

# Canberra organic

The quarterly publication of the Canberra Organic Growers Society Inc.

Visit to Heronswood  
We Eat Weeds  
Growing potatoes

## Visit to Heronswood see pages 12 - 13



*Lotus in foreground, prostrate Rosemary on right and silver-grey garden on left*



*Outdoor table with herbs in the middle*

*Photos: Jane Vincent*

# President's report: Spring 2012

Hello folks,

As I write there are a few signs that Spring is on the way: the days are lengthening (hooray) and some fruit trees are budding. I'm looking forward to this growing season and hope that the harvest will be better than last year's.

It's still frosty, though. Old hands tell me that Canberra has just had one of the longest stretches of frosts for many years and that this summer could be a hot one.

If we *are* in for a hot summer, be prepared! Start planning your water conservation strategies now. Remember that water costs money and COGS must pay its way like everybody else. We don't get it for free and never shall. Thanks to the recent drought we know what to do and how to do it: thick mulch, drippers, strategically-timed watering, drought-tolerant species where appropriate, shading, windbreaks, and so on. If you're not sure, ask around for help; it's out there just waiting for you.

## COGS NEEDS YOU!

You may have noticed that the last edition of the magazine was very late and that this edition is rather thin. The problem is that we're simply not getting enough *content* to fill it. COGS is a 100% volunteer organisation, and unless our members send in articles and photos we've got nothing to print. It's more blessed to give than receive, and the equation is brutally simple: no content = no magazine, and yet many members say that the magazine is the one part of COGS they value and enjoy the most. Also it's a membership benefit for which you've paid, and our editorial team does their level best to produce it. Folks, WE NEED CONTENT! You don't need to be a Shakespeare or a Henry Lawson. Please write something and send it in. Don't sit back and leave it to someone else — there *is* no-one else. Only, please make it *timely* (at least four weeks prior to publication), *seasonal* (talking about winter produce in the summer edition just won't do), and about *organic growing*. Oh yes, pictures need to be at least 500K in size or they can come out like postage stamps. Contact the Editor to find out more.

Talking of volunteering, we still need *garden conveners*. We lose six at the start of September. The job should be fun, and we've started making things easier for new conveners by synchronising membership and plot fees. If a garden ends up with no convener for long enough, that garden may have to be *CLOSED*. It's that important! Think about it. Please contact the Gardens Co-ordinator to find out more.

On the morning of 20 August, Bob McAlister and I went to the Charnwood Garden where Simon Corbell

launched an ACT Labor Party electoral policy. If re-elected they undertake to fund ten more community gardens in existing suburbs. The ALP policy statement says that "[s]iting gardens locally supports our objectives of reducing the Territory's ecological footprint and carbon emissions, producing food locally, and engendering social inclusiveness and a sense of belonging." All of this augurs very well for the future of ACT community gardens, and some of the funding may come to COGS. I contacted my shadow MP, Alistair Coe, for the Opposition's viewpoint. He will get back to me in due course, unfortunately too late for this edition.

As I wrote in the last issue, COGS continues in a period of frankly stressful growth and change. An important coping tool is our website, currently being rebuilt from the ground up. COGS has a very large amount of data, experience and practical knowledge to offer, and to capture this the website is being built around a Wiki. If you're not sure, a Wiki is a computer-based way for communities such as COGS to write documents collaboratively using a web browser. It provides an easy way to create, correct, search for and browse information. Wikipedia of course is the first and largest example of this, but other organisations commonly create Wikis for their own needs.

We intend to start adding information to our Wiki soon. It will come mainly from old magazines and newsletters, but also directly from the members themselves. It's easy to add to a Wiki: it can be typed directly in, or someone can prepare a text file and load it up later.

What sort of topics do we want to cover? Just about everything and anything that could appear in the magazine or be discussed at the monthly meetings; especially organic growing tips and hints for the Canberra climate, pest treatments that work for you, favourite recipes. You name it! While Wiki topics can be edited by anybody, rather than leading to chaos, this in fact produces better and more accurate results. I'm looking forward to watching our Wiki grow and develop.

Would anyone like to volunteer to start preparing some (plain) text files? Please contact me if you would.

But now it's time to start preparing for spring. Cindy and I have quite a bit to do in our backyard and it's not long to go before things start hotting up. Happy planting!

Walter Steensby





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*Canberra Organic* is the quarterly publication of the Canberra Organic Growers Society Inc.

It celebrates organic gardening, local produce, sustainability and information exchange in the Canberra region.

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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.

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Front cover photo:  
Mitchell Community garden by Man-Chul Jung

Back cover photos:  
Fruit trees in blossom by Adrienne Fazekas  
Clockwise from top left:  
Peach, Blood plum, Nectarine, Cherry, Prune  
and Apricot.

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## Editor's note

As I write this we have had the warmest day in 3 months: 19°. Spring is in the air!

I just had the urge to do the spring cleaning - isn't it funny how you just get these urges. Then I got another urge to clean out the glass house and start planting tomatoes. It's time to clean up the garden as well and prepare those beds for planting.

Another interest of mine is a kitchen garden and waste recycling centre which I am preparing for our school this year to be ready for Spring. The children are all very excited to be planting seeds and watching them grow in the classroom. We will also be doing soil sampling to see what happens when we add compost and manure to the ground.

*Melissa Dede*



### WE NEED YOUR INPUT!

Please send any comments, articles, photos, news items, event information or recipes to  
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### ***Canberra Organic by email***

*Canberra Organic* is now available via email as a 2 - 3Mb pdf file.

The email version includes colour photos.

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[members@cogs.asn.au](mailto:members@cogs.asn.au)

# Around the COGS Gardens

## Erindale

The Erindale garden is rolling along in the quiet and sleepy way gardens (and some gardeners) tend to semi-hibernate during the bitterly cold winter months. Activity has slowed with little much else to do apart from having clearing and tidying working bees in preparation for the activity of spring.

Our main achievement was the pruning and mulching of our communal plot of raspberry and blackberry bushes. Erindale gardeners are lucky enough to be able to share in an abundant offering of berries come summer, with almost the whole length of one side of the garden taken up with the bushes. Nathan was the hero on the day, single-handedly taming the very unruly blackberries while Andrea, Christine, Emily and my eight year old daughter Bella tackled the raspberry canes. Small children are very good and scrambling in and out prickly bushes – given that she was a willing worker, I am sure there is nothing unethical about this kind of child labour!

Christine, our garden convenor, arranged for the use of a shredding/mulching machine and with Ray at the helm, another afternoon was spent diminishing the substantial piles of pruning. I am pleased to say everyone survived with all digits intact, although I

think a couple went home with a few scrapes and scratches from manhandling so many branches. Although we worked hard it was fun and a great way of re-connecting with the other gardeners. We are fortunate to have such a nice group of people to garden with at Erindale. At present the plots are a bit bare, but there are still some brassicas and broad beans that are doing well and Christine's and Andrea's artichokes are looking very healthy. Maybe now the Olympics are over (and we can finally get some more sleep) things will start progressing in readiness for spring – bring on the sunshine!

*Nicole Coates*

## Dickson

The Dickson community garden has been running for a couple of years now and we are starting to get some great things happening. We are saying goodbye to convenor Andrew and welcoming in Ray who will be supported by Jo, myself and Andrew who will not be leaving us altogether. Thank you Andrew for being convenor for the past year. Some things we have been up to include: a beautifully decorated sign so passers by know who we are; a herb garden; and we are in the process of building a sandpit for the little people who regularly visit our garden. We have a few people leaving us and a few more coming on board this Spring who we hope will stay with us for



*Erindale garden*

*Photo: Nicole Coates*

a while. With such a small garden losing people during the year can make a bit of an impact on gardeners.... Even if that is just not running into people at the garden so often – which is certainly one of my favourite things about having a garden! We are all looking forward to Spring, getting busy again and welcoming our new members.

*Rachael Millsom*

### **Kaleen**

After a very busy start to the year with our participation in the Open Gardens Australia weekend, things have been very quiet in the last quarter. We are still managing to have our Friday morning teas although numbers have dropped somewhat in these cold months. It is amazing though just how beautiful it can be on a still morning of about 7 degrees when you are sitting in the sun. We find it very difficult to tear ourselves away and head home to “other” duties.

Gardeners have been busy preparing their soil for the coming Spring with numerous loads and bags of straw, manure and compost coming into the garden. We have noticed the magpies again becoming more interested in what we are doing and we even spotted one flying off with a long piece of green twist tie. The mind boggles about how it is planning to incorporate

it into its nest, but as the nest is way up in a pine tree we shall never find out!

During the last school holidays one of our members came up with the brilliant idea of the children making scarecrows for the plots, so that became the focus of our next Friday morning tea. It was a very busy scene with about half a dozen of these being erected on sticks. The place was covered in straw and shredded paper stuffing but some very clever scarecrows emerged sporting very elaborate outfits including boots and a scarf for the freezing winds. Most of the hats have blown off since and we are forever picking these up and replacing them. We'll have to come up with some way of fastening them. As we do our daily walk past the garden it appears at first glance that there are several people working away in the plots and sometimes when you are working there you get the feeling that someone is watching you...great for our security. Mind you, the magpies aren't fooled.

We have just planted 8 fruit trees and look forward to some fruit next season.

We had one small plot available recently, but that was snapped up internally.

*Robyn Power*



*One of Kaleen's scarecrows with some young friends*

*Photo: Robyn Power*

## Around the COGS Gardens continued . . .

### **Charnwood**

Firstly I need to correct the Charnwood report from the previous (Winter) edition. The featured pumpkin did not end up feeding school students in Weston, but provided a number of meals at home and for work colleagues. The variety was Musque de Provence. It was good for roasting and soup. Thankfully it was easy to cut with a knife, but it still took an hour to slice into usable portions.

This is my last report as Charnwood convenor, as I relinquish my plot in September. I need to get my own backyard in order before I venture out again in search of more land. That said, I would be the first to secure a plot if ever a community garden starts up in Hawker. A community garden in every Canberra suburb I say. Being convenor at Charnwood for two years has mostly been a pleasure. A genuine spirit of cooperation pervades the garden community, making the job of convenor relatively easy.

The winter months have seen gardeners preparing their plots for planting in spring. Particularly busy have been new gardeners Jenny, Maria, Kim, Jo, Darryl and Troy. We also welcome Teresa to the garden. It is encouraging to see so many new people keen to do the hard work involved in growing organic fruit and vegetables. As at August the garden is full, and there's nobody on the waiting list. I expect that to change as the weather warms up.

Thanks to all gardeners at Charnwood who have contributed to the smooth running of the garden - from organising working bees, through to acknowledging it may be time to relinquish a plot and allow someone on the waiting list to have a crack at this wonderful and frustrating thing we call organic gardening! Particular thanks to: Gita for her tireless work in maintaining the communal areas and plot coordination; Tim, Steve D, Vince and Peter for leading working bees and providing sound advice when needed; Steve S and Angela for handling

finances; Heide, Elissa and Manon for suggesting improvements to the garden; Richard T, Allan and Angelo for simply being good blokes; and Alison and Kylie for putting up with me as their fellow gardener (and not criticising me for harvesting the potatoes way too early).

*Haydn Burgess*

### **Cook**

Over the winter months it has been quiet in the garden as the growth of the winter crops and the number of gardeners in the garden has slowed down because of the cold and the constant frosts.

However, despite the cold there is an assortment of brassica, garlic, coriander, asian vegetables and leeks throughout the garden. The broad beans are yet to flower but, hope fully it won't be far off. The ducks have been busy in the garden in the past few weeks and have been chewing broadbeans and garlic.

I am sure all of the gardeners, including me, are looking forward to spring arriving as it a wonderful time of the year. Gardeners we have not seen for quite some time emerge from their hibernation to start their spring and summer crops.

We have welcomed a few new gardeners to Cook and these include Alex Digan, Sarah Rapp and Julia Zachara. Currently, we have 22 people on our waiting list so I am afraid it may be some time before some of the folk on the list get a plot at Cook as turnover of plots is fairly slow.

We have had a few working bees over winter but attendance has been fairly poor. Hopefully, more gardeners will contribute to the upkeep of the garden when the weather warms up.

*Glynis Kennedy*

Plot fees for 2012 - 13

Plot fees for the new gardening year,

1 September 2012 - 31 August 2013,

are unchanged at \$2.20 per sq metre

### **O'Connor**

Since our last report, the O'Connor Garden has farewelled Ken and Leanne, and Lea, sadly a brief sojourner with us, all because of other complications and commitments in their lives. Thank you Ken and Leanne for one of your stupendous accidental pumpkins: a number of people in Jarrah Street have enjoyed large slices.

Subsequently, we have also welcomed new gardeners: Sarah and Katya, very local people, who have taken over one full bed, and Will who has valiantly taken on a half bed when he also has a new baby. Commendably, Trish has taken up the challenge of half of the Plot from Hell, and it is looking good. We now have an expensive new concrete path to replace the one damaged when the rainwater tanks were installed, plus mulch and the beginnings of

landscaping in this area around the rainwater tanks next to the Church. It will look good in a season or two, especially when the citrus trees begin to grow.

*Jenny Clark*

### **The delights of cropping rights at O'Connor**

Recently we have been eating delicious winter salads; Mizuna and Tuscan kale from Deb's plot, sweet brassica greens from Peter and Vanessa's cover crop, rocket from a number of places, the best ever succulent parsley and some endive from Ian's, and fenugreek greens, tatsoi, broad bean leaves, silver beet and a few other things from my plot. Dress with a sweet vinaigrette and the salad is superb!

Thank you all for letting me pick from your gardens.

*Jenny Clark*



*Photo: Man-Chul Jung*

## Membership fees for COGS gardeners

From September 1 2012 membership fees and plot levies will be aligned.

Both these payments will now be due on September 1 each year.

Any gardeners renewing their plot this year whose membership does not currently extend to at least August 2013 will also need to pay a pro rata membership fee to extend their membership to August 31 2013.

Please contact your garden convenor for details of any pro rata fees you may owe.

# COGS Backyard Gardeners group

## Our Bonython Garden

In the middle of winter, when the COGS Backyard Garden group visited, our vegetable garden has some lovely cabbages, broccoli, cauliflowers and sugarloaf chicory, all grown from seed. The garden is provided with a low fence to keep out our lovely big dog! Herbs include dill, coriander and oregano. Two types of onions had just been planted out. The red flowering broad beans had germinated and are growing slowly. Climbing peas put in ages ago have not emerged so we planted new seeds.

In the leafy greens department, there is English spinach and mizuna. Our favourite lettuce, red iceberg, has germinated but the plants are still very small. Next month we will plant our potatoes; we have Spunta and Nicola seed potatoes ready to go. Usually we get a very good potato crop that lasts us many months. We keep them in a big hessian bag in the garage. Usually we get a lot of onions as well which we store by hanging them in panty hose with a knot between each onion.

I know many people do not like cabbages but they are magnificent when you grow your own. I use them for oven baked spring rolls, coleslaw and stir fries. We also love cabbage cooked in milk. There is a great recipe from Antonio Carlucci's 'Simple Cooking', called cabbage and onion pasta which I would highly recommend.

In the fruit department we have three citrus trees in large pots against an east facing brick wall. The blood orange is particularly prolific but is not looking as well as you would hope. The cumquat also fruits well. The Meyer lemon has some fruit but some has been frost damaged. I think they all need some TLC and we had the benefit of some good advice from our garden visitors.



We have access to six buckets of coffee grounds per week from my sister's café. We have been making lots of compost as we are extending the area of

garden and the soil is quite shallow and needs building up. This is still a learning process but so far the results are promising. We had a lovely morning tea in the beautiful winter's sun after an enjoyable walk and talk in the garden.



## Spring roll recipe.

- 1 onion
- Few slices of chopped green ginger
- Garlic if liked
- Finely chopped chilli if liked
- ½ large cabbage
- 100-150 grams beef mince if liked
- Celery
- Carrot
- Coriander
- Sweet chilli sauce
- Large spring roll skins frozen

Cook up onion, garlic, chili and ginger in a wok or frying pan. Add some beef mince if liked. Cook for a few minutes and add finely sliced cabbage (use heaps as it cooks down) add any other vegies you like. We have carrot and celery. I add a dollop of sweet chilli sauce at this stage. I always add the coriander last. You do not want to over cook the vegetables. Let them cool down. If the mixture is too hot the spring roll skins will split. I use frozen large spring roll skins. Not from Woollies, they are better from an Asian grocer. I wrap the filling in the wrappers according to the instructions on the packet. I brush the rolls with a little bit of water. I put them on baking trays lined with baking paper. I put them in a hot oven 200 degrees for about 10 minutes. They are ready when the skins are just starting to colour. Do not expect them to be golden like deep fried ones. Our family love them and it is amazing the amount of vegetables you consume with this recipe.

*Cynthia & Ed Harris*

# We Eat Weeds – a forager's guide to Canberra

It is often a challenge for Canberra gardeners to have an ongoing supply of fresh veggies happening through winter. Luckily nature has this completely covered and the cooler months bring bountiful harvests of delicious, healthy greens. I thought you might like to come on this journey with me while I explore the wild edible world of Canberra. There is so much to learn and so much to eat!

Here at the Princess Castle, between the raised garden beds and the greenhouse we have a pretty constant supply of lovely parsley, corn salad, English spinach, winter lettuce, miners lettuce and baby beet leaves to keep us going during the winter months.

Two "weeds" that used to be problems are nettles (*Urtica dioica*) and what I now know is chickweed (*Stellaria media*). I have had a long term love affair going on with nettles. They are invariably healthy, green, glossy, clean and frankly, delicious. The Canberra nettle is a smaller, milder, less cranky version than what often grows in warmer areas. Only the smallest amount of heat is required to remove their stinginess. They can be gathered in bunches, with a pair of scissors and rubber gloves of course, and snipped straight into soups, pasta and stews. They perfectly replace spinach in quiches, flans, spanakopita and omelettes. They have no bitter aftertaste. Even the stalks are tender. They are full of iron and vitamins and minerals. And most importantly, they love winter. Recently I read somewhere that raw nettles go just fine in green smoothies and that somehow magically whizzing them up in a blender gets rid of the stinginess. (Where does it go?) After a few cautious trials I can happily confirm this to be true.

Nettles like to grow where there is an oversupply of undigested organic material, or a little bit of "indigestion" in the soil. This is why they love veggie gardens where sheep manure has been applied in autumn and the areas around shearing sheds. Nettles are our friends!

Now, onto my newest winter love: chickweed. This is a delicate, beautiful, sweet, neutral tasting green packed full of vitamins and minerals, including omega 3 and vitamin A. It seems to like damp and sheltered areas. It is easy to identify once you know a few tricks – like the tell-tale white flowers that have five deeply split petals which make it look like 10 petals. If you break off a stem and hold it up to the light, you will notice it has a single line of hairs growing up just one side of the stem. Once the stem goes past a leaf node, the line of delicate hairs

switches to the other side of the stem. It's like a secret identification code! It can be snipped or chopped into salads and used as a garnish on top of hot dishes. It also goes nicely in green smoothies.

Previously I pulled this out of my raised garden beds in great handfuls and threw it to the ducks. My beloved was constantly pulling chickweed out of the front garden beds where it develops into thick luscious mats each year. Not anymore. Turns out it is delicious, edible, healthy, and free.

Of course, correct identification is important. My bible on this journey is a lovely book by John Kallas called "Wild Food from Dirt to Plate: A Foragers Guide to Edible Wild Plants". It is available from [www.fishpond.com.au](http://www.fishpond.com.au) and on Kindle. There are other books available, and lots of on line resources. Even in the depths of a cold Canberra winter there is food and treasure everywhere. Happy foraging!

*Simone Dilkara*



*Nettles collected from the garden.*



*Chickweed*

## Raising seedlings in a heated propagator

Last year I tried raising my Spring seedlings in a heated propagator and found it very successful. This year I have used it again and thought others might find it useful to use also. The tomato seedlings, for example, start to appear 3 days after planting! Similar for the brown and red onions I have just raised, it's just amazing. It works on a gentle bottom heat that makes the seeds spring into life.

Once the seedlings have appeared I move them out and put them on a sunny windowsill so they don't become long and leggy. I then put the next batch of seeds in until I have what I need for Spring. During a warm day I will turn off the little greenhouse and put it outside against a warm wall.

I often use margarine containers for punnets but don't fill them up too much as it takes longer for them to germinate the deeper the soil. After my present batch of onions I will start on the egg plants, zucchini etc. I have successfully used toilet rolls for corn so it doesn't have to be disturbed when planted and jiffy pots work well also. Some tomatoes I will purchase, but this gives me the opportunity



to save my own seed from fruit that I have enjoyed or ones that have crossed.

The propagators only cost about \$70 and wouldn't use a lot of electricity. Perfect for Canberra winters.

*Robyn Power*

## The Food Co-op Shop: The roof is sprouting vegetables!

Keen to lend a hand in growing a community garden? Like being among keen minds teaching each other to grow luscious produce sustainably?

ANU's second organic garden, The Lena Karmel Roof-top Garden, opened in 2012 and is an exciting community space. The Co-op has been given a share of the beds, and has put together a gardening and greening team to work on the rooftop as well as inside the Co-op. Affectionately known as The Dirty Beanstalk, the team share ideas and develop skills while continuously learning about growing your own food. The produce is enjoyed together, taken home by volunteers or given to the Co-op for lunches or to sell.

The Co-op helps with seeds, food scraps, community engagement and much more in a symbiotic relationship. Greening rooftops is a great way to counteract the loss of gardens in dense urban developments and re-seed the link between food production and consumption. The garden has 11 raised beds (the non co-op beds are run by a Uni lodge residence team) and plans to experiment with raised beds from recycled materials. There's also a beautiful view, especially at sunset, looking west over Black Mountain. Getting your hands dirty while socialising is fun, and a practical way to learn about kitchen gardens.

If you're interested in getting dirty with the Beanstalk, email [thedirtybeanstalk@gmail.com](mailto:thedirtybeanstalk@gmail.com) or come along to our working bees Tuesday 4 - 6pm or Saturdays 10 - 12am.



# Chook Chat

## Help, my hen is broody!

Chooks sitting in the nest box all day? Making growling noises at you? Perhaps taking a peck at you when you collect the eggs?

Consider your hen is broody.

Spring is the time when many hens go broody, which means their biological clock is telling them to raise a family, their temperature goes up and they get all moody in anticipation of having some chicks to raise.

This will happen whether you have a rooster or not. You will need a rooster before you can hatch your own eggs and it is legal to have a rooster in Canberra.

If you have a commercial breed such as ISA or Hyline, there is not much you can do, it is rare for these hens to go broody and they won't often sit long enough to hatch any chicks. Leave them alone and they will start to lay again in a couple of weeks.

Pure breeds and a lot of bantam breeds are notorious for broodiness, breeds such as Pekins, Silkies and Wyandottes often going broody more than once a season and making excellent mothers. Other utility breeds such as Australorps, Langshans and Sussex tend to go broody just once a season. Other pure breeds that are used as layers like Leghorns, Campines and Araucanas are not usually broody



types but it's not unheard of.

### What to do?

It takes 3 weeks for a fertile egg to go from egg to chick once a hen has started sitting on it.

If you would like your hen to hatch some chicks it is recommended that you get some fertile eggs soon after your hen has gone broody.

If your hen has been sitting for a few weeks, you can slip some day old chicks under the hen roughly three weeks after she has gone broody. Please seek advice from the breeder before attempting this as the hen may reject them. It is advised that you pen your broody separately from your other hens during the broody and chick raising time, as this protects the eggs and chicks from other hens who may attack them.



Don't want or can't get chicks or eggs?

The classic sin bin - try putting your hen in a raised, wire bottom cage with some air flow under her bottom. This can help break broodiness, but take care that she has access to food, water and shade.

*Denae Starkovski*

*poultry breeder and  
member of the CQPC*

# Visit to Heronswood

In March I spent a morning at the home of Diggers, Heronswood, near Dromana. I was visiting the Mornington Peninsula, a short drive from Melbourne, with my son, Sam. He is a travel writer so kindly invited me to come with him, to help with an article he was asked to write on gardens of the Peninsula. I accepted this invitation with alacrity!

Diggers was established in 1978 by Penny and Clive Blazey, with the aim to create a repository of unusual varieties of fruit, flowers and vegetables to be sold to like-minded gardeners. Today Diggers is a multimillion-dollar business and club with thousands of members. Its headquarters are Heronswood, a Gothic Revival mansion built in 1871 surrounded by 4 acres of gardens including five vegetable gardens. According to Diggers, Heronswood is Australia's first certified organic garden open to the public

Last year the Blazey family transferred their ownership of the Club to the not-for-profit Diggers Garden and Environment Trust. So now when you buy Diggers seeds and plants, the surplus helps preserve the historic buildings at Heronswood and The Garden of St. Erth, as well as maintaining and improving those gardens. A key function of the Trust will be to preserve heirloom vegetables, flowers and fruit in both seed and clonal form. As well a perennial trial ground has been set up, with the planting of scion wood of heritage fruit trees. This will become a Horticulture Centre for Heritage Gardening.

We were shown around by Talei Kenyon, Diggers' Education, Media and Food Manager, and saw how the garden has integrated plantings of flowers, including evergreen and summer perennial borders, with herb and food borders and a children's garden, all set around feature trees. One attractive section had a French-style parterre made from colourful vegetables – bright-green Lettuce Leaf Basil, Five Colour silverbeet and Curly Parsley. Another area had many colorful towering hollyhocks. Last year Diggers set out a request, through their magazine, for single hollyhock seeds, as the range of cultivars has collapsed since eighty were listed in the 1880s. They were amazed at the response –so many seeds were sent in, so now they are growing them out – to see which ones are the best to retain and then commercialize. Next to the hollyhocks, was a big trellis covered with tiny Mexican Sour climbing cucumbers. These looked a brilliant screening plant.

We were shown edible hedges of avocados and feijoas, as well as other subtropical plants like tamarillos, and Natal plums - the idea being to show gardeners these could be grown in Victoria. But given that the Peninsula is pretty well frost-free and Canberra is definitely not, I will not be trying such plants in a hurry! We also looked at the square metre gardening plots. This shows how to grow a year's supply of vegetables for two in just twenty square metres, using some high yielding varieties in a matrix planning system instead of rows (see photo).



*Parterre in foreground with Curly Parsley, Five Colour silverbeet, Rudbeckia and espaliered young apples in the background*

Another Diggers' theme is water efficiency; we saw a dry garden section, a mix of cacti, succulents, aloes, shrubs, bulbs and grasses that never need watering. As well there was an evergreen grey garden with water-wise silver foliage. Talei said, "We should mainly look to garden traditions that mirror our climate – the Mediterranean, parts of South America, southern Africa and West Coast U.S.A."

For lunch we ate in the Fork to Fork restaurant, a clever name and logo denoting how the whole menu is based on what is fresh in the

Heronswood garden. The emphasis here is on organic, seasonal and regional foods. We had a fantastic heirloom tomato salad of many different varieties and a beetroot entrée, with several colourful varieties in a delicious tart, plus delectable borscht. For our main course, Sam had Tromboncino Zucchini with chicken breast, beans and mint, decorated with borage. I had a King Richard Leek risotto with lemon thyme. Outside the restaurant was a short trimmed Lemon Verbena hedge which had a lovely scent as everyone brushed past it - I had never thought of it as hedging plant but it looked great at about one metre high.



*Square metre gardening. Speckled trout lettuces in foreground.*

We saw the old original heritage garden around Heronswood which was designed by the Anglo-Australian landscape gardener, Edward La Trobe Bateman. Bateman designed many of Melbourne's well-known private and public gardens. He loved the "exotic" plants of Australia and Heronswood's subtropical section is shaded by a 140-year-old Moreton Bay fig, from the Bateman era.

In Heronswood's big kitchen garden we were shown around by Bill Bampton, the garden supervisor, and sampled heirloom tomato varieties such as Jaune Flamme, (an early maturing variety), Green Zebras, and Manx Marvel – it was good to taste a few varieties to give me prior knowledge of what to order next time. An interesting one was Schimmeig Creg which they've found is perfect for stuffed tomatoes on their menus. This one comes from the Isle of Man so is very hard to pronounce! We also tried delicious Lemon cucumbers, similar to Apple ones, but apparently they never turn bitter. In keeping with the organic status all the Brassicas were covered in fine white netting which they are finding good against the cabbage white butterflies. We saw many new species being trialled, like a blue sweetcorn.

Despite our tour being largely conducted in rain, it was a fascinating place to see and I thoroughly enjoyed the morning. I can highly recommend a visit here, especially for those COGS members who love to use the heritage seeds from Diggers. There are even audio tours available. Other gardens we visited were Cruden Farm, the famous farm of Dame Elisabeth Murdoch. I can highly recommend this if

you can coincide your Diggers visit when this garden is open too – this year the Open Gardens fair was held there. Her picking garden was a highlight! We also loved Morning Star Estate, where the owner Judy Barrett has planted 75,000 roses – all overlooking Port Phillip Bay.

See [www.diggers.com.au](http://www.diggers.com.au) and Sam Vincent's article in the Sydney Morning Herald <http://www.smh.com.au/travel/a-hedge-for-all-seasons-20120504-1y33o.html>.

*Jane Vincent*



*Pennsylvania Dutch Crookneck Pumpkins grown over a trellis*

# Seed Savers Report

The Seed Savers' group has been rather quiet for rather a long time. As I said in an earlier edition of the magazine, this is partly due to The Summer That Never Was: we collected too few seeds and not many varieties.

We've decided to hold Seed Savers meetings along with the Backyard Gardens group meetings. The first combined meeting was held last Sunday in Denae Starkovski's garden and both meetings went very well. It was surprising to see so many seeds appear almost out of the blue. In the picture you can probably see four groups of seeds surrounding the afternoon tea things on the themed tablecloth. In all we had quite a large collection and variety of seeds of all sorts to give away or swap, some of which like the gramma pumpkin are not common. I chose some lettuce, "green with a red tinge" which is intriguing, two sorts of carrot including a purple variety, and a mild mesclun mix. Salad season is approaching and it'd be great to have a large variety of vegetables ready to eat.

Two new people decided to join the Seed Savers Group, so that's good and promises to add variety to the collection.

At the moment we're giving seeds out; later of course we will be inviting people to deposit into the seed bank. The seeds in the bank include:

Black Mini Popcorn  
Blue Ballet Pumpkin  
Blue Lake Climbing Beans  
Heritage Chilli  
Melting Mammoth Snow Peas  
Peppery Kale  
Purple Broccoli  
Silverbeet  
Tigerella Tomato  
Tromboncino Zucchini (these are yummy)  
Wapsipinicon Peach Tomato  
Yin Yang or Frost Climbing Beans

and then there is The Jar of the Unknown Bean. So far no-one has

been able to identify it. It may be a hybrid, and it may be not. The only way left is to actually plant some and see what comes up!

There are more seeds but the full list is too long to print here. It will of course appear on the COGS Wiki in the near future.

Finally, we need to do some germination tests. Any volunteers? You don't need to be a member of the Group to conduct a test. Please contact Cindy Steensby of the Seed Savers Group if you're interested.

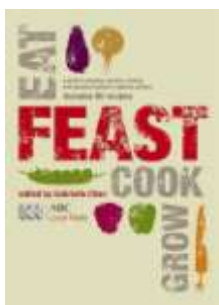
*Cindy Steensby*



# COGS Library Report

**Feast: Grow, Cook, Eat**  
Edited by Gabrielle Chan

From the ABC Canberra comes a delicious collection of the most popular recipes and horticultural tips from listeners, chefs, cooks, gardeners, providers as heard on 666 ABC Canberra. A must-have guide to planting, growing, buying and cooking food in Canberra and the surrounding region.



Feast is a seasonal journey into food, and celebrates the rich produce of the Canberra region. With its genesis in the sustainable food festival “Feast” run by ABC Local Radio Canberra, the book features material from the station’s presenters and lifestyle contributors; there are more than 60 recipes from local chefs and cooks; and there are fantastic tips from experts on how to grow the produce and what foods are ready to plant or be picked at various times of the year.

A copy of this book was donated COGS and should be of interest to all our members.

*Margaret Richardson*

## Kumara or Sweet Potato – Part II

After I wrote the first article on my attempt to keep Kumara cuttings growing over winter, I found that they were being attacked by something small like a spider mite. There appeared to be small webbing around some leaves and so I attempted to squash what I could see. The leaves all went yellow and dropped off. I decided to divide up the cuttings so I left one in the water and planted one in a pot. The one in the water appears to still be alive but hasn’t re-grown any leaves. The one in the pot is now sporting some healthy new leaves and more coming. I will have to keep an eye open for the mites so they don’t take over again. Only a few more months to go so here’s hoping.

*Robyn Power*



## Rhubarb Rock Cakes

(Adapted from a recipe in the Canberra Times Food & Wine section October 7, 2009)

Makes 24 large or 40 small rock cakes. A great favourite with children and freezes well. My rhubarb grows all through winter and so is available in Spring for these wonderful tasty biscuits.

Ingredients:

- 2 cups plain flour
- 1/2 cup raw sugar
- 90g butter softened
- 1 level dessertspoon baking powder
- 1 egg
- 3 tablespoons milk
- 1 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1/2 cup currants/sultanas mixed
- 1 dessertspoon mixed peel (or grated lemon zest)
- 1 1/2 cups finely chopped young rhubarb stalks

Heat oven to 200 degrees C. Place baking paper on a flat baking slide. Sift flour and baking powder. Lightly rub in the softened butter. Add sugar, ginger, dried fruit and raw rhubarb. Beat egg lightly and add to the milk. Add to the dry ingredients to make a stiff dough. Place in small rough heaps. Bake for approx. 20 mins, depending on the size of the rock cakes.

Note: These soften the next day, but can be popped into a medium oven for a few minutes to crisp up. Optional additions: stem ginger chopped, gluten free flour and baking powder to make gluten free.

*Robyn Power*



## Growing potatoes, its easy as.

All you need to do is purchase seed potatoes; all the nurseries have a great variety now! I am planting Sapphire, Kipfler, King Edward and Dutch Cream. Keep them in the dark. Come spring time they will need to be planted. While they don't like frost, it will only affect the above ground shoots.

You need now to prepare your soil for the planting. Get lots of home-made compost and worm castings, dig this in and let it sit until September/October when the weather starts to warm up.

Be careful with the potatoes when they start shooting. Remove the smaller shoots and leave a single large one.

Loosen up the soil so its nice and friable, then dig trenches (piling up the soil to the side) to about 30cm or a spade depth. Place the tubers about 30 cm apart, back fill the holes using a rake, and make rows 50cm apart. Finish off with some blood and bone. I like to put mulch on top to stop weeds and keep the beds moist; anything you have will do: straw, lucerne, leaves (but *not* eucalyptus).

Now keep them damp but not wet. It will take 14 weeks to produce large spuds, but you can pick

some new potatoes (small ones) around Christmas. Just gently fossick around and pull out the small ones, then cover up with plenty of soil again.

You will need to keep hilling up the soil around the plants as they grow to get a better crop, but don't cover them completely. Mulch them heavily as they come into the hotter months, making sure the soil is covering the potatoes well as they will pop out of the soil and go green if light gets to them. If this happens, don't worry, let them grow and use the green ones for next year's seed!

The potatoes will be ready when the plant starts to die down, but you can steal them earlier if you can't wait.

To store them put them in a tray to dry, *not* in the sun, and then put them away in a dark, dry, airy spot. Any that are damaged we eat. Then I choose some for next year's planting, maybe green ones or medium sized ones, which I put into a paper bag labelled with the name of the variety. The bag is stored in a cool, dark cupboard, waiting for next spring.

*Melissa Dede*



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## ACT Vegan & Vegetarian Society

Want to help the planet, your health, and millions of animals?

The ACT Vegan & Vegetarian Society welcomes new members.

We provide support and information about vegan and vegetarian lifestyles, and opportunities to meet others with similar interests.

We organise regular social events and workshops, including family-friendly events.

Members also receive discounts from a variety of local restaurants and businesses.

To find out more, or to join our free e-mail list, see our website at [www.vegact.org.au](http://www.vegact.org.au) or call 0417 464 675.

You can also find us on facebook.

### DID YOU KNOW?

The United Nations estimates that the meat industry causes more greenhouse gas emissions than all the cars, trucks, planes and ships in the world combined.\*

Producing 1 kg of beef takes between 50,000 and 100,000 litres of water, compared to 2,500 litres for 1 kg of white rice, and much less for most fruit and vegetables.\*\*

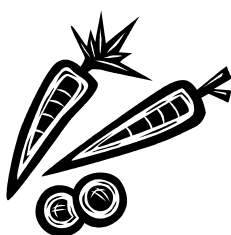
People on a plant based diet have far less incidence of heart disease, cancer, diabetes, MS and many other diseases.\*\*

\*Livestock's Long Shadow, [www.fao.org](http://www.fao.org)

\*\*Eating Up The World, [www.vegetarianvictoria.org.au](http://www.vegetarianvictoria.org.au)



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- Memberships are for one or two adults and their children under 18 years of age.
- **Annual memberships run from September 1st to August 31st and cost \$30 for full memberships and \$18 for concession memberships.** Concessions are available to Healthcare card holders, pensioners and full time students. Both adults must be eligible for the concession rate to apply and evidence needs to be provided.
- Pro rata membership payments are available and detailed below for those joining during the membership year.
- An additional joining fee of \$5 or \$3 for concessions applies to all new memberships.

**Member details: Please print clearly, especially your email address**

Adult 1: First name \_\_\_\_\_ Child 1: Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Surname \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_  
 Date of Birth \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_  
 Occupation \_\_\_\_\_ Child 2: Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date of Birth \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_  
 Adult 2: First name \_\_\_\_\_ Child 3: Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Surname \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_  
 Date of Birth \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_  
 Occupation \_\_\_\_\_ Child 4: Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date of Birth \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_  
 Title for address label e.g. John Smith, Mr & Mrs J Smith \_\_\_\_\_  
 Street \_\_\_\_\_  
 Suburb/Town \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Postcode \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone: Home \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email \_\_\_\_\_ Receive COGS magazine by email? Yes ☐ No ☐

Have you been allocated a plot in a COGS garden? ☐ If so, which garden? \_\_\_\_\_

COGS relies entirely on volunteers for its continued operation. As a member, in which areas would you be prepared to volunteer some time or skills? Please tick below.

Magazine ☐ Website/IT ☐ Meeting suppers ☐  
 Library ☐ Finances ☐ Community gardens management ☐  
 Seed saving ☐ Committee ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

How much time do you have available \_\_\_\_\_ hours/days per month

**Payment details: Please see table below for the payment due**

☐ Full membership **or** ☐ Concession Please attach a copy of eligibility documentation

Joining fee	\$5.00	\$3.00
Membership	\$_____	\$_____
Total payable	\$_____	\$_____

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

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_  
 (signature)

**Please send your completed application form, with a cheque or money order (no cash please) 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'

Month of joining	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug
Full membership	\$30	\$27.50	\$25	\$22.50	\$20	\$17.50	\$15	\$12.50	\$10	\$7.50	\$5	\$2.50
Concession	\$18	\$16.50	\$15	\$13.50	\$12	\$10.50	\$9	\$7.50	\$6	\$4.50	\$3	\$1.50

**For COGS administration:** Membership number \_\_\_\_\_ Bank ID \_\_\_\_\_ Receipt number \_\_\_\_\_

# COGS SPRING PLANTING GUIDE

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

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

## Using seeds

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

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

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

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

## Crop rotation

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

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

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

## Plant varieties

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

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

**S = seed sowing; T = transplanting**

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

# COGS NOTICE BOARD

## COGS Monthly Meetings

7:30 pm on the fourth Tuesday of each month except Dec and Jan at the MAJURA COMMUNITY CENTRE, ROSEVEAR PLACE, DICKSON

See the COGS website for further details:  
[www.cogs.asn.au](http://www.cogs.asn.au)

Canberra City Farm

has a new website at

<http://canberracityfarm.wikispaces.com>

## Sustainability Workshops

If the sound of getting stuck into composting, worm-farming or permaculture floats your boat, you might like to book into one of many exciting sustainability-related workshops being held at the Canberra Environment Centre during September.

Bookings are essential.

Please visit [www.ecoaction.com.au](http://www.ecoaction.com.au) for more information.

## Advertising in Canberra Organic

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 550.

## 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)

Please contact [editor@cogs.asn.au](mailto:editor@cogs.asn.au)

Articles in the magazine do not necessarily reflect the views of COGS. Advertised products and services are not specifically endorsed by COGS.

## Conservation Council Conference 21-22 September 2012

"Our Environment Our Future" is the title of our Spring Conference to be held on Friday 21 and Saturday 22 September at the Australian National University. Put the dates in your diary now!

## 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.

**Spring Swap and Sale** Saturday 8th Sept 2012  
1pm to 4pm Canberra Environment Centre  
(Lennox & Lawsonmore, by the national Museum)

Items for Swapping  
**Clothes and Accessories\***  
Books DVDs CDs

Items for Swapping or Buying  
**Bike Parts**  
**Seedlings**

**Check the swapping guidelines and come prepared!**

\*Please note: To participate in the Clothes Swap, items must be registered by 1.30pm on the day, be clean, and of excellent quality.

All other items may be swapped/bought between 1pm - 4pm.  
All items must be swapped like for like.

This year we'll also have Librarian Chris selling her range of vintage clothes, wood-fired pizza by gold coin donation & an 'Eco Screen-Printing Workshop' all taking place simultaneously!

Registration fee \$5

For swapping guidelines or to book in for the 'Eco Screen-Printing Workshop', please visit: [www.ecoaction.com.au](http://www.ecoaction.com.au)

The Spring Swap & Sale is coordinated by the Canberra Environment Centre with the support of the ACT DEC Organic Garden and the Recycling

# ECO MEATS

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