THE COGS QUARTERLY

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ORGANIC GROWING IN THE CANBERRA REGION

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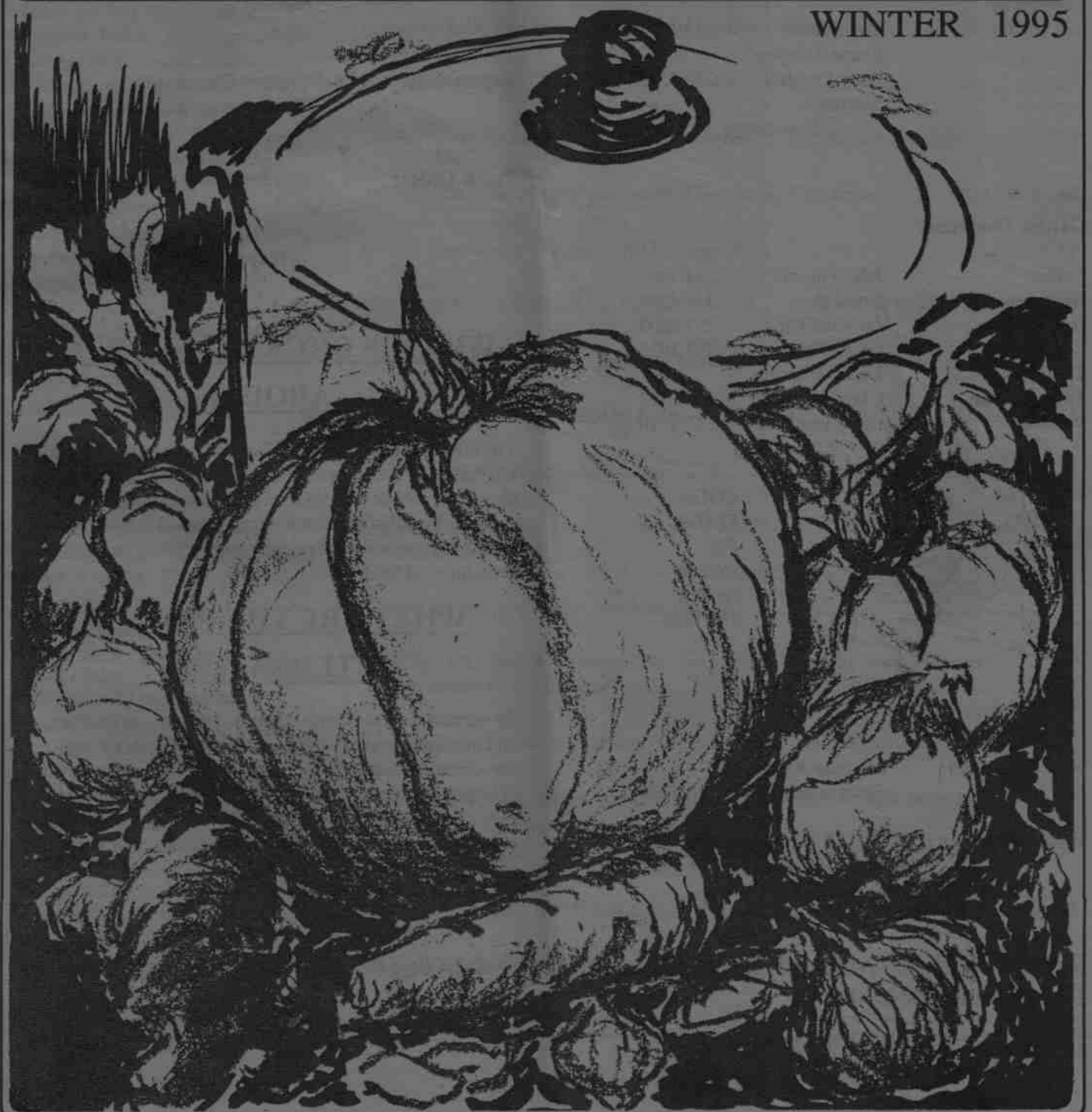

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WHAT IS ORGANIC GROWING ABOUT?

The ORGANIC MOVEMENT endeavours to provide an alternative to the mass of toxic chemicals, fertilisers, fungicides and herbicides used in modern agricultural methods by utilising more natural means of improving and preserving our soils and to produce nutritious, less contaminated food.

WHAT ARE THE ORGANIC ALTERNATIVES?

By enriching the soil with compost, manure, green manure and mulches we avoid disease and control pests through non-chemical methods, including encouraging the presence of beneficial insects to feed on pests, growing companion plants to discourage pest attacks, by growing healthy plants to resist pest attacks and disease and by tuning in to nature with love, harmony and gratitude.

REMEMBER: Monthly meetings are on the 4th Tuesday of every month, except December & January.

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Meeting Notices are on COGS NOTICEBOARD on the inside back cover

NEWS BRIEFS...

by Michelle Johnson

THE WORLD:

PERMACULTURE IN CUBA:

The major food and resource shortages in Cuba, caused primarliy by the US Trade embargo, and the end of trade relations with the Soviet Block, continue to motivate the Cuban Government and the ordinary people to take a strong interest in sustainable agriculture. Some see it as "the largest conversion from conventional modern agriculture to organic farming"[1].

Faced with shortages in farm equipment, chemical fertilisers and pesticides, agricultural practices are changing rapidly. It is estimated that there are now 915 home and community gardens in Santa Fe, covering approximately 75 hectares in total.

Source: 1 "Cuba's Garden Revolution" by Steve Payne, PIJ #54 p13

THE CENTRE FOR ALTERNATIVE TECHNOLOGY:

In Machynelleth in Wales, this Centre has now been running for twenty years. The aim of the project has been public education through practical demonstrations some of which focus on the use of renewable resources and energy conservation. The seven acre site includes extensive organic gardens.

This centre provides a successful model for the project planned by ACESS (the Australian Centre for Environmentally Sustainable Systems) in Canberra.

AUSTRALIA:

BIRDS EATING YOUR FRUIT?

Ian Lloyd, former owner of Lloyds vineyard, came up with a perfect solution to flocks of starlings devouring their grape crop - **white homing pigeons**.

He observed that their flock of homing pigeons resented strange birds coming into their territory and would try to chase them off. The success of their efforts was observed to be governed by the colours of the pigeons involved in harassing the starlings. Over time Lloyd found that all white was the deterrent colour. A flock of pigeons with even one blue or brown pigeon had little or no effect. The vineyard began a colour elimination programme with their homing pigeons, and, according to Lloyd, "Starlings don't come within about 2km of our pigeon loft nowadays. Crows and ravens are also warded off".

A biodynamic farmer in the Riverina adopted Lloyd's approach, since he was losing almost all the fruit in his home orchard to parrots and white cockatoos. By setting up a loft of about 10 white pigeons he harvested about half his crop. Lloyd believes it will take a couple of years to disrupt the parrots feeding pattern and get rid of them completely.

Source: Biological Farmers of Australia Quarterly Journal, Sept. 1994

PLANT BREEDER'S RIGHTS

A very belated report on the Plant Breeder's Rights Act (an amendment of the Plant Variety Rights Act 1987) passed on 24th August 1994:

One of the central issues in this new Act, and perhaps the most critical, is that of farm-saved seeds. According to Michel Fanton, of the Seed Savers Network, one of the disturbing aspects of the Act is that: "*Until this Act was passed, farmers had the **right** to save seeds on their farms, whether they were PBR protected or not. It must be said that quite a number of PBR protected varieties are not hybrids and therefore their seed can be used from one year to the next. Now the situation has changed to that farmers now only have a **privilege** of saving PBR-protected seeds, and this can be cancelled by the following process:- if a commodity council (they are heavily lobbied by corporate concerns) recommends to the PBR Office Committee that farmers lose this privilege of saving seeds of a taxon (e.g. all rice species or all cotton species, defined by usage), then all farmers who save PBR-protected seeds of that taxon would be committing both a civil and a criminal offense.*"

Michel believes that this legislation gives more security for agri-business and that it is more important than ever that we keep on saving seeds in our gardens and farms.

Source: "Plant Breeder's Rights Legislation with a bite", The Seed Saver's Network: Spring 1994 p24

REVIEW OF PERMISSIBLE CADMIUM

The National Food Authority (NFA) is considering raising the Maximum Permitted Concentration (MPC) of cadmium for a range of agricultural products, including potatoes, crustaceans, and pasta products.

This review of the MPC for cadmium is linked to our GATT agreements. Many of our trading partners don't have MPCs for cadmium and hence imports in Australia from these countries could be rejected for inadmissably high levels of contamination -- causing Australia to fall foul of the GATT agreement.

The question of the effect of the GATT agreement on our standards for residues and contaminants in food products is a complex one, and one deserving of more explanation than can be given here, but it does seem to the more sceptical among us that yet again trade issues may take

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Proposed Labelling of Organic Foods Threatens the Industry

*By **Julia Hazel**, reprinted with permission from "Going Organic", the journal of TROPO, (Tweed Richmond Organic Producers Organisation) No 21 January-March 1995*

The introduction, a couple of years ago, of a national standard for regulating organic export produce was hailed as a great step forward for the organic industry. Similar regulation of the domestic market has been eagerly awaited ever since that time.

Sadly, the watered down regulations now being proposed for the domestic market seem more likely to be a giant step backwards.

Proposed new standard

Late last year the National Food Authority (NFA) proposed an amendment to the Australian Food Standard Code to cover the labelling of organic foods sold on the domestic market.

The amendment will, if it becomes law, allow any farmer to label his or her produce as organic, as long as it is also labelled with the name and address of the farmer.

There is no requirement in the proposed amendment that the produce should be certified organic. And of course no certification means there is no independent assurance for the consumer that the produce is genuinely organic.

By contrast, the standard for organic produce for export, administered by the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS), states that food can be labelled as organic *only* if the producer has been certified by an accredited certifying body. The accredited certifying bodies are in turn subject to close scrutiny by AQIS.

This export standard has given Australian organic foods greater credibility in overseas markets, and is seen by producers of export organic produce as a significant boost to prospects for increasing export sales.

Undermining consumer confidence

The proposed regulations for domestic produce offer no comparable benefits. Rather they raise the fear that the word "organic" on a label will cease to have any real meaning to Australian consumers because there is no certification requirement.

Just when the organic food industry is growing bigger and becoming better organised and more diversified, this proposed legislation threatens to set it back by undermining consumer confidence.

That double standard

For consumers it also raises the prospect of a double standard in labelling: is protection for overseas consumers of greater concern to our government than protection for our own domestic consumers?

As with differing standards for export and domestic beef, it seems the answer is yes. Of course it could perhaps be that protection is mainly aimed at export marketers, but the result is the same: domestic consumers and domestic producers are the losers.

As Tim Marshall points out in a recent NASAA Bulletin,

Putting the name of the manufacturer on so-called organic products, which would not pass the certification test and with which the certification bodies are not happy, has not stopped manufacturers or growers in the past, however.

Who will control mislabelling of this type? The NFA suggest that the certification organisations and AQIS will do this but this is absurd. NASAA and the other certifiers do not have the jurisdiction to assess products which have not applied to join the scheme. AQIS does not have a charter to do this either other than for export products.

In other words it seems that the problems envisaged by the NFA are exactly the problems which will arise under their proposed controls.

Asking producers/manufacturers to put their name on the product will only remove the most undefendable products and the onus of proof will be the responsibility of no organisation or institution with any power to act or resources. Whereas forcing these producers to be certified ensures that some party has conducted a rigorous evaluation of the product and the NFA need only address the labelling system.

The NFA also claims that a product which is clearly misleading or fraudulent would be in breach of the general labelling provisions, which require that the product be not falsely represented. The issue here remains, who/what will address these issues and how can national distribution of products continue, where these products do not contain any ingredients that would satisfy the AQIS approved certification programs?

If you are concerned, speak up

As David Roby points out on page 9 *(note: in Going Organic only)*, the NFA's consultation seems inadequate.

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News Briefs continued from p. 4:

precedence over environmental and health concerns here in Australia.

Australia has a recognised problem with cadmium in our old and weathered soils, although we have compounded this problem since the majority of our cadmium comes from superphosphate fertiliser with over 5000 tons of cadmium added to our soils since the war. We also need to be careful not to compound the problem when adding sewerage sludge to our agricultural soils.

Source: Marianne Grinter, National Toxics Network

Companion Planting: What REALLY Happens When Basil Meets Tomato

or Why Companion Planting Doesn't Work - And How It Does

The first in a series of feature articles contributed by writer Jackie French

Jackie's latest books include The Chook Boook (Aird Books), The Great Survivors (Lothian Books), TheSecret Beach (Harper Collins) and Soil Food - 3,462 Ways to Feed Your Garden.

It was love at first sight - just like the books explained - the ones that tell you how parsnips hate celery, and celery like cabbages. He was tall, green and handsome, the perfect basil plant, and she was a blushing tomato, a country girl at heart.

He swept her off her feet (well, shook her to the roots anyway) and they produced prolifically all season, and were buried in the same compost heap that winter. (Yes, I know that's not romantic but we do need a bit of realism here).

Actually if I had my way myths like 'basil loves tomato' would be composted too. 'Tomatoes love basil' is one of the great companion planting fallacies. Tomatoes grown here with basil don't do any better or any worse than those grown without it: but if you condemn poor old basil to live his life next to tomatoes he'll probably get black spot.

There are a lot of companion planting myths around - like growing marigolds to repel nematodes. Marigolds can repel nematodes - they'll repel them away from the marigold roots, and right into the arms of the poor flowers or vegies you're trying to protect. Not that it matters much - the main pest species of nematodes in Australia don't care one way or another about marigolds (most of them can't stand mustard though - but that's another story).

So many companion planting hints have been passed on from book to book, all based on European observations - whereas Australia has quite different pests and predators, and garden relationships - and the 'companion planting' that works overseas may not work here at all.

In fact it's often hard to tell whether companion planting works or not. Most people who practice companion planting are exceptional, caring gardeners. When their loving touch gets rid of pests, produces blooms that stun the neighbours, or cabbages as large as watermelons, they praise companion planting.

They should be singing their own praises instead.

To know whether one plant really grows better or worse with another you need to have at least two similar plots - say one with tomatoes without basil, one with both tomatoes and basil, and maybe another with basil all on his lonesome. Take lots of notes: measure how long the seed takes to germinate, how fast the seedlings grow, when they fruit, how much and how often. Then compare each plot's performance- and do it all over again next year as well.

Having said all that, I now have to praise companion planting. *It's because of companion planting that I don't have to use pesticides any more (except to test one sometimes), rarely weed and hardly ever fertilise.*

A few years ago, for example, I planted pansies with my onions. Onions are slow growing and are easily overcome by weeds - but the faster growing, spreading pansies kept the weeds down, and insulated the soil around the onion bulbs. We got bigger onions - and for much less work. (The pansies were pretty too.)

I harvested the onions and weighed them - and in one square metre so thick with pansies that you'd never know there were onions there at all I gathered 23 kilos of the fattest, sweetest, most delicious onions you have ever tasted. (I admit a bit of bias here - all gardeners are fanatic about their produce).

The pansies were still flowering six months later. I suspect the onions helped protect them from aphids and fungal problems - but I'll test that another year.

This to me is the essence of companion planting - designing a system where the plants do the work. You don't need long lists of what loves what, either - in most cases, you can simply work it out yourself.

Fertilising with Companion Planting

Many plants 'fix' nitrogen from the air - or, more correctly, the bacteria associated with their roots do. You can use these plants as home grown fertiliser to feed your garden.

We grow masses of perennial climbing sweet peas - those lovely pink and white ones that come up every year and flower through most of summer. In autumn I pull down their debris and use it to feed nearby trees or vegies. Try growing peas, beans, lupins, broad beans and other 'nitrogen' fixers, and using the old plants to fertilise others next door. If you can bear to slash them down as soon as they flower they'll be much richer in nutrients before they've put most of their effort into next year's seeds - the beans or peas etc.

I also use the trimmings from our wattle trees as fertilizer/mulch. It's nitrogen rich, breaks down quickly into stunning black soil (worms adore it) - and a light prune keeps the wattles healthier and in better shape too.

Other nitrogen fixers include casuarinas, honey locusts, sweet peas, soy beans, clover, peanuts, kennedias, broom (use sterile varieties that don't spread), woad and tree lucerne. The latter makes a lovely street tree by the way - evergreen, heat, drought and frost tolerant, with masses of honey scented white flowers all spring. Tree lucerne can be kept severely pruned - and the prunings make some of the best mulch I know.

Weeding with Companion Planting

Many plants suppress the growth of other plants, or inhibit the germination of their seeds. This makes sense when you think about it. A plant wants to make sure its own progeny survives - and will do its best to wipe out the competition. (Even barracking parents at children's sports are far less ruthless than their plant equivalents).

Every spring I let some of my radishes, as well as cabbages and other brassicas, go to seed. The flowering vegies suppress the growth of everything around them. Then I water the garden, pull them out and have a relatively weed free garden, already dug over by the deep roots ready for planting - and the old radishes and cabbages can rot down to become mulch later in the year.

I use a thick barrier of marigolds to suppress any couch grass that thinks it's going to invade the garden beds, and a thick hedge of comfrey to keep out kikuyu. The comfrey dies down each winter, about the same time the kikuyu stops growing. I slash the comfrey too three or four times each summer for home grown (and wonderfully rich) mulch. Don't ever dig around comfrey - it spreads.

You need to be wary of some growth suppressors though. Sunflowers suppress the growth of most plants around them - wonderful for clearing up a weedy patch, but not so good if you want other plants clustered around their legs. I sometimes grow climbing beans up our sunflowers. The plants are never as tall or as prolific as those grown elsewhere, but they produce beans up to two weeks earlier - good for an early crop - and the sunflowers seem to do better with the beans.

Attracting Predators with Companion Planting

Predators - from birds to dragonflies to tiny wasps (not the great ugly European wasps but Australia's enormous range of smaller good guys) - can control all your pests for you. When we first came here we had every pest on the Southern Tablelands. Now we don't have any major pest problems at all. We've still got a few pests - but they're kept in check by an enormous number of predators.

As I write I can see a tiny warbler picking off mites from the kiwi fruit leaves, and a blue wren gobbling aphids on the roses. I know there are hoverflies in the grevillea and their larvae must be eating something. And the yellow robins and polistes wasps cleaned all our pear and cherry slug up too before I could even take a photo of them (one year I'll get the camera out in time - but at the moment our photo library just has some not very good shots of where the pests were before the predators started guzzling).

Many garden predators are blossom feeders, and it's their larvae that like to eat pests. Birds also adore blossom - either to eat directly or to feed on the insects that are attracted to blossom - and then they move onto your vegies nearby and clean up the insects there too. Even nectar feeders may eat pests when they're nesting, or - birds are great opportunists - if there are a lot of pests about (you should see the honeyeaters dart about after flying ants round here).

Every garden needs blossoms all year round. The best for attracting birds and other predators are probably those with tubular flowers (my favourite is pineapple sage - sweet smelling leaves with brilliant red flowers and clouds of tiny birds), or any of the prolific native flowerers like grevilleas - especially the grevilleas that flower most of the year, like 'Robyn Gordon'. After all, most predators are natives too.

A word of warning about grevilleas - many people are allergic to them, especially the hybrids of *G. banksii*. Before buying a grevillea stroke a bit of it on the soft skin under your arm pit. If you come up in a rash avoid that particular grevillea.

Confusing Pests with Companion Planting

Pests recognise their food supply either by its shape or by its scent. Most of our gardens are like a supermarket for pests - they can wander up and down the neat, straight, weedless rows saying 'I'll have a bit of this and a whole lot of that.'

Confuse them. Don't plant straight rows of anything - mix up your plants so you don't have great blocks of any one shape or scent - plant flowers among the vegies and vegies among the flowers for a productive (and beautiful) pest deceiving garden.

After all, this is what companion planting is about - letting your garden do the work for you, while you sit back and enjoy the flowers and bounty.

Labelling... continued from p. 5

The date for official submissions on the proposed amendments is now passed, but it is still worth letting the NFA know your views on their proposals. Write to:

The Standards Liason Officer, National Food Authority, Box 7186 Canberra MC, ACT 2610.

Update: by Michelle Johnson

A telephone conversation with Dr John Hall, Project Manager with the NFA, today (4 May 1995) confirmed that the proposed legislation is still being reviewed, although a decision ***must be made by June 25****. Dialogue with AQIS continues about some of the criticisms raised in submissions to NFA.*

While many recognise the difficulties very small growers have with the cost of certification, I feel the industry must have a domestic standard or risk losing consuner confidence.

Blueberries in a Cool Climate

by Harold McCormick, Shepherd Road, Geary's Gap

Blueberries grow well in the Canberra area and can provide the home gardener with plenty of nutritious fruit. In addition, the bushes are attractive additions to the garden, providing masses of white blossoms in spring and a brilliant array of red and yellow leaves in the autumn. For these reasons, a couple of bushes would be a welcome addition to even a small backyard.

Blueberries are produced on deciduous bushes about 2 metres in height, similar to azaleas. Growth is most prolific in an acid, free-draining soil with lots of organic matter. Severe stunting will result if the pH is above 6.

Blueberries are native to high rainfall regions and have a shallow root system, and so require supplementary watering in this area. Irrigation is essential during fruit development (Nov. - Jan.) and bud development (March), but the soil should not be allowed to dry out at any time, even during winter when the plants are dormant. I use micro-jets (180°) placed half way between two bushes; one hour of watering is equivalent to 25 mm of rain. In mid-summer I supply this amount about every 3 days.

New plants should be placed in prepared soil during the dormant period. Incorporate as much organic material in the soil as you can prior to planting. You should choose from a number of highbush varieties which can be recommended for this area. I have found Bluecrop, Brigitta and Denise to be most suitable, although Northland seems to be the most available cultivar locally. Cross fertilization is not necessary, so only one variety is required.

It is imperative that the plant you choose is NOT rootbound. Blueberry plants are very vigorous growers and become rootbound easily and it is almost impossible to sufficiently tease out the roots to correct this problem. Tip out the plant to see if the roots go around the inside of the pot. This is the most common reason for failure of plants to grow well, particularly after the first year.

Plants should be planted about 1 metre apart. Dig a hole sufficiently large to spread out the roots and backfill with a mixture of soil and organic material such as compost or worm castings. Water in well.

In October, the plants will show signs of growth - masses of white blossoms and then green leaves The plants will produce fruit from the first year but you should remove all blossoms for the first two years to ensure the development of a vigorous root system.

At this time, you should feed and mulch your plants to prevent excessive weed growth and retain moisture in the summer. Dynamic Lifter (500 grams per mature bush) or compost are both suitable fertilizers or you can achieve both objectives by using lucerne hay or a horse manure/sawdust mixture. If you use the latter, beware of worming drenches. During the growing season I grow clover between and in the rows, and slash it in summer for additional mulch.

If all goes to plan, the berries should start to ripen by late December. Fruit is ripe about 10 days after fully blue.

Berries stay on the bush unless there are strong winds so you should leave them until fully ripe as the sweetening process stops when they are picked. Cooling immediately after picking will greatly increase the storage life. We have been able to keep ripe fruit 3-4 weeks in the fridge as long as they are stored dry. For long term storage freeze the berries (do not wash them) and they keep for up to 2 years.

Young plants require minimum pruning, limited to shaping and taking out some of the shoots if too many develop. Older plants should be pruned to 6-8 strong shoots, one third of the oldest being removed each year to be replaced by strong new shoots. The fruiting vigour of the wood declines after about three years so shoots should not be allowed to get too old. In addition, all diseased, broken and excess shoots should be removed.

In this area, blueberries are vigorous growers and do not suffer much damage from pests or diseases; this makes them ideal for organic growers. I have had minor problems with caterpillars and botrytis. Dipel and copper sprays seem to solve the problems but I haven't even bothered with this treatment over the last few years. Phytophthora is widely reported as being a problem but I have seen little evidence of this and only in plants weakened because of being rootbound. Do not even contemplate the recommended remedy of drenching the soil with a fungicide.

However, the biggest problem is birds at blossom and harvest time. The only effective long term solution is to cover entirely with nets. As this may result in loss of insect control, I run chooks in the field for most of the year.

I hope this information might encourage you to consider blueberries and help you to avoid the most common pitfalls. In later issues, I will expand on some of the tasks involved in their management and the versatility of this fruit.

The Australian Clean-Green Marketing Push; Fact or Fiction?

*by **Kate Short** – reprinted from "Sentinel": National Toxics Network News Bulletin, February 1995*

In October 1993, the Australian Minister for Primary Industry launched an export drive to persuade the Asia Pacific region to buy "Pure Australian Food". The $5 million marketing campaign aims to cash in on Australia's high standards of food quality and "origin from a clean environment." Taiwan was chosen as the pilot market, with other Asian nations, like Singapore and Malaysia and Thailand targeted for attention later.

However the rhetoric of clean food production stands in marked contrast to the reality of pesticide use. Australian pesticide sales now exceed over half a billion dollars each year with the majority of pesticides badly in need of reassessment because of missing, inadequate, sometimes misleading toxicology data. And there is the problem of inadequate pesticide monitoring. Of the 177-plus pesticides registered for fruit, vegetables and grain production, less than 25% are regularly monitored for residues, and total dietary pesticide load is not calculated. Moreover, only a fraction of the pesticides used on foods are regularly monitored, with many herbicides escaping the surveillance net. This means that the potential for food contamination is probably much higher than claimed.

For example, the total dietary load of a widely used insecticide like chlorpyrifos could well pose health problems. It is a chlorinated organophosphate, and permitted for use on over 35 different foods, including asparagus, kiwi fruit, pineapple, pears, nashis and tomatoes. However a person's total dietary intake of chlorpyrifos is not considered in government food monitoring programs, raising the possibility that exposure may exceed safe limits.

Another problem is the occurrence of over-the-limit residues in mass production staples like potatoes. 1991 monitoring revealed that 17% of samples contained organophosphate residues over the limit and a 1994 survey found that 25% of potatoes were over the limit for cadmium, a contaminant of superphosphate fertiliser. By 1995 the potato industry responded by seeking a weakening of the cadmium food standard. It requested a doubling of the permissible level in raw potatoes and a ten-fold increase for crustaceans.

Residue Risk

Many growers consider that "occasional" high readings of cadmium or pesticide residues are isolated events and that public health and export dollars are protected by laws and food monitoring programs. But the laws are inadequate and food surveys tend to downplay or ignore problems. The latest safety survey failed to address residue risk issues and did not monitor for key contaminants like the teratogenic post-harvest fungicide benomyl. The majority of herbicides also escape scrutiny despite the fact they comprise over half of total pesticide use. Clearly, if Australian rice was monitored for all herbicides and insecticides used in the field, as well as those used in post-harvest storage, Australia's clean green image may be more difficult to sell abroad.

The Helix Incident

Since the 1987 beef export crises, Australian exporters have lost millions of dollars. In late 1994, residues of Helix were found in beef destined for American, Japanese and Korean markets. Although only conditionally registered due to concerns about persistence, *Helix* was given special government approval for use on cotton, and because of fodder shortages during the drought, cotton trash had been fed to cattle. Since it persists in the environment, *Helix* found its way up the food chain and into the beef.

The latest incident involving the insecticide *Helix* raises concerns about the government's track record on pesticide assessment and industry's commitment to its "responsible care", a product stewardship program initiated by the transnational firm, ICI.

Helix is one of a number of export-risk pesticides which still pose risks to Australia's clean green export drive. They join hundreds of other pesticides destined for re-review by the Australian Governments' National Registration Authority which aims to make the re-review a comprehensive, transparent and open process. How this can be achieved within the constraints of commercial confidentially is yet to be determined. Only time will tell and the pace of reform is sure to be tortuously slow. To communities regularly exposed to pesticide drift, much needed reforms to pesticide assessment and control seem light years away.

Yet despite the go-slow on the crucial re-review issue, the Australian government is still actively pursuing its clean green image abroad. Since the *Helix* incident, officials have travelled several times to Asian countries to smooth the waters disturbed by yet another "beef export crisis". There seems to be no undue concern that Australia's failure to prioritise the "data gap" issue may continue to place Australian farm exports at risk.

Fortunately many producers are increasingly aware of the issues and understand how it can be manipulated for market advantage. Besides, many genuinely want to reduce pesticide use and a new wave of farmers seeking ways off the pesticide treadmill is swelling the ranks of established bio-dynamic and organic growers, many of whom have been established for over twenty years. Rice growers for example, are all too well aware how the Japanese rice industry exploited the issue of post-harvest residues and used them as a de-facto trade barrier. They responded positively, introduced state of the art storage facilities to ensure zero post-harvest residues and are now accepted into the Japanese rice market.

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Pesticide Reduction in Europe: a Guide for our Farming Future?

Adapted from an article by ***Els Wynen****, first published in* **Australian Grain,** *Dec 1993*

Since the mid 198Os some European countries have embarked on government programs to decrease the use of pesticides in agriculture. Such programs started in Sweden in 1985, in Denmark in 1987 and in The Netherlands in the early 1990s. Similar schemes are in force in Canada, and the United States has also recently announced its intention to take that direction.

The schemes have been initiated by governments which are particularly concerned about environmental issues. In the case of the European countries, the effect of pesticides on ground water quality has been important.

Do these schemes work, and if so how? And what can be the consequences of these overseas developments for Australian agriculture?

In the process of implementing these policies, farmers have discovered that decreasing the use of pesticides is not nearly as difficult as originally thought.

Sweden

There is little doubt that in Sweden and Denmark, the decision to decrease the use of pesticides in agriculture was at least partly political. In the 1970s the general public expressed its concern at the presence of pesticides in ground water -- an important resource used for drinking.

In the late 1970s one of the political parties ran with the promise of reducing pesticide use in the elections of 1985. When it won, it then had to implement its promise and a pesticide reduction scheme was the result.

According to this plan the quantity of active pesticide ingredients used had to be down by 50 per cent in 1990, compared to the average used from 1981-85. Another reduction target of 50 per cent has been announced for 1996. This should bring the overall use in that year to 25 per cent of the average of the first half of the 1980s.

Denmark

Denmark started a similar program in 1986-87. Its target reduction was a 25 per cent decrease by 1990 compared to 1981-85. In addition, another measure of pesticide reduction was introduced: the frequency index. This measures the frequency of pesticide use counted in number of recommended doses per hectare.

The Netherlands

The situation in The Netherlands was somewhat different. Here again public and scientific concern for the environmental effects of pesticides was a major reason why a plan for reduced pesticide use has been adopted.

The use of pesticides was very high in The Netherlands. Approximately 21 kg of active ingredients were used per hectare in the early 1990s. (In Sweden, the comparable figure was 1.3 kg, and in Denmark 2.6 kg per hectare.) Just under half of this amount was used for soil sterilisation in the potato and bulb growing sectors, but pesticide use in other industries was still considerable.

Apart from objections to pesticide use by the general public for environmental reasons, farmers started to notice agronomic and marketing problems. Pesticide resistance and phytotoxicity (crops getting a setback from the pesticides used) were some of the agronomic problems.

Even so, farmers were not happy with the intention of the Ministry to curtail pesticide use, and they campaigned against it.

The government decided that all those who were in some way involved with agricultural pesticide use (bureaucrats, farmers and chemical industry representatives), had to resolve who was going to carry out the different aspects of the program. The agreement, called the 'Covenant', was signed in July 1993.

PESTICIDE QUALITY

All three countries not only restrict the quantities of pesticides to be used, but they also scrutinise the kinds of pesticides on the market. Different criteria were introduced to measure the appropriateness of pesticides. The degree of persistence and leaching potential through soil into water are two more factors by which pesticides are now judged.

Documentation about risks to health and the environment have now become considerably more stringent. In addition, some criteria deal with the possibility of substitution or elimination of pesticides. For example, registration may not be allowed if other means (chemical or non-chemical) exist which are less harmful to human health or to the environment. This is the case even if the pesticide could be allowable on the set criteria.

Long-term acceptance is also something of the past. For example, in Sweden all pesticides have to be reregistered every five years.

FARMERS' ACCEPTANCE

Farmers in all three countries were angry at the introduction of the schemes. But the results are such that this resistance has decreased or dissipated completely. Sweden has found it relatively easy to reach the target, in Denmark it has been only marginally difficult, and the first signs in The Netherlands seem encouraging.

A few factors have influenced these results, some of which have little to do with decreasing pesticide use in itself.

One of the reasons for the decrease in quantity of pesticide used is the change in types of pesticides in recent years. For example, some of the 'old' pesticides, of which 1.5 kg per hectare active ingredient was used, have now been replaced with pesticides with similar results but needing only six grams of active ingredient per hectare. In Sweden the pesticide companies calculated that this change in technology contributed approximately 16 per cent of the decrease in 1991.

Two other factors are lower doses used per hectare and new computer models which allow farmers to predict the risk that a pest or disease will occur in the near future.

In Sweden and Denmark, trials carried out in the 1970s on the quantity of weedicides needed found that considerably lower rates (e.g. half) than those recommended killed a high proportion of weeds. With the crop itself receiving less of a setback, this resulted in similar or higher yields than with the full dose.

A similar picture occurred with the fungicides. The doses recommended on the packages were intended to cover all conditions in all years, whereas in most years they were not actually needed to get a good result.

Previously, farmers might have sprayed routinely even when the risk of pest or disease damage might be low. The models incorporate forecasts of climatic conditions (e.g. min. and max. temperatures and soil moisture), and other factors such as the natural predators present. The models then show the likelihood of the problem occurring in the near future, and give advice about spraying options.

IMPLICATIONS FOR AUSTRALIA

The implications of these developments for Australian farmers concern our competitiveness and future markets.

Initially farmers in the countries with pesticide reduction schemes were upset about their introduction. But now they are getting used to the idea. Using lower rates and spraying only when conditions warrant, appeals to them, as it means lower input costs with little reduction in gross income.

Different conditions apply in Australia, so lower application rates might not be appropriate -- but it would be worthwhile examining.

Models which advise farmers on the optimum time to spray might be more appropriate in the more intensive industries rather than grain.

Many other areas of research could lead to a reduction in pesticide use. Developing crop varieties resistant to diseases (or able to 'crowd out' weeds), mechanical weed control and biological pest control are a few.

Apart from research, extension activities are also important. In Denmark some farmers have formed groups in which each member maintains records of pesticide applications. At their meetings they compare the pesticides used and the results. These activities show that applications vary widely between farmers. Recording actual use and talking about its effectiveness increases the awareness of the best application rates and times.

As many farmers in Australia are already members of groups like Landcare, these might be ideal venues to discuss these pesticide issues.

The other aspect of relevance to farmers is the future market for their produce. At present, only Sweden has actually banned some pesticides. In Denmark and The Netherlands, decreasing the number of pesticides are long and drawn-out processes.

But there is little doubt that pesticide use is going to be more restricted in the future, certainly in these three European countries discussed. It might well influence policies in other areas, such as the European Community and North America. If so, this should have consequences for imports into those countries.

CONCLUSIONS

Agriculture in some of the European countries, and also in North America, is changing. Apart from being concerned solely with the productivity aspects of farming, the environment is also taken into consideration.

In the process of implementing policies which take the environment into consideration, farmers have found that decreasing the use of pesticides is easier than originally thought, especially with the right research behind them.

Continued from page 9 So despite the drought and bad commodity prices, many Australian farmers are shifting away from pesticide-dependent agriculture. Their farm practices may not yet be accepted as mainstream, but it is only a matter of time. With support from consumers at home and abroad Australian organic farmers can readily increase their market share and enhance the growth of global sustainable agriculture.

There have been calls to have *Helix* deregistered and individuals within the cattle industry are discussing possible legal action. National Toxics Network has recommended that current draft regulations before the Federal Minister for Primary Industries and National Registration Authority (NRA) include provision for the establishment of a National Register of Analytical Standards. This will enable testing laboratories Australia-wide to cut through commercial confidentiality and have immediate access to analytical methods needed to detect the full range of possible pesticide contaminants of concern to overseas buyers. Although the pesticide industry is sure to resist this much needed technical reform, it is essential to safeguard Australia's clean green image.

Helix: A Short Profile

Helix is the trade name for chlorfluazuron, a benzole urea insecticide manufactured by ICI. It is used for the control of insects in cotton crops and acts as an insect growth regulator by interfering with the deposition of chitin, a substance essential for the survival and reproduction of many insect species.

Concerns about the potential impact of *Helix* on the environment were noted by the Queensland Department of the Environment in 1991, specifically the possible impact on non-target species. For this reason the Commonwealth Government gave the pesticide provisional registration only. According to a major CSIRO report (December 1991) full registration status will be given when the manufacturer and Commonwealth finalise unresolved matters about its fate and transport in the environment. These matters still appear to be outstanding.

Every Day Herbs For Healthy Living

The second article of a two-part series by ***Shirley Carden***

The Sedative Type Herbs.

These are most important in modern day living. Stress is a big problem with both young and old. It is not unusual for young children to be diagnosed as suffering from migraines. Such problems can be caused by stress.

Any method of removing the stress without side effects is worth investigating. If the way is pleasant - then so much the better. Remove the stress and more than likely the headache will disappear.

Lemon Balm -- a mint -- is a winner in this area. It is also known as melissa (the Greek for bee). Strangely enough it will help to keep bees calm and planting it near the hives is recommended. As well, rubbing the inside of the bee box with lemon balm before installing a new swarm is also considered advisable.

Plant it around your fruit trees to attract bees to pollinate the flowers and so improve your yield of fruit.

Its effect on humans is instantaneous. Used as either a tea or a green drink, it will calm a cranky child, sweeten an obnoxious teenager or a disagreeable adult.

For someone who can't sleep at night, prepare a strong brew with lemon balm, (a good handful per cup of water or juice). A good, long and relaxed sleep is assured and the person will awaken feeling fully refreshed.

If you have an interview you are dreading, prepare a medium brew. You will become relaxed and confident.

With any illness, stress rears its ugly head and worsens the condition. Turn off the stress with lemon balm and the situation will improve. It is also important for those who are close to invalids to remain calm by using lemon balm -- then they are more able to cope and assist the patient.

Lemon balm is known as the students' herb for it clears the head and improves the memory.

It likes plenty of sunshine, good soil and lots of water, but will stand harsher conditions.

Camomile is another remarkable herb -- soothing, relaxing and healing. It is one that is highly recommended for babies upwards -- e.g. for teething problems, abdominal migraine.

A cup of camomile tea will remove tension before a meal.

For such problems as gastritis, sip camomile tea until the symptoms disappear.

It makes an excellent eye wash and hair conditioner especially for blondes. Use the warm tea as a final rinse after shampooing.

The English camomile is a perennial creeper and likes to be walked on so may be grown as a lawn. It can be mown but set the level of the mower a little higher than for a grass lawn.

The German camomile is an annual of upright habit. The flowers are used in teas. The perfume from the foliage is very attractive -- a cross between apples and cloves.

There is a larger yellow flowered variety which is used as a dye plant.

Lavender has many uses but I have found it invaluable for those who wake every few hours at night and have difficulty getting back to sleep again. This becomes a bad habit and will affect one's health.

Anyone with this problem has only to reach for a lavender bag, squeeze it to release the perfume, then breathe deeply. A good night's sleep is assured. For a small child the bag can be placed inside the pillow slip.

A novel idea is to stitch a bag of lavender into a child's cuddly toy. However do not expect the lavender to remain effective forever more. It needs to be replaced after constant use.

For this reason I usually place a couple of tablespoons of lavender flowers into the centre of a pretty handkerchief, gather it together and keep it closed with a small rubber band. Tie a pretty ribbon over the band for a more attractive finish. It is easy to replace the flowers when needed.

Most herbs I use picked fresh from the garden. However camomile and lavender flowers are seasonal, so I dry them to make sure I always have a supply.

Be careful not to include any of the stalks which when dry can easily protrude through the cloth of the bag to prick your hand when you are squeezing it.

It is claimed stammering can be overcome by gargling regularly with lavender tea.

It is excellent as a moth repellant in cupboards. Place it in bags and squeeze occasionally to release the aroma.

Try lavender as an insect repellant. It has been used in hospitals as an antiseptic.

There are three main types: English lavender has the strongest aroma; French lavender seems to flower all the year round and is very hardy; and Italian lavender has the brightest flower.

Lavenders like an alkaline soil so use dolomite or lime. Good drainage is essential but it likes to be watered occasionally.

Lettuce has sedative type properties, but it is less convenient to indulge in a feast of salad just before retiring.

So to recap, lack of sleep is detrimental to health. These simple herbal remedies have no side effects but are surprisingly effective and pleasant to use.

When serving the teas a little lemon juice and or honey may be added.

Milk generally is not used in herbal teas. One exception is marjoram. This is an appropriate tea when someone is suffering from melancholy.

I feel at this stage it is important to say something about the **psychology of herbs**. It is very difficult when one knows that a herbal brew will help a dear one's well-being, *not to insist it be consumed.*

With young children, teenagers or even adults, this can be disastrous.

I find it is best to prepare the appropriate brew, use it and offer it to those who realize its value -- but refrain from suggesting the very one who needs it should have it.

Curiosity usually gets the better of the human of the species. Children love to imitate adults so are quick to demand their share. With my family (twelve grandchildren) I have managed to convert all by using this method. My grandchildren are my greatest converts.

Other Herbs

Our final group of herbs will cover those which do not fit into the three groups we have already discussed -- or which have additional properties so that they need further consideration.

The most important of these would have to be **Aloe Vera** (Vera meaning true) -- *Aloe barbadensis.*

It was first recorded in Egypt over 6,000 years ago. The earliest recorded pharmaceutical use is 1750 B.C. It is often referred to as " the first-aid plant". It can be used both externally and internally.

There are many products on the market but unfortunately the quality varies. The fresh leaf is very effective in many ways.

There are at least 200 aloes. Many I have tried and they have exhibited the same healing properties of Aloe Vera. The plant is not a cactus. Rather it belongs to the lily or onion family.

It has a tough outer skin but beneath is a jelly-like substance referred to as **gel**. Initially it was found that an extract from the plant after harvesting, quickly lost its healing properties.

The earliest extract was known as bitter aloes. It was used as a purgative, or applied to a child's finger to discourage sucking. The bitter taste would certainly discourage such a habit, and comes from the yellow liquid which is noticeable when the leaf is first harvested. The gel has no strong flavour.

In a nut shell, Aloe Vera is anti-inflammatory, pain-inhibiting, bactericidal, virucidal, fungicidal and penetrating (e.g. can be used for the relief of arthritic joints and the facial pain associated with sinusitis).

It has been used in the U.S.A. in dentistry to stop bleeding, prevent infection, pain and swelling.

It is believed early man observed how quickly the plant could heal itself to prevent the escape of moisture, so applied it to himself.

A mature plant has greater healing properties. For burns, spray on the commercial juice (kept in the refrigerator), for instant relief, or gently apply the gel.

The more often it is applied the quicker the cure. I have sprayed a bad burn every 20 minutes initially and after 10 days there was little evidence of the injury.

The same method may be used for jammed fingers.

With regards to growing the plant, too much water, especially during the winter months, is detrimental. It likes filtered light. Excessive sunlight will cause the leaves to turn brown. Wind helps to strengthen the "spears".

The "pups" should be removed from the mother plant when they are 3 to 4 inches high or they will sap the strength from the mature plant and eventually kill it.

When it is pot-bound it will produce myriads of plants.

As an indoor plant it is quite successful but it needs adequate light and a large pot. Soil must not be too rich nor too alkaline. Good drainage is essential.

Comfrey is similar to Aloe Vera as far as its healing properties are concerned, but it is not antiseptic. It may be combined with rosemary or thyme to make it so.

Allantoin, a cell-proliferant, and vitamin B12 are both found in comfrey.

It is very deep rooted and rich in plant nutrients. It is said to be as good as any farmyard manure.

High in potassium, it is good for such plants as tomatoes and onions.

Use it in the compost. Dig into garden beds (but not any part of the root nor the leaf stalk because these will quickly regrow -- it is best to keep comfrey strictly in its own area).

Use as a mulch or in liquid manure. The latter can be watered down and sprayed directly on the leaves to nourish plants and to discourage plant diseases and insect attack. It is excellent used in this form together with stinging nettle and seaweed.

Comfrey has been known through the ages as knitbone because it speeds up the healing of broken bones. It is also helpful in the treatment of varicose ulcers.

Calendula, or pot marigold, is a blood cleanser, stimulates circulation and improves the healing of wounds. In the treatment of athlete's foot it is helpful used in a foot bath.

The petals may be mixed through salads, stirred through cooked rice or the flowers made into a tea.

Like garlic, marjoram and pumpkin seeds, it will expel worms.

Try the juice of the stalks to get rid of warts.

Two SIMPLE OINTMENTS may be made as follows.

1. Chop two handfuls of calendulas, leaves stems and flowers. Heat 500gms of lard or 400gms of vaseline in a heatproof container over a pot of simmering water.
   Combine and stir.
   Stand overnight.
   Reheat and filter through a piece of cloth.
   Pour into small, clean jars.

2. I prefer to use beeswax, olive oil and **propolis** (the powerful, resin-like antibiotic used by the bees to keep their hives disease-free):
   2oz vegetable oil,
   1/2oz beeswax ,
   a small piece of propolis
   and as many chopped herbs as possible: for example, **chickweed** (for bruises or skin irritations), comfrey (varicose ulcers etc.) or calendula, just to mention a few.

   Rosemary or **thyme** may be added as well for their antiseptic properties.

An OIL FOR TREATING BRUISES may be prepared as follows.
Place in a jar, calendula flowers, leaves and flowers of feverfew, lavender, melissa, rosemary, sage, rose petals, southernwood and wormwood.
Chop or bruise for maximum extraction.
Cover with oil and leave on a sunny window sill for two weeks, shaking often.
Strain and bottle.

Prepare a TEA FROM CORN COB SILK for kidney problems, cystitis, prostrate problems and bed-wetting. Remove the brown ends for they give the tea a bitter taste. Dry for winter use.

The white roots of **couch-grass** may be used for the same problems but they need to be simmered gently for about half an hour before serving.

HERBAL BATHS may be prepared by simmering gently any of the following: calendula, lavender, rosemary (great for tired and aching muscles), comfrey, violets, chickweed, thyme, any of the mints and stinging nettle. Allow to stand until cool before straining.

A large quantity of concentrate may be prepared and stored in the refrigerator. Use a cupful at a time.

This is particularly beneficial for people who are recovering from an illness. The skin is the largest organ of the body and it can absorb nutrients. When the other organs are malfunctioning the skin often takes over to rid the body of toxins which tend to irritate the skin.

Herbal rinses for the hair may be prepared in the same way. Rosemary is a good general rinse, helps to control dandruff and leaves the hair shining.

Use yarrow if you are concerned at loosing too much hair.

Camomile is especially good for blondes.

Sage is reputed to help to restore the original colour in the case of grey hair. A tea may be brushed through the hair daily for this purpose. Drink the tea as well.

Use borage flowers and the tips of mint to decorate desserts and drinks. Leaves of carraway thyme may be stirred through softened cream cheese and spread on cracker biscuits.

For a refreshing tea use cardinal mint (spearmint flavour) and lemon thyme.

CONFETTI COLESLAW:
1/4 cabbage finely shredded,
2-3 carrots grated,
1/2 cup chopped red capsicum,
1/2 cup chopped shallots.
Combine dressing and toss.

DRESSING:
The juice of 1-2 oranges and 1/2 lemon,
1/2 cup cottage cheese,
1 tbsp honey (optional),
1/2 cup chopped savoury herbs.
Blend all ingredients.

I hope you have found my thoughts on herbs interesting enough to become inspired to seek out more knowledge for yourselves on how they can best benefit you.

Requirements for marketing produce as organic

Commonly asked questions about marketing organic produce are answered

by ***Michael Burlace,*** *Organic Farming Officer, NSW Agriculture*

(Locked Bag 21, Orange 2800, ph 063 91 3155, fax 063 91 3206)

To be organic, produce must have been grown according to organic farming guidelines. Any handling must also have been according to organic guidelines.

There are two main differences between organic farming and conventional farming.

A competent organic farmer:

- **chooses not to use any artificial chemicals; and**
- **integrates all of the management practices and approaches needed to make the farm sustainable and self-balancing.**

So, organic produce has been grown in a system which uses no artificial chemicals and which sets out to be sustainable.

Can I legally sell my produce as organic?

Yes, if it is organic as described above. **No**, if it is not.

It is illegal to sell non-organic produce as organic produce. All food sold must be what it is claimed to be on the label. If an inspector believes someone is selling produce as organic which is not organic, they can prosecute them. The retailer, wholesaler and farmer may be called upon to prove that it is organic.

There are various consumer protection acts, federal and state, under which people can be prosecuted, fined and/or jailed for labelling something as organic when it is not. Fines of up to $20,000 tend to make cheating less attractive.

There is a national standard and a range of certifying organisations approved to certify to that standard. Produce does not need to be certified, but the standard is the most likely measure if you end up in the courts trying to prove you were doing the right thing. So it would be wise to comply with it even if you don't want to be certified.

Who keeps organic farmers honest?

Anyone who cheats by using chemicals while pretending to be farming organically is likely to be caught. Neighbours notice what is happening or the certifier finds out through random tests on produce or regular checks on farmers.

Organic certifiers inspect all certified farms, wholesalers and shops every year. Certified farmers normally sign a contract with the certifier. This spells out that the farmer will stick to the standards, keep suitable records and let the certifier know if they want to do anything which is not approved. The contract often also spells out that the farmer will improve rotations, plant more trees or take other steps to increase the farm's sustainability.

Produce from 5% of certified farms is tested at random each year and testing is also done where there is any suspicion of cheating. Testing cannot determine whether something is organic, but it can show which produce is not organic.

Must I be certified?

Only for export. No law says you must be certified to sell produce as organic if your produce remains in Australia. However, if you are certified, more markets are open to you because many traders prefer certified organic produce. Also, certification is becoming more important and is expected to eventually be compulsory for the local market.

Statutory declarations

Statutory declarations are often used by organic farming certification organisations to keep track of what certified farmers are doing. If a certified farmer is cheating and is not organic, they will be faced with the choice of admitting it on their yearly statutory declaration or making a false declaration.

If they admit that they are not in line with the contract, they may lose their certification or have some suitable restrictions put on it.

If instead they make a false declaration, the consequences are greater: there are penalties for false declarations, including fines and jail terms.

Do organic farmers get around the law?

No. Being organic does not override obligations to tail tag cattle, manage noxious weeds and comply with pesticides laws. Organic farmers and their produce must meet all relevant local, state and federal requirements, just as other farmers and their produce must.

For example, if you have noxious weeds, you must take steps towards managing them adequately, even if it means using a herbicide and in the process destroying your farm's organic status. The same applies to plague locusts and cattle ticks. Organic farmers must comply with regulations on produce, such as for fruit grading.

Your Rural Correspondent David Odell

Abigail's Dairy - and Some More on the Greening of Christchurch!

Eileen Joyce, the distinguished Australian concert pianist, once made a very accurate and perceptive observation when she said no filmstar had eyelashes as beautiful as those of a Jersey cow. But even with such an accurate observation as this it is 'de udder end' that produces the gold -- and the Jersey is the leader in her field.

The Bega Valley was once synonymous with Jersey cows, butter factories and bacon pigs but with the opening up of the Canberra market and the allocation of whole milk quotas things began to change. The pigs went first, surplus milk was processed for cheeses, but the Jerseys hung on because the quality of the milk ensured their competitiveness. Even without the extra cream the 'solids non fat' component was far superior to that of the Friesiens at that time, but eventually Jersey numbers declined as the demand for quantity increased. However some were retained to 'top up' the bulk.

The Jersey cow at that time tended to follow the standards and genetics of the Channel Islands, small, robust but very thrifty and a 'natural' for the prevailing conditions in the Valley. But currently Jerseys in Australia are enjoying a resurgence due to an infusion of Canadian genetics which has lifted size and production whilst retaining superior butterfat.

However, as excellent as the new type is, I hold an affection for the Channel Island type Jersey for two reasons, first because this is the type for the ideal house cow: -- smaller (they aren't so intimidating), robust (easy calving with early maturity), very thrifty (good production where conditions are more difficult) and a 'natural' where a gentle temperament is required; -- and secondly, because it is a preservation of a unique and diverse gene pool.

Abigail is my house cow -- a cow with all of the desirable attributes of her breed - and one I reared from a calf some six years ago. She is a dairy in herself and is the subject of this ditty:

'Abigail's milk, Abigail's cream,
The perfect house cow, a cockie's dream.
Abigail's butter, Abigail's cheese,
My Jersey cow is sure to please!

After weaning her heifer calf I had intentions of getting a couple of foster calves for her to rear until her next lactation. But due to difficulties in obtaining suitable replacements I decided to keep milking her, setting the milk for the cream to rise, skimming the cream, making (unsalted) butter every four or five days and using the surplus milk for the hens. It does become a little more labour intensive but the benefits far outweigh the extra work and also fall within my objectives of being reasonably self-sufficient.

Although the hens have appreciated and benefitted from their skim-milk supplement my next idea is to use that milk for making cheese - a low fat cheddar.

While visiting the South Island of New Zealand I was amazed to see dairy cows with their tails docked. The first one or two I saw (I thought) could have suffered an accident, but when I saw a whole herd trying to wave flies away with elongated stumps of tails, I knew that I wouldn't be satisfied until I had an explanation.

Apparently, tail docking of dairy cattle is carried out in the name of dairy hygiene as a preventive measure against the disease Leptospirosis. I don't know which is the greater cruelty -- the apprehension of a crippling disease to man or the wholesale mutilation of dairy herds which not only lack their natural protection mechanisms but must suffer the 'phantom' feelings in lost members about which human amputees often complain.

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In the last issue of the *Quarterly* I promised to tell you more about how the City of Christchurch is performing in order to back-up its projected 'clean and green' image.

In the past the Canterbury Plains' farmers, in common with others imbued with the quick-fix policies of the 'Green Revolution', relied heavily on chemical dips, sprays and drenches to maintain high numbers of sheep for the production of Canterbury lamb for the export market. However, pioneering work by Bob Crowder of Lincoln University in the field of organic growing and sustainable systems heightened awareness of the dangers associated with chemical contamination.

It is pleasing to see that many of his ideas are being implemented by the Mayor of Christchurch, Vicki Buck, with the approval of the ratepayers. One initiative was to put out a video entitled 'Compost -- The Video' (which, incidentally, demonstrates Bob's infectious enthusiasm). But the major commitment is to recycle all of the city's compostable waste instead of just dumping and filling.

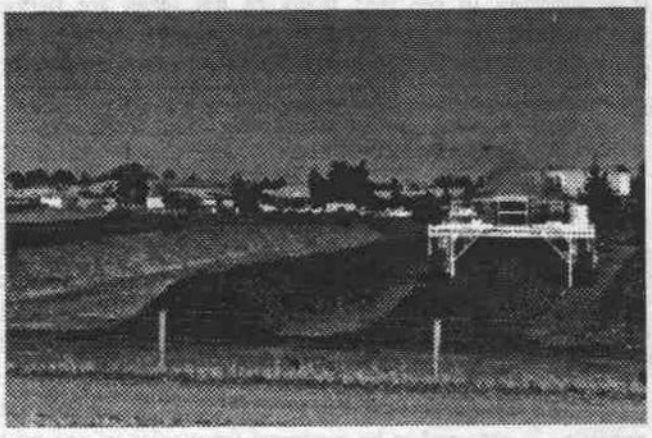
There are parallels here for residents of the ACT (and an example for the new government) *(* see note p. 19)* as Christchurch, approximately the same size as Canberra and which also prides itself on being a garden city, is motivated by the plain economic benefits of recycling. The investment the city is making in facilities, equipment and publicity is expected to be recouped from sales of compost back to residents. *cont. p. 18*

The system was explained to us by Mr Murray Binney, the engineer in charge of the project, when we visited the Metro Waste Transfer Station.

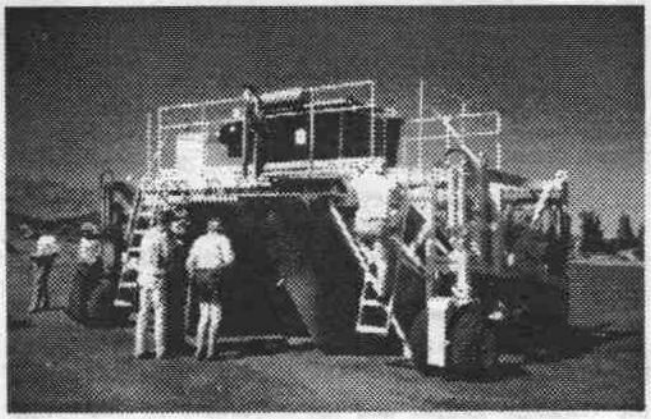
Residents are encouraged to pre-sort trailer loads by means of a financial incentive. The compostable material is levied at $5 a load to dump while the unsorted loads attract a 50% impost. Even so the compostable material is checked for flax grass and this is removed because it clogs up the

The mechanical grab loading the mulcher's hopper

The raw material from the mulcher



The "Scarab" windrow turner in action



A close-up of the "Scarab"

mulcher. A mechanical grab loads the the mulcher's hopper.

After this material is processed it is trucked into windrows for further processing by the 'Scarab' windrow turner. This imported machine represents a major financial commitment, but its effectiveness in quickly turning long rows of compostable material during the curing process is essential for the viability of the project.

I was intrigued by the mechanism for turning the compost and crawled under the Scarab for a better look. At the time of our visit it was explained to us that the City Council was six weeks away from its first sales of the processed product and at that time the full benefits of the project would begin to be realised.

* *Editor's note: The ACT Parks and Conservation Service and the Waste Management Section of the ACT government are collaborating in pilot trials ultimately aimed at producing a commercial product from Canberra's organic waste. This currently involves composting waste materials from the Fyshwick markets, then using this material as worm food, producing high quality worm castings for sale. We hope to have an article on this project in a future issue of the Quarterly.*

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The January rain that lifted our hopes and which promised so much proved to be an aberration -- a welcome aberration to be sure -- but without the benefits of the expected follow-up rains the resulting growth lacked density and soon 'hayed' off. In fact, the succession of near cloudless days for the almost three months following was beginning to sap morale and cause one to wonder if it would ever rain again.

The soaking rain which lasted over the first two days of May came too late to provide that necessary boost for Autumn growth, but will benefit oat crops sown in anticipation and allow wheat to be sown in the prepared fallows. *cont. p. 19*

The full extent of the drought was evident as I travelled to Cowra to visit Peter Larsen's pig farm on the Canowindra Road. Such stock as I saw were obviously being hand fed because the paddocks were bare. The animals were just going through the motions of looking for feed, creating dust clouds as they went -- a sobering sight!

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Peter Larsen is an interesting man to talk to as he puts forward his ideas as to the future direction of the pig industry. The indoor system, based on the Landrace/Large White hybrid, has become so specialised that these 'factory' pigs would have extreme difficulty in surviving in any other envirionment.

Recognising the dangers of concentrating his resources on a diminishing gene pool he decided to set up a parallel outdoor system where his sows could free range, obtaining the bulk of their nutrition from grazing pasture, and rear their young under more natural conditions.

His first problem was to find suitable stock to provide the foundation for his project. I could appreciate the extent of his problem because the suitable type of pig I remembered had long been discarded as commercially 'uneconomic'. A few dedicated breeders had retained the Tamworths, the Berkshires, the Wessex Saddlebacks and their like, mainly due to sentiment, because there was no place for coloured pigs in a high-tech environment.

Peter scoured the country for his foundation sows (and came across many interesting stories in the process) and is now stabilising his breed on a combination of Berkshire, Saddleback and Canadian Hampshire bloodlines. He has definite ideas on the type of sow he sees as the ideal mother, not the least being that she should be able to rear at least 2.4 litters a year.

In the meanwhile his breed is known as L.O.Ps (the Larsen Outrange Pig). As a sideline Peter is making a high-yielding compost from a combination of pig effluent and pine fines which has been well received in early trials. I will have some here for trial and available for purchase by members in the very near future. I will keep you informed of progress in this area as there are some very interesting developments taking place.

Watson Community Garden

by Gerry van Wyk

It is still too early to know whether the change of Government will bring about a change to the re-development plans applying to the North Watson area, including the site occupied by the Watson Garden. The previous Government had scheduled commencement of the re-development in the latter part of 1996. The Watson Gardens have an interim lease up until the end of June 1996, with an expectation that the 1995/96 growing season will be the final one at the existing garden.

The uncertainty over the last few years about the final closure of the Garden has restricted activity at Watson. A series of "final dates" has prompted many to re-focus their activities on a home garden or to give up extended gardening altogether. The remaining core group of gardeners has had an active season, despite the dry conditions, and as this season draws to a close, that group is considering options for re-location.

COGS has decided to concentrate on the establishment of a new garden in North Canberra and to consider the 30 June 1996 deadline for the closure of Watson as final.

A meeting of members and others to determine the number of people interested in contributing to the establishment of a new garden will be held:

7.30 pm 6 June Griffin Centre CIVIC.

See article by M. Johnson on p. 24

Gilian Painter's The Herb Growers Handbook for Australians

(David Bateman Ltd., N.Z. , 1993. 120 pp.)

Book Review by G. M. Baker..

I feel a Handbook should be informative, concise, practical and easy to use. This book meets some of these requirements well, but is not always as useful as it could be. There are lapses in material organisation which were both frustrating and disappointing when trying to obtain information from the text.

For example, *Mentha cunninghamii* is one of the illustrations, but the caption to the picture gave no common name so I could not refer directly to the text -- in which the plants are arranged under common name in each section -- and I next referred to the index under the botanical name. This proved useless, so I then turned to Mint, which gave information about four varieties but excluded the one illustrated between pp. 80-81. (None of the others was illustrated). This search proved disappointing as I particularly wanted information on this plant.

The entry "Grey-leaved herbs" was an almost useless paragraph as not one single herb in this category was mentioned by name, and I have an interest in grey or silver-leaved plants. Equally unhelpful, on p. 46, is the entry for "night-scented herbs".

For the beginner, this book has very few illustrations of the herbs described. Therefore one must have other volumes to complement this grower's handbook. Books with detailed illustrations, preferably in colour, are necessary; and probably at least one herbal describing the parts of the plants to be used and the purposes for which they are used.

Some of the entries are comparatively lengthy, while others are much shorter and could have been more informative. I found Chap.6. on Herbs for ground cover useful and accurate, while Chap. 11 on Native plants for the herb garden would have been a real 'scoop' for herb books if only each of the plants had been clearly illustrated, preferably in colour.

There are extensive tables at the end which give a summary of the main growing characteristics of the plants mentioned, and recommendations on soil etc., are given either in the text or in the introductory chapters. All the information is free of excessively technical terms and botanical terms are pleasantly limited to the identification of plants, thus making the book easy to use, and also easy to cross-reference with other works.

As frost-tender warnings are not often given, one must always assume that 'tropical' is usually synonymous where these plants are concerned. Thus the lovely Cape York lily would not be suitable for Canberra. Perhaps Old man saltbush (*Atriplex nummularis*) would be a nice addition to the garden for its blue-grey foliage, but there is no mention of the colour of its flowers, either in the text or in the Herb tables.

There is much that is useful, and accessible, in this little book.

Grow a Beautiful and Productive Garden

by Betty Cornhill

Editor's note: The Watson Community Garden is due to close at the end of June 1996. If there is sufficient interest from gardeners, COGS will attempt to establish a new garden in the North Canberra area. See notice and article, this edition.

When the Watson Garden moves, it will be your chance to have a plot to grow the things you cannot grow in your home garden for one reason or another. For some people this is pumpkins, for others, corn, potatoes, strawberries or other fruits such as blackcurrants, gooseberries and red currants, with garlic as an understory crop.

Some people have shady gardens at home, and this means they cannot grow even the common vegetables like lettuce, beans, peas, corn, carrots and onions. COGS has found the answer to this problem by starting community gardens in various parts of Canberra. These are proving most successful, for those people who have taken up plots and are growing their own vegies.

I have four plots at the present Watson Garden. They are not the tidiest plots, but I have had them for 7 years, and have been making Biodynamic and ordinary compost there all that time. Everything I plant gets compost when it is planted and later before I mulch it for the summer.

The result is beautiful soil, which will grow just about anything. Here is a list of the vegetables and herbs which I have picked from my plots at Watson during the last year:

globe artichokes, Jerusalem artichokes, zucchinis, tomatoes, onions (2 kinds), corn, leeks, strawberries, beans, broad beans, pumpkins (3 kinds), button squash, eggplant, cabbage, Chinese cabbage (3 kinds), broccoli, cauliflower, peas (ordinary, sugar snap, and snow peas--some from my own seed), kohlrabi, lettuce (3 kinds), silver beet (some of the best I have ever grown), garlic (2 kinds), carrots (2 kinds), potatoes (5 kinds), kale (2 kinds), capsicum, cucumber, beetroot, Brussels sprouts;

and many herbs, including parsley, sage, thyme, golden oregano, rosemary, lavender, rocket, peppermint, dandelion, lemon balm, borage, santolina, winter savory

to p. 21

Theodore Community Garden

*by **Leone Atherton***

The Theodore Garden had another good year for all our plot holders. Our main hurdle this year was the very large water bill, but with the cooperation of all plot holders we managed to pay the account on time.

Those plot holders who were actively gardening this season had bountiful crops with plenty to spare. These results were achieved by the alluvial type soil in Theodore, which when compost and mulches are added produces a rich soil.

Paul Bourke, one of our members, has been supplying grass clippings gathered from his mowing business to what we call our future "orchard area". These have helped in keeping the weeds under control and keeping the soil moist at the same time. Next spring we may plant some pumpkins in this area which will go towards our fundraising to help pay for future water bills.

Another member who has worked tirelessly is Steve Sutton. He has been mowing our allotment and keeping the area around the plots tidy. Steve's hard work has been greatly appreciated and I thank him so much.

In June we are hoping to see a few new members who will help to make our community garden even bigger and better.

from p. 20: "Grow a Beautiful...."
and southernwood.

I use southernwood against cabbage white butterflies when I plant out brassica seedlings. The butterflies cannot see the plants if they are surrounded by southernwood cuttings, and they tend not to find them by smell either. If you have a southernwood plant, it is a simple matter to break off a few pieces and stick them in, in a circle around each small plant. You also need to examine the plants once in a while in case some clever butterfly has sneaked in and laid her eggs while you were away fetching some compost!

I use most of the herbs fresh in my salads and green drinks, which is how I keep healthy. When I take home a feedbag with dandelion, dock and borage leaves, and many nutritious weeds, any snails I can find, grasshoppers and other insects, my chooks are delighted, and I usually have a few eggs, even through the winter months. These eggs contain all the goodness of this chemical-free food. I also manage to grow about 15 different varieties of flowers, including calendulas, zinnias, marigolds, larkspur, cornflowers, cosmos, pentstemon, delphiniums, stocks, phlox, yellow alyssum, white alyssum, ceratostigma (beautiful blue), pansies, and heartsease.

It may not seem to most of you that my plots could possibly contain all these things. But since I work there usually every other day, summer and winter, (which is another reason for my good health), and have been making Biodynamic and ordinary compost there, and improving the soil for the last 7 years, and because I grow only a few plants of each thing, and no set rows of anything, the plants grow and produce well, with very litle insect trouble.

The Joy of Seeds

Recipe by Jackie French

Bush rats love them, scampering along the stalks to find the treasure up above. Birds adore them. So do I.

A large part of the human diet is actually seed - flour is just wheat seed slightly transformed, rice is a seed, almonds, peanuts and soya beans are seeds. But the most common seeds in our kitchen - pumpkin seeds - are usually thrown in the bin, unless you're lucky enough to have chooks, or a resident possum - but why waste good seeds on chooks or possums?

Pumpkin seeds can be delicious - if you know how to prepare them. So can sunflower seeds and watermelon seeds, or even zucchini seeds, if you've got a monster that hid itself till it was three metres long and filled with dark, black, tough bits.

Chew Strew

Ingredients: seeds of pumpkin, watermelon, rockmelon, cucumber, even zucchini; a little oil; salt/ garlic (optional)

Wash the seeds thoroughly, so there's no pith attached. Simmer for 30 minutes in salty water till tender; drain and dry well. If the seeds aren't perfectly dry they'll be tough instead of crisp.

Place the seeds in a single layer on a greased baking tray, not too close together or they won't dry out. I use olive oil, and spread it liberally, with a few chunks of chopped garlic added for good measure - but a simple greased tray is all that's really needed.

Bake the oily seeds in a very low oven, turning often. Chew strew seeds should be crisp, but not yet starting to brown. Cool and store in a sealed jar - or eat them hot. Sprinkle them with salt before eating if you like salt - but you'll lose the nutty subtlety if you do - that lovely earthy crunch, the essence of a seed, the heart of any plant.

Organic Growers' Success -- Youthhaven Project Wins Giant Pumpkin Competition

*by **John Brummell**, Coordinator Youthhaven Horticulture Project*

A 201.2 kg Atlantic Giant pumpkin grown at Youthhaven Horticulture Project won first prize of $1,000 for the heaviest pumpkin grown in the ACT & Queanbeyan in 1995, and a $50 prize for the third largest in the region.

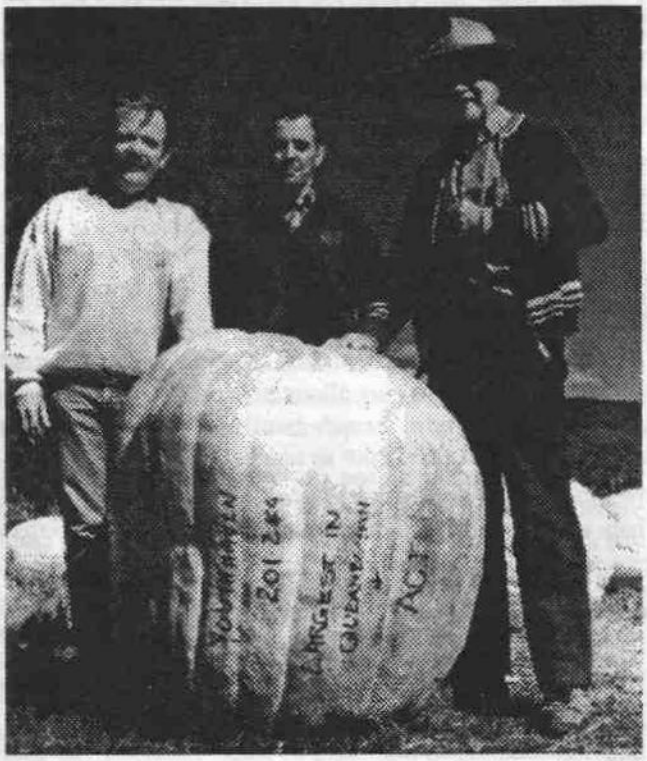
An organic growing project, Youthhaven assists people who are out of work to grow vegetables as a satisfying and creative activity (see article in *COGS Quarterly* May 1994).

Youthhaven's monster became the ACT's entry in the national competition and came third behind NSW (251 kg) and Victoria (220 kg).

The growers are not secretive about how they produced their prize winner, which required six people to lift onto a truck. They rotary-hoed horse manure into the plot during the winter and planted seedlings (from the 1994 winner) in late November. They used liquid horse manure for the first two months and, after fruit had set, potassium-rich liquid comfrey manure on roots and leaves. They grow comfrey specifically for manures. When four or five fruit had set, all except the biggest one were cut off. Unlike some growers, however, they did not remove any stems or leaves.

The win was a tremendous thrill and encouragement to the growers, most of whom have had only one year's experience of vegetable growing. The prize money will be used to improve facilities and equipment at the project. In the meantime, they are already planning how to grow even bigger monsters in 1996.

Tony Bray, the Word Pumpkin Federation local representative, said this year's competition attracted 99 entries, and that to date 350 people have asked him for seeds to plant for the 1996 competition.



Youthhaven's 201.2 kg giant with (from left) growers David Lambert and John Gunson and coordinator John Brummell

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Cotter Community Garden

*by **John Flowers***

The weather during the 1994-95 growing season has been most unseasonable, with many of us complaining about the lateness of our tomato crops, but overall the majority of plotholders were well rewarded for the work they had done building up soil fertility of their vegetable beds.

The joint projects, such as the herb bed and the flower border, also contributed to the pleasurable atmosphere of the garden.

Water has been a problem with some careless or thoughtless members not heeding the many requests to check leaking taps and turn off the water at the meter when leaving the garden.

Very soon it will be necessary to protect taps from freezing and this should be a community effort with all plotholders participating.

to p. 24

Jane Taylor's "The Dry Garden: Gardening With Drought-Tolerant Plants"

(Lothian, Melbourne, 1993, 192 pp)

Book Review by ***G.M. Baker***

This is an interesting book on a very topical aspect of Australian, particularly Canberran, gardening. The illustrations are pleasant and the general plan of the book appears practical.

It does not belong in the 'how-to-do-it' range, nor is it for the beginner gardener as the text appears to me to assume some botanical knowledge, together with some gardening experience and skill. I did not find it an easy work from which to extract information.

An introductory chapter, The Drought-tolerant Garden, discusses characteristics of the climate and how plants cope with drought. This is followed by the main part of the book which lists alphabetically -- by Latin name -- the plants, suitable for garden cultivation, which grow in drought areas throughout the world. Plants in Californian, Argentinian or Mediterranean gardens, for example, are discussed, as well as those from Africa, Asia and Australia, in fact, anywhere that drought or consistently dry conditions are experienced. This makes for very interesting reading, though for the practical person not all the plants may be available in Australia.

The arrangement of the alphabetical listing is in sections in the following order: Trees & Shrubs, forming the framework of the garden; Conifers as elegantly shaped evergreens in a range of colours and forms; Palms & Cycads for dramatic silhouettes giving a tropical feel to the garden; Climbers, colourful and scented plants...; Perennials & Ephemerals; Bulbs; Grasses; Succulents & Xerophytes.

There is at least one illustration on each page, but definitely nowhere nearly all the plants are illustrated, which makes identification or planning an area with new plants difficult. In some cases, despite two or three page numbers given in the index, not one entry for that plant is illustrated.

The final section is a useful chapter on Dry Garden Maintenance which discusses resolving soil problems and how to improve and enrich the soil; planting; windbreaks, and a list of wind-resistant plants is contained in the section on special characteristics; lawns and lawn substitutes, very relevant now, in view of the water costs and restrictions (in some parts of Australia); and irrigation techniques. The two pages listing Plants with special characteristics is a most useful quick check-list or reference for those wanting some practical suggestions.

My main criticism of this work is the Index. As the text is arranged by Latin name, some cross-reference from the generally-accepted common name (I know such names vary in different parts of the world) would have made the book user-friendly. This is done in most serious botanical works intended for the layman as well as the expert, and it would have made a tremendous difference to the value of this book for Canberra gardeners like myself.

Main entries are indicated in bold type, which usually occurs in the most common section to which the plant relates, and illustrations are in italics. For example, I tried to check wormwood, and found one page number. On this page all the items were, as stated above, listed by Latin name, so I had to read all of them until I found mention of the plant I wanted. On re-checking the Index under Artemisia I found the same page entry, together with six other references, but the same detailed reading was necessary to find the plant on each of those pages. I also wanted to look for Bromeliads, but these were indicated with only one passing reference (no main entry given) in the Index. There were no illustrations of either plant.

For each plant, or tree etc., the entry contains Z2, Z3, or Z9 or a similar number from 1-11. These are the climatic zone ratings devised by the US Department of Agriculture, a full chart of which is given on p. 186, which means you can check the hardiness of the plant according to the temperature range given. Around Z8 or Z9, -12C to -7C, or -7C to -1C, would be about the Canberra extreme. The temperature is not rated by maximum heat, it is only intended as a rough guide, and frost does more damage to plants than excessive heat, usually.

The entry for Eucalypts is over three pages, with one simple illustration, but it contains a wealth of information, as do most of the entries. I learned a great deal about all kinds of plants, where they came from and their unusual features. It is a book I would recommend to the patient reader, but it is not a suitable reference work for anyone without a strong botanical background or complete familiarity with the Latin names of trees, shrubs, plants and so on, and the appearance and other characteristics of most of the plants discussed.

My other criticism concerns the illustrations. If colour illustrations of each item were not possible, a line drawing or some simple diagram even, would have been an invaluable aid to using this book to help in the selection of plants, and planning an area - whether a large property or a small backyard. The claim on the back cover "Contains a unique comprehensive catalogue of more than 1,000 drought-tolerant plants" is no doubt correct, but the further claim that it is "The first guide to choosing plants ... " is misleading for the layman.

Tuggeranong (Erindale) Community Garden

by Christine Carter

Due to James Wilsons 'retirement' from the garden, I was coaxed into filling the vacant position of convenor. Once I accepted the responsibility I surprised myself with an irresistible surge of enthusiasm.

During the changeover, Housing Trust removed a corner section and extended several metres along a fence line. This posed the problem of decision making, planning and the need for physical manpower.

A meeting was organised inviting plot holders to attend. Everyone spontaneously contributed their suggestions and volunteered assistance.

After several productive working bees, our community garden has been reorganised and is looking much tidier. I'm sure we all feel a sense of satisfaction with the results and enjoyed working together.

Moving the garden shed was entertaining. Imagine several chaps inside the shed literally lifting it in the air by supporting the ceiling while blindly shuffling along. I wonder where they would be now if I didn't call them to a halt, shuffling the shed down the Parkway ??!

Those who could not attend a working bee requested to do chores when they were able.

Such commitment was unexpected and most appreciated. All in all, a perfect example of community spirit within a community garden concept.

Future priorities are to: continue to attack or at least control the #!*?#!?#! couch grass and of course deplete the greedy snail population. Gradually pathways will be improved and old edges replaced. Several lemon trees, raspberries and a communal herb garden will be planted in the near future.

Four garden plots that are under heavy weed resisting mulch are patiently waiting for new caretakers.

Enquires are welcome, Phone me on 231 5862

Watson Community Garden To Close 30 June 1996

by Michelle Johnson

For some years now there has a great deal of uncertainty about the future of the Watson Garden, with the uncertainty linked principally to the proposed North Watson residential development. When this development was first proposed, the original plan meant that land occupied by the community garden would become residential and it seemed certain that this would mean the demise of the garden.

The proposal met with a considerable amount of opposition by residents in the North Watson area, as well as other people in Canberra concerned with urban planning issues. Eventually some modifications were made to the original proposal in order to reduce the number of residential sites that would become available.

One modification was that the land occupied by the garden would not become residential but would be zoned for future tourist development. This initially appeared to be the reprieve COGS had been hoping for. However, after discussions with the appropriate people in the Planning Section it became clear that this was not to be.

There is now considerable interest in the tourist potential of the area, although with no specific development in mind. Consequently we could only obtain a guarantee for our security of tenure of the site until the end of June 1996. Beyond that date we would only be given very short-term tenure.

Whilst it is possible that we could keep on extending these short-term tenure arrangements for a number of years if no commercial developer showed an interest in the area, we could also be told to move immediately. This would be an extremely unsatisfactory situation for plotholders at the garden, and hence it was informally decided at that time that we would look to close the garden when the security of tenure ended.

There has already been a significant decline in the number of plotholders at the garden, mostly due to the uncertainty in the future of the garden. The COGS Committee believes that there would be a continuation in the decline of the garden after June '96 if we tried to keep the garden open.

Therefore at the last meeting of the COGS Committee we, in consultation with Gerry Van Wyk, the convenor of the Watson garden, decided to formalise our position on the garden. Consequently, a motion was passed that the Watson garden will close on the 30th June 1996.

from p. 22, ***Cotter Garden***

Perhaps this is wishful thinking, but we should aim at getting rid of the couch grass in the garden. There is no easy way of doing this but dedicated and thoughtful gardeners should be able to do it if they applied themselves to the task.

And don't forget, winter isn't a time for hibernating, but a time to do those little things which we have been too busy to think about when the sowing and harvesting seasons had fully occupied our time. Good Gardening!

Interested in a New Community Garden In North Canberra?

COME TO A MEETING ON TUESDAY, 6TH JUNE AT 7.30pm ROOM 4 GRIFFIN CENTRE

The COGS Committee recognises that there will be a number of the current plotholders at the Watson garden who will feel disappointed to see their garden close and who will wish to find new space to grow their own fresh organic produce.

In addition there may well be other COGS members who are interested in joining a community garden in the North Canberra area, but who do not wish to join the Watson garden knowing the effort they put into their plots would only benefit them for one growing season.

Some residents in the North Canberra area may also be interested in joining COGS and having plots at a new community garden in a different location to Watson.

With these possible interest groups in mind, the COGS Committee is considering the feasibility of opening another garden in the North Canberra area.

For this to happen we clearly need to explore all the options available to us in terms of site availability and possible funding arrangements.

BUT, before we undertake such a project we need to have more definite information on how many people would be interested in having plots at such a garden.

Most importantly, we need to know who would be prepared to commit themselves to the task of establishing a new garden by coming on a local garden committee for the new garden. There is a considerable amount of work to be done to get such a garden up and running. The COGS Committee needs to be confident that there is enough support for a new garden for it to be viable.

So, the COGS Committee is calling a meeting on the **Tuesday 6th June at 7.30pm in Room 4 at the Griffin Centre** for those people interested in this new community garden. If you are interested, but just cannot make the meeting, please let me know beforehand. THIS WILL BE YOUR CHANCE TO BE COUNTED: IF NOT ENOUGH PEOPLE ARE INTERESTED THE PROJECT WILL NOT PROCEED FURTHER.

Please consider this carefully -- there is work involved, but there are many rewards too. It is a wonderful opportunity to be involved in the beginning of a community project and have your views and wishes on the future shape of the garden taken into account. Once the garden is established you can enjoy gardening in a pleasant environment, and have the satisfaction of producing your own fresh fruit and vegetables.

I hope to see you at the meeting Michelle Johnson

RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

INGREDIENTS ? YOU!

This year promises to be a good one for COGS, but I'd like to see it become a very successful one. This can only happen with the support of COGS members:- some Committee members need assistance with some of the routine jobs that need to be done, and we need additional help with our project to get together a display kit that COGS can take to field days, and various publicity outlets. Please look at the list below and see if **you** can help in any way - if you can please give me a ring on 231 6219.

COGS needs:

2 Committee members: we can coopt 2 people as general committee members

more people to write articles for the Quarterly: we need experienced growers to share their knowledge with us, particularly with "How to grow..." articles

a typist: to help enter some articles into the computer for our Quarterly

someone with carpentry skills: there are some items for our tent that we are considering making out of timber

and

a card table: can someone donate one?

Support from other COGS members would make the workload much lighter for those already giving much time and effort to COGS. Think about what you can contribute.

Michelle Johnson

COGS NOTICEBOARD

MAY GENERAL MEETING:
TheMay General Meeting will be held at Room 4, Griffin Centre Tuesday 23 May, 7:30 pm. Speaker: Dick Windsor Topic: "Green Thumbs and Brown Fingers" **Visitors are most welcome.**

MEETING TO DECIDE WHETHER TO ESTABLISH A NEW COMMUNITY GARDEN IN NORTH CANBERRA **Room 4, Griffin Centre Tuesday 6 June, 7:30 pm**
Since the existing Community Garden in Watson is due to close on 30 June 1996 (see articles in this issue) a meeting will be held to determine whether to proceed with a new Community Garden in this area. If there is not sufficient interest, the matter will not proceed further.

JUNE GENERAL MEETING:
The June General Meeting will be held at Room 4, Griffin Centre Tuesday 27 June, 7:30 pm. Speaker: John Brummell, coordinator Youthhaven Horticulture Project.

JULY GENERAL MEETING:
The July General Meeting will be held at Room 4, Griffin Centre Tuesday 25 July, 7:30 pm. Speaker: Stuart Burge, NSW Dept Agriculture expert on weeds.

QUIZ NIGHT, AUGUST GENERAL MEETING:
A repeat of last year's successful **Organic Gardening Quiz Night** will be held at the August General Meeting will be held at Room 4, Griffin Centre Tuesday 22 August, 7:30 pm. Organize a team of 4 (guests welcome) or come along by yourself and join a scratch team.

NEXT COMMITTEE MEETING:
Tuesday 30 May, 7:30 pm, Environment Centre.

OPENING OF SYDNEY'S FIRST ORGANIC FOOD MARKET: Commencing Sunday 18 JUNE and held each Sunday
Park Way Hotel, Frenchs Forest Road, Frenchs Forest SYDNEY 2086
All types of stall holders required- organic food, new age therapy, home cooked food, plants and flowers
sites with power at $25/Sunday Contact Elizabeth M Taylor Ph.(02)9182828

VACANCY -- COGS COMMITTEE MEMBERS
Two positions on the COGS Committee are vacant. Members interested in this important job please contact **Michelle Johnson**
(ph 231 6219).

SEED EXCHANGE:
If you have an excess of seeds of your favourite non-hybrid vegetables or flowers, please remember the COGS Seed Exchange and bring some along to our Seed Librarians to share with other members.
Anyone willing to help clean seed (and learn how to do it in the process), please contact **Marjatta Asa** (ph 249 7406) or **Barbara Schreiner** (ph 248 8298).

SPEAKERS AVAILABLE: COGS will endeavour to make speakers available to interested groups in the Canberra region. Please contact **Michelle Johnson** (ph 231 6219).

THANKS TO SMITHS ALTERNATIVE BOOKSHOP:
Many thanks to **Smiths Alternative Bookshop** (Alinga St, Civic) for their generous donations of prizes for our book raffles. Proceeds go toward purchasing books for the COGS Library. We ask members to show their appreciation by supporting Smiths Books.

JOYCE WILKIE'S RADIO PROGRAM:
Don't forget Joyce's regular session with Elaine Harris on radio 2CN, the first Friday of every month, 1:30 pm to 1:50 pm.

COGS MULCHERS:
The two COGS mulchers are available for use by COGS members. Enquiries to:
John Ross (Northside, including Queanbeyan & Bungendore) ph 241 4063, and
Richard Blyton (Southside) ph 231 6219.