



Canberra Organic

**ORGANIC GROWING
IN THE CANBERRA REGION**

Quarterly publication of the Canberra Organic Growers Society Inc.



VOL. 11 NO. 1

Autumn 2003

CANBERRA ORGANIC

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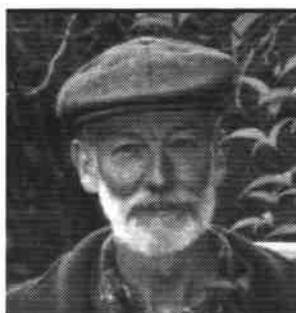
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From the Editor

Welcome to the Autumn edition of *Canberra Organic*.

Despite the drought and recent bushfires most of our gardeners are having a great summer with abundant crops, even with the water restrictions imposed on us. A few varieties of plants are stressed with the hot dry weather and we hope that the Autumn rains will soon arrive

Stephen Dean



President's Report Autumn 2003

As we enter the new year the drought continues unabated, bringing with it the disastrous fires which devastated the western parts of Canberra. I am sure all COGS members will join with me in expressing our deepest sympathy and support for those COGS members who lost their homes in the fires of 18th January. Both the Holder and Xeriscape gardens suffered some fire damage and there is a report on the damage on pages 4 & 6 in this issue of the magazine.

There is still no sign of an end to the drought but our gardens are holding up remarkably well under the current water restrictions, although some plants are not coping well with the hot weather. Nevertheless, it's looking like a good year for rock melons and perhaps even for water melons. Let us hope that it rains before the next level of water restrictions have to be introduced.

2003 is shaping up as a busy year for COGS. A new Committee will be elected at the Annual General Meeting which will be held on 25 March. COGS relies on the work of volunteers to function and I am sure all Committee members would agree that committee work is very rewarding. If you think COGS worthy of your support please consider nominating for a Committee position. Details of the AGM and the nomination process are detailed on page 9. Don't forget that the AGM is also harvest night where we all get the chance to show off the results of our efforts during the season. For the remainder of the year we are also lining up a series of interesting speakers on organic related topics for our monthly meetings held, as usual, on the fourth Tuesday of the month in the Griffin Centre.

Last year two of our gardeners had great success at the Autumn Show of the Horticultural Society of Canberra. This is an excellent way to demonstrate to the wider gardening community the practicality of organic gardening and the quality of produce that organic methods can produce. Please consider entering some of your best produce in this year's Show as a high quality product is the best publicity there is for the use of organic methods. Details of

this year's Autumn Show are on page 16.

Again, in 2003 COGS will be offering a beginners organic gardening course in conjunction with CIT Solutions. The first course starts on Sunday 2 March. Other CIT courses which may be of interest to COGS members are also included in this issue. COGS is also hoping to run, in conjunction with Michel and Jude Fanton from the Seed Savers' Network, a one or two day workshop on seed saving in Canberra in May. The Summer 2002 issue of *Canberra Organic* contained a very enthusiastic report from Garry Ridgway on one of Michel's and Jude's workshops he attended in Byron Bay. It indicates what may be in store for us.

It is now time to be thinking about planting those winter vegetables. The seed bank has a range of seed available but unfortunately seedling production this year may be somewhat reduced. The Nature and Society Forum building and greenhouses where Laurie Thomson and his team produced seedlings in the past was almost totally destroyed in the recent fires. Only one greenhouse survived and at this stage it is not known what will happen to the site.

While the drought and the fires have resulted in a fairly depressing start to 2003 we are looking forward to an interesting and productive year for COGS. I look forward to seeing everyone at the AGM.

Happy Gardening,

Keith Colls

GARDEN STATUS

Charnwood:

Several vacant plots.

Cook:

Three vacant plots.

Cotter:

Despite the water restrictions and high temperatures the Cotter Garden is doing well with only limited impact on crops. Gardeners have been using water saving techniques and watering in accordance with the sprinkler curfews. To meet the curfew requirements there have been some bleary eyed gardeners at the garden at first light to do their watering! Water consumption is being monitored and recorded on a weekly basis to establish baseline water usage for future reference. Betty Cornhill kindly arranged for a large number of bags of sheep manure to be delivered to the garden. These have all been taken up by gardeners and the garden is showing the benefits.

Fortunately the Cotter Garden escaped the terrible fires that destroyed so many parts of Weston Creek and southern Canberra.

There are 2 vacant plots.

Erindale:

No vacancies apart from the three concession plots in full production with Mick Crowe as caretaker.

Holder:

Our deepest sympathies and support for Holder gardeners - Don Horan, Jennifer Jenkins and Jen Johnston, who lost their homes in Duffy during the recent bushfires. The fires also destroyed 12 of our plots, together with 33 expensive bales of straw, approximately 35 hardwood sleepers and several hoses and trickle irrigation systems. Another 12 - 15 plots suffered lesser damage with crops partially burnt or scorched. Our small orchard of fruit trees and our windbreak bushes were all destroyed or damaged by the intense fires on Saturday 18th January.

Since the bushfires an aggressive 1.5m Brown Snake has taken up residence in our gardens - extreme caution and long trousers and boots are now necessary!!

No vacant plots, four people on the waiting list

Kambah:

One vacancy, no waiting list.

Northside:

Several vacant plots.

Oaks Estate:

Five vacant plots and have a space ready for growing seeds for the seed bank.

Queanbeyan:

Railway Park Community Garden suffered another attack of mindless vandalism early in the New Year. It was the second incident in a couple of months, and understandably disheartened those gardeners affected. Of particular concern this time was that the people responsible used straw bales to set a fire just outside the garden fence and which came very close to getting inside.

This was the third incident since the garden began operating in August 2001, so in the scheme of things we haven't fared too badly. But this kind of activity is very demoralising and it is disturbing to think some of our neighbours take pleasure in damaging an asset that is adding a new dimension to the community life of our precinct.

On a more positive note, the garden continues to attract newcomers as other gardeners move on. We currently have one vacancy, a 9sq m plot.

We are continuing to expand our common beds, which are particularly valuable as most of our plots are relatively small. A new plot has been established to grow produce for the COGS seed bank. We are growing freckled lettuce, a non-hearting variety with flecks of pink, and several varieties of tomato.

Thanks to George from Oaks Estate garden for a donation of chilli plants and asparagus.

These have been planted in our common beds for everyone to enjoy.

Theodore:

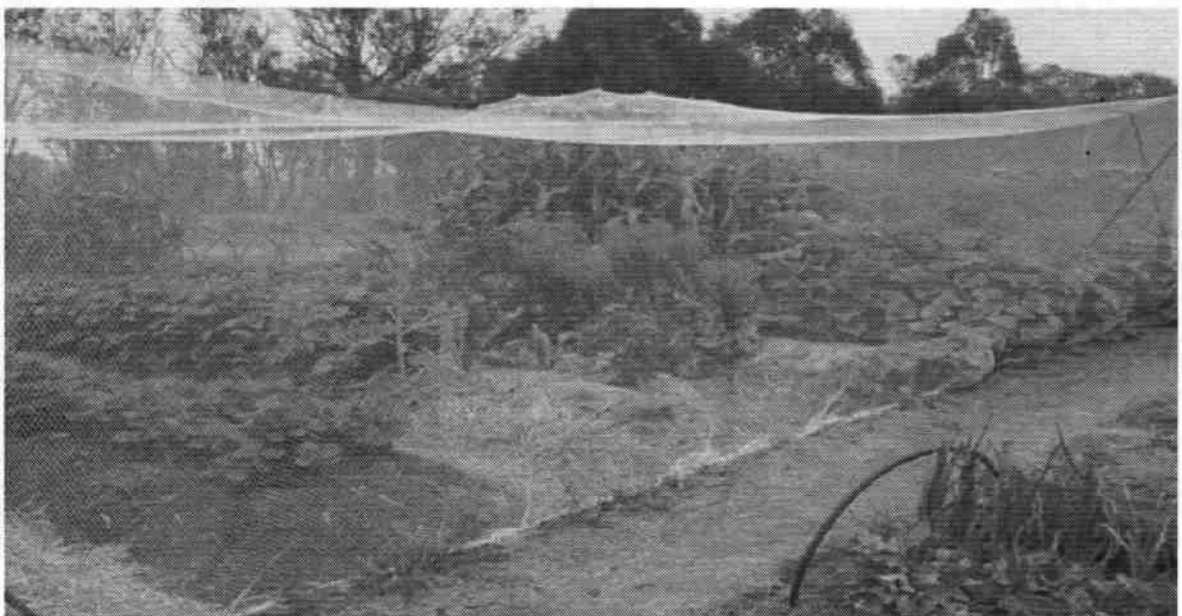
Several vacant plots.

COGS Cook Gardens



In spite of the harsh summer and our parsimonious use of water the Cook garden has been very productive as can be seen from the photographs. The extensive use of mulch as a water saving technique has enabled us to live within the current water restrictions without too much difficulty, although some of our windbreak

shrubs are struggling. At present there are three vacant plots, although the soil in two of them closely resembles concrete. Nevertheless, these two plots are very suitable for above the ground gardening and there are some very successful examples of such plots in the Cook garden such as the one shown in the above photograph.



The land surrounding the garden is extremely dry so our lush green plots are extremely attractive to birds and other wildlife. We have not yet managed to catch the rabbit which has taken a liking to the garden but it is just a matter of time before it will be permanently evicted. On the other hand the kangaroo which gave some plot holders a lot of exercise when they were trying to

chase it out of the garden has not come back. The main problem is caused by the birds. Several plot holders have resorted to netting over their whole plot as shown above. This seems to be the only permanent solution. The artificial birds and noisy strings some gardeners have used seem to have limited usefulness.

Xeriscape Garden

In spite of the hot weather and water restrictions the COGS plots in the Xeriscape garden were flourishing until the fires of 18th January. The fires swept through the whole garden but fortunately they did not cause too much damage to the COGS plots, however, other areas of the garden were not so lucky. The rose and the cottage garden areas seem to be a complete write off.

The COGS pumpkin patch disappeared and the tomatoes on the western side of the plot were cooked but plants on the eastern side were relatively unscathed. The major loss for COGS was the garden shed which contained the gardening tools, two wheel barrows, lawnmower, whipper snipper, tent, display material and all the COGS handouts and back copies of the COGS

magazine. Only a couple of the hand garden tools were salvaged, minus the handles.

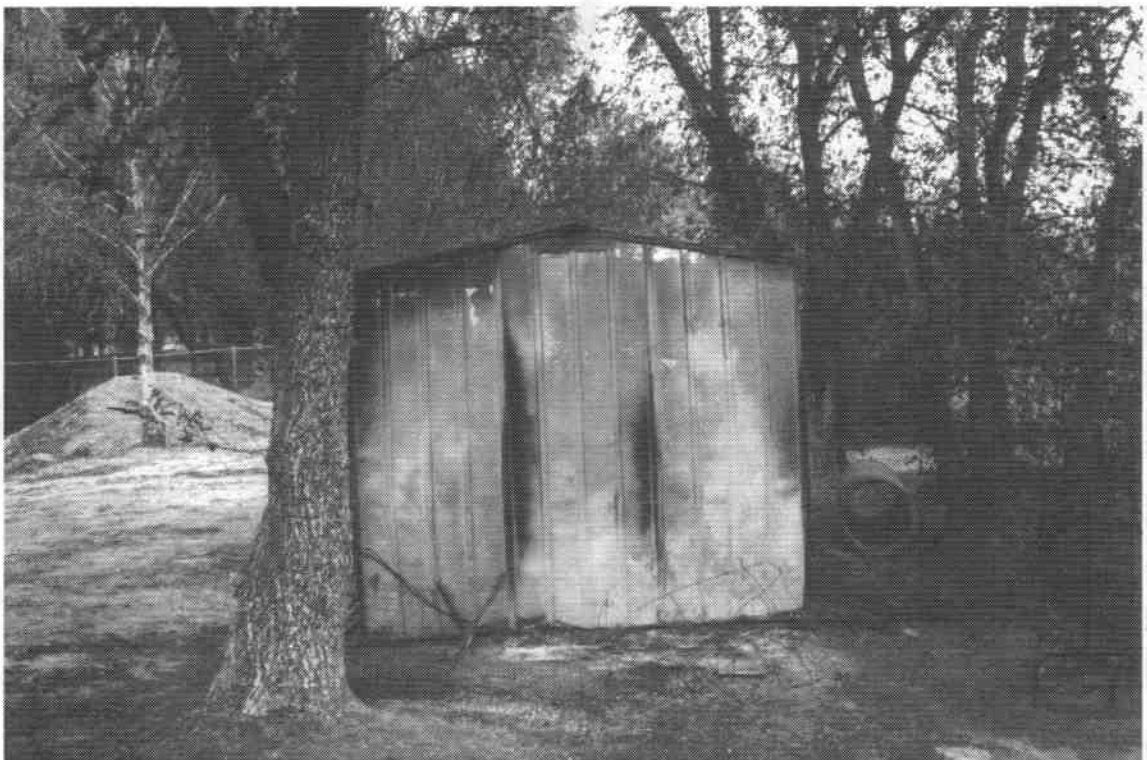
The Nature and Society Forum building, next to the Xeriscape garden, where Laurie Thomson and his team produced all the COGS seedlings and where the COGS/CIT *Organic Gardening for Beginners* courses were held was almost completely destroyed. Only one greenhouse survived the fire. Consequently all those pots and punnets which COGS members generously supplied have been burnt so we will need more for the next season of seedlings. Please contact Laurie Thomson on 62887161 if you have any spares. The photographs below and on the following pages give some idea of the impact of the fires on the Xeriscape garden.



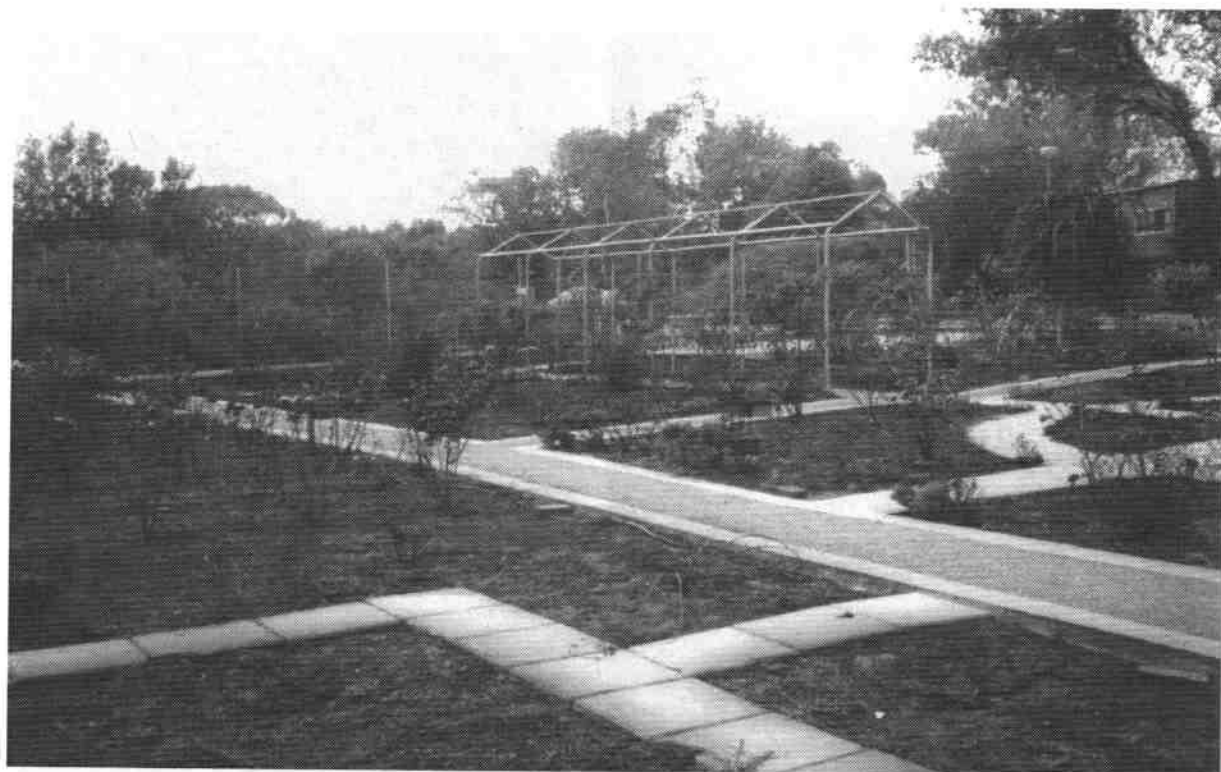
COGS plots in the Xeriscape Gardens—cooked tomatoes on the right



The remains of the COGS pumpkin patch



The burnt out COGS shed



The remains of the rose and cottage gardens



The remains of the Nature and Society Forum greenhouses



The remains of the Nature and Society Forum Building

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Canberra Organic Growers Society Inc will be held at 7:30 pm, Room 4 of the Griffin Centre on 25 March.

In accordance with Section 22 of the COGS Constitution the business of this meeting will be:

1. to confirm the minutes of the last preceding Annual General Meeting and of any general meeting held since that meeting;
2. to receive from the committee reports on the activities of COGS during the last preceding financial year;
3. to elect members of the committee, including office-bearers; and to receive and consider the audited statement of accounts and the auditor's and committee reports that are required to be submitted to members pursuant to Subsection 73(1) of the Act.

Committee members will be elected according to Section 13 of the COGS Constitution which states:

Nominations of candidates for election as office-bearers of COGS, or newsletter editor, or librarian, or as ordinary Committee members shall be made in writing, signed by 2 members of COGS and accompanied by the written consent of the candidate (which may be endorsed on the nomination form).

If insufficient nominations are received to fill all vacancies on the committee, the candidates nominated shall be deemed to be elected and further nominations shall be received at the Annual General Meeting.

If insufficient further nominations are received, any vacant positions remaining on the committee shall be deemed to be vacancies.

If the number of nominations received is equal to the number of vacancies to be filled, the persons nominated shall be taken to be elected.

If the number of nominations received exceeds the number of vacancies to be filled, a ballot shall be held.

The ballot for the election of office-bearers, newsletter editor and librarian and ordinary committee members shall be conducted at the AGM in such a manner as the Committee may direct.

A person is not eligible to simultaneously hold more than one position on the committee, except: the position of Public Officer; and the position of Membership Secretary, which can be held by the Honorary Treasurer.

Please contact Keith Colls on 62517729 or Conrad Van Hest on 62882443 if you would like a nomination form.

Library News

In the past year, quite a lot of new books have been purchased for the library. These include books on organic gardening, garden planning, cooking and preserving your produce, raising chickens, and seed saving books which have been purchased for the use of the seed saving group.

Below is a listing of new books recently added to our Library collection.

The library collection is now recorded in the new database which is keeping track of loans, stocktaking and details of the books in the

collection. A new feature is that we now have subject categories for the books and you can look in the subject list to find books on topics that you are interested in. The subject list, title list and author list are all kept in a purple folder and the librarian will assist you if you would like to look for something.

Next year, Beby (Beatrix Bros) will be taking over from me as librarian, leaving me free to concentrate on the website.

Maren Child

Title: **Herbs and Spices**
 Author: Jan Kybal
 Publisher: Harveys Bookshop Ltd
 ISBN: 1-85422-864-1
 Subject: A guide to plants used in modern kitchens throughout the world. Each plant is illustrated (coloured) and a brief description is given as to growth, origin, modern usage and/or medicinal purposes.

Title: **Pruning & Training Fruit Trees**
 Author: Warren Somerville
 Publisher: Inkata Press
 ISBN: 0 7506 8931 5
 Subject: A reference for the practical farmer on both training methods and pruning procedures. It has both drawings and photographic illustrations (black & white).

Title: **Farming in a Flowerpot**
 New & Revised Edition: formerly *Cucumbers in a Flowerpot*
 Author: Alice Skelsey
 Publisher: Workman Publishing Company
 ISBN: 0-911104-56-9
 Subject: Ideas on what and how to grow fruit and vegetables in containers.

Title: **Herbs - An Illustrated Guide**
 Author: Editorial Director Bob Doyle
 Publisher: Sunset Books
 ISBN: 0-376-03324-X
 Subject: Plans for designing a herb garden; description and usage of herbs illustrated in colour including advice on how to grow them.

Title: **Bantams & Small Poultry**
 Author: Joseph Batty
 Publisher: Beech Publishing House
 ISBN: 1-85736-174-1
 Subject: A presentation of popular breeds, rare breeds, some that are extinct, and some that are in some countries, but not the UK. the breeds are arranged in alphabetical order, are described, and are illustrated, in black and white and in colour.

Title: **Domesticated Ducks & Geese**
 Author: Joseph Batty
 Publisher: Beech Publishing House
 ISBN: 1-85736-091-8
 Subject: A complete guide book to the many ducks and geese kept by poultry fanciers, smallholders and farmers. It covers breeds, accommodation, ponds, breeding, showing, ducklings for the table and many more aspects of this special division of poultry-keeping.

Title: **Asian Herbs & Vegetables**
 Author: Penny Woodward
 Publisher: Hyland House
 ISBN: 1 8644 7074 7
 Subject: A comprehensive guide to identify, grow and use Asian herbs & vegetables in Australia. Given are the latin name, common names (English & Asian), illustrations and information on how to grow and use them.

A FIRST YEAR WITH COGS

I joined COGS, and the Cook Community Garden, in mid March 2002, having heard of the community gardens through a work colleague. I couldn't believe the quantity and quality of tomatoes, eggplant and basil in particular that were the remainder of produce from a community garden that had been first dug in the previous September. Released from office work into retirement I was keen to harness the sun that my overgrown home garden lacked. Keith did warn me about the cold and the wind and the frost but pegged out an 80 square metre plot for me.

Just before Easter I planted two packets of the COGS green manure mix in half the block and shaped the first pathetic looking raised bed in the

other half. I was determined not to import any soil but to build up what was there with organic matter. In my garden at home I had experienced the worth of lucerne hay in reclaiming badly neglected soil overrun with native tree roots so that was the first material I introduced, luckily at a modest pre-drought price. This was supplemented with blood and bone and sheep manure, and lime for the onions and legume beds. During April and May I started three compost heaps on the block from home garden refuse. I invested in a shredding mulcher through the ad hoc ads and found that shredded garden waste composted relatively quickly and was more attractive to worms



I was impatient to plant something other than the green manure, though I was grateful that the green manure meant I could put off digging beds straight away on half the block.

Generally when planting seedlings I watered with liquid seaweed. I was attracted to the Jackie French approach of planting something every week, especially when harvesting.

I didn't quite manage that but the program turned out like this:

April – I planted COGS Creamgold and White Spanish onion seeds and snow peas (Delta Louise), garlic and garlic chive cloves, Florence fennel, broad beans (long pod), Red Cos and Everlasting lettuce, and leeks (Musselburgh). The lettuce was remarkable – almost 100 per cent successful germination and transplanting of the thinnings, providing a good feed winter to spring (and plenty of encouragement). The fennel made great progress but eventually fell prey to the birds that were looking for anything

moist. The birds had also been pulling out chives and onion sets. The onions produced eventually were small to medium but satisfactory in soil with lime the only additive. The snow peas suffered terribly in the frost but recovered and started to produce quite well right at the end of October. The broad beans survived well and produced a big crop in October/ November. Nothing much happened with the leeks though, ever hopeful, I have not pulled them out as at January 2003.

Early May - I planted white and Creamgold onions sets, beetroot, cauliflower, broccoli, chives and red lettuce - all seedlings from Hall markets. I discovered nasturtium seed didn't like the cold! The beetroot, cauliflower and broccoli appeared to do nothing other than survive for a long while, but in time their growth accelerated to produce modest crops - don't give up on nature!

Mid May - I started two lucerne hay bale "hotbeds" - cutting out the tops and adding compost and soil in which I planted Mesclun and Provencale mixed lettuce seed. This was a waste - the seeds were decimated by heavy rain (hard to believe now!) followed by wind and cold. Only three or four rocket plants emerged, but then the lucerne bales were useful for mulching. I didn't have any luck either with Five Colour silver beet seeds - only two or three plants emerged and struggled.

End May - I planted rocket seed, three advanced broccoli seedlings and a calendula. These seedlings were Betty's from a COGS meeting - I was surprised it was okay to still plant broccoli. The broccoli flourished and provided good eating September/ November. The calendula is still going strong in January 2003.

Early June - I planted silver beet, Cos lettuce, yarrow and ranuncula seedlings - with mixed success.

End June - At the working bee at Cook garden I bought and planted bargain priced COGS punnets of spinach and onions and these have all been successful. The spinach was particularly delicious in a salad of tomatoes, onions and pecans with honey, lemon and spiced dressing.

Mid July - I turned in the green manure as it started to seed/ flower, added chopped lucerne and sheep manure and covered the green manure beds with black plastic: this based on my observation that the worms were working hard under black plastic covering the amalgamated compost heaps.

End July - I planted certified seed potatoes Desiree, Nicola and Ruby Lou, pyrethrum daisy and Achillea "the beacon".

Mid August - I sowed snow peas and Greenfeast peas and certified seed potatoes Toulangi, King Edward and Otway Reds.

End August - I removed the black plastic from the green manure and dug beds; planted seedlings of January King cabbage, Everlasting lettuce, pak choy, celery and replacement florence fennel. These were planted under netting held up by plastic tube hoops, for protection against birds and cabbage moth. The cabbages are doing well and those harvested have been free from pests, unlike those left in the open garden at home. The pak choy and florence fennel bolted to seed, as did the celery though some sticks were successfully harvested.

Early September - I transplanted more Everlasting lettuce into the net covered bed and sowed carrots in the open. I'm still unlucky with carrots though some came up when I used Laurie's method of keeping the moist hessian bag on top for the first week.

September - abundant harvest of broccoli, lettuce and rocket. A single head of cauliflower harvested but that was great!

Early October - I was given some Joi Choi Hybrid pak choy seed bred not to bolt and planted it both under netting and in the open with a small wind break. Because the plants under the net were doing so well I covered another brassica bed with net and the pak choy, cabbages, silver beet and rocket have been flourishing. The net appears to help retain moisture, to keep off birds and moths but to encourage plenty of ladybirds. Good harvest of spinach, lettuce, broccoli, rocket and chives.

Late October - good harvest of broad beans, rocket, broccoli, snow peas, lettuce, garlic, chives and the beetroot that had hung on all through winter then flourished!

November – I sowed Lollo lettuce (with minimal watering it proved too hot and dry for this), pak choy and COGS climbing beans. Good harvest of broad beans, spinach, lettuce, snow peas and the last of the broccoli.

Mid November – I transplanted home raised eggplant (long purple), and tomatoes (Tommy Toe, Jaune Flamme, Amish paste, Vivian, Maltese Roma). Sowed Golden Bantam corn, Black Jack zucchini, cucumber (Lebanese, Spacemaster and pickling), pumpkin (Qld Blue and Golden Nugget) and beans (Purple Tongue), and marigolds. Harvested broad beans, silver beet, spinach, rocket, onions and cauliflowers.

End November – Transplanted banana chillies, capsicum, basil, cosmos. Harvested first pak choy, bumper lettuces. Sowed more pak choy.

Early December – Sowed more corn, heirloom beetroot (perished in the hot dry conditions) and rock melon (a gamble because others in the garden were trying it after a success story last season at Cook – mine is struggling but I am not pulling it out yet!).

January – I planted more beans and zucchini. I manured the old onion beds and sowed lucerne – you never know I might be lucky! I also have the Clever Clover pack to try later. Harvesting pak choy, basil, the last of the peas, the first of the beans, zucchini, a few pickling cucumbers, the first of the cabbage and the very first of the tomatoes.



I've yet to test how good the potatoes are but I've harvested some at home. I'm optimistic about the tomatoes, capsicum and eggplant which as at mid January are thriving and flowering well despite the lack of rain and trying to keep watering to a minimum but I may have been a bit optimistic buying a dehydrator for the expected bumper crop!

Thanks COGS for a great year! I've really enjoyed the gardening and the monthly COGS meetings, admired and learned from the knowledge and skill of other COGS gardeners, and benefited greatly from the COGS seed collection, its wonderful library and website and its plant, produce and book sales.

Janet Popovic

AROUND THE HOUSE AND THE GARDEN

Talking about lawns with God

Imagine the conversation the Creator might have had with St. Francis on the subject of lawns.

God: Frank, you know all about gardens and nature, what in the world is going on down there? What happened to the dandelions, violets, thistle and stuff I started eons ago? I had a perfect no maintenance garden plan. Those plants grow in any type of soil, withstand drought and multiply with abandon. The nectar from the long lasting blossoms attracts butterflies, honeybees and flocks of songbirds. I expected to see a vast garden of colours by now. But all I see are these green rectangles.

St. Francis: It's the tribes that settled there, Lord. The Suburbanites. They started calling your flowers "weeds" and went to great lengths to kill them and replace them with grass.

God: Grass? But it's so boring. It's not colourful. It doesn't attract butterflies, birds and bees, only grubs and sod worms. It's temperamental with temperature. Do these Suburbanites really want all that grass growing there?

St. Francis: Apparently so. They go to great pains to grow it and keep it green. They begin each spring by fertilising the grass and poisoning any other plant that crops up in the lawn.

God: The spring rains and warm weather probably makes grass grow really fast. That must make the Suburbanites happy.

St. Francis: Apparently not. As soon as it grows a little, they cut it – sometimes twice a week.

God: They cut it? Do they then bale it like hay?

St. Francis: Not exactly. Most of them rake it up and put it into bags.

God: They bag it? Why? Is it a cash crop? Do they sell it?

St. Francis: Just the opposite, they pay to throw it away.

God: Now let me get this straight. They

fertilise grass so it will grow. And when it does grow, they cut it off and pay to throw it away?

St. Francis: Yes, Sir.

God: These Suburbanites must be relieved in the summer when we turn up the heat. That surely slows the growth and saves a lot of work.

St. Francis: You will not believe this but when the grass stops growing so fast, they drag out hoses and pay more money to water it so they can continue to mow it and pay to get rid of it.

God: What nonsense. At least they kept some of the trees. That was a sheer stroke of genius, if I do say myself. The trees grow leaves in the spring to provide beauty and shade in summer. In autumn the leaves fall to the ground and form a natural blanket to keep moisture in the soil and protect the trees and bushes. Plus as they rot, the leaves form compost to enhance the soil. It's a natural circle of life.

St. Francis: You had better sit down. The Suburbanites have drawn a new circle. As soon as the leaves fall, they rake them into great piles and pay to have them hauled away.

God: No! What do they do to protect the shrub and tree roots in winter and to keep the soil moist and loose?

St. Francis: After throwing away the leaves they go out and buy something which they call mulch. Then they haul it home and spread it around.

God: Where do they get this mulch?

St. Francis: They cut down trees and grind them up to make mulch.

God: Enough! I don't want to think about this any more. Saint. Catherine, you're in charge of the arts. What movie have you for us tonight?

St. Catherine: *Dumb and Dumber*, Lord. It's a stupid movie about.....

God: Never mind, I think I just heard the whole story from St. Francis.

From Suncoast Organic Growers newsletter
November 2002

Compiled by Conrad van Hest

COGS Courses

Organic Gardening for Beginners

COGS in partnership with CIT Solutions will be conducting the next beginners organic gardening course starting on Sunday, 2nd March. The course will be conducted for COGS by Keith Colls and Laurie Thomson. It will run over four consecutive Sunday afternoons starting at 1 pm and all sessions will be held at the Xeriscape 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, 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 ACT1188), phone 6207 4441, or contact Keith Colls on 6251 7729 for further information.

The course fee is \$90.

Is Organic Farming for you?

A weekend workshop (10 and 11 May), which explores the principles of alternative farming systems, the differences between conventional and organic farming and the role of certification in marketing and meeting customer requirements. A copy of the book *The Organic Alternative* is included in the course fees. For further information phone CIT on 62074953.

Understanding your Soils

Three evening sessions (13, 20 and 27 May) and one field day (31 May) covering the soil web, soil tests and understanding the results and the main soil types in this region. Course fees are \$320 (or \$80 if you are eligible for a FarmBis rebate). For further information phone CIT on 62074953.

Seed Saving Course

COGS in conjunction with Michel and Jude Fanton of the Seed Savers' Network are planning a seed saving workshops in Canberra during May.

There will be either one two day workshop or two one day workshops. The cost of the workshop has not yet been determined but to be viable about 30 participants are required.

If you may be interested in attending such a workshop please contact Laurie Thomson on 62887161 or Keith Colls 62517729 as soon as possible so that we can determine the viability of holding such a workshop.

Lanyon Homestead Garden Festival

This year on the weekend of April 5th and 6th Lanyon Homestead is holding its inaugural Garden Festival.

With its superb location overlooking the Murrumbidgee River and its orchard, picking gardens and pleasure gardens, Lanyon is the perfect place in which to celebrate Canberra's rich horticultural heritage.

The festival has been timed to coincide with the Monaro's autumn fruitfulness – Canberra's most beautiful season, and a time when Lanyon's

magnificent gardens are looking their best. The program will include specialist speakers on historic gardens and their conservation, celebrity gardeners, a garden clinic, specialist garden and plant societies, and an exhibition area where people can purchase and/or seek advice on gardens and garden related products.

AUTUMN SHOW – The Horticultural Society of Canberra Inc

Many of you may not be aware that two gardeners from the COGS Kambah garden (Bronwyn Beechey and Heather Pearce) had considerable success in the vegetable section of last year's Autumn Show of the Horticultural Society of Canberra. This provided an excellent demonstration to the wider Canberra gardening community of the quality of produce that can be achieved using organic gardening techniques.

Bronwyn Beechey won:

The **Simmie Bowl** as the most successful exhibitor in the vegetable section.

First prize - Class 216 - collection of three types of vegetables

First Prize - Class 227 - three parsnips

First Prize - Class 228 - three carrots

First Prize - Class 246 - collection of twelve herbs

Second prize - Class 238 - six stalks of rhubarb

Second prize - Class 245 - collection of six culinary herbs

Heather Pearce won:

Champion Vegetable Exhibit - Class 215 (leeks)

First Prize - Class 215 Vegetables - Collection of vegetables, 6 kinds

First Prize - Class 226 Vegetables - Twelve cherry tomatoes, under 40mm

First prize - Class 238 Vegetables - Six stalks of rhubarb

First prize - Class 217 Vegetables - One butternut pumpkin

Second Prize - Class 217 Vegetables - One butternut pumpkin

Congratulations Bronwyn and Heather. This year the Autumn Show will be staged at the Lancaster Hall, Wesley Centre, National Circuit, Forrest on 8 and 9 March. This is an excellent opportunity to again demonstrate to the wider Canberra community that organic gardening techniques can produce the highest quality produce, so please consider entering some of your produce. A list of the vegetable and fruit categories for the Show are described below. There are also many flower categories which you may wish to consider entering. For further information on the Show, including the rules of entry, please contact The Honorary Show Secretary, Mrs Linn Doyle, phone 6231 7755.

Autumn Show Categories for Vegetables

The **Simmie Bowl** plus \$5 will be awarded annually to the most successful exhibitor in vegetables at the Autumn flower Show. Winner will hold the Trophy for one year.

Notes: All melons are to be shown in the vegetable section. A standard unit for any particular vegetable is as shown in Classes 217 to 243, eg, three brown onions, twelve beans, one long cucumber, one egg plant.

215 Collection of vegetables, six kinds, standard units (see note above)

1st: \$5. 2nd: \$3. 3rd: \$1.

216 Collection of vegetables, three kinds, standard units (see note above)

1st: \$5. 2nd: \$3. 3rd: \$1.

217 One Butternut pumpkin

218 One Bush pumpkin eg: Golden Nugget

219 One pumpkin, any other variety

220 One vegetable marrow.

221 Three zucchinis under 200mm

222 Three button squash not more than 75mm in diameter

223 One squash, any other variety

224 Three potatoes

225 Three tomatoes (without stalks)

226 Twelve cherry tomatoes (eg Tiny Tim, cocktail), under 40mm

227 Three parsnips

228 Three carrots

229 Six stalks of silver beet

230 Three beetroot

232 Three brown or straw coloured onions, any variety

233 Three onions, any other colour

235 Twelve beans

236 Three capsicums, bell-shaped

237 Three capsicums, long type

238 Six stalks of rhubarb

239 Three apple cucumbers

240 One long cucumber 250mm and over

241 One long cucumber under 250mm

242 Three cobs of sweet corn

243 Three gourds

244 Any other vegetable (standard unit) Note: Lettuce may be staged in a container of water.

245 Collection of six culinary herbs, distinct, in one container (name to be attached to each herb). One cut of each.

246 Collection of twelve herbs, distinct, in two containers (name to be attached to each herb). One cut of each.

234 Six small onions family (eg cocktail, pickling types)

Champion vegetable exhibit

The Arthur Yates Perpetual Cup, for vegetables, plus ribbon, plus \$5

Reserve Champion vegetable exhibit

Ribbon plus \$2.

Autumn Show Categories for Fruit

Notes: All melons are to be shown in the Vegetable section.

Standard units:

Fruit - three of one cultivar:

Berries/nuts - twelve of one cultivar:

Grapes - one bunch.

Exhibitors must show apples and pears with stalks attached.

Nashi fruit are to be shown in Class 254

247 Three apples, Granny Smith

248 Three apples, Delicious

249 Apples, any other cultivar (cultivar to be named). Standard unit

250 Three apples, distinct cultivars (cultivars to be named)

251 Three pears (cultivar to be named)

252 Three citrus - one type

253 Twelve berry fruits - one type

254 Any other fruit

255 Collection of fruit, three distinct kinds (standard units)

Most successful exhibitor, Classes 247-255
The Lord Gowrie Cup plus \$5.

NOTE Vegetable classes 221, 222, 224-226, 230, 232-237 and 239, together with all fruit classes must be exhibited on disposable plates provided by the Society, and available at the hall.

FROM THE GARDEN TO THE POT

Cous cous with chicken

Cook cous cous as per packet instructions, add chopped capsicum and toasted almond flakes to the cooked cous cous and keep it warm.

Coat chicken pieces in an equal mix of ground coriander and cumin.

Heat oil in a pan and fry the chicken until brown, add 1 cup of chicken stock to the pan, bring to a boil and simmer until the chicken is cooked.

Remove chicken, add sea salt and pepper to the stock, simmer to reduce. Serve chicken on cous cous pour over stock and garnish with fresh coriander.

Lamburgers

Put 250gm organic lamb mince in a bowl, mix with 1 chopped onion, fresh organic thyme, 1 egg, ½ cup fresh breadcrumbs, salt and pepper to taste.

Shape into 4 - 6 burgers, heat oil in a pan and fry until meat is golden brown. Serve in a bun with tomato, lettuce and mayonnaise mixed with fresh mint.

Sausage rolls

Crack an egg into small bowl and beat with a fork or whisk. Slit sausage and gently remove the skin. Lay out a sheet of puff pastry, long edge closest to you. Put sausage along this edge leaving a gap of about 5mm from the edge.

Roll pastry over sausage meat, overlapping edges, brush long edge with egg to seal and cut to form a long sausage roll. Brush top with beaten egg, cut small slashes at desired lengths, bake at 200C for 15 minutes or golden brown.

Recipes from Organic Snack newsletter,
publication of The Organic Super Site
www.organicssupersite.com

Recipes and cooking tips by Amanda Ellis
www.down-to-earth.com.au

Conrad van Hest

GE drought aid causes alarm

The importation of 50,000 tonnes of genetically engineered corn from the United States last month (ED January) as drought aid for struggling Australian farmers has caused alarm among opponents of GE food.

The grain is to be used for chicken feed in meat-producing poultry. Part of the shipment was offloaded in Brisbane in early January where GE opponents protested at its arrival and called for grain to be returned to the US.

The GeneEthics Network said Japan and Europe reject US corn because of concerns about environmental, human and animal health. Even countries in need of food aid, such as India and Zambia, had rejected US GE corn, GeneEthics Network director Bob Phelps said.

The shipment comes amid growing concern in Australia about the implications of what is expected to be the first commercial release of genetically modified canola -- including how to resolve the issues of segregating GE and GE-free grain -- and growing doubts about the claimed benefits of genetic modification.

A study by the British Soil Association, cited in the Australian Parliament late last year, found that genetically engineered crops cost US and Canadian farmers more than \$12 billion in the past three years. The costs included lost markets, reduced productivity because of increased costs to segregate crops, and increased royalty payments to multinational seed companies.

Segregation is shaping up as a major issue for Australia. Some farmers and farming groups are profoundly concerned about the implications of the first commercial release of canola in Australia, which is probably only a few months away.

The Commonwealth Government has rejected calls for a moratorium pending a resolution of the segregation issue. The government has established a working group to look at segregation and a long-running audit of the issue is still underway.

A significant shortcoming with the federal legislation governing the assessment of

applications for genetically engineered products, which is handled by the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator (OGTR), is that it excludes economic costs and benefits, such as the potential loss of markets for Australian farmers growing GE-free product.

The segregation issue is far from settled and has prompted renewed calls from some farmers for a moratorium on commercial release. Yet Monsanto and Bayer may be granted permission some time this year for a commercial release of canola.

Monsanto and Bayer applied to the OGTR last year to release GE canola. Monsanto (application DIR 020/2002) wants to release an herbicide tolerant canola in all current and future canola-growing regions, in all states and the ACT. Bayer (previously Aventis, application DIR 021/2002) wants to release an herbicide tolerant canola that also contains a novel hybrid breeding system, in all current and future canola-growing regions, in all states and the ACT.

Progress on the assessments has been delayed because the companies are still developing vital documents dealing with technology stewardship and crop management. These documents are used to assess the human health and safety, and environmental risks of a commercial release.

Another body, the Gene Technology Grains Committee, representing a number of stakeholder groups, is also developing guidelines for managing the supply chain of GE canola.

The OGTR closed off public comment on the Monsanto and Bayer releases in October in anticipation of receiving these documents but a further opportunity to comment will be available when the risk assessment and risk management plans have been completed.

Information about proposed trials and commercial releases can be found at the OGTR website: www.ogtr.gov.au

Katrina Willis

New Report Shatters GE Myths

A comprehensive report launched in September reveals that most genetically engineered (GE) crops in North America have not delivered the benefits that were promised to farmers. The study carried out by the UK Soil Association, shatters industry myths that GE crops produce higher yields, reduce herbicide use and benefit the economy. Included in the report is the revelation that between 1999 and 2001, GE crops actually cost the US economy up to US\$12 billion dollars.

The report has disturbing implications for Australia, because regulators, farmers and politicians have three months from December 2002 to decide whether they will allow the commercial introduction of GE canola. While canola is the first GE food crop proposed to be grown commercially in Australia, North American farmers have been growing GE crops for some six years. The Soil Association report is the first comprehensive study to assess the economic and social impact of GE crops in North America.

Molong (NSW) canola grower, Arthur Bowman, said that Australian farmers would do well to heed the report's findings. "Despite promises of increased yields, many North American farmers are reporting the opposite," he said. "In many cases, farmers are also having to use more herbicides. They have lost access to markets and have lower profitability. We need to learn from the mistakes of North America, not copy them."

The report, which profiles individual farmers, also details social impacts experienced by those growing GE. "GE contamination in North America has led to a host of legal issues over patents and lost markets -with farmers suing and being sued," says Scott Kinnear, spokesperson for the Biological Farmers of Australia. "We don't want this kind of conflict in rural communities in Australia."

Arthur Bowman said the report shows in no uncertain terms that GE crops have become a burden, not a blessing, for North American farmers. "The proposed introduction of GE wheat is being met with stiff resistance from the Canadian Wheat Board, US and Canadian Farmers unions and over 200 other groups, who are calling for a ban or moratorium on its introduction," Bowman said. "This brings the future of GE crops into question."

Scott Kinnear concluded the report reiterates the risks posed to Australian farmers by GE crops. "Australia currently has a clean and green image. Our non-GE status gives us better market access and a point of difference in international markets," he said. "Why would we jeopardise this,

when the claimed benefits of GE crops in North America do not seem to have been realised?"

From : EARTH GARDEN p.7,
December 2002 - February 2003

Tomato Bug:

Charles Arntzen, an Arizona State University biologist, has created tomatoes which carry a gene from a strain of the E. coli bacterium that causes diarrhoea. If the genes cause the tomatoes to produce a protein normally made by E. coli, drinking their juice should act like a vaccine against the bug.

Arntzen chose tomatoes because greenhouse grown plants can't easily pass altered genes to other crops and because tomato processing equipment is relatively cheap.

He hopes to test his tomato juice on animals within the year, with human trials to follow.
<http://lsvl.la.asu.edu/plantbiology/faculty/arntzen.htm>

From: The Canberra Times 21/11/02

Delay on applications

The Commonwealth Gene Technology Regulator, Sue Meek, announced recently that she had decided to 'stop the clock' on two applications for the commercial release of genetically modified (GM) canola until more information becomes available.

Public consultation on the risk assessment and risk management plans for these applications was originally scheduled for mid November.

The 'clock stop' means that this consultation will now be delayed until early 2003 and the final decisions on whether or not to issue licences (currently due in February / March 2003) will therefore also be delayed.

The two applications from Monsanto and Bayer contain references to a number of documents relating to technology stewardship and crop management.

These documents are under development, in parallel with Guidelines for Supply Chain Management of GM Canola being prepared by the Gene Technology Grains Committee.

The committee comprises representation from across the grains industry, including producers, research institutions, technology providers, bulk handlers, food processors and farmers associations.

"I have recently been advised that these documents will not now be finalised until early next year (2003)" Dr Meek said.

From Rural News 15/11/02

Submitted by Bridget Farrer

Two COGS Members - a Potted History

After each COGS monthly meeting at Room 4 of the Griffin Centre, at the kitchen servery appear two ladies who, for a small fee, will serve you a refreshing hot cup of herbal tea with cake, to enjoy as we mill around talking, or perusing the interesting gardening and environmental books, the seed bank and various plants for sale. The ladies who provide this faithful service are Marie Bahr and Mary Flowers. They are both long-time members of the Cotter Community Garden which is situated along the Yarralumla Woolshed road, a dirt road off the Cotter Road near Curtin.

Marie grew up at Henty in NSW, just south of Wagga Wagga, on the family sheep, wheat and oat farm. As well as running the farm, her dad maintained a good organic garden but Marie doesn't remember being inspired to join in much as a child, as gardening meant weeding, weeding and more weeding. How things have changed! She arrived in Canberra in 1969 but it was not until 1989 that she joined some friends who were gardening at that time at the Cotter Community Garden, which members had just moved from its initial site adjoining the Cotter Road to one further down the dirt road, closer to the Yarralumla Woolshed. This was an ideal leisure hobby for her as she lives in a high-rise unit with no garden, and since her retirement from community nursing a few years ago, she has more time to devote to producing vegetables and flowers.

The enthusiasm and friendliness of the Cotter Gardeners instilled in Marie a passion for gardening which sees her spending at least 8 hours per week in the garden (3 hours general garden tending on two days per week, plus 2-4 hours per week just watering). In the Cotter Garden glasshouse she sows capsicums, basil, parsley, pie melon, cucumbers and butternut pumpkins. In spring, to hasten the warming of the soil, she lays plastic sheeting on the ground and places the baby capsicums in holes in the plastic and "cloches" each plant with a cut-off plastic bottle. Beetroot, peas and beans are sown directly into her compost-enriched garden soil. She covers with hessian those seeds which require constant moisture to germinate - carrot, parsnip, radish, and daikon radish - and removes the hessian once germination has occurred. She buys purple onion plants, leeks and tomatoes. She has just prepared a garden ready to take broccoli plants. In spring, daffodils bloom in amongst the veggies, and later dahlias, and later still, chrysanthemums.

Marie's favourite gardening books are:

The Organic Gardener by Bob Flowerdew;
The Organic Gardener's Companion
compiled by Anne Heazlewood for the
Organic Gardening and Farming Society of
Tasmania (published 1982).

Her recipe for her **Carrot and Ginger Loaf** (which we enjoy at monthly meetings) is as follows:

Ingredients:

125g butter (softened),
3/4 cup (150g) firmly packed brown sugar,
1/4 cup (60g) golden syrup,
2 eggs,
1 1/2 cups (225g) self-raising flour,
1/2 teaspoon bicarbonate of soda,
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon,
3 teaspoons ground ginger,
1/2 cup (125mls) buttermilk,
2 tablespoons (50g) glace ginger (finely
chopped),
1 cup (120g) coarsely grated raw carrot.

Method:

Preheat oven to moderate (180-350F).
Grease 14x21cm loaf pan, line base with
baking paper. Heat butter and sugar in
medium bowl with electric mixer till light
and fluffy. Add syrup, beat until combined.
Add eggs one at a time, beating until
combined between additions. Fold in
combined sifted flour, soda and spices, then
buttermilk, ginger and carrot. Spread cake
mixture into pan. Bake in oven for about 50
minutes, then let stand for 5 minutes, then
turn onto wire rack to cool.

Tips:

**A simple way to measure the required
amount of golden syrup is to coat the
measuring cup with cooking oil.

**Buttermilk is a low fat milk that has been
cultured to give a tangy taste. You can
substitute low-fat yoghurt or make your own
by combining 1 cup low fat milk with 2
teaspoons lemon juice.

Mary also grew up on a farm. It was a mixed
farm on deep volcanic soil on the north coast of
Tasmania, between Devonport and Ulverstone.
She remembers the magnificent view on a clear
day east to West Head on the Tamar River near
Georgetown (approximately 50km as the crow
flies) and west to The Nut at Stanley
(approximately 90km crow flight). Her parents
and both sets of grandparents (who lived nearby)
had flourishing gardens and orchards. Mary also

had her own garden before she was 10, growing mostly flowers from seed. The family was almost self-sufficient in food and they never bought vegetables - she remembers the manure piled outside the stable, later to be put in the garden, and the oats grown as green manure for the potatoes and turnips to follow. She also recalls that her dad always had a salad for tea, and lettuce was part of the chooks' diet. The big orchard (approximately half an acre) had many apple varieties - Gravenstein, Lady in the Snow, Pippin, Alexander, Worster Pearmain and Sturmer - and these would feed the family until December (some were a bit wrinkly by then of course). There were also apricots, greengages and red prune plums. The veggie garden also produced lots of gooseberries (no mildew in those days), raspberries and loganberries.

Mary later went nursing at Launceston, then on as a midwife to Melbourne where she met her husband John who was attending university there. They moved to Canberra in 1950 to a government house in Yarralumla where they raised 3 boys. During her time working at home, Mary went to Tech (now called CIT) in Kingston to gardening classes conducted by Mr Featherstone who was a keen advocate of green manures. At home she grew oats as a green manure and let the chooks forage amongst them before digging them into the soil in the 2nd week in September and sowing / planting her spring vegies 3 weeks after.

In about 1986 she and John (who kept bees) went to their first meeting at the Griffin Centre to hear a lady talk about bees - they became members of the Cotter garden, adjoining the Cotter Road, and John was convenor of the garden when it was moved to its present site. As Mary said "they almost lived there" during the re-establishment days in mid 1989 - the member working bees cleared and rotary hoed the new site, applied gypsum to break up the clay and moved trailer loads of enriched soil from the original site, with the Department (Parks & Gardens?) also moving several truck loads. Members also moved the established herb plants and the 26 foot long irrigation pipes down the road to the new site.

At her Cotter garden plot, Mary grows a large range of vegetables: to name a few salad items - Salad Bowl (frilly) lettuces originally from seed from her dad in the 1950's, black velvet lettuce from seed obtained from a Hobart friend 10 years ago, Oak Leaf and Mignonette lettuces, and flat

leaved endive, and corn salad. Both she and Marie grow potato onions (a small onion which keeps well and which Marie also pickles and bottles).

Some of Mary's favourite gardening books are:

Peter Bennett's book on organic gardening;

Organic Gardening by Roy Lacey (who formerly had a garden show on northern Tasmanian TV). This is a UK book, published 1988, approved by the UK Soil Association;

The Natural Magic of Mulch - Organic Gardening Australian Style by Michael J Roads (published 1989).

The recipe for the delicious and therapeutic "Green Drink" which has been mentioned to me by several long-time Cotter Gardeners, was previously published in the Canberra Organic Spring 2001 (Vol 9 No 3) magazine article 'Herbs for Healthy Living' by Shirley Carden, and is from a book titled *Nature's Healing Grasses* by H E Kirscher, MD (first published 1960).

Mary's recipe for compost activator is:

Dry and crush to powder the following herbs - Yarrow, Nettle, Valerian, Camomile, Dandelion, Oak Bark.

Place 1 teaspoon of each in a container, add one teaspoon of sugar of milk and honey (made from a mixture of 2 tablespoons of sugar of milk & 15 drops of honey stored in a separate jar and mixed well).

Take enough to cover a one cent piece (in other words, a minute amount) and mix into 600 mls of rain water in a bottle and let stand overnight. Shake well before sprinkling over a 1 cubic metre compost heap as you build it.

If the heap is already completed, take a crowbar and drive 5 evenly spaced holes into the heap. Pour the liquid down the holes and then fill the holes with loam, cover the heap and leave. This recipe is from M E Bruce's *Commonsense Compost Making*.

Fortunately, for these two gardeners and other members, the Cotter Garden was not affected by the recent fires, but did fall victim to those of December 2001, when nearby trees had to be felled due to fire damage, and the shed and garden plots were burned.

Heather Gill

COGS HERALD

January 18th 2003: Sympathy goes out to COGS members, their friends and family who have suffered from the devastating bushfires.

Australia's Open Garden Scheme: The Summer – Autumn 2003 program has been released between now and May there are more than 60 gardens opening throughout the ACT and NSW. Weekly updates on all gardens open are available by phoning 1902 261 026 (charges apply), or contact the ACT/Southern NSW co-ordinator Genevieve Jacobs on 6943 2666 or by email at act@opengarden.org.au. Further information is also available from the AOGS website on www.opengarden.org.au

Lanyon Homestead Garden Festival April 5th and 6th: The program will include a specialist speaker on historic gardens and their conservation, celebrity gardeners and a garden clinic. Specialist garden and plant societies will have an exhibition area where people can purchase and/or seek advice on gardens and garden related products.

Green Living Fair: The fair will be on Sunday March 23rd from 10am to 4pm at ROCKS (between Kingsley and Childers Streets, Civic). The focus will be on organisations, products and services relevant to urban ecology. Also there will be active demonstrations, entertainment and PhotoAccess photographic exhibition.

Compiled by Conrad van Hest

Worm Products in the Garden

Liquid WormCasting makes a very good fertilizer, set up a worm farm and collect the liquid into an old ice cream container. Liquid needs to be diluted 20 ml to 1 litre of water, or just cover the bottom of your watering can and can be used as a foliage spray.

Setting-up a worm farm is a worthwhile project as you get rid of your kitchen and garden vegetable scraps, you have the worm casting for seedling mix, you can make worm casting tea, and at the same time you can collect worm casting liquid.

WormCasting also makes a good brew which is made the same way as compost tea.

Liquid Worm Casting and Worm Castings contain nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P) and potassium (K) as well as trace elements. **The liquid** is also ideal to use in hydroponics, tomatoes and cucumber thrive on it.

A good brew for young plants is also 25% brew and 75% water - a weak tea colour. For older plants it is 50/50. This is a strong brew so be careful not to burn the plants.

Before applying liquid fertilizer give your plants a good watering. This will help the plants to absorb the nutrients from the liquid fertilizer and prevent the risk of burning the plants roots and leaves.

Most plants like liquid fertilizer, especially tomatoes, lettuce, the brassicas family, (cabbage etc.) cucurbits (cucumber, pumpkin.)

Plants that like a little liquid fertilizer when they are beginning to produce their crops are peas, beans, and onions when they are starting to bulb, (not before or they will not store well).

Plants that dislike liquid fertilizer, or any other kind of fertilizer are root crops (carrots, potatoes, turnips etc.) if they are fertilised they will be all tops and no bottoms or fork out with very hairy legs.

A good basic rule to remember is that crops above the ground (leaf and fruit crops) like liquid fertilizer, compost and manures, plants that grow below the ground (root crops) dislike much liquid fertilizer, compost and manures.

THANK YOU

COGS wishes to thank Corporate Express for their generous donation of paper and printer cartridges to enable us to reprint all the COGS brochures and handouts destroyed in the bushfires

The Tomato Blether

Tomato growing is an occupation fraught with conversational danger. Just inadvertently mention your under-sized spindly tomato plants to a tomato enthusiast (and there's thousands of tomato enthusiasts out there) and you could be stuck for hours listening politely to every conceivable way of nurturing these smelly plants.

And such strange names too: Big Boy, Supersonic, Tiny Tim, Outdoor Girl, Money Maker... the list goes on and on.

Apparently Bull's Dung is an excellent medium for growing tomatoes. Something to do with the testosterone content. It brings on the 'Toms' a treat. Good grief, what a thought, but undoubtedly an excellent conversation stopper should you ever need one. And then there's the tomato-ripening properties of the humble banana. Bananas give off a barely detectable gas, you see, very subtle and undetectable to the human nose, a gas that aids tomato ripening. Put the green ones in the kitchen drawer, on newspaper, and add a banana. That should do the trick. So there you are, another conversation stopper.

Now let me tell you this. I could win prizes for my tomatoes if I wanted to. How? Because I know how to grow the best tomatoes in the country, juicy, red and tasty, and probably the best in the world. But I don't grow the best in the country. Why not? Well read on, for here comes the ultimate 'conversation stopper' as far as tomatoes go.

Many years ago my Grand-Parents employed the services of a part-time gardener to help out in the garden. A man called Tom. He was very good at his job and particularly renowned

throughout the district for his tomatoes. A tomato grower par excellence. Champion tomatoes they were. Tomatoes with exceedingly good flavour. But strangely enough the plants themselves were quite spindly, quite poor-looking, and not really the sort of specimens that you would expect to bear good fruit, though the end product was truly magnificent.

Whenever there was a family gathering Tom's tomatoes were always on the menu, and always discussed. "Tasty Tomatoes, these.... lovely flavour... prize winning fruits... splendid texture... wonderful colour..." and so on. And that's the reason why we called him 'Tom' when his real name was John.

Just recently, and from a very reliable source, I discovered that Tom had a secret ingredient for growing tomatoes and, to be perfectly frank, it put me off tomatoes for life. Urine. His special ingredient was urine.

The house had a septic tank, you see, emptied once a year, and Tom held on to the top layer to use as a liquid feed for his tomato plants. He may even have given them a personal sprinkling himself on the odd occasion too.

So I could grow the best tomatoes in the country if I wanted to. I really could. No doubt about that. And win prizes for them too. But I don't fancy the idea, not now. Do you?



From The Garden Blethers website
www.geocities.com/gardenblethers

(Copyright 2002 Patrick Vickery)

SEED BANK

The seed bank has the following seeds for sale:

Beetroot

Anneke

Broccoli

Bushido, Calabrese, Green Belt, Kai lan (chinese)

Brussel Sprouts

Long Island

Cabbage

Mammoth Red Rock, Sugar Ball, Sugar Loaf

Cauliflower

Mini White

Celery

Bulton-laden

Chard

Bolivia

Leek

Jumbo

Silver beet

Giant Hornbrook, Yarrolong King, Red Legs

At a later date Spinach, Winter Lettuce, Snow Peas and Onions will also be available.

This seed can be obtained from Laurie Thomson. Laurie can be contacted at home, any time, on phone 62887161 or by email at diamondjim@bigpond.com.

City Rooftops Go Green: Tokyo

City Rooftops Go Green, a 4 minute segment in Japan Video Topics 2002/6 available through the Japanese Embassy in Canberra, shows some of the techniques being used on a number of buildings and the enjoyment being experienced by individuals as rooftop gardening takes hold.

Since April 2001, by law the roofs of all new mid - and high - rise buildings in Tokyo must be over 20 per cent greenery. This is an attempt to tackle the phenomenon of "urban heat islands" generated from the build up of pollutants in densely populated areas. The initiative follows trial programs begun in Tokyo in 1993 by the Urban Development Corporation after the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

Exhibitions devoted to specialised plants and soil types cater to the new interest in rooftop gardening in Tokyo. To minimize weight the rooftop gardeners use coconut matting, perlite and sponge materials with soil.

They are experimenting with water storage and reticulation including solar powered systems and keeping records of what works best. Throughout Tokyo volunteers are helping to convert the roofs of local public buildings into gardens.

The initiative is designed to reduce city temperatures and the adverse effects of pollution but it is also bringing the pleasures of gardening to people who live and work in high density buildings.

Marinated Zucchini, Eggplant or Green Beans

2 kg zucchini (approx 7 x 20 - 25cm zucchini)
70g salt
3 cups water
3 cups white vinegar
½ teaspoon dried oregano or mint
1 small clove garlic
Olive oil

Cut zucchini into approx 5mm slices. Mix in salt, cover and stand overnight. Strain and squeeze out all liquid. Put in pan and cover with vinegar and water, adding more of each if necessary, and bring gently to the boil. Boil 3-4 minutes.

Strain and put on a towel on a tray in the sun for several hours until dry and leathery but not crisp.

Alternatively, use a dryer (e.g. Vacola - this quantity uses 6 trays) at 58°C for about 2 ¾ hours, checking after 2 hours.

Put into a bowl with the oregano or mint, garlic and some olive oil. Pack tightly into jars and cover with olive oil. (This quantity packed into 2 x 375g salsa jars.) Make sure the zucchini are always under the surface of the oil and they will keep in the pantry for up to a year.

Use in antipasto, salads, pasta sauces, on pizza, in sandwiches or as a vegetable.

For **eggplant** or **green beans**: Slice the eggplant thinly as for zucchini and halve or quarter the slices, cut beans into 4-5cm lengths.

Margaret Colls

MUIRHEVNAMOR COMMUNITY GARDEN, IRELAND

While driving south back to Dublin from Drogheda we made a wrong turning and had to backtrack to the main road. Using a driveway to reverse direction my wife said, "Stop!". "Why?" I asked, my head already turned to reverse. She pointed ahead and I saw the entrance, "Muirhevnamor Community Garden," in yellow letters on an arched entranceway and a fine green metal fence. This seemed fateful for it was the closest we had come to a community garden in our three week tour of Ireland. It was worth a quick look around. A man in his forties with salt and pepper hair came out with a puzzled expression on his face. I explained I had an allotment in an organic community garden in Canberra, Australia. "Would it be all right to look around?" He was just leaving, he said, but it

would be fine for a few minutes. As we walked in, I enquired about the garden and he explained it grew organic vegetables for home use and local sale. It was worked by people from the nearby government housing estate. He explained the garden was good in fostering community relations and helped to bond the religious divide in the community. It received a grant from the European Union, he went on, which was rather intriguing to us. We quickly walked around while our friend put away his tools. It looked a good seven acres which were in part given to allotments and to town park. The walkways were quite broad and of bitumen. The good size plots had only season pickings left. We saw no other gardeners.



What about this EU support I wondered as I drove away and resolved to look it up when I got home. I put Muirhevnamor into the search engine. Muirhevnamor Community Garden came up on the EU page as one of seven projects, involving, besides the organic garden, such areas as bicycle and hand tool recycling and a teleworking development centre all designed to assist alleviate unemployment through a partnership pact involving community bodies in Dundalk, Drogheda and Louth.

It said unemployment in the area was running at 1.5 times the national average. The little garden we had bumped into occupied land once an eyesore and site of much anti-social activity.

I never found out what the EU gave to the partnership but judging from the splendid gate and fence it must have been generous. It is a nice thought that organic gardens can help unemployed people and be assisted by such august organisations as the EU.

Peter Marstin

Plant Profile - Brussels Sprouts

Brassica Oleracea L. (Gemmifera group)

Features

The brussels sprout is a member of the cabbage family with similar requirements to those of cabbages. The small heads measure approximately five centimetres in diameter, resemble cabbages and sprout from a tall main stem among large green leaves. Brussels sprouts get their name from having been grown 400 years ago in the vicinity of Brussels, Belgium.

Conditions

Climate

A cool growing season is preferable. This hardy brassica tolerates frost but does not like either extended cold or hot periods. It is not suitable for growing in hot tropical climates. Areas with a daytime temperature range between 10°C & 25°C are ideal.

Aspect

Garden beds should have a sunny aspect and be adequately drained. Brussels sprouts will not grow in waterlogged soils. Most soil is suitable with the exception of sandy soils which produce only loose leafy vegetables with no heart.

Cultivation

The growing season is long, approximately 5-6 months. Protect plants from wind damage by hilling soil around plants during the growing period. Removal of the terminal bud when the plant has reached about 40 - 50cm encourages sprouts to mature all at the same time

Growing Method

Planting

Sow seeds in Spring or early Summer, well spaced, in punnets and transplant the seedlings when 10 centimetres tall during summer and early autumn. Young plants will do best in soils of pH range of 6.5 to 7.5.

Watering

Water frequently as plants need a great deal of water to encourage growth. Ease off watering a week or two before harvesting.

Fertilising

Brussels sprouts require a rich soil. Prepare beds some weeks ahead of transplanting by digging in ample manure or compost.



Problems

This vegetable is very prone to pests and diseases. The White Cabbage moth caterpillar causes problems early in the season and later aphids, slugs and snails may damage sprouts. Control these pests with organic sprays. Downy mildew and club root (intensified by acidic moist soil conditions) can also be a problem. Yellowish areas around leaves are indicative of magnesium deficiency. Water soil around the plant with a solution of 30 grams of magnesium sulphate (Epsom salts) in five litres of water. Remember, many of those conditions can be avoided if proper drainage is provided in the first place. Proper preparation will prevent later problems.

Harvesting

The harvesting period is early Winter through to Spring, providing the weather is not too hot in which case harvest time will be shorter. Mature sprouts are harvested frequently, and are picked before they burst, starting at the bottom of the stem where mature sprouts first develop.

Laurie Thomson



Autumn Vegetable Planting Guide

Brassicas

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

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

Lettuces

Only plant Winter varieties of lettuces (cos, salad bowl, oak leaf, butter head and mignonette varieties)

Autumn Vegetable Planting Guide

	Mar	Apr	May
Broad Beans		S	S
Broccoli	T		
Brussels Sprouts	T		
Cabbage	T		
Cauliflower	T		
Chicory	ST	T	
Chinese Cabbage	T		
Corn Salad	ST	T	
Endive	ST	T	
Garlic		S	S
Kale	T		
Kohlrabi	ST	T	
Leeks	T		
Lettuce	ST	ST	
Peas	S	S	S
Onions		S	S
Turnips	T		

S = Seed Sowing T = Transplanting

NB: This 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 time when you plant.

Leeks

Leek seedlings may be planted early March for small leeks in Winter, although plantings are more reliably made in Summer.

Onions

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

SPRING FLOWERS

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

GREEN MANURES

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

Benefits of green manure crops are:

- a) they provide valuable nutrients for successive crops
- b) they provide organic matter for soil micro-organisms to breakdown;
- c) they provide soil cover in winter; and,
- d) they help aerate the soil.

Crops suitable for planting in Canberra are:

Legumes:

Broad Beans, Field Peas, Lupins, Sub-Clover, Tic Peas, vetch.

Non-Legumes

Barley, Oats, Rye

NB. Legumes are very useful as they fix nitrogen in the soil.

Flowering crops need to be dug in before flowering, cereal crops before producing a head of grain.

CANBERRA ORGANIC GROWERS SOCIETY INC.
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COGS FLYER

Pilots: Vacant

MONTHLY MEETINGS

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

COGS REPRESENTATIVES

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	David Read

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COGS monthly meetings are held on the 4th Tuesday of each month (except December and January)



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 the adoption organic growing methods. COGS is an association without specific political or religious affiliation as a group. COGS has the following objectives – to:

- Foster the use of organic methods in home gardening, horticulture and agriculture

- Foster organic agricultural knowledge

- Promote the production and consumption of certified organically grown foods and the adoption of recognised organic standards

- Demonstrate and encourage the use of organic growing techniques

- Provide a forum for the discussion of matters of interest to organic growers in the ACT and surrounding region

- Facilitate the exchange of information and ideas between members and with other organic growers

- Assist members in establishing their own organic growing areas

- Administer community gardens operated under organic agricultural principles for recreational, educational or rehabilitation purposes and for the self-supply of contaminant free produce.

ADMINISTRATION

COGS is run by a voluntary committee which is elected annually at the AGM in March. The committee meets monthly and all members are encouraged to consider participating in the work of the committee.

MONTHLY MEETINGS

Meetings of members are held in Room 4 at the Griffin Centre, Civic, at 7.30 pm on the fourth Tuesday of the month (except in December and January). Each month there is a guest speaker. Recent meeting topics have included Backyard poultry keeping, Worms, Herbs and Seed Saving. At the meetings there is a produce and seed exchange table and a book-stall. COGS seeds and seedlings are also available for purchase. Members may also borrow two items from the COGS library. A light supper is available after the meeting.

Visitors are welcome.

QUARTERLY MAGAZINE

Canberra Organic, the quarterly publication of COGS, contains articles on organic growing, informs members of upcoming speakers and events, and includes planting and growing information specifically for the Canberra region. Members are encouraged to contribute articles.

COMMUNITY GARDENS

COGS currently operates 10 community gardens in the Canberra region. Gardens are located at Charnwood, Cook, Curtin (Cotter Garden), Erindale, Holder, Kambah, Mitchell (Northside Garden), Oaks Estate, Queanbeyan and Theodore. 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. Plot holders are required to pay an annual levy to cover the cost of water, insurance, tools and maintenance.

The ACT Government has supported the establishment of these gardens through the ACT Office of Sport and Recreation and the Department of Urban Services Community Renewal program.

INTERNET

COGS maintains a web site devoted to organic growing at www.cogs.asn.au. The site contains the COGS information papers on organic growing, seasonal planting guides, certification information, a page for children and links to related organisations and information sources.

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.

CONTACT

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Email: info@cogs.asn.au
Web: www.cogs.asn.au

See reverse side for Membership form and rates

SPEAKERS

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

February 25

Terry Wilson - Wilsons Organics, Farrer
"Retailing Organic Produce"

March 25

AGM & Harvest Night

April 22

Neil Davidson - *"Worms"*



Wanted

Our supply of pots and punnets was destroyed in the recent bushfires. The COGS seed bank needs small pots (suitable for seedlings) and punnets for growing seedlings for sale at COGS stalls.

If you have any old pots or punnets you can spare, please call Laurie Thomson on 62887161.

Dates to remember

Green Living Fair – Sunday March 23rd from 10am to 4pm at the ROCKS (between Kingsley and Childers Streets Civic).

Lanyon Homestead Garden Festival April 5th and 6th

Xeriscape

As the ActewAGL Xeriscape gardens are closed due to damage sustained by the recent bushfires, the Xeriscape garden talks are postponed until further notice

(further info www.actewagl.com.au environment page then to Xeriscape page)

Date TBA

Paving

with Kevin O'Rourke

Date TBA

Winter Vegetable Growing

with Canberra Organic Growers

COGS Website has moved

The COGS website is now active on our own domain name, generously hosted by COGS member Karl Schaffarczyk at Inspired.net.au

The URL is now

[Http://www.cogs.asn.au](http://www.cogs.asn.au)