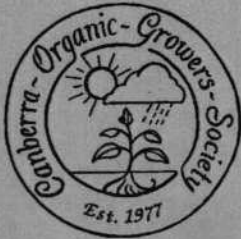




Canberra Organic

Summer 2010-2011: Vol 18 No 4

Community Gardening Conference
Using chooks in your organic garden
A Community Garden in New York City



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

Enquiries

Elizabeth Palmer
6248 8004
info@cogs.asn.au

Postal address

COGS
PO Box 347
Dickson ACT 2602

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.

COGS COMMITTEE

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

President

Keith Colls
6254 5038
president@cogs.asn.au

Vice President

Alison Killen
6259 2940
trida@optusnet.com.au

Secretary & Public Officer

Alex Satrapa
0407 705 332
grail@goldweb.com.au

Treasurer

Adrienne Fazekas
6247 5882
afazekas@yahoo.com.au

Membership Officer

Sarah Todd
0407 037 060
toddsatpg.com.au

Librarian

Margaret Richardson
6248 8306
ainsrich@grapevine.com.au

Editor

Angela Spencer
6258 0918
angstevo@dodo.com.au

Seed Saving

Richard Aspden
Richard@pathfinderpm.com

Warren Clendenning

wclendenning@mac.com

General committee members

Wayde Margetts
0402 344 367
wayde.marg@gmail.com

David Pearson

David.pearson@canberra.edu.au

Monica van Wensveen

6255 4332
Monica.vanwensveen@gmail.com

Web Manager

Mary Colls
webmanager@cogs.asn.au

Telephone enquiries

Elizabeth Palmer
6248 8004

COMMUNITY GARDENS

COGS operates 12 community gardens in the Canberra region, with the support of the ACT Government.

Charnwood

Haydn Burgess
burmo70@optusnet.com.au

Cook

Wayde Margetts
0402 344 367
wayde.marg@gmail.com

Cotter

Richard Horobin & Patricia Georgee
0422 702 846
richardh9935@gmail.com

Dickson

Monica van Wensveen
6255 4332
monica.vanwensveen@gmail.com

Erindale

Christine Carter
6231 5862
ccarter@netspeed.com.au

Holder

Heather Campbell
campdavid@netspeed.com.au

Kaleen

John Grubb
0419 290 546
the.grubbs@gmail.com

Kambah

Sonya Kershaw
6296 4631
bailsa64@hotmail.com

Northside

Bob McAlister
0431 088 885
bob.mcalister@bigpond.com

Oaks Estate

Margaret Harrap
0402 114 653
mharrap44@msn.com

O'Connor

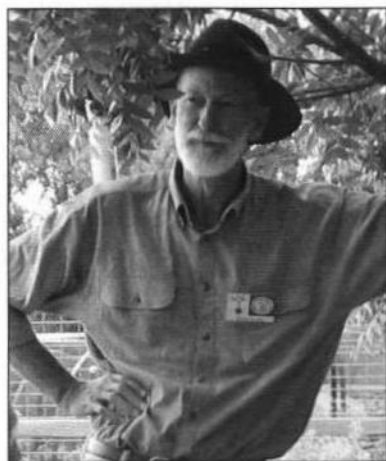
Adele Morrison
Adele.morrison@anu.edu.au

Queanbeyan

Monica Donnan
queanbeyangardens@gmail.com

Backyard Gardener's Group

Margaret Richardson
ainsrich@grapevine.com.au



President's Report: Summer 2010

Rainfall this year has given us the best start to our gardening year for a long time.

All the gardens are looking lush and green and, with any luck, we should have good harvests later in the season.

In the last three months we have received about 225mm of rain compared with the long-term average for the same period of 160mm. This has replenished the sub-soil moisture and almost filled the water storages. At the end of November, ACT dam levels were at about 89% capacity. This has resulted in the first easing of water restrictions in the ACT for a long time. However, as water is the major and an increasing cost of running the COGS community gardens, there will still be some continuing restrictions in our gardens additional to the ACT water conservation measures now in force. These restrictions, and the reasons behind them, are explained elsewhere in this issue.

It is time to start thinking about what you are going to put into the COGS display at the Canberra Horticultural Society's Autumn show in February. The Show is an excellent opportunity to publicise community gardens in general and COGS in particular. Two COGS gardens will be open to the public in February as part of the Australian Open Garden Scheme. The Kaleen garden will be open on the 5th and 6th February and the O'Connor garden will be open on the 26th and 27th of February. In the past, these events generated a lot of interest amongst the general public and your support again this year would be appreciated. Thanks very much to the plot holders who make these events possible each year.

COGS once again participated in Floriade, providing a series of 18 talks on organic backyard gardening at the kitchen garden display. These talks were very well received. COGS has continued to publicise backyard and community gardening through the beginners organic gardening courses and composting workshops conducted through CIT Solutions and Canberra Museums and Galleries programs. COGS has also been chosen for the cover picture on the Canberra district *White Pages* for 2011/2012. We hope this will provide good publicity for community gardening in general and COGS in particular.

The major event for COGS in October was the Community Gardening Conference which was organised in conjunction with the University of Canberra. About one hundred participants attended from all States (except NT) and from the UK. It was a very successful event which brought together gardeners, garden managers, government policy makers, politicians and academics from a broad range of backgrounds. More information on the conference is provided elsewhere in this issue. For those who were unable to attend, downloadable copies of all the papers presented over the two days will soon be available from a link on the COGS website.

Several of the conference participants were members of the Australian City Farms and Community Gardens Network. COGS is a member of this network, which represents community gardens and city farms throughout Australia. On the day after the conference, COGS hosted the annual general meeting of the network. For information on the network and its role see <http://communitygarden.org.au/>. A new edition of their magazine *Community Harvest* will be available online soon and gives a good overview of our Community Gardening Conference.

An issue which arose from the Community Gardening Conference was the need for the COGS Committee to have a much clearer idea of the needs and wishes of our members so that we are better able to focus on those activities which are of most interest to members. With this in mind, a researcher from the Canberra University will be undertaking a study for COGS to identify those needs and wishes. Your participation is vital for the success of the study. Please see the notice about this study elsewhere in this issue and consider volunteering for the focus groups and/or the online survey.

The last COGS meeting this year will be the COGS Christmas Party on 23 November, at which there will also be a gardening book sale (to declutter the COGS library). I would like to thank everyone who contributed to COGS during the year and, on behalf of the Committee, wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year and look forward to another successful year for COGS in 2011.

Keith

CANBERRA ORGANIC

Volume 18 Number 4 (Issue 71)

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
Canberra Organic
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)

Articles in the magazine do not necessarily reflect the views of COGS. Products and services offered by advertisers are not specifically endorsed by COGS.

Editor's note

A long-bearded passionate television gardening celebrity asking why we can't all buy food locally and seasonally, or grow our own. A Greens senator suggesting that community gardeners use the social media to spread the message. A UK eco-activist noticing the lack of statistics on community gardening in Australia, saying community gardeners need a "compelling narrative" to get more attention from policy-makers. Earnest local government representatives and an indignant local mayor. Plus lots of COGS members, academics, gardeners from around the country and other interested people.

This interesting crowd – attending the Community Gardening Conference at the University of Canberra in early October – were all indicative of the rise in interest and existence of community gardening around Australia and the world.

The time is ripe for community gardening. Community gardens are unearthing themselves around the country, sprouting up in public spaces all over the place. Academics, governments and the media have latched onto the concept of community gardening as just one way to help achieve society's environmental, sustainability and food security needs.

It's an exciting time for COGS – the conference has provided an impetus for introspection, discussion and new ideas to help ensure COGS continues to have a relevant place in the dialogue about community gardening and environmental sustainability in the Canberra region.

It's important to note, however, that community gardens are not necessarily a panacea for social or environmental change. Community gardening is just one element in the broader social change that needs to happen to achieve environmental sustainability.

COGS President Keith Colls has provided a synopsis of the Community Gardening Conference in this issue of *Canberra Organic* for those interested members unable to attend. We also take a look at community gardening New York style, thanks to a member of the Kaleen garden. Alex Satrapa also gives us an insight into keeping chickens as an organic gardening practice.

Happy summer gardening!

Angela

*Right: one of my girls,
Marilyn the Isa Brown*



Contents

Regulars

- 3 President's Report - Summer 2010
- 4 Editor's Note
- 6 Aussie Organic News
- 6 Weather and Water Watch
- 8 Around the COGS Gardens
- 12 Summer Tips, Digging Around the Web
- 22 Book Nook: COGS Library
- 25 Summer Planting Guide
- 26 Q&A @ COGS, Little Sprouts Corner
- 27 COGS Notice Board, Out and About

People and produce

- 13 Community Gardening Conference 2011
- 16 Chooks in my organic garden
- 18 I ♥ NYC: Green Thumb Oasis in Concrete Jungle
- 21 COGS Creations: Recipes to the Rescue

Pick of the season

- 13 Summer planting: Zucchini
- 15 Summer harvest: Apricots

Green ideas

- 17 Book Review: Green Harvest

Index of Advertisers

When you use the services of our advertisers, please let them know you saw their ad in Canberra Organic.

Conservation Council ACT	20
Holiday house, Malua Bay	21
ACT Vegetarian Society	21
Eco Meats	22

Contributors to this issue

Articles

Warren Clendenning, Keith Colls, COGS Convenors, Peter Cornhill, Andrew Hodges, Alison Killen, Margaret Richardson, Alex Satrapa, Angela Spencer, Sarah Todd, Monica van Wensveen, Joanne Widdup.



Photos

Simone Dilkara, Adrienne Fazekas, Margaret Richardson, Alex Satrapa, Angela Spencer, Monica van Wensveen, Joanne Widdup.

Cover photos

FRONT COVER: A globe artichoke

ABOVE: Welcome to my garden!

BACK COVER: Summer fruits

Articles and photos by Angela Spencer unless otherwise stated.

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

Aussie Organic News

Organic gastronomy

RMIT University researchers are seeking volunteers to participate in a planned study into the behaviours and beliefs of organic consumers. The *Organic Consumption Study* will investigate whether those who eat organic food have different levels of agricultural toxins in their bodies than people eating non-organic food. This comes after recent US studies into children which found that eating organic food compared with non-organic food resulted in reduced organophosphate pesticide residues. To access the survey, see www.surveymonkey.com/s/OCS.

Australia's wild honeybees threatened

A Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation report, *Pollen Aware*, has highlighted the vulnerability of Australia's wild European honeybee population to the highly destructive Varoa mite, which is affecting bees worldwide. The report found that the 65% of Australia's crops relying on bees for pollination could be seriously affected by an outbreak of this parasite.

Ancient crop to help WA farmers

Trials by University of Western Australia researchers have found that a hardy ancient Russian oilseed crop, camelina, may prove to be a lifeline for WA's struggling farmers. Camelina grows best on sandy soils, needs less fertiliser than canola and is drought and frost tolerant. The UWA's Professor William Erskine said the gluten-free seed has many applications as a healthy food ingredient and is being used as a biofuel in the USA.

Not a bird or a plane...it's super pea!

The University of Sydney's Plant Breeding Institute recently introduced a new variety of field pea, known as PRL131, which has improved disease resistance and higher yields. It was produced using conventional pedigree plant breeding methods and is suitable for human consumption or stock feed and would offer grain growers in northern NSW and southern QLD a short season, high-yielding white-seeded field pea.

Items sourced from Australian Food News

Weather and water watch

Here are the Bureau of Meteorology's long term temperature and rainfall statistics for the ACT region. For more weather info visit the Bureau of Meteorology's ACT website: www.bom.gov.au/weather/act

TEMPERATURE	December	January	February
Canberra airport	max 26.1	max 28	max 27.1
	min 11.4	min 13.2	min 13.1

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

RAINFALL	December	January	February
Canberra airport	53.8 mm	58.5 mm	56.4 mm
	5.8 rain days	5.6 rain days	5.1 rain days

Seasonal forecast: December-February

- The maximum temperature outlook for SE Australia is expected to be cooler than average.
- The outlook for rainfall for SE Australia is wetter than average conditions, due to warm conditions in the Indian Ocean, cool conditions in equatorial Pacific Ocean as well as the current La Nina.

Water use and restrictions

- At 4 November 2010, Canberra's dams were 88.59% full.
- The daily water target is currently 104ML - 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.

Actew eases water restrictions in the ACT

Actew has ended the high-level water restrictions that have been in place in the ACT for the past 8 years. From November 1, the ACT will follow "Permanent Water Conservation Measures" instead, which Actew says will "ensure water use across the community is sustainable", putting the onus back on the community for water conservation. Water restrictions have been ceased due to vastly improved dam storage levels, a wetter-than-average weather outlook into 2011, the Cotter Dam enlargement and an official end to drought conditions. Actew's Managing Director, Mark Sullivan said Canberrans have learned the hard lessons of drought and would now always be water-wise.

For details of Actew's Permanent Water Conservation Measures, please see www.actew.com.au.

The COGS water allowance and watering rules

The recent easing of water restrictions has come as a relief to many COGS gardeners. Even more welcome has been the above average Spring rainfall. The water allocation in the COGS community gardens however remains unchanged. This allocation, of 54 kl/100sqm of paid plot area, allows COGS to budget for the cost of water use. It is very important that gardeners continue to use water responsibly and not suddenly think that they can use as much as they want simply because ACTEW has removed the time constraints on watering. Plants do not suddenly need watering every day.

For the past nine years the committee has monitored the water use in the majority of the gardens to determine the level of the water allowance. The annual plot fees are based on this expected cost of water. Most gardens have remained within this allowance each year except in cases of temporarily undetected leaks or of easily identifiable bad watering practices - flood irrigation, watering past the point of runoff or daily watering of everything.

In addition to using water within the allowance, community gardeners are required to obey the COGS watering rules at all times in all of the gardens. These rules are detailed below and will also be displayed in all the gardens.

Good watering practices are important and include

- regular but infrequent deep watering
- giving different plants appropriate amounts of water
- plants do not suddenly need watering every day just because you are allowed to
- water during the cooler parts of the day - either early morning or evening
- water the soil not the foliage - water sprayed onto leaves is wasted through evaporation and can encourage fungal diseases

COGS Community Gardens Watering Rules as of 1 November 2010

1. The ACTEW Permanent Water Conservation Measures must be complied with at all times in COGS gardens. Details are available at www.actew.com.au
Under these measures handheld hoses fitted with trigger nozzles, buckets and watering cans may be used at any time. Gardens may only be watered without causing pooling or runoff.
Drippers may only be used between 6 pm and 9 am.
2. Sprinklers are not allowed in COGS gardens at any time, even when ACTEW allows their use.
3. Tap timers are not allowed in COGS gardens
4. No unattended watering is allowed in COGS gardens. You must be present at all times while you are watering unless you have specifically delegated this responsibility to another gardener who is prepared to take on the responsibility for abiding by the rules.
5. The water must be turned off at the meter when no one is in the garden - this is the responsibility of the last gardener to leave

Failure to comply with these rules will result in an official warning from either the garden convenor or the COGS committee. A second offence will result in forfeiture of your plot and eviction from the garden.

Some practices which contravene the watering rules, but gardeners have attempted to excuse, include:

- leaving hoses running on the ground while they are working in their plot
- taking the nozzle off the hose to water
- filling trenches with water
- using a sprinkler
- leaving drippers on while they leave the garden for a couple of hours

Around the COGS Gardens

Charnwood

Things are bustling at the Charnwood garden, which tends to happen when the warm weather finally bestows its presence on us! The lovely rain over winter has meant that plants seem to be growing a lot faster than the same time last year – including the dastardly weeds! Plot holders have sprung into action preparing the soil, planting baby seedlings, weeding and mulching. Piles of poo and hay adorn most of the garden beds, indicating imminent action.

We had an eventful AGM, with a new convenor being elected. The Charnwood gardeners would like to thank Alison Killen for all her hard work as convenor and warmly welcome Haydn Burgess as our new convenor. We also dealt with the need to develop a plan of action for the increasing number of communal fruit trees we now have – hopefully some of the trees will be productive this year.

Gita Curnow is our busy plot co-ordinator (thanks for your efforts) and at last report, we had 5 eager beavers on the waiting list, with some plots soon to become vacant. The Charnwood garden is thus very full at the moment and is looking to be quite productive for the summer season.

Angela Spencer

Cook

The Cook garden has entered the new gardening year with quite a few new gardeners, as some of our community left Canberra, plan to leave Canberra, have their own gardens to create at home, or have simply run out of time to garden and are happy for someone else to have the opportunity. Our waiting list was reduced briefly, until the call of Spring saw several potential new gardeners express an interest and the list is now back up to nine.

The weather co-operated for our working bee and BBQ on the 31st of October, after having had several previous barbeque intentions abandoned due to rain. A reasonable number of gardeners came along, and not just the usual suspects. We ate appropriately seasonal produce, including artichokes, asparagus, broadbeans and leeks. Mario shared some of his tomato seedlings with those present.

We look forward to the summer crops, and a season more suited to growing plants than we had last summer.

Wayde Margetts

Dickson

The new Dickson garden is a hive of late spring activity. The new plots – situated around the back of Dickson College in the old agriculture block – are being turned over, manured, mulched and planted by a new group of enthusiastic organic gardeners and their families.

The Dickson College has offered us fantastic facilities, including a glasshouse, a set of communal tools, a myriad of storage sheds and what will become a COGS training classroom in 2011. A major clean up in October has left things as close to sparkling as a garden can be.

Thanks to Wayde, Adrienne and Andrew, we have a new watering system. The existing fruit trees have been given a chance to thrive, with pruning and a bit of TLC and water. We have a group dedicated to establishing communal herb patches throughout the garden, and another group establishing vertical plantings of spreading vines like pumpkins and cucumbers.



Adrienne, Wayde and Andrew installing plumbing at the Dickson garden

There's also a concrete tank and unloved pond that a group from the College is converting into an aquaponics trial.

We even have a resident pair of magpies who've quickly learned that garden action = worms.

We have a full complement of 13 plot holders, with four people on the waiting list.

Monica van Wensveen

Sprinklers may not be used at any time in a COGS community garden

Holder

The Holder Garden is full. A number of new folks joined the garden over winter and there was lots of busy digging, weeding and plot preparations. The garden is humming with lots of friendly faces and new growth.

Folks are harvesting asparagus, broccoli, rocket, parsley, silverbeet, spinach, kale, leeks, nettles, lettuce, parsnip and cabbage. Broad beans are happily flowering. Early plantings of peas, snow peas and onion are in and there are some lovely plantings of garlic well on their way to a bumper crop. Early plantings of potatoes have had their little tips nipped by a late frost. The fruit trees have all flowered and hopefully the bees have done their job. We have many new grapevines planted along the boundary fence and some lovely new olive trees donated by an ex-member who left to take up a new job in Launceston.

Our AGM this year doubled as a seed exchange with many varieties of beans, herbs and pumpkin seeds changing hands. The convenor's baton (El Presidente) has passed to Heather this year. Many thanks to Conrad for his work as convenor.

To help make the most of our enlarged membership we have instigated a parliamentary approach to garden governance by giving people the opportunity to nominate for various "ministerial" roles, including Infrastructure (lawn mower and tool maintenance), Labour (working bees), Works (compost bin overseer), Police Liaison (for contacting police in case of break-ins) and various others. We have all the roles filled and an enthusiastic garden committee for the next year.

We followed our AGM with our first working bee of the season and look forward to our newly-appointed Minister for Labour organising a second year of twilight working bees and BBQs which successfully ran last season on the first Tuesday afternoon of each month.

Our garden has been extended to the south in return for giving up some land to make way for a new bike path. We suddenly feel very rich with all this new space and are looking forward to some good discussions about



Steve at the Holder Garden checking the temperature of the bokashi concoction.

clever things we can do with all this land.

All that frantic weeding over winter left us with a huge pile of couch. Steve, Vickie and Simone have been turning this into lovely compost by mixing it with food waste collected from a greengrocer and old folks' home and a biological inoculant similar to liquid bokashi. It is the same process being used by Goulburn Mulwaree Council and Lachlan Council to ferment their food scraps and garden waste except on a MUCH smaller scale. The trick is to get the temperature up over 55 degrees for at least a few days in order to kill off the couch and any other seeds or diseases. As the photo of Steve (below) shows, we have been reaching these temperatures without too much trouble. If you want to know more about the fermentation/composting process, contact Simone at sdilkara@pcug.org.au.

In other news, three of our five bee hives swarmed in the first week of October. Luckily our bee keepers were never far away and each swarm was re-homed on the same day. To date, there have been no civilian bee stings for which we are very grateful although our apiarists have not always gotten off so lightly.

Our enormous resident blue tongue lizard was accidentally unearthed during the winter weeding bonanza but was successfully covered over and lived to tell the tale. His main role in life is to eat snails and to keep us on our toes as he always looks a little like a snake when he is hiding amongst the plants.

Simone Dilkara

O'Connor

The O'Connor garden is slowly feeling Spring seep into its bones and is becoming more lively by the day! The garden welcomed three new gardeners since the last magazine and it is a joy to see new faces and new approaches.

The water tanks have been filling up with all the late Winter and early Spring rain and gardeners are using the water to good effect. With the daunting task of finishing the landscaping around the tanks (tonnes of heavy clay soil had to be shifted), the garden was lucky enough to have the assistance of over 20 ANU Environment students. In return for a light lunch, the students enthusiastically finished the landscaping and even helped with pathway maintenance.

Many of us are eagerly awaiting Melbourne Cup day so we can start planting our tomatoes. Whilst one gardener has already put tomatoes out (under cover!) the risk of frost is ever present.

Other gardeners have taken the risk with curcubits such as pumpkins and zucchinis and what hasn't been demolished by the slaters and snails is growing strongly.

Our garden seems to be having a stronger focus on soil improvement with many gardeners having their own composting system on site. Together with the communal composting area and various brews of manure teas, the garden is fast becoming worm central station. Much to the joy of the friendly resident magpies who greatly appreciate the juicy snacks that are revealed with all the digging and planting!

Elly Cotsell

Queanbeyan

The Queanbeyan Garden would firstly like to thank Rowan for his time in the role as convenor. Rowan has now moved on and a very 'newbie' convenor has taken over, me!

The garden has been very quiet over the last few weeks - I know that the cold weather and onset of early darkness has made it hard for some to work in their gardens. But daylight savings is now in play and bodies are showing up.

We also have a few new people to welcome: Richard, Paula, Lyn, Kate and Harry. But sadly, we also say goodbye to Rowan, Helen and Brian. The garden does have some vacancies and I am heavily encouraging new members to come through the gates. Please feel free to let people know.

Monica Donnan

Theodore

Well, an era in the history of COGS gardens is coming to a end. While it has happened before in the past, this time it looks to be permanent. The Theodore garden is closing.

Despite the enthusiastic gardeners that have been a part of the garden and the magnificent soil to be cultivated

there, a number of factors have culminated in the closure of the garden over time.

We had a low number of gardeners, despite attempts to attract more ploholders. The garden was basically hidden from sight, making it a vandal's delight. Also, lately we've had big problems with water, especially at the beginning of the year, when we experienced a very expensive hidden leak in the water pipe leading to the garden. Lessons have been taught and learned.

So, it would now appear that the future of the garden is one of unfettered wild vegies growing in the wilderness of long, languid grasses as the cultivators fade away to other pastures and Nature reclaims what is ultimately hers.

Beware wild pumpkin vines knocking on your door!

Michael Bell

Backyard Gardener's Group

Home Gardeners? Backyard Gardeners?

It's all the same to us. There are now 24 active members of our group, and we meet at a different member's home once a month to share ideas, problems and our passion for organic growing.

We have a link on the COGS website so you can keep in touch with our happenings!

Terrific ideas we have seen in action at our meetings include wonderful compost to a recipe, a large orchard completely netted, an automated grey-water system and many wonderful vegies growing. Morning tea is a feature too.

If interested in joining, see page 23 of this issue.

Margaret Richardson

Can't remember where you read that story about carrots in Canberra Organic?

Problem solved! We now have a comprehensive index of articles published in the magazine from 2000-2010.

The index can be found on the COGS website-www.cogs.asn.au- or in hard copy form at monthly general meetings.

Thanks to Margaret Richardson for compiling this new index.



The Backyard Gardener's Group enjoying morning tea at Jane's house.

Recent changes to COGS constitution

At the general meeting of members on Tuesday 28th September 2010, members unanimously approved, by special resolution, some changes to the COGS Constitution proposed by the COGS Committee.

The major changes are designed to ensure that the COGS Committee has greater flexibility in the COGS disciplinary process where it appears that the behaviour of a member is putting the safety and wellbeing of other members at risk, and immediate action is warranted.

Other minor changes were also made.

Summary of the changes:

1. Changes to Rule 9 of the Constitution

These changes were intended to improve the COGS Committee's ability to protect the safety and welfare of other garden plot holders in the event of disciplinary action being taken against a plot holder and there being concerns about the safety and welfare of other plot holders in the garden as a result of that plot holder's behaviour.

The amendments enable the Committee to impose an interim sanction on a member against whom disciplinary action is being taken, pending the finalisation of the disciplinary procedures set out in Rule 9. For example, the interim action might involve requiring that member not to visit the garden of which

they are a member pending the outcome of the disciplinary action.

The rules are not restricted to the actions of members in relation to gardens, but they were prompted because of a difficult situation in one garden which exposed gaps in the Committee's powers to deal quickly with the problem.

None of the changes affect the rights of the member undergoing disciplinary action to a hearing, and to appeal against any final disciplinary resolution.

2. Changes to Appendix 4 of the Constitution (General Community Garden Rules)

These changes:

(i) make it clear that COGS garden members (plot holders) must abide by any water rules issued by the COGS committee when watering in COGS gardens, and when watering in COGS gardens, and

(ii) update the reference to the relevant organic standard.

The changes can be viewed in the COGS Constitution on the COGS website at www.cogs.asn.au

Sarah Todd
COGS Membership Secretary

Seed Saver's Group Update

Following on from the first meeting of the Seed Savers Group, a small but enthusiastic group planned to have further productive seed saving training sessions. Meetings will be held once a quarter.

The group agreed it had two aims, which are:

1. To instruct, train and educate gardeners about seed saving and the associated practical techniques.
2. To maintain pure strains of selected vegetables and establish and maintain a vegetable seed bank for Canberra and COGS.

Activities planned for the future include presentations and workshops for COGS and the Canberra community.

The group plans to save a wide range of true-to-type seeds from vegetables, flowers and plants grown in the Canberra area. A list of Curators for a range of vegetable seeds was compiled, in a bid to enhance the seed saving skills and experience of the group as a whole.

If any COGS member would like to join the group, please contact either Richard or Warren, who's contact details appear on page 2 of this edition of *Canberra Organic*.

The next meeting of the group will be held early in 2011.

Warren Clendenning

Top tips for Summer

☺ Success with successive planting

Why not think about planting successive crops of some summer vegies that are quick to mature, such as rocket, zucchini, or even carrots, to extend the harvest season and to get the pick of the crop. If you plant more seeds or seedlings every few weeks, you can harvest well into Autumn.

☺ Lettuce save money at the shops

So-called gourmet salad leaves and lettuces are expensive to buy at the supermarket, but are easy and quick to grow in Canberra in the summer months. Pop in a pile of seeds, such as mesclun, cos lettuce or rocket, give them regular seaweed extract or compost tea drinks and watch them grow!

☺ Water plants wisely

Especially in the warmer months, watering your vegetable garden efficiently will save you time (hand watering), money (on water bills) and give you more produce. Directing the water in the most-needed places, without wastage, makes sense. Vegetables such as corn, celery, lettuce, spinach and Chinese cabbage need a decent and regular watering, while plantings of onions, tomatoes (unless flowering), potatoes and broccoli are happy with less watering.

☺ Happy little vegemites

Reports from the Charnwood garden is that a vegemite soup (vegemite mixed with water) will help lure those pesky slaters to their death (sorry for the violence!). It seems to work when placed in those green snail traps from Bunnings (or try using yoghurt containers) sunk into the ground. Good news for those of you who suffered from nibbled bean plants last Summer!



"I know that if odour were visible, as colour is, I'd see the summer garden in rainbow clouds".

Robert Bridges, "Testament of Beauty"

Digging Around the Web

Getting the dirt on the Internet for you!

Greens Senator Christine Milne's personal blog
<http://sowingseedswithchristinemilne.wordpress.com>

This is the personal gardening blog of Greens Deputy Leader and Tasmanian Senator Christine Milne and is tagged with the purpose of showing "how gardening can help grow a better world". Christine is a passionate home gardener and this blog holds her gardening tips and stories and also offers a growing guide suited to colder climates. In the blog, Christine says: "With my focus on climate change, I see gardens – home gardens, community gardens, school gardens – including eating local as a key part of growing a sustainable future". Well worth a look!

Climate Xchange

<http://canberra.climatexchange.org.au>

This is the website of Climate Xchange, a not-for-profit initiative designed to provide an information exchange for all things green in the local community, with the stated objective of "sharing climate solutions". It sports an events calendar (to which community groups can post), a forum (exploring topics such as sustainable living and energy) and a green directory. Verdict – useful!

Rap ode to organic farming

<http://www.grist.org/article/2010-10-19-the-worlds-first-organic-dairy-rap-video-yeo-valley>

For a bit of light relief, have a look at this YouTube video, which extols the virtues of organic UK dairy farm, Yeo Valley, in rap. Yes, you read correctly, in rap. Very funny...

Slow food and backyard ovens

<http://www.slowfoodandhandforgedtools.com.au>

Aussies Tracy and her blacksmith hubby Pete make hand-forged backyard pizza oven tools. Their website is packed with pics of DIY wood-fired ovens, pizza dough and topping recipes, tips on firing your oven and an online store selling tools such as old style bread knives, dough cutters, mezzalunas and pizza shovels. Beautiful tools!



Community Gardening Conference 2010

In conjunction with the University of Canberra, COGS held its first Community Gardening Conference at the University of Canberra on the 7th and 8th of October.

Community gardens play an important role in the promotion of urban health, social inclusion, active civic participation and practices of sustainable living in urban environments. High quality, informed planning policy and practice improves the sustainability and liveability of our cities. The purpose of this conference was contribute to these goals by exploring community gardening practices, academic evaluations of local food systems and current policy initiatives. It brought together representatives of different forms of community gardening practices in Australia to share knowledge, promote dialogue and assess best practice to enable policy makers and urban planners to engage more productively and sustainably with local food systems through community gardens and city farms.

Nearly 100 delegates
Attended the conference.
Delegates came from a wide range of backgrounds and geographical areas, all States (except NT) were represented, two from UK, many from ACT.

There were 37 speakers. The speakers provided a broad perspective of views on the value of community gardens for the community and practical aspects of their implementation. Topics included the contribution of community gardening to food sustainability and security, health, social inclusion and community building, the establishment of food communities, dealing with green waste, equity and access to local food. Other papers also focussed on planning issues associated with community gardening and the practical issues of designing and managing community gardens successfully. The importance of engaging in the political processes, particularly in relation to planning sustainable urban futures, were emphasised in some papers.

For COGS, the key messages to come out of the conference in relation to the further development of community gardening were:

- ◇ There's a need to be clear on the community garden model and its constituents—ie differentiate between an allotment, grassroots schemes and direct intervention.

- ◇ It is important to gain credibility in the community by collecting facts and figures—being confident on the beneficiaries and stakeholders of community gardening.
- ◇ Community gardening groups need to deliver a compelling narrative for their motivations and achievements.
- ◇ Find a spokesperson to deliver the community gardening message.
- ◇ Be proactive with policymakers and the media by demonstrating community gardening.
- ◇ Recognise and celebrate the fact that community gardening is an international and national movement!

These messages have clear implications for COGS. The Committee will be exploring these implications



COGS members at the Community Gardening Conference

during the coming months. As a first step, we will be undertaking a fairly comprehensive study on the needs and wishes of members so that we are better able to focus on those activities which are of most interest to members. Without the broad support of the COGS membership the committee is unable to develop COGS activities and community gardens further. Please see the notice below about participation in this study.

A new Community Gardening Conference page will be appearing on the COGS website shortly. The conference program and all conference papers will be available for downloading from a link on the page.

*Keith Colls
COGS President*

Have your say in the future of COGS

In the near future, all COGS members will be asked to complete an on-line survey. The results will ensure COGS provides services and activities that members want. The study will be supervised by David Pearson and Keith Colls of the COGS Committee. The work will be carried out by Walter Steensby, COGS member and Canberra University researcher.

If you wish to contribute to the study by participating in a focus group, or have any questions, please contact David Pearson at david.pearson@canberra.edu.au.

The success of this important study depends on you having your say – so when asked please complete the questionnaire.

Summer planting: ZUCCHINI

The delightfully named *Cucurbita pepo* is a reliable and prolific member of any summer vegetable garden.

Although they're originally from the Americas, the name "zucchini" comes from the Italian word for squash. They're also known as courgettes, summer squash (not surprisingly) and the ones that grow to the size of a baseball bat while your head is turned are called marrows.

The most common varieties grown in this region are Black Beauty and Blackjack, both of which produce large, dark green fruit. Other popular varieties include Lebanese (smaller and pale green), 'Golden' zucchini (long, yellow fruit) and 'Rondo' zucchinis (small and round).



Site and soil

Zucchinis like a sunny position in the garden and prefer well-drained soil with lots of organic matter.

Planting

Zucchinis need warmth, so wait until the frosts are over before planting. They're easy to grow from seed – plant a few seeds 3-4 cm deep in a small hill (this provides some extra drainage). They'll take 6-10 days to germinate, then thin the seedlings down to the strongest plant.

If you're tempted to grow more than one plant: 1) remember how many surplus zucchinis you had last year, and 2) make sure you give them enough room for good air circulation – 1 to 1.5m each should help to keep your plants healthy.

Growing

Zucchinis mature quickly in the right conditions, usually in around 6-8 weeks. Once they're fruiting, they tend to be thirsty – make sure you water the soil and not the leaves and mulch well. They're also quite partial to liquid fertiliser, especially in poor soil.

Zucchinis are pollinated by insects and if your garden's not buzzing, you may need to pollinate the flowers yourself. Use a cotton wool bud to take pollen from the male flower (the one on a long stalk) to the female flower (closer to the stem, with a swelling behind the petals) – look inside the flower for a golden crown-like structure. It might take a couple of weeks to know if you've been successful.

Harvesting

Once the plant starts to bear fruit, harvest regularly to encourage continuous production. As the fruit gets bigger, it will become tougher and less flavoursome. It's best to cut fruit with a sharp knife rather than pull it from the plant.

Problems

Invariably, at the end of a hot summer, plants will succumb to powdery mildew (like a white powder on the leaves). Remove the infected leaves – but chances are you might be saturated with zucchini by this stage anyway.

Poor drainage can lead to fungal problems on the roots and slugs and snails can also be a menace.

Choosing and using

Choose firm, small zucchinis with a glossy, unmarked skin. Store for a couple of days only in the crisper.

Zucchinis don't have a strong flavour, so can be added to many meals. To prepare, just wash and chop, slice or grate. They can be eaten raw, steamed, barbequed, grilled, sautéed, stuffed or baked in a frittata or cake. I recently came across a great idea for using hollowed slices of larger fruit as poaching rings for eggs.

When buying zucchini flowers, avoid any signs of wilting. If possible, use them on the day of picking. They are delicious stuffed with cheese or rice, or dipped in light batter and fried.

References and further reading

- Organic Vegetable Gardening (Annette McFarlane)
- Vegetable Gardening @ the Vegetable Patch (www.thevegetablepatch.com)
- Indolent Kitchen Gardening (Libby Smith)
- Farmers Market Companion (Viking Books)

Monica van Wensveen

Summer harvest: APRICOTS

The window of opportunity is small for these fragrant summer wonders, so open the shutters and enjoy!

Apricots are natives of China, where they've been cultivated for more than 3000 years. Their origins are near the Russian border in the north-east of the country and they're now grown in most temperate countries around the world. Popular varieties in this region include Moorpark, Tilton and Trevatt.

Like many stone fruits, they are both demanding and vulnerable. They require good soil and nutrients and are susceptible to a range of diseases and to early and late frosts, which can cause damage to stems and buds.

Location and preparation

Choose a site that is out of the wind and not in a valley. In winter, valleys can form frost hollows; in summer they can trap humidity - potentially leading to diseases such as canker and rust, respectively. In addition, drainage is likely to be poor, potentially causing root disease.

Prepare your soil as you would for organic vegetables - with plenty of compost, manure and other organic matter. Green manure provides a good nitrogen boost prior to planting or even as an inter-crop.

Planting and growing

Apricot trees are self-pollinating, so you'll get results even if you only have space for one. Dig a wide hole and make the sides rough to allow the roots to penetrate. Fill with water and allow it to drain, then place the tree in the hole. Replace the soil, ensuring the surface level is no deeper than it was in the pot.

Water once a week - more often in very hot weather and while the tree is establishing. Infrequent deep soaking encourages strong root development whereas light watering promotes production of surface roots. Be careful not to overwater, especially in winter.

Keep weeds down around your tree, as they compete for resources and studies suggest they may be alternative hosts or reservoirs for some pests and diseases once the summer fruit has been harvested. A layer of mulch will help suppress weeds and retain moisture - avoid contact with the trunk.

Pruning

Pruning is essential for tree health, to improve size, colour and quality of fruit and to promote regular bearing. Formative pruning develops a strong, healthy branch structure before the trees start bearing.



At the very minimum, prune trees so no branches cross one another. More advanced gardeners should use formative pruning to create a vase shape with three or four main limbs dividing into two secondary limbs. Lateral branches will grow from these limbs and fruiting spurs will develop on two year and older wood.

It is essential to use clean, sharp tools and to wipe the blades with methylated spirits between trees. For apricots, prune straight after harvest providing the weather is fine and warm, removing old,

crowded or weak spurs.

Harvesting, choosing and using

Harvest carefully as the fruit is fragile and bruises easily. Pick them as soon as they're ripe and remember that fruit from the same plant might not ripen at the same time - fruit from the sunny side may ripen earlier.

Apricots are generally available from November to February, with a supply peak around January. Ripe apricots come in many shades, but are never green. Choose fruit that is plump, uniformly coloured and that has a bit of give without being soft. Ripe fruit can be kept in the fridge for two or three days.

Eat them as is (yum!), dried, stewed in pies, as a compote or as a jam. See Andrew's jam recipe later in this magazine.

References and further information

- Botanica's Organic Gardening (Judyth McLeod)
- Pruning stone fruit (Canberra Organic Autumn 2008; Adrienne Fazekas)
- Organic fruit production (NSW Department of Primary Industries Primefact 805)
- Planting basics for new Canberra gardeners (Yarralumla Nursery Garden Advice Series)

Monica van Wensveen

Getting clucky: chooks in my organic garden

As I walk out my back door, I'm greeted by our three chooks, Contessa Omeletta, Princess Leia and Margaret Hatcher, who mostly free-range around our 200sqm backyard. Up the back is my rotation cropping garden with tilling, weeding and fertilising done by the chooks. They roost in a chook tractor.

I have chickens to help with composting. My attempts at composting have ended up as piles of dry grass being eaten by an army of slaters. Also, chickens will eat dinner leftovers (including meat) - they'll take everything except citrus and other acidic foods like kiwi fruit or onions.

I also have chickens because I don't like weeding—they do it for me, along with the mulching. I like my garden to take care of itself and the chooks take care of the weeding and mulching, in return for a comfortable place to roost and plenty of seeds (especially sunflower seeds). I think the secret to happy chooks is sunflower seeds and leftovers!

My chickens, two Australorps and one Wyandotte, are kept in a "chook tractor" - a fancy name for what is basically a portable chook pen. The idea came from the work of Bill Mollison et al - in a permaculture system where amongst other things we (the gardeners) recruit the services of animals whose primary behavioural traits are useful to our garden (e.g. beneficial insects). In the case of the chook tractor, we recruit litter-foraging animals such as chooks, whose main behaviour is to scratch at the ground looking for yummy stuff, such as grass, meat, vegetable scraps and cereal grains.

It's important to consider the intended function of a tractor before you try to build or buy one. I have a "McCallum Made" tractor, 90cm x 270cm with folding undercarriage. This pricey prefabricated "Rolls-Royce" of chook tractors would be ideal for folks grazing their chooks on vast expanses of grass, but has proven unwieldy for application to sheet-mulch gardening. In hindsight, I should have built a tractor to suit pre-existing raised garden beds (all the same size), with handles at waist height to allow for easy lifting.

I move the chook tractor to a new bed monthly (see picture to the right of my chook tractor and garden bed rotation system) and the chooks get a fresh batch of dry straw. The chooks then turn the straw and plant remnants into a fresh garden bed ready for planting through a combination of scratching and manuring. A green manure crop is planted after the chooks (leafy greens), then a grass crop (such as barley), which both feed and protect the next crop as part of the rotation. After the green manure, the rotation mainly prevents

club root or other soil-borne ailments affecting my plants so the garden will end up perpetually high in nitrogen and carbon due to the chooks and the litter.

According to the Organic Standard, manure-based sheet mulching systems must allow for two green manure crops before food plants are grown on the bed. I'm growing forage plants, then barley. The forage plants soak up as much nitrogen as possible to stop nutrients leeching off in the rain, while simultaneously providing forage for the chooks. The barley provides a layer of straw to cover up the bed and act as a mulch, and has a reputation as a "companion plant" to make potassium more accessible to following crops.

The Organic Standard requires plenty of free ranging time for chickens. My chooks are in the tractor during the day and free range in the late afternoon and on weekends, returning to the tractor to roost on their own. The chooks forage, weed and dust bathe in the garden. Collapsible portable frames can be used to fence off delicate areas or vegie beds.

If the chooks are ill, there are answers on the Internet, such as Andy Vardy's "Backyard Poultry" - with advice on a wide range of chook-related topics.

Another big reason for having chooks is of course eggs. You will quickly find friends who like baking if you have too many eggs. Our count is up to about 210 eggs, having started our flock in March. Organic, free range, and only a step or two out the door!

Alex Satrapa

Further information:

- ◇ Andy W Lee & Patricia L. Foreman, "*Chicken Tractor: The Permaculture Guide to Happy Hens and Healthy Soil*" (this book is in the COGS library)
- ◇ Andy Vardy's Backyard Poultry forums: <http://forum.backyardpoultry.com/>
- ◇ One Straw, a website about sub-acre "ranching": <http://onestraw.wordpress.com/>
- ◇ Chook forage seed kit from Green Harvest: http://greenharvest.com.au/seeds/poultry_forage.html



Book Review: Green Harvest

Green Harvest: A History of Organic Farming and Gardening in Australia is a new arrival in the COGS library.

Written by Rebecca Jones, this a well-presented and engagingly-written history of the organic growing movement in Australia, largely told from the perspective of organic growers themselves.

Using a mixture of documents and interviews, Jones organises her book around four key ideas or 'principles' founded on organic growers' belief that our health is dependent on the biophysical environment. The four ideas are the soil, chemical free growing, ecological wellbeing, and back to the land.

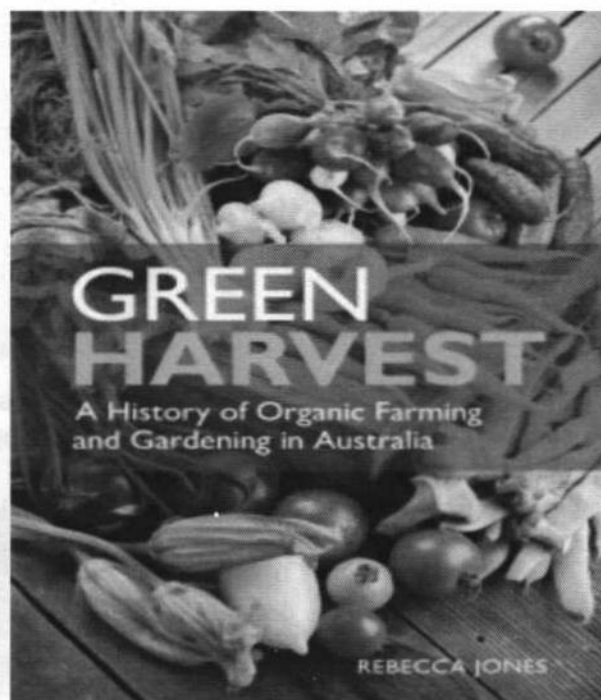
The chapter on soil explores the original thinking behind organic growing – that the health of the soil is vital to growing nutritious and healthy food. Initially, Australian thinking was based on the ideas coming out of Europe on how to increase soil humus, but it was not long before these ideas were adapted for Australian conditions.

I particularly enjoyed Dr Younger Ross's evidence to the 1949 Victorian Royal Commission on the Bread Industry. Representing the Victorian Compost Society, Younger Ross patiently explained to the somewhat confused enquirer the link between human health, humus and compost.

Chemical-free growing as the second key principle initially evolved as a response to the increasing use of artificial fertilisers, but from the 1950s it broadened to include pesticides and herbicides.

The principle of ecological wellbeing started to emerge in the 1950s and focussed on the need to ensure survival of the natural environment.

Finally, Jones explores the 'back to the land' phenomenon, which focussed on self-sufficiency and rejection of urban, industrialised society. COGS members who have had the pleasure of visiting Jackie French's garden will enjoy the case study of Jackie's journey that follows this chapter.



Conclusion: This is a good read for those who enjoy reflecting on our historical roots as organic growers.

I leave you with an extract from the 1951 *Victorian Compost News* contributed by J S Lennie, describing how he consigned his much-darned army socks to the compost heap.

"...with great solemnity we laid the socks to rest in the very centre of my next heap. That was an extra specially well-made heap, and when I opened it later on, everything – even the rose prunings – had rotted away nicely, that is, everything except the Army socks. My wife wanted to wash and darn them again and replace them in my drawer, but I was firm and I interred them in my next heap. They've been in six other heaps since then, and only now are they showing signs of wear. When they finally decompose, the vitality they put into the compost is going to be something worth watching."

Alison Killen

I ♥ NYC: Green Thumb Oasis in Concrete Jungle

While on holiday recently in New York, I took an early-morning walk through the high-density terraces and narrow one-way streets in the West Side of Manhattan Island and came across a what seemed like a wonderful oasis.

It was a community garden, open from dawn to dusk all year round.

This community garden is an intensely-planted space, with pathways formed using broken concrete or house bricks, small grassed areas, flower beds with woven vine edging, paved pergola-covered spaces, small vegetable plots to the back and park benches positioned in alcoves of greenery.

Due to its position, the garden does not get many hours of intense sunlight. It is a peaceful sanctuary amid the high-rise surroundings. Vandalism is not an issue in this garden.

Not all the gardeners are interested in vegetables. The vegetable section is separated from the park-like area with a wire fence and the plots are very small.

The lady who let me in said she had waited over seven years to become a member of this garden (some have waited 10!) and her area was the size of a single bed mattress! She only planted a few herbs (parsley, chives and basil) and was quite unsuccessful with her cherry tomatoes.

In this garden, the main problem gardeners deal with is not lack of water, snails or slaters but...rats!

An internal noticeboard keeps members up to date with botanical information and events. But I was particularly interested in the sign on the solid external fence, in three languages, listing the garden rules (listed opposite).

The garden rules were pertinent to me because the Kaleen gardeners have recently been discussing this very issue. Perhaps this list could be a starting point to formulating our set of rules!

The property is technically owned by the New York City Council, but it was unclear how the garden is managed. Apparently, when a building there on the site of the garden was demolished in the 1970s, the local community bravely lobbied the Council to allow the area to become a community garden. It is precious real

estate, with the land worth a lot of money, but still deemed a worthy project as a community garden.

Not far away from this community garden is another - a Children's Garden, with quirky wind-mills and paper decorations hanging from tree branches. It is an even smaller oasis managed by a school.

My experience of viewing these gardens in New York made me aware of how lucky am I to be an original member of the Kaleen garden with the space to plant five different varieties of potato ... and that is only the start!

*Joanne Widdup
Kaleen garden*

New York community garden rules

1. Children must be supervised at all times and accompanied by an adult.
2. No drugs.
3. Our garden is not a playground
4. Running, rough games and ball games are not permitted.
5. Pets not permitted.
6. Picking and destruction of plants and flowers is not permitted.
7. Climbing, picking and pulling on shrubs is not permitted.
8. Entry into any garden bed or plot is not permitted.
9. Rollerblades, tricycles and bicycles and ride toys are not allowed in the garden.
10. Strollers and carts are not allowed on the lawns, only on the brick paths.
11. Littering, urinating and defecating are not permitted.
12. Amplified sound is not permitted except through earphones.
13. Non keyholder guests are welcome to visit upon request as long as a keyholder is present.

Pictures from NYC...



ABOVE: The garden and pathways in the Manhattan community garden



ABOVE: Sign in front of the Children's Garden



ABOVE: The school garden



ABOVE: The 'cool' garden



ABOVE: plaque displayed on the front of the garden



ABOVE: Pergola in the garden



ABOVE: A Japanese-style corner within the garden

BELOW: The garden through the chain-link fence



Project SunShine

**– increasing solar roof systems in
the ACT by 1000 in 2011**



**CONSERVATION
COUNCIL**
ACT REGION

Did you know?

- Solar power is within reach of most homeowners in the ACT.
- Canberra has the second most sunshine hours out of Australia's major cities – but it has the highest carbon footprint.
- You can become an energy contributor and turn your home into a mini-solar power station by installing a solar system on your roof.
- You can use the clean, green solar energy you generate to earn money – which can be used to repay for the cost of your solar system OR for your daily energy needs.
- After the system pays for itself, it continues to earn you income throughout its long life, with panel output guaranteed for 25 years.
- That installing solar adds value to your home – it's an income generating asset.
- Current Government incentives make it more affordable than ever to install solar on the average family home.
- Producing your own electricity with a solar power system on your roof means a real reduction in your own carbon emissions – it benefits the environment as well as improving your household's bottom line.

***Project SunShine aims to spread the word about the
benefits of solar to ACT householders. Together we
can increase sustainable living in Canberra.***

Project SunShine – it's a Conservation Council ACT Region initiative.



For more information about solar, you can download a handy consumer guide from

www.consact.org.au

For a quick and easy solar system quote from a reputable supplier

you can phone **1800 993 334** and quote

Conservation Council ACT, or Project SunShine to receive an additional discount.

Email: projectsunshine@consact.org.au - Phone 02 6229 3200

COGS Creations: Recipes to the Rescue

There's lots of delicious fruit and vegetables available in your garden during the summer months. Here's a few recipes to try.

Andy's Apricot Jam Recipe

by Andrew Hodges

1 kg apricots
1kg white sugar
1/4 cup of lemon juice
Small tin of crushed pineapple

Cut fruit into cubes, discarding the seeds. Pop them into a big pot, along with the rest of the ingredients. Bring slowly to the boil, then simmer for an hour. Leave to cool and transfer to hot, sterilised jars.

Marvellous Mayo

By aliveandcooking.com.au

2 eggs yolks + 1 whole egg
1 tsp caster sugar
1 tsp dijon mustard
Juice of 1 lemon
Salt and white pepper
1-2 cups of vegetable oil (not olive oil)

In a big mixing bowl, whisk two egg yolks and one whole egg. Add caster sugar, dijon mustard and lemon juice, along with a pinch of salt and white pepper (white pepper won't discolour the mayonnaise). Add the oil to the bowl slowly, drop by drop, while continuously whisking and stop adding oil when mixture is thick and luscious.

NB: It seems to work better whisking by hand rather than using a blender.

Got a tried-and-tested seasonal recipe that you'd like to share? Please send them to us for publication! Recipes can be emailed to editor@cogs.asn.au.



ACT VEGETARIAN SOCIETY

Want to help the planet, yourself and millions of animals?

The ACT Vegetarian Society welcomes new members. We'd like to help you with information and support about vegetarian and vegan diets and provide opportunities to meet others with the same interest.

If you would like to join, simply use any of the payment options for membership on our website (www.vegetariansociety.org.au), including choosing a quarterly magazine, if you wish. Memberships range from \$16 to \$30.

If you would like to know more, please contact us:

contact@vegetariansociety.org.au OR president@vegetariansociety.org.au OR 0417 464 675



DID YOU KNOW:

According to the United Nations, the meat industry causes more greenhouse gas emissions than all the cars, trucks, planes, and ships in the world combined.

It takes up to 7kgs of grain to produce 0.5kg of meat. The production of 1kg of beef takes 15,500 litres of water. 1kg of wheat takes only 1,300 litres of water.

Eating vegetarian food is more environmentally sustainable.

"Nothing will benefit human health and increase chances for survival of life on Earth as much as the evolution to a vegetarian diet." – Albert Einstein

COGS library: November book sale!

We are reducing the number of books in the COGS Library, as it is overflowing.

There will be a book sale at our November general member's meeting on November 23.

So...good books on most aspects of gardening will be sold at bargain prices, with the money raised used to purchase a few new books on needed topics.

You will also have the chance to buy some gardening magazines, which will be for sale.

And if you would like to spring-clean your bookshelf, any donations of gardening books for the book sale would be much appreciated.

Margaret Richardson
COGS librarian

Gardening book sale!
@ the COGS general meeting
Tuesday, 23rd November 2010
Majura Community Centre,
Rosevar Place, Dickson.
7.30pm.



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

LINDSAY and EDMUNDS Homemade Organic Chocolate



Specialists in organic pesticide-free meats

Shop 41
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Lathlain Street, Belconnen

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Phone 6251 9018

Fax 6251 9017



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.

COGS now runs a Backyard Gardener's interest group, with a dedicated group of willing members. We aim to explore the best ways of sharing gardening expertise, by 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 OR

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

Name:

Member No.

I am interested in the COGS Backyard Gardener interest group.

Particular interests:

I 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



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.



~ Organic Gardening Courses ~

The Canberra Organic Growers Society and CIT Solutions



Beginner's Organic Gardening
Starting Semester 1, 2011

Composting and Worm Farms
Starting Semester 1, 2011

Both courses are being held at the CIT at Bruce. More information will be available on the below website when dates and times for 2011 are determined.

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



COGS SUMMER PLANTING GUIDE

Mulch and compost

In summer it is a good idea to mulch your garden beds to help keep the soil cool and moist. One experiment showed that a 4cm layer of straw reduced evaporation by 73%. Be careful not to lay down a thick layer of sawdust or lawn clippings that can pack down to form an impenetrable barrier to water.

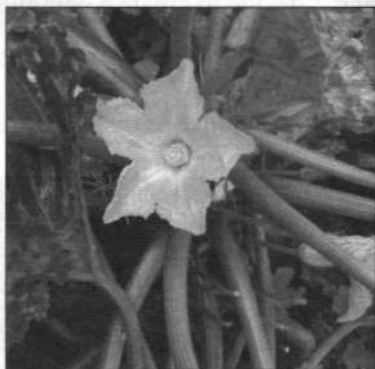
Soil with lots of compost contains all the nutrients your plants need for strong, healthy growth. In addition well composted soil retains water and act like a sponge to keep your plants moist through dry summer days.

Heat protection

On days of extreme temperature your plants may need to be physically protected from the heat. This can be achieved by covering plants with shade cloth secured on a frame eg weldmesh or irrigation pipe bent over to form a tunnel, with shade cloth secured by pegs).

Watering

Try not to water the leaves of plants that are susceptible to fungal diseases (eg tomatoes, cucumbers, pumpkins and zucchinis) and try to water individual plants thoroughly, rather than watering a whole area.



Always follow water restrictions and check soil moisture before watering—a rostered watering day doesn't mean you *must* water.

Weeds

Keep weeds down. They compete with your plants for food, water and sunlight. It is best to tackle them when they are small—before removing them becomes an exhausting exercise.

Pests

Pests can multiply over summer. Don't reach for the pesticides. Observe if there are natural predators present, remembering that there will be a delay between the appearance of the pest and the subsequent build-up of its predators.

If you must spray, use an environmentally benign spray. Read books such as Jackie French's *Natural Pest Control*.

Harvesting

Make sure you harvest your crop regularly - in most cases this will encourage your plants to continue cropping and you can enjoy your produce at its peak.

Remember to leave space in your vegie patch for those winter vegetables that prefer to be planted in late Summer - early autumn. Brassicas and other winter crops need time to mature before the extreme cold of winter sets in.

	DEC	JAN	FEB
Bush beans	S	S	
Beetroot	S	S	S
Broccoli	ST	ST	T
Brussel sprouts	ST	ST	T
Cabbage	ST	ST	T
Carrots	S	S	S
Cauliflower	ST	ST	T
Celery	T	T	S
Chicory	S	S	S
Chinese cabbage	S	S	
Cucumber	ST	T	
Endive	S	S	S
Kohlrabi	ST	ST	T
Leeks	S	S	
Lettuce	ST	ST	ST
Marrows	T		
Parsnips	S	S	S
Potatoes	S	S	
Radish	S	S	S
Silverbeet	ST	ST	T
Squash	ST		
Swedes		S	S
Sweet corn	ST	T	
Tomatoes	T	T	
Turnips		S	S

S = seed sowing; T = transplanting

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

Planting times will vary for different varieties of the one vegetable eg December plantings of heading lettuce varieties should be successful; while February plantings should be the butterhead varieties.

Q&A @ COGS

Q “My grandfather often used Epsom salts in his garden and I never asked why. Do you know?”

A On the *Gardening Australia* website, presenter Colin Campbell notes that the use of Epsom salts is an old-fashioned technique used to aid seed germination. Epsom salts are magnesium sulphate which activates enzymes in the seed to restrict food supply to the plant, forcing it to germinate quicker. Simply add one teaspoon of Epsom salts to a watering can and water the newly-sown seeds (only once).

Make a spud cage

If you don't have the space or inclination to plant your potatoes in long rows in garden beds, why not try making a spud cage, which could be called the “plonk them in, chuck stuff on top and wait” method of growing potatoes. Well, not quite.

1. Buy or recycle some tomato stakes, chicken wire and hay.
2. Find a spot in your vegie garden, or another unused corner of the garden.
3. Hammer the tomato stakes (or any kind of post) into the ground to form a square.
4. Wrap the chicken wire around the stakes and secure with wire or string.
5. Put some seed potatoes into the bottom of the cage. Cover them snugly with hay (or even dried weeds).
6. Water them as needed until the potatoes sprout, then keep piling hay or dried weeds on top to nearly cover the tops.
7. In a couple of months, you'll have spuds galore!



ABOVE: potatoes growing nicely

LEFT: a DIY potato cage made with tomato stakes and chicken wire

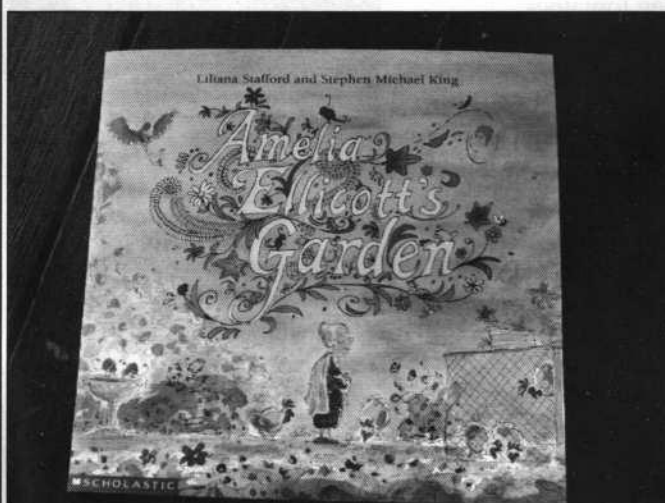
Little Sprout's Corner

☺ **Book review: Amelia's Garden**

I was pleasantly surprised to discover *Amelia Ellicott's Garden* in my daughter's school book club catalogue. Lately, a lot of kid's television shows and picture books seem to focus on the environment, gardening and recycling, providing important messages for kids.

This gorgeous picture book, written by Liliana Stafford and Stephen Michael King, tells the warm and fuzzy tale of a lonely lady (Amelia Ellicott) living by herself in a suburban house with a big backyard full of vegies and chooks, in an otherwise sterile neighbourhood next to a tall building of apartments. Amelia remains without friends (she just has the company of her much-loved chooks) and oblivious to her neighbours until one day, a storm tears through her street, destroying her garden in the process. All the people living in the apartments next door band together to repair the garden and....decide to create a community garden!

Verdict? A lovely story with beautiful illustrations well-suited to 3-7 year olds. And a delight for a parent to read. (Published by Scholastic in 2000).



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



Use bread tags as ties to secure climbing vegetables such as beans.

COGS NOTICE BOARD

COGS Monthly Meetings

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

**23 Nov 2010 Xmas drinks and book sale—
all COGS members are welcome.**

*Please see the COGS website for updates on
upcoming monthly meetings in 2011.*

Free Worm Food!

If you're finding it hard to get enough organic matter for your compost pile or worm farm, contact the Tuggeranong Hyperdome, where there is a variety of organic waste available. For more information and to access this, please contact Wayne Hudson on 6293 1000 or email Wayne_Hudson@cfsgam.com.au.

Turkish man's trees of change

A Turkish villager, Rahim Demirbas, has planted 22,000 trees (100 species) over the past 12 years on a barren mountain in Beyoren, an almost-abandoned village in Turkey. He wants to plant 50,000 trees in total, to help rejuvenate the area. He funded his quest by teaching, selling carpets and selling two houses. "My ancestors were nomads," said Mr Demirbas, "They would set up their tents, take what they needed and then move on—sometimes I think Turkey never left its tent. The speed we are using this country up, it is as if we are planning to move somewhere else tomorrow."

Source: Epoch Times, July 14-20, 2010

Ed's note: thanks to Peter Cornhill for sending this in.

Out and About

Joel Salatin talks in Canberra

Author, recipient of the Heinz International Award for Environmental Leadership and farmer of Polyface Farms, Joel Salatin, will speak in Canberra in November. Joel's focus is on small-scale farming and the growing relocalisation movement and has disregarded conventional wisdom with his own farm, where he has used a perennial prairie polyculture by planting huge compost piles and moving his cows daily with portable electric fencing and using portable sheltering systems. For more info see see-change.org.au. *Details: ANU, November 24, 7-9pm, \$15 (\$10 concession)*

Australian Solar Energy Society Annual Conference

The Australian Solar Energy Society's annual conference *Solar 2010* is being held in Canberra from Dec 1-3 at the ANU. Professionals and academics from all energy-related sectors from Australian and other countries, are expected to attend to discuss ideas and latest developments in clean energy technologies, including solar energy. *More info: www.auses.org.au conference.*

Ecological Society of Aust Annual Conference

The ANU is hosting the Ecological Society of Australia's 2010 Annual Conference, called *Sustaining Biodiversity: The Next 50 Years*. The focus will be on the challenges faced by Australia's ecosystems, with a view to developing a long-term perspective of ecology. Speakers will focus on achievements over the past 50 years in ecology set against the future challenges of biodiversity. *More info: www.esa2010.org.au. Details: December 6-10, ANU, Canberra.*

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