



Autumn 2006

Canberra Organic

ORGANIC GROWING IN THE CANBERRA REGION

The quarterly publication of the Canberra Organic Growers Society Inc.

New community garden in O'Connor Gardening near the Snowy River

Cecily Gibson writes on *Clay Forms in Garden Spaces*

What to do with all those Zucchini's

Cool Season Legumes Open Garden Day photos

COGS Autumn Vegetable Planting Guide



Vol. 14 No. 1

CANBERRA ORGANIC

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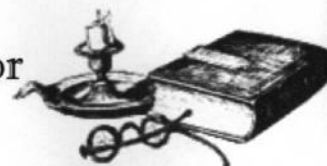
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From the Editor



*Once again we have some wonderful articles
written by our own members—thank you!*

*Julia Trainor, a COGS member who lives on a
rural property 35 km South East of Thredbo has
sent her story "Gardening near the Snowy
River" (pages 10-12) as a substitute response to
our frequent calls for volunteer activities, for
example COGS Backyard working bees which she
is unable to participate in because of her location.
This is much appreciated Julia and I know readers
will enjoy your article very much.*

*Graham Walker's articles are always popular and
this time you might be surprised that he has turned
his talents to concocting a "Marvellous Harvest
Curry Bake" (page 24) - well I suppose it's not
totally unrelated to his genius in recycling!*

*Alan Robertson, the current convenor of Cook
community garden, has decided to move to the new
garden in O'Connor and to take on convenor
responsibilities there. He has written about the
progress so far at O'Connor for us (page 10).*

*Then all you could possibly want to know about
"Cool Season Legumes" (page 26) has been
contributed by our President Adrienne Fazekas - in
between negotiating at O'Connor and installing
water pipes there, keeping COGS Backyard under
control and providing backup to me on the
magazine and to garden convenors and other office
bearers—thankyou!*

*I want to also thank Sophia Williams for her
assistance to me in putting together this issue,
including the photographic record of our Open
Day at Charnwood, Mitchell and Queanbeyan
community gardens (pages 13-15) and "What to do
with all of those Zucchini's" (page 25). There'll be
more from Sophia in future issues I hope.*

*I hope you also enjoy "Clay Forms in Garden
Spaces" by Cecily Gibson, a Canberra resident.*

Enjoy your magazine,

Janet Popovic



From the President Autumn 2006

Welcome to another year of gardening with COGS. Despite the recent very hot weather most of the COGS gardens I have seen recently are brimming with summer produce.

New O'Connor Garden

COGS is very fortunate to have been offered the use of their former tennis courts by the O'Connor Uniting Church and during the past couple of months the twelfth COGS garden has been established on this site. The water is connected, the plots marked out and the first gardeners busy preparing their plots for Autumn plantings. Thanks are due to Alan Robertson who has agreed to take on the role of garden convenor and who did much of the initial planning, organisation and work needed to get the garden going. Thanks also to Keith Colls who, with Alan and myself, spent a couple of days laying out the garden and installing the water. There is still an amount of work to be done clearing encroaching vegetation from the fence lines, installing a shed and preparing the communal growing areas but with the enthusiastic group of gardeners already busy at O'Connor I'm sure this work will soon be completed.

Changes to the COGS Gardens Policy

Community gardens do not just appear by magic, or maintain themselves, and too often the necessary work is left to very few people. Many COGS gardeners seem to have forgotten the 'community' aspect of community gardening and the fact that it is not the job of the convenor, or of the garden committee, to do all of the work required to maintain and improve the communal facilities in a garden.

At the November 2005 garden convenors meeting changes to the COGS garden policy were proposed which were subsequently passed by the committee. These changes involved adding two sections detailing the responsibilities of garden members and the conditions under which livestock may be kept in COGS gardens. These additions were considered necessary due to the increasing number of members keeping poultry in COGS gardens and the ongoing disappointment of the committee and the garden

convenors with those members of the gardens who feel their responsibilities extend only as far as paying plot fees. For the information of all COGS gardeners the additional sections of the policy are included on page 29 of this magazine. Please take the time to read this page and let myself or another committee member know if you have any comments or concerns.

AGM and Harvest Night

The 2006 COGS Annual General Meeting will be held on March 28th. At this meeting the formal business of COGS is conducted - receiving and approving the financial statements and electing the committee to manage COGS for the next year. Despite common perceptions, attending this meeting does not put you at risk of being drafted onto the committee. Most of the current committee members have expressed their willingness to continue in their roles but there is always room for a couple of new members. Anyone interested in joining the committee who would like to know more about what is involved please feel free to contact either myself or another member of the committee.

To relieve the formality of the evening, the AGM is followed by the annual harvest night. This is your chance to show off your produce and to discuss the successes and failures of the season with other members.

Thanks to Marie and Mary

After many years of providing us with delicious suppers at the monthly meetings, Marie Bahr and Mary Flowers have decided to retire from the job. On behalf of COGS I would like to thank Marie and Mary for their work over the years and for all the delicious nibbles which have made chatting after meetings so much more enjoyable.

So far we have one volunteer to take over the supper duties at meetings but we need another one or two to spread the load. If you attend the monthly meetings regularly and feel you would like to make this job your contribution to COGS please let me know.

Adrienne Fazekas

ABC

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COGS Green Manure mixes now available

Green manures are crops grown especially to provide organic matter for the soil. Often a mixture of legumes and cereals is used. The legumes have the ability to fix nitrogen in nodules on their roots and this nitrogen remains in the soil to benefit subsequent vegetable crops. The cereals produce large volumes of leafy growth which can be cut for use as a feeding mulch or dug into the top 15 cm of the soil where it is broken down by soil micro-organisms. Green manure crops planted during Autumn will grow well during the Winter in Canberra and make use of garden space which would otherwise be left empty.

Each year COGS buys bulk seed which is mixed, packaged and made available to members. This year there will be two mixes available:

Legume and cereal mix containing field peas, vetch, ryecorn, wheat and oats
Legumes only mix containing field peas, clover and vetch.

Seed is packaged in quantities suitable to cover approximately 30 sq. metres and will be available at the general meetings during Autumn or through the garden convenors from late February.



Around the Gardens



Cook

Plots are thriving, surviving the heat quite well, helped by some very beneficial rain in January. Everyone is looking forward to harvest time as tomatoes, zucchini, and beans come on stream and potatoes are dug. There are already some healthy specimens of colourful pumpkin ready to harvest. A very big thankyou from all Cook gardeners to Cook garden convener Alan Robertson for his meticulous oversight of the garden over the past couple of years. Alan has taken on the establishment of the COGS garden at O'Connor (see page 8 of this magazine) and we know that will ensure the success of the enterprise. We will miss him at Cook—thank you Alan! *Ed.*

Cotter

The gardens were fortunate to escape the considerable damage caused by the fierce storms of 2 December. However, a few days later a large branch fell from a gum tree and landed in bush away from the plots.

Although an ACT departmental representative inspected the trees at the gardens some while ago and marked those to be removed, further action has been delayed by the workload following the storms.

There was a successful working bee in October which resulted in a good tidying up of the communal garden and surrounding area. The Cotter gardeners have access to a neglected orchard close to our gardens. On the day of the working bee Ann Smith lead a team of volunteers armed with the necessary tools to perform some badly-needed pruning of the fruit trees. If anyone is interested in helping to care for the orchard, please contact Ann on 6285 2995.

The spring rains certainly boosted the growth of crops and weeds, but the lack of summer rain coupled with the higher-than-average temperatures have resulted in rapid drying of the soil. Nevertheless, gardeners have been harvesting good crops of vegetables such as peas, potatoes and zucchinis. Apart from the hot, dry conditions another problem has been the number of grasshoppers who can definitely not be rated as an endangered species!

At present, there are two plots available—45sq.m and 32sq.m.

Roz and Trevor Bruhn

Erindale

Everyone has planted lots of their favourite vegies and it's been full steam ahead in our garden. It's also heartening to see that most plots are being well maintained and all are taken. Crops that are doing particularly well are spring onions, corn, silver beet, zucchini, squash, strawberries and various herbs. Everyone that replanted several varieties of self-sown lettuce seedlings (popping up in various nooks and crannies) were well rewarded with lovely hardy plants. For some strange reason however the tomatoes have been a bit of a let down – the bushes may be large but the fruit is smallish and not as prolific as we normally expect and received in previous years. Trying to grow beans and cucumbers has also been disappointing and although maintaining a vigil with pest control – time and again their promising, tender young shoots just disappear out of sight. I guess this year Mother Nature decided to be frugal with some vegies, perhaps to teach us a lesson in appreciating what we usually have taken for granted.

Even though we are supposed to be experiencing the worst grasshopper outbreak in twenty-five years, so far they don't seem to be too much of a worry in our garden – crossing fingers and toes. Might be a different story next time around though, considering that experts are predicting a worse infestation and a longer season, possibly occurring from early November. I might have to improve on my eradication methods because so far the frisky little blighters have no trouble evading my enthusiastic yet futile attempts to stomp out their disturbing presence. Perhaps we can hope for more rainfall since this helps to increase parasite levels (their natural enemy) that subsequently attack and keep grasshoppers in check. What really bothers me the most though is the obvious presence of another greedy sod, far out numbering grasshoppers – slaters. I'm now on a mission to markedly reduce the numbers of these pesky little pests!

Christine Carter

Kambah

It's been a windy, dusty and dry summer in the Kambah garden. Time management becomes the number one priority for members during the festive and holiday seasons so spending time in the gardens has been relegated to second place, but hopefully it will look more productive with

the cooler weather. Nonetheless there are some good results.

A healthy crop of potatoes is growing in some well aged horse manure; climbing beans cover a couple of weld-mesh arches; corn stalks have withstood the recent hot, dry winds; and various lettuce and silver beet or chard are still producing. A new member has done well with cucumbers and squash and is eagerly awaiting a first watermelon. Tomatoes have not been standout producers so far this year but more hot weather expected in February should help ripen fruit. A pumpkin plot, established by the children, is finally starting to take off and we hope the children will have pumpkins to share with our members.

Unfortunately grasshoppers are everywhere. They have feasted on the foliage of parsnips, leaving just the fine veins of the leaf. All new seedlings have suffered, except onions, and they have totally perforated the leaves of the broccoli and cabbages. According to an expert, they will be with us for the next six weeks, so Autumn is looking more promising.

We had limited response to the posters placed at all local shops, so still have 4 good plots available and another 1 requiring some work. Three other plots have been taken on a caretaker basis by existing members so they can be recovered and be available from October.

Reconstruction of 2 garden plots has nearly been completed to improve vehicle access for those gardeners wishing to bring in heavier materials. Happy harvesting,
Mary Coulson

Mitchell

The Mitchell garden is in full swing at this time of year. Most plots are extremely productive despite the massive hailstorm which hit the day

before our Open Day in November. The Open Day was well attended, however the thoughts on most members' minds was the awesome damage caused by the hailstorm rather than the bounty produced when growing organically in tune with Mother Nature. I guess we must take the good with the bad. While many plants were set back, they seem to have caught up given the abundant moisture and warm days of late.

Ten fruit trees were netted just before the storm—the fruit is now well protected from the birds, but probably won't be of much use to us on account of the storm damage.

One gardener managed to produce ripe red tomatoes in time for Christmas—these were grown under netting which reduced the impact of the hail stones on the tomato plants which was probably just enough to give them an edge over the more exposed plants. Graham Walker planted out a batch of broccoli seedlings in the last week of December. We all thought he was mad, but they are still doing well three weeks later despite the very hot days.

The COGS policy on keeping livestock in the gardens was recently released and all gardeners have aligned their activities with the policy. It is designed to give a good balance between the interests of the owners, animals and other gardeners.

Our new Italian gardener has established an Australian hardwood plantation on his 50sqm plot. Well from a distance it looks that way. On closer inspection he has driven a couple of hundred large hardwood stakes into the ground to support his favourite vegetables—beans and tomatoes. We wish him well, but I wouldn't want to be the one having to tie up all those tomato plants to the stakes. He will be there forever.

Ben Bradey.

Below: Left—The 'hardwood plantation' at Mitchell—stakes to support a mighty tomato and bean crop. Right—Onion seed heads, Mitchell.



A New Community Garden is Born in O'Connor



Alan Robertson turns the first sod—for the water pipes at O'Connor community garden

Photo by Adrienne Fazekas

The Uniting Church in O'Connor (UCOC) had been looking for some time for a socially and environmentally friendly use of their two long-disused tennis courts at the rear of the church property in Jarrah Street, O'Connor. A church member with contacts at the Dickson garden suggested that COGS could be invited to develop the land as a community garden. This idea met the church's objectives and, following a number of meetings, an agreement was reached on 12 December 2005 for COGS to establish a community garden on the disused tennis courts.

UCOC has provided the land, at no cost to COGS, for a period of three years, with three year extensions by mutual agreement. COGS is providing up to \$2,000 to assist in the establishment of the garden and will meter the water used and pay the appropriate proportion of UCOC's water bill. The garden will be operated in accordance with COGS garden policy and rules and any local rules established by the garden committee. All plot holders are required to be members of COGS and to pay the set plot fees.

Despite the busy time of the year pre-Christmas and the heat, work commenced on trimming overhanging trees, stripping out unwanted vegetation, mowing weeds, marking plot boundaries, and installing a water meter, water lines and garden taps. By Christmas Eve the garden was ready to accept members and ten were enrolled

before the end of January.

The garden covers an area of approximately 1,000 square metres, quite small by COGS standards, and is fenced with a high chain wire fence. It has been divided into fifteen plots of 45 square metres each. This plot size is not large compared to some COGS gardens but it is believed to be adequate for an individual or couple to manage and is expected to result in intensive garden production at a high standard. In addition to the fifteen individual plots there is a strip around the perimeter totaling about 120 square metres that will be used for communal fruit trees, berry canes, herbs and so forth, for the growing of climbing annuals such as peas and beans on the fence, and for small individual plots for perennials such as asparagus and rhubarb.

The soil consists of imported reddish clay loam covered with a thin sandy layer for the court surface. While the clay is likely to be very gluggy if disturbed, it is quite free draining and is expected to provide an excellent surface upon which to build up garden beds and for deeper rooting plants such as fruit trees. To our great surprise several earthworms were dug up during the trenching for the water pipes. It is expected that most gardeners will use some form of no-dig garden utilising hay, straw, manures, compost and imported soils. A number of methods of removing or killing existing weeds are being trialled. Chipping the weeds has, unfortunately, proved to be time-consuming and

wasteful of the thin sandy top layer. Solarisation, where the ground is thoroughly wetted then covered with black plastic sealed at the edges, has proved effective in killing all green plants. Whether it has killed the ungerminated bindii type seeds, remains to be seen. The third method being tried is simply covering the ground with a thick layer of newspaper and building garden beds up from there. By Australia Day we had our first vegetables in the ground. A good effort in only a month from commencement.

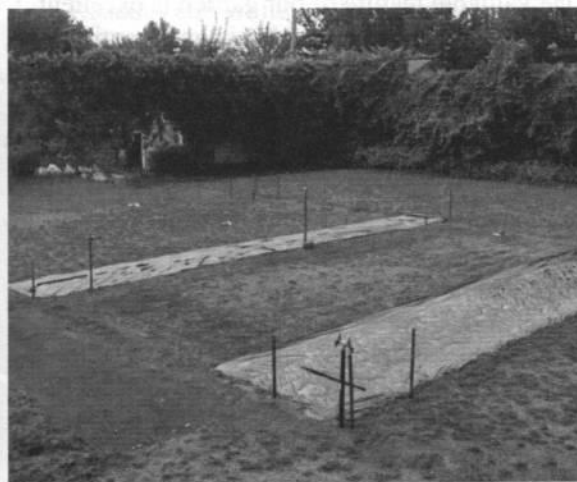
Much work remains to be done to have the garden fully operational. The most immediate communal work project is to strip the weeds off the former tennis court surface so that, in a relatively short period of time, we can achieve a weed-free, mow-free garden. Achievement of this aim will, no doubt have other COGS gardeners, who struggle with weeds interminably, green with envy. Other urgent work includes repairs to the fencing, the

installation of a garden shed so that garden tools and hoses can be purchased, and the stripping of unwanted ivy and ornamental grape vines off the ground and fences so that the perimeter garden beds can be developed.

A number of garden plots are currently being held for possible use by local schools and groups attached to the church. Once these needs are ascertained and met it is expected that the few remaining plots will be quickly filled by residents in nearby suburbs who are unable to meet their gardening requirements at home. The O'Connor community garden is an exciting new development for COGS and it is expected to result in a showcase organic garden that can be used to further COGS' aims in the wider community.

Alan Robertson
O'Connor Community Garden Convenor

Below: Alan, Adrienne and Keith laid the water pipes in the former tennis court. Photos by Keith Colls



Above: Solarisation with black plastic in some very high temperatures has been successful in killing deep-rooted weeds that would be otherwise difficult to remove.

Photos by Alan Robertson

Gardening near the Snowy River



Above: The property in Summer time

For 17 years we have had an organic garden at our rural property in Snowy River Shire 35 km South East of Thredbo. The elevation of the property falls from 1100 metres in the north west corner to 750 metres in the south east corner. The garden is at an elevation of about 1000 metres. The climate is similar to Canberra, with a slightly shorter growing season. Summers are hot and dry. Winters are frosty with some snow. We would typically have a couple of dumps of snow each winter where the snow stays on the ground for a day or more. Snow is not a problem for winter vegies. It protects them nicely from the frost, and they emerge tall and proud after the snow melt.

One valuable feature of our garden is excellent cold air drainage. The garden is on a gentle slope, and we have not tried to make it too level. With no windbreaks or solid fences around the garden, the cold air drains freely. This is a big bonus for a garden in a cold climate.

Mulch—The soil is granite and well drained, so it warms up quite early. But the soil is very thirsty and hungry, so mulching is essential. We compost kitchen waste and weeds, and use an electric chipper to reduce harder materials to mulch. These harder materials are typically the stalks of any vegetables that have gone to seed. You cannot feed wet stalks into the mulcher, as it just chokes on them. Stalks have to be pulled up and laid out on top of the soil to dry out a bit.

Then they go nicely through the mulcher, and provide a fine protective layer that breaks down evenly into the soil. Another advantage of having a fine mulch is that it does not provide harbour for snakes. Snakes are regular visitors to our garden, but we definitely do not want them to take up residence.

Water—Water for the vegetable garden is plentiful in good years, using a hand-held hose that is supplied by gravity feed from the house dam. However, in dry years the house dam is the first dam to dry up. In dry years we water with buckets, filled from drums that are located beneath tank overflows. In fact, we have had so many dry years recently, that we are still using buckets to water the garden this year. Economy in water use has become a deeply ingrained habit and it feels so profligate to turn on the hose! Watering by bucket takes a lot of effort to be fully effective, so we need to supplement this method to ensure the garden gets enough to drink. In dry summers we give the garden a treat about once a month. We hitch up the fire-fighting water-trailer behind the land rover, and fetch a trailer full of water from one of the paddock dams. This water is then pumped onto the garden beds, and is also used to give a deep drink to the exotic shade trees and fruit trees. Everything jumps away gladly following these deep drinks. And best of all, it means a day off bucket patrol for the gardeners.



Above: Similar view of the property after a snowfall.

Fertiliser—Our light granite soils are not only thirsty, they are also very hungry for fertiliser. You would think this would not be a problem on a rural property, with livestock producing plenty of manure every day. But we run sheep, and it is difficult to collect sheep manure from the paddocks where it falls. At shearing time and crutching time, when the sheep are shedded for 12 hours, it is an easy matter to collect manure from under the shed. But this only happens a couple of times a year. If we want to collect manure at other times, we must yard the sheep for a few hours and then collect what they leave behind. The alternative is to collect manure from the sheep camps, but these measures are labour intensive and it is easy to find more pressing tasks.

Insect pests—The thing I like best about our rural garden is the virtual absence of slugs and snails. The odd individual is quickly despatched. Another good thing about our property is that it is remote, with the nearest vegetable garden being about three kilometres away. So our apple trees have not yet been discovered by codling moth—they are entirely pest free. However, the white cabbage moth knows its way to our garden. Another more heart-breaking pest is the wingless grasshopper, who visits the Monaro in the driest summers, and devours what little green matter remains in the paddocks and the garden. Some insect pests do not harm the vegetables, but are a

hazard for the gardeners. European wasps are starting to colonise the area, and they have a nasty sting. In consultation with the Department of Agriculture, we have become skilful trappers of European wasps. Another nasty pest is the jumper ant, which also has a nasty bite.

Larger pests—By far the biggest problem of having a garden in the bush is the presence of birds and possums. Fences keep out the kangaroos and wallabies. Wombats are rare although destructive visitors. We have wonderful bird life, and four species of birds are nesting within 50 metres of the vegetable garden. All birds love to share the garden produce, but some birds are extremely destructive and just take the lot. Rosellas and white cockatoos will happily snap off asparagus stalks just for fun, and leave them lying on the ground. They will also amuse themselves by pulling the small hard fruit off the trees and drop it to the ground. Satin bower birds win the prize for greed. They are quite bold and enterprising, and will completely consume any vegetable crop they can find. Squeezing their plump sleek bodies under the wire cages, they will eat everything before bothering to panic about being trapped in a wire cage. Satin bower birds and currawongs also appreciate fruit in large quantities. They will completely strip a fruit tree as soon as the fruit is ripe. This usually happens the morning after you say 'Let's harvest the apricots tomorrow'. *continued on page 12*

The other big pest in our garden is possums. Since the 2003 fires their numbers have increased enormously throughout the bush, and they are nightly visitors to the garden when fruit is ripening.

What do we grow?—We enjoy eating a large range of vegetables and fruit, but in the garden the emphasis is on **reliable produce**. As the nearest shops are in Jindabyne, which is a one-and-a-half-hour round trip from home, it is practical to have a reliable supply of garden produce. Every year we grow asparagus, parsley, garlic, potato onions, potatoes, beetroot, zucchini, tomatoes and a variety of Asian greens. Lettuce and silver beet go to seed every year and grow throughout the garden during most months. Lettuces are mostly oak leaf and *rouge d'hiver*. Red stemmed beets are more cold hardy, but we find the silver beet much more tender and tasty. We always grow more than we need, and are happy to share with friends. Our property has a lower elevation and more easterly aspect than the surrounding properties, so local friends appreciate gifts of tomatoes, which they find very hard to grow.

Generally root vegetables like carrots and parsnips grow well, although they can be hard to germinate in the warm weather in the well-drained soils. Growing sweet corn is something that we have enjoyed in the past, but we cannot justify the water for this thirsty crop. Some vegetables have been less successful, especially beans and cucumbers. When vegetables fail to thrive, we do not persist with undue efforts to grow them, as there are more pressing challenges on the farm to absorb our time and energy.

Growing behind the wire—Everything grown from March to September must be grown under wire cages to protect it from birds and possums. Cages are required to protect crops from birds and possums. The wire cages we use are made from old single bed frames with four steel legs of about 40 cm welded onto the frame. Then wire netting is wrapped around the lot and tied on with wire ties. These frames are sturdy, and in the summer they are useful for drying onions and garlic, and for drying stalks before chipping them for mulch. In winter we never have enough cages. In summer we have unused cages cluttering up the garden and getting in the way of the mower. Such is life.

We are able to grow beautiful fruit—apricots, peaches, nectarines, plums, cherries and apples. However, harvesting it is another matter. Fruit trees must be netted from an early stage—as soon as the fruit starts to resemble playthings for playful birds. Once the fruit starts to ripen, it is almost impossible to keep birds and possums outside the netting. They are clever and persistent, and can eat a whole crop in one night. While we have ample space for a large orchard, we prefer to concentrate on a few trees and try to ensure the harvest by careful netting.

In summary, the climate is something that we can work with, but birds and possums seriously limit what we can harvest. While we have almost unlimited space, we are limited by how much time and effort we want to put into protecting our crops from birds and possums.

Story and photos

Julia Trainor

Below: Julia's very successful vegie patch.



Community Garden Open Day - Charnwood, Mitchell, and Queanbeyan, 27 November 2005



Above: Worth a look—Garry's straw bale house at Charnwood meant he had well advanced tomato plants early.



Above: Visitors to the Mitchell Garden exploring the abundant produce!



Above: Productive Charnwood.



Graham Walker laments the hail damage that hit Mitchell garden the night before Open Day.

Above right: Queanbeyan garden is in a medium density residential area.



Above: Neat and productive beds at Queanbeyan.

Open Day Continued...



Left: Garry, Gita and Steve from Charnwood admire the chooks at the Mitchell Garden.

Below: Gita's new and exciting plot out at the Charnwood Community Garden.

Below: The resident turkey and a few of the orchard chickens out at Charnwood Garden.



Many visitors exploring the unique set up at the Queanbeyan Garden. Recycled conveyor belts are used to suppress weeds and couch grass.

Open Day Continued...



Chook houses are springing up with the corn and other vegetables at the Charnwood Garden.



The lovely bush surrounds of the Mitchell Garden make gardening a pleasure. Adele is pictured at her plot in Mitchell.



A vegetable palace at the Mitchell Garden!



A wonderful opportunity to meet new people, catch up with old friends and share our communal wealth of knowledge!



Queanbeyan gardeners showing open day visitors the ins and outs of the very productive gardens.

Thanks to **Sophia Williams** for arranging these Open Day photo pages 13-15. Ed. Photos by *Sophia Williams and Janet Popovic.*

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Clay Forms in Garden Spaces*



For me, two of the most beautiful things in this world are wonderful pots and wonderful gardens. The fact that the two are basically from the same source adds to the sense of mystery, rhythm and completeness in a profound and appropriate way.

Basically the source material is clay. For one, the soft and tactile particles are mixed with water and oxides, and when shaped and dried, are offered in an almost ritualistic manner to the searing flames. There, at very high temperatures,

the pliant clay hardens and vitrifies through the chemical reaction of fire on clay and a magical transformation takes place. The inert clay becomes an imperishable form, and may emerge with wondrous colour, texture and character. On the other hand, clay for the garden is mixed with sand, mingled with minerals, water and organic matter, and through the marvellous process of photosynthesis, through sunlight, the plants live and thrive and give so generously to all living things.

But what is clay? Clay is the product of the geological weathering of the earth's surface. It is a common material, it is found everywhere in the world and so is accessible to all mankind. Its origins go back to the beginnings of Time, as it is a representative example of the earth's crust, pulverized to very fine particle size by the action of erosion and time. It waits for us today to understand it, cherish it and transform it with skill and care to fashion what we may. For me it is clay forms in garden spaces.

Because of the imperishable nature of fired clay, ceramic artefacts left by early man provide the most continuous record available from the prehistoric world—man's gradual emergence from the nomadic hunter to the cave dweller to the artisan of ancient cities. Even before man

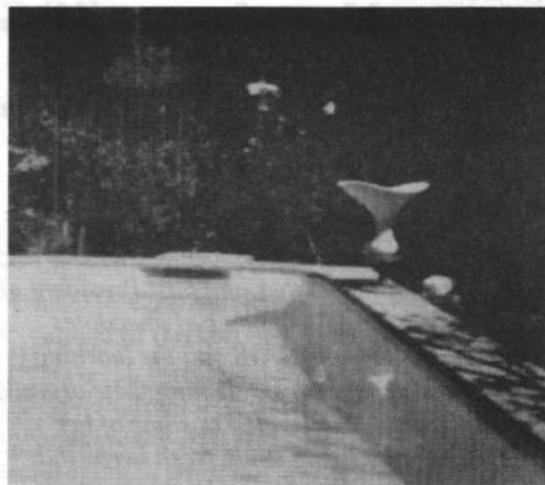


made the great discovery that a seed planted in the ground would reproduce itself, he was modelling things from clay.

Clay is so marvellously plastic it almost invites one to model. It was probably because of this that early man did so and dried his work in the sun. Probably it was accidental that those sun dried pots were near fires and he realized that fired pots could hold shape and be a container. He probably did not explore this phenomenon until, over time, he left his nomadic life as hunter and seed gatherer to settle down and plant crops and tend herds.

The human race has always had a desire to decorate, be it his own person or his surroundings. Garden decoration has evolved from the erection of religious symbols and memorials to various gods or mythical heroes. Gardens throughout the world now contain such objects, sometimes in their original situation but more frequently torn out of their first context and transported from their homes. In the West ornamentation of gardens goes back to Roman times. The unburied gardens of Pompeii alone show many examples, of which a large proportion have yet earlier classical allusions. Europe had its fountains and statuary, China had its dragons and gods, Japan its lanterns and today, Suburbia its gnomes.

Today with the pressure and madness of the outside political world, and the unholy values that are perpetuated on the people, I feel that we all need our own world to make as we will to



escape the manipulation outside. A garden is a necessity to bring balance and worth and hope back to man. For me, finding within that garden a place for clay forms is a way to bring beauty and harmony into everyday living.

Cecily Gibson



**This article comprises extracts from an essay of the same title by Cecily Gibson. Cecily was born in Yass and had a successful nursing career in Australia and overseas. A love of pottery then led her to Japan where she was the first Australian to work initially with Japanese traditional potters and then with the great porcelain master Tomimoto. In later life Cecily completed a horticultural course in Canberra and moved to Maleny to fulfil her dream of combining the creation of beautiful pots with the creation of a large scale garden. Following a serious accident Cecily returned to Canberra. She held a major exhibition of her pottery in September 2003 and is still an active and successful gardener. Editor*

Notes from a COGS Monthly Meeting

22 November 2005 Shirley Carden on the beginning of community gardens and some observations on the value of herbs

At the COGS general meeting on 22 November 2005 it was a pleasure to be addressed by Shirley Carden, a founding member and past President of COGS. Shirley shared a number of anecdotes about the early days of COGS and the learning experiences of members establishing their organic gardens. We were also treated to some of her recipes for healthy living using fresh herbs that we can readily grow in the garden. A summary based on the Editor's notes from the talk (and Shirley's notes on herbs referenced on page 22) follows.

COGS early days in community gardening

- Shirley Carden was President of COGS when Chris Nazer, who worked for City Parks and Gardens and was into organics, suggested applying for a community garden on the Cotter Road. On this original site (the current Cotter garden later shifted location) the garden had about 20 people with 20 reasonable size plots. On two sides of the allotted land there were large pine trees that sucked up the nutrients applied to the garden.
- Shirley's immediate predecessor Rose Walters was the one who suggested that COGS meetings be held in the Griffin Centre in Civic. In order to hold their meetings there organizations had to be incorporated and this started the COGS incorporation process. After some difficulties in getting an agreed constitution David Odell used his legal knowledge to publish the draft constitution in the Newsletter with a default starting date. Incorporation was achieved and this enabled COGS Inc. to start meeting in the Griffin Centre and importantly, to apply for grants.
- At the Cotter garden a group of 8 year old children came to garden each Tuesday. They were enthusiastic and never caused any damage. The other gardeners at Cotter missed them when they moved to their newly built school.
- There were various problems with watering systems and some vandalism, stealing of tools and vegetable produce—but basically the gardeners fixed problems as they arose and 'got on with it.' In particular working people who lived in flats without access to gardens experienced the benefits of a community garden.
- Shirley's friend Traudi Kalivoda was an avid reader always looking for new ideas and was an incredibly successful gardener. Traudi made garden tarps by recycling manure bags (opened out, taped around the edges with each of the four corners folded in to become handles)—the resulting product was used all through the garden in place of wheelbarrows. *See page 30 for Traudi's method of germinating carrots.*
- The Cotter gardeners used their initiative to obtain local horse manure—they hired a truck and brought in about 18 loads of horse manure and sawdust.
- One member of the garden had imported masses of sheep manure but never got around to harvesting. The weeds appeared to have completely taken over but, during a field day held to clean up plots that were overgrown, it was discovered that carrots of huge diameter were flourishing—the weeds acting as a living mulch.
- Shirley 'has a soft spot for weeds' so used to weed other plots and put the weeds in a heap (before weeds go to seed). A weed heap started in Autumn and added to regularly until Spring was then sown with pumpkin seeds. This produced 50 great pumpkins and the resulting composted soil was spread out to make a new garden. Traudi also made weed heaps, for zucchini planting, and enclosed them with recycled shelving with a curved edge that kept out the snails.
- These were wonderful times in the company of interesting people who learned together about organic gardening and problem solving.

Using Fresh Herbs

Shirley indicated she had first addressed a COGS general meeting on the subject of herbs almost 30 years ago. Until recently Shirley lived on certified organic land at Berry. Now she has moved back to Canberra to a small house and is establishing her herbs there. In the meantime her grandchildren are asking her 'When are you going to make a green drink grandma?' Her 13 grandchildren and 2 and 1/2 great grandchildren have grown used to a healthy lifestyle in which herbs have played an integral part.

- Shirley referred to Herbs under the categories of Antiseptic, Tonic, Sedative and Other.
- The antiseptic herbs include sage, thyme, marjoram, oregano, basil and garlic. Some recipes with these that Shirley uses are—

Herbed Butter: 125g butter at room temperature, 4 sprigs each marjoram, thyme and oregano (strip leaves from woody stalks if necessary), 4 sage leaves, 4 sprigs parsley (not too large), bunch of chives about 1/2 inch thick, a few leaves of garlic chives if available. Chop the herbs very finely. Combine thoroughly with the softened butter. Spread generously on long wholemeal rolls cut on the diagonal. Either use on fresh rolls or heat in an electric fry pan lined with foil until the butter is melted and the under side of the bread is golden brown. Serve immediately.

Potent Salad Dressing: 1 knob of garlic peeled, the juice of one large lemon, 1/2 cup olive oil, as much parsley and or mint as will fit into a blender. Blend thoroughly. This dressing can be used on salads or hot vegetables. The mint and parsley have a deodorizing effect.

- The tonic herbs include yarrow (helps fever, colds, cramp, can stop bleeding), dandelion (general tonic and blood purifier), parsley including its nutritious stalks (vitamins A, B, C, iron - good for anaemia).

- The sedative herbs in particular are great stress relievers and include Lemon Balm, chamomile, lavender. Shirley noted the importance of the 'psychology' of herbal use: "prepare the appropriate brew, use it and offer it to those who realize its value—but refrain from suggesting the very one who needs it should have it. Curiosity usually gets the better of the human of the species."

Use Lemon Balm in a Green Drink (see next page) or, for someone who can't sleep at night, prepare a strong brew (a good handful of Lemon Balm per cup of water or juice).

Place a couple of tablespoons of lavender flowers into the centre of a pretty handkerchief, gather it together and keep it closed with a small rubber band. Tie a pretty ribbon over the band for a more attractive finish. Squeeze to release the perfume and breathe deeply to get a good night's sleep. Do not include stalks, which prick when dried.

- The main herb under other herbs that Shirley talked about was Aloe Vera (anti-inflammatory, pain-inhibiting, 'bactericidal', 'virucidal', fungicidal and penetrating e.g. for arthritic joint pain). In particular Shirley referred to the efficient and effective sprayed application of Aloe Vera to stop pain and swelling after a child's hand had been caught in a slammed door.

Shirley buys the commercially available AV juice in one litre containers available from the health food sections of Woolworths and Coles. After nasty falls and bruising this should be sipped frequently in small quantities while resting.

- Shirley emphasized that she sticks with the well known herbs such as mentioned here that she knows well and that have been used without harm for centuries.
- So ask your friends for cuttings of these herbs and get started using them regularly—and try the Green Drink recipe on the next page!



Green Drink

In her talk to COGS on herbs Shirley referred us to her notes "Every Day Herbs for Healthy Living." Copies of these notes are available from the COGS library (372, P, H). Here is the extract (page 3) on *green drink*—

"I grow my herbs in healthy soil without the use of chemical sprays or fertilizers. I use them mostly freshly picked, always seeking out the best quality. One of my family's favourite drinks is what we call the GREEN DRINK. I can vary it to lessen stress, give energy, ensure a good night's sleep, overcome the unpleasant effects of hay fever, colds—the list is endless. I prefer a base of unsweetened apple or pineapple juice with the addition of a little lemon juice to make sure the colour is green and not a murky brown. A good selection of herbs would be lemon balm, peppermint, borage, yarrow and lemon verbena. The herbs are blended into the juice and the mixture strained. The lemon flavoured herbs tend to have a calming effect as well as improving the flavour. Peppermint also makes the drink more flavoursome, but as an added benefit, it rids the body of excess mucus—thus helpful in all the "itis" illnesses e.g. sinusitis, bronchitis—even hay fever. If you haven't the time to prepare a green drink or herbal tea, just chew a few sprigs fresh from the garden. The lemon balm is great for anyone under stress—it has a calming effect on young and old."

COGS Backyard - Xeriscape Gardens



*Fine artichokes at COGS Backyard December 2005.
Photo by J Popovic.*

Please try and join the next COGS Backyard working bee to be held on **Saturday 4 March**, 2 - 4pm. Enter through the gate on Unwin Place, Weston just past the Police complex and

opposite Orana School.

Mowing, weeding and watering are likely to be the main tasks on the day.

Working bees are also scheduled for April 1 and April 29 from 1 - 3pm

Thank you to the following COGS members who have helped—

at COGS Backyard in recent months:

Roz and Trevor Bruhn, Keith Colls and his beginners organic gardening class, Peter Cornhill, Adrienne Fazekas, Janet and Ilya Popovic, Garry Ridgway, Judy Tier;

and at the COGS plant sale on 12 November:

Ben Bradey, Peter Cornhill, Stephen Dangaard, Adrienne Fazekas, Robin McKeown, Ilya and Janet Popovic, Judy Tier, Sophia Williams.

Canberra Organic Growers Society Inc.
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
28 March 2006, 7.30pm

The Annual General Meeting of the Canberra Organic Growers Society Inc. will be held on
Tuesday 28 March 2006 at 7:30 pm, in Meeting Room 6 of the Griffin Centre ,
Genge Street, Civic (opposite the old Griffin Centre site)

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
4. 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:

1. 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).
2. 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.
3. If insufficient further nominations are received, any vacant positions remaining on the committee shall be deemed to be vacancies.
4. 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.
5. If the number of nominations received exceeds the number of vacancies to be filled, a ballot shall be held.
6. 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.
7. A person is not eligible to simultaneously hold more than one position on the committee, except:
 - (a) the position of Public Officer; and
 - (b) the position of Membership Secretary, which can be held by the Honorary Treasurer.

Please contact either the Secretary Ben Bradey, phone 6161 0329, email info@cogs.asn.au or another member of the current committee (see page 32) if you would like further information or a nomination form.

Marvellous Harvest Curry Bake

Well, it's harvest time folks...and you know what that means if you've done the hard yards in the dirt—a plethora of lovely bounty in need of feasting upon or freezing. As my freezer brims to near overflow early in the impending autumn, I'm left to the feasting option and this is one of my favourite recipes when there is just way too much to think about sensible food preparation.

This recipe will absorb pretty much anything you pull from your plots and process it efficiently, tastily and, most importantly, in bulk and with a distinct lack of cleaning up afterwards.

1. Survey thy bounty and divide based on cooking time.
2. Vegies that cook quickly, such as tomatoes, capsicum, eggplant, zucchini, beans, spinach, coriander (a fine addition) and other leafy goodies, are chopped into large pieces; to be precise, about half the size of a matchbox.
3. Those which cook slowly—potato, pumpkin, squash, onion, carrot are cut finer; roughly into small cubes as big as one's thumb or thinish slices.
4. Remember to keep seeds from any prize mature specimens for planting next season.
5. Preheat oven to 180-200 °C.
6. Put the whole lot in a large baking tray and mix 'em up good.
7. For the carnivorous out there, God bless their position upon the crest of the food chain, lay small cubes of meat or whole chicken pieces on top.
8. Douse liberally in a curry sauce. Purists out there can make their own from scratch (a messy, time-consuming but worth-it process) using your favourite recipe, but for simplicity's sake I'd suggest a store bought paste. Mix the paste with coconut milk (for Thai curry pastes) or water and a dash of cream (for Indian curry pastes); mix well (a bout in the microwave will assist this) and pour over the tray of home-grown delicacies. The cooking vegies will supply the rest of the liquid required. For a large baking tray, you'll need 2 to 3 cups of potent curry broth, but the beauty of this alleged recipe is that it is no exact science. Use 3 to 7 tablespoons of good paste per dish – you can adjust the taste (upwards) later if necessary, but the vegies will impart the bulk of the flavour.
9. Cook in the oven until the meat starts looking cooked, then stir the whole lot up.
10. Cook some more. If you're using chicken or other poultry, ensure the meat is fully cooked by checking it falls away from the bone or flakes easily. The meat should be done well by the time the slow cooking vegies are softish.
11. Remove from oven and leave to stand—it will be hotter than a tin roof on Venus. Sample a small amount and adjust flavour by stirring in more paste, or if it's too spicy hot, cream and/or yoghurt, which are good additions regardless.
12. Serve with rice or noodles, though I often scoff it straight given that the amount of vegies negates the need for this additional filler.



Experiment with your pastes and amounts until you reckon it's perfect. Unless chilli is your friend, beware the insanely hot varieties like Madras as they will drown out the intense vegie flavour. I prefer the milder versions like a yellow Thai, Korma or Tandoori.

Graham Walker

What to do with all of those:

Zucchini's

In a season when zucchinis are taking over the garden and the refrigerator, it's often daunting to know just what to do with them all! So here are a few suggestions !

Zucchini Soup

In a soup pot cook one onion with a little oil. Slice zucchinis (one for each person eating plus one more), and add them to the pot cooking for a few minutes. Cover with a cup of stock for each zucchini (5 zucchinis, then 5 cups of stock). Allow to boil, cooking until zucchinis are soft. Blend and serve with a dollop of sour cream! This soup also freezes well.

Zucchini Patties

Substitute grated zucchinis for the mince in a rissoles recipe. Mix grated zucchini, eggs, onion, parsley, mint, gruyere cheese, flour and lemon juice together to form the patties and then spoon into hot oil and fry.

Zucchini Cake

Substitute grated zucchini for the carrot in your favourite carrot cake recipe. Adding chopped walnuts or pecans gives an extra special flavour and texture!

Zucchini Dip

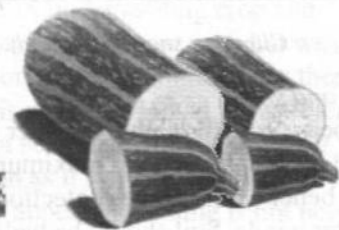
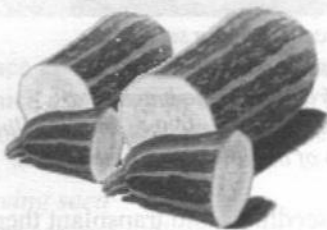
Slice the zucchinis lengthwise, removing seeds if very large zucchini, spread with squeezed fresh garlic and place on a baking tray in the oven. When softened blend the zucchini flesh in a blender till smooth, adding olive oil, a squeeze of lemon, and other flavouring of your choice, for example Italian herbs, salt and freshly ground pepper. Serve with lebanese bread 'chips' (torn and dried in the oven).

Zucchini Chips

Slice zucchini into thin rounds and dry in a dehydrator a (or a very slow oven). Store in an airtight container and serve as chips or to eat with dips. The chips may be flavoured by sprinkling with herb salts or, for example, Italian garlic herb seasoning.

Zucchini Frittata

Grate zucchini (about 2 cups) and press in colander to drain any excess liquid. Coat wok or frypan (it's easier to remove the cooked frittata from a wok) with a film of olive oil and over a gentle heat sauté zucchini, onion rings and finely sliced garlic clove/s. Lightly beat 4 or 5 eggs and add salt and chopped herbs to your taste, then pour over the zucchini and onion mix in the pan, continuing gentle cooking until firm. If you wish, add grated cheese to melt on top.



*Next issue we would like to include recipes on the brassica family particularly broccoli So if you have any tried and true family favourites please e-mail them to **Sophia Williams** at: nathsoph@hotmail.com*

Cool Season Legumes - Peas and Broad beans

Peas and broad beans are crops which grow well in Canberra over the cooler months when space is usually available in the garden. Both peas and broad beans are legumes which have the ability to fix atmospheric nitrogen in nodules on their roots. This makes them very useful in a crop rotation program as this fixed nitrogen is available for use by later crops.

Peas

Varieties of peas available as seed include snow peas, snap peas, shelling peas and peas suitable for drying (split peas). Snow peas are eaten as young flat pods before the seeds start to grow, while snap peas, which are also known as sugar pods, are eaten whole - pods and seeds together. Many varieties of traditional shelling pea seed are available and are well worth growing as they can be picked while still young and sweet. Fresh young peas are rarely available for sale. Peas grown for use as dried peas are quite floury and not particularly palatable when eaten fresh. Purple Podded Dutch is the most commonly available of the dried pea varieties.



Climbing snow peas ready to harvest

Site and soil

As peas grow through the colder months they need a site that receives maximum winter sun and will benefit from some protection from cold winter winds. Soil should be well structured with good drainage. Peas do not enjoy wet soils and will struggle in heavy clay soils. The addition of organic matter such as compost or well rotted animal manure before planting will improve soil

structure and drainage. Peas are not heavy feeders and if planted in a soil rich in organic matter should not need any additional fertilising.

Planting

Peas can be planted in Canberra in mid to late Autumn and again in early Spring. Autumn planted peas will grow through the Winter and start to flower as the weather warms up in Spring. There are several methods for planting peas:

1. *Direct sowing:* Plant the seed directly at a depth of three times its diameter and about 5 cm apart. Water well once after planting and then do not water again until the first shoots appear in 7 - 10 days. If the soil is too wet the seed can rot in the ground before it germinates.
2. *Pre-germination:* Once pea seeds have started to germinate they are less likely to rot in soil that is too cold or wet. This method is also useful if you are unsure of the viability of the pea seed. Place the seeds in a bowl and just cover with water. The seeds will swell and after about 24 hours the developing root will be visible as a triangular swelling. This indicates the seed has started to germinate and it can then be carefully planted into damp soil. The seed must not be allowed to dry out at this stage or it will die. If you can't plant it immediately it can be kept for a few days between moist paper towels. The root will appear and grow during this time and care needs to be taken to ensure it is not damaged during planting out.



Greenfeast pea seed

above left: after 5 years storage, above right: seed from the same batch after soaking for 24 hours. The developing root swelling is visible at the top of the lower right-hand seed.

3. *Seedlings:* Buy seedlings and transplant them or germinate seed in punnets and transplant when the seedlings are 5 - 10 cm tall. Peas seem to cope well with transplanting when small and this method is useful for early

spring plantings when the soil may be too cold or wet for good germination.

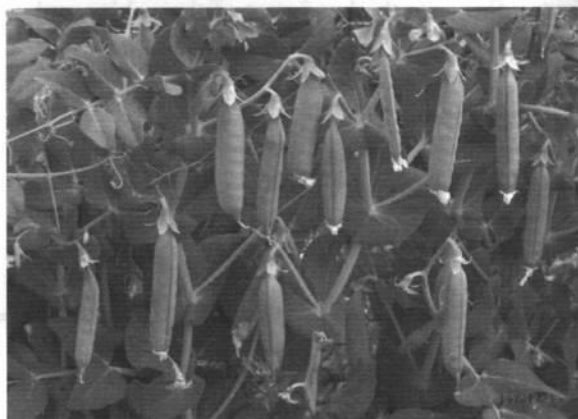
If you have ever planted pea seeds which have never been seen again, method 2 or 3 may be worth a try.

Cultivation

Peas support themselves by means of tendrils which will wrap around any available support including other peas. Dwarf peas can be grown without support but the provision of a low trellis will make harvesting easier. Generally dwarf peas are given a wire trellis 600 - 900 mm tall and climbing peas a 1.5 - 2 metre trellis. Peas need constant soil moisture but little or no supplementary feeding. Overhead watering should be avoided as it can encourage fungal diseases such as powdery mildew and rust. Insect pests are rarely a problem through the winter months.

Harvesting

Young peas will be ready to pick about four weeks after flowering. Snow peas should be picked before the seeds start to swell. Shelling peas should be picked when the seeds have tightly filled the pods but before the pods become dull and rough. Regular picking encourages further flower and pod development.

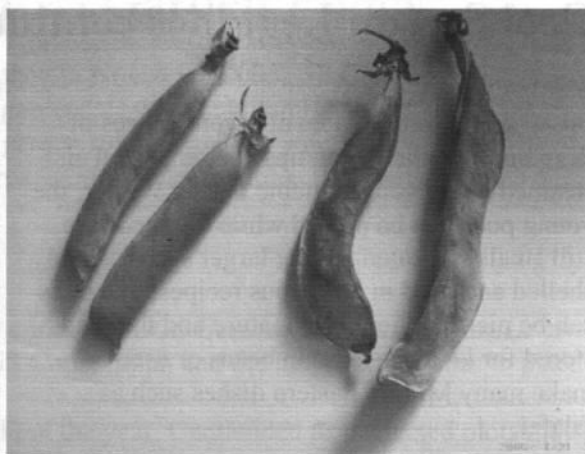


Pods of William Massey Dwarf peas ready to pick

Once all the peas have been harvested, the vines, which are now pea straw, can be used to mulch summer crops such as tomatoes or sweetcorn.

Saving seed

Peas are self-pollinating so saved seed will be true to type. To save pea seed the pods should be left on the vine to fully ripen - they will become light brown and papery.



*Dried pods ready for seed collecting
left: Kodiak shelling peas
right: Oregon Dwarf snow peas*

If left on the vine for too long pea pods will split open and shed their seeds. Once the pods are completely dry the seeds can be removed and stored in a cool, dry place where they should keep for at least five years.

Broad beans

Broad beans have similar soil and site requirements to those of peas, although they will tolerate heavier clay soils than peas. They should be grown in full sun and given some protection from strong winds which can blow over or snap the plants.

Planting

Sow broad beans in either mid to late autumn (April - May) or in early spring (Aug - Sept). Plant the seed about 1.5 - 2 cm deep and about 20 cm apart. Water after planting and keep the soil damp but not wet until the first shoots appear in about 10 days. If the soil is too wet the seed can rot before it germinates.

Cultivation

Broad beans are an undemanding crop and tolerate most conditions except very hot weather. If planted in a soil rich in organic matter then no further feeding is required. Broad beans tolerate frost but will not set pods while the weather is too cold. As soon as it starts to warm up in spring pods will appear. Trellising is not needed as broad beans have no means of attaching themselves. In a windy situation stakes and strings can be used to stop them being blown over and damaged and will also make harvesting easier.

continued next page . . .

Cool Season Legumes continued . . .

Harvesting

Broad beans can be eaten at several stages of development: the young tips can be picked and steamed as a green vegetable during Winter; the young pods can be picked while the seeds are still small and eaten whole; larger seeds can be shelled and used in numerous recipes; the pods can be picked when fully mature and the seeds stored for later use as soup beans or used to make many Middle Eastern dishes such as falafel.

Saving seed

Broad beans like peas are self-pollinating and are one of the easiest seeds to save. The pods should be left on the plant to fully ripen. As the pods ripen they shrivel and turn dark brown to black and become papery. Once the pods are completely dry the seeds can be removed and

stored in a cool dry place where they will keep for up to five years.



Dried pods and seed of Coles Prolific broad beans

Article and photos by **Adrienne Fazekas**



For those who don't grow broad beans because they think they don't like them here is an interesting way to prepare them. This recipe is based on the one appearing on page 96 of *the cook's companion* by Stephanie Alexander, Viking, Penguin Books Australia Ltd, 1996

Moroccan broad bean dip

500 g shelled broad beans
1 - 2 cloves garlic, crushed or finely chopped
½ teaspoon freshly chopped oregano
½ teaspoon ground cumin
¼ - ½ teaspoon chilli powder
⅓ - ½ cup extra virgin olive oil
1 tablespoon lemon juice
salt, freshly ground black pepper

Boil beans for 15 minutes until quite tender. Drain over a bowl and reserve the cooking water. Squeeze the beans out of their skins and discard the skins. Tip ¼ cup of cooking water into a food processor and add beans, garlic, oregano, cumin, chilli powder, salt and pepper and blend. If the mixture is too thick add a further ¼ cup of cooking water. Taste and adjust seasonings and lemon juice. Serve garnished with paprika, cumin, olive oil and finely chopped spring onions.

Pea and Broad bean seed available from COGS

The following varieties of seed will be available at COGS meetings during Autumn

Dwarf shelling peas:

William Massey Dwarf
Greenfeast
Kodiak
Hurst Greenshaft

Snap peas:

Oregon Sugar Pod

Dwarf snow peas:

Oregon Dwarf
Delta Louisa

Broad beans:

Coles Prolific
Coles Early Dwarf

All seeds were grown either in the Cook Community Garden seed saving plot or at 'COGS Backyard' in the Xeriscape Garden, Weston

Changes to the COGS Garden Policy

Two sections were added to the COGS garden policy in November 2005. All COGS gardeners should be familiar with the rules applying in the gardens. If you are unfamiliar with the *COGS General Community Garden Rules* or your local garden rules please ask your garden convener for a copy to read. A garden plot is defined as any area within a COGS garden that is available to a member for their sole use or benefit.

Garden members responsibilities

1. Garden members must at all times comply with the *COGS General Community Garden Rules* as set out in Appendix 4 of the COGS Constitution and the local garden rules in place in their garden;
2. Members plots must be maintained throughout the year. Unattended or neglected plots may be resumed according to the conditions set out in the local garden rules;
3. Garden members are expected to contribute to the maintenance and upkeep of the communal areas of a garden. This involves regularly participating in activities such as working bees and mowing/whipper snipping/weeding communal areas;
4. Garden members are expected to attend garden meetings and participate in the electing of garden conveners and committees and in the determining of local garden rules;
5. Garden members must comply with any ACTEW water restrictions or ACTEW water conservation measures in force;
6. Members are responsible for their private property left in gardens or gardens' sheds;

Livestock in gardens



Garden members do not have the automatic right to keep livestock of any sort in a COGS garden. The keeping of any livestock, other than poultry or bees, in a garden requires the explicit permission of the COGS committee.

Members wishing to keep livestock in a COGS garden must:

1. Take sole responsibility for the health and welfare of the livestock and, in the case of poultry, agree to attend to them daily;
2. Provide secure housing and adequate shade, shelter and space;
3. Provide adequate food and clean water;
4. Pay plot fees for the area occupied;
5. Be familiar with, and comply with, ACT Government Regulations in relation to the keeping of livestock e.g. The ACT Public Health Regulations 2000 requirements for keeping poultry;
6. Comply with any local garden rules concerning the keeping of livestock;

Local garden rules may:

- a) Prohibit particular livestock or livestock in general in a garden;
- b) Limit the number of members keeping livestock in a garden or the number of animals/ birds/hives etc that an individual can keep;
- c) Specify areas of a garden where livestock can or can't be housed;
- b) Change at any time with the agreement of a majority of a gardens' members;

Members failing to comply with these rules will be required to remove their livestock from the garden and forfeit any plot fees paid.

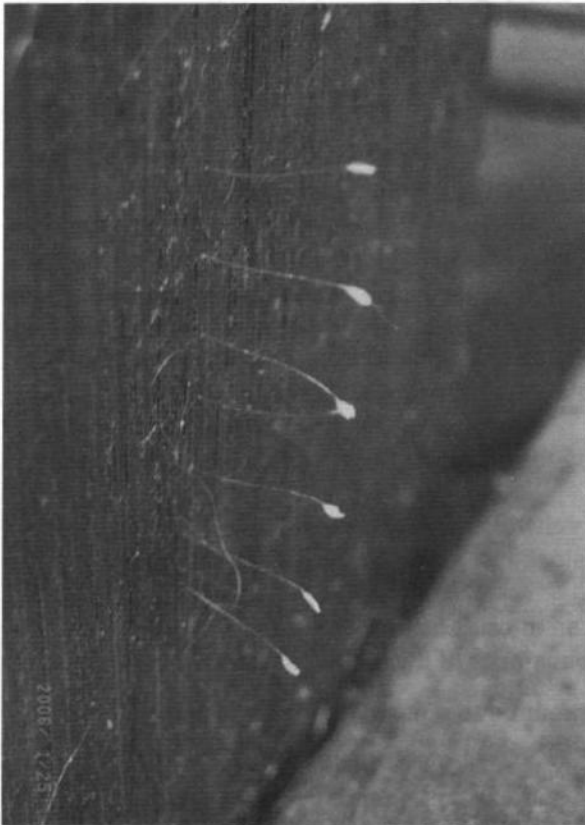
Any disputes arising over the keeping of livestock in gardens will, in the first instance, be mediated by the garden convener and if unresolved, determined by the COGS committee.





Would you recognise lacewing eggs?

We've mentioned often that lacewings are to be encouraged in the garden as beneficial insects but would you recognise lacewing eggs if you came across them in your garden? In fact each egg is deposited on the end of a very fine hairlike stalk that attaches to a leaf or other surface so when you see a series of such stalks and eggs be careful not to destroy these garden friendly predators.



A row of lacewing eggs on their distinctive stalks discovered on the barbecue trolley!

The eggs are 1 - 2 mm long on 1 cm stalks.

Photo by Adrienne Fazekas

Internet sites of interest—

You may find the following internet sites worth a look.

www.industrysearch.com.au/news/viewrecord.aspID=19183

This leads you to the article "Understand organic to stretch health-conscious dollars" dated 24 January 2006. *Thanks to Carl Were for this one.*

www.i-sis.org.uk/NSADTMB.php

"World genebanks and food security in jeopardy", a report which was the subject of a press release "SOS: Save our Seeds," August 2005. *Thanks to Keith Thomas for this reference.*

www.soilandhealth.org

This site describes itself as "a specialist library about holistic agriculture, holistic health and self-sufficient homestead living"... a free public library. No membership payment is required to get full access to its contents."

www.managingwholes.com

This site is primarily aimed at landholders with an interest in sustainable agriculture. *Thanks to Ben Bradey for contributing the two references immediately above.*

Germinating Carrots

Mix fresh carrot seeds with damp sand in an ice cream container or similar and leave for 3 days. Lay old fence palings across the plot in between the rows where the carrot seeds are to be sown. Sprinkle the seeds between the palings and cover with a fine loam. Walk over the sown seed to firm down the soil—carrots like firmed soil. Keep moist till germination occurs. The palings allow the carrots to get a head start on weeds. Once the first weeds are pulled out and the carrots get bigger, the carrot leaves shade out further weeds.

Source: Editor's notes from Shirley Carden's address to the COGS November general meeting that included Traudi Kalivoda's tricks with germinating carrot seeds. It seems Traudi, "a brilliant gardener" spent rather a long time in the community garden and often just made it home a few minutes ahead of her husband. She'd throw on a pan with onions and garlic creating delicious aromas through the house so there were no doubts that dinner was in preparation!



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 eg it is too late to plant savoy cabbages, but the smaller ball-headed varieties should be successful.



Peas

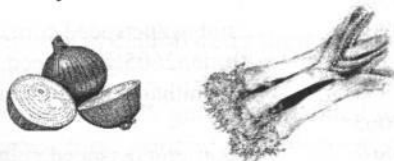
Sugar snap peas may be sown in early March for a Winter harvest, but the crop could be lost if there is an early severe frost affecting the blossom. Peas sown later in April-May will be ready for a Spring harvest.

Lettuces

Only plant Winter varieties of lettuces (cos, salad bowl, oakleaf, butterhead and mignonette varieties).

Leeks

Leek seedlings may be planted in 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 from Spring to early Summer. Mid season varieties are often sown in late Autumn or early Winter and long keeping varieties in Winter or early Spring. The timing of mid or late season varieties is well worth experimenting with by making successive plantings to determine the best time for 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. Stocks, Pansies and Poppies can be planted as seedlings in March and early April. Others such as Virginia Stock, Candytuft, Larkspur and Sweetpeas can be sown direct throughout Autumn.



Green manures

Autumn is the time to plant green manure crops so they can establish well before the frosts. Cut or dig in the green manure in Spring, at least 4-6 weeks prior to planting your Summer crops. Some benefits of green manure crops are:

- they provide valuable nutrients for successive crops;
- they provide organic matter for soil micro-organisms to breakdown;
- they provide soil cover in Winter;
- 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.

The legumes are very useful as they fix nitrogen in the soil whilst the non legumes provide bulk organic matter.

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

Autumn Vegetable Planting Guide

	MAR	APR	MAY
Asian greens	ST	T	
Brussels Sprouts	T		
Broccoli	T		
Broad Beans		S	S
Cabbage	T		
Cauliflower	T		
Chicory	ST	T	
Chinese Cabbage	T		
Corn Salad	ST	ST	
Endive	ST	T	
Garlic		S	S
Kale	T		
Kohlrabi	ST	T	
Leeks	T		
Lettuce	ST	ST	T
Peas	S	S	S
Onions		S	S
Turnips	T		

S = Seed Sowing
T = Transplanting

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

Canberra Organic Quick Quiz

1. Why should green manure not be dug in too deeply?
2. Why do most soil micro-organisms live near the soil surface?
3. Why are peas one of the easiest plants to save seed from?
4. Why is self-pollination a great advantage to a seed saver?
5. Why is green manure a good winter crop in Canberra?

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

COGS Committee Members & Helpers

President	Adrienne Fazekas	6247 5882	president@cogs.asn.au
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Public Officer	Ben Bradey	6161 0329	info@cogs.asn.au
Treasurer	Michelle West		
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Editor	Janet Popovic	6258 2811	editor@cogs.asn.au
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Cotter Orchard	Ann Smith	6285 2995	a.smith@netspeed.com.au
Dickson	Beby Bros	6248 0063	
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<u>Monthly Meetings</u>			
Seed exchange	Volunteers required		
Supper convenors	Volunteers required		
Librarians	Beby Bros, assisted by Victor Oates		
Web manager	Ben Bradey		info@cogs.asn.au
Telephone contact	Elizabeth Palmer	6248 8004	
Inquiries about Organic Growing		6248 8004	info@cogs.asn.au

To contact COGS

Email info@cogs.asn.au or visit our website at www.cogs.asn.au

COGS monthly meetings are held at 7:30pm on the 4th Tuesday of each month
except December and January
in Meeting Room 6 of the new Griffin Centre, Genge Street, Civic (opposite the old Griffin Centre site)
— 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 Meeting Room 6, Griffin Centre, Genge St. 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 12 community gardens in the Canberra region. Gardens are located at Charnwood, Cook, Curtin (Cotter Garden), Dickson, Erindale, Holder, Kambah, Mitchell (Northside Garden), Oaks Estate, O'Connor, 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

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

COGS NOTICE BOARD

Don't forget to check the COGS website at www.cogs.asn.au for updates and new notices.

Speakers

COGS monthly meetings

7:30 pm, Griffin Centre, Genge Street, Civic
(the new Griffin Centre, opposite the old Griffin Centre site)

28 February 2006

Graham Williams
Head Gardener at Lanyon Homestead
Organic Gardening and Vegetable Growing

28 March 2006

COGS AGM (see notice on page 23 of this issue) and Harvest Night - all COGS members are invited to bring their produce to display and talk about.

25 April 2005

Speaker to be advised.

COGS meeting suppers

Please consider joining a roster for serving supper at our monthly general meetings in the Griffin Centre (4th Tuesday of the month except December and January). Contact Adrienne or a committee member (see page 32 for contact information).

COGS Working Bees

COGS Backyard

Saturday 4 March, 2 - 4pm
Saturday 1 April, 1 - 3pm
Saturday 29 April, 1 - 3pm

See page 22 of this issue for details.

www.cogs.asn.au for updates and confirmations.

Events

COGS Autumn Open Garden Day

COGS is hoping to hold another community garden Open Day in mid Autumn. Details will be posted on the COGS website.

Biodynamic Farming and Gardening Course

With Lynette West
25 February 2006, Coolamon
26 March 2006, Bungendore

For further information,
www.biodynamiceducation.com.au

Biodynamic regional network

For further information,
yvonne.best@netspeed.com.au

Caption Competition

No entries were received for the Summer issue caption competition so there's no winner!

Thanks Marie and Mary for all those wonderful cups of herbal tea, delicious supper goodies and the service with smiles over countless COGS general meeting evenings.



Canberra Organic Quick Quiz Answers

1. Most of the micro-organisms which break down organic matter live in the top 15 cm of the soil.
2. Because the oxygen they require is available.
3. Peas are self-pollinating, the seed is large enough to handle easily, stores well and is produced in one season.
4. The seed produced by self-pollinating plants will be true to type without any special precautions being taken.
5. It grows well, occupies unused beds and once cut adds organic matter to the soil which benefits summer crops.