

Autumn 2009 : Vol 17 No 1

# Canberra • Organic



Kids and vegies  
Beating couch  
Beetroot & kale  
COGS autumn planting guide



The **Canberra Organic Growers Society** is a non-profit organisation providing a forum for organic growers to exchange information and supporting the adoption of organic growing methods in the community.

COGS encourages the use of natural methods to improve our soils, promote sustainability and produce fresh, nutritious food.

For information about COGS and organic gardening, visit the COGS website [www.cogs.asn.au](http://www.cogs.asn.au)

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#### MONTHLY MEETINGS

COGS meetings are held at 7:30pm on the fourth Tuesday of each month (except December and January) at the Majura Community Centre, Rosevear Place, Dickson.

Guest speakers, a produce and seed exchange and sales and the COGS library feature at each meeting. Visitors welcome.

#### MEMBERSHIP

COGS offers single, family, associate and overseas memberships for \$25 for one year (\$15 for concessions) or \$40 for two years (\$24 for concessions) for new members.

There is a membership application form in this magazine. Please contact the Membership Secretary or a COGS garden convenor for an information kit.

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COGS is run by a voluntary committee elected at the COGS AGM each March.

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## President's report: Autumn 2009

This summer's weather has been quite a challenge for gardeners. Perhaps we were lulled into a false sense of security by December's below average temperatures with rainfall more than twice monthly average. It gave us a very good

start to the season but, unfortunately, it did not last.

January has certainly tested how well we prepared our gardens for hot dry conditions. The maximum average temperature was more than two degrees above normal and the rainfall was less than half the January average. In these conditions the advantage of organic gardening methods such as mulching and increasing the amount of organic material in the soil can be clearly seen.

Nevertheless, I have noticed quite a few tomatoes, zucchini and cucumbers in the Cook garden burnt by exposure to the sun and virtually cooking on the plant.

We have been fortunate that the ACT water supply is holding up with over 50 percent capacity in the dams at the beginning of the February. Hopefully, we will get through summer and autumn without any further tightening of the water restrictions. In spite of the weather our gardens are still producing very well with level three water restrictions and the Cook garden was looking almost lush in preparation for its opening as part of the Australian Open Garden Scheme.

As part of a process of bringing our licences to use unleased ACT land into line with the current ACT Planning Act, officers from the Territory and Municipal Services Department have inspected all COGS gardens situated on ACT government land. This has thrown up a few issues, the most significant being the lack gardening activity observed by the officers at the Theodore garden. To ensure that COGS continues to have access to the Theodore site it is essential we attract more plot holders to the garden. Please read the important notice elsewhere in this issue about the Theodore working bee in March. If you live in the Theodore area and you would like a plot, please contact me urgently.

### COGS meetings and speakers

The Committee is currently preparing a list of interesting speakers for our monthly meetings in 2009. If you know of anyone who may be willing to speak at a monthly meeting on an organic gardening/farming related issue please let a member of the Committee know. We are always on the lookout for new speakers.

Later in the year we are planning to trial a southside meeting for those who find it difficult or impossible to get to Dickson. If you would be likely to attend such a meeting, please let us know so we can gauge support for the idea. Without sufficient support it won't happen. We would also like to hear from anyone who knows of suitable venues.

The next Dickson meeting will be harvest night in February. This is an opportunity to bring along some examples of what you have produced this season, including failures as well as successes. It is a forum to discuss any pest and disease issues or other gardening difficulties you may have had and it provides an opportunity to learn from one another's gardening experiences.

The March meeting, as always, is the Annual General meeting where we elect the COGS Committee for the following twelve months. Several committee members will be stepping down this year so there will be quite a few vacancies. To keep the organisation running it is essential that we at least replace those stepping down but it would be preferably if we could increase the numbers so that we have a full committee as provided for in the COGS Constitution.

During the last few years we have been operating with fewer committee members than the Constitution allows and this restricts the services we can provide to members. If you are interested in joining the Committee please contact a current committee member and we will arrange your nomination. There is a notice of the AGM elsewhere in this issue. The AGM will be followed by a taste test for the different climbing bean varieties grown by the Special Interest Group.

### Horticultural Society Autumn Show

Finally, I would urge all COGS Community Gardens' plot holders to consider contributing produce to the Community Gardens display at the Canberra Horticultural Society's Autumn Show. Last year Cook and Holder gardens entered a display which was very popular with the public who visited to show.

This is very good publicity for COGS and demonstrates to the public the quality of food which can be produced using organic gardening techniques. It would be good if all gardens would contribute. Details of how to enter the show are given in the notice elsewhere in this issue.

I hope your gardens survive the heat wave. I look forward to seeing everyone at Harvest night on 24 February.

*Keith*



## CANBERRA ORGANIC Volume 17 Number 1 (Issue 64)

*Canberra Organic* is the quarterly publication of the Canberra Organic Growers Society Inc.

It celebrates organic gardening, local produce, sustainability and information and social exchange in the Canberra region.

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### EDITOR

Monica van Wensveen

### CONTRIBUTIONS

We welcome submissions, ideas and feedback.

Contributions preferred in Word, Publisher or text format, on disk, as attached files or as clean typed copy.

Images should be sent as attached (not embedded) files, on disk or as original photographs or slides.

There are four issues each year - Autumn (February), Winter (May), Spring (August) and Summer (November). Deadlines for copy and advertising are 15 January, 15 April, 15 July and 15 October, respectively.

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### ADVERTISING

Please contact Monica van Wensveen on 6255 4332 or email editor@cogs.asn.au.

*Canberra Organic* is a unique way to reach people in the Canberra region who have an interest in organics, gardening and the environment. Our circulation is around 400.

### ADVERTISING RATES

Payment is to be made in advance. COGS members are eligible for the price in brackets.

Size	1 Issue	4 Issues
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1/4 page	\$18 (\$15)	\$60 (\$50)
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## Editor's note

With the hot weather we've had through December and January, I wasn't whether my garden would make it to autumn. I wasn't sure I would either.

One of the best things I did this growing season was to install a very simple irrigation system. Little drippers gave my thirsty greenery the water they needed in the place they most needed it and heavy duty mulching took care of moisture retention. Which left me plenty of time for weeding (that necessary evil) and now harvesting. Why didn't I do this before?

The autumn issue of *Canberra Organic* features collected wisdom on growing and eating vegies with kids, a success story about eradicating couch and recipes to the rescue for those drowning in zucchinis. Our seasonal vegetables are beetroot and kale. Q&A contributions give information about microwave bottling and fungicides that can be used in an organic garden.

With the COGS AGM approaching, March is the time to think about whether you can spare some time to keep the organisation running smoothly. From the magazine's perspective, if anyone has skills or interests in writing, editing, layout, photography or advertising, I would love to hear from you!

Lastly (as I'm sure you already know), Macquarie Dictionary has just announced its Word of the Year 2008. Although *toxic debt* won, honourable mentions were given to *guerrilla gardener* (a person who plants gardens in areas controlled by councils or other organisations but neglected by them in terms of vegetation) and *water footprint* (the amount of fresh water, both virtual and visible, used by a country, business, organisation or individual. Visit [www.macquariedictionary.com.au](http://www.macquariedictionary.com.au) for more details.

Monica



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### Photos

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### Cover photos

**Front cover:** Andrew and friends

#### **Back cover:**

Upwardly mobile beans (Sonya)  
Summer crops at the Kambah garden (Sonya)  
New crop of vegie gardeners (Inge)

**Opposite page:** Lucienne, the undisputed queen of the tomato harvest

**This page:** Morning sun through tomato plants

*Articles and photos by Monica van Wensveen unless otherwise stated*

**This issue of Canberra Organic is printed on recycled paper**

## In the news

### A hot, dry 2008

The Bureau of Meteorology has reported that 2008 was the seventeenth warmest year on record in Canberra, and the twelfth year in a row with above average temperatures. Both average daytime and night-time temperatures were higher than normal (by almost one degree and half a degree respectively). Canberra was about 100mm short of average rainfall for the year and there were fewer frosts and fogs.

### UK remembers the forgotten kingdom

The UK's leading conservation and research organisations have banded together to study, protect and promote the region's fungi, according to BBC News. Fungi are critical in supporting the world's ecosystems - through soil fertility and nutrient cycling - and although 15 000 species are recognised in the region, many more are thought to exist. "If we do not understand the world of fungi, then our ability to repair and restore damaged habitats is considerably reduced", according to leading researcher, Professor Mark Chase.

### Imported garlic warning

In the latest Gawler Foundation newsletter, the CEO of the Digger's Club reiterated a warning about the fumigation of imported garlic. Ninety percent of garlic consumed in Australia is imported. Due to quarantine regulations, each clove has been fumigated by methyl bromide, which is not only destructive to the environment and the atmosphere, it is also toxic to humans. Wherever possible, buy locally grown garlic, or better still, grow your own.

### Organic vs conventional - new ag research

A 72 acre farm near Newcastle-upon-Tyne provides the latest to the UK's debate over the nutritional benefits of organic food, reports the Times Online. Preliminary findings from a large EU-funded project comparing conventional and organic practices indicate that organically produced fruit, vegetables and milk usually contain more 'beneficial compounds' such as vitamins and antioxidants. Researchers are now trying to identify the agricultural practices that are responsible. Stay tuned.

### Experts warn against 'recession pounds'

There are fears amongst America's health professionals of a dramatic increase in obesity and diabetes as the economic crisis takes hold around the country, reports ABC News. Researchers have found a strong link between income and unhealthy eating habits. As people are forced to cut food spending, cheap sources of calories - those high in sugar, saturated fats and refined grains - are chosen before healthy, but dearer foods such as fresh fish, fruit and vegetables. Nutrition expert Adam Drewnowski says the answer to affordable, healthy eating in economic crisis is to rely on dense, but nutrient-rich foods such as beans, milk, nuts, cheese, carrots, potatoes, soups and rice.

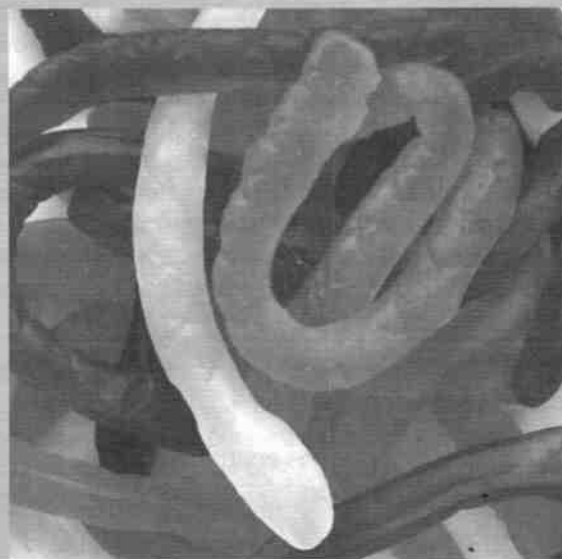
## Top tips for AUTUMN

### 1 Snakes alive

Living in and around the 'Bush Capital' means living with snakes. There are eight species in the ACT, the most commonly seen is the Eastern Brown Snake.

Snakes are naturally shy, but can strike in defence. Avoid being bitten by wearing enclosed shoes and long trousers, keep gardens and lawns well maintained, enclose compost heaps that might harbour mice, be alert (especially in the early morning when snakes are sunning themselves) and never try to kill, handle or chase a snake.

If bitten, don't interfere with the bite (no tourniquets, washing or cutting), apply a compression bandage, immobilise and seek medical help.



### 2 Brew up some liquid gold

Liquid fertilisers are a great asset to organic gardeners, providing a nutrient source that is easily absorbed by the roots and foliage. They can also be used as a form of pest control. Soak any nutrient-rich material - comfrey, manure, compost, seaweed - in water until the solid material is broken down. Dilute to the colour of weak tea, hold your nose and give your plants a boost.

### 3 Embrace your inner ox

Welcome to the Year of the Ox! According to the Eastern calendar, 2009 will be a year for productivity and steady progress for those who are patient and hard-working. The characteristics of the Ox are methodical, calm and dependable, with an ambitious nature - sounds like a great year for gardeners!

**"Only two things in this world are too serious to be jested - potatoes and matrimony."** *Irish saying*



## Weather and water watch

Here's what weather we can expect to weather this autumn, courtesy of the Bureau of Meteorology's long term statistics for temperature and rainfall in the ACT region.

TEMPERATURE	March	April	May
Canberra airport	max 24.5	max 20.0	max 15.5
	min 10.7	min 6.6	min 3.2

RAINFALL	March	April	May
Canberra airport	50.8 mm	46.0 mm	44.7 mm
	4.9 rain days	4.8 rain days	5.2 rain days

(Rain days are days with more than 1 mm rain; temperatures are degrees Celsius)

### Seasonal forecast: February to April

- The rainfall outlook for southeastern Australia shows no strong bias towards either drier or wetter than average conditions, with likelihood for the ACT region estimated to be 50%.
- There is similar outlook for both maximum (generally day) and minimum (generally overnight) temperatures, with no significant shift away from normal conditions for this period.

For more weather info, visit the Bureau of Meteorology's ACT website: [www.bom.gov.au/weather/act](http://www.bom.gov.au/weather/act)

### Water use and restrictions

- At 1 February, Canberra's dams were 50.1% full.
- Stage 3 water restrictions are currently in place across the ACT. The daily water target is currently 139 ML - watch the road signs on Canberra's main roads for any changes, or visit ActewAGL's water networks website: [www.actewagl.com.au/water/networks](http://www.actewagl.com.au/water/networks)

## Organic matter boosts continuous cropping yields

Potential improvement in crop yields and reduced greenhouse gas emissions were among the benefits of increased soil organic matter throughput according to the findings of a project funded by growers, the Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) and the Victorian Department of Primary Industries (DPI).

The relationships between organic matter inputs and changes in soil properties were investigated in the irrigated cropping regions of Victoria and NSW. The trials involved the use of irrigated grain growers' paired paddocks, with each pair consisting of one paddock with a relatively higher organic matter throughput scenario and a paddock with a lower organic matter throughput scenario.

The results showed that in most of the paired paddocks the system with higher organic matter throughput produced yields equal to or higher than its adjacent paddock with lower throughput.

"It's not absolute scientific proof, but this data nevertheless constitutes convincing evidence for growers," DPI researcher Dr Peter Fisher said.

Dr Fisher said the project aimed to address growers' concerns about declining soil structure resulting from

continuous cropping.

"Soil structural decline under cropping systems is something that many farmers are familiar with," he said. "Soil structural degradation probably remains, after salinity, the major threat to the sustainability of agricultural production.

"It is commonly associated with soil hardness, poor germination, restricted root growth, poor water infiltration, reduced water holding capacity and inevitably, reduced yields."

Dr Fisher said soil organic carbon was important in building and maintaining good soil structure, but a lack of understanding about the processes involved and a lack of experimental evidence in Australian conditions about the benefits had left advisers and agronomists wary about making recommendations to growers to increase organic matter inputs.

"This project has developed a better understanding of how varying organic matter inputs influences soil organic carbon, and how soil organic carbon influences other soil properties and ultimately crop performance," he said.

Source: GRDC website ([www.grdc.gov.au](http://www.grdc.gov.au)), 24/12/08.

# Around the COGS Gardens

## Kambah

The rain that fell over the Christmas/New Year break has boosted the growth of crops, weeds and the grass. After a slow start to summer heat, it is great to see plants such as tomatoes and capsicums finally ripen. We also look forward to harvesting sweet corn, squash, onions and some interesting pumpkin varieties, whereas potatoes, beans, cucumbers, zucchinis and blackberries have already been harvested.

The grasshoppers haven't done too much damage and due to vigilant efforts in trapping and hand picking, the snail population has been brought under control for the moment.

As is evident from the photos, we acquired our children's playset which has proved to be a great success with both children and parents alike.



Although we have had a steady stream of potential gardeners showing great interest in taking on plots, we still have vacancies.

*Photo & words from Sonya Kershaw*

## Cotter

The marvellous December rain resulted in rapid growth of crops and weeds! The Cotter gardeners have been working hard to maintain weed-free plots and now that the hot weather has arrived, they are battling to keep the plants watered adequately. There are already good pickings of zucchinis, squashes, beans, tomatoes and potatoes (to name but a few). It is so satisfying and healthy to gather your homegrown vegetables and eat them almost immediately.

There has been several sightings of snakes around the plots this season and gardeners have been asked to be cautious when moving and working at the gardens. As a precaution, we have added a very long, wide bandage to the first aid box which includes a leaflet on what to do in the event of snakebite. We also discourage gardeners from locking themselves in the gardens in case they need to call for help.

The gardens continue to attract new members and it is great to see how enthusiastically they clear and prepare their plots and get stuck into the work. At present, we have no vacant plots and do not expect to have any before the next rents are due in September. We have 18 gardeners working plots ranging in size from 15 to 100 square meters.

*Roz & Trevor Bruhn*

## Holder

Some gardeners used the early warm weather to get a headstart on summer planting, but the unseasonal cool weather meant that some plants failed or remained dormant. Everything has now started moving along after a bout of moisture and heat.

Some plot holders have covered grassed over plots with cardboard and compost materials and have planted out pumpkins, zucchinis, tomatoes and potatoes. This season is going to be best for the fruit trees and grape vines as it has taken time for them to be established especially after a couple years of drought.

A new garden area for native and drought tolerant plants is being established at the northern end near the gate. Some plants have been slow to take off due to the site's exposure to the strong north westerly winds, but the plants are now starting to settle in.

The garden would like to welcome Kenneth and Rob who both have worked feverishly to turn neglected and overgrown plots with reasonable soil into a productive area.

There are still some sad and neglected plots available, but if prospective gardeners are willing to put work in there are rewards of fresh produce next summer.

*Conrad van Hest*



### Cook

The garden continues to prosper. This is the time of the year when all the hard work in spring begins to produce its rewards and this year is no exception.

All of our forty-six garden plots are showing themselves at their very best. Flowers and vegetables are thriving and gardeners can be seen taking fresh produce for their summer salads on most days of the week.

That is not to say that we don't share what we grow. Cockatoos and currawongs are particularly pleased with our crops this year, but there has generally been enough to share.

Our growers of berries and corn are probably the ones not so happy with the feathered predators and some have gone to great lengths to protect their crops. Berries in particular must be a real avian delicacy.

By the time this goes to press we will have survived our two open days as part of the Australian Open Garden Scheme. This is being seen as a good opportunity to promote the virtues of organic gardening and our gardeners have not stinted on time or energy in getting the garden looking at its best.

There has been minimal turnover in garden membership this quarter and there is still a lengthy waiting list for a plot in the garden.

*John Bennett*

### Mitchell

We finally have some ripe tomato action - Kiri, our youngest gardener at Mitchell, was way ahead of the rest of us.

Sadly, a large brown snake got stuck in some bird netting in the tool shed, and had to be killed by the rangers. Luckily no-one had bothered to net the fruit trees recently - it had been in there for a while by the looks of it, still fat from the shed rats. Just a reminder to tread cautiously.

All garden members are encouraged to help out with mowing and slashing weeds in communal areas - so far it's been done by Monica, Tony, Domenic and myself. Thanks to Phillip for emptying the bins, and I ask Mitchell gardeners to take their rubbish with them from now on. Also, please try and keep your plots weed free - this will help your fellow gardeners, and it looks nicer.

All plots are taken at the moment, but for keen gardeners we can make some room.

*Will Borowski*

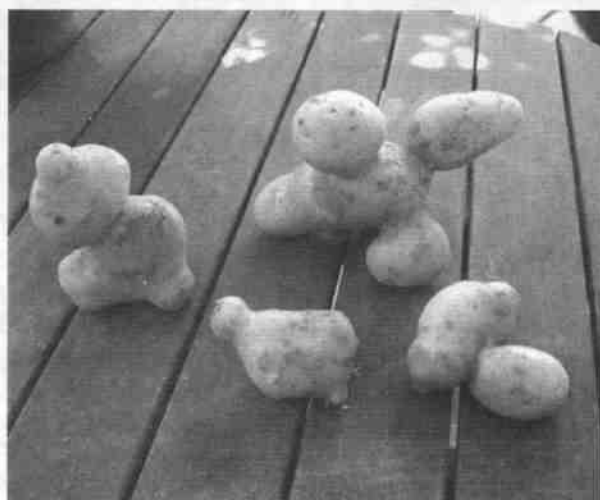
### Queanbeyan

Happy 2009 to all.

The Queanbeyan Community Garden is looking fabulous, lush and productive. We have a new shared garden full of various pumpkin vines and herbs. We are grateful to Queanbeyan City Council for the provision of some lovely soil and aged compost to get it started. It is terrific to have their support. The Council is also considering putting lighting along the frequently used bicycle path and walkway nearby. That will be great for our garden and for all who enjoy an evening stroll.

There are currently no plots available and 3 groups are on our waiting list. Enjoy your summer produce.

*Di Weekes*



*Top: Willing workers Dylan and Ollie at Queanbeyan  
Bottom: Nicola potatoes recently harvested from the Cotter garden*

## Oaks Estate

Hi everyone, I'm Gail, the new convenor at Oaks Estate. It has been a fantastic summer for the Oaks Estate Garden. We have seen a huge increase in the number of gardeners, and the garden is now a hive of busyness. Mind you, there is just a little bit of jealousy amongst some of the old hands as new and enthusiastic gardeners get the jump on the summer crop, and produced the first ripe tomatoes! Welcome to all the new gardeners, and a hearty thanks to Terry for keeping the garden going during a lean patch.

The upside of having many gardeners is that the job of mowing the vacant plots and communal land is much less thanks to many hands and less grass! Here are some photos of our December working bee.



Projects on the to-do list include rejuvenating a misused plot site, assessing the health of an old pear tree on the plot, planting a small communal orchard and creating a new sign for the garden.

Several of our gardeners have been implementing a variety of 'experimental' techniques, which include finding the perfect climbing frame for peas. The contenders range from plastic netting, string and everything else in the garden (I am told it is called

companion planting – peas vs everything else!). Judging by the pea harvest, the companion planting method seems to be in the lead, although you might think otherwise if you expected to harvest anything else!

We still have a number of vacancies at the garden, however at the rate that growing your own veggies is being discovered around here, who can be sure how long this situation will last!

*Gail Bennell*

## Not the Oaks Estate Garden report

O frabjous day! Callooh! Callay! I am no longer our convenor. But, if I am really quick, I can still get in an unauthorised Oaks Estate report before the real convenor shows up. Here goes...

Historically-minded readers of our last newsletter will have been appalled that our editor, the ever-vigilant Monica, "corrected" the spelling of Tim Beard's squatting, Quinbean. The spelling wasn't standardised to Queanbeyan until later. Shame on you Monica, not to mention that I never, ever, use "darn" it. Those things have almost nothing to do with what I am writing about, other than that I've noticed many Canberrans have no sense of history at all. Accordingly, here is a short burst about the history of our garden.

We are an extension of Gillespie Park, in Oaks Estate. That name recognises the Gillespie family, who had lived in Oaks Estate since the 1890s. All was fine until Stan, a second-generation local, was killed in a traffic accident in 1939. (He worked in Canberra and was walking home from work. Think on this next time you complain about transport around here!).

This left his wife, Mary, and daughter Jan with no breadwinner. A Canberra dairy farmer, Cargill, gave the family an old Jersey cow to help make ends meet. Mrs Gillespie took a job in the public service and, on the home front, Jan put the block to good use. What was one cow became several, and a milk-run. And chooks, lots of them. Deliveries on horseback, mind you, no fancy cart, with each and every egg wrapped in newspaper and delivered cross-country. Ah, the good old days....

I have to say that there is no evidence that Mrs G was an organic farmer. But with all that chook-poo to deal with, what else would you be? OK, that's it for me, got to go buy some eggs – hmmm, think I'll drive. But remind me to tell you about the old Chinese veggie gardens down on the river. Now *they* were organic, though maybe you won't want to know the details.

*Terry Williams*

*[I am duly chastened. Apologies - Ed]*

# A year in the garden and the plot thickens

**Heather Campbell gives hope to hundreds of Canberra gardeners with her account of successfully eradicating couch!**

It was a year ago in February 2008 as we looked with some dismay at our recently acquired garden plot in the Holder Community Garden. It was overgrown with tall grasses and some leeks that had gone to seed, wire remnants of a chicken run and a solid base of couch grass.

This was going to be a challenge!

I consulted my 30 year old battered version of 'Organic Gardening' by Peter Bennett and found a suggestion that I thought would be worth trying and that small paragraph, on converting lawn area to a garden bed, suggested a process that we think has resulted in the eradication of 99% of the couch from our garden plot.

Firstly armed with shears we slashed the grasses to the ground and then over a period of a week turned the whole plot over with a mattock. The earth was hard and dry and absolutely lifeless except for a small black frog that, once disturbed, listlessly hopped away into the plot next door.

This was hard yakka in the heat so we set up an umbrella and garden chairs under which we sat for frequent water breaks covered in dust, hot and sweaty and waving away the flies.

During the following week the whole bed was weeded of as much of the couch as could be removed, using a Dutch hoe to expose the roots in the clods of earth and raking the dry soil into heaps. We discovered a plug of nasty blue black clay in the middle of the plot, a myriad of rocks and smaller stones but not a single earthworm or other insect life. Our hearts sank.

We threw gypsum over the clay sods but couldn't work it in so just left it on the surface and we covered the bed with a load of home composted leaves and raked the leaves and the poor soil into some sort of level bed.

With a heavy heart I bought a couple of kilos of barley seed from the local Stock Feed shop and broadcast it over the bed, watered it with a hose and we crossed our fingers.

Miraculously, and much to our delight the barley sprouted within a week and within a month the whole bed was a sea of bright green. What a reassuring sight!

By now it was April. At the beginning of May the barley was about 40cm high and we were ready for the next stage of the process.

The barley was turned over and left in clumps, then pulverized chicken manure (not pellets) was sprinkled liberally over the bed. This was then covered with a 2-3cm layer of soft sugarcane mulch and the whole bed was left to sit over the winter months of June, July and August.

During this time I covered the paths of couch that surrounded the garden bed with thick layers of newspaper covered with wood chip mulch to see if I could prevent future couch invasions.

In September the bed was dug over with a fork. The soil had improved dramatically and we were delighted to see our first earthworm and a very fine fat specimen it was too.

A sheep farmer dropped off 10 bags of sheep manure and this was then dug into the soil and then another layer of sugar cane mulch applied.

On the October long week-end I raked up the mulch covered soil into raised garden beds scaring the new arrivals of slaters and earwigs scuttling for shelter. I built a pagoda-like trellis for the climbing beans out of star pickets and cane stakes. One of the other gardeners said it looked more like a gazebo and we should sit in there and have a beer.

I dared to plant some climbing beans, lettuce and spring onions and anxiously waited for the couch to appear with the onset of the warmer weather.

The paths surrounding the plot started to show scraps of couch finding their way to the light but the main garden plot remained couch free.

It is now January 2009 and the plot has had very little couch re-growth and those bits that have tried to grow have easily been weeded out.

We reckon a 99% success rate and highly recommend this approach.

That initial bed of couch and tangled wire has turned into a very productive plot thick with tomatoes, cucumbers, chillies, eggplant, zucchini, Asian vegetable, silverbeet, San Michele cabbage, carrots, spring onions and climbing beans which are now covering the 'gazebo'.

Maybe soon we will be able to sit in its shade and have a cold beer with beans dangling over our heads and not a blade of couch in sight.

*Heather Campbell  
with many thanks to my mattock diggers  
Paul Campbell & Geoff Davidson*



# Canberra Organic Growers Society

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

### 7:30pm 24 March 2008

The COGS Annual General Meeting will be held on Tuesday 24 March at 7:30pm at the Majura Community Centre in Rosevear Place, Dickson.

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

1. To confirm the minutes of the last AGM and of any general meeting since that meeting
2. To receive from the Committee reports on the activities of COGS during the preceding financial year
3. To elect members of the Committee, including office-bearers
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 according 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, librarian or ordinary Committee members shall be made in writing, signed by two 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 in the Committee, the nominated candidates shall be deemed elected and further nominations shall be received at the AGM.
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 nominated persons 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, librarian and ordinary Committee members shall be conducted at the AGM in a manner as the Committee directs.
7. A person is not eligible to hold more than one position on the Committee simultaneously except:
  - (a) the position of Public Officer
  - (b) the position of Membership Secretary, which can be held by the Honorary Treasurer.

**For more information** on the meeting and for nomination forms, please contact the COGS Secretary Barbara Schreiner at [grow@backyardfood.com](mailto:grow@backyardfood.com) or [info@cogs.asn.au](mailto:info@cogs.asn.au), or talk to another member of the current Committee (see page2 for contact details).

## COGS green manure mixes now available

Each year COGS buys bulk seed that 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 about 30 square metres and will be available from COGS garden convenors from late February or at the COGS general meetings.



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### The COGS Committee needs YOU!

The COGS Committee is looking for new members to help run the organisation and support organic growing methods in the region. The more people we have on the committee, the more we can do!

You don't have to take on the job of Treasurer, Secretary or other office bearers to join - we also need general committee members who have skills or an interest in a range of areas - finances, garden management, grant applications, communication, education, database management - you name it!

### Revitalisation of Theodore Community Garden

The number of plot holders in the Theodore garden has been decreasing for some time and now there are only three gardeners left. Unfortunately, this is not enough to maintain a garden the size of Theodore (approximately half a hectare).

In order to revitalise the garden we are organising a working bee at the garden in March. If you would like to secure a plot at Theodore (one of the few gardens which does not have a long waiting list) all you have to do is come along to the working bee.

To indicate your interest please contact me either by email or phone (see contact list on the first page) and I will advise you of the date of the working bee when it has been organised.

If there is insufficient interest from members to have a viable number of gardeners at the Theodore garden, the Committee will have no choice but to close the garden and return the land to the ACT government. This would be a great pity. Not only would there be no community garden in the far south of Canberra but the Theodore garden has the best soil of all COGS gardens. *Keith Colls*

### Organic Gardening course

**CIT Solutions**  
**Beginners Organic Gardening**

15 March to 5 April  
& 24 May to 21 June

Weston Campus, Sundays 1-4pm

For information, call 6207 4441 or visit  
[www.citsolutions.cit.act.edu.au](http://www.citsolutions.cit.act.edu.au)

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**Eokomit** is available in three pack sizes for small, medium and large scale gardeners, farmers and growers

75g	\$18	treats 5 cubic m compost or 250 square m of land
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Eokomit can be ordered securely via our website using *Paypal*.



# Autumn harvest: BEETROOT

**Although it took me the best part of 25 years to discover it, fresh beetroot is tasty, versatile and packed with goodness. Can the can!**

In looking for interesting information about beetroot, I came across a fantastic British website - Love Beetroot - ([www.lovebeetroot.co.uk](http://www.lovebeetroot.co.uk)) with everything you could possibly want to know about beetroot. It's well worth a look (as are its sister sites Love Celery and Love Lettuce).

Amongst the gems, I discovered that beetroot is a good source of:

- Folate - great during pregnancy and as protection against high blood pressure, dementia and Alzheimer's
- Betaine - a mind relaxant and is used to treat depression
- Tryptophan - supports a sense of well being (also found in chocolate)
- Soluble fibre, carotenoids and flavonoids - help to reduce blood cholesterol and prevent it from being deposited in the arteries
- Boron - used by the body to produce sex hormones, which explains why the Romans used beetroot as an aphrodisiac.
- Potassium and magnesium - just good for you!

Beetroot's ancestors were sea beets which were first domesticated in the Mediterranean and the middle East in pre-Christian times. It was originally grown for the medicinal qualities of its leaves. The roots we favour today weren't discovered until the Middle Ages.

## Site and soil

Beetroot like fertile, well drained and well worked soil and plenty of sun.

They will benefit from the addition of compost or manure, but be careful not to add too much nitrogen or you will end up with lush foliage and not much root development. They like good levels of potassium and phosphorous and prefer to follow an above-ground crop.

## Planting

Best time for planting is late spring-summer for seeds and early summer for seedlings.

Plant seeds at a depth of 1-2 cm about 10 cm apart, with about 20-30 cm between rows. Keep soil moist until seedlings emerge in 10-14 days.

Seeds are actually clusters of 1-4 true seeds in a corky outer casing, so thinning is usually necessary after germination. Soaking seeds for about 2 hours in water just before planting is said to speed up germination.

Seedlings can be transplanted once they've formed their first proper leaves. Ensure seedlings are kept moist during transplanting.

## Cultivating

Beetroot needs lots of water - insufficient or irregular watering will lead to cracking or forking.

They may need:- to be thin out while young, if they do and you are careful you will be able to transplant these.

## Harvesting

Maturity is between 8 and 10 weeks from planting. Older roots will become tough and fibrous while smaller vegetables will be sweeter, so try to harvest before 10 cm in diameter. Use a garden fork to lift from the soil.

## Problems

Beetroot is not generally bothered by pests, but the leaves can occasionally be attacked by grubs or chewing insects.



## Choosing and using

There aren't too many things you can't do with beetroot. Leaves and grated fresh beetroot are colourful and flavoursome in salads.

It can be steamed, roasted, added to juice and made into puree or dips, to be enjoyed with fresh vegetable crudité's or flat bread.

When purchasing, look for firm, smooth vegetables, with whiskers and stems attached and without spotty leaves. They can be kept in the crisper for 7-10 days. Leaves can be kept in the fridge for about 2 days.

Cook with the skins on and at least 5 cm of stalk, to prevent 'bleeding'. Once cooked, the skins will slip off easily.

## References and further reading

- Love Beetroot ([www.lovebeetroot.co.uk](http://www.lovebeetroot.co.uk))
- Brisbane Organic Growers Inc ([www.bogi.org.au/beetroot](http://www.bogi.org.au/beetroot))
- The Farmers Market Companion (Viking Books)
- Organic vegetable gardening (Annette McFarlane)
- The Canberra Gardener (Horticultural Society of Canberra)

# Autumn planting: KALE

**Not only nutritious and easy to grow, kale is attractive, flavoursome and generous - it's the cool weather green that keeps on giving.**

Brassicas come in all shapes and sizes. Cabbage, brussels sprouts, broccoli, cauliflower and even run-of-the-mill root vegies like turnips and swedes are all part of the family. Kale is a lesser known, good-natured Brassica cousin, that tolerates less than perfect soil and weather conditions and becomes sweeter with frost.

Kale is also known as borecole, which in Dutch means 'farmer's cabbage'. There are many varieties now available, the most common being Cavolo Nero (Tuscan kale, with dark green 'dinosaur' leaves) and Scotch kale with tightly curled frilly leaves.

## Site and soil

Ideally, choose an area with full sun and rich, well-drained soil with a pH of 6.0-7.0. If the soil is too acidic, add lime. If the soil isn't already rich, dig in compost or well-rotted manure. As you are growing kale for foliage, high nitrogen content is recommended.

## Planting

Kale prefers cool temperatures. Frost will sweeten the taste, while heat turns kale bitter. Sow in February-March for a winter harvest.

Kale can be either direct seeded into the garden or transplanted as seedlings. For direct seeding, sow about 1 cm deep and about 30-45 cm apart. Three or four seeds can be planted together and thinned out at the two-leaf stage. If you ensure the soil doesn't dry out, seeds should germinate in about 5-8 days.

Transplanted seeds should be spaced 30-45 cm apart, giving them room to spread. Choose healthy plants and keep them lightly moist.

## Cultivating

Keep young plants well watered. Along with cool temperatures, moisture will encourage tender, sweet leaves.

Apply mulch to keep soil moist and cool, control weeds and protect plants from late summer heat. Kale will also benefit from regular applications of liquid fertiliser during the growing season.

## Harvesting

Plants should be ready for harvest in around 2 months, depending on weather conditions and variety. Young leaves can be used fresh in salads or mature leaves can be used as a cooked green.

You can regularly harvest the lower leaves, allowing the centre of the plant to continue to produce. Alternatively, you can wait until the plant is mature and harvest all at once.

## Problems

Kale is bothered by many of the brassica pests and diseases, such as cabbage moth, aphids, snails, slugs and some soil-borne diseases. Suggested companion plants are celery, onion, potato and beetroot.

Healthy kale grown in rich, well-drained soil will be better able to withstand these problems. Crop rotation is also strongly recommended so that members of the cabbage family are not grown in the same place in the following year. This reduces the likelihood of pests and diseases building up in the soil.



## Choosing and using

Choose green kale with dark, soft leaves or Tuscan kale with glossy blue-black leaves. Store (washed and dried) for a couple of days at the most in a salad crisper.

Kale is rich in vitamins and minerals, particularly iron, potassium, calcium and vitamins A and C. Cook as you would cook cabbage - stewed, boiled, braised, blanched - but remember that kale takes a little longer to soften. Tuscan kale is traditionally used in minestrone.

## References and further reading

- The Farmers Market Companion (Viking Books)
- Botanica's Organic Gardening (Judyth McLeod)
- How to grow cabbage and kale ([www.gardening.about.com/od/vegetables](http://www.gardening.about.com/od/vegetables))
- Growing cabbages and brassicas ([www.bbc.co.uk/gardening](http://www.bbc.co.uk/gardening))

# Little sprouts: kids and vegies

**It's an age-old question: How do you get your children interested in vegetables? Parents and other experts share their strategies and secrets.**

A recent survey by the University of South Australia and the CSIRO reported on Australian children's diet and activity habits. Project coordinator Dr Jane Bowen says that since previous similar surveys, there have been some big changes in Australian way of life.

"Many children are not eating enough nutritious food, which means they don't get the vitamins and minerals needed during their growing years," she says. "Unfortunately fruit, vegetables and dairy foods are being replaced by foods high in kilojoules, salt and saturated fat - the very dietary patterns linked to the development of type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease in adults.

Growing, preparing and eating nutritious food should be an enjoyable and social part of life - and good habits can be formed from a very young age.

## Eating your greens

Australians are being encouraged to eat two servings of fruit and five servings of vegetables each day, but most children (and most adults) don't eat this much.

There are a few of facts to consider.

- Any fruit and vegies are better than none.
- Children won't starve themselves. If they won't eat healthy food, resist the temptation to give them unhealthy food.
- Parents can set a good example by eating healthy food themselves.
- Kids should know why fruit and vegies are good for them and should know which foods are for everyday and which are for special occasions.

The Victorian Government's Better Health website outlines five key steps to success.

## 1. Get kids involved in preparing and planning

Involve your children in choosing and preparing their fruit and vegetables, and also in shopping or growing.

"I give the kids a choice at dinner - for example they can have peas and carrots *or* tomatoes and cucumber. They usually choose the one that least repulses them."

*Rachel*

"Murphy (3) will not eat vegies *unless* they're juiced and then he'll eat just about anything - carrot, beetroot, pumpkin, even spinach. He prefers to do the juicing himself, so he knows that what's going into the juice are the vegies he hates, but it works. This summer, we've made the juice into ice blocks and all the kids love them."

*Stuart*

## 2. Make eating good food enjoyable

Reinforce positive behaviour and try to keep the eating environment emotion-free and fun.

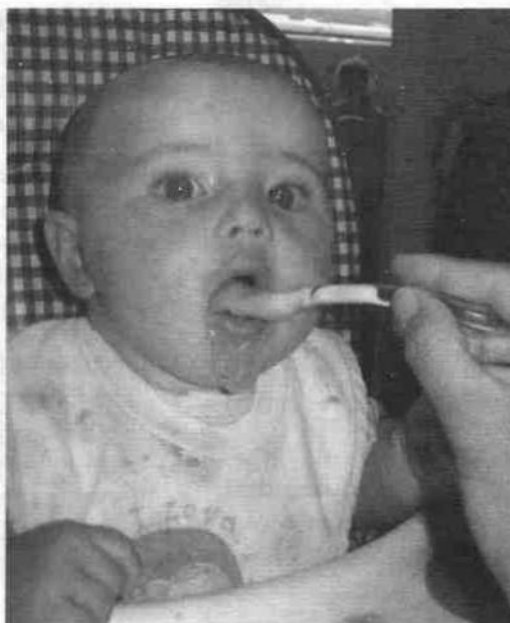
Anna appeals to Maddie's sense of fun by calling vegies silly names, some based on the Charlie and Lola books, and some from their imaginations. So tomatoes become moon squirters, asparagus are giraffe's ears, peas are green drops from Greenland and zucchini becomes asteroid slices.

"I've recently been julienning celery, carrots and peppers for lunch boxes and picnics. Toby (5) makes letters and houses with them and Rosie (3) uses them to pick up her grapes."

*Louise*

"Luca loves raw vegetables but won't touch cooked vegetables. There was a battle for a while, but in the end I figured that he's getting the nutrients cooked or raw, so now we go with raw."

*Ashley*





### 3. Pay attention to presentation

Colour is important to kids. Chris worried that Lucy (3) wouldn't eat onions, until he switched to Spanish onions, which are Lucy's favourite colour - pink.

Naomi has great success with 'special rainbow fried rice' (plain rice with colourful chopped up vegies) and Jane with 'rainbow mash (potato and zucchini base, with cheese and seasonal vegies).

### 4. Include fruit and vegetables wherever possible

Herein lies the parent's secret weapon - camouflage.

Most parents swear by grating - the finer the better. Pasta sauce is a favourite disguise, as well as pizza, meatballs and soups.

"Tom (8 months) will eat any vegetable, as long as it's mixed with banana or prune puree, or both. It's disgusting, and effective."

Jess

### 5. Keep trying

Research in this area suggests that children often need to be offered new food at least ten times before they'll accept it, or even try it. Experts suggest introducing new flavours into your child's diet from a young age - through pregnancy, via breastmilk and when they start eating solids. A key to success lies in positive reinforcement.

For each meal, Therese serves some food she knows Ben and Kate will eat and something new.

"The kids tend to be pretty risk-averse. We have a new strategy where if they try that day's new food, they get a special treat. They don't have to like it, but we encourage them to try it. We've had a complete turnaround - the kids now get pleasure and achievement out of trying something new."

*Photos opposite page: Murphy's prize seedling; Darcy inhales potatoes and pumpkins; Diavi enjoying strawberries*

### Growing your own

If you have the time and room, growing your own vegetables and other plants gives kids an enjoyable way to learn about how things grow.

It can also introduce them to new tastes and pique their interest in new foods. Almost all the parents I spoke to said that if their child had grown or picked vegetables, they were more likely to eat them - even the committed vegophobes.

"Cooper (3) has never been interested in any kind of cabbage - was violently opposed to them in fact. Until he picked a kid-sized cauliflower out of a friend's garden. He ate the whole lot that night for dinner. I was stunned!"

Veena

Even if your kids don't join you in your garden or take an immediate interest, it's likely that your enthusiasm for gardening will rub off on them, and may appear to them in later life.

### Pride of place

To really hook your kids on gardening, give them their own little patch in the garden. The bad news is that sacrificing the best patch is probably more beneficial to them than palming off the worst patch. Most kids will respond well to having their own space but will lose interest if nothing grows.

"Jasper (8) has his own small section of the backyard - near his cubby house - to grow whatever he wants in. The rules are that he chooses what to put in his garden, and he looks after it. He's had a few failures, but more successes. He's now quite the green thumb and likes to give us advice on the rest of the yard."

Joe and Peta

*Photos this page: Hugh, Murphy and their sunflower; Manu shows off his gardening shoes; Lily and her watermelon*



## Little sprouts - continued

If you don't have much room, try growing herbs and vegies in pots on a deck or windowsill, or grow sprouts in the kitchen.

Another thing that does seem to be important is for kids to have at least some of their own tools. A set of children's garden gloves, a small trowel or even garden shoes are good investments.

### Fill up your senses

Colourful plants that grow quickly seem to be winners with kids. Amongst the most popular were radishes, beans, marigolds, carrots, strawberries, snow peas and sweet peas and sunflowers.

To indulge all of your child's senses, try some of these tips.

- For taste and smell, grow herbs like basil, mints, coriander, chives and rocket.
- For sound, grow some plants that rustle in the breeze, like sweet corn, or add a windchime to the garden.
- Encourage butterflies into your garden with lavender or butterfly bush. Tempt birds with a garden bird bath.
- Grow vegies and colourful flowers in a fairy ring or in the shape of a dinosaur tail.
- Include different textures in the garden, from rough to silky, with plants such as globe artichoke and lamb's ear.

### Worms, dirt and other treasures

Of course, one of the biggest attractions about gardening is the opportunity to get dirty and, if possible, wet.

"Jack (6) isn't all that keen on garden preparation and

it's hard to get him interested in regular maintenance jobs like weeding. The two things he loves are harvesting and earthworms. Finding worms in the garden is often more exciting than finding ripe vegies." *Steve*

"Our kids love to dig and they love to water. They've spent many happy, muddy hours 'working' at the plot. They also love to see bugs and birds in the garden and we once saw a blue-tongue lizard, which was a huge hit." *Prue & Michael*

### School gardens

Many schools and child care centres now have a small garden on their grounds.

Advice from staff is to choose hardy plants that don't mind being loved to near-death, and forget neat and tidy rows.

"We let the kids sow the seeds themselves, so we ended up with a dense clump of plants down one end of the bed and some lonely scattered plants at the other end. Symmetry and order doesn't matter much to kids." *Astrid*

There was an anxious wait for the seeds to come through the soil and once they did, they were watered every day - sometimes a couple of times to avoid arguments. Despite this enthusiasm, they survived and thrived, giving much enjoyment to staff, parents and children.

"We didn't end up harvesting much, even though the vegies grew well. There was more fun in seeing things go to seed, flower and attract insects."

*Photos: The gardening spirit is alive and well at Kambah and Queanbeyan gardens.*



### To market, to market

Fresh produce, organic and farmers markets are a great way to add some interest and colour to food shopping with kids.

Markets not only offer fresh produce, but with so many stalls, you also have a smorgasbord of choice. By buying directly, both consumers and producers benefit.

### Make markets a family outing

At 14 months, Will is a regular at the Northside Farmers Markets. He's there most Saturdays with his mums and his trusty sidekick, Blue Dog.

He loves the sights and smells of the market and is entrusted with guarding the purchases that are packed around him in his stroller. This also means ready access to his favourite foods - particularly strawberries - and to other foods that appeal to his inquisitive nature, if not his palate, such as raw spring onions.



### Baby steps towards organics

If you're think about switching to organic, Organic Bubs suggests taking small steps rather than trying to convert overnight.

First, switch to easily accessible items such as eggs and dairy products. Then choose organics for fruit and vegetables that are tend to be high in pesticides, like oranges, berries, grapes, carrots and pears.

### For more info, try:

- Organic Bubs: 100% organic meals for your little one [www.organicbubs.com](http://www.organicbubs.com)
- BBC Gardening website [www.bbc.co.uk/gardening](http://www.bbc.co.uk/gardening)
- Victorian Government's Better Health website [www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au)
- Positive food for kids (Jenny O'Dea)

*Photos from Inge Thor, Rebecca Scott, Di Weekes, Sonya Bail and Monica van Wensveen*

*With thanks to Kate, Teezy, Anna, Steve, the Bad Mothers Club, and all the other mums and dads*

## INTRODUCTION TO PERMACULTURE monthly courses

**Grow your own** vegetables & fruit organically, sustainably and cheaply

**Share your gardening** problems, knowledge and experience with others

We are also setting up **demonstration balcony and courtyard food gardens**



**When:** Each month a COURSE consisting of 4 evening sessions runs 6.30-8.30 pm (different nights for each course)

**Where:** Canberra Environment & Sustainability Resource Centre, Corner of Lawson Crescent and Lennox Crossing, ACTON

**Cost:** \$40

### More information & contacts:

Email [garden@ecoaction.com.au](mailto:garden@ecoaction.com.au)

Phone 6248 0885

Web [www.ecoaction.com.au](http://www.ecoaction.com.au)



# Recipes to the rescue!

Has the wonder of your first ripe zucchini worn off? Are you now drowning in a sea of courgette? COGS gardeners have collected some recipes to help you get through the glut.



## Zucchini ripieni

- 1 large slice bread
- 1 teaspoon chopped fresh basil, marjoram or parsley
- milk
- black pepper
- 4 mushrooms, chopped
- 1 egg yolk
- 2 anchovy fillets, chopped
- 2 teaspoons breadcrumbs
- 2 rashers bacon, chopped
- 3 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese

- Remove the crusts from the bread and soak for 5-10 minutes in a little milk, then squeeze dry.
- Put the unpeeled zucchini into salted, boiling water for 3 minutes. Drain well, cut in halves lengthwise and scoop out the flesh with a teaspoon.
- Put the mushrooms, anchovy fillets, bacon, 2 tablespoons of the cheese, basil, soaked bread and zucchini flesh in a bowl. Add a little black pepper and mix well together. Bind with the egg yolk.
- Fill the zucchini halves with this mixture and arrange in a lightly oiled fireproof dish.
- Mix the remaining cheese and breadcrumbs together and sprinkle over the top. Sprinkle with oil and bake in a moderate oven (180/190C) for 35-40 minutes.



## Dot's zucchini flan

- 1 cup self raising flour
- 4 eggs
- 1/2 cup oil
- 1 cup grated cheese
- 3-4 grated zucchinis
- 3-4 chopped shallots
- 2 ears fresh corn (or 1 tin)

- Mix all ingredients in a bowl.
- Transfer to a greased oven dish.
- Sprinkle with grated cheese
- Bake at 180C for 30-40 minutes

## Zucchini with ham (*Zucchini alla romano*)

- 1 lb. zucchini
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- flour
- 250g (1/2 lb) ham cut into 4 pieces
- salt, pepper
- 1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- oil
- 2 onions, peeled and chopped

- Cut the zucchini into fairly thick slices and coat with flour to which a little salt and pepper has been added. Heat a little oil in a pan, add the onion and garlic and cook until the onion is soft and translucent.
- Add the pieces of ham and brown lightly. Remove the ham and onion onto a plate. Heat a little more oil in the pan, add the slices of zucchini and leave just long enough to brown lightly.
- Arrange most of the slices of zucchini in a buttered fireproof dish, sprinkle with half the onion and half the grated cheese. Put the ham on top, sprinkle with the remaining onion and cheese and top with the rest of the zucchini.
- Put into a moderate oven (180/190C) for about 15 minutes.



## Zucchini soup

- 2 tablespoons butter
- 2 chopped onions
- 2 chopped potatoes
- 8 chopped zucchinis
- 1/4 teaspoon thyme
- 1/4 teaspoon rosemary
- 1/2 teaspoon basil
- 4 cups chicken stock
- 1 cup milk
- 1/4 cup potato flakes

- Fry onion with butter.
- Add potatoes, zucchinis and herbs.
- Cook for 5 minutes
- In a pot, bring stock to the boil, then add the potato-zucchini mixture and simmer for 15 minutes.
- When cooked, puree and return to pot.
- Add milk and bring just to the boil
- Add instant potato and stir through well.

### Bird's zucchini slice

Some grated zucchinis  
About the same amount of grated carrot  
Chopped onion or shallots  
Chopped ham  
4 eggs  
3/4 cup self raising flour  
Grated cheese  
Salt and pepper

- Mix all ingredients together
- Transfer to a slice tray
- Sprinkle with grated cheese.
- Cook in a moderate oven until cheese is golden (about 30 minutes at 180C)



### Zucchini loaf

4 cups grated zucchini  
4 eggs  
1 cup butter  
2 cups sugar  
4 cups flour  
3 teaspoons vanilla  
2 teaspoons cinnamon  
1 teaspoon salt  
1 teaspoon baking soda  
1/4 cup chopped walnuts

- Mix zucchini, eggs, butter, cinnamon, salt, baking soda, vanilla and sugar.
- Add flour, a bit at a time. Stir until all ingredients are mixed.
- Lightly grease and flour bread pans
- Carefully spoon into bread pans, stopping when the mixture is about 3/4 of the way to the top.
- Bake for 35 minutes in a moderate oven, or until a golden brown.
- Take out loaves, and let them cool five minutes before removing the bread from the pans to finish cooling on a wire rack.



### Zucchini and feta pancakes

Mix 4 eggs, 4 cups zucchini, 1 cup crumbled feta, 1/2 cup chopped shallots, 1/3 cup flour, 2 tablespoons chopped mint.

- Heat oil in a frying pan and add spoonful of batter.
- Cook on both sides until golden and crispy



Zucchini and feta pancake recipe adapted from Potager by Georgeanne Brennan.

Zucchini ripieni and Zucchini with ham recipes adapted from Popular Italian Cookery.

# ECO MEATS

## Your organic butcher

**ORGANIC** beef and lamb cuts including rump, porterhouse and T-bone steaks, sausages, mince, kebabs and fillet, cutlets and chops.

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## **The Co-op Food Shop**

Kingsley Street, Acton  
off Barry Drive

*We provide an ecologically and socially sustainable alternative to supermarket shopping.*

**We have fresh organic and BD fruit and vegetables.**

**A large range of beans, flours, nuts, oils, tofu and tempeh is also available.**

Tuesday and Thursday  
10 a.m. to 7 p.m.  
Wednesday Friday Saturday  
10 a.m. to 4 p.m.  
Sunday 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

**Phone 6257 1186**

*Food Co-op Members receive  
20% off listed prices*



## **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.



## **Mountain Creek Farm**

Local and Biodynamic producers of rare breed beef, free range & rare breed pork, raw honey and pastured free range eggs.

Available direct & all processes ACT health and NSW 'food safe' compliant.



Visit us at the Southside and Northside Farmers Markets every weekend, or visit our website. More products will be added progressively.

A truly local and genuinely mixed farm, preserving biodiversity in all its forms

### **Mountain Creek Farm**

Michael Croft PH 0413 387 686  
michael@mountaincreekfarm.com.au  
[www.mountaincreekfarm.com.au](http://www.mountaincreekfarm.com.au)

## **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.**



## Membership Application / Renewal

To: The Membership Secretary  
 Canberra Organic Growers Society Inc.  
 PO Box 347 Dickson ACT 2602

**Please print clearly - especially your email address**

New application  Renewal   
 Concession  Please provide justification:

Paying for: One year  Two years

**Member details:**

Name: (1) \_\_\_\_\_

Name: (2) \_\_\_\_\_

Names & ages of children under 18 included in this membership:

Title for address label: \_\_\_\_\_

Street: \_\_\_\_\_

Suburb/Town: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Receive COGS Flier by email? Yes / No

Receive organic email? Yes / No

Do you have a plot in a COGS garden? \_\_\_\_\_

If so, which garden? \_\_\_\_\_

Please tick below if you can spare some time to help with the running of COGS

Magazine  Library  Committee

Seed bank  Seedlings  Stalls

Community gardens  Other \_\_\_\_\_

**I agree to be bound by the rules of COGS for the time being in force.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
 (signed) Date \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

**For COGS administration**

Membership number \_\_\_\_\_ Bank ID \_\_\_\_\_

Receipt number \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_

**About COGS membership**

There are four categories of membership available:

- Single membership - 1 adult
- Family membership - 1 or 2 adults and their children under 18 years
- Associate membership - available to schools, businesses, other organic groups
- Overseas membership

**Benefits available to COGS members**

- Monthly meetings with guest speakers, library, organic seed and seedling exchange and sales
- Quarterly magazine and occasional newsletters (COGS Flier)
- Access to COGS community gardens
- Excursions and social activities
- Discount advertising rates (Internet and *Canberra Organic*)

**Membership rates**

The current subscription rates for single or family memberships are:

<i>New members</i>	Full	Concession
One year	\$25	\$15
Two years	\$40	\$24

**Renewing members**

One year	\$20	\$12
Two years	\$35	\$21

Concession rates are available to pension and benefit recipients and full time students. Justification for concession rates must be provided annually.

Rates for overseas membership are as above except that concession rates are not available.

COGS memberships are valid for 12 months from the joining date and each anniversary thereof.

A member becomes unfinancial immediately his or her membership expires and thereby ceases to be a member of COGS. and:

- a) Will not receive any more publications
- b) Will lose entitlement to any plot held in a community garden

To assist members a reminder letter will be sent with the last *Canberra Organic* prior to the membership expiry date.

**Please send your application with a cheque or money order to:**

The Membership Secretary  
 Canberra Organic Growers Society Inc.  
 PO Box 347  
 Dickson  
 ACT 2602



# COGS AUTUMN PLANTING GUIDE

## Brassicas

Late plantings of Brassicas in March may be successful, but summer plantings are usually more reliable. In autumn, it is already too late to grow from seed. Take care too with the varieties chosen - 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 summer plantings are more reliable.



## 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. It is worth experimenting with the timing of mid or late season varieties by making successive plantings to determine the best time for your specific garden.

## Spring flowers

Remember that many spring flowering plants are best planted in autumn, so 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.

Green manure crops suitable for planting in Canberra are:

**Legumes:** Broad beans, field peas, lupins, sub clover, tic peas and vetch.

**Non-Legumes:** Barley, oats and rye.



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

Cut or dig in the green manure in spring, at least 4-6 weeks prior to planting your summer crops.

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

	MAR	APR	MAY
Asian greens	ST	T	
Brussel 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	ST
Peas	S	S	S
Onions		S	S
Turnips	T		

**S = seed sowing**  
**T = transplanting**

This table is a guide only, please observe the seasonal weather patterns before deciding when to plant, as there will often be distinct differences in weather from one year to the next.



## Q&A @ COGS

**Q** “What **fungicides** are permitted in organic gardens for plant pest and disease control?”

**A** The National Standard for Organic and Biodynamic Produce allows various options for fungicide, including:

- Copper-based products, within limits (see below)
- Lime sulphur (calcium polysulphide)
- Potassium bicarbonate and sodium bicarbonate
- Full cream milk (diluted to 10%)

I'm not sure of the efficacy of the bicarbonates or milk as I haven't used them myself, but others claim they work satisfactorily as a fungicide. They are supposed to work by increasing the pH of the plant surface (making it more alkaline) and therefore discouraging fungal development, as most fungi prefer an acid environment.

I understand that the commercial products *Ecocarb* and *Ecorose* are a form of 'activated' potassium bicarbonate. Both are certified organic by Biological Farmers Australia.

The use of copper products are restricted to minimise the accumulation of copper in the soil. The natural background copper content in the COGS gardens varies considerably. At Cook it was less than 2 mg/kg when we started the garden, at the Holder garden it was 6.4 mg/kg and at Kambah it was 10 mg/kg. The maximum allowable amount of copper in the soil is 50 mg/kg.

The general principles given in the National Standard governing the use of copper based fungicides are: “Inputs should contain none or only low levels of heavy metals. Due to the lack of any satisfactory alternative, and due to long-standing, traditional use in organic agriculture, copper and copper salts are an exception for the time being. The use of copper in any form in organic agriculture is seen as a temporary measure and therefore its use is limited to a maximum of 8 kg/ha/annum with a staged reduction strategy in place.”

In practice this means that the following copper compounds are allowed, provided the total annual application of copper is less than 8 kg/ha:

- Bordeaux and Burgundy mixes
- Copper in ionised forms or as hydroxide, oxide or sulphate, but **not** oxychloride forms.

Copper compounds should not be used in aquatic systems. It is also important to note that copper is

highly toxic to earthworms.

The NASAA version of the National Standard summarises the tests used to determine what is allowable in an organic garden and what is not. It gives the rationale behind what otherwise may seem to be a set of random rules.

Each 'input product' is considered in terms of necessity, nature and method of production and potential impact on yield, product quality, environmental safety, ecological protection, landscape, human/animal welfare and ethical and socio-economic considerations.

The NASAA site has more information, at [www.nasaa.com.au](http://www.nasaa.com.au)

Another useful website is [www.greenharvest.com.au/pestcontrol/fungal\\_info](http://www.greenharvest.com.au/pestcontrol/fungal_info)

*Keith Colls*

**Q** “Is there a safe, easy way to **bottle fruit**?”

**A** Imagine picking 6 stalks of your vigorous rhubarb, chopping the stalks into bite size pieces, dropping them into a jar, covering with a sugar syrup, popping on the lid and cooking for 3 – 5 minutes in your microwave and ending up with a jar of bottled fruit that will last for months.

The advantages are that:

- you don't have to boil preserving jars in water for hours heating up your kitchen during the hot summer
- You can use a selection of sweeteners when you make the syrup
- You can bottle small quantities at a time
- Any microwave with a turntable can be used
- Any kind of jar can be used that has a METAL lid.

I have been using this method for many years and it can be used for all sorts of fruit, apples, pears, plums, citrus as well as tomatoes.

Check out: Isabel Webb's first book 'Microwave Bottling fruit, jams, jellies, Pickles and Sauces' printed by The Five Mile Press.

*Heather Campbell*



Please send any questions or responses to [editor@cogs.asn.au](mailto:editor@cogs.asn.au) or to the COGS post box.

## COGS NOTICE BOARD

### Speakers

7:30 pm on the fourth Tuesday  
MAJURA COMMUNITY CENTRE  
ROSEVEAR PLACE DICKSON

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.

**24 February 2009**  
COGS Harvest Night

**24 March 2009**  
COGS Annual General Meeting  
*plus* review & taste-testing Special  
Interest Group climbing beans

**28 April 2009**  
TBA

**26 May 2009**  
Organic agriculture in Australia: Past,  
present and future  
Els Wynen, Eco Landuse Systems

### Canberra Harvest Festival 09: celebrating our local food

**Date:** 28 March 2009; noon to 5pm

**Venue:** Canberra Environment Centre car park  
and surrounding green areas; corner of Lawson  
Circuit and Lennox Crossing, Acton

#### Activities include:

- Stalls for produce and providing information
- Workshops, including talks on sustainable agriculture and food issues
- A 'Best Homegrown Vegetable Competition, with prizes
- Live music, free entry a BBQ fundraiser and a free raffle



**More info:** [www.ecoaction.com.au](http://www.ecoaction.com.au) or  
[canberraharvestfestival@gmail.com](mailto:canberraharvestfestival@gmail.com)

Stage 3 water restrictions apply in all gardens

### Horticultural Society of Canberra's Autumn Show

COGS members will remember that last year Cook and Holder gardens entered a display at in the HSOC Autumn Show. Our display was well received and generated considerable interest in COGS community gardens. This year all COGS community gardens are urged to enter a display. A large number of Canberra residents visit the show and the publicity received by COGS through our garden displays is well worth the effort.

Details provided by the Horticultural Society of the requirements for the community garden displays are:

- HSOC Autumn show is on **Saturday 7 March** (and Sunday 8 March)
- There is a section for **Community Gardens Display** which is sponsored by Bunnings at Fyshwick.

- Description – Class 244. A display of flowers, fruit and /or vegetables grown in a community allotment or garden. To be displayed in an area 750mm deep and 1200mm wide. Entries are collective garden entries.

A prize of a \$50 Bunnings gift voucher will be awarded for each of the following:

- Overall appearance and quality
- Most outstanding flower exhibit
- Most outstanding vegetable exhibit
- Most outstanding fruit exhibit

Entries need to be phoned through to the show Secretaries (Jim and Robyn Donlan) 6255 1371 by 8pm Thursday 5 March. The hall is open Friday night 6-10pm and Saturday morning 7:30 – 10am for the staging of exhibits, with judging starting at 10am.

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