

Winter 2010 : Vol 18 No 2

# Canberra Organic

Starting a vegetable patch from scratch  
Moon planting  
Kohlrabi & Brussels sprouts



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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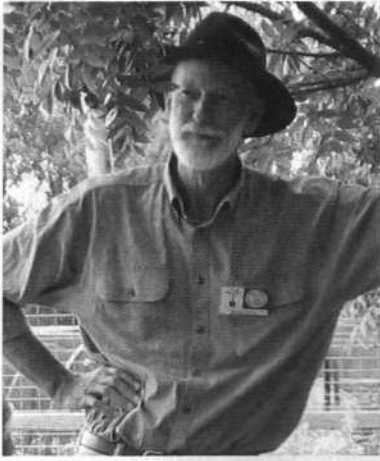
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## President's report: Winter 2010

The cooler weather is quite a relief from the heat of summer, although maximum and minimum temperatures have been consistently above average during autumn. Hopefully we will get a few severe frosts this winter to kill off some of the pests

which have been managing to survive during the warmer winters we have been having during the last few years.

The dire situation of water in our gardens has eased somewhat during autumn. Both February and March had above average rainfall and, after the deluge we had in early February, very little watering has been required. Provided plot holders continue to minimise their water use, it is likely most, if not all, gardens will complete the gardening year without going over their water allocation. The autumn rains have also had a positive effect on the ACT water supply. The dams are now at about 53% of capacity, which is about 10% more than the same time last year. If the Bureau of Meteorology's seasonal outlook is correct, we can expect above average rainfall to continue into winter.

While the February rains were most welcome, it was unfortunate that over 100mm fell on the weekend of the Cook opening for the Australian Open Garden Scheme. Consequently, all the helpers and most of our visitors got very wet. Nevertheless, nearly 80 hardy souls visited the garden and those of us who staffed the garden learnt a lot about the curiosities of water flow through the garden, both above and below ground. But alas, it was too much of a good thing for the tomatoes and most of them died during the weekend with wet feet. Next year it will be the Kaleen garden's turn to open for the Australian Open Garden Scheme.

COGS had another successful year at the Horticultural Society of Canberra's Autumn show. The Kaleen garden did us proud with a magnificent display which was a credit to organic vegetable gardening. This was an even more impressive effort given that the garden has been operational for less than a year. The Holder and Cook gardens also presented impressive displays and individual Kaleen garden members had success in the vegetable section of the Canberra Show as well as the Horticultural Show. While such competitions are not everyone's cup of tea, they do provide a valuable

demonstration to the public of the quality of produce that can be grown using organic gardening methods.

There will be a further opportunity to publicise organic produce at this year's *Trust Organic* fortnight from 19 August to 5 September, organised by the Organic Federation of Australia.

The community gardens continue to be a major activity of COGS. Our thirteenth garden, at Dickson, will be operational soon. This year, we are hoping to introduce some new activities to cater for those who are backyard gardeners but do not have plots in community gardens. Some of the activities proposed are listed in a notice elsewhere in this issue. Please fill in the form and return it to COGS if you are interested in participating in the 'Home Gardeners' interest group. We are interested in any suggestions you may have for the activities of this group.

There seems to be a growing public interest in fruit and vegetable gardening and in community gardens in particular. This is spilling over into urban planning agencies which are now incorporating community gardens within new suburban developments. To take advantage of this interest, COGS, in conjunction with the University of Canberra will be holding a two day Community Gardening Conference on October 7-8 to bring together gardeners such as ourselves, policy makers, town planners and academics who have studied the benefits of community gardening in the urban environment. More detail is provided later in this issue and keep an eye on the COGS web site for further developments.

The March meeting was, as always, the Annual General Meeting. It is very encouraging that a full complement of thirteen committee members were elected this year. Hopefully this will provide us with the resources to undertake more activities during the coming year. Please let me know if there is any new activity you would like COGS to undertake.

I would like to welcome all the new committee members and look forward to working with our new team during the coming year. I would also like to thank all the committee members who retired at the AGM for their dedication and hard work during the previous year.

I look forward to seeing you at our monthly meetings and other events.

*Keith*

## CANBERRA ORGANIC Volume 18 Number 2 (Issue 69)

*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

Angela Spencer

### 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.

### Please send contributions to

editor@cogs.asn.au or  
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### ADVERTISING

Please contact Angela Spencer on  
6258 0918 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
1/8 page	\$9 (\$7)	\$30 (\$25)
1/4 page	\$18 (\$15)	\$60 (\$50)
1/2 page	\$36 (\$30)	\$120 (\$100)
Full page	\$72 (\$60)	\$240 (\$200)

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## Editor's note

There's a new support group called Compulsive Composter's Anonymous...just joking! However, there could be a group like this. In fact, I would be keen to join, just to be able to hear other members' dirty (sorry, had to!) little composting secrets and enjoy strength in numbers.

I first realised that I might be a bit odd with my composting habits when visiting close relatives recently and offered to spend Christmas Eve making a compost bay in my brother's backyard, only to be told to "bugger off" by my (very honest) sibling. I must also confess to taking fruit peelings home from my daughter's school canteen rather than throw them in the bin. Is that weird? I just didn't want the scraps to go to waste, as I find it hard to get enough materials for our composting needs.

I also engaged in a spot of leaf "procuring" recently and intend on doing it again. At the suggestion of my fervent-composter husband, we attached the trailer to the car and drove around the public spaces of Belconnen and raked up leaves for our compost bay.

I partly blame my hubbie for my composting addiction. He has (only just) fallen short of badgering our neighbours for their lawn clippings or the local fruit shop for their old produce. My other half can often be found out in the garden quietly turning the compost when feeling stressed, claiming it is relaxing.

I also blame various inspiring gardening books for their composting advice, such as Linda Woodrow's *The Permaculture Home Garden*. She, however, does confess to collecting road kill for her compost pile. I don't think I could do that!

But to be serious, there is a simple pleasure in making a good pile of compost and holding some soft, warm, moist compost in your hands and knowing it will nourish your plants. It's a challenge, it can be tricky, but when you get it right, it is almost magical. I'm sure there are others that think the same way.

On another note, this is my first issue as editor of *Canberra Organic*. Thanks to outgoing editor Monica van Wensveen for all her wonderful efforts with the magazine on behalf of myself and all COGS members. She's still around on the COGS committee and as a contributor to the magazine.

Enjoy the winter magazine and until the next issue,  
happy composting!

Angela

Right: A compost bay made from old pallets



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Richard Bailey, Keith Colls, COGS Convenors, Alison Corbet, Gita Curnow, Gerry Jacobsen, Angela Spencer.



### Photos

Angela Spencer, Monica van Wensveen

### Cover photos

FRONT COVER: Last winter's snow at Bulls Head rest area in the Brindabellas.

ABOVE: Some funky gumboots to brighten up winter.

BACK COVER: hand fork and leaf, plastic drink bottle cloches and a very wintry tree.

### WE LOVE YOUR INPUT!

Please send any comments, articles, photos, news items, event information or recipes to *Canberra Organic* by emailing [editor@cogs.asn.au](mailto:editor@cogs.asn.au) or via post to PO Box 347 Dickson ACT 2602.

*Articles and photos by Angela Spencer unless otherwise stated.*

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

## In the news

### Aussie climate change findings

The CSIRO and Bureau of Meteorology have released a report that shows our climate has warmed significantly over the past 50 years, with the mean temperature increasing 0.7 degrees since 1960. The average daily maximum temperatures have increased every decade in the past 50 years, with the report saying that data on temperature, rainfall, atmosphere and oceans "clearly demonstrate that climate change is real".

[www.acfonline.org.au](http://www.acfonline.org.au)

### Qld vet scientists: fish affected by agri-chemicals

A recent report by Qld Government vet scientists shows that agri-chemicals have affected the health of fish in the Noosa River. The report, by Dr Roger Chong from the Noosa Fish Health Investigation Taskforce, agreed with a recent report which found that agri-chemicals were implicated in fish deaths and deformities in the Noosa River catchment. The Queensland Greens has called for national bans on several chemicals used by the agri-chemical industry, especially carbendazim, to protect human and ecological health.

<http://green.org.au>

### Population growth is a threat to biodiversity

The Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) has nominated human population growth as a "key threatening process" to Australia's biodiversity, as part of its recent comments on the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation ACT 1999 (EPBC)*. The ACF says there's a direct link between population growth and environmental degradation, due to increased energy and water use, urban sprawl and more pressure on the natural environment.

[www.acfonline.org.au](http://www.acfonline.org.au)

### Fresh produce contaminated with pesticides

US Department of Agriculture tests have found that many non-organic fruits and vegetables in supermarkets are contaminated with dangerous pesticides. Tests on peaches grown in the US and overseas) found traces of more than 50 different pesticides, with five compounds at levels higher than those considered safe by the Environmental Protection Agency. Six of the chemicals found were not approved for use in the US. Peaches are often considered the most contaminated fresh food product in the United States, followed by apples, bell peppers, imported carrots, celery, cherries, imported grapes, kale, lettuce, nectarines, pears and strawberries.

[www.naturalnews.com](http://www.naturalnews.com)

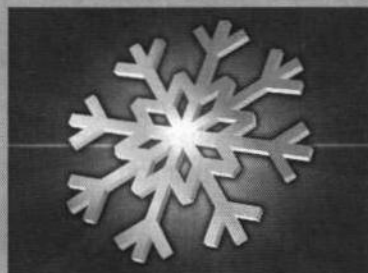
## Top tips for WINTER

### ☺ Carrots are tops

The winter months are not so dismal as they seem, so don't give up on planting! You can plant some carrot seeds in late autumn and get them sprouting – they will stay in the ground and slowly but surely grow over winter.

### ☺ Winter comfort food

Winter comfort food such as casseroles and roasts are not just about meat. Save money on meat and boost the nutrient value of your winter dishes by adding as many home-grown vegies as possible. Try using celery, parsnips, carrots, peas and potato, either directly from the garden or from your freezer.



### ☺ Ward off coughs and colds

If you are suffering from coughs and colds over winter, why not look into your herb garden to alleviate the symptoms? Make some yummy lemongrass tea and enjoy the results. To make, grab 4 stalks of lemongrass, 1 litre of water, 4 teaspoons of sugar or honey (optional) and 3 slices of fresh ginger (also optional). Then boil the water, cut the lemongrass stalks so you have only the whitest part, smash the stalks with a meat tenderiser, place the smashed stalks and ginger in a tea pot, pour the boiling water over and steep for 5 minutes, pour into tea cups and serve with sweetener. Serve hot or cold.

### ☺ It's all in the planning

Winter is an ideal time to take stock of your vegie garden and continue or establish a plan, incorporating crop rotation principles. One way to start is to take a photo of your current vegetable garden beds and then do "a plan on a page". If you are not currently rotating your crops, just start from scratch and plan the perfect garden for spring – draw it on a piece of paper and start planning to achieve it. Then in Spring, do the same thing for summer and so on, and then you'll have a virtually no-fuss method of achieving crop rotation.

**"How fair is a garden amid the trials and passions of existence."**

*Benjamin Disraeli*

## Weather and water watch

As the days become grey and frosty, here are the temperatures and rainfall to expect this winter, courtesy of the Bureau of Meteorology's long term statistics for the ACT region.

TEMPERATURE	June	July	August
Canberra airport	max 12.2	max 11.3	max 13.0
	min 1.0	min -0.1	min 1.0

RAINFALL	June	July	August
Canberra airport	40.7 mm	41.2 mm	46mm
	5.7 rain days	5.9 rain days	7.0 rain days

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

### Seasonal forecast: April to July

- The chances of exceeding the median rainfall from May to July shows a wetter than normal season (60% chance).
- Warmer days are favoured, with a 60% chance that the average maximum temperature from May to July will exceed the long-term median maximum temperature.

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 May, Canberra's dams were 53.11% full.
- Stage 3 water restrictions are currently in place across the ACT. The daily water target is currently 120 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).

## Aussie bees cleared of US colony collapse

US researchers have questioned claims that Australia was responsible for exporting a virus which may have caused US bee colonies to collapse.

New findings by Dr Jay Evans and Dr Yanping Chen from the US Department of Agriculture published in the *American Bee Journal* have found that the virus – Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD) – was already in the US before the Australian imports began.

The virus "was present in US bees collected several years prior to CCD, and prior to the recent importation into the US of honey bees from Australia", the researchers found.

In the study, samples from commercial US beekeepers collected between 2002 and 2007 were tested and they found the virus was present in the US since at least 2002.

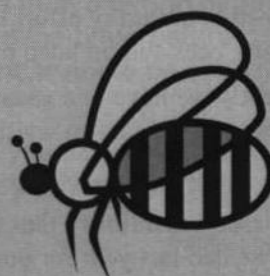
A study published in the journal *Science* earlier this year suggested Australia as a possible culprit and there was also talk of banning imports of Australian bees.

The honey bee industry, worth US \$17 billion a year has been affected by hives collapsing, with a quarter of beekeepers losing more than half of their hives during 2006-2007. This also affects farmers and orchardists, who require bees for pollination.

"Australian packages only arrived on the US shore in 2005 so the linkage with Australia is just garbage," said Australian bee expert, Dr Doug Somerville, from the NSW Department of Primary Industries.

There are now plans to study Australian strains of the virus to compare them to the strains present in the collapsed US bee colonies.

*ABC Science Online*



# Around the COGS Gardens

## Charnwood

March and April has rapidly slipped by and the Charnwood garden is taking on the ragged appearance of a partial-close-down after a reasonably productive warm season.

At the time of writing, tomatoes have taken on a somewhat straggly appearance, pumpkins are peeping through thinning foliage and potato tops are dying down. Some gardeners have already burst into renewed activity and planted root crops, brassicas and green manure. Summer may be gone but the growing enthusiasm continues.

Following our March meeting we held a 'harvest meal' – a tasty feast featuring a wide range of garden produce – salad sandwiches, a pepper dip, salads, home-made sausages, potato bake and curry, followed by desserts of pumpkin cake and rhubarb crumble.

A major headache last winter was the breakdown of our ageing plumbing system (the Charnwood garden has been in operation since the mid to late 1980s). Old, rusted risers would suddenly burst and spray fountains of water, or taps would drip incessantly even with new washers. To control the unnecessary wastage of water we turned the water off at the mains each time we left the garden. As the mains tap was more than half a metre below ground level, in a large muddy puddle, this involved getting down on the ground to turn the mains on or off - a hard job for some older knees, and never possible without getting muddy or dishevelled in some way. After awhile Ken & Cindy came to the rescue with a home-made contraption on a length of metal piping that allowed the mains to be manipulated from a standing position. Members, particularly Frank, have now replaced broken and badly rusted risers and washers in taps. And a plumber was engaged to repair other damage.

We lost our convenor mid-stream - to a house with a large garden on the Southside. And our previous convenor has departed to the new Kaleen garden where he is the founding convenor. Our newly-ensconced convenor is Alison Killen who will be ably supported by a bunch of volunteers to manage a range of tasks. A dinky-di community effort in addition to regular working bees should keep the garden in good nick.

Currently we have one vacant plot and, for the first time in over a year, no waiting list. *Gita Curnow*

## Cook

Last issue I mentioned that we hoped for better weather than we had last year for our garden's weekend as part of the Australian Open Garden Scheme. In stark

contrast to 2009's two days of 40+ degrees, this year we faced a weekend of almost constant rain. By the end of Sunday, over 100mm had fallen both on the garden and people in the garden.

Some enthusiastic vegetable admirers braved the conditions both days and observed our plants growing amongst assorted moats and small ponds. Also, some dutiful gardeners staffed the gate and described our garden to the wet visitors.

By Monday, it was apparent that the ground was so thoroughly soaked that the tomato plants that had struggled through the hot and dry summer had now had too much of a good thing and promptly drowned.

In addition to paying customers, the garden has had a few vandals come through in their usual pointless and destructive way.

We've had one gardener leave for warmer and wetter climes and one new gardener joining the garden. The waiting list still has more than 10 people on it.

*Wayde Margetts*

## Holder

The autumn weather has given the garden a second wind, with some summer crops still producing while others have finished.

The cool nights, warm days and soil moisture is helping the brassicas, alliums and other winter crops to get established.

There is activity abound in the garden. Plots are being tidied for either winter hibernation or winter planting, while new gardeners are busy preparing their plots for spring planting or, if lucky, maybe some winter vegies.

One downside—the garden had a break-in and lost a considerable amount of garden and personnel items, which has left us with a bitter taste in our mouths.

April has seen the start of the duplication of the Cotter Road and construction of the Weston Pond which means a year of noise and dust.

The construction has affected access to the garden, but a temporary access has been established and a permanent solution is currently being looked into.

The garden has had influx of gardeners which means there are four 45 metre plots available which are grassed over or weed infested but a little sweat and determination can have plots ready for spring planting. Welcome to the garden Anthony, Stewart, David & Meredith, John & Jeannie, Toni & family, Sam & Sujie.

*Conrad van Hest*



## Kaleen

Our community garden at Kaleen continues to prosper and most gardeners have enjoyed harvesting the benefits of their labours.

The only disappointing incident to note is that around mid April (at the height of the autumn harvest) we encountered a break-in and a significant amount of produce was taken. Notwithstanding, the incident reinforced the group's intent to work together and to be more vigilant when it comes to garden security.

The arrangement between the garden and Kaleen High School is working extremely well and offers the potential to work together on a broader base of activities. For example, providing the students with an opportunity to identify directly with organic gardening and the positive results that can be achieved through a group working together towards a common goal. Our gardening community is most grateful to the Principal Mr Denis Dickinson and his staff for the support and continued interest provided by the school.

In looking ahead, the garden will be involved in the Open Garden Scheme and will have the open day on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> February 2011.

At the time of writing, Kaleen has one vacant plot. We remain an enthusiastic group of gardeners and look forward to a successful winter crop and an even more productive spring planting.

*John Grubb*

*(Below: The usual suspects from the Kaleen garden)*



## Charnwood garden bird watch musings

In between digging, weeding, transplanting, watering and chatting, do you ever notice the birds around the garden?

At Charnwood we have nuisance birds like white cockatoos that stripped our corncocks bare two years ago and are now noisily pecking the Chinese pistachio berries and scream at us if we come near. Galahs are ever about but don't seem to do much damage. Crimson rosellas attack the stone fruit when it is almost ripe, and Eastern Rosellas do so to a lesser extent (because there are not so many of them).

The superb Parrot, not so long ago a very rare visitor to Canberra, occasionally calls in to feed on grass seeds and on blossoms in the adjacent gum trees.

Topknot Pigeons, Red-rump Grass Parrots and Indian Mynas whirr and stalk the garden for seeds and the Red Wattle Bird rasps and flies from place to place. The beady-eyed Currawongs swoop down for berries and other things. Blackbirds covertly hop and run in the bushy shadows. The ever-present Magpies and Peewees greedily eye freshly turned over earth for delectable bites, while the Willy-wag-tail cheekily flits about. Silvereyes and Yellow-tail Thornbills come and go at irregular intervals in busy twittering groups.



Sometimes a solitary black crow (or do I mean rook?) assails us with its doleful song. In February a family of six Blue Wrens flittered about the garden for about a week before making off to other pastures.

Two years ago a pair of Kookaburras hung about for a week or so before heading off elsewhere. Sparrows and starlings periodically drop in.

Earlier this year we were visited one morning by a group of about a dozen White Wing Choughs that, with almost military precision, scratched and pecked the beds in a line from one end of the east side of the garden to the other before disappearing into the yonder not to be seen again.

And if one raises one's eyes skywards, very occasionally a bird of prey hovers overhead.

*Gita Curnow*

# Starting a vegetable patch from scratch

Whether you want to grow a few herbs or enough fresh produce to feed the family, it's not hard to start a vegetable garden. A bit of space, sunlight, good gardening advice and a few tried-and-true organic gardening techniques is all you need to started and trial and error will teach you the rest!

## First steps

You can easily grow your own fruit and veggies, whether you have a balcony, back yard or a community garden plot.

Have a look at the available space and work out the best position for your new vegetable garden. Make sure you have at least 6 hours of sunlight per day.

You can start a vegetable garden at any time of the year—all seasons have their advantages.

To dig or not to dig, that is the question. Pots will work for a balcony. Or you can create new garden beds in your back yard. At a community garden, you can work with an existing plot or redesign it.

Community garden plots may benefit from sunshine, extra beneficial bees and insects and good advice from other gardeners. Gardening at home means you have good access to tinker away at any time of the day.

## Garden design

When thinking about garden design, consider factors such as access to vegetables, types of vegetables, crop rotation and if you want the garden to look both pretty and functional. Do an initial "plan on a page".

**Rows:** A popular choice for vegetable garden design is to have 4-6 beds in long, skinny rows and with a spaded edge and space to walk between the rows. The soil is hilled slightly in the middle of the row. The advantage of this design is you can easily use a crop rotation system.

**No-dig raised beds:** The no-dig method is a popular organic gardening choice and was originally well-described by Esther Deans in her seminal book, *Growing Without Digging*. It involves creating a

number of raised beds, either in long rectangular rows or in a circular design. The bed is layered with organic matter and lucerne hay. Raised beds mean minimal disturbance to the soil.

**Mandala style garden:** Another interesting design is a mandala style garden, as described by Linda Woodrow, in her book *The Permaculture Home Garden*. This involves creating circular garden beds, on either a small or large scale depending on the size of your available space. The beds have a keyhole design to allow for easy access to the parts of the garden. This permaculture-style garden allows for crop rotation, no matter how many beds you have.

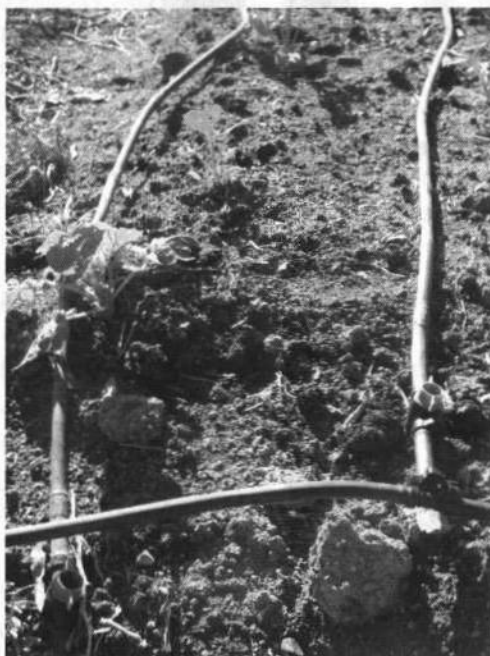
## Let's start digging

Now for the hard yakka!

If you have a community garden plot, you may be faced with spent vegetables, weeds or couch, already-formed beds or even be starting from scratch on a bare patch of grass. Set aside a couple of days for a weeding marathon. Put weeds that haven't gone to seed and old vegetables in a makeshift compost pile or bin. Put other weeds and couch grass in a black garbage bin, fill with water with the lid on and let it heat up to create some "weed tea" - use this liquid as a fertiliser in a few weeks. After weeding, it may be worthwhile to cover the beds with clear plastic to solarise whatever weed seeds may be left in the soil.

Start preparing the soil, as good soil is the basis of your garden and integral to its success. A soil pH test could be of use and you should determine what sort of soil you have. Get a variety of manure, compost and some mulch. Mix some chook, sheep, cow or horse manure into the soil, along with some compost, and let it sit for a couple of weeks. You could also dig in a bit of mulch (such as lucerne or pea straw) or other organic matter.

To give the soil a further boost, you could also plant some green manure seeds (available from COGS, mail order or garden centres). Green manure adds nitrogen back to the soil and you can either plant amongst it or cut the foliage and let it sit on the top of the soil or dig it in.



*Above: It's a good idea to lay your drippers before planting for easier access*

If you are planting straight onto clay, dig in some gypsum and add lots of organic matter and poo and let it sit for a few weeks. It may take a couple of seasons and continual adding of organic matter and manure, but the soil will improve.

If you are making raised garden beds, the idea is to start with a thick layer of newspaper on the ground and then form layers of straw, manure and compost. You can then plant vegetables straight into it, pushing aside the straw to create little individual holes for each plant.

### The right tools for the job

There are a multitude of gardening tools and gadgets out there but you really just need the basics to get started. A few weeding tools, a hose, some seeds or seedlings, some poo and mulch and a compost bin should do the trick.

### Planting time

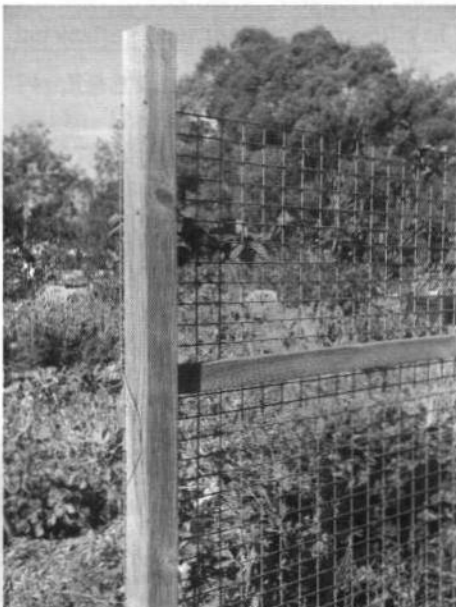
Plant perennials like rosemary, fruit trees or berries first as they are long term fixtures in the garden.

Grow things like grapes, pumpkin, beans and peas upwards on trellises or stakes to maximise growing space.

Draw a diagram of what you want to plant and where for the coming season, after researching what to plant and when. Make sure your information is based on Canberra's climate, which is quite different to other areas of Australia.

Find out about crop rotation, companion planting and moon planting and incorporate these into your garden design, if you wish. All of these can enhance and improve your vegetable growing experience.

Source your plants by growing from seed to save money (plan ahead for this) or buy ready-made seedlings. Swap seeds with other gardeners or try interesting seed suppliers.



*Above: Garden structures like this trellis can be a great use of vertical space in the vegie garden.*

You can also experiment with heirloom and open-pollinated varieties.

Sprinkle compost around seedlings when planting and protect them from pests or frost by covering them or surrounding them with a barrier.

Keep plants well-watered when young, while also adhering to the current watering restrictions. Don't water too much in the early stages as it gives the plants a chance to grow strong roots to be more water efficient as mature plants.

Regular fertilising with compost, poo, seaweed or fish emulsion, vermicompost or worm juice or bokashi juice is a good idea.

Compost – if you aren't addicted to composting yet, you soon will be. The advantages of having home-grown compost on tap are endless.

### A note about watering

Think about the appropriate use of water in the garden. Adhere to water restrictions, plant water-wise vegies, don't water too much and don't grow plants unsuited to Canberra's climate or that you don't like to eat.

Regular and deep watering lets plants to develop good root systems. Stick your finger in the soil to check for moisture before watering. If it rains, don't water. Use hessian or shade cloth to cover directly-planted seeds to keep them moist until they sprout.

In general, dripper irrigation systems deliver water more efficiently than hand watering.

### Using vegetables

Plant regularly to ensure a constant supply of vegies. A good rule of thumb is: every time you are in your garden, try to weed a bit, plant something and harvest something, just to ensure everything is ticking over nicely.

Some good cookbooks or websites on hand will help you to find recipes when faced with a glut of vegetables or you could also bottle and preserve your excess produce for later use or give it away.



*Above: Green manure can boost the soil before planting*

## Learning more

You could easily spend a lifetime learning about gardening and you could still not know everything – for many people, this is the very thing that attracts them to gardening as a hobby. There's a plethora of information about gardening—try the television, magazines, the local library, bookstore and websites. The Canberra Organic Grower's Society has an extensive library of books which members can borrow.

COGS publishes a range of seasonal planting guides and gardening advice on the website—see [www.cogs.asn.au](http://www.cogs.asn.au).

Also check the website for information on local organic gardening courses. COGS and the CIT jointly run regular organic gardening, composting and worm-farming workshops—see the website for details.

## Canberra tricks and tips

There are advantages and disadvantages about organic gardening in Canberra and in many ways it has quite a few quirks. There's the marked seasons, quite large temperature variations within the seasons and clay soil to contend with.

While gardening books and television shows offer advice on gardening in cool mountain zones (which does describe Canberra), the best bet is to double-check the information with Canberra-specific planting guides. A good source of information is *Canberra Gardener* (details below) and the COGS seasonal planting guides. And of course, your fellow gardeners!

Above all, give it a go and don't worry! As the seasons pass, your gardening knowledge will grow. Organic gardening is both addictive and relaxing and provides you with cheap, yummy and chemical-free produce to test your cooking skills with and nourish your family.

*Angela Spencer*

## Recommended reading

The Horticultural Society of Canberra Inc (2004) *Canberra Gardener* Pirion: Canberra.

French, Jackie (1992) *Backyard Self-sufficiency*, Aird Books: Victoria.

Canberra Organic Growers Society website – [www.cogs.asn.au](http://www.cogs.asn.au)

Deans, Esther (1977) *Growing Without Digging*, Harper & Row: Sydney.

McFarlane, Annette (2002) *Organic Vegetable Gardening*, ABC Books: Sydney.

Woodrow, Linda (1996) *The Permaculture Home Garden*, Penguin: Victoria.

## What are you doing this National Tree Day?

From caring for our coasts and beaches to building a home for native animals, to growing a garden at a school, there are endless activities to occupy volunteers on this year's National Tree Day on Sunday, August 1.

Planet Ark is calling on keen gardeners to coordinate tree-planting sites or provide ongoing care to the many thousands of existing native trees and shrubs which have been planted as part of National Tree Day.

By taking part, you'll have the opportunity to share your expertise and teach future generations how life is better with trees. You'll make a difference.



Planet Ark needs volunteers to register as Site Coordinators to organise and supervise tree planting sites. Get your local school, sporting or church group together and ask your local council if they can provide you with some land to care for and seedlings to plant.

Planet Ark provides support through its National Tree Day Hotline and website, which has downloadable Resources, a step-by-step guide and other tools to help promote tree planting activities.

For an information kit visit  
<http://treeday.planetark.org> OR call the  
National Tree Day Hotline on 1300 88 5000.

## ~ Organic Gardening Courses ~

### The Canberra Organic Growers Society and CIT Solutions



Beginner's Organic Gardening  
*Starting 30 May*

Composting and Worm Farms  
*22 May*

For more information  
call 6207 4441 or visit  
<http://citace.com.au>



# Winter planting: Kohlrabi

**What's odd-looking, bulbous and purple, doesn't get nibbled very much by garden pests and doesn't get out much? No, it's not your great-uncle Colin's big nose – it's a Kohlrabi!**

The Kohlrabi, or *Brassica oleracea gongyloides*, is a member of the brassica family and is hence closely related to cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower and kale, all coming from a common parent – the “wild cabbage”. Its name is a German word derived from “kohl”, meaning cabbage and “rabi”, which is turnip. It originates from 14<sup>th</sup> century northern Europe.

The foliage resembles a cabbage but the main part of the plant is the swelled turnip-like base. Kohlrabi can be white, light green or bluish purple, but the inside flesh is white and sweet-tasting on all the varieties. In Europe, there are fancier varieties with frilled, deeply cut leaves that are often grown ornamentally. It is a cold-hardy vegetable and is thus suited to Canberra winters.

## Growing

Kohlrabi is easy to grow and is tolerant of a wide range of climatic conditions. Before planting, prepare the soil with lots of compost and manure, along with some lime or dolomite. It is important to ensure the soil is rich with fertilisers as kohlrabi are heavy feeders, like all brassicas. A soil pH between 6.0 and 7.5 is ideal.

Kohlrabi can be planted in late winter until mid summer in Canberra. Stagger planting for continual harvesting over the cooler months of the year.

Plant seeds direct or in seed trays and transplant at 5 weeks. They do best in full sun, but will tolerate shade. Thin seedlings to 15cm apart and use the thinnings in salads or stir fries.

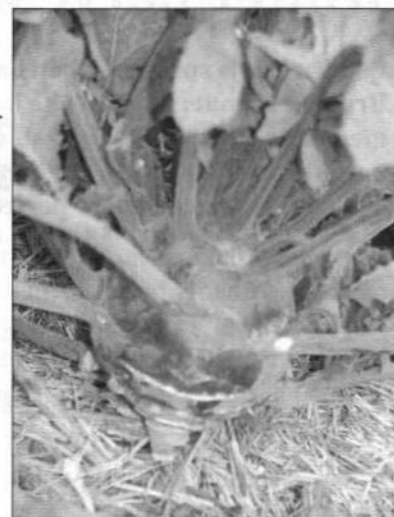
Kohlrabi is not deep-rooted and likes to be watered well in dry weather to prevent the bulb and stems from becoming woody. Keep them weeded and mulched to help the soil retain moisture. As the plants have a high demand for nutrients, regularly apply liquid fertiliser during the growing season.

Kohlrabi is best grown quickly and crops in 50-70 days of planting the seeds. You can start picking them when the bulbs are 3cm in diameter but use them before they are 12cm across or they'll be woody.

Popular varieties include *Purple Vienna* and *White Vienna*. The *Gigante*, a green-skinned Czechoslovakian heirloom variety, produces stems of up to 25cm in diameter and 3kg in weight – it's often

used to make sauerkraut. The green-skinned varieties are thought to be more heat tolerant.

Kohlrabi are the most space-saving member of the brassica group, with 3 or more plants per 1 cabbage and are arguably easier to grow than cabbage, cauliflower and broccoli, with a harvestable crop in less time than other brassicas.



Above: The swollen kohlrabi stem

## Problems

Like other brassicas, kohlrabi can be affected by cabbage white butterfly and other chewing pests. But if you are growing it for the stem and not the foliage, this isn't an issue.

## Harvesting

Kohlrabi plants can develop thick stems in around 8-10 weeks. Like beetroot, they push themselves out of the ground. The leaves and stalks can be harvested at any stage, but don't pick too many or the stem will develop more slowly. To harvest, cut with a sharp knife or secateurs just above ground level.

## Choosing and using

All of the plant is edible – the leaves, leaf stalks, stem and bulb. The stem is similar to a broccoli stalk in taste and like the texture of potato. The young leaves can be sliced thinly for coleslaw and the leaves and stalks can be added to soups, stir fries or salads. The bulb can be grated and eaten raw in salads. Or boil it, then peel, chop and serve with butter, garlic and cracked pepper. You can bake, steam, stir fry or boil it – a bit like a turnip. Store in the fridge for up to 10 days or blanch and freeze.

## References and further reading

French, Jackie ( ) *The Best of Jackie French: A Practical Guide to Everything From Aphids to Zucchini Chocolate Cake*. Harper Collins: Sydney.

McFarlane, Annette (2002) *Organic Vegetable Gardening*. ABC Books: Sydney.

Ossowski, Penny (2010) *Growing Kohlrabi*, Brisbane Organic Growers Inc Newsletter April 2010, p9.

# Winter harvest: Brussels Sprouts

**Poor brussels sprouts – they have a bad reputation! Brussels sprouts may invoke bad childhood cuisine memories – icky with an “eau de flatulence” and parents nagging you to eat them. But they can be delicious when cooked to perfection.**

Brussels sprout is a variation of the species *Brassica oleracea*. A hardy brassica, they tolerate frost and drier conditions more than similar vegetables. They can be traced to Belgium around 200 years ago. It is developed from kale, which is the ancestor of the cabbage in western Europe.

Brussels sprouts are a tall, top-heavy, hardy biennial that produce a multitude of what look like baby cabbages along their stem. They are an annual crop, but they are a bit tricky as they require a cold winter to produce well, so they are ideal for Canberra.

The advent of modern hybrid varieties has led to the decline in the diversity of brussels sprout varieties, as commercial growers have favoured hybrids which produce large, uniform sprouts. Heirloom varieties are better suited to home vegetable gardens as they can be harvested for longer and produce a better flavour, albeit with smaller buds. There are varieties which are a deep blue or purple colour. Problems of cross-pollination and the difficulty of maintaining seed purity has also contributed to declining varieties.

## Growing

Brussels sprouts should be grown in a cool climate with minimum temperatures of between 5 and 18°C as the frosts make the sprouts form tightly. They have the same growing conditions as cabbage and it's best to plant out as seedlings between November and January.

Grow as seedlings then plant them 50cm apart in 1m rows. Or grow from seed, either directly or in seed trays, with germination taking 10-14 days. Seed to harvest takes around 16-20 weeks. They can be planted out in around 4 weeks. Make 2-3 plantings each month to allow for a continuous harvest.

Light applications of seaweed or fish emulsion or manure during the growing season are recommended, along with major nutrients and trace elements.

The Seed Savers Network recommends planting superior-tasting, small-sprouted varieties such as *Darlington*, *King of the Market*, *Dwarf Gem*, *Laxton*, *Rear Guard*, *Yates Champion* and *Rubine Red*.

## Problems

Brussels sprouts don't like too much nitrogen (the

sprouts can come loose) so don't add too much manure when planting. Their roots are shallow so water deeply. They are top-heavy and thus prone to falling over in heavy wind—it's a good idea to stake them and hill up the soil around the plant.



Brussels sprouts are susceptible to the same pests that affect cabbage, especially chewing insects which can cause deformities in the sprouts. Vigilance is the answer – inspect plants regularly. Also too much nitrogen leaves plants susceptible to attack.

## Harvesting

When the sprouts are formed and are still tight, crisp and bright green, cut them from the main stem with a knife or secateurs (don't twist them off) while also snapping off the leaves between the sprouts to let more grow. Harvest regularly and from the base of the plant first.

After harvesting, leave the rest of the plant in the ground until spring, when they will produce flowering shoots, which you can use as a vegetable. The head of the plant can be used just like a mini cabbage. At the end of the season, remove the terminal bud to allow the rest of the sprouts to form all at once.

## Using

Smaller sprouts are more tender. To cook, trim the stems, remove damaged outer leaves and wash. Steam and serve with butter, pepper and salt and lemon juice, or serve with cold-pressed walnut oil. Sprouts can also be boiled, stir fried or steamed. Don't overcook them – you'll get that yucky smell and they'll lose flavour. They can be stored in the fridge for 2-3 days. To freeze excess produce, wash and remove the outer leaves and blanch in water for 2-4 minutes, before freezing.

## References and further reading

- Blazey, Clive (1999) *The Australian Vegetable Garden: What's New Is Old*, Averill Chase: Victoria.
- Fanton, Michel & Jude (2008) *The Seed Savers' Handbook*. Seed Savers' Network: Byron Bay.
- McFarlane, Annette (2002) *Organic Vegetable Gardening*. ABC Books: Sydney.
- Wise, Sally (2008) *A Year in a Bottle*. ABC Books: Sydney.

# Gerry's Rhubarb Day

Today, 20th July 2009, was Rhubarb Day. I dug up the older plants and subdivided the crowns, prepared new beds and re-planted ... so for every old plant there are now three new plants ...

Doing this every couple of years, the number of rhubarb plants soon multiplies. I give a lot of crowns away, so there must be quite a bit now in and around my suburb. However there is a bit of rhubarb resistance, apparently not everyone likes it, even though it grows so well in Canberra and requires little looking after ...

I generally have a dozen or so plants at home and eight or so at the Cotter Garden, so there is abundant rhubarb for nine months of the year. Most weeks I stew some with apples and pears to make a fruit compote. When there's a glut in summer, I make rhubarb chutney.

On Rhubarb Day, which is always in July, I get these subversive feelings that if more people grew rhubarb and kept on subdividing the crowns, then rhubarb would multiply and take over the world ... perhaps we would have a National Rhubarb Day in midwinter, or even an International Year of The Rhubarb ...

Here's a recipe handed down to me by Marie, who was formerly at the Cotter Garden.

*Gerry Jacobson*

## Rhubarb Chutney

<i>1kg rhubarb</i>	<i>2tsp chopped ginger</i>
<i>250g apples</i>	<i>3 cups brown sugar</i>
<i>250 g dates</i>	<i>½ tsp cayenne pepper</i>
<i>2 tsp salt</i>	<i>1½ cups vinegar</i>

Harvest, wash and cut into 1 cm pieces.

Peel, core and dice the apples and chop the dates.

Add the vinegar and other ingredients into a saucepan, heat until boiling, and stir until sugar has dissolved.

Cook steadily, stirring frequently, for about 1 hour or until very thick.

Spoon into warm sterilised jars and seal so airtight.



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# Waxing and Waning: Planting by the Moon

Whether you want to grow a few herbs or enough fresh produce to feed the family, it's not hard to start a vegetable garden. A bit of space, sunlight, good gardening advice and a few tried-and-true organic gardening techniques is all you need to started and trial and error will teach you the rest!

## First steps

You can easily grow your own fruit and vegies, whether you have a balcony, back yard or a community garden plot.

Have a look at the available space and work out the best position for your new vegetable garden. Make sure you have at least 6 hours of sunlight per day.

You can start a vegetable garden at any time of the year—all seasons have their advantages.

To dig or not to dig, that is the question. Pots will work for a balcony. Or you can create new garden beds in your back yard. At a community garden, you can work with an existing plot or redesign it.

Community garden plots may benefit from sunshine, extra beneficial bees and insects and good advice from other gardeners. Gardening at home means you have good access to tinker away at any time of the day.

## Garden design

When thinking about garden design, consider factors such as access to vegetables, types of vegetables, crop rotation and if you want the garden to look both pretty and functional. Do an initial "plan on a page".

*Rows:* A popular choice for vegetable garden design is to have 4-6 beds in long, skinny rows and with a spaded edge and space to walk between the rows. The soil is hilled slightly in the middle of the row. The advantage of this design is you can easily use a crop rotation system.

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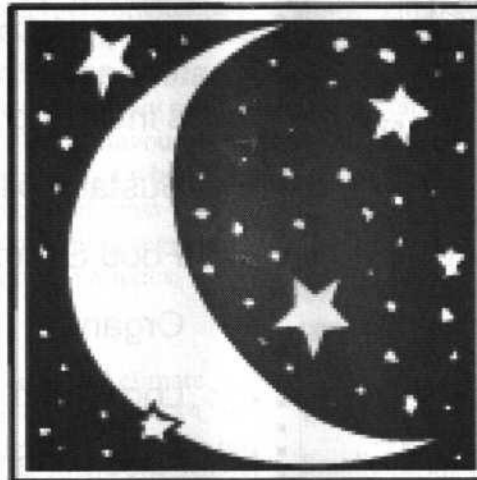
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*The moon is at her full, and, riding high,  
Floods the calm fields with light.  
The air that hovers in the summer sky  
Are all asleep to-night*

**William Cullen Bryant (American writer, 1794-1878)**





Some of our COGS gardeners have tried moon planting for their seed sowing. Belinda 'Ginger' Clark, of the Mitchell garden, swears by it. "We use the moon calendar and always find that planting goes well. It always seems to rain at the right time to help the plants along." Other gardeners that I have spoken to have experimented with moon planting but seem happy for the jury to remain out as to whether it makes a big difference.

But is all of this fact or fiction?

While much of the literature around this seems to be a little dodgy, there was a paper published in 1946 by Beeson which reviewed some of the claims from biodynamic growers about their system of planting guided by the zodiac, mainly focussing on a study by Dr Lily Kolisko in 1936. This study showed that low levels of light can influence plants. The study examined moisture levels in the soil at different depths. While the effect a metre below the soil was almost identical to the surface, water levels rose significantly at depths of -5 and as low as 6 metres underground.

Whichever your view about moon planting, why not give it a try alongside everything else in our gardening "toolbox of ideas" and give it the same consideration as companion planting, which is also often contested.

*Alison Corbet*

**References**

1. Beeson, C.F.C. (1946) "The moon and plant growth." *Nature* vol. 158, pp. 572-573.

**Quick guide to moon planting**

WAXING PERIOD – from the new moon to the full moon, plant vegetables that produce their crop ABOVE the ground.

From the new moon to the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter – plant leafy vegetables, celery and herbs like parsley, basil and chives.

From the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter to the full moon – plant tomatoes, beans corn, eggplant, pumpkin and capsicum.

WANING CYCLE – between the full moon and the last quarter plant vegetables that produce BELOW the ground.

From the full moon to the last quarter, plant potatoes carrots, parsnips and radish.

From the last quarter to the new moon – no planting.

**Horticultural Society of Canberra's Autumn Show**

COGS enjoyed success year at the annual Horticultural Society of Canberra's Autumn Show recently. The Kaleen, Cook and Holder gardens gathered their troops and put entries into the Show. The results were impressive—all gardens produced fantastic efforts and the Kaleen garden did us proud with a winning display. Considering the Kaleen garden has been around for less than a year, this is a mean feat. Individual gardeners also enjoyed success in the vegetable section of the Show, with a blue ribbon being awarded to young Kaleen gardener Madison (pictured) for her butternut pumpkin. This is all great "PR" for organic gardening!

*Below: Kaleen's table at the Show Right: Madison and her winning pumpkin*



# Turn hanging baskets into plant protection!

*With some extra hanging baskets floating around in his garage, Charnwood gardener Richard Bailey was inspired to recycle and make some mini greenhouse cloches to protect his fledgling winter seedlings from pests and the emerging cooler temperatures of winter.*

*Following, Richard tells us how to make your own:*

1. To make the cloches, take an unused hanging basket and cover with seedling raising fabric, which is available from Bunnings and other gardening stores.
2. I used fishing line and a needle to sew the fabric around the circumference to hold it in place.

I have had these cloches installed at my plot at the Charnwood garden for several weeks now and I am experimenting with broccoli. So far, they have been a success.

I planted some seedlings both inside and outside the cloches. The seedlings outside have been stripped of their leaves, whereas the broccoli under the cloches are in perfect health and two or three times larger.

I will soon have to remove them to let the plants to fend for themselves and start my next batch of seedlings.

I was inspired to try this by an article I read on cloches. I was also wondering what to do with the six unused hanging baskets I had in my shed - I have found Canberra too dry for hanging baskets as I am not very good at watering plants.

*Richard Bailey*

*Left: Richard's uncovered broccoli plant—no holes!*



*Right: Richard's home-made hanging basket cloches are protecting brassicas from pests and frost.*



*Left: The same seed raising fabric used to make the cloches is also shielding seedlings.*



*Right: Pots with the bottoms cut out are also used as plant protection*



*Right: A close-up of one of the cloches—why not make your own?*

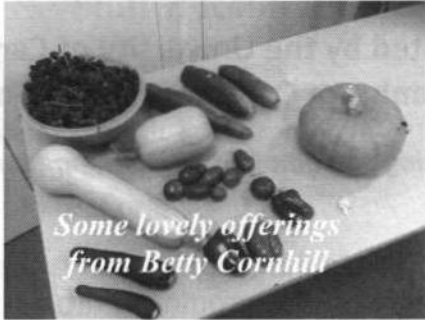


# COGS Around Town

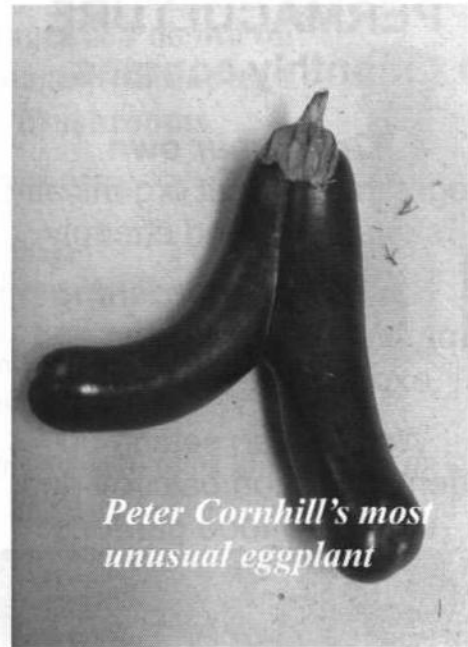
## Harvest Night and AGM

The COGS annual Harvest Night and Annual General Meeting was held on Tuesday, March 23 at the Majura Community Centre in Dickson.

The meeting was well attended and members were treated to a display of several gardeners' produce, including a most unusual eggplant (pictured below)!



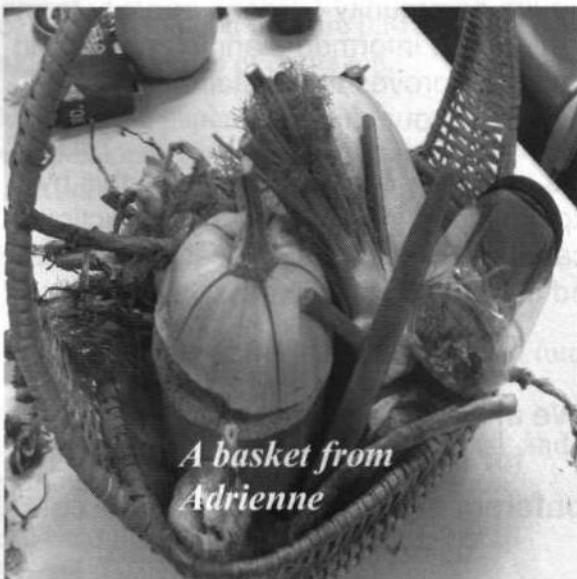
*Some lovely offerings from Betty Cornhill*



*Peter Cornhill's most unusual eggplant*



*Mario's beans are at the back*



*A basket from Adrienne*

## Canberra Sustainability & Education Centre Harvest Festival

Recently COGS participated in the annual Harvest Festival, held at the Canberra Sustainability and Education Centre at the ANU at Acton.

The COGS stall proved to be popular, particularly the bags of well-priced green manure seeds and our planting guides.

Thanks to all who volunteered their time to look after the stall.



*The COGS stall at the Harvest Festival*

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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)

### **ACTEW Stage 3 water restrictions apply in all COGS gardens**

Handheld hoses with trigger nozzles,  
drippers, watering cans or buckets  
can be used between 7-10 am or 7-10 pm  
on the odds and evens system.

NO WATERING is allowed outside these hours.

## **Community Garden**

### **Conference**

**7-8 October 2010**

**Co-hosted by the University of Canberra  
and Canberra Organic Growers Society**

*Promoting sustainability, health and inclusion  
in the city*

It is recognised that community gardens play  
an important role in promoting urban health,  
social inclusion, active civic participation and  
practices of sustainable living in urban  
environments.

This conference will be held on October 7-8  
at the University of Canberra to bring  
together representatives from different forms  
of community gardening practices in  
Australia to share knowledge, promote  
dialogue and assess best practice.

This will help enable policy makers and  
urban planners to engage more productively  
and sustainably with local food systems  
through community gardens and city farms.  
High quality, informed planning policy and  
practice improves the sustainability and  
liveability of our cities.

This conference will contribute to this by  
exploring community gardening practices,  
academic evaluations of local food systems  
and current policy initiatives.

**We are seeking expressions of interest  
for people to participate in the  
conference. If interested, please contact  
us on [info@cogs.asn.au](mailto:info@cogs.asn.au).**

# COGS creations: recipes to the rescue!

Do you have a bounteous bucket of brassicas to use? Or the desire for a quiet winter night in with a glass of wine and a hearty meal? Here are some wintry recipes to try...



## Stuffed Kohlrabi

- 6 kohlrabi
- 2 cups boiling water
- 1 1/2 teaspoons of salt
- teaspoon of sugar
- 125g minced beef or pork
- 1 egg
- 1/4 cup sliced mushrooms
- 1 tablespoon grated parmesan
- 1/4 teaspoon of salt
- 2 tablespoons dry breadcrumbs
- Pepper to taste

Trim kohlrabi and cook in boiling water with the salt and sugar until tender.

Drain and cool, then cut off the top and scoop out the centre to leave a thick, hollow shell.

Fry mince, mushrooms and onions in a pan until golden. Add cheese, salt and pepper and mix well.

Remove from heat and blend in an egg.

Mash the scooped-out centre and combine with mince mixture. Spoon mixture into the shell and sprinkle breadcrumbs over the top.

Place on baking paper in a shallow tray in the oven and bake at 180 degrees Celsius for 10-15 mins or until lightly browned on top.



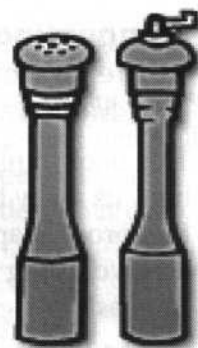
## Roasted Kohlrabi

Trim and peel 700g of fresh kohlrabi and cut into wedges.

Mix 1 tbs olive oil, 1 tbs crushed garlic, salt and pepper and toss the kohlrabi in the mixture.

Spread onto lined baking tray and cook until tender and golden.

## Sausages & Polenta on Cabbage with Sauteed Mushrooms



- Good quality sausages
- Polenta
- Red cabbage
- Mushrooms
- Butter
- Balsamic vinegar
- Salt and pepper

Cook polenta according to the packet instructions.

Brown and cook sausages in a pan.

Shred some red cabbage and cook on low heat in saucepan with a few splashes of balsamic vinegar and pepper.

Meanwhile sautee some mushrooms in some melted butter and a bit of balsamic vinegar and a teaspoon of crushed garlic.

Serve the sausages on a bed of polenta with the red cabbage and mushrooms on the side.

*NB: Adjust quantities according to the number of people.*



## Emergency recipe finders!

Ever been in the situation where you have an over-abundance of freshly-grown vegetables on hand and can't think what else to cook with them?

Try the Internet. There's a search engine that helps you find recipes with the ingredients that you have—Supercook.

Give it a go at [www.supercook.com](http://www.supercook.com).

*Thanks to Gita Curnow for this tip!*

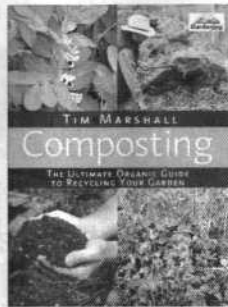


## Book nook: What's new in the COGS Library

### **Composting: The Ultimate Organic Guide to Recycling Your Garden, by Tim Marshall**

This book explores how composting works, outlines its many benefits and shows how to build a fool-proof heap and maintain it well. A comprehensive listing of all compostible materials - from ash to algae, human hair to shredded newspaper - shows how the materials for composting can go much further than kitchen and green waste. Other features include sections on biodynamic composting methods and ingredients; composts for different climates and how to maintain a thriving worm colony.

There are also suggestions on the many ways to use the rich, crumbly organic matter your compost will produce.



### **Also in the COGS Library:**

*Recycle Your Garden : The Essential Guide to Composting*, Tim Marshall, ABC Books, 2003.

*Organic Matter and Soils*, Kevin A. Handreck, CSIRO, 1979.

### **From the librarian:**

The Canberra Organic Growers Society maintains an interesting and well-stocked library oorganic gardening books, which are available for all COGS members to borrow.

Books can be borrowed at the COGS monthly meetings, which are held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of each month (checked the events page of *Canberra Organic* for meeting details). Hope to see you borrowing books soon!

*Margaret Richardson*  
**COGS librarian**

## **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.

**ORGANIC** pork and free range chickens

**GAME MEAT** including emu, ostrich, goat, crocodile, kangaroo, rabbit & venison

**CONTINENTAL DELI** including pepperoni, cabanossi, trout, salmon, cheeses, gourmet cheese-cakes, homemade pasta, organic stock, bread, bagels, dips, pestos, pizzas and more.



### **Specialists in organic pesticide-free meats**

Shop 41  
Belconnen Fresh Food Markets  
Lathlain Street, Belconnen

Open Wednesday  
to Sunday

8am to 6pm

Phone 6251 9018  
Fax 6251 9017



## 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.



## 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*



## Calling all COGS Backyard Gardeners!

Many COGS members have plots in our community gardens, and have the advantage of sharing ideas, expertise, seeds and seedlings. But approximately half of all COGS members are NOT members of community gardens, but garden at home.

We are about to trial a "Home Gardeners" interest group. If there is sufficient interest we will explore the best ways of sharing expertise, possibly arranging visits to various member's gardens and helping each other to make best use of our home organic gardens.

We also hope to run a series of workshops, using our newly acquired Dickson garden, which has a classroom facility.

**Please express your interest by emailing us at [president@cogs.asn.au](mailto:president@cogs.asn.au) OR**

Photocopy and post to: COGS, Home Garden Group, PO Box 347, Dickson ACT 2602

Name: .....

Member No. ....

I am interested in a COGS Home-garden interest group.

Particular interests: .....

would/would not (PLEASE CHOOSE ONE) be interested in making my garden available for small group visits

I would/would not (PLEASE CHOOSE ONE) be interested in workshops on Soils Water Use Pests/Diseases (TICK ALL THAT APPLY)





# COGS WINTER PLANTING GUIDE

## VEGETABLES

### Asparagus

Prepare the bed before you buy the crowns to plant in late winter - early spring. Since this is a perennial crop which can last for up to 20 years it is well worth the effort of establishing properly. Asparagus needs good drainage and plentiful food and can be planted very successfully in a raised bed enriched with compost and well rotted manure. Seaweed is an excellent mulch. The crowns are planted in a trench, but with the roots straddling a ridge. Cover so dormant shoots are about 4cm below the surface. Do not harvest spears the first year, and only harvest for a few weeks the second year. Remember this is a long-term investment.

### Broad Beans

Late plantings of broad beans in June may be very slow to germinate. Better results are usually achieved with an autumn or early spring planting.

### Kohlrabi

Prepare the soil well with lots of organic matter. Needs rapid growth for flavour.

### Lettuce

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

### Onions

Mid season varieties are often sown late autumn or early winter and long keeping varieties in winter. However, the timing of mid or late season varieties is well worth experimenting with by making successive plantings to determine the best time in your specific locality.

### Peas

Peas can be planted in August/September for an early summer crop but may be very slow to germinate if the ground is still very cold or wet.

### Rhubarb

This is a perennial but plants generally only produce well for a few years, then fresh plants need to be started from subdivided crowns planted in late winter or early spring. It is very hardy, but it is a gross feeder and will appreciate lots of compost or well rotted manure and plenty of water.

### Other possibilities

Growers may wish to start a number of crops in late winter rather than early spring if the winter is mild or if they have a sheltered garden bed.

These crops include artichokes (Globe and Jerusalem), beetroot, cabbage, carrots, potatoes and radish.

Frost-sensitive vegetables such as capsicum, eggplant and tomatoes can be started early in August indoors but may need a heated glasshouse or warm spot to germinate and will certainly need protection before being planted out in spring.

## FRUIT

Winter is the usual time to plant and prune soft fruits including:

### Strawberries

Plant certified stock or propagate from runners (not from plants more than 2 years old however) in a soil enriched with compost or well rotted manure. Remove old leaves and excess runners to tidy up the plants in winter.

### Berries

Raspberries, youngberries, boysenberries etc can be planted during winter while they are dormant. Remember these bear fruit on canes grown in the previous year so to prune remove all the old canes in autumn or winter making sure to leave the current seasons growth for next years fruit. Autumn fruiting raspberries bear on the current years growth so are cut to the ground in winter after they have fruited.

### Currants

Red, white or black currants are easy bushes to grow in Canberra as they withstand very cold weather and don't mind heavy clay soil. Currants produce a fruit rarely available commercially. They need to be pruned in winter to remove dead wood and around a third of the oldest branches to encourage new growth and allow for good air circulation.

	JUN	JUL	AUG
Artichokes		T	T
Asparagus		T	ST
Broad beans		S	S
Kohlrabi			S
Lettuce			S
Onions			T
Peas	ST	ST	S
Rhubarb			T
Silverbeet		T	S
Snowpeas			ST
Spinach	T	T	S

S = seed sowing; T = transplanting



## Q&A @ COGS

**Q** “I find it difficult to make enough compost for my garden’s needs. I don’t want to buy it! How can I make more?”

**A** It is true that you probably can’t have enough of the lovely brown stuff, but there are ways that you can make more with the materials you have available and also reduce your household waste at the same time.

Have a think and ensure you are using everything you possibly can around the house and garden to put into your compost pile.

Things you can use include:

- grass clippings
- tree and shrub prunings (cut into small pieces or mulched)
- kitchen waste
- dirt
- vacuum dust
- blood and bone, cow/sheep/chook/horse poo
- worm juice
- sprinkle of water
- leaves and bark
- hair
- shredded paper
- newspaper
- cardboard (break into smallish pieces)
- egg shells (crunched)

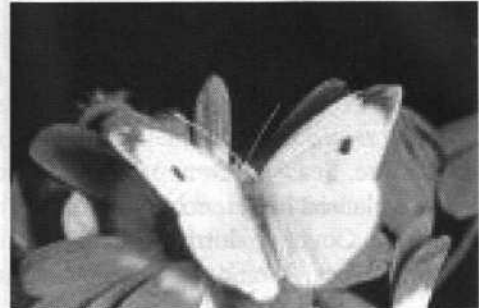
Ensuring your compost is being created efficiently is also important. This means the compost heap needs the right mix of ingredients layered correctly and turning the heap occasionally.

Also experiment with using both an open compost heap and a closed black bin to see what works best for you.

If the combination of ingredients and the type of compost pile is right and you just need more organic matter to put into it, you can do things like raking up leaves from neighbours or the park, asking neighbours for their unwanted grass clippings or begging for old vegies from the markets. Consider buying a cheap paper shredder to shred paper, instead of putting it in the recycle bin.



## Pest of the Season: Cabbage White Butterfly



*Cabbage white butterfly  
(picture from yates.com)*

You may have seen the **cabbage white butterfly** (*Pieris rapae*) fluttering over your broccoli or cabbage.

Jackie French, in *The Organic Garden Problem Solver* (1994), has some useful suggestions for keeping the cabbage moth at bay:

**Disguise the target plants:** Plant strongly-scented herbs like lavender around your garden edges as a deterrent. Another option is to interplant thickly – more plants means there will be less of a problem with each individual plant. The idea is to disguise the target plants.

**Fake crop:** Leave a couple of brassicas to go to seed each season to deter the adult butterflies from your new seedlings during the next season.

**Squash 'em:** Another plan of attack is to squash the cabbage moths (if you can catch them with a net first!) and leave the evidence on the brassica leaves to attract predators such as birds and wasps to deter the living cabbage moths.

**Egg shells:** Halved egg shells or planted white clover placed amongst the brassicas might confuse the cabbage butterflies.

**Organic spray:** Any DIY repellent spray such as a chilli spray or garlic spray might work.

**...and as a last resort:** If nothing else works, try dusting with white pepper, sprinkle leaves with powdered rock phosphate, try diluted clay spray, dipel or derris, bug juice, garlic or wormwood sprays. Or don't worry and see if your cabbages still form hearts!

# COGS NOTICE BOARD

## COGS Monthly Meetings

7:30 pm on the fourth Tuesday of the month at the  
**MAJURA COMMUNITY CENTRE,  
ROSEVEAR PLACE, DICKSON**

### 25th May 2010

Exploring the role of gardens in local organic food webs in Australia with Dr David Pearson, COGS Committee Member.

### 22nd June 2010

All about PermaBlitzACT with Warren Jolly. PermaBlitzACT formed in mid 2009 to help the local community turn unused, tired suburban lawns and backyards into edible gardens filled with vegetables, fruit trees, berries, as well as native vegetation and habitat. Warren will explain how PermaBlitzACT operates.

### 27 July 2010

Curing a pork neck with Mario Serenellini. Mario has been a member of the Cook Community garden for several years. He will demonstrate the Italian tradition of curing pork neck.

## Upcoming Event

Community Garden Conference  
*Promoting Sustainability, Health & Inclusion  
in the City*

October 7-8, 2010

Organised by The Canberra Organic Growers Society and the University of Canberra

Please email [info@cogs.asn.au](mailto:info@cogs.asn.au) for more information.

## Digging Around the Web

*Getting the dirt on the Internet for you!*

### **[Organicgarden.blogspot.com.au](http://Organicgarden.blogspot.com.au)**

An interesting blog claiming a dedication to organic gardening news and advice and views on sustainable agriculture by an amateur US organic gardener.

### **[www.vegout.asn.au](http://www.vegout.asn.au)**

The website of the St Kilda community garden called Veg Out, which was built on a former bowling green in 1981 and a self-proclaimed "very fertile and creative place". Have a read!

### **[www.greenfoot.com.au](http://www.greenfoot.com.au)**

Sydneysider Tina Tune maintains this blog dealing with topics surrounding organic gardening and everything eco-friendly.

The Organic Federation of Australia's **Trust Organic** event will run from Aug 19 - Sept 5 to increase awareness of organic products and the benefits of organic farming. See [www.ofa.org.au](http://www.ofa.org.au) for more info.

## **ACTEW Stage 3 water restrictions apply in all COGS gardens**

Handheld hoses with trigger nozzles, drippers, watering cans or buckets can be used between 7-10 am or 7-10 pm on the odds and evens system.

**NO WATERING** is allowed outside these hours.

## **Canberra farmers markets**

**Northside:** Saturdays 8am - 11am  
Capital Region Farmers Market  
EPIC (entry near Shell service station)

**Southside:** Sundays 9am - noon  
CIT Southside Campus  
Entry via Ainsworth Street in Phillip

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