

Canberra Organic

The quarterly publication
of the Canberra Organic Growers Society Inc.

Merici College grows lunch





Photo: Heather Campbell

**The Holder garden
won the community garden section
and the Overall Prize for the Best in Show
run by the Canberra Horticultural Society.**

Congratulations!

President's report

Winter is with us. It's raining heavily as I write this report; so nice to see. Our garden has gone very quiet but I look at our apple tree and think it's beginning to bud a bit early. The Bureau of Meteorology expects cooler than normal weather for Canberra during July to September, and a 75 per cent chance of it being wetter over that period. I hope so: rainfall records from my backyard show a lot less rainfall so far than in 2011 or 2012. As for next summer, your crystal ball is as good as mine. Remember always that water is our biggest single expense.

As usual at this time of year things are quiet around the community and backyard gardens. Many people have gone to warmer climes. COGS itself is trundling along quietly. However, in late September Shane Rattenbury, the ACT Minister for Territory and Municipal Services (among other things) will meet our Secretary and me to discuss funding assistance to help COGS plan for a sustainable future. Here's hoping!

Crace Garden

CIC Crace Pty Ltd have finished a truly excellent garden. It was handed over to COGS on 23 July and is now our 12th garden. We have about 35 gardeners whom Keith Colls will train in organic techniques and how to operate a COGS community garden. A plot holder gathering was held recently and a grand opening function is planned.

Oaks Estate

In an interesting development, the Oaks Estate Progress Association is discussing with the ACT government ways to transform the estate into a centre of education. The area has many assets: heritage values, fertile land, roofs for solar power, urban open space, a river corridor, links to arts networks—and the COGS garden is an important part of the whole. The garden has no convener at the moment but

the Association has offered to provide one, which is an excellent way forward to keep the garden operating.

History book launch

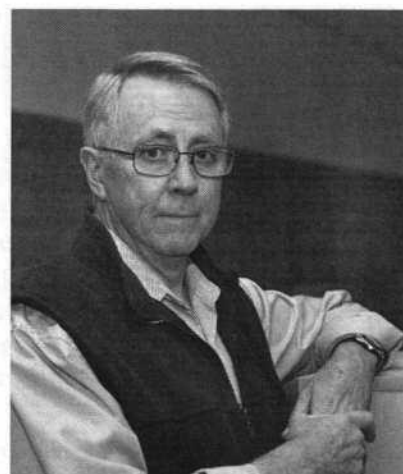
The launch of the Heritage-funded book *From Bare Earth to Bounty, The Story of the Canberra Organic Growers Society* took place on the 28 May Presentation Night. We had a good attendance and the event was a great success. Two of the authors, David Pearson from the University of Canberra and I, conducted proceedings. It was very moving and agreeable to have been able to honour our senior members in this way.

I really think we should do more to involve all age groups as far as possible in the life of COGS and the wider community, and I am looking for ways to do so. One example was our visit to Merici College which I describe elsewhere in this magazine.

By the way, I have six books left for a mere \$10 each. The book makes good reading and it may surprise you to learn what COGS has been up to since 1977.

Urban Agriculture Australia (UAA)

As you know COGS recently joined UAA and is now helping set up the UAA display for this year's Floriade. As it says on the UAA's website, the display will create 'an inspiring, innovative and interactive exploratory pathway, which demonstrates how healthy food can be grown in different urban settings. The proposal will also deliver a range of talks and workshops which will provide visitors with the opportunity to find practical solutions for urban agriculture in their own backyards, and will provide information on how they can go beyond



their backyards and into their own community, to engage in sustainable food production and learn more!

(For more details, go to canberracityfarm.wikispaces.com/Urban+Agriculture+Australia)

I have been to two of the UAA Floriade group's monthly meetings—the last one with 22 people in attendance. It is exciting to see the enthusiasm and dedication of the volunteers and to see things developing. Remember an email from me a few weeks ago asking for COGS members to get involved? Ten people responded which is great—but we need more helpers.

Keith Colls, Jan Jennings and Vaughan Winter ran an informative seed raising workshop on 7 July in the Dickson garden. At the moment we need yet more people to sprout and grow a variety of plants in pots. The Floriade management is keen for displays to be visually attractive (i.e. pretty) and this can be hard to achieve with food plants grown out-of-season. Not all plants will last the entire month of Floriade and we will need a supply of new seedlings.

Can you help? If so please either

- contact me at president@cogs.asn.au, or
- go to the online survey at www.surveymonkey.com/s/WL8WC7Z and provide your contact details by answering just question 8. Forget the rest if you wish.

If you want to help in ways other than sprouting seeds, that's great. Let us know what you'd like to do and we'll get in touch.

—Walter Steensby

Canberra Organic

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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.

For information about COGS and organic gardening, visit the COGS website

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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.

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COGS members are eligible for the price in brackets.

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1/2 page	\$36 (\$30)	\$120 (\$100)
Full page	\$72 (\$60)	\$240 (\$200)

Please contact editor@cogs.asn.au

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Editor's note

Welcome to the COGS winter magazine!

It's a bit late but I think you'll agree it was worth waiting for. There's such a lot of wonderful activity going on out there.

In the autumn edition Margaret announced that she was stepping down from the role of magazine editor and I am very happy to take it on. I can see that Margaret did a fantastic job and I hope I can keep up the good work.

Of course it's not just me—I'm working closely with David Jockel and Walter Steensby, and Matt Mawson is doing the design and desktopping. Let us know what you think of the new look.

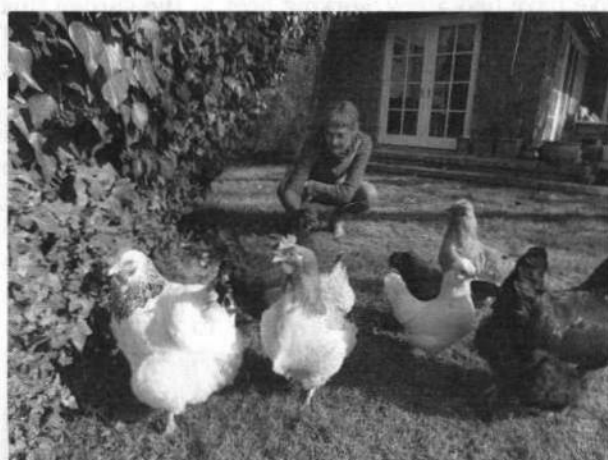
And there wouldn't be a magazine at all if you didn't send in articles and photographs, so please keep sending in copy.

Send content to editor@cogs.asn.au

Please send photographs as separate attachments at as high a resolution as you can so that we can do them justice! (Don't forget to make sure that any people in the photograph are happy to have their photo published in the magazine.)

I hope you enjoy this issue.

—Sue



If you would like to receive Canberra Organic by email instead of in the post, you can!

Please let us know by emailing
members@cogs.asn.au

The email version includes colour photographs and will be sent as a PDF.

Cook community garden

For some reason my contribution to the autumn edition of the magazine was not published so I am concluding some items which are now a little dated.

Since the summer edition, four plots at the garden have changed hands and we welcomed Anthony and Natalie Moore to plot no. 30, Emina Subasic to plot no. 39, Christine Larkin and David Purnell to plot 13, and Alice Hill to plot no. 47. The gardeners who left did so for various reasons: one moved to Melbourne, one moved to Oaks Estate Garden and two found that they did not have the time to tend to their gardens and their plots had been neglected.

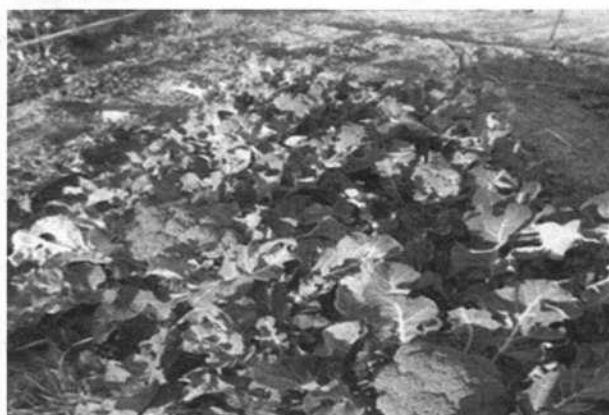
We have 11 people on the waiting list for a plot in the garden. COGS members are now given priority over non-members when plots are allocated. To date all COGS members who have requested a plot at Cook have been given one. The 11 on the list are not members but they must become COGS members before a plot will be allocated to them and they are handed a key to the garden. Currently there are no vacant plots at the garden.

We have had a few working bees at the garden this year and we mostly cleared weeds, pruned shrubs and put down woodchip mulch in the community beds and the driveway. The working bees are important as they keep the community areas of the garden maintained and tidy. All gardeners are expected to contribute their time as least once or twice during the year and to mow the garden once a year. There are some gardeners who attend all the working bees and some who never attend. In addition, Marion Sereneline has made a few trips to the tip to drop off green waste, Garry Ridgeway has mended and painted the garden's tables and chairs and repaired the mower and Mike Avent has overhauled all the taps in the garden and also taken green waste to the tip. I have to apologise to Mike as I incorrectly thanked somebody else for overhauling the taps in

the summer edition of the magazine! Also, John Tuckwell arranged for the woodchip to be delivered to the garden and Adrienne Fazekas pruned and tended to the garden's fruit trees. Anyway, for all those gardeners who contributed their time, the Garden Committee and I give them a big thank you to let them know that their contribution is greatly appreciated.

Mario Sereneline and I organised for two trucks loads of hay from the Canberra show to be delivered to the garden for the use of all plot holders in the garden. The large hay pile is slowly disappearing, but as spring approaches and the gardeners start their summer crops, I expect it will more quickly disappear.

Winter is a quiet month in the garden. However, it is still looks quite lush and productive as you can see from the photographs.



We recently had a free range hen in the garden for about a week which was probably dumped at the garden. She was a beautiful hen and quite tame. However, our garden does not have hens on site so she was found a new home and now goes by the name of Cookie. Below is a photograph of her looking in the garden shed for a possible roosting site.

—Glynis Kennedy (photos and story)



Dickson community garden

In recent months the Dickson garden has farewellled two longstanding members: Darren and Brendan. Both made significant contributions to the garden over the years and will be missed.

However, with departures come opportunities to welcome new members into our garden and we will be working towards allocating our vacant plots in time for the spring growing season.

A focus for the Dickson garden in 2013 has been to expand and fully use all the growing space available. We will in the course of this year, add communal herb areas and a pumpkin patch. We thank Robert and Mohammed for their efforts in cultivating one of our new growing areas (see photo).

In July we hosted the group volunteering to grow seedlings for Floriade. It was a fun morning where even the most experienced of gardeners among us learned something new!

—Nerida Hunter



Cookie's secret

When Glynis sent out the email about a dumped hen needing a good home I offered to help. John and I had brought our hens down from Queensland when we moved to Canberra in late January, and once you have 'chicken infrastructure' one more is no problem.

Because we both work during the week we couldn't collect Cookie until Saturday morning. We drove to the Cook garden early that morning and were very relieved to see her scratching away at the edge of someone's plot near the front gate. I had been worried that she would be taken by a fox or bitten by a snake, but she was obviously a clever little animal. We called her Cookie after the garden she came from.

Because she is so tame it wasn't difficult to catch her but once we got her home we realised she had a little secret—she was a flier! Jumping a two-metre fence through a thorny bougainvillea is not my idea of fun—particularly when John was in a hurry to get to the airport for an international work trip! On that first day I rescued Cookie about five times before we both realised she would have to get her wings clipped as part of the settling-in process. We've had fliers before and even though they have had a great time circling city suburbs and playing 'chicken' with cars and dogs, I pride myself on never losing a chicken and I wasn't about to start with Cookie.

A quick visit to Doctor Gray at the local vet clinic and Cookie's flying days were temporarily over. I watched her today as she trudged around with the flock, looking longingly at the fences and the wonders beyond. She's been wormed, put on weight and has started a friendship with Crème, our French Maran. She looks healthy and I hope she is happy.

—Sue Pavasaris



Holder community garden

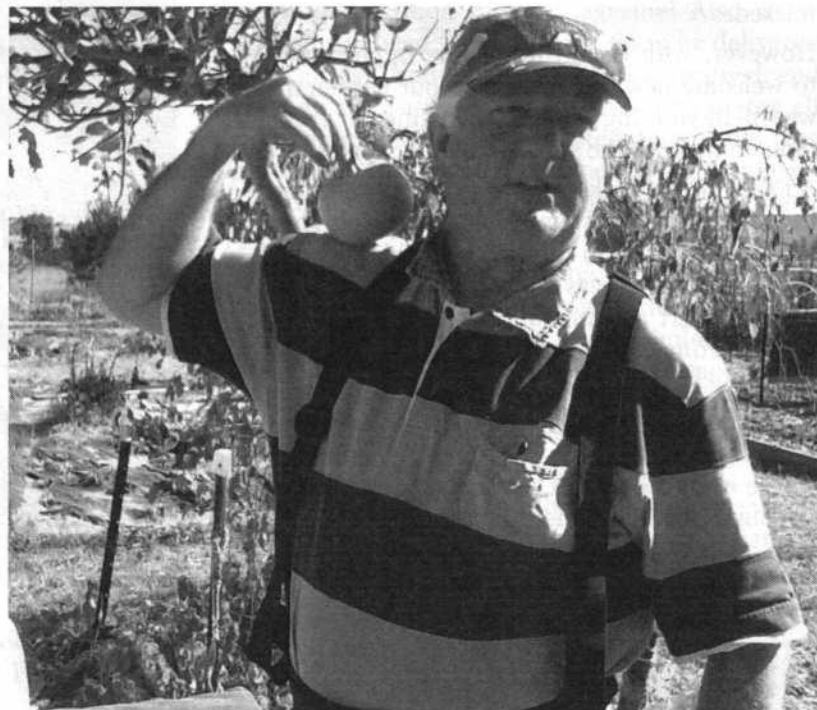
A challenge was put out to all Holder gardeners to grow the biggest and best pumpkin. Secret manures. Unusual seed. Saved seed from past pumpkins.

Results were mixed.

We met on a working bee Saturday when our annual sheep manure and lucerne hay delivery was due. Prior to this delivery one of the jobs on the working bee agenda was to work on the hothouse which had to have some TLC. The hot house is a donated item from a good samaritan, and it came in many pieces and has previously proved a greater challenge than a new flat pack with instructions!

At a previous working bee the sides of the hot house had been erected and the roof put on. It was decided that the roof had been put on back-to-front so one of the jobs at the working bee was to correct that. Quite tricky, with four people holding the four sides while the roof was unscrewed by two others and then a wobbly carry around by three people. It's still not right but maybe by spring we will have the glass in and door sorted.

Delivery of sheep manure bags over and hay bales stashed on plots. We all gathered around the shed. Only one gardener had the special pumpkin seed but others



bravely put forward a pumpkin that they had grown on their plot, so there was a mixed selection.

The best on table was (photo) David's 'Wee B Little' pumpkin—round, golden and spherically perfect; the Trombolinis, suitably shaped; the Yarradale a gorgeous green and gold with the elegant heavy Butternut, the smaller Buttercup and then the gorgeous Spaghetti squash. The biggest pumpkin over all, 'Dills Atlantic

Giant' was slightly upstaged by dog, Brambles.

Winter crops are growing well and the broccoli and English spinach should prove a good standby for the next few months. Huge carrots are being pulled now if over three months old. Onions and garlic are planted and beds are being prepared for planting peas and broad beans in early June.

—Heather Campbell
(photo and story)

Kaleen community garden

As usual, it's been very quiet over the winter months—at least the grass doesn't grow! We have some new plot-holders—welcome to Sharon, Tushara and Annette, who have been very busily removing couch from their plot to get it ready for spring.

We also have a baby boom at the moment with several babies due over the next few months.

Our new fruit trees are showing signs of very early movement, so hopefully the first lot of fruit won't be lost to late frosts.

We were donated a small fig tree by one of our gardeners. They joined us last Friday at morning tea and all the children helped to dig the clay and plant the tree. It was finished off with some pretty pansies around the edge.

We have been lucky to get a load of chips and people were busily trying to cover up the couch. Unfortunately it is never enough and we ran out pretty quickly! We are waiting on another load to come soon—hopefully!

—Robyn Power

O'Connor community garden

The O'Connor COGS garden is a small one, based on the two tennis courts owned by the O'Connor Uniting Church (OCUC) at the corner of Scrivener and Brigalow streets in the northern part of O'Connor. We have 15 beds of 40-45 square metres each and a perimeter of mostly communally managed space. Our gardening precepts range from fairly deep bio-dynamics to a pragmatic wish to reduce agro-industrial chemical and energy consumption, but we all seem to get on together.

Last early autumn, we had an atypical spill of plots and welcomed three new gardeners and expansions to full 45 square metre plots for two existing gardeners. The vigour and enthusiasm of our new and expanded plot holders is impressive: both because of their additional inputs and the fact that some soils have been rested for a while. These new plots are now some of our best winter gardens.

Conversely, we now have only one half plot to be transferred to the next person on our waiting list, and little prospect for new plots becoming available within the next six to twelve months.

The OCUC recently organised for the creepers to be cut out of the TRANSACT lines on our southern boundary, and also lopping of a rampant tree. With luck this will deter possums from invading our garden. There has been recent predation on spinach and other greens with a bite-size that suggests these little buggers have, finally, found their way into our garden. Andrew (see page 8) has been assiduously removing more of the creepers on the south.

On the rawest, coldest day in May the 'Green Team' from Radford College visited our garden. This was a group of younger students, still half-clad in their

summer uniforms, and with all but one boy, of possibly Sri-Lankan origins, exhibiting blue knees. They were given a tour of the garden, some explanations of organic and sustainable gardening principles, and hands-on practice of dividing and re-planting saffron bulbs. Some went home with a few hot chillies and the warning to treat them with respect! Thank you Rick for organising this!

Trish also brought her group from a Permaculture Design Course (Permacult) walking tour of the Inner North through in June.

For the first time in a few years, COGS green manure mixes were sown extensively. The growth is lush and vetch a very pretty little plant. It will be interesting to see the effect this additional organic matter makes to our summer soils.

Broccoli is doing us proud this year. Not sure if it is the season or judicious garden-wide use of Dipel early on that has instigated this, but many of our gardeners are cropping bountifully.

I have not been an effective convenor over the last couple of months as my head has been decidedly elsewhere. However, magic has been happening. Gardeners have nominated and organised themselves to clear gutters and resolve rainwater inflow to the tanks, renovate the Half Plot from Hell and a section of communal bed infested with feral passionfruit, plus a lot of other maintenance chores and enhancements.

I thank all who have contributed and believe the O'Connor Garden is working well as a supportive, responsible and collaborative community.

—Jenny Clark

COGS Library

One of the benefits of COGS membership is access to the COGS Library, which is housed in a cupboard at the Northside Community Centre, Rosevear Place, Dickson. This is the location where COGS monthly General Meetings are held on fourth Tuesday of each month (except December and January) starting at 7.30 pm. Access to the library is before and after the meetings.

Financial members can borrow two books (sometimes more if they are known to us and reliable!) and these should be returned a month later at the next meeting. There is no charge for borrowing, or for late fees. Members should show their current membership card when borrowing.

The collection of over 400 books covers the following areas:

- Food crops, seeds and propagation
- Agriculture
- Animals
- Soils, mulching, composting, pests and diseases
- Herbs
- General gardening
- Food and lifestyle.

New titles include: the *New Organic Gardener*, *Waterwise Gardening* (3rd ed), *Chooks in the City*, *Feast: Grow, Cook and Eat* and *Organic Gardening* (7th ed).

Members may donate relevant titles or make suggestions for new acquisitions.

The current COGS Librarians are Donna Vaughan and Greg Blood.

Battle for the back fence

The O'Connor garden has communal beds around the outside—herbs, fruit trees (including a fruiting pomegranate), rhubarb and some berries. The back fence line has some raspberries, a crowded apricot tree and a nice grapevine climbing along the fence.

Unfortunately, the rodent of the plant world—ivy—was taking over. Its roots were permeating the beds, branches were blocking sunlight (possibly why the apricot hasn't fruited) and the grape vine was getting overrun.

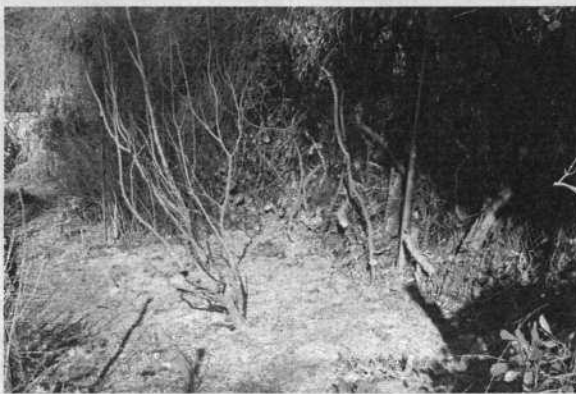
So commenced a two-month struggle to turn the tide of the war. Some of the ivy trunks were actually worthy of being called trunks—as thick as your leg—and had grown around the fence wire so they could only be partially removed.

Excavations in the bed revealed no Spanish doubloons, but there were a number of Jerusalem artichokes that made one gardener a nice flatulent stew. There was also a peculiar bulbous mass, which I'm fairly sure was a fossilised alien life form. Others thought it was a dahlia bulb.

So we are left with a freshly dug-over bed covered in a layer of straw, a better-lit and pruned apricot tree and a pile of green waste as big as a Smart car. After the big push, there'll now be some lighter work to do, planting some nice annual herbs in time for spring.

Don't worry though, there won't be too much resting on laurels—there's still plenty of remaining ivy keep us busy behind the compost area and around the big tree.

—Andrew Hunt (photos and story)



A Short History of COGS

- 1977 Founded in August by the enthusiasm of Betty Cornhill.
Named the 'Organic Gardening and Farming Society of the A.C.T.' or O.G.F.S.A.C.T. Ran a single 'guerilla' (unofficial) garden for three years in Watson.
- 1981 Name changed to Canberra Organic Growers (C.O.G.).
Membership sinks to 30; extinction of C.O.G. looking likely.
- 1980s Watson garden moved to Mitchell owing to housing developments.
- 1982 Membership built up to 96; extinction averted.
- 1985 Adopted a Constitution.
Changed name to Canberra Organic Growers Society (COGS).
- 1989 Erindale garden established.
Cotter garden moved owing to proposed roadworks (still proposed).

- 1991 Membership almost 300.
- 1992 Oaks Estate garden established.
- 2001— Cook, Dickson, Holder, Kambah, O'Connor
- 2005 and Queanbeyan gardens established.
- 2009 Kaleen garden established.
- 2011 Membership 430.
- 2013 Queanbeyan garden transferred to NSW management.
Crace garden established.
- 2013 Membership 480.

This list is incomplete and I would be grateful to learn of errors and omissions. For instance, I don't know in which year the Watson garden was moved, nor when the Cotter garden was established.

—Walter Steensby

Visit to Merici College

Our cover story

Photos and story: Walter Steensby

On Tuesday, 18 June COGS members and people from other organisations including Fusion Australia, the University of Canberra, and the UC Kaleen High School, were treated to a tour of Merici College's Sustainability Program facilities. Merici College is a private Catholic girls' high school located in the Canberra suburb of Braddon. It covers years 7 to 12.

The College has a strong policy towards achieving sustainability. In 2012 it won the ACT Sustainable Cities Award for its kitchen garden program as one outcome of deciding in 2009 to take over running its own school canteen to provide healthier eating for the students and the staff. To quote extensively from the College's website, the key aims of the *Healthy Canteen Project* are to:

- provide affordable healthy food
- enable vocational students to get industry experience while studying
- encourage girls to sit and eat in a social environment
- reduce the amount of processed and packaged foods and drinks consumed by students



- enable the college to take positive steps towards sustainable practices to reduce, reuse and recycle.

This project has led on to further sustainability initiatives such as a vegetable garden, an elective in sustainability, and ways to reduce waste in the school. [For more complete information visit www.merici.act.edu.au/node/86]

We were met by the Acting Principal, Dr Ann Cleary, the Bursar, Keith Vardanega, and Science Teacher, Fiona Buining. Our first stop was the canteen where the manager, Virginia McLeod, gave us a talk on the history and progress of the canteen project.

In particular we learned that the behaviour of the girls changed after the new canteen started operating: instead of congregating in small and socially isolated cliques in the open quadrangle, they now tend to mix freely within the canteen, treat each other more as friends than strangers, and positively enjoy the now-healthier



Photo: Merici College

diet of school-grown, school-prepared food.

Next we were shown a near-new extensively automated glasshouse to gladden the heart of any gardener.

It has an enormous heated sprouting tray; it can automatically open or close roof panels and can extend or retract an overhead horizontal reflective curtain to reflect excessive sunlight. A splendid asset indeed!

For the COGS members at least, the beautifully built vegetable garden was the highlight of the tour. The garden was opened in May 2011 by Costa Georgiadis, the well-known compère of the ABC's *Gardening Australia* TV program. It was built on a disused netball court by the College's Maintenance Team, with about 20 large raised beds, plenty of maneuvering space between and around the beds, a good solid chain link fence and, most usefully, chicken wire netting over the entire area. Not only does this keep possums out, it reportedly excludes white cabbage moths even though the mesh size seems too big. The vertical parts of the fence have been painted black and this simple treatment makes the fence hard to see from a distance. How nice it would be to re-fence some or all of our COGS gardens the same way, although I hesitate to think what the cost might be! One day ...

Here some of the students gave us a talk on what they were growing and how they were getting along with it. To judge by the brassicas and lettuces and onions in the various open beds and under the polytunnels,



they are doing quite well indeed. So are the chickens whose run is within the safety of the fenced-off garden. A former COGS President, David Odell, gave a chook lesson to two attentive and interested young students, showing them how to hold a chicken so that it tries not to escape—take its legs between your fingers and tuck its head under your elbow—, where to palpitate its nether regions to check for eggs—hard to describe in a few words but it works—, and how to treat scaly leg mites—a solution of potassium permanganate (Condy's crystals) painted no higher than the knees. It was good to see this dialogue, however brief, between a long-experienced organic grower and the up-and-coming generation. It would be good to see even more of it.

The last part of our visit consisted of lunch served in the restaurant part of the canteen building. Thirty-odd diners agreed that the meal was delicious and well-presented. The vegetables came straight out of the garden and they, the viands and dessert were all prepared in the magnificent kitchen. This is a real, fully-equipped kitchen with a multi-million-dollar investment in equipment intended to give the girls training and work experience in this aspect of the hospitality industry.

The number of skills that can be learned from the 'simple' growing, preparation and serving of food is quite remarkable: soil preparation, species selection, garden design, cultivation techniques, water management, recycling, composting, tool selection and handling, biodiversity and outdoor exercise to name a few. When you add the skills involved in preparing and serving food, the list becomes long indeed. Food hygiene



alone is an entire topic area in its own right.

Our visit to Merici College has reinforced my feelings that something very positive is happening in Canberra right now. I think the public are becoming aware of the challenges posed by peaks of a variety of important resources, and they are moving to do something about it.

The growing interest in urban agriculture reflects a growing interest in public and personal health which, one hopes, will feed into making sustainability an integral part of our public and private lives.

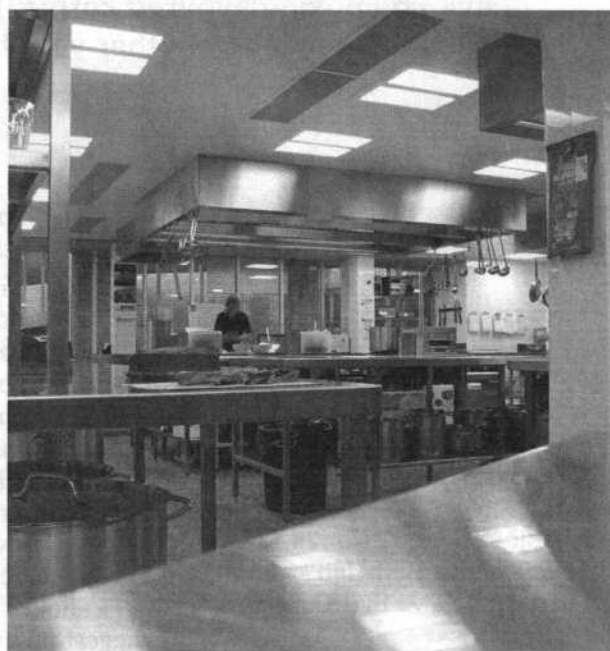
I would like to continue building upon the foundation laid on this visit. If nothing else, the broader ACT community needs to become aware and supportive of what is being done at Merici College—and elsewhere, for this is not the only such program in Canberra. So, as a start we propose to invite some of the Merici sustainability students to make a presentation at a future COGS general meeting. They need and deserve to know that the people of Canberra are behind them and appreciate their efforts.



Another good way to continue the building is via COGS' membership of Urban Agriculture Australia (UAA), the fairly new peak body coordinating collaboration between 12 community-based urban food farming and other environmental groups in and near the ACT. [For the complete list visit www.canberracityfarm.wikispaces.com/urban+agriculture+Australia]

While none of these includes Merici College or other academic institutions, UAA will provide a forum which can expand to include more participants.

With urban agriculture on its way to becoming an entirely new category of statutory land use in the ACT, these are exciting and interesting times for both COGS and like-minded organisations.



Collector Village Pumpkin Festival draws big crowds

The Collector Village Pumpkin Festival is basically a harvest festival, following the tradition of bringing the pumpkins in after the first frosts. There's something so comforting about pumpkin soup or pumpkin scones, especially on a chilly winter's evening.

Collector is a village just off the Federal Highway, about 40 minutes drive from Civic. The district was settled by Europeans quite early, in 1829, and named after the Aboriginal word for the area, *Colegdar*. It became a popular stopover for travellers because it was a day's journey from Goulburn. After the Federal Highway bypassed it in 1988, it went into a decline for many years, with businesses pulling out and houses knocked down.

Things are changing. It's becoming a commuter village for people who work in Goulburn or Canberra. Several wineries are nearby, such as Lerida (worth a visit), and of course the annual Collector Village Pumpkin Festival which has become quite a popular attraction.

Cindy and I like pumpkins and felt like a day out and had never been



once had five inns when today there is only one.

It certainly was a pumpkin festival: a pumpkin-growing contest, pumpkin soup, pumpkin scones, pumpkin pies both savoury and sweet, and even pumpkin-flavoured coffee. I didn't really like this—maybe another year if the chef works on his recipe. However, his liquid-pumpkin-pie drink/soup was quite tasty. The festival is a great place to learn

Photo: The smaller pumpkin near the front weighs a mere 58 kg. The picture has been cropped on purpose to avoid the need for getting a signed release form.

seen. Someone said that these monsters can be cooked down into something edible, so maybe they're not all woody after all. There was also clear opposition to a proposed wind farm in the district, so issues of sustainable energy continue to be worked out.

This festival is organised by the Collector Village Pumpkin Festival Committee, pumpkinfestival.com.au.

Admission in 2013 was \$5 for adults, no charge for children under 12. Funds raised go towards improving local facilities. If you'd like a pleasant day out, this will do very well. One hint: the quickest way to get to the parking area is by entering Collector using the second exit to Collector from the Federal Highway, the furthest from Canberra.

—Walter Steensby
(photo and story)

More photos are available at www.goulburnpost.com.au/story/1480414/gallery-collector-pumpkin-festival.

... even pumpkin-flavoured coffee. I didn't really like this—maybe another year if the chef works on his recipe ...

to this festival, so off we went on a lovely sunny day to the tenth celebration.

This isn't really a specialist pumpkin-growing area; instead, like Goulburn, it earns its keep from fine wool, lambs, beef and a goodly amount of history including bushrangers. The Bushranger Hotel was the site of the shooting of Constable Samuel Nelson in 1865 by a member of Ben Hall's gang. It's hard to believe that Collector

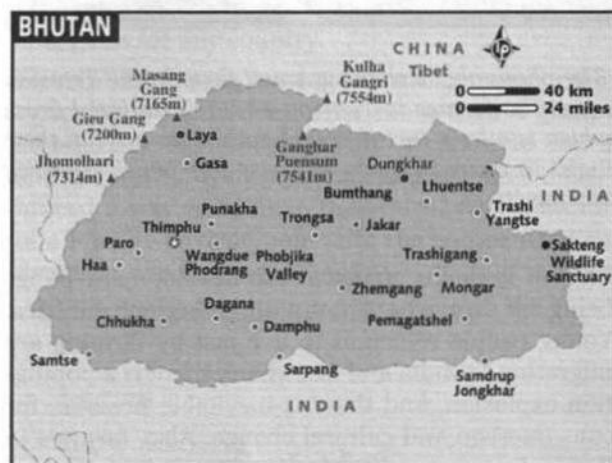
what can be done with pumpkins as an ingredient.

This year the festival reportedly drew some 8,000 people to 100 market stalls offering the usual and wide range of produce. We enjoyed live music and entertainment, the Pipes and Drums from Goulburn, a display of working vintage farm machinery, a large area of classic cars, a scarecrow building competition (do scarecrows really scare crows?) and, of course, some of the biggest pumpkins I have ever



Bhutan aims to be the first certified organic country

In April and May of this year I had the wonderful privilege to visit Bhutan, a small landlocked country in the foothills of the Himalayas bordered by India in the south and China (Tibet) in the north.



It is a fascinating country which only opened its borders to outsiders about 30 years ago. I recommend everyone to take a trip there as it is beautiful and it is a developing country which really looks after its people. Bhutan measures 'Gross National Happiness' instead of Gross Domestic Product and as the majority of the population is Buddhist they believe in living in harmony with nature.



This is a photograph of me next to a sign which reads 'Preserve our natural rich heritage. Do not pollute the environment. Remember nature is the source of all happiness'. Signs with similar messages are placed all over Bhutan.

Bhutan plans to become the first country in the world to turn its agriculture completely organic, banning the sales of pesticides and herbicides and relying on its own animals and farm waste for fertilisers. The government expects that the farmers of this small country, with a population of around 740,000 people, will be able to grow more food and export increasing amounts of high quality niche foods to neighbouring India, China and other countries. The Ministry of Agriculture says the organic program, launched this year, is not just about protecting the environment it will also train farmers in new methods that will help them grow more food and move the country closer to self-sufficiency.



Terracing is used for growing crops throughout Bhutan because of the steepness of the land.



Farmland outside of Paro on the way to the airport. It is one of the most productive areas in Bhutan because of the large area of flat land. This is also the reason why the airport is here.

Bhutan is an overwhelmingly agrarian nation as two-thirds of its population depend on farming in villages dotted around fertile southern plains near India and the soaring Himalayan peaks and deep valleys to the north. Mostly forested, only about three per cent of the country's land area is used for growing crops with the majority of farmers already organic and reliant on rotting leaves, manure or compost as a natural fertiliser. Because of the mountains many farms are quite isolated and many have no access to chemicals. Growing their produce organically is how they have grown their crops for generations.

Bhutan's only competitor for the first '100 per cent organic' title is the tiny self-governing island of Niue in the South Pacific, which has a population of only 1,300. It aims to reach its objective by 2015–2020.



This is fiddle head fern for sale at the Thimpu (the capital city) food market. It grows wild throughout Bhutan and tastes like silver beet mixed with asparagus. It has a crunchy texture.

Bhutan is challenging the view that organic farming means smaller crop production by working with farmers to develop new techniques to grow more and not lose soil quality.

Bhutan plans to become the first country in the world to turn its agriculture completely organic, banning the sales of pesticides and herbicides and relying on its own animals and farm waste for fertilisers.

Systems like 'sustainable root intensification' (SRI), which carefully regulates the amount of water that crops need and the age at which seedlings are planted out, have shown that organic crop yields can be doubled with no synthetic chemicals.

The government is experimenting with different methods of growing crops like SRI and is also going to increase the amount of irrigated land and use traditional varieties of crops which have a higher pest resistance.



The photo above shows a small farm in the Trongsa area. The farmer is wearing Bhutan's national dress which is a long tartan smock tucked up around their waist to form a pouch. Men use this pouch to carry various items.

Bhutan is facing many of the development pangs being felt everywhere in rapidly emerging countries. Young people reluctant to live just by farming are migrating to India and elsewhere, there is a population explosion, and there is inevitable pressure for consumerism and cultural change. Also, farmers in Paro who are smallholder farmers have in recent years had problems with their crops. The weather has been very erratic. It's been warmer than normal and the number of pests is increasing. Some farmers, who for decades have been chemical free, are finding that they have to use them for the first time.

However, the government is optimistic and is working towards providing solutions. In a world looking for new ideas, Bhutan is already called the poster child of sustainable development. More than 95 per cent of the population has clean water and electricity, 80 per cent of the country is forested and, to the envy of many countries, it is carbon neutral and food secure.

Bhutan has no fossil fuels or nuclear power and its rivers have the potential to generate over 30,000



A basket of garlic drying in the sun.

megawatts of electricity. So far it only generates 2,000 megawatts and exports some of it to India. The government already is working towards increasing the output of electricity to 10,000 megawatts. The biggest threat to the country is the number of cars is increasing every day and, therefore, it has to import fuel.

Bhutan's goal of 100 per cent organic farming in 10 years is a very ambitious one. Not only does Bhutan follow the philosophy of Gross National Happiness it also has four integral concepts: equitable social-economic development, conservation of the environment, preservation and promotion of culture, and good governance. These are highly commendable goals for any country.

Bhutan's success in moving to a 100 per cent organic agricultural model may offer more than a glimpse at whether sustainable living is possible for an entire country. It may just suggest whether there is indeed a way to balance the ethical considerations of a healthy environment with the competition and demands of a thriving economy.

—Glynis Kennedy (photos and story)



A woman is sorting through rice while her garlic is drying in the sun.

RECIPE

Ema datshi— the ubiquitous Bhutanese dish

They say that if you have been to Bhutan and not eaten *ema datshi* you have not been to Bhutan!

This dish is served with every meal and sometimes even at breakfast time. Bhutanese people love their chillies and this dish is delicious with rice, vegetables and meat. It is quite hot so a little on your food goes a long way. I must say that I loved it and when it wasn't served with my meal I always asked for it.

Ingredients

- 250 g of chillies (green and of medium hotness)
- 1 onion, chopped longitudinally
- 2 tomatoes, chopped
- 250 g feta cheese
- 5 cloves of garlic, finely crushed
- 1 tablespoon of vegetable oil
- 400 mL of water

Method

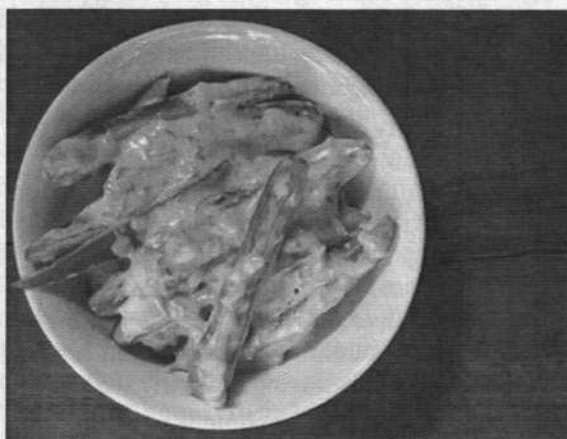
1. Cut chillies longitudinally (1 chilli = 4 pieces). Put these chillies and chopped onions in a pot of water (approx. 400 mL).
2. Add vegetable oil and then boil on medium heat for about 10 minutes.

3. Add tomato and garlic and boil for another 3 minutes.
4. Add cheese, mix and simmer for 3 more minutes.
5. Turn off the heat, cover and let stand for a few minutes before serving.

Note: The cheese that is actually used cannot be found outside Bhutan. It is a local farmer's cheese with a unique texture that doesn't dissolve when put in boiling water. I have tried it with feta cheese and although it is not quite the same as the local cheese it is ok. 'Farmers cheese' or a mixture of various cheeses may also be suitable.

—Glynis Kennedy

Adapted from: *Tashi Delek Magazine*, March–April 2013, p. 22





Urban agriculture in Havana, Cuba

I first heard about Urban Agriculture in Cuba when I did my Permaculture Design Course (PDC) in 2011. In the 1990s, after the collapse of the socialist block and ongoing trade embargo from the USA, Cuba was faced with an economic and a food production crisis. As a result agriculture shifted from state farms reliant on high level imported inputs (petrochemicals and chemical fertilisers) to small-scale local production using organic (low input) methods.

So when we travelled to Cuba in April 2013 we took the opportunity to visit some of the urban gardens in Havana including a tour of the Organopónico Vivero Alamar—Unidad Básica de Producción Cooperativa (UBPC) organic farm and cooperative, organised through the Ministry of Agriculture.

UBPC is located 20 km from Havana city in the suburb of Alamar with a population of over 100,000 people. It was started in 1997 on 800 square metres with 5 workers. It has now grown to 162 workers (40 per cent women) and expanded to 11.4 hectares (25 acres). The average age of workers is 56 years and they have a variety of university and technical qualifications. They work 6–7 hours a day and receive at least the basic wage of \$350 per month. Profits from the garden are divided with half reinvested into the garden and the remaining divided between staff helping to create a sense of ownership and pride.

The aim of UBPC is to provide healthy food at a good price to the community through a shop front at the garden. One of the challenges is to get young people engaged in urban agriculture and they are working with schools to encourage children to change their attitude towards seeing farming as a viable career.

They have a nursery where they sell plants to the public and seedling houses where they can grow over 3 million seedlings which are primarily used in the garden. Their focus is on increasing biodiversity through using organic methods. The principle crop is lettuce which has a 25-day production cycle and is popular with the locals. Green houses are used for growing tomatoes, cucumber, peppers and lettuce all year round especially during the rainy season.

The land is owned by the government to whom they pay taxes but UBPC owns the produce and equipment.

The soil was fairly poor when the garden was started but is being improved by adding a mixture of 50 per cent humus, 25 per cent compost and 25 per cent rice husks. The garden produces 400 tonne of humus a year but this is still not enough to meet their needs. The compost is also produced at the garden and includes manure from the cattle, goats and rabbits raised at the garden.

UBPC is supported by international Non-Government Organisations from Germany, Italy and Canada and has links to Cuban universities' research institutes.

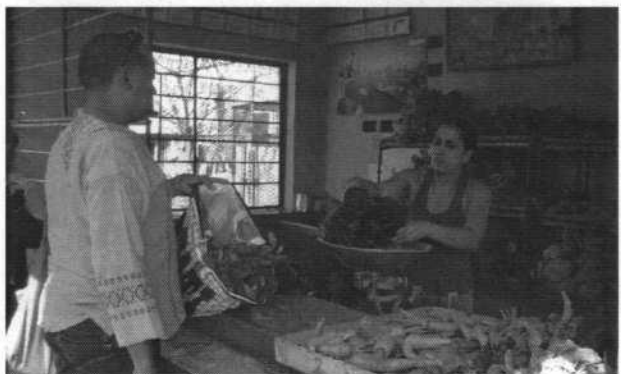
Research activities include the production of insects as a preventative insecticide.

Aromatic and spiritual plants are grown for their medicinal qualities such as *noni*, which is used for stomach problems and blood pressure and *moringa*, which is high in calcium and protein. Excess fruit and vegetables are turned into vinegars and pickles, spices such as turmeric are dried on a solar disc and powdered. All are sold in the garden shop to encourage customers to diversify their diets.

Back in Havana and wandering the streets we came across more urban gardens on a smaller scale but still using organic methods and selling to local residents.

It was great to have the opportunity to see these urban gardens and while visiting Havana has given me a bit of a 'reality' check on how much these gardens have evolved out of necessity, they have still managed to inspire me to engage further with urban agriculture here at home.

—Trish McEwan (photos and story)



Communion with plants?

(An article in *New Scientist* (25 August 2012, Vol. 215 No. 2879) and a TED talk that may interest COGS members)

'Have you ever wondered what the grass under your feet feels, what an apple tree smells, or a marigold sees?'

I must admit, most of the time I don't think of plants and trees as sensory beings. I can walk down a tree-lined street, surrounded by giant living creatures spreading their limbs on all sides, without any real sense of interaction. Certainly I admire their beauty and they stimulate my senses, but it doesn't usually cross my mind that *they* might in some way be aware of *me*. After all, trees don't have eyes, ears or noses. I think for many of us these days, plants and trees seem less alive than animals, more like decorative objects. Or organic machines to produce food.

In different eras, however, people interacted differently with the flora around them. Trees and plants could be spoken to, prayed to, and thanked for what they provided. Flowers held magical charms. Certain forests were best avoided.

In this era of rationality, people who think about plants in such a manner are regarded as eccentric. Daniel Chamovitz's article 'Tree Sense' in *New Scientist* does not go so far as to suggest trees will listen if we talk to them. Nor does he claim that trees have ears. But he does point out that trees and plants sense the environment in ways that are very similar to how we humans listen, see, touch, taste and smell that same shared environment.

'What do plants see?' he asks. 'The obvious answer is that, like us, they see light. Just as we have photoreceptors in our eyes, they have their own throughout their stems and leaves.' And, just as we do, plants also have receptors that respond to volatile chemicals (smell) and soluble chemicals (taste). A parasitic vine called dodder is apparently the champion sniffer of the vegetable world. To live, it needs to suck the sugary sap from other plants. It uses olfaction to track down victims, and also sniffs scents emitted by unhealthy specimens to avoid them.



All plants, says Chamovitz, have a sense of smell. Trees set up defensive mechanisms when scents warn them that caterpillars are at large in neighbouring trees; fruit ripens in response to the scent of other ripening fruit nearby. As taste involves soluble chemicals, much of a plant's sense of taste is in its roots. Chamovitz describes an experiment that demonstrated trees communicating through the

exchange and tasting of soluble chemicals. One row of trees was subjected to drought-stress conditions. The trees in other rows that had root connections with the stressed trees quickly began to close their stomata in preparation for lack of water. Trees an equal distance away, but with no root connections, did not.

'Plants live in a very tactile world.

Branches sway in the wind, insects crawl across leaves, and vines search out supports to hang on to.' Chamovitz discusses the Venus Fly Trap as a prime example of a plant's sensitivity to touch, pointing out that the mechanism by which this plant senses its prey is uncannily similar to the way a human feels an insect crawling on their arm. Even at the level of individual cells, plants and animals use similar proteins and mechanoreceptors to feel things and generate electrical currents in response.

Less scientific research has been conducted on plant hearing, but there are certainly sounds, such as the beating of an insect's wings, that it would be beneficial for plants to sense. Some preliminary research has begun to investigate ultrasonic vibrations emanating from oak trees, and a tendency in corn to grow towards specific frequencies of vibrations.

I said at the beginning of this article that I often see plants and trees more as decorative objects than sentient beings. But sometimes, in a certain relaxed mood, I have felt what seems like a connection with green life forms. A sense of communion, if not communication exactly. Reading Chamovitz's article, has, I think, helped to foster this feeling.

(continued next page)

Plants and trees are not just sitting there vacantly, oblivious to the environment around them. They are alert and aware, engaged. Possibly more engaged than we humans are, given that they don't have brains constantly buzzing with words and abstractions.

Does this lack of a brain make plants somehow less evolved or less sophisticated than us? Michael Pollan doesn't think so. In his TED talk 'A Plant's Eye View', he points out that we have all been evolving for the same time, just in different directions. Plants do not have consciousness in the sense that we do. Their genius is biochemistry. The lima bean, for example, releases a volatile chemical when it is attacked by spidermites. This chemical attracts rival spidermites, which effectively come to the lima bean's defence. The human genome project found that humans have 23,000 genes. Rice has 35,000.

'A Plant's Eye View' explores the idea of trying to see the world from the perspective of plants. As evident in the grammar of our language, we usually see our interactions with the external world in a subject/object context. I, the subject, do things to the object, nature. I plant the potatoes, I weed the garden, I domesticate the species. I am in charge. Pollan speculates that a bee going about its business might feel the same way. But has the bee in fact been manipulated—in a Darwinian sense—by the flower?

Thinking in this way, agriculture can be seen not as a human invention, but as a co-evolutionary development. It is an interesting way of looking at things, which resonates with certain aspects of Buddhist and ancient Chinese philosophy.

Apart from providing 'a cure for the disease of human self-importance', looking at the world from the perspective of other species also has practical applications. Pollan discusses a permaculture farm in the US called Polyface in which multiple species are raised in an interactive manner. All the species 'perform ecological services for one another'. For example, cows are allowed to intensively graze for one day in a restricted area of pasture. After three



Snow pea photos: Heather Campbell

days, chickens are transported to this pasture and they eat the maggots that have developed in the cow manure. The chickens obtain their favourite form of protein, prevent an outbreak of flies, distribute the cow manure by scratching and pecking through it, and also provide their own fertiliser to enhance the soil. The grass, which has had its root/shoot ratio changed, needs to keep its root mass in balance with its leaf mass. So roots are shed, and the species in the soil go to work decomposing them. And the result is: new soil. Polyface produces a very large quantity of food, and also demonstrates the fallacy of the concept that 'for us to get what we want, nature is diminished'. In fact, at the end of the season, there is more soil, more fertility and more biodiversity.

Which is good for humans and good for all the other species involved. We tend to think of evolution as a ruthless battle between individuals and between species, but communication and cooperation clearly have their benefits. Perhaps even communion is not so far-fetched after all.

—David Jockel

For more information:

www.newscientist.com/special/plant-senses

www.ted.com/talks/michael_pollan_gives_a_plant_s_eye_view.html

The Weather Report

Wetter winter season likely for most of south-east Australia

The Bureau of Metrology reported on 4 June 2013 that atmospheric and oceanic indicators continue to be neutral; that is neither El Niño nor La Niña. Most models of weather conditions suggest that these neutral conditions will continue for the rest of 2013. However, the bureau has not ruled out a La Niña event developing later in the year.

La Niña events are associated with higher rain fall in eastern Australia.

In the tropical Indian Ocean, warmer than average ocean temperatures have persisted in the east, while in recent weeks, ocean temperatures in the western Indian Ocean have cooled slightly. Patterns of Indian Ocean temperatures like this during winter—spring increases the chances of above-average rainfall over southern Australia and increased humidity over parts of northern Australia.

Recent cloud bands originating in the northwest and then tracking across Australia are a direct result of the Indian Ocean temperatures.

I have 100 kg of organic waste in the boot of my car

This material is just two days' worth of organic waste from one average office building in Canberra. 100 kg may not sound like a lot, but when you see it crammed into your boot I can assure you it is quite tangible. And it's not difficult to extrapolate from this. How many office buildings are there in Canberra? How many office buildings are there in Sydney? How many office buildings are there in the world?

Day after day, week after week, year after year, in office buildings all over the world, the organic waste keeps on coming. Billions and billions of kilos. Typically, this waste has gone to landfill. It gets dumped into big piles of toxic garbage where it serves no useful purpose, and in fact instead is left to rot and release gases that, if scientific evidence is to be believed, contribute in a major way to climate change.

Why do I have organic waste from a Canberra office building in the boot of my car? Because, much to my surprise, and possibly for the first time in my life, I am actually working in a useful and worthwhile job. For about a year now I have been working with a wonderful Canberra-based company called Global Worming, helping to collect organic waste from office buildings and transport it to worm farms.

Collecting and recycling organic waste in this way is a new industry, but hopefully before too long organic waste will be collected everywhere—from offices, restaurants, shopping malls, schools, private houses. So instead of contributing to the destruction of our environment, organic 'waste' will actually help to rejuvenate the soil and provide us with healthy food.

Global Worming and COGS are natural allies, and after a preliminary meeting there is optimism that practical cooperation could soon be underway. I am very excited by this prospect. I think it would be a great feeling throwing an apple core into a Global Worming bin in your office, knowing that the organic energy contained in that fruit would not be wasted and would not cause pollution, but would instead contribute to a healthy meal of fresh produce for local people.

Further details on Global Worming and possible cooperation arrangements with COGS will be published in our next edition.

—David Jockel

Speakers for the August to October 2013 COGS meetings

August

Tobias Koenig—Ingelara

Ingelara is a biodynamic farm owned and run by Tobias and Beatrice Koenig, Peter Bottomley and Gini Osborne. It is an established producer and supplier of the finest organic potatoes and a range of seasonal vegetables. The farm is also home to Angus cattle and a herd of Wessex Saddle-back pigs, and it has an orchard. Tobias will speak on the operation of the entire farm.

September

Rob Gourlay—Phi'on

Rob Gourlay operates his company, Phi'on, from his farm at Mongarlowe. The company provides services which are dedicated to supporting the sustainability of agriculture, other land uses and the environment through the production and distribution of products that are specifically designed to balance soil and water function and improve the quality of food and fibre, and support plant, animal and human probiotics. With a background in soil biology, Rob will speak on the impact of soil systems and water on nutrition uptake.

October

Gary Watkins-Sully—Sully's Cider, Perry, Mead and Country Wines

Gary Watkins-Sully is a maker of traditional hand crafted cider, perry, mead and country wines based at Reidsdale near Braidwood. The Watkins-Sully family originate from the cider- and perry-making counties of Monmouthshire and Gloucestershire in the UK. The family has discovered that a cider industry flourished in the Reidsdale region as far back as the 1860s. They also discovered that farms in the area grew apples for the cider factory and that some of these have remnant orchards. They have set up a program to find, identify and propagate the region's heritage fruit with the aim of producing a cider using traditional techniques and eventually to recreate a cider from the apple varieties grown for the original cider factory.

COGS in the news

Republished with the kind permission of the Canberra Weekly. Article published in Canberra Weekly, 9 May 2013.

Community gardening in Canberra

I recently joined Canberra Organic Growers Society Inc (COGS) with a permaculture friend and am now the proud lessee of two gardening plots totalling 35 square metres—more than any veggie nut could ever wish for (although I may revise this at the rate I am developing a passion for homegrown produce). The only regret I have is not taking advantage of this fantastic not-for-profit, community-run and ACT Government supported resource years ago.

To have a plot you need to be a COGS member and pay an annual levy fee per square metre for your plot (this covers the costs of water and insurance). Membership entitles you to an informative quarterly magazine full of information and advice, and access to extensive organic seed bank, plant library and garden-related seminars. Plot ownership includes use of water, tools, community compost, community berries and fruit trees (not all gardens have fruit trees due to size limitations), and any other amenities. Members work together as needed in general upkeep and housekeeping of the garden, and share a wealth of associated knowledge, friendship and surplus produce.

Christine Carter, convener of the Erindale community garden since its inception in 1989 (that's 24 years on a voluntary basis), joined because her home garden was unsuited to growing vegetables. With a total of four plots totalling more than 67 square metres,

in the garden



Help yourself! At COGS, a red ribbon tied on a plant means the plot owner would like to share their produce with fellow gardeners.



Local kids Francesca and Thomas tend a plot leased by their mother, Kathryn.



Erindale community garden, which is one of 11 community gardens in the ACT region.

WITH HORTICULTURIST TRACEY BOOL

COMMUNITY GARDENING IN CANBERRA

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Christine Carter, convener of the Erindale community garden since its inception in 1989 (that's 24 years on a voluntary basis), joined because her home garden was unsuited to growing vegetables. With a total of four plots totalling more than 67 square metres, Christine has plenty of room to grow a range of cool and warm season veggies, berries and herbs. She is a keen advocate of organic gardening principles and doesn't mind the 'challenge of thwarting bugs that dare to have the audacity to attack my vegies!' she says. Christine's passionate about being outdoors, its associated benefits, and enjoys the simple pleasure of 'Creating superbly rich soil in which I can grow and harvest an abundance of uncontaminated, deliciously fresh food.'

For any further information on COGS community gardens visit www.cogs.asn.au



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For any further information on COGS community gardens visit www.cogs.asn.au

—Tracey Bool

COGS wiki

Have you checked out the COGS wiki? www.wiki.cogs.asn.au/wiki/Main_Page

The wiki aims to be the definitive reference for organic growing in Canberra, bringing together knowledge about plant growing, garden management, COGS administration and all things COGS in Canberra.

It's easy to search and you can add to it. If you find the COGS wiki to be deficient in information you need, or if you have information you would like to include, you can post information on the discussion section on each page.

Now open and available for editing is the COGS Suppliers Page: www.wiki.cogs.asn.au/wiki/Suppliers

This page is available for members to source supplies and also post known suppliers of resources for organic gardening such as seeds, mulches, tools and compost. Take a look and add any supplier you know directly to the page or email it to the COGS Wiki editing team at dmstokes73@gmail.com

COGS Winter Planting Guide

VEGETABLES

Asparagus

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

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

Remember this is a long-term investment.

Broad Beans

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

Kohlrabi

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

Lettuce

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

Onions

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

Peas

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

Rhubarb

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

Other possibilities

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

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

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

FRUIT

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

Strawberries

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

Berries

Raspberries, youngberries, boysenberries etc can be planted during winter while they are dormant.

Remember, these bear fruit on canes grown in the previous year so to prune remove all the old canes in autumn or winter making sure to leave the current season's growth for next year's fruit. Autumn fruiting raspberries bear on the current year's growth so are cut to the ground in winter after they have fruited.

Currants

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

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

S = seed sowing; T = transplanting



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 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 2500 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

**Eating Up The World, www.vegetarianvictoria.org.au

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 a sandy beach good for swimming, snorkelling or teaching children to swim.

Easy drive to many other lovely beaches.

House sleeps eight, with a 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 km from Canberra. Take visiting friends and relatives to see the South Coast.

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



COGS Noticeboard

COGS green manure mixes are available

Each year COGS buys bulk seed that is mixed, packaged and made available to members.



This year there are two mixes available:

- Cereal and legume mix containing wheat, oats, ryecorn, field peas and vetch
- Legumes only mix containing field peas, vetch, lupins.

Seed is packaged in quantities suitable to cover about 25—30 square metres and is available at the COGS general meetings or on request.

Bulk deliveries to community gardens can also be arranged through your garden convener.

Available for \$2 per bag as a COGS fundraiser.

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.



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Canberra City Farm

has a new website

canberracityfarm.wikispaces.com

And while you're there, click the side menu to check out the Urban Agriculture Australia page.



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The University of Canberra and Ricoh Australia have partnered in the **UC Green Print Centre**.

UC Green Print Centre is designed as a sustainable bulk print centre using certified carbon-neutral papers, soy-based non-toxic toners and zero-waste-to-landfill practices.

We would like to invite COGS members to use our services, which are lower-priced than elsewhere.

A4 colour print	\$0.28 each
A4 B&W print	\$0.028 each
A4 100% FSC recycled paper	\$0.02 sheet

A0 colour posters \$26 each

Retractable banners \$175

Trade quality paperback binding \$5 with colour cover

We specialise in short-run printing, and can help with graphic design work too.

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