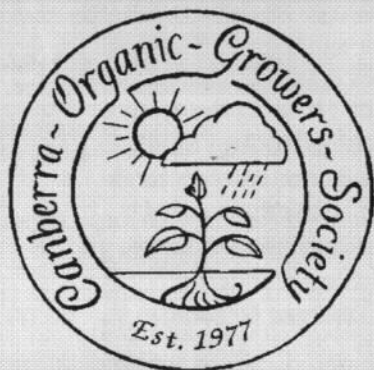


Summer



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# Canberra Organic

## ORGANIC GROWING IN THE CANBERRA REGION

Quarterly publication of the Canberra Organic Growers Society Inc.

In this issue—

- Cotter Garden
- Some of my  
Eggplants Were  
Yellow
- Seaweed in My  
Garden
- 15 Tomato Tips
- Dexter Cows
- Organic Beer



*Grow your own, organically!*

**VOL. 12 NO. 4**

**Summer 2004**

## CANBERRA ORGANIC

Quarterly magazine published by the  
Canberra Organic Growers Society Inc.  
PO Box 347, Dickson, ACT 2602  
Vol 12 No. 4 (Issue 48)

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### EDITOR:

Janet Popovic

### ADVERTISING:

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region who have an interest in organic food,  
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## From the Editor



Gardeners at the Cotter Garden have come out in  
force—not only to plant their summer crops, but to  
write for the magazine (pages 8-16)! Thank you to  
Cotter Garden convener Andy Hrast for the feature  
on Cotter and some great pictures; to Ann Smith  
for sharing with humour both her internet research  
skills and her findings on the beetle that caused  
havoc for her eggplants last season; and to Betty  
Cornhill who continues to make a wonderful  
contribution to COGS and *Canberra Organic*—  
this time with *Seaweed in My Garden* and  
*Meandering Back Though Time with COGS*.

Thanks to Richard Reed for sharing with us a  
method for trellising tomatoes (page 26). This is  
followed on page 27 by *Fifteen Tomato Tips*.  
Ben Bradey writes about another of his interests—  
last time water tanks, this time *Organic Beef—  
Dexter Style* (page 18). Our President Martin  
Butterfield shares his thoughts on matters as  
diverse as worms (page 17), organic beer (page  
24) and politicians (page 3). And at page 21 it's  
good to hear again from our young gardeners  
Dennise & Debra Bros at Dickson Garden—it  
looks like you are really enjoying the garden and  
its produce now!

***Please note the invitation from the Maurices to  
visit their organic farm Yalleroo on 20 November  
(page 7) and make a real effort to join this COGS  
outing. In the 2004 COGS Survey members  
indicated they wanted more farm visits.***

Please also note the various messages seeking  
your input to the magazine (never satisfied!) and  
assistance by volunteers. We all have different  
capacities at different times to participate but I am  
sure you will agree that both the magazine and  
COGS activities as a whole are better for the  
willingness of members to share their expertise  
and experience with others.

Have a successful summer in the garden!

*Janet Popovic*

*Thanks to Arthur's Vegetable Clipart*



## President's Report Summer 2004

Welcome to the Summer edition of *Canberra Organic*. All of your favourite themes are here and hopefully some new material will inform and entertain you! I'll start with what are becoming recurring themes in these Reports: politics and the weather (and some of the linkages between them).

My last Report contained an exhortation for you all to participate in the electoral process. As I suggested we were in fact able to express our views at both Territory and National level. The results clearly showed that the masses were strongly in favour of the incumbent Governments and as a result both the Prime Minister and the Chief Minister of the ACT will operate from positions of significant power (although the precise extent of that power wasn't completely clear in the Territory at the time of writing). However, they are still our servants and if parts of their actions go against **our** personal values they should be advised of this, by letters to them.

The weather continues largely dry, although Cook has received slightly over median rainfall for the last two months. We are still down roughly 100mm on both last year (very dry) to date and the median. (As an aside, if other Gardens have rainfall records I'd be pleased to receive them – preferably as a spreadsheet - and incorporate them in a future article for *Canberra Organic*).

On a positive note information available on water usage from several Gardens shows that the impact of watering restrictions greatly reduced usage of water last year. From the Gardens I have seen there was still a good level of production so I'd suggest that we have in the past over-used this valuable resource.

This brings me to the key linkage between politics and weather which is the supply of piped water to supplement that provided from the sky. (Our politicians can't influence the

latter whatever opinion they may have of themselves.)

In the case of Eastern Australia the pronouncements of politicians are showing clearly the desperate imbalance between amounts of water demanded and that supplied naturally. Thus far the responses to this appear to be looking for ways to increase the supply – desalination for the coastal cities and building an additional dam for the ACT. A dam will be no use if there is no rainfall to fill it – that is the essential problem at the moment! It might be better if, instead of spending vast sums of money on destroying more of the environment, the demand was reduced at the basic level by slowing/reversing population growth in areas which can't sustain it in the long term.

That being said, our October meeting was addressed by a speaker from ACTEW/AGL on ways of using water more effectively around the home and garden. These measures will surely be of assistance to us in the shorter term.

Moving to internal matters all Gardens have had their annual Meetings. I welcome on board all new Conveners and members of Garden Committees. The Community Gardens are a crucial component of COGS and the efforts of the Conveners and their Committees are most important in keeping them running effectively. I thank those previous Conveners and members of Garden Committees who have moved on from their positions for their activities in the past.

Happy digging (or no-digging) and enjoy planting your crops (or picking those that have matured through Spring)!

**Martin Butterfield**



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## Plot fees for 2004 -2005

**All outstanding plot fees are due immediately.**

If you have not paid your fees for the current year (commencing 1 September 2004) please contact your garden convener as soon as possible to arrange payment (see page 32 for contact details).





## Around the Gardens



Following the annual general meetings at the gardens we have new garden conveners at Holder, Queanbeyan and Oaks Estate. Thank you to outgoing conveners for the contributions you have made to the gardens, and to the new conveners—thank you for taking on the job, welcome, and happy gardening! Its especially good to see the garden at Oaks Estate re-opening.

### **Charnwood**

Charnwood garden will again host the CIT Organic Gardening for Beginners course in November.

### **Cook**

There has been a lot of activity across most plots at Cook during Spring and the planting of summer crops is underway. At our annual garden meeting we decided to institute regular monthly gatherings one Sunday a month in the late afternoon. At our November gathering we had a large number of seedlings, including twelve varieties of tomatoes, available for purchase, at bargain basement prices. The usual small but hardy group of volunteers has been mowing and whipper snipping the garden after bursts of growth following rain. All the dead trees in our perimeter (windbreak) plantings have been replaced with new specimens and additional plantings done along the eastern (Bindubi Street) fence to halve the spacings. Gardeners are rostered to look after specific sections of these plants during the expected hot dry periods.

*Alan Robertson*

### **Cotter**

See the feature on Cotter Garden on pages 8 and 9 and also other articles from busy Cotter gardeners on pages 10, 12 and 15.

*Andy Hrast*

### **Dickson**

There are two vacancies at Dickson garden. Please see the item on page 21 written by Dennise and Debra Bros about their gardening experiences at Dickson.

*Beby Bros*

### **Erindale**

During the long haul of drought and winter conditions our pickings from the garden were slim indeed. Once spring (and a bit of rain) arrived those of us that planted broccoli, cabbage and cauli received plenty of produce (see the proof in the photos following). In preparation for the busy

seasons we refurbished most of our aged dilapidated boxing and pathways. Consequently the clean up caused unsightly piles of rubbish, which took a few trips to the dump to dispose of. The work was strenuous but now, every time you walk through the gate it's a pleasure to see the well-earned reward of a markedly improved garden. Everyone has caught the springtime bug and as a result simply cannot stop themselves from planting their favourite vegies. Presently there are no vacant plots.

*Christine Carter*



*Photos: Erindale produce, courtesy Christine Carter*

### **Holder**

Jen Johnston and Jane Andrews are the new joint Garden conveners at Holder—and they are planning some working bees to get the garden into tip top condition for the summer and autumn growing seasons. Thanks to Lesley Pattinson from Holder for growing the large number and variety of tomato seedlings for sale to COGS members at the monthly meetings and for the COGS stall at the Xeriscape site associated with the CIT Plant Sale on 13 November 2004. There are vacant plots available if anyone is interested.

*Jen Johnston & Jane Andrews*

### **Kambah**

With some wonderful rain and happy sunny days, our gardeners are emerging one by one and we are seeing a few interesting plantings happening, some tidying up of gardens, and general regeneration of our whole garden. We held a working bee in September to tidy a lot of rubbish off vacated plots. (Can I beg gardeners to please clean up before you leave!! The rest of us are also busy people.)

We are hopeful that our spate of vandalism has ceased as we have not been broken into for a few months now.

We have farewelled another two long standing members and wish them Godspeed in their future pursuits. We have also welcomed a few new members. We have embarked on a small scale advertising program to attract new members and

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## Around the Gardens continued. . .



### **Kambah continued from page 5**

hope that we may soon have a full and flourishing garden once more. We especially welcome a group of four young people from an organization called "Achievable Outcomes". These four young folk, guided by Annette Crotty, have put the rest of us to shame, having prepared their little plot and planted a lovely variety of flowers and vegies before the rest of us emerged from the winter cold. Keep on keeping on gardeners!

*Shirley Irvin*

### **Northside**

The recent rains have resulted in rapid growth of weeds and grass on the vacant plots and adjacent common areas. We will shortly be organising a working bee to tackle the problem before the grass gets knee-high and totally out of control. Plans are underway for the development of a communal herb garden in one of the vacant plots.

While we have good stocks of the common herbs, any donations from other members of seeds/ cuttings/ divisions from unusual varieties will be most gratefully received for planting in the new garden.

*Ben Bradey*

### **Oaks Estate**

The Oaks Estate garden has re-opened with gardeners for five of the six plots made ready for summer plantings and a sixth person may join shortly. There is considerable work to be done around the grounds, including the need for some major clearing in order to establish more garden beds—once that is underway there will be more vacancies.

*Robin Wolter*

### **Queanbeyan**

Katrina Willis has handed over to Maree Timbs as the convener at Queanbeyan. Thanks to both Katrina and Maree and welcome Maree!

## Yalleroo Farm Visit 20 November 2004

The Yalleroo organic chicken farm will be hosting a farm visit on November 20. If you attended Catriona Maurice's talk earlier in the year and would like to learn more about keeping chooks for profit or pleasure, then this is the day for you. Please arrive by 2pm for a tour with Catriona. She will answer all of your questions and give you a first-hand insight to the operations of a commercial enterprise.

**Directions:** Yalleroo is on the Old Cooma Road, ten minutes from Queanbeyan or ten minutes from Tuggeranong. The Old Cooma Road (Cooma St in Queanbeyan) starts from the back of Karabar. Pass the Googong dam turnoff and the Burra turnoff (both on your left). About 2 km after the Burra turnoff you will see the Yalleroo chickens on the right hand side. The address is 1382 Old Cooma Road. They have a yellow letter box. Call Catriona on 62995062 if you have trouble locating the farm, or beforehand just to let her know you will be attending.

If you are coming from Tuggeranong, head up the Monaro Highway and turn left on the Old Cooma Road. Follow the sign to Burra and Googong Dam. Part of this road is unsealed. Shortly after you cross a little bridge, keep an eye out for the big windmill on your left and the yellow letter box.

If you require transport, or would like to offer somebody a lift then please contact Ben Bradey on 6161 0329 to arrange a car pool from the Griffin Centre at 1:15pm on the day.



## The Cotter Garden

The Cotter Garden is found at the end of a shady lane off the Cotter Road near the Yarralumla Woolshed, surrounded by horse paddocks, within the disused horticulture station. The peace and tranquillity is one of the features of the garden that is appreciated by all involved with it. It is an idyllic location.



The Cotter Garden has been at its current location for about 15 years. Its original location was next to the Cotter Road at Curtin – hence its name. It was one of the original COGS gardens.

The Garden covers an area of about half a hectare but only about a quarter is cultivated. There are presently 20 gardeners utilising nearly all the available garden beds. The garden beds range in size from 15 square metres up to 100 square metres.

### Membership

The ages of the gardeners at the Cotter Garden range from their twenties to well into the eighties. The gardeners come from diverse backgrounds – students, public servants, self employed, from the private sector and retirees - all drawn together by their love of gardening.

The garden has a fairly stable membership with a



number of gardeners being involved from before the garden moved to its current location. It is this hard core of members that gives the garden its stability and they are the people that new members look to for knowledge and experience. Impromptu sessions where experienced gardeners pass on their knowledge are common.

### December 2001 Bushfire

The Cotter Garden was severely affected by the bushfires that swept through the area on Christmas Eve in 2001. The shed and its contents were lost and many of the garden plots were severely burnt. The shed has been rebuilt and the contents replaced.

On the other hand the bushfire had the effect of killing the large pine trees that cast shadows and sent roots into a number of plots. We are extremely grateful to Parks and Gardens who removed a number of large and dangerous trees within the Garden precinct after the bushfire.



### The Orchard

The Cotter Garden is in a fenced off corner of the former horticultural station now used by a horse club. All the original planting in the horticultural station (apart from those lost to the bushfire) are still in place although somewhat neglected.

A number of gardeners, led by Ann Smith, are working with the horse club to develop an abandoned orchard of fruit trees.

### Spring 2004

The Cotter Garden in early October 2004 is looking lush and green after the early spring rains. Many of the gardeners have commenced their

spring plantings and these are germinating well with the moist soil and warm days. But we all know that the spring flush will not last and the days will get hot bringing with them the difficulties of maintaining an adequate supply of water. The water restrictions of last summer and for the coming summer add to the difficulties of gardening - especially gardening away from home.

Gardeners coped last summer with long hours of hand watering to achieve respectable crops while at the same time reducing water consumption by nearly 50% compared to the previous summer.

### The Challenges

The Cotter Garden faces a number challenges:

**Water**—The most pressing challenge is the summer water restrictions, especially the restriction limiting irrigation to hand watering that makes gardening in an environment away from home difficult. The long term restriction on the use of sprinklers will jeopardise the long term viability of the garden;

**Trees and regrowth**—Cotter garden needs to

manage the regrowth following the bushfires and the large eucalypt trees that survived the bushfire and now shading and sending roots into some plots;

**Management of the non-cultivated areas**—These are largely left untended at present. These areas are very rough with numerous tree stumps from the trees removed after the bushfires and currently covered by long grass and regrowth. At present we do not have the capability to manage these areas that could potentially be a fire hazard;

**The orchard**—The development of the orchard is a wonderful opportunity for those interested in expanding their organic growing experience and a way of forming partnerships with the horse club. We need to be careful however that we do not over extend our financial and labour resources;

**Relationship with the horse club**—Cotter garden is located in the middle of the ACT Equestrian Park. The relationship needs to be managed sensibly to avoid conflicts.

**Andy Hrast  
Convener, Cotter Garden.**

*Photo below: Left to right—Marie Bahr, Betty Cornhill, visitor to the garden, and Terry Jackobsen*



## Meandering Back Through Time With COGS



*Above: Cover from a Canberra Organic predecessor Newsletter, July 1988.*

Having read the most interesting article by Martin Butterfield interpreting the results of the 2004 Survey, I should like to make a few comments.

As the first President, and, in fact the person who was so enthusiastic about organics that I started my Organic Farm near Murrumbateman, the first of its kind in the Canberra area, and then initiated the first meeting at the Downer Community Centre where the elections were held, I have always taken a great interest in the membership of COGS.

In fact for many years I kept the membership lists and was a member of the Committee, guiding things and taking on the President's job when the membership had dropped to 20.

As President and also newsletter editor I was able to build up the newsletter from 4 pages to 14, by reprinting articles on the shocking chemicals being used in agriculture at that time. Also articles on the awful effects of woodchipping the ancient forests of this country and selling the woodchips to Japan for paper – a practice which is continuing right now, and seemingly is backed by the present government as part of their boasted wonderful economic growth. There were also little articles on how to grow organically.

Meanwhile I was using the newsletter to get new members, by giving copies away to anyone who rang me with questions on how to tackle problems organically, suggesting that they join in order to receive the newsletter every month. I also photocopied the whole newsletter, and annotated it and helped Tony and Rose to do the copies up for posting.

I was getting some excellent speakers, such as Esther Deans, who attracted 83 members and non-members to the meeting where she spoke about her no-dig garden method (then a novelty), and sold many autographed copies of her first book.

We ended that year with 90 members, and I was putting newsletters in all the Health Food shops, and also a notice about what was on at the next meeting and where, since COGS had started from a meeting of the Canberra branch of the Natural Health Society of Australia.

About this time Ron and I thought up the idea of setting up a demonstration Organic Farm somewhere in Canberra. It was to have animals, chickens and plots like the English allotments for members of COGS. It turned into a Bicentenary project and we managed to get a grant of \$16,000 to set it up plus gates donated by ARC, and donations from other companies and from private individuals, but the whole thing fell through. However, we were offered land at Watson and were able to use the fencing and most of the other equipment for the Watson Community Garden and also the Erindale Garden, the biggest and the smallest of the COGS Community Gardens at that time.

When Ron Champagne took over the newsletter at the end of that year, he got it printed very cheaply by students at the Defence Forces Academy, and we were able to continue to give it away through the Health Food Stores and some Garden Centres, and Ron made it into a little green book, A5 size. He got many people to contribute articles and wrote quite a few himself. He stuck to the job for quite a few years, improving it all the time. Eventually it was changed to a quarterly magazine.

Each year the membership increased. Old members left Canberra to do their own thing, many buying land and setting up their own little farm.

Over the years, I have noticed quite a large turnover of members, especially at the Watson Garden, which Elizabeth Palmer and I ran for four years. During those four years many people left COGS when they decided to give up their plots, but their places were taken by others discovering the garden for the first



time. We had 165 plots divided among 65 families, and there were a few plots which I kept dug and weeded and planted, ready to allocate to newcomers.

There was a children's play area, a large shed with a window at each end, so we could have meetings there, though we always sat under the pine trees for our meetings and to eat lunch if we were there for the day.

It was sad to see the Government take the land away from us and let it go wild and unused for so many years. For a few stalwarts the Northside Garden at Mitchell provided an alternative, though I was not allowed to have a plot there, though I got all my fruit trees moved there. All were producing fruit at the time, but I'm not sure if they have since the move.

The Gardens are ever popular, and give people practical experience in Organic Growing, and also provide a place where people can meet with others who have the same enthusiasms.

The library is excellent. It was the first thing we started. Hannah Enders and I picked out the first eight books at the second Organic Festival held at Colo River, using \$60 donated by Mike Luke's group, the Organic Growers of NSW.

In my view the Library is very important, as two of the best organic farmers I know, Joyce Wilkie and Mike Plane, borrowed and read many of my books on organics to help them when they first started.

I hope this little historical article will interest the members.

### Betty Cornhill

*Betty Cornhill currently gardens at the Cotter Garden (see pages 8 and 9). As well as actively writing for Canberra Organic (see pages 15 & 16 as well as the article above), she is a keen participant in the COGS monthly meetings at the Griffin Centre and regularly sells plants there. She often passes on valuable tips for growing organically—thanks Betty, you are an inspiration!*  
JP

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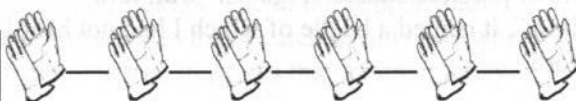
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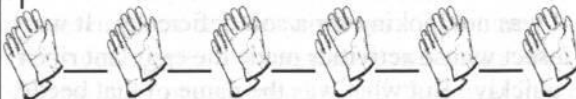
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\*Robyn

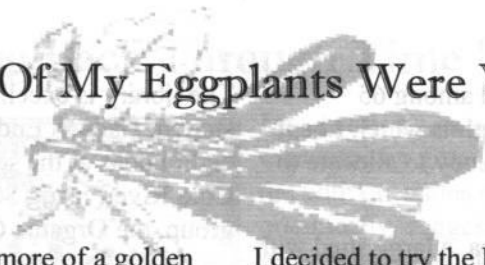
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## Some Of My Eggplants Were Yellow



Actually, the fruit were turning more of a golden brown colour, sometimes in stripes. They were meant to be purple.

Even some of the small ones were turning yellow, so it didn't seem to be a question of ripeness.

When you've got gardeners of the calibre of Betty Cornhill, Mary Flowers or Marie Bahr as your neighbours at the Cotter Garden, you start by asking them. Nobody could explain the colour of the fruit.

I picked one and examined it carefully before I chopped it up to make an eggplant dip. The dip had a slightly bitter taste but, otherwise, I could see nothing wrong.

At the end of the growing season, I was still curious. Into the Google search engine went "eggplant fruit turn yellow". The results included one site, from a State University in the USA, with a table of possible causes. Against "fruit turn yellow", it named a beetle of which I had not heard before.

It also pointed out that there would be exit holes. Off I went to pick the remainder of the crop. Sure enough, each yellow fruit had at least one hole in it, up to 5 mm in diameter.

Only 11 hours after the first Google search, I fed the same string in again: eggplant fruit turn yellow. Not only was Google responding very slowly for a Saturday evening, but the 16,100 results did not include the page it had found for me in the morning – not among the first 20 results anyhow.

I decided to go to one page for which Google's summary had included the clause, "Purple varieties take on a bronze appearance when overripe". This turned out to be on another State University site in the USA.

The page also pointed out that, "Fruit that ... has begun to change color is overripe and most likely bitter". This page had just explained a couple of things about my crop, as well as a lot about the types of eggplants preferred by different cultures.

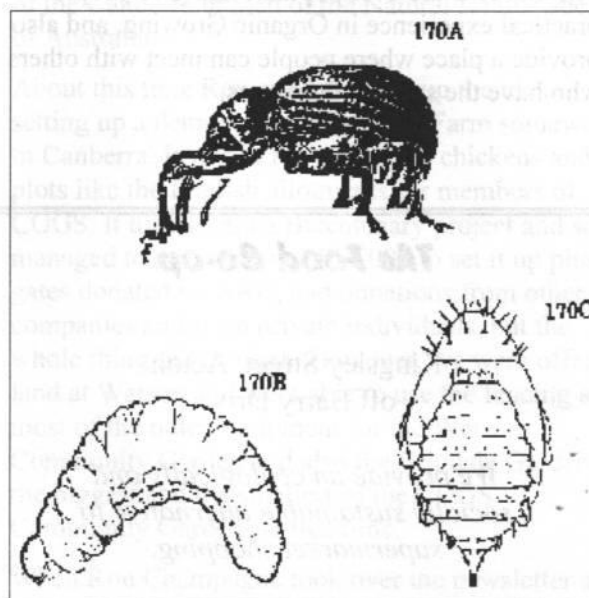
Did you know that eggplants got their English name because the original varieties were small and white? Thanks, Sherry Rindels at Iowa State U!

So, I was not looking for a soil deficiency. It was an insect whose activities made the eggplant ripen too quickly. But what was the name of that beetle, and what organic treatment was recommended?

I decided to try the History list for the same Saturday in my copy of Internet Explorer. Aha, in the morning I had searched for "eggplant *fruits* turn yellow", not "eggplant *fruit* turn yellow". Let that be a warning.

When I returned to the morning's search results, they showed that the table of eggplant pests and diseases had been on a site run by the University of California at Davis. This had turned up at the top of the list of a mere 7530 results.

The insect was called the pepper weevil. The table said that, "Adults are dark beetles 1/8 inch long. Larvae are white, legless, found inside fruit."

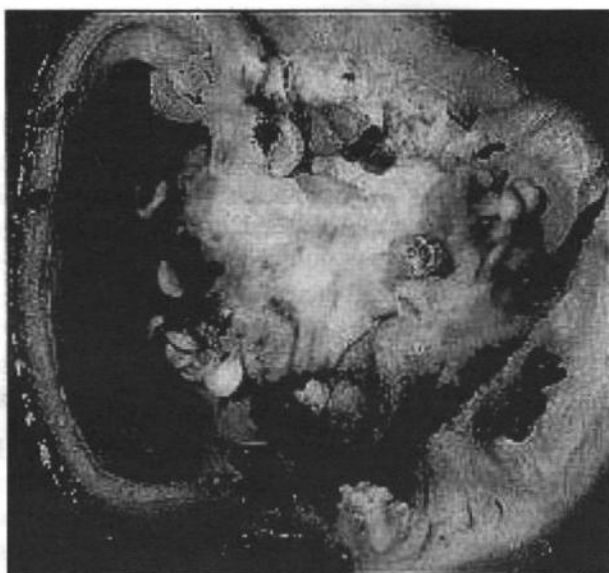


Above: Adult, larva, pupa of the pepper weevil, Centre for Integrated Pest Management, [www.ces.ncsu.edu](http://www.ces.ncsu.edu)

The table also contained an organic solution, "Destroy plants as soon as harvest is over to reduce problem next year. Destroy nightshade plants, an alternate host."

Yes, but what if you want to do something about it the first time you notice a young eggplant fruit turning yellow or bronze? Back to the World Wide Web.

First I looked to see if the pepper weevil had an alternative common name, especially in Australia. Asking Google to find "pepper weevil", even without adding "Latin name" produced about 6880 results. The first few all referred to *Anthonomus eugenii* Cano, where Cano is the name of the person who first published a description of the bug in the



Pepper weevil grubs in pepper fruit and fallen bud.

Photos above are from Agricultural Extension Services, The Texas A&M University System, [entowww.tamu.edu/extension/bulletins/1-5069.html](http://entowww.tamu.edu/extension/bulletins/1-5069.html)

scientific literature. This was only 70 years ago. The pepper weevil had been placed in the Order Coleoptera of the Class Insecta, Family Curculionidae.

From the first summary alone, I learnt that the pepper weevil was in the same genus, ie *Anthonomus*, as that well-known insect of American song and legend, the cotton boll weevil. I felt honoured, as well as disappointed that the relative had invaded so many of my eggplants.

The same source, this time at North Carolina State University, provided pictures of the bug. It also had the advice that, in the areas of the US where eggplants were grown commercially, "Infestations are transported from infested areas on transplants".

Having lived for three years in the United States, I am sufficiently bilingual in American and Australian English to know that probably they meant "seedlings" when they said "transplants".

They had told me where the weevils came from, but how to get rid of them before they damaged the fruit?

They had added, "The pepper weevil is not reported to successfully pass the winter in the Carolinas." Again, three years in America said that this meant that Canberra's frosts should knock them out. However, how could we get rid of any travelling on next years seedlings?

A spray of soapy water ought to do the trick, or any of the milder treatments (given the youth of the seedlings) for insect infestations. What did the Web say?

While looking for pictures of the beasties, I found <[www.fierce-foods.com](http://www.fierce-foods.com)> which recommended that "Plants should be dusted or sprayed weekly with Sevin or diatomaceous earth." Anything starting with a capital letter is unlikely to be organic, but diatomaceous earth is allowed.

I also found Great Lakes Insect Monitoring Systems for the Professional Grower, which sells traps and lures specific to the pepper weevil. The site advises that a catch of only one weevil in any one trap indicates that treatment may be necessary. Overkill (if you'll excuse the pun) for a domestic garden – the first sight of a small, bronzing fruit should indicate to the knowledgeable grower that treatment is essential.

Depending on the length of the life cycle of the weevil, the treatment could start with the removal of the small, yellow fruit as they appeared. This would also encourage the plant to produce more flowers to develop into, hopefully, pest-free fruit.

Googling for "pepper weevil" on Australian pages produced a mere 128 results. Only the first, from a University of Queensland site called [www.newcrops.uq.au](http://www.newcrops.uq.au) produced a page which referred specifically to *Anthonomus eugenii* Cano. Did it have another common name in Australia? I put *Anthonomus eugenii* into the Google search window – and the UQ site produced the only result!

The site has the title "Australian New Crops". The page I found referred to *Solanum elaeagnifolium*, a fruiting plant with the common name of "trompillo". Most of the page consisted of references from botany journals. The one reference to *Anthonomus eugenii* was in the title of an article from a journal called "Tropical Pest



## 'Eggplants' continued ...

Management". Without tracking down part 1 of volume 38, page 65-69, the reader could take a guess that the research could have been done anywhere in the world.

Perhaps my Web research was revealing a first sighting for the pepper weevil in Australia? Surely not! I had seen the same sort of damage in capsicums before this year. In fact, I probably had seen it in the nearby capsicum plot this year too, but had twisted off the infected fruit before they wasted too much of the mother plant's energy.

Feeding "organic control pests peppers" to Google and asking it to search pages in Australia only produced 178 results. The first was so generic and the second related so specifically to slugs and snails that I could tell that we were going nowhere relevant.

The first page was in fact the home page of an Australian-based supplier of organic gardening products, Green Harvest. Since I had not come across them before, I was curious. I was also dubious, because even the "About Us" page did not list a locality for the owners of this business. To contact them, one could call a 1800 number or e-mail. One of the first rules of safe ordering by mail (or e-mail) is to also know the street address of the business from which you are ordering.

The paragraph which led into the link to the order form said that I could fax it or post it to them. This looked hopeful. When I looked at the order form which I had downloaded, however, there was no address or fax number. The "Contact Us" page then announced their geographic location, on a lane near Maleny in Queensland. Have any other COGS members used them?

Speaking of which, what does the COGS site have to say? A quick visit says nothing specific about the successful organic growing of eggplants or peppers. While the emphasis is on healthy soil, crop rotation, plant and animal diversity – you're a COGS member, you know and practice all this – the suggested insect killers are stronger than anything I want to try.

The best organic treatment still awaits the results of experimentation with the suggestions above, but at least we know the culprit.

Or will a quick search of the Web sometime soon produce a site with a definitive answer?



Ann Smith

## "Almost" Summer Snapshots



Photos above: Left—new comfrey growth; Right: time for the chooks to enjoy the spent broccoli. Photos by J Popovic.

## Seaweed in My Garden

The best vegie garden I have ever had was at the coast house. Everything grew like magic there. Each day, when we came up from our swim, we brought two buckets of seaweed freshly washed up by the sea, with all its nutrients intact. The vegie patch was in the topmost corner of the land on a North-facing slope and with a fence behind to keep out rabbits and the cold winds which blew straight from the Antarctic, I sometimes thought.

I planted cauliflowers, broccoli, cabbages, beetroot, onions, peas and beans. All seemed to thrive, and after a while, I discovered that tomatoes, beans and other summer vegetables grew well even in the winter, as there was no frost.

The worst enemy was the salty wind off the sea, which could play havoc with most plants, but especially plants like beans and tomatoes. I bought a book telling me which plants grew well beside the sea, and planted windbreak plants at the bottom of the large double block. The house was built across the two blocks, and so provided the ideal windbreak. My husband, a naval architect, designed the house like a ship, with nearly every room having windows facing the sea. Having lived on an island for the first 17 years of my life, this suited me too.

My husband had built me three compost bins of besser bricks left over from the house, and I brought autumn leaves from Canberra in feed bags, filling the bins with a mixture of weeds, a little soil, seaweed, grass mowings and any vegetable scraps from the kitchen. I watered it while making it, and it broke down beautifully. Seaweed and grass mowings were always the main ingredients, and still are, but now I add huge comfrey leaves from the plant which thrives in front of the compost bins, fighting the kikuyu which also tries to invade the compost heap.

While the compost was breaking down I decided to

make little terraces on the sloping ground, digging a ditch below each row and burying fresh seaweed just below the surface in the pathways which went across the slope, thus improving the soil directly with the seaweed.

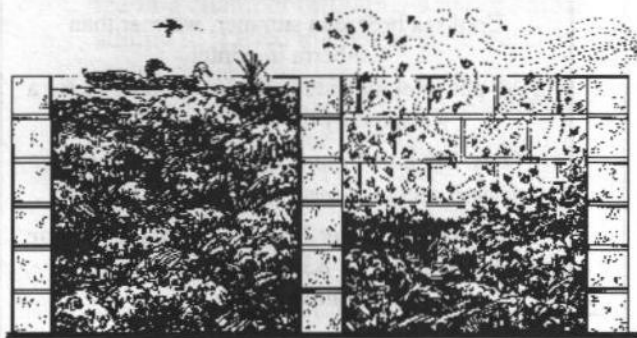
A row of cabbage, cauliflower and broccoli above the pathway would send roots down to the seaweed in the path below it, as these are gross feeders, and the pathway was level for walking on, and felt springy underfoot like a carpet with spongy underfelt.

This system produced wonderful peas, beans, and tomatoes, and the corn was out of this world. I always washed the seaweed before using it for the garden or the compost heap, although in those days we had plenty of rain in huge downpours, which washed the seaweed nicely.

I found that grey aphid attacked the cabbage family in that mild climate, so used soapy bath water to remove them. The soap dissolves the waxy coating on the outside of the insect's body. A tiny amount of dishwashing liquid will do the same, and shield bugs, harlequin beetles and earwigs are killed by it too. However these are best knocked into a bucket of soapy water from which they cannot escape.

My father came out from England to stay with us. He had grown vegetables on our farm in Bermuda, and knew a lot about the subject. He watched me carefully transplanting little corn plants, which were too close together, and said, "You can't transplant corn." I said, "Yes I can, just watch me."

This is how I do it—  
With a trowel you make a hole where you want to plant the corn plant. Then, using the trowel, cut straight down about 3 or 4 cm from the plant, and do three more cuts on the other sides of the plant remembering that small corn plants have a root that goes straight down about twice as far as the height



of the shoot above ground. Lift it with its ball of soil intact, place gently in the hole, push the earth in around it and soak it with water. Chances are it won't even know it's been moved. Baby corn plants grow so fast you can almost see them growing, but it is important not to cut the end off the main root when transplanting.

The secret of the wonderful growth and flavour was in the seaweed. Seaweed contains over 80 elements, all taken from the ocean in which it grows. It also provides organic matter and colloids, which makes these elements easy for the plant to assimilate, and eating that plant gives US all the nutrients from the sea.

This is why it is so important to eat organically grown food, and why it is so important to make good compost to feed our plants.

My first experience with seaweed was as a child in Bermuda. One of my school friends invited me to spend a day on a tiny rocky islet in Hamilton Harbour. This island was simply bare rock except for a little garden, where my friend's father each weekend had deposited seaweed collected on the shore, until a patch of soil had formed in a hollow, weeds had seeded themselves, and he had planted bright Geraniums, which were thriving, even through the latest hurricane weather.

This little garden impressed me so much that I have known ever since that you don't have to start with good soil, or any soil at all. By hard work and loving care you can MAKE GOOD SOIL.

Betty Cornhill

JUNIOR WORD SEARCH SOLUTION  
 HUMUS, STRUCTURE, MULCH, MANURES, NUTRIENTS, CONSERVATION,  
 RECYCLING, LEGUMES, GREEN MANURE, COMPOSTED, CALCIUM,  
 MAGNESIUM, WORMS, SEAWEED, VERMICULITE, STRAW.

## Organic garden needs new members

Mugga Mugga Community Garden, is located near the historic Mugga Mugga homestead in Symonston, not far from Red Hill, Narrabundah, Griffith, O'Malley etc. The garden is not run by COGS but is organic. It is a small garden about 20m x 8m, fully fenced, with an automatic drip watering system and a fertile clay soil. There are currently no plot fees payable in this garden.

We are looking for up to four more interested individuals or families to join us in working this garden to its full potential.

**If you are interested please contact Peter Cornhill on 6295 9851 after 7pm weekdays or at weekends.**

## Beautiful Holiday House



Just across the road from the beach at Garden Bay over the hill from Malua Bay surf beach.

Two minutes walk to sandy beach good for swimming, snorkelling, or teaching children to swim. Easy drive to many other lovely beaches. House sleeps eight, large fenced garden where children can play within sight.

Pets welcome.

Cool sea breeze in summer, warmer than Canberra in winter.

\$190 per week outside holidays or \$80-\$90 for a weekend by the sea, plus GST.

Only 166 kms from Canberra. Take visiting friends and relatives to see the South Coast.

**Telephone Brian or Jackie on 6254 4977, or Betty on 6249 8323 for bookings and holiday prices.**



## Some Thoughts On Worms



I had tried running a worm farm (plastic box style) for a while, before we went to Tanzania. It was singularly unsuccessful with the worms barely seeming to be interested in consuming the food I put in for them and not at all interested in building up their numbers.

On returning to Canberra the worm farm still existed but there wasn't a worm in sight. I guess 2 years of total neglect will do that. However there was a small amount of castings in the tray so I acquired some more annelids and resumed the process. I then happened to speak with Neil Davidson at the CIT open day and he made a few suggestions. I have followed up on these and have had considerable success. The key points have been:

1. Drilling a 1cm hole in the bottom compartment (under the tap outlet) and filling it with a strainer. This lets all the liquid out. I catch this with an empty yoghurt container and store in a plastic bottle until needed as liquid fertiliser (diluted at 1:9).
2. Putting some rocks in the lowest, liquid collecting, chamber so that the worms which fall down there can climb out and get back on the job.
3. I run all the waste food scraps I put in the feeding chamber through a blender before adding it. I tried microwaving it but the audience (ie worm) reaction was not good: the areas given blended food are a heaving mass, while the area that got the nuked material was devoid of worms.
4. After adding food I lightly cover it with "worm topper" available from Neil's business at Pialligo. I have tried replacing this topper with compost from my bins and

sawdust but both failed miserably since the worms moved away.

5. The supply of food has been kept up over Winter. Initially I thought that the beasts' metabolic rate would decline so I reduced the food since all references stress the need to avoid overfeeding. Production almost completely stopped: I then read that they need the food to keep the chamber warm so started adding more food and things started humming along again.

The outcomes of these revised processes have been:

- I've collected at least 10 litres of concentrated liquid fertiliser in about 9 months;
- One chamber of castings has been harvested and another is about ready to harvest (this seems to equate to about three times the volume of "topper" added).
- The number of worms increased somewhat last Summer but in the last few weeks the underside of the cardboard covering the castings was covered with hundreds or thousands of tiny red eggs. These have now hatched into a horde of baby worms – I think the heavy production stage is about to start.

In summary the revised processes have taken my efforts from being basically a waste of effort to a highly productive way of converting food scraps into high quality fertiliser. If the worms breed up as they appear to be going to I will be able to transfer a few handfuls of them into my compost bins to speed up the processes there also.

**Martin Butterfield**

## Organic Beef – Dexter Style



Last year my partner and I purchased our own piece of country near Braidwood as a weekend retreat from the pressures of city life. As we started to develop the property, the question arose as to what we'd like to do with the place. A popular choice around the district is beef cattle, so this seemed like a pretty safe bet. I searched high and low to find out all I possibly could about the different breeds of cattle and how to look after them – organically of course. It didn't take very long before I came to the conclusion that Dexter cattle are the ideal choice for first-time and small scale farmers such as us. I also recall having seen a Dexter cow at the CERES Environment Park in Melbourne last year and thinking to myself at the time 'Interesting, I'll have to look into those creatures one day...'

The Dexter breed originated in Ireland in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. Today they are recognised as the smallest naturally occurring British breed with a height of just over 1 metre. They have three primary uses – beef, milk and dragging a plough through the fields. I'll probably use them for their beef qualities more than anything else. Their small size makes handling relatively easy and they thrive under a diverse range of climatic and feed conditions. The breed was first introduced to Australia in the 1890's and was quite popular until the 1950's when the 'bigger is better' mentality took hold of mainstream agriculture and their popularity waned. Their popularity has increased again in recent times partly due to the large number of 'hobby farmers' looking for cattle suited to smaller acreages. High prices were paid a few years ago, but the prices have recently come back to something more reasonable. It is unlikely the breed will ever be a dominant player in the market

again and most likely it will remain a niche player for smaller players such as myself.

We sourced a local organic breeder who was reducing her holdings due to the harsh winter conditions in the region. The first inspection went very well – the cows were friendly and enjoyed human contact. Our stomachs were also satisfied when the owners gave us a couple of T-bone steaks from a previous slaughter to sample. It was the ultimate in 'try before you buy' – smallish steaks which were very tender. Our creek was still flowing and there was plenty of pasture from last season (kangaroos hadn't eaten it all), so we purchased 3 pregnant females in July thinking our property was in reasonable condition to accept them. Getting them to our property was a bit of fun. The breeder had a wire cage attached to the tray of his ute which held the two smaller cows. The third was bundled into a horse float towed on the back. Being quite small (not much bigger than a pony), they were relatively easy to transport. The trip went well until we stopped in Bungendore for refreshments and the side door of the horse float shot open. Out jumped Primrose and the chase was on through the back streets of Bungendore to get her back in. Half an hour later and we were off again with all three cows securely in tow.

Upon arrival at our property, the driver asked if there was a bank nearby. I thought it strange that he would need money in such a remote location, but fortunately he found a bank on the side of the hill before I could open my mouth and make a fool of myself! He backed up to the 'bank' and out jumped the cows – couldn't have been simpler. They settled into our place quite quickly but to my surprise they wouldn't touch the grass. Apparently grass from the previous season goes 'sour' during



winter and the cows won't eat it. So we were forced to supplement their feed with purchased hay. Around this time I learnt there are many varieties of hay including: meadow (cheap), oaten (moderate) and lucerne (outrageously expensive). So I tried a variety. They turned up their noses to the meadow hay and stuffed themselves silly on the lucerne. We ended up settling on oaten as a happy medium. The early spring rains have brought a flush of green grass and in late September I saw them munch on it for the first time. It was like a sight for sore eyes – no more hand feeding, although I may still feed them a little just because I enjoy spending time with them.

I still have a lot to learn about keeping healthy cows organically. The basic principle seems to involve keeping them healthy through good diet so they don't get sick in the first place. The correct minerals are vitally important, and as many soils are deficient in certain minerals the cattle require supplementation through their feed. Key minerals fed to the cows (mixed together with grains) are:

- (a) seaweed meal - a high protein mix containing a wide variety of minerals;
- (b) dolomite for milk production (for the calves – not me!);
- (c) sulphur to reduce ticks and other external parasites; and
- (d) copper for improved iron absorption.

There are plenty of books on the subject but I have found 'The Healthy House Cow' by Marja Fitzgerald, 'Small-Scale Livestock Farming' by

Carol Ekarius and anything by Pat Colbey as being particularly worth reading.

We are expecting three calves in mid – late spring. Being born a male is pretty rough because you end up being eaten after about 2 years, or sold into a life of slavery only to offer females the one thing they are looking for at the peak of their 21 day cycle.

Apparently it can be quite exhausting if you are the only bull let loose in a paddock full of desirable females. The rest of your time is spent in isolation so as not to bother the females during their pregnancy and birth. But I'm hoping for three female calves so we can increase our future breeding stock. To be honest, I'm not sure how I'd go eating one of the males knowing that I've raised him myself, but I've got two years before I have to cross that bridge. For now I'm just happy watching them develop and the extra cow manure is doing wonders for my organic vegetable garden. Being a small cow, their manure is also smaller than that of regular cows, which makes it easy to collect and use around the garden. My next purchase will be a set of cowbells to put around their necks that will remind me of the many fond memories I have from the mountains of Switzerland several years ago.

**Ben Bradey**

*Photos—page 18: Dexter cows at Braidwood, below: with Ben Bradey.*





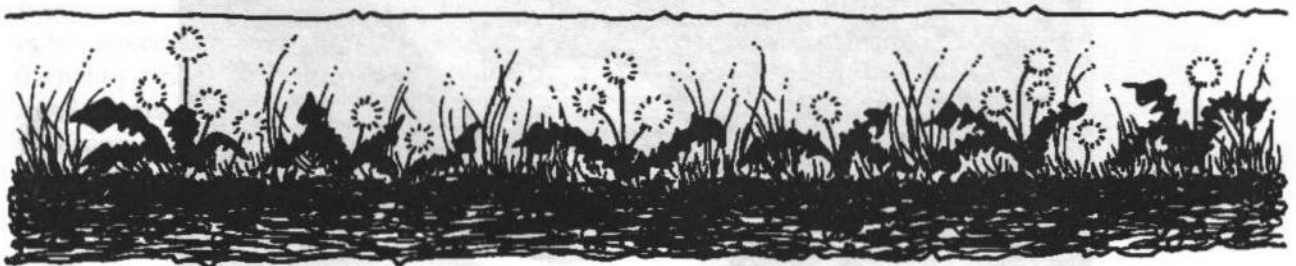
# Junior Organic Puzzle Page

## Word Search 'Organic Soil'

E	D	P	X	M	E	D	U	D	K	A	M	M	D	E
E	T	H	U	M	U	S	D	W	A	L	A	X	R	W
R	N	I	U	C	M	L	J	I	P	U	G	U	R	H
U	M	N	L	T	O	N	C	O	M	X	N	I	N	P
T	T	U	J	U	Y	M	U	H	S	A	E	R	G	P
C	I	B	I	S	C	S	P	T	M	P	S	M	S	D
U	O	M	O	C	J	I	N	O	T	F	I	M	D	G
R	G	R	N	J	L	E	M	K	S	W	U	V	E	I
T	G	A	L	P	I	A	N	R	O	T	M	Q	E	S
S	L	E	K	R	N	M	C	R	E	H	E	N	W	G
T	K	W	T	U	A	R	M	Q	L	V	N	D	A	R
Y	U	U	R	H	P	S	W	A	R	T	S	B	E	E
Q	N	E	N	R	E	C	Y	C	L	I	N	G	S	E
M	S	E	M	U	G	E	L	T	W	E	U	K	J	N
N	O	I	T	A	V	R	E	S	N	O	C	H	V	K

Created by Puzzlemaker at [DiscoverySchool.com](http://DiscoverySchool.com)

You'll find all sixteen words that are hidden in this Word Search in the article *Organic Soil Management* on pages 22 and 23 of this issue of *Canberra Organic*. Words can be shown horizontally, vertically, or diagonally and are sometimes to be read from bottom to top and right to left. The solution is on page 16.



## Dickson Garden is Growing Well!

It is now Spring and everything is growing and it looks great. There are lots of flowers, vegetables and fruit growing at the moment such as bulbs, pansies, snowpeas, broad beans, lettuce, herbs and even apple trees and a grape vine. We feel a lot more involved because when we started the plants in our beds were chosen by other people but this year we got to choose. Our beds have mainly flowers and some vegetables. I've really enjoyed watching the plants grow and just think—no more than eighteen months ago it was just grass, dirt and weeds. Now its vegetables, herbs and flowers and I know what three I prefer! Our vegetables also taste so good because we grow them organically. I now enjoy and look forward to Saturday - it feels more alive.

The herbs are also great. We use them less so we only need one garden bed for them to have enough to share with everyone.

Unfortunately we cannot collect as many seeds as we did last year as most of the plants have come up as not being true to type, but we still have quite a lot of seeds from last year.

The pond has got a lot of things growing around and in it, but there are still no frogs. We hoped they would come by themselves, but they haven't yet - let's keep our fingers crossed.

Lettuce is growing by the ton and there is heaps of it every time we come to the garden—there is even lettuce growing on the paths as well as in the plots. We take at least one bag of lettuce and one bag of other things when we go home. We are picking a lot of snowpeas too. They are really nice, and they also taste a lot better than shop-bought snowpeas. It makes us feel so proud that we grew them and that they are all healthy.

With the new season creeping up, we have been busy while enjoying the great food. We are really glad that we have our own plots. Almost every time we come now there is at least a handful of flowers coming up or blooming. I really prefer eating the vegetables that I grew and to know that I grew them.

We have learned things we didn't know before, like how to tell whether a vegetable is ready to harvest or not and when things are in season or not. We hope things keep growing and that we will keep having things to harvest. Through the past year, the garden has grown more than we expected. -

**Dennise & Debra Bros**

## From the Library



Title: *Gardening for Life—The Biodynamic Way*  
Author: Maria Thun  
Subject: An illustrated and well written book outlining the practical application of biodynamic principles as described by Rudolf Steiner during his 1924 lectures.

Title: *Culture and Horticulture—A Philosophy of Gardening*  
Author: Wolf D Storl  
Subject: This book looks at the history of gardening (including growing food plants) and the development of modern organic gardening. In this context, it explains the fundamental idea of bio-dynamics and the interaction of negative and positive forces during the growing process.

We are almost at the end of another year and I would like to remind people who have borrowed books that are now overdue to ensure that they are returned at the November meeting. If you are unable to attend this meeting, please give me a ring (6248 0063) to make an alternative return arrangement.

**Beby Bros**

## Organic Soil Management

The building and maintaining of a fertile, well-structured and biologically active soil is the foundation of organic growing. The recycling of organic nutrients by the use of compost, green manures and mulch promotes the formation of humus in soils. Increased humus levels lead to better crumb structure, greater water holding capacity and the ability of soil particles to hold onto nutrients so they are not leached out of the topsoil and out of the reach of plants' feeder roots.

In this issue of *Canberra Organic* we look at the General Principles and Standards for Soil Management as laid out in the *National Standard for Organic and Bio-dynamic Produce*.<sup>1</sup> Also included from the *Standard* is a list of materials permitted for soil fertilising and conditioning in an organic system.

Section 3.4 on Soil Management includes the following:

### General Principles

- i. *Healthy soil is the prerequisite for healthy plants, animals and products. With organic farming, the care of a living soil and consequently the maintenance or improvement of soil structure, fertility and nutrient cycling is fundamental to all measures adopted.*
- ii. *Sufficient organic material should be regenerated and/or returned to the soil to improve, or at least maintain, humus levels. Conservation and recycling of nutrients is a major feature of any organic farming system.*
- iii. *A high or routine use of off-farm inputs is not encouraged by this Standard.*

### Standards

The fertility and the biological activity of the soil must be maintained or increased by any combination of the following methods:

- a. use of legumes, green manure crops or perennial deep-rooting plants in an appropriate rotation program.
- b. sheet composting using animal manures. These areas are required to grow two green manure crops before the area is planted to crops intended for human consumption.
- c. application of fully composted organic matter derived from selected sources as listed in Appendix 1 Annex B (see next page)
- d. application of bio-dynamic preparations and methods.
- e. tillage techniques which preserve or improve soil structure.
- f. incorporation of livestock into a farming system.

The use of off-farm fertilisers shall be regarded as a supplement to nutrient recycling, not as a replacement for good soil management practices.

Cultivation of soils is to be under taken with care and consideration. Implements and techniques chosen must maintain or improve soil structure.

<sup>1</sup> *National Standard for Organic and Bio-dynamic Produce, Third Edition December 2002* written and published by the Organic Produce Export Committee of AQIS. Copies are available free of charge at [www.aqis.gov.au/organic](http://www.aqis.gov.au/organic) then click 2. Legislation



## Permitted materials for soil fertilising and conditioning<sup>2</sup>

Substances	Specific conditions / restrictions
Animal manures	Application must be composted or followed by at least two green manure crops
Blood and bone, fish-meal, hoof and horn meal, or other waste products from live stock processing	Application must be composted or followed by at least two green manure crops
Compost	Should be produced in accordance with AS 4454-1999 or equivalent
Minerals and trace elements from natural sources, including: * calcium (dolomite, gypsum, lime); * clay (bentonite, kaolin, attapulgite); * magnesium * phosphate (rock phosphate, phosphatic guano); * potash (rock and sulphate potash); * elemental sulphur	Must not be chemically treated to promote water solubility
Epsom salts (magnesium sulphate)	None
Microbiological, biological, and botanical preparations	Products derived from genetic modification technology are prohibited
Mined carbon-based products	Peat to be used for plant propagation only
Naturally occurring biological organisms (e.g. worms) and their by-products	None
Plant by-products	From chemically untreated sources only
Perlite	For potting/seeding mixes only
Sawdust, bark and wood waste	From chemically untreated sources only
Seaweed or algae preparations	None
Straw	From chemically untreated sources only
Trace elements and natural chelates e.g. ligno sulphonates and those using the natural chelating agents e.g. citric, maleic and other di-/tri-acids	Not synthetically chelated elements
Vermiculite	For use in potting/seeding mixes only
Wood ash	From chemically untreated sources only
Zeolites	None

<sup>2</sup> Appendix 1 Annex B *National Standard for Organic and Bio-dynamic Produce, Third Edition December 2002* written and published by the Organic Produce Export Committee of AQIS.

# Organic Beer

When studying chemistry at high school our first foray into “organic” chemistry was producing some alcohol by means of fermenting maize with some form of yeast. This was undoubtedly a different meaning of the word “organic” to that applicable to these pages. We then went to lengths that would be quite unacceptable legally outside the school laboratory to distil the liquid produced into pure alcohol. My memory is that this was a good idea since the initial brew smelt and tasted foul.

Since that time I have experimented with a wide range of beers including the outcome of mass production, boutique breweries and home made. However on a recent trip to New Zealand I encountered for the first time brews advertised as “organic”. I’ll start by reporting on my findings about these beers.

The first brew met was the produce of the Founders Brewery in Nelson. While it was very common to see signs on the roadside advertising “organic vegies” etc this beer was found on the shelves of a major supermarket in the town. The brewery is located in an historic park (see <http://www.biobrew.co.nz> for images).

There are 4 ingredients for their beers: barley, hops, yeast and water<sup>1</sup>. The ingredients and the processes are certified organic by Bio-gro NZ Ltd (see <http://www.bio-gro.co.nz/main.php?page=145> for details of this company). The water comes from the town reticulation system with a rigorous filtration system to get it as clean as possible. As everything they produce is organic the brewers did not have to face the difficulties of recertifying their products as can be the case where some product is organic and some not. The spent yeast and grains are able to be sold for stockfeed to the local organic meat producers and other by-products are recycled through a worm farm.

They apply the principles of sustainability wherever possible, including re-using bottles (the bottles have to be imported from Germany and are very expensive). Up to 50 uses can be obtained from each bottle and recycling is enhanced by a payment of 15c to the guys at the recycling depot. Local customers who use the product return the

bottles directly to the brewery. (The usual bottles for beer are not strong enough for refilling and can only be recycled: a far more wasteful process)

They produce three beers (and a cider). All tasted very well. The Tall Blonde (4.2%) was a little sharp but a very malty nose and a strong finish. The Long Black was a little smoother (after a thinner foretaste) and suited my taste rather better (although few Kiwis apparently like dark beer). The Red Lager was noted by me as “not strong tasting” so probably suited the locals!

In Australia the only organic brewery I have come across is Mountain Goat, located in Melbourne. They do several beers which are retailed nationally as well as being retailed at a pub location in Melbourne. One of these beers – an India Pale Ale is certified as organic by BFA. This is currently only brewed in the summer.

The brewery has told me that they currently have to get their malt from Germany, but are hoping to source an Australian organic maltster for the next season. Their hops are imported from New Zealand.

This beer is a 5% alc/vol India Pale Ale which is a Pale Ale but with an extra charge of hops to make it more bitter and floral than a regular pale Ale. The style India Pale Ale is an old one, coming from colonial times when the English transported their beer all the way around the Cape of Good Hope to India by sail boat. The long journey had nasty effects on normal beer so, with hops and alcohol being natural preservatives, the extra additions of these preserved the beer and made it much more drinkable once it arrived at the colonies.

More details of this, and other, non-organic Mountain Goat beers can be found at their website <http://www.goatbeer.com.au>.

## Martin Butterfield

<sup>1</sup> These are the usual ingredients for beers although some European brewers use fruit as the source of substrate for the fermentation. The author has also added a chilli to a home brew and despite some trepidation the result was quite potable.

## News from the Seed Savers' Network Annual Conference

The Seed Savers' Annual Conference was held at Exeter, New South Wales Southern Highlands, on Saturday 23 and Sunday 24 October 2004. It was followed by tours of farms on Monday and a workshop on Local Seed Networks on Tuesday and Wednesday.

There was a forum on each day of the Conference—one on GE led by the environment representative on the NSW Advisory Committee on GE; and the other on Food Gardens in Schools that became a lively discussion on increasing risk in children's lives.

The whole weekend was like a *permaculture convergence* in that there were talks in the morning, followed by a forum followed by workshops on many topics in the afternoon. Saturday evening we had a bush dance and creative talent expo.

There were six speakers:

- Dr David Murray on *Toxic Agriculture*,
- Jude Fanton on *Seed Savers' Projects in Australia and Overseas*,
- Jo Immig on *Chemicals, GE and School Food Gardens as a Solution*,
- Peter Stuart on *Germinating Natives*,
- Michel Fanton on *Conserving Vegetatively Reproduced Food Plants*, and
- April Sampson-Kelly on *Diversity in Edible Plants*.

There were 16 workshops, including—

- *bush foods* (conducted by a local aboriginal solicitor),
- *traditional varieties of vegetables* (discussed by a 60 year old Calabrian farmer),
- *basic and advanced seed saving*,
- *biodynamic sidereal planting*,
- *tours of the Steiner School's gardens*,
- *soil cation exchanges*,
- *getting more from your bean* (with Dr David Murray),
- *the Tesla turbine*,
- *heritage potatoes*,
- *heritage apples*.

**Jude Fanton**  
*The Seed Savers' Network*  
*Byron Bay*

## Some Organic Statistics from New Zealand

The following information comes from the March 2002 edition of "Essentially Food" the house magazine of an NZ supermarket chain. The supermarkets carry 600 organic lines and there are 700 certified organic growers. A supermarket in Auckland reports the sales of organic products had risen by 800% over the last two years.

Exports of certified organic produce from New Zealand were worth \$NZ 60m in 2000 and were expected to grow to \$NZ 500m within 4 years.



## An Alternative Way to Trellis Tomatoes

I come from South Australia where the water quality is poor at the best of times. Certainly it was little short of stupidity to spray plant leaves with tap water, and peas were only really successful if rainfall was good. Another problem for plants such as tomatoes is that irrigating using sprays of water creates ideal conditions for rot while splashes of soil can carry fungal spores onto the leaves of the plants.

I found that gardeners of Greek and Italian origin had a way of growing tall tomatoes to perfection despite the South Australian tap water. I am a magpie and unashamedly pinch good ideas of this kind. The technique is as follows—

- Plant tomatoes at normal inter row spacings (50 cm) in two parallel rows with about 1 metre between the rows. However, instead of placing a tomato stake vertically at each plant an A-frame is constructed as might be used for climbing beans.
- Between the rows and at each end a stake is vertically driven into the ground. Then at each end and at every 50 cm along the rows a stake is driven in angled towards a corresponding stake in the other row.

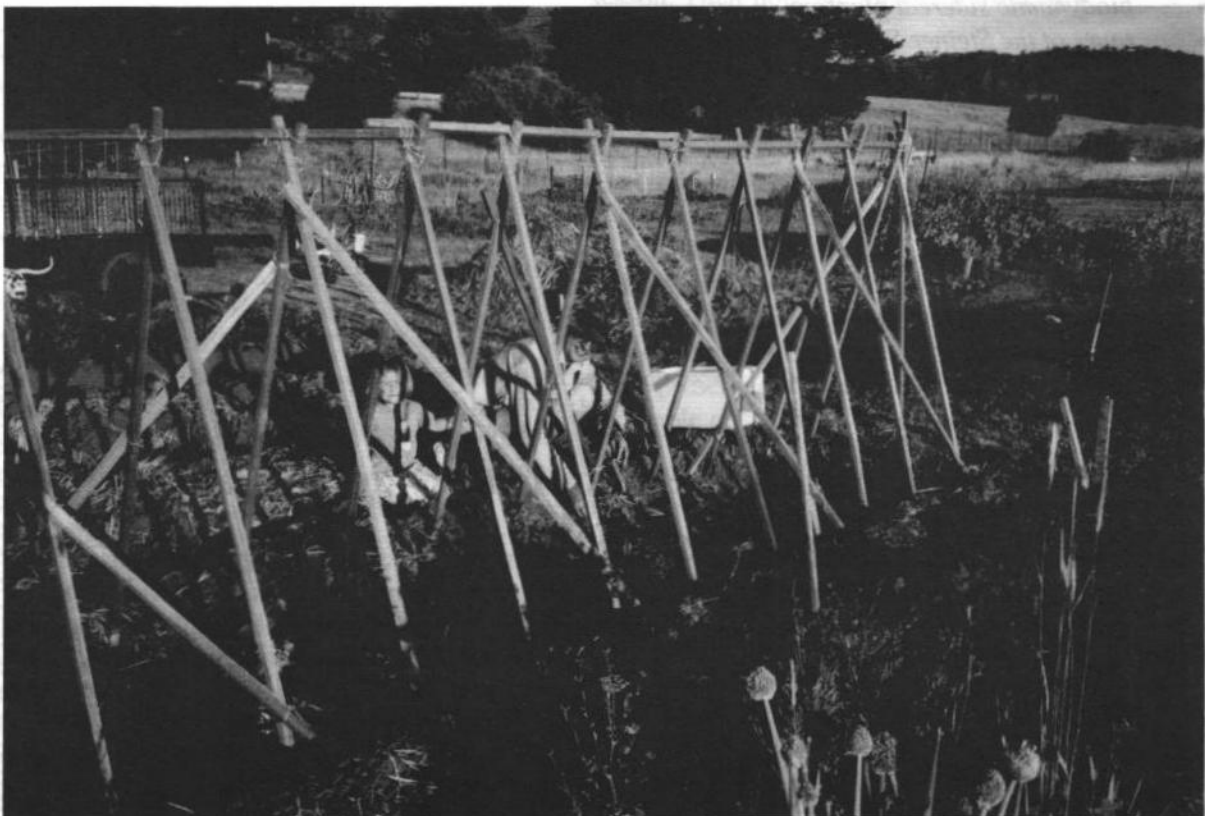
Additional stakes are used to form a centre top bar and yet others are angled across the stakes within each row to improve stability. The whole structure is lashed together.

- A levy bank is made around the A-frame and mulch is placed beneath the frame.
- A tomato is planted at each upright-ish stake and tied to the structure as it grows.
- Water is flood irrigated into the centre of the A-frame and the levy bank restricts runoff away from the tomato plants.

By high summer the tomato plants are shading the area that is watered. Most tomatoes ripen in the semi-shade which means they ripen to perfection without the sun scalding that so often occurs with the single vertical stake method. The use of flood irrigation reduces soil splashes and rot.

We only water our tomatoes once a week in the hottest of weather and normally less often. So far I have had far less wind damage with this structure compared with a single vertical stake.

**Richard Reed**



*Photo: The tomato trellis constructed in the manner described in Richard Reed's article above.*



## Fifteen Tomato Tips



- Place **banana skins** in the bottom of planting holes for tomatoes. The banana skins are a good source of potash which encourages tomato flowering and fruiting. *Source: p11, BOGI Newsletter, June 2004. Banana skins buried near roses also assist roses to flower, JP.*
- When transplanting tomatoes bury a large portion of the stem to encourage a good root system that will be able to take up water and nutrients as required. *Source: The Chef's Garden internet site.*
- Water with Seasol or equivalent when transplanting. Plant in sunny position and stake when planting to avoid hurting roots later. Do not feed until the first flowers appear; this forces the development of the plant and encourages flowering/ fruiting. Then side dress with potash. *Source: various planting guides.*
- "Provide essential air circulation and distance from soil pathogens by growing mulched tomatoes on tall stakes, in wire cage or attached to a trellis". *Source: How to Grow Tomatoes Organically, eHow.com internet site.*
- According to Heritage Farm tests, the greater the degree of pruning of tomato plants, the lower the yield of fruit per plant. Pruning had no effect on the size of the fruit. *Source: p105, The Australian Vegetable Garden, Clive Blazey.*
- Try growing tomatoes, especially the small varieties, in '**upside-down**' pots. The tomatoes can then hang in the sunshine with plenty of air circulation and away from the earth and earth borne viral diseases. *Source: Janet Popovic. If you try this successfully send us some photos to publish in the next issue of Canberra Organic, JP.*
- Use **comfrey leaves** in foliar feeds and anti-pest sprays; cover the ground around plants with comfrey leaves—when watered in it becomes a liquid feed of potash, phosphates and other vital nutrients. Tomatoes in particular thrive on this. *Source: Here's Health Guide Gardening Without Chemicals, UK.*
- Causes for flowers failing to set fruit are low temperatures (under 15°C), particularly at night; extreme temperatures 35°C to 40°C; and too sheltered/ shady positions. *Source: p103, The Australian Vegetable Garden, Clive Blazey.*
- Tomatoes are self-pollinating and the transfer of pollen is enhanced by motion—most commonly by wind. *Source: p103 The Australian Vegetable Garden, Clive Blazey.*
- Under-water rather than over-water tomatoes; less-frequent deep watering to the base of plants is recommended. This encourages strong root structure and helps prevent root rots—it's okay to have plants with slightly stressed tips at the hottest time of the day. *Source: p106, The Australian Vegetable Garden, Clive Blazey.*
- Blossom end rot is a rotting of the fruit from the bottom up and is primarily because of a lack of calcium. Either the soil is deficient in calcium or very wet soil, very dry soil or the alternation of wet and dry conditions can impede the uptake of calcium into the stem. Deep less frequent watering is best. *Source: The Chef's Garden internet site.*
- "Take low-impact steps to control insects: encourage beneficial insects, watch for pests, stomp and squish all you can and use physical controls such as hair to repel slugs." *Source: How to Grow Tomatoes Organically, eHow.com internet site.*
- If the dreaded vegetable bug strikes again in plague proportions this year, macerate some, dilute with water and spray plants. *Source: see Tips and Techniques, p16 CO May 2004.*
- Harvest tomatoes at the "pink shoulders" stage (just starting to ripen) to protect from bird and insect damage. *Source: The Chef's Garden internet site.*
- Try **drying your ripe tomatoes** outdoors under a frame made from an old window. *Source: Janet Popovic. If you try this successfully please send us some photos to publish in the next issue of Canberra Organic.*

**Janet Popovic**

# COGS Backyard

## What is COGS Backyard?

'COGS backyard' is the demonstration organic vegetable garden located within the Xeriscape gardens in Weston. The garden was established six years ago as a venue for COGS to showcase to the public some of the principles and practices of organic growing, such as crop rotation, the use of green manures, composting techniques, mulching and seed saving.

The garden covers approximately 180sq metres and is arranged into four beds for growing annual vegetables and a surrounding border for perennial vegetables, herbs and soft fruits.



*A view of COGS Backyard looking west.*

Vegetables in the four main beds are planted using the rotation scheme outlined in the last issue of *Canberra Organic* (Spring 2004).

Working bees have been held over the last several weeks to get the garden ready for the main Summer plantings. These have involved weeding, clearing out spent vegetables, slashing the green manure which was grown over Winter, mowing the paths and generally tidying up the garden.

## This month at COGS Backyard

The **root crop and potato** bed is fully planted and growing well. The following crops were planted in late September:

- Potatoes - Rosevale, King Edward and Nicola varieties
- Onions - red salad variety
- French eschalots

- Leeks
- Celery seedlings
- Carrots - Baby
- Beetroot - Boltardy



*The newly planted root bed showing the protective netting needed to defeat the ducks.*

In the **legume and brassica** bed there are peas (William Massey dwarf and Oregon Sugar pod) which are flowering and starting to set fruit. The beans which were planted in late October are already more than 10 cm tall and starting to climb up their wigwams. Savoy cabbages are growing well and broccoli and cauliflower seedlings will be planted in early January.

The **solanum and summer salad** bed has a variety of young looseleaf lettuces including Green speckled, Frilly green, Oakleaf and Cos. Tomatoes will be planted in early November as well advanced seedlings and protected with plastic tree guards in case of late frosts. This year Grosse lisse, Roma, Maltese and Oxheart varieties will be planted. 'California Wonder' capsicums and 'Supreme' eggplants will be planted in late November.



*Grosse lisse tomato seedlings being hardened off prior to planting at COGS Backyard.*



In the *cucurbit and sweetcorn* bed the winter green manure has been slashed and dug in and Butternut and Jap pumpkins planted. Two varieties of open pollinated zucchini, Greenskin and Black Beauty, have been planted. The first sweetcorn is emerging.



*Capsicum and eggplant seedlings still in the glasshouse before hardening off outside for a couple of weeks and planting out in late November.*

In the border beds Globe artichokes are fruiting well, the gooseberry and currant bushes are covered in young fruit and the comfrey has grown so much following the recent rain that it is almost ready for its first cut. Once cut the comfrey leaves will be used as a mulch on the solanum bed to supply potassium to the growing



*A globe artichoke with several heads almost ready to cut.*

tomatoes, eggplants and capsicums.

This season all the work at COGS backyard has been done by a small group of current and ex-committee members. Regular working bees will be held throughout the season and any help from COGS members would be greatly appreciated. If you can spare a couple of hours once a month and would like to become involved please contact one of the committee members listed on page 32.

**Adrienne Fazekas**

### The Xeriscape Gardens Public Events Heyson Street—Weston ACT

**Nov 20 & 21—BOTH DAYS 2pm-4pm**  
*Garry Dawson/ Bruce Davies—CIT Weston Horticulturalists on water saving strategies for Irrigation and Lawn Care.*

**Nov 27 & 28** Last Xeriscape w/end for Spring.

**February 5 & 6, 2005—Xeriscape re-opens.**

**February 12 & 13—BOTH DAYS 2pm-4pm**  
*Dr Richard Stirzaker—CSIRO water scientist and fanatical home gardener on maximizing your home garden productivity and water re-use.*

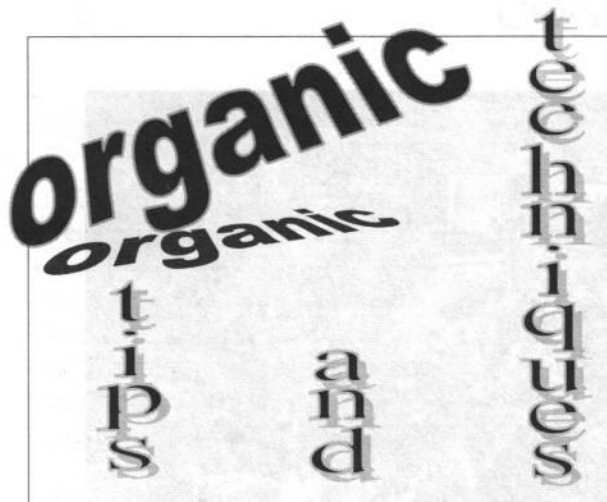
**February 26 & 27— BOTH DAYS 2pm-4pm**  
*Neil Hobbs—Xeriscape Garden designer on minimizing water use through landscape design and the application of Xeriscape principles.*

### Environment Tours with Ian Fraser

Ian Fraser is a local naturalist, conservationist and author. He has been running Environment Tours for the Canberra environment movement since 1984. The Environment Centre sponsors the environment tours to introduce people to new areas, and to increase appreciation of our region. Tours are conducted from a modern, comfortable 22-seater mini-bus; emphasis is equally on information and fun.

Mountain wildflower tours 5 December 2004 and 9 January 2005.

For further information phone Ian Fraser 02 6249 1560 8am-7pm (7 days) or email [ianf@pcug.org.au](mailto:ianf@pcug.org.au).



**Transplant trick**—Cover the base of the cardboard cylinder from a toilet paper roll with a few layers of newspaper – tied or taped around the side of the cylinder to stop it falling off. Fill with seed raising mix and plant the desired seed(s). When the plants are big enough to transplant, pop the whole lot into the ground. The roots break through the paper quite quickly and head straight down into the soil. The cardboard cylinder decomposes over the course of the growing season. *Source: Ben Bradey.*

**Sucking insects**—Prepare a soapy solution in a bucket and soak up some of it with a sponge. Squeeze the sponge around the affected part of the plants gently—you get more coverage and effect than simply using a sprayer when the infestations are bad, but you do have to be very careful not to break buds, fruiting flowers or fruit. *Source: Janet Popovic. See also Betty Cornhill's advice on page 15.*

**Peas following corn**—Sweet corn trunks left in the ground can be used to support the next—pea—crop. After harvesting the peas, pea trash and sweet corn trunks are all returned to the soil to increase its organic content. *Source: Biopesticide Farming in Rural China by RD McKinnon AM, p7, BOGI Newsletter, June 2004.*

**Snail deterrent**—Use kitty litter around plants as a snail deterrent. Apparently it causes the snails to run out of their slimy juice. *Source: p9, BOGI, June 2004.*

**Seed bank in your garden**—Allow a 'seed bank' to develop in your garden by leaving healthy plants of various kinds to go to seed. With the passage of seasons you'll have more voluntary seedlings emerging. Leave them *in situ* to thrive, or transplant to more suitable beds in a rotation system. *Source: p84, Natural Gardening by J Hodges (1989) COGS library 410.GO.*

**Three tips from emily compost.com—**

- If a flower blooms in spring, divide it in the autumn. If it blooms in the autumn, divide it in the spring.
- Used coffee filters can not only be composted but they make great liners for small pots so the soil won't escape. When it comes time to plant, it's easy to pop out.
- The thinner the leaf the more water it needs to sustain life. The thicker the leaf, the less it needs.

*Source: Tips, hints and suggestions, emily compost.com.*

**Pick more often, pick more, longer**—Remember that whether it's peas or beans, broccoli, basil or silver beet, pick the produce frequently to encourage more produce. Pick off flowers of plants such as these to lengthen the productive period. Don't pick off tomato flowers but pick the fruit as soon as it begins to ripen to avoid insect and bird attack and to give the plant more energy to put into the production of other fruit.

*Source: Various gardening gurus!*

**On mulching with spent plant materials—**

“It has been found that **all plants produce antagonistic chemicals designed to literally inhibit the germination of other potential plant competitors**. Some plants—usually the ones we call 'weeds' - are better at it than others, and this is one of the reasons for their success in growing so profusely.

The important thing is that these chemicals can also be found in the **dry residues of the dead plants** for some weeks before breaking down, and can inhibit the germination of seeds of other plants. Therefore, when using a mulch of straw, or grass clippings, or whatever, it is important to **use old ones**. When you get in the straw, or cut the grass, let them sit in a corner of the garden for a month or two before using them, to allow these residual inhibitory chemicals to be broken down. Alternately, you can **compost** these plant materials before using them on the garden.” *Source: p122, Natural Gardening, Jeffrey Hodges, 410FGO. Note that the author permits small portions of the book to be reproduced in garden club newsletters for educational purposes. JP*

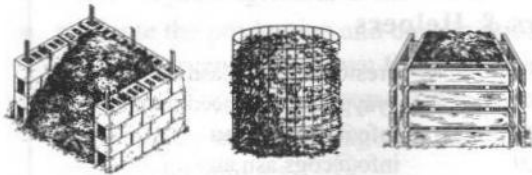
**Please send your favourite organic tips and techniques for publication in Canberra Organic. Contributions can be sent by email to editor@cogs.asn.au or be phoned in or posted to COGS—see page 32 for contact details. JP.**



## SUMMER VEGETABLE PLANTING GUIDE

In Summer it is a good idea to mulch your garden beds to help keep the soil cool and moist. One experiment has shown that a 4cm layer of straw reduced evaporation by 73%. Be careful however not to lay down a thick layer of sawdust or lawn clippings that can pack down to form an impenetrable barrier to water.

Soil with lots of compost will contain all the nutrients your plants need for strong, healthy growth. In addition it will retain water and act like a sponge to keep your plants moist through the dry summer days.



On days of extreme temperatures your plants may need to be physically protected from the heat. This can be achieved by covering the plants with shade cloth secured on a frame eg weldmesh bent over to form a tunnel (secure the shade cloth with some pegs).

Try not to water the leaves of plants that are susceptible to fungal diseases eg tomatoes, cucumbers, pumpkins, zucchinis. Water with drippers, fill pots sunk into the soil near the plants, or if you must use overhead watering, water in the cool of the morning so the water can evaporate during the day.

Keep those weeds down. They compete with your plants for food, water and sunlight. It is best to tackle them when they are small—before removing them becomes an exhausting exercise.

Pests can multiply over summer. Don't reach for the pesticides. Observe if there are natural predators present, remembering that there will be a delay between the appearance of the pest and the subsequent build-up of its predators. If you must spray, use an environmentally benign spray. Read books such as Jackie French's *Natural Pest Control*.

Make sure you harvest your crop regularly - in most cases this will encourage your plants to continue cropping and you get

to eat your produce at its peak.

Remember to leave space in your vegie patch for those winter vegetables that must be planted in late summer—early autumn. Brassicas and other winter crops need time to mature before the extreme cold of winter sets in.



### *Summer Vegetable Planting Guide*

	DEC	JAN	FEB
French Beans	S	S	
Beetroot	S	S	S
Broccoli	ST	ST	T
Brussels Sprouts	ST	ST	T
Cabbage	ST	ST	T
Cauliflower	ST	ST	T
Carrots	S	S	S
Celery	T	T	S
Chicory	S	S	S
Chinese Cabbage	S	S	
Cucumber	ST	T	
Endive	S	S	S
Kohl Rabi	ST	ST	T
Leeks	S	S	
Lettuce	ST	ST	ST
Marrows	T		
Parsnips	S	S	S
Potatoes	S	S	
Radish	S	S	S
Silver Beet	ST	ST	T
Squash	ST		
Swedes		S	S
Sweet Corn	ST	T	
Tomatoes	T	T	
Turnips		S	S

**S = Seed Sowing**  
**T = Transplanting**

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 summer weather from one year to the next. Planting times will vary for different varieties of the one vegetable eg. December plantings of heading lettuce should be successful; February plantings should be the butterhead varieties.



## Canberra Organic Quick Quiz

1. Are there any restrictions on the use of the following products in an organic garden?
  - a. seaweed preparations
  - b. blood and bone
  - c. straw
  - d. worm juice
2. Is hydroponics an allowable organic growing method?
3. Are there any foods which can be grown organically without soil?
4. Why are you an organic gardener?

Answers are on page 35. Too easy? Send your own quiz and answers for possible publication to [editor@cogs.asn.au](mailto:editor@cogs.asn.au)

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<b>Book sales</b>	Murray Dadds		
<b>Supper conveners</b>	Marie Bahr, Mary Flowers		
<b>Librarians</b>	Beby Bros, assisted by Ben Bradey		
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### To contact COGS

Email [info@cogs.asn.au](mailto:info@cogs.asn.au) or visit our website at [www.cogs.asn.au](http://www.cogs.asn.au)

COGS monthly meetings are held on the 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of each month (except December and January)  
at 7:30pm in Room 4 of the Griffin Centre in Civic  
Visitors Welcome



## 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 of 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 bookstall. COGS seeds and seedlings are often 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 11 community gardens in the Canberra region. Gardens are located at Charnwood, Cook, Curtin (Cotter Garden), Dickson, 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](http://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

COGS  
PO Box 347  
DICKSON ACT 2602  
Phone: (02) 6248 8004  
Email: [info@cogs.asn.au](mailto:info@cogs.asn.au)  
Web: [www.cogs.asn.au](http://www.cogs.asn.au)

# COGS NOTICE BOARD

Don't forget to check the COGS website at [www.cogs.asn.au](http://www.cogs.asn.au) for updates and new notices.

## Speakers

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

### 23 November 2004

Kim Pullen, CSIRO entomologist  
*Garden Pests*

### December—January

*Please note that there are no general COGS meetings in the months of December\*and January.*

### 22 February 2005

Joyce Wilkie, Allsun Garden Farm, Gundaroo  
*Asian / Winter Vegetables—what you can plant now.*

### 22 March 2005

#### COGS Annual General Meeting

to be followed by *Harvest Night* (members display garden produce)

### 26 April 2005

Venie Holmgren,  
*Permaculture Experiences*

Please check the COGS website at [www.cogs.asn.au](http://www.cogs.asn.au) for updates and confirmations.

## Events

### Saturdays

Gorman House Markets

### Saturday mornings, 8am-11am

Growers Market, EPIC  
(enter near Shell service station)

### 13 November (this is a revised date)

CIT plant sale/ Xeriscape venue, Weston

### 7 - 28 November

Organic Gardening for Beginners Course

### 20 November Visit to Yalleroo Organic Farm.

*See page 7 for further information. Contact Ben Bradey on 6161 0329.*

### Garden Regeneration Project: to 28 November 2004

(Canberra Urban Parks and Places)

Coordinator: Nina Stahl, Ph: (02) 6207 0142  
email: [nina.stahl@act.gov.au](mailto:nina.stahl@act.gov.au)

### Phoenix Garden Group Contacts:

Chris Stamford ph 6288 4049  
Lesley Pattinson ph 6288 0293

### ACTEW Irrigation Workshop Dates

17 November (Wed) 4.30pm and 6.00pm

23 November (Tues) 4.30pm and 6.00pm

Entry by gold coin donation. Bookings necessary; phone 6248 3131.

### Volunteer Gardeners Wanted

COGS frequently receives requests from worthy community projects for volunteer gardeners with some spare time to help. If you have the time to help with one of these projects please contact a COGS Committee Member (listed on page 32).

### Canberra Organic Quick Quiz Answers

1a. No.

1b. Blood and bone should be either composted or used only on green manure crops - not directly on food crops.

1c. Only straw from chemically untreated sources should be used.

1d. No.

2. No - organic growing requires plants to be grown in well structured, biologically active soil.

3. Yes - mushrooms, sprouts, wheat or barley grass.

4. Why not tell us for the next issue of *Canberra Organic*?