Spring

Canberra Organic Growers Society

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Canberra Organic

ORGANIC GROWING IN THE CANBERRA REGION

Quarterly publication of the Canberra Organic Growers Society Inc.

Inside!

PRESS THIS BUTTON TO AVOID GENETICALLY ENGINEERED FOOD

SPRING 1999

CANBERRA ORGANIC

Quarterly magazine published by the Canberra Organic Growers Society Inc.
Vol. 7 No. 3 (Issue 27)

CONTRIBUTIONS INVITED

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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 550.

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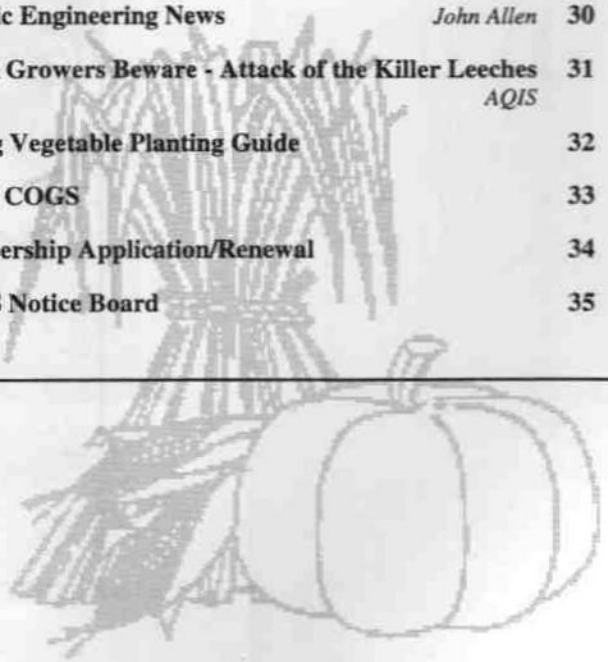

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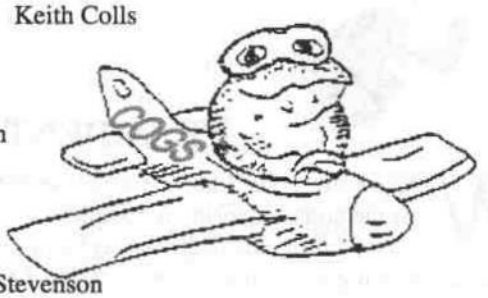

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REMINDER

Monthly meetings are held on the 4th Tuesday of each month (except December and January).
Time: 7:30 pm Place: Civic Youth Centre (at the rear of Room 4 Griffin Centre).

~ VISITORS WELCOME ~

From The Editor

Hello readers.

Organic gardeners need to be careful with some of the organic inputs they use. This month there is an article on the use of Pyrethrins. We are also featuring an article on how to avoid genetically engineered foods, and part two of Backyard Bushfoods by Sammy Ringer. We also have two new writers - Rosemary Stevenson and Jenny Allen, we welcome them and hope to have many more interesting articles from both of them. There are more yummy recipes to try, plus our feature from Seed Savers on Asparagus. Apologies to Bill Hankin from Heritage Seed Curators for not being able to print his informative article, but that will be in the next edition.

The quality of Joan Buckie's cover drawing in the last edition did not do the original justice - hopefully that has improved this issue. Happy Spring gardening to all, and we hope to hear from some of our readers in the form of letters to the editor.

Margaret

President's Report

Welcome everyone, I hope this edition of Canberra Organic finds you all well. At long last the home extension is complete and we are utilising it regularly. We found it quite cramped using the bedrooms as extra living areas. All that has to be completed now is some paving and painting then the project will finally be finished completely.

Spring is upon us and the days are getting longer. If you take the time to look in the garden you will see that things are slowly coming to life. So it's time to dust off those cobwebs from your gardening tools and set to work. The green manure crops need to be slashed. At *Cogs Backyard* last August I slashed a green manure crop that we had growing in a four metre square bed. There has been some debate on what to do with it afterwards - whether to dig it in or just mulch it over. So to experiment I split the bed in half. I dug the green manure crop into one and mulch the other half over (this was a lot easier). After about seven weeks the plot that had the green manure dug in was then mulched and corn was transplanted into both of these beds with some golden nugget pumpkins on one side and apple cucumbers on the other. Now which do you think did better? Well the results surprised me as the bed with the corn where I just mulched the green manure crop after slashing, took off a lot faster than the other side. After two months the height of the corn was the same but the slashed and mulched side looked a bit healthier (the whole crop looked great). At about one month after planting I pulled back the mulch on the plots to examine the soil and found that there was more worm activity in the plot that had been slashed and mulched and it was also holding more moisture.

A disturbing piece of news came my way the other week. A member had their backyard tested for chemical residues. The test results came back positive to a couple of chemicals that had been used in bygone days for the spraying of fruit trees. The house is in the inner suburbs and has had a number of families living in it before them. So for your own piece of mind and health it could pay to have these things checked.

With the debate on genetic engineering becoming a controversial topic, people are asking more questions on where their food originated; not liking the answers, they are turning to organic food. It's great to see people taking the time to think about this.

We receive many enquiries at our information stands at COGS BACKYARD (see dates and times on notice board). These vary from - how to grow organic food, where to purchase it, and can I be sure that I'm buying totally organic. The COGS committee needs help this spring in staffing these stands. We have been approached by numerous groups and organisations seeking a COGS information stand at their events. We have been unable to fulfil many of these requests due to lack of members who are willing to help. No experience is necessary, and support is available from fellow members if needed. You may find that some of these events are great fun and you will learn from it. So if you are available for a couple of hours now and again it would be greatly appreciated.

S R Sutton

Steve Sutton

LIFE IN A COMMUNITY GARDEN

Sarah Porriss

I live in Hartford, Connecticut USA, and have been the coordinator of a community garden for 1 & half years, since the beginning of 1998. There are about 15 actively used community gardens throughout the city. The one I have a plot in and coordinate has 28 plots of 225 (about 15x15) square feet - in metric that is about 22 square metres. So they are a good size. We have a greenhouse and toolshed. The allotment is fenced which keeps stray dogs and other animals out, and we don't have much problem with theft, because the plot is in an affluent district, in fact on the grounds of the Law School. I am the worst thief - if I see people neglecting their plots & letting their flowers and vegetables rot, I harvest their produce!

I did the Certificate in Ecological Horticulture at University of California at Santa Cruz in 1995, and absolutely loved the course. We learned so much about so many kinds of crops, and it gave me an enthusiasm for and knowledge of gardening which even being the coordinator of a community plot hasn't managed to defuse! I met Julia Veitch and Phil Moore, from Australia, during that course, & Julia asked me recently if I'd write an article for the Canberra Organic Growers Society about being a coordinator. Well, I'm more interested in gardening than coordinating, so thought I'd just write a diary (Southern hemisphere readers will have to add 6 months to each date for it to make sense!).

Sarah is visiting Canberra and may speak at a COGS meeting. .. Ed.

March 13: Today is my first day in the greenhouse. It is very cold and windy outside, but the sun has warmed the greenhouse to a balmy 75 degrees. The decision on what seeds to start is not that difficult - my greenhouse space is about 3x6 feet, which seems large, and there is enough soil mix for everyone to start as many seedlings as they like. I rummage around and decide which size pots to use, and I start broccoli, tomatoes, statice, cosmos, calendula, ageratum, basil, thyme, dill, parsley, radicchio, and lettuce. Only a few others have had the chance to begin their seeds. Some people appear to have brought plants from last season or from home, which is against the garden rules. (The rules are written on a chalkboard propped up on one of the work surfaces, next to a box of seeds to trade, gloves, and some old clay pots. I water and cover with plastic my future garden, sign up on the calendar to open and close the greenhouse a couple of times a week, then hesitantly leave this tropical climate.

March 18: I have been coming to water every afternoon after work. Today I meet one of the other people in the greenhouse, and notice she has a large bag of seed packets. I remember that I wanted to plant asters this year, which look so nice mixed with the small blue flowers that ageratum produces, but don't have the seed. I ask her and she finds me an old packet, packed for 1993 it says, but luckily the seeds were also packed in a vacuum-sealed packet inside the outside envelope. I offer to trade her some seed I've saved from the last two years - orange or purple cosmos? Red poppies? California poppy? Lettuce? Flax? But she has no room for these in her alphabetically organised seed bag.

April 10: No rain yet and the weather is very mild. Temperatures stay just above freezing at night and the lettuce is getting restless in the greenhouse. I visit my 15 by 20 foot garden plot and drop off a tray of Black Seeded Simpson (from seed saved in 1998) and Rouge d'Hiver (3 year old seed but I gave it one more chance and it sprouted for the first time ever in the greenhouse). I turn up a section that will house the lettuces this season and decide to return in a few days to plant the lettuce babies when they've had a chance to harden off. I scatter some spinach seed and notice a few mourning doves eyeing my plot as I leave for home.

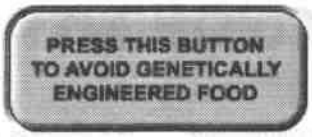
April 14-17: The seedlings have really taken off. I spend several afternoons at the greenhouse transplanting and trying to fit all the pots into what now seems like a tiny space. I don't have the patience to transplant every seedling, so I leave a few on the counter for others. The tomatoes I transplanted on the 14th have almost doubled in size by the 17th. I am very happy the aster seed is viable. I pinch some larkspur and lobelia seed from one of the other gardeners who has left his seed box out. I notice that Alycia, who was one of my high school teachers and is the former garden coordinator of my garden, has planted Heliotrope, one of my favorites, and I make a mental note to ask her for some seed the next time we speak. I feel lucky for many reasons: that I have access to a greenhouse this year, that I share the space with generous people, and that my area is in the far opposite corner from a man whose pepper plants are infested with aphids.

April 20: Seed arrives in the mail from a woman in Washington state who is a fellow member of the Seed Saver's Exchange. I ordered 3 varieties of lettuce from her on the condition that I grow them out and save the seed to distribute next season. Simpson Elite, Garnet and Vulcan are just 3 of 240 varieties this woman grows every year, and their seeds are in short supply in the United States. I give myself a pat on the back for taking on this project, albeit minuscule compared to the work done by the true heroes who work to prevent the loss of hundreds of varieties every year.

May 1: We had less than one inch of rain in April, a rare event which lays to rest the popular New England saying, "April showers bring May flowers". Instead of a nice moist, even muddy, garden, we have dust and scraggly weeds. I have forgotten to call the maintenance crew of the Law School to have the water turned on, and people have been complaining. I recall the days before Alycia passed me the torch and I was just one happy gardener among 30 with no responsibilities. However, I call the crew, try not to feel guilty, and am cheered up by my purple tulips which are finally in bloom.

May 13: I bring the last of my seedlings out of the greenhouse. I have worked about1/2 of my garden plot so far, including a strip of lavender and mint which lines the path. The lettuce I planted in April is ready for its first clipping. I will take the outside leaves of each plant whenever I am in the mood for salad, and they will continue to produce leaves through June. I delineate the middle section of the garden for flowers and plant them according to color: yellow, orange and red on the left; blue, pink and purple on the right. I hope this works because last year I planned poorly and when the poppies stopped blooming, I had flowers on one side only. I realise now I have more seedlings than space for flowers.

My plans to travel to Australia are solid and I am trying to balance my desire to travel with my love for my little garden plot. What is looking to be my best garden ever will be left in the hands of friends and family in July, the peak of summer and the 4 best weeks of the year. My head swims with questions: will my father take care of the tomatoes? Will my friend Traci recognise when the lettuce starts to bolt? Will they know the difference between bindweed and a gourd vine? Will they over water? Will the garden miss me as much I miss it?!



By John Allen

Many people today are very concerned about the introduction of genetically engineered (GE) organisms in our food, but do not realise that certified organic food is, by definition, not allowed to contain GE organisms.

FIVE WAYS TO AVOID GE FOODS

1. Eat organic foods

Genetically engineered organisms are not permitted in certified organic food. Organic farmers have to be certified by a government-accredited certifying body and are inspected annually to ensure that they are complying with organic production standards. Certified organic food offers consumers the only quality assurance program that can come close to guaranteeing whole, untampered food.

2. Eat unprocessed foods

GE foods are used as ingredients in non-organic processed foods such as canned foods, desserts, pies, cakes, breads, lollies and crisps. Fresh fruit and vegetables, meats meat (check pork, which may be reared on synthetic growth hormones), fish, dried beans (non-soy), eggs and milk are not genetically engineered (in this country) at present. *Certified organic processed foods may contain up to 5% of non-organic ingredients but none of these can be GE.*

3. Buy Australian

Foods labelled "Product of Australia" should contain wholly Australian ingredients. Cottonseed oil and cellulose from cotton linters are the only Australian GE ingredients at present. However, beware of food labelled "Made in Australia". It may contain imported GE ingredients.

4. Grow your own food!

Ensure that you use seeds and seedlings that are not genetically modified.

5. Ask food companies which products are GE-free

Food companies are increasingly checking their sources to identify GE foods and some are voluntarily advertising and/or labelling foods as GE-free. Following this article is a list of toll-free telephone numbers of food companies. You can also obtain Customer Response Cards from many supermarkets and fast food outlets - fill them out and ask about GE-free products, and ask for a written response.

GE-Free Foods List

If you do eat food which is not certified organic, the Gene Ethics network of Northern Rivers maintains a list of GE-free foods - see P24 of this magazine, or www.nor.com.au/environment/genethic/foodlist.html

Foods which may contain GE ingredients

- foods labelled "Made in Australia": they contain imported ingredients which may be genetically engineered;
- Foods with these imported ingredients: soybean; corn; canola; sugarbeet (sugar); potato, cottonseed oil;

Reprinted from Suncoast Organic Growers Group Inc. May 1999 Newsletter

- Any food containing or cooked in cottonseed oil as engineered cotton is also grown here;
- processed foods from the USA (except those certified organic);
- processed foods labelled 'soy protein' or 'soy protein isolate', both US products.

GE food is on our shelves now

Multinational food corporations have submitted applications for approval of 18 foods containing GE ingredients to the Australian & New Zealand Food Authority (ANZFA).

An industry spokesperson has said that these applications should cover all GE foods likely to be on Australian supermarket shelves. However, no application has been submitted for GE tomatoes, which are likely to be present in products such as salsa dips imported from the USA.

Only soybeans, cottonseed oil and linters, have completed their safety assessment by ANZFA. The Health Ministers' Council has agreed to provide immediate approval for all these foods, before they have been tested for safety in Australia. These untested GE foods are allowed on our supermarket shelves. These foods will not be labelled, because the Health Ministers and the Food Authority have not agreed on what a GE food is, nor on what the label will say. ANZFA is still proposing that only foods "containing detectable amounts of altered DNA or protein" will be labelled. This will exclude foods containing GE oils, sugars and starches.

What foods will be affected?

Corn, canola, potato and sugar beet are the GE foods set to be approved. They are not destined for the fresh food market, but as ingredients in processed food. GE corn is made into ingredients such as starch, thickeners and high

fructose syrup, canola becomes vegetable oil, potatoes are used for crisps and sugar beet becomes sugar in sweets, desserts and drinks.

The most likely GE ingredients to find their way into Australian-made foods are soy-based ingredients such as lecithin, protein isolate, vegetable oil and soy flour and high-fructose corn syrup, which is used in confectionery and desserts.

Cotton is the only GE crop grown commercially in Australia at present. We do not grow enough soybeans for our domestic market and so import soybeans and soy products from USA, some of which are GE. Our farmers grow all the corn, potatoes, sugar and canola that we need but we do import small amounts of specialised ingredients made from these foods, principally high-fructose corns syrup.

Thus, GE ingredients, apart from soy and cottonseed oil, are most likely to be found in processed foods imported from the USA.

See also the Genetic Engineering News section in this publication.

Includes information from:
Dick Copeman, Consumer Food Network, 223 Logan Road, Buranda QLD 4102
Australian GeneEthics Network, PO Box 2424, Fitzroy MC Vic 3065

Toll-free telephone numbers of food companies

AMCAN INTERNATIONAL	1800 674 427
ARNOTTS	1800 242 492
AUSSIE BODIES	1800 247 757
AUSTRALIAN DAILY JUICE COMPANY	1800 131 133
AUSTRALIAN NATURAL FOODS	1800 641 614
BERRI	1800 131 133
BI-LO	1800 150 023
BICKFORDS	1800 816 769
BIOGENIC	1800 622 619
BLACKMORES	1800 808 522
BONLAC	1800 816 773
BRISTOL MYERS	1800 803 543
BUDERIM GINGER.	1800 067 686
BULLIVANTS	1800 777 889
CAMPBELLS	1800 663 366
CARNATION	1800 621 987
CAROBANA	1800 700 118
CASCADE	1800 641 647
CENOVIS	1800 802 777
COCA-COLA AMATIL	1800 025 123
COLES	1800 061 562
CSR.	1800 800 329
DAIRY FARMERS	1800 627 624
DAYDAWN	1800 064 911
DEFIANCE	1800 628 883
DIEGO'S MEXICAN PRODUCTS	1800 357 077
DON SMALLGOODS	1800 806 381
DOUGLAS PHARMACEUTICALS	1800 060 057
ETA	1800 811 528
FERRERO	1800 627 231
FLORAFOODS	1800 677 807
FRANKLINS	1800 621 111
FREEDOM FOODS	1800 646 231
FRITO-LAY AUSTRALIA	1800 500 502
GEORGE WESTON FOODS	1800 634 783
GO NATURAL	1800 062 558
GOODNESS PRODUCTS	1800 654 751
GREENRIDGE	1800 016 061
GREENS	1800 803 605
GREG NORMAN'S	1800 240 446
HARVEST HOUSE	1800 650 913
HANS	1800 060 909
HEALTH REVOLUTION	1800 353 896
HEINZ	1800 037 058
I & J	1800 657 917
J. U. WHITTAKER & SONS	1800 143 197
INGHAM	1800 777 663
INNER GLOW	1800 247 322
KELLOGGS	1800 000 474
KENMAN	1800 674 830
KETTLE CHIPS	1800 806 128
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MALANDA	1800 818 300
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MASTER FOODS	1800 816 016
McCAIN	1800 065 521
McMAIN BAKERIES	1800 247 008
MEAD JOHNSON	1800 671 628
MEADOWLEA	1800 638 112
MICROGENICS	1800 636 094
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NATURAL CONFECTIONERY CO	1800 678 708
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NESTLE DAIRY PRODUCTS	1800 633 200
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NOVARTIS NUTRITION	1800 244 523
OLD EL PASO	1800 677 774
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PAMPAS	1800 033 050
PARKERS' PRETZELS	1800 062 554
PAULS	1800 676 961
PROCTOR & GAMBLE	1800 028 280
QUALITY BAKERS	1800 810 599
QUF INDUSTRIES	1800 067 439
QUICKPULSE	1800 689 700
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SARA LEE	1800 065 056
SCHWEPPES COTTEES	1800 244 054
SIMPLOT AUSTRALIA	1800 061 279
SMITHKLINE BEECHAM	1800 028 533
SMITHS	1800 025 789
SNACK BRANDS AUSTRALIA	1800 501 441
SPC	1800 805 168
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SUMMIT HEALTH PRODUCTS	1800 180 034
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TIP-TOP ICE CREAM COMPANY	1800 641 727
UNCLE TOBY'S	1800 025 768
WESTONS	1800 643 287
WHITE WINGS	1800 025 768
WYETH	1800 552 229

RETURNING THE NATURE STRIP TO NATURE

by Julia Veitch

Kingston, unlike the Inner North suburb of O'Connor, really hasn't got going with the nature strip planting ethos. In O'Connor, more and more people are planting out their nature strips with meadow plants, native shrubs, ground covers, flower features, native grasses, and so on. It is remarkable to see the gradual but powerful transformation of streetscapes as people realise that their 'nature' strips really can provide habitat for insects, birds and small animals, and look beautiful, and plant them up.

In Kingston, people haven't extended their awareness of their garden out beyond the footpath. I'm trying to establish a trend, get people used to an actively worked nature strip, to encourage them to do likewise. Also, because I am so restless, the idea of *not* working the nature strip when it is right there to hand is anathema. However, there is no 'critical mass' yet. Nobody else in my block, or even my street, has started colonising their nature strip.

So what sort of difference has working the nature strip made? First of all, I deep mulched (20 cm) my two pin oaks with woodchips about two years ago, and a large oval between them. They made it through the drought of '97-'98 with flying colours. This last summer has been much wetter, and they have absolutely thrived in their 'instant' forest floor. They are noticeably larger, greener, leafed up earlier, kept their leaves later, and simply had more leaves than any other trees on the street. Unfortunately, the other trees had not had the benefit of deep mulching and strip watering during the drought, and many had died back considerably. People don't realise that their street trees need looking after and watering during a drought too.

Secondly, I planted shrubs, grasses and small trees into the large mulched oval between the pinoaks. These are now starting to establish and look naturalised, particularly with a few tree branches and a spectacular bleached old stump providing an instant established feel to the arrangement. I planted jonquils, daffodils and teliquia bulbs under the oak trees, and some lavenders. People steal the flowers, but if everybody put flowers out in their nature strips, there would be so many flowers to steal from that a few here or there wouldn't make any difference. As it was, I had a fragrant spread of flowers last spring one day, and none the next! The lesson for me? Plant more flowers.

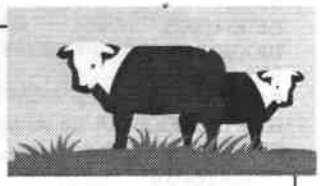
Thirdly, I put rocks out on the nature strip, for texture, variety, habitat and as a mulch - they look fabulous and no-one has stolen or vandalised them yet.

And fourthly, I paid Morgan Kurrajong to install a nest box big enough for owls in one of the pin oaks, living in hope that one day an owl will inspect the real estate and realise what a great position he or she has found. It's currently occupied by mynahs. Opportunists find their niches.

But remember, any work in the nature strip needs to be maintained, plantings must not block visual access for safety reasons, and services such as powerlines must remain accessible. If you are concerned, contact CityScape, the gardening branch of Urban Services, and ask for advice about what you may or may not do with your nature strip.

ENDOSULPHAN IN DOMESTIC MEAT

From COGS member Patricia Denham



I thought you would be interested to know that I recently received a reply to my letter to The Hon. Mark Vaile, the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, asking him what had happened to the consignment of Australian beef rejected by the Korean authorities because it was heavily laced with the poison endosulfan. According to the reply, dated 20 April 1999, the beef was not sold for human consumption in Australia. It was "...rendered under Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service supervision in March and did not enter the domestic meat supply chain. The same compliance testing program for endosulfan residues that has been operating for the past three months at export abattoirs has also been in place at domestic abattoirs in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia." The letter doesn't mention Tasmania or WA.

In response to my question about safety checks for domestic meat supply, I was advised that "...the National Registration Authority for Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (NRA) has announced changes to next season's spraying regime. The changes include restrictions aimed at reducing spray drift which will help to avoid contamination of meat as well as further reducing potential effects of endosulfan on the environment, worker safety and public health. The new restrictions are to be implemented well before the next cotton-spraying season and will be closely monitored."

I'm not sure what it means to render beef, but I'm cheered that the consignment didn't end up as roast beef on Australian dining tables!

PYRETHRINS

http://pmep.cce.cornell.edu/profiles/extoxnet/

INTRODUCTION

Pyrethrins are natural insecticides produced by certain species of the chrysanthemum plant. The flowers of the plant are harvested shortly after blooming and are either dried and powdered or the oils within the flowers are extracted with solvents. The resulting pyrethrin containing dusts and extracts usually have an active ingredient content of about 30%. These active insecticidal components are collectively known as pyrethrins. Two pyrethrins are most prominent, pyrethrin-I and pyrethrin-II. The pyrethrins have another four different active ingredients, Cinerin I and II and Jasmolin I and II. Pyrethrin compounds have been used primarily to control human lice, mosquitoes, cockroaches, beetles and flies. Some "pyrethrin dusts," used to control insects in horticultural crops, are only 0.3% to 0.5% pyrethrins, and are used at rates of up to 50 lb/A. Other pyrethrin compounds may be used in grain storage and in poultry pens and on dogs and cats to control lice and fleas.

The natural pyrethrins are contact poisons which quickly penetrate the nerve system of the insect. A few minutes after application, the insect cannot move or fly away. But, a "knockdown dose" does not mean a killing dose. The natural pyrethrins are swiftly detoxified by enzymes in the insect. Thus, some pests will recover. To delay the enzyme action so a lethal dose is assured, organophosphates, carbamates, or synergists may be added to the pyrethrins.

Semisynthetic derivatives of the chrysanthemumic acids have been developed as insecticides. These are called pyrethroids and tend to be more effective than natural pyrethrins while they are less toxic to mammals. One common synthetic pyrethroid is allethrin.

In this report, the term "pyrethrins" refers to the natural insecticides derived from chrysanthemum flowers; "pyrethroids" are the synthetic chemicals, and "pyrethrum" is a general name covering both compounds. The EPA classifies pyrethrin-I as a Restricted Use Pesticide (RUP). Restricted Use Pesticides may be purchased and used only by certified applicators.

TOXICOLOGICAL EFFECTS

Acute toxicity

Synthetic pyrethroid compounds vary in their toxicity as do the natural pyrethrins. Pyrethrum carries the signal word CAUTION. Inhaling high levels of pyrethrum may bring about asthmatic breathing, sneezing, nasal stuffiness, headache, nausea, incoordination, tremors, convulsions, facial flushing and swelling, and burning and itching sensations. The most severe poisonings have been reported in infants, who are not able to efficiently break down pyrethrum. The lowest lethal oral dose of pyrethrum is 750 mg/kg for children and 1,000 mg/kg for adults. Oral LD50 values of pyrethrins in rats range from 200 mg/kg to greater than 2,600 mg/kg. Some of this variability is due to the variety of constituents in the formulation. Mice have a pyrethrum oral LD50 of 370 mg/kg. Animals exposed to toxic amounts may experience tongue and lip numbness, nausea, and diarrhoea. Symptoms may also include incoordination, tremors, convulsions, paralysis, respiratory failure, and death.

Pyrethroids can cause two quite different responses at near lethal doses in rats; aggressive sparring and a sensitivity to external stimuli progressing to tremors is the one response and pawing and burrowing behaviour, and salivation leading to chronic seizures is the other. Human response to these two different types of pyrethroids has not yet been evaluated. Recovery from serious poisoning in mammals is fairly rapid.

Rats and rabbits are not affected by large dermal applications. On broken skin, pyrethrum produces irritation and sensitisation, which is further aggravated by sun exposure.

Chronic toxicity

Absorption of pyrethrum through the stomach and intestines and through the skin is slow. However, humans can absorb pyrethrum more quickly through the lungs during respiration. Response appears to depend on the pyrethrum compound used. Overall, pyrethrins and pyrethroids are of low chronic toxicity to humans and the most common problems in humans have resulted from the allergenic properties of pyrethrum Patch tests for allergic reaction are an important tool in determining an individuals sensitivity to these compounds.

Many of the natural and synthetic compounds can produce skin irritation, itching, pricking sensations and local burning sensations. These symptoms may last for about two days.

Reproductive effects

Rabbits that received pyrethrins orally at high doses during the sensitive period of pregnancy had normal litters. A group of rats fed very high levels of pyrethrins daily for three

EXTOXNET
Extension Toxicology Network
A Pesticide Information Project of Cooperative Extension Offices of Cornell University, Michigan State University, Oregon State University, and University of California at Davis.

County agents, homeowners, office workers, consumers, pesticide applicators, and others are often asked questions about the potential effects of the pesticides they use or that are used where they work. Questions like is it toxic? Does it cause birth defects? Cancer? Other problems? How long does it last? Will any effects or difficulties develop a long time from now? Will it harm birds or other wildlife? And so on.

To assist in providing information on the toxicology and behaviour of pesticides, the Extension Services of Cornell University and Michigan State University provide a series of informational sheets on commonly used insecticides, fungicides, and herbicides.

weeks before first mating had litters with weanling weights much lower than normal. Overall, pyrethrins appear to have low reproductive toxicity.

Teratogenic Effects
The one rabbit reproduction study performed showed no effect of pyrethrins on development of the offspring (3). More information is needed.

Mutagenic Effects
No information was found.

Carcinogenic Effects
No carcinogenic status has been established for pyrethrins or pyrethroids.

Organ Toxicity
In mammals, tissue storage has not been recorded. At high doses, pyrethrum can be damaging to the central nervous system and the immune system. When the immune system is attacked by pyrethrum, allergies can be worsened.

Animals fed large doses of pyrethrins may experience liver damage. Rats fed pyrethrin at high levels for two years showed no significant effect on survival, but slight, definite damage to the livers was observed. Inhalation of high doses of pyrethrum for 30 minutes each day for 31 days caused slight lung irritation in rats and dogs.

Fate in Humans and Animals
Pyrethrins, pyrethroids, and their metabolites are not known to be stored in the body nor excreted in the milk. The urine and faeces of people given oral doses of pyrethrum contain chrysanthemumic acid and other metabolites. These metabolites are less toxic to mammals than are the parent compounds. Pyrethrins I and II are excreted unchanged in the faeces. Other pyrethrum components undergo rapid destruction and detoxification in the liver and gastrointestinal tract.

ECOLOGICAL EFFECTS

Pyrethrin is extremely toxic to aquatic life, such as bluegill and lake trout while it is slightly toxic to bird species, such as mallards. Toxicity increases with higher water temperatures and acidity. Natural pyrethrins are highly fat soluble, but are easily degraded and thus do not accumulate in the body. These compounds are toxic to bees also.

Because pyrethrin-I, pyrethrin-II, and allethrin have multiple sites in their structures that can be readily attacked in biological systems, it is unlikely that they will concentrate in the food chain.

ENVIRONMENTAL FATE

Two pyrethroid synthetic insecticides, permethrin and cypermethrin, break down in plants to produce a variety of products. Pyrethrins have little residual effect. In stored grain, 50% or more of the applied pyrethrins disappear during the first three or four months of storage. At least 80% of what remains is removed by handling, processing, and cooking.

Pyrethrins alone provide limited crop protection because they are not stable. As a result, they are often combined with small amounts of antioxidants to prolong their effectiveness. Pyrethrum compounds are broken down in water to non-toxic products.

Pyrethrins are inactivated and decomposed by exposure to light and air. Pyrethrins are also rapidly decomposed by mild acids and alkalis. Stored pyrethrin powders lose about 20% of their potency in one year.

As the pyrethrins are purified, their stability decreases; thus, pure pyrethrin-I and pyrethrin-II are the least stable of the pyrethrins. Purified pyrethrins are very expensive and are only available for laboratory uses.

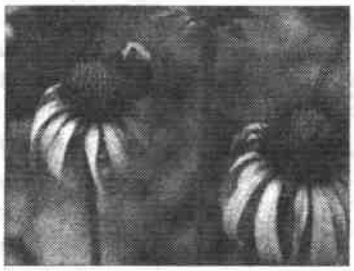
NEW CERTIFICATION SYSTEM

Reprinted from NASAA Bulletin May 1999

There have been concerns expressed that the new certification protocols for producers, applicable to all AQIS Accredited certifiers, that became effective as of the 1st of May, extend the time before use of a certification label. The new protocols require that for the first year of certification there will be no label use. There is no extension of the time requirement and producers must still comply with the standards for 3 years - this has not changed. In the past, the three years still applied but producers had to comply with the standards for one of those years before applying for certification. Now application can be made at the start of the introduction of organic practices and this first 12 months is the time of no label use. *Jan Denhani*

Homemade Echinacea Tincture

Jennifer H. Allen



One of the most versatile herbs for medicinal use is Echinacea. Commonly called the purple cone flower, this name perfectly describes the black conical centre which is surrounded by purple petals. Traditionally used to treat general cold and flu symptoms, this multi-functional plant is also useful as an immune system booster and has anti-bacterial properties. Echinacea enjoys full to partial sun and can also be grown indoors. Attractive as well as useful, Echinacea is a wonderful addition to any garden.

A tincture is simply a drug or other substance in alcohol. Tinctures are easy to make, convenient to use and store well. When making a tincture with Echinacea, the entire plant is used. Pull up when in flower, wash the dirt from the roots and hang out of the sun to dry. After a few days to a week, when the moisture content is greatly reduced, cut the plant into small pieces and cram tightly into a wide mouth glass jar (brown glass is the best if you can find it). The tighter the herb is packed, the less chance air bubbles have of getting trapped. Leave some room at the top of the jar because the herb will swell with the initial application of alcohol.

I use vodka for my tinctures but any spirit will do. But remember, you won't be diluting this mixture so use an alcohol you can tolerate in small doses. The use of organic alcohol is to be supported whenever possible but it can be difficult to find. Fill the jar with alcohol until the dried herb is submerged by approximately 10 cm (also known as the two-finger rule). Cover loosely so than any remaining moisture can evaporate out of the jar. Set out of the sun and shake gently once a day to release any air bubbles. Always make sure the herb is still completely covered with liquid when you leave it. The alcohol draws out the useful properties of the plant while protecting the mixture from bacterial growth.

After a month or two, or when the plant matter has become nothing more than fibre, strain off the alcohol. Dry out the remaining plant material to evaporate the alcohol, then compost. Store your finished tincture in brown, glass bottles with tight fitting lids out of the sun.

Homemade, organic herbal remedies help to break the cash/cure cycle and allow individuals to treat illness with gifts from the garden rather than continued dependence on pharmaceuticals.

Jennifer Allen has recently moved to Belconnen from the United States. She shares house and garden responsibilities with her Aussie husband and her dog, Nykita, who enjoys the benefits of duel citizenship. Jennifer works at Organic Harvest in the Belconnen Markets.

COGS recommends that you check with your medical practitioner before using any herb for medicinal purposes. .. Ed.

TRIALS AND ERRORS

Jennifer H. Allen

I am a newcomer to Australia, a recent immigrant from North America. I arrived in Canberra in February of this year and it was summer, as I believed it would be throughout the year in my adopted country. I superiorly dismissed those who told me about Canberra's "winter". Born and raised in the state of Maine, which is as far north as you can go on the east coast of the United States without being in Canada, I have been exposed to some long, cold, hard winters; winters where nothing grows but frustration and cabin fever. I mistakenly believed that I would pin down Australia's seasons in no time.

A few months of perpetually open windows was all I got before my illusions of eternal summer disappeared in the foggy, wet mornings. In response to the onset of some season that felt vaguely, at first, like spring, I began planting at an alarming rate. I stuffed bulbs in the dirt. I planted flowers I had never heard of. The parsley, basil, and coriander seedlings sustained daily checks for additional growth. I weeded and pruned and swept and cleared. Being a new gardener in a new country with new seasons, I made many mistakes. I had to move the bulbs to a sunnier spot. I hadn't really believed that winter would come, so many plants were lost to frost. But it didn't matter. I dug into the soil to be reminded that, despite all the recent changes in my life, I was still standing on solid earth. I gardened for solace, the plants were just a bonus.

To offer structure beyond gardening, I took a job at a health food store in North Canberra. Customers often arrive looking for information on new eating routines, healthier diets or simply seeking definitions for the terms organic or biodynamic. They want to pin down the specifics of health and nutrition; their craving for simple, comprehensive advice is paramount. They want someone to tell them how much of what to eat and when. And I want someone to tell me, without a doubt, when spring begins here, what vegetables and flowers can handle a Canberra winter and if I am truly in danger of being assaulted by Magpies during their breeding season. Both the customers and myself are in foreign countries, learning the language, trying to perfect our accents.

As young school children, many of us were exposed to the awesome power, and unpredictability of nature. With great optimism, we placed our waxed drinking cup full of dirt and a large seed in the classroom window. Each morning we were reminded to water the cup of dirt with our initials on the side and we were reminded that patience is a virtue. We waited. Optimism was replaced by unease. Then one day,

when we had given up on patience (and possibly on watering) a small green nub appeared in the dark soil. Overwhelmed, we checked our classmate's cups. Some plants had several leaves, some just the two and some seeds didn't come up at all. We asked why. The adult answers weren't very satisfying. We had discovered nature's game of chance and the trial and error that accompanies all great discoveries.

As adults, we are encouraged to consult experts or books, conduct research and search the web. While certainly all worthwhile pursuits, sometimes the adult answers are still not very satisfying. Technically accurate? Yes. Fun? Maybe, maybe not. Trying new things, noticing what is successful and what is not, is fascinating. Children intrinsically know this but as adults it seems that many of us are relearning the basics. My garden is my experiment; for others it may be preparing tofu for the first time or trying Echinacea instead of cold medicine.

As the morning frost claims my late- planted parsley, and as customers try new supplements or ingredients, we are both reminded of the joyous, crazy, and unpredictable science of life. In the garden, the health food store, or a new country, none of it need be too scary if we remember that the only rule on a playground is to play.

GROWING MEDICINAL HERBS IN THE CANBERRA REGION

Rosemary Stevenson

Having only lived here for 12 months, the following observations are quite sketchy, however I have gardened in similar soil and climatic areas before.

Most useful herbs can be incorporated into perennial borders, planted around shrubs or trees or grown in pots. It is not necessary to have a Herb Garden per se. Also, one does not need vast quantities if only growing for personal use, but some make very attractive plantings which provide colour and cut flowers as well as food and medicine.

One I have seen very successfully grown here, in our Mitchell COGS garden, is Echinacea Purpurea, or Purple Cone Flower, which makes lovely flowers, is very hardy and makes a powerful immune booster when made into a tincture. *(Rosemary included a recipe for Echinacea Tincture but this is already featured in an article by Jenny Allen on P.12. ..Ed.).* The usual dose is 5mls in water, daily. This is a great preventative and builds immunity to colds and flu etc. These plants make big clumps in a few years and will look good in hot dry places.

Some of the best medicinal herbs are usually regarded as intrusive weeds and are best grown in a "wild" part of the garden or in tubs. Cleavers is a sticky little ground cover that is usually regarded as a nuisance, but was Europe's main immune booster for centuries before the knowledge about Echinacea was given to us by North American Native people. Cleavers does well in most areas, and once you have it, you'll always have it!

Nettles and mints can be invasive too, so best to grow them in tubs or pots. Nettle is a good blood cleanser and a tonic for the adrenal system, also a good source of calcium. The best time to drink tea from dried nettles is late winter, as an internal spring cleaning. Pick your nettles before they flower for the maximum potency.

In this hot dry climate, Sage should does well, but needs to be renewed every couple of years. It is good for the digestion. Rosemary, of all types, does well here. Rosemary tea is good for soothing the tired nerves and relaxing tired muscles. Lavender has the same properties, and Lavenders do well here too. They like well-drained soil, as do the Thymes. Thymol is the most powerful disinfectant known, so a cooled "tea" can be used to bathe wounds or wipe over other surfaces. Oils of Rosemary, Lavender and Thyme should be in every medicine chest.

I have found Dill difficult to grow in this kind of soil and climate, but Carraway seems to do well. Carraway seeds, added to cooked cabbage, improve the flavour and help prevent "wind". Oregano does well and the common variety has lovely pink flowers. Marjoram is a more subtle flavour and comes in attractive variegated as well as plain leafed plants.

Vitex agnus-castus is an attractive shrub/small tree which has perfumed flowers and berries. It is deciduous. It does well in this region and is particularly helpful for women as it balances hormones and helps relieve PMT. Mullein is another herb which will grow without trouble in a hot dry climate. Its big grey woolly leaves are dried for a tea which helps to strengthen the lungs and cleanse them of air borne pollutants.

Of course Comfrey "grows like a weed", but is wonderful as a fertiliser for your garden when left soaking in a bin for several weeks, as is nettle. There is some controversy about the safety of eating comfrey, but bathing with a cooled "tea" is known to reduce inflammation and swelling around ulcers and wounds.

Mrs Grieve's *A Modern Herbal*.. is my "bible" for All information about growing and using herbs. The Rodale herb Book is also very good. People will tell you that growing herbs is easy, but I have been trying to do it for about 30 years, and it is not necessarily straightforward. There is still a lack of information about cultivation requirements. Members of the Blue Mountains and Nepean Herb Group Inc. can help with questions on all aspects of herb growing and use. The President is Sue Perkins, phone: (02) 4788 1097. Workshops and fests are held regularly.

COGS recommends that you check with your medical practitioner before using any herb for medicinal purposes. .. Ed.

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 2: The Sub-tropical Garden

For many, the word 'bushfoods' conjures up small wriggly things which are best left where they are. A walk through bushlands or scrub can be no more enlightening - lots of plants, but where's the food?

I have often been amazed at the ability of the original inhabitants to live - and live well - in arid lands and rainforest, wallum scrub and alpine valley. Part of the secret of their success lay in the incredibly wide range of plants they utilised as food. Some of these plants gave very little in the way of nutrient, some required extensive processing to remove toxins - taken as a whole, this 'menu from nature' gave them a more rounded diet than most of us enjoy today.

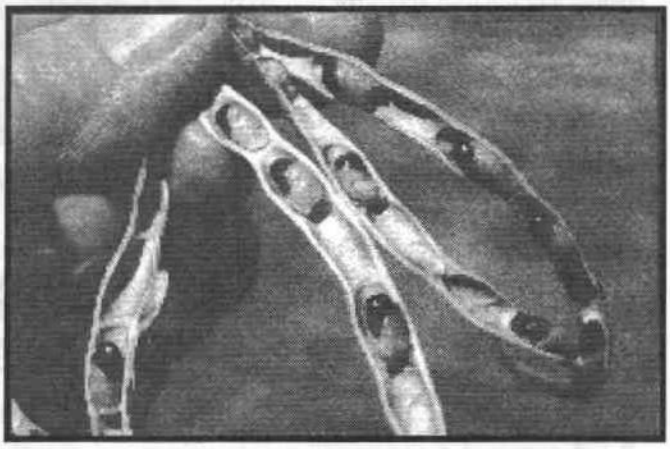
Survival aside, bushfoods offer the gardener - and the diner - a glorious range of options. They may never replace the vegie patch or the orchard, but they can lend beauty, utility and interest to any backyard. With a little work and imagination, they can also add unique, intriguing flavours to any meal. Bushfoods have another great attribute - they can be grown in any garden, anywhere in Australia. There's not a region in the country which doesn't have a range of wild food plants.

Though this article looks at sub-tropical species, it could just as easily focus on temperate, arid or coastal edibles. No region has a monopoly on our bushfoods.

As urban and suburban gardens often have space restrictions, we'll by-pass the large trees and less well behaved scramblers and vines and look at those plants which are marked by both landscaping and eating properties. Starting at ground level, our Native violet (Viola hederacae) is a delightful, reasonably hardy and fast-growing ground cover with attractive purple flowers nearly year-round. You'd hardly build a meal around them but the flowers make a delightful garnish for salads, quiche or even sweets. Though I've seen them survive in some pretty rugged terrain, they prefer semi shade and reasonably moist conditions. Given these, they will form a dense, spreading mat.

If you have some really moist areas with dappled or very little sun, Warrigal greens (Tetragonia tetragonoides) will keep the ground covered - and your table laden! This native has a confusing array of names - New Zealand spinach, Native spinach and, sometimes simply 'Tetragon'. I don't know how or when the New Zealanders laid claim to it, it's definitely an Australian native. To confuse matters further, samples sent to France back in the last century were so well accepted that this plant became almost a staple winter green there. Certainly, French chefs and gardeners would be more familiar with it than we are here.

This is a vigorous scrambler with attractive and very distinctive tetragon-shaped leaves. The better the conditions, the thicker and greener the leaf and the larger the harvest. There are two warnings with this plant - the leaf must be



boiled before eating and it's suggested that the water is thrown out (though I've heard the water makes a great stain remover). Also - left to its own devices it will scramble and continue to scramble till it hits an immovable object or too much sun. Keeping it under control's not difficult and, if you want to make harvesting easier, a small trellis, low fence or even wire supports will enable the plant to scramble up off the ground. The leaf is, as the name implies, a substitute for spinach. Or, perhaps, English spinach is a substitute for our own, easy to grow variety. The tastes are very similar and the dishes you might make with it identical.

As I live on a sloping block, there are some areas which simply need a hardy plant to compete with our local weed, the rampant Mistflower. In most cases, I've chosen Mat rush or Lomandra (Lomandra longifolia or L. hystrix). I'm surprised this species hasn't been used more extensively in commercial landscaping as its tufty grass-like shape and dramatic flower bracts are ideal for setting off an otherwise bland area. It can reach a metre or more in height and width and will grow in shade, full sun and anything in between. The long and very strong leaves were used by Aborigines to make their dillies and the young leaf bases were nibbled. I have tried them and must confess that this is one of those bushfoods which might be classified as 'You've got to be hungry.' Nevertheless, this hardy plant is an ideal addition to almost any garden.

I will admit to having a great fondness for the tart fruit of the Lilly Pilly (Syzygium species). There are over 64 native Syzygiums to choose from and the most common (S. australe, S. fibrosum, S. Luehmannii) all share the beautiful trait of a coppery-pink flush to new growth. These three are small to medium trees which fit well into average sized gardens. If you're pushed for space, there is now a dwarf 'Mini Pilly' which remains shrub-sized and appears to carry the glorious leaf colouring almost year round. My little specimen gave me three fruit in its second year and I look forward to a 'mini feast' in the years to come. The Lilly pillies make an ornamental wind-break and I have seen them pruned to form a hedge, though this drastically reduces the

fruit you will harvest. They can be topped when they reach 2-3m to encourage side growth and easier picking or you can simply let them grow untouched and enjoy their compact, often rounded habit.

There are literally hundreds of wild foods to be found in the sub-tropics, certainly too many to cover in a short article. When you're next in a nursery, look for Midyim berry (Austromyrtus dulcis), Mountain pepper (Tasmannia insipida), Native ginger (Alpinea caerulea) or Davidson plum (Davidsonia spp) - if your local nursery hasn't heard of these, let them know they're missing out on a wild feast fit for any backyard!

Sammy Ringer

COGS Internet Position filled!

Gerard De Ruyter has volunteered to take on the jobs of COGS Web Manager and email coodinator. I have handed these jobs over to Gerard.

Developing the COGS web site has been an interesting, challenging and rewarding experience for me. It was the first Australian site on organic growing on the world-wide web.

The COGS site has helped to increase world-wide public awareness of the benefits of organic growing. It has also played a part in the education of the world about the issues surrounding genetic engineering in food - one of the major threats to the organic industry.

In doing this interesting and challenging job for COGS, I have developed skills in web publishing, and I have made many new friends and contacts in other parts of Australia and around the world.

John Allen

HACCP

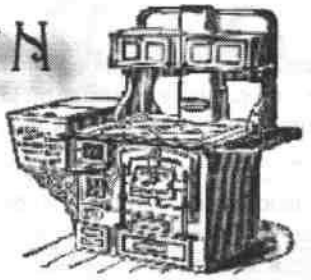
The last issue of *Canberra Organic* included a list of organic acronyms. Here is another classic one that you may come across - *Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point* (HACCP) principles *(I thought that organic farming was supposed to be simple!! ..Ed.).*

The NASAA standards require that all operations have a "Quality management System...compatible with HACCP principles." Whilst a formal HACCP program is not presently required, the principles of HACCP will form part of the NASAA (and other certifier) references when future assessments are being made of organic operations.

Full details of HACCP are in NASAA Bulletins February 1999 (Volume 6 No. 1) and May 1999 (Volume 6 No.2).

John Allen

FROM THE GARDEN TO THE POT



By Conrad van Hest

More yummy recipes from Conrad

Scrumptious vegetable pies

Made with fresh vegetables and flavour enhanced with homemade short pastry. These are great for lazy Sunday brunch or lovely spring day picnic - what a way to savour the fruits of your labour.

Savoury short pastry*

500g organic flour
125g butter
125g lard
pinch salt
100ml cold water

Sift flour and salt into a bowl and rub in the fats to give a granular texture. Make a bay in the centre and mix in sufficient water to form the ingredients into a light smooth paste. Rest the paste in fridge, covered, for 30 minutes before use. Roll out to fit pie flan or foil pie dish. This recipe makes 850 grams of pastry so any unused pastry can be frozen for up to a month and defrosted overnight in the fridge.

Pie fillings

You can make your own favourite filling or try these tempting delights.

Bean, tofu and peppercorn
350g green or yellow beans cooked
15Og organic tofu cubed
1 tablespoon green or pink peppercorns
1/4 cup parmesan cheese

Roll out pastry, line a pie dish and add beans, tofu and peppercorns. Top with parmesan. In 180C oven cook 30 minutes or until pastry is light brown.

Pumpkin and spinach
500g spinach cooked
250g pumpkin cooked
1/2 teaspoon nutmeg
1/4 teaspoon white pepper

Roll out pastry, line a pie dish. In bowl mash pumpkin. add spinach. nutmeg and pepper mix well. Spoon into pie casing and in 180C oven cook 30 minutes or until pastry is light brown.

Kale, sour cream and tomato
500g kale cooked
1/2 cup sour cream
2 medium yellow or red tomatoes sliced
1 teaspoon mixed herbs

Roll out pastry, line a pie dish. In a bowl add kale, mix in sour cream and herbs, spoon into pie casing, top with tomato slices and in 180C oven cook 30 minutes or until pastry is light brown.

Red kidney beans
400g cooked red kidney beans
250g corn kernels
2 long radish sliced
4 mushrooms sliced
4 roma tomatoes diced
2 tablespoons water
200g feta cheese diced
1 tablespoon olive oil
season to taste

In a frypan heat oil, add mushrooms, lightly colour, then add radishes cook for a minute. Mix in corn, beans and tomatoes cook for five minutes. add water, feta cheese and seasoning stir until cheese has melted and mixture is smooth and creamy. Roll out pastry line a pie dish and spoon in mixture, cook
in 180C oven for 30 minutes or until pastry is light brown.

Cannelli beans and leeks in tomato stock
1 cup cannelli beans
2 medium leeks
1 teaspoon dried garlic
2 cups tomato puree
1 cup vegetable stock
2 tablespoon olive oil
1 teaspoon pepper
2 cups water

Overnight soak beans in two cups of water and next day drain. Leeks halve lengthwise, wash and slice. Heat oil add garlic and pepper sweat for one minute, add leeks and cook until soft. Add the beans, tomato
and stock mix in well, bring to boil and simmer stirring regularly for hour and half or until thickens and liquid is reduced by three-quarters. Remove from heat and stand for five minutes. Roll out pastry to line a pie dish, spoon in mixture and in 180C oven cook for 30 minutes or until pastry is light brown.

**(recipe from Practical Professional Cookery, H.L. Cracknell and R.J. Kaufman. recipe 1738 page 741)*

COMPOSTING WITH GRACE

Garry Ridgway June 1999

Though early winter, the green manure in COGS' plot at Xeriscape gardens in June was a respectable half metre in height, ripe for harvesting according to Dave Tooley.

Fabian Veron and Dave were trainers in a delightful exercise in composting, worm farming and no-dig at these Gardens in Weston on a cobalt-blue Saturday. Some days of Canberra's winters can be achingly beautiful for gardeners in this most seasonal of all Australian cities. This was one of those days, ordered specifically, according to the man in the poncho.

A score of composters were there, since the practice of composting was a field exercise, an integral part of this Earth Works program to spread the message of "No Waste" in the ACT by 2010. ACT Waste sponsors the program: the theme is recycling.

Richard the Wamboin worm man started the practical exercise of rejuvenating a moribund worm farm at the Gardens. First the trench, then the lucerne, then the green tucker of scraps, then the watering, finally covering with a heavy layer of carpet.

Old palettes were the framing for a new compost heap. The secret is layering, beginning with twigs and branches to Encourage aeration. For old composters who have served their time on many a heap it may have been old hat, but it is always a pleasure for any group of enthusiasts to build something --whatever -- with purpose. Layering is the key, aeration, and diversity.

Palette construction, I think, is too large for most suburban gardens but a metre-cubed bin can be easily constructed from scrap timber. Our dolomite-sprinkled, diversified compost heap was topped and tailed with lucerne.

Photo from David Heaton's
www.organicdownunder.com/compost_heap.htm

And we composted with grace. My most vivid visual memory of this exercise is that of Fabian reclining atop the bin frame, a picture of studied elegance, after forking from on high.

Dave then grabbed the Gundaroo tiller and opened up some nearby soil for a demo of no-dig gardening. The breath of permaculture was in the air. Dolomited, newspapered, lucerned and watered, a plot was receptacle for Dave to trim and transplant two seedlings into the no-dig. (Instinctively I resist no-dig, but that's Methodist indoctrination.)

Importantly, the Earth Works program is a stimulus to conservation and there will be more courses run this year. Course attendees shall be future broadcasters of that message. Good organic gardening is an extension of this principle contained in the program which began in the ACT in October 1997. In New South Wales Earth Works is regarded as a key contributor to the objective of reducing waste to land-fill by 60% by Year 2000.

Nayra Rusan is the ACT Waste Contact on 6207 5822.

$$$ NO CHARGE $$$

My little boy came into the kitchen this morning while I was fixing supper, and he handed me a piece of paper he'd been writing on; and after wiping my hands on my apron I read it - and this is what it said:

For mowing the yard $5.00 and for making my own bed this week $1.00 and for going to the store 50¢ and for playing with little brother while you went shopping 25¢. Taking out the trash $1.00, getting a good report card $5.00 and for raking the yard $2.00 - Total load $14.75.

Well I looked at him standing there expecting it and a thousand memories flashed through my mind. So I picked up the pen and turning the paper over, this is what I wrote.

For the nine months I carried you, growing inside of me NO CHARGE. For the nights I sat up with you, doctored you, prayed for you, NO CHARGE. For the time and the tears and the cost through the years there's NO CHARGE. When you add it all up, the full cost of my love is NO CHARGE.

For the nights filled with dread and the worries ahead NO CHARGE. For advice and the knowledge and the cost of your college NO CHARGE.

For the toys, food and clothes and for wiping your nose there's NO CHARGE son. When you add it all up the full cost of my love is NO CHARGE.

Well when he finished reading it he had great big old tears in his eyes and he looked up at me and he said "Mum, I sure do love you". Then he took the pen and in great big letters he wrote: PAID IN FULL!!

When you add it all up the full cost of real love is NO CHARGE

Reprinted from Just Organics June 1999

ORGANIC WEED MANAGEMENT SURVEY

Preliminary results - Part 1

Paul Kristiansen

ORGANIC WEED MANAGEMENT PROJECT

Weeds are an on-going cost for many primary producers. Many options are available for organic growers to manage weeds on their property, including cultivation, slashing, suppressive cover crops, mulches, strategic irrigation and fertilising, preventative measures and, of course, chipping. Questions remain, however, about when and how best to apply these options to any given weed situation.

A research project looking at a range of non-chemical weed management methods is in progress at the University of New England in Armidale. In response to enquiries from a local organic grower, a research proposal was submitted to the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC) for funding. A three year project was approved under RIRDCs 'Organic Produce' program to study current organic weed control practices in the industry and to investigate specific weed management strategies. The project aims to develop methods which reduce the weed seed bank, suppress in-crop weeds and which can be readily adopted into existing organic herb and vegetable production.

In addition to field trials, an important component of the project is the Organic Weed Management Survey. The survey has been conducted, the results have been collated, and the 'number-crunching' is still taking place. A series of articles will be presented as results become available, with this article being the first of those.

THE SURVEY

A mail survey was undertaken late last year in order to gain a practical understanding of how weeds are managed by Australian organic growers. In an effort to get feedback from experienced and active organic growers, cooperation was sought and received from a number of certification bodies. Limited access was provided to a portion of their membership list. Survey questionnaires either were posted directly to growers or inserted in a newsletter for mail-out, so that members could remain anonymous. A satisfactory return rate was achieved, with surveys sent directly to growers showing almost double the return rate (Table 1). Most of the questionnaires were returned within two months (Figure 1).

Table 1. Summary of survey delivery method and return rate.

	Method of delivery		Total
	Sent directly	Sent in newsletter	
Surveys Sent	360	400	760
Surveys Returned	204	119	323
Return Rate	56.7 %	29.8 %	42.5 %

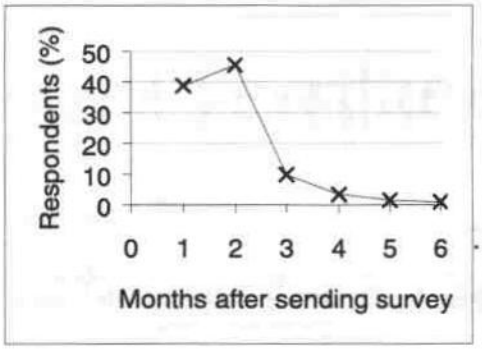


Figure 1. Percentage of surveys returned over the six months following mail-out.

Overall, the growers who responded to the questionnaire were very enthusiastic and committed to organic principles. While acknowledging that weeds did cause some economic losses, many viewed weeds as a part of the farm ecology with a positive role to play in terms of beneficial insect habitat, nutrient cycling and soil protection.

Interest in the research project was high, with at least 80% of growers requesting follow-up information about the survey results. Some people felt that there was no need to do the research, that the answers were already 'out there'. Indeed, there were many successful, long-term organic growers who were not concerned about weeds on their property, however, many newer growers were very concerned about weeds and were searching for information on how to manage them. An important aspect of the survey is to tap into the knowledge of more experienced growers and share that information through articles such as this.

In the survey, several questions were asked about the growers, their properties, and the crops and weeds which grow there. These questions were designed to provide a 'snapshot' or profile of the different types of growers, such as vegetable grower versus grazier, broadacre versus intensive, novice versus experienced, etc. The rest of the survey was concerned with grower attitudes to weeds, the methods and strategies used in weed control, and underlying principles of weed management. A combination of tick-the-box and written response questions was provided, (a) to enable a straightforward numerical comparison of survey answers, and (b) to allow growers to explain their methods and principles in some detail. In this article, some survey findings relating to the grower 'snapshot' will be presented.

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GROWER SNAPSHOT: WHO RESPONDED TO THE SURVEY

Survey questionnaires were returned from all states and territories of Australia. Most of the growers (> 80%) were from the three eastern states of NSW, Victoria and Queensland. More than three quarters of the survey respondents reported themselves as organically certified, and another 15% were either "in conversion" or seeking certified status (Table 2).

Table 2. Distribution of survey respondents by state or territory in which their organic farm is located, and by certification status (8 respondents did not indicate their organic status).

State or Territory	Certification status				Sub-total of States	Percentage of all States
	Certified	In conversion	Seeking	Not certified		
	(number of respondents)					
ACT	2		2		4	1.3
NSW	95		23	10	128	40.6
NT	1				1	0.3
QLD	46		3	6	55	17.5
SA	15		1		16	5.1
TAS	11	2	1	2	16	5.1
VIC	56	7	8	3	74	23.5
WA	19			2	21	6.7
Sub-total	245	9	38	23	315	
% of all growers	77.8	2.9	12.1	7.3		

Organic growers responding to the survey had a combined total of almost 2600 years experience, with the average grower having farmed organically for eight years (Figure 2). The most experienced grower has been at it for 150 years - a long family history in organics presumably!. However, almost half of the growers (44%) have no more than five years experience. This large group of less experienced growers reflects the influx of people into the organic industry in the past few years.

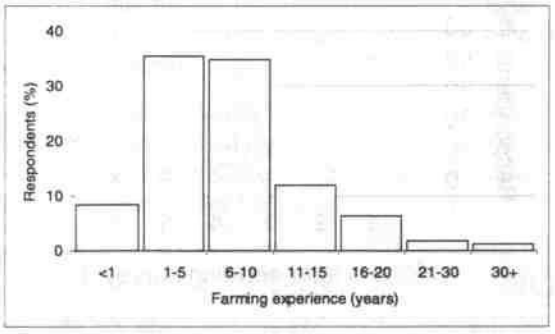

Figure 2. Percentage of respondents classified by the number of years of experience farming organically.

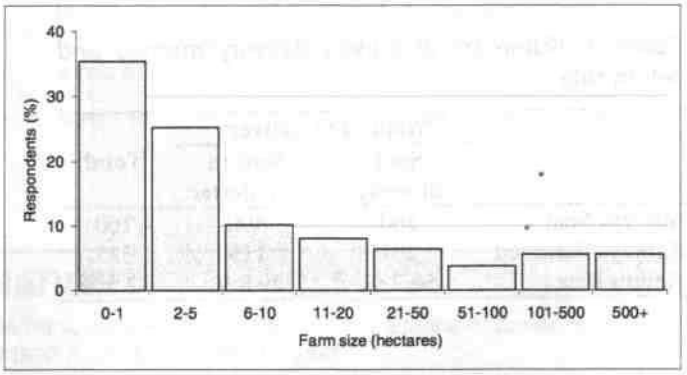

Figure 3. Percentage of respondents classified by the amount of land farmed organically on their property.

The variation in the amount of land used for organic production by the surveyed growers is shown in Figure 3. The total area reported in the survey that is farmed organically is 60,000 hectares (about 147,000 acres), with an average area of 185 hectares (450 acres). A significant majority of the respondent's farms are small, and a very small number of growers work a large proportion of the total land area. The most common farm size is up to 5 hectares, where 60% of respondents use 0.6% of the organically farmed land. On the other hand, a few massive beef cattle properties make up the largest farms responding to the survey, where 2% of respondents work 50% of the reported land area. It would seem that the very high number of vegetable and herb growers responding to the survey (Figure 4) may partly explain the dominance of smaller, more intensively managed farms. Herb production in particular is commonly carried out on small acreages.

A broad variety of products are grown or produced organically by survey respondents. Over two hundred plant and animal products were reported, including 55 types of vegetables, 28 grains and pulses, 51 fruits and 5 types of animals. These products have been categorised into commodities, and a breakdown of the number of growers producing each commodity is presented in Figure 4. Often growers may be producing more than one commodity, as in the case of a sheep grazier growing fodder, or a vegetable farmer growing a cereal or pulse green manure crop. In this survey, just over 60% of producers grow vegetables or herbs, 20% grow fruits and 12% grow broadacre crops.

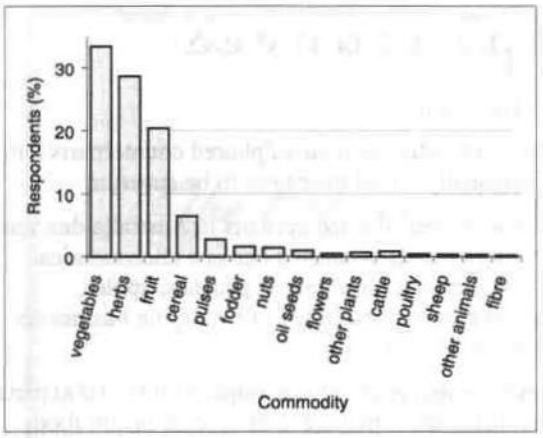

Figure 4. Percentage of respondents classified by the type of commodity grown organically.

The types of commodities grown by survey respondents varied between the certification groups. Some certification groups have members growing a wide range of commodities, while others have members growing only a few types of crops. Access to membership lists of the certification organisations was different in each case. Growers names were provided for all commodities in some cases, and only for specific commodities (e.g. vegetables and herbs) in other cases. Consequently, the pool of people surveyed did not include representation of the whole organic industry. Industry sectors which were less well represented include grazing, broadacre cropping and orchards. Also, while it was not uncommon for broadacre producers to grow vegetables commercially, vegetable growers were less likely to grow grain or pulse crops or to run animals as a commercial exercise.

FUTURE ARTICLES

Further results from the Organic Weed Management survey will presented in future articles. Some of the issues which will be discussed include: Why are weeds considered a problem? Why are weeds considered beneficial? How much time and money people spend on weed management? Which methods are most commonly used? How successful and how expensive are the methods?

CONTACT DETAILS

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Keeping Up Appearances

By John Needham, Mountain Creek Wholefoods

In any natural food store, dried fruit are among the most popular items sold. The appearance of brightly coloured apricots, peaches and pears easily catches the eye of both children and adults. The reason for their bright colour is simple: preservative 220 or Sulphur Dioxide (SO2). The purpose of this article is to briefly discuss the price we pay for appearance.

There are two aspects to sulphur dioxide. Firstly there is the effect that it has on the human body, and secondly, the effect that it has on the environment.

Wardlaw, amongst others, has argued that exposure to sulphur dioxide can be a contributing factor in inducing asthma in susceptible individuals.

The naturopath Michael Murray suggests that one explanation for allergies to sulphur is that the trace element Molybdenum is needed to metabolise SO2. If the diet is high in SO2 foods (such as dried fruit) the body can become deficient in molybdenum and accordingly can no longer deal with SO2. It also destroys Vitamin B1. B1 deficiency is characterised by impaired mental function (p83 Murray). An unpublished report by the United States Department of Agriculture studied the effect of SO2 on humans. The department found that from 3/10ths of a gram to one gram of SO2 daily had adverse effects on individuals. It should be noted that 1 gram of SO2 is found in 335grms of dried fruit.

Sulphur dioxide has a boiling point of -10c. This means that on exposure to air, much of the SO2 present in dried fruit evaporates into the atmosphere. Most readers would have experienced the sulphur odour that hits you when you open a bag of dried apricots or apples. For environmentalists, it is this volatility that presents the greatest concern. When sulphur dioxide is released into the air, it forms what is commonly called acid rain. SO2 when added to water forms sulphurous acid. It can oxidise further to give the more potent and very dangerous sulphuric acid.

The sulphur dioxide used in drying fruits is released into the atmosphere after fumigation. One fruit drying company burns approximately 30 kg of sulphur per day. Fruits are sulphured with different amounts of sulphur. Pears may be sulphured 8 times before they are ready for packaging.

In Australia the level of SO2 when fruit is dried can be as high as 2500 parts per million. This is amongst the highest in the world. Germany has put a limit of 800 parts per million on SO2. This amount is perfectly satisfactory for retaining the colour and plumpness of dried fruit.

For the drier, the benefits of SO2 are in the appearance of the dried fruit and the ability to conceal inferior fruit. Any impurities in the skin can be bleached out. After drying with SO2 the colour of the rotten portion cannot be distinguished from the sound portion of the fruit. There are choices to sulphured dried fruits. Unsulphured dried fruit is available in most health food and wholefoods stores. Their appearance may not be as attractive as their sulphured counterparts but, speaking personally, I find their taste to be superior.

Sadly, the major drier of dried apricots in Australia this year stopped drying apricots because it became uneconomical. While he is still drying unsulphured peaches, apples, nectarines and cherries, the future of his drying businesses remains uncertain.

Also, there is a small range of low sulphur (500 -1000 parts per million) dried fruits that are sold in some health food shops. The fruit is organic but the grower has decided to add a small amount of sulphur in an attempt to broaden his market. Until recently, a fruit could be called organic even if it was low sulphur. A dried fruit cannot now be certified organic if there is any sulphur added to the process.

When the fruit is treated as low sulphur, around 500 grams of SO2 is burnt for 4 hours. This compares with conventionally dried fruit where 1 1/2 to 2 kgs of sulphur is burnt for 8 to 10 hours. Incidentally, this longer time tends to cook the fruit.

The question that has to be asked is if the organic grower can treat his fruit in a low sulphur environment, why can't everybody?

Well, part of the answer is that the organic fruit has a better sugar content that lends itself to a better SO2 uptake.

In conclusion, my personal observation is that at the retail level there is little interest in unsulphured fruit, even though it is generally priced at between 10 to 20% less than the sulphured equivalent with a moisture content of 17% compared to 23% for sulphured fruit. That is, you are getting more actual fruit for your money. Their hard leathery texture does not appeal even if their taste is supèrior to their sulphured counterpart. (If you do find unsulphured fruit too hard, a quick soak in hot water normally does the trick).

If there is little interest in unsulphured fruit, then the next best is the low sulphured fruit. Currently there is a small range of low sulphur available for this season. I have been told that next season looks far more promising.

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Michael Murray, N.D. Encyclopedia of Nutritional Supplements. Prima Publishing 1996.

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Why additives? The safety of foods. The British Nutrition Foundation Forbes publications London 1977.

A special thanks to Rachael Gray who did much of the ground work for this article. Rachael and her sister Sophie worked at Mountain Creek for a number of wonderful years.

ORGANIC FEDERATION OF AUSTRALIA - UPDATE

AGM & Seminar/Workshop May 15 1999
At the AGM the following committee was declared elected. Scott Kinnear (Retailer) as Chairperson; Andy Monk (Inspector) as Vice Chair; George Devrell (Certifier) as Treasurer; Louise Skidmore (Grower Livestock) as Secretary; Leigh Verrall (Grower Horticulture); Arthur Dakin (Grower Broadacre); Jerry Spencer (Processor); Nick Miall (Wholesaler/Exporter); Sam Staley (Education/Advisory/Extension) and Dick Copeman (Consumer). There is one vacant certifier position

The seminar/workshop on Saturday after the AGM considered the following:

- Domestic regulation was seen to be the most pressing issue confronting the industry and the participants endorsed the OFA taking a strong position insisting that the application before ANZFA go ahead. The OFA will take all steps to move the application forward and if not will initiate a public campaign with the rest of industry (see report below).
- Genetic engineering was discussed and the consensus was that we must resist the introduction of this technology. Bob Phelps from the GeneEthics Network spoke and gave a good case for applying the precautionary principle.
- An industry briefing paper to be used for lobbying of government. The wider implications of such documents was discussed, how they might be used and when and for what purpose.
- An industry web site and directory were discussed which also invoked rigorous debate. The OFA will apply to RIRDC for a joint web site, directory which will deliver a printed directory as well as web site featuring the organic industry with the directory listed too.
- The Canberra Industry Workshop was briefly discussed and we will proceed to implement the recommendations were possible for the expansion and operation of the OFA.

Policy, Promotions/Marketing, Education/Advisory/Extension subcommittees & Finance were set up. If people want to contribute please contact the OFA. In addition each of the OFA committee will be contacting their OFA members in their sector to invite dialogue as to the particular issues in their sector.

We would urge industry members to consider joining the OFA to support our moves to advocate for domestic regulation, for widespread publicity for organics with the media, for more R&D funding from government, and for wider understanding of health & the environment generally.

Meetings in Canberra, 26th & 27th May, Canberra
In addition to coming to Canberra for a meeting with AQIS (Australian Quarantine Inspection Service), the OFA has been active in using the opportunity to meet people in government, briefing them on the state of the industry and our current issues and future opportunities. Topics covered included: emerging industries funding; organic beef export project; domestic regulation policy; R&D funding; concerns for public health and safety; encouraging political parties to develop policy on organics; organic Exports; and food regulation

Domestic Australian standard for organic produce
The Organic Federation of Australia decided at its recent Annual General Meeting in Melbourne to press for a domestic Australian standard for organic produce as its number one priority for the coming year. Currently there is an Australian standard for organic produce but it is only enforceable for exported produce. In reality, the great majority of produce sold as organic on the domestic market does, in fact, comply with the export standard. From time to time, however, evidence comes to light that some produce sold as organic is not organic. This causes confusion and distrust amongst consumers and amongst the great majority of organic industry members committed to doing the right thing by consumers and the environment.

The demand for organic produce is increasing rapidly, outstripping supply of some lines at some times of the year. In this situation, the temptation is there for suppliers to substitute non-organic produce for organic, in order to receive the higher premiums that consumers are prepared to pay for organic produce. There are also many new growers entering the industry at the moment, some of whom are selling produce as organic while waiting for organic certification.

As long as there is no domestic standard that can be enforced, there is little that consumers or the organic industry can do about organic deception or fraud, unless it is on a large scale and able to be prosecuted in court. Repeated applications to the Australia New Zealand Food Authority (ANZFA) to establish a domestic standard for organic produce have been rejected, on the grounds that the Authority has no control over agriculture nor staff to enforce agriculture standards. ANZFA suggested that the organic industry adopt a voluntary code of practice instead.

The organic industry has had a voluntary industry code of practice for 20 or more years, well before other sections of industry adopted such codes. But codes of practice, on their own, are not effective in controlling the less scrupulous sections of any industry. That is why both the industry and consumers are calling for mandatory standards for domestic organic produce.

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John Allen

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 asparagus. 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*

ASPARAGUS LILIACEAE

Asparagus officinalis - in Greek, asparagus means "first sprout" and in Latin officinalis, "the apothecary shop".

Origins: Asparagus is a native of coastal areas and river banks of Europe and southern Russia. It has been taken from its natural habitat to the garden and slowly improved by selection. Seed savers have been at work!

The Romans cultivated it and so did the Gauls, who used it as a medicinal plant. It has now reverted to its wild form in many wasteland areas to become bush tucker.

Description: Asparagus is a perennial and a Permaculture plant par excellence. It has both male plants and female plants (i.e. it is dioecious). The flowers on the male plants look like yellowish green bells and the female's flowers are smaller and quite inconspicuous. Asparagus plants are ferny and grow to one and a half metres.

Cultivation: Thorough preparation of the soil is needed, including a large proportion of sand, along with high fertility. Asparagus is highly salt resistant and a light application of salt - up to thirty grams, or an ounce, per plant - is even recommended.

The male plants produce more spears earlier in the growing season than the female plants which have rather thicker and more tender spears. For good production, give the best conditions from the start and keep feeding and mulching deeply every winter. Care should be taken not to harvest in the first two or three years while the plant is gathering strength.

Propagation: Asparagus is generally propagated by dividing the crowns of plants that are at least three years old. This is done in winter when there is no visible growth. Lift the tangles of roots and crowns, which will look like bunches of stiff seagrass, and tease them out into separate crowns. Trim the roots back to fifteen cm (six inches).

Plant in furrows about forty cm deep, placing the crowns onto a small mound in the centre of the furrow. Fill up the furrow with good rich compost.

Saving the Seed: Asparagus can also be propagated by seed, but this takes longer than from crowns because the plants need an extra year before they are ready for harvesting. To obtain seeds, leave the most vigorous female plants, with at least one male nearby. Following cross-pollination by insects, scarlet berries will form on the female plants in autumn. The ripe fleshy berries containing half a dozen black seeds are picked, crushed, washed and dried in the shade.

If you are an asparagus collector who wants to propagate from seeds and have more than one variety, be aware that bees will cross-pollinate them. Plant the seeds in spring in fine rich soil and transplant the seedlings the following year, choosing only the strongest. Select for the desired characteristics in the subsequent years.

Storage: Seeds will last between three and five years. There are fifty seeds to the gram.

Usage: When young shoots are eaten raw, they give maximum nutritional value. Otherwise they are boiled upright in bunches from three to ten minutes according to age and size. The reliable old "billy" (no aluminium please!) is a good vessel for this.

Serve with butter or lemon, or as the French do -while still hot, douse with vinaigrette dressing, allow to cool and serve as an entree. Some gardeners prefer their asparagus green, while others produce fat white spears by heaping soil, leaves, straw or seaweed over the whole bed and cutting the spears off deep under this mulch. The Chinese use several species of asparagus, both medicinally and as a food.

Medicinally, asparagus is used to stimulate lazy intestines, because its high fibre content helps bowel movements. It is not indicated for people with rheumatoid arthritis. It increases the flow of urine and perspiration, along with cell production in the kidneys, but should not be eaten when the kidneys are inflamed. It is believed to increase the libido.

On the Lookout: In Geelong, Victoria a certain Monsieur Tournouer grew asparagus plants that he brought from France in 1866. Other French settlers introduced their plants to different parts of Australia, both before and after that time. Some of the original strains may well have survived and would be worth tracking down and tasting.

Ask around for Grosse Blanche, Asperge Verte, Asperge d'Argenteuil, which bears even-sized spears until the season finishes, and Asperge de Vineuil which is suitable to cool, foggy areas. Supermale produces only males which means there is no competition for the established plants from volunteer seedlings.

English-named varieties include Early Giant and Violet of Holland (the ancestor of many of today's varieties), which have pink or purple tips; Connover's Colossal, which has very thick spears, may not be as appetising. California 500, which is an improvement on Mary Washington, is popular in New Zealand.

IT'S RAINING PESTICIDES

Summarised from New Scientist vol:162, no. 2180, 3 April 1999, P:23, by Fred Pearce & Debora Mackenzie

A new study reveals that much of the precipitation in Europe contains such high levels of dissolved pesticides that it would be illegal to supply it as drinking water.

Studies in Switzerland have found that rain is laced with toxic levels of atrazine, alachlor and other commonly used crop sprays. "Drinking water standards are regularly exceeded in rain," says Stephan Müller, a chemist at the Swiss Federal Institute for Environmental Science and Technology in Dübendorf. The chemicals appear to have evaporated from fields and become part of the clouds.

Swedish researchers Lennart Hardell of Orebro Medical Centre and Mikael Eriksson of Lund University Hospital have linked pesticides Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, which has risen by 73 per cent in the US since 1973.

Lennart Hardell of Orebro Medical Centre and Mikael Eriksson of Lund University Hospital found Swedish sufferers of the disease were 2.7 times more likely to have been exposed to MCPA, a widely used weedkiller, than healthy people (Cancer, vol 85 p 1353). MCPA, which is used on grain crops, is sold as Target by the Swiss firm Novartis. In addition, patients were 3.7 times more likely to have been exposed to a range of fungicides, an association not previously reported.

The patients were also 2.3 times more likely to have had contact with glyphosate, the most commonly used herbicide in Sweden. Use of this chemical, sold as Round-Up by the US firm Monsanto, is expected to rocket with the introduction of crops, such as Roundup-Ready soya beans, that are genetically modified to resist glyphosate. The researchers suggest that the chemicals have suppressed the patients' immunity, allowing viruses such as Epstein-Barr to trigger cancer.

John Allen

Eating Into The Future

By Phil Moore

Eating into theFuture was the first Australian conference inter-relating the themes of food, health, and the environment. It was held in Adelaide on 11-13 April this year. I went to the conference as a delegate from Organic Energy, Griffith ACT, and found the conference to be much more than a chatfest.

The diversity of interest groups and individuals attending included public health professionals, food industry reps, nutritionalists, environmental activists, conventional and organic growers, wholesalers and retailers, scientists, citizens, academics, local council reps, educators, medical professionals, Dept. of Agriculture reps, welfare agencies, community & consumer groups, Aboriginal groups, media reps, unionists, and government food policy reps. As such a maturity of discussion occurred and links were made between people who might otherwise be unaware that all sorts of people are concerned about environment, health and food issues. I was quietly pleased to hear 'organic family/organic food' referred to throughout the conference. How things have changed in 10 years!

More than ever though, diverse circles of alliance are important. Thames University Professor, Tim Lang, points out that our very own food standards governing body, ANZFA has very little to say about public health, and tends to be industry-focussed. So too, health ministers allowed 20 genetically-engineered varieties of six major food crops, unlabelled, onto our supermarket shelves this year without health and safety assessments by ANZFA.

Professor Lang went on to soberly remind us that as soon as any country doesn't grow all of its own food, there is space for corruption in food policy. Conference proceedings are posted at the Children's Health Development Foundation website at: www.chdf.org.au/eatwellsa/

A concise overview of the genetic engineering food and family situation can be found in a special supplement in the Australian Conservation Foundation's current *Habitat* magazine.

Bio-piracy aside, I returned from the conference determined to extend the responsibility of the food retailer to presenting information that citizens have a right to, and might like to, know about the foods we are investing in, their role in our health, and that of our environments.

We are attempting to do in three ways.

(1) Presenting an informative board of "organic grower profiles"; introductions to the faces and stories of growers and their families, supplying urban centres with their fine produce. These growers will be pinpointed geographically onto a satellite map of Australia to provide a link between grower and consumer. Seasonality and regionality will be emphasised, and produce-feedback offered to growers.

(2) Presenting an informative board on basic, practical, aspects of organic/bio/dynamic farming. History and uses of food will be seasonally emphasised.

Nutritionalist Rosemary Stanton spoke about ways in which we feed ourselves being reflected in our health and the health of our environment. In a world where many drive around in expensive cars looking for cheap food we note that fresh, clean, quality foods can act as protective agents against world trends in health decline. Rosemary referred to the general de-skilling around food and food culture. World "burgerisation" means many people are now only able to re-assemble pre-made ingredients which lack texture, aroma, flavour and nutrition - all in the few minutes allocated to eating. Our food and the very way we make it shouldn't detract from our health! (Two references I picked up while in Adelaide: *Eating Safely in a Toxic World* by Sue Kedgley/Penguin 1998; and *Our Stolen Future* by Colbern, Dumancsk: Myers/Abacus 1997).

(3) In addition to our in-shop Catalyst Library which has a range of in-depth health and nutrition information available for loan, we will also be presenting a reading corner in-shop, in the spirit of enhancing food and health knowledge and skills. Typically, we will present information on clean, fresh food as protective agents, body cleansing foods, food combining, enzymes & digestion, mineral availability, water purity, non-synthetic nutritional supplements, food purity, intestinal health and other old cultural notions on feeding ourselves.

The aim behind these three moves is to make connections and find links between the food we grow and eat, our health, and the state of our environments.

GENETIC ENGINEERING NEWS

There is a massive consumer backlash to genetically engineered food. It is particularly strong in Europe, and is gaining momentum in Australia. This food is being forced upon us with great haste, and with virtually no testing on humans. Already we are hearing of health and environmental problems. Some scientists say that there is a "scare-mongering" campaign against GE foods - these same scientists provide no evidence of safe use on human, and place the onus on others to prove that these products may cause problems. Consumers are demanding more information about, testing of, and labelling of GE food products.

Full details of the following articles can be provided by e-mail to COGS members. If you are a COGS member and would like to receive the latest news in the organic industry as it happens, then send a message to cogs@netspeed.com.au and ask to be placed on the COGS organic e-mail list. *John Allen*

GM ban by Northern Foods UK
The Independent (London) - Friday 7 May 1999

Tony Blair is facing further embarrassment over the Government's stance on genetically modified foods after it emerged that a company run by one of his favourite businessmen has decided to phase them out. Northern Foods, chaired by the Labour peer, Lord Haskins, is removing GM ingredients from its brands following consumer fears over their safety.

The company, one of Britain's biggest food manufacturers, supplies all the main supermarkets as well as producing its own brands such as Goodfellas Pizzas and Ski yoghurts. This has occurred in the wake of similar decisions by Tesco, Safeway and Sainsbury's.

British doctors warn modified crops may pose health risks
Sunday Independent (London) May 16, 1999

LONDON, Sunday: Doctors will tell the British Government this week that too little is known about the long-term risks of eating genetically modified food to guarantee its safety. They will warn that GM crops pose a potential threat to human health and the environment. The British Medical Association, which represents 115,000 doctors, will say the crops should not be grown commercially in Britain until more trials are carried out, arguing that the benefits must be clearly shown before biotechnology companies are allowed to go ahead.

EU cancels order for GM canola
The Evening Post, April 14, 1999

The European Union has canned an order for genetically modified, pesticide-resistant canola, which American food giant [Monsanto] is proposing to grow in New Zealand. Green Party agriculture spokesman Ian Ewen-Street said the EU had cancelled this year's order, worth tens of millions of dollars, and switched to Australia because Australia could guarantee its canola crop was not genetically modified. "The Canadians could not provide that guarantee and lost the order." He said the cancelled order would have a huge impact on Canada because Europe took 40 percent of all canola produced. Other countries have also refused to take it, including Japan, Thailand and Australia, he said.

Europe halts genetic corn trade
Wired News Report: 12:00 p.m. 20.May.99.PDT

The European Commission on Thursday halted the approval process for US-produced, genetically altered corn because the plant's pollen could threaten Monarch butterflies. The policy freeze comes at a time when trade relations between Europe and the United States have already suffered setbacks. A conflict is also brewing over Europe's ban on US beef produced with hormones.

The study, by researchers at Cornell University, was published in this week's Nature magazine. Scientists found that leaves dusted with pollen from genetically modified "Bt maize," developed by American company Pioneer Hi-Bred International, have been proven lethal to Monarch butterflies. The Commission further cautioned that similar products being used in Europe, such as those produced by Monsanto and Novartis, could also be in jeopardy.

Alliance to push benefits of bio-technology
Australian Financial Review, May 17, 1999

Farmers, researchers and agribusiness interests have teamed up to try to regain critical lost ground in the bitter debate over the merits of genetically engineered foods. Agrifood Alliance Australia, launched on Friday, is a joint venture between the National Farmers' Federation, Avcare, which represents crop and veterinary chemical companies, the Grains Research and Development Corporation, the Seed Industry Association, the Australian Biotechnology Association, Co-operative Research Centres Association and fertiliser company Pivot Ltd. The Alliance said its aim was to achieve public understanding of the benefits of biotechnology.

GE-free is in World-wide Demand
Australian GeneEthics Network

All UK supermarket chains will make their homebrands GE-free, and label, as a result of public pressure; Unilever and Nestle, among the largest food processors, will go GE-free; Sanitarium removed GE from its soymilks, and Heinz High Protein Baby Cereal is now GE-free, as a result of public outcry; European, Asian and North American demand for GE-free foods is huge.

300 local councils in the UK serve only GE free food in their schools and childcare centres; The House of Commons dining room serves only GE free food.

In Australia: canola exports are a record, only because our crops are still GE-free; Waverley and North Sydney Councils have declared all its childcare centres free of GE food; Moreland Council in Melbourne serves only GE-free food in its meals-on-wheels and creches; Sanitarium is in the process of removing GE ingredients from their entire range, which includes Longalife meat alternatives. By the end of April their So Good soya milks should be GE-free, with other products going the same way by the middle of the year.

Bees 'spread genes from GM crops'
The Times (London) April 15, 1999

Guidelines on the isolation of genetically modified crops are to be reviewed by the UK Government, after a study found that bees could carry pollen four kilometres from test sites. Farm scale trials

to assess the impact of the crops have begun with "buffer" zones between them and the countryside of just 50 metres. Government rules on commercial plantings of gene altered crops suggest buffers of 200 metres. But the new findings, published yesterday, indicate that a revised strategy may be needed to allay public concern. The 4km distance is much further than previously supposed.

Virus resistant crops, risks
Independent on Sunday, Sun 21 Mar 1999

A report, ordered under the [British] Government's Genetically Modified Organisms Research Programme, has found that plants engineered to be resistant to common viruses could in fact lead to the creation of more virulent strains which could spread throughout the British countryside.

Victory for grass-roots action
Independent (London) May 2

At nine o'clock last Monday morning two of the most powerful men in the global food industry turned up at a pressure group's door. Richard Greenhalgh, chairman of Unilever UK, and Michel Ogrizek, the international head of corporate affairs for the giant multinational - the world's largest food manufacturing company - came to Greenpeace's offices in Islington, north London, in what appears to have been a last-ditch attempt to make peace. But next day the company had to admit defeat, announcing that it would stop using GM ingredients in its products in Britain.

Rogue genes cross to weeds
Independent on Sunday 18th April,1999

Scientists have discovered the first genetically modified superweeds in Britain, following the spread of pollen from a GM trial crop to wild turnip plants. The hybrids were produced after plants in a field of wild turnip crossed with a nearby test-site of genetically engineered oilseed rape. Some of the "Frankenstein" plants, which had inherited their GM parent's herbicide resistance genes, were able to breed. The discovery has been seized on by environmentalists as "groundbreaking" because it proves for the first time that GM crops can pass on their engineered traits to indigenous British species growing nearby.

Modified corn on sale in UK 'kills' life-saving antibiotics
The Independent on Sunday, 6 June 1999

GM corn sold in Britain could render eight powerful antibiotics, used by doctors to fight fatal diseases including typhoid, pneumonia and infections suffered by Aids patients, useless within half an hour. Expert advice received by the Ministry of Agriculture (Maff) as long ago as 1995, warned that an antibiotic resistance gene inserted into a type of GM maize was so powerful that it could degrade an antibiotic in the human gut in 30 minutes. The antibiotics are used to treat people with diseases such as bronchitis, septicemia, gangrene and life-threatening infections suffered by people with cystic fibrosis and Aids. The leaked advice, from members of the Government's powerful Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes, warned that the antibiotic resistance genes can mutate. GM maize is already grown in the US and imported into Britain in foods such as tortilla chips.

The Fires Burn In Europe
An ACRES,USA Special Edition, 7 June 1999

"I think that if we had been told five years ago that this new technology would bring us so much grief, we would never have supported it," said one North Dakota grain producer.

Sir Paul McCartney Enters
BBC Thursday, June 10, 1999,UK

Sir Paul McCartney has pledged to lead a campaign against genetically-modified foods and is to spend £3m to ensure his late wife's vegetarian meals range is GM-free.

Marks & Spencer first to go GM-free
BBC Wednesday, June 30, 1999 UK

Marks & Spencer says it has become the first High Street retailer to go completely genetically-modified food free. The troubled company's move was announced by Dr Tom Clayton, the firm's head of food technology, who said that from 1 July 1999, all M&S foods will be produced without GM ingredients or derivatives.

BST Decision Good for Consumers
Consumer International Press Release 30 June 1999

Governments attending the biennial Codex Alimentarius Commission meeting in Rome failed to agree on an international standard on BST (Bovine Somatotropin) which is used to increase cows' milk production. The Codex Alimentarius Commission is the main United Nations body that sets international food standards.

Failure to agree to what is known as a Maximum Residue Level (MRL) for BST means that governments will have much more leeway at the national level to decide whether to allow the use of BST in their countries. Already, the European Union has a moratorium on its use in the EU and Canadian regulators have rejected Monsanto's request for its approval. However it is widely used in the United States.

WORM GROWERS BEWARE - ATTACK OF THE KILLER LEECHES!

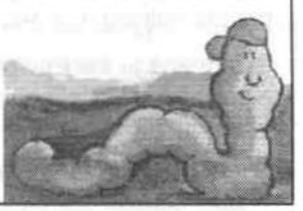
A Bundaberg earthworm farmer (unknown whether he was organic) was horrified recently to discover that predatory leeches were dining on his precious livestock. He sought help from various agencies, and eventually the Office of the Chief Plant Protection Officer (OCPPO), who handles plant protection issues regarding earthworms, snails, leeches and so on.

Rob Blakemore, an earthworm expert, found the predatory leeches are different from all previously recorded leeches. He arranged for the grower to collect some leeches and hand them over to Bundaberg AQIS to forward to the OCPPO. The package contained no fewer than 60 live leeches and a number of earthworms in case the leeches became a little peckish on the trip! It was forwarded to Monash University, where they were identified by Fred Govedich (an American student conducting postgraduate studies on Australian leeches). Fred confirmed that the leeches belong to a new species of Bassianodbella, provisionally named B. bundabergü.

The leech has since been found along the east coast from Bundaberg to northern New South Wales, apparently expanding its range by laying its eggs in earthworms, and has the potential to become a significant pest of Australia's earthworm industry.

Further information contact Robert Ingram (02)6272 5154 or Fred Govedich (03)9905 4554

AQIS BULLETIN November 1998



SPRING VEGETABLE PLANTING GUIDE

When direct planting with small seeds, for example carrots, bulk out first by mixing the seeds with sand. You can help the plants pre-germinate by keeping them in moist sand for about 4 days (no longer - don't let them actually germinate!) before planting out.

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

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

Check you seed packets for their 'use-by' date as poor germination may result from planting after that time, or plants may show a lack of vigour when seedlings come up.

Be prepared to protect your frost-tender seedlings, as Canberra can experience harsh frosts throughout spring. Make your own cloches from plastic bottles with the bottoms cut out, or cover rows for larger plantings.

Crop Rotation

Remember to rotate the crops which you grow in a particular garden bed. Crop rotation is a most important practice for organic gardeners. Successive crops should not make the same demand on nutrients, i.e. follow heavy feeders with light feeders. They should also not share the same diseases or attract the same pests (this prevents a build up of disease problems and losses from pests).

There are numerous crop rotation schemes used, but try to keep at least a four year rotation period (see *What to Plant & Where* - indexed on COGS main page) and do not grow the same members of a plant family in the same bed in consecutive years. For example, the solanum family - tomatoes, capsicums, eggplants, potatoes.

Plant Varieties

It is important with crops such as cabbage and lettuce to choose the appropriate variety for the time of year. Lettuce varieties best suited to early spring are Cos, Salad Bowl, Butterhead varieties, and Mignonette.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

We need volunteers to help to fold, tape, and label the *Canberra Organic* magazine. The more people helping, the quicker this job is done.

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

If you can help for an hour or so next session please contact Margaret Allen on 6258 9004

Spring Vegetable Planting Guide

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

S = Seed sowing
T = Transplant

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 at the Civic Youth Centre (behind Room 4 at the Griffin Centre), 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
- 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 incidental items 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
Web site: 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.

AUGUST MEETING

Large- scale worm farmer Paul Coates:

"The Benefits and Farming of Worms"

When? *Tuesday 24th August at 7:30 pm*

Where? *Civic Youth Centre*
(at the back of Room 4 at the Griffin Centre)

NOTE: The Youth Centre is trying to feed the kids wholesome food (for some, the only meals they get are at the centre). If you have any spare organic produce that you would like to donate, please bring it to the COGS meetings.

AT COGS BACKYARD

Xeriscape Gardens, Unwin Place, Weston

Date: Saturday 18th and Sunday 19th of September.
Subject: COGS will be holding talks on Organic Vegetable growing;
Time: 1pm and 3pm.

Date: Saturday 30th and Sunday 31 st of October.
Subject: CIT Garden Show, to be held at the CIT campus and the Xeriscape Garden.
Time: 9am to 4pm.

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)

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
- Natural dental care products
- Re-useable sanitary pads and organic tampons
- Natural cosmetics
- Natural insecticide
- Books on environment & sustainable technology
- Children's books
- Educational toys
- Games
- Calendars and diaries
- Australian made fashion clothing and
- Gifts for the whole family

The shop is at Kingsley Street Acton
Ph/Fax: 6247 3064
Open Tuesday-Friday 9 - 5, Saturday 10 - 1

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 now!

- 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