

Spring 2006



Canberra Organic

ORGANIC GROWING IN THE CANBERRA REGION

The quarterly publication of the Canberra Organic Growers Society Inc.

**A look at Community Gardens around the world; Growing Lavender;
Ode to a Scarecrow; The Organic Federation of Australia's latest conference;
New Gardening courses for plot holders; A Visit to Jackie French's Garden;
Charcoal; Managing Weeds; Edible Ornamental Gardens;
Soil Health and SO MUCH MORE!**



Vol. 14 No. 3

CANBERRA ORGANIC

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The *Canberra Organic* magazine is a unique
medium for reaching people in the Canberra
region who have an interest in organic food,
gardening and general environmental issues.
Our circulation is currently 400.

ADVERTISING RATES

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Thanks to Arthur's Vegetable Clipart

From the Editor



*We have a jam packed issue this season, brimming
with articles for you to enjoy!*

*The COGS General Meetings, have hosted some
very interesting speakers and many who have
inspired input and feedback from the audience.
Each month, the conversations and discussions
produce a rich array of information and ideas. We
have collected many of these ideas and added them
to the magazine, allowing a broader audience to
participate.*

*Our COGS membership have been crucial in the
development of the Spring issue of Canberra
Organic by sharing their wealth of knowledge with
us all. Thankyou very much to all contributors.*

*We would also like to thank Warm Earth Magazine,
for allowing us permission to re-print an interesting
article they published on the use of Charcoal in the
garden.*

*Due to the welcome input from our readers we have
been able to continue two of our new sections. We
received some great questions for our Question and
Answer section (Page 25) and a fascinating
Zucchini/'Ucinni' claimed "Vegie of the
issue" (Page 16). Remember these sections can
only continue if YOU contribute!*

*We welcome contributions from everyone, whether
it be in the form of questions, photos, new ideas or
research, well loved recipes, exciting new books, or
helpful hints. It is amazing just how useful the
knowledge and ideas we take for granted can be to
others. So please share your ideas and concepts
with others by contacting us at editor@cogs.asn.au!*

*With the weather warming up it is time to dream of
our Spring gardens. What will you plant? regulars,
favourites. Are you trying anything new this
Season? So many possibilities!*

*Enjoy soaking up the sun while reading your Spring
edition 2006.*

*Sophia Williams
Janet Popovic*



From the President Spring 2006

With Spring rapidly approaching it's time to get busy in the garden again. In Canberra Spring is our main planting season and it's

always tempting to plant everything too soon. There is still the likelihood of frosts for at least the next month and any tender seedlings should be kept in a sheltered spot. Nurseries often stock frost tender seedlings in early and mid Spring even though it is far too early to plant them out in the open garden. Most seedlings planted too early will struggle in the cold conditions and be overtaken by those planted a month or two later when the soil has warmed up.

When planting out your Spring garden don't forget to leave some room for those winter crops which need to be planted in Summer: cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, broccoli and leeks.

Plot fees for 2006 - 2007

The annual joint committee and garden convenors meeting was held on August 8th and it was decided to leave the plot fees unchanged at their current rate of \$1 per square metre. The water allowance was also left unchanged at 60kl per square metre per year. Each garden will be holding its annual meeting during September (see page 35 for details) and all gardeners are expected to attend to pay their plot fees, to participate in the election of garden convenors and committees and to decide how their garden's funds will be spent during the coming year. If you cannot attend your garden's meeting please make arrangements with your garden convenor to pay your plot fees before the end of September.

Water restrictions

ACTEW water restrictions will come into force again on the 1st of September and remain in place until the end of Autumn. These restrictions apply in all the COGS gardens and I would ask members to make sure they abide by them. Last Summer there were many instances of COGS gardeners flouting the restrictions and a great variety of poor excuses as to why they were doing this. The current restrictions are detailed on page 5

of this issue, are available on the ACTEW website and are published each week in the Canberra Times. It is each gardeners responsibility to make themselves aware of the details of the restrictions and to make sure they obey the rules.

New Plot Holders Workshop

The first workshop for new community gardeners will be held at the O'Connor garden on Saturday afternoon September 10. This is a wonderful opportunity for members who have recently (or not so recently) joined a COGS community garden to have their questions answered, to pick up valuable information on organic growing and soil health, and to find out what is expected of them as members of a community garden. I hope members will support this initiative and give us their feedback on its value. It is currently proposed that these workshops will be held several times a year and that all new gardeners will be strongly encouraged to attend one when taking up a plot in a COGS garden. Further details about the workshop can be found on page 23.

CIT plant sale

The CIT plant sale this year will be held on Saturday November 11. COGS will again be having a stall at which we sell seedlings, seeds and magazines, answer questions and give away information sheets. Volunteers are needed to grow seedlings to sell and to work for an hour or two on the stall. If you can help please let me or another committee member know so we can co-ordinate activities.

Speakers

The committee has started to line up speakers for our monthly meetings next year and would welcome suggestions from members. If you know of anyone you think would make an interesting speaker at our meetings please let us know. Or if there's a subject you've always wanted to learn about tell us and we'll see if we can find an appropriate speaker.

Adrienne Fazekas

Plot fees for 2006 -2007 are now due

The fee is \$1 per square metre for the year 1/9/06 - 31/8/07

Plots not paid for by 30 September 2006 may be re-allocated to other gardeners

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An afternoon in November with Jackie French

Jackie has kindly offered to show COGS members through her wonderful garden at Araluen on Saturday, 25th of November. We haven't yet finalized the transport arrangements but will either be hiring a bus from Canberra or car-pooling to Braidwood and getting a bus from there - transport costs to be confirmed. For \$20 you will be shown through the garden and provided with afternoon tea. We will stop in Braidwood for an early lunch (your expense) and return to Canberra by about 6pm.

Please note that for insurance reasons, this excursion is for **COGS members only**.

Non-members may join COGS on the day if they wish to come.

There will be some walking over steep and rough ground, so a fair degree of mobility is required. Not suitable for young children. Numbers will be limited (current members will be given priority) so for those who haven't already done so, please register your interest with Ben Bradey (info@cogs.asn.au or phone 6161 0329) so you can be contacted once the arrangements are finalised.

Some Summer Watering Tips

With the introduction of permanent water restrictions it is even more important that gardeners learn to use water responsibly and to maximise the benefits to their plants of the available water.

Soil health is an essential part of organic gardening and this includes efficient and effective water use. A well structured soil with a good level of organic matter can hold a surprising amount of water which is then available to plant roots. Some moderate water stress will encourage plants to send their roots deeper into the soil where water is more reliably available. Regular but infrequent deep watering is much more beneficial than frequent shallow watering which just encourages plant roots to remain near the surface where they can more easily dry out and die.

Very few plants in an open garden need watering every day, or even every second day, once they are established. Do not decide to water just because you haven't done it for a while. Always check the actual soil moisture a few centimetres below the surface - if you have an un-mulched garden the soil surface will naturally dry out but the soil may be quite damp below the surface. Be aware of the weather and if it rains take note of the amount that has fallen to give you an idea of how many days you don't have to water for.

Over-watering can lead to as many problems as under-watering. It encourages soft, lanky growth which may be more prone to attack by pests and diseases, causes the leaching of nutrients from the root zone and the soil leading to the contamination of ground water and provides conditions conducive to the growth and spread of fungal diseases.

One of the best ways to conserve soil moisture and reduce watering is to use mulch. Mulch has many benefits in an organic garden including: water conservation, promoting more even soil moisture, suppressing weeds, providing organic matter for the soil micro-organisms. If a thick mulch is used you may need to apply water under the mulch via drippers. Coarser mulches allow both air and water to more easily penetrate to the soil surface.

Always water the soil rather than the plants and water only at a rate the soil can absorb - do not apply water so quickly that it pools on the surface or runs off and is wasted. The infiltration rate and the water holding capacity of soils are greatly influenced by soil structure and organic matter content.

Think about establishing a windbreak to block the hot drying summer winds - in Canberra these generally come from the north west and can cause a garden to dry out very quickly.

Water restrictions in COGS gardens

ACTEW Permanent Water Conservation Measures will come into force again on September 1 2006 and remain in place until May 31 2007.

These restrictions do apply in the COGS community gardens and gardeners are required to abide by them.

Under these measures:

Sprinklers, drippers, weeping hoses and any other irrigation systems can *only* be used between 6pm and 9am each day

Hand held hoses, watering cans and buckets can be used anytime
Hand held hoses must be fitted with a trigger nozzle

It is illegal to water a garden to the point of run-off or pooling

In addition it is a COGS rule that unattended watering is not permitted in the gardens. If you are using sprinklers, drippers or oozing hoses you must be present in your garden for the entire time they are on



Around the Gardens



Cook

At the end of June we had a wonderful Sunday afternoon turn out of our membership. We did a lot of work and had a lovely BBQ over a glass of wine/beer. We'll try to do this once a month, on the last Sunday of the month at 12.30pm. We don't need to do a lot of gardening every month we meet but it would certainly keep the garden neat. The garden is currently full but no longer has a waiting list.

Rasima Kecanovic

Cotter

There was a working bee in mid May to tidy-up the gardens before Winter set in. Although it would have been nice to have a greater roll-up of our gardeners, we were grateful for the help that we got.



Morning tea at Cotter garden: l.to.r Roz Bruhn holding Giles the Border collie, Marie Bahr, Ann Smith, Peter Rouse, Judy Bourne, Betty Cornhill and Mary Flowers. Trevor took the picture

We were sad to say farewell to Marie Bahr who has been a keen gardener at Cotter for many years, but decided to move interstate. It did not take long for her well-tended plot to be taken up by someone else.

After harvesting good crops through the Autumn, most of the plots are 'having a rest' although there are some brassicas, broad beans and other vegetables growing in a number of the plots. Several plots have a green crop growing and some gardeners have been working hard to prepare their gardens for Winter and Spring sowings. The equestrian park adjacent to the gardens is a source of manure, lucerne and straw and some gardeners have taken advantage of this material.

There are some vacant plots so please contact us if you are interested in having one.

Roz and Trevor Bruhn

Cotter Orchard

Three members have been meeting most Saturday afternoons for winter pruning sessions in the orchard which is beginning to look more like a real orchard

than a real wilderness.

We are educating ourselves on the practicalities of caring for fruit trees via helpful hints from the Internet and a pruning lesson at the Xeriscape Garden. We've found a friend with a chain saw to take down the young poplars that have been encroaching. Now we're hoping that one of you will have a mobile mulcher to grind up the copious supply of small poplar branches into wood chips for your garden.

Christine has been bringing plentiful supplies of her rabbit hutch sweepings to spread around the trees for some fertilizer and grass control. She's so enthusiastic that she distributed 35 kilos of Dynamic Lifter and added a new peacherine to our plot. Christine thinks the little tree is cute. It certainly looks like a baby surrounded by its grandparents' generation but adds to the variety of fruit potentially available.

Judith has been carrying out a census of the tree tags. About half have disappeared but, among those that survive, we have discovered: Gala, Cortland, Discovery, Monroe and Red Delicious (Harrod) eating apples; Breakwell's Seedling, Brown Snout, Sweet Coppin and Yarrington Mill cider apples; Passe-Crassane, Winter Cole and Roma pears (a fruit tree, not a pear tomato).

If you would like to join our working bees, provide advice or loan pruning/cutting/mulching equipment, please contact Ann Smith on 6285 2995 or a.smith@netspeed.com.au.

Ann Smith, Christine Carter, Judith Bourne

Erindale

There's a cloud of uncertainty hovering over the garden as ACT Housing has indicated it may resume the land to provide a garden for the residents of the adjacent Malahide complex. COGS was originally approached seventeen years ago by ACT Housing to establish a community garden on the site and has successfully managed it ever since. Over the years Malahide residents have always been welcome and a number have become plot holders but have all eventually moved on.

Unfortunately the garden is now in the uncomfortable situation of being in limbo until a decision is made. On the positive side, if we are evicted, all the COGS goods and chattels will be up for grabs by the other community gardens. It is going to be interesting to see what transpires from hereon.....

Christine Carter

Holder

Spring must definitely be in the air: the weeds are already making a takeover move on many mulched areas and paths. It's definitely time to pore through our seed collections and to perhaps also start sowing seeds under cover, ready for planting out in the warmer months.

Some plot holders have winter lettuces, silver beet, rocket, broccoli, cabbages and nettles (for the enthusiasts) ready to harvest. Those who were organized have good crops of leeks, garlic and other onion family members growing well. Broad beans are also quite popular with some plot holders, with autumn-planted seeds now growing well and ready to produce as soon as the weather warms up. Soft fruits are becoming more popular: many new plantings of raspberries, various currants and other berries have gone in during the last two years. Large, ornamental clusters of globe artichoke leaves also feature on some plots. Some gardeners have used the piles of autumn leaves dropped off by garden contractors to build large compost heaps on their plots. These are very popular with our one straw-necked ibis that visits the garden regularly. As these birds are particularly fond of crickets and grasshoppers, it is probably helping to keep our plentiful mole crickets in check.

Also a big thank you to those members who have helped us by mowing around the pathways within the garden and are starting to clean up our few vacant plots and sow them with green manure. One of these has now been taken a new gardener member.

We currently have four single plots (45 sq m) and one double plot (90 sq m) available. These are in various states of readiness for use. So if you are interested in joining us please get in touch.

Jane Andrews and Jen Johnston, co-conveners.

Kambah

There are three vacant plots at the Kambah Garden which are ready for immediate use. All enquiries are welcome.

Fran and Len, our newest gardeners, have quickly demonstrated what can be achieved in the garden through the winter months. They have had good

results with broad beans, peas, carrots and cabbage seeds. Onion and garlic seedlings have also been planted and they have strong bunches of curly-leaf parsley growing in poly pipe. An adjoining plot has been deep mulched with deciduous leaves and is now being forked over to accelerate the decomposition. George, another new gardener, is steadily deep digging his plot which had been vacant for some years. As each section is completed a deep trench is filled with manure or compost, then backfilled and mulched with pea straw. Currently he has broad beans, cabbage and peas. These plots are examples of why winter is a good time to work in the garden. The ground is softer after rain, the weeds are slower to invade and it is not too hot to dig.

Thanks to the work of our members at a busy bee on Sunday 25 June, our garden is looking more cheerful. It was encouraging to see the achievements after just one hour and, in exchange, their contribution was recognised with some warming refreshment and some games for the children. Hopefully, with another bit of rain, our garden will be refreshed and ready for spring. I look forward to seeing you in the garden soon.

Mary Coulson

Mitchell

Not a lot to report from the Mitchell garden at this time of year. A few brave souls are growing winter vegetables and those which were planted early are doing well. One plot holder left recently and his plot was quickly taken up by a new member. The garden is pretty full, but I'm sure we could squeeze in one or two more people if anybody wants a plot.

After reading an article in Grass Roots recently about Loofah, I'm keen to try these plants this summer. If anybody has had any success with these plants (or a even a few spare seeds), I'd appreciate hearing from you. I suspect they need a longer summer than we can offer them in Canberra, but I'm still keen to give them a shot.

It's the time of year to sit back in front of the open fire browsing the latest seed catalogues. Soon I'll have to make up my mind and place an order for the coming growing season. I always enjoy trying out one or two new plants along with my favourites.

Ben Bradey

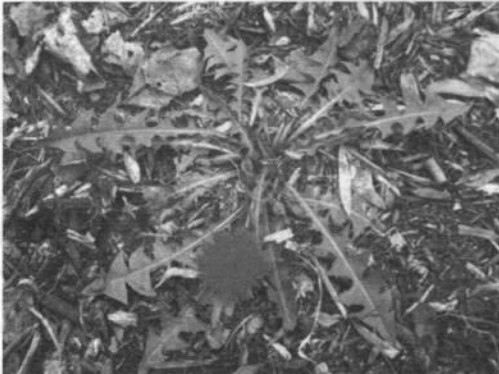
SHEEP POO FOR YOU!

AND A FUND RAISER FOR THE LAKE BURLEY GRIFFIN SEA SCOUTS!
Contact your garden convenor with your order to facilitate bulk deliveries
to the gardens or phone Jen on 6288 3200 ah
\$5 for a 30 litre bag COD

“Name that Weed”

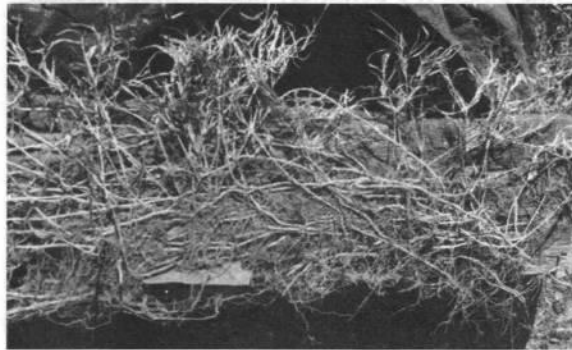
At the COGS general meeting of 27 June 2006 we were treated to an entertaining presentation by Graham Walker and Ben Bradey on weed identification and control. It began with the promise “By the end of this presentation you’ll be able to grow enormous weeds...” and it included an episode of COGS own gameshow “Name that Weed”. I’m afraid we won’t be able to reproduce the presentation here but instead we’ll record some of the useful solutions offered up by our contestants drawn from the audience (solutions varied according to whether members perceived the plant as a weed or not!). Our knowledgeable audience included COGS life members Shirley Carden and Betty Cornhill, and Traudi Kalivoda. We learned that in fact some weeds are not weeds but marvellous opportunities! A description of ‘weed’ picked up by our presenters from the internet is “any plant whose virtue has not yet been discovered”.

Dandelion



- Throw the plants into a bin to make a liquid manure—this takes about a month.
- Add a pile of dandelion seeds to honey; after a week the pile has reduced as the honey takes in moisture from the dandelions. Use this as a cough mixture.
- Feed to the chooks for nutritious egg production.
- Make a skin tonic from the leaves
DANDELION SKIN TONIC : Crush 1 teaspoon of fresh dandelion leaves, and add to one cup of boiling water. Let stand for 1/2 hour, strain and let cool. This will revitalize the skin and improve the circulation. The tonic can be stored in a sealed bottle in the refrigerator for about 10 days without losing power.
<http://www.astray.com/recipes/?show=Dandelion>
- Make dandelion wine from the flowers.

Couch



- Dig it out, dig it out, dig it out—burn it and be careful where you put the ashes!
- Smother couch with a no-dig garden and grow beautiful potatoes.
- Dig out the couch and dig trenches around the garden beds; mulch the trenches with lots of newspaper (blocks light and raises temperature); pull up yards of couch runners that seek the light.
- Put down plenty of wood ash, then newspaper and plant on top of this (the couch does not like alkaline soil).

Onion Weed

- Dig it out before it makes its little bulbs.
- Remove by very careful weeding by hand.

Hay

- Spread hay on a small trial area first to check whether it is full of seeds, or deal with the consequences!
- Pick up the pads (also known as ‘biscuits’) of hay that have sprouted and turn them over.
- Compost hay first, or give it to the chooks for a few weeks before using as mulch.
- Lay hay directly on the garden and treat the sprouted seed as green manure; easy to pull up before it gets out of control.

Oxalis

Put a lot of compost on it and improve the soil. The compost can modify the Ph of the soil and provide better conditions for other plants to grow.

Winter Grass

- Catch this before it goes to seed. It’s an annual weed that disappears.

Tree seeds

(e.g. from ash, maple, oak trees)

- Rake leaves and keep them in bags long enough for the seeds to germinate.
- Let the leaves rot down first—there is concentrated nutrient in the seeds that you don't want to lose.
- Let the birds pick out the seeds from street leaves before raking up.
- Re acorns—let cars run over them and crush them; "call the pig man" (noting that some are not suitable for animals to eat); Acorn flour can make a very nice bread; Roasted acorns were used as a coffee substitute during the war.

Chick Weed



- Use it like spinach, in salads.
- It's anti-fungal; make tea with it; you can add some calendula.
- Use in chick weed ointment.

Note: Do not confuse with euphorbia which is more upright and has yellow rather than white flowers.

Nettle



- Nettle is nutritious and is regarded as a herb elsewhere (e.g. in Austria).

- Once wilted nettle no longer stings.
- Blended with water and lemon juice nettle makes an excellent "green drink" for treating anaemia.
- Traditionally nettle picked at a particular time of the year, is made into soup—regarded as blood cleansing and to treat rheumatism.
- Rub nettle juice to deodorize smelly feet.
- When stung by nettle rub skin with dock leaf.

Milk thistle

- Catch before the plant goes to seed; hoe.
- Milk thistle is very high in antioxidants and is very good for liver complaints (buy in capsule form).
- Chooks and aviary birds love it.
- Use in recipe for skin tonic.
"a teaspoon of flowing milky juice from the cut stem of sow thistle, added to 140ml soft water, makes a wash with skin-clearing and softening properties".

'The make-your-own cosmetic and fragrance book for Australians' by Elizabeth Franke

Some tips on removing weeds in general

- Use a Dutch hoe (the wider the better) to slide across the ground and cut off surface leaves.
- Avoid leaving the soil bare—use a green manure, the COGS variety or peas seeds, lupins.
- Smother weeds with cardboard (check out the bike shops) or thick newspaper. Small weeds need 10 sheets thickness of newspaper and large weeds need 30 sheets cover.
- Solarise by covering with clear plastic, all gaps sealed for 4 weeks, in the heat. Note that this can damage soil biology so recovery time and added compost are needed. Use as a last resort, eg for couch infestations.
- Use of flaming devices is NOT recommended—bricks can explode, fences melt or burn and it is dangerous for people and animals.
- Large spent brassica leaves laid over soil inhibit weed growth while they break down.

Photos taken by Sophia Williams and Janet Popovic

Colourful Edible Ornamental Gardens at Lanyon Homestead



*Editor's Notes from a
presentation by
Graham Williams,
Head Gardener, ACT
Historic Places*



Graham Williams, is responsible for the beautiful gardens at Lanyon, Calthorpes' House and Mugga-Mugga Cottage. His presentation to the COGS General Meeting on 23 May 2006 focussed on his work at Lanyon where the colourful ornamental

gardens are filled with organically grown heirloom vegetables delighting and exciting visitors of all ages. Graham brought along to the meeting a wonderful selection of gourds, pumpkins and chards (pictured), and distributed some beautiful scarlet runner bean seeds, as an aid to sharing his enthusiasm for achieving biodiversity, colour and interest in organic gardens.

Lanyon's heritage homestead comprises 19th century buildings and 19th and 20th century gardens. In regenerating the gardens consistent with historical plantings Graham researched the plants that were grown there in the past and gathered heritage seeds, some gifted from people who have worked at Lanyon or with knowledge of what had grown there, and by sourcing heirloom varieties from seed catalogues.

Graham uses colourful vegies as part of ornamental gardens, including as hedges and archways, creating 'rooms'. He mixes in green, red and coral lettuces and plants cabbages in mixed beds rather than in rows. He takes advantages of the many varieties of tomatoes, using red, yellow, black and pear-shaped ones and mixes in marigolds and nasturtiums for colour, for eating and for confusing insect predators. He recommends seeking out and planting lots of varieties, e.g. blue and red podded peas or several of the 500 varieties of rhubarb; Spaghetti and Round Robin squashes; kale; plain green and rainbow coloured chard; purple, black, and white radishes; Goldfinger zucchini (resistant to powdery mildew) mixed with Blackjack; Leopard Marrow (good for baking, a drier flesh-but sweeter tasting than zucchini); mixing beans, corn and squash. He suggested planting a patch of sunflowers surrounded with corn and then planting squash on the outermost edge.

Graham showed us a wonderful collection of different shaped gourds and commented that their plants are beautiful to grow with white flowers and tendrils. They are generally not edible but can be used for ornament including decoupage decorated, as water carriers, shakers, or for playing bowls! He also talked about varieties of pumpkin. Ebisu is a Japanese variety of reasonable size that is very prolific. He always grows Golden Nugget because it is the first variety to be ready. He mentioned Turk's Turban and Minikin (Peter Cundall's suggestion is to cook this small one whole, then cut off the top and add butter, salt and pepper before eating like a boiled egg), and Triamble that has three lobes and is well suited to dividing into 3 for baking the sweet flesh. Ironbark ('a chainsaw job') has an excellent taste. Hubbard comes in green, blue, red. Crookneck squash, 'a zucchini gone crazy with lots of warts', is edible till a certain age then only ornamental beyond that.



On pests, Graham referred to the bad plague of grasshoppers of last summer. He said grasshoppers did not eat pumpkins or tomatoes though they did eat their flowers; they loved garlic and onions and would burrow in and eat the inside of carrots and onions. They decimated lemons but not limes. They even ate plastic bags and green curtains! He described the plague of vegetable bug as a temperature related thing and recommended picking them off and careful searching including around the roots of plants rather than spraying which can kill praying mantis.

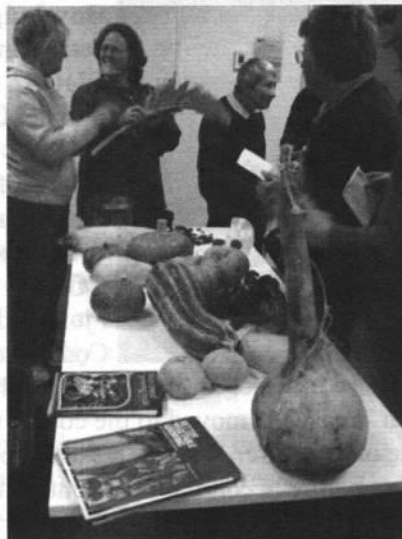
Tip: Grow tomatoes without staking by growing them on a mound of compost, trailing down the mound. Tomatoes, like pumpkins, put down roots from nodes so the compost mound encourages them to produce more roots and more fruit in this supported structure.

Tip: Let some plants go to seed in the garden. Self sown seedlings have better defence against insect attack and manage better waterwise - they grow because they like the conditions in your garden.

Tip: A no-dig garden can be built on top of cement in a cement yard. Build it up with besser blocks or use an old bath.

Tip: Start tomatoes and pumpkins in foam boxes, then transplant them into the garden when the soil has warmed up.

Tip: Useful garden aids that can be made from recycled material include scoops from 2 litre plastic milk bottles; labels from venetian blind slats (write on with pencil that can be rubbed off for subsequent re-use); tubes for seeds from old toilet roll tubes that can be planted directly into the garden once seedling roots have established; old tyres for retaining walls over which plants are trailed, or for growing potatoes in.



Tip: Birds need water - give it to them in your gardens. A small tree or shrub near the water will provide habitat for silvereyes and protection from currawongs and miner birds.

Tip: A garden is the best possible gym. It's good for mind and body, you see the return on your hard work and it's a good feeling to get dirt on your hands!

BIODIVERSITY*

Biological diversity is responsible for the maintenance of the world as we know it. The gene pool is a real treasure. This living treasure of seeds comprises billions of years of evolution and at least 12,000 years of human selection for agriculture. From a biological viewpoint, genetic diversity is as essential to life as food, air and water. Today our society relies on only 150 out of a possible 80,000 food plants. Since 1900, of the variety of food plants that our grandparents ate, only 3% are still available today.

The loss of genetic diversity in the food supply chain directly impedes the safety of crops, because their ability to adapt, to resist blights, pests and disease depends on variation. When one plant species becomes extinct, so too will the 20-40 animal and insect species that rely on it.

Gardeners are emerging as principal biological heroes in the struggle of the era to maintain the biological diversity that sustains life on the planet.

Fetzer Garden, USA

* handout Graham provided to the meeting for reflection.

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Gardener Profiles —Our New Life Members!

Earlier this year the COGS Committee recognised the significant contributions to COGS of Adrienne Fazekas and Keith Colls by making them Life Members .
Congratulations to you both, and thank you!



Keith Colls

How long have you been a member of COGS?

I joined COGS in 1998.

What different roles have you taken during your time with COGS?

I joined the COGS Committee as an

ordinary member in 1999. When John Allen, the then Treasurer, moved to the coast I took over the role of Treasurer. I was Treasurer for a couple of years before becoming President on the retirement of Steve Sutton. I was President for three years and then retired from the Committee for a couple of years and concentrated on running the Beginners' Gardening course for COGS through CIT Solutions. I rejoined the Committee as Vice President this year.

What was your gardening life before COGS?

I was brought up on a farm and started gardening, or at least helping in the garden, early in life. I have continued gardening most of my life when I had land available. I am not sure what first spurred my interest in gardening. It was just something I have always done and enjoyed. When I first moved to the city it was a sharp contrast from living on the farm and I found it very comforting to be able to go into the backyard and dig it up to grow plants. I have always found weeding to be very therapeutic.

What brought you to organic gardening?

I have not always been an organic gardener but thirty to forty years ago it was becoming increasingly obvious that the continued use of chemicals in agriculture (and gardening) to "conquer nature" and eliminate pests and diseases was doomed to fail and was in fact causing more harm than good. It seemed to me then that the way to go was to work with nature rather than against it

so I drifted towards gardening techniques which fulfilled this aim. I guess my approach to gardening was ecological in so far as I was trying to garden in harmony with the ecology of where I was gardening rather than fighting against it. The continued use of agricultural chemicals in gardening to eliminate those parts of the ecological system which we deem to be pests and diseases was incompatible with this approach.

Consequently I went searching for gardening techniques which were compatible with this approach. Organic gardening, while not perfect in this regard, was certainly more compatible to this approach than the chemical method of gardening. I am still on the look out for better ways of working with the ecology of situation in which we are gardening. I don't see organic techniques as set in stone, rather I think we need to evolve our gardening techniques based on increased understanding through scientific research on how the ecological system works so that we can more effectively work with nature rather than against it.

Any great gardening achievements?

I suppose the establishment of the Cook, Kambah, Holder and Queanbeyan gardens was a highlight of my gardening efforts and I am also pretty happy with the way my own garden at home is developing, although it is still very much a work in progress. Nowadays, because of space constraints, at home I only grow fruit trees, grapes, leafy vegetables or those which are picked just before they are served. I grow other types of vegetables, for example potatoes, pumpkins etc in a COGS garden plot at Cook. My home garden is mostly ornamental and designed for sitting in or looking at.

Why did you choose to become part of a community garden?

In 2000 I was about to retire from full time work. As I would have more time I thought I would need more space for gardening than I had at home so I decided to join a community garden to grow vegetables. I have been gardening at the COGS garden in Cook since it was established. I've met some great gardeners there and I find it a very enjoyable activity.



Adrienne Fazekas

How long have you been a member of COGS?

I used to buy the COGS magazine from the local nursery and finally got around to joining seven years ago.

What different roles have you taken during your time with COGS?

I spent a year as a general committee member then four years as treasurer before

becoming the COGS president in March 2005. I've also been on the Cook garden committee since the garden started in 2001.

What first spurred your interest in gardening?

I have gardened as far back as I can remember although my first efforts didn't involve much more than being in charge of picking the strawberries. My mother was a great gardener and grew most of our vegetables when I was young and also introduced me to the mysteries of preserving and bottling seasonal gluts. Since then I've always had a vegetable garden wherever I've lived - the two years in a caravan at Ayers Rock was the biggest challenge but 'growing your own' was the only option for salads.

What brought you to organic gardening?

Reading lots of gardening books over the years - it seemed the only sensible and sustainable approach.

Do you have a garden at home?

Yes, I'm fortunate to live on one of Canberra's old quarter acre blocks, but because the garden is now almost 50 years old it is full of large established trees and is generally too shady in summer to grow vegetables successfully. I have managed to squeeze in almost 30 fruit, nut and olive trees during the 11 years I have lived there as well as passionfruit, grapevines, strawberries and autumn raspberries. Over the years the vegies have self-selected so only those that crop in winter or spring, or tolerate some shade, remain. There are lots of herbs in the few sunny spots plus lettuces, silverbeet (which is mainly for the chooks), and the perpetual parsnip patch which sows itself if you leave a couple to go to seed each year. Its been going for about 9 years now. Winter and spring vegetables like cos lettuce, peas and broad beans grow well but I no longer try and grow anything which needs lots of summer sun

- tomatoes, capsicums, eggplants, sweetcorn and pumpkins as they produce so much better at Cook.

Why did you choose to become part of a community garden?

When I first moved to my current house I planted lots of veggie's but after a couple of seasons it became clear they were not going to be a great success. As we had moved in during Winter, I hadn't realised how much shade a garden full of large deciduous trees would provide in Summer, nor how difficult it would be for the vegetables to compete with established tree roots for moisture. About this time the Cook garden was proposed and I joined just in time to assist with the slashing, trenching, plumbing and shed building! It still amazes me just how much more productive vegetables are in a full sun position without any competition and how infrequently you really need to water when there are no tree roots in the garden.

What is your favourite vegetable to grow and why?

I've got a few of these for different reasons:

- Asparagus because it's a seasonal treat and one of the vegetables that doesn't keep it's full flavour well after picking.
- Fresh young peas which are almost never available in the shops but are remarkably easy to grow.
- Paprika, a capsicum variety, which I either roast or dry and grind to make the spice - again because it's so much tastier fresh (must be my Hungarian ancestry coming out).

I have tried growing almost everything available as seed or seedlings over the years and usually try 1 or 2 different varieties each year, but the bulk of the garden is tried and true favourites.

Do you have any other living things in your COGS garden?

I don't keep chooks in the community garden as I'm not able to attend to them daily there, but of course the garden is full of life - birds, insects, worms and the less welcome small rodents and their attendant brown snakes.

What is your secret to a great garden?

I don't have any special secrets for gardening success - just be observant when you're in the garden and learn as much as you can about how everything interacts. Also constantly build up the soil organic matter, use lots of mulch and compost everything.

Do you have any special tips for others?

Don't waste your time, energy and space growing vegetables you don't enjoy eating.

All About Lavender—Part 1



It's hard to find somebody who doesn't have a lavender bush or two in their garden and hopefully this article will open your eyes to the wonderful varieties and possibilities that come with this plant.

Lavender is a member of the Mint family and native to the Mediterranean. The name is derived from the Latin name 'lavare', meaning 'to wash' as ancient Romans valued the plant for its scent and medicinal properties. It would have to be one of the easiest plants to grow, especially during drought times and yet still rewards you with flowers of exquisite fragrance. More often than not I replace plants lost to the drought with lavender bushes that just seem to thrive with very little attention. I recently attend a Lavender conference at Goulburn and was amazed to find the plants in local gardens doing very well under exceptional circumstances.

The most commonly grown types of lavender are:

Lavandula angustifolia.

This known as the 'English' lavender, despite being a native of France growing at altitudes between 500m and 1500m. It's just that the English grew a lot of it in the nineteenth century and the name kind of stuck. Not surprisingly, this is the most popular of all lavenders for home gardeners, growing to a small frost hardy bush 40-90cm high depending on the variety. Oil produced from this species is of the highest quality and is used extensively in aromatherapy owing to its relaxing and soothing effect. This is the only species that can be used in cooking because of its low camphor content. Flowers grow on a single stem with most varieties flowering in early summer (early Dec to mid Jan).



Lavandula intermedia is a natural cross between *L. angustifolia* and *L. latifolia* ('Spike Lavender' which occurs at lower altitudes and has flowers on multiple long stems). This species produces oil which is correctly referred to as 'Lavandin'. This oil is less valued, being higher in camphor and giving rise to a more stimulating effect.

Lavandin oil is more likely to be used in soaps and other craft items. Lavandin oil is significantly cheaper than that of *L. angustifolia* (\$12 per 10ml compared to \$20 per 10ml) owing to the higher volume produced per plant. Always ensure the oil you buy is correctly labeled so you know what you are getting for your money. Please support local Aussie growers who are producing oils of a quality up amongst the best in the world. This species will flower one month later than *L. angustifolia* (and into autumn depending on the variety). Plants grow up to 1 metre in size.

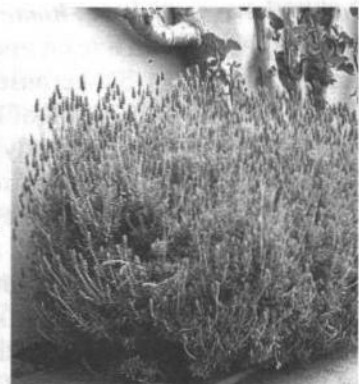
Lavandula stoechas.

Commonly known as 'Italian' or 'Spanish' lavender. This species produces large petals (bracts) at the top of each flower. Flowers are generally dark purple and bloom from mid spring to mid autumn. These grow better in warmer climates, but will survive in Canberra if planted in a sheltered position protected from the most severe frosts. These make a good ornamental plant in the garden.



Lavandula dentata.

Commonly known as 'French' lavender. Like the Stoechas, they do better in warmer climates. They will flower for long periods (including winter!), particularly if mature flower stalks are cut back regularly. Flowers are generally on quite short stems. Best use is for fresh flower arrangements and as an ornamental plant. Its flowers are not particularly suitable for drying or oil production.



Growing Lavender

All varieties of lavender do best in a sunny open position. Poor drainage will result in root rot during wet conditions (or so I'm told – it's been



so long I can hardly remember the last wet period) and ultimate death of your plant. Creating a low mound is a good way to ensure adequate drainage. They prefer a slightly alkaline soil, but will tolerate a wide range of soil types. The *angustifolia* variety is more demanding of an alkaline soil than the others.

The natural habitat of lavender is exposed chalky mountain slopes in France with excellent drainage and soils not particularly high in nutrients. Pests are rarely a problem, but you will need to keep the area clear of weeds. Watering is important until the plant becomes established, after which time it is remarkably drought tolerant, particularly if protected from damaging hot winds.

Summer flowering varieties should be pruned in autumn. Cut off the flower stems and then prune the remaining foliage to shape, removing up to half of the plant material. Avoid cutting back into the woody material that has no leaves as they won't re-sprout. Aim to end up with branches containing about 3 leaf nodes. Winter flowering varieties (yes it's true, even in Canberra) should be pruned in January. Avoid the temptation to let the plants flower in the first year if buying small plants as tubestock. Cut off any flower spikes when they get to the length of your finger in order to concentrate on developing a good round shape as a base for future years growth and prolific flowering. If you buy a larger plant in a pot then hopefully the nursery has already followed this procedure.

Lavender plants are not particularly long lived, but expect at least 10 years if carefully managed and pruned each year. These plants enjoy a well limed soil, so ensure there is adequate calcium available for good growth. Strong fertiliser is not required and can indeed be detrimental to the health of your plants. An application of blood and bone after flowering, plus dolomite lime and potash in spring will ensure healthy plants with plenty of flowers. There are very few organic lavender farms in Australia owing to the high labour overhead involved in keeping weeds at bay. Expect to pay about twice the conventional price if you seek an organic product. All the more incentive to grow your own!

Propagation

Lavender can be propagated from seed, but tip cuttings are my preference for a reliable copy of the parent plant. Take the cuttings in late spring or early autumn and put into a pot of sand. Pot up individually when they take root, then harden off before planting out. Lavender would have to be one of the easiest plants to grow from cuttings with a high strike rate. They make excellent hedges and propagating your own plants is a cheap way to make your own hedge. For hedging, plant the lavenders as close to each other as you want the hedge to be high. Grow a few extras in pots as replacements for any that die.

In the next part of this series I will discuss how to harvest lavender and what you can do with the bounty.

Ben Bradey

References and further reading:

Lavender, the grower's guide.

Virginia McNaughton

Lavender, sweet lavender. *Judyth McLeod*

Glenbog Lavender Nursery, Burra Creek NSW

The Australian Lavender Growers Association

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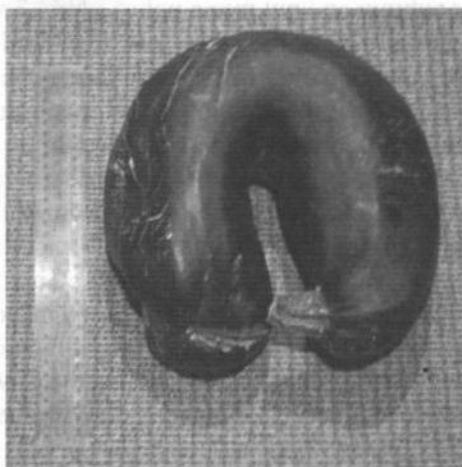
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Veggie of the Issue

Zucchini has COGS members doing U-turn



This issue's most special and unique veggie has been submitted by Trevor Bruhn – thanks mate! While dangerously large, clublike zucchinis are nothing new for the inattentive gardener, Trevor's aptly named 'Uccinni' is truly in a skin of its own.

'Its size can be gauged from the 30cm ruler beside it and it weighs around 3.25kg,' says the proud father Trevor. Indeed, it's quite a whopper by any zucchini standards, but the unique form (which could be a blessing from Mother Nature for small plot holders) wins it the prestigious Veggie of the Issue award.

'This veggie took me by surprise, firstly simply discovering it under a layer of dense plant leaves – it must have been an early set zucchini on the stem but not seen as I picked many other zucchinis from the plant – and secondly because of its shape.'

I'm sure most COGs gardeners have little trouble growing zucchinis, but just in case here are a few handy links, special varieties (if you haven't tried the round Ronde de Nice then do – tasty and novel) and delicious recipes:

<http://www.abc.net.au/canberra/stories/s1011639.htm> - The legendary Jackie French talks recipes, Ronde and dealing with abundant zucchini bounty.

<http://passionatenonchalance.com/?cat=13>
- Zuch and fish kebabs....tasty!

<http://www.bradsproduce.com.au/> - Zucchini flowers, including recipes. Don't waste this very exotic part of the plant. Female flowers are a neat way to reduce the volume of fruit (read: checking before you need a block and tackle to pick them) when it gets to oversupply season, while the male flowers droop and dry out eventually, so make the most of them beforehand. Remember to let the bees at them first.

<http://www.edenseeds.com.au/content/seeds.asp?section=1&letter=Z>

<http://www.diggers.com.au/>
Interesting varieties available via mail order in Oz.

CALL FOR ENTRIES: If you have an amazing fruit or veggie, send details, a quote/description and image (photo or drawing, kid's drawings especially good) to graham.walker@csiro.au or Graham Walker, c/ CSIRO Education, PO Box 225, Dickson, ACT, 2602.

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ODE TO THE SCARECROWS

Last issue we introduced our organisation (DSA or Disability Services Australia) and told the story of our group. We have a Day Program in Queanbeyan and we took on a garden plot at the Oak's Estate garden earlier this year. Our story last issue told how we prepared our plot, our soil, how we worked out what to plant, bought seeds and seedlings and then planted them all.

There has been lots of action in the watering department, but this winter we have found out about frost and the slow growing season. So we filled in our some of our gardening time talking about and then making Scarecrows. Lynne arrived first (with the plaits) and then Russell (with the wild hair).

Several people in the gardening program have written a poem about how it might be to be a scarecrow.



Lynne

By Dave and Jeremy

I am a scarecrow named Lynne
Here to stand in the Sun, Rain and Wind
To a stake I am pinned
Made to keep birds away

Scarecrow Poem

By Mathew

I'm a scarecrow made of straw
I have a hat, a nose, boots

I stand here in the Sun, the Rain
the Wind

I am here to scare the birds and crows
They squawk and fly away

Or laugh... Who knows?

My hands dangle
Waving hello to everyone

Russell

(who has the coloured hair)

By Dave and Jeremy

I am a scarecrow
My name is Russell

I am stuffed with straw, which acts like
muscle

And I tell the birds they need to
hustle!

Charcoal - Not just Burnt Wood*

Imagine organic gardeners a hundred years from now in the year 3005 studying the patch of earth where your garden once grew - in awe of the wisdom revealed when examining the nutrient-rich black soil you had produced.



Charcoal

By Lorraine Turner
Donnybrook, WA.

Such were the secrets of soil fertility hidden away in the Amazon region of South America for over a thousand years.

Scientists studying soil in this region believe the addition of charcoal by the ancient inhabitants was a key factor in the transformation of a soil with little agricultural value into one of the most fertile soils on earth.

These soils have prompted research and trials around the globe to try to simulate this sustainable fertile earth. Scientists are now working to understand these unique agricultural techniques that until recently had vanished along with its people. Like a time-capsule hidden away for hundreds of years, it was discovered that an ancient civilisation existed in this region. They had farmed the soil for thousands of years. A popular theory to explain the sudden disappearance of this indigenous population was the introduction of diseases such as typhoid and measles by European explorers - diseases the natives had little resistance to.

Terra Preta

The soil of the region, known as Terra Preta, covers an area around the size of France. Soil samples taken by Bruno Glaser, a soil chemist from the Bayreuth University in Germany reveal the transformation of a mineral and nutrient deficient soil into an agriculturally sustainable black living soil.

This living soil - rich in microbial activity, was created by these ancient Indians. Glaser also found a substantial quantity of charcoal along with a combination of organic matter such as manure, fish and bones. An interesting aspect of this fertile earth is its remarkable ability to regenerate.

Soil regenerates if left undisturbed

Local farmers have found that after removing and selling this soil, it will regenerate as long as a 20cm layer is left undisturbed for around twenty years.

Over the past two hundred years scientists have been able to reveal a wealth of information supporting the value of charcoal in soil improvement. Foremost is charcoal's extreme porosity giving it amazing powers of absorption, with around six million pores in a 3 cm circle. It has been estimated that 28 grams of charcoal contains a surface area equivalent to 5 hectares of land (13 acres). Another of charcoal's attributes is its ability to attach to minerals in the soil as though coated in adhesive. Best of all - adding charcoal is a one off application - unlike many jobs in the garden. Even after thousands of years underground charcoal retains every detail of the wood structure.

Organic growers add many varieties of organic matter to the soil to create a fertile 'live' soil. They know that the secret to good crop yields and healthy plants is in the soil. Yet somehow, these ancient farmers of the Amazon took soil fertility to another level. They created a living soil that sustains and improves its microbial and nutrient levels with time instead of leaching and depleting them - as with many agricultural techniques practised today.

In this region, research has shown that crop yields cannot be maintained into a third growing season when treated with chemical fertilisers. Yet even after a thousand years Terra Preta remains fertile.

Producing charcoal

Wood burnt to ash offers little toward soil improvement, it is devoid of carbon and is rapidly leached. Charcoal produced with a hot fire has much the same effect; destroying much of its valuable carbon. A slower, cooler burn stifling the oxygen is the best way to produce high quality charcoal. This method eliminates the flame that consumes the wood. Liquids and gases are slowly baked away leaving behind a charcoal high in carbon - as did the natives thousands of years ago.

Carbon content in charcoal is the secret to a quality charcoal. No other substance shares its properties. The carbon found in South America's Terra Preta indicates that the indigenous people were adding charcoal to their soil 3,000 to 4,000 years ago. Trials to create a Terra Preta on weathered soil at a site outside the central Amazonian city of Manaus has proven successful. Bruno Glaser and colleagues from Bayreuth University, along with soil experts from Brazilian Agricultural Research Enterprise, compared plots treated with fertiliser, charcoal alone, and plots combining the two.

880 percent increase in crop yields

In the first year little improvement was seen but in the second year the plot with a combination of both charcoal and fertiliser showed an 880 percent increase in crop yields over other crops. This indicates that time is a factor for the nutrient retention and positive effect charcoal provides.

Sydney Shea, from Notre Dame University in Fremantle has seen the success of trials in Japan and South America with eight times crop improvement. Sydney said, "Although local field trials are needed, I remain optimistic of charcoal's potential in Australia for water and nutrient absorption as well as a growth stimulant."

Closer to home

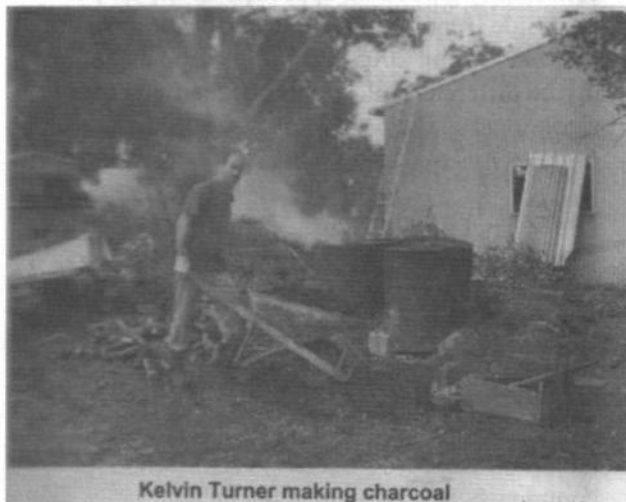
Kelvin Turner, a farmer and organic gardener from Yabberup in Western Australia, is experimenting with charcoal in his home garden and orchard. Although he has always added organic matter to the soil, he is now adding crushed charcoal to sustain nutrients.

Kelvin produces his own charcoal using a 44 gallon drum. "It's early days in my patch of Terra Preta," says Kelvin, "I am trying to discover what portion of charcoal will give the best results in my soil type. There was little improvement in last year's crop adding only marginal charcoal, so I have increased this amount to 30 to 40% crushed charcoal - now I will wait and see."

Thousands of years ago the people of the Amazon started creating sustainable fertile soil - it may have started from a single patch of earth. After achieving success, they possibly passed the method around to others, eventually passing their unique knowledge down to future generations - this fertile soil finally spreading to an area the size of France.

Hundreds of years after their disappearance this soil remains a spectacle for the world's admiration. Could this be our chance to start little Terra Pretas around Australia? Who knows where it might lead?

**This article has been reproduced from Warm Earth magazine September 2005 with permission - thank you Warm Earth and Lorraine Turner; and to our COGS reader of Warm Earth who drew our attention to this interesting article. Ed.*



Kelvin Turner making charcoal

Community Gardens There and Here



Mary Coulson, convenor of Kambah community garden, drew our attention to a magazine article about the Inverleith Allotments, a community garden that occupies the south east corner of Inverleith Park in Edinburgh, Scotland. For copyright reasons we can't reproduce the beautiful photos published to commemorate Inverleith Allotments' Diamond Anniversary but you can imagine the lush intermingling of flowers and vegetables, images of healthy produce, the abundant assortment of growing containers, cloches and sheds and you will know that people frequent the allotments to enjoy working close to the soil, watching over their produce with pride as it grows, and relaxing in the company of other gardeners. The garden area comprises about 130 allotments of 9m by 18m, some shared by up to four people. "The basic choice of vegetables has remained constant. Root vegetables such as potatoes, leeks, parsnips and beetroot are always firm favourites. Rows of cabbages, ruby chard, courgettes, brassica, artichokes, broad beans and peas grow between bushes of soft fruit such as red and black currants and raspberries. Mounds of purple sage and thyme, spikes of chives and patches of parsley fill empty corners. Flowers too have their place.

In the spring roses spill over the fence that surrounds the allotments but in the late summer the plots ... are fired up with clumps of *Crocsmia* 'Lucifer', dahlias, nasturtiums and marigolds, the latter planted because they help prevent the spread of aphids among the vegetables." Source: page 56 "Plot Plants" by Antoinette Galbraith, *Scottish Field*, November 2002.



Former COGS President Martin Butterfield and his wife Frances have also been on the lookout for community gardens abroad. They write: "We are still alive in NYC after missions to Kosovo, Kabul and various parts of Africa. Today we wandered through the Upper West Side of New York including this place [pictured above], the West Side Community Garden. They have vegie patches as well as the flowers but today most folk seemed to be taking a few rays and a coffee amongst the tulips. Rather more organised than the "take a vacant plot and grow something" community gardening approach on the Lower East Side [reported on page 29 of *Canberra Organic* Spring 2005. Ed.]. This probably sums up the different philosophies of the two areas also! Source: Email of 7 May 2006 from the Butterfields.

I must say I too look out for community gardens when I'm away from home, whether they be along train lines in Metropolitan Melbourne or, as in the next set of photos, in the Loire Valley in France. The community garden was just a few kilometers north of the Amboise Chateau and the gardeners were going about their business in much the same way as one does in COGS community gardens—they just had a castle nearby!



Above: Amboise Chateau, France and the community garden a few kilometers north. Photos by I. Popovic.

And now for the 'here' - it's Kambah Community Garden. You see the productive garden beds (below and right), and work being



undertaken (Lyn Mills pictured at far left on the opposite page) but there's also a bit of relaxing going on. You can get the drift of it from the pictures but also from Mary's report on Kambah garden in the Around the Gardens section starting on page 6 of this magazine. Thanks to Trevor Mills for the Kambah photos. Why not send us your photos and notes on community gardens you come across?

Janet Popovic



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New Plot Holders' Workshop for COGS Gardeners

As foreshadowed in the Winter 2006 issue of *Canberra Organic* the first workshop for new COGS plot holders will be held at the O'Connor garden, adjacent to the Uniting Church in Scrivener St, from 1 to 4 pm on Sunday 10 September. Although the workshop is designed to introduce new plot holders to organic gardening as it is practiced in COGS community gardens, all COGS members are welcome to attend.

The workshop will touch on the following topics:

- ★ the principles of sustainable organic gardening;
- ★ nurturing the soil;
- ★ dealing with pests and diseases;
- ★ suppliers of useful products for the organic gardener;
- ★ garden rules and etiquette;
- ★ participants are also urged to ask any questions they may have in relation to gardening in a COGS community garden.

With only three hours available it will not be possible to deal with these subjects in any great depth, however, it is hoped that sufficient information will be provided to enable participants to successfully integrate into the COGS garden community. Some knowledge of gardening will be assumed, so those who have no previous experience or knowledge of gardening may wish to consider enrolling in the *Beginners Organic Gardening Course* notified below.

Some notes will be provided but it may be helpful to bring a note paper and pen. Gardens are not equipped with chairs so if you wish to be able to sit down please bring a chair. There will be a coffee/tea break during the workshop and hot water will be provided. In the case of rain the workshop will be rescheduled. If possible please notify Keith Colls at keithcolls@optusnet.com.au if you wish to attend. This will ensure you are notified if rain forces the rescheduling of the workshop. For more information, contact Keith Colls on 62517729.

Organic Gardening for Beginners

The next beginners gardening course will be held on Sunday afternoons from Nov 5 to Nov 26
The course will again be run by Keith Colls and held at the Xeriscape Garden, Weston

All enquiries should be directed to CIT Solutions on 6207 4441

COGS E-mail Announcement List

COGS has re-established an email announcement list for its members. The list will be used to notify members of the following :

- ★ reminders about upcoming COGS events
- ★ changes to the schedule/speaker line up for COGS events
- ★ information received by other organisations or people that may be of interest to COGS members (eg gardening courses, open days, exhibitions, requests for assistance)

You may expect to receive one or two emails a week from this list. To subscribe, simply send a blank email to the following address :

canberra_organic_growers-subscribe@yahoogroups.com.au

You will receive a welcome message containing details about the announcement list and how to unsubscribe if you want to.

Only the COGS Secretary can forward message to participants and your email address wont be given to any other person or organisation by participating in this list. Send an email to info@cogs.asn.au if you would like anything announced. If appropriate it will be released to the other participating members.

New Plot Holders' Workshop for COGS Gardeners

As foreshadowed in the Winter 2006 issue of *Canberra Organic* the first workshop for new COGS plot holders will be held at the O'Connor garden, adjacent to the Uniting Church in Scrivener St, from 1 to 4 pm on Sunday 10 September. Although the workshop is designed to introduce new plot holders to organic gardening as it is practiced in COGS community gardens, all COGS members are welcome to attend.

The workshop will touch on the following topics:

- ★ the principles of sustainable organic gardening;
- ★ nurturing the soil;
- ★ dealing with pests and diseases;
- ★ suppliers of useful products for the organic gardener;
- ★ garden rules and etiquette;
- ★ participants are also urged to ask any questions they may have in relation to gardening in a COGS community garden.

With only three hours available it will not be possible to deal with these subjects in any great depth, however, it is hoped that sufficient information will be provided to enable participants to successfully integrate into the COGS garden community. Some knowledge of gardening will be assumed, so those who have no previous experience or knowledge of gardening may wish to consider enrolling in the *Beginners Organic Gardening Course* notified below.

Some notes will be provided but it may be helpful to bring a note paper and pen. Gardens are not equipped with chairs so if you wish to be able to sit down please bring a chair. There will be a coffee/tea break during the workshop and hot water will be provided. In the case of rain the workshop will be rescheduled. If possible please notify Keith Colls at keithcolls@optusnet.com.au if you wish to attend. This will ensure you are notified if rain forces the rescheduling of the workshop. For more information, contact Keith Colls on 62517729.

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New Books in the COGS Library!

There are some new and exciting books coming into the COGS Library!

Here are the first four to look out for:

Gardening Down-Under - A Guide to healthier soils and plants by Kevin Handreck

"*Gardening Down-Under* covers the basics of soils, composting, fertilisers and potting mixes, as well as simple tests and colour guides to nutrient deficiencies. It contains much practical information left out by other gardening books. It will enable you to improve the worst of soils, choose the best fertilisers for particular plants and minimise water use." - Back cover of *Gardening Down-Under*

What Garden Pest or Disease is That? - Organic & Chemical Solutions for Every Garden Problem Judy McMaugh

What Garden Pest or Disease is that? is a comprehensive guide to pests and diseases in your garden. It covers: "Planning and maintaining your garden to avoid pests and diseases; Chemical controls and organic alternatives; A-Z of Plant Care; A-Z of Pests and Diseases; and Each pest and diseases is illustrated for easy identification." - Back Cover of *What Garden Pest of Disease s That?*

Lawns to Lunch - Growing Food in the City by Jill Finnane

"*Lawns to Lunch* is about 22 people who discovered how to grow food in the city.... In this book, these urban gardeners share their mistakes, their lucky breaks, their discoveries, their clever inventions and time-saving techniques. The book bubbles with clever ideas and is a testament to how gardens touch lives and connect people with one another." - Back cover of *Lawns to Lunch*

Seed to Seed - Seed Saving and Growing Techniques for Vegetable Gardeners by Suzanne Ashworth

"*Seed to Seed* is a complete seed-saving guide describing specific techniques for saving the seeds of 160 vegetables. Detailed information on each vegetable includes: Botanical classification, flower structure and pollination, isolation distance, population size, caging or hand-pollination, and proper methods to grow, harvest, dry, clean and store the seeds." - Back Cover of *Seed to Seed*

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YOUR ORGANIC BUTCHERY

Questions and Answers

Many of us have questions related to Organic Gardening and one of the benefits of being a part of a community is being able to access our communal wealth of knowledge. We are proposing to have a new regular page within our magazine where we are able to learn from the experiences of others, but it can only happen with your input! This is how we envisage the page working:

1. You send your questions either to us or to the e-mail announcement list (see page 23).
2. We put your questions to the Members at the next COGS General Meeting or collect responses through the e-mail announcement list.
3. We publish your question and the answer in the next issue of *Canberra Organic*.

If we cannot get an answer from the members who attend the next general meeting we will then publish the question in the magazine and ask for answers from our readers. Also if you disagree with the answer given by the members please write to us so that we can give different view points and perspectives!

So here comes your part! Please send us your questions or answers to:

E-mail: editor@cogs.asn.au
Phone: 62551349

Snail Mail: COGS, PO Box 347
Dickson ACT 2602

Q: Shallots - I have planted a few sets of shallots. Any tips on when and how to harvest and store? Same as onions?

A: Shallots are ready to harvest when the leaves yellow and start to wilt - usually in late summer or early autumn - each bulb you planted should have divided and formed a clump of bulbs. After digging up the clumps, spread them out on a rack to dry thoroughly before storing in a dry, well ventilated spot. Keep a few bulbs to replant the following season.

Q: Leeks - Planting leek seeds in punnets results in a forest of fine shoots. Any tips on how to handle them when planting out?

A: Leek seedlings are fairly tough and will tolerate handling better than many seedlings. The easiest way is to tip the whole punnet out and gently disentangle them - doing this in a bucket of water may make things easier. Keep them moist by wrapping in damp newspaper as planting any number can take a while. Alternatively, spread the seeds out and plant only about 20 seeds per punnet.

Q: Raising seedlings - planting seeds in seed raising mix produces very leggy seedlings. To avoid damage to the stems, I transplant them deeply into individual pots at a very early stage. Tomatoes love being planted deeply, but cucumber seedlings seem less happy to be planted up to their armpits. Does anyone have any tips for producing slow growing, sturdy seedlings?

A: Leggy seedlings are usually a result of inadequate light rather than the medium they are grown in. In Canberra its difficult to find a situation which is both light enough and warm enough for seedling growing in winter and early spring, unless you have access to a glasshouse or heat mat. Once the weather warms up seeds and seedlings planted later will often overtake those that have struggled to survive in conditions that were too cold. Most plants need to be transplanted at the same depth as they were growing in the container. Plant stems are not usually able to adapt to life underground and can become vulnerable to attack by fungal diseases. Tomatoes are an exception and will produce extra roots from buried stems - as will potatoes and sweetcorn.

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Nutrients for your Organically Grown Plants

There are a variety of ways that you can maintain nutrient levels in your soils so that plants can grow at an optimum level. The variety of certification bodies that oversee organic growing in Australia have a plethora of rules that govern what you could use if you were growing plants and wanted their imprimatur, but as private organic growers you have greater freedom. Discussions at earlier meetings of our organization settled on the view that we should comply with the spirit of organic growing and not concern ourselves unduly with the letter of any of these sets of regulations. It is in that light that I am going to make my recommendations on what to use, when and how.

There are 4 sets of nutrients that I want to discuss that all can make a difference in how well our plants grow. It does not matter whether the plant is to be eaten or only admired, nor does it matter whether it is an endemic, a native or an exotic plant, they all require the same nutrients. On the other hand, the levels of each nutrient are different for the variety of plants that we grow. Natives, and particularly endemic natives generally require lower levels of all nutrients because they are adapted to our naturally very poor soils, and too rapid an increase in any one of a number of nutrients can be their downfall.

The first group of nutrients are often called the essential nutrients; they are Carbon (C), Hydrogen (H) and Oxygen (O). We usually don't think of these as nutrients because they are regarded as ubiquitous. They are not and plant roots particularly can be affected by a lack of O in conditions such as waterlogging, and plant leaves are also affected by levels of C – for instance the current debate about the effects of carbon dioxide changers in climate change. O and H are provided by the breakdown of water molecules and from small quantities in the atmosphere. C is provided in organic matter and broken down in the root zone by respiration and in the air from the same process.

The next group are the macro nutrients: Nitrogen (N), Phosphorous (P), and Potassium (K). Nitrogen makes up about 80% of the atmosphere but plants can't generally access it in this form. They use an intermediary, the microbes that can fix it into nitrates and ammonia compounds. Plants provide a place for the microbes to live, provide moisture and sugars, and in return they are supplied with nitrogen in a form that they can utilise. We call these plants legumes and use them as composted organic materials, grown as green manures, or plants in their own right in a rotation such as peas or beans. An alternative source of N can be manures such as Chicken (very high and in the form of uric acid), sheep (moderate and as area), cow and horse (low and also as urea). High levels may chemically burn plants, while low levels can sometimes cause a C to N ratio change and actually make N less available to plants, at least initially. Under various organic sets of regulations manures brought on farm have to also be from organic operations, a major problem in supply. A third source is blood and bone, which contains high levels of N and should be applied at rates specified on the pack – usually around a cupful per square meter. Be particularly careful of applying high levels of N to native plants.

The next most important nutrient is P. It is also the most likely to be deficient in all Australian soils so it is likely that you will need to provide it in some form in ongoing plant growth. In conventional agricultural systems superphosphate is the commonest source of P, but this is almost universally banned in organic agriculture. This fertiliser is rock phosphate leached to remove Calcium (Ca) and altered to become more readily available to plants. This is both an advantage (plants can take it up more readily) and a disadvantage (it can leach through the soil and make its way into waterways and cause eutrophication. However you may have to wait for a season or two before even activated rock phosphate is soluble enough to be taken up by plants. Putting Rock phosphate into your compost may accelerate the availability. An alternative source is the blood and bone already mentioned but again be careful to follow instructions, and be particularly cautious when growing native plants.

Potassium is the next most important nutrient. You may have come across it as potash, the common name. This name, literally "pot ash" gives you an idea for the commonest source for the nutrient. Ash from fires that are burning "clean" organic material (ie excluding CCA timber, any solvent and / or containers, petroleum products, plastics, treated leather etc) will produce a useful organic fertiliser high in K. Potassium is particularly important in the onset of flowering and fruit formation. K is also contained in reasonable levels in composts and other plant material but not as readily available in these as in ash. One application of wood ash at a rate of a cupful per square meter per year is going to be an adequate and non toxic organic fertiliser providing sufficient K for most plants.

For the other two groups of nutrients (the meso and micro nutrients) plus a more in depth discussion of those already mentioned you will need to come to the August general meeting!

John Field

Organic Federation of Australia – Annual Conference

22-23 July 2006

This year both Adrienne Fazekas and I were fortunate to be able to attend the 3rd OFA Conference held in Sydney. The Theme of the Conference was “*Organics – Solutions to Climate Change*”. It was a timely theme given the difficult weather conditions we have been experiencing during the last few years and increasing global concern about the consequences of climate change particularly on water supplies and food production. It was also of considerable personal interest to me, not only as a keen organic gardener but also as a meteorologist and member of the Australian negotiating team during the international negotiations to establish the Framework Convention on Climate Change and as a participant in Australia’s contribution to the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s scientific assessment of climate change.

The main message of the conference was that organic farming and gardening have a valuable role to play in the sequestration of atmospheric carbon as organic matter (living and non-living) within the soil. This process reduces the amount of atmospheric carbon (as carbon dioxide, methane and other trace gases) available to contribute to the greenhouse effect. The majority of the papers presented at the conference explored this role. Carbon sequestration is a natural consequence of building soil fertility through increasing the amount of humus and encouraging an abundant and balanced ecological system of soil life within the soil. Both of these processes are cornerstones of the organic method. Composting on a large scale is the method, par excellence, for achieving these two aims provided we refrain from the application of any chemicals which upsets the ecological balance of the soil life.

It is not possible to summarise all the material presented in this short article but the titles of papers presented gives an overview of the subjects discussed.

Session 1A: Organics and innovation

The importance of organic farming systems to reduce greenhouse gases and climate change. *Allan Yeoman*;
Organics and soil carbon: increasing soil carbon, crop productivity and farm

profitability. *Andre Leu*

How the soil food web and compost increase soil organic matter content. *Elaine Ingham*

Session 1B: Building natural soil fertility

Soil fertility management in Australian agriculture. *Maarten Stapper*

Organic carbon dynamics in agriculture. *Jan Skjemstad*

Ecological engineering: pest management solutions for organic agriculture. *Geoff Gurr*

Building natural soil fertility. *Stuart Larsen*

Session 1C: Innovations for climate change

Intensive organic production systems and issues of sustainability. *David Midmore*

Establishing perennial pastures in dry-land organic farming systems: developing

resilience for climate variability. *Viv Burnett*

Feeding above the line: strategic feeding to reduce inputs and increase efficiency of

grazing ruminants. *Tim Kempton*

Pasture cropping: a land management technique. *Colin Seis*

Session 1D: Landscapes and agriculture

Is agricultural education heading in the right direction and what direction might that be?

Kerry Cochrane

The importance of climate change to agriculture and landscape. *Brian Scarsbrick*

The bio-based economy – hydrocarbons to carbohydrates. *Eric Love*

Cost benefit of recycled organics in agriculture. A Partnership Project with

Department of Primary Industries (funded by

NSW Department of Environment and Conservation). *Daren Bragg*

Certification: coping with climate change flexibly. *Rod May*

Session 2A: Soil biology workshops

Developing NPK in the soil food web.

Elaine Ingham

Session 2B: Biodynamic workshops

Biodynamic options to address climate change. *Hamish Mackay*

Biodynamic solutions in the tropics. *James Sprunt*

The Biodynamic preparations – solutions for climate change. *Cheryl Kemp*

Session 2C: Organic sector issues: farmer to consumer

The UK organic market: key drivers and recent mistakes. *Alasdair Smithson*
Peak oil and the future of food – a Western Australian perspective. *Colleen Yates*
Fresh thinking: from farm gate to dinner plate. *Jane Adams*
Fools rush in where angels fear to tread: leadership reflections for Oceania Pacific. *Brendan Hoare*

For those who wish to read the papers in full, a CD of the conference proceedings is available for loan from the COGS library.

The conference highlighted two important issues for COGS, particularly in relation to the operation of our community gardens. The first concerns the use of composting as a means to increase the amount of soil humus and to build a sustainable and balanced ecological system of soil life in our community gardens. Perhaps there is a need to provide better support and know-how for COGS gardeners (especially those who are new to organic gardening) on the techniques for making good quality compost and compost teas. This is crucial for disease control and the maintenance of good soil structure. The work of microbiologist Dr Elaine Ingham provides some valuable practical advice on these matters. It is hoped to incorporate at least some of her ideas and methods into future workshops for COGS gardeners.

The second issue concerns the need for flexibility in the application of organic methods to ensure organic gardening/farming is adequately addressing the issue of sustainability in the light of contemporary research. This matter was highlighted at the conference by Rod May, Technical Director of NASAA. He outlined some of the new draft organic standards being considered which more overtly address climate change issues (see his conference paper for details). The lesson here for COGS is that we must ensure that our methods are kept up-to-date and that members are kept informed of research which should be incorporated into our gardening methods. Current organic gardening methods are not chiselled in stone but must continually evolve as new knowledge becomes available.

Adrienne and I are grateful for the opportunity provided by COGS to attend this conference.

Keith Colls

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Some Ideas on Organic Growing

I've been growing things since I was a six year old. My father gave me a barrow load of well rotted cow manure, which I mixed with the rich red soil of our island in Bermuda. I planted geraniums with help from my sister, and later a little lime tree planted itself, no doubt from the dishwater that was regularly thrown out in the summer when there was not much rain.

Later, after I had got a degree in conventional agriculture, with all the NPK stuff, but without learning about things like DDT and Dioxin and the literally thousands of chemicals that are used today, I read about the English Soil Association, and the work of Lady Eve Balfour and Sir Albert Howard and Lawrence Hills. Then we moved to Australia. We rented a house in Melbourne from a member of the Victorian Compost Society. He begged me not to use any chemicals on his garden while he was away for six months and he encouraged me to join the Society. This was 1958. I still used snail bait in my garden until one day my little dog fell down in a fit, and the vet told me immediately it was due to eating snail bait, so I gave that up.

When we moved to Canberra we started another vegetable garden, as usual, but then after I had started and stopped my organic farm (the first in the Canberra area), and COGS had been formed, I got a plot at the newly started Cotter community garden. We had no garden rules in those days (1983), but we were all COGS members, and wouldn't have dreamt of using any chemicals.

In 1986 The Total Environment Centre published a little book called "The A-Z of Chemicals in the Home." This is a book everyone should read and keep in their home. In 1989 I read some pretty awful stuff from the Environment Centre about chemicals being used here and in third world countries, which I reprinted in the monthly newsletter. Then I discovered the Market Basket Surveys put out by the National Food Authority. The table for pesticides tells the following facts: for celery, 14 different ones were found; for tomatoes, 12; for lettuce, 9; for pears, 9, and so on.

In my view it is worthwhile to grow your own as much as possible, in order to avoid ingesting all these lethal chemicals, because one thing is well

known, that a cocktail of mixed chemicals is more poisonous than when they are separate. The other alternative is to buy organic, and work out your budget accordingly. It's expensive, but less so than many medical conditions caused by eating pesticides, and the flavour is so much better! Another thing to do is to stop buying packaged foods if possible. Not only do you save yourself eating chemicals, but you also save on GST, which is added to the cost of these.

Betty Cornhill

The Organic Federation of Australia has awarded Betty Cornhill a Lifetime Achievement Award for her contribution to organics. The award was presented at the OFA Conference dinner on Saturday 22 July 2006.

Congratulations Betty!

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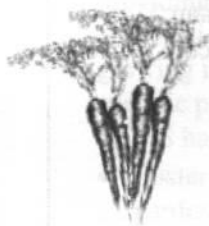
Telephone Brian or Jackie on 6254 4977 for bookings and prices.





SPRING VEGETABLE PLANTING GUIDE

Spring is the main planting season in Canberra. The timing of some plantings may need to be varied depending on the particular season. Be prepared to protect your frost tender seedlings, as harsh frosts can occur right through Spring. Make your own cloches from plastic bottles with the bottoms cut out, or use row covers for larger plantings.



When direct planting with small seeds, eg carrots, bulk out first by mixing the seeds with sand. You can help the plants pre-germinate by keeping them in moist sand for about 4 days before planting out (do not let them actually germinate).

When planting out large seeds, eg. pea or corn, soak overnight in a weak seaweed solution prior to planting; alternatively, keep seeds moist between 2 pieces of kitchen paper for 3 to 4 days until seeds germinate, then plant out carefully. This is particularly useful if you are not sure of the seeds viability.

Check your seed packets for their "use-by" date as poor germination may result from planting after that time, or plants may show a lack of vigour when the seedlings come up.

A seed should be planted at a depth 2-3 times its diameter, although it is better to plant too shallow rather than too deep.

CROP ROTATION:

Remember to rotate the crops you grow in a particular garden bed. Crop rotation is a most important practice for organic gardeners. Successive crops should not come from the same plant families nor make the same demands on nutrients i.e. follow heavy feeders with light feeders. Also successive crops should not share the same diseases or attract the same pests - this prevents a build up of disease problems, and reduces losses from pests. There are numerous crop rotation schemes used, but try to keep to at least a 4 year rotation period and do not grow members of the same plant family in the same bed in consecutive years. eg the solanum family - tomatoes, capsicums, eggplants and potatoes.



PLANT VARIETIES:

It is important with crops such as cabbage and lettuce to choose the appropriate variety for the time of year. Lettuce



varieties best suited to early Spring are Cos, Salad Bowl, Butterhead and Mignonette..

	SEPT	OCT	NOV
Globe Artichoke	T	T	
J'salem Artichoke	T		
Asparagus	S	S	S
French Beans		S	S
Beetroot	S	S	S
Broccoli			S
Brussels Sprouts		S	S
Cabbage	ST	ST	ST
Capsicum*		S	ST
Carrot	S	S	S
Cauliflower			S
Celery	S	ST	ST
Cucumber*	S	S	ST
Eggplant*	S	S	T
Endive			S
Leeks	ST	ST	T
Lettuce	ST	ST	S
Melons*	S	S	ST
Onions	T	T	
Parsnips	S	S	S
Peas	S	S	
Potatoes	S	S	S
Pumpkins*	S	S	ST
Radish	S	S	S
Rhubarb	T	T	
Silverbeet	S	S	ST
Snow Peas	S	S	S
Spinach	ST	ST	
Squash*	S	S	ST
Sweet corn		S	ST
Tomatoes*	S	S	ST
Turnips, white	S		
Zucchini*	S	S	ST

S= seed sowing

T= transplanting seedlings

* When planting these seeds before November the seed should be started in punnets indoors and the young seedlings kept in a warm sheltered place. Plant out the seedlings once the soil has warmed and the danger of frost has passed.

COGS Committee Members & Helpers

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Vice President	Keith Colls	6251 7729	keithcolls@optusnet.com.au
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Cotter Orchard	Ann Smith	6285 2995	a.smith@netspeed.com.au
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Oaks Estate	Terry Williams	6299 2409	fourofus@cyberone.com.au
O'Connor	Alan Robertson	6251 0906	araba@netspeed.com.au
Queanbeyan	Cormac Farrell	0422441358	cormac.farrell@minerals.org.au
Theodore	Richard Reed	6291 1897	rmjreed@ozemail.com.au
<u>Monthly Meetings</u>			
Seed exchange	vacant		
Supper conveners	Volunteers - please add your name to the roster!		
Librarians	Sophia Williams and volunteers - please add your name to the roster!		
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)

Venue: Meeting Room 6 The 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 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 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

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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

7:30 pm, Meeting Room 6,
Griffin Centre, Genge Street, Civic

22 August 2006

John Field: Will speak about the importance of plant nutrition, and how it can be achieved using organic and biodynamic techniques.

26 September 2006

Barbara Schreiner:
An Introduction to Permaculture

24 October 2006

David Odell:
Cheese Making

28 November 2006

Adrienne Fazekas and Keith Colls will run a Plant Clinic - bring along your questions and pest and disease specimens for identification.

COGS Working Bees

COGS Backyard
Saturday 26th August, 1-3pm
Sunday 1st October, 1-3pm
Saturday 28th October, 1-3pm

Thankyou to Adrienne Fazekas, Garry Ridgway, Janet Popovic, Martin Largry, Keith Colls and his grandson Ted for their help in maintaining COGS Backyard.

COGS Meeting Suppers

Thanks to Janet, Alison and Eliza for providing our recent general meetings with supper. Members enjoyed your tasty treats!

*We need MORE volunteers for upcoming meetings so why not add YOUR name to the roster!
(ring Janet 62582811)*

Annual Garden Meetings

During September meetings are held in each of the gardens at which convenors and local garden committees are elected, plot levies collected and local garden rules reviewed.

All gardeners are expected to attend and are encouraged to become involved in the running of their garden.

The dates for this years meetings are:

Charnwood:	Sat	24/9/06	3 pm
Cook:	Sun	24/9/06	12 noon
Cotter:	Sat	9/9/06	9 am
Erindale:	Please contact Christine		
Kambah:	Sun	17/9/06	2 pm
Holder:	Sat	9/9/06	10 am
Northside:	Sat	9/9/06	1 pm
O'Connor	Sun	10/9/06	12 noon
Oaks Estate:	Sun	17/9/06	11 am
Queanbeyan:	Sat	23/9/06	12 noon
Theodore:	Sun	24/9/06	10 am

Events

Murrumbateman Field Days:

14 and 15 October 2006
for further information
www.murrumbateman.org.au

Jackie French's Garden Tour COGS Members Only

Saturday, 25th of November (See Page 4)

CIT Plant Sale and COGS stall
Saturday 11th November 9am—4 pm
Volunteers needed

COGS Open Gardens

Saturday 2nd December
Theodore 10 → 11:30
Holder 12 → 1:30
O'Connor 2 → 3:30

COGS E-mail Announcement List!

(See Page 23)

To subscribe, simply send a blank email to the following address :
canberra_organic_growers-subscribe@yahoo.com.au