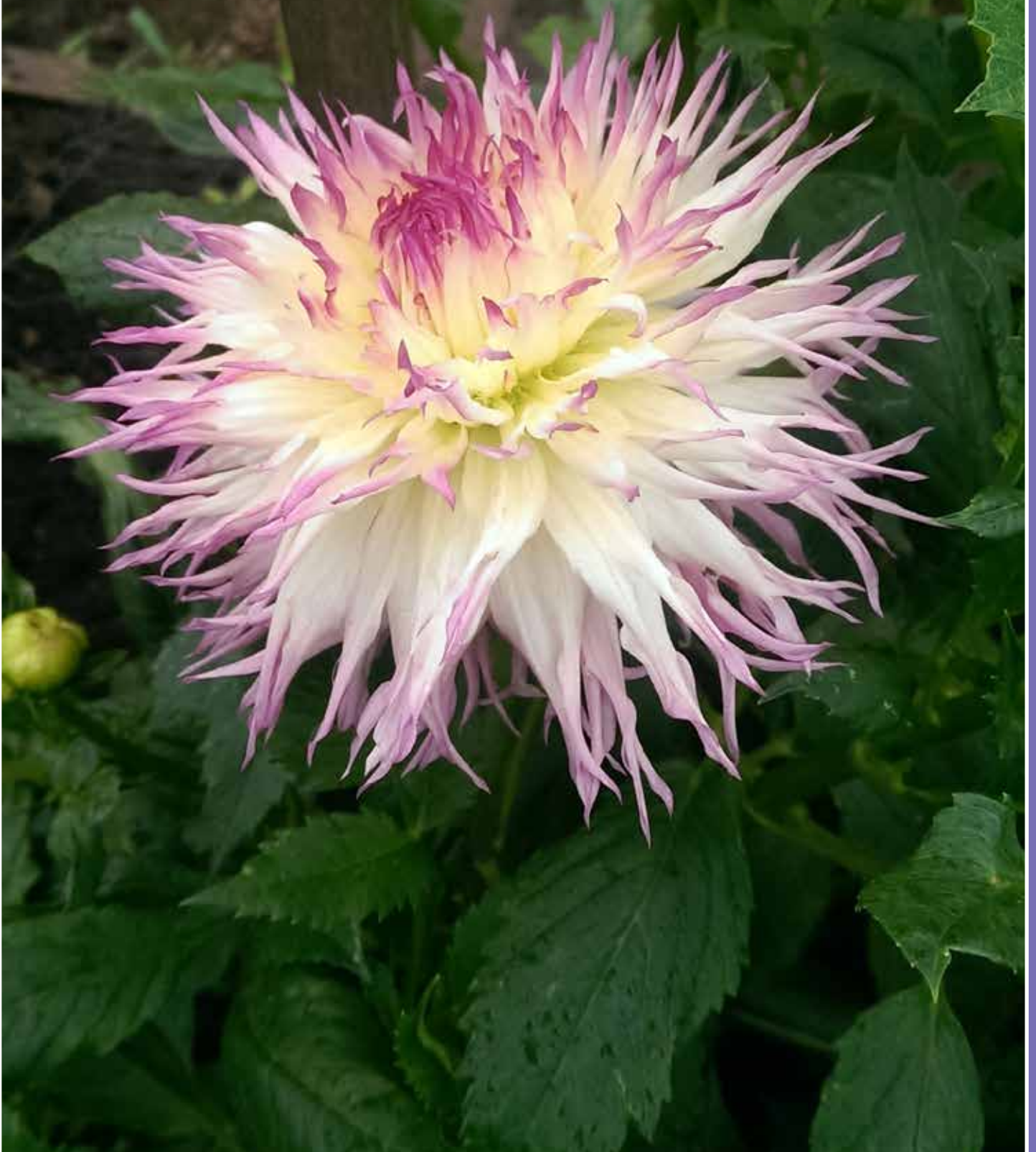


# Canberra Organic







# Mulch Q&A

The Diggers Club has kindly allowed COGS to republish this article. You can find out more by visiting the Diggers website: [www.diggers.com.au](http://www.diggers.com.au)

\* \* \*



**Bill Bampton, head gardener at Heronswood, explains their success with making and using mulch**

## **Why should I mulch with clear plastic/black plastic?**

Plastic mulches of various colours are widely used in commercial vegetable production. Black plastic is most commonly used in strawberry production. Its use raises some environmental concerns (see table on following page).

One of the most interesting aspects of plastic mulch is the use of coloured plastic to manipulate production. Tomatoes can yield earlier and more heavily when mulched with red plastic. The plastic intensifies red light increasing plant photosynthesis. The effect of colour is still

being researched with different plants and colour combinations producing quite different results.

## **How does the application of mulch affect soil temperature?**

Mulch has a complicated effect on soil temperature. It is very much determined by the type of mulch material, season and climate. Thick organic mulches have a lot of air pockets and act as insulators. The result is cooler soils in summer but they also mean cooler winter temperatures.

Frost settles on mulch in winter. The mulch acts as an insulator during the day preventing the soil from warming. At night it prevents heat loss into the air, meaning colder air temperature and frost potential.

A moist, weed-free, compact soil is far more frost resistant. Counter to this, black plastic mulch in winter acts as a conductor, both

heating during the day and releasing heat at night.

## **What is the best time of year to apply mulch?**

Again there is no one size fits all answer. In temperate Australia I would recommend mulching in late winter/spring. The soil is at its maximum moisture content and fear of frost is over. If you have lots of bulbs in your garden I recommend mulching before they emerge to avoid having to mulch on tiptoes.

Avoid mulching in the dry heat of summer as you will prevent any water from reaching your plants and most of the soil moisture will have already evaporated.

Mulching works wonders in the aesthetic department so before a garden open day or visit from a dignitary it's a good idea. If this is in the height of summer or deep winter aesthetic mulch should be

*Heronswood's driveway border is mulched with fine pebbles*





applied as what I call lip gloss, not too thick. In areas that receive wet season rain mulch can be applied beforehand to mitigate erosion.

**When should I use chip-bark as mulch? Is it wise to use it around the vegetable garden?**

Bark chips make excellent mulch especially for trees and shrubs. Having fewer fine particles wood chip is very effective at allowing water infiltration. The particles can be screened to ensure a particle size of not less than 16-20 cm. Wood chip is relatively slow to decompose, making a longer lasting mulch.

You have to be careful where you source your wood chips from. The local arborist may seem a good option but they deal with mainly diseased trees. What disease will you be bringing in to your garden?

Woodchip is low in nitrogen, good to suppress weeds, less useful for gross feeding crops. It is also slow to break down and large particles can interfere with seed bed preparation. For this reason I would not use it on vegetables.

**What is the best mulch for the vegetable garden?**

At Heronswood we use organic lucerne mulch on our kitchen garden. It allows good water infiltration but also insulates the soil. On our parterre, partially for aesthetic reasons, we use a thin 50 mm layer of our own compost. This compost layer is regularly ‘tickled’ with a small rake to suppress weeds.

**How does imitation turf as a mulch differ from grass in terms of its effect on the soil?**

The biggest problem with synthetic turf, apart from environmental impact of manufacture, is its extreme heat in summer. How hot? On a 37°C day in Provo, Utah synthetic turf reached 93°C! Natural grass rarely gets over 38°C and is usually lower than air temperature. Need I say more?

USE	MULCH TYPE	PROs	CONs
ANNUALS: Vegetable and flower gardens	Lucerne	Certified organic available. Good water infiltration. Adds to soil fertility.	Weed or lucerne seeds can germinate. Rustic look not suited to all ornamental gardens.
	Compost	Sustainable resource. Can be made at home for free. Adds to soil fertility.	Weed seeds can germinate. Heavy applications can affect water infiltration.
	Green manures	Home grown mulch. Adds to soil fertility.	N/A
	Mushroom compost	Looks tidy. Adds to soil fertility. Good way to recycle waste.	Can be highly alkaline. Be sure of source as chemicals are used in non-organic mushroom production.
	Sugar cane	Good water infiltration. Adds to soil fertility. Generally weed free.	Carbon footprint for transport to southern states.
PERENNIALS, TREES & SHRUBS	Lawn clippings	High nitrogen. Readily available from home.	Weed seeds can germinate. Heavy applications can affect water infiltration.
	Giant Miscanthus, Canna and Banana	Home grown mulch. Self sufficient resources. Good weed suppressors. Adds to soil fertility.	Rustic look not suited to all ornamental gardens.
	Council mulch	Good way to recycle waste.	Difficult to regulate the inputs. No safeguards against chemicals in material. Heavy applications can affect water infiltration.
	Pebbles and crushed rock	Bushfire retardant. Long lasting. Good water infiltration.	Can be highly alkaline. Need to check source as chemicals are used in non-organic mushroom production.
	Woodchip	Can control particle size. Long lasting. Good water infiltration. Good weed suppression.	Need to be sure of the source - avoid treated pine.
OTHER	Artificial turf	Words fail me! I guess a 'no water' play surface.	The work of the devil Extremely hot in summer.
	Plastic sheet	Raises soil temp in winter/early spring. Good weed suppression. Good moisture retention (best used with drip). Protects strawberry fruit from spoiling through soil contact. Can use colour to manipulate production.	Poor rain infiltration. Looks ugly. High input resource. Waste disposal issues. Summer heat.

**Can I use carpet as mulch?**

Carpet can function as mulch but has a few pitfalls. As a recycled manufactured product you cannot be sure what it is made out of or what chemicals it has been treated or glued with.

I have found it can make a snug home for rodents and other pests

to tunnel under. It may prevent moisture penetration. It looks pretty bad as it breaks down. It is perhaps best used as a weed barrier on pathways where you want nothing to grow.

Source: *Diggers Spring Garden 2015*

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

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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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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.







# Editor's note

Happy 2016! Fortunately the predicted El Niño weather event does not seem to be happening and we have had some wonderful falls of rain. Every time our rainwater tanks get low it rains so I have been able to keep my vegetables and fruit gardens well watered. In fact I recently harvested the best rhubarb I have ever grown. And look at my giant beans (see photo right)!



It looks as though the rain has also been kind to Ken Farley's dahlias and it is nice to be able to feature a flower on our cover.

A big thank you to those who send in contributions to the magazine. *Canberra Organic* is your magazine and I am keen to publish items that will be of interest to our readers. As a lover of poetry I have been particularly enjoying Gerry Jacobson's tankas. Although I sometimes write haiku, I didn't know much about tankas before I started to receive Gerry's, and given that this very old form of poetry—dating back some 1200 years—is about nature, seasons and strong emotions, it is entirely appropriate for a gardening magazine.

Gerry's tanka in this issue (p. 19) is next to the lovely tribute Walter wrote for COGS pioneer, Shirley Carden. People like Shirley are the backbone of community organisations like COGS and she will be remembered for the wonderful contribution she made.

Interest in gardening—and particularly organic gardening—grows. Not only is the ACT government promoting the idea of allowing gardening on nature strips in Canberra, but I've noticed a healthy interest in organic gardening among the people—particularly young people—I am working with. A group of us are growing organic carrots and several other work colleagues have thriving gardens producing all kinds of edibles.

Interest in organic gardening is truly global. On a recent visit to Brussels I was thrilled to see this insect house in Parc de Wolvendael, in central Brussels (see below).

See you at COGS annual general meeting at 7.30 pm on Tuesday 22 March.

—Sue

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### This month's cover:

Organic gardening is not just about fruit and vegetables. Dahlia flower (photo: Ken Farley)



## Dickson community garden

**Dickson community garden convenor, Michele England, talks to Veronica, who has a lifelong love of gardening.**

‘Gardening has taught me a lot about life and the challenges we face. Like the possums that feast in the garden who I now feed rhubarb leaves destined for the compost. Despite the challenges I find gardening relaxing and enjoyable and something that has helped me work through many difficult situations.’—Veronica

Ninety-three years of growing, nurturing and sharing: that’s how Veronica sees her life with plants and people.

It all started on the north island of New Zealand in the 1920s where Veronica was born and grew up on the family farm. With six siblings there was plenty of work to do and from a young age Veronica revelled in work and nature. Preferring the outdoors to domestic duties, she did all sorts of jobs on the small, self-sufficient farm—ploughing with horses, feeding the pigs, chickens and other assorted livestock, reaping the wheat and piling it up into haystacks—all without electricity or mechanical aids.

Leaving school at 12½ Veronica has spent a lifetime creating and tending gardens: gardens for people with disabilities in several L’Arche communities, both in Australia and Canada; as well as gardens in remote parts of the Western Australian outback.

Veronica believes that gardening alongside other people helps break down language, cultural and religious differences.

She also thinks that gardening gives people a sense of purpose, responsibility and gets them in touch with the earth—not to



*Veronica in her abundant plot at Dickson*

mention food and stories to share across a table!

I tell Veronica she has green thumbs and digits but she credits good healthy soil as her secret, particularly praising earthworms for their marvellous work in turning food scraps, manure and grass into nutritious humus for the plants in her garden. Her favourite activity is making compost, as evident at the Dickson community garden where Veronica has worked miracles in creat-

ing sweet dark compost for all to use.

I asked her, ‘what is your favourite vegetable?’, to which she replied with a cheeky smile, ‘I love them all. I remember when going to school I would pull up the swedes grown for cattle and eat them like an apple.’

Veronica does however have a strong connection to trees, loving their longevity, structure and strength: ‘That they grow from a tiny seed is amazing.’



# Around the COGS gardens



*Veronica making her magic compost*

Veronica's nurturing abilities are clearly seen in her plot. That plot had been abandoned and thought unworkable due to the shade and large overhanging eucalyptus, but Veronica has worked wonders, producing most things including beans, tomatoes, carrots, garlic, capsicum, eggplant, pumpkin, zucchini and corn. The Dickson Community is very pleased to have Veronica's experience and warm nature blooming in our garden.



*Thanks to Ray, Dickson garden's resident handyman, hoses are kept tidy and easy to use on Ray's excellent hose reel devices*

## Mitchell community garden

Over the last few months the weather has changed from warm to cold to warm to hot and the calendar tells me that even though it seems that summer isn't all that old, winter will be fast approaching. I look around the garden and see that others have thought about their broccoli, cabbage and cauliflowers, and once again I make a mental note to myself that I also need to think about getting the brassica seedlings in earlier this year (hmmm, that should have been last year!). I think this but I know that come the end of summer, I will still not have had the heart to pull up the tomatoes, beans and pumpkins and it will all be too late again. Summer has been a funny season with crops developing whenever they wanted to. I guess they were trying to adapt to the four seasons in a week Canberra dished up again this year. I couldn't believe the size of my neighbour's corn and pumpkins while mine were only as high as bee's knees. Guess I was too risk-averse and overly worried about the frost. Most of our plants have been productive but there has been a bit of moaning about some of the corn this year. I think the harlequin bug took too strong a liking to them.

**Our garden is looking great at the moment with working bee attendances up and gardeners taking on day-to-day maintenance of their own surrounds.**

I think we must have some fairies in the garden because sometimes we will turn up to find the whole area has been mown or some other work done like path maintenance without notice. Many thanks to the garden fairies.

One thing that has really struck me recently is the fantastic cultural diversity we have in our garden. I am thinking we need a few cooking master classes to learn how our produce might be used in the countries represented by our gardeners.

There has been the usual number of people departing or taking up plots so we only occasionally have any spare gardens. One of the people who has returned to the garden after a stint away is Bob McAlister. Bob was a very active treasurer, convenor and jack of all trades at the Mitchell garden for many years. Welcome back Bob and thanks to you and Gwen Bates for all the work you have been doing around the garden. (They must be the garden fairies.) Gwen is now our new convenor and we welcome her to this position.

A couple of our gardeners have had to deal with illness recently. We wish them all the best for their recovery and hope that any visits to the garden help to lift their spirits and assist in the healing process.

A quick thank you to everyone who has contributed to the Mitchell garden over the last few months and particularly to Ian Mitchell who has held the reins as convenor for the last few years. Thanks very much for all your work, Ian.

We at the Mitchell garden wish all our fellow gardeners across Canberra an enjoyable year of dirty fingernails and bounteous crops.

—Keith Murphy (story)

## Holder community garden

Holder gardener Heather Campbell alerts us to a couple of unexpected garden issues—parsnip rash and bitterness in cucumbers—she encountered in her plot this year.

### Parsnip rash

If you are out in the sunshine enjoying pulling up your old parsnips to collect the seed ... watch out!

Known as phytophotodermatitis or 'Lime Disease' (not to be confused with Lyme Disease) this problem can occur when your skin comes into contact with the now tall foliage and stems of your parsnip plants.

If this happens while the sun is shining, a chemical reaction makes the skin hypersensitive to ultraviolet light.

The resulting contact can cause blistering and redness on the skin which takes some hours or days to appear.

If the plants are wet with dew this can apparently make the condition worse.

Parsnip is not the only plant that can cause this nasty looking dermatitis.

Carrots, parsley, celery, limes and figs are some of the other plants that can cause this skin problem.

The blisters last for two to three days or longer and the resulting red-brown marks can leave permanent scars.

If you suddenly realise you have carried a whole lot of parsnip stalks to the compost in your bare arms, it is best to provide treatment straight away:



*Day 4, after the blisters subsided*

- WASH your arms and hands and COVER the skin immediately.
- Stay out of the sun.

One natural remedy that may be worth investigating suggests a salve of lavender and comfrey.

In the end prevention is the best policy—wear gloves, long sleeves and long pants if you are planning to remove old parsnip.

— Heather Campbell (story and photo)

### References

[dailymail.co.uk/health/article-1306680](http://dailymail.co.uk/health/article-1306680)



### A lovely surprise at the Holder community garden!

*Meredith Hatherly sent in this photo of a family of quails enjoying the Holder garden. Meredith said they didn't stay long enough for her to get a closer photograph but what she did manage to take is a real treat!*



## Bitterness in cucumbers

The first crisp sweet taste of a homegrown cucumber for the season is usually so refreshing but this year ... aaagh ... so bitter. Why?

It seems that there are a number of reasons for bitterness in cucumbers and our recent Canberra weather patterns would seem to be contributing to this phenomenon.

The bitter cucurbitacins that usually inhabit mainly the stalks and leaves of the cucumber plant are sometimes transferred to the fruit due to heat stress, uneven watering, and fluctuations in temperature. As you know, that's just the sort of weather we have experienced over the last few months in Canberra, with some very hot days and quite cool nights, dry periods and then some heavy rainfalls.

The end result is bitter fruit and some suggest that once this happens all the fruit on that vine will be bitter.

There is an old wives' tale that if you cut the end of the cucumber off the stalk end and then rub the ends together in a circular motion across the cut end of the cucumber until it stops frothing, this will draw out the bitterness. The bitterness is usually only apparent in the ends so if you cut out the middle it should still be sweet. I have experimented with this and found it to be successful sometimes and not at other times. This may be due to the age of the fruit picked or that it is a nonsense anyway.

The YouTube clip, *How to remove bitterness in cucumber* demonstrates this technique.

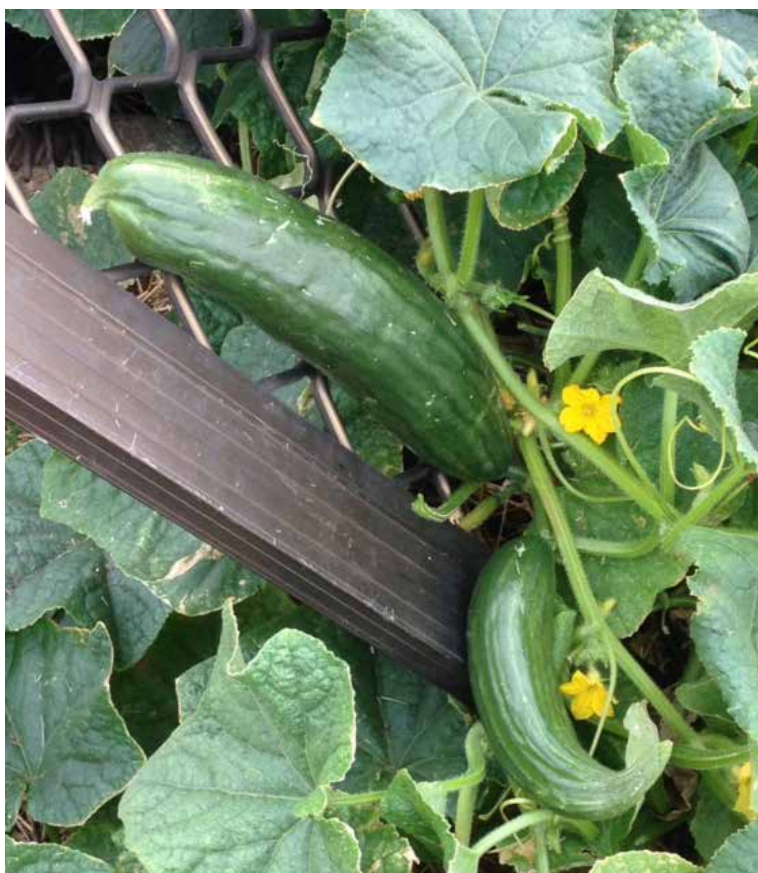
(<http://tinyurl.com/jdwn7sr>)

Whether this works for you or not is another question but if you have a crop of bitter cucumbers you might like to try it, or do as I now do and just eat the middle of the cucumber!

—Heather Campbell  
(story and photos)

### References

Website article, *What causes bitter cucumber*, [www.gardeningknowhow.com/edible/vegetables/cucumber/what-causes-bitter-cucumber.htm](http://www.gardeningknowhow.com/edible/vegetables/cucumber/what-causes-bitter-cucumber.htm)





## Cook community garden

2015 finished up with a working bee and Christmas get-together for lunch, which I am pleased to say involved over 50 per cent of plot holders. Of particular note was the culinary expertise of Mario with his *pricuto*, and home-made wine. The working bee managed to clean up a lot of the dead grass and trees that had accumulated over the winter months. We also managed to put woodchips on the area near the shed to eliminate the weed growth.

The growth of vegetables has been prolific following the rain and hot spell, but I am sure some of the plants don't know what season it is, going to seed or producing with abundance. Cook Garden has accepted the challenge to produce award-winning vegetables for the Horticultural Society Show, if the recent rains don't bring on the growth too soon. Then again, we can't complain about the rain as the garden looks splendid!

—Mike Avent (story; photos as marked)



*Photos (clockwise from top left): David Maish assisting with the plumbing (photo: Mike Avent); John Tuckwell pruning (photo: Mike Avent); Contemplating lunch (photo: Mike Avent); The convenor plumbing (photo: David Maish)*

*Below: Working bee group (photo: Mike Avent)*





## Charnwood community garden

*Everything* has been growing well in the Charnwood garden this season—organic and inanimate structures included!

The fruit trees have been bursting with fruit. The plum trees always do well, but we have also had decent crops of apricots this year (they escaped the last bites of frost when budding). I heard on the garden grapevine that Gita has harvested at least 25 kilograms of blueberries, while the multiple thornless blackberry bushes around the garden have sported masses of berries.

As per usual, summer has seen good crops of zucchini, with the monster marrows being fed to chickens. Tomatoes have been happily growing and slowly ripening and are not being bothered by harlequin beetles as in past years. Most gardeners enjoyed large crops of garlic and the potatoes reproduced quietly in the background.

Some of the gardeners have been very excited to report evidence of frogs and beneficial insects around the frog pond, which was recently revamped.

**We are lucky to have a large, active group of gardeners, which is usually evident at working bees and summer barbecues.**

The involvement of our gardeners was particularly evident at our late-January working bee to construct our big, brand new garden shed.

Over the weekend of 23 to 24 January most of the Charnwood gardeners met at the garden to demolish the old, smaller shed and build the new shed, which was delivered in pieces. To witness the exercise was akin to a 'barn raising' in many ways, with tools, ladders and workers everywhere, being fed and watered intermittently. Thanks to all those involved in the construction process and to COGS for providing the shed, which is a much bigger and more secure option for the storage of our tools and equipment.

Wishing you all a bountiful cool season!  
— Angela Spencer (story)



*Above and below: constructing the new Charwood community garden shed (photos: Jo McMillan)*



## Dahlia growing tips—summer to autumn

### January to March

This time of year is busy as dahlias are growing rapidly and gardeners need to inspect plants on a daily basis to make sure that any issues that can be detected early are dealt with as soon as possible.

From January right through to April, the plants will be growing fast and budding all over.

To get better quality flowers, some side buds and laterals will need to be removed on larger flower dahlias, while smaller flowers benefit from removing the centre stem from the plant and allowing it to branch out from lower stems.

**Disbudding:** Buds are popping all over. Diligently disbudding will reward you with exhibition quality blooms. Two or three headed blooms are of lesser quality because they are much smaller and can be deformed. Leave only one bud.

**Deadheading:** This is critical to keep your dahlia plant producing more blooms so energy is not directed to making seeds. After a dahlia bloom opens, cut it for your indoor display. This will encourage more blooms. Even if you don't cut it, you should deadhead the flower by removing it just as pollen appears for a 'double' plant or when the petals

begin drooping on an 'open-centred' variety. Always cut the bloom at a point that is one node below the bloom (the next node). This will encourage more laterals to produce more blooms.

**Busy, busy doing the routines:** Cleaning out the under-leaves, spraying, watering, fertilising—all this demands your time now. When cleaning out the undergrowth of leaves, allow for at least 30 cm (12 inches) of space above the ground for good air circulation.

**Exhibition:** Whether it is to enter a show or just for your own enjoyment, cut flowers early in the morning or later evening and put the bloom immediately in water.

**Abundance:** If you fail to cut back to new growth, your plants will soon look like brown skeletons. Disbud to assure only one bloom per stem with a nice pair of leaves. You will get a bigger flower, longer stem, and more plant vigour if you do not let every bud blossom. Give your growing plants support. If you have the luxury of multiple stakes, you can put one on either side of your plant and wrap ties around the whole bundle. If not, string the plant staunchly to the stake to

prevent wind damage and give the heavy laterals some support.

As your bloom size dwindles, try double-disbudding, taking off both the extra buds next to the central stem, and also the emerging shoots just below the first leaf pair. This will channel all the energy to the remaining bloom.

**Be vigilant:** Control pests, clean out lower branches, arrest fungus, fertilise, and water properly. Don't worry if your lovely flowers start popping in the centre or getting a bit scraggly—they are responding to the waning light. If you have shade cloth or umbrella protection over your dahlias, remove the cover for extra light. As your plants slow down, cut back on water.

**Keep the bandits at bay:** Aphids, caterpillars and diabolical beetles abound. Try the traditional liquid dishwashing soap applied in a sprayer. If you are fighting powdery mildew, strip off the dusted leaves and spray with a milk-based spray.

### March to April

There are a few important jobs to do during these months, including tagging and deciding which plants you should let go to seed.





**Tag:** Check name tags for accuracy. Move name tags down and tie them around the bottom of the plant so they will still be attached when lopping in May.

**Seedlings:** Now is the time to consider allowing a few blooms to go to seed. Seeds are the genetic lottery; dreadful odds but such a payoff! Simply let the petals fall off and wait until the remaining seed head is brown and dry. Bring into a cool, dry area for germinating.

#### **Late April to May**

The first major frost signals the end of the blooming season.

**Stop watering:** The waning seasonal light prematurely pops centres, weakens stems, and slows down growth. Let nature take its own course and provide growth to the tubers for next year's crop.

**Labels:** Make sure your labels are legible and move them down to the bottom of the plant.

**Lopping:** Lop every plant. That will give the tubers 8 weeks to toughen their skins and go dormant before digging out in July.

Depending on how well your soil drains, you can dig them out before the first frost. When each plant turns brown, cut down to 4 to 5 bamboo-like notches; these act as water seals. Each bamboo-like joint is a mini water seal to help prevent crown rot.

If your plants are in pots, move them to a sheltered area or cover to prevent rain from rotting them. Allow your tubers to go dormant for at least 6 weeks before disinterring. They seem to develop tougher skin if they are allowed to go fully dormant.

—Ken Farley (story and photos)



## Autumn is the time to harvest pumpkins

**W**hy should you bother growing, eating or preserving pumpkins?

Pumpkins are like a horizontal version of Jack's beanstalk with their unstoppable growth.

**I have found that if you grow them in the sweet corn patch they will reach for the sky and you will find your Queensland blues 2 metres off the ground!**

Although some Europeans disdain pumpkins as only fit for stock fodder and Americans cut out their hearts and stick candles in them—and even worse turn them into dessert pies—pumpkins are a sweet, mellow vegetable, the epitome of autumn and a tasty treat.

### **Pumpkins are good for you!**

Anything orange is generally good for you and pumpkins are no exception.

- Pumpkin is a low calorie food that satisfies the appetite.
- 100 grams of pumpkin will give you more than twice the recommended daily intake of vitamin A, which is necessary for healthy skin, mucous membranes and eyes and may give protection against some cancers.
- Pumpkin flesh is rich in dietary fibre; antioxidants such as zeaxanthin, cryptoxanthin and lutein; minerals such as copper, calcium, potassium and phosphorus; and vitamins such as the vitamin B complex group.
- Save your pumpkin seeds as they are loaded with goodies including tryptophan, which helps the production of



*Photo: Sia*

serotonin and promotes good sleep.

### **Growing pumpkins**

The best way to grow pumpkins is to plant a few seeds in an old compost heap when all danger of frost has passed, then just leave them to go rampaging through the garden.

### **Harvesting and preserving pumpkins**

Once the pumpkin vine starts to die off you will be surprised to see how many rather large pumpkins have been lurking under those big leaves. Sacrifice the immature ones and only keep the ones that have changed colour and have hard skin. Leave a little of the stem on your pumpkin to help prevent it rotting.

Rot is the major enemy of storing pumpkins successfully. Some people prop their maturing pumpkins up off the ground so they don't get too wet. You can inure your pumpkins against rot by placing them in a sunny, sheltered spot to harden off for a few weeks before storing them

in a cool, dry, airy, and protected shed. Some say that frost helps this process but you can have too much of a good thing.

Check your stored pumpkins throughout winter and if they look like they won't keep much longer, turn them into soup and freeze to eat at your leisure. Butternuts seem to keep well as do Queensland blues.

### **Cooking with pumpkins**

Pumpkin caramelises when roasted with a little honey, maple syrup or brown sugar enhanced by spices such as ground cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves, ginger and coriander. It offsets the saltiness of bacon or prosciutto and is delicious with fresh sage, thyme and rosemary, pine nuts, cashews, raisins and dates. It goes well with smooth creamy goat's cheese or ricotta, and blue cheese and parmesan with real bite.

### **Pumpkin laksa**

- Cut up half a butternut pumpkin into bite size cubes.
- Bake in the oven drizzled with olive oil until just tender—don't overcook it as it will not hold its shape in the soup.
- Gently heat 2 cups of vegetable stock and about 800 millilitres of coconut milk and add 2 tablespoons of laksa paste (more or less depending on how hot you want your soup), 2 kaffir lime leaves, the juice of 2 limes and 2 tablespoons of Vietnamese fish sauce and 2 tablespoons soy sauce.
- Add a pinch of palm (or brown) sugar. Taste to see if it has a good balance between sweet, sour, salty and savoury.
- Steam or stir fry some Chinese green vegetables so they are softened but still a little crisp.



- Heat up some long-life noodles by soaking them in boiling water for a few minutes.
- Place the noodles in the bottom of large bowls. Add all the solid ingredients then pour over the liquid. (In addition, you might like to add some strips of roasted capsicum, some sautéed chilli, garlic, or prawns or some tofu.)
- Top with bean sprouts, coriander, and mint and a few crushed peanuts and serve.

### **Grilled and roasted pumpkin**

You can cook pumpkin on a grill or griddle.

- Cut very thin slices of pumpkin leaving the skin on.
- Mix oil with aromatics, such as crushed garlic, turmeric, Chinese five spice, cumin, smoked paprika, salt, pepper, and rub into the pumpkin.
- Cook on a chargrill until golden and tender. You can cook thicker wedges in the oven.

### **Baby pumpkins are delicious roasted.**

- Cut the tops off, scoop out the seeds and place butter and a little brown sugar in the cavity and cook until tender but not too soft.
- You can then stuff the little pumpkins with various fillings, leftovers, then sprinkle with grated cheese or breadcrumbs and brown in the oven.

### **Using cooked pumpkin**

Cooked pumpkin can be used in a variety of ways. You can use cubes of cooked pumpkin as the basis of a salad, a tart or even a pizza. You can also use it in cakes, scones and even pies.

#### **Pumpkin salad**

- Mix some cubes of cooked pumpkin with some feta or blue cheese, crumbled grilled bacon or prosciutto, spices of your choices, some roasted onion or red onion slices, some lemon zest or even some strips of preserved lemon, some chopped coriander, an olive or two and drizzle with olive oil.
- Place the mixture on a bed of couscous along with some salad leaves such as rocket and a dash of balsamic vinegar. Pumpkin goes well with nuts so you could add pine nuts, cashew nuts or Brazil nuts for added texture.

#### **Pumpkin dip**

- Heat some olive oil and sauté some chopped onion, 3 cloves of garlic, and some chilli if you like, until tender.
- Add some cumin or Moroccan spices and nuts (e.g. walnut, hazelnut or pinenuts) and toast for a few seconds.
- Add a dollop of yoghurt, cream or coconut cream to the pumpkin along with the other ingredients and some herbs such as coriander or parsley.
- Purée so that it still has some texture and serve with crudités.

—Elizabeth Dangerfield (story)



## Spicy pumpkin empanadas

For this recipe you can make the filling up to a day ahead and store covered in the refrigerator until ready to use. Unbaked empanadas can be frozen for up to 2 months. Bake them from frozen for 40 minutes or until golden. This recipe makes 20 empanadas. For an easier method you can use frozen shortcrust pastry. Just cut it into 10 cm rounds. It won't be as light as the home-made version.

### Ingredients

#### Pumpkin filling

600 grams butternut pumpkin, peeled and chopped coarsely  
 2 tablespoons olive oil  
 ½ cup finely chopped fresh flat-leafed parsley  
 ½ cup finely chopped fresh coriander  
 2 teaspoon ground cumin  
 ½ teaspoon cayenne pepper  
 1 teaspoon ground coriander  
 1 small red onion, finely chopped  
 ⅔ cup (130 grams) fetta, crumbled  
 1 egg, lightly beaten

#### Empanada dough

4 cups plain flour  
 2 teaspoons (7 grams) dried yeast  
 ½ teaspoon salt  
 1 teaspoon castor sugar  
 ¼ cup olive oil  
 1 ½ cups of water

#### Method

Preheat the oven to 200°C. Line two oven trays with baking paper.

#### Make pumpkin filling

1. Combine pumpkin and olive oil in a large roasting pan and roast for 20 minutes until the pumpkin is tender. Turn the pumpkin occasionally while roasting.
2. When cooked, transfer the pumpkin into a bowl. Add the spices to the pumpkin and mash them together.



3. Stir in herbs, onion and fetta and let cool. You can put the filling in the refrigerator to cool for 30 minutes or overnight. You can make the empanada dough while the filling is cooling off.

#### Preparing the dough

1. Combine the water, yeast and sugar in a small bowl. Set aside for about 5 minutes until the mixture becomes foamy.
2. Combine flour and salt in a large bowl; make a well in the centre.
3. Add yeast mixture and oil. Using your hands, mix until all the ingredients are combined.
4. Turn dough onto a floured surface and knead it for about 10 minutes until it is smooth and elastic.
5. Place dough into an large oiled bowl and move it around the bowl to coat it in oil.

6. Cover the dough with plastic wrap and set aside in a warm, draught-free place for 1 hour until dough doubles in size.

#### Constructing and baking the empanadas

1. Divide dough into 20 balls. Roll each ball on a floured surface into a 10 cm (4 inches) round.
2. Spoon 1 rounded tablespoon of the filling mixture onto half of each round and brush the edges with a little egg.
3. Fold over tight to enclose the filling and make a half-moon shape; twist the edges to seal filling (or crimp with a floured fork).
4. Place the empanadas on trays (which are lined with baking paper) and brush with a little more egg.
5. Bake empanadas 30 minutes or until golden.

Serve hot at room temperature.



## Dipping sauces for empanadas

There are three to choose from: Chimichurri, a very typical Argentinian sauce; a Tamarind ginger sauce; and an Aji sauce.

### Chimichurri sauce

#### Ingredients

- 1 cup firmly packed fresh flat-leaf parsley, trimmed of thick stems
- 3 to 4 garlic cloves
- 2 tablespoons fresh oregano leaves (or 2 teaspoons dried oregano)
- ½ cup olive oil
- 2 tablespoons red or white wine vinegar
- ½ teaspoon sea salt
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- ¼ teaspoon red pepper flakes

#### Method

1. Finely chop the parsley, fresh oregano, and garlic (or process in a food processor for several pulses). Place in a small bowl.
2. Stir in the olive oil, vinegar, salt, pepper, and red pepper flakes. Adjust seasonings.

3. Serve immediately or refrigerate. If chilled, return to room temperature before serving.

It will keep for a day or two, and in fact the flavours intensify a bit if you let it sit for a few hours or overnight before serving. Makes about 1 cup.

### Tamarind ginger sauce

#### Ingredients

- 1 teaspoon tamarind concentrate
- 1½ tablespoons fresh lime juice
- ⅔ cup mayonnaise or sour cream or Greek yoghurt
- 2 teaspoons Dijon mustard
- 1 teaspoon fresh ginger, peeled and grated
- ¼ teaspoon salt

#### Method

1. Whisk tamarind into lime juice until dissolved.
2. Add remaining ingredients and whisk until smooth.
3. Refrigerate up to one week. Serve at room temperature. Makes about one cup.

### Aji sauce

#### Ingredients

- 4 green chilli peppers
- 4 spring onions
- 1 bunch fresh coriander
- Juice of 2 limes
- ½ teaspoon cumin
- 2 tablespoons vinegar
- Salt and pepper to taste

#### Sauce preparation

1. Wash and dry the onions and coriander and remove stems from the coriander.
2. Roughly slice the spring onions and roasted chilli peppers (see below), and place them in a food processor or blender with the coriander leaves. Process in short spurts until they are well minced.
3. Place the mixture in a bowl and stir in the lime juice, cumin, and vinegar.
4. Season with salt and pepper to taste.
5. Refrigerate in air tight container for up to one week.

Serve at room temperature. Makes about one cup.

—Glynis Kennedy (recipes and photos)

## Roasting chilli peppers

1. Preheat oven to 230°C. Spread the peppers evenly on a baking sheet, in a single layer.
2. Roast the peppers for about 4 to 5 minutes until the skins blister. Watch carefully so they do not burn.
3. Place the roasted peppers in a plastic bag and seal the bag. Allow the chilli peppers to sweat in the plastic bag for about 10 to 15 minutes. When you remove them from the bag they will be easy to peel.
4. Rinse the peppers under cool running water. Peel the chillies and remove and discard the skin, seeds, and the veins. You may want to leave a small amount of the charred skin for flavour.



## Green manure—what is it and what are its advantages?

*This is an article which appears on the COGS website. Glynis Kennedy suggested we publish it in the magazine to remind gardeners that it is time to be thinking about planting a green manure crop during the winter growing season. Green manure mixes are available from Glynis at COGS and for details on how to buy them refer to the advertisement on the inside back cover.*

\*\*\*

Green manures are a simple, cheap way to:

- improve the fertility of your garden soil
- enhance its drought resistance
- suppress the germination and growth of weeds.

Green manure crops are crops grown not to be harvested by the grower, but to be incorporated into the soil before they reach maturity to contribute to the care and feeding of the soil. It is an old technique of soil management that has unfortunately been forgotten by many farmers and gardeners who are no longer aware of the proven benefits of such crops, benefits that come at the low cost of the seeds for the green manure crop.

Green manure crops contribute directly to the fertility of the garden through the supply of important plant nutrients. Legumes, in particular, supply a valuable amount of nitrogen since their roots form an association with soil-borne bacteria that can transform nitrogen from the atmosphere into nitrogen compounds that can be used by plants. This is quite a complicated feat and one which can save you the cost of fertilisers. Different nutrients such as phosphorus are supplied by other green manure crops.

Green manure crops contribute indirectly to nutrient supply as well. The process of decomposition of the crop aids in making further nutrients available that are already present in the soil but in a form that cannot be used by plants. It is believed that this happens through the actions of decomposition products including carbon dioxide and organic acids. An example of this indirect contribution is a barley crop. Bennett (1979) recommends growing a green manure crop of barley before a crop of tomatoes, since tomatoes have a high requirement for phosphorus and barley somehow increases the uptake of phosphorus in crops following it.

When incorporated into the soil, green manure crops can supply vast amounts of organic matter. Organic matter can also be supplied through mulches as well as through the incorporation of a green manure crop, but this usually involves greater expense. It can also be difficult to locate a source of good clean mulch such as straw that you know has not been sprayed with any chemicals, whereas, as an organic gardener, you know your crop is clean and does not contain unwanted chemical residues.

A good healthy soil should contain approximately 5% organic matter. While this may seem to be a small component of the soil, it is a vital one. According to the *La Motte Soil Handbook*: 'No other constituent plays such a major beneficial role in the soil environment and gets so little credit as does the organic fraction.' Indeed, it was the emphasis placed on organic matter in the soil by the early proponents of organic growing that gave our method of agriculture its title.

Why is organic matter so important? Because decayed organic matter, or humus as it is called, is the key to soil structure, nutrient supply and the biological vitality of the soil.



The presence of humus in the soil also increases the amount of water which can be held in the soil. This is critical in making a garden drought resistant. In a dry season water applied to a garden is wasted if that water runs away and does not stay near the root zones of the plants.

Drought resistance can also be improved in another way by the use of green manure crops. Many of the legumes used as green manures, such as alfalfa, lupins and sweet clover, are very deep rooted crops. Their roots can penetrate the subsoil and open it up, which is an important improvement in compacted soils. Subsequent vegetable crops can use the channels in the subsoil to allow their roots to reach deep into the subsoil and obtain water from the lower levels. It is worth remembering that many common vegetable crops are capable of putting down a large root system if the soil is loose enough. For example, in a deep, well structured soil, tomatoes can put roots down 150 cm with the main root zone down to about 55 cm and pumpkin and sweet corn roots can reach down to 180 cm, with the main root zone down to about 60 cm.

Crops can also obtain plant nutrients from the subsoil once it is opened by deep rooted green manure crops. Sourcing nutrients from these deeper levels of the soil has proved a major benefit for crops grown on farmland where the topsoil has either been eroded or has been worn out from over-cropping. It is important in young



gardens where the topsoil is thin. The clay subsoil in many parts of the Canberra region for instance can provide an excellent foundation for a soil building program provided it can be opened up for the crops grown in it.

**Another benefit of a green manure crop is that while the green manure crop is growing it prevents weeds colonising the bare ground left after the previous crop has been removed.**

In general, a green manure crop helps protect the soil surface from erosion and leaching of nutrients.

Green manures can be grown in three ways:

- As a crop during the main growing season, which, however, has the disadvantage of taking up valuable space at the most productive time of year.
- As an undercover crop grown with the main crop, but planted after the main crop is established. This is an extremely useful method for gardeners in areas with long cold winters where there is not time to plant a green manure

crop after the summer harvest. It is an interesting area of research in vegetable growing and for more information see Eliot Coleman's *The New Organic Grower*.

- As an over winter crop, which is the most common way they are grown. In the Canberra region, autumn is an ideal time to plant green manure crops in beds emptied of the summer harvest. There is usually time to establish the crop before winter.

When establishing a garden, a green manure crop can be grown whenever a bed would otherwise be left vacant over winter. The only exception is preceding an onion crop, since onions seem to do best with no preceding green manure crop. Care should be taken with most root vegetables which do not appreciate soil with a lot of organic matter, so bulky crops should be avoided, as well as those high in nitrogen.

Once a good fertile soil has been created in the vegetable garden, it should only be necessary to replenish the supply of organic matter once in every four years. The green manure crop can be grown at the end of a four-year crop rotation such as follows:

- Year 1: Tomatoes, capsicums, eggplants, leafy greens
- Year 2: Onions, garlic or peas, beans, followed by brassicas
- Year 3: Root crops
- Year 4: Cucurbits, sweet corn followed by a winter green manure crop, then returning to Year 1 in the rotation.

The green manure crop can be dug in in spring prior to planting crops for next summer. Having dug in a green manure crop you need wait only 4 to 6 weeks before planting summer crops.

However, if you consider digging in the green manure a difficult chore, you will be pleased to hear the results of a study by US Department of Agriculture scientists. Apparently they found 'that amounts of nitrogen released from residues of alfalfa, wheat, and sorghum hardly differed at all whether the plants were tilled into the soil or just left there, untilled and unchopped on the surface'.

It seems therefore that you don't have to dig it in, but incorporating it into the soil may lead to a speedier decomposition of the organic material. A satisfactory compromise is to partially chop up the crop, leave it on the soil surface, but cover it with straw to give protection to all the micro organisms who will appear to feast on the organic matter and convert it into humus in the soil.

The adjacent table is a list of suitable green manure crops for autumn for this region, along with brief comments which may help you decide which crop to plant. It is important to vary the types of green manure crops grown as they have different attributes and disadvantages. It is often a good idea to grow a mix of crops in the one bed to get the best results.

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- Organic Gardening*, Rodale Press, December, 1993 p.15.
- Marshall, Tim, *Green Manures*, Acres Aust. V1, No. 9, p.33.

### Autumn green manure crops

#### Legumes (Some lucernes may also be suitable)

- Broad beans: Produce a large amount of organic matter. Can be sown late in Autumn. Will stand some waterlogging. Sow 35 gm/sq m
- Field peas: Similar to above.
- Lupins: Effective phosphorus gatherers. Contribute lots of organic matter. Not usually susceptible to fungal diseases which may affect peas and beans. Sow 16 gm/sq m.
- Sub clover: Very effective nitrogen fixer. Not large amount of foliage. Sow 1 gm/sq m.
- Tic peas: Cheaper alternative to broad beans.
- Vetch: Large bulk. Competes well with weeds.

#### Non-legumes

- Barley: Vigorous grower. Increases uptake of phosphorus in following crop. Bennett (1979) recommends planting 2 cm deep, 3 cm apart, 15 cm between rows.
- Oats: Grows in wide range of soils. Doesn't mind acidity. Tolerates very cold weather. Broadcast 10 gm/sq m.
- Rye: Large amount of organic matter. Drought resistant. Sow similar to oats.

**Notes:** Some legumes need to be inoculated to ensure the right bacteria is present in your soil. Flowering crops should be dug just before flowering; cereals before producing a head of grain. A crop will decompose in 4 to 6 weeks in late October to early November, but may take longer if it is a cold spring.




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*Shirley and her husband Peter*

## Shirley Carden: Obituary

### Remembering a COGS pioneer

Shirley Carden passed away peacefully on 9 January 2016, aged 85. She died in the arms of her husband, Peter, after a long illness.

The funeral was held on the 18 January in the Chapel at Gold Creek. It was a moving service in a beautiful setting with about 100 people attending, including their children, grandchildren and a number of great-grandchildren. The extended family's love for and high esteem of her were clear. It was good to see.

Shirley Carden was involved with COGS right from the very beginning in 1977, one of seven people on the first committee. She served on the committee a number of times between 1977 and 1984, was president in 1984 and 1985, vice president from 1985 to 1987, and Cotter convenor between 1987 and 1988.

Shirley played a key role in the incorporation of COGS, and it was she who came up with the name of *Canberra Organic Growers Society* or COGS to replace the accurate but lengthy *Organic Gardening and Farming Society of the ACT* or OGFSACT. Her husband Peter served as COGS Treasurer from 1986 to 1987. It was his reputation as a professional scientist that acted powerfully to dispel the myth that organic growing is 'all muck and magic'.

Shirley's lifelong passion was herbs and their healing properties, and she brought this passion to COGS for the benefit of many members over the years. She wrote a number of articles for the newsletter and magazine, and held seminars on herbs. Her 'green drinks' became well known and popular; depending on the recipe they could equally stimulate or soothe, as well as help and heal.

She was one of the quiet achievers who aren't prominent in the eyes of the world and yet do so much to keep things running smoothly. Many thanks, Shirley, for your wonderful life.

—Walter Steensby (story and photo)

## Blessed are those who plant

pumpkin vines  
on the rampage  
in the chookyard  
the old black hen  
reluctant to descend

our first frost  
strikes silently  
before dawn  
dahlias die ... vines wither  
I pick the last zucchini

mulching leaves  
composting memories  
half hidden  
in morning mist  
and smoke haze

autumn begins  
with a new compost heap  
collecting  
weeds and manure  
to fertilise the future

blessed  
are those who plant peas  
this season —  
they shall harvest  
and eat in the spring

—Gerry Jacobson



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## Interested in selling any surplus produce to the Food Co-op?

The Food Co-op Shop management committee has recently launched a new project aimed at building links with other groups or individuals in the Canberra region who support local, organic food and have a commitment to strengthening our community around food.

COGS was one of the first names to come up in our discussions about who we would like to be more involved with! We will be preparing a mailout with some more information and calling for collaborators, but we specifically wanted to contact COGS to speak about your community gardens. If you're not already aware, the Food Co-op Shop has a consignment system and we support small producers and home growers to sell their produce in our shop.

We want to find out if some of your community garden groups might be interested in collaborating to potentially sell any surplus produce through the shop. We think it would be brilliant to have a relationship with the COGS gardeners and be able to offer this to our customers, and your organic principles are perfectly aligned with ours.

Looking forward to hearing your thoughts, and any other ideas you might have are also very welcome!

**The Food Co-op Shop  
at 3 Kingsley Street, Acton**

[Please remember, COGS gardeners cannot sell produce grown in the community gardens for personal profit but can sell produce to boost your garden's revenue.]

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## Horticultural Society of Canberra invites entries for Autumn Show

It's on again and COGS gardeners always enjoy the challenge of entering produce in the Horticultural Society of Canberra's Autumn Show.

The 2016 show will be held on the weekend of the 5th and 6th March at Lancaster Hall in the Wesley Centre.

The society is inviting entries in several categories including the Community Gardens Display and individual fruit and vegetable categories.

Traditionally, COGS's Holder garden has carried off many of the prizes but many of the other gardens have indicated their intentions to submit entries this year.

For more information about the show email Sheila Hodgson on [zhodgson@tpg.com.au](mailto:zhodgson@tpg.com.au).



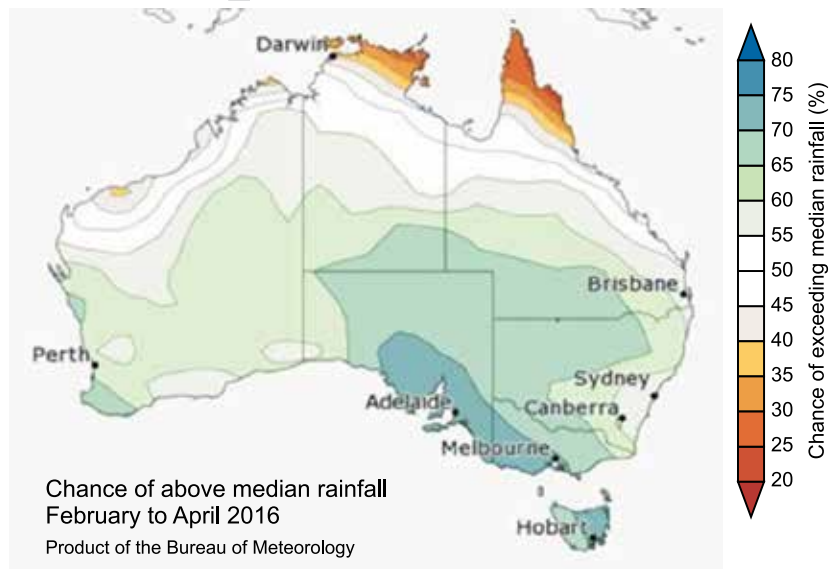
## El Niño in decline

The Bureau of Meteorology report issued on 19 January 2016 shows that while a strong El Niño persists, ocean temperatures in the tropical Pacific are gradually cooling. Climate modelling suggest that the current El Niño will decay over the coming months, with a likely return to neutral conditions in the second quarter of 2016.

The eastern tropical Pacific sub-surface waters have cooled by up to 3 degrees since late November. Sea surface temperatures are also showing a cooling trend, evident since late November. However, the bureau says that recent tropical cyclone activity in the central tropical Pacific has produced strong westerly winds along the equator which may temporarily slow the decline of El Niño.

Based on the 26 El Niño events since 1900, around 50 per cent have been followed by a neutral year, and 40 per cent have been followed by La Niña. Modelling suggests that neutral and La Niña states are about equally likely for the second half of 2016, with a repeat El Niño the least

## The Weather Report



likely outcome. Historically, the breakdown of strong El Niño events brings above average rainfall to parts of Australia in the first half of the year.

The Indian Ocean has little influence on Australian climate between December and April. However, Indian Ocean sea surface temperatures remain at record warm levels across the majority of the basin. This basin-wide warmth may provide extra moisture for rain systems across Australia.

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

ACT storages . . . . .	.79% full
Murray-Darling Basin . . . . .	.37% full
Burrinjuck Dam . . . . .	.56% full
Blowering Dam . . . . .	.29% full
Sydney . . . . .	.93% full
Melbourne . . . . .	.67% full
Brisbane . . . . .	.89% full
Adelaide . . . . .	.49% full
Perth . . . . .	.21% full

## Permaculture courses in the Canberra region

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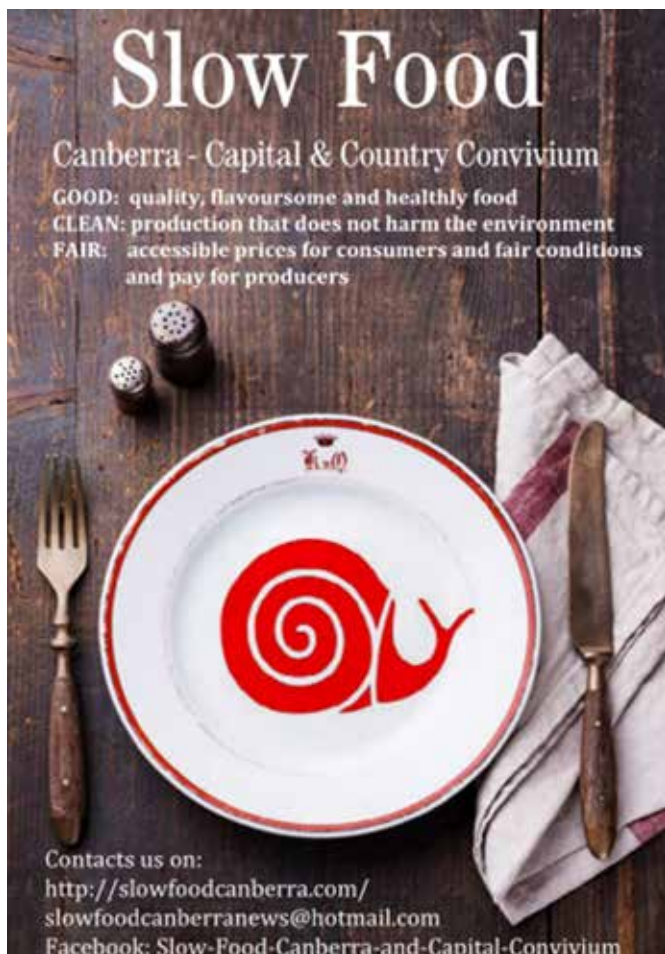
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**CLEAN:** production that does not harm the environment  
**FAIR:** accessible prices for consumers and fair conditions and pay for producers



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 _____ Surname _____ Occupation _____	<b>Child 1</b>	Name _____ Age _____
<b>Adult 2</b>	First name _____ Surname _____ Occupation _____	<b>Child 2</b>	Name _____ Age _____
		<b>Child 3</b>	Name _____ Age _____
		<b>Child 4</b>	Name _____ Age _____
<b>Address</b>	Street _____ Suburb/Town _____ State _____ P/code _____	<b>Phone</b>	Home _____ Mobile _____
		<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

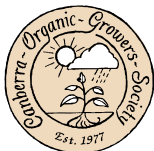
'Canberra Organic Growers Society' or 'COGS'

Payment attached to completed application

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

## COGS Administration only

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



# autumn planting guide

## Brassicas

Late plantings of brassicas in March may be successful, but summer plantings are usually more reliable. In autumn, it is already too late to grow from seed. Take care too with the varieties chosen. It is too late to plant savoy cabbages, but the smaller ball-headed varieties should be successful.

## Peas

Sugar snap peas may be sown in early March for a winter harvest, but the crop could be lost if there is an early severe frost affecting the blossom. Peas sown later in April–May will be ready for a spring harvest.

## Lettuces

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

## Leeks

Leek seedlings may be planted in early March for small leeks in winter, although summer plantings are more reliable.



## Onions

Early varieties can be sown in April to early May to be harvested from spring to early summer. Mid season varieties are often sown in late autumn or early winter and long-keeping varieties in winter or early spring. It is worth experimenting with the timing of mid- or late-season varieties by making successive plantings to determine the best time for your specific garden.

## Spring flowers

Remember that many spring flowering plants are best planted in autumn so they can establish before the winter cold, and then start growing in the early warmth of spring. Stocks, pansies and poppies can be planted as seedlings in March and early April. Others such as Virginia stock, candytuft, larkspur and sweetpeas can be sown direct throughout autumn.

## Green manures

Autumn is the time to plant green manure crops so they can establish well before the frosts.

Green manure crops suitable for planting in Canberra are:

- **Legumes:** Broad beans, field peas, lupins, sub clover, tic peas and vetch.
- **Non-legumes:** Barley, oats and rye.

Legumes are very useful as they fix nitrogen in the soil while the non-legumes provide bulk organic matter.

Cut or dig in the green manure in spring, at least 4–6 weeks prior to planting your summer crops.

Flowering crops need to be dug in before flowering; cereal crops before producing a head of grain.

	MAR	APR	MAY
Asian greens	ST	T	
Brussel sprouts	T		
Broccoli	T		
Broad beans		S	S
Cabbage	T		
Cauliflower	T		
Chicory	ST	T	
Chinese cabbage	T		
Corn salad	ST	ST	
Endive	ST	T	
Garlic		S	S
Kale	T		
Kohlrabi	ST	T	
Leeks	T		
Lettuce	ST	ST	ST
Peas	S	S	S
Onions		S	S
Turnips	T		

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

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



# What's On

## Notice of Annual General Meeting

### Canberra Organic Growers Society Inc

**7.30 pm**  
**Tuesday 22 March 2016**

**Majura Community Centre**  
**Rosevear Place, Dickson ACT**



## 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)**

## Speakers at COGS meeting Tweenhills Chestnuts

**7.30 pm, Tuesday 23 February, 2016**  
**Majura Community Centre,**  
**Rosevear Place, Dickson**

Tweenhills Chestnuts is a family operated commercial chestnut orchard at Hoskinstown, not far from Canberra. John and Heather Kane established Tweenhills Chestnuts in 1997. The orchard comprises 1,700 grafted trees on 10 ha. Tweenhills is operated using modern horticultural practices with limited use of chemicals. John and Heather will talk about their experiences in establishing and operating the orchard on a commercial basis, but with lots of information useful to the small grower. There will even be a simple cooking demonstration for those uninitiated in the culinary pleasures of the chestnut. See [www.tweenhillschestnuts.com.au/](http://www.tweenhillschestnuts.com.au/) for more information.



**FARMERS  
MARKET**  
**AT BUNGENDORE**  
**2nd and 4th Saturdays**  
**9am to 1pm**  
**Bungendore Memorial Hall**

## Want to contribute?

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

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



*Cotter community  
garden peaches  
(photo: Ken Farley)*



*Charnwood gardener Troy Lloyd has been growing  
impressive big red 'USA' tomatoes (photo: Jo McMillan)*