



Autumn 2007

# Canberra Organic

## ORGANIC GROWING IN THE CANBERRA REGION

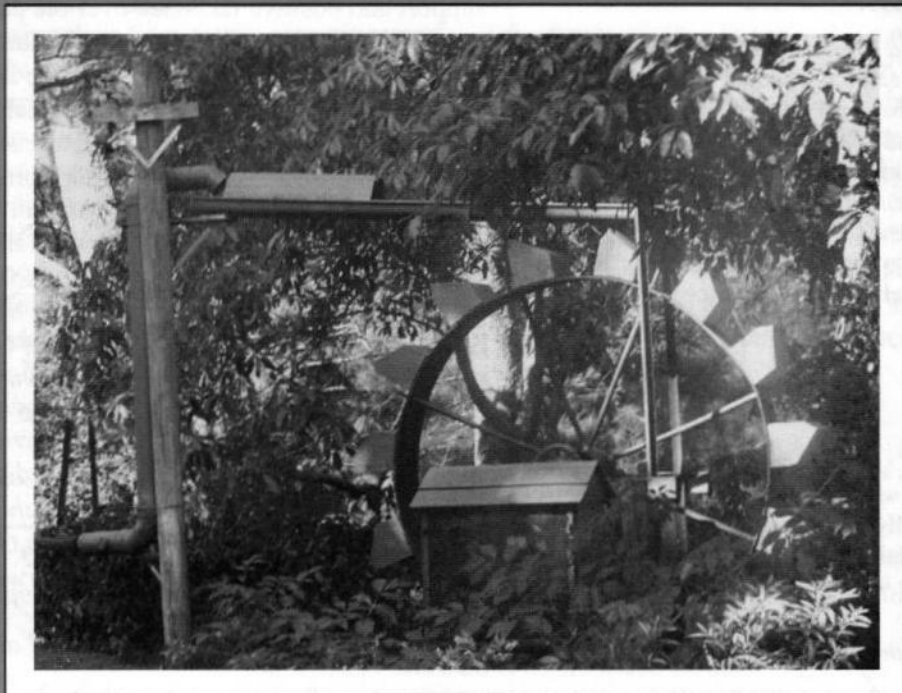
The quarterly publication of the Canberra Organic Growers Society Inc.

Report on Visit to Jackie French Garden

All you need to know about Asparagus    Waterwise

Fresh Produce from Markets in France

Integrated Pest Management in an Organic Garden



Vol. 15 No. 1

## CANBERRA ORGANIC

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Articles in the magazine do not necessarily  
reflect the views of the Society.

### CO-EDITORS:

Janet Popovic and Sophia Williams

### ADVERTISING:

Contact Janet Popovic 62582811  
Email: editor@cogs.asn.au

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

Payment is to be made in advance. COGS  
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*Thanks to Arthur's Vegetable Clipart*

## From the Editor



40 COGS members had a wonderful visit to Jackie French's property at Araluen last November and we have a report with pictures for you on pages 8 and 9. If you missed out you'll just have to catch up on some of Jackie's marvellous books, a number of which are in our COGS library, or watch out for the next Open Garden Scheme opportunity to visit. Garry Ridgway has sent us some excellent photographs of mouthwatering fresh produce he came upon in the morning markets in Toulouse, France and a selection of these photos is published on pages 16 and 17 - thanks Garry! Our President and Vice-President have prepared articles on Growing Asparagus and on Integrated Pest Management in an organic garden respectively and you should check out the wisdom on Watering in these current harsh conditions (pages 26 and 27). Once again our community garden convenors have sent in their reports and photos on what's on Around the Gardens and Graham Walker has another masterpiece for you to marvel at. As we have said many times it is the fact that our members contribute that makes the magazine!

*Sophia Williams and Janet Popovic*

With mixed emotions I confess that this is the last issue of *Canberra Organic* that I'll be co-editing - time to move on to other things, including some work in my own gardens! Thanks for all your support and positive feedback over the past four years! Thanks so much to Sophia Williams who has taken on much of the editing load since last year's AGM by handling all the desktop publishing as well as starting up some regular features such as the Q and A, and who has also been our librarian for a year! We need at least three new Committee members for the coming year so especially if you want to try your hand at editing, but also if you are prepared to be COGS Treasurer, or the Membership Secretary, or to take on one of the other Committee positions so re-elected members can swap roles, please put your name forward (see page 4). JP

*We would also like to acknowledge the amazing contribution that Janet has made over the past 4 years. Janet you have helped Canberra Organic to become a magazine that we all look forward to receiving each season. THANKYOU!!*

*Sophia and all at COGS*



## From the President Autumn 2007

Welcome to another year of gardening with COGS. This year marks a special milestone for the Society as it turns thirty. It is a remarkable achievement for an entirely volunteer organisation to continue to grow and prosper over this length of time and something we should certainly celebrate. The nature of this celebration is for the membership to decide and the committee is eagerly awaiting suggestions!

### *The COGS committee*

An organisation like COGS does not run itself. We have financial and legal responsibilities to fulfil, membership records to maintain, speakers and meetings to organise, a quarterly magazine to produce, publish and distribute, and twelve community gardens to manage.

Over the past year, the seven members of the current COGS committee have continued to keep the Society running smoothly on behalf of all its members and I would like to thank them all for the time, effort and dedication they have put into this task.

Sadly, three members, Jen Johnston, Janet Popovic and Michelle West have decided, for personal reasons, that they will be retiring from the committee after the AGM in March. Jen, Janet and Michelle have each contributed greatly to COGS during their time on the committee and will be sorely missed. On behalf of all the COGS members thank you for all your hard work.

This, of course, means the committee is in urgent need of some new members. We are required to have a committee of at least five which should not be too difficult for an organisation of over three hundred members. If you enjoy any of the benefits COGS provides (magazine, meetings, library and access to a garden plot) please consider joining the committee and helping to ensure the ongoing viability of the organisation. The work involved is not very arduous unless, of course, it all has to be done by a handful of people.

Some members I have talked to over the years about joining the committee have felt they were not sufficiently knowledgeable about organic gardening. Gardening knowledge is certainly not a prerequisite for committee membership - all you need is an interest in, and enthusiasm for the ongoing success of COGS.

### *AGM and Harvest night*

The 2007 COGS Annual General Meeting will be held on March 27th. This is the meeting where the formal business of COGS is conducted - receiving and approving the financial statements and electing the committee to manage COGS for the next year.

As I mentioned last year, attending this meeting does not put you at risk of being drafted onto the committee but we do need at least two or three new members to enable the committee, and therefore COGS, to continue to function.

Anyone interested in joining the committee who would like to know more about what is involved please feel free to contact either myself or another member of the committee.

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

This growing season has provided a real challenge for gardeners. We've had a bit of everything in terms of weather. Snow one week in November followed by 30 degree temperatures the following week, heatwaves, drought and hail throughout the Summer and very patchy rainfall across Canberra including floods in some areas. Not to mention trying to keep up with the hand watering. Hopefully we will get some good, soaking Autumn rains rather than Stage 4 restrictions.

**Adrienne Fazekas**

**ACTEW Stage 3 Water Restrictions apply in all the COGS gardens**  
Handheld hoses with trigger nozzles, drippers, watering cans or buckets can be used from 7 - 10 am and 7 - 10 pm on the odds and evens system.

No watering is allowed outside these hours.

All sprinklers are banned after February 28th 2007.

**Canberra Organic Growers Society Inc.**  
**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**  
**27 March 2007, 7.30pm**

The Annual General Meeting of the Canberra Organic Growers Society Inc. will be held on  
***Tuesday 27 March 2007 at 7:30 pm, in Meeting Room 6 of the Griffin Centre,***  
***Genge Street, Civic*** (opposite the old Griffin Centre site)

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

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

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

1. Nominations of candidates for election as office-bearers of COGS, or newsletter editor, or librarian, or as ordinary Committee members shall be made in writing, signed by 2 members of COGS and accompanied by the written consent of the candidate (which may be endorsed on the nomination form).
2. If insufficient nominations are received to fill all vacancies on the committee, the candidates nominated shall be deemed to be elected and further nominations shall be received at the Annual General Meeting.
3. If insufficient further nominations are received, any vacant positions remaining on the committee shall be deemed to be vacancies.
4. If the number of nominations received is equal to the number of vacancies to be filled, the persons nominated shall be taken to be elected.
5. If the number of nominations received exceeds the number of vacancies to be filled, a ballot shall be held.
6. The ballot for the election of office-bearers, newsletter editor and librarian and ordinary committee members shall be conducted at the AGM in such a manner as the Committee may direct.
7. A person is not eligible to simultaneously hold more than one position on the committee, except:
  - (a) the position of Public Officer; and
  - (b) the position of Membership Secretary, which can be held by the Honorary Treasurer.

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

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## Organic Gardening for Beginners Course

The next beginners gardening course will be held on Sunday afternoons  
commencing on 13th May 2007.

The course will be conducted by Keith Colls, Vice-President of COGS.

All enquiries should be directed to CIT Solutions on 6207 4441.



### Cook

There was a big hail storm at Cook on 30 December. Ian and Karin were passing by and took photos (see back cover). There was lots of hail on the ground and caught in the nets but the damage was not as bad as feared. The individual gardens are producing very well considering the hail, long periods of hot weather and the watering restrictions, and the community fruit trees are now bearing fruit.

We had our first working bee in 2007 on Sunday 4 February. It finished up being a lovely afternoon. Not only did we have a sunset BBQ but we also bordered community plots with the railway sleepers delivered last year. Thanks to all those who attended and helped. We'll hold further working bees/ BBQs on the first Sunday of each month.

*Rasima Kecanovic*

### Cotter

Following the departure of three former plot holders since last September, the Cotter gardeners have been pleased to welcome three new members. Two of the new gardeners have enthusiastically taken over areas which needed a bit of extra effort to prepare them before planting of crops could take place. The photograph shows the results of one of those efforts and what can be achieved in a very short time by using good gardening practices. The plot had not been worked for a few years and was overgrown with weeds when it was taken over last October. The gardener began work in November and cleared all the weeds before giving the plot a good covering of pulverised cow manure followed by a thick layer of straw. As you can see, she is getting great results already.



Despite the continuing drought, most gardeners have persevered and are being rewarded with reasonable crops. In fact, in our experience, tomato

## Around the Gardens



plants are producing much better fruit this season than they did in the previous one. However, it is difficult to maintain the communal garden because, not surprisingly, plot-holders give preference to nurturing their own crops. Even normally hardy plants such as lavender are having a tough time, but it was heartening to see some fresh green shoots on a plant that had looked as dead as a dodo before being given a 'drink'.

There are a few vacant plots so we invite you to contact us if you are interested in having one.

*Roz & Trevor Bruhn*

### Dickson

What a difficult summer this is! We only had 12.5mm of rain in December and 7mm in January, so the main activity has been watering. The grasshoppers have eaten holes all through the potato leaves, and our friendly chough birds continually scratch off our mulch (plus the first young corn and watermelon plants!) The pumpkins are yet to flower and we have resorted to shade covers during the worst of the scorching days. I've worked out that the first 4 corncobs we've harvested come at the input of about 100 litres of water and 10 hours of labour each! At least half of our available area is not being used.

*Margaret Richardson*

### Holder

What a growing season - a very warm Spring, then a cool start to Summer, then on Boxing Day the garden was hit with a light frost with light to medium frost damage! The thunder storms on the following weekend brought rain which was not penetrating but enough to make the garden come alive and take on a lovely shade of green. Some gardeners have planted their plots to the maximum, while others have concentrated on planting the plots to the minimum with the basics, but with either approach all are growing and producing. Our new gardeners have been patient and have persevered but they now are reaping rewards for their efforts.

Water restrictions have been a challenge but each gardener has seemed to adjust and with mulch the gardens have been able to retain some moisture to survive the hot days. We are hoping the promised Autumn rains come so work can be started to improve soil over the Winter period.

Finally, the garden had an open day in December that saw a handful of members turn up to see how the garden was progressing. There was a display by Joe Emerson (Uncle Joes chooks) of his mobile chook runs and row cover units on the day.

*Conrad van Hest*

### **Kambah**

There are nine vacant plots at the Kambah Community Garden. Some are ready for immediate use but a number of plots will require some work to bring them up to scratch. All enquiries are welcome.

This Summer's growing season has been marked by days of very high temperatures and strong winds but we have also had a couple of days of heavy rainfall and overcast sky which meant that we could reduce the amount of hand watering in the gardens. The changeable weather appears to have delayed the tomato crops and we are only now starting to pick ripe red tomatoes.

Len & Fran have continued to produce good results with hearted lettuce, silverbeet, onions, beans, peas and lots of very lush potato plants in their three plots.

Other plot holders are picking small green squash, cabbage and bunching onions and waiting for eggplant, capsicum and cucumber to ripen. A flock of pigeons has taken up residence in the garden compound and continues to rake the mulch off the plots in search of food. So, whilst the gardens do not look very presentable at this time, they are nonetheless fairly productive.

The earlier severe influx of earwigs has now eased a little and fortunately we have not yet been visited by the green vegetable bug that was such a problem last Summer.

Steve Taylor will be taking on the job of convenor from 1st February as I will be away interstate. I wish all members well with their gardens and all the best for 2007.

*Mary Coulson*

*Thanks Mary for your great contribution as convenor and your regular contributions to Canberra Organic. Welcome Steve! Ed.*

### **Mitchell**

The Mitchell gardeners are starting to enjoy the rewards of careful watering and nurturing during summer. Our tomatoes are starting to blush becomingly, beans are defying gravity and corn's as high as...well...an elephant's eye.

Many of us had to replant after the November frosts and have worked hard to keep plants alive through January's spate of high 30 degree days. I've given up

hope on a pumpkin crop this year after three replantings. Even my zucchini plants have struggled recently (I thought zucchinis were like cockroaches and could survive bomb blasts).

John C's fabulous rabbit-proofing efforts have held fast so far and John F is giving our fruit trees a long-overdue pampering. One good thing about the dry weather is that the weeds and couch haven't needed attention.

We've recently had a few problems with our gates and with a shovel thief, but otherwise, things are looking pretty good for summer harvest.

*Monica van Wensveen*

### **O'Connor**

The plant growth over our first full Summer has been remarkable, mostly taking place in imported soil, compost and organic fertilizers over the well draining clay tennis court base. Like, no doubt, most other COGS gardens, gardeners are picking good crops of tomatoes, zucchinis, eggplants, button squash and cucumbers. The green and butter bean plants are taking a rest after the first good flush and look set for a second cropping before the cold weather sets in. Most potato crops appear to be doing well with little sign so far of die back of the tops. The pumpkins have done less well with the unseasonably cold November delaying planting. Some plants, including the self-sown ones, initially produced some good looking pumpkins but since then, for reasons unknown, the flowering and fruiting has been unusually slow. If the hot weather is extended, we may achieve some late results. The low rainfall, nothing over 6mm since new year's day, has had us envious of our South Canberra cousins who might well be feeling the effects of a surplus.

The restricted watering hours have at least had the benefit of bringing gardeners into the garden at the same time which, together with the compact space and relatively low number of members, is achieving a very good communal atmosphere. Takeaway coffees from Tilley's early on a weekend morning are not unheard of. Water pressure is adequate for three or four hoses at a time so with a little cooperation and coordination we generally have not had water pressure problems.

The fifteen plots in the O'Connor garden remain fully allocated with a waiting list of five.

*Alan Robertson*

## A Pre-Christmas Treat - hosted by Jackie French!



At the end of November last year 40 COGS members enjoyed a very special afternoon visiting Jackie French's wonderful garden in the bush at Araluen. Thank you Jackie for this opportunity, for your hospitality and generously donated time talking to us and showing us around. Everyone went away full of admiration and at least a little wiser on better managing the resources we have available in our gardens.

As it happened the day of the visit was also Braidwood's 'airing of the quilts' day, an annual event for which dozens of beautiful quilts are hung from awnings and windows in the main streets of Braidwood and displayed in the town's galleries. There was also a busy market in the large central park so there was plenty to see as our group assembled for the trip to Araluen.

We were bussed into Jackie's in two groups, served with refreshing watermelon and then seated under shady trees for Jackie's introductory talk about her garden and how it had evolved. Later we followed her through shady groves and past a wonderful array of plants and vegetables growing in unexpected places. During afternoon tea (delicious, homebrewed) and tasty treats we were able to chat informally with Jackie while she obliged with endless book signings.

Jackie explained that she was interested more in how and why things grow rather than to 'farm'. She came to Araluen in the 1970s, initially to try and grow avocados - an interest of her partner. They were faced with hard clay and shale, a forest of blackberries and some old citrus trees covered in scale. While saving for spray equipment she observed how effective the ladybirds were at handling pests and so began to change tack and develop her methods of observation and tackling the eradication of weeds by targeting







small areas at a time and replanting with something else. Jackie told us her place now grows 270 types of fruit on 600 fruit trees including 130 varieties of apples and 13 varieties of plums! All this in a bush location where summer temperatures of 40 and 50 degrees and winter temperatures regularly down to -6 degrees are experienced, where there is little rainfall with high evaporation rates, and strong winds!

Jackie explained that her place was planted 1) to feed the family during the year 2) to see how things grow 3) to be sustainable and not require work and 4) to co-exist with the native animals. Susceptible vegetables such as lettuce and other greens, carrots, parsnips and corn are grown in pens that keep out wombats but otherwise plants are open to wombats and wallabies. A key technique has been to grow in groves - these become windbreaks and create microclimates that greatly reduce evaporation. Groves also protect fruit from pests by not providing obvious silhouettes and disguising plant aromas, cutting down the dust and encouraging prolific birdlife. The birds eat fruit from the top of the tree and the humans harvest from below. Possums are deterred by the unpruned nature of the groves. The shading of the fruit extends the ripening and harvest period over several months, very suitable for home consumption as opposed to commercial production.

Seeing is believing - we'll leave the rest to pictures!



## More News on Composting

In the Summer issue of *Canberra Organic* I provided readers with a preliminary report on the Aerobin400 ([www.aerobin.com.au](http://www.aerobin.com.au)). On the day of the magazine's publishing deadline I had purchased the bin, installed it, three quarters filled it and, after two days' operation noted that the temperature of the composting material had risen to 48 degrees.

I can now further report that, after filling the bin, the level of material sank remarkably quickly, around 100 to 200 mm every two or three days. I kept the bin topped up, including with material that I would have considered too tough to process through a black plastic bin (bpb) such as some feral mint, roots and all, and a lot of woody broad bean stems and stumps. The Aerobin took all this material in its stride and within five weeks of the initial loading I opened the two hatches and carefully shovelled out the bottom third to half of the material. This consisted of wonderfully moist but crumbly compost with a lot of worms, the best compost I have ever produced. It was fairly easy to work the remaining, partially composted, material to the bottom of the bin and to refill the bin with fresh vegetable matter. By the middle of January I had fully composted all the material that would otherwise have stayed in three bpbs until April and I had produced a superior quality product.

Does it live up to its claims to produce good quality compost quickly? Yes.

Will it kill off the tomato, pumpkin, zucchini and other seeds that survive through my existing bins? Maybe. Composting all the tomato seeds that are the waste from making passata this Summer will be the big test.

Will it work if it is filled over time rather than all at one time? I believe so, but suspect that the higher the fill level the greater the efficiency. How will I handle the large volumes of material awaiting composting when I clear out my spent crops at the end of both Summer and Winter? I plan to store excess material in my existing bpbs knowing that it will be quickly transferred to the Aerobin.

Will it work effectively through a Canberra winter? That remains to be seen but I suspect that the remarkable level of microbial action and

the bin's insulation will largely shrug off the cold ambient temperature.

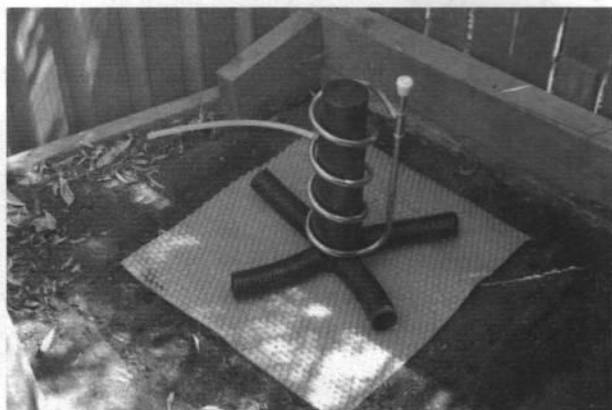
The Aerobin400 can be strongly recommended but with the following caveats:

The bin needs to be placed on a plinth to be able to access the leachate from the tank.

Sufficient space is needed to be able to access the hatches from both the front and rear.

The significant cost could only be justified by a gardener having a large amount of material to feed through it. I would think you would need the waste from at least 60 m<sup>2</sup> of vegetable garden or a similar sized supply from other sources to be able to keep the bin occupied.

During this test my attention was drawn to the Compost Oven Lung which has been successfully used by Michael Plane at Allsun to compost commercial quantities of garden waste. The Compost Oven is the one that was shown on *The New Inventors* last year. It consists of a soft sided, insulated bin and an internal heating, aerating and insulating kit, the Compost Oven Lung, which can be bought separately and installed in a bpb. Readers are referred to [www.compostoven.com.au](http://www.compostoven.com.au) for full details and costs.



I purchased and assembled a Lung in mid January and filled the bpb surrounding it with some layers of fresh material and some that had been slowly composting in another bpb for some

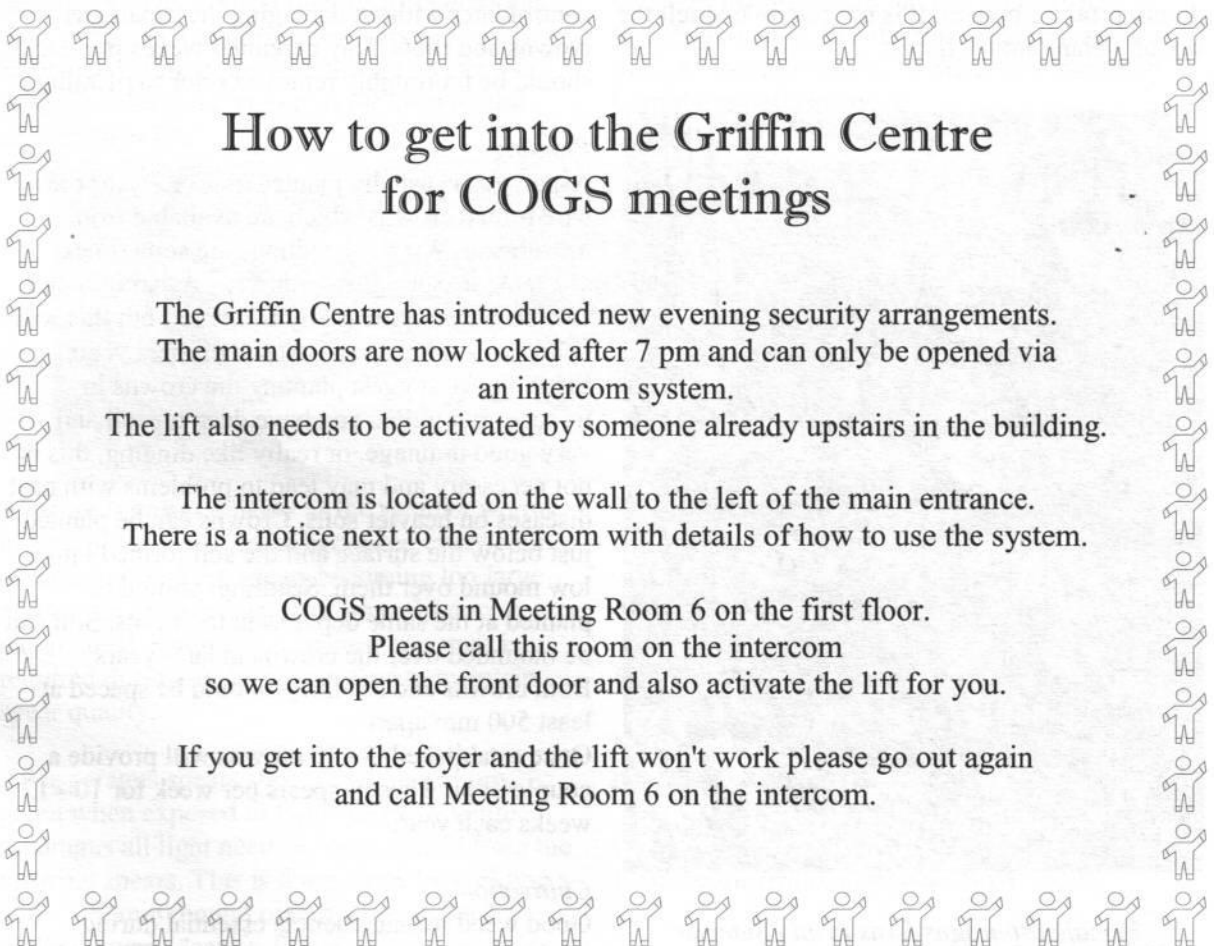
time. It has now been composting for around three weeks which allows me to give a very preliminary report on progress. The material in bin has shown no increase in temperature near the surface but it has sunk more rapidly than one would expect in a normal bpb but not nearly as fast as the Aerobin. Lifting out one of the hatches of the bin and scraping out a bit of material indicated that it was composting faster than an ordinary bpb but not as fast as the Aerobin. I will allow this process to continue, topping up the bin with vegetable scraps from the kitchen, until I generate a big supply of waste from the vegetable garden when I will start the Compost Lung again with all fresh material. It should be noted that the Compost Lung could not be operated in continuous mode. The susceptibility of the Lung components to damage from a spade would preclude attempting to dig out compost through the small hatches in the bpb. It might therefore be necessary to have two Compost Lungs to keep a continuous composting process going.

Robinson style aerating kit from 50 mm plastic pipe and fittings and possibly with full insulation over the bpb. Further reports will be forthcoming.

**Alan Robertson**



In addition to giving the Compost Lung a second trial I intend to construct my own Heath



## How to get into the Griffin Centre for COGS meetings

The Griffin Centre has introduced new evening security arrangements. The main doors are now locked after 7 pm and can only be opened via an intercom system.

The lift also needs to be activated by someone already upstairs in the building.

The intercom is located on the wall to the left of the main entrance. There is a notice next to the intercom with details of how to use the system.

COGS meets in Meeting Room 6 on the first floor.

Please call this room on the intercom  
so we can open the front door and also activate the lift for you.

If you get into the foyer and the lift won't work please go out again  
and call Meeting Room 6 on the intercom.

# Growing Asparagus

Asparagus is a long lived perennial crop well suited to being grown organically. Once established it requires little maintenance and is relatively untroubled by pests and diseases. A well managed planting should remain productive for 15 - 20 years.

### *The plant*

Asparagus (*Asparagus officinalis*) is a member of the lily family (Liliaceae) and has been cultivated for over 2000 years. It is a deep rooted, herbaceous perennial which becomes dormant during Winter in cool climates. Asparagus spears are the young stems which originate from buds on permanent, woody, below ground crowns. When left to grow on the spears become 1 - 1.5 metre tall, dense, green ferns which supply food to replenish the crowns over Summer. The ferns yellow and die in Autumn.

The plants are dioecious i.e. each plant has only either male or female flowers. Female plants have fewer, thicker spears and produce small red berries in Summer and Autumn. Male plants produce a greater number of thinner spears and do not produce berries. It is not possible to tell the sex of a plant until it flowers.



*Female asparagus ferns in mid Summer*

### *Site and soil*

Good site selection and preparation is necessary as the crop will remain in the same place for many years. Asparagus is best planted in a dedicated bed free of annual crops to avoid future root disturbance. Asparagus needs constant adequate moisture, good drainage and moderate fertility. These essentials can be provided by focusing on improving the soil structure, incorporating large quantities of organic matter and mulching.

Choose an open, sunny position with well structured soil and good drainage. Incorporating a green manure crop, some old animal manure or well made compost prior to planting will improve the soil structure and drainage. The soil should have a pH of 6.5 - 7.5 (slightly alkaline). If the pH is 6 or lower, lime or dolomite should be added. Asparagus requires only moderate fertility compared to many vegetable crops.

It is very important that the site chosen is free from perennial weeds as these will be difficult to control later without damaging the asparagus crowns and roots. Any perennial weeds present should be thoroughly removed prior to planting..

### *Planting*

Asparagus is usually planted as 1 or 2 year old bare rooted crowns which are available from nurseries in Winter. Seedlings are sometimes available in Spring and Summer. Asparagus can also be grown quite easily from seed but this will delay your first harvest by two or three years. Many books suggest planting the crowns in trenches but unless you have deep topsoil and very good drainage, or really like digging, this is not necessary and may lead to problems with root diseases on heavier soils. Crowns can be planted just below the surface and the soil formed into a low mound over them. Seedlings should be planted at the same depth as in their pots. Soil can be mounded over the crowns in later years. Both crowns and seedlings should be spaced at least 500 mm apart. Once established, 8 - 10 crowns will provide a couple of bunches of spears per week for 10 - 12 weeks each year.

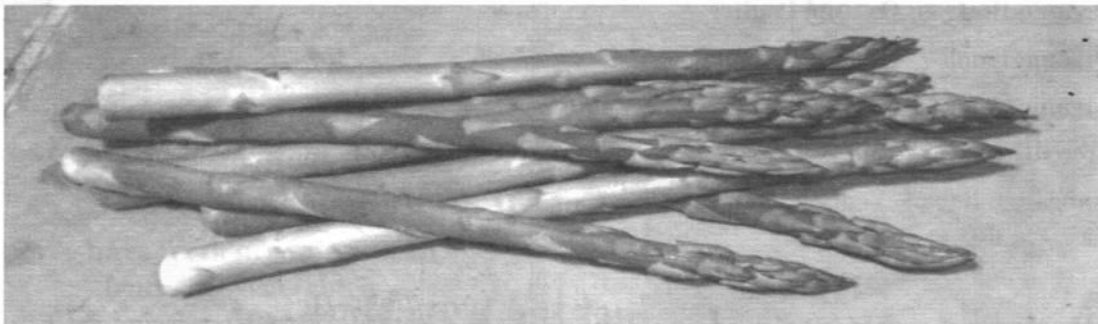
### *Cultivation*

Good weed management is essential during establishment as young asparagus plants are not

vigorous growers. Annual weeds need to be removed regularly to avoid competition. Asparagus has large fleshy roots which are easily damaged by cultivation. Mulch deeply ( at least 100 mm) to control annual weeds and to maintain more even soil moisture. Drip irrigate to encourage deep rooting. Top dress annually with compost, animal manure or a feeding mulch such as lucerne hay. Check the pH every couple of years and add a dressing of lime or dolomite if it falls below 6.

#### Harvesting

The first spears can usually be harvested two years after planting crowns or three years after planting seedlings. Spears emerge in early Spring and are harvested by cutting them at ground level with a sharp knife. They should be 150 - 250 mm tall and greater than pencil thickness. Spears should be cut before their tips start to open. Any very thin spears can be left to grow into ferns. The first harvest should not last for more than 4 - 6 weeks but in subsequent years spears can be cut for three months each year (Sept - Dec). Spear quality will deteriorate once the hot Summer weather arrives. Over-harvesting in the first few years can severely reduce the vigour of the crowns and shorten their life.



Asparagus grows quickly as the weather warms in Spring and needs to be harvested every couple of days to avoid the spears becoming too large and woody. Spears can grow up to 10 cm per day in ideal conditions. Constant moisture is required during the harvest period to maintain spear quality.

All asparagus spears start off white and turn green when exposed to light. To grow white asparagus all light needs to be excluded from the growing spears. This is done either by building a 150 - 200 mm mound over the crowns or by mulching very deeply. The spears are cut as soon

as their tips emerge from the mound/mulch. Great care needs to be taken to avoid damaging any younger spears which have not yet emerged. Commercially, white asparagus is produced in black polythene tunnels.

Asparagus does not store well and should be eaten as soon as possible after cutting for maximum flavour and sweetness.

Once harvesting stops in early Summer new spears are left to grow up into ferns. These ferns need to grow for at least four months to replenish the nutrient reserves in the crown for the next years harvest. As the weather cools in Autumn the ferns will begin to yellow and will die off as soon as the first frosts arrive. At this stage all the ferns should be completely removed at ground level.

#### Pests and diseases

Asparagus is rarely troubled by pests or diseases. The main pests which can damage the spears are snails and slugs which may need to be controlled by trapping. Pests which can cause damage to the ferns include thrips, aphids, loopers and Rutherglen bugs. In a diverse organic garden there are usually sufficient predatory insects to keep these pests in check.

The most common diseases of asparagus are the soil borne fungi *Fusarium sp.* and *Phytophthora sp.* usually associated with poor drainage or root damage as a result of cultivation.

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[www.agric.wa.gov.au](http://www.agric.wa.gov.au) *Growing Asparagus in Western Australia*, Farmnote No.45/2005

**Adrienne Fazekas**

## COGS Green Manure mixes now available

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

Each year COGS buys bulk seed which is mixed, packaged and made available to members.

This year there will be two mixes available:

*Legume and cereal mix* containing field peas, vetch, ryecorn, wheat and oats

*Legumes only mix* containing field peas, clover and vetch

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

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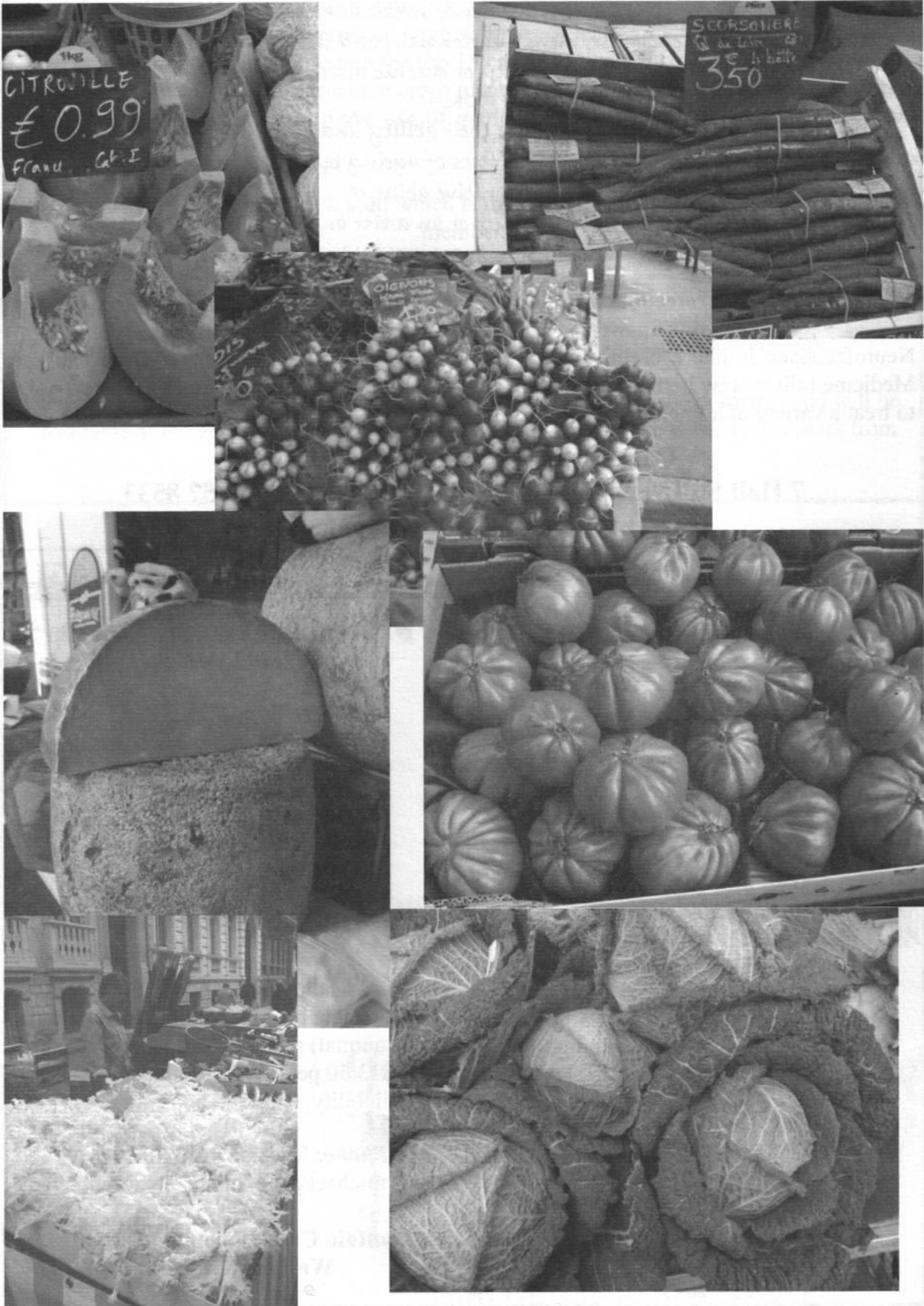
**Phone: Michael 0413 387 686**

**Email: [michael@mountaincreekfarm.com.au](mailto:michael@mountaincreekfarm.com.au)**

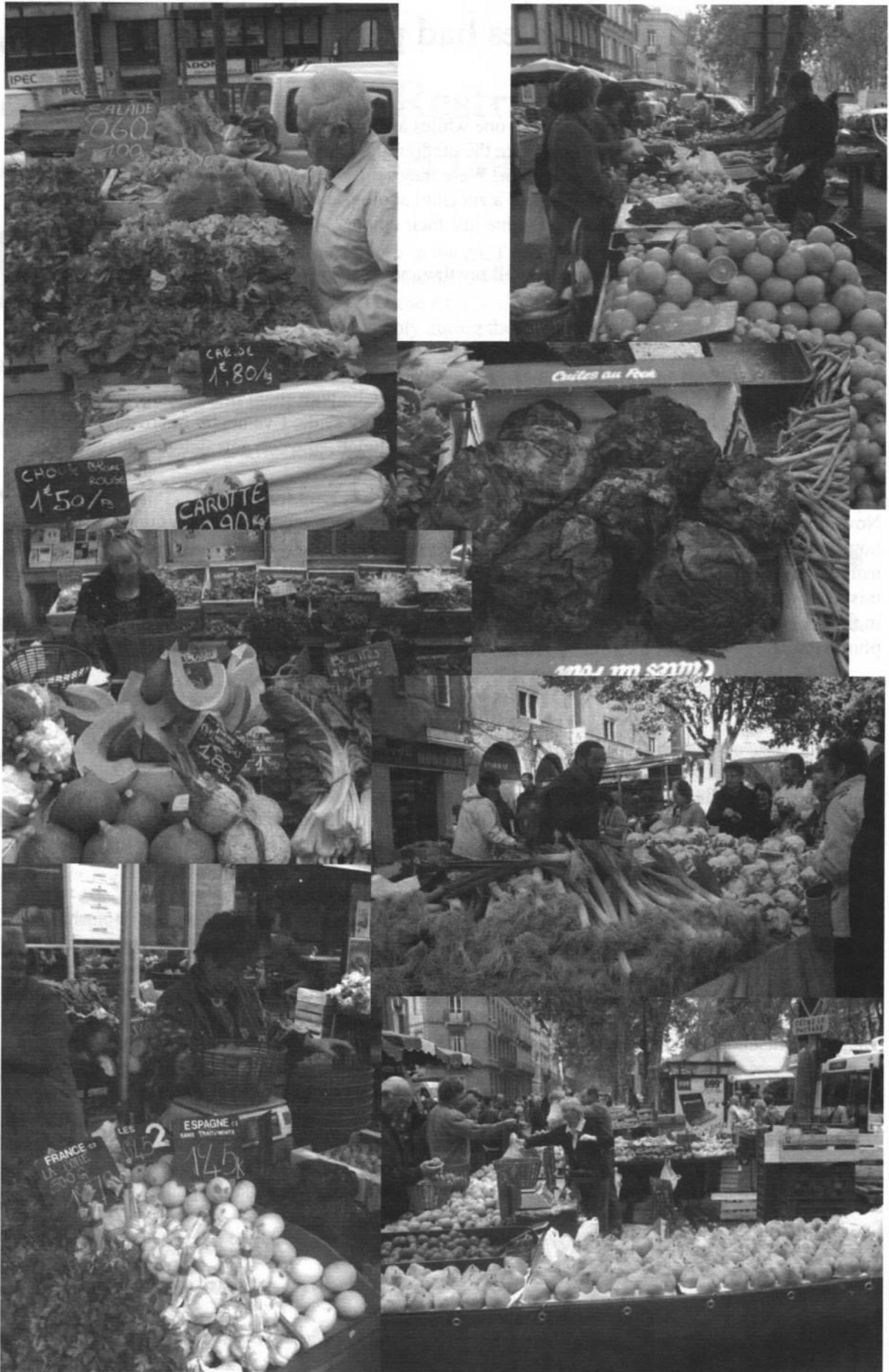
**Mountain Creek Farm PO Box 4015  
Weston ACT 2611**

## Fresh Produce in France

Thanks to Garry Ridgway for these photos of delectable French produce. The photos were taken by Garry at the main street market about 9am on a lukewarm morning in Toulouse, South West France, in November 2006. It was the last month of autumn.









## If vegetables had personalities



The mind tends to wander as one whiles away the Canberra evenings watering, and folks, mine took a serious hike the other night and I began thinking, deeply, about the amazing vegies growing in our Mitchell plot. Were they sentient, did they have personalities that matched their unique characteristics, would a zucchini apologise for its uncontained excesses and are my berry bushes really depressed, or was blue just their colour?

For the purposes of this article (just don't tell my therapist) I was reasonably sure they did. After the corn told me so, I was darn sure.

Corn is an assertive vegetable - well you have to be to maintain the rank of kernel - and had no problem representing the garden with its proud, sturdy footing and deep roots. But while it has a stout exterior and a 'I'm the tallest thing in the garden', macho way about it, deep down corn is quite tender and sweet, but you need to get past the husk. As a tasty aside, I've begun microwaving (not ideal I know) the entire cob husk-and-all as a quick work lunch - the cob gets delightfully steamed in its all-natural wrapping - yum!

Now zucchinis on the other hand are a little deluded and just between you and me, quite vain. I mean how could a plant that makes such a huge amount of fruit that one can't give it away and ends up using them as door stops possibly think it needs protective spikes that'll bring you out in rash easily mistaken for measles? Lashings of aloe may provide nice relief after carelessly harvesting zucchinis in the darkness of water restrictions, but really zucchini, is the feisty fur necessary? Maybe for a plump tomato.

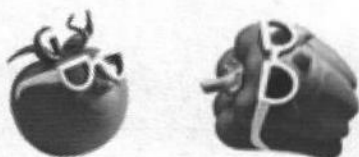


Now onions, or so they told me, are much maligned and misunderstood. How they wish they didn't bring people to tears every time they were just getting to know them. How they wish for a kiss after being consumed raw, but are so often denied on shallow cosmetic considerations. You may think I'm mad but onions are complex; they have many layers.

Now eggplants believe it or don't, just like less fortunate humans, are racist. Why just in our humble little plot the caspers, a rather striking white variety, have grown in a completely different spot to the luscious purple and striped teardrop varieties, while the traditional round specimens chose a different plot altogether. Now my gardening compadre says that's just where he planted them, but in the quiet of night when no one else is around they tell me a different story. One of ancient battles and clashing values, of misunderstandings, stolen plots and wars over thick, rich, black liquid manure.

It's about then I do think these vegetables have personalities, just like us humans, and with it flaws. But I see my chance to make it right. If only we could get on like my four-eggplant dip with all the varieties combining into a smooth, homogenous and tasty mix.

Ah the solace of a vegie patch and the fantasies you can escape to amongst the plants.



**Graham Walker**

*(and thanks to rivelazioni.com for the pics)*



## A.C.T. Water Restrictions apply in COGS Gardens

Stage 3 water restrictions are mandatory in the ACT and Queanbeyan, including in all COGS community gardens, from 16 December 2006 until further notice. These are the most severe restrictions imposed in the ACT's history and compliance with them is crucial to ensure sustained water supply during these extremely dry conditions.

**For gardens and lawns; commercial nurseries, market gardens and turf-growing businesses Stage 3 water restrictions are:**

No sprinkler or other irrigation system may be used.\*\*

Watering of lawns not permitted.\*\*

A hand-held hose fitted with a trigger nozzle, a bucket or a watering can may be used to water plants between 7am and 10am and between 7pm and 10pm on alternate days as per the "odds and evens" system.

At all times gardens may only be watered without causing pooling or runoff.

### **\*\* General Exemptions**

*Drippers alternate days (plants only).*

As an alternative to hand-held hoses, buckets or watering cans, drippers may be used for watering plants between 7-10am and 7-10pm on alternate days as per the odds and evens system. Watering of lawns by drippers is not permitted under this general exemption.

*Sprinklers once per week (lawns and plants) - UNTIL 28 FEBRUARY 2007 (beyond this date further advice to be issued by ACTEW must be adhered to).*

Sprinklers and other irrigation systems can be used to water lawns and plants between 7-10pm only, on:

SATURDAYS for premises with EVEN street number; and  
SUNDAYS for premises with ODD street number.

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

**For full details see [www.actew.com.au](http://www.actew.com.au) or phone the Water Conservation Office 6248 3131.**

# Managing Pests and Diseases in an Organic Garden

We have all suffered the disappointment of nurturing plants in our garden only to find pests arrive or disease strikes and we lose most, if not all, the crop. The following year we are determined to be more vigilant. We carefully watch for any sign of pests. Before they get out of control we reach for the nearest organic spray and destroy them, only to be surprised in a week or so when we notice the infestation is worse than ever. Again we spray, again the pests return with a vengeance. At this stage we seem doomed to continue using sprays, or we give up. If this is your experience then it is probably time to rethink your approach to managing pests and diseases in the garden and to carefully consider what it really means to garden organically.

The NASAA Organic Standard (December 2004) defines organic agriculture as "*a holistic system built upon natural ecological processes*". These ecological processes include the biological activities of all organisms living within the soil as well as those living above the soil surface. Of all such organisms, of which there are many tens of thousands of different types, only a relatively small number cause problems in our crops. In fact, most are beneficial and some are essential to the health of most plants. Consequently, we need to be mindful of the disturbance to the overall ecological balance of organisms living within our garden caused by the use of sprays or other methods to control pests and diseases. After all, it is the maintenance of that ecological balance which is the key to a productive organic garden.

Many of the control methods which are allowed under the organic standards, such as pyrethrum, derris dust, Bordeaux and Burgundy mixes etc, are fatal to many beneficial organisms and can easily destroy the ecological balance within a garden. Broad spectrum sprays (those which kill a large range of organisms), such as pyrethrum and derris dust, are particularly destructive of the ecological balance if used indiscriminately. Such sprays also destroy the natural predators and parasites of our pests. Some pests always survive any spray program and those survivors can then rapidly multiply, unchecked by their natural enemies. This forces us to spray again to try to control the new pest outbreak, and we become trapped into a vicious cycle of a regular spray program and each time causing more damage to

the ecology of our garden.

Good organic gardeners have long been aware of these problems and many of the organic gardening techniques are designed to maintain the ecological balance of the garden so that pests and diseases are kept in check by their natural enemies. For example, crop rotation disrupts the build up of various soil borne diseases, companion planting can be used to "confuse" some insect pests and provide food and shelter for beneficial insects (the predators and parasites of pests), good nutrition facilitates the natural defence mechanisms of plants to pests and diseases etc. Broad spectrum sprays are only used as a very last resort and then very selectively. For example, they would not be used if predators or parasites of the pest are present. While these techniques are well known they are often applied in an ad hoc manner rather than as an integrated and systematic approach to pest and disease control.

The problem of creating ecological imbalance through the use of aggressive methods of controlling pests and diseases in crops is also becoming increasingly well recognised by conventional growers and a great deal of work has been undertaken to formulate better approaches to pest and disease control. One of the most promising is Integrated Pest Management (IPM). It largely comprises the range of techniques in common use by any good organic gardener but its advantage is that it applies those techniques in a systematic and integrated manner and it overtly aims to protect the ecology of the garden and surrounding environment.

This article provides an overview of the main features of IPM and briefly summarises what the gardener needs to know and to do to successfully implement an IPM program. It is the first of a series which will look at IPM procedures that can be used to manage the common pest and disease problems which occur in our gardens. These procedures also aim to maintain or enhance the ecological balance of living organisms within our soils and plants. Future articles will discuss procedures for particular pests and diseases and, because different crops are susceptible to different pests and diseases, IPM procedures for particular crops will also be considered.

### Integrated Pest Management

The main features of IPM are:

- it is a strategy for managing pest populations by taking advantage of all available control measures;
- it uses control measures which include physical, cultural, biological, varietal selection as well as chemical methods where organically acceptable, eg pyrethrum, derris dust etc;
- it aims to manage pest populations rather than eradicate them;
- it works with and protects the ecology of the garden and its environment;
- chemicals such as pyrethrum and derris dust are only used as a very last resort and are used very selectively to minimise ecological damage and the build up of chemical resistance in pests.

### IPM Requirements

There are several requirements if an IPM program is to be successfully implemented. These are listed below.

Gardeners need a good knowledge of the pests which affect our gardens and must,

- be able to identify the pest;
- know its life cycle; and,
- know how fast it can build up.

A monitoring strategy is needed which includes,

- a timetable for monitoring at critical times;
- a sampling method eg inspection of plants, sticky traps, light traps etc.

Gardeners need to be aware of all the possible control methods including,

Biological controls, such as natural enemies;

introduced enemies eg Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*),

Cultural controls, such as irrigation/mulch;

fertilising/compost;

weed control;

companion planting;

habitat for biological controls,

Physical controls, such as

squashing;

chooks, blue tongue lizards etc;

destruction of overwintering habitat for pests,

Varietal selection of pest resistant plants;

pest resistant root stocks (eg woolly aphid

resistant apple root stock, grape phylloxera resistant root stock),

Chemical controls (only to be used as a very last resort), including

whether they are they allowed under the National Standard;

whether they are registered with APVMA;

the frequency of application required;

their mode of action to avoid problems with pest and disease resistance;

their effects on other (non-target) organisms

Gardeners must also set thresholds to determine when control strategies should be implemented. This will depend on how much damage can be tolerated.

Integral to the development of these IPM procedures and programs is the plant clinic which will be held at all monthly meetings this year before the guest speaker starts at 8pm or after tea. Members are encouraged to bring along any pest or disease problems they have encountered so that the problem can be identified and their experience with it recorded. These pest and disease problems will be the basis of the IPM procedures to be developed during the year.

### Further Reading

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*National Standard For Organic And Bio-*

*Dynamic Produce*, Ed 3.2, October 2005

**Keith Colls**

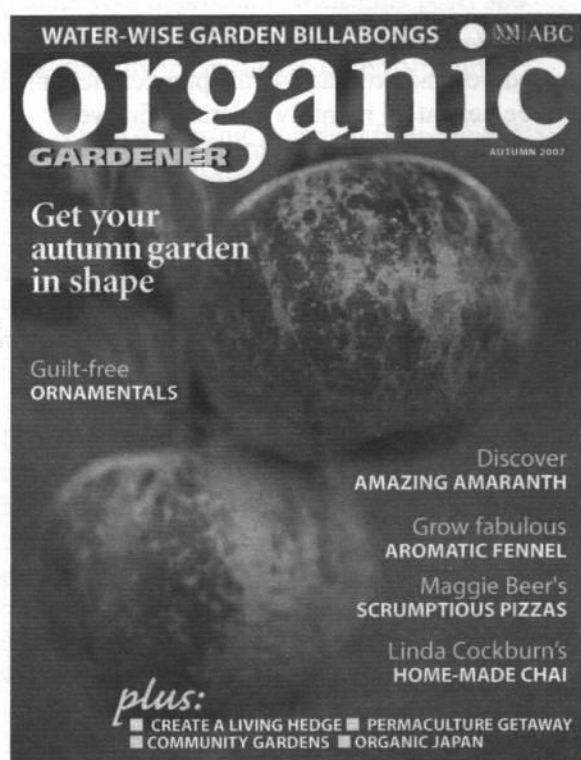
# organic

WATER-WISE GARDEN BILLABONGS ABC

## GARDENER

### magazine

*Organic Gardener* magazine is your guide to an organic lifestyle and presents clearly written features and stunning photography on all aspects of eco-living.



In

**Inspiration**

**Information**

**Practical advice**

the autumn issue of *Organic Gardener* we look at terrific water-wise gardens featuring nature-friendly billabongs and ponds. Annette McFarlane gets caught up in the heady aromas of fennel and Josh Byrne shows how edible plants can be used as hedges for shade and privacy. Plus, we feature Maggie Beer's favourite sizzling pizzas from ABC TV's *The Cook and the Chef*.

ABC's *Organic Gardener* magazine is on sale from 3 March 2007, only \$7.95 and is available from ABC Shops, ABC Centres, Newsagents and online, or subscribe 03 8317 8110.

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**Special subscription offer for the autumn issue:**

Subscribe to *Organic Gardener* for \$25.00 and save over 27% on the regular cover price. Offer available to Australian residents only and ends 25/5/2007. Please quote **CO/ORAO7** at the time of subscribing to receive this special offer.

## COGS Harvest Night



COGS Harvest Night happens every March. It's the COGS general meeting program that immediately follows the brief Annual General Meeting. We need AGMs to report to our members on financial matters and the activities of the past year and to elect a new COGS Committee but the business of COGS is to promote organic growing. Harvest Night is the opportunity for members, ALL members, to bring along examples of the fine produce—in fresh or preserved form—they have grown to show others. We encourage people to talk informally about what they have brought along but if you just want to “show” rather than “show and tell” that's okay. It's also good to hear about what worked and what didn't work, what “new” plants you trialled, how you coped with the lack of rain and the water restrictions. Please join us on Tuesday 27 March at 7.30 pm and please if you can, bring along some produce you have grown.

### 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](mailto:canberra_organic_growers-subscribe@yahoogroups.com)

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](mailto:info@cogs.asn.au) if you would like anything announced. If appropriate it will be released to the other participating members.

## 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.

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

E-mail: [editor@cogs.asn.au](mailto:editor@cogs.asn.au)  
Phone: 62551349

Snail Mail: COGS  
PO Box 347  
Dickson ACT 2602

**Q: When I water my garden, the water just runs off instead of soaking in. What organic methods can I use to stop this?**

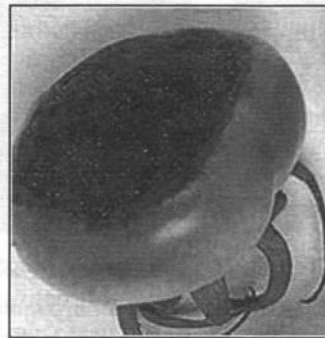
**A:** Soils that repel water are called 'hydrophobic'. This can be caused by intense heating of the soil by a fire or by letting the soil dry out completely. Mulching the soil and increasing its organic matter assists the soil to not dry out completely and to take water up more readily. Raking over the surface of the soil can also assist to break the surface tension built up in the soil. The best method is avoidance. This can be achieved by not letting the soil dry out completely - easier said than done in current conditions!



*Hydrophobic soil*



**Q: The end of my tomatoes are going brown and black. What could be causing this?**



**A:** Often this is caused by "Blossom-end rot". 'Blossom-end rot is not caused by a parasitic organism but is a physiologic disorder associated with a low concentration of calcium in the fruit. Calcium is required in relatively large concentrations for normal cell growth. When a rapidly growing fruit is deprived of necessary calcium, the tissues break down, leaving the characteristic dry, sunken lesion at the blossom end. Blossom-end rot is induced when demand for calcium exceeds supply. This may result from low calcium levels in the soil, drought stress, or excessive soil moisture fluctuations which reduce uptake and movement of calcium into the plant.' (<http://ohioline.osu.edu/hyg-fact/3000/3117.html>). Uneven watering is hard to avoid when restricted to hand watering only, thus making blossom-end rot very prominent this season.



## Mouth-watering Munchies!

### Zucchini and Basil Soup

My neighbour put me on to a delicious way of using up zucchinis this summer. We have been making lots of zucchini and basil soup -

Zucchini - as much or as little as you want  
Onions - one or two, chopped  
Garlic - one to three cloves, depending on your preference  
Olive or other vegetable oil - a tablespoon, for sautéing the onions  
Basil - a good handful, fresh from the garden  
Water or broth if necessary  
Salt or other herbs to your taste.

Gently sauté the chopped onions and garlic in a pan with a little olive oil. Add chopped zucchini and cook until soft (the cooking will release liquid from the zucchini). Cool slightly and blend till smooth. If too thick, add water or broth but be careful not to make the creamy texture go watery. Add the preferred seasonings and lastly blend in the fresh basil. Serve hot or cold. Can be served with sour cream or yoghurt.

*Janet Popovic, with thanks to Kirsty.*

### The Tea served at COGS general meetings

We are often asked about the blend of delicious herbal tea served (without milk) at supper after COGS monthly general meetings. Well here it is -

Lemongrass 40%, Alfalfa 40%, Spearmint 20%.

COGS buys the tea in loose leaf form at Mountain Creek Wholefoods in Griffith ACT.

*Janet Popovic*

### Lavender Biscuits

(to be brought to the February general meeting by Ben Bradey)

This recipe was printed in a book called 'lavender, sweet lavender' by Judyth McLeod and they acknowledged Yuulong Lavender Estate in Victoria for the original recipe.

125g butter or margarine  
100g sugar  
1 egg  
1 level tablespoon of dried English lavender flowers (*Lavandula angustifolia* - this is important as this variety has no camphor scent)  
1 small cup chopped glace ginger (optional)  
150-200g self raising flour

Cream butter and sugar, add egg and beat well. Add dried flowers and mix well. Add ginger if using. Finally add sieved self raising flour and mix all together.  
Place teaspoonfuls onto baking tray lined with non-stick baking paper and bake in moderate oven for about 15-20 minutes until golden brown. Makes about 30.

*Ben Bradey*

*Thanks Ben, can't wait to try them at the meeting! Ed.*

## Watering more efficiently

Water is essential for plant survival and growth. With below average rainfall this season and Stage 3 water restrictions now in force it is important that we use the available water as effectively and efficiently as possible. This involves watering only when necessary, not just because you are allowed to, and ensuring the water you use is available to the plants you are watering, not wasted in runoff or on pathways.

Plants need water itself to provide them with hydrogen and oxygen and to remain turgid. Also plants can only absorb the mineral nutrients they need if these nutrients are dissolved in water. Supplying the correct amount of water is important as too little water causes wilting and eventual death. Too much water causes waterlogging which can suffocate and kill plant roots leading to stunting or death. Both under and over watering can also be detrimental to soil structure. Infrequent, deep watering which thoroughly wets the root zone is much more efficient than frequent shallow watering which encourages the plant roots to remain near the surface where they are vulnerable to drying out.

### *Soil water*

The soil is a large water reservoir. This reservoir is filled by rainfall and irrigation and emptied by plants, evaporation and drainage into the subsoil. Most plant roots are found in the top half a metre of the soil where there is adequate aeration. Water draining down through a soil can carry dissolved mineral nutrients out of the reach of these plant roots. This process is known as leaching and commonly results from over watering.

The amount of water the soil can store is known, not surprisingly, as the water holding capacity. This water holding capacity is very dependent on the soil structure. A well structured soil is made up of aggregates of different sized soil particles with various sized pore spaces between them and acts like a sponge. Water adheres to the surfaces of the soil particles and is also held in the smaller pore spaces. It drains through the larger pore spaces allowing the soil to remain aerated. Soil water can soak sideways and upwards, against gravity, which is why it does not drain straight through to the subsoil.

The easiest way to improve soil structure, and therefore water holding capacity, is by the

addition of organic matter to a soil. Decayed organic matter acts like a glue to bind soil particles together into aggregates and create the various sized pore spaces necessary to hold water whilst still providing adequate aeration and drainage.

Soil structure can be easily destroyed by inappropriate practices such as over cultivation, particularly the use of mechanical cultivation methods like rotary hoeing.

### *Mulch, mulch and more mulch*

It's almost impossible to have too much mulch, particularly during a hot and dry Summer. A mulch of straw or hay should be applied at least 10 cm deep but any amount is better than none if your supplies are limited.

Mulching provides many benefits for the soil including:

- it is the best way to retain soil moisture as it greatly reduces evaporation from the soil surface, resulting in more evenly moist soil
- providing organic matter used as food by earthworms and soil micro-organisms. The incorporation of this organic matter improves the soil structure, water holding capacity and fertility.
- reducing erosion by wind or water.
- preventing the soil surface from drying out completely and becoming hydrophobic.



*Forestry tube sunk into the soil to assist hand watering in a thickly mulched bed*

Mulching heavily can make it difficult to water effectively by hand. It takes time and a significant amount of water to soak through mulch and start wetting the soil. If you are restricted to a hand-held hose or watering can, you need to ensure the water is actually reaching the soil. One method is to 'plant' tubes or pots alongside your vegetables. These are then filled with water which can soak slowly into the soil under the mulch. Alternatively, mulch can be temporarily pulled aside to allow the soil to be watered directly.

The best way to water a mulched garden is to use a dripper system installed under the mulch. The brown in-line drippers now available provide a simple, easy to install and relatively cheap system. They are readily available in 50 and 100 metre rolls from irrigation suppliers. This is a much cheaper option than the hardware stores. One 100 metre roll will adequately cover a 50 sq metre garden. This season I have watered my plot at Cook almost exclusively with drippers and have only needed to run them for a couple of hours every five or six days. Even during the hottest weeks the soil has stayed damp under about 100 mm of a mixed hay and old straw mulch. However you water it is important to dig around occasionally to see where the water has ended up and how deeply it has penetrated.

#### *Infiltration rate*

The infiltration rate is the rate at which water can soak into a soil. Applying water at a quicker rate will lead to pooling, runoff and wastage. Typical infiltration rates in moist soil are between 5 and 20 mm/hour.

To measure the infiltration rate of your soil: Remove the bottom from an empty tin and place



*Measuring the infiltration rate*

it on the soil surface. Any surface mulch should be removed. The bottom of the tin should be just below the soil surface so that water will not leak out sideways onto the surface.

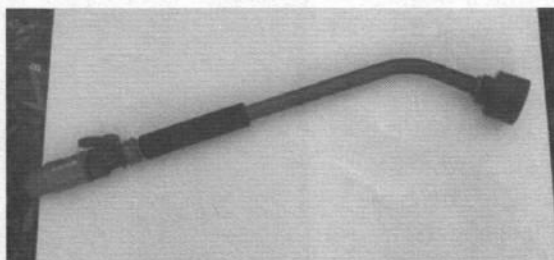
Fill the tin completely with water and leave it for at least 15, but preferably 30 or 60 minutes. At the end of this time measure how much the water level has dropped in millimetres. If your test was for 15 minutes multiply this number by 4, if it was for 30 minutes multiply by 2. This gives you the infiltration rate in mm/hour.

The infiltration rate can be increased in several ways including:

- using a mulch to prevent the soil surface crusting.
- encouraging earthworm activity through the addition of compost or an organic mulch.
- improving the soil structure by increasing (or at least maintaining) the organic matter content.
- preventing and relieving soil compaction - avoid walking on wet soils as this can collapse the pores in the soil aggregates.
- avoiding the cultivation of very wet or very dry soils as this can destroy the soil structure.
- terracing sloping land to slow runoff.

#### *Delivery rate*

This is the rate at which your watering system delivers water. Many sprinklers and hand held hoses deliver water far quicker than the soil can absorb. Water wands such as the one shown



typically deliver 15 - 20 litres per minute which is equivalent to 15 -20 mm of water per sq metre per minute so you have to keep moving to avoid runoff or pooling. Drip systems have a fixed delivery rate - typically 2 litres per hour per dripper which most soils can easily absorb.

Always remember to keep track of any rainfall and note how much watering this will replace and don't water just because you are allowed to.

**Adrienne Fazekas**

## Gardener Profile—Aino Toivonen

Aino gardens at the Cook community garden. She has supplied some "before" and "after" photos of her plot there that show great progress in a short time!



### Do you have gardens at home?

Yes, over the years I have had a few fruit trees and a vegetable garden. I have a 30 year old lemon tree which has produced good lemons since I bought it - sometimes over 300 lemons a year. I also have two nectarine trees that are doing very well, one plum tree that I have had over 25 years, a loquat tree that has done well in the past but did not get enough water this year and did not produce any fruit. I also

### How long have you been a member of COGS?

Many years ago I went to some COGS meetings but I joined COGS in May 2005.

have an apple tree but the cockatoos eat all the apples every year and a fig tree which would like to have more rain.

### What was your gardening life before COGS?

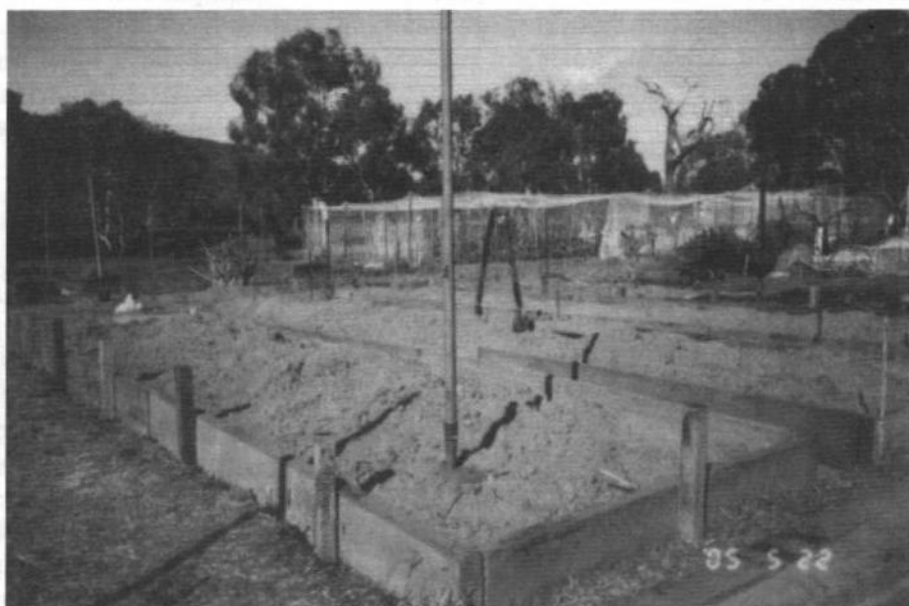
I have always had a garden in my backyard where I have had fruit trees and grown my own organic vegetables.

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

One morning my colleague walked past my desk and asked me if I had seen the community gardens between Aranda and Cook. She asked if I was interested in having a plot there. I said yes

### What first spurred your interest in gardening?

I have been interested in gardening since my childhood. In Finland, my home country, I planted spring bulbs in pots, which we had to grow inside at first and then plant outside in summer when the weather was warm enough. It was exciting to check the pot plants on the window sills every day as they were growing.



### Any great gardening achievements?

Every time when I collect organic home grown products from my garden it is an achievement as it gives me pleasure and satisfaction.

and later in the week we were the joint owners of the then last available plot at the Cook Gardens. Later when more plots became available we both got our own plot.



**Do you have any other living things in your COGS garden - chicken, ducks, children!**

I don't have any other than some uninvited guests, rodents. I see in the morning that they have visited my plot during the night. They have carved up my peas and beans very nicely. Now I pick sweet peas every second day and that problem is solved. Next they ate my corn cobs so now I know why not many other gardeners are growing any corn on the plot. Last year there was a brown snake on my plot but he went away very quickly when I took away the

**What is your favourite vegetable to grow and why?**

I most like strawberries and raspberries, just to eat them from the garden. However my favourite vegetable varies all the time. It is one that gives me a good pest free product. One year I got really good kale and I chopped the leaves into soup and on top of my sandwiches - I like the taste of kale! Last year I had good crop of garlic and onions. We use a lot of onion in preparing meals. My favourite energy drink is squeezed garlic and chopped parsley mixed with lemon or orange juice. Sometimes I just put in the liquidiser a clove of garlic, parsley and orange juice and mix and drink it straight away. It is my energiser.

weed mat under which he was resting. Cockatoos or some other birds chopped some of my onion plants (90 out of 250) but now I have a net over my plot and it has not happened any more. The same happened to my asparagus plants.

**What is your secret to a great garden?**

I learn from my own experience and the experience of other gardeners. I ask them what they are planting and then I plant the same vegetables at the same time. If I see that some

**Do you have a favourite use of your self grown vegies?**

At the moment I have plenty of yellow zucchinis from my garden plot and I love zucchini casserole. It is easy to make:

*I just fry six slices of diced bacon and chopped onion, add this into 4 cups of sliced zucchini and one can (5 ounces) of tomato sauce and a little salt and pepper. I pour this into a greased casserole dish, sprinkle with breadcrumbs and parmesan cheese, cover and bake in the oven at 180-200C for about 30-45 minutes.*



other gardener has cut their asparagus stems I do the same. Somebody told me that her mother told her that you plant garlic on the shortest day of the year and you harvest them on the longest day of the year. I tried that and it worked very well.

## Let's celebrate - COGS is 30!

In the previous issue of *Canberra Organic* we asked for your ideas on how we could celebrate COGS's 30<sup>th</sup> year. We've not had many suggestions to date but here are a couple of them. What do YOU think, let us hear your ideas and your comments on the suggestions below. You can either email or phone or talk to a Committee member about your ideas at a general meeting or in between meetings. If possible we would like help from members additional to the COGS Committee in organising events or activities suggested.

### *Participate in the Relay for Life Walk*

I wonder if COGS could celebrate 30 years by entering 30 walkers in the Relay for Life (24 hr walk) to be held on 30-31 March 2007 in Canberra (generally at Bruce stadium). If each walker got 30 sponsors we could make a good contribution to the Cancer Council whilst at the same time raising the profile of COGS. After all, most gardeners are reasonably fit and we could probably cheer up the place by wearing some Carmen Miranda type fruit and vegetables on our straw hats!

I note that Peter Cundall got a gong in the Australia Day honors for his work in raising the profile of gardening (as well as the environment); perhaps we could give the COGS walkers a special membership category to recognise their contribution towards celebrating 30 years of COGS.

I'm willing to be a walker if anyone else is interested.

*Mary Coulson*

### *Lazy afternoon in a COGS Community Garden*

I was thinking of something not too energetic for the 30th celebration. Perhaps a lazy afternoon in one of the gardens: a COGS funded BBQ and a few long time members to say something interesting. People would need to RSVP as a commitment to the event and for catering purposes.

*Ben Bradey*

*Please let us have your comments and suggestions:*

*[editor@cogs.asn.au](mailto:editor@cogs.asn.au), [president@cogs.asn.au](mailto:president@cogs.asn.au), [info@COGS.asn.au](mailto:info@COGS.asn.au) or via the other contacts for COGS.*

## Cedar Lodge Motel Braidwood

Centre of town  
in historic Braidwood

Discount to COGS Members

64 Duncan Street  
Braidwood

Phone: 02 4842 2244  
Fax: 02 4842 2658  
Run by a COGS member.



## Beautiful Holiday House

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

Two minutes walk to sandy beach good for swimming, snorkelling, or teaching children to swim.

Easy drive to many other lovely beaches. House sleeps eight, large fenced garden where children can play within sight.

Pets welcome.

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

Reasonable rates.

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

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





## Autumn Vegetable Planting Guide

### Brassicas

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



### Peas

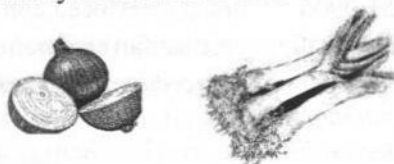
Sugar snap peas may be sown in early March for a Winter harvest, but the crop could be lost if there is an early severe frost affecting the blossom. Peas sown later in April-May will be ready for a Spring harvest.

### Lettuces

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

### Leeks

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



### Onions

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

### Spring flowers

Remember that many Spring flowering plants are best planted in Autumn, so that they can establish before the Winter cold, and then start growing in the early warmth of Spring. Stocks, Pansies and Poppies can be planted as seedlings in March and early April. Others such as Virginia Stock, Candytuft, Larkspur and Sweetpeas can be sown direct throughout Autumn.



### Green manures

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

Some benefits of green manure crops are:

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

Crops suitable for planting in Canberra are:

Legumes:

Broad Beans, Field Peas, Lupins, Sub Clover, Tic Peas, Vetch.

Non-Legumes

Barley, Oats, Rye.

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

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

### Autumn Vegetable Planting Guide

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

S = Seed Sowing

T = Transplanting

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

## COGS Committee Members & Helpers

<b>President</b>	Adrienne Fazekas	6247 5882	president@cogs.asn.au
<b>Vice President</b>	Keith Colls	6251 7729	keithcolls@optusnet.com.au
<b>Secretary</b>	Ben Bradey	6161 0329	info@cogs.asn.au
<b>Public Officer</b>	Ben Bradey	6161 0329	info@cogs.asn.au
<b>Treasurer</b>	Michelle West		
<b>Membership Secretary</b>	Jen Johnston	6288 3200	members@cogs.asn.au
<b>Librarian</b>	Sophia Williams	6255 1349	nathosph@hotmail.com
<b>Co-Editors</b>	Janet Popovic & Sophia Williams	6258 2811 6255 1349	editor@cogs.asn.au editor@cogs.asn.au

### Garden Convenors

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<b>Holder</b>	Conrad van Hest	6286 3784	zysyphot@netspeed.com.au
<b>Kambah</b>	Steve Taylor	6231 4344	taylorclan@iinet.net.au
<b>Northside</b>	Monica van Wensveen	6255 4332	monica.vanwensveen@csiro.au
<b>Oaks Estate</b>	Terry Williams	6299 2409	fourofus@cyberone.com.au
<b>O'Connor</b>	Alan Robertson	6251 0906	araba@netspeed.com.au
<b>Queanbeyan</b>	Cormac Farrell	0422441358	cormac.farrell@minerals.org.au
<b>Theodore</b>	Richard Reed	6291 1897	rmjreed@ozemail.com.au

### Monthly Meetings

<b>Seed exchange</b>	vacant
<b>Supper convenors</b>	Volunteers - Please add your name to the roster!
<b>Librarian</b>	Sophia Williams

<b>Web manager</b>	Ben Bradey	info@cogs.asn.au
<b>Telephone contact</b>	Elizabeth Palmer	6248 8004
<b>Inquiries about Organic Growing</b>		6248 8004 info@cogs.asn.au

### To contact COGS

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

**COGS monthly meetings** are held at **7:30pm** on the **4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday** of each month

(NO MEETINGS December and January)

**Venue: Meeting Room 6 The Griffin Centre**

Genge Street, Civic

(opposite the old Griffin Centre site, see page 15 for instructions re after hours access)

—Visitors Welcome—





# Canberra Organic Growers Society Inc.

## INFORMATION

### GENERAL INFORMATION

The Canberra Organic Growers Society is a non-profit organisation started in 1977 with the aim of providing a forum for organic growers to exchange information and encourage the adoption of organic growing methods. COGS is an association without specific political or religious affiliation as a group. COGS has the following objectives – to:

- Foster the use of organic methods in home gardening, horticulture and agriculture
- Foster organic agricultural knowledge
- Promote the production and consumption of certified organically grown foods and the adoption of recognised organic standards
- Demonstrate and encourage the use of organic growing techniques
- Provide a forum for the discussion of matters of interest to organic growers in the ACT and surrounding region
- Facilitate the exchange of information and ideas between members and with other organic growers
- Assist members in establishing their own organic growing areas
- Administer community gardens operated under organic agricultural principles for recreational, educational or rehabilitation purposes and for the self-supply of contaminant free produce.

### ADMINISTRATION

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

### MONTHLY MEETINGS

Meetings of members are held in Meeting Room 6 at The Griffin Centre, Civic, at 7.30 pm on the fourth Tuesday of the month (no meetings in December and January). Each month there is a guest speaker. Recent meeting topics have included Backyard poultry keeping, Worms, Herbs and Seed Saving. 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 at a small charge.

*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 access plots to grow organic produce for home consumption. These gardens provide a wonderful opportunity for people to garden with other organic growers, to share their expertise and learn something new at the same time. Plot holders are required to pay an annual levy to cover the cost of water, insurance, tools and maintenance. The ACT Government has supported the establishment of these gardens through the ACT Office of Sport and Recreation and the Department of Urban Services Community Renewal program.

### INTERNET

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

### OTHER ACTIVITIES

From time to time COGS organises other activities for its members. For example, we visit local farms and hold open days for members at our community gardens. Seminars and workshops are also conducted.

### CONTACT

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

# COGS NOTICE BOARD

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

## Speakers

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

A Plant Clinic will be held at all monthly meetings. Please bring any pest or disease problems for identification and share your experience with other gardeners.

### **27th February 2007**

*Clem Davis*

*formerly from the Bureau of Meteorology  
Changes in Canberra's Climate*

### **27th March 2007**

*COGS Annual General Meeting (AGM) and  
Harvest Night (Members bring their garden  
produce and tales about successes and failures in  
the past season—everyone is welcome and  
encouraged to participate.)*

### **24th April 2007 or 22nd May 2007**

*How to Make Nutritious Bread*

### **22nd May 2007 or 24th April 2007**

*Gardeners Discussion Night*

*Problem Solving for Plot Holders*

[www.cogs.asn.au](http://www.cogs.asn.au) for updates and confirmations.

## COGS AGM Notice of Meeting

**Tuesday 27 March 2007  
7.30 pm**

to be held in  
The Griffin Centre, Genge St Civic  
Meeting Room 6

For further information see  
pages 4 and 11.

## Roster COGS meeting suppers

Thanks to Alison and Eliza for providing many suppers at our general meetings in 2006. Our roster for 2007 needs filling. So far we have volunteers for February and one person for March and April (it's good to have two):

**27 February** Jen Johnston, Lesley Pattinson

**27 March** Eliza Ngan

**24 April** Eliza Ngan

Please put your name on the roster available at meetings or ring a committee member to volunteer. Thankyou!

## WANTED

### New COGS Committee Members

COGS administration depends on volunteers. We are losing a Treasurer, Membership Secretary and Editor. Please nominate for these or other positions on the Committee before or at the AGM. Continuing members may nominate for one of these vacancies but then other positions will need backfilling.

### COGS E-mail Announcement List!

(See Page 23)

To subscribe, simply send a blank email to the following address :

[canberra\\_organic\\_growers-  
subscribe@yahoogroups.com.au](mailto:canberra_organic_growers-subscribe@yahoogroups.com.au)

## Events

### **31 March 2007 Apple Day.**

(1.30 - 5.00pm)

Organic delights and music  
at Loriendale Orchard

Travel along the Barton Highway, north of Canberra. Turn right at Spring Range Road (2km north of border between ACT/NSW)