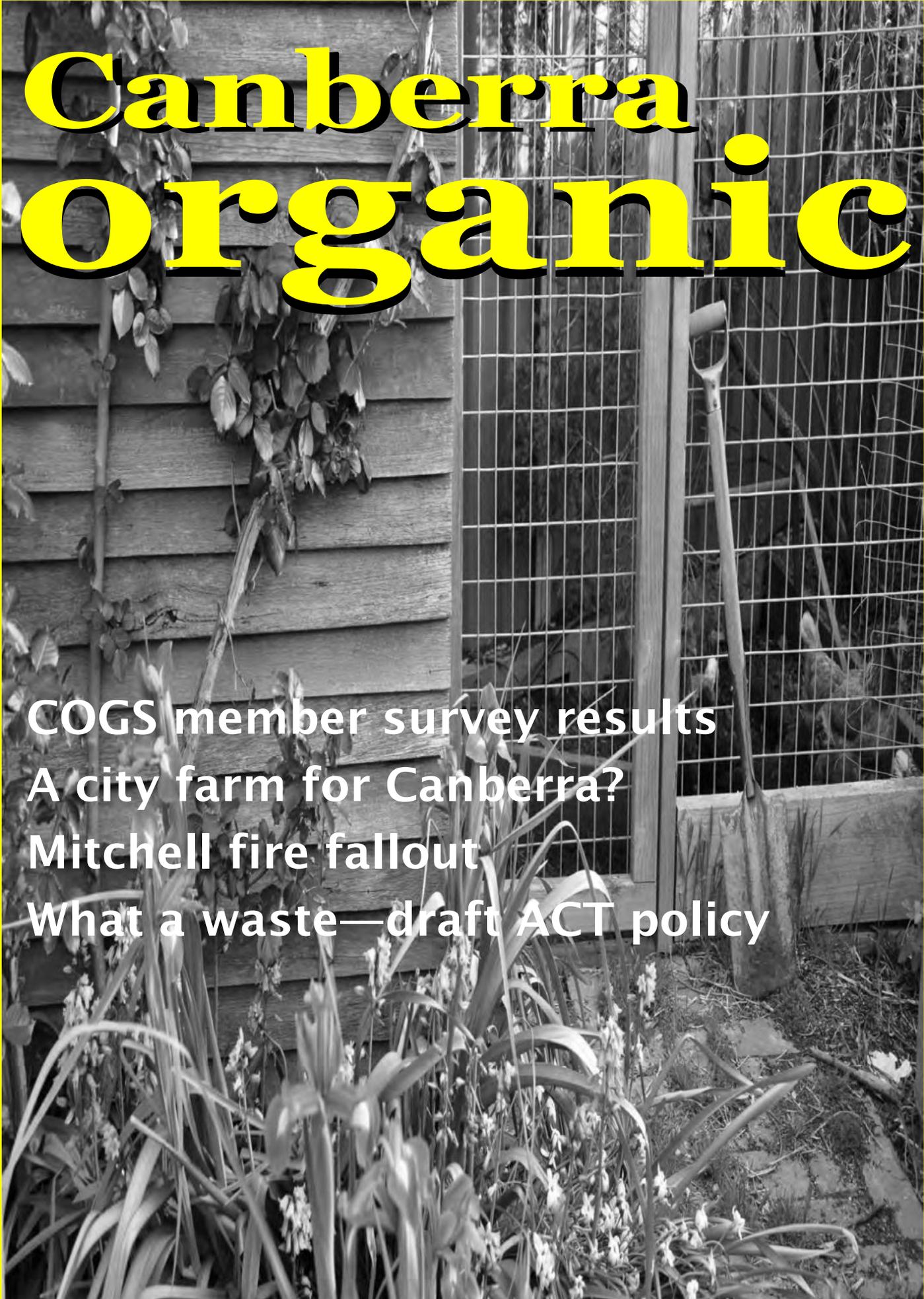


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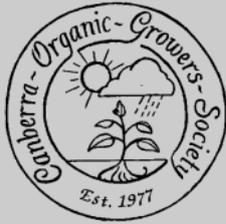


COGS member survey results

A city farm for Canberra?

Mitchell fire fallout

What a waste—draft ACT policy



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 meetings. 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.

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Articles and photos by Jane Goffman unless otherwise stated.

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Kaleen morning tea: Joanne Widdup

Cover photos

FRONT COVER:

The Embry-Lowe's backyard architect - designed chookshed in Dickson

BACK COVER:

Charnwood's frog

A bucket at Erindale

O'Connor's guard-en lizard



Floridora from Olive Mellor's Complete Australian Gardener Illustrated, published by Colorgravure (The Herald & Weekly Times Ltd) dated December 1952.

WE LOVE YOUR INPUT!

Please send any comments, articles, photos, news items, event information or recipes to
Canberra Organic.

Email: editor@cogs.asn.au

Post: PO Box 347 Dickson ACT 2602.

CANBERRA ORGANIC
Volume 19 Number 4 (Issue 75)

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

Jane Goffman

CONTRIBUTIONS

We welcome submissions, ideas and feedback. Contributions preferred in Word, Publisher or text format, on disk, as attached files or as clean typed copy. Images should be sent as attached (not embedded) files, on disk or as original photographs or slides.

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

Please send contributions to
editor@cogs.asn.au or
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PO Box 347 Dickson ACT 2602

ADVERTISING

Please contact Jane Goffman by 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 500.

ADVERTISING RATES

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Full page	\$72 (\$60)	\$240 (\$200)

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Editor's note

Many of this quarterly's readers would know that Angela Spencer has been tireless magazine editor for the past two years. What you might not have realised is that COGS has been a 100% volunteer organisation for the past 34 years.



Speaking of which, there are a few other tireless workers I've been noticing lately who don't get a lot of recognition for all the hours they put in to COGS. Over the past umpteen years, Adrienne Fazekas has been either COGS Treasurer or COGS President (the only way she could find to get out of being Treasurer, apparently) and has put a huge amount of selfless work into nurturing and maintaining the COGS we know and love. I've always enjoyed finding out what really happens behind the scenes, and discovering Adrienne and all her hats has been one of the genuine pleasures of being on this year's Committee.

Of course, Committees aren't usually a lot of fun. But when the people around the table are smart, caring, sensible people, it can be a very rewarding experience. I've been on a fair few in my time, and this has definitely been the best of the lot.

As the new magazine editor (having recently traded up from Membership Secretary), I'm hoping to carry on the good work as best I can. If there are hiccups of any kind, you can be sure that I'm to blame. But if the result is a good one, it's sure to be thanks to the wonderful Colin Brammall who's pulling it all together from Bywong.

So let me know what you think, send me your stories, keep me informed – because the reason we put all these hours into writing and sending you a magazine in the first place is to share, to engage, to bind and weave us together: and that's very much worth doing and being a part of.

Angela says: Thanks to all the wonderful COGS members for the inspiration, comments and contributions to the magazine during my time as editor - Angela Spencer (reincarnated as your friendly Membership Secretary).

JANE GOFFMAN

President's report: Summer 2011 - 2012

I'm writing this report in late October, looking out at a beautiful spring day – the sort of day that calls to you to head out into the garden and spend the whole day there – good motivation to make me write quickly so I can respond to the call!

This issue, I want to flag some of the thinking the COGS Committee has been doing about options for the future. While it is invisible to most members, keeping the COGS organisation ticking over takes a considerable amount of work. Most committee members commit several hours a week to the organisation, and those who take on extra responsibilities commit considerably more. This is because, for a relatively small organisation, we provide significant member services.

COGS runs 11 community gardens and is usually involved in supporting efforts to establish additional gardens, providing an opportunity for several hundred people to access plots. We have monthly member meetings with a speaker and access to a library; we have a very active home gardeners' group, a quarterly magazine; a website, blog and, most recently, a Facebook page; and we facilitate access to organic courses through CIT. These activities, particularly the community gardens, magazine, and courses, require a considerable amount of time and administrative effort. Committee members are volunteers, usually with fulltime jobs and family commitments, and are struggling to manage the workload required to keep this all on track.

As the former president, Keith Colls, flagged on a number of occasions, this is not sustainable. The Committee is finding the workload increasingly stressful, and I suspect we are approaching the point where essential activities will simply slip. Given this, I believe we need to make some hard decisions about the way forward by the end of this year.

We've discussed a number of options and, as is usually the way of these things, they all have pros and cons: We could reduce the workload – this might involve moving from the current paper magazine to a simple newsletter that is only delivered via email, and requiring the community garden convenors to take on a greater share of the work of managing the gardens, noting that this has risks given COGS' ultimate responsibility as licensee for the gardens and for paying water charges; We could try to more effectively harness the skills and energy of the membership to take over some activities, such as the magazine and website; We could pay someone to take on the administrative work of the organisation – membership, banking, paying bills, supporting garden convenors, liaison with the ACT Government, doing much of the work required for the magazine, etc. This would need to be funded by an increase in plot fees and membership fees – noting that the cost of membership has not increased for many years.



I'll be raising these issues at our general meetings in coming months, and will also include information on our website. Whichever path we take, the committee needs the support of the membership, so your views are important. I look forward to hearing from you on this important issue.

Happy gardening!

Alison Killen

We want a new website

The COGS website has served the organisation well for some years, but the Committee has determined that members need more in the way of an online presence than we have been able to provide.

It is time to refresh the website.

The Committee is seeking a volunteer web designer to redesign the website to take us into the future by delivering online content to the membership. The Committee would like a solid site structure that will be relatively simple to maintain with up-to-date

information while being able to use the evolving capabilities of the internet to communicate with the current membership and present a professional presence to the public and future members.

This is not something that needs to be attended to urgently, but we would like to get moving fairly soon. Is there anyone familiar with one of the web design tools (such as Dreamweaver or Freeway) who would be able to design and build a new and improved web site for COGS? If so, **please contact Walter Steensby at steensby@netspeed.com.au or on 6254 3881** to discuss where we go from here.

COGS Survey: Early Results Are Out!

Organic gardening is increasingly popular and COGS as an organisation is at a crossroads. COGS has waiting lists for many of its gardens and proposals for establishing more gardens, and we need to think about how and if we grow larger.

Should we remain a gardening club, or should we become perhaps a community-service organisation?

In late 2010, the Management Committee agreed to do a survey of members to learn more about what members are thinking, what they need and expect. The survey got underway in late August 2011.

We invited only individual members with email addresses. We would have liked to invite everybody by mailing questionnaires where necessary, but were running late and we apologise for this. We had a good response, and from people using every one of the gardens. In September 2011, we had 413 individual members—371 had working email addresses. 135 responses came back. This reasonably large number provides useful information. Analysis will continue for a while yet, but we have some information already. Some of it is what one might expect and some is a surprise.

The average period of membership is just under four years; the longest is 24 years! No one is unemployed.

The most valuable features of COGS are, in order: the magazine (72%), access to community gardens (70%), gardening advice and support (54%), the monthly meetings (24%), the website (21%), the Seed Savers and Backyard special interest groups (20%), and seminars and training sessions (16%).

Why do members use a community garden? To grow more food than they can elsewhere (78%). Other reasons are that it provides a social venue (62%), helps bring agriculture back into urban areas (54%), and makes the food supply more certain (51%).

Most people using a community garden get there by car (68%). Some bicycle (18%) or walk (13%). A tiny number carpool (1%), and nobody uses the bus. It might be useful if some community gardens were near bus routes.

The main problems members find with growing in Canberra are the climate (37%), water and rainfall (22%), animal and vegetable pests (15%), soil quality (11%), lack of space (4%), and lack of time (4%). If you'd like a useless statistic, the number of gripes per respondent is 1.54.

The most popular things to grow are brassicas of all varieties, closely followed by garlics, onions and leeks, then beans, tomatoes, herbs and berries. Surprisingly, potatoes come after leafy greens, stone fruit and peas.

The growers' wish list tells us that many would like to move to the northern NSW coast. We have a pent-up demand for the tropical and subtropical. Most hankered after are avocados, mangoes, sweet potatoes, bananas, pawpaws, and pineapples. What some people wish to grow, others are already growing: citrus, stone fruits, raspberries, kiwifruit and figs. One person says it's not the climate, it's the insects.

When it comes to how much we feed ourselves, only two people (or 1.7%) grow all they need themselves. Otherwise, 55% grow a quarter of their diet, 27% grow half, and 10% grow three-quarters. Doing the arithmetic reveals that 116 people are growing enough fruit and vegetables to feed 43 people - a bit disappointing.

There is also a pent-up desire for more land. The total reported area under cultivation is 44 200 sq m, while the desired area is 106 800 sqm. Some dreams border on the small rural, e.g. two acres, but a common wish is for 80–90% more land.

Finally, when it comes to ways to improve COGS, suggestions can be clustered under five broad headings: meetings/publicity/outreach, gardens/facilities, education/training, committee/governance, and water.

Very briefly, ideas include general advertising, visiting other community gardens, changing where the meetings are held, continuing the open days, rabbitproofing the gardens, more gardens in high density areas and more details of what the Committee is doing.

However, it was nice to learn that some people think that it's all going quite well. The Committee thanks everyone for their participation in the survey and their kind help. A comprehensive report will be available soon on the website—www.cogs.asn.au.

*By Walter Steensby
COGS Committee Member and
University of Canberra Researcher*

Seed Savers Group

The Seed Savers group have been quiet over winter. With Spring here, we're testing the germination rates of some seeds and directly planting others. Details of our seed stocks can be found on www.cogs.asn.au

New members are always welcome: we meet on the third Monday of the month at 7:30pm at different venues. Email steensby@netspeed.com.au and we'll tell you where it is next!

Walter Steensby

We could have saved the earth, but we were too damn cheap. Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.

Around the COGS Gardens

Oaks Estate

We are powering ahead with redeveloping. We have had a bobcat in to fix some derelict beds, and have had two successful working bees with a third one planned. The Oaks Estate Progress Society donated a barbecue early dinner for one event and a gardener has donated a good three-burner BBQ to the garden collective.

One cloud on the horizon is the park next to the garden being redeveloped and the contractors using our water. As President of the local progress association, I have contacted TAMS and told them compensation to COGS will be required and a separate meter installed for the new water supply being installed in the park. I will be contacting *The Canberra Times* to see if we can get an article printed to stimulate more interest from locals in gardening with us.

Peter O'Dea

Cotter

A rare event has occurred at the Cotter Garden: three gardeners have left us at once, leaving us with five vacant plots and no waiting list. We are anxious to have new gardeners join us, as their activities will keep the now vacant plots tidy. What can we offer you besides another 19 knowledgeable gardeners for company?

Our garden is surrounded by land managed by the ACT Equestrian Association, so we have a rural oasis near Curtin. Apart from our shed, the only building in sight is the Yarralumla Woolshed. Sometimes we get the music from Woolshed activities as we garden. Occasionally we can hear the strains of music from the Governor-General's lawns. Our location means that we have lots of wildlife visitors, especially interesting birds. There's the odd kangaroo and hare, while you might unearth a pobblebonk frog as you dig your plot.

The old hands have been very impressed by the enthusiasm and ideas of our three newest members, Kay, Helen and Michael. They are another reason why we are trying to encourage more to join us. If the idea and the location suit you, please contact the convenor, Ann Smith, on 6285 2995.

Ann Smith

Dickson

The garden has been quite busy over the past few months. We've had our main Spring working bee to rectify some safety problems around the garden, including filling in the 'pond' (which only served to breed mosquitoes!) and generally tidy up the garden for the upcoming growing season. It was great to see



A view of the Oaks Estate garden

everyone get together to get some work done and revitalise the garden, which had been somewhat moribund over winter.

We're also very excited to welcome a number of new gardeners this year. This led to a flurry of activity as new plots were prepared, weeds cleared and the greenhouse filled up with fresh young seedlings. The new gardeners have also brought new ideas and new gardening experiences with them. Hopefully these new ideas, combined with the experience from our existing gardeners, will make 2011-2012 an even better and more productive year than the last.

We have also held discussions with Dickson College and they are interested in opening up some more land for community gardens in future. While this may be a way down the road, it does offer some hope (along with the new True North community garden) for those who have been waiting patiently to get into a garden in the inner north.

Andrew Cairns

Cook

Spring has really struck us all and called us to get our gardens prepared for the coming Summer. Plot holders have all been busy pulling up weeds and preparing the soil. Some already have crops starting to poke their heads out of the ground. Some are harvesting their Winter crops including broad beans, coriander, rocket, lettuce and silverbeet.

A new mowing and maintenance roster has been drawn up and everyone during the year will have a turn to take on these tasks. It appears to be working well and everyone concerned is now sharing the burden. In the past it was a few dedicated people who undertook them.

There have been a few changes in the garden as people have left and others have taken up the vacant plots. The garden currently has 10 people on its

Around the COGS gardens continued

waiting list. We had a few delinquent ducks in the garden causing a little bit of havoc during the Winter but they seem to have moved on – probably to another community garden!

If you are wondering what to do with your weeds other than putting them in the compost, try the recipe (on page 25) or you can replace the weeds with silverbeet (if you have lots of silverbeet as I have in my garden plot).
Glynis Kennedy

O'Connor

Hi to all in the gardens. O'Connor is going well and everyone is starting to plant with a creeping consensus that the late frost, if any, will struggle to make any impression with the ground being as warm as it is. Fingers crossed. We have a new convenor in Jenny Lou and a new coconvenor in Ken Filewood. Thanks guys and huge thanks to Adele Morrison for her work as coordinator in the previous year.

As a follow up to our last open day, there are plans for another one, possibly in February, but all is tentative as yet. The last one was a success and enjoyed by all as well as raising some money for the garden. The community response and involvement was really heartening.

O'Connor has 15 plots, which are more or less nine metres by five metres. People share some plots and use a mixture of town water or the tank water we have. The garden is developing a lot of character now with fruit trees being grown along the borders and everyone's different approach to growing vegetables. Our relationship with the O'Connor Uniting Church continues to be a pleasant and fruitful one!
Phil Woodhill

Erindale

Erindale is a relatively small community garden consisting of only 15 plots ranging in size from 14 to 23 square metres. All are occupied and well maintained by seven dedicated gardening members and we currently do not have a waiting list. We have what could be described as a "secret garden" as, generally, long-term local residents are quite unaware of its existence. The off road location adjacent to government units and the garden perimeter enclosed by paling fencing helps provide somewhat of an indistinctive and secluded oasis.

Naturally, at this time of the year everyone is in full swing planting their favourite seasonal vegetables of choice. Some are already harvesting globe artichokes, asparagus, peas, lettuce and so on. Due to the massive number of flowers on individual plants

we're fully expecting to reap luscious strawberries by the bucket loads. Society members are welcome to contact me (preferably by phone) if they are interested in collecting or exchanging surplus plants and seedlings. At the moment we have dill, spearmint, strawberry, endive, raspberry, Jerusalem artichokes freely available and looking for useful new homes.
Christine Carter

Kambah

We welcome Ingrid, Ben, Michael, Stephanie and partner, Roger and partner, and say goodbye to Evan and Katie. Hoping everyone's enjoying the wonderful rain we've had, it promises to be a great



Kambah's guard-en gnome

growing season. We still have six vacant plots so please contact me if you're keen. We're a very casual and friendly lot with lots of social interaction.
Sonya Kershaw

Kaleen

Spring seemed to come in a rush this year and plot holders were busily starting to prepare soil and potato plantings, then the cold spell hit and we were twiddling thumbs waiting for it to warm up again to get our plantings done.

We have no vacant plots, seven on the waiting list and several inquiries but they haven't come back to put their names on the list. It seems everyone wants to be in a community garden at the moment. Unfortunately we aren't a large garden and can't stretch to any more plots.

Things were quiet over the winter period, but there were a few hardy gardeners enjoying the vegetables that can be grown in the cooler months. Some of us allowed various vegetables to go to seed and found the new seedlings popping up after that few weeks of rain. Parsnips, carrots, chard, bok choy etc. What a delight. Of course, there are the old faithfuls like

potatoes and Jerusalem artichokes that just seem to come up every year no matter how carefully you sift through the soil.

Our Friday morning teas have continued and are always enjoyed by those attending. It is a great way to stay connected with other gardeners and their partners and to discuss recipes, vegetables, fruit, swap seeds, plants, magazines and to share excess seedlings with others.

Our numbers swell enormously during school holidays when the children join in and we have a granddaughter who just loves coming along with us, bringing something she has cooked to share. We even had a very successful Friday where the “kids cooked”. A couple of our families have been making their own pork products, smoking and preserving them. We have been fortunate to be given tastings of these delightful products. Unfortunately, we have to move to a nearby club if it is raining as we don't have any shelter, something we are hoping to rectify in the coming months.

We often have visitors to the garden and our morning teas. Recently we have had a couple of visits from the Kaleen/Giralang Mens Shed (even an alpaca who belongs to one of the men) who are setting up a vegetable garden at the Kaleen Community Centre. They are seeking our assistance with their venture.



A Friday morning tea at Kaleen.

We suffered a fair bit of damage to our winter/spring crops and blamed it on cockatoos, but the other day a rabbit was spotted in the garden. With intentions of rabbit pie it was chased by a member who was determined to tire it out and make a capture. Just when it appeared the rabbit was cornered, it discovered an opening under the fence and shot through it to safety. The hunter feels that the rabbit won't be seen in the garden again and so far they

seem to be right (here's hoping).

We are working towards our Open Garden in February as there is a lot of preparation to be done before the big weekend.

There was a lot of excitement with three bee swarms in the garden in a few weeks - bees from outside, not the resident ones. John Grubb was kept busy trying to capture them.

Our first Convenor, John Grubb, has handed over the reigns to me so he will now have time to pursue some other interests. I would like to thank him on behalf of all the members of our garden for the huge amount of time and energy he has put into the initial setting up of the garden and then the ongoing work in building it up to its full potential. *Robyn Power*

Holder

The garden is looking healthy and everyone is preparing to plant. Most of us are just awaiting the last of the frosts; being in a low, flat spot means we always cop a late one or two. The gardeners who planted their potatoes in September have had the tips nipped again this year. We have lost a few gardeners over the past couple of months, but the enquiry rate is up and we anticipate seeing all current plots taken up in the coming weeks. We welcome Kurt and Tom and Hannah, the latter with their two little helpers Joseph and Sam. We currently have four vacant plots awaiting loving growers.

We have started to mark out the new plots to the south on the land given to us by the ACT Government last year. The extra land was for giving up some land to the north to make way for a new bike path running parallel to the new road constructions on Cotter Drive. We consider that a mix of smaller- and larger-sized plots would be appropriate for new gardeners and these are looking good in the new space. With the new suburbs in Molonglo opening up soon, it is expected that these will be quickly taken up.

After another garden break-in – an annual event - and loss again of our lawn mowers, keeping our grass down presently rests on members to bring in their own lawn mowers. We do have one lawn mower left but for the time being this is kept off-site until we review the garden's security.

The Holder AGM was held at the end of September, combined with our first working bee. The convenor mantle has now passed to Dave Rice. The gardeners thank Heather for her organising contribution in the past year; she will continue as a garden committee member. *Dave Rice*

Around the COGS gardens continued

Charnwood

Planting is in full swing following some good rain in September and the soil warming up. Gardeners are planting potatoes, carrots, peas and tomatoes (with protection). The last of the broccoli is being harvested, and the alliums are going strong. Compost is being spread around, with mushroom compost proving popular this season.

Proposed structural changes include relocating the sand pit from the far NW corner of the garden to a spot near the garden shed, making it easier for parents to keep an eye on their children.

There are currently 34 gardeners at Charnwood. Several gardeners have relinquished their plots in recent weeks, but once the people on the waiting list become COGS members, all plots will be allocated with no-one left on the waiting list (unusual for the Charnwood).

The garden really is a pleasure to be a part of, a great place to grow vegetables and community!

Haydn Burgess

Northside

Hello to all you plotters, vegies, couch potatoes and to those serious gardeners among us and the not so serious, who like me just enjoy what the space and community gardening offers.

The garden is waking up after what felt like a long winter and so are the gardeners. Several have been very energetic and the plots are becoming lush in texture and colour - count the shades of green, just awesome. Not to mention the bird life, blue wrens, vibrant and vocal, parrots and noisy chuffs. Even the resident hens are more strident, spurred on by rowdy cockerels. Talking of hens, our thanks to John Field for the additional organic birds he has supplied to the garden this year.



Northside's compost bins.

The Garden continues to evolve. It now runs on a committee basis with several people sharing convener roles and responsibility. Charlie, Bob Mc and Ian co-convene, Ian attends meetings and Charlie is responsible for all things water. Bob Mc is responsible for waitlist, meet and greet and signage. Helen and Trish have volunteered to be this year's "working bee" queen bees, with more people expected to volunteer for a variety of roles still to fill.

At the September fee day, we saw several of our regular gardeners leave. We took the opportunity to make several smaller gardens out of larger ones and have several new gardeners.

Several gardeners are already mulching with hay, good to see ... and the resident chough family parade and scratch through these beds with great intent, leaving hay and holes all over the place.

The seed-raising shed has had an early workout, peas, beans and tomatoes being raised successfully, corn not so successful.

A lot of work has been done on the community fruit trees this year, mostly by Bob D with his very able apprentice Ian. Blossoms were lovely and the trees and surrounds are healthy and well-maintained, more will be done ... we might even experiment with espalier trees and different varieties this year.

Several gardeners are also keen to run a hive or three of bees - lots of research and interest being shown. We would be happy to have "experts" on bees and other things come and chat, educate us at our working bees this coming season.

Our garden currently has only one vacant plot, great soil, no tree roots and only a little windswept at certain times of the year: 50 sq m (it was Ray's work in progress and is unlikely to be empty for long).

For those who are interested in them ... some facts and figures about our garden. We have over 1655 square metres of plots, excluding the community fruit trees and four community herb gardens. We have 28 registered gardeners, working 32 plots (some have multiple plots). The smallest is 15 sqm, the largest is 100 sq m. The average size is 48.7 sqm. We also have three chook sheds taking up 96 sqm.

The garden boasts a great mix of people and cultures, four from Mediterranean backgrounds, five from Asian backgrounds, several gardening the POME way, some well grounded Aussies and an import or two. We have people with science, agriculture, horticulture and land management backgrounds, some long-term generational

gardeners who bring a wealth of organic gardening principles and are happy to share knowledge. We have technicians, bankers and community and public sector folk who are just as happy to learn.

The common link to all in this is children and their gardening knowledge. Great to see. We have 15 youngsters regularly attending and our social breakfasts and working bee BBQs are all the more dynamic because of their attendance.

Yes, yes, I can hear those voices ... he hasn't mentioned the fire ...

OK, it was an imposition, the lockout was necessary, watering was not conducted, some

plants including my own became a little stressed. Fortunately, there was some flexibility and Dominic was allowed in to feed everyone's chickens. I can't tell you if the garden was tested for toxins, the Government seemed to have its hands full. I took solace in the fact that the police and Government folk manning the several barricades, firm but polite, were not in special clothing nor were they "wearing masks". That might have been the case at ground zero but not on the perimeters. Most gardeners continue to wash the limited range to harvest after picking for a while.

Bob McAlister

(Also see "Mitchell chemical fire fallout" on pg 12)

Proposed new COGS gardens

COGS is considering proposals to establish community gardens in Dickson, Reid, Flynn and Florey. If you are interested in assisting with the planning and establishment of any of these, would like to join a waiting list for a plot, or would like more information, contact the COGS committee by emailing gardens@cogs.asn.au.

SE Australia's seasonal rainfall outlook: probabilities for November 2011 to January 2012

Wet season favoured for most of the region

The south-east Australian outlook for November 2011 to January 2012 shows the following: a wetter season is likely for most of southeastern Australia.

- strongest probabilities occur in northeastern NSW
- no strong signal for Victoria or Tasmania.

A persistently warm Indian Ocean is the main driver behind this outlook, although it is also consistent with the developing La Niña in the Pacific Ocean.

The chances of receiving above median rainfall during the November to January period are more than 60% over NSW and most of SA, with odds greater than 75% in northeast.

Such odds mean that, for every 10 years with similar ocean patterns to those currently observed, about six to eight November to January periods would be expected to be wetter than average over these areas, while about two to four would be drier.

For up-to-date information about the ACT's forecasts see www.bom.gov.au/weather/ACT

Issued 25 October 2011.

Source: <http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/ahead>

Water and dam report

1 October 2011	1 October 2010
Corin 99.9%	Corin 100%
Bendora 82.5%	Bendora 100%
Cotter 98.1%	Cotter 84.9%
Googong 99%	Googong 65.2%
Combined 98.3%	Combined 79.4%

September water use target: 149 million litres/day
Actual water use for September: 114 million litres/day

October water use target: 178 million litres/day

Source: ACTEW Corporation Newsletter

Mitchell chemical fire fallout

On 15 September, a fire at the Energy Services Environmental (ESI) facility in Mitchell destroyed the facility and burnt most of the chemicals stored there. It was late the following day before the fire was finally brought under control.

The facility held 420 000 litres of transformer oil, which contained polychlorinated biphenol (PCB) at concentrations ranging from 147 parts per million (ppm) to 11ppm. The majority of this oil was destroyed in the fire. The manufacture of PCBs is banned under the Stockholm Convention, to which Australia is a signatory. The treaty requires member nations to "manage [PCB] stockpiles and wastes in an environmentally sound manner" and remediate contaminated sites in "an environmentally sound manner".

The ACT Environment Protection Authority (EPA) carried out a detailed sampling program between 16 and 20 September that included samples of surface swabs, soil, water and ash. Tests were carried out to assess if any contaminants (including PCB) produced by the fire were present in quantities deemed hazardous to human health. The results were deemed to indicate that no contaminants tested for were present at levels above safe levels. On 28 September, the *Canberra Times* reported that the testing carried out was inadequate and did not include testing for dioxins, according to chemical engineer Chris Clunies-Ross, the Director of Queensland-based pollution testing facility Airlabs, A spokesperson for the ACT Government rejected the need for testing for dioxins as the tests carried out for PCBs indicated levels below safe limits.

Dioxins are a highly toxic group of hundreds of chemicals that can occur through natural processes (such as bushfires) but are mainly formed by industrial processes, such as burning chlorine-based chemical compounds (such as PCBs) with hydrocarbons (such as transformer oils). Dioxins can enter soil and be taken up by animals and deposited in fatty tissue. Apart from contaminated soil itself, the highest levels of dioxins are found in dairy products, meat, fish, shellfish and eggs (yolks only as whites have no fat so cannot store dioxin). Fruits and vegetables are safe to eat as long as they are thoroughly washed. A recent ioxincontamination case in Germany resulted in thousands of eggs being destroyed. Commercial animal feed had been accidentally contaminated with transformer oil and then fed to pigs and chickens.

On reading the *Canberra Times* article on 28 September, I was concerned about the possibility of



*Smoke plume from chemical fire in Mitchell
16 September 2011. Source: ABC.*

dioxin contamination in my chickens' eggs. I have two chickens housed in a chook tractor that rotates through my veggie beds. If there was any dioxin contamination from ash on the vegetation and soil, this would enter the chickens and become concentrated in their bodies and enter their eggs.

Obviously knowing actual dioxin levels is the only sure way of ensuring if eggs are safe and this can only be done by testing in a lab. The only lab in Australia that carries out dioxin testing is the National Measurement Institute in Sydney. The only tests they do is for agricultural producers wishing to export to the EU. It costs around \$1600 to do one test and takes around four weeks. The tests are difficult as the levels of dioxin tested for are so miniscule. The legal allowable level in the EU is 0.33 ppt (parts per *trillion*).

I and others approached the ACT Government about carrying out tests. The Government refused but announced an independent review of the testing regime. Unfortunately, there is no timeframe around when this review will take place.

*By Ingvar Anda,
COGS member and Downer resident*

A city farm for Canberra?

COGS Secretary Haydn Burgess discusses the proposal for a city farm in Canberra. This article will endeavour to explain the idea of a city farm, why community groups like COGS are exploring the concept, and what has happened to date.

In May this year, the COGS Committee decided on some strategic priorities for the next five years.

The top three priorities are to:

1. Explore the concept of a city farm in partnership with other organisations;
2. Develop more community gardens; and
3. Educate our community gardeners.

What is a city farm?

There are two main types of city farm operating in Australia. The first is a demonstration site for sustainable (or low-carbon) living in the urban environment. Elements may include organic gardening based on permaculture principles, education and training, organic markets and café, an organic nursery, renewable energy, solar-passive building design and waste and water recycling. Examples include CERES in Melbourne, Northey Street City Farm in Brisbane, and Perth City Farm. These farms are generally managed by not-for-profit community organisations.

The second type aims to bring a rural experience to the city, with an emphasis on animals. Examples include Collingwood Children's Farm in Melbourne and Calmsley Hill City Farm in Sydney's west. Not surprisingly, COGS is interested in exploring the former type.

A city farm (or sustainability hub) for the Canberra region is not a new idea. The Canberra Environment and Sustainability Resource Centre and Real Food Canberra have previously worked on proposals for a city farm or similar, and these proposals are informing the current conversation.

Why a city farm?

As the world's population increases and becomes more urbanised, the challenge of providing nourishing food, smart housing and clean water in a resource-constrained world also increases. Growing as much food as possible near where most people live makes sense, to reduce carbon emissions used in transporting food. Other reasons for growing food in the urban environment include: encouraging people to consume more real food and less 'edible food-like substances' (Pollan), taking advantage of the significant resources available in cities such as organic waste and labour, reconnecting with nature, and promoting social inclusion.

Who's involved?

As well as COGS, other organisations involved in the city farm initiative include Canberra Loves 40%, SEEChange, the Canberra Environment and Sustainability Resource Centre, Real Food Canberra, and the Australian Youth Climate Coalition. Representatives from these groups plus some individuals have formed an informal collective to progress the concept of a Canberra city farm through a series of workshops.

What's happened so far?

An initial workshop was held on 18 September at the Downer Community Centre, with 75 people attending. The workshop was a genuine scoping exercise, with outcomes including a database of interested people (150 and counting), key themes, and the setting up of working groups to progress elements such as governance and financial viability, possible sites, enterprises, food production, education, arts and culture. Most workshop participants agreed the primary function of a city farm is to demonstrate urban sustainability.

A second workshop on 15 October attracted 35 participants, who heard updates from the working groups, discussed the purpose/vision of the city farm, and threw up some possible names.

What's next?

The next workshop will be held on Sunday 20 November from 2pm to 5pm (venue TBA). The main objectives of these workshops are to establish a compelling case for a city farm, and eventually develop a proposal to take to government and business. Any potential city farm in Canberra will need to establish strong links with existing sustainability initiatives in Canberra, and with peri-urban and regional food producers.

For further information please email canberracityfarm@gmail.com.

By Haydn Burgess

References

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Collingwood Children's Farm: farm.org.au
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Planting, growing and harvesting times for annual vegetables in

Have you ever wondered how you can have a variety of fresh vegetables from your garden during every month of the year?

The accompanying table is designed to help those wanting to harvest vegetables all year round from an outdoor garden in the Canberra region. As well as planting times it gives typical growing and harvesting times. From this table it's easy to see what would be growing in the garden during any month of the year and what would be available for harvesting, as well as when the bed would be free for the next crop.

The timings of planting and harvesting should be used as a guide only as they can vary with the seasonal conditions.

The Spring plantings may need to be delayed if it's a cold season. Likewise the late Autumn harvest times could be brought forward by an early frost or extended by a warm season.

Those vegetables marked with a 'T' are grown elsewhere in punnets and planted as seedlings either to save space in the garden or to enable easier protection of tender seedlings.

KEY	
	Plant the entire crop at the beginning of the block
&	
	
	First planting of vegetables which will have successive plantings
	Extra plantings can be made of different varieties or to extend the harvest
	Indicates existing plantings made in previous months
	Vegetables that can be harvested during this month

	JUL	AUG	SEPT	OCT
Artichoke, Jerusalem	H →	Plant		
Asian greens	T		H	H
Beans, bush				
Beans, climbing				
Beetroot	H →			
Broad beans	→		H	H
Broccoli	T H →	H	H	H
Brussels sprouts	T H →	H	H	
Cabbage	T H →	H		
Capsicum / chilli	T			
Carrot				
Cauliflower	T H →	H	H	H
Celery	T H →	H		
Cucumber	T			
Eggplant	T			
Endive and chicory	T			
Fennel bulb	T H →			
Garlic	→			H
Leeks	T			
Lettuce	T H →	Plant seasonal varieties every		
Melon, rock	T			
Onion	T			
Parsnip	H →			
Peas	→		H	H
Potato				
Pumpkin	T			
Radish			Sow monthly for	
Silverbeet / Chard	T H →	H	H	
Snow peas				H
Spinach	T H →	H	H	H
Spring onion	T →	Plant every 2 - 3 months for		
Squash	T			
Sweet corn				
Tomato	T			
Turnip / Swede	H →			
Zucchini	T			

COGS training initiative

One of the strategic goals the COGS Committee set for itself in 2011 was to begin a process whereby members have access to organic garden training material.

If a member wanted to know about growing Jerusalem artichokes or the opinions on raised beds v trenches, where did they look? Where did new gardeners go to gain an understanding of what organic gardening was about and where was all the knowledge of members of COGS going over time?

The COGS Training Initiative

This is a structure that will, over time, become a source of resources for those attempting to undertake organic gardening in Canberra. It is designed to collect the knowledge of those who have been undertaking organic gardening in Canberra and pass it on to those new to organic gardening, new to the Canberra environment, suffering setbacks in their gardening, seeking knowledge on new plants or just generally curious.

How?

The underlying skeleton of the system will be the COGS web page, which will connect to articles, blog entries, videos, CIT course opportunities, COGS presentations and any other materials on identified topics. This will not replace the magazine and will never be as good as talking to a fellow gardener, but will have the benefit of being available at any time and it hopefully will be around long after the only COGS member who knows the best mulch to use on passionfruit vines in Canberra has passed away.

A sub-committee is being formed to compile and edit material to be placed in the training structure. This is a challenging task because there are conflicting opinions on everything in gardening and there is no real way of saying who is 'right.' The job of the Training subcommittee is more to ensure that what is put forward is not obviously wrong and is suitable to be published under COGS endorsement.

The challenge

There is a huge volume of material already available in books, DVDs, articles and in the experiences of COGS gardeners in plots and home gardens. The challenge is to make that knowledge accessible and then keep it up to date. Plants may be plants but, over time, our understanding of them changed and some of the material carved in stone 20 years ago might no longer be accepted as lore. This effort will begin with the COGS magazine articles. There have been COGS members contributing their knowledge of organic gardening in Canberra to the COGS



A promising young tomato crop being grown by Mario, one of the COGS expert growers

magazine since it began being published, but much of that knowledge is hidden in boxes of back copies so we will begin by bringing it back into the light.

Are you an expert?

What will be needed by the Training sub-committee is the expertise of current members. It is all well and good to bring out the only article on growing soya beans in Canberra from the 1985 Winter magazine but the Training sub-committee is going to need to ask someone if the content of the article is still regarded as best practice. If a member puts forward the opinion for the brassica section that it is not possible to grow lima beans if planted after late Autumn in Canberra, there is going to need to be discussion with other people who have successfully or unsuccessfully attempted brassica cultivation in Canberra to ensure any material published is the best COGS can put forward on a topic.

If you have been successful with a particular plant or technique, the Training sub-committee wants to know. What plant, what soil, what time of year, what water, what pests, what results? Anything you can tell us about your planting successes and failures will

Continued next page

Continued from previous page

contribute to the COGS body of knowledge. It will also be used to verify or challenge what has already been collected on a particular topic.

The Training sub-committee is very interested in the timing of plantings. Many of the growing principles for food plants are common to a variety of environments such as planting depth, soil acidity, trace element requirements, drainage etc but what is very unique and not well published is timing in Canberra. When to plant, when to fertilise, when to harvest, when is too late. Given our climate and the presence of frost, much of the 'common knowledge' in publication on when to plant is not appropriate to the Canberra region and this challenges a lot of COGS members when finding information before planting new species for the first time or not getting the results they expect out of their crops.

Do you want to help?

The COGS Training Initiative is a long-term project. Rome was not built in a day and the accumulated knowledge of COGS members past and present is not going to resolve itself into an easy-to-digest

format by the end of the week.

This is going to be a process of publishing the material available and then adding to it over time.

To get this process going is going to need some additional members on the Training subcommittee to go out and find knowledge, talk to conveners and gardeners, edit material and appear in training videos! The hard work has already been done by the COGS members by learning about organic gardening in Canberra through trial and error but there is still the job of collecting it and for that you can contribute a little or a lot as a member of the Training sub-committee, but anything will help.

To register your interest in participating in the Training Initiative, either as a member of the Training sub-committee or by contributing organic growing knowledge, please contact Darren Stokes at COGS.Training@gmail.com or **0448811404**.

Now is the time to share what you know.

*By Darren Stokes
COGS Committee*

What a waste! The ACT Government draft policy

It is expected that the draft ACT Sustainable Waste Strategy 2010-2025 will be adopted by the ACT Government before the end of this year. This strategy is of interest to all organic gardeners and composters. It defines the way the ACT will deal with waste organic material for the next 15 years.

Under the present arrangements, between 34,000 and 50,000 tonnes of food and garden waste is buried in landfill every year. This is about half of what we send to landfill every year. Unfortunately, under the new strategy it appears that most of the food and other organic waste, both household and commercial, will not be composted but will be burnt to produce energy and a low-quality biochar. This represents a huge loss of the plant nutrients contained within the waste organic material, nutrients which will no longer be available for growing our food.

Across Australia and the world, towns and cities everywhere are setting up systems to divert organic waste from the waste stream, compost it and get it back into agriculture. Farmers, communities and organics processors are joining forces to capture this valuable resource and get it back into the soil where it belongs. This is best done by separating out our organic waste at its source (households and

businesses) using a third bin to avoid contamination. Unfortunately, this has been rejected by the ACT Government. By separating out our food waste, garden waste and other organic waste, we could halve the amount of waste going into our landfill each year.

The system the ACT Government seems to favour is a "dirty MRF (Mixed Residual Material Facility)" where the organics are separated at a central location and not at the source (third bin). The Sydney basin has such a system in place. Unfortunately, because the dirty MRF is very inefficient at separating organics from the rest of the waste material, there is now a huge stockpile of "compost" in Sydney which is too toxic to be used for food production. It is only suitable for landfill.

If you are concerned about the ACT Government's proposed waste of organic material (compost), please consider contacting your local MLA, radio stations and writing to the papers to express your concern. There is still time for the policy to be changed. A copy of the draft ACT Sustainable Waste Strategy 2010-2025 is available at <http://www.environment.act.gov.au/waste>.

*By Keith Colls
COGS Committee*

'Most ... waste will not be composted but will be burnt to produce energy and a low-quality biochar.'

Water pricing update

The Productivity Commission was commissioned by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) to examine State and Territory government responses in terms of urban water supply during the drought conditions of the past decade. It has now released its final report.

It has more than 50 findings and recommendations and can be found at <http://www.pc.gov.au/projects/inquiry/urban-water/report>.

The State and Territory government responses to the drought were twofold:

- impose water restrictions; and
- desalination plants to provide water security (only the ACT has responded by building new dam; the proposed dam on the Mary River in Queensland was abandoned after fierce protests)

Of interest to COGS is the Commission's view on water restrictions. The Commission found that restrictions were not an appropriate policy response except in a dire emergency and that they had resulted in a loss to the community estimated to be in excess of \$1 billion.

It proposes that consumers be charged for water based on the scarcity, which would mean that consumers can use as much water as they wish, even in the depth of a drought but will have to pay a high price.

At about the same time that the Commission released its final report, the *Canberra Times* revealed that ACTEW had commissioned the ANU to undertake a survey which would ask if households should be able to pay more to avoid water restrictions with the extra revenue used to cut the bills of other water users.

The survey asked questions such as:

- Should the price of water be lower when dams are full and higher during water shortages? and
- Should the current pricing system, where all households pay the same price for water and are subject to the same watering restrictions (note that COGS gardens have self-imposed additional water restrictions), be replaced?

According to the *Canberra Times*, an ACTEW spokeswoman said, "ACTEW Corporation is very keen to explore the introduction of some form of dynamic pricing of water for users in the ACT region. Whether it is scarcity pricing, where prices reflect the store of water, or a variation, we believe it is important to move from a static price with major variation at points in the price cycle to a system of pricing with the objective means of continual price adjustment up and down."

The ANU work is based on a random survey of

householders and there is no process for making submissions.

Current COGS water purchasing arrangements

COGS charges plot fees that are largely driven by the need to ensure it will have sufficient funds to pay anticipated water bills. Gardens (not individual gardeners) purchase the water in advance as the water used is measured at the garden level. The amount they purchase is estimated by a formula (developed by COGS) that is the equivalent of 20mm of rain per week for garden area that is in production over the growing season.

Individual gardeners are charged by the garden for the estimated amount of water that they would use, based on the formula above. There is no acquittal of the water used by individual gardeners to the amount notionally purchased under the formula arrangement.



Cotter gardeners' view to Black Mountain

COGS submission to ACTEW

COGS, in its submission in June to the ACTEW review of water restrictions, said it was supportive of scarcity pricing for water but expressed concerns about the practicality of its application and that it would raise serious management issues for COGS as there was no means of tracking water usage by individual gardeners.

COGS also expressed concern at how scarcity pricing would operate at the general community level, as there would need to be developed the ability to read meters as the price of water varied in response to changes in its availability. This would be a significant logistics challenge with current technology that requires the physical reading of meters.

These emerging developments in water pricing have the potential to significantly impact on the management of COGS community gardens and its finances. The COGS Executive will continue to monitor the situation and make representations to the ACT Government to protect COGS member interests.

By Andy Hrast

Organic news

Farms using phosphorus inefficiently: CSIRO

Australian pasture systems are not using phosphorus fertiliser efficiently, according to research by Australian and international scientists as part of a national review of phosphorus use in grazing and cropping systems.

The researchers looked at ways to reduce the cost of phosphorus fertiliser on farms, such as improving fertiliser technologies, breeding plants which take phosphorus up from the soil more efficiently or grow better in low-phosphorus soils or applying different amounts of phosphorus fertilisers at the right times.

Dr Richard Simpson, from the CSIRO's Sustainable Agriculture Flagship, said: "High-quality phosphorus reserves are a finite global resource – the more effectively we use phosphorus the better global citizens we will be". Phosphorus fertilisers are currently an important input for producing food.

Source and more information: www.csiro.au

OFA Chair is the new IFOAM president

Andre Leu, the Chair of the Organic Federation of Australia, was recently elected as the new President of the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM). IFOAM is an umbrella organisation that looks after 750 member organisations across 116 countries and advocates for

organic agriculture in the global setting.

"It is an exciting time to be involved in the organic sector as it is the fastest-growing agricultural-based industry in the world ... the global value of certified organic market sales is estimated to be around \$60 billion dollars," Andre said.

Of his priorities as President, Andre said: "I am interested in promoting the multifunctional benefits of organic systems and food in terms of health, climate change, biodiversity, small farmers, feeding the world, resilience, soil improvement, water use efficiency and poverty alleviation."

Source: www.ofa.org.au

Backyard vegie patch banned in the US

The latest in a series of similar incidents in the United States, a Memphis maths teacher has been called a "public nuisance" and ordered to dismantle his backyard vegie garden by his local council, which claims it contravenes city zoning regulations. The teacher, Adam Guerrero, tends to his urban garden with three local students, keeping bees, making vermicompost, producing biofuel and making soap. This situation is similar to the story about a Michigan woman who faced 93 days in jail recently for planting a vegetable garden.

Source: www.grist.org.au

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The Winter of our silverbeet - recipes to end the glut

Was it some time in February? I'm quite sure that I planted carrots and turnips and broccoli. A cunning gardener I, taking advantage of the still warm soil to get Autumn crops going. It rained conveniently and I'm sure that I watched young seedlings emerge. But then I had to go away. I had to go to the Snowies for some bushwalking. And then I had to go to Sydney to hang out with grandchildren. And spend some time in cafes and bookshops. Eventually I got back to the garden, was it three or four weeks later? And found that where I had sown carrots there was now silverbeet growing! Where I thought I had turnips there was now silverbeet! And where I had seen broccoli seedlings there were now silverbeet seedlings! A miracle in the Cotter garden! Not a single weed! The whole plot was a dense ground cover of silverbeet.

Lest we be totally silverbeaten, I am looking for recipes. Here is a family favourite, resurrected for this Winter of our silverbeet .



Silverbeet frittata

*12 silverbeet leaves
1 onion, chopped finely
3 cloves garlic, chopped finely
1 tbsp olive oil
6 to 8 free-range eggs
handful parmesan
salt and pepper
grated nutmeg*

Wash silverbeet and squeeze out water. Cut leaves and stems into 1cm shreds. Saute with onions and garlic until leaves wilt and stems and onion soften. Lightly beat eggs in a bowl and add cheese, salt, pepper, nutmeg. Add egg mixture to hot silverbeet mixture and cook for three minutes, occasionally lifting edges to disperse uncooked egg underneath. Finish the runny top off under the grill until just firm.

Gerry Jacobson

Weed (or silverbeet) pie

*1 onion or leek chopped
150gm of fresh mixed weeds (such as dandelion tops, chickweed, sorrel, wild rocket, nettles)
1 tbsp oil
2 tsp dried dill
50gm feta cheese crumbled
3 hard-boiled eggs crumbled
10 sheets filo pastry*

Olive oil to liberally cover each layer of the filo pastry

Pick the weeds and discard woody stems, just leaving leafy bits. Take the leaves and rip them roughly by hand (a knife releases too much juice). Saute the onions in olive oil and, when they are soft, add the leaves and cook until they are limp but not browned. Mix in the dill, crumbled boiled eggs, feta cheese, pepper and salt. Cover each layer of filo liberally with olive oil. Spread the weed mix over five sheets then top with another five sheets. Put the pie onto a lightly greased baking tray or one covered with baking paper.

Bake in a hot oven (180-200C) till the filo is golden and crisp (20-25 minutes).

Glynis Kennedy

Do you dig this?

The Canberra Organic Growers Society has set up a new Facebook page, intended to give COGS members, and other interested individuals and groups, an opportunity to share information, ask and answer questions and promote events and issues surrounding organic growing and community gardening.

The Facebook page is a dialogue and community-building exercise and will complement the existing COGS website and chat forum (www.cogs.asn.au), seasonal magazine and general meetings.

For those unfamiliar with social media, Facebook can be a useful and interesting way to share online links and news stories, promote upcoming events and ask and answer questions.

To "like" the Facebook page, click on the Facebook button on the COGS website or search for "Canberra Organic Growers Society" in the search bar on Facebook and click on "like".

Happy social networking!



Invitation

Please join our cooperative!

We are setting up a landshare growing cooperative at the historic 'Cuppacumbalong' at Tharwa. We are looking for interested and enthusiastic people to join us in our food security venture.

The beautiful Cuppacumbalong boasts:

- 2 acres of heritage vegetable gardens
- 2 acres for future orchards
- Ample water supply
- Lovely setting
- Food craft building (drying, meetings etc)
- Space for craft ventures
- Possibility of Saturday morning markets
- A land management agreement allowing 300 deep litter free range chooks

And so much more...

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.



**Please email us for more information:
cuppacumbalong@gmail.com**

www.cuppacumbalong.com.au

RMIT organic health and wellness survey

A recent study in the Netherlands showed 75 per cent of organic consumers reported health benefits after moving to an organic diet .

RMIT University in Melbourne is conducting an Organic Health & Wellness Survey because they want to know whether Australian organic consumers have similar experiences.

Further information:
www.rmit.edu.au/wellness/organicresearch

Biodynamics course

Mulloon Creek Natural Farms will be hosting Hamish Mackay and John Priestly for a two-day Biodynamics course on Saturday, 26 and Sunday 27 November. The course is subsidised by the Organic Federation of Australia so only \$110 p/p. It is aimed at graziers, croppers and horticulturalists. Details at http://www.themullooninstitute.org/webapp_1561549/Biodynamics_for_Grazing,_Cropping_and_Horticulture.

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.



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

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



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 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 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, as these materials can pack down to form an impenetrable barrier to water.

Heat protection

On days of extreme heat your plants may need to be physically protected. This can be achieved by covering plants with shade cloth secured to a frame made from weldmesh or irrigation pipe which is bent to form a tunnel.

Watering

Water the soil not the plants. This is especially important for plants that are susceptible to fungal leaf diseases such as tomatoes, cucumbers, pumpkins and zucchinis.

Always check soil moisture before deciding to water. Even if the surface looks dry, the soil may be quite moist just a few centimetres below. Infrequent, deeper watering is more effective than frequent shallow watering.



Pests

Pests can multiply quickly over Summer. Before reaching for a spray, check if there are also 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*.

Weeds

Keep weeds down. They compete with your plants for water, nutrients and sunlight. It is much easier to tackle them when they are small.

Harvesting

Make sure you harvest your crops regularly. This will generally encourage your plants to continue cropping and you will enjoy your produce at its peak.

Remember to leave space in your vegie patch for those Winter vegetables that need to be planted by mid to late Summer, such as cauliflowers and Brussels sprouts, which need time to grow before the extreme cold of Winter sets in.

	DEC	JAN	FEB
Bush beans	S	S	
Beetroot	S	S	S
Broccoli	ST	ST	T
Brussels 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. Always observe the seasonal weather patterns before deciding when to plant as there will often be significant differences in the Summer weather from one year to the next.

More seasonal planting information is available at www.cogs.asn.au

Digging Around the Web

Getting the dirt on the Internet for you!

Sustainable World Radio

www.sustainableworldradio.com

Hailing from the US and started in 2004 by Jill Cloutier, an environmental educator, freelance writer and videographer, Sustainable World Radio presents interviews, news and commentary about sustainable living and permaculture coming from the perspective that permaculture provides solutions to many of the problems facing us today. Jill's approach to life is to "Care for the Earth, Care for each other, Share the surplus". The website offers podcasts, videos and a blog and covers topics such as permaculture projects around the globe, how to plant a food forest, restorative design and ethnobotany.

Eat at Dixiebelles

<http://eatatdixiebelles.blogspot.com/>

Written by a Canberran who describes herself as a "survivor environmentalist" (see the blog for a definition!), this blog makes for interesting and regular reading on topics such as gardening, urban homesteading, chooks, crochet, bottling and preserving and frugal living. You can subscribe via RSS feed or through Facebook.

How to fix your soil

<http://www.permaculture.co.uk/articles/150811990/soil-restoration-using-plants-fix-nitrogen-ground>

A useful article on how to restore your soil using plants to fix nitrogen in the ground. This is the website of UK magazine *Permaculture* so have a look at the other resources on the site.

Librarian's report

Book on order: All About Tomatoes, Clive Blazey. Diggers, 2011.

Providing taste-test results, pruning trials and grafted tomato comparisons, Clive exposes many myths. Comparing heirlooms with hybrids for yield, flavour and length of harvest, this is the most comprehensive growing guide for gardeners and chefs in Australia.

Note to COGS members – Please don't forget to return any Library books you have on loan. You will be able to borrow books over the summer break at our final meeting for the year on 22 November.

Margaret Richardson
COGS Librarian

Little Sprout's Corner

Sharing the joy of gardening with small people

Many of our members have children or grandchildren, young nephews and nieces, or other small people in their lives. If you're anything like me, you'll want to encourage them to get out with some good gloves and a proper hat and discover the joy of pulling weeds after it's rained, of planting seeds and watching them grow, and harvesting the freshest, purest food they can possibly eat, packed full of vitamins and minerals from the healthy soils you've been feeding all through the year. So I'm interested to hear your thoughts about what works well and what doesn't, and hoping to set up a regular column to collect and share ideas!

My tips are to go for the foods that are easy to pop in their mouths, so there's instant gratification. Strawberries and cherry tomatoes are my two favourites, plus sunflowers for the sheer thrill they produce. As they get older, it helps to ask them what they'd like to grow and take them to a well-stocked nursery or the farmers' markets to choose.

If you're looking for Christmas ideas, seed packets and comfortable gloves make a great stocking stuffer. There are cute colourful watering cans at all sorts of places like local nurseries, IKEA and good toyshops and, if you're interested in heirloom varieties, The Diggers Club catalogue has a brilliant selection plus you can order online at diggers.com.au

The ACT Libraries system has an excellent range of gardening books and magazines for gardeners of all ages, so you don't have to spend a fortune on expensive glossy publications – it's just a quick click and you're there

www.librarycatalogue.act.gov.au. Then search by subject keyword (gardening) and if you want to weed out over a thousand items you would normally want to read yourself, select the Advanced Search option and limit by ALL JUNIOR. That will throw up over 40 books, of varying quality, but remember that you can always request that the library buy a particular book. Just go to the main page www.library.act.gov.au and over on the right you'll see a menu with REQUEST. It's as simple as typing in the title and format, together with your name and membership number, and Bob's your uncle.

Good luck with it, and if you'd like to send me your green ideas for happy kids in the garden, either email me on editor@cogs.asn.au or send one of those nifty free postcards you can find around town to Editor, COGS, PO Box 347 Dickson ACT 2602.

Happy gardening and remember those gloves!

Jane Goffman

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

22 November 2011:
COGS Christmas Drinks
All COGS members are welcome

28 February 2012:
Beekeeping with John Grubb

27 March 2012:
COGS Annual General Meeting
followed by Harvest Night

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.

Water conservation in the ACT

Permanent water conservation measures currently apply in the ACT and Queanbeyan and are mandatory and enforceable. Anyone found in breach of the restrictions may be liable for fines starting at \$200 for an individual or \$1000 for a corporation.

The ACT's permanent water conservation measures apply to ACTEW's potable water ('drinking' or 'tap' water).

In general, no variations to the exemptions will be permitted unless customers can demonstrate serious detriment from the application of the Scheme of Water Conservation Measures or a particular stage of restrictions. ACTEW reserves the right to vary or revoke exemptions at any time.

For more information, go to:
www.actew.com.au

Possible new COGS garden in Forrest

COGS has been approached by the management of Manning Clark House to establish a community garden on the site of the Clark's vegetable garden in Tasmania Circle, Forrest. If you are interested in being part of this garden, please contact gardens@cogs.asn.au as soon as possible.

Let's Talk About Gardening...

Did you know that you can now find COGS on Facebook?

Just search for the Canberra Organic Growers Society and "like" the page



to receive interesting links and tips in your Newsfeed or to debate a topic.

Top tips for summer watering

1. Keep watering to once per week or not at all if it rains.
2. Make sure all your garden beds are adequately mulched to reduce evaporation as the weather warms.
3. Join ACTEW when it opens its new garden at the National Arboretum to learn about efficient irrigation methods and how to get the best out of plants and soil in Canberra.

Register your interest by phoning 6248 3131.

Source: ACTEW Corporation Newsletter

If undelivered please return to
CANBERRA ORGANIC GROWERS SOCIETY INC.
PO Box 347
DICKSON ACT 2602

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