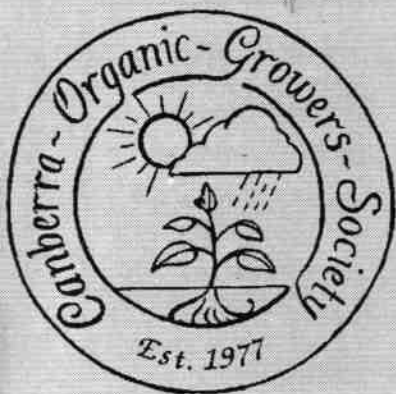


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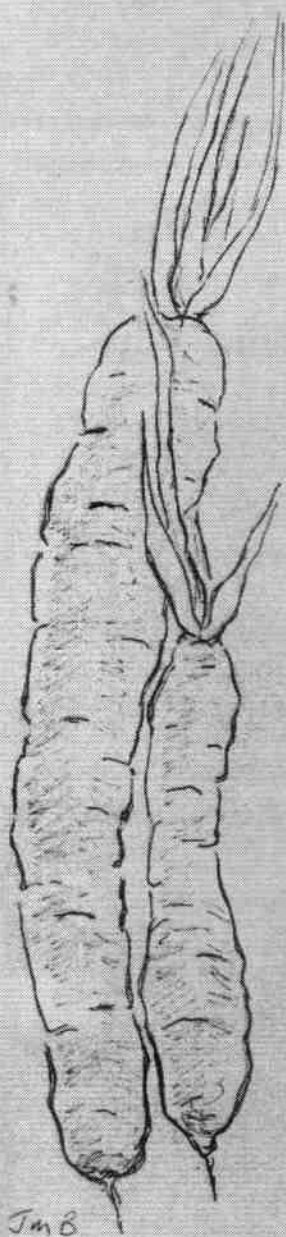
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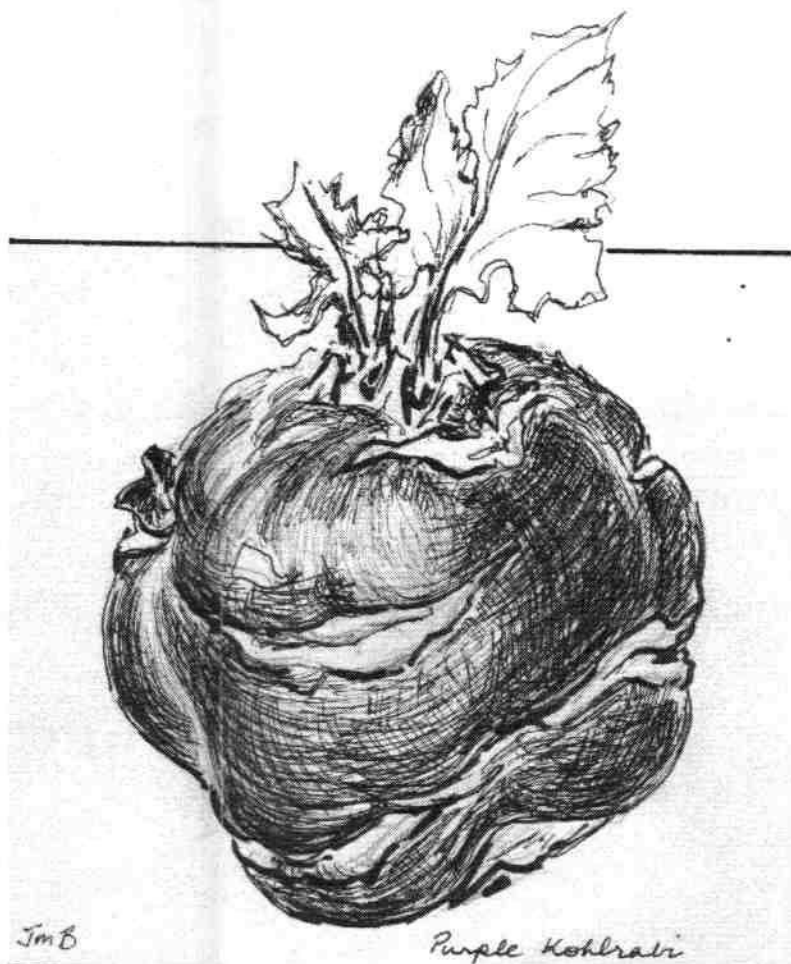
# Canberra Organic

Quarterly publication of the Canberra Organic Growers Society Inc.

**ORGANIC GROWING  
IN THE CANBERRA REGION**



JmB



JmB

Purple Kohlrabi

**VOL. 8 NO. 3**

**SPRING 2000**

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## From the Editors

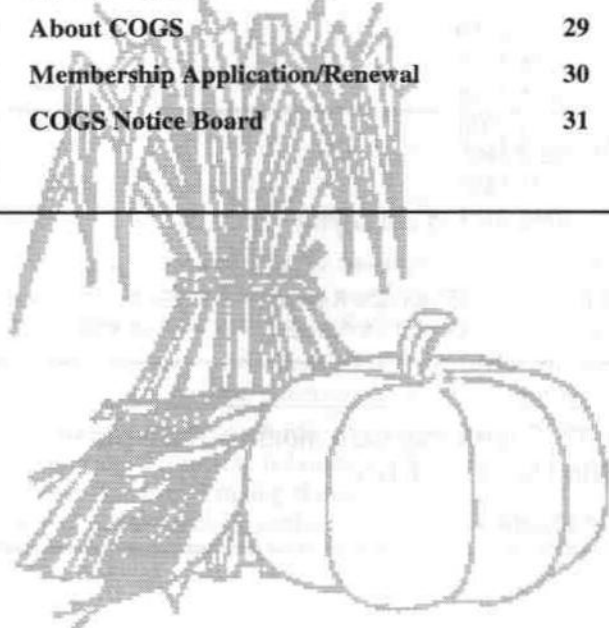
Thankfully, spring has arrived. We weren't sure how much longer we could endure those glorious frosty mornings, foggy days and chilly temperatures.

Jen and I are certain that the rest of you all understand the constraints of time and energy on your daily lives (and gardens!). We feel these same limits, but I was reminded the other day how important the work in organic growing is. An open discussion after night class brought some of us around to the topic of genetically modified organisms. One woman expressed great concern about what was being done in this area. Having no soapbox near at hand, I did the next best thing and told her to buy organic, or better yet, *grow* organic. I talked about certification, self-education, knowing where your food comes from and being on a first name basis with the grower. And, finally, joining a local organic gardening group.

I hope my zealotness came across as knowledge. And I hope my classmate actually makes some changes in her life that help her feel empowered, because fear is not the true catalyst for change, hope is. And that is why I volunteer for COGS. I hope that people are smart enough to encourage sustainable agriculture, both in broadacre and in backyards. I hope we take back our soil and seed from the fists of greed. I hope that we can halt soil salinity with tree planting and farmer education. I hope I have time to keep my own little garden going. I hope you enjoy this magazine and decide to contribute some time and energy to COGS. I hope I see you at the next meeting.



P.S. For those of you interested in the status of Jane Akre and Steve Wilson's court case against FoxTV, at press time, there was no additional information on their website. We will keep you informed as we find out more information. You can offer your support by visiting their website at [www.foxbghsuit.com](http://www.foxbghsuit.com)



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Rosemary Stevenson      Laurie Thompson      Adrienne Fazekas

#### COGS FLIER

Pilots: Steve & Michelle Sutton

#### MONTHLY MEETINGS

Book sales: Murray Dadds  
 Produce table: Vacant  
 Supper convenors: Marie Bahr, Rosemary Stevenson  
 Librarian: Maren Childs



#### COGS REPRESENTATIVES

Conservation Council: Vacant  
 Environment Centre: Vacant  
 Griffin Centre: Vacant

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Charnwood:	Gerard De Ruyter	6258 5903
Northside:	Rod Therkelsen	6226 5086
Oaks Estate:	George Rehn	6297 1036
Theodore:	Steve Sutton	6292 5609
Erindale:	Christine Carter	6231 5862
COGS Backyard:	Laurie Thompson	6288 7161

#### COGS ON THE INTERNET

<a href="http://www.netspeed.com.au/cogs">www.netspeed.com.au/cogs</a>	Web Manager:	Gerard De Ruyter	6258 5903
<a href="mailto:cogs@netspeed.com.au">cogs@netspeed.com.au</a>	E-mail Coordinator:	Gerard De Ruyter	6258 5903

**COGS monthly meetings are held on the 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of each month at 7:30 pm in Room 4 of the Griffin Centre in Civic.**

~ VISITORS WELCOME ~

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT



Welcome everyone. Well "Tog the Dog" has been read along with numerous other books, the toys have been tidied up and there is quiet in the house. Yes, the kids are finally asleep and I can sit down and write this in peace. It's been a busy day at COGS BACKYARD with the seed raising medium and soil blocking workshop presented by Joyce Wilkie and Michael Plane. This was a fun and interesting day spent learning and socialising, the only problem being the weather didn't know what it wanted to do - rain one minute, sun the next. I hope everyone learnt something and that you all got enough soil blocks to help you start off this spring.

What a busy winter it has been with the fencing projects at Charnwood, Northside and Oaks Estate Gardens. Over the last three months we have used five hundred metres of netting and numerous eight foot star pickets which extended the height of the fences around the gardens to two metres. I hope this gives the members the security to grow lots of wonderful organic food for themselves and their families. The sausage sizzles at the end of each day gave committee members and myself the opportunity to talk with members that we don't usually see at our monthly meetings. Thanks to all who participated, it was a job well done.

As you will see on the noticeboard, COGS has a busy spring ahead. On Sunday, August 20<sup>th</sup>, members are invited to come along to the Environment Centre to have a brainstorm on what direction we should be going with the SEED SAVING project, and to package up some donated seed. In September there is the CHOOK COURSE. On Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> October we take our turn in presenting the afternoon talks at COGS BACKYARD. The following Sunday we will be having a stall at the GREEN LIVING FAIR. The first Saturday in November we will be at COGS BACKYARD for SPECIAL EVENTS at the XERISCAPE GARDEN in conjunction with the CIT PLANT SALE. The committee will need help in staffing the above stalls. Please try to spare a couple of hours to give a hand. The money raised on these days helps to keep fees down, plus it is a wonderful way of meeting like-minded people. To help make our stalls more interesting and profitable, a couple of members have already said they will grow some vegetable seedlings to sell. If anybody else can help with some extra seedlings they have in their garden, it would be much appreciated.

I would like to thank Jenny Waygood for her work on the COGS committee. Firstly as a general committee member and then as Membership Secretary over the last eighteen months. Jenny is always the first to volunteer in helping at our stalls and all her work has been greatly appreciated.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'SR Sutton'.

Steve Sutton

### CANBERRA ORGANIC

Vol.8 No.3 Issue 31

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There are four issues each year: autumn (February), winter (May), spring (August), and summer (November). The deadline for copy and advertising is January 15<sup>th</sup>, April 15<sup>th</sup>, July 15<sup>th</sup>, and October 15<sup>th</sup> respectively. Editors are Jennifer Allen and Jennifer Hendriks. Printing is done by Aussieprint on recycled paper. Illustrations courtesy of Joan Buckie and Wendy Rose. For advertising queries, please contact Jennifer Hendriks.

## New Additions to the Canberra Organic Growers Society Library

### ***The Australian Vegetable Garden*** by Clive Blazey

This colorful, enjoyable addition to our library is published by the Diggers Club, of which the author is the founding member. The book is divided into six, easy-to-read sections beginning with the *Introduction, What's New is Old, Basics for Growing, Growing Vegetables, Seed Saving* and an *Index*.

The main section entitled *What's New is Old*, covers the myth of hybrid superiority, how to become liberated from hybrid seed use, heirloom vegetables, edible gardens, types of gardens, grouping veggies, self sufficiency, small space gardening, and buying food. This informative chapter offers beautiful photos that will motivate any gardener. The use of vegetables in gardens traditionally used for flower growth is both impressive and inspiring.

The *Basics for Growing* chapter covers soil health, mulch, watering, seed sowing, temperature and heat. The charts and maps in this section will be useful for both new and old gardeners.

The *Growing Vegetables* chapter tells you how to do just that. Sections are divided up as follows: Cool Soil – first planting, Cool Soil- second planting, Warm Soil- third planting, and Tomatoes. In the first three sections, the vegetables are arranged alphabetically. For each veggie we find the information on: background, selecting varieties, preparation and management and varieties available. Tomatoes, of course, warrant their own section, as well they should.

The Seed Saving section answers the question of why to seed save, pollination, isolation, caging, seed collection as well as processing and storage.

This is a wonderful book and is a must for all serious Australian gardeners committed to the ideals of seed saving and organic gardening. It will be a welcome (and I trust, well loved) addition to the COGS library.

### ***Food Preserving at Home*** by John Gross

This incredibly useful book contains all the basics about home preserving. The seven chapters provide information on canning, pickling, making jams,

jellies and preserves, juices (both fruit and tomato), freezing, drying, curing and smoking. Focusing mainly on the science of home food preserving, this 182-page book answers such questions as: Which method should I use? How does food preserving work? and Can I preserve food for specific diets? There are twenty easy-to-follow tables and the line illustrations are both charming and useful.

This book will familiarize the beginner with the necessary equipment for preserving, different methods, the pluses and minuses of those methods, and offers answers to frequently asked questions. There is a fine array of recipes for fruit, veg, and seafood as well as fowl, fish, and flesh.

### ***The Natural Gardener: A Complete Guide to Organic Gardening*** edited by Jeffrey Hodges

This fine book has a total of nine contributing writers with backgrounds in such areas as herbalism, commercial organic farming, environmental science, ecology, geography and civil engineering. With such impressive credentials, it is no wonder this book has something for everyone. The twenty chapters cover such topics as: defining natural and organic gardening, garden design, listening to your garden's needs, plant science, soil structure, preparing your garden, natural fertilizers, companion planting, mulch, watering strategies, natural pest control, weeds, pruning, flowers, roses, trees and shrubs, growing fruit, herbs and their uses, vegetables, and lawns and other groundcovers. There are many sub-topics within each chapter (too many to comment on!) so rest assured, if you can formulate it into a question, this book will have the answer. There is also a wonderful bibliography and resource list.

For those of you wishing to know the why behind the what, this is the book for you. Written in an easy-to-read, useful style, it fully explains the science of gardening. This is a wonderful addition to the COGS library.



To borrow books from the Canberra Organic Growers Society library, simply come to the next meeting, purchase a year's membership and take out some books. Our wonderful librarian, Maren, will talk you through your first time borrowing.

# Community Garden Convenors' Reports

## Cooree from Charnwood Community Organic Garden

Hi to all from the north-west extremes of Belconnen, where the only sounds you're likely to hear at our garden is some quiet chipping of a couple of hoes in action - and the sound of graders turning more of the remnant surrounding farmland into sites for 30 sq mansions for two-child families. It's getting "cosy" out here all of a sudden!

While the new development of Dunlop is surging ahead, the Charnwood Garden is "aging gracefully", shall we say. No sudden surges in membership for us...some seasons we wax, some we wane, keeping an average of eight or so plots productive. We have had some new developments: new member Borek Puza brought with him thirty or so fruit trees which are now growing happily in a new mulch bed set up for that purpose.

Thanks to the efforts of our resident superman, John Turnbull, we've had a steady inflow of mulch topsoil for new beds - we plan to hold an **Open Day for the Charnwood Garden on the 9th of September (from 10am)** and have on offer three or four newly mulched and turned garden beds for hire by new members. Well done John - and let's hope the work pays off!

The other big event this autumn was our Fencing Day held on the 21st of May. Thanks for making this such a success go to Steve Sutton, for suggesting and then following through on the idea of raising the height of the existing fence on the site (and a program to do likewise at other gardens) and for promoting the day as a 'COGS community day'. It was. We had twenty or so members there with plenty of kids to run 'round the place while the "grown-ups" set to with chicken wire and pliers and several sets of fumble fingers. Done (amazingly) by midday, we then had plenty of time for chat (glorious warm, still day) and a barbecue. It felt just like a Quaker barn raising - complete with that absolutely gorgeous feeling of community. On to Mitchell Garden!

Gerard De Ruyter, Charnwood Convenor  
May 2000

## Mitchell Community Garden

The working bee was a huge success. Heaps of people turned up and it was a great turnout, so great, in fact, was the day's effort by all and sundry that we not only got done what we had planned for the day (including demolishing the sausages), but we finished the job - knocked it clean on the head. More fencing is planned for next year, if required. We will wait and see what the fruits of our labour produce. Suffice to say, for now we have the beginnings of a great growing, living, breathing fence.

I want to thank the people who turned up and also the people who took the time to contact me and say they were unavailable that day. Thank you! What a community garden needs apart from sun, soil, and water is dedicated gardeners willing to lend a hand whenever they can or may. Community gardens are a wonderful place to meet other like-minded people. It is fun to grow your own fruit and vegetables. Moving forward is a hard road some will tell, but once you get there, there is no compromise for quality produce.

As well as getting the fence done, members also managed to get two trailer loads of rubbish taken to the tip and prune some of the fruit trees. A very good effort all round! So thanks to the members who attended: Steve-star-pickett-Sutton, Keith our treasured treasurer, Laurie-no-fuuss-Thompson, Charnwood's convenor Gerard De Ruyter, Jenny (do you want to be a member?) Waygood and husband plus family, plus the plot holders. Richard Larson was too ill to work, but still managed to get his BBQ and the gas bottle down to us in time. Thanks to Margie Perkins, Gary (prompt) Ridgway, Maren Child, Maura O'Conner (thanks for your trailer), Emma Hawke and friend, Edwina and Craig Richardson, Janet and Russel Doust (new members), Martin and Francis Butterfield (who have offered to donate a lawn mower to us when the shed is more secure), Richard Bailey, Mark Noak and friend (thanks for your trailer) Glyn-mow-you-down Sargent (put a lawn mower in that man's hands, and you can't stop him), Sandy Ryan and my wife Sigrid Drescher. Not counting all the children (and there were quiet a few) we had 26 people on the day which says it all I think. If I have left someone out (I hope I haven't) then please let me know.

Best regards, Rod Therkelsen, Mitchell Convenor

# ORGANIC ADVENTURES

COGS Outing to Allsun Farm a Great Success

By Jennifer Allen

April 9th. A short forty-minute drive from the city a farm is nestled. It is surrounded by bush and a cloud-streaked sky. The owners of this place are Joyce Wilke and Michael Plane, people doing what they love, spending time on the land, and sharing their knowledge with others. Best of all, they are wonderful storytellers (as most farmers are). So for this COGS group, the day begins in their kitchen, over a cuppa and a yarn.

Michael decided, after experience as a geologist in Africa, Papua New Guinea, and Central Australia, that he was not up to the demands of suburban living. He drew a 50-mile radius around Canberra and looked for property. His basic premise was that land "was a good hedge against inflation". In 1970, he found a piece in Gundaroo referred to by the locals as "the green timber". It was poor grazing land and heavily wooded. The 40ha piece had no house or dam and was completely devoid of boundary fencing.

Michael's eldest daughter began the first vegie garden in 1975. He tells us that the garden was "hexagonal, renaissance, had nice beds - totally impractical." We laugh, mainly because we are beginning to understand that Michael is nothing, if not practical. There was a mere 50 mm of topsoil when the land first came under cultivation. Even now, walking down the access road to the garden, one can hardly imagine that vegies will grow out of the bits of crushed rock that seem to be the only ground cover.

In 1979, Michael met Joyce and it was (in his words) a "momentous event". In a telling gesture, here Michael turns the story over to Joyce and the yarn continues, in a different voice, but just as compelling.

Joyce became involved with COGS after compiling a year-round planting calendar. She still expresses fascination with Canberra residents' insistence that the growing season here is short. "Maine and England do better than Canberra [for year round gardening], so what's the problem?" she asks the group, mystified. Maine continues to be a theme in many of Joyce and Michael's stories, as their mentor and friend, Eliot Coleman, farms organically there. "We use his book (*New Organic Grower*, or NOG, as they refer to it at Allsun) as the blueprint for our farm. He grows efficient and high quality crops." Joyce and Michael's most popular crop continues to

be their year-round baby salad greens, grown in almost the exact same manner that Eliot grows his own popular mix.

Joyce and Michael have always grown organically "Why would I put chemicals on my vegetables? Why would I do that?" Joyce wonders aloud to the group. Regardless of their principles, early on there were some problems. Mulches were brought from other sources onto the property in order to build the soil quickly, but soon after, dieldrin residue was found in the soil. Large molecule organo-chlorines, like dieldrin, latch onto fats and humus and for this reason, can be found in mulch material like lucerne. The half-life of many of these agrochemicals can be as long as thirty years. Composting, however, can bring the half-life of organo-chlorines down to less than seven years. Joyce recalled that this experience made "us grow up fast. [...] and started us thinking holistically about the garden, the block of land and the farm". They are now very careful about what materials they allow onto the property, and they hot compost farm inputs and their own garden wastes. Compost, green manure crops, and the chooks are all used to build up and maintain what is now fertile soil.

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Joyce and Michael's tool company, Gundaroo Tiller, arose from their own farm needs. "We kept seeing these tools that were not available in Australia and we wondered, "Why not?" Some of the metal parts of the tools are forged in Korea, because "Koreans are prepared to hand-forge, Australians are not and hand forging makes for a better quality product". Michael insists that the tools be used properly to ensure the continued good health of the farmer. Michael was heavily influenced by Ruth Stout's book "How to have a green thumb without an aching back". In a quick demonstration, he points out that many of the tools have extra long handles to allow the gardener to stand up straight, a necessity if the user intends to ward off future lower back problems.

permanent buildings on the farm site, with the exception of the tool shed. It makes for a very dynamic and flexible site.

After this extensive farm tour, we were all famished. We were treated to a tantalizing array of treats from the farm: organic roast chicken, salads galore, and homemade pastries. Joyce believes very strongly in the farming/food connection and enjoys demonstrating how wonderful food can be by catering for such functions.

The garden itself runs on the W-E axis and has approximately 100 permanent beds, which are 20 meters long and 70 cm wide with a 30-cm path in between. The fencing is as elaborate as it needs to be to discourage roos and Tyson, the extremely large, overly exuberant Ridgeback/Labrador mix who calls the farm home. Two hoop houses shelter heat-loving vegies like tomatoes, eggplant and capsicum. One of the green houses is on a system of rollers that allows it to be moved with the least amount of effort. The bed is three times the length of the shelter, allowing for three years of green house rotation.

Heavily influenced by Gene Logsdon's book, *The Contrary Farmer*, Joyce and Michael give us the show we expect. They are feisty, intense and play up their contrariness. They market direct, cut out middlemen, don't abide whingers and say it like it is. It's a refreshing day in so many ways.

The chickens are housed within a moveable electric fence to protect them from possible fox attack. The fence is powered by small solar panels linked directly to the system and can be set up to fit any size or shape of ground (these fencing systems are available from Gundaroo Tiller and are a hot item - no pun intended.) The chooks' food and water is housed in a moveable shelter which makes fine use of old bicycle tires and is a cinch to re-locate. There are very few

It is clear that Joyce and Michael are good at what they do. Their waiting list of customers is testimony to that. But it is also evident that they enjoy what they do. Who could not, surrounded by this beautiful garden, this wonderful bush land and cloud-streaked sky. Their life is the envy of most of us and as the cars begin to pull out of the drive, one sees many silent faces turned skyward, imagining how to manifest in their own lives, just a portion of what Joyce and Michael have created. COGS thanks them for a wonderful day.



**Have you had an Organic Adventure?**

Would you like to share your recent visit to an organic farm, garden or property with others? Write it up and submit to the editors! See page five for e-mail and phone contact information. Articles on disk, or sent as e-mail attachments are greatly appreciated.

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# Turning a Suburban Backyard into a Permaculture Paradise

by Jenny Waygood

## Session 1: April 3rd, 2000

It is our first consultation with Dave Tooley, proprietor of E.C.O. systems, a permaculture consulting business, and my husband Ian and I are feeling really excited (though he does not admit it). Apart from getting some order into the yard, I foresee a lot of work but am still very committed to the task. Dave stays for nearly 2 hours. In between rescuing my boys (aged 2 and nearly 5) from various falls and making a cuppa, we discuss what we want from the wish list my hubby and I and our nearly 7 year old daughter compiled during the previous weeks. We got our ideas from magazines, books and other people's yards.

We then have a look around the yard to get Dave's perspective (a trained eye). He looks at the lay of the land, assesses sizes and positions of structures and plants along with aspect and garden potential.

When we finish, Dave takes home a map of the house and land and our wish list to refer to. From this consultation, we decide that our action list is to thin out the bushes in the front garden on the north side to let more breezes go through our alsanite-covered pergola, which has the house on either side. This job includes chopping out the leptospermums and Hakea and trimming back the smaller branches of the maple tree to chest height. Dave also suggests we clear a circle from under the sasanqua camellias and incorporate some blood and bone and worm castings into the first two inches of the soil. The camellias are on the southern wall and I planted lots of ground cover underneath them to suppress the weeds. This needs a little trimming back every now and then but works well for its intended purpose.

In these two hours, Dave offers heaps of information and suggestions, including how to make a map of the site, planning for future development, and lots, lots more. I have no hope of remembering all of it but will be reminded of most of it in consultations to follow.

Dave will now spend some time putting down some ideas of his own. We will have to wait until next time to see what he comes up with.

## Session 2: April 25th, 2000

It is our second consultation with Dave. Both Ian and I are again excited when Dave arrives, held in anticipation even longer when he is a bit late. Here at last, it is hard to sit on our hands inside, quietly, and plan, so I occupy myself by making a cup of coffee and discussing ideas.

The first thing we do with Dave is to go over our wish list and add a few things we forgot, like a strawberry patch. Dave has produced a large-sized photocopy of our house and land plan on which the end plan will be produced.

Then Dave, still inside, offers us a few suggestions for the chook house, such as what to build it out of, how big it needs to be and the height of the fences. Eventually, Ian would like the chook house to double as an aviary, so building plans must incorporate this future function as well as the structure's initial purpose.

Ideas are discussed, plans are drawn and coffee is drunk. *Finally*, we get outside to show him our progress. Dave has another general look around the yard as we show him our pruning, clearing and fertilizing. Then he gives us another few things to do, namely build the chook house, and plan the lower garden, which are to be done before our next session in about a month. Homework!!!

That very afternoon after Dave has gone, our excitement cannot be contained. We both rush out into the garden and start excavating for the cement slab of the chook house. We decide on cement, as cleaning will be easier. That done in the first day, we then have a progression of steps including planning exact dimensions, compiling a materials list, noting exact size and length of wood. These materials are bought both from a hardware store and Revolve or make use of materials we already have. Now, off to build it!!!!

Stay tuned....



# THE ADVENTURES OF YUM AND YUK

A (Genetically Modified) Short Story  
by Bridget Farrar

Once upon a time, there were two little carrots called Yum and Yuk. They met in the greengrocer's shop, and Yuk said to Yum, "That's a nice name, Yum. Where did you come from?" Yum said, "I come from OzzieOrg's farm where my mum and dad made me - what about you?-Yuk is a funny name." "That's because I was made by two men called Professor Grim and Doctor Grump in a laboratory," said Yuk. "Why did they do that?" asked Yum. "Because some other men called Greedy and Grab said they'd take away their jobs if they didn't. But I'd have rather had a mum and dad like you," said Yuk starting to cry. "Don't cry," said Yum "let's pretend my mum and dad are yours, too."

But when they climbed off the shelf and went to look for Yum's mum and dad, the greengrocer came up and said, "What are these doing together - GM Yuk musn't go near any of OzzieOrg's vegies." And he picked them up and put them in separate bins. Yum could still hear Yuk sniffing quietly and saying, "I don't want to be GM, I want to belong to OzzieOrg, too."

When the greengrocer had gone away Yum climbed in again next to Yuk and said "Oh, come on, it's no use just crying, we've got to do something about this bad GM". But Yuk only cried louder 'til Yum grabbed his hand, jumped with him from the bin, and ran out of the shop door. "Where are we going?" Yuk asked (at least he'd stopped crying). "We're going to

find Grim and Grump and tell them to fix you up, so that you're not GM any more," replied Yum. So they walked and walked all day, asking people if they'd seen Grim and Grump. Most people ignored them, except for one little old lady who said, "Talking carrots, whatever next!!"

Yum and Yuk walked until finally they got into the countryside. "Why, I know this place," said Yum. "It's not far from OzzieOrg's home - look there's a sign." Yuk looked at the sign which said '*Aussie and Org. Bros.-vegies for sale*'. Yuk (who could read better than Yum, even if he did cry more) said, "There's two of 'em - brothers - one called Aussie and one called Org." "That's right," said an old turnip near the fence. "You can have Aussie vegies or Organic vegies -just so long as you don't have GM ones." Yum and Yuk chorused, "what's wrong with GM ones? What *is* GM?" But the old turnip just turned over and said, "Hrmph." Yum and Yuk looked at each other and agreed. "Lets find Ozzie or Org. and ask *them* what GM means."

So they trotted up the track to the farmhouse, but though they called and called they couldn't find either brother. Then Yum noticed the truck was gone. "They're both in town," she said. "We'll have to go back." Just then Sheila, the old collie, came round the corner and stopped in amazement when she saw them. "What are you doing here?" she asked. When they explained, she said, "Oh, I know where you want to go - hop on my back and I'll take you to the place where Professor Grim and Doctor Grump work." So they rode on Sheila's back for a long time until they came to a big pair of iron gates. Sheila stopped and said, "Here's the laboratory where Grim and Grump work. I can't come any further, because I don't want to be caught and GM'd." Yum and Yuk looked at each other in fear, but then Yum, jumping off Sheila's back said "Oh, well, we'll soon find out about GM, anyway." And, thanking Sheila, they both crept under the gate and started walking up the gravel road.

When Yum and Yuk got to the big red building at the top of the gravel drive, they found that the big

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wooden door was closed and too heavy for them to open. So they tiptoed round the side of the building just in time to hear someone near an open window say, "If we don't get more vegies GM'd by the end of the week, we'll be in big trouble with Greedy and Grab." It was Professor Grim!

Just as Yum and Yuk were about to turn and run, Grim caught sight of them and said, "Hullo, looks like two of the carrots have escaped. Quick, bring me the butterfly net." And he jumped out of the window and caught them in the net. Doctor Grump was leaning out of the window watching and said, "One of them's GM alright, but the other one looks different to me." Yum shouted, "That's because I *am* different. I'm from OzzieOrg's and we want to know why Yuk is GM'd and what GM means."

Grim was so surprised that he sat down on the ground - but he didn't let go of the butterfly net. "Well, if you must know," said Grump, coming round the corner and joining them on the ground, "we wanted to make carrots grow longer. So to hurry things up we took a little bit of G out of a snake and Moved it into the carrots, and that's called GM." Yuk squeaked in horror, "You mean I've got a bit of snake in me? But how do you know it won't hurt me?" "We don't," said Professor Grim, "but it was the only way we could make lots of money fast enough for Greedy and Grab who own this laboratory - and talk of the devil, here they come now."

Greedy and Grab rushed over from their expensive car, and shouted, "Why aren't you working? What are you doing out here? You're supposed to be turning all

the vegies and fruit and other foods into GM, and spoiling the earth for other farmers so people can only buy what we have!"

Grim and Grump slunk back into the building, letting the butterfly net fall to the ground. Yum was so angry for OzzieOrg's sake that she ran up to Greedy and kicked him on the leg. Yuk, who even forgot to cry, ran up to Grab and bit him on the leg, then turned to Greedy, who was trying to stamp on him, and bit his leg, too. Immediately, the two men turned purple and fell to the ground. "Oh," said Yum, "I think you've killed them." "But how could a bite do that?" said Yuk, horrified. Professor Grim leaned out of the window and said, "It must have been the snake G we put in you. Some of the poison must've gone in, too. It often happens, we don't really know why." "That's dangerous!" cried Yum, shaking her fist at Grim. "You two had better just concentrate on making fruit and vegies bigger and better the non-GM way." And Grim and Grump nodded slowly, then fast, then at each other and then said excitedly, "Yes! That's the way to go!" Yum turned to Yuk saying, "Im going back to OzzieOrg's now to grow some seed for more carrots for kids to eat. What are you going to do?" "I'm going to write our story down, and put a lot of copies in my backpack, and walk around the world telling people about GM," said Yuk.

And that's what he did. And here it is!

The End



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# DIARY NOTES FROM JOHN & MARGARET

By John & Margaret Allen

We moved to the South Coast in October 1999 so we could oversee developments on our five acre property. The Council finally approved our development plan after a lengthy debate about our septic tank. Earthworks were done in November. After the heavy-duty equipment departed, we had a cleared house site, a new road, a level area in front of the house site, a level area for the shed, a hole for a 100,000 litre concrete tank, and a five million litre capacity dam complete with an island!

We irrigate our gardens from the smaller upper dam, topping it up as necessary by pumping water from the new lower dam.

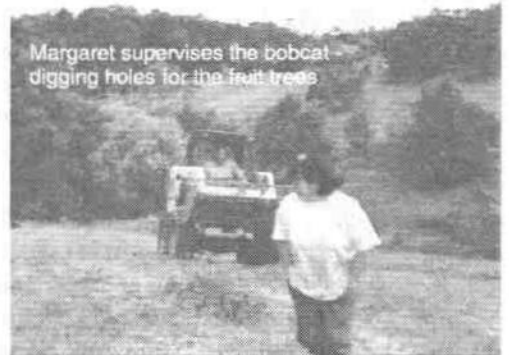
Only a couple of minor problems so far. The excavator got stuck in the upper dam while doing some selective tree removal - it nearly fell in and had to be salvaged by the bulldozer. A large truck delivering sand got stuck sideways on the road and broke an axle - it had to be pulled out by a cement truck. John lost control of a 150m roll of 1½" water pipe rolling it down from the road to the dam - I had to chase it and kick it hard to change its course which was straight towards the dam.

We are on a sloping block so it was important to get some grass growing on the patches left bare by the bulldozer. The slopes have been harrowed, dynamic lifter added and seed planted. It is all sprouting beautifully thanks to the regular rain.

Our shed has a 20,000 litre plastic tank - this will supply drinking water until the concrete taste dissipates from the large tank. We use a ride-on mower with trailer to carry things around the slopes.

The house is now complete and we have moved in. It is a steel pole house, the base bricked up on three sides. Framing is all treated pine so we should not have structural trouble with termites.

One of our vegetable gardens is operational, we have just finished fencing it to keep the wallabies out. We have transplanted asparagus, onions, raspberries, youngerberries, strawberries, rhubarb, and a few



Margaret supervises the bobcat digging holes for the fruit trees



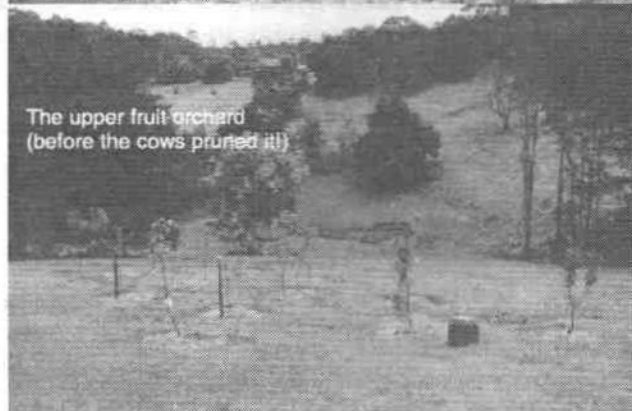
The Shed and small tank



John has a new toy



The house is finished!



The upper fruit orchard (before the cows pruned it!)

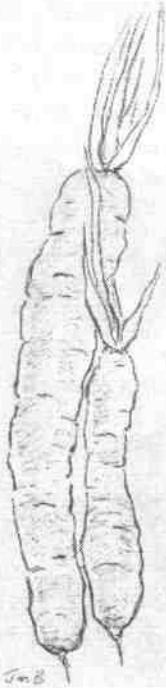
other bits and pieces salvaged from Canberra; and planted cabbage, carrots, onions, broccoli, brussel sprouts, spinach and peas. We also have a good selection of herbs and other plants, also ex-Canberra. John's Stevia plants survived the Canberra winter and are loving it here. We have planted a selection of fruit trees - cherry, quince, guava, olive, pear, peach, cumquat, apricot, nectarine, plum, apple, walnut, orange, grapefruit, avocado, mandarin, lime (from COGS), and lemon. They are grouped together to form a canopy against bird invasion. The orchard will be enclosed by a fence and connected to a chook run. We think that we will have to net the whole area eventually.

A few weeks ago, two cows from next door got in and chewed the orchard slightly, some trees suffering more than others - luckily another neighbour saw them and chased them off.

There are many maned geese (i.e. wood ducks) residing on the property - they eat grass shoots, but leave all the vegetables alone. A pair of geese has adopted us, and we have inherited two ducks from next door.

We are loving it here!

*John & Margaret*



## Plant Profile: Carrots

by Keith Colls

### CARROTS

*Daucus carota* var. *sativus*

Carrots are one of the easiest vegetables to grow in Canberra's climate. You can have fresh carrots in an open garden all year round, except perhaps for a short period between the end of the over-winter crop and the new spring crop. Carrots are a particularly useful crop for a small garden, since a large number of carrots can be grown in a very small area.

Carrots are native to areas around the Mediterranean Sea, Afghanistan and central Asia and come in various colours. White is the dominant colour of wild carrots but they also occur in various shades of yellow, orange, red and purple. They were used for both medicine and food in ancient times. By the Middle Ages the Japanese had developed unusually long carrots. According to the *Seed Savers' Handbook* by Michel and Jude Fanton, early cultivated carrots were yellow but a Dutch gardener obtained a mutation which had the orange pigment we are accustomed to today. According to *Taylor's Guide to Heirloom Vegetables* by Benjamin Watson, it was the French who developed many of today's familiar orange-red varieties, hence the French names such as Chantenay, Nantes, etc.

Carrots have very small seed so it is necessary to have fairly finely cultivated soil to get a good strike. The seeds should only be lightly covered with soil and kept moist. The optimum temperature for germination is between 16C and 22C. I have found the easiest way to ensure that the soil stays

sufficiently moist, even on the hottest summer days, is to cover them with a piece of damp hessian until just after the shoots have emerged. The damp hessian guarantees a good strike. The seeds can be planted quite thickly in rows and thinned out later. But if, like me, you cannot bear to pull out perfectly good seedlings, they can be left until they reach the baby carrot stage and thinned by eating. If they are not thinned it does not seem to make much difference to their final growth although you may get a few odd shaped carrots as they grow around one another trying to find enough space.

If you are using crop rotation (as you should be), carrots are often grown following the brassicas and if you like the idea of companion planting, try alternating rows of carrots with rows of leeks. In *Companion Gardening in Australia*, Judith Collins suggests that carrots also grow well with sage, lettuce, chives, peas, salsify, viola and rosemary.

I find that carrots which are overwatered develop a bitter and unpleasant taste. Carrot roots reach fairly deep into the soil and should not require much watering if you have a reasonable amount of organic matter in the soil and the rows are well mulched. Even in the hottest periods a good watering once a week is more than enough.

Carrots suffer from very few diseases and pests in Canberra's climate although *The Canberra Gardener* published by the Horticultural Society of Canberra Inc. suggests aphids can cause problems. I have been growing carrots for about twenty years in Canberra and I have never had any serious pest or disease problems. Although I have lost a few carrot seedlings to snails and slugs, they do not seem to like them very much and have not caused enough damage to justify taking any preventative measures.

The Hunter Biodynamic Group will be holding a **two-day workshop on Beginner BioDynamics**. The course is **October 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>** and will take place at CB Alexander Agricultural College, Tocal. The course fee is \$180 (including lunches, morning and afternoon tea and a Saturday BBQ).

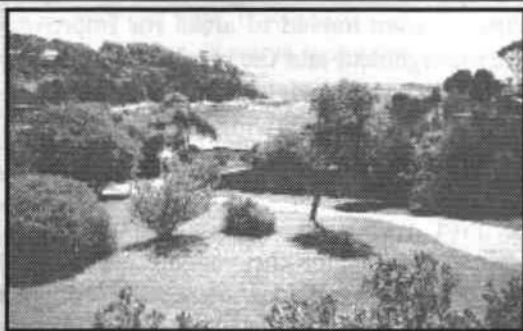
For registration details, please phone/fax Helen McCall on **4938 5308**.

Carrots are most easily stored by leaving them in the ground and using them when needed. This method assumes you are planting a few crops a year with enough carrots in the garden to meet your needs at any time of the year. Carrots can be successfully stored by freezing but they should be blanched first. Carrots are best eaten fresh if possible. By peeling, cutting them into small pieces and boiling, much of their vitamin content is lost by oxidation when they are drained and exposed to the air. Their mineral salts are dissolved in the cooking water and therefore lost.

There are several varieties of carrots which grow well in Canberra. The time to reach maturity depends on the variety but the general rule is the shorter the carrot the more quickly it matures. The 'best' variety depends entirely on your taste. Why not experiment and try several varieties and choose those you like best. The *Seed Savers' Handbook* lists several

varieties which are worth looking out for and the COGS seed saver group can advise you about which varieties they have available. There are also several varieties available from commercial seed suppliers.

Once you have chosen the varieties which suit your needs it is worth considering saving your own seed. Carrot seed can be stored in a cool, dark, dry place for at least three years. Carrots are one of the easy vegetables for seed saving. They are biennials and need two growing seasons to flower. Carrots are insect pollinated and different varieties cross easily but they tend to flower at different times so cross pollination is not usually a problem. If you do have different varieties flowering at the same time, try experimenting with breeding your own variety. For more information on seed saving, contact the COGS seed savers group.



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# Permaculture Builds More Than Soil

by Anna Lyons

The Alcohol and Drug Association, Australian Capital Territory Inc. (ADFACT) is going through a very exciting transformation with the aim of "greening" itself. This Therapeutic Community is working with volunteers from Permaculture ACT and some graduates of the Urban Services Earth Works Program, engaging residents and staff of ADFACT in organic gardening, composting and worm farming.

Participants began this project on April 7th 2000 at 'Karralika', a drug and rehab center. Twelve residents attended a four hour workshop lead by Dave Tooley. After a short theoretical introduction, the participants watched a Bill Mollison video. With their new found knowledge, the group constructed a "No Dig Garden Bed". The residents chose the best spot for their garden next to the kitchen. They hoed the weeds and laid down wet newspapers and lucerne under the watchful eyes of Dave Tooley and Dave Read.

Plantings of broccoli, silver beet, parsley, beetroot and other vegetables soon took place into pockets of a compost mix supplied by the educators. When the 'No Dig Garden' was complete everyone settled down with Dave Tooley to look at photos of permaculture gardens at their best. This wonderful and productive morning was finished off with a barbeque lunch while everyone put together plans for the next workshop.

The second workshop covered design with Dave Tooley presenting plans of a couple of properties. A few participants indicated that they were keen to get started on their own drawings for the community gardens. Another Bill Mollison video was also part of the workshop whilst the rain poured down. Then, in the rain showers, the group set about building a large compost bay next to the existing vegetable patch under some magnificent Casuarinas. This compost bay was built with donated palettes. A mix of an old compost heap (rather smelly) and new ingredients of wet cardboard boxes, shredded paper, leaves, grass clippings, lime and chook manure formed the new compost heap.

In the process of building the compost heap, the discussion soon moved to areas for improvement in waste management and the participants quickly came up with a list of materials they could use for compost making instead of throwing away. The need for a paper shredder was identified.

The third workshop, facilitated by Dave Read, examined 'design' for the vegetable patch. After a lively discussion, residents erected wire mesh for growing the winter crop of climbing vegetables. One group concentrated on this while the other busily dug holes to plant shrubs that had been donated to 'Karralika'. This workshop was completed by residents planting seeds to raise as winter vegetables, and a barbeque lunch followed afterwards.

The project team's ongoing plan is to support the residents of 'Karralika' in managing their gardens efficiently so that they may grow most of their culinary requirements. It is envisaged that they will leave the therapeutic program with new skills and an enthusiasm for permaculture practices. The team further hopes to achieve the building of a women's sacred garden, a children's playground, butterfly and fairy gardens and meditation areas.

In order that this project will blossom, the organising team is hoping to secure donations of trees, seeds, seedlings, worms, worm farms and other relevant materials. If you wish to find out more, or wish to participate, please contact project team members on the following telephone numbers: Dave Tooley 6231 2187, Dave Read 6296 3550, Anna Lyons 6287 1428.

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# The Coldframe

## A Tomato's Best Friend

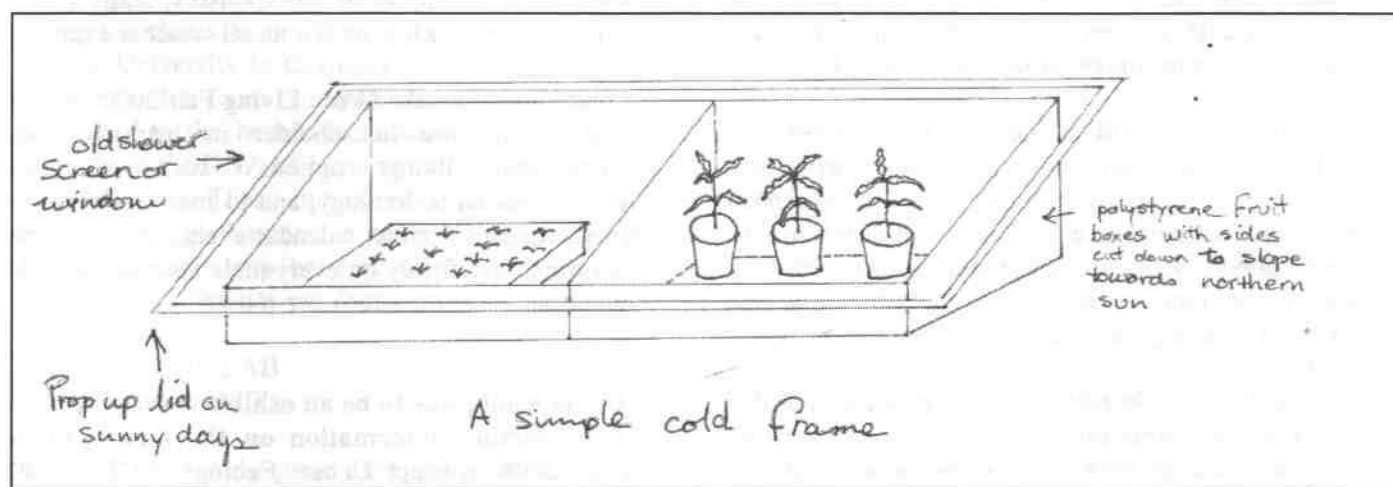
By Adrienne Fazekas

Having your own tomatoes ripe before Christmas is one of the challenges of vegetable growing in Canberra. The weather will usually have the biggest influence on how successful you will be unless you can grow your plants under cover. This could be in a glasshouse or polyhouse, for example, or in pots, which can be moved about to the sunniest spots and brought inside if frosts are predicted. You need a warm spring and early summer with no severe late frosts to get the best chance.

To improve your odds, choose early maturing varieties such as Rouge de Marmande or varieties from cool climates such as Stupice. Try to get seeds that have been grown locally, as they may be more adapted to our climate. I plant my first seeds indoors in July in 6 or 8 cell punnets, and leave them in a warm spot to germinate on top of the fridge for example. Last year I put all the early seeds on top of the fish tank which worked well. If the temperature is not at least 15 degrees, tomato seeds will be very slow to germinate.

When the seedlings appear, move them to a bright sunny windowsill. Once the seedlings are a few inches tall, with several real leaves, transplant them to small pots and keep them in a warm bright spot. Slight root binding is said to promote early flowering so don't be too generous with the pot size. I use the little 2-inch square ones. At this stage it becomes a matter of chasing warmth and light. If you have a glasshouse the seedlings can go in there provided it's not too cold at night. You could also use a cold frame in a warm, sunny protected spot.

A simple cold frame can be easily made from a variety of materials. The only essential one is a clear lid. Glass or plastic roofing sheets are good too. Old windows are easily obtainable in a great variety of sizes. Last year I discovered old shower screen panels at Revolve which were very cheap and made of laminated or wired glass which is much stronger and safer than normal window glass. The walls of your cold frame can be made of timber, old bricks, concrete blocks or even cut down polystyrene fruit boxes. If the weather is sunny, a small cold frame can become very warm during the day so the lid should be propped open to prevent the seedlings from drying out too quickly or even cooking. A cold frame may not be enough protection for tomatoes on seriously cold nights, so if it is likely to be much below zero it is safer to bring the tomato seedlings inside for the night.



By this stage it is early September, your tomatoes are several inches tall, and the first flower buds should be appearing. Once this happens, pot the tomatoes up again and feed them well. From this point on you have to watch the weather and take a few risks. It is very easy to be fooled by a week or two of warm sunshine. Some years you get away with planting the tomatoes out in early October but it's probably safer to wait until late October or early November. It's much easier to protect them from a late frost if they're mobile. If you do put a few plants out early, plastic tree guards or plastic tunnels offer some protection. I always keep at least four plants in pots until November just in case.

From this point, it's almost out of your hands. If the season is averagely warm you should have your own tomatoes for Christmas. Good Luck. Often these early fruiting tomatoes don't seem to do much for the rest of the season so do plant some more seeds in spring so you have lots of tomatoes in late summer and autumn.



# GREEN LIVING FAIR 2000

## Media Release

Ever thought of making your home more ecologically sustainable with a water saving garden, energy efficiency or even solar panels on the roof?

If you have, then Canberra's Green Living Fair 2000 is the event to visit! The ACT Region Branch of Urban Ecology Australia will hold the **Green Living Fair 2000 on Sunday, 15 October** at the ROCKS site, Canberra City. At the Fair you will find a collection of informative talks, voluntary organisations, and suppliers of products and services that can help the urban dweller steer a course for more ecologically integrated living.

"The 1999 Green Living Fair was a great success in terms of engaging both community and business" said Mr Warren Overton, President of Urban Ecology ACT. "Despite the unseasonable rain and cold, the fair managed to attract a crowd in excess of 500. Twenty-one stall holders successfully show-cased their products and services resulting in substantial sales and networking opportunities," he said.

Especially successful at the Fair in 1999 was the lecture series featuring such topics as urban retrofitting, organic gardening, water management and rammed earth construction. Michael Mobbs spoke about 'Sydney's Sustainable House', his well known creation, and this talk was particularly well received by a large audience.

Among the stall holders at the fair were ACTEW Greenchoice presenting their 100% and 50% renewable energy options for domestic and business electricity consumers. Another stall holder, Bushman Tanks, made sales of domestic water tanks on the

day. The Australian Society for Growing Native Plants was able to sell many plants and disseminate their knowledge of and passion for native plants and low water and maintenance gardening. Griffith Organic Butchery sold biodynamic sausages and the Canberra Environment Centre formally received a cheque from Urban Services Minister, Brendan Smyth, for renovations on their buildings. Two bands, Gravy Train and LASH, entertained the crowd while children had their faces painted and parents enjoyed the delicious organic food at the Organic Food Coop.

The Green Living Fair 2000 will build on the successes of the previous year. In its second year you can expect to see more stalls and entertainment, better facilities, substantial crowds and new ways of getting your hands dirty in the interactive demonstrations of sustainable building. Thanks to the generous support of our sponsors, stalls will be under cover, making the fair an all-weather event.

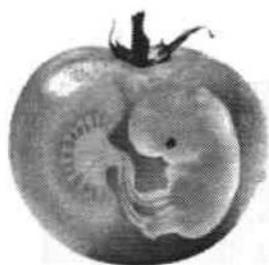
"Our aim is to make Green Living Fair 2000 an event that assists the householder in learning about sustainable living options, sustainable and environmental technology, and to make the Fair one of Canberra's premier calendar events, putting urban sustainability firmly on everyone's agenda", said Mr Overton.

**If you would like to be an exhibitor or sponsor, or want further information on the Green Living Fair 2000, contact Urban Ecology ACT on (02) 6262 6064.**

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## GENETIC ENGINEERING NEWS

Compiled by Bridgett Farrer

### SURPRISE FRAGMENTS FOUND IN GM SOYA (Guardian Weekly 8.14.6.00)

Monsanto revealed that its most widely used GM product contains unexpected gene fragments. They were found in modified soya beans that have been grown commercially in the US and used as an important ingredient in processed foods sold in Britain for four years. The company and the Government, which approved the soya's use in food and animal feed on behalf of the European Union, insisted the beans were no more risky to human health than conventional types. Tests found two "inactive" pieces of genetic material were inserted at the same time as the whole gene, which is resistant to weedkiller. Meanwhile about 400 British farmers who unwittingly sowed 11,600 acres with crops from seed contaminated by GM material will get compensation running into millions of pounds.

### JUMPING GENES (New Scientist 3.6.00)

Genes introduced into genetically modified plants do jump species into bacteria in the guts of animals eating the plants. Hans-Hinrich Kaatz and colleagues at Jena University in Germany collected young bees that ate pollen from rapeseed containing a gene for resistance to the herbicide glufosinate. They found the gene in the DNA of bacteria and yeast taken from the bees' guts. These microorganisms also survived exposure to glufosinate in culture, suggesting the resistance gene may be expressed. Kaatz cautions that the team has not yet found proof of expression.

### BACK TO THE LAB (New Scientist 3.6.00)

The unit that ran the gene therapy trial during which 18-year old Jesse Gelsinger died last year will no longer carry out clinical studies. The University of Pennsylvania announced last week that its Institute for Human Gene Therapy directed by James Wilson, will now concentrate on basic research. The decision comes as a serious blow to an institute that once led the world in moving gene therapy from the lab to the clinic. Wilson said in a statement that the institute would develop "a foundation of science necessary to assure the ultimate success of this field."

### JAPAN CONFECTIONER TO STOP GMO SWEETNER USE (Planet Ark 9.6.00)

In the latest sign of the Japanese suburbs wanting food industry's shift away from genetically modified organisms (GMOs), confectionery maker Bourbon Corp said yesterday it will stop using sweetener made from GMO corn in all of its products. As an alternative, Bourbon will use sugar or sweeteners made from domestically-grown potatoes because gene modification technology has yet to be applied to commercial production of these crops, a company official said. The company declined to say how much corn-based sweetener it uses annually or how much it will cost the company to shift to sweeteners made from non-GM crops, although it said it would not pass any additional costs on to consumers by raising retail prices. Food processors in Japan have begun to shift to non-GM crops and ingredients after the government's decision last August to require labelling of foods containing GMOs from April 2001. Japanese traders expect that, out of Japan's total corn needs of 16 million tonnes this year, about one million tonnes will be non-GM corn imported through a crop segregation system for use by snack makers, flour product manufacturers and breweries.

### KOREAN PLANS BOYCOTT OF GMO (Planet Ark 9. 6. 00)

South Korea's major environmental group said yesterday it was planning a boycott of food products made from genetically-modified organisms (GMOs) and urged processed food makers not to use such products. "We have urged food makers to use GMO-free ingredients," Yang Jang-il, director of the campaign department at the Korean Federation for Environmental Movement (KFEM), told Reuters that consumer groups in Korea are planning a campaign to boycott products from those food companies that continued to use GMOs. "Food makers should voluntarily use GMO-free ingredients because GMOs have not been proven in safety," Yang said. KFEM staged a demonstration in late March against genetically-modified foods in front of the office of Nestle Korea Ltd office in Seoul. Following the action, KFEM members met local officials of the world's biggest food company, where the firm said it

would comply with Korean government guidelines on modified foods. Korea will require labelling of GM corn, soybeans and bean sprouts from March 2001, to be followed by GM potatoes in March 2002. Other GM processed foods will need to be labelled from July 2001. There is currently no internationally-standardised test to verify GMO content. Some U.S. Department of Agriculture officials recently told Reuters that around 50 percent of total U.S. cotton and soybean were genetically-modified, as was 30 percent of last year's total U.S. corn crop. Korea's agriculture ministry said in April corn, soybeans, bean sprouts and potatoes which contain less than three percent of GMO would be considered GMO-free. Most domestic and foreign food companies in Korea have said they will conform to government guidelines on GMO usage, while some hope to adopt GMO-free products at a later date. But some firms have said they would continue to use GMO, and label products as containing GMO ingredients, as it was difficult for them to differentiate GMO from unmodified ingredients. The KFEM draws its support from 42 local organisations in Korea which have

71,000 members. It shares information on GMO with other domestic and international environmental groups including Greenpeace International, he said. "We are going to watch thoroughly all steps of GMO-processed food, from where the new ingredients come from to how they are processed when the government starts GMO labelling," Yang said. GMOs became a controversial issue in Korea and elsewhere, on concerns raised by some alternative groups that GMOs might harm health and the environment. Manufacturers deny such claims and say restrictions on GMOs could violate world fair trade agreements.

**If you would like to help with local action concerning labeling legislation of GMO's, contact Marja <[marou@pcug.org.au](mailto:marou@pcug.org.au)> or contact me, Bridget, at <[prospect@spirit.com.au](mailto:prospect@spirit.com.au)>. If you would like to get some informative booklets, one on 'the GE issue' which Scott Kinnear said recently was the best treatment of the issues he has seen, available for \$9.95 from me. Or a booklet telling you what food currently is not GM, available for 50c.**

#### COGS FLIER BY E-MAIL

If you are a COGS member and on the Internet then you may want to consider receiving the COGS Flier by E-mail.

**-One third of our members already receive the Flier this way -**

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

#### **How do I register?**

New members: Tick the *Send Flier by E-mail* box on the membership application form.

Current members: Tick the *Send Flier by E-mail* box on the membership renewal form  
or send a request to [cogs@netspeed.com.au](mailto:cogs@netspeed.com.au)

## Raising Chooks and Other Poultry Sunday, September 3<sup>rd</sup>

Joyce Wilkie will be presenting this course at the Allsun Farm in Gundaroo. This one day course covers the keeping, feeding, care and maintenance of poultry in the backyard as well as on small farms.

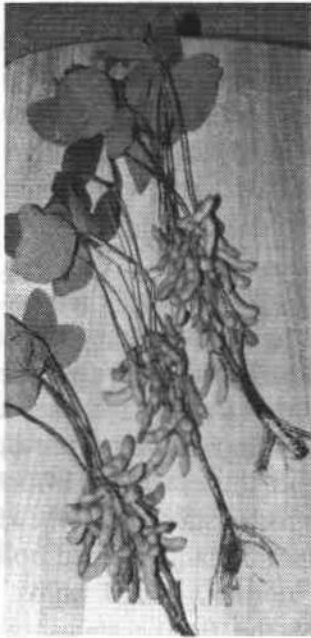
Cost is \$60.00 for COGS Members

Group size will be limited to keep the group small and interactive.

First in, best dressed.

RSVP by August 19<sup>th</sup> to Steve on 6292 5609

Email [suttonsm@lightingpl.net.au](mailto:suttonsm@lightingpl.net.au)



## Plant Profile: *Eda Mame* and *Ninniku No Me* "Stalk Talk"

by Jennifer Hendriks

I'm no expert on Japanese food but I did make it through a year living in Tokyo which meant that I could gorge myself full on two of my favorite summertime vegetable dishes: steamed fresh green soya beans and sautéed garlic stalks. Eating fresh green soybeans had become increasingly popular in the U.S. before I left the country about three years ago, although I suspect that anyone who had any sort of Japanese connection would have been familiar with eating *eda mame* long before that. In Japan, there is literally an *eda mame* eating season in mid-summer at which time restaurants serve up mound upon mound of these fresh beans, steamed, salted, still in their pods (and sometimes even chilled) as a snack to accompany an ice cold beer. But here in Australia, I have never come across them for sale anywhere except in the frozen food sections of Asian food shops (and I would not recommend purchasing them in this form--they taste awful). As for the garlic stalks, I have only ever seen and eaten them in Japan--an oddity since garlic is so abundant here and therefore the potential for growing and, more importantly, *consuming* this part of the garlic plant already exists.

Since many of us are starting to think about what we might grow in our gardens this coming season, I thought I'd share what information I could find on how to grow soya beans and garlic stalks so that you too can enjoy these extremely simple Japanese dishes.

*Eda mame* or *beans on stalks*. The first thing to get straight when talking about soya beans is what type of soya bean *eda mame* is. According

to Joy Larkin's *Oriental Vegetables: The Complete Guide for Garden and Kitchen*, there are three main types of soya beans: green-seeded, black-seeded, and yellow-seeded. The black bean sauces on the menus of Chinese restaurants are made from black-seeded soya beans. The yellow-seeded are perhaps the most familiar to us as they are used to make soya milk, tofu and bean sprouts. Larkin believes that the green-seeded are the most tender and best flavoured of the three types regardless of whether they are eaten fresh or dry. These green-seeded soya beans, eaten in the green shelling bean stage (as opposed to the dry bean stage) are what the Japanese refer to as *eda mame*.

Many books containing information on soya beans, however, do not seem to make a distinction based on the colour of the bean, and this begs the question: Can *any* colour soybean be eaten in the green shelling stage? Gene Logsdon's *Small-scale Grain Raising* contains a chapter on soya beans--a legume which he believes to be so important that it merits a full chapter in a book on grains. Here he writes that 'soybean lovers will harvest half or more of their beans in the green pod stage, when the beans are fully formed, but still soft, green, and pea-like'. *The Book of Tofu* by William Shurtleff and Akiko Aoyagi states merely that 'fresh green soybeans are simply soybeans picked before they are mature'. Colour would seem to be irrelevant according to these sources. Yet if you look in a seed catalogue like Johnny's Selected Seed (Maine, USA), you again find reference to the colour of the soya bean: 'eaten in the fresh shell stage, green-seeded soybeans have a delicious, buttery flavor and tender-firm texture'. The catalogue also notes that green-seeded soybeans are more easily digested than yellow-seeded soybeans. *The Seed Savers' handbook* (Michel and Jude Fanton) also suggests that variety (if not colour) plays a role as 'there are some

varieties that can be eaten as green shelled beans (Vegetable Soya--worth enquiring around for).'

The question of colour and variety aside, the books I've mentioned above contain some intriguing bits of information about the growing characteristics of soybeans. Evidently these beans will compensate if they are planted too thinly by spreading out to cover any gaps between plants. Conversely, they will thin themselves out if they are planted too thickly. Whether carefully planted, broadcast by hand and disked into the soil, seeded directly into sod or dropped out of an airplane into a field of standing wheat with no tillage whatsoever, the beans will grow successfully. If space is a concern, they will even grow well in small containers. By harvesting the pods at the base of the stalks, the plant will produce more pods at the top. Each bean plant contains about 50 pods of three beans per pod and the beans grow best in a soil with a pH of between 6.5 and 7. Soya bean flowers are automatic self-pollinators and they are fertilized before the flowers open. Saving the seed is therefore not difficult; after about three months, the beans will rattle in their pods. The pods should then be collected and dried further indoors until the seeds are quite hard. Finally, soybeans are particularly suited to organic growing methods since they can be used as green manure, they do not seem to attract destructive insects and they do not respond well to chemical fertilizing.

Since I began enquiring about the availability of *eda mame* seed years ago in the States, I had always been told that it was a special type of soybean--not just any old soybean harvested when the pods are fully developed though not yet dry. But by all means do not let this stop you from harvesting a handful of whatever colour soybeans you might be growing (once they are mature, that is) and steaming them for about 10-15 minutes or until just tender, especially since I cannot say at this point where you can purchase green-seeded soybeans for growing *eda mame*. I'm still trying to locate a source of green-seeded soybeans in Australia myself.

*Ninniku no me* or *garlic stalks*. This delicacy is prepared in the same way you would stir fry very

long green beans. Chop the garlic stalks into smaller pieces and stir fry in a wok (or sauté in a pan) with a bit of sesame oil until tender. Sprinkle lightly with salt and devour. The texture and consistency are similar to a French green bean and the flavour is like that of very delicate, sweet, mild garlic. It couldn't be simpler.

So what's the catch? Well, apparently not every strain of garlic forms a flower stem. In fact, according to Joy Larkin (*Oriental Vegetables*), the European strains of garlic have had the flowering (or rather, bolting) characteristic bred out of them. To my mind, this conscious effort to eliminate bolting characteristics is somewhat baffling since bolted garlic plants (unlike bolted onions) still produce normal, sound bulbs. In fact, the harvesting of the flower stems takes place early in the summer when the bulbs are not yet mature and the stalks are still green. Care is taken not to damage the bulbs below the soil which are left to grow to maturity throughout the summer. In Japan the bolting strains are, of course, preferred since in this part of the world, garlic is grown for its stalks and edible flowers as well as for its bulbs. If you are interested in trying to grow garlic that will produce stalks, your best bet is to look for seed bulbs that have a definite bit of stalk in the middle when you pull all of the cloves apart. The other types of garlic, which will not produce firm stems but are good for braiding, will not have any sort of stalk-like center to them.

*Itadakimasu!*  
(Happy eating)

## raw earth

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# Raw Earth - A Gift From Nature

## The Role of Humic Acids in Soil & Plants

By Michael Ripley

Every gardener worth their green thumb is familiar with compost and its value to soil fertility and the quality of their crops. For most of us that is the extent of our understanding of the relationship between what we put in the soil and what we harvest from our gardens. By compost we understand that it is a mixture made out of leaves, manure and other organic waste. We know how much compost improves soil structure and how it provides nutrients to the plants such as nitrogen.

The most common practice for supplementing soils is done by adding compost.

However, not all composts are the same. The nutritional quality of compost will always depend on the quality of the raw materials used in making the compost. A 1992 Earth Summit Report found that 55% of the mineral nutrients had been lost from Australian soil. Since minerals cannot be created, it is likely that the compost we use today is an insufficient source of mineral nutrients. This is why humic shale humates or pre-historic compost - materials that are high in Humic and Fulvic Acids - are such a good source for high quality humus. Poorer sources of humates may include leonardite, lignite, and peat.

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Once compost reaches an advanced stage of decomposition it becomes what is called Humus. Humus is a much more valuable natural substance made out of soil matter and micro-organisms. After humus has fully decomposed we may be left with as little as 15% of the initial organic matter. Extensive research has shown us that humus is colloidal by nature, meaning soluble, and has the ability to increase the water and nutrient holding capacity of the soil. It contains several humic substances that are now known to be central to plant and soil health.

Specifically, humus consists of: Constituents of the original organic material that are resistant to further decomposition, substances that are still undergoing decomposition, large organic molecules, called complexes, formed by the chemical reaction of the organic matter with water and oxygen, other compounds of synthesised micro-organisms. Senn and Kingman (1973) wrote, "many investigators have observed a substantial and positive effect of humic substances on the growth of (soil) micro-organisms. This important and unique effect has been attributed to their colloidal (soluble) nature. Equally, they are regarded as organic catalysts in the many natural chemical reactions of the soil."

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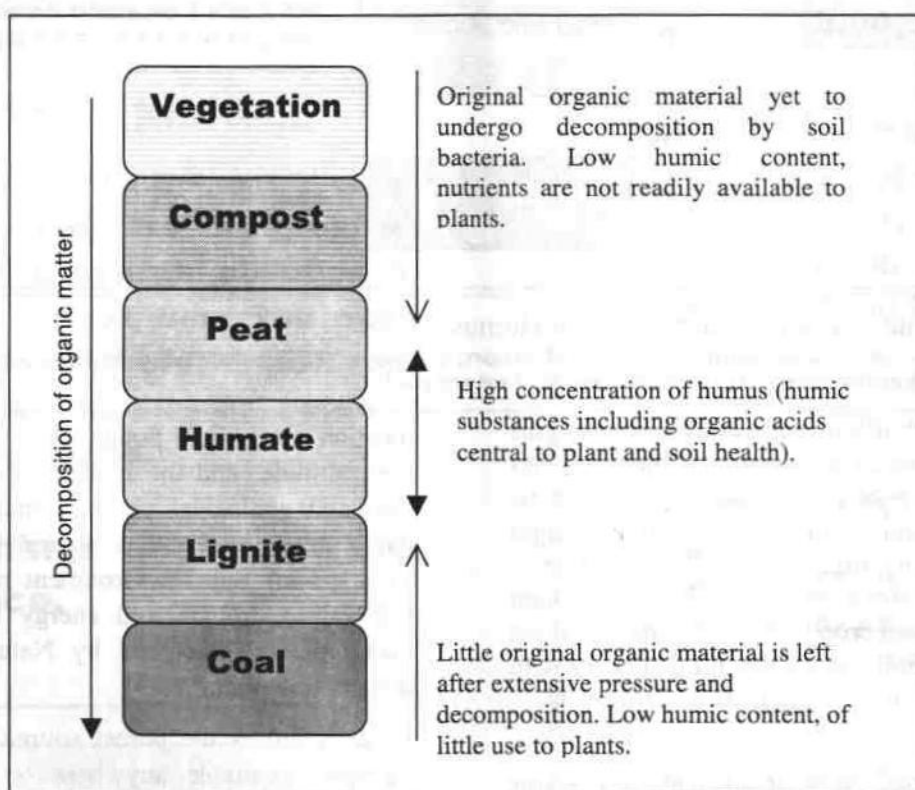


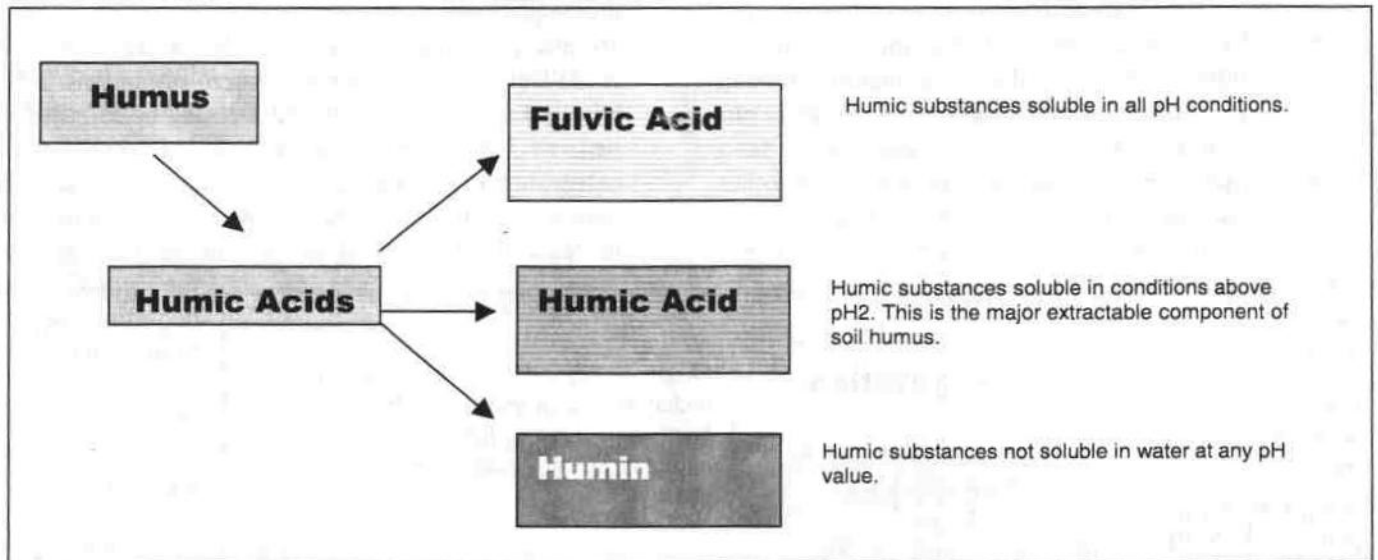
Diagram 1. Evolution of Organic Matter.

In order of evolution, as organic matter decomposes over a long period of time it becomes; compost, peat, humate, lignite, and eventually coal. Coal, for example, represents a number of humus types in an advanced state of decomposition. It contains organic residues from prehistoric times that were later stratified and compressed by layers of mineral matter.

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Both humic and fulvic acids are water-soluble making available certain nutrients and trace minerals that would otherwise be unavailable to plants. The high molecular weight humic acids alter the physical characteristics of the soil whereas, the low molecular weight fulvic acids are more involved in the chemical reactions in the soil that influence the metabolic processes of plants.

nutrients. As confirmed by the US Government and private studies, the uniqueness of this source stems from its vastness and purity; its broad mineral content of a totally organic nature; its fresh water background, and the fact that it has been protected from leaching and the effects of the elements by a base of clay and a thick layer of sandstone cover. Its



**Diagram 2. Humic Substances Derived from Humus.**

Humic substances, also called 'humic acids', are a chemical grouping of 3 organic residues derived from Humus. They are; **Fulvic Acid**, **Humic Acid** and **Humin**. They are vital to the natural health of soil and plants.

Both, humic and fulvic substances either have auxins or act as auxins, which are natural plant hormones that promote growth of plant cells in roots, shoots, leaves, flowers and fruits by controlling light reception and making sugars available to the plants. These functions improve the metabolism of the plant i.e. repair, growth and crop yield. Substances that act upon plants' metabolic processes are called growth regulators.

Humic substances:

- Promote the conversion of nutrients into forms that make them readily available to plants.
- Increase the germination capacity of seeds and the vitamin content of plants.
- Act as sensitising agents increasing the permeability of the plant membranes resulting in increased uptake of nutrients by plants.

**Raw Earth** is a new range of soil conditioners and fertilisers extracted from 'plant-derived' pre-historic humic shale. They are made from very unique humic shale found only high in the mountains of Emery, Utah in North America. The formation of this humic shale took thousands of years and happened approximately 75 million years ago when there was no pollution and when plants and soils were richest in

location away from populated areas, its location at high altitude, and the isolation from the effects of heat and geological pressure maintained its purity while preventing the deposit from evolving into coal. This special 'safe' environment has maintained the full value, strength and energy of those nutrients captured and processed by Nature over past and distant millennia.

What is left is the purest source of soil and plant nutrients available anywhere on the planet. Raw Earth products contain over 77 plant-derived colloidal minerals and humic substances required for optimum soil and plant health. It has been calculated that one kilogram of Raw Earth humate has the same nutrient content as over 700kg of Australian compost today. These humates heal the Earth by breaking down toxins in the soil while providing the full spectrum of minerals and organic acids required to promote and sustain healthy soils for future generations.

Raw Earth delivers the full spectrum of nutrients to plants in forms that can be utilised immediately. Most chemical growing products only supply three macronutrients (NPK) and do not provide any of the organic acids or micronutrients 'essential' to health.

With chemical fertilisers, what isn't lost to leaching or evaporation needs to be broken down in the soil before plants can properly use them. Raw Earth products work perfectly with the soil's biological systems so that plants grow to their full potential the Natural way. By re-mineralising the soils that produce our food, health and healing can once again become the natural order of the day.

Raw Earth products (under their commercial name Live Earth Products Inc.) have been used by the American organic farming community for the past 16 years. The quality of these products has been proven time and time again, not only through lab tests but also with higher, more nutrient rich yields and consistent quality results. Raw Earth produces exciting results in all plants and soil conditions the natural way. Once you taste vegetables or fruits

### **Did you know....**

**Motor vehicles are the greatest source of urban air pollution in Australia. Next time you need to go somewhere, ride your bike, take the bus or catch a ride with a friend.**

**little things make a BIG difference.**

Certified organic farm has land available. Grow the vegetable crop you've always wanted on a larger scale.

**Phone 6236 3211, 0404092602 for more information.**

grown with Raw Earth you will know what the healthiest organic produce should taste and smell like.

For more information please contact Status Challenger, Phone (02) 8850 5221 [status\\_c@bigpond.com](mailto:status_c@bigpond.com). or purchase these products from Mountain Creek Wholefoods Pty, 14 Barker St, Griffith, ACT 2603.

## ***Organic Origins***

***Gardeners With Attitude***

**Sale, Sale, Sale, Sale  
Apple, Plum and Nectarine  
Trees,  
Cool Climate Olives, Citrus,  
Kiwifruit and Grapes.**

Mulching Lucerne Bales delivered to your door

### **Who are we?**

Organic Origins is a Co-operative Enterprise based on Permaculture and Organic gardening principles. Offering consultancy services and books. Community Education, Garden Design & Management, Herbs & Vegetables, Mulches & Manures, Compost Bins, Worm Farms, "No Dig", Raised & Easy Care Gardens, Creative Recycling, and Foodscaping, Big & Small.

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**Tooley**

**0409 070 189**

**Email [kdread@primus.com.au](mailto:kdread@primus.com.au)**

**PO Box Erindale Centre, ACT 2903**



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

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 COGS Information sheet - *What to Plant & Where*) 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.

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.

Spring Vegetable Planting Guide

	Septemb	October	Novemb
Globe Art	T		
Jerus Art	T		
Asparagus	S		
French Beans	S	S	S
Beetroot	S	S	S
Broccoli			S
Brussel		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



## Canberra Organic Growers Society Inc.

# INFORMATION

### GENERAL INFORMATION

The Canberra Organic Growers Society 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.

The organic movement endeavours to provide an alternative to the mass of toxic chemicals, fertilisers, fungicides, herbicides and genetic modification used in modern agriculture. Using natural means of improving and preserving our soils produces nutritious, less contaminated food. Enriching the soil with compost, manure, green manure and mulches, and using companion planting, produces healthy plants which resist pest attacks and disease

### MONTHLY MEETINGS

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

- Backyard Self-sufficiency
- Worms
- Permaculture

After each talk a light supper is available. At all meetings, there is a produce and seed exchange table and a book-stall. Members may also borrow two items from the COGS library.

*Visitors are welcome (donation requested).*

### CONTACT

COGS  
PO Box 347  
DICKSON ACT 2601

Phone: (02) 6248 8004

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

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

### FLIER & QUARTERLY PUBLICATION

These publications inform members about the speaker at the next meeting and any other activities coming up. Canberra Organic, the Quarterly publication, contains articles on organic growing as well as tips specifically for the Canberra region, such as a seasonal planting guide. Members are encouraged to contribute.

### COMMUNITY GARDENS

COGS currently operates 5 community gardens in the Canberra area at Mitchell (Northside Garden), Curtin (Cotter Garden), Erindale, Charnwood, and The Oaks Estate. Members may obtain plots 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 learn something new at the same time!

At each garden, plot-holders may be required to contribute to the cost of water and other small expenses.

The ACT Government has supported the establishment of these gardens through the ACT Office of Sport and Recreation.

### INTERNET

COGS has an extensive and highly appraised web site devoted to organic growing. The site contains all of the COGS information papers on organic growing, certification information, a page for children, links to related organisations and information sources, a picture gallery, the latest on issues such as genetic engineering, regional information and much much more.

### OTHER ACTIVITIES

From time to time COGS organises other activities for its members. For example, we participate in the World Environment Day fair and arrange information days at "COGS Backyard". Seminars and workshops are also conducted.

**See reverse side for Membership form and rates** ➡

## SPEAKERS

Room 4, Griffin Centre, Civic, 7:30pm

### August

#### *Urban Ecology ACT*

Warren Overton will inform us on what the ACT group is doing, including the forthcoming Green Living Fair (see media release on page 20)

### September

#### *Panel Night*

We will have a panel of experts on hand to answer your many questions about organic gardening. Can you stump the experts?



### Seed Saving Project

Sunday 23<sup>0</sup><sup>th</sup> of August 1.00pm

Environment Centre Kingsley Street Acton

#### Everyone welcome

The group will be meeting to gather ideas on the direction COGS should be heading with seed saving efforts. There will be tea, coffee and cake.

### PERMACULTURE ACT (PACT)

The August PACT meeting is on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup>. The September meeting is Saturday 16<sup>th</sup>. Both meetings from 12 - 2 pm at Kingsley Street, Civic (southeast corner of the Environment centre building)

Contact: David Read on 0407 070 189

### 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
- Gifts for the whole family

The shop is at Kingsley Street Acton

Ph/Fax: 6247 3064

Open Tuesday-Friday 9 - 5, Saturday 10 - 1

### AT COGS BACKYARD

Xeriscape Gardens, Heyson Street, Weston

#### **Organic Gardening: Vegetable Growing without Chemicals**

Learn how to prepare vegie beds, compost, how to grow wonderful vegetables and control weeds without using chemicals.

**Date: Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> of October**

**Time: 2:00pm both days**

#### **Special Events at the Xeriscape Garden in conjunction with the CIT Plant Sale**

Competitions for adults and children, quizzes with prizes to be won. Demonstrations on Earthworks, No Dig Gardening, Composting and Mulching, Organic Gardening with COGS, Roses, Camellias and more!

**Date: Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> of November**

**Time: 9am to 4:30pm**