

# Canberra Organic



## Cotter and Dickson community gardens win ACT Government grants

Cotter and Dickson community gardens were among 8 successful applicants awarded funds through the ACT Government's Community Gardens program. A total of 17 applications were received.

Environment Minister Simon Corbell announced the winners of the 2015–16 program in late October.

It is the first time the ACT Government has offered grants specifically aimed at community gardens with Mr Corbell saying the program was responding to the popularity of movements such as community gardens and school kitchen gardens in the Canberra region and across Australia.

Other recipients included Communities@Work, the Kingston Organic Community Garden (run through the Canberra Baptist Church) and Canberra City Care.

Cotter garden was awarded \$2,345 to replace a small shed with a more robust shed to accommodate tools, and Dickson garden was granted \$539.88 to service two rainwater tanks totalling 6000 litres and will assist with water autonomy at the garden.

Dickson garden convenor Michele England said the gardeners at Dickson were delighted. She said the gardeners thanked the ACT Government and hoped that the Community Garden Grant would return in 2016.

COGS Executive Committee also extended thanks to the ACT Government, applauding the government's recognition of the importance of organic gardening and the hard work and dedication of COGS' gardeners.

The autumn 2016 issue of *Canberra Organic* will include a more detailed story on the Cotter and Dickson grants.



L to R: Shane Rattenbury, Jodie Pipkorn (CCF), Danny O'Brien (CCF)

## Congratulations Canberra City Farm!

On Monday 22 October, ACT Minister for Territory and Municipal Services Shane Rattenbury and the Canberra City Farm signed a 10-year licence for the use of almost 20 hectares of land on Dairy Flat Road. Canberra City Farm started life on a small area of land on the corner of Watson and Masson Streets, Turner, and this signing marks an important step in the growth and development of the farm towards a productive urban farm and education centre.

The land comes with classrooms, toilets, chicken sheds, fruit trees, water supply and a vineyard. There are also plans to set up market gardens, add value to fruit production, provide a place for young farmers to practise techniques, and provide demonstrations such as a typical backyard with ideas for making the best use of it.

—Walter Steensby (photo and story)

## Putting on a united front

Walter recently took these photos at the Urban Agriculture Australia (UAA) display at a farm site in Turner. He commented: 'I am most attracted to the co-operation they reveal in the urban agriculture sector'.

Doesn't it show a strong, positive movement!



—photos by  
Walter Steensby

## Neglected plots in community gardens: Proposed new rule for plot holders

### Development of a new garden rule

As part of COGS' management responsibilities of 12 ACT community gardens, the COGS Committee has undertaken re-consideration of the optimal approach to adopt in the management of 'derelict' or 'neglected' plots in those gardens, to benefit COGS itself and COGS community gardeners as a group.

The intention of the committee has been that the outcome will be an agreed revised or restated garden rule that will apply to all COGS community gardeners, with sufficient flexibility to reasonably accommodate any differences between gardens and prevailing garden styles.

The draft rule will be submitted for approval by COGS members at the next Annual General Meeting. If approved, it will be incorporated into the COGS Constitution as an amendment to Appendix 4 [General Community Garden Rules].

### New garden rule

The following new garden rule, to apply to all COGS community gardens, is to be recommended

by the committee for approval by COGS members.

*The plot holder of any plot which, in the reasonable opinion of the Garden Convenor in consultation with the Garden Committee, has been in an unkempt, derelict, overgrown or neglected condition for a continuous period of not less than two (2) months may be given written notice by the Garden Convenor by post or email that the condition of the plot must be rectified within a period of thirty (30) days from receipt of the notice to the standard of a reasonably well-maintained plot. If the condition of the plot has not been rectified to that standard within that period of thirty (30) days the plot may be resumed by written notice from the Garden Convenor to the plot holder, and no refund of plot fees will be payable.*

*Any plot which in the reasonable opinion of the Garden Convenor, in consultation with the Garden Committee, has been abandoned may be resumed by the Garden Convenor by giving written notice to the plot holder at the plot holder's last known email or postal address. Resumption will take effect upon the giving of the notice.*

*Individual gardens may modify these rules for application to plot holders in their garden.*

### Features of draft garden rule

The draft garden rule has the following features:

- Potential general application to all COGS-managed gardens.
- Ability for individual gardens to modify the rule for their garden.
- Discretion at the local garden level at all stages of the process.
- Involvement of the Garden Committee in the application of the rule.
- Responsibility on the Garden Convenor to apply the rule.
- Reasonable timeframes.
- Broad descriptions of offending gardens.
- Abandoned plots to be resumed in a 1-stage process.

### Discussion paper

A copy of the full discussion paper considered by the committee while developing the draft new garden rule is available from the committee on request.

–Sue McCarthy  
(committee member)



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**The Canberra Organic Growers Society** is a non-profit organisation providing a forum for organic growers to exchange information and supporting the adoption of organic growing methods in the community.

COGS encourages the use of natural methods to improve our soils, promote sustainability and produce fresh, nutritious food.

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

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COGS operates 12 community gardens in the Canberra region, with the support of the ACT Government. The convenors and contact email addresses are listed below.

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## Don't forget our Christmas party!!!

**Tuesday 24 November, 7:30 pm**  
**Majura Community Centre, Rosevear Place, Dickson**

The November COGS meeting is our last meeting for 2015 as well as our Christmas party and end-of-year social gathering.

Come and talk gardening—or whatever you like!—with other members over a drink and nibbles.

Drinks will be supplied but please bring a plate of food to share.

Our regular COGS monthly meetings will re-start in February 2016 with a dazzling line-up of speakers.



## Editor's note

### What a fabulous issue of Canberra Organic!

It seems that the onset of spring has encouraged COGS' gardeners to contribute a fascinating range of articles—everything from how to grow beetroot, successfully raise tomatoes, coexist with snakes and even understand your mower.

COGS is also flushed with the success of winning two ACT Government grants, having another inspiring open day at Kambah, and being involved with a highly effective gardening program with school kids at Dickson.

We've been in the news several times since the last spring issue, including in Sue Parson's *Canberra Times*' feature on Cook gardener Mario's one-kilo-gram tomato (published on 29 September 2015).

And, as shown by Walter's photos of our poster hanging with posters from like-minded organisations at a recent Urban Agriculture Australia event, it's good to feel that we are part of a blossoming movement that respects the environment and good organic techniques. Good organic food is also very



important in 'slow food' as opposed to fast food and Walter reports on his attendance at the recent Slow Food National Conference.

Speaking of good organic techniques, Sue McCarthy found a wealth of information in the COGS library book *Growing peas and beans*. You can read Sue's review of the book on page 15—it's also a good reminder of the treasure-chest of free information available through our library collection. If you're cultivating broad beans you can also try some of Glynis's delicious recipes on page 21.

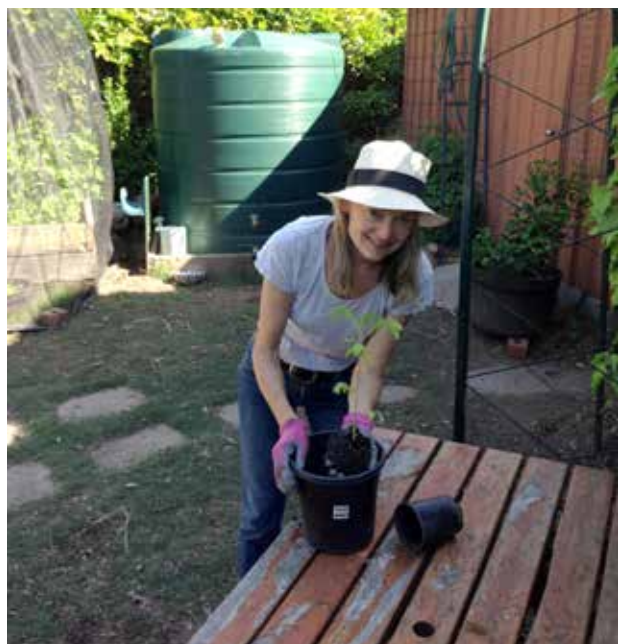
I hope you enjoy reading this issue as much as Matt (the designer) and I enjoyed putting it together. And now, I've just got to get outside to my backyard garden ... Sue

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#### This month's cover:

Charnwood garden, looking through the round window (photo by Angela Spencer).



## Dickson community garden

**Michele England, Dickson garden convenor, sent in the following article, photographs and artwork provided by Laura Close, who is a teacher at Dickson College. Laura wrote the article and took the photographs; a student provided the artwork (see the back cover).**

There are shrieks of delight when rainbows are seen in sunlit hose water, colourful beetles are discovered, and friendships develop digging the ground and telling secrets over the patch. It seems that at least one surprise is hidden in each trip to the garden, and students start to look forward to the changes.

We are grateful for the support of our fellow community gardeners in sharing space with our students. Sometimes we cross paths, and the students have the chance to practise conversing with others about their gardens.

And so the garden grows: plants, laughter, care and community.

—Laura Close (story and photos)

A special feature of Dickson community garden is the space sharing arrangement with Dickson College. The garden adjoins classrooms, and two beds are maintained by classes at the Secondary Intensive English Centre (SIEC).

Students of high school age who are newly arrived in Australia and have minimal English language skills, attend a 3-term program at the SIEC before enrolling at mainstream schools. The students come from all over the world: some are migrants, some are refugees, some are fee-paying, and some are the children of diplomats.

**The garden is a great place for our students to learn our language and get used to a new environment.**

They practise English in a practical setting as they work together. Deeper connections happen naturally as we work: students link what we are doing to their own stories of gardening from other countries and with other families. Students slowly soak up a feeling for Australian seasons and weather, and observe life in the garden. They start to gain a sense of place and belonging as they care for the garden and each other.

A class of high school students in the garden is always lively.



## Crace community garden

Crace community garden has celebrated its second year of operation. It was an eventful year, with lots of social events and working bees. The second annual passata day was a great success and featured in the spring edition of *Canberra Organic*.

The communal areas of the garden have been upgraded to include several citrus trees and some herbs—the young trees suffered during winter but will hopefully survive.

**We have been pleased to donate excess produce to the Mustard Seed charity, with low income families and others in need looking forward to receiving a variety of herbs and vegetables every week.**

Twelve new plot holders joined the garden, as outgoing plot holders moved to other suburbs, built houses with their own vegie patches, or decided to take a break from communal gardening.



*Photo: The 2015 Annual General Meeting*

Our red, decomposed granite pathways continue to be a challenge for us—if we don't work hard to control winter grass and other weeds we will eventually need to buy a lawn mower!

A bigger concern is the local birdlife. While the peewees and

maggies are a constant friendly but harmless presence, the cockies are still causing regular and considerable damage to a wide range of crops. Once again, any advice on how to manage this issue is warmly welcomed.

**Ducks have also found the garden and are stealing the lettuce.**

Following last year's AGM, we enacted a coloured stake system, which is working very well. Plot-holders can 'plant' a coloured stake in their plot if they need help or have excess produce (the stakes are different colours to show what is needed).

This year's AGM was held on 13 September. We thanked our outgoing convenor John and committee Alan, Diana, Jodi, Lisa, Liz and Mathenge. The newly elected committee—Liz, Alan and Peter—will share the convenor role and be supported by a group of volunteers whom they can call upon as needed.

–Diana Cozadinos  
(photo and story)



## Charnwood community garden

The Charnwood Garden has been a hive of activity coming into the warm seasons, with the usual bed preparing, mulching, planting, watering, planning, building and weeding of individual plots as per usual, along with regular working bees and social barbecues. With the weather finally warming up, our garden is looking spectacularly fertile and colourful.

Rather than list all of our happenings, here are some snapshots taken around the Charnwood garden. Happy Summer Gardening!

—Angela Spencer



*(Clockwise from top right)*

*The refurbished pond at the Charnwood garden, the perfect place for visiting frogs and beneficial insects.*

*Jo McMillan's flower patch is delighting the bees and other gardeners.*

*Bearded irises in the beautiful back boundary of the garden.*

*Kookie – a regular visitor surveying the domain at the Charnwood garden.*

*The Mulchers, also known as Natalie and Flynn.*

The photographs were taken by Angela Spencer, with permission to publish for the picture of Natalie and Flynn.





## Kambah community garden

Our Open Day on the 26th of September was a great success. We welcomed a lot of visitors in the glorious spring weather and the garden was in wonderful condition, all ready for spring planting.

**We endeavour to hold an open day every year as one way to showcase organic gardening techniques and bring people from the local community into the garden to learn and be inspired to grow their own food.**

Our locally propagated organic vegetable and herb seedlings were very popular in our plant sale as were the cakes, muffins, salads and other vegetarian food prepared from vegetables picked from the garden on the day. We got a lot of positive feedback from visitors about the taste and freshness of the food and the interesting dishes.

The talk from a local expert on composting techniques and use of bio-activators was well attended and inspiring. We are considering introducing these enhancements into our communal composting



*Kambah plot holders at our Annual General Meeting on 10 October*

system to speed up the process of decomposition of green waste and meet the increasing demand for compost from our plot holders.

Our thanks go to Bunnings Warehouse, Tuggeranong for their generous donation of prizes in the open day raffle. All proceeds from the raffle, plant sale and our food stall went to our Goodwill Garden program which, in cooperation with the Australian Red Cross and Companion House, sponsors asylum-seekers and refugees in organic gardening. This injection of funds has enabled us to support the program at least for another year.

Our communal vegetable garden has been replanted from a period of dormancy over winter. Our first tomatoes were planted on 12 October—

*Frank and John (a volunteer) planting our first tomatoes in the communal vegetable plot*



all locally propagated heritage varieties (see photo). We are hoping to use some of the produce from this plot and donations from other plots in the garden to continue to supply fresh vegetables to Companion House and other charitable outlets in Canberra.

We are very pleased to have introduced two new plot holders since September and a new volunteer who assists us with planting and other communal activities.

**We still have vacant plots, however—all in very good condition—so we look forward to enquiries from potential plot holders interested in joining a great community of people in organic gardening.**

The Annual General Meeting of the garden was held on the 10th of October (see photo). I have the pleasure of serving as Convenor for another year with the help of Chris, Liz, Sam and Frank—our hardworking garden committee.

—Neville Jackson  
(story and photos)

# Slow Food National Conference

Slow Food groups from all over Australia came together at Ulladulla in August 2015 for a national conference.

Slow Food (SF) was started in 1986 by Carlo Petrini as a protest against the planned opening of a McDonald's at the Spanish Steps in Rome. From there it has expanded into a world-wide organisation of over 100,000 members and a million supporters, and is part of the Global Food Solution, presenting counter-arguments to the industrial food system.

At the local level, groups known as *convivia* (1,500 worldwide) coordinate activities and organise events. My wife and I are members of the Canberra Capital and Country Convivium (4Cs), as are several other COGS members. Several 4Cs members attended, and 14 other *convivia* were represented.

Among SF's goals are sustainable agriculture, local and regional food in preference to globalised, fair prices to the people and fair income for the producers. Have a look at <http://slowfoodaustralia.com.au/>

**Many of the aims and purposes of COGS are integral aspects of SF, and our two organisations overlap usefully.**

SF Australia is currently focussed on adding to the *Ark of Taste*, a worldwide catalogue of endangered traditional foods which aims to protect the heritage of fruits, vegetables, animal breeds (e.g. Belted Galloway cattle, Wessex Saddleback pigs), cheeses, breads, and so on. We aim to add 200 Australian foods to the Ark; so far the total is 22 of which 80 per cent are indigenous. A recent addition was the uncommon Angasi oyster from the south coast of NSW.

SF President Carlo Petrini opened the conference with an insightful and encouraging video presentation. Presenters included

Paolo di Croce (international general secretary), Pia Winberg (scientist), Matthew Evans (the Gourmet Farmer), Alison Lansley and Kris Lloyd (cheesemakers). After watching Carlo and then Paolo speak with his Italian verve and animation, I tried to imagine Slow Food being run by other than Italians, and failed.

A highlight was the involvement of the Aboriginal community, the Yuin nation, in all the conference. Cindy and I went on a bush food tour guided by Noel Butler, traditional custodian and Budawang man (*Bud* rhymes with *Good*). It was a major revelation how many edible plants—leaves, roots, berries—exist in just a small area of coastal bush at Meroo Lake. Noel teaches at the TAFE and is spreading his knowledge as widely as possible. This and future generations sure need it.

**This knowledge is priceless, garnered over many centuries of experience.**

Paolo's address covered a lot of ground. In Peru great world demand for quinoa has led to more being grown but its price has risen also, from about 50c/kg to \$5 kg; perversely, a traditional food is now unaffordable by many. Worse, the farmers spend their profits on junk food and exhibit the same problems of obesity and malnutrition as other nations. Peruvian TV shows 335 junk food commercials every day, 34 minutes of it in children's prime time of course, and it's estimated that if they had their full intended effect, some two-thirds of the Peruvian diet would consist of fat and sugar.

In Africa a program to establish 10,000 food gardens across the continent is going well, with 40,000 people now working in them. Also in Africa many of the poor are now eating better than the rich, who have been misled into regarding junk food as elite food.

**European farming resembles Australian in that the average age of a European farmer is 60. Who succeeds them: agribusiness?**

Paolo thinks we should adopt the Chinese attitude that a normal doctor treats the disease but a good doctor treats the patient. Right now we need an exceptional doctor to treat the world system.

Later he was interviewed by local radio and was asked—*yet again*, he stressed: 'Isn't food produced by small-scale agriculture a luxury for the rich, so we need Big Agriculture to feed the world?'

The answer is no, and in 2011 the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) released a report saying that it is indeed possible to feed the world by small-scale farming. The FAO estimates that 28 per cent of the world's agricultural area is used to produce food that is lost or wasted.

**Rich Australians throw away up to 20 per cent of the cheap food they buy. This is hardly a good use of a precious resource.**

Alison Lansley and Kris Lloyd brought the good news that the regulatory paranoia about raw milk cheese is at last being dealt with. Big Dairy doesn't like artisanal cheese, seeing it as a problem and not a valid part of the industry, but small cheesemakers aren't idiots—they exercise due diligence and aren't about to harm their own industry.

Lacking a tradition of artisanal cheese, we are now developing one, and in December last year Food Standard 4.2.4 was finalised and handed to state regulators. After 25 years, raw milk cheese is re-appearing. You might like to consider that to produce safe raw milk cheese, the animals need to



be healthy; to produce pasteurised milk cheese, they don't. Think about it.

Dr Pia Winberg from the University of Wollongong gave a presentation on the potential of seaweed to supplement our diets and improve our mental health. Wild fisheries are at their limits and we are turning to aquaculture to provide more food for a hungry planet.

In particular we are acknowledging at last the dietary, medicinal and therapeutic benefits of seaweeds, facts long known by indigenous cultures around the world. Seaweed is an excellent fertiliser for land crops, increasing their health and nutritional value. It takes up metals and various species are used to clean up mining waste. A very important benefit of incorporating seaweeds into the diet is that the ratio of omega-3 to omega-6 fatty acids can be restored to normal. The modern Western diet is grossly deficient in omega-3, pushed out by omega-6 in vegetable oils. Studies show that low omega-3 levels correlate strongly with violent behaviour, attention-deficit disorder and crime; prison trials

of corrected diets reveal a most encouraging drop in the number of reprimands. Naturally we wonder what such studies say about the mental health of people in whom this dietary deficiency is widespread and common. It potentially requires rethinking the whole notion of culpability, such is the importance of diet to health.

Continuing the seafood theme, Matthew Evans spoke on fish and fisheries, and you may have seen his recent TV series *What's the Catch* on this topic. Some 85–90 per cent of the world's fisheries are either over-exploited or in recovery. The FAO estimates that we could get rid of half of the world's fishing fleet and it would have no impact at all on the total catch. To our credit most of our fisheries are very well-managed with a co-operating fishing industry. Australia imports about 70 per cent of its fish—while we have the world's third-largest fishing area, it is not rich and our catch ranks about 30th. Fish markets deal in about 600 species every year, of which we catch 60, but the main demand is for only about 10 species.

**As you might expect at a Slow Food conference, the food was superb.**

Local producers and the TAFE gave us great lunches, which only made us look forward all the more to the dinners. One dinner was held at Rick Stein at Bannister's, the other at Cupitt's Winery and Restaurant. Both meals were splendid, but I regret that I didn't record what we ate! Trust me that it was regionally-sourced, delicious and did not leave us feeling overfed. Conversation over dinner was animated and happy, with ideas, dreams and plans in abundance. The Ulladulla area is fertile and scenic—a great place for a conference.

There is so much more to talk about, but space does not permit. I haven't even mentioned the Terra Madre network, or the Indigenous Terra Madre, or the Foundation for Biodiversity, or Slow Meat, or Slow Fish, or ...

Next year the Australian Conference will be held in Mildura. Making my plans already.

–Walter Steensby  
(story and photo)

## Summer—Beetroot Beauties

**B**eetroot is the vegetable that distinguishes Australian hamburgers from their pale overseas imitations. It is an essential part of the Australian barbeque.

### Why eat beetroots?

Like many red vegetables and fruits beetroot is full of antioxidants and the leaves are very good for you too—they contain calcium, iron and vitamins and other minerals.

- It seems that beetroot juice can help to lower blood pressure and also improve oxygen uptake by the brain which may help to slow the development of dementia.
- Beets contain alpha-lipoic acid which can help to combat diabetes.
- Because of its high fibre content beetroot helps prevent constipation.
- Beetroots also contain choline which helps with sleep, muscle movement, learning and memory, cell maintenance, nerve transmission and reducing chronic inflammation.

**So eat lots of beetroots—but this doesn't mean just adding a slice to your hamburger! Beetroots are one of the few vegetables that can be used in every course of a meal.**

### Dips

You can start off with a beetroot dip. Simply process some cooked beetroot with equal amounts of yoghurt, add a dash of lemon juice and a pinch of cumin and maybe some herbs such as mint or coriander. Season to taste.

### Soups

What better than borscht for first course?

- Wrap some beetroot in foil and roast until tender.
- Peel and grate the beetroot and add it to some beef consommé, or vegetable stock if you prefer.
- Heat the soup gently and season to taste—a pinch of tarragon goes well as does a tablespoon of sherry. I think beetroot needs a touch of vinegar in order to balance its earthy flavour so balsamic goes well with it.

You could also make a beetroot gazpacho. To make this chilled soup:

- Process cooked beetroot with a chopped red onion, a garlic clove and 3 tablespoons of a good vinaigrette.
- Traditionally, gazpacho contains bread, so soak a slice or two of rustic bread in the mixture and blend a little before adding some stock.
- Chill well and serve with crushed ice and a little yoghurt.

### Salads plus

Cooked beetroot and tiny beetroot leaves are great in salads. Make sure the salads are well dressed. Beetroot mixes well with strong flavours and creamy textures so try adding some of the following to your salad—goat's cheese, ricotta, cream cheese, sour cream, blue cheese, walnuts, hazelnuts, beef, lamb, duck, baby spinach leaves, red onion, orange, chickpeas, silverbeet and even baby brussels sprouts. All these things go well with beetroot and cooked pasta to make a more substantial meal.

And of course, roasted beetroots are an old favourite.

- As beetroots are tough as nails it is a good idea to simmer them in water until they are

just tender. Leave their roots on and cut their leaves a good 3 cm above the beet before putting them in the water otherwise you will have blood on your hands.

- Let them cool a bit, don disposable gloves and peel the beetroot.
- Place them in a baking pan, sprinkle with olive oil and any hard herbs you like such as thyme. Bake in a hot oven until the beets are tender.
- Dress with a dash of balsamic vinegar or squeeze of orange juice and olive oil.

### Desserts

Strangely enough, because beetroots are somewhat sweet they can be used to make dessert. Think of adding beetroot purée to an ice cream base.

Beetroot goes well with chocolate. There are lots of beetroot chocolate cake and pudding recipes on the web.

### Beetroot platter

If you have vegetarian friends and want to give them a treat for dinner instead of the usual vegetarian fare, prepare a beetroot platter. Artfully arrange the following beetroot beauties on a plate:

- **Beetroot jelly cubes** Add ¼ cup of juice from pickled beetroots and a tablespoon of port (or more to taste) to a portwine jelly (use less water to compensate). Pour into a shallow tray and when set, cut into small cubes.
- **Beetroot cream** Line a sieve with muslin cloth and place over a bowl. Add a cup of Greek-style yoghurt and leave overnight to strain. Purée some drained pickled beetroot

and add the drained yoghurt (labna) to it with a pinch of cumin.

- **Beetroot leaves** Make a little salad of tender beetroot leaves, orange segments, walnuts and a piquant dressing.
- **Beetroot chips** You can make your own chips by slicing beetroot very thinly and deep-frying until crisp. You can even break up the chips and crush them to make a beetroot 'soil'.

### Preserving beetroots

#### *Pickled beetroots*

- Wash four largish beetroots to remove all traces of dirt.
- Cut off most of the leaves. Boil until tender.
- Let cool then peel. Slice or cut into julienne strips.
- Put into hot, sterilised jars.
- Heat  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup of water, with  $1\frac{1}{2}$  cup of vinegar and  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup of sugar, a pinch of salt and spices such as peppercorns, cinnamon, mustard seeds, bay leaves, cloves. Bring to the boil, and simmer for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally to make sure sugar has dissolved.
- Pour over beetroot in jars and seal. Leave for a few weeks to mature. If hygienically prepared the beetroot should keep well.

#### *Drying*

You can dry beetroots in a dehydrator to make your own beetroot crisps.

- Wash the beetroots thoroughly and soak them in some acidulated water for 10 minutes to cleanse them further.
- Slice the beetroots very thinly. Dry.
- Toss the slices in a little olive oil, salt and spices if desired.
- Place in dehydrator and dry until quite crisp—around 12 hours. You can also try crisping them in a slow oven with the door ajar.

#### *Freezing*

You can freeze cooked beetroot and apparently it retains its texture well. I never bother because I use pickled beetroot in my recipes as I like the piquancy.

- Choose the best beetroots to freeze. Cook them until just tender.
- Peel and cut into desired shapes. Freeze on trays then pack into vacuum bags or airtight containers.

Never think of a beetroot as a humble vegetable again!

–Elizabeth Dangerfield



## Tomatoes—how I protect and support early plantings

I have tried many methods of protecting early plantings from late frosts and cold snaps, but most have required someone being present and remembering to apply them at nightfall, and to remove them early the next day.

A number of years back I decided to get serious about growing early tomatoes. A quick check confirmed I had the materials to make quality frost guards with removable covers to apply during extreme late weather events—the materials being light-duty 90 cm high, 5 cm x 5 cm aperture wire mesh, high-density shade cloth, and clear plastic.

However, the issue remaining once the guard was removed was that the plants needed to be regularly secured to stakes.

A year or so later, in a hardware store I noticed a heavy-duty 120 cm high, 15 cm x 15 cm aperture wire mesh marketed as ‘tomato mesh’ and immediately saw its potential, so purchased a roll. I made the mesh into a number of 48 cm diameter cylinders slightly smaller than the existing frost guards so they could be inserted inside (while the plants remained contained) before removing the guard.

Last year again while in a hardware store I noted the ‘frost cloth’ product and realised this could simplify my technique of protecting early plantings so I purchased a roll.

So since last year I now just place 90 cm high frost cloth around the bottom of the 120 cm high tomato mesh support cylinders, then carefully place over garden stakes and tomato plants and secure both top and bottom. Securing the guard is essential to prevent wind gusts blowing away the guard and damaging the plants. I leave the

top open at all times and have found it still provides adequate protection in most cold weather events, and eliminates unnecessary worry and work.

Once the weather warms and there is only a limited chance of late frosts I remove the frost cloth (which is low cost but claimed to be re-usable). The remaining ‘mesh support’ greatly minimises the need to tie plants. Ties are mostly needed to secure those varieties that grow above the mesh to the garden stake.

Apart from large aperture for easy access to fruit, an additional benefit of using tomato mesh is that frost guards attached to cylindrical mesh supports are portable and available in the off-season for protection of other garden plants during winter. Being of heavy gauge, the mesh will last for many years of use.

### Material needed

Well-prepared garden soil; garden stakes 1.8 m–2.0 m high; strong, advanced seedlings; mulch; trellis (tomato) mesh or similar of heavy-duty gauge, 120 cm high, 15 cm x 15 cm aperture; frost cloth (re-usable) or similar 90 cm high; cloth tape or similar; weed mat/irrigation pins or similar; tie wire or similar; and time.

### Instructions

1. Place garden stakes in well-prepared garden bed at required planting intervals.
2. Plant selected seedlings deep in the soil adjacent to the garden stakes, water with seaweed solution, and mulch well.
3. Cut trellis (tomato) mesh or similar at 180 cm lengths, half-way along an aperture.
4. Form trellis (tomato) mesh or similar into 10 x 15 cm

aperture (48 cm) cylinders, overlapping one 15 cm aperture for strength, then bend the ‘loose’ wire ends around on both sides to secure.

5. Cover the bottom section of the mesh cylinders with 90 cm high frost cloth and tape into position.
  6. Carefully place the frost cloth-clad mesh cylinders over the garden stakes and tomato plants.
  7. Centralise the mesh cylinders, secure the bottom with wire pins and top with tie wire.
  8. Remove the frost cloth from the mesh cylinders once the weather warms and there is only a limited chance of late frosts.
  9. Prune and secure plants as each tomato variety dictates.
- Bill Chaffey (story and photos)

### Some tips

1. Select strong, healthy, advanced seedlings, plant deep in well-prepared soil, water with seaweed solution, then mulch well.
2. Follow instructions for the particular tomato variety chosen.
3. The best early tomatoes that I’ve found successful in cool climates are Stupice and Kotlas as they fruit at a lower temperature than most other varieties.



*Stupice (front & rear) and Kotlas (centre) plantings 18 October 2015*



*Plantings protected with frost cloth clad mesh cylinders 18 October 2015*



*Kotlas (front) 15 December 2014*



*Kotlas (right) 27 December 2014*

# The Autumn Crop

I give most of my time to food. Thinking about food. Shopping, cooking, eating. Growing food. I'm wondering if this has to change. Doctor's picked up slightly high sugar levels. Maybe too much food, and not enough exercise since hip stiffness has reduced the joy of walking.

See in the news that the great runner Ron Clarke has died (June, 2015). The obituary lists his many long distance records, and he was Mayor of the Gold Coast, etc. But I remember him for something he said years ago:

*There are four things you can't have too much of—fish and vegetables and sex and laughter!*

An inspiring speaker.

Well it's hard for me to get fresh fish in Canberra, and I'm not sure about sex or laughter. But vegetables! I grow them, dear reader, and always have more than enough ... Except that a blight took my silverbeet and senposai. That's a Japanese cabbage-like thing. Still I have kale, leeks, broccoli and potatoes in my autumn garden. And make veg stock every week and huge pots of soup. Well there's Green Earth Soup and there's Red Earth Soup. I think I've already published these recipes in *Canberra Organic*.

I suppose the gardening and food preparation take up half the week. Sitting in cafes the other half. Writing. Thinking about writing. Cooking it. Growing it.



the summer crop  
now gone to seed  
the autumn crop  
is coming on—  
my poetry

—Gerry Jacobson

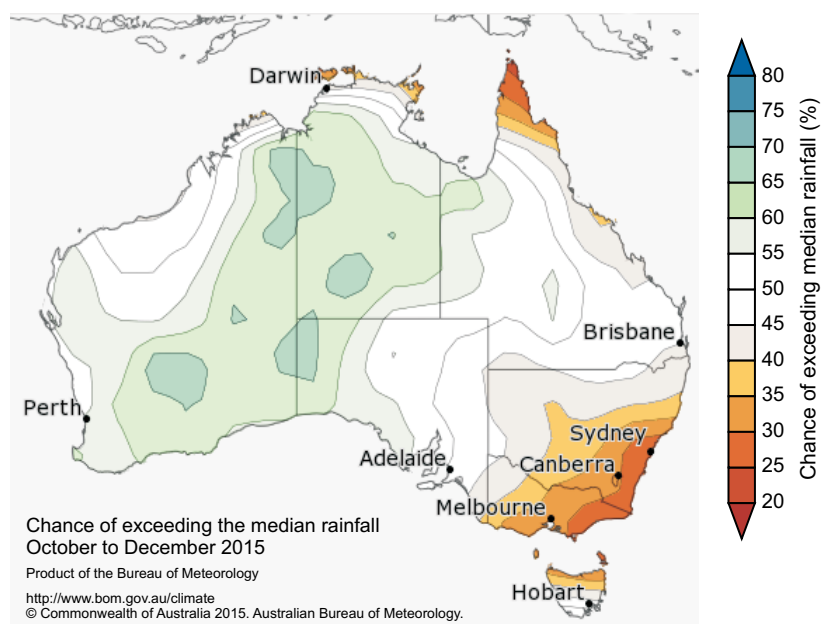
## The Weather Report

### Pacific and Indian oceans reinforcing low rainfall pattern

The Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) report issued on 13 October 2015 says that the 2015 El Niño is the strongest seen since 1997. El Niño is usually associated with below-average spring rainfall over eastern Australia, and increased spring and summer daytime temperatures in Australia south of the tropics.

The Indian Ocean equivalent of El Niño—the positive Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD)—is now at levels not seen since late 2006. A positive IOD typically reinforces the El Niño drying pattern, particularly in the southeast.

BOM warns that sea surface temperatures in the central to eastern tropical Pacific continue to warm, further entrenching El Niño, while waters south of Indonesia have cooled, strengthening the positive IOD. Likewise, waters to the north of Australia have also cooled over



the past three weeks, which may further contribute to drier conditions.

BOM says that most international climate models indicate that the strong El Niño will last until at least the end of the year before declining in the first quarter of 2016. The positive Indian Ocean Dipole is expected to decay in November 2015.

#### Dam levels in the Canberra region and capital cities

ACT storages	.82% full
Murray-Darling Basin	.46% full
Burrinjuck Dam	.71% full
Blowering Dam	.47% full
Sydney	.97% full
Melbourne	.74% full
Brisbane	.93% full
Adelaide	.58% full
Perth	.24% full



**H**ow hard can growing peas and beans really be?

Climbing blue lake beans were my first crop as a keen 8 year old all those years ago in Lithgow NSW, that lovely valley with a pretty short growing season where the sun sets so early.

Much later, climbing shelling peas were my first big crop at Holder community garden when I took a never-worked plot a few years back.

**A very impressive crop it turned out to be—so much so that I think my fellow gardeners probably suspected some sort of non-organic foul play was involved, whereas I think the virgin soil was almost certainly the secret.**

Accordingly, when I recently borrowed this book from the COGS library, I observed somewhat over-confidently: ‘I could probably write a book like this, but you never know, I might learn something new’.

How wrong that first observation was, and how correct the second one.

Like me, Dr David Murray is a long-time gardener, who first grew peas and beans as a child, and counts legumes as among his favourite plants. However, he is also an internationally-renowned scientist, and thus in addition to

his lifetime gardening experience and field observation, he brings to his narrative the additional perspectives of historical context, pea and bean breeding, heirlooms and heritage (genetic diversity and seed saving) and nutrition.

Even for a gardener who simply wants to know (or even just be reminded) ‘how to’, this book definitely justifies the read.

Peas and beans each get four chapters, covering ‘Growing’, ‘General Care’, ‘Pests and Diseases’ and ‘Flowering and Afterwards’. Chapter headings are well-organised and flow logically, and the writing is simple and direct.

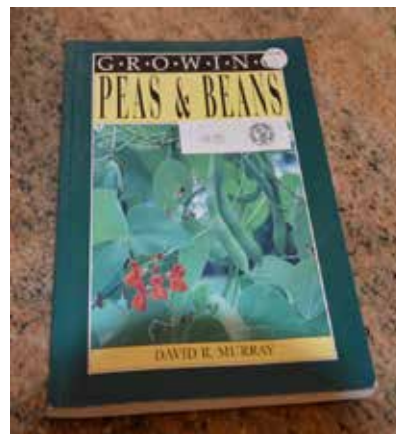
So for example, ‘Growing Peas’ covers choosing what kinds to grow, garden location, soil preparation, organic additions, pH, and sowing.

‘General Care of Peas’ covers support, watering, windbreaks, weeding and fertilising.

‘Handling Pests and Diseases’ covers leaf and stem chewing pests, sap suckers, diseases caused by fungi, and diseases caused by bacteria and viruses.

‘Flowering and Afterwards’ covers flowering and self-fertilisation, pod and seed development, collecting pods at the right stages, saving and storing seeds for future planting, and cleaning up.

What practical tips might you find useful? For me, it is the reminders about re-checking pH after appli-



cation of compost and manure; saving seeds from the healthiest plants, rather than a few late unattended plants; ensuring adequate phosphorus and potassium; timing aspects where planting beans and sweet corn together (to ensure the young sweet corn plants get the lion’s share of the available nitrogen before the beans are planted) and the advantages of north/south or east/west planting.

The chapter on ‘Heirlooms and Heritage’, though written over 15 years ago, makes for alarming reading. The author outlines that although there were hundreds of varieties of peas and beans in existence at the time, the range in seed catalogues in the early 20th century was scaled back dramatically for home gardeners, and is now constituted by literally a handful of varieties.

There is also a useful detailed bibliography, a glossary, and appendixes on pea and bean varieties.

I read this book twice, on both occasions with real gratitude to Dr Murray, partly for the practical cultural guidance, but most of all for the historical and social context he gives to the importance of seed saving and active conservation for future generations. Peas and beans have been cultivated for thousands of years, and as gardeners today we have a responsibility to conserve for posterity what is left of that living inheritance.

–Sue McCarthy  
(review and photos)

**Growing Peas and Beans by David R Murray, published in Australia by Kangaroo Press, 1999. [ISBN 0 86417 989 8]**

*Sue’s peas*



# Organic mowing: Terry explains how to get the best out of your lawnmower

Editor's note: *Some time ago Terry offered to write a piece on lawnmowers for Canberra Organic. Given how completely hilarious his previous contributions have been, I've been waiting with keen anticipation ... My powers of persuasion (totally exaggerated in the article below) obviously worked as Terry has sent in this little gem. Terry: you may no longer be convenor but I hope that doesn't stop you from sending in further contributions. Just think of all the other things you could tell us about?*

\* \* \*

Absolutely not the convenor.

You've no idea how good it feels to say that, unless of course you've just escaped from the same role yourself. Yes folks, it's true, the smallest of the COGS gardens, the one at Oaks Estate, has a new convenor—a real one, one who knows more about gardening than, 'Er, I think those might be eggplants' and whose plot doesn't need to be hidden in the far corner, where it won't be seen from the park or the main road. Many thanks, Jinglong! However, I've one little chore still to attend to. Once upon a time I promised Evil Editor Sue that I'd write something about lawnmowers. Since then, we've progressed from Hurt Looks to Gentle Reminders, and lately to Gentle Reminders with Threats of Violence ... so now it's crunch time.

Let me start by having a little gripe. What is it about Canberrans that they seem to love their lawns while hating their mowers? The sound of mower engines being tortured is probably drifting over your suburb as you read this. Or maybe not?

**Perhaps you're one of the sick puppies that can't wait to get out there in the sunlight, thrashing your own mower to death and scalping your lawn within an inch of the subsoil?**

There are names for such goings-on, and for the dreadful people



involved, but Editor Sue probably won't let me use them in a family-friendly publication like this one. More's the pity.

You think I'm exaggerating the mower-abuse thing? Stick around: it's survey time.

[Q1] How many of you know if your mower has an air cleaner? [Q2] How many of you use a funnel *with a strainer* when you add fuel? Or (a harder question) ... [Q3] How many of you think unleaded petrol is anything like a decent fuel, rather than the product of an improper union between paint-stripper and fire starter?

And (a really hard one now): [Q4] How many of you think that it's *good* for your mower to be run flat out, on nearly full throttle for as long as possible, particularly on a stinking-hot summer day?

Answers [Sue. Can you maybe put the answers to the questions in 18-point, with bold red ink?]

Q1: A trick question, they *all* do, and perhaps this will suggest something you might like to be doing, and soon? [And you lot with the 4-strokes: change the oil, for pity's sake!]

Q2: What, you maybe think the yuck that sooner or later will fall off the tree/fuel can/your hat/whatever is *healthy* for your mower? Really?

Q3: Trust me—while there are good environmental reasons for modern fuels to be the way they are, they're harsher, chemically, than they used to be, and lack some of the engine-friendly lubrication properties of older (leaded) fuel. All you need is a bit of dirt mixed in (see both previous questions) to turn modern-day unleaded fuel into a first-class, abrasive, engine-wrecker.

Q4. No, it (bleep)-well isn't! Do your mower a favour and cut the revs back whenever you can.

**Try taking your ear-muffs off, then you can share in the pain you are causing!**

There, I've got that off my chest. I feel sooo much better. If some of the answers help explain why you now need a new mower, keep reading. Here are a couple of photos of quite different examples of the common or garden-variety lawnmower. Both were killed off by sheer neglect—and if either of them looks familiar, feel free to suffer your guilty conscience in silence, OK? But, even dead, they will help me point out a thing or two you might find useful.

Firstly, look at the red mower, in Photo A. The air-cleaner is the black thingie sitting below the rest of the black plastic covering the

fuel tank etc. Notice how there is a little bit of blue visible inside the black grille? Yup, a nice clean new element: rarer in suburbia than the legless lizard. True, the air-cleaner is low to the ground where it will be exposed to as much dirt as possible, and will need more frequent cleaning.

That's not so with the green mower in Photo B. See how it has a long corrugated tube running to the air cleaner located near the top of the handle? In theory, a really good design, it keeps the air-cleaner element up and out of the dust. In practice: a real turkey. Look closely and you'll see that the tube has a gap, where it's become disconnected near the top. We'll say nothing about the cap that is missing from the very top of the air-cleaner. Obviously, some dill of an owner removed it in the course of replacing the air-filter element, and now it's just perfect for collecting possum poop/spiders/all available yuck falling from trees, the shed roof etc. But the best part of the disaster is when the tube at the bottom perishes (did I mention that petrol isn't good for rubber?), develops holes, and proceeds to suck up dirt and grass clippings at a great rate.

The green mower has an alloy base. These stubbornly refuse to rust, unlike the steel base of the red mower. If you look carefully you'll see rust-holes in the red-painted metal near where the handle bolts to the steel base.

**Hands up anyone who thinks wet grass clippings aren't going to cause steel to rust? Hands up anyone who believes in Tinkerbell, er, factory rust-proofing?**

On the other hand, wet grass-clippings can cause an alloy base to become brittle, as can too much exposure to sea air. It doesn't always happen, and the issue is only going to cause a problem if your soil has lots of loose stones the size of marbles or bigger. Greenie is a case in point: I've circled, in black, a spot where the base has started to crack from impact-damage, just behind the front wheel.

Now, getting back to the handles: the red mower has a handle that will be much nicer to use for a longer period of time. Those extra bends allow your hands a more powerful grip, both for pushing and for cornering.

OK, two more things to point out. If you have chooks and want to give them grass clippings, buy something like the red one. See the muffler, the oval-shaped thing with holes, low and at the front of the engine? The exhaust gas is ejected out through the holes, i.e. sideways. Greenie, on the other hand, has a muffler that fires the exhaust straight down, *into* the grass. That won't hurt your lawn but the chooks would strongly prefer that you didn't fumigate their clippings with hot exhaust gas. (And yes, greenie is a two-stroke, that's why

the manufacturer is trying to hide the exhaust, in the hope that we won't notice the blue smoke and the distinctive smell.)

Still on the subject of clippings, make sure you have a look under any mower you are considering buying. It will hopefully have a round (rather than oval-shaped) plate to which the blades bolt. So-called mulching mowers have four blades to shred the grass more efficiently and to pack it more tightly into the catcher but, unsurprisingly, these are sold at a premium price. Sometimes the economy model has an identical base and an identical round plate but with only two blades fitted. And yes, they can potentially (if in doubt, ask!!) be fitted with a second pair of blades for an instant performance upgrade.

Finally, an idea to make life easier for both yourself and your mower. For those times when the grass is too thick—or more often too wet—to use a grass-catcher, perhaps the local mower place can sell you an ejector chute that will attach where the grass-catcher normally goes. The chute flicks the clippings sideways but its real advantage is that it won't clog up in the same way as the mower would without chute and with the safety flap down. No, you don't want to get clever and simply wire the safety flap up and out of the way—it's there for a reason.

**If you don't believe me, check your life insurance, wire the flap up, start your mower and run over a few largish stones.**

Stones make exciting noises as they bounce off the house, the (oops) car or (double oops) the car belonging to the really bad-ass guy who was driving past on his way to the gym. He looks as though he too is probably going to start making exciting noises ... this could be interesting.

OK, I guess we'll have to leave it there, I can see you're in a hurry to be off. 'Bye, now.

—Terry Williams, former convenor, Oaks Estate, (photos and story)






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# Speaker report: Snake tips

In August this year Ross Bennett gave us a presentation on snakes, and in particular presented his pet red-bellied black snake, which he brought in a travel bag for us to admire. And admire we did, the beautiful and placid fellow.

Ross is a former ranger in Victoria and later with ACT Parks, and has decades of experience in handling and dealing with snakes of all types. He gets very irritated by the sheer volume of misinformation persistently spread around, much of it total rubbish.

Here are some snake *facts*, taken from his talk and various herpetological websites.

## Snakes are cool

1. Snakes are NOT mindless, aggressive, human-eating creatures that attack without provocation. The species in Australia that attack without provocation include sharks, crocodiles and *homo sapiens*; most others do so for food or self-defence.

### All native snake species in Australia are protected.

2. Snakes perform an essential role in nature and should be allowed to get on with it.

3. Maybe it's not even a snake you have seen, but a legless lizard or a blue-tongue.

4. Snakes by nature are shy and inoffensive. They're more afraid of you than you are of them: after all, you tower over any snake like a giant. Leave it alone and let it escape to safety.

5. Snakes are not faster than humans on land. In his decades of exposure to snakes Ross has never met one that gave persistent chase; in his experience stories of snakes that chase people are stories of people persistently attacking the snake, and/or of the snake desperately trying to escape.

## Snakes are like this

6. Brown snakes are common in the ACT, but they don't always appear brown: sometimes they're quite



Harmless tree snake (photo: Matt Mawson)

dark and sometimes even greenish. They're also comparatively aggressive, i.e. self-defensive. Red-bellied black snakes are relatively placid and predate upon brown snakes, so this species in the garden is a good sign.

### All snakes are DEAF, so it's useless banging things to scare them away.

7. Snakes may come to your area because they are thirsty.

8. Snakes are most active in the warmer months, especially October to March when they are breeding and feeding. If an area has lots of food, the snakes will be busy catching it.

## Snake tactics

1. Reduce or eliminate snake habitat by clearing away clumps of vegetation and piles of rubbish that might hold snake food (e.g. mice and frogs).

2. People allergic to bee stings seldom panic when they see a bee, so please try not to go to pieces if you see a snake. Behave like a reasoning adult, especially in front of the children. Teach them to value and respect snakes.

3. Snakes greatly dislike cold water, so sprinkling or hosing a snake from a safe distance should drive it away.

4. If you think—but aren't sure—that snakes are living in a particular place, sprinkle flour on the ground to reveal snake movements.

## Don't affright the snake

5. Not all snakes are venomous, but it is wise to assume that any snake you meet is.

6. The most common reason for bites is idiots (usually males) chasing the snake to kill it, and the snake being 'very wicked' defending itself.

7. Something like 1,500 people are bitten each year, about 200 of whom require anti-venom. Australia has wide access to anti-venom, available for all dangerous species

### Deaths owing to snakebite are rare, about 2 to 4 annually.

8. Most snakes have small teeth, including the fangs. They have

(continued on next page)

trouble puncturing stout leather boots. It can help to wear snake-proof gaiters but a frightened snake can always strike higher than any gaiter.

9. Snakes bite generally as a last resort. Many bites are warnings only, involving no venom. Snakes cannot produce unlimited venom; it takes time to replenish it and they must use it economically.

#### Snake rescue

10. If the snake is injured, definitely leave it alone. Like humans they can become very aggressive when hurt. Phone for help (see below).

#### Where to get help

*Snake Removal:* the ACT Wildlife Rangers won't remove them from our gardens or our garden sheds. If there's no food in the shed then the snake will leave, so the best remedy is to leave the door open for a while. Keep the shed foodless.

*Injured Snakes:* phone

- Canberra Connect on 13-22-81 (24 hours) and the nearest Ranger will be contacted.

Say whether you're north or south of the lake.

- RSPCA on 1300-777-221 (business hours), 0413-495-031 (after hours).
- ACT Wildlife on 04-323-000-33 (24 hours), [www.actwildlife.net](http://www.actwildlife.net)

#### What to do if you're bitten

1. Stay as calm and still as possible. This helps stop venom from spreading through the lymphatic system.
2. Apply a compression bandage firmly over the wound and immobilise the affected limb. The first URL at the foot of this article has clear pictorial instructions.
3. Send for help. If you're alone, exert yourself as little as possible.
4. Do NOT try to kill or capture the snake. Instead, try to identify it.
5. Do NOT apply a tourniquet. This can permanently damage the limb.
6. Do NOT cut, wash or even suck the bite. This is old and obsolete advice.

7. Do NOT apply any antiseptics or chemicals.

8. Do NOT give any alcohol or medication.

9. Do NOT let the victim walk or run around.

10. Do NOT take off the compression bandage until you get to the hospital, even if feeling comfortable—people have died prematurely this way. Let the hospital take it off.

#### More information

A good website to start learning to identify snakes Australia-wide is:

[www.whatsnakeisthat.com.au/](http://www.whatsnakeisthat.com.au/)

You might like to read Ross's book, *Reptiles & Frogs of the Australian Capital Territory*. It's in the Australian National Botanical Gardens bookshop, and also the ACT Library system.

ACT Government leaflet, *Living with Snakes*

<http://tinyurl.com/pkbl7sp>

—Walter Steensby

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COGS's resident masterchef Glynis says she originally found these recipes in a magazine but has since made her own flavoursome changes and embellishments.

## Broad bean, yoghurt and mint soup

Serves 4 people

### Ingredients

- 1 onion or leek, chopped
- 1 stick of celery, thinly sliced
- 1 tablespoon olive or sunflower oil
- 3 tablespoons couscous
- 1 generous sprig of thyme
- 350 grams shelled broad beans (about 1.4 kilograms before podding)
- 1 litre vegetable stock
- 100 grams peas (fresh or frozen)
- 7 tablespoons Greek yoghurt
- ½ cup chopped mint leaves

### Method

1. Fry the onion (or leek) and celery gently in the oil in a covered saucepan over a low heat for about 10 minutes until very tender.
2. Tip in the couscous, add the thyme and cook for another minute, uncovered.
3. Add the broad beans, pour in the stock and season with pepper. Bring to the boil, simmer for about 5 minutes, then tip in the peas and cook for a further 5 minutes.
4. Remove the sprig of thyme and purée the soup in batches in a blender or food processor, then return to the rinsed-out pan. (If you've got a hand blender, use it in the pan.)
5. Shortly before serving, reheat the soup thoroughly. Take the pan off the heat and stir in 1 tablespoon of the yoghurt and the chopped mint. Continue to stir in the yoghurt, 1 tablespoon at a time, until it's all incorporated. Taste for seasoning, then serve in warmed bowls with an extra spoonful of yoghurt stirred into each and a grinding of black pepper on top.



## Broad bean and pea hommus with mascarpone cheese and sourdough

Serves 4 people

### Ingredients

- 300 grams fresh or frozen peas
- 300 grams shelled broad beans (just over 1 kilograms before podding)
- 4 teaspoons olive or sunflower oil
- 2 garlic cloves, peeled
- zest of 2 lemons
- juice of 1 lemon
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil (for drizzling over the bread)
- 8 slices sourdough bread, halved
- 125 grams mascarpone cheese
- 50 grams pea shoots (or use watercress)

### Method

1. Tip the peas and beans into a large pan of salted boiling water, then cook for 3 minutes. Drain, cool under cold water, then drain again thoroughly.
2. Put the 4 tablespoons oil in a pan, heat gently, then add the garlic. Cook for 3 minutes, very, very gently, until the oil is infused and the garlic has softened but is not coloured. Tip the oil and garlic into a jug and cool.
3. Whizz the peas, beans and almost all the zest in a food processor, then trickle in the garlicky oil. Add the garlic cloves, almost all the lemon juice and 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil. The hommus should be swirling around the bowl nicely by this point, but not be too fine in texture. Scrape the sides down if you need to.
4. Season well—you'll need about 1 teaspoon sea salt and lots of black pepper. Add the rest of the lemon juice to taste. Spoon into a dish, swirl the top, then drizzle over the remaining extra virgin olive oil.
5. To serve, toast the bread, then spread with the mascarpone cheese. Dollop a good spoonful of hommus onto each piece, drizzle with a little more olive oil, scatter with the remaining zest, then grind over a little black pepper. Top with a few pea shoots and serve.



—Glynis Kennedy (recipes and photos)



## Permaculture courses in the Canberra region

### Fermented drinks (including booze)

Weekend 21/22 November 2015

### Introduction to permaculture with John Champagne

Weekend 5/6 December 2015

### Beginners beekeeping workshop

Sunday 20 March 2016

Bookings essential

More information and online bookings at:  
[www.permacultureexchange.org.au](http://www.permacultureexchange.org.au)  
E: [admin@permacultureexchange.org.au](mailto:admin@permacultureexchange.org.au)  
T: Penny on 0400 165 403

COGS members  
get the 'early-bird'  
price!

Permaculture  
eXchange

## Beautiful Holiday House

Just across the road from the beach at Garden Bay,  
over the hill from Malua Bay surf beach

Two minutes walk to a sandy beach good for  
swimming, snorkelling or teaching children to swim.  
Easy drive to many other lovely beaches

House sleeps eight, with a large fenced garden  
where children can play within sight ■ Disabled  
access and bathroom ■ Pets welcome ■ Cool sea  
breeze in summer, warmer than Canberra in winter  
Reasonable rates ■ Only 166 km from Canberra

View at [www.maluabayhouse.com](http://www.maluabayhouse.com)

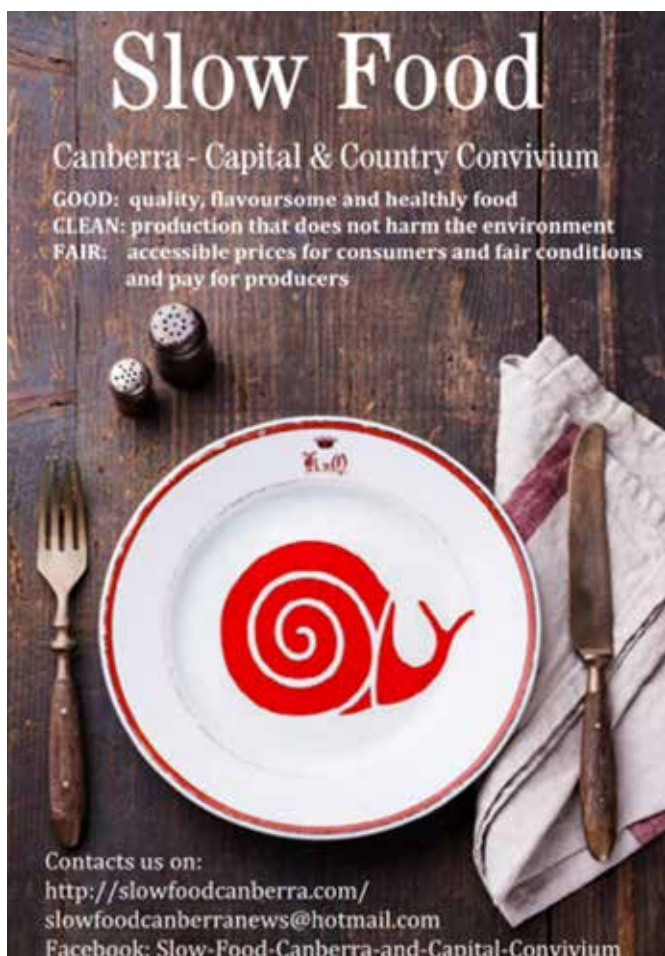
Telephone Brian or Jackie on 6254 4977 or  
0422 630 665 for prices and bookings,  
or email [briangolledge@yahoo.com.au](mailto:briangolledge@yahoo.com.au)



## Slow Food

Canberra - Capital & Country Convivium

GOOD: quality, flavoursome and healthy food  
CLEAN: production that does not harm the environment  
FAIR: accessible prices for consumers and fair conditions  
and pay for producers



Contacts us on:  
<http://slowfoodcanberra.com/>  
[slowfoodcanberranews@hotmail.com](mailto:slowfoodcanberranews@hotmail.com)  
Facebook: Slow-Food-Canberra-and-Capital-Convivium

## Advertising in Canberra Organic

Canberra Organic is a unique way to reach  
people in the Canberra region who have an  
interest in organics, gardening and the  
environment.

Our circulation is around 700.

### Advertising rates

Payment is to be made in advance. COGS  
members are eligible for the price in brackets.

Size	Issue	4 Issues
1/8 page	\$9 (\$7)	\$30 (\$25)
1/4 page	\$18 (\$15)	\$60 (\$50)
1/2 page	\$36 (\$30)	\$120 (\$100)
Full page	\$72 (\$60)	\$240 (\$200)

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

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



# Canberra Organic Growers Society MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Please contact members@cogs.asn.au with any enquiries

## Member details—Please print clearly, especially your email address

*A membership year runs from September 1st of the current year to August 31st of the following year.*

<b>Adult 1</b>	First name _____	<b>Child 1</b>	Name _____
	Surname _____		Age _____
	Occupation _____	<b>Child 2</b>	Name _____
<b>Adult 2</b>	First name _____		Age _____
	Surname _____	<b>Child 3</b>	Name _____
	Occupation _____		Age _____
	_____	<b>Child 4</b>	Name _____
	_____		Age _____
<b>Address</b>	Street _____	<b>Phone</b>	Home _____
	Suburb/Town _____		Mobile _____
	State _____ P/code _____	<b>Email address</b>	_____
		Receive COGS magazine by email <input type="checkbox"/> or post? <input type="checkbox"/>	

(tick relevant box)

## Volunteer details

*COGS is a volunteer organisation and thus relies entirely on volunteers for its continued operation.*

As a member, in which areas would you be prepared to volunteer some time or skills?

\_\_\_\_\_

## Garden plot request

For which garden(s) do you want to be on the waiting list? \_\_\_\_\_

## Membership agreement and signature

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

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

## Payment details

**Memberships are for a family unit of one or two adults and their children under 18 years of age.**

*Full membership costs \$30. Concession membership costs \$18.*

*Concessions are available to Healthcare card holders, pensioners and full-time students.*

**Both adults must be eligible for the concession rate to apply AND evidence must be provided.**

*An additional joining fee of \$5 (\$3 for concessions) applies to all new memberships. This only need be paid ONCE.*

*Applications will be sent back if there is no reference for direct deposits.*

<b>Member</b>	<b>Full</b>	<b>Concession</b>
New	<input type="checkbox"/> \$35.00	<input type="checkbox"/> \$21.00
Renewal	<input type="checkbox"/> \$30.00	<input type="checkbox"/> \$18.00

**Please send your completed application and payment (no cash) to:**

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

### Payment by direct deposit to

Canberra Organic Growers Society Inc.  
Westpac Bank, Petrie Plaza, Canberra

BSB 032-719

Account 291247

Date / /

Reference \_\_\_\_\_ (please use your surname)

### Payment by cheque/money order to

'Canberra Organic Growers Society' or 'COGS'

Payment attached to completed application

**Direct deposit is the preferred payment method.**

## COGS Administration only

Membership No. \_\_\_\_\_ Bank ID \_\_\_\_\_ Receipt No. \_\_\_\_\_



# summer planting guide

## Mulch and compost

In summer it is a good idea to mulch your garden beds to help keep the soil cool and moist. One experiment showed that a 4 cm layer of straw reduced evaporation by 73%. Be careful not to lay down a thick layer of sawdust or lawn clippings that can pack down to form an impenetrable barrier to water. Soil with lots of compost contains all the nutrients your plants need for strong, healthy growth. In addition well-composted soil retains water and acts like a sponge to keep your plants moist through dry summer days.

## Heat protection

On days of extreme temperature your plants may need to be physically protected from the heat. This can be achieved by covering plants with shade cloth secured on a frame e.g. weldmesh or irrigation pipe bent over to form a tunnel, with shade cloth secured by pegs.

## Watering

Try not to water the leaves of plants that are susceptible to fungal diseases (e.g. tomatoes, cucumbers, pumpkins and zucchinis) and try to water individual plants thoroughly, rather than watering a whole area.

Always follow water restrictions and check soil moisture before watering—a rostered watering day doesn't mean you must water.

## Weeds

Keep weeds down. They compete with your plants for food, water and sunlight. It is best to tackle them when they are small—before removing them becomes an exhausting exercise.

## Pests

Pests can multiply over summer. Don't reach for the pesticides. Observe if there are natural predators present, remembering that there will be a delay between the appearance of the pest and the subsequent build-up of its predators.

If you must spray, use an environmentally benign spray. Read books such as Jackie French's *Natural Pest Control*.

## Harvesting

Make sure you harvest your crop regularly—in most cases this will encourage your plants to continue cropping and you can enjoy your produce at its peak. Remember to leave space in your vegie patch for those winter vegetables that prefer to be planted in late summer – early autumn. Brassicas and other

winter crops need time to mature before the extreme cold of winter sets in.

	DEC	JAN	FEB
<b>Bush beans</b>	S	S	
<b>Beetroot</b>	S	S	S
<b>Broccoli</b>	ST	ST	T
<b>Brussel sprouts</b>	ST	ST	T
<b>Cabbage</b>	ST	ST	T
<b>Carrots</b>	S	S	S
<b>Cauliflower</b>	ST	ST	T
<b>Celery</b>	T	T	S
<b>Chicory</b>	S	S	S
<b>Chinese cabbage</b>	S	S	
<b>Cucumber</b>	ST	T	
<b>Endive</b>	S	S	S
<b>Kohlrabi</b>	ST	ST	T
<b>Leeks</b>	S	S	
<b>Lettuce</b>	ST	ST	ST
<b>Marrows</b>	T		
<b>Parsnips</b>	S	S	S
<b>Potatoes</b>	S	S	
<b>Radish</b>	S	S	S
<b>Silverbeet</b>	ST	ST	T
<b>Squash</b>	ST		
<b>Swedes</b>		S	S
<b>Sweet corn</b>	ST	T	
<b>Tomatoes</b>	T	T	
<b>Turnips</b>		S	S

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

This table is a guide only—observe the seasonal weather patterns before deciding when to plant, as there will often be distinct differences in summer weather from one year to the next.

Planting times will vary for different varieties of the one vegetable e.g. December plantings of heading lettuce varieties should be successful; while February plantings should be the butterhead varieties.

# What's On



## Want to contribute?

We'd love to hear from you!  
Please send contributions to:  
[editor@cogs.asn.au](mailto:editor@cogs.asn.au)

	Deadline	Published
Autumn	mid-January	mid-February
Winter	mid-April	mid-May
Spring	mid-July	mid-August
Summer	mid-October	mid-November



People's Climate March

Sunday 29 November

Federation Mall,  
Parliament House

[www.peoplesclimate.org.au/](http://www.peoplesclimate.org.au/)

## Have we got your email address?

The COGS Committee is endeavouring to capture members' email addresses in the COGS database.

This will allow the committee to send out reminders for upcoming events that may be of interest to COGS members.

If you would like to be included on the distribution list, please forward your name to ...

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

## COGS green manure mixes Now available —

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



This year there are two mixes available:

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

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

Bulk deliveries to community gardens can also be arranged. **Available for \$5.00 per bag.**

Please contact Glynis on 6251 6641  
or email [glynken@iinet.net.au](mailto:glynken@iinet.net.au)

## Find us on Facebook

Do you want local growing guidance on what to plant, when and how, geared to the current season?

Or more knowledge about soil nutrition, pH, weeds, compost or El Niño?

Maybe you want up-to-date reminders about local food economy events?

You can have all this and more when you join close to 1,200 COGS Facebook followers by finding COGS on Facebook.

Just search for the Canberra Organic Growers Society and 'like' the page to receive interesting links and tips in your newsfeed or to discuss a topic.



# FARMERS MARKET

## AT BUNGENDORE

### 2nd and 4th Saturdays

### 9am to 1pm

### Bungendore Memorial Hall



Hamasa's drawing (see story, page 4)