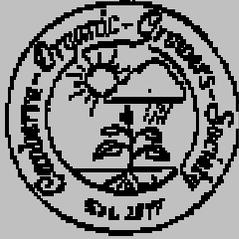


Canberra Organic



Towards self sufficiency at Bywong
Manures in an organic garden
Ducks versus chooks
Harvesting radish



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: Winter 2011

President's report to
come.....

Calling all gardeners!

Two researchers from the University of Canberra will be contacting you in the near future. They are interested in learning how much community and backyard gardens are contributing to the ACT's food supply.

They would like to know things such as what vegetables and fruits you grow, how helpful growing them is to your budget, why you prefer to grow your own, some idea of the quantities you harvest, and things like that.

In a time of peak oil and climate change organisations like COGS will become increasingly important, providing vital examples for the wider community.

A questionnaire will be sent to you in the near future. It will be completely anonymous and you can pull out at any time. But if you do help, you could win a book voucher!

If you would like more information, please contact **Dr David Pearson** on 6201-5720 or david.pearson@canberra.edu.au or **Walter Steensby** on 6254-3881 or steensby@netspeed.com.au.

By the way, they are both members of COGS. Walter is in the Backyard Gardeners and the Seedsavers special interest groups while David labours with modest success in his backyard.

CANBERRA ORGANIC Volume 19 Number 2 (Issue 73)

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.

Articles may be reproduced for non-profit, educational purposes or with prior permission from COGS.

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

I have childhood memories of sitting at the dinner table, resolutely refusing to eat my meal, with my parents threatening to give my food to "the starving children of Ethiopia". As was the standard response of most young kids to this exact situation, I remember telling them to put my food into an envelope and mail it to Ethiopia. While slightly amusing, the global issue of food security and famine behind this was not. Likewise, statistics that indicate countries like Australia are facing food wastage on a huge scale are not amusing.

Consider:

- ◇ Australians throw away food worth \$5.2 billion each year and the average household wastes \$616 of food per year
- ◇ Australians discard 20% of food they purchase (1 out of every 5 bags of groceries)
- ◇ Statistics show 3.28 million tonnes of food is driven to landfill in Australia each year
- ◇ 47% of municipal waste to landfill is food and green waste *

Food wastage is due to practices such as buying too much food at the supermarket, cooking meals that are too large or throwing food scraps or unused items into landfill. From the perspective of the fruit and vegetable gardener, this also means planting produce that you don't like or are unable to use. This can be remedied by bottling and preserving crops for future use, eating (and buying) seasonally, bartering and swapping with other gardeners, or giving food away to worthwhile organisations such as OzHarvest. Any unused food scraps can also be composted. Just growing your own fruit and vegies tends means we are more conscious of the hard work and effort that has gone into their growing.

If we accept the Oxford Dictionary definition of "sustainable" as "conserving an ecological balance by avoiding depletion of natural resources", then becoming part of the solution to food waste, rather than deepening the problem, seems like the reasonable course of action to achieve a sustainable way of living.

The winter issue of *Canberra Organic* has many topics for you to mull over while you take a break from the hectic pace of the warmer seasons. The magazine offers thoughts on community gardening, advice on the use of manures and an introduction to the lovely and enthusiastic new COGS president, Alison Killen.

Happy winter gardening,

Angela

* Statistics from the Australia Institute and www.foodwise.com.au

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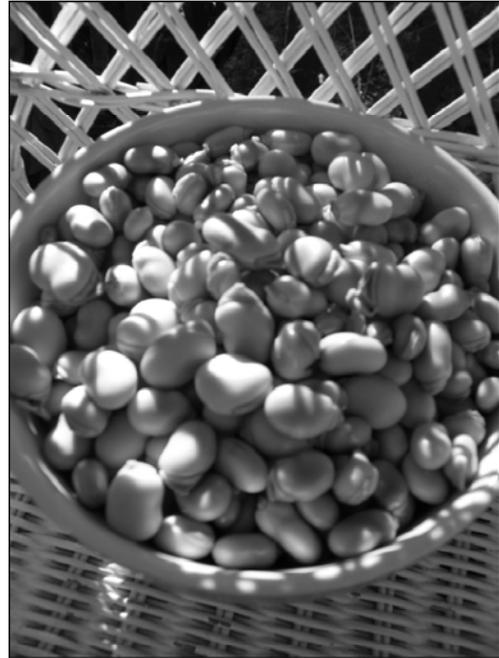
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Contributors to this issue

Articles

Colin Brammall, COGS Convenors, Adrienne Fazekas, Karan Gabriel, John Grubb, David Pearson, Margaret Richardson, Angela Spencer, David Stephen, Cindy Steensby, Walter Steensby, Gaetane Worrell.



Photos

Colin Brammall, Adrienne Fazekas, Karan Gabriel, Bruce Gibbs, John Grubb, Angela Spencer, Monica van Wensveen, Gaetane Worrell.

Cover photos

FRONT COVER: Bundle of carrots

ABOVE: Broadbeans anyone?

BACK COVER: Harvest basket from Kambah, apples, onions

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.

Articles and photos by Angela Spencer unless otherwise stated.

This issue of Canberra Organic is printed on recycled paper

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	June	July	August
Isabella Plains	max 11.8	max 11.1	max 12.8
	min 1.9	min 0.9	min 2.0

RAINFALL	June	July	August
Isabella Plains	42.9 mm	42.7 mm	51.4 mm
	6.0 rain days	6.2 rain days	7.9 rain days

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

Seasonal forecast: May-July

- The maximum temperature outlook for SE Australia points to warmer than normal conditions as a result of warm conditions in the Indian Ocean.
- The outlook for rainfall for SE Australia favours above median rainfall.

Water use and restrictions

- At 18 May 2011, Canberra's dams were 97.55% full.
- The daily water consumption, as at 18 May 2011, is 117.3 ML. For more information, visit ActewAGL's water networks website: www.actewagl.com.au/water/networks.

Have your say on the ACTEW review of water restrictions

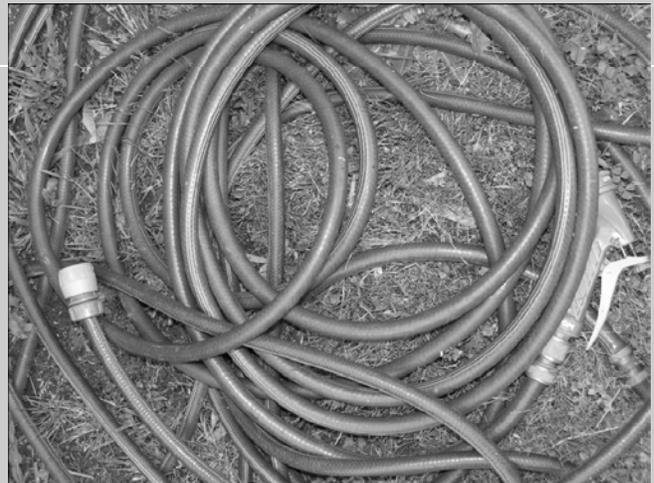
How do you think water restrictions should operate in the future in the ACT?

ACTEW is undertaking a review of its water restrictions and is seeking public comment on its new concept schemes for the Water Restrictions and Permanent Water Conservation Measures that are currently in place in the ACT.

ACTEW says the aim of the review is to ensure water restrictions reflect the lifestyle of Canberrans while also acknowledging the need to save water.

At the moment, the ACT has a four-stage water restriction scheme, suited to times when water is scarce and reductions in water use is necessary. When water is scarce, higher levels of restrictions are put in place to help conserve water in the dams. When water is plentiful, Permanent Water Conservation Measures operate, which allows Canberrans to use water but also ensure water is not wasted.

Based on the past 9 years of water restrictions, ACTEW has developed new concept schemes proposing how water restrictions should operate in the



future. A key change includes the introduction of a new Stage 5 (highest level of restrictions), changes to watering times/days and how businesses can use water.

If you would like to provide input to ACTEW, have a look at the concept schemes and fill out an outline survey.

The survey can be found at:

<http://www.actew.com.au/SaveWaterForLife/WaterRestrictions/have-your-say.aspx>

Around the COGS Gardens

Cook Garden

A bizarre wet and cold summer turned into an autumn that was eventually dry and cold. Not quite what you would describe as ideal growing conditions, but nevertheless gardeners have gardened, summer crops have been harvested and winter crops sown.

We had a working bee in the middle of May which was well attended on a fine crisp morning. The main task was the removal of assorted dead and nearly-dead small trees. A range of pruning and sawing tools were initially used, then mattocks and axes and a large sledge hammer, and finally the judicious use of the internal combustion engine driving four wheels saw the removal of the stubborn remains.

Much fun was had fitting as much of the high-volume low-weight plant material into a trailer as was humanly possible. I later did a run to the green waste depository and spent almost as long removing the load as we had taken loading it to begin with.

The waiting list is largely unchanged. We have had one gardener leave this season, with another soon to be welcomed into the garden.

Wayde Margetts

Erindale Garden

It's been a splendid growing season at the Erindale garden. I noticed in particular the zucchinis and squash did very well. Some of the excess vegetables were left just outside the garden gate for any passerby to take home. These are surely appreciated, as for instance someone left a lovely, encouraging note saying, "Many thanks, just wonderful, God bless you".

We have a small community of six gardeners and all plots are taken. Nicole joined us after Theodore Community garden closed down and has done a fantastic job cleaning up her three plots. For sometime they were sorely neglected but under her care and cultivation they're now well under way to flourish productively. Christine grew lots of splendid corn and potatoes and is in the process of digging up her jerusalem artichokes, the surplus of which we have all been enjoying. She also gave away as many strawberry plants, self sown lettuce seedlings and a few other goodies as the local Wanniasa Hills Primary School could take for their edible garden project. Richard reaped bumper crops of broad beans and assorted varieties of climbing beans. Andy impressed everyone with his healthy silver beet and massively large variety

of tomatoes. Being one to experiment with the unusual, Ray grew 'climbing' silver beet and although quite an attractive plant, I believe no one was especially keen to try them on their menu more than once or twice.

My daughter and I are relatively recent members and with the help of other gardeners (in particular thanks to Ray) we managed to clear our plots of couch grass and are already harvesting some leafy vegetables. I was initially hesitant about joining as I thought I would probably be too busy to have a plot – now I have two, as well as my veggie patch at home! We have an excellent system for sharing our excess produce and seedlings (thanks to our convenor) - we just mark the area with a stake with a red ribbon tied to it to let the other plot owners know that they can help themselves. My daughter Emily (13 years old) enjoys the garden at Erindale as well and is more interested in it than the one at home.

On a disappointing note we've had an annoying thief take some of our veggies plus the garden fork and spade disappeared from the shed. The tools were replaced and engraved as belonging to COGS. In the hope warning signs might deter perpetrator/s our convenor notified them in no uncertain terms: "Please No Trespassing! Stealing is an offence and will be reported to the authorities. We pay for the privilege and spend many hours working and sweating in this garden just so we can grow veggies for our family. Instead of helping yourself to our labours of love please do yourself (and us) a great big favour and have a go at growing your own".

We plan to start pruning the community thornless blackberries and then later on the raspberry canes after they've finished this season's fruit.

Andrea Versteegen

Holder Garden

The Holder garden had a very successful working bee on Sunday May 15th. Despite the freezing start, 19 gardeners braved the cold morning to help create a new compost heap, which is now covered and will brew over the winter months.

All our fruit trees and herb garden were mulched using some well-rotted compost and a new compost area was created for leaf litter and grass clippings recycling several of the old fence poles to create some 'bins'. At the end of all this hard work the BBQ was lit and gardeners enjoyed some sausages and other goodies that were contributed to the table.

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

A project team from ANU arrived and interviewed several gardeners about Community gardening and surveys were completed. We will be sent a copy of the report that the group write.

Most plots are in the process of being tidied up after the last of the pumpkins have now been harvested and there are spears of garlic shoots appearing in plots along with the brassicas, parsnips and onions and a few pea plants.

Heather Campbell

Kaleen Garden

Our small gardening community continues to progress following our successful Open Day. For our group, the most significant event in during autumn was the installation of a new perimeter fence courtesy of the ACT Government under Chief Minister John Stanhope and it goes without saying that we are most grateful to those staff in the government who were involved in the process of securing and erecting the fence for our community. Our gardens are now well protected and we look forward to the spring season with renewed confidence after a number of incidents involving garden break-ins and associated vandalism.

No longer do we have to hide our pumpkins and rock melons under straw so they can't be easily seen and taken. We now plan to carry out improvements in the garden without the worry of finding money first to replace the fence, something that was going to be an impossible task for our little community to manage.

Not surprisingly, autumn has been quite a busy period involving the harvesting of the pumpkins, rock melons, to picking the last crop of runner beans and other non-frost tolerant plants, to preparing beds for the planting of green manure or building up the fallow sections of

your plot with heaps of horse manure and mushroom compost. There was also plenty of veggies to plant, from the brassicas to onions, garlic, spinach, beetroot, parsnip and carrot. Furthermore, there were also seeds to gather for storage until spring and summer. Indeed, I (and other gardeners) have found the autumn season just as busy as spring, perhaps even more so as autumn gives one the opportunity to prepare the plots for a productive spring start.

While a couple of gardeners have recently left our community and new gardeners to replace those who left, Kaleen still has a short waiting list.

John Grubb



Surveying the fenceline at the Kaleen Garden in preparation for the new fence

Peter Peter Pumpkin Eater at Collector!

Former COGS President Keith Colls attended the recent Collector Pumpkin Festival as our erstwhile reporter, taking these photos of astounding pumpkins.

For residents of the tiny rural community of Collector, the annual Pumpkin Festival celebrates the arrival of another harvest season, with the bringing in of the pumpkins after the first autumn frosts.

This year the festival was held on Sunday, May 1, and featured around 60 market stall, music and entertainment, a vintage farm machinery display and rural demonstrations, not forgetting the display of truly giant pumpkins.

Remember to visit Collector for pumpkin festival next May!



Impressive pumpkins being judged at the Collector Pumpkin Festival—and these weren't even as big as the winner!

Kambah's Open Garden Day

The Kambah Community Garden is fairly small, and after so many years of drought, had become a little bedraggled and unkempt. We needed some new members! So the current crop of garden members agreed that we would hold an Open Day to encourage more people to discover the pleasures of gardening year round in Canberra.

That was just the first step – we then needed to set a suitable date, so we thought about what crops would be growing, how the gardens would look, whether new members would have a chance to plant anything before Winter set in and so on, before agreeing on a date - Saturday, April 9 2011. It would be a short afternoon session, from 2 to 4pm.

Of course all members were encouraged to start tidying up their plots, but the trigger for action was firstly an all-in working bee – this was really well attended and resulted in some amazing work being done in just a few hours. It was also a sobering lesson for me on how quickly gardens can get away from you without that regular maintenance...!

Once the blisters had healed, we then formed a small working group which began to identify all the other jobs that needed doing. I found the story on Kaleen's Open Garden in the last newsletter really helpful, and their convenor, John Grubb, gave some great advice on how to proceed, which we quickly incorporated into our planning. Tasks included publicity, garden preparation and maintenance leading up to the day, setting up and creating displays for the day, arranging some events and items for sale, and refreshments.

We were lucky enough to have a brilliant Canberra Autumn afternoon for our open day, and while I had hoped for a larger crowd, it was an enthusiastic one and several visitors joined up on the spot. A number of other people also expressed interest, so we're hoping our membership will be closer to a full complement for next spring.

Visitors were able to browse the garden and then (attempt to!) decide on selections from our tasty, organically grown – of course – produce on display, including eggplants, leeks, cucumbers, chillies, Jerusalem artichokes, herbs, pumpkins and potatoes, plus products such as jams, cakes and seedlings.

The kids enthusiastically joined in the Great Snail Hunt, gathering a couple of hundred snails in just 15 minutes! The captured snails were put through their paces, with the most energetic selected for the final

snail race. After some hotly contested in-race manoeuvres, prizes were awarded and the juiciest snails packed off to Ronnie's Succulent Snails.

Pat and Lynn Shiels, of the ACT Beekeepers Society, gave a very enjoyable talk (plus honey tastings!) on bees and bee keeping, with many questions put forward by visitors and garden members alike. We don't have any hives as yet, but I will be putting my first hive up in the garden this Spring, so hope to see the little workers busy around everyone's crops then.

Thanks go to Bunnings Tuggeranong for donation of a great range of gardening baskets, full of garden products and a selection of our organic produce, which were up for grabs in the raffle. Thanks also to 2CC and the "Gardening Gurus" for their promotion of our Open Day, and to the Kambah Scouts, who ran the sausage sizzle. COGS provided us with a banner and lots of handouts, including newsletters, and I'd like to congratulate the working group and all our members on a wonderful job in preparing our plots and running the day – our garden looks absolutely lovely!

Some of the lessons learnt for me included starting the publicity work well in advance. Some websites and publications have surprisingly long lead times, and sometimes things don't always go to plan. For example, we had wanted to put some signs up on the Tuggeranong Parkway, but discovered that the median strip has the consistency of concrete!

The other important factor is to try and estimate as accurately as possible the amount of legwork and resources required to achieve some of the tasks – for example, in seeking sponsorship, setting up events such as talks and snail races, and even preparing displays; some of us were still desperately trying to colour in and put up plot numbers as visitors were walking around.

Many ideas are great, but without the active support of members, things can all too easily fall over. Of course, none of this is life and death, and despite any hiccups we enjoyed a lovely, companionable afternoon in our beautiful garden – which we will hopefully be sharing with many more new members!

*Gaetane Worrell
Kambah Community Garden*



Above: Toby Mills (4) makes friends with the silkies



Above: snail catchers Caius Worrell (5), Sebastian (7) and Miranda (4) display their haul



Left: Will Bail giving Brynmor Worrell (3) and Toby Mills (4) a wheelbarrow ride



Right: produce for sale on the Open Day at Kambah

Below: sitting on the garden's largest pumpkin—Grace Kershaw (5) beside Toby Mills (4).



Below: produce display at the Kambah Community Garden Open Day



Towards Self-Sufficiency at Bywong

The COGS Backyard Gardeners Group enjoyed a pleasant outing to the home and garden of COGS members, Colin and Mary Brammall, in April.

We moved here five years ago after building a solar house, a project to ease our retirement years. The 20 acre block had only about 12 mature trees on it.

Our first project was to get in as many tubestock as possible for shelter, as the windy time of year can be most unpleasant. This great season we have just had has seen many of them take off and give us great joy watching them grow.

The vegetable garden and orchard has evolved as a secondary project, and it just keeps growing. A huge amount of work has been undertaken to provide raised garden beds, netting to deter the kangaroos, wallabies and hares, plus extensive water storages and pumps. Improved soil and compost fills the garden beds, providing lush crops of every conceivable type suitable for our climate.

Apart from the solar aspects of the house, we have a sewerage system which is a worm farm. The worm castings produced go out in trenches to feed our fruit trees. We have chooks grazing in the orchard, living in movable 'chook tractors' as protection from foxes at night .

For the last 12 months, we have been almost self sufficient in veggies which has been great. Mostly our fruit trees are three years old or less, but have started to give us quite a bit of fruit this season. Berries are neatly supported and a passionfruit finds warmth and protection against a water tank.

Mary & Colin Brammall



The yummy morning tea at the Brammall's



A passionfruit vine climbs the wall



Netted raised vegie beds help protect the produce from birds and kangaroos

Pumpkins at the Brammalls



Parsnips and carrots in raised vegie beds



Which poo are you? Manures in the organic garden

NB: This is an edited version of an article that appeared in the Canberra Organic Growers Society Newsletter in August 2009.

Most of us have been educated from a very early age to regard our waste products as something not be discussed in polite circles.

Urine and faecal matter were put in the same category as other unmentionables. Waste is a convenience of humankind alone. The environmental crisis is changing all that. The time is approaching when the humus/nutrient value of our own treated sewerage will be valued as a source of fertiliser just as much as are manure from other sources.

The word "manure" comes from the old French word "manoeuvrer", which means to cultivate by manual Labour. It is strictly an agricultural term which ties in directly with the theories of organic gardening and soil conservation.

The best way to prepare raw manures for the garden is to compost them with organic materials that are high in cellulose and lignins such as the animals' straw bedding soaked in urine, or sawdust, balsa chips, hay, weeds etc. One part of manure, by bulk, with three or four parts of organic matter, is nature's ratio as witnessed under forest conditions. If animal manure is used alone for too many years as the only source of fertiliser for vegetable crops, a build up of undesirable salts such as sodium, could detrimentally affect plant growth.

Fresh manures, without litter, can be trenched in moist, friable soil during the Autumn. Plants can safely be grown on it in the Spring. Fresh animal manure is, however, likely to contain more weed seeds than rotted manure. This is why hot composting is so important for its initial preparation as a fertiliser. Hot manures are better than the cold for this purpose.

Cow manure

By choice, this manure is used almost exclusively by bio-dynamic farmers as the basis for their organic sprays and compost activators.

The food of ruminating animals passes through five stomachs, picking up a variety of micro-organisms on the way, which they claim add value to the manure.

Cattle produce a wet (86% moisture), compact type of cold manure which breaks down slowly. This latter fact makes it longer lasting, a most desirable characteristic for feeding the

soil, especially for open-textured sandy soils.

Cow pats dropped on pastures have been analysed after nine months, and found to contain 70% of the original nutrients. The loose textured nature of horse manure is, by comparison, unreliable as a good source of nutriment when left in the open.

If the manure from grazing animals becomes available when it is not needed, hoard it this way: Pile up manure against a wall (with as much straw, hay etc, as possible), treading it down firmly, because the aim is to exclude air and thus prevent heating. Build the heap into a triangular shape for covering with sheets of corrugated iron or plastic sheeting. Warning: condensation under plastic may keep the heap too wet. A temporary wooden frame may be justified here.

In general, the quality of manure increases with the amount of protein in an animals diet. For example, a horse fed on grain produces a bio-product far more valuable than one fed on hay.

Animal urine

Potassium (salts of potash), a necessary major plant focus, is found in the urine of all animals, including humans. Unfortunately it is lost as a source of nutriment because it is now cheaper and easier to use alternative sources. But we must learn to recycle this element to sustain our agriculture because many alternative sources are non-renewable.

Of the three major nutrients, potassium is generally the least stable in typical farming soil. It is found in seaweed but in concentrations too small to satisfy broad acre cropping of gross feeding plants. However, terrific results have been obtained using liquid seaweeds on pastures.

Pig manure

Chinese farmers use pigs as fertiliser factories. One pig produces three tonnes a year. Mixed with the same quantity of organic wastes, the resulting high quality compost fertilisers one MU (0.06ha) of land. Pig manure is cold and slow to decompose, probably due to the copper compounds put into their feed.

Sheep manure

This is seldom obtained in a fresh, unleached condition, which is a pity because after bird droppings, fresh sheep manure classed as hot has the highest nitrogen value when the animals are grazing. Sheep droppings are relatively dry (68% moisture) and richer in nutrients for a given weight than most others.



Poultry manure is readily available if you keep chickens

Use sheep manure under a mulch of grass around trees and plants, or used in drums of water for manure tea.

Stable manure

Fresh horse dung is fibrous, open and classified as a hot, dry manure (78% moisture). It can lighten heavy soils. The heat produced during its rapid decomposition helps with composting and can warm the soil in winter. In compost making, sustained heat is required to kill weed seeds and plant pathogens. Manure quality is determined by the type of food eaten, the animal's age, the amount of urine retained in straw bedding and the manner of storage.

Poultry manure

When you buy poultry manure from factory farms, it contains concentrated plant foods because all birds have the one duct for the disposal of their urine and faeces. Thus potassium is higher than in any of the other manures where the urine is lost. Its humus value is poor, however, unless mixed with a deep litter of sawdust, straw, or other fibrous material. Using manure from poultry or any of our seed eating feathered friends is unlikely to introduce weed seeds, which is one reason for its popularity. However, there is one drawback with using raw poultry manure, especially from a battery. Its nitrogen, in the form of ammonium carbonate, is fierce and can burn crops more harshly than other combined forms of nitrogen.

In the deep litter system, this free ammonia is used up by a bacterium in breaking up hard cellulose wastes like straw, or bussa chips and producing heat to dry it. In a year, 100 hens can produce 4 tonnes of droppings.

Pigeon poo

This is the richest manure of all. Pigeon poo has four times more potash and nitrogen than poultry manure. The phosphorous is doubled, making pigeon manure ideal as a compost activator, because it is not safe to dig into a highly productive garden.

Goat manure

This ranks above cow manure in nutriment and should be collected weekly to avoid autointoxication of the animal's feed. Goat manure is perhaps the best general purpose manure of all, because goats are browsers – they feed on leaves, shoots or trees and shrubs, rather than grass only.

Alpaca Poo

“Paca Poo” is great for the garden and alpacas are great composters. Alpacas have an efficient digestive system, not giving seeds a chance to germinate. Alpaca poo does not have to be aged or cured as it does not ‘burn’ the plants it comes into contact with.

Alpaca manure is lower in organic matter than manure from most other livestock (cows, horses, goats, and sheep), but still has enough to improve soil texture and

water-holding capacity. This lower organic content allows alpaca poo to spread directly onto plants without burning them. It is the decomposition of organic matter content of the manure that indicates their efficient digestion system.

The nitrogen and potassium content of alpaca poo is high, an indication of good fertilizer value.

To use alpaca poo on seedlings make an

alpaca poo tea. Mix alpaca pellets with water and let it sit for 3 hours (or overnight) before applying. This is a great liquid fertilizer.

Nutrients in animal manure

The amount of nutrients in animal manures, even when dry, are small when compared with chemical fertilisers. It may take 2 tonnes of dry cow manure to supply the same amount of nitrogen as 50kg of ammonium sulphate. But chemicals do not supply humus, or a well balanced food supply for plants or earthworms.

Exceptions to this are young animals who are busy growing, and their mothers who are busy making milk. Both lactation and body development use up larger quantities of nutriment and subsequently affect the value of their droppings.

Manure is a good, balanced fertilizer because 80% of all the nutrients gathered by farm animals in foraging is expelled in their dung.

A variety of acidic digestive juices, enzymes and bacteria act on nutrients in digested food to make them readily available as plant food. The fastest way to turn crop residues such as corn stalks, cereal stubbles and weeds into humus is to graze them with animals.

A major problem with animal manures is that most of them contain so much phosphorus that if they are used in conjunction with blood and bone, which many people use exclusively to fertilise or stimulate crops, then a potassium shortage is soon detected.

Deficiencies of potash generally show in poor yields, stunted growth and in particular, the scorching of leaves. The habitual practice of applying superphosphate to grow human and animal feed, means that the food chain may already be intoxicated with too much phosphorous, unless it is locked up in acid soils.

David Stephen



Manure can be composted before use

Getting Clucky: Chooks at Brammall Lane

COGS member Colin Brammall talks about the joys of keeping chickens in the backyard garden.

We've had chooks for about four years now. People ask us for advice, and we give it, so I'm sure that makes us experts! Here's some of the things we've learnt.

They are much less trouble than ducks.

We had ducks as well as chooks for a year. Ducks are messy birds and require fresh water at least twice a day. Chooks drink less and don't dirty the water much. Crows (correctly ravens) stole the duck eggs, ate the newborns and settled in on the chook/duck food in the feeders.

Free-range ducks lay their eggs anywhere they can make a nest in long grass. The ravens sat in trees above them and stole the eggs the moment they popped out. When someone offered to buy the ducks, we accepted. And the ravens must have been part of the deal, because they have gone too. But cockies and crested pigeons still steal from the feeders.

Free-range chooks lay their eggs in chook houses. The ravens aren't game to go into the dark rooms. I don't blame them – I don't like the roosting areas either! We have mobile chook houses that we have to crawl half inside not only to get the eggs but also to clean the floors – chooks poop a LOT at night – and to oil their perches occasionally to reduce the risk of mites breeding up and giving the chooks nasty sores on their legs.

Chooks are keeping newspapers from dying out. We line the floors with several layers of newspaper – rather than straw, which harbours mites in the hollow stems. We started with pine needles, but newspaper is more readily available. The layer boxes are a few cms deep in shell grit, rather than newspaper or straw.

Chooks and worms work as a team. We feed the birds organic coarse layer grain (from Queensland), plus greens and other stuff from the veg garden, oats and the quality end of our leftovers. The worms look after the mucky kitchen scraps. We dose the fowls for intestinal worms once a week, usually with diatomaceous earth but we also can use garlic, paprika and cider vinegar.

Free-range, semi-organic eggs walk out the door. We have up to 20 Isa Browns at a time and sell much of the output to friends, who appreciate the golden yolks and superior taste. Isas are prolific layers, easy to handle and rarely go broody. If they do, we confine them away from eggs for a few days until they cool down. Literally. Their rear ends heat up when they go

broody and stopping them from sitting on eggs is the answer.

Don't give the chooks names.

It makes things difficult when they get sick or die. We identify ours by coloured leg bands. But some get names anyway. Goldilocks has a golden chest (it should be brown), Rabbit has red and green leg bands (the colours of the South Sydney rugby league team, the Rabbits), and Miss Australia has gold and green bands.

We are too squeamish to kill and gut them to eat and anyway, eating chooks are only 16-26 weeks old and have only just started laying. One recently lost an eye and broke a wing – maybe got tangled in some rolled up fencing wire – and was starving slowly to death from losing out to the crowds at the feeders. It is now composting one of the veg gardens.

Chooks put themselves to bed at night. All we have to do is close the doors. Ducks (and children!) are a lot more work.

There's plenty to learn about chooks. Topics to learn (and write) about include introducing new chooks to established flocks, sending old-timers to retirement homes, keeping them out of the gardens, egg-eaters, deformed eggs, yolkless eggs, shell-less eggs, stupid chooks, buying chooks and foxes.

In the meantime, why not get clucky and get some chooks?

Colin Brammall



Colin with his chooks



Dust bath under the rhubarb

Organic news

Organics industry growing

Australia's fastest growing industry in 2011 will be organic farming, the IBISWorld business analysis report recently predicted. The industry will enjoy revenue growth of 14%, or \$475 million (up from \$416 million). "Demand for organic products in Australia has risen steadily over the last five years as consumers increasingly factor in the health benefits and environmental impact of their food choices", the report said.

Source: Organic Gardener, May/June 2011.

Ants and termites boost wheat yields

Ants and termites have a positive impact on crop yields in dryland agriculture, according to a March paper published in *Nature Communications journal by scientists at the CSIRO and the University of Sydney*. The study on ants and termites in soil indicated an average 36% higher wheat crop yield under low tillage in a conventional agricultural management setting. This is due to tunnels dug by ants and termites which allow rain to penetrate deeper into the soil for the plants to access and also reducing runoff and evaporation. The insects also improve soil nitrogen, as termites have nitrogen-fixing gut bacteria (similar to that found in the root nodules of legumes).

"Ants and termites perform the same ecosystem service functions in dryland agriculture that earthworms perform in cooler and wetter areas, but the potential for ants and termites to provide these benefits has received little attention until now," said Dr Theo Evans from the CSIRO.

"We already knew that the activities of ants and termites affect soil structure, aeration, water infiltration and nutrient cycling in natural ecosystems but we wondered whether they also perform these services in agricultural landscapes."

The effects of ants and termites are likely to be greatest in hot and dry climates, where water is at a premium.

Source: CSIRO

Federal government to rethink approach to destructive Asian honeybee

The federal government has decided to rethink its decision not to fight the invasion of the destructive Asian honeybee, recalling the committee which originally claimed it was impossible to eradicate the pest.

The approach had caused widespread outrage within Australia's \$90 million honey industry.

The committee will re-examine the scientific evidence and issue a second finding.

Australian Greens Senator Christine Milne has opposed the original decision, saying "the asian honeybee could become the cane toad of the insect world".

"The costs to our environment, agriculture and honey industry far outweigh the costs of trying to eradicate this bee now", Senator Milne said.

Source : AAP

Best-ever Australian climate change projections in the pipeline

The CSIRO and the Bureau of Meteorology are working towards releasing the most detailed national climate change projections to date, according to the CSIRO's Dr Penny Whetton, also a senior scientist with the Centre for Australian Weather and Climate Research.

The next set of projections will be released in 2014, following the next official global assessment by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

"In three years, Australians will have the latest climate projections for the 21st Century for a range of factors including; sea levels, seasonal-average temperatures, rainfall, as well as extreme weather events such as heatwaves, fires, droughts, floods, and cyclones," Dr Whetton said recently at the Greenhouse 2011 climate change conference in Cairns.

Scientists working on the post-2014 projections will have access to twice the number of climate models available to them in 2007, as well a new set of emission scenarios.

CSIRO produced national climate projections in 1990, 1992, 1996 and 2001 and, jointly with the Bureau of Meteorology (BoM), in 2007.

Source: CSIRO



Top tips for Winter

☺ **Rhubarb, rhubarb**

Divide up rhubarb crowns and replant them. Select buds from the outer portions of the old crowns and use the most vigorous portions.

☺ **Avoid Jack Frost**

Protect frost-sensitive plants. Cover them with a sheet and move pot plants under cover next to a north-facing wall.

☺ **Tips on cuttings**

Take cuttings of lavender. Dip them into honey or root hormone powder, plant in some soil and keep moist. And then wait for your free lavender plants!

☺ **Rivers run through it**

Water plants early in the morning in winter, so the moisture or frost has a chance to dry before the end of the day.

☺ **A bit fruity**

Dig and prepare holes for any bare-rooted fruit trees planted over the winter months.

☺ **Heard it on the grapevine**

Take hardwood cuttings of grape vines to use to establish new vines

☺ **Frozen pipes**

Don't be surprised if hoses are a bit more reluctant to work during the coldest weeks of winter!



"Weeds are flowers too, once you get to know them."

~ Eeyore, from A. A. Milne's *Winnie the Pooh*

Digging Around the Web

Getting the dirt on the Internet for you!

The Plant List

<http://www.theplantlist.org>

This is a working list of all known plant species, compiled with data from the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew and Missouri Botanic Gardens, in a bid to help conserve global plant life. Released in Dec 2010, version 1 contains 1,244,871 scientific plant names, mainly of vascular plants and of Bryophytes. Worth a look!

Rare Fruit

www.rarefruitaustralia.org

This is the website of the Rare Fruit Council of Australia, which contains useful information and articles on growing fruit, web links, recipes and a forum. Good to explore...

Want to work on an organic farm?

www.wwoof.com.au

Heard about the WWOOF movement? This is the website of Willing Workers On Organic Farms Australia, which is part of a global network of volunteers working on organic farms. If you are interested in volunteering or being a host farm, have a look at the website.

Frugavore

www.frugavore.com

Melbourne nutritionist Arabella Forge started this website with the focus of "how to grow your own, buy local, waste nothing and eat well". There's resources on the website, along with links to the book and blog and you get updates via an email newsletter or the Facebook page. Arabella describes herself as a "passionate frugavore". Inspiring!

Pick the BOGI on the web!

www.bogi.org.au

The Brisbane Organic Growers Society (BOGI) website provides an interesting comparison to the COGS website, containing information about the organisation and organic gardening advice. Check out the plant profiles (includes fruit and vegetables and more) - while the Brisbane climate is different and planting times won't be the same, the general growing information can be useful.

Collision of great ideas in Yass

Yass Tribune journalist Karan Gabriel gives us an update on the progress of the planned Yass Community Garden, with a report on a recent fundraiser film night.

What happens when a community gardener and film buff collide? Wonderful things, it seems. At least that's how it works in Yass.

The Yass Community Garden is in the pipeline and, thanks to the Yass Film Club, they have already had their first fundraiser.

Both groups are what you might call 'fledgling', so it was simply through a wonderful confluence of people and discussions that the film night came about, and became a fundraiser for the community garden group.

To provide some background, the NSW Government recently began an initiative called *Sustaining Our Towns*. The people of the Yass Valley were offered support and encouragement, plus a little bit of funding, to work out a sustainability project. The first public meeting was held last year and, right from the start, the idea of a community garden was the most popular choice.

From there, it was a matter of forming a steering committee, putting in an application for funding, and working out some of the basics, such as where it would be located.

Why have a community garden in a place like Yass? It's true that many people in this area live on the land, or have enough of a yard to fit a veggie patch and some chickens. But in recent years, Yass has had an influx of city folk making a "tree change". This means there are many who want to grow veggies and so on but don't necessarily know where to begin. It was felt that a community garden, could be a centre for educating people about organic and sustainable gardening practices, as well as providing a place for social interaction and the sharing of ideas. It's hoped that, in the long term, other sustainability projects might grow from this one.

The steering committee has worked hard to set up all the administrative and legal details in the last few months and is now close to being able to turn the first sod. Chair, Gayle Buttrose, has been very appreciative of the support she has had from COGS members in offering advice.

While this has all been going on, a film club was also forming—a group of film buffs who keenly felt the lack of a cinema in Yass. To launch the film club, the David Suzuki film, 'Force of Nature', was chosen, and

the film club felt it was appropriate to donate the funds from such a film to a group devoted to sustaining our environment.

The film night was a wonderful success, with over 40 adults attending (and some children). Punters enjoyed the film and were happy to see their money going towards the community garden. Both the community garden group and the film club look like having a rosy future in Yass.

An open day at the garden site, on disused tennis courts at the Anglican Church, is planned for Sunday 5th June, World Environment Day. The group welcomes ideas from locals about how they would like the site designed and developed.

For more information or to get involved with the Yass Community Garden, follow us on Facebook or email yasscommunitygarden@gmail.com.

Karan Gabriel



Above: the film venue was a beautifully restored hall, originally called the Oddfellows' Hall now used as a gallery by the famed local artist Kim Nelson.



Chris McKenzie-McHarg and Sally Rasmussen gladly hand over their dollars to film organiser Karan Gabriel, to raise funds for the community garden group.

Winter planting: ONIONS

Onions can be considered a staple vegetable and are one of the easiest to grow – if you get the timing right.

Thought to have originated in the Middle East and Central Asia, onions are one of the oldest cultivated plants, with a recorded history of over 5000 years.

Onions can be soft or paper-skinned, bulbing or bunching, coloured white, red, brown, yellow or green. Varieties include *Allium cepa*, *Early Flat White*, *Creamgold*, *Brown Spanish* and *White Spanish*, all of which have different skins and mature at slightly different times. In attempting to have onions available all year, the tricky part is planting enough to last until late spring when the new season's crop is ready.

Site and soil

Full sun and a well-worked, friable soil with well-rotted organic matter is best. You don't need a very rich soil as too much nitrogen will produce large onions that don't store well. Good drainage and light soil is essential. Onions prefer an alkaline soil, with a pre-planting dressing of lime or dolomite (dolomite at a rate of one handful per 2 square metres) applied a couple of months before planting out the onion seedlings to ensure a pH of at least 7.

Planting

Plant seedlings in their final position in late July, August or early September. Gardening books may tell you plant onions in early winter, but in Canberra the weather and the soil is too cold. Seedlings planted too early in winter will not thrive and tend to bolt to seed in spring without forming bulbs. Planted too late, onion seedlings will also not form bulbs and will go to seed the following spring. Onions are slow growers and will occupy the garden for around 6 months from seedling stage. You can sow onion seed direct, but can be slow to germinate in winter and you will then need to thin and transplant the seedlings to their final growing position when they germinate. It is easier to sow seeds into punnets and transplant seedlings when they are about 10-15cm tall and easier to handle.

To plant, make a shallow v-shaped trench 5-10cm deep and lay the seedlings roots-down in the trench about 10cm apart to allow space for the bulbs. Brush some soil over the roots and water in well. The seedlings will stand up in a few days.

Cultivation

Plant onions intended for long storage in a separate area so you can control their watering easier at harvest time. The number of leaves indicates the number of layers in the bulb and its ultimate size. Seedlings will grow slowly until the weather warms, when the leaves will grow quite rapidly. During the early growth, keep the soil damp but not wet (as onion roots are quite

deep, the soil surface does not need to be kept moist). Mulch between the rows (but not too close to the plants so as to discourage fungal disease) will help retain soil moisture. If the soil has enough organic matter, there is no need for extra feeding, but it is important to keep

the bed well-weeded. Bulb formation is triggered by day length – longer keeping varieties require longer days to begin forming bulbs. Bulbs begin to form from late Spring to late Summer, depending on the variety. When the bulbs are visible, reduce watering of the longer keeping varieties to allow the outer bulb layers to dry and form paper skins.

Harvesting

Paper skin onions mature in late Summer to early Autumn. The leaves begin to yellow and wither when the bulbs are fully grown. Don't water at this stage as it can induce neck rots and mildew problems. Keep the soil surface dry and fold the leaves over the neck to assist ripening. The onions are ready to harvest when the leaves have completely yellowed or have fallen over. Pull them up and allow to dry further in a dry, sheltered spot (on the ground or on a rack) until the roots wither and can be rubbed off.

Pests and diseases

Although there are pests and diseases which attack onions, in practice onions are basically a bullet-proof crop to grow, with attention paid to weeding, mulching and crop rotation.

Saving seed

Onions are biennials and will go to seed in the second spring. The flowers are insect pollinated and different varieties should be separated from each other to prevent cross-pollination. To save seed, it is easiest to let just one variety go to seed each year. Onion seed does not keep well and should be planted within two years of harvest.

Adrienne Fazekas

Recommended reading

Garlic and Friends by Penny Woodward

The Seed Savers Handbook by Michel & Jude Fanton



Winter harvest: RADISH

The radish is “a vulgar article of the diet...” that has a “remarkable power of causing flatulence and eructation”~ PLINY

Plant a radish, get a radish, never any doubt.

That's why I love vegetables, you know what they're about!
~ TOM JONES and HARVEY SCHMIDT

The radish, that most “vulgar” of vegetables, according to Pliny...after that enticing description, why should you think about growing them?

In short, the radish is quick and easy to grow, can adapt to a wide range of climates, seasons and soil types and they are remarkably cold tolerant (even coping with light frost). Radish flowers are attractive to many beneficial insects. Good reasons to grow them in Canberra!

Radishes were first cultivated thousands of years ago in China, then in Egypt and Greece. The radish made its way to England around 1548 and they were being cultivated in the United States by 1629.

About the humble radish

Radishes are quick-growing annual root vegetables that resemble beetroots or turnips in appearance and texture and have a quite distinct flavour. It is the root of a plant in the *Brassicaceae* family. The external skin can be white, pink, red or black. There are 5 main types:

Red Globe—popular, red and white, small and round-shaped, crisp flesh

Black—black or dark brown skin, like a turnip in shape and size, white and pungent flesh, peaks winter and early spring

Daikons—large and carrot-shaped, native to Asia, white and juicy flesh, hotter than a red radish, but milder than the black radish, taste best in autumn and winter, sweet and zesty.

White Icicles—long and tapered, white flesh, milder in flavour than the red variety.

California Mammoth White—larger than the *White Icicles*, oblong-shaped roots, slightly pungent flesh. Other varieties include *French Breakfast*, *White Globe*, *Champion*, *Tokinashi*, *Long Scarlet*.

Planting

Radish are a fast and easy vegetable to grow and are practically indestructible. They are sown in the spring and harvested in the cool season, requiring a loose soil with extra organic matter for root growth and generous watering and mulch. Oriental varieties like open sandy or friable sand to accommodate their deep roots and it is beneficial to hill the foliage up as the roots swell. Radish reach maturity very quickly, so successive sowings via direct seed sowing every two weeks will supply a continuous harvest. Winter radish (like *Daikon*) should be sown in autumn – they take longer to mature and store better than the spring radish varieties. Try mixing radish seed with slower-growing crops such

as carrots to keep track of what is growing. If they are planted with carrots, you can thin the carrot crop while you are picking the mature radishes.

Problems

Radish are usually pest and disease free.

Keep watered so their roots don't split.

Avoid fresh manure when planting as this can cause forked roots.

Harvesting and Using

Radish are grown for their crisp, pungent roots and are generally eaten fresh from the garden, but the oriental types are usually pickled or soaked in soups or stews, steamed or stir fried. If left for too long, radishes become hollow and pithy. Radish can be eaten raw but can also be cooked or served whole. Peel them for a milder flavor.

The foliage of all radish types is edible, but varies in palatability. Radish tops can be cooked like spinach. Radish should be kept cool and are best used within 2-3 days. Store in plastic bags in the fridge.

To use, scrub and trim off the stem and tip, then either peel or leave the skin on to taste. Small radishes can be served whole or chopped while black and daikon varieties are usually cut or grated.

Radish can be used in a green salad, grated in pasta or bean salads or whole in a vegetable platter with dips. White radish can be tasty in a vegetable soup. It can be useful to soak washed and trimmed radishes in ice water for awhile before serving, to increase their crispness and flavour.

Seed saving

If you leave radish plants to produce tall flower spikes late in the growing season, you can collect seeds. Radish are insect pollinated—leave several plants of the same variety to flower to ensure pollination between individuals of the same type.

Radish trivia

Did you know that it is believed that Peter Rabbit was eating a Long Scarlet Radish in the famous Beatrix Potter illustration, not a carrot as widely believed? Or that in Oaxaca, Mexico, Christmas Eve is also known as the Night of the Radishes, when large radishes are cut into animal shapes. Angela Spencer

Information sources

www.foodreference.com

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Photo sourced from http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/view_photog.php?photogid=404

Project SunShine
– increasing solar roof systems in
the ACT by 1000 in 2011



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Please email us for more information:
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We are keen to discuss the venture with anyone who is interested in being part of our growing cooperative.

Please contact us for more information.

Community Gardens motion in ACT Parliament

The ACT Greens are keen for all new suburbs in Canberra to have allocated land set aside for community gardens, recently putting forward a motion in the ACT Parliament to that effect.

Greens planning spokesperson Caroline Le Couteur called on the ACT Government in March 2011 to facilitate the establishment and operation of new community gardens across Canberra. The motion was amended and passed.

She recently said that community gardens have an important role in the community, particularly in high density housing areas, having social and economic benefits.

Speaking to ABC News, she said: "In terms of affordability, food prices are one of the major components of cost of living, if people can grow some of their food and save themselves a bit of money, that makes an impact," Ms Le Couteur said.

Sources

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2011/01/11/3110335.htm> www.actgreens.org.au

Chocolate Raspberry Brownies

<i>1/2 cup plain flour</i>	<i>1/2 cup self raising flour</i>
<i>1 tspn bicarb</i>	<i>3/4 cup cocoa</i>
<i>2 eggs lightly beaten</i>	<i>1 1/4 cups caster sugar</i>
<i>1 tspn vanilla essence</i>	<i>1 1/2 tbs oil</i>
<i>200g plain yoghurt</i>	<i>120g apple puree *</i>
<i>200g raspberries</i>	<i>icing sugar, to dust</i>
<i>fresh berries, to serve</i>	

Preheat oven to 180°C. Grease and line the base and sides of a 30cmx20cm pan with baking paper. Sift the flours, bicarbonate of soda and cocoa into a large bowl and make a well in the centre.

Whisk together the eggs, sugar, vanilla, oil and yogurt in bowl. Pour into the flour mixture and mix until smooth. Fold through the apple puree and raspberries. Spoon the mixture into the prepared pan and bake for 10 minutes or until a skewer comes out clean when inserted in the centre. Allow to cool for 5 min in the pan before turning out onto a wire rack to cool completely. Cut into squares and dust with icing sugar. Serve with extra fresh berries and ice-cream (optional).

**Rather than buying apple puree I cook (either on stove or in microwave) 2 peeled and sliced apples and then mash them into a puree.*

Original recipe from the Heart Foundation's *Deliciously Healthy Cook*.

Recipe kindly provided by Cindy Steensby

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or visit <http://citace.com.au>

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



ACT VEGETARIAN SOCIETY

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

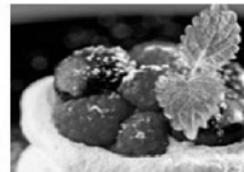
The ACT Vegetarian Society welcomes new members. We'd like to help you with information and support about vegetarian and vegan diets and provide opportunities to meet others with the same interest.

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 membership application/ renewal

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

Application details

1. New application *or* Renewal
2. Single membership
 Concession Please attach copy of details
 Family membership
3. One year payment *or* Two year payment

Member details (Please print clearly)

Name _____

If a Family Membership, please provide additional names

Adult 2 _____

Child 1 _____ Age _____

Child 2 _____ Age _____

Child 3 _____ Age _____

Title for address label _____

Street _____

Suburb/Town _____

State _____ Postcode _____ Phone _____

Email _____

Do you have a plot in a COGS garden?

If so, which garden? _____

I agree to follow the rules of COGS during my membership.

_____ Date ____/____/____
(signature)

For COGS administration

Membership number _____ Bank ID _____

Receipt number _____ Exp. Date _____

Membership benefits

- Monthly meetings with guest speakers, organic seed and seedling exchange and sales
- Quarterly magazine (*Canberra Organic*); reduced members' advertising rates
- Access to extensive COGS library
- Eligibility for plot allocation in a COGS community garden
- Excursions and social activities

Membership categories

- **Single membership:** 1 adult
- **Family membership:** 1 or 2 adults and their children under 18 years
- **Associate membership:** Available to schools, businesses, and other organic and relevant interest groups

Membership rates

Current membership rates for one and two years are:

<i>New members</i>	1 year	2 years
Single/family	\$25	\$40
Concession	\$15	\$24

<i>Renewing members</i>	1 year	2 years
Single/family	\$20	\$35
Concession	\$12	\$21

Concession rates are available for Commonwealth healthcare card holders and full time students.

Copies of evidence for concession rates must be provided when renewing your membership.

COGS memberships are valid for 12 months (or 2 years) from the joining date.

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

If membership expires, the person in question:

- Ceases to be a member of COGS
- Receives no further publications
- Loses entitlement to any plot held in a COGS community garden

Please send your completed application form, with cheque or money order to:

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

Cheques and money orders should be made payable to 'Canberra Organic Growers Society' or 'COGS'.

COGS WINTER PLANTING GUIDE

VEGETABLES

Asparagus

Prepare the bed before you buy the crowns to plant in late winter - early spring. Since this is a perennial crop which can last for up to 20 years it is well worth the effort of establishing properly. Asparagus needs good drainage and plentiful food and can be planted very successfully in a raised bed enriched with compost and well rotted manure. Seaweed is an excellent mulch.

The crowns are planted in a trench, but with the roots straddling a ridge. Cover so dormant shoots are about 4cm below the surface. Do not harvest spears the first year, and only harvest for a few weeks the second year. Remember this is a long-term investment.

Broad Beans

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

Kohlrabi

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

Lettuce

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

Onions

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

Peas

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

Rhubarb

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

Other possibilities

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

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

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

FRUIT

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

Strawberries

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

Berries

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

Currants

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

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

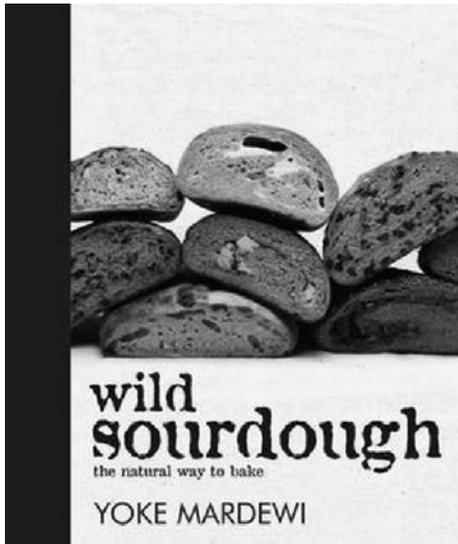
S = seed sowing; T = transplanting

COGS Library News

Here's a couple of tasty new books available to borrow from the COGS Library...

Wild Sourdough - The Natural Way to Bake by Yoke Mardewi

This book is a hands-on and highly practical guide to sourdough bread-making at home. With more than 45 easy-to-follow sourdough bread recipes, written for home bakers, "Wild Sourdough" invites you to go back to basics, using just flour, water and salt, using no commercial yeast, additives or preservatives of any kind. There is also a guide to making your own starter (from rye flour) using natural fermentation.



Microgreens: How to Grow Nature's Own Superfood, by Fiona Hill



Larger than sprouts and smaller than baby salad greens, microgreens nutritionally contain higher levels of active plant compounds than mature plants or seeds and can easily be grown in containers on a terrace or windowsill. With microgreens, you don't wait weeks or months for them to come to maturi-

ty; most varieties are ready in a week or two and you can grow them right through winter. Microgreens are the new big thing in growing your own food, and you can use up excess vegetable seeds!

Margaret Richardson
COGS Librarian

Little Sprout's Corner

☺ **Ronnie's Succulent Snails**
www.ronniessucculentsnails.com.au

Want to convince the kids that picking snails off the vegies is fun? Here's a way they can collect snails and make a difference to the community at the same time—who wouldn't like that?

Ronnie's Succulent Snails is a social enterprise set up by a 21 year-old Canberra man, Ronnie, who has a moderate intellectual disability and life-long history of hospitalisation, injuries and surgeries due to his serious chronic epileptic condition. His challenges mean regular mainstream employment is not an option for him.

So Ronnie has set up a business breeding and growing snails for the restaurant market. Ronnie's Succulent Snails means Ronnie can engage with the community and raise awareness for people with disabilities. There is a flourishing market for snails internationally and within Australia.

Why not get involved in Ronnie's snail collection program? All you need to do is collect snails from your garden (get the kids to help!) and keep them in a secure container with air holes, leaves and water and contact Ronnie!

Contact Ronnie for more information at
ronnie@ronniessucculentsnails.com.au.



Useful spot



Food dehydrators are a good way to dry out saved seeds

COGS NOTICE BOARD

COGS Monthly Meetings

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

See the COGS website for further details:

www.cogs.asn.au

If you would like to speak about a topic related to organic gardening, please contact the COGS committee via email at info@cogs.asn.au.

COGS Green Manure

Premixed bags of green manure can be purchased at the monthly COGS member's meetings. Look for the table next to the library books!

Yass Community Garden

For more information about the planned Community Garden at Yass, or to offer assistance, please email yasscommunitygarden@gmail.com or follow the garden on Facebook.

COGS blog needs input

Have you noticed the blog on the COGS website? Why not pose a question or respond to a post—it all helps improve the content and vibrancy of the blog for COGS members.

Want to help produce Canberra Organic magazine?

Do you have a yearning for gardening, a burning desire to write about organic growing, a penchant for Publisher or an eye for photography?

COGS is searching for a volunteer or two to help with the quarterly magazine, *Canberra Organic*.

Production involves sourcing stories, writing, editing, photography and desktop publishing.

The magazine is published 4 times per year, in line with the seasons.

If you are interested, please email Angela at editor@cogs.asn.au for more information.

Out and About

Soil Biology Conference

The Soil Biology Conference, to be held on 8-10 June, will focus on the benefits of increasing soil biology to soil structure. Hosted by the North East Catchment Management Authority, the conference includes a forum at La Trobe University in Wodonga and farm visits.

See www.necma.vic.gov.au for more information

Queanbeyan City Council Enviro Expo

This is an exhibition by retailers and service providers encouraging sustainable living practices in the Queanbeyan area. This event aims to encourage sustainable living by Queanbeyan residents, showcase a variety of local environmental businesses and provide relevant interactive workshops.

June 4, 10am-5pm, Queanbeyan Conference Centre

Grafting workshop

Have a look at this grafting workshop run by Milkwood Permaculture in Sydney in June. Dan Harris-Pascal, a Southern Tablelands horticulturalist, will teach the basic techniques of grafting. Take-home resources and workshop materials are provided.

Sunday June 12, 10am-noon, \$65, book online at www.milkwoodpermaculture.com.au

World Environment Day in Canberra

Join COGS and other Canberra-based environmental groups, such as the ACT Conservation Council, Healthy Soils Australia and the ACT Environment Centre in a walk across Commonwealth Bridge to Parliament House, as part of World Environment Day. Help express concern at the need for strong national action on climate change. Speakers include Bishop George Browning and Dr John Hewson.

Sunday June 5, 12.30pm, Commonwealth Park.

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

