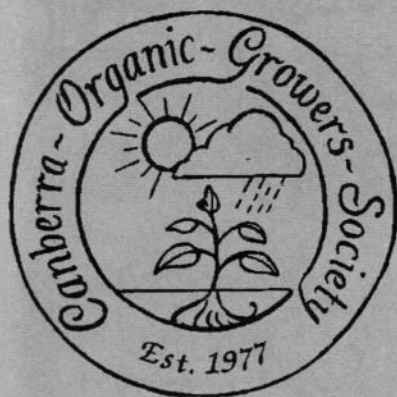


Spring



Canberra Organic

**ORGANIC GROWING
IN THE CANBERRA REGION**

Quarterly publication of the Canberra Organic Growers Society Inc.



VOL. 9 NO. 3

SPRING 2001

SPEAKERS

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

Tuesday 28 August

Maureen and Michael Malant

Topic: Bush Foods

Tuesday 25 September

Panel Night

Panel of experts to answer all
your questions



PERMACULTURE ACT (PACT)

Please contact David Read on 0407 070 189 if you are interested in becoming involved with the permaculture group within the ACT.

Theodore Community Garden

Plots are now available to grow organic produce for home consumption. Inquiries to Steve on 6292 5609

Charnwood Community Garden

Plots are available to grow organic home produce. Inquiries to Peter on 6254 1278

Environment Centre Shop

Closing Down Sale

The Canberra Environment Centre Shop will be selling its remaining stock at the Green Living Fair, 28 October 2001, Kingsley Street, Acton.

Books, posters, cards, decals, Stringybark clothing, bird tapes, environment-friendly cleaning products and personal care items.

All stock massively reduced to clear.

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From the Editors

Welcome to the Spring edition of *Canberra Organic*. Spring is high energy time in our gardens. Digging, planting and mulching.

Don't forget to make some compost to put around your plants later on in the growing season.

In the conclusion of the Square Foot Gardening article in the last edition it was written that 'Regular sources of organic vegetables are almost non existent Canberra at present'. At the start of the article it stated that it was reprinted from notes from a talk given in 1988. Canberra is now well serviced by a number of organic outlets. How lucky are we?! The aim was to give people an example of how planning your vegetable growing can reap rewards.

We are always looking for articles on people's experiences. The different ways they do things and why.

Have you found a resource that you like to share with us all? Please email potential articles to deboraha@interact.net.au.

Steve Sutton and Deborah Avery

Letter To The Editor

You recently requested that members supply information regarding their experiences with worm juice.

Last year we planted a 4 acre vineyard on our property. Prior to planting we rotary hoed approximately 45 cubic metres of worm castings into the vine rows (I think I'm the first in the Canberra district to have used castings on this scale as the source of organic matter for a new vineyard!!??).

Anyway, the supplier mentioned at the time that a cherry grower in Young was having success in keeping downy/powdery mildew at bay using worm juice. So when we got downy appearing in the vineyard on the new vines I used the juice from my own worm farm to test out the theory.

I used a hand sprayer to apply it to only a select sample area of vines and initially I used a mixture of 50% juice to 50% water. This certainly killed off the downy ... unfortunately it also basically burnt the leaves off within 2-3 days!!

I finally settled on a blend of approximately 25% worm juice which certainly seemed to kill off the downy over about a one week period. Downy continued to exist in adjacent areas that hadn't been sprayed so I believe it is a viable treatment. I did find though that new growth on some of the treated vines became 'reinfected'.

The 'testing' wasn't over a long enough period to consider whether this was as a result of the fact that I hadn't killed it off fully on the sprayed vines (all the vines are currently in vineguards which were not removed when spraying hence not all infected leaves on each vine may have been effectively sprayed), or because the downy was in the adjacent areas and simply reinfected some vines, e.g. through wind transfer.

Anyway, I will be spraying again this year to see if I can prevent it occurring and so would be very keen to be kept informed of the experiences of others.

David Crossley, Bungendore, NSW

CANBERRA ORGANIC GROWERS SOCIETY INC.

PO Box 347 DICKSON ACT 2602

COMMITTEE MEMBERS & HELPERS

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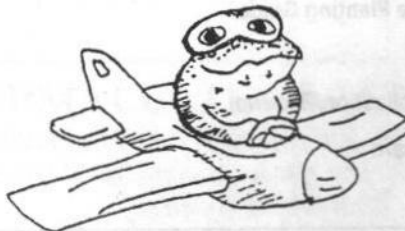
Rosemary Stevenson, Laurie Thompson, Sandra Johnston, Beatrix Bros

COGS FLYER

Pilots: Vacant

MONTHLY MEETINGS

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



COGS REPRESENTATIVES

Environment Centre:	Steve Sutton, Deborah Avery
Griffin Centre:	Vacant

INQUIRIES ABOUT ORGANIC GROWING

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Telephone: Elizabeth Palmer 6248 8004

GARDEN CONVENORS

Cotter:	Michelle Johnson	6231 6219
Charnwood:	Peter Marstin	6254 1278
Northside:	Margie Perkins	6241 6031
Oaks Estate:	George Rehn	6297 1036
Theodore:	Steve Sutton	6292 5609
Erindale:	Christine Carter	6231 5862
Queanbeyan:	Katrina Willis	6232 9743
Cook	Keith Colls	6251 7729
Kambah	Steve Sutton	6292 5609
Holder	Steve Sutton	6292 5609

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Contributions are invited. Send on diskette (PC format, Microsoft Word files preferred) or e-mail to cogs@netspeed.com.au. Otherwise, send clean, typed copy.

There are four issues each year: autumn (February), winter (May), spring (August), and summer (November). The deadline for copy and advertising is 15 January, 15 April, 15 July, and 15 October respectively. Printing is done by Aussieprint on recycled paper. Illustrations courtesy of Carolyn Brooks. For advertising queries, please contact the editor.

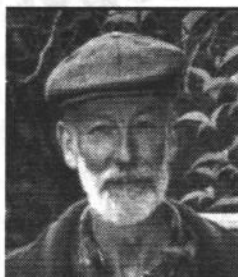
COGS ON THE INTERNET

www.netspeed.com.au/cogs	Web Manager:	Maren Child	6254 9927
cogs@netspeed.com.au	E-mail Coordinator:	Conrad Van Hest	6288 2443

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

~ VISITORS WELCOME ~

President's Report



The feverish activity of Spring is almost upon us. It has been a very busy Winter for those of us involved in establishing the new COGS gardens in Cook, Holder, Kambah and Queanbeyan. Kambah is up and running and the others are almost complete and should be ready for gardening during August. There are more detailed reports on the progress of these gardens elsewhere in this issue. I'd like to thank everyone who helped with the establishment of the new gardens and I would particularly like to thank Steve Sutton for managing the overall project. It turned out to be quite a big task. There is still plenty of room for plot holders in these new gardens so if you are interested in joining one of these gardens please contact the appropriate Convenor. Don't forget there are also vacancies in most of the established gardens as well.

As part of our effort to encourage organic gardening, in September we will be running a gardening course for beginners in conjunction with CIT Solutions. The course has been advertised in the CIT Solutions Winter/Spring course program booklet. If you are aware of anyone who may be interested in this course, please bring it to their attention. See page 15 for more information.

Some members of COGS have also been assisting schools/students to establish organic gardens and students involved in the NSW 'LINKS' education program have been actively involved in gardening at the Theodore garden. These are very valuable activities for teaching organic and sustainable gardening techniques to the next generation and deserve further encouragement. If you are involved in such activities, please let us know. We may be able to assist.

This season COGS will again be actively involved in the Xeriscape garden program of events for the public. On open days we always have a stall at the COGS demonstration garden to publicise COGS and sell seeds and seedlings. We always need helpers on the stall so if you are able to assist, even for a short time, please contact me or one of the other Committee members. Your help would be greatly appreciated.

Some of you may have noticed that the COGS website now has links to some of the revamped web pages which Maren Child has prepared. These are still very much 'works in progress' but any feedback to Maren about the new pages would be greatly appreciated.

With the new growing season fast approaching it is time to start thinking about the seeds you intend to save from this coming season and to make sure you have all the seeds you need for this year's crops. The COGS seed saving group has been very active and Laurie Thomson who is storing the COGS seeds at present has a good range available. For those of you have been a bit slow off the mark starting your seedlings Laurie will have a range of COGS seedlings available shortly. Contact Laurie if you want to know more. Seed saving is a very important way of preserving heritage plants which are no longer supplied by commercial seed companies. It is also an essential part of the process of maintaining the gene diversity of our food plants. COGS has some important seeds which need to be grown out this season to build up the seed bank of some rare peas and beans. Contact Rosemary Stevenson or Laurie Thomson if you are able to help with growing out these rare varieties. We hope that in this coming season most, if not all, of the community gardens will be able to assist by growing seed for some of these rare plants.

Happy gardening,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Keith".

Keith Colls

Community Garden Convenors' Reports

Cook Garden Progress

The establishment of the Cook garden is progressing well. The security fence was erected in very quick time during the Queen's Birthday long weekend in June thanks to the amazing organising abilities of Steve Sutton, the fencing abilities of Dave Read and sons and the efforts of all the potential plot holders in attaching the netting (see picture). The site is now secure and we are awaiting for access to the water main which runs along the boundary of the garden.



There was an on-site meeting of all the potential plot holders and the layout of the garden has been agreed to. There will be communal area at the southern end of the garden with shed, compost bins, communal garden, chook house and pergola to sit under and admire the garden. The remainder of the garden will be allocated plots. As the garden is quite large (approximately half a hectare) there will be an access track around the perimeter to allow delivery of compost etc. and there will be paths between plots and over the water lines to minimise the chances of them being dug up.

The water lines within the garden have all been marked out and as soon as the water has been connected plots will be allocated and gardening will begin. There is plenty of space for additional plots holders so if you are interested in a plot at Cook or know of someone who is, contact Keith Colls on 6251 7729.

Queanbeyan Garden

Queanbeyan City Council has approved the Railway Park Community Garden and will pay to erect a fence and install a water supply.

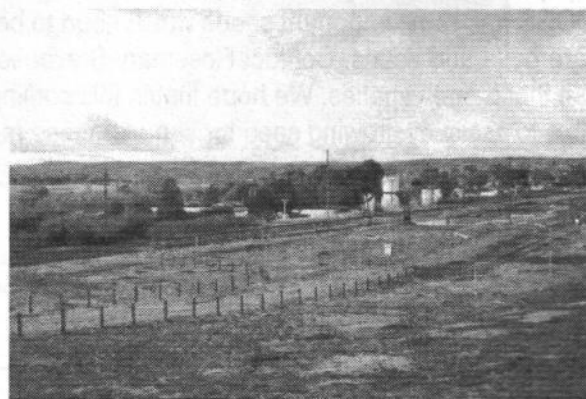
Council is expected to undertake the works in July, paving the way for the garden to be established on the former railway goods yard.

Already around a dozen people have expressed interest in having one of the planned 28 plots. Some of them met Keith and Steve on site on 1 July to hear how COGS gardens work and to discuss the development plan for the Queanbeyan garden.

A couple of working bees will be needed in coming weeks to make beds, deliver soil, erect a garden shed, and install water pipes and taps. All offers of assistance and any second-hand, unwanted equipment or suitable materials will be gratefully accepted.

Funds are still being sought for bed edging, a significant but necessary expense as the soil on site is very compacted and beds will need to be built up. We will use a no-dig approach, thereby not disturbing the ground on the former railway goods yard.

Applications are being prepared for grants from the NSW Department of Sport and Recreation, and the ABC's Gardening Australia Community Garden Grants program. We also hope to know soon whether Great Southern Energy will provide financial support for the garden.



We also plan to make contact with the State Rail Authority to reach an acceptable agreement about weed control on the garden's railway line boundary, to ensure no chemical contamination.

Those of us who have worked on the project for the past seven months are thrilled that approval has gone so smoothly and that the Council will look after the fencing and water.

We hope to begin planting in September and to have an official opening with the Mayor in November.

For more information about the Queanbeyan garden, contact Katrina Willis on 6232 9743 (ah) or 6274 2894 (bh).

Kambah

The fence has been erected, the taps have been installed, a second hand garden shed has been put together (these things are always harder to erect the second or third time) and the first plots have been allocated. Yes there is already soil being turned. There is still limited space available in the garden.

The garden shed needs a concrete floor and some tools need to be purchased for the shed, other wise the garden is up and running. Now it is up to the group to work together as a community group to establish the common areas. On Saturday the 2nd of September they will hold there inaugural Annual General Meeting and elect a Convenor and committee to run the garden. On this day the plot fees of 75 cents a square metre per year are due for 2001/2002.



Holder

This garden is taking shape at a fast rate. The fence has been completed and the water connection forms have been submitted to ACTEW to connect the water. On Friday the third of August the trenches for the water supply will be dug and the taps installed over the next couple of weeks. We should be allocating plots by mid August if not sooner.



Theodore

We had a great summer out at Theodore last summer. With the security of the high fence the group members where able to grow a wide range of vegetables. Welcome to all of the new members.

I would like to thank Healthy City Canberra for their support. The grant money let us buy a lawn mower to help maintain the common areas and purchase materials to construct a shelter to provide some shade to escape the sun on those hot summer days. The few trees we have are only small. There is still room for more members. The garden is starting to look really good.

For more information about the Kambah, Holder or Theodore gardens, contact Steve Sutton on 6292 5609.



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Chili Plants In Winter

Sigrid Drescher

It's July now and still in the middle of winter. Frosty and foggy mornings are common. The water in our birdbath on the verandah is very often frozen much to the annoyance of our two cats that use the birdbath for their own purposes: as a drinking bowl. Despite all these images of cold and 'father frost' my chili plants are bearing heaps of fruit. It is *not* a miracle. It is true! Because, the *plants are growing indoors!*

Harvest night last year I think it was when somebody mentioned that capsicums and chilies are actually perennial plants. Here in our climate 'down south the tropics' there won't be much of a chance to keep them out during the colder months of the year so we treat them as annuals. But, we heard, why not dig them out and bring them inside to winter them in a lovely heated environment?

That is a good idea, I thought, I'll give it a try. I had started my plants too late in spring so they did hardly have any chilies on them or not at all. I dug them out before the first frost, put them into pots to fit onto my windowsill. I brought them inside into the lounge room and will keep them there the whole winter.

There they are enjoying full afternoon sun. My Serrano chili had only one green unripe fruit when I took it inside. The two mild round red chilies hadn't any fruit at all and the plants were tiny. Every day I showered my plants with attention, watered them (and these plants need plenty of water especially exposed to full sun), even tried to hand-pollinate the open flowers that occurred. And then, it happened! A miracle for me, I wouldn't have thought that this was possible. The fruit of my Serrano chili, heat rating 7 (out of 10 with 10 the hottest) with banana like shaped red fruits, turned red ripened under 'tropical conditions' inside in the middle of winter. The two plants with the mild chilies flowered and formed fruits, ready to be picked and eaten now, that is in July.

There is a third variety, one where nobody knows the exact name of this species (George might know, he donated the seeds to COGS) which I am keeping indoors as well with very good results.

It has very decorative upright growing fruits that are whitish first, then turn purple, then yellow and finally red. The plant with all its many fruits in various stages of ripening looks to me like a tree decorated for Christmas. The plant doesn't stop to produce more and more flowers that set fruit. It is very fascinating to be able to have such a close look at these plants sitting high up on the windowsill almost at eye height.

For the rest of winter I will be watching my chili plants so decoratively placed on the windowsill. Isn't this a surprising turnout of this 'scientific research project' and an interesting experience for a totally inexperienced gardener like me to produce indoor chilies during the wrong season? As soon as it is warm enough and no more frost will be expected I will transfer my chili plants back into the garden. And I tell you what, next winter I'll try it again!

Xeriscape Gardens Program Spring 2001

Lawns and Irrigation

David Young and Keith McIntyre
8 and 9 September (2.00pm)

Chemical and Organic Methods of Disease Control/Growing Citrus Trees

David Young and Peter Sutton
6 and 7 October (2.00pm)

Composting and Mulching Demonstrations and Organic Gardening

Dave Tooley and David Read (Organic Origins)
20 and 21 October (2.00pm)

CIT Plant Sale and Xeriscape Garden Open Day

3 November (9.00am-4.00pm)

Kurrajong Organic

New! Bulk beef and lamb available from the farm of Alan Druce. Call for prices

- ✓ 10% discount to members of COGS, PACT, & Environment Groups
- ✓ Free delivery with orders over \$30
- ✓ All certified organic by BFA or SCPA

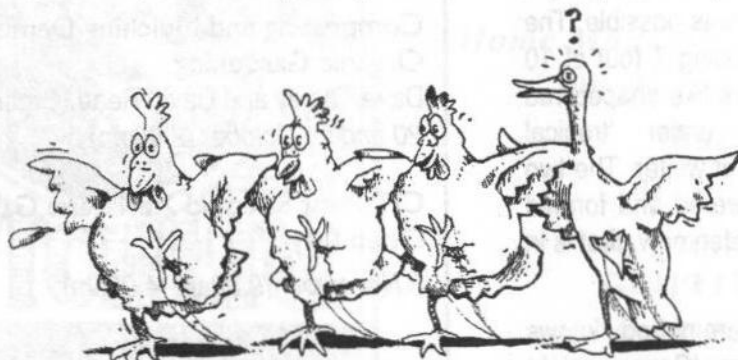
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- Sunflower - 25kg bag \$27.50, <25kg \$1.30 kg
- Bird grit - 50¢ kg
- Vitagrit - vitamin mineral grit health supplement - 5kg bag \$7.50, <5kg \$2 kg to ensure beak performance
- Oats - 25kg bag \$11.50, <25kg 50¢ kg, Barley - 25kg bag \$13.50, <25kg 50¢ kg or make beer, mmm beer
- Sulphur - \$3.30 kg
- Seaweed meal - 15kg bag \$66, <15kg \$8 kg
- Hay, Lucerne - market price varies
- Homeopathics for: coccidias, worms and lice in poultry and fleas in dogs and cats - cheap, safe and effective \$4.95 each
- 'Pestaffect' - External Parasite diatomaceous earth powder poultry & caged birds - livestock - 1kg bags - \$14
- Pullets, Hens, Chook Houses, Waterers, Feeders, False Eggs pinup posters of roosters
- Drums 44 Gallon, safely store grain, clothes, anything. \$17.50 ea
- Hire of non-lethal mouse, rat, sparrow traps, bag closer sewing machine

For the Garden

- Biodynamic Fish Emulsion - 2.5 litres \$16.50, for balancing the fertility of your garden
- Biodynamic Manure Concentrate, enough for the compost & a huge garden - 250g pack \$12.50
- Chicken Manure - 20kg bag \$8.50, 40kg bag \$16.50
- Micro Nutrient King - Liquid Seaweed Concentrate 500ml pack \$9 each
- Worm juice - \$7.50 litre, Liquid comfrey concentrate - \$6.50 litre
- Alroc (crushed mineral rock mix) - 20 kg bag \$17.50, <20kg \$1.80 kg
- Garden lime - 50¢ kg (free soil pH test available)
- Diatomaceous earth/garlic spray, 500ml \$6.60
- Mulch, Lucerne - market price varies
- Water tanks, diverters, feed and water troughs, etc. - we can beat most quotes
- Frog Pond Ecology Kits - \$27.50 - includes captive bred tadpoles, water plants, zoo plankton, pond inoculant
- BD Potting Mix/Compost - 36lt bag \$11, by the cubic metre \$110 plus delivery



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GREEN LIVING FAIR 2001

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Sunday 28th October
10am – 4pm

Cnr Barry Drive & Marcus Clarke Street
Canberra City



If you are interested in making your home more ecologically friendly with organic gardening, energy efficiency, or even solar panels on the roof, then Canberra's Green Living Fair 2001 is an event not to be missed.

At the Fair you'll find a collection of informative talks and exhibitions by voluntary organisations and suppliers of products & services that can help communities and households steer a course for more environmentally friendly living. You'll also find interesting demonstrations on such things as mud brick making, chemical free cleaning, renewable energy, and keeping chooks.

Bring your family and friends to learn about green living in an authentic fair atmosphere. Enjoy delicious food, live music and children's activities such as face painting, paper making and a giant jumping castle.

Major Sponsor: ACT Government Environmental Grants Program

Brought to you by *Urban Ecology ACT & Region Branch Inc.*

If you would like to be an exhibitor or sponsor, or want further information on the Green Living Fair 2001, contact:

Event Manager: Philippa Boardman

Ph (02) 6248 0885

Fax: (02) 6247 3064

Email: glf@ecoaction.net.au

Raspberries

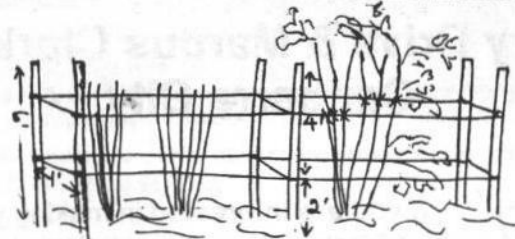
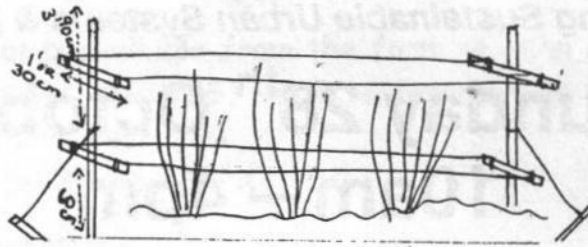
Raspberries belong to the rose family. The berries and leaves have been used for centuries for fruit and herbal remedies.

Raspberries are grown from suckers that should be transplanted in winter to well-drained soil and protected from winds. They need plenty water in spring and when they are fruiting. Note that some varieties fruit in spring and autumn (check with your nurseryman).

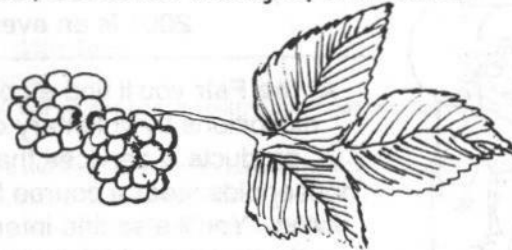
Raspberries need an acid soil and will grow well in shade or semi-shade. The south side of the house or garage where other plants may not thrive is a good place for raspberries but do not plant them hard against a wall or fence because:

- a) they will grow through/under the fence;
- b) they have no trouble going under concrete into your neighbour's garden;
- c) not enough air will circulate around and through the canes encouraging diseases;
- d) picking the fruit is difficult;
- e) snails and bugs are encouraged on the wall or fence.

The canes need to be planted in a shallow trench, 30 cm deep and a little more than 30 cm wide, containing good compost in the bottom. The rows should be one metre apart to allow adequate air circulation and enough light. This arrangement will also allow enough space for relatively easy weed control, picking the fruit and tying canes as well as access for mulching, manuring with chicken manure in winter and watering at the base of the canes in summer.



Two simple wire supports. Heavy canes may be spread out and tied lightly to the wires.



Canes will grow to 150 to 180 cm and need support to prevent them bending over and becoming congested. After fruiting, all old canes (those which have borne the current season's fruit) must be cut out at the base as the next season's fruit is produced on the new canes. Only allow 4-6 strong new canes per plant and cut out all weak, straggling canes and all suckers unless you intend to transplant the best of the latter for further stock. Do not allow the rows to become more than about 30 cm wide or the canes will develop into a 'Ber

Rabbit' thicket and the tangled mass will harbour all kinds of problems and the plants will become weak and crop poorly. Like strawberries, raspberries are very quick cropping but it is better not to allow a crop in the first year's canes. After planting new canes, cut them back to 60cm above the ground, otherwise poor canes will develop with little or very poor fruit. In spring cut back the tips of very long canes to encourage lower fruiting buds. Like grapes, the more carefully the canes are pruned and tied, the better the crop and the healthier the plant.

Problems

1. Susceptible to late frosts.
2. Waterlogged soil, particularly in winter, will kill roots. Do not plant under trees with excessive shade or too much dripping in winter.
3. Wind damage is the worst problem. The canes and laterals are very brittle and fragile and snap easily at any time.

4. Alkaline soil is not suitable. Use acid leaves for mulching. I use oak leaves.
5. Various pests include:
 - a) aphids which also spread virus diseases;
 - b) raspberry beetle which produces the small grub that eats inside the fruit;
 - c) cane spot;
 - d) botrytis (a grey mould which also affects strawberries);
 - e) moth.

Organic Origins

Gardeners With Attitude



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.

David Read or Dave Tooley

0409 070 189

Email: kdread@primus.com.au

To prevent most of the bugs and viruses from attacking raspberries and spreading to other plants in the garden keep the weeds down and the ground clear and clean. It is also necessary to cut out all diseased canes, pinch off all diseased leaves and shoots, remove and destroy chrysalis and other visible bugs. Misshapen fruit is a sign of cane spot. In this case the whole plant should be dug out and removed (burned) immediately the disease is noticed.

Finally, as raspberries are a very fragile fruit and break down quickly after picking, they can be harvested by cutting the fruit off with scissors and leaving the core inside until you are ready to use them. This preserves the shape of the fruit and prevents them becoming 'floppy' and rather sorry-looking.

News From the Library

New books in the COGS library!

Yes, with the help of a grant from Healthy City Canberra we have been able to purchase the following new books.

- The Women's Weekly: From the garden to the table—the cook's garden
- Success with Soft Fruits, by Christine Recht.
- The complete book of Fruit Growing in Australia, by Louis Glowinski (new edition)
- Better Homes and Gardens: A Practical Guide to Organic Gardening
- Jackie French: Companion Planting, to replace our copy which was lost.
- Small Farming for Profit and Pleasure, by J. Wilkinson
- A Guide to Keeping Poultry in Australia, by Dorothy Reading
- Backyard Poultry—Naturally (2nd edition), by Alanna Moore



Healthy City
Canberra

Gowrie Court Garden Officially Opened

Healthy City Canberra developed the Community Gardens Project as part of its work with neighbourhoods during the financial year 2000/2001. In partnership with ACT Housing and St. Benedict's Parish Church, Healthy City Canberra has been assisting the residents of Gowrie Court, Narrabundah to create a vegetable garden and flower beds at the complex. Work first began on the garden in October 2000. A group of tenants expressed a desire to create a garden, to learn how to grow their own vegetables, and to build some flower beds to improve the appearance of the flats. Through working bees, a small grant and the assistance of a horticulturalist they created several plots using permaculture principles. The garden has produced abundant crops of corn, tomatoes, eggplants, herbs and capsicums. The flowerbeds have brightened up an otherwise dull and worn out looking building.

The creation of the garden has had a very marked impact on the residents. Residents have said that being involved in the garden gives them a feeling of membership and connection to the community. They have also said it has improved their self-esteem as they take pride in their achievements.

A tenants group has been formed comprising residents who are involved in the garden. The group tends and manages the garden, and now has plans to expand and to embark on other projects to improve their skills and general wellbeing.

The Minister for Health, Housing and Community Services, Michael Moore MLA, officially opened the garden on 1 February 2001. The Minister was presented with a tray full of fresh home produce at the opening of the garden. He congratulated the tenants on their commitment to working together

to improve their home environment and their health. He said that the garden gives people a focal point, a pleasant and

productive way of working together, getting to know each other better, and respecting each others efforts.

This project is a living example of health promotion—working with people in the settings in which they live to improve the quality of their lives. It shows that health promotion doesn't have to be expensive or elaborate to achieve results.

Jervis Bay School Wins Achievement Award

On 2 March, Michael Sparks and Mabelle Gardiol of Healthy City Canberra accompanied Michael Moore, Minister for Health, Housing and Community Services to Jervis Bay School to present the school with their \$1,000 Special Achievement Award won at last year's Healthy Schools Awards. Jervis Bay School won the award for their project 'Michael and Friends Life Skills'. This project so impressed the Minister that he wanted to visit the school himself to see the project first hand and meet those responsible for it.

Set in the natural surroundings of the Booderee National Park and overlooking the ocean, the school grounds are welcoming and immaculately kept. The school's project focussed on providing an alternative learning environment for a student with special needs called Michael. Michael is a student who has had a high rate of absenteeism and difficulty engaging with others. He has had great difficulty learning in the traditional school environment. In response to these needs, his teacher and teaching assistant came up with a plan to provide an alternative to the traditional learning environment—a vegetable garden. Michael now uses the garden as the focal point of his learning. He practices his writing and reading skills, maths and other basic learning skills through the garden environment. His absenteeism is now a thing of the past. Michael now interacts with his teachers and his fellow students. He has also recruited fellow students to assist him with his composting and recycling processes.

Although the project was conceived as a way to help one student overcome difficulties at school it has grown to involve the whole school community. Representatives at the Award presentation included those from the national park, the Navy, the school and all sectors of the local community. During the ceremony the school choir sang and a number of Michael's peers spoke personally about Michael's project and the impact it has had on the school and the community. It was clear that the whole school was involved in the project and that they were proud of Michael's achievement. A very proud Michael and his teacher's aide, Jeanette Fisher, gave the Minister and the Healthy City Canberra staff a tour of the worm farm and vegetable garden he has created. The school has decided to expand its garden theme by making and selling worm farm bins at the local market to raise funds for the school.

Gardening for Beginners

COGS in partnership with CIT Solutions will be conducting a beginners gardening course starting on 16 September. It will run over four consecutive Sunday afternoons starting at 1pm. The first session will be held at the Xeriscape garden but subsequent sessions will be held at the Charnwood garden.

The course is aimed at complete beginners and no prior knowledge or experience of gardening will be assumed. There will be a mix of theoretical information and practical gardening experience provided at each session. By the end of the course, participants will be in a position to confidently start their own organic garden for the next season, either in their own backyard or in a COGS community garden.

If you know of anyone who may be interested in attending this course enrolments should be made through CIT Solutions (course code ACT2188), phone 6207 4441, or contact Keith Colls for further information. The course fee is \$88.

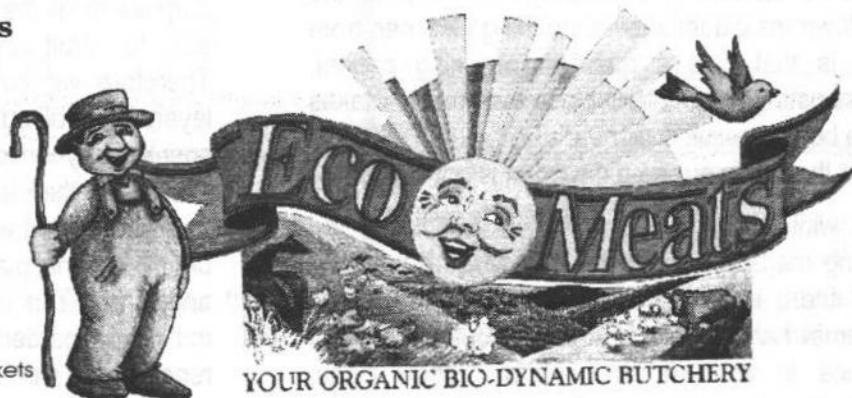
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No-Dig Gardening —A Recommendation

Sigrid Drescher



In one of the last magazines I wrote about our no-dig garden in Yass. First of all, I wish to correct the size of our garden (my husband was upset how I could have got it that wrong). It is not 50m² but almost double the size.

As it worked out the quality of the soil was not the factor that caused the weird growing conditions at the beginning. Indeed, since many months the soil is full of earthworms that were eating their way through the manure and straw layers and converted them into wonderful rich worm castings. The height of the layers has shrunken visibly now where the worms turned it into rich soil. It is only one third of what we started with.

We had a wonderful and bountiful harvest of our summer crop. Cucumbers, zucchinis and eggplants grew in such abundance that I pickled most of it. The basil plants I had put in as small seedlings (two varieties, curly and sweet) grew to a size I have never seen before in my life: bushes up to hip height. I harvested that much basil that I made containers over containers full of pesto that in its frozen form brings us easily over winter into spring. The various other perennial herbs I had planted were thriving when the hot weather finally cooled down at the end of summer. What makes the soil so rich and caused the phenomenal growth is surely the fact that a composting process has taken place during summer when the earthworms did their job. One thing I learned from this is that it is a question of being patient. Composting doesn't take place over night, it takes time but the result is wonderful rich humus. This is what the soil in our no-dig garden is now.

It is winter whilst I am writing this article for the spring magazine. My garden is covered in green and there is hardly a bare spot in it. After the summer harvest finished I put various varieties of lettuce in as well as beetroots, snow peas, Egyptian tree onions, Russian Giant garlic, mizuna, daikon, cabbages, broccoli, broad beans, strawberries and a lot of perennial spinach.

The carrots of last spring are still in (I simply sowed too many for a just two-person household) and get taken out whenever I create one of my carrot-potato pies. In fact, we are eating out of our garden almost the whole winter that plentiful of greens are available. The so-called 'perpetual spinach' as well as the Swiss chards from last spring provides us with the much-needed greens in winter. Spinach dishes are on the menu as often as we want and spinach pie is one of our favourites. Last winter at the soil blocking course one generous COGS member gave me the seeds of a variety of chard (I identified it as being the Fordhook Giant Silverbeet) which have grown into really big chard plants which keep producing and have self-sown themselves with new plants coming up everywhere around the old ones.

To create a no-dig garden is something I only can recommend. There are various methods how to put the layers out and one should certainly choose which one suits the best for the purpose. For our purpose of a productive vegetable garden we created all these different layers as described in the autumn magazine and it worked very well. It still is amazing for me that we got bucket loads full of vegies out of it in only a couple of weeks after its creation. And because it was that successful we started to transform the front yard into a no-dig experience as well. In the front yard it is our main purpose to kill the couch grass and to prepare the soil for fruit tree planting and flowerbeds. Therefore we covered the soil with very thick layers of in blood and bone watered newspaper, sprinkled dynamic lifter over it and topped it up with a very thick layer of hay. In spring this garden bed will be filled with potatoes to break up the soil before the final plantings will be done next autumn and winter. This is a much simpler approach than our vegie garden but it surely will work. I will report how it went.

The conclusion for me is: ***no-dig gardening is the way to go!***

Spinach pie

Ingredients (for 4 persons)

250 g white flour
125 g margarine
1 egg yolk, salt

For the filling

1 kg spinach
100 g bacon
100 g onions

For the topping

200 g sour cream (about 24 % fat)
3 eggs
2 teaspoons starch
salt, pepper, nutmeg
200 g shredded cheese

How to do it

Knead dough out of flour, margarine, egg yolk and salt. Put the dough for about 30 minutes into the fridge to cool it.

Then roll the dough out using two thirds of it for the bottom layer and one third to cover the inside border of the greased baking dish (26 cm Ø). Pre-bake in pre-heated oven at 200 degrees Celsius for about 12 till 15 minutes.

Wash the spinach very well and cook it very shortly in boiling slightly salted water. Drain it very well.

Cut onions and bacon into small cubes and fry them slightly. Add the spinach and mix it well.

For the topping mix all ingredients very well. Fill the spinach filling into the baking dish, pour the topping over it and sprinkle with cheese. Bake at 200 degrees Celsius for about 45 minutes.

Carrot-potato gratin

Ingredients (for four people)

500 g big carrots
500 g smaller potatoes
100 ml cream (30 % fat)
150 ml sour cream
2 eggs, salt, black pepper, nutmeg, fat for the form
80 g shredded cheese
20 g ground hazelnut

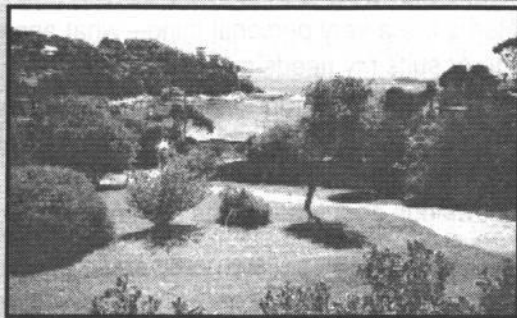
How to do it

Brush carrots and potatoes very well clean or wash and peel them thinly instead. Cut potatoes and carrots into even thin slices, the carrots slightly slanting to get a bigger surface.

Mix cream, sour cream and eggs very well together and add salt, freshly ground black pepper and nutmeg to season it.

Grease an ovenproof dish like a tart form lightly and fill alternately the carrot and potato slices in like tiles on the roof. Pour the cream-egg mixture over it and sprinkle with shredded cheese and nuts.

Bake it in a pre-heated oven at 180 till 200 degrees Celsius for about 30 minutes till the cream-egg mixture is thickened.



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Every Day Herbs for Healthy Living

Shirley Carden

The Oxford Dictionary defines the word herb as a soft-stemmed plant that dies down to the ground after flowering, one with leaves or seeds etc. that are used as food or in medicine or for flavouring. There are plants that we regard as herbs that do not fit this definition e.g. rosehip, lemon verbena and elderberry.

My main aim with this series of articles is to instill in you a desire to learn more about the unlimited treasures to be found in the plant world—the healing powers, the simple remedies—there for the taking if only we strive to familiarise ourselves with them.

Herbs are a very personal thing—what appeals to me or suits my needs may not necessarily appeal to you. I can pass on to you my experiences and once your interest is aroused, hope your life will become all the richer as you seek more knowledge about these gifts from nature.

Most of these plants are hardy and easy to grow. If I were given the choice of one garden—vegetables, fruit, flowers or herbs—I would decide on the last of the four with no doubt in my mind whatsoever.

They can have eye appeal, delight the sense of smell—even the sense of touch. They can improve the health of your family, your garden—even the health of your pets or domestic animals.

Each country in the world has its favourite healing plants. Occasionally one plant proves so effective its fame spreads and it is distributed around the globe.

But there are millions of plants in this world of benefit to mankind. I feel we should concentrate on those that grow around us rather than attempt to get supplies of those proven elsewhere but unavailable here.

Different countries have produced authors of best sellers on this present-day popular subject. Some publications have become so famous they have been translated into other languages, e.g. Maurice Messegue's books, Maria Treben's 'Health Through God's Pharmacy'.

However for a beginner in Australia I would suggest Dorothy Hall's 'The Book of Herbs'. To me all three authors have a similar style and share a love—almost a reverence—of these valuable plants.

I should also point out to you that many plants that are considered as weeds are prized by those who know their value as powerful medicinal herbs, valuable food sources or of cosmetic use—some fitting into each of these categories.

I grow my herbs in healthy soil without the use of chemical sprays or fertilizers. I use them mostly freshly picked, always seeking out the best quality.

One of my family's favourite drinks is what we call the green drink'. I can vary it to lessen stress, give energy, ensure a good night's sleep, overcome the unpleasant effects of hayfever, colds—the list is endless.

I prefer a base of unsweetened apple or pineapple juice with the addition of a little lemon juice to make sure the colour is green and not a murky brown. A good selection of herbs would be lemon balm, peppermint, borage, yarrow and lemon verbena. The herbs are blended into the juice and the mixture strained.

The lemon flavoured herbs tend to have a calming effect as well as improving the flavour. Peppermint also makes the drink more flavoursome, but as an added benefit, it rids the body of excess mucus—thus helpful in all the 'itis' illnesses e.g. sinusitis, bronchitis—even hayfever.

If you haven't the time to prepare a green drink or herbal tea, just chew a few sprigs fresh from the garden.

Lemon balm is great for anyone under stress—it has a calming effect on young and old.

Yarrow helps to keep up one's energy.

Borage is good for the heart and helps to keep our kidneys functioning effectively.

continued ...

Another family favourite is pesto dip served with cracker biscuits and crudites, e.g. carrot and celery sticks, tomato and cucumber wedges etc., also grown organically and picked fresh from the garden.

Basil is the magic ingredient in this recipe. It is the sacred herb of India. It is reputed to gladden the heart and lighten the mind—great for anyone under stress or depressed.

Pesto

2 cups fresh basil leaves (or basil and parsley)

½ cup pine nuts or blanched almonds

3 cloves garlic

¼ cup romano cheese

¼ cup parmesan cheese

½ cup olive oil

Blend thoroughly in a food processor.

Pesto Dip

Blend in a small container of cottage cheese.

The Antiseptic Herbs

The antiseptic herbs can be very helpful in maintaining good health. I shall concentrate on half a dozen of the well known ones—sage, thyme, marjoram, oregano, basil and garlic.

The term 'antiseptic' is not appealing with regard to food but I can assure you the recipes I shall pass on to you are such firm favourites in my family that we occasionally have problems with grandchildren eating far more than their share.

Herb bread is but one example:

Herbed Butter

125g butter (at room temperature)

4 sprigs each of marjoram, thyme and oregano, (strip leaves from woody stalks if necessary)

4 sage leaves

4 sprigs parsley (not too large)

bunch chives about ½ inch thick

a few leaves of-garlic chives if available

Chop the herbs very finely. Combine thoroughly with the softened butter. Spread generously on long wholemeal rolls cut on the diagonal.

Either use on fresh rolls or heat in an electric fry pan lined with foil until the butter is melted and the under side of the bread is golden brown. Serve immediately.

Pesto bread may be prepared in the same way by stirring finely chopped basil through the butter and sprinkling grated parmesan cheese on top of the buttered bread before heating.

Marjoram and **oregano** are the same family. Marjoram is more flavoursome. Oregano is hot to the taste buds if you bite into a leaf. Marjoram can be difficult to grow, so in early spring it is a good idea to divide your plants and plant in various areas of the garden. Golden oregano is a very attractive plant in the summer with its golden foliage. Purple oregano has purple buds changing to lavender flowers—a colourful addition to floral arrangements.

However, the ordinary oregano is better as far as flavour is concerned in food preparation. There are many delightful varieties of thyme.



B. M. Evans

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Caraway thyme has a distinctive caraway flavour. It can be grown as a lawn.

Shakespeare thyme is another growing type, beautiful when flowering, but quite attractive when green with its closely packed tiny rounded leaves.

Lemon thyme is distinctly lemon in flavour and valuable during the winter months when lemon grass and lemon verbena are unavailable for herbal teas and green drinks.

The thymes are beautiful as edging plants, as ground covers or in rockeries. Their presence in the garden help to keep other plants healthy, e.g. roses, and they also discourage the cabbage butterfly from laying eggs on the brassica plants.

Thyme is the herb for the relief of fungus type infections such as thrush. It can be made into a strong tea, strained and stored in the refrigerator. Pour a little into a glass, top up with hot water to make warm and use to gargle the throat.

Use in the same way in larger quantities in a bowl to bath the feet in the case of tinea.

Use to soak fingers in the case of fungus type infections under the finger nails.

Sage, marjoram and oregano can be used in the same way for the relief of sore throats.

Sage was considered so valuable by the Chinese for a long and healthy life that they were happy to exchange four pounds of China tea for one pound of sage tea.

The leaves may also be dried, powdered and used to clean the teeth to keep the gums and mouth healthy.

Garlic is quite a remarkable herb. It is a powerful antibiotic and good for circulation. The Russian government during a severe 'flu epidemic advised the population to eat lots of garlic.

It can be used to worm both humans and animals. However, it is not acceptable socially. The problems of unpleasant odours can be solved by eating lots of parsley which has a deodorising effect.

Small cloves of garlic can be swallowed whole like capsules followed by lemon juice and water.

Honey has the ability to extract moisture from substances. An easy way of giving garlic to small

children is to peel and halve the garlic clove, cover with honey and allow to stand. Give by the spoonful to small children. You'd be amazed how a child can reek of garlic after this treatment.

A very potent salad dressing recipe was given to me by a doctor who used it regularly but still managed to lead a very busy social life:

1 knob of garlic peeled
the juice of one large lemon
½ cup olive oil
as much parsley and/or mint as will fit into a blender
Blend thoroughly.

This dressing can be used on salads or hot vegetables. The mint and parsley have a deodorising effect. BUT a word of caution—all things in moderation—I know of two people who have had very severe nose bleeds after eating very large quantities of garlic over a long period.

By using these antiseptic herbs in dishes tasty enough to be accepted by one's family, it is possible to prevent infectious illnesses spreading from one member to another. They will also help a person recover more quickly from an illness.

Their use can prevent many common illnesses which make life so unpleasant, but at the same time their addition to various dishes makes food much more interesting and attractive.

Pizzas and omelettes are greatly improved with the addition of some of these herbs.

Omelette with Cheese and Savoury Herbs

3eggs
2 sprigs each of marjoram, oregano, thyme and sage
½ cup grated cheese
½ cup chopped parsley and chives
Have an electric fry pan ready. Grease. Blend herbs with the eggs. Pour into a medium hot fry pan. cook for 3–4 minutes. Sprinkle the cheese, chives and parsley evenly over the top. Fold. Serve with hot buttered toast.

The 'Tonic' Type Herbs

Lack of energy seems a common complaint in modern times. These herbs are invaluable in this area.

One of Dorothy Han's favourite herbs when she needs a boost is **yarrow**. I find it not very inviting by itself so add more flavoursome herbs such as lemon grass, or peppermint.

I've always endeavoured to make my herbal remedies tasty. Perhaps that is why they are so popular in the family—even with regards to the goats and chickens.

Yarrow is astringent so will stop bleeding. It can help in the case of a fever, break a stubborn cold, prevent cramp. It is an attractive plant in the garden with its fern-like leaves and clusters of tiny flowers of white, yellow, pinks, orange or reds.

It is regarded as a plant doctor and will improve the health of ailing plants when planted close by. A few sprigs forked through a compost heap will speed up the process.

Dandelion is considered by many as a weed to be disposed of as soon as it appears. In reality it is a general spring tonic and blood purifier. It is high in vitamins and minerals. Use the leaves in salads, cook as a spinach, make into a tea or include a few leaves in a green drink.

Gather the roots, clean, chop into about ½ inch pieces and dry in a slow oven until brown. Grind and use as a coffee substitute. The instant variety is available in health food shops at great expense imported from overseas.

Use the flowers to make a cough syrup by placing in a jar and covering with honey. Allow to stand for a few weeks.

Parsley is a most valuable addition to a diet. Remember the stalks are even more nutritious than the leaves. It has vitamins A, B and C and is very high in iron as well as other minerals.

Your body uses the iron within hours of your consuming this herb without side effects, so it is very important in the case of anaemia. It is a pleasant addition to mashed potatoes, potato soup, boiled rice and scrambled eggs just to mention a few.

It can be frozen. Do not thaw to use but crumble by rolling lightly with a rolling pin. It is amazing how much chopped parsley can be stirred into boiled rice, etc if someone in the family needs a boost.

It needs a rich soil and plenty of water.

Basil is another pick-me-up for those who feel they need more energy. Use with **borage** as a tea. This is reputed to cure a migraine.

It is too stimulating to take before bedtime. The plant likes lots of water but dislikes wind and frost.

Stinging nettle may not sound too appealing but it is a very valuable plant. It is high in iron, magnesium and phosphorus.

Chlorophyll is also very high in this plant so that it is cleansing to the system. Nettles have been described as an arterial tonic. They are quick acting in the case of anaemia.

Use it instead of or with spinach, in green drinks or teas. It can even be chopped very finely and added to a salad. It stimulates the system. In the garden it can be regarded as a companion plant, or more appropriately a mother plant. I have noticed the quality of strawberries has been greatly improved by the presence of several nettles in the garden bed.

Thyme and marjoram also have a tonic effect on the system.

Tossed Green Salad

lettuce, dandelion leaves, rocket
juice of half a lemon
2 tbsp olive oil
1 clove garlic (peeled)
4 large sprigs parsley
Blend thoroughly. Combine with salad greens.

Pizza Base

2 cups wholemeal flour,
1 teaspoon dry yeast dissolved in
½ cup warm water with
½ teaspoon raw sugar.

Allow yeast to froth. Add flour and mix together to form a workable dough, adding a little more warm water if necessary. Knead lightly and roll out to the desired shape. Place on oiled pizza tray, or biscuit tray. Top with your favourite filling and bake in a moderate to hot oven for 30–40 minutes.

Savoury Topping

Tomato paste, thinly sliced tomatoes, thinly sliced onion rings, chopped capsicum, sliced mushrooms, chopped herbs (thyme, marjoram, oregano, sage, chives and parsley) and grated cheese.

Dream Garden

Betty Cornhill

Some advice for those organic gardeners who have just got their plots in the new community gardens

The dream garden should be beautiful. This means you need to leave room for flowers and herbs around the edges of your plot. The best flowers to grow are those which bees love, as these are also attractive to tiny wasps, which are predators. They lay their eggs on the flower heads of plants such as parsley, parsnip and other plants of the same family. Parsley and Dwarf Zinnias as a border make a pretty picture, and the butterflies think they are in heaven, and forget to lay their eggs on the cabbages—up to a point, but always search for them on your cauliflowers, cabbages and broccoli. This is the only sure way, of saving these plants.

Don't use dusts such as *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Dipel), as we now know that insects are able to build up resistance to this, as with most of the more lethal chemicals, and it is important to realise that if you attract the right predators to your garden you do not need to use 'killers'.

Birds can be useful too, especially the little birds, as they perch among the plants and eat the caterpillars. On my plot at the Cotter Garden I have watched a family of blue wrens flitting about among the vegetables and tall larkspurs which seed themselves. These grow strong enough for the little birds to alight on, and it is worth planting some now, as soon as you are able to get your plot going.

In my home garden birds like Rosellas and cockatoos come to the garden to chomp on the seeds of the 30 or so trees I planted 38 years ago. Unfortunately the Rosellas like to chop off the new red shoots on my roses, so that I have to drape pieces of bird netting over the plants in late winter. I once had a pink Queen Elizabeth rose that grew 12 feet high, so that I could see the flowers sitting up on the bed in my upstairs bedroom.

I enjoyed them for one season, but the next year the big birds chopped off all the young shoots, and killed the rose. It could grow strongly through the shrubs and climbers such as wisteria and winter Jasmine, but could not survive having all its new growth being chopped off.

My pet snail bait is a teaspoon each of Vegemite, sugar and salt in a cup of water in small containers surrounding seedlings and plants which slugs and snails delight in, such as young peas and seedlings of all kinds, particularly the cabbage family.

Herbs are pretty and also are a delight for the predators, and can be health-giving for you, as Shirley Carden told us in her recent talk. We crazy gardeners, as some people think we are, use herbs such as stinging nettles, Yarrow, Dandelion, lemon balm and Chickweed in 'Green Drink', made in the blender, adding honey or pineapple juice or apple juice for those who like it sweetened. It makes a delicious drink, and as Shirley told us, she keeps her grandchildren healthy by giving it to them when they come to stay and they love it.

I don't advocate growing all these herbs in your plot, but do plan a border of flowers and herbs around the whole garden, as we have down one side of the Cotter Garden, and a herb garden as well. This is important for the health of the whole garden, and for those who work in it. Especially if, like me, you pick a few sprigs of herbs for your green drink or salad whenever you visit the garden. A working bee once or twice a year to cut back the old flower heads of the herbs and to generally tidy up the whole garden is a must for community gardens. It also provides a chance for the gardeners to get to know each other and enjoy a picnic lunch in pleasant surroundings.

Even though in COGS Community Gardens people grow the vegies and flowers that they want, it is still important to keep the garden as a whole reasonably tidy, but beware of the really 'tidy' gardeners, because weeds are often attractive to predators, so don't pull up every weed and then mulch thoroughly, so as to prevent weeds growing, but allow some chickweed and corn salad and Chinese cabbage to seed itself and grow for healthy greens during the winter months.

You can grow wonderful vegetables using biscuits of lucerne hay for a mulch, but allow the soil to warm up in the spring and the little birds to feed on the grubs in the open soil in the spring; then water thoroughly before mulching for the hot summer.

Love your garden. Be relaxed in it. Decorate it with flowers and sweet smelling herbs, eat your weeds and herbs and really enjoy it. Every garden I have been in has helped to make me healthy. If you ask the other gardeners at the Cotter Community Garden, they will probably tell you that Betty's plot is the most untidy one in the garden, and although this is probably so I have had a plot there since it first started, and brought good soil over from my plot at the 'old Cotter Garden' which I have had since 1983. I have helped to start six of our Community Gardens, and I am delighted that we now have 4 or 5 more started. Congratulations to Steve!

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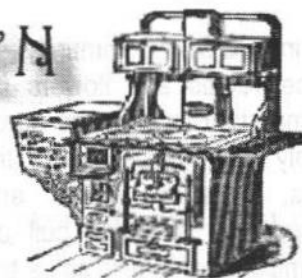
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FROM THE GARDEN TO THE POT

By Conrad van Hest



If you feel sluggish it's because we need to detox our bodies of the toxic by products of our Western diet. So if you have a juicer machine these juices can put a spring in your step and replace lost vitamins.

(Note: wash and clean properly and use the best and fresh organic produce)

Pumping iron tonic—a battery charger

apples 2 unpeeled, uncored and quartered
beetroot 1 small unpeeled with leaves
cucumber 1 medium
spinach 1 handful of leaves
watercress 1 handful

Ginger spice cleanser for a onset of a cold

carrots 2 unpeeled unless organic remove top and tail
apple 1 unpeeled, uncored and quartered
orange 1 peeled leaving behind
ginger 1oz peeled and sliced

Super stinger immune booster

carrots 2 unpeeled unless organic remove top and tail
apples 2 unpeeled uncored and quartered
stinging nettle 1 bunch young pale leaves
spinach 1 handful of leaves

Bunnies bonanza a potion for two

carrots 3 unpeeled unless organic remove top and tail
cabbage 2 dark green leaves
celery 1 stick with leaves
coriander 1 handful
parsley 1 handful with stems

Doctor garlic a juice with a kick

garlic 3 cloves peeled
carrots 2 unpeeled unless organic remove top and tail
celery 1 stick with leaves
tomato 1 medium
sweet potato 1 scrubbed unpeeled cut into sticks
jalapeno pepper ½ deseeded
white radish 3 inches

Monkey business—one for the little kids and the big kids

apples 6 unpeeled uncored and quartered
bananas 2 peeled
peanut butter 1 tablespoon smooth unsalted

Juice the apples first then blend with the bananas and peanut butter

All recipes from the Super Juice book by M van Straten and M Beazley

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Botanical Melrose

The courtyards at Melrose Primary School in Chifley are undergoing a progressive horticultural transformation.

Flowers now blooming in the school colours and Canberra region native plants are revitalizing some of the courtyard garden beds. The students of years 1 & 2 with the assistance and experience of parents and staff have researched and planted a native bird attracting Garden bed. Years 3, 4 & 5 have planted dwarf beans in the shade house and have recently harvested the produce. Both of these classes have studied the science behind these activities. The shade house has huge potential and plans are being made to utilize this area to its full potential.

The Australian National University has a current program with the schools in the ACT. BISACT (Biology & Science in ACT) scientists come to the school to show and talk to the students about all sorts of interesting science and biology topics such as: fast plants (*Brassica Rapa*), their growth, development and requirements; growing mushrooms in the classroom; and worm/composting experiments. The students will be having hands on day with more experiments and reptiles to touch and feel. At this present time they are researching Australian Endangered Species.

The school has had a wombat and possum take up residency in the courtyards, being made of terracotta they will be staying for some time!

A compost/worm farm demonstration was arranged for the students, conducted by Dave Tooley from Ecos Design and Neil Davidson from Back to the Future. They enjoyed the hands on approach and gave life to the newly constructed compost bins. The students have been given the opportunity to collect and recycle the schools food scraps with a group of year six students becoming the 'Compost Keepers'. The compost keepers will be collecting the food waste from the canteen, staff room and from the students eating areas to be recycled into the compost bins and worm farms.

We have two different systems set up for both the worm farm and compost bins to teach the students how different methods work. In the beginning of term three, two no dig garden beds will be laid by David Reed from Organic Origins, with the help of students. With plans of vegetables, herbs and companion plants for the use in the school canteen. We have also considered a couple of laying hens.

The School is an active Health Promoting School, with an incentive to pack lunch boxes filled with healthy food and the canteen supplying a nutritious menu five days a week.

The School will be celebrating Literacy Week between 3-9 September with a special day 'Spring into Literacy' on the 6 September. This project celebrates our parent initiative of enhancing the environment and our Healthy Promoting Schools partnership activities.

The Melrose parents began a gardening project to restore and beautify the school courtyards. It has involved the whole community. In September the gardens will look beautiful. We will celebrate in the following ways:

- Holding a family luncheon in the courtyards.
- Celebrating the 'Year of the Volunteer' involving reading volunteers in the junior school.

HALL RURAL CENTRE

Blood & Bone

C.O.F.

Cow manure, sheep manure

Gypsum, lime, dolomite

plus all your other gardening requirements from Wayne and his friendly staff. Call in and see them at 12 Victoria Street Hall or phone: 6230 2209

- Patsy Allan, a Canberra based storyteller will hold story sessions throughout the day.
- The children will produce books on topics such as:
 - creating and maintaining a compost/worm farm;
 - how to develop and care for gardens;
 - indigenous stories around indigenous totems; and
 - poetry reading.
- A tour around 'The Native Garden'
- Sensory gardens for the YMCA courtyard.
- Integrated learning.
- Information Communication Technology and Literacy.
- This project links with the holistic view of Melrose Primary School:
 - Physical—Gardening, weeding, composting etc.;
 - Mental—Knowledge of our environment, recycling etc.
 - Spiritual—Beautiful surroundings in which to relax, play and work.
 - Social/emotional—Spending time with family and friends.

Melrose Primary School in liaison with the adjoining YMCA has plans for a 'sensory garden'. It is hoped to incorporate sound, smell, touch and taste. A garden along these lines was planted at the Canberra Botanical Gardens, for the use of the visually impaired. Anyone with information that would help in planning this development, please contact the school on 6205 6644.

A garden committee has formed to facilitate all the hard work and to give direction to the many ideas that are still to be addressed. Along with the parents of Melrose Primary School we have attended many working bees to prepare the site ready for the students and raise money for the purchase of tools and plants.

With the support of local businesses and the community the project has had a great start. A

big thank you to Arthur Yates and Co.; Bunnings Warehouse, Tuggeranong; The Garden Nurseries; Yarralumla Nursery; Samarkos Earthmoving, Fyshwick; Neil Davidson, Back to the Future; Dave Tooley, Organic Origins; ACT No Waste; Tom Raalchos, ACT NO Waste and Parent; David Read and Steve Sutton from Canberra Organic Growers Society.

With their generosity we have accomplished so much in one School Term! The Garden committee along the school would appreciate any advice and support of our project.

There are no barriers when it comes to sharing a gardens secret

Contact telephone: 6205 6644

Why Eat Organic

Betty Cornhill

Many people say to me, 'Does it really make that much difference?' or

'Does it really taste any better? I read somewhere. that they did some research on it, and the people couldn't taste any difference', or

'It's just too expensive. I can't afford it,' or

'Yes I really must visit the organic place at the Belconnen Markets' or

'It's too far to go'.

To answer the last one first: Canberra is a small city. Some of the supermarkets are now selling some organic products, and if we buy a few of these, they will continue to stock them. We can all afford to encourage the supermarkets in this way. Look at it like this: some day quite soon all our food must be grown without pesticides, or the planet will not survive, and WE will not survive, so why not be one of the first to recognise this fact and act now to help bring it about.

The Belconnen Market is not the only place that sells organic fruit and vegetables. Karen of Organic Energy at the Griffith shops was the first to retail organic fruit and vegies, first from her home, later from a warehouse in Fyshwick and finally at Griffith. She has consistently tried to

buy the very best quality produce, and is always willing to help people who have some horrible disease like Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, giving a discount for whole cases of carrots, etc. for juicing. Griffith shopping centre is very popular because you can buy organic and biodynamic meat and delicatessen products there and also Mountain Creek has all sorts of organic products, and John is willing to get in many health products if asked.

Joseph's A-1 stall at the Fyshwick Markets is another retailer of organic fruits and vegetables, and there are many more. It would be good if all organic retailers were to advertise in the COGS magazine.

Too expensive? This is where organic growers have an advantage. You can grow enough food to feed yourself and family, and if you haven't enough room or have too many trees, you can always get plots at one of COGS' many Community Gardens.

This means that you can spend extra money on organic fruit, nuts, cheese, eggs, olives, dates, raisins, sultanas and other dried fruits to make up a good vegetarian diet to which you may add biodynamic meat once a week if you wish, and you can still save enough give to charities like the Smith Family who help the families who cannot make it when misfortune strikes

Whether it tastes any better to someone else doesn't really matter. If you are a COGS member you are probably growing your own, and you know it tastes better. The reason may be because it has been left to ripen on the bush, or because it has been fresh picked or because it is organic. It just tastes better.

Does it make any difference? Yes, I think it does. It makes the difference between eating poisons and not eating poisons.

All conventionally grown produce contains minute quantities of pesticides. I often quote from the Market Basket Surveys put out by ANZFA (the Australia and New Zealand Food Authority). The latest I have is 1996, but the 1998 one will be available soon. Here are some of the shocking statistics from the 1996 one.

Apple samples contained the following pesticides, all pretty lethal: Endosulfan,

Chlorpyrifos, Diazinon, Dimethoate, Parathion, Permethrin, Diphenylamine, Iprodione, Dicofol, Vinclozolin, ziphos-methyl, and Fenthion.

Let's look at one of these pesticides, which is present in conventionally grown apples, Parathion.

The A-Z of Chemicals in the Home' says 'Methyl parathion is used as a broad spectrum insecticide on a wide range of crops. It is an organophosphate and acts to inhibit the acetylcholinesterase enzymes in the nervous system. No parathion products are sold for domestic use due to their high toxicity'.

It goes on to say that Parathion is highly toxic to most animals. Due to its fat soluble nature, it is absorbed into the waxy cuticle of leaves and fruits and unless the long withholding period is observed the chemical may still be active in foodstuffs.

Chlorpyrifos is another organophosphate, which also contains chlorine and is more persistent than other OPs. It is very toxic when ingested.

I don't intend to tell the story for each pesticide listed, but would like to point out that the minute quantities of these highly toxic chemicals make up a lethal cocktail, and each time we eat a conventionally grown apple we are eating this cocktail, and the effect can be cumulative. Nobody really knows what this effect can be, because little or no research has been done on this but we do know that children are affected more than adults, due to their lower body weight. One indicator, however, is the fact that mother's milk tested still contains DDT, even though DDT was banned in Australia 14 years ago. Incidentally, it was still used in some developing countries as late as 1990.

Pesticides found in some other foods include grapes 10, lettuce 12, pears 10, silver beet 12, and celery was omitted in 1996, but in 1994, it contained 12 pesticides. Yet all these foods are considered safe to eat.

It's no wonder there are so many people with degenerative diseases today—arthritis, Alzheimer's, cancer, heart disease, Parkinson's, to name only a few. Personally, I think it is worth the extra money to buy and eat organic food.

SPRING VEGETABLE PLANTING GUIDE

When direct planting with small seeds, e.g. 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, e.g. 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 seeds viability.

A seed should be planted at a depth 2–3 times its diameter, although it is better to plant too shallow rather 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 the seedlings come up.

Be prepared to protect your frost tender seedlings, as Canberra can experience harsh frosts right through Spring. Make your own cloches from plastic bottles with the bottoms cut out, or row covers for larger plantings.

Crop Rotation

Remember to rotate the crops 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, and should 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 to at least a 4 year rotation period and do not grow the same members of a plant family in the same bed in consecutive years e.g. 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.

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



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

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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 10 community gardens in the Canberra area at Mitchell (Northside Garden), Curtin (Cotter Garden), Erindale, Charnwood, Theodore, Oaks Estate, Kambah, Holder, Cook and Queanbeyan. 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