



Canberra • Organic

Spring 2010 : Vol 18 No 3

The Art of Bokashi Composting
Seed Saving
Potatoes and Asian Greens
Community Gardening Conference



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

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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: Spring 2010

Winter rainfall has been kind to us this year. We received well above average rainfall in May and July, although rainfall in June was only 60% of the average. Dam levels have continued to rise during winter and are now at about

59.5% capacity compared with 45% at the same time last year. Hopefully this will ensure there will be no tightening of water restrictions for some time yet. With good soil moisture and warmer daytime temperatures than normal during the last three months our spring crops should get off to a flying start.

In spite of the good winter rainfall plot holders still need to be frugal in their use of water in the gardens. Cost of water is the major cost of running the gardens and this is reflected in the plot levy all plot holders pay. By minimising water use we are able to minimise the plot levy.

Because ActewAGL has not raised the cost of water this year, the joint meeting on August 10 of the COGS committee and convenors decided to hold the plot levy at \$2.00 per square metre for the coming garden year (September 1—August 31). This should provide sufficient funds for the gardens to operate during the next year provided all plot holders use water as sparingly as possible.

The COGS Committee has just completed its annual risk assessments of all the COGS gardens. The gardens are functioning well with strong demand for plots in most areas. There are very few vacancies in the gardens in the northern half of Canberra. Some of them have had long waiting lists for some time. To help ease these waiting lists the Committee has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Dickson College to establish a new COGS garden in the college grounds. The Dickson garden has been operating for about six weeks and already has a waiting list.

The new home gardeners gardening group has got off to a good start with several members joining. We look forward to some interesting meetings and garden visits later in the gardening year.

A new endeavour to be established this year is the seed saving group organised by Warren Clendenning and Richard Aspden. Seed saving is an important part of organic community gardening. Warren and Richard spoke about the new group at the August general meeting and further details on becoming involvement are published later in this magazine. This year the Organic Federation of Australia (OFA) is again holding an organic awareness fortnight *Trust Organic* from August 19 to September 5 to raise awareness of the Organic Food Standards and the National Organic Mark. COGS participation in this fortnight will be notified on the COGS website as soon as it is finalised.

The Chairman of the OFA, Andre Leu, will be speaking at the Community Gardening Conference, *Promoting Sustainability, Health and Inclusion in the City*, jointly organised by COGS and the University of Canberra on October 7-8. Other speakers at the conference include Costa Georgiadis, of *Costa's Garden Odyssey* on SBS television and Myles Bremner, CEO of Garden Organic, UK (formerly the Henry Double Day Research Association). Several members of the Australian City Farms and Community Gardens Network will also be participating in the workshop, as well as representatives of various ACT government agencies. It is hoped as many COGS members as possible will attend.

The purpose of the conference is to canvas possible ways forward to promote community gardening in urban environments and to encourage planners to provide the facilities which will allow the number of community gardens to increase in response to what has lately been an increasing demand for community garden plots. Information about the conference is available on the COGS website and registration can be made on the conference web site at www.canberra.edu.au/communitygardens.

This year COGS will again be contributing to Floriade. Three COGS members will be providing a total of fourteen talks on organic gardening at the kitchen garden display at Floriade. These talks will be listed on the website soon. If you happen to be at Floriade at these times, I'm sure it would be appreciated if you attended the talks to provide the speakers with moral support.

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

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PO Box 347 Dickson ACT 2602

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

I don't know about you, but I was addicted to *Masterchef*. I know it was a bit commercial, a tad pompous and the average Australian family doesn't cook like that in reality.

But apart from being mesmerised by judge Matt Preston's mind-boggling array of colourful cravats and watermelon-coloured trousers (and a small crush on contestant Adam!), the show seemed to inject some passion for kitchen gardening, fresh produce and the idea of cooking from scratch back into the Australian psyche.

The downside was that my kids (at the wise old ages of 6 and 4) kept asking me when I was "plating up" at dinner time, then exchanging a glance and saying "let's taste". I'm not sure that my cooking stands up against this sort of scrutiny!

Which brings us to the remarkable popularity that *Masterchef* has with children of all ages. With childhood obesity on the rise, this can only be a good thing – if our kids see us growing our own organic produce and positive role models in the media cooking with fresh ingredients with creativity and passion, this can only inspire healthy lifestyles.

Whether you love or hate cooking, if you are keen on growing your own fruit and vegetables, you need to know how to use them in the kitchen. With a bit of inspiration from the kitchen gardening philosophy and the wide array of good cooking television shows and cookbooks on offer, it makes it easier to figure out what to grow and when, how not to grow too much and how to turn the garden's bounty into tasty meals.

Organic gardeners are ahead of the rest of the gourmet cooking bunch as we have the advantage of fresh, organic, seasonal produce at our fingertips. Our ingredients don't have to travel too far to get on the table, cost us less and we just have to look in the mirror to talk to the grower.

On a different note, I'd like to offer my apologies with regards to Alison Corbet's article on moon planting published in the last edition of the magazine – the gremlins got into the system and the first page was incorrect text.

Sorry Alison! We've reprinted the article in this edition.

Happy gardening (and cooking) for Spring!

Angela

Right: my daughter Natalie likes cooking (or messing up the kitchen, not sure which!)



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Contributors to this issue

Articles

Warren Clendenning, Keith Colls, COGS Convenors, Alison Corbet, Alison Killen, Margaret Richardson, Angela Spencer, Monica van Wensveen.



Photos

Robyn Power, Angela Spencer, Conrad van Hest, Monica van Wensveen.

Cover photos

FRONT COVER: Tiptoe through the tulips in spring!

ABOVE: Doug the Garden Gnome measures the recent rainfall.

BACK COVER: The patterns of gardening: hats, a garden gate and gardening tools.

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 or via post to PO Box 347 Dickson ACT 2602.

This issue of Canberra Organic is printed on recycled paper

In the news

Organic yields can be higher

Organic farming systems can produce higher yields than conventional farming systems, according to an Iowa State University study.

The study, conducted by producers and researchers, focussed on organic corn and soybean and indicated that organic systems had lower yields at first, but produced higher yields than conventional crops by the fourth year. Organic crops resulted in twice the revenue of the conventionally-grown crops, due to saving on chemical fertilisers and pesticides.

Source: *Organic Federation of Australia*

Organic wine a popular choice

The wine industry's WineTech event, held in Adelaide in July, highlighted the high quality and increased popularity of organic wine produced in Australia, according to Biological Farmers Federation of Australia General Manager, Holly Vyner. The event "showcased an impressive and rapidly increasing number of Australia award-winning organic and biodynamic bottles", said Ms Vyner.

Source: *Australian Food News*

Colony Collapse Disorder continues in the US

A US bee industry survey has indicated a worrying trend that bee populations are on a terminal decline, with around 30% of beehives failing to survive the 2009-2010 winter. The USDA said that 121 pesticides have been identified in bees, pollen and wax, with strong evidence to show nicotinyl insecticides causes colony collapse disorder.

Source: www.organic-center.org

Old tomato crop sabotage

Police are investigating the sabotage of millions of truss tomato seedlings at a hydroponics farm in Bowen, Northern Queensland, occurring in July. It's thought that herbicide was injected into the irrigation system. The seedlings were worth around \$50 million and the sabotage is likely to affect tomato prices across the country as the region grows 80% of Australia's September supply of tomatoes.

Source: *Australian Food News*

School kids to grow their own greens

More than 1700 Australian primary schools have registered for the McCain School Veggie Patches program, which provides a chance to win resources to help schools establish vegetable gardens with seeds, tools and equipment.

Source: *Australian Food News*

Top tips for SPRING

☺ With a twist of lemon

Now is the time to pay attention to your citrus. Apply chook poo in early spring to moist ground (keeping manure and mulch well clear of trunks). A large, mature tree needs around 20kg or more of manure over the season, while 4-8kg will suffice for a one year-old tree. Prune lightly after the last frost and give them a drink with seaweed emulsion.

☺ Heirloom tomatoes

Start thinking about a future bounteous crop of beautiful tomatoes in summer. Why not focus on heirloom varieties this year? Suppliers such as Green Harvest and the Digger's Club offer different and succulent varieties such as Beefsteak and Black Russian.



☺ Put it in your diary

Any time is a good time to start a gardening diary, but it is particularly useful when things are busy in the garden (such as spring). Grab a folder, blank notebook, computer spreadsheet or specially-designed gardening diary and start recording your crop rotation, plant varieties, planting reminders and thoughts for the season. You can look back on them next year to make your gardening easier.

☺ Seeds of doubt

And a reminder not to plant your seeds too close together! Don't be pessimistic and overplant, as it could create overcrowding in the plants that grow. Follow the seed planting instructions on the back of the seed packet. If you are worried about the seeds possibly not germinating, make successive sowings every two weeks or so.

"I came to love my rows, my beans, though so many more than I wanted. They attached me to the earth, and so I got strength like Antaeus."

- **Henry David Thoreau**

Weather and water watch

As the days become warmer with the glow of spring, here are the temperatures and rainfall to expect this spring, courtesy of the Bureau of Meteorology's long term statistics for the ACT region.

TEMPERATURE	September	October	November
Canberra airport	max 16.2	max 19.4	max 22.7
	min 3.2	min 6.1	min 8.8

RAINFALL	September	October	November
Canberra airport	52.2 mm	62.1 mm	63.9mm
	7.0 rain days	7.8 rain days	7.4 rain days

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

Seasonal forecast: August-October

- Warmer than normal minimum temperatures for South-Eastern Australia to mid-Spring are favoured, due to the recent warm conditions in the Indian and Pacific Oceans.
- Neither wetter nor drier conditions are favoured for South-Eastern Australia, with regards to expected rainfall in the period up until mid-Spring.

For more weather info visit the Bureau of Meteorology's ACT website: www.bom.gov.au/weather/act

Water use and restrictions

- At 9 August, Canberra's dams were 59.57% full.
- Stage 3 water restrictions are currently in place across the ACT.
- The daily water target is currently 105 ML - watch the road signs on Canberra's main roads for any changes as we progress further into spring, or visit ActewAGL's water networks website: www.actewagl.com.au/water/networks.

Water-wise tip for Spring

Mulch is the word

Mulch can save water in your garden by keeping the soil cool in the warmer months as the water is better able to soak into the ground.

Some ideas for mulch are: lucerne, raked-up leaves, wood chips, pea straw, compost, manure, dried-out lawn clippings and inorganic materials like gravel and pebbles.

A good time to check your mulch situation is during spring. If you are adding more mulch, prepare the ground first by weeding, digging and watering thoroughly.

When applying mulch, keep it away from plant stems and ensure it is around 75mm thick.

More water-wise ideas can be found on Actewagl's website: www.actewagl.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.

Around the COGS Gardens

Charnwood

While the winter ground has been cold and frosty, the green life at the Charnwood Garden has certainly not been dormant. Broccoli, cabbage, broad beans, spinach, silverbeet and green manure are amongst the produce growing in many of the plots, with the new tips of onions and garlic starting to poke through the soil in many garden beds.

Our working bees have been buzzing through the winter months mowing and whipper snipping, while the social highlight of the past few months was a spectacular campfire night with roast potatoes, damper, soup and mulled wine keeping us all warm on a cold night.

A kindly local treelopper has been regularly dropping off piles of mulch, which has been useful in keeping our vegie bed pathways and fruit trees mulched.

Our only hassle has been a few plumbing issues. With our garden looking neat and bountiful during the cold season, things look good for spring!

At present, all garden plots are occupied and we have a waiting list of 4.

Angela Spencer

Holder garden

The Holder garden is currently experiencing noise from road works to north and the housing estate to the east. The road works have meant access to the garden has become difficult and TAMS is currently organising for the entrance to the garden to be re-located from Streeton Drive to Dixon

Drive. The garden is also being extended to the south to compensate for the area resumed last year for a cycle path.

The garden has seen an influx of new members in the last three months, resulting in the garden now being full. Last time the garden was full like this was back about five or six years ago. These new members are busy getting some of the neglected plots ready for spring planting.

Some plot holders have taken a hiatus over winter, while others come to do some tidying up and pick any vegetables.

The winter rain has been good for the garden as the ground is locking moisture away for spring time.



Above: A couch-infested plot at the Holder garden cleared and ready for Spring.

Plot fees for 2010 - 2011

The plot fees for the new garden year, 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011, will remain at \$2 per square metre.

The water allowance will remain at 54 kl per 100 square metres

**All plot fees are due, and payable to your garden convenor,
by 30 September 2010**

Even in winter the garden looks a nice shade of green and does not feel dry or drab like the last couple of winters.

Welcome Steve, Tim, Andrea, John & June.

Conrad van Hest

Kaleen Community Garden

Our garden will be a year old when this is published and all plots are taken – what a year it has been. We have even decided to enter into the Open Gardens Scheme in February next year, so we have a lot to do in the meantime.

With the colder weather, the numbers active in the garden have dropped off. However, some hardy souls have been busily planting winter crops, particularly onions, brassicas and garlic, and with the rain these are flourishing.

While digging, it has become evident that we are going to have a bumper year for scarab grubs as well. Our resident magpies now come running when you call them, knowing that they are going to get some tasty morsels. They give us a wonderful little song when you feed them and then wander around your feet while you are digging, forever watchful. There are about six of them that call our garden home and we sometimes witness some noisy squabbling amongst them over “land rights”. One of them gives the most beautiful wolf whistle and often it is as a challenge call to the opposition. We think it is a female and can only assume she has picked it up from some of the local school boys! It always makes us smile when we hear her in the garden.

We have just received an enormous truckload of mushroom compost which has now been deposited onto most of the plots. We may be lucky to get some mushrooms from it before we dig it in, particularly with the current rain that is falling. We look forward to the benefits in our soil in the Spring and Summer crops.

Our resident bees have continued as busily as if it was Spring and so hopefully it will be a good season for them also. They did a wonderful job pollinating our vegetables last season and we all benefited from their presence. We have never had so many zucchinis set.

There are many things we need to do to our area,

particularly improve the fencing and build a pergola for the summer. The fencing will be expensive and we have to explore avenues to try and secure funding.

We look forward to another fruitful year, but I for one won't be planting so many tomatoes next Spring and I have heard others say the same. I think it will take a couple of years to use up the chutneys, pickles, sauces etc. that we produced in the harvest months earlier this year. We became regular visitors to Kaleen's Butts and Brews Store to purchase jar after jar. I guess this is all part of the learning experience of gardening!

Robyn Power



Above: The Kaleen garden as it looks today.

Update: Backyard Gardeners Group

The Backyard Gardeners Group is a new group set up within COGS to service those members who garden at home.

We held our first meeting of 7 members—thanks to our host Donna Vaughan.

We are almost totally Northside residents and plan to hold monthly social meetings to provide feedback and support on gardening at home.

Issues discussed at our inaugural meeting included possum, earwig and harlequin bug problems.

If you are interested in joining us please contact me via ainsrich@grapevine.com.au

Margaret Richardson—convenor

Unearthing bokashi composting

The Japanese have it all – just think about the wonders of anime, kimonos, origami and sushi for starters. We can all learn from the Japanese by giving a bokashi composting system a go.

If you introduce a bokashi composting system into your recycling repertoire, it can add another useful element to your gardening alongside the usual stalwarts - the compost bin and the worm farm.

What is bokashi?

Bokashi is a method of intensive composting which uses a fermentation process to turn kitchen waste into a rich soil conditioner. Bokashi is a Japanese term that means “fermented organic matter”.

This unique composting system works by using bokashi powder, a mix of sawdust, water, molasses and bran that has been infused with Effective Microorganisms (EM). EM bokashi has traditionally been used to increase the microbial diversity and activity in soils and apply nutrients to plants.

The microorganisms in EM are known to produce bioactive substances, vitamins, hormones, enzymes, amino acids and antibiotics, which enrich and detoxify the soil.

To use a bokashi composting system, you need one (or more) specially designed bokashi buckets and bokashi powder.

How bokashi works

The system works by creating the ideal conditions for airtight (anaerobic) composting of all types of kitchen waste, including meat, fish, dairy and bones without the usual turning requirements of outdoor compost.

Essentially, the bokashi powder turns organic waste into high-grade soil conditioner through the use of effective microbes (or “bokashi”). Bokashi composting can help re-establish a wide range of beneficial microbes back into the soil.

To explain further, the system relies on fermentation to decompose kitchen waste, rather than putrefaction,

which means it creates no yucky smells while it is working. Nutrient-rich matter is produced in around 10 days, which you then bury in your garden to put into your usual compost bin.

Fermentation works in a similar way to pickling. Just as a pickled onion will still look like an onion after it is pickled, kitchen waste in the bokashi bin will still look the same while being processed as the lignin, or fibre, in the waste is the only thing breaking down. Fermentation produces no heat, therefore all energy is retained – that is why the kitchen waste inside the bucket needs no turning, produces no leachate and minimal greenhouse gases.

What are the benefits of bokashi?

A bokashi composting system has many benefits, including the fact that you can recycle a greater percentage of your kitchen waste. You can potentially recycle all of your food waste, as it accepts all the things that are a problem for your compost bin or worm farm – milk, citrus, onion, small bits of meat.

Unlike traditional composting, the fermentation process means the waste smells sweet and doesn't attract pests.

If you have trouble with making your usual compost bin or worm farm work efficiently, the bokashi system is easier in comparison or it can just add another element to your usual composting techniques – ie why not try everything and hope that one of them works?!



Above: A bokashi bucket system

Bokashi compost produces a liquid which you syphon off via a tap on the bokashi buckets which you can use in a similar way to seaweed or fish emulsion as a soil conditioner and fertiliser.

Bokashi-treated kitchen waste also decomposes faster when put back into the soil or compost bin.

The system is ideal for use in the kitchen, is eco-friendly and is arguably practical and convenient. The bucket is small and compact which means it can easily fit into a corner of your kitchen.

How it works step by step

To use a bokashi composting system, you need one or two bokashi buckets and the EM bokashi powder and your kitchen waste. The buckets can easily be placed in a corner of your kitchen.

You can compost almost every kitchen waste in your bokashi bucket, including fresh fruit and vegetables, prepared foods, small amounts of cooked and uncooked meats and fish, cheese, eggs, bread, coffee grinds, tea bags, wilted flowers and tissues, citrus, onion and dairy products.

But you can't include paper and plastic wrap or large meat bones (fine, small bones are fine).

Step by Step:

1. Place your kitchen waste into the bucket, squish it down with a potato masher to remove air and evenly sprinkle a handful of EM bokashi powder over the waste. Use more powder when adding high protein foods such as meat, fish, cheese and eggs. Ensure the lid is tightly closed afterwards to reduce oxygen and create the right conditions for the anaerobic fermentation process to take place.
2. Repeat this layering process until the bucket is full.
3. While the waste is being processed, you can drain off the bokashi juice via the tap on the front of the bucket.
4. When the bucket is full, the waste can be buried or put into the compost bin. If you have a second bin, you can leave the waste in the first bin for a bit longer (an extra 10-14 days) and start the process in the second bin. The bokashi compost is ready to use in as little as one week after the bucket is full.
5. Wash out the bokashi bin with water and begin the process again.

You can tell that the kitchen waste has fermented properly if it smells similar to pickles or cider vinegar. Sometimes (although not always) you can see a white cotton-like fungi growth on the surface – this shows that good fermentation has occurred.

Bokashi juice: Liquid, known as bokashi juice, pools at the bottom of the bucket during the fermentation process. You can drain it off at any time by opening the tap. This liquid has a high nutrient value and can be used as a plant food and soil conditioner by diluting it in a watering can with water, in a similar way to seaweed and fish emulsion.

Use one teaspoon to 2-3 litres of water and apply directly to the soil (not directly on foliage). You can also pour the concentrated juice directly down the

drain to help our waterways or in your septic system, if you have one, as the juice competes with the harmful bacteria.

Pour it into your kitchen and bathroom drains, toilets or septic systems and the Effective Micro-organisms will help prevent algae build-up and control odour.

Bokashi juice cannot be stored and must be used within 24 hours after draining from the bucket.

Bokashi compost: You can either bury the waste from the bucket directly in the garden or in the compost bin. Burying it in the garden by digging holes around existing plants and shrubs will supply the plants with a nourishing food source and condition your soil with enriching microbes. To do this, dig a hole and add your fermented bokashi compost, mix it with some soil and cover it up. Or you create a special bokashi compost heap by digging a bottomless bucket with a lid in the garden and keep adding the bokashi, which will start breaking down. You can also add bokashi compost directly to your planter boxes, tubs or pots.

The bokashi composting system significantly accelerates the composting process of organic waste. Bokashi compost is acidic when first dug in, but neutralizes after 7-10 days. Ensure plant roots do not come directly into contact with the compost as it may burn the roots, particularly if the plants are very young.



Above: Waste in a bokashi bucket in the process of fermenting.

Things to note

Bokashi compost will look different to other compost that has decayed. This is because the food waste does not actually begin decomposing in the bucket, rather it stays looking the same just with a pickled appearance. The waste will begin breaking down after it has been transferred to your normal compost bin or soil.

The amount and colour of bokashi juice produced will depend on the type of foods you have put into the bucket. Fruit and vegetables tend to release more liquid than other foods. Do not be concerned if little or no bokashi juice is produced.

I have found that beetroot changes the colour of the juice and things like watermelon produce more liquid.

Another point is that you can never add too much EM bokashi powder as it is better to add too much than too little to ensure complete fermentation and sweet-smelling compost.

It is important to only add fresh food waste – don't wait until it is rotten or mouldy. Also, break or chop large bits into smaller pieces.

You need to ensure the bucket lid is airtight and to compact the waste down as much as possible before sprinkling the powder on top to remove air.

Do not add water, excessive amounts of fluids and drain the bokashi juice frequently. Also, don't put the bucket in the sun.

Potential problems and how to fix them

As with any composting process, things can go wrong and it is important to know how to fix them.

You may notice signs that the fermentation process has not been successful, such as a strong rancid or rotten smell or the presence of black or blue green fungi, which indicate the process has putrefied.

This usually means that you haven't added enough EM bokashi, not closed the lid tightly enough after every use, need to drain the juice more regularly or the bucket has been exposed to sunlight or extreme temperatures.

There is no need to throw the waste out – instead, find a spot in the garden away from plants and dig a 35cm deep hole.

Sprinkle 3 handfuls of bokashi powder into the hole, tip the waste from the bucket in and mix with soil, before adding another 3 handfuls of powder on top of the compost. Then fill the hole.

How to buy bokashi products

The bokashi composting system, which involves a specially designed bucket and the EM Bokashi powder, is available online and at health food shops. It is becoming increasingly popular (and is endorsed by Planet Ark) so you may notice it being sold in more places soon.

Without intending to endorse any particular business, with regards to Canberra stockists, I have noticed that Mountain Creek Wholefoods in Griffith stocks the bokashi buckets, EM powder and molasses (which can be used to make your own powder). Bunnings at Belconnen also stocks the buckets and powder.

If you search on "bokashi" in Google, you may come across a variety of instructions on how to make your own bokashi powder. I haven't personally tried this, but please email us at *Canberra Organic* if you do happen to try it as I would be interested to see if it works!

For the game and curious, there's a U-Tube video that explains all the steps in DIY bokashi powder. The link is <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=96fSXccQx9Q>.

Go forth and ferment!

Angela Spencer

References

www.bokashi.com.au

www.bokashiaustralia.com.au

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bokashi_composting

<http://dirtbyamystewart.blogspot.com/2006/02/bokashi.html>

www.todae.com.au

*Below right:
Bokashi bucket
waste can go
straight into
your compost
bay when
fermented.*



Spring planting: POTATOES

Consider the spud. You can bake, boil and bandicoot them, hill, hash and mash them, look them in eye and call them blighty. Just don't call them humble.

The potato was first cultivated in the Andes 6000 years ago, made its first tour of Europe via Spain in the 16th century and took Asia and the US by storm in the 17th and 18th centuries.

Potatoes are rich in carbohydrates and also have high levels of vitamin C and potassium. Many nutrients are contained just underneath the skin, so try to leave it on!

Site and soil

Potatoes are easy to grow if planted in the right place. They prefer sun and well-drained, well-composted, well-dug soils. Try to avoid beds that have grown the tomato family as they may have attracted soil nematodes.

Planting and cultivating

Use certified seed potatoes as these are guaranteed to be disease-free. You could also try planting potatoes purchased from the shop or supermarket, or those saved from a healthy plant as a starter for a home crop.

Small, whole seed potatoes the size of chats are good. If your seed potatoes are bigger, cut them into chat-sized pieces and make sure each piece has at least one good shoot.

Plant in trenches about 10-15cm deep, 25cm between plants and 75cm between rows. New shoots appear in 2 weeks. Plant during September—December for a summer/autumn harvest. Keep water up and weeds down to prevent drying out



during the growing period. As the plants grow, many gardeners hill the soil around each stem to encourage the plants to grow taller and produce more potatoes and to stop the new potatoes being exposed to light.

Harvesting

Flowers indicate that the potatoes are at a suitable size for an early harvest of new potatoes, but you'll need to wait until Autumn for the main crop.

Bite	Boiling
Coliban	Baking; mashing; steaming
Desiree	Boiling; baking; gnocchi
Kennebec	Boiling, baking, frying, mashing
Kipfler	Steaming; salads
Nicola	Mashing; baking; boiling; salads
Pink fir	Salads; boiling
Pontiac	Grating; baking; boiling
Sebago	Boiling; baking; mashing; frying

From: The Farmers Market Companion (Penguin-Viking)

Problems

Diseases can be a problem - some have obvious leaf symptoms and some don't. Any plants affected with blight, mildew or club rot should quickly be removed from the garden. Using certified seed is a good way to reduce disease risk. Also watch out for a range of spud-hungry grubs, aphids and nematodes.

Choosing and using

There are many varieties of potato but two main kinds - waxy or floury.

Waxy potatoes are translucent and feel moist. They tend to maintain their shape and consistency, but are too glutinous for mashing. Floury potatoes look brighter and grainier and feel drier. They are better for mashing and don't keep their shape as well.

Besides that, there are new potatoes and old potatoes. New potatoes (chats) are dug when still immature and small and should be eaten relatively quickly. Old potatoes are fully mature and can be stored for months in the right place - somewhere cool, dark and airy (but not the fridge), away from onions and out of plastic.

Don't eat the green bits - they contain the alkaloid solanine which is not suitable for consumption. It's safe to eat spuds that have sprouted but they may not cook or keep well (take the sprouts off first).

References and further reading

- *Organic Vegetable Growing (Annette McFarlane)*
- *Farmers Market Companion (Penguin-Viking)*
- *Vegetable gardening @ the vegetable patch*
www.thevegetablepatch.com

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Harvesting

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Coliban	Baking; mashing; steaming
Desiree	Boiling; baking; gnocchi
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- *Farmers Market Companion (Penguin-Viking)*
- *Vegetable gardening @ the vegetable patch*
www.thevegetablepatch.com

Spring harvest: ASIAN GREENS

With a diversity of shapes, fresh flavours and appetising names, how can you *not* grow Asian greens? Wok on!

These cabbage cousins belong to the Brassica family and are easy to grow and very hardy. Not surprisingly, these leafy greens have been cultivated in Asia (particularly China) for thousands of years. They appeared in Australia around the time of the gold rushes, but only recently have we started to see and enjoy their extraordinary diversity.

The Canberra Gardener describes a number of very broad types of Asian greens. Asian cabbages are typically cylindrical or ball-shaped with hard heads - womboks (*first photo on the right*) are a good example.

Bunching varieties such as the pak choi (*second photo on the right*) are distinguishable by their curved stalks and thick, bulbous bases. They are best harvested as a whole plant. Loose leaf varieties - such as the tatsoi, or flat cabbage (*third photo on the right*), are hardy, quick - growing and can be picked leaf by leaf. Flowering plants such as kalia (Asian broccoli) or choi sum are grown for their stems, leaves and flowers.

Both the leaves and stems of salad greens - such as the mizuna (*fourth photo on the right*) and its straight-leafed partner mibuna - like to be regularly harvested and eaten raw.

Site and soil

Asian greens enjoy full sun and well-drained soil. They love organic matter, so add compost or well-rotted manure before planting. To give them the best start, remember to remove weeds, stones or hard clumps from the garden bed.

Planting and cultivating

Seeds should be sown where you want the plants to grow. Make shallow rows about 5mm deep, sow seeds (they're very small!), cover lightly with soil and water gently and regularly. The seeds should germinate in about a week and will need to be thinned out.

If you're planting seedlings, either space them around 20cm apart or place them throughout the garden to confuse the pests.

Consider successive plantings of Asian greens between August and May in all but the hottest weather, leaving around 3 weeks between planting.

Asian greens have shallow roots, so water frequently and use mulch to keep weeds at bay. Grow them quickly for maximum taste. Try a fortnightly feed of liquid manure or compost tea.

Harvesting

Time to maturity depends on the type of Asian green. As a guide, Asian cabbage needs about the same time as other cabbage to mature - at least 12 weeks. Bunching and loose leaf varieties can be harvested in around 6-8 weeks. Asian broccoli takes around 10-12 weeks.

Problems

Snails and slugs are partial to Asian greens, so employ your favourite organic slug-stopping remedy. As they're brassicas, they're also prone to the dastardly cabbage moth.

One of the biggest problems with these vegetables is their tendency to bolt to seed in warm weather. Wait until the weather cools and then replant.

Choosing and using

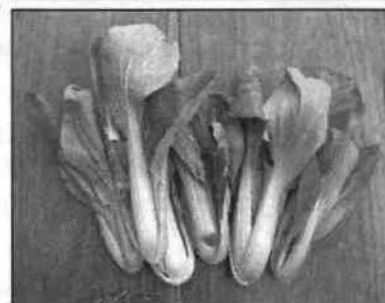
Choose fresh, healthy plants with no yellowing or drooping leaves.

Asian greens are best eaten soon after purchase or harvest but can be stored in the crisper for a few days - but not in a closed plastic bag.

For most plants, both the leaves and stems can be eaten and are best steamed to retain their crisp texture and fresh flavour. Wash well as dirt and slugs are common squatters.

References and further reading

- *Sustainable Gardening Australia*; www.sgaonline.org.au
- *The Canberra Gardener (HSOC)*
- *Stephanie Alexander's Kitchen Garden Companion (Penguin)*
- *ABC Gardening*; www.abc.net.au/gardening



Digging deep at Permablitz

Recently in June at the COGS members monthly meeting in Dickson, Warren Jolly from Permablitz ACT detailed the “who, what, when, where, why and hows” of his fantastic group.

As we suspect there may be many potential Permablitz members amongst the ranks of the Canberra Organic Grower's Society, we thought it would be worthwhile to give a brief overview of Warren's talk.

Permablitz ACT was 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”.

The ACT Permablitz Network is not funded, members are volunteers and the group's activities are based on the principle of reciprocity.

Permablitz ACT is part of a wider network of Australia-wide groups that are part of Permablitz.

Members combine their efforts to help each other transform their suburban backyards and grow their own food at home using simple permaculture principles, which in turn helps the environment. It helps people do something positive about climate change in a way that is fun and inexpensive, while growing organic fruit and vegies at home.

A “permablitz” is essentially an informal gathering of members with the aim of creating or improving an existing garden, sharing skills related to permaculture and sustainable living and building community networks. Before and after the permablitz, the recipient has access to pre-blitz design visits, help with organising materials needed for the blitz and follow-up visits afterwards.

Permablitz ACT's values are based around the practice of permaculture, which was an idea originally pioneered in the 1970s by Bill Mollison and David Holmgren drawing on principles such as organic agriculture, sustainable forestry, horticulture and agroforestry.

The Permablitz website defines permaculture as “an ethically underpinned design system for sustainable living and landuse, functioning through mimicking of patterns and relationships we observe in natural ecosystems”. And further, “It is fundamentally a process of consciously designing the places we live to be sustainable in the sense of being able to persist indefinitely”.

Being part of Permablitz is a great way to get involved in your local community and members include gardeners with varying skills, ranging from beginner gardeners to trained permaculture enthusiasts with years of gardening experience.

To get an idea of what happens during a permablitz, look on the Permablitz ACT website or you can watch a 2009 episode of *Costa's Garden Odyssey* television show (the link is <http://www.sbs.com.au/shows/costa/watchonline/page/i/1/show/costa>).

To find out more information or to join the group, please visit the Permablitz ACT website at <http://permablitzact.webs.com>.



Above: Worm farms are a great addition to a permaculture home garden.

Waxing and Waning: Planting by the Moon

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)

The moon, that wondrous orb – it affects us in many ways and can also have a wonderful effect on our gardening practices.

The moon is richly imbued with meaning and cultural significance in all parts of the globe. In Western cultures, 'lunacy' is madness brought on by a full moon, and of course werewolves and vampires like to pop out at this time.

Many cultures have tried to structure calendars around the moon and thinkers like Isaac Newton paid heed to it. Unfortunately, cycles haven't fallen into neat enough patterns. Despite this, there remains vestiges of moon calendar festivals, including Easter and Ramadan.

The myriad of folklore and myths surrounding the moon are similarly rich. Many folk traditions based on the moon and agriculture holds that there are certain parts of the lunar cycle that are best for planting different crops and germinating seeds.

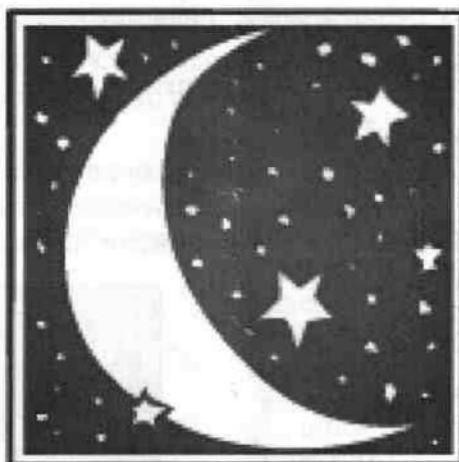
The scientific reasoning for a lot of these beliefs appear to be based both on the differing levels of light and soil moisture at different times in the lunar cycle. The increased moisture in the soil occurs around the new moon and the full moon, encouraging seeds to sprout and grow.

The gravitation of the passing moon pulls the nearest body of water a little away from the solid mass of earth beneath it, and at the same time pulls the earth a little away from the water on the farthest side. In this manner, the moon sets up two tidal bulges on opposite sides of the earth. 1

The simplest form of moon planting relates to the four phases of the moon:

In the **first phase** (new moon to 1st quarter), the gravitational pull is very strong. Crops that grow above ground should be planted during this first phase, such as green leafy vegetables and flowering annuals. This is also a good time to take cuttings from flowers.

In the **second phase** of the moon (1st quarter to full moon), the gravitational pull is strong but not as strong as during the first phase. During this phase leaf growth occurs. This is the time to plant crops that grow above the ground and have seeds that will form inside the fruit (beans, peas, squash, zucchini, melons, peppers and tomatoes) and canes (roses, raspberries, blackberries). Plant any time during this phase, but the best time to plant is two days before the full moon.



In the **third phase** (full moon to last quarter), the gravitational pull is starting to decrease and energy is given to the roots of the plants, thus plants that grow and mature underground should be planted (such as beets, potatoes, onions, carrots and radish). This is also the time to plant perennial flowers and bulbs and prune trees, flowers and other plants. This is because the energy is concentrated in the roots and not in the leaves or fruit.

The **fourth phase** (last quarter to new moon) is the resting period for all plants, so no planting is recommended.

Biodynamic agriculture includes two other types of moon planting regimes that involve the use of the **twelve signs of the zodiac** to determine optimal planting times. This means planting leaf crops when the moon is in a water sign (Cancer, Scorpio or Pisces), fruit and seed crops when the moon is in a fire sign (Leo, Sagittarius or Aries), flower crops when the moon is in an air sign (Aquarius, Gemini or Libra) and root crops when the moon is in an earth sign (Taurus, Virgo or Capricorn).

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 1st quarter – plant leafy vegetables, celery and herbs like parsley, basil and chives.

From the 1st 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.

Winter warmer campfire at Charnwood

On a cold winter's night in the middle of June, a bunch of enthusiastic members of the Charnwood garden gathered together for a campfire night, with hopes of some warm food and conversation.

Weeks before, several talented gardeners scrounged together some pavers and railway sleepers to construct a firepit in the common area. The monthly working bee had collected some prunings to store for firewood. A license was procured for the fire. All was set for a great night!

A decent turnout of Charnwood plot holders turned up late afternoon on Saturday, June 19, laden with yummy food, chairs, offspring, partners and warm clothing.

The fire was lit and we huddled around it as it grew bigger and warmer. We were all surprisingly warm and great food and company made it a great evening. We feasted on homemade pumpkin soup, damper, jacket potatoes, mulled wine and lemon-grass tea.

Who says it's too cold to have fun outside at night in the Canberra winter?

Right: The firepit and some early campfire arrivals at the winter Charnwood campfire night.



New COGS Seed Savers Group

Seed saving is the practice of saving seeds or tubers from open-pollinated vegetables, herbs and flowers for use from year to year.

Much of the grassroots seed-saving activity today is the work of home gardeners. However, it is gaining popularity among organic gardeners, permaculturists and enthusiasts with cultural or environmental interests.

Throughout Australia, many seed savers groups have been formed as part of the Seed Savers Network. As specific seed saving activities have not been operating for some time now within COGS, there is a need to re-establish a Seed Savers Group within the Society.

A few members within the society are keen to re-commence seed saving activities for any member of COGS who would like to be involved in the group.

At the recent general meeting on August 24, two committee members, myself (Warren Clendenning) and Richard Aspden, spoke about plans to re-establish such as group and what activities a potential new group would participate in.

No seed saving experience is necessary to be part of the seed savers group, as each member may have their own individual talents that all could learn from.

Activities and ideas envisaged could be along the following lines:

- To collect and safeguard heritage and non-hybrid seeds for long-term viability specifically suited to Canberra and surrounding areas;
- To foster fellowship between people who already collect seeds and beginner seed collectors wanting to join a seed savers group;
- To foster skills from within the group and pass on experience to lift the skills level within the group;

- Concentrate on saving staple vegetable types first e.g. carrots, beans, peas, onions, potatoes etc and then branch out into more hard to save type seeds;
- Aim at having main curators of seeds and sub-curators to back them up;
- Establish a sustainable collection/small seed bank for distribution to COGS members and to allow all new members to receive a small number of packets of free seeds on joining COGS;
- Aim to conduct workshops and public awareness sessions of the COGS Seed savers group;
- Promote and conduct seed saving sessions for children interested in propagating seeds in their own gardens;
- To aim for, as a long-term project, a sustainable, permanent home for seed saving activities, propagation of plants, grafting and budding of plants and trees and a growing nursery.

This is not an exhaustive list of activities and ideas, so please consider becoming involved in the re-establishment of the COGS Seed Savers Group and letting us know what you think.

For further details, please contact Richard Aspden on 0415959365 or Warren Clendenning on 0408293063.

*Warren Clendenning
COGS Seed Savers*



Book Review: Out of a Scientist's Garden

***Out of a Scientist's Garden – A Story of Water and Food* is a book all Canberra gardeners should read.**

Written by Canberra-based author Richard Stirzaker, the book is a rich and very personal account of the author's garden and how it has enriched and been shaped by his work at the CSIRO.

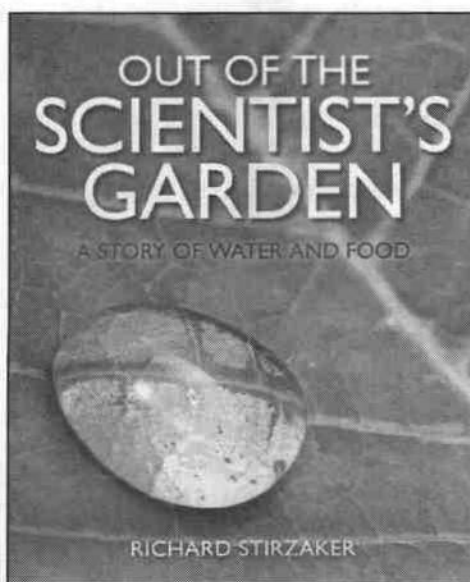
The author is both a keen gardener and an agricultural scientist, one of those fortunate people whose work aligns with their passion.

Stirzaker begins with a tour of his own garden, which is almost totally devoted to food production. On an average-sized suburban block, he produces most of his family's fruit and vegetables.

His garden features 35 fruit trees, 15 vines, numerous berries, as well as extensive vegetable beds, chooks, water tanks and a green house. No mean feat!

The book is illustrated throughout with photos from his garden and work.

"Oil will run out someday, but so far no petrol station has stopped me filling my car. I am, however, forbidden to turn on my garden tap and water the tomatoes in my back garden – at least on every second day. The great renewable resource is not being renewed fast enough where I live."



Out of a Scientist's Garden is comprised of a series of essays loosely grouped into three sections: dealing with the author's own garden, a section on soil, and finally, the environmental and scientific challenges of feeding the world's growing population.

Stirzaker manages to weave the personal and scientific in a way that presents complex concepts and information simply and clearly to readers.

He provides an interesting discussion on water use. On average, Australians use 4500 litres of water per day – 280 litres in the home and garden, with the rest producing and transporting food.

It takes around one litre of water to produce one calorie of plant food (although this varies hugely depending on the type of plant) and about 10 litres to produce one calorie of animal food such as milk or meat.

From water, the book takes us on a journey through a year in the author's vegetable garden, from summer gluts through to what he calls 'the hungry months' of later winter and early spring, followed by chapters on his adventures with fruit trees, the difficulties and joys of birds in the garden and the challenges of growing organically.

The section on soil covers the development of 'Clever Clover' as a system for improving soil, a fascinating explanation of how water moves through the soil and a discussion about the difficulties of accurately monitoring soil moisture.

The final section is an overview of the development of agriculture and the productivity gains of the 20th century and the challenges of moving to low energy-input systems whilst maintaining high yields.

COGS creations: The Not So Humble Salad

The warmer months are an ideal time to grow salad greens. A salad is a perfect meal on its own and is also a great accompaniment to a meal. And the garden is bursting with possible tasty additions to your salad bowl.



Super Dooper Coleslaw

Half a cabbage, shredded
1 carrot, grated
2 tbs chopping spring onions
1 green capsicum, chopped
1 unpeeled apple, chopped
125g dried apricots
125g sultanas
125 dates
125g nuts
cooked beetroot, grated
2 gherkins, chopped
1 tbs capers
2 celery stalks
125g grapes
1/2 cucumber
dressing—mayonnaise

Shred the cabbage and add some or all of the other ingredients in a bowl. Add some dressing and—YUM!



Wasabi Mayonnaise

1/2 cup freshly squeezed lemon juice
2 whole eggs and 2 egg yolks
2tsp wasabi powder
1/2 tsp salt
crushed garlic

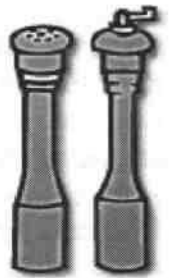
Mix wasabi powder with water to form a stiff paste, then cover and set aside for 5 mins.

Blend all ingredients (except olive oil) in a food processor or blender at high speed. Turn speed down to medium and add olive oil by drizzling slowly in a steady stream until mixture is thick.

Can be kept in the fridge in a jar for up to one week. Shake or stir before use.

Cannellini Bean and Parsley Salad

1x 450g cannellini beans
250g cherry tomatoes
1 bunch Italian parsley, washed & leaves picked
1/2 small red onion, cut into thin wedges
2 tbs red wine vinegar
2tsp extra virgin olive oil
1 garlic clove, crushed
Salt and pepper



Put the beans, parsley, onions and tomatoes in a bowl and combine.

Whisk together the vinegar, oil and garlic in a small bowl until well combined. Season with salt and pepper and drizzle over the salad.



Broad Bean and Coriander Salad

3 cups shelled broad beans
8 slices prosciutto
1 small red onion (Spanish), thinly sliced
2 tbs extra virgin olive oil
1 tbs white wine vinegar
1/2 tsp sugar
2 tbs freshly chopped coriander
1 tbs freshly chopped continental parsley
Salt and freshly ground pepper

Cook broad beans in a saucepan of boiling water for 1 minute. Then drain and rinse under cold water. Remove skins from the beans.

Place prosciutto on a baking tray and place under hot grill. Cook for 1-2 minutes each side until crisp. When cool break into pieces.

Place broad beans, prosciutto and onion in a serving bowl. Drizzle olive oil and vinegar over mixture. Then sprinkle with sugar, coriander and parsley and season with salt and pepper.

Toss well to combine and you are ready to go!

Thanks to Marilyn O'Rourke from the Charnwood garden for this recipe.

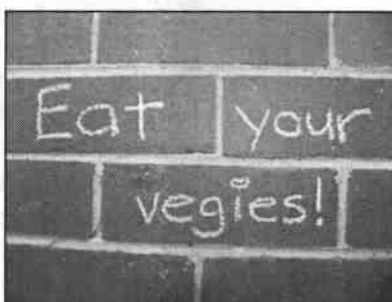
Book nook: COGS library borrowers needed

There are currently over 400 books registered in the Canberra Organic Growers library, all of which are available for browsing and borrowing at every COGS General Meeting.

General meetings are held on the fourth Tuesday of each month (except December) at the Majura Community Centre, Rosevar Place, Dickson at 7.30pm.

Details of each meeting are posted on our website – www.cogs.asn.au.

COGS members can borrow one or two books, which should be returned at the following meeting.



The books are roughly categorised – Organics, Agriculture, Animals (including worms), Herbs, Food & Lifestyle, General Gardening, Soil Mulch Pests Diseases, Food Crops and Propogating.

At the November meeting, we will be selling some of the books not frequently borrowed, duplicated or redundant, together with back issues of *Organic Gardener* magazine. Proceeds will purchase new books for the Library!

Happy reading and gardening,

Margaret Richardson
COGS librarian

ECO MEATS

Your organic butcher

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

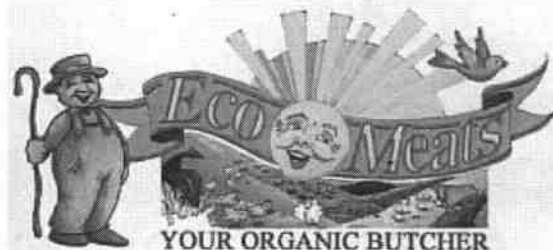
ORGANIC pork and free range organic chickens

FREE RANGE GAME MEAT including emu, goat, crocodile, kangaroo, wallaby, rabbit, duck & venison

CONTINENTAL DELI including pepperoni, cabanossi, trout, salmon, cheeses, organic stock, bread, bagels, dips, salami & smoked meats

FAIR TRADE Jasper coffee

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Specialists in organic pesticide-free meats

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Lathlain Street, Belconnen

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COGS SPRING PLANTING GUIDE

Spring is the main planting season in Canberra. The timing of some plantings may need to be varied depending on the particular year.

Be prepared to protect your frost tender seedlings, as harsh frosts can occur right through spring. Make your own cloches from plastic bottles with the bottoms cut out, or use row covers for larger plantings.

Using seeds

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

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

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

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

Crop rotation

Remember to rotate the crops you grow in a particular garden bed. Crop rotation is a most important practice for organic gardeners. Successive crops should not come from the same plant families nor make the same demands on nutrients ie follow heavy feeders with light feeders.

Also, successive crops should not share the same diseases or attract the same pests - this prevents a build up of disease problems, and reduces losses from pests.

There are numerous crop rotation schemes used, but try to keep to at least a 4 year rotation period and **do not grow members of the same plant family** in the same bed in consecutive years eg tomatoes, capsicums, eggplants and potatoes are all from the solanum family.

Plant varieties

It is important with crops such as cabbage and lettuce to choose the appropriate variety for the time of year. Lettuce varieties best suited to early spring are Cos, Salad Bowl, Butterhead and Mignonette.

	SEP	OCT	NOV
Globe artichoke	T	T	
Jerus. artichoke	T		
Asparagus	S	S	S
French beans		S	S
Beetroot	S	S	S
Broccoli			S
Brussel sprouts		S	S
Cabbage	ST	ST	ST
Capsicum*		S	ST
Carrot	S	S	S
Cauliflower			S
Celery	S	ST	ST
Cucumber*	S	S	ST
Eggplant*	S	S	T
Endive			S
Leeks	ST	ST	T
Lettuce	ST	ST	S
Melons	S	S	ST
Onions	T	T	
Parsnips	S	S	S
Peas	S	S	
Potatoes	S	S	S
Pumpkins*	S	S	ST
Radish	S	S	S
Rhubarb	T	T	
Silverbeet	S	S	ST
Snow peas	S	S	S
Spinach	ST	ST	
Squash*	S	S	ST
Sweet corn		S	ST
Tomatoes*	S	S	ST
Turnips (white)	S		
Zucchini*	S	S	ST

S = seed sowing; T = transplanting

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

Q&A @ COGS

Q “Are old tyres safe to use in the garden?”

A It is tempting to recycle old tyres to reduce environmental waste and provide an easy garden container for vegetables and flowers. Tyres contain toxic materials, but these are tightly bound in vulcanised rubber. The release into water and soil varies on locations, climatic factors and the composition and age of individual tyres.

A very good article in the July 2009 issue of *Organic Gardener* magazine suggests that more research needs to be done before they can safely be used for growing food plants. Up to 49 chemicals could be released from recycled tyres, including zinc, iron, lead, barium and chromium. Potatoes, lettuce and greens tend to accumulate cadmium, whilst carrots can accumulate copper and zinc. The Victorian Environment Protection Authority advises they should not be used in artificial reefs because of toxicity to fish.

So use your own judgement – they would look terrific with flowers but perhaps give them a miss for vegies!

Digging Around the Web

Getting the dirt on the Internet for you!

American Community Gardening Association

www.communitygarden.org

The American Community Garden Association exists to help build community and lobby for community gardening across the United States and Canada. This website offers some good resources and articles about community gardening. Well worth a look.

Forest Edge Permaculture

<http://forestedgepermaculture.com>

Have a look at the permaculture design courses on offer at Mulloon Creek Natural Farm, located near Braidwood. Inspiring!

A different take on vegetables

<http://insideinsides.blogspot.com>

This US blog is mesmerising, with animated MRI scans of various fruit and vegetables, such as mushroom and broccoli. It needs to be viewed to be understood! A good time waster...

Little Sprout's Corner

☺ Get Grubby with Dirt Girl

Dirtgirl World is a fantastic television show for kids focussing on a girl and her vegie garden and the weird and wonderful characters she comes across there. Her garden is complete with worms and chooks. Our verdict—a fantastic way to encourage kids to get stuck into gardening! *Airs on ABC Kids.*
See <http://dirtgirlworld.com.au> for times.

☺ Kitchen Garden Program a hit

Deakin and Melbourne university researchers have found that kids involved in the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program have demonstrated positive changes in their attitudes and knowledge of cooking, food and gardening.

The program operates in 139 schools around Australia to help kids set up kitchen gardens to grow their own fruit, vegies and herbs, while also teaching cooking skills.

The researchers found that the program improves food literacy among school-aged children in participating schools.

This is a new spot in the magazine devoted to kids and gardening. If you want to contribute to the next issue, please email editor@cogs.asn.au.



Useful spot



Old newspapers are ideal to use in the garden, as fodder for the compost, mulch or to make seedling tubes.

COGS NOTICE BOARD

COGS Monthly Meetings

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

24 Aug 2010

Introducing the new COGS Seed Savers Group with Warren Clendenning and Richard Aspden, COGS committee members. Plans to re-establish COGS seed saving activities will be discussed.

28 Sep 2010 To be advised

26 Oct 2010 To be advised

23 Nov 2010 Xmas drinks and book sale

Please see the COGS website for updates on upcoming monthly meetings

Community Gardening 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 see www.canberra.edu.au/communitygardens for more information.

COGS at Floriade

Floriade is Canberra's very own must-see event and is an institution. It is hard to tire of seeing the masses of colourful flowers on exhibition.

This year's theme is *Imagination* and all the usual workshops, exhibits and demonstrations on offer, including some fabulous talks by COGS members.

*11 September-10 October, 2010
Commonwealth Park, Canberra*

Out and About

Trust Organic 19 Aug-5 Sep

Run by the Organic Federation of Australia, this event aims to increase awareness of organic products and the benefits of organic farming. See www.ofa.org.au for more info.

Zero Waste Summit 2010 13-15 Sep, Sydney.

The Summit will explore issues such as climate change and renewable resources. Representatives from federal and local governments, waste and recycling industries, international speakers, non-government organisations and more will be there. See <http://www.acevents.com.au/zerowaste2010> for more information.

Murrumbateman Moving Feast 2-3 Oct

Indulge in some of the Canberra region's finest food and wine at cafes, restaurants, wineries and bed and breakfasts as part of the Murrumbateman Moving Feast.

The Feast is an annual weekend designed to showcase the vibrant village of Murrumbateman and the region's best wine and fresh produce. For more information visit www.murrumbateman.org.au/movingfeast.

Bright Spring Festival 22 Oct-2 Nov, Bright.

An exciting program of art and craft, food and wine in the lovely town of Bright in Victoria. Visit for the Spring Festival and enjoy delights such as open gardens, art exhibitions, bush poetry, street markets and more. Special appearance by ABC's *Gardening Australia* presenter, Angus Stewart. See

www.brightspringfestival.com.au for more info.

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