sold unlabelled and without assessment for up to a year.

Up to fifty six imported GE foods may be in our supermarkets, but it's more likely that only soy, cotton seed oil and some processing agents are used so far.

To qualify for acceptance, Health Ministers said that the (GE) food commodity must already be on the market lawfully overseas and be considered safe by an overseas regulatory agency. This gives no assurance of safety at all.

By making exceptions for transnational companies, Health Ministers have created a regulatory minefield and many inequities..

## SEED SAVERS

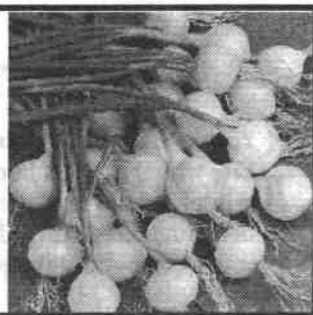
www.seedsavers.net

Each issue we feature an extract from *The Seed Savers' Handbook* by Michael & Jude Fanton, from the Seed Savers' Network in Byron Bay. This issue looks at onions. 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



### ONION (*AMARYLLIDACEAE*)

*Allium cepa* - *allium* means garlic, and *cepa* means onion in Latin.

**Origins:** Onion is a hardy biennial from the southern parts of Russia and Iran. It was disseminated by the Indo-European hordes in their numerous migrations. Very ancient forms of onion are still for sale in Middle Eastern markets. Onions were considered sacred and were eaten in copious quantities by the Egyptians who honoured them in some of their monuments. In recent times, UN officials have found old varieties in Iran that show resistance to thrips - greatly benefited the industry. Thrips are slender insects with stout, cone-shaped mouth parts with which they scrape the onion stems and suck out the sap, causing yellowing of the leaves.

**Description:** Onions have many close relatives:

- *cepa* var. *aggregatum* (see Eschallot, also called French Shallot, Potato Onion and Multiplier Onion).
- *cepa* var. *proliferum* (see Tree Onion, also called Topset, Egyptian and Walking Onion).
- *fistulosum* (see Spring Onion, also called Bunching, Welsh Onion, Scallion, Shallot and Self-Perpetuating Onion).

**Cultivation:** Bending the leaves late in the season will stop premature bolting and encourage development of the bulb. Onions may not form bulbs or seed at all if moved to a different latitude. A Tasmanian onion, for example, is unlikely to produce seeds in North Queensland, even if grown on the cool Atherton Tableland.

**Saving the Seed:** Several varieties can be grown in the same garden in the first year of their growth. To ensure purity, only one sort should be allowed to flower in the second spring within a 400 metre radius.

At least twenty plants of a variety must be saved in order to maintain diversity for the long term, but this optimum number should not deter you from saving onion seeds if you have grown only a small number of plants.

Onions are pollinated by insects. Some collectors or curators of onions actually bag their onion flower heads. This involves the hand-pollination of at least twenty individual heads of each variety, moving pollen, with a camel hair brush, from head to head, each morning for a month! More simply, onion seed breeders introduce pollinating insects into the cages in which onions are isolated.

Choose well-formed and firm onions for seed purposes. Large onions produce more seed than small ones, but it is worthwhile looking at the whole plant when it is growing and tagging it, rather than just choosing the largest at harvest. The flowering stalk which develops in the second season is leafless, hard and hollow and can grow up to two metres tall. As onions go to seed very rapidly, a stake may be needed at this time.

Seeds are ripe when the stalk changes colour to brownish. The seeds become black and the capsules begin to open and drop seeds if shaken. All the plants' heads do not come to seed at the same time, so they may have to be harvested at random. Put the heads in a paper or cloth bag and hang in a dry shady place.

When dry, shake and rub the bunch. A mixture of seed, capsule and stems will result. Little white dried calyces will be amongst the seeds. The mix can be sieved and winnowed or simply blown upon gently until only black seeds are left.

**Storage:** The seeds will last only one to two years. They are best kept in cold and dry storage after complete drying. Onion seeds lose vitality very quickly in warm and humid climates. There are 250 seeds to the gram.

**Usage:** Onions are much sweeter when grown in warm climates. This explains why the Spanish and Iranians chop into them as we eat apples. Onion is believed to be unsuitable for people with a nervous disposition or prone to skin disorders. Onion is reputed to loosen phlegm, drain mucus from the nose, and have antiseptic qualities. Onion is also helpful for lowering blood pressure, and blood sugar. Rub raw onions on cracked feet for quick relief.

**On the Lookout:** The ancient Greeks had many varieties bearing the names of different Aegean Islands.

Multiplier types are very valuable. Some older farmers may still have some interesting ancient varieties.

It is possible to obtain seeds within a few months from particularly good onion bulbs that you find at the greengrocer's. Concerning rare folk strains, Robert, a Seed Saver subscriber from Norfolk Island, writes: *Approximately 20 years ago, there was on the Island an onion referred to locally as the "Norfolk Island onion" which seems to have died out here. It was a small to medium onion with a distinctive flat button-shaped bulb and a deep-brownish outer dry skin which, when peeled, revealed the purple-coloured inner flesh. The stem was purple until it turned into normal green leaves.*

*It was grown from the seeds of the previous year's crop. It was similar to the Indonesian onion to look at but it did not multiply by dividing itself to form clumps as the Indonesian one does. It had rather a strong flavour and kept in storage for three to four times longer than other onions. It was excellent for pickling also. The seed originated with visiting American whaling ships between 1850 and 1900. What Yates called the Lord Howe Island onion, bears no resemblance to it. Hopefully this variety will be found again.*

Margaret Heseltine, a retired market gardener, in Derby WA, sent a sample of onion seeds that she has been keeping for thirty years. She reported obtaining the seeds, that she planted and seed-harvested, from the gardener at the Fitzroy Crossing Hotel. It is a white onion which keeps well and grows easily in the tropics. Generally, white varieties such as Barletta, Hunter River, Early Flat White and White Pearl are for immediate use. They are known as short-day varieties.

Pukekohe Long Keeper is still number one in New Zealand and lasts for more than nine months in a well-ventilated shed. Ailsa Craig is a huge, straw-yellow globe weighing up to one kilogram but it does not keep quite as long as Pukekohe.

Because onions in general respond to day length for forming bulbs, local varieties are best.

## WINTER VEGETABLE PLANTING GUIDE

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

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

### Asparagus

Prepare your bed before you buy the crowns to plant late winter - early spring. Since this is a perennial which can last for up to 20 years, it is well worth the effort of establishing properly. It needs good drainage and can be planted very successfully in a raised bed. It likes compost and well-rotted manure. Seaweed is excellent mulch. The crowns are planted in a trench, but worth the roots straddling a ridge. Cover so dormant shoots are about 4cm below the surface.

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

### Broad Beans

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

### Kohlrabi

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

### Lettuce

Only plant winter varieties of lettuces (Cos, Salad bowl, Oakleaf, Butterhead and Mignonette varieties)

### Onions

Mid season varieties are often sown late autumn early winter and long keeping varieties in winter.

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

### Rhubarb

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

### Peas

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

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

### Strawberries

Plant certified stock or propagate from runners (not from plants more than 2 years old however) on a soil enriched with compost or well rotted manure. On old plants remove

the old leaves and burn or throw them in the garbage in case they are infected with a virus.

### Berries

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

### Currents

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

### Gooseberries

Like similar conditions to Currants.

**Winter Vegetable Planting Guide**

	June	July	August
Asparagus		T	ST
Broad Beans	S		
Kohlrabi			S
Lettuce			S
Onions	ST	S	S
Peas			S
Rhubarb			T
Silverbeet			S
Spinach			S

S = Seed sowing

T = Transplant

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

### Green Manures

Autumn is the time to plant green manure crops which can be dug in during spring, at least 4 weeks prior to planting your summer crops. Benefits of green manures 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 are:

#### Legumes:

Broad Beans, Field Peas, Lupins, Sub Clover, Tic Peas, Vetch.

#### Non-Legumes:

Barley, Oats, Rye.



## 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, which 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 alternative is to enrich the soil with compost, manure, green manure and mulches, so avoiding disease; and to 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 the quarterly *Canberra Organic* magazine (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 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.

## MAY MEETING

### ORGANIC CROP PROTECTION

David O'Brien will be bringing along his wide range of organic crop protection products.

**When?** Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> May at 7:30 pm

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



## WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY FESTIVAL

COGS will have an information stand at the World Environment Day Festival in Garema Place/City Walk on Saturday 5 June 1999, from 10am to 4pm.

If any members would like to assist in staffing this stall please contact Jenny Waygood on 6294 4221 or email Jenny at: quickfix@dynamite.com.au

## COGS MONTHLY MEETINGS JUNE & JULY CHANGE OF VENUE

Due to excessive noise from bands in the Civic Youth Centre which have disrupted some of our meetings in the Griffin Centre, we have decided to move our June and July meetings, on a trial basis, to the Civic Youth Centre! This centre has all the necessary facilities, and is significantly cheaper to hire than the Griffin Centre. The entrance is only a few metres around the corner from our usual Room 4 meeting place.

## 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)

## 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