


# Canberra Organic



Vale **BETTY CORNHILL**  
**1920–2016**

*We pay tribute to Betty, the founder of COGS*

## Winning displays at the Horticultural Society Autumn Show



*Charwood garden's winning entry (photo: Jo McMillan)*



*Holder garden came a close second (photo: Sue McCarthy)*

# President's report

## **Hello again!**

I've been persuaded to take up the presidential role again after the mandatory year off, and now I'm settling back into the job. It will be a pleasure given our committee and convenors, enthusiastic, dedicated and hard-working people who make so much possible.

Our previous treasurer, Maarten Stapper, has left to focus on his professional interests, as has Bill Chaffey, and Andy Hrast is now treasurer. We welcome Heather Campbell, Peter Weddell, Neville Jackson, Ken Farley and Terry Williams as general committee members, and also Keith Colls who has agreed to return to the committee to bring us his expertise and experience. Jeannette Heycox continues to run the Backyard Group and Sue Pavasaris brings us a first-class magazine. Patricia Georgee has taken over as membership secretary from Joanne McMillan, while Joanne is now in the brand new position of gardens coordinator. Michelle England has volunteered as librarian after Donna Vaughn, and Glynis Kennedy is the new secretary. Sue McCarthy is vice-president and Facebook page maintainer.

**By the way, we encourage all convenors to attend the monthly committee meetings.**

Most of the convenors remain, some of whom are on the management committee too. We give a warm welcome to Bridget Norton in Erindale and Gwen Bates in Mitchell. We wish the convenors well as this is one of the key jobs in COGS. Our management model is clearly a successful one but this depends hugely on the dedication and skills of our convenors.

We need to keep each other informed and offer each other support.

In short, and as I just said, a great set of people generously volunteering their time and skills to keep COGS humming along smoothly.

## **Death of Betty Cornhill**

Our founder, visionary and tireless promoter, died in her 96th year. Her obituary is on page 12 in this edition of the magazine.

## **Opportunities**

As I have emphasised before, COGS is more than a gardening club: it is an important part of the urban agriculture scene in Canberra. There is a great deal of activity in this area and COGS is right there in it.

**... we gratefully acknowledge the ACT Government ...**

A number of agriculture and food related community organisations are working out how best to work together for the benefit of the broader community. Organisations immediately involved include COGS of course, the Canberra City Farm, the Environment Centre, the Food Co-op Shop at the ANU, Slow Food, the Conservation Council, SEE-Change, and the Southern Harvest. Together we are pursuing and promoting a local and regional food economy, based as far as possible on organic agricultural principles, to enhance food security in the Australian Capital Region. There is growing public interest in this topic and growing demand for organic food. Great opportunities to improve community health and wellbeing are opening up.

To this end we gratefully acknowledge the ACT Government's



involvement in ways such as a Food Security Roundtable last year and the more recent Nature Strip Gardening Guidelines to allow food growing on road verges. The committee and I will continue to liaise with the government on these and other matters, such as the new garden site being developed now in Coombs and the one that should appear in the new suburb of Lawson.

It promises to be a busy and exciting year.

## **Spreading the word**

An up-to-date internet presence is a must in this era, and COGS is no exception. We really do need a modernised website and soon shall have one. Our web designer's draft proposal was approved by the committee at its last meeting (12 April) and work on it continues. We also have a popular Facebook page (go to [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com) and search for "Canberra Organic Growers Society").

Do drop by and have a look.

## **Managing COGS' money**

A particular advance is the adoption of a modern accounting system, MYOB or Mind Your Own Business, which Maarten Stapper set up. He poured a great deal of effort into this project and the results are looking good. Many thanks, Maarten!

Happy winter planning and planting!

*Walter*

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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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## Editor's note

Autumn greetings! I always celebrate autumn by making quince paste—there's nothing nicer with a piece of sharp cheese—in the same way as I always plant my tomato seeds (inside!) in August and plait my home-grown garlic in late spring.

These are the rituals that bind gardening with the rhythm of our lives: the pleasant seasonal tasks that mark beginnings and endings.

It occurred to me that this winter issue of *Canberra Organic* is all about beginnings and endings. Crace community garden had their third annual passata-making day; Sue McCarthy says in her review of Richard Stirzaker's book (p. 19), *There is a wonderful lyricism in his outline of the yearly cycle of crops as the seasons unfold ...*; in 'Warming Up' Gerry says *It's all happening again ...*

As you can see from the cover, we mourn the death and pay tribute for the life of Betty Cornhill, who is widely acknowledged as the founder of COGS. I enjoyed Walter's lovely tribute to Betty and wish I had met her—she sounds truly inspirational!

Betty would no doubt be pleased to know that the work she started will be continuing under the guidance of COGS' new management committee (see pages 10 and 11). Members of the committee



have written a short piece about themselves so that you know a bit more about us all.

The annual Horticultural Society of Canberra Autumn Show has come and gone with Charnwood sweeping the first prize away from regular winners, Holder garden. Glynis reminds us that even though the roses might be getting ready for winter, there is so much you can do in the kitchen with rose hips, and Elizabeth is doing wonderful things with my favourite winter vegetable, brussels sprouts.

So back to the quince paste: it's a long process, involving boiling the fruit until tender, straining through a colander, and then pushing through a fine sieve before boiling up with sugar. However, watching those awkward-looking yellow fruits transforming into a rich garnet-coloured paste makes it all worthwhile.

My best friend in my endeavours making quince paste, jams and preserves is *A year in a bottle* by Sally Wise. If you enjoy this sort of cooking, you will love Sally's books.

A big thanks to everyone who has sent in contributions for this issue—the magazine wouldn't exist without you. Enjoy the lovely autumn weather and happy gardening!

—Sue

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### This month's cover:

We say goodbye to Betty Cornhill (photo from Betty's estate)



## Cotter community garden

Summer is over and, like many others, Cotter gardeners are turning over spent crops and thinking about green manure.

But there is one special upcoming task at the Cotter garden: we will soon be putting up a new shed! After many years and being burnt in the bushfires, our old smallish shed is being retired. Cotter was one of the COGS gardens that received a community grant in last year's community gardens grant program administered by the ACT Government. While our shed has provided good service I, for one, am tired of tilting my preferred wheel barrow on its side in order to dance it through the door. And I won't even mention what we have to do to unlock the lawn mower ...

So, a few weeks ago we had an impromptu working bee to move the old shed and it has now landed temporarily, like the Tardis, on a grassy patch elsewhere. (However, unlike the Tardis, it is still not bigger on the inside than the outside.) Part of the working bee involved removing the concrete pavers that formed the base and stacking them—maybe for some future use? After shifting and stacking, we all enjoyed cake from one of our Canberra Show cookery competition winning gardeners: a perfect morning really.

However, it was not so perfect when some of us started harvesting pumpkins. I know it might be too

early, but better to take them early than have them attacked by mice. This is the first year I have known that mice prefer pumpkin seeds and it leads to interesting discoveries in the garden (see photo on back cover). Cotter is located next to the Pony Club and quite near to the Forest Park Riding School, so we are never going to be free of mice. Fortunately the damaged pumpkin still made good soup after the holed end was removed. Happy gardening over winter!

—Patricia Georgee  
(story and photos)



*Farewell, faithful old shed*



*Ken Farley holding a shovel—Ken says he was looking for the family of brown snakes 'reported' to live under the shed pavers*



*Graham Crough smiling near the pavers—perhaps anticipating cake?*

## Charnwood garden update

There has been a display of green thumbs a'plenty at the Charnwood garden this season, as usual. The aftermath of the summer harvest usually brings an odd lull in garden productivity while we wait for the pumpkins to finish their thing, and the pumpkins certainly did not disappoint, with many gardeners sporting varieties such as golden nugget, Queensland blue, butternut and 'funny American' roasting varieties.

We are a sociable lot at the Charnwood garden and this season was no exception. We hosted a visit from the Quean-

beyan community garden group, a contingent from the University of the Third Age gardening group from Yass, along with some student dieticians from the University of Canberra.

### Charnwood garden won first prize at the Horticultural Society Autumn Show.

Due to the remarkable efforts of Jo, Teresa, Peter and Glenda, the Charnwood garden participated in, and won first prize, at the Horticultural Society Autumn Show.

We have all made use of our wonderful, big new garden shed, while the tools have had a workout in the plots, as well as during our working bees. Some of our gardeners celebrated with a Shed Party and Jo McMillan carved some friendly-looking pumpkin jack-o-lanterns.

Some experiments have been attempted, with Troy trying to grow the ever-elusive (in Canberra) sweet potatoes and Lauren and Josh coordinating an attempt at the Yates Challenge event. The results of these experiments are yet to be reported on.

Welcome to our new gardeners, Marlene and Arthur (and kids) and Lauren and Josh. We hope that you are having fun!

Warm gardening wishes to all for a fruitful winter season.

—Angela Spencer (story)



*(left): Charnwood's prize-winning entry at the Horticultural Society Autumn Show. The display was set up by Peter Polkinghorn, Teresa Rose, Glenda McDevitt and Jo McMillan (photo by Teresa Rose)*

*(below left): Troy's green egg tomatoes (photo by Rebecca Bourke)*

*(below): Jo's pumpkin jack-o-lanterns (photo by Geoff Miller)*



## Crace celebrates its third annual passata day

It's been three summers since Crace community garden was established, and it's starting to look like a proper little community. Friendships have been formed and the committee makes sure to follow up with anyone whose garden is looking neglected—not just to remind them of their responsibilities but to check if they're okay and need a hand.

It's also a diverse community, with first-generation Australians from India, Pakistan, America, Lebanon, Sri Lanka, Austria, Serbia, China, France, Japan, Africa, New Zealand and more. Three generations of family can be regularly seen caring for more than one plot.

It was in the spirit of this community that the third annual passata day was held in early March. There was a great turnout despite the 35 degree heat, with

one of our gardeners, former chef Josh, once again capably leading the production line.

We are fortunate to have a large barbecue on site, which was used for a free sausage sizzle hosted by the committee. Gardeners also brought their own plates, many featuring summer fruit and veg from their gardens.

Trying to time the event with the tomato glut in advance can be tricky, so this year bulk purchased tomatoes were used to supplement our own supply. Around 80 litres of passata were bottled, keeping everyone in good sauce supply for the rest of the year until tomato season comes around again.

—Diana Cozadinos (story and photo)

*Photo: The passata production line in full swing*





# COGS Backyard Gardeners Group goes 'out of town' to Hoskinstown

*Chestnuts—make everyday meals special with chestnuts!*

*Chestnuts have a delicious, unique nutty taste and texture. Delectably different from other nuts, their natural goodness is obtained through cooking. They are low in fat and add a delicate flavour to so many sweet and savoury dishes.\**

The COGS Backyard Gardeners Group discovered this, and more, on their 'out of town' excursion to the Tweenhills chestnut farm near Hoskinstown in early April 2016.

Farmer Heather Kane, who operates the farm with her husband John, motored up from the depths of the orchard on her bouncy quad tractor to greet our group warmly. She proceeded to outline the history of their enterprise from a picturesque elevated vantage point overlooking an expansive orchard of chestnut and hazelnut trees below. This was a great site-specific presentation, augmenting the recent talk that Heather and John gave at the February COGS members' monthly meeting.

**Make no mistake, this is dry, dusty country, and planting all those trees cannot have been a walk in the park.**

Trees have been strategically placed to aid maintenance, some have irrigation lines installed, and many have white-painted trunks for temperature control. Heather and John say they aim to produce the best Australian chestnuts—ones that are high quality, sweet tasting and easy to peel. Their main variety is an Italian-style chestnut, De Coppi Marone, said to be perfect for roasting.

Our convivial shared morning tea was set up in the processing shed, amongst brushing and sorting equipment. Conversation ranged well beyond chestnuts, as our group shared their gardening



knowledge and experiences—covering important issues like when to mulch and fertilise asparagus, how to prune raspberries, and why our April beans are so much better than our February beans!

Tweenhills chestnut sales are 'farm gate', on line, and via a red roasting van at the Fyshwick Fresh Food market. Most of the group left with at least one bag of uncooked chestnuts, undoubtedly

debating on the return to Canberra whether these were destined for chestnut and mushroom soup, roasted Asian-style chicken with chestnuts, chestnut and bacon green beans or sweet chestnut cream.

\*[www.chestnutsaustralia.com.au](http://www.chestnutsaustralia.com.au)  
For those who missed the outing, see [Tweenhillschestnuts.com.au](http://Tweenhillschestnuts.com.au)

—Sue McCarthy  
(story and photos)

## Rose hips—a forgotten source of vitamin C

Roses don't usually come to mind when we think of either food or nutrition. Yet, all parts of the rose, and especially the hips, are storehouses of vitamin C and other important nutrients. Roses are in the same family as apples and crabapples so the resemblance of their fruit is not coincidental.

All roses should produce hips, although rugosa roses and the dog rose (*rosa canina*) are said to have the best tasting hips. Many enthusiastic gardeners never see the development of colourful hips because as soon as blossoms fade the old roses are snipped off to tidy up the garden. Blossoms must be left on the plant to naturally fade for hips to develop. Wherever you gather rose hips, be sure they have not been treated with herbicides or pesticides.

Just after a frost is the best time to gather rose hips. Trim off the stem and blossom ends. You can use whole, fresh rose hips, but the seeds inside have an irritating hairy covering and should be removed prior to eating.

You can store hips for later use and all you need to do is spread the hips out on a clean surface and allow to dry partially. You can also dry them in an oven at a low temperature. When the skins begin to feel dried and shrivelled, split the hips and take out the seeds—all of them. If you let the hips dry too much, it will be difficult to remove the seeds. If not dry enough, the inside pulp will be sticky and cling to the seeds. After the seeds are removed, allow the hips to dry completely before storing or they will not keep well. Store in small, sealed plastic bags. These will keep indefinitely in the freezer or for several months in the refrigerator. They are good to munch on anytime you need extra energy.

Rose hips are very versatile and can be used in a variety of ways. You can even make wine with them but I have not included a recipe for wine as I have not tried it. If you are interested there is a recipe at [www.lovetobrew.co.uk/rose-hip-wine](http://www.lovetobrew.co.uk/rose-hip-wine). I have included two rose hip tea recipes but do not, under any circumstances, add milk when drinking the tea as it curdles. I learnt this lesson many years ago when I was travelling through the then Yugoslavia where they drink a lot of rose hip tea. I insisted to the waiter that I wanted milk in my tea and was very embarrassed when I saw a horrible curdled mess in my cup.

### Rose hip tea recipe 1

You can use fresh or dried rose hips for a simple rose hip tea. You'll need about twice as many hips, if using fresh.

For fresh rose hip tea, steep 4–8 hips in a cup of boiling water for about 10–15 minutes.



### Rose hip tea recipe 2

Top and tail the hips, and make sure they are clean and dry.

Spread out in a roasting tin and place in a slow oven until absolutely dry.

Then grind in an electric coffee grinder and store in an airtight jar.

Using about 1 teaspoon per cup, prepare as you would Indian tea, leaving to infuse for 6–7 minutes.

Then strain through a very fine strainer. Sweeten with honey to taste if required.

### Rose petal tea

Pour 4 cups of boiling water over 3 teaspoons full of dried rose petals.

Infuse for 3–5 minutes and sweeten with honey to taste.

### Rose hip syrup

Roughly chop 500 grams rose hips in a food processor in batches.

Transfer to a large saucepan and add 1.25 litres water. Bring to the boil, then turn the heat down and simmer for around 15 minutes.

Strain through a double layer of muslin, letting the pulp sit for a good half hour so that all the juice passes through.

Wash out the muslin, or cut a fresh piece, fold to double it and pass the strained juice through it again. Double-straining ensures that the tiny, irritant hairs found inside rose hips are removed.

Measure the rose hip juice into a large saucepan. For every 500 millilitres, add 325 grams sugar.

Heat slowly, stirring until the sugar has dissolved, then bring to the boil and boil for 3 minutes, skimming off any scum if necessary.

Decant immediately into sterilised bottles and seal.

Label when the bottles have cooled completely. Use within 4 months and refrigerate once opened. This is delicious on yoghurt and ice cream.

For a refreshing spring tonic punch, simmer rhubarb in rose hip syrup until soft.

Strain and adjust sweetening as needed.

Chill, and pour over ice for a refreshing and healthy drink. Add a sprig of fresh spearmint or lemon balm as garnish.

—Glynis Kennedy (story and photos)



## Changes to the COGS Constitution

At the Annual General Meeting held on 22 March 2016 COGS members resolved to change some provisions in the Constitution (Rules). The changes are outlined below.

### **Community Gardens Coordinator**

There is a new office-bearer position of Community Gardens Coordinator, who will liaise with individual garden convenors concerning community garden matters, such as plot holder data, water allocations and usage, rainfall statistics and gardens-wide matters.

### **Neglected plots in community gardens**

COGS and its garden convenors and garden committees now have more uniform and strengthened powers to manage derelict or neglected plots in COGS community gardens.

Resumption is now possible for any plot in a community garden which has been in an unkempt, derelict, overgrown or neglected condition continuously for two months or more, where the plot holder does not then rectify the condition of the plot to the standard of a reasonably well maintained plot within a further 30 days from receiving a written notice to do so. Abandoned plots can be resumed by written notice.

### **Gardening organically**

Members holding a plot in a COGS community garden must (as previously) garden in accordance with organic principles, but are no longer required to familiarise themselves with a difficult to obtain organic standard.

### **Lighting of fires and burning off in community gardens**

The lighting of fires and burning off in community gardens is now expressly restricted and

regulated. Should a community garden wish to burn off tree litter, or have an open fire for social purposes (e.g. a barbecue) it must comply with all relevant laws, including obtaining any necessary government permits in advance for every such event. No fires of any other kind are permitted.

Now, all activities in community gardens, including but not limited to the lighting of fires and burning off, must be undertaken in accordance with all relevant laws.

### **Updating outdated legislative reference**

An out-of-date legislative reference has been updated. One practical effect of the change is to allow notices to be given to members by email.

You can access the whole COGS Constitution on our website ([www.cogs.asn.au](http://www.cogs.asn.au)) or, if you are accessing the magazine online, click here: [COGS Constitution](#)



Meet the new committee!

## Meet the new committee!

**At the AGM on Tuesday 22 March COGS members elected the new COGS Management Committee. The one remaining vacancy was filled by Terry Williams, who was appointed at the following committee meeting.**

### **Andy Hrast, Treasurer**

Andy has been a member of COGS for more than 25 years. He gardens at the Cotter garden where he has been the convenor. He has been on the COGS Executive Committee for six years and has held the positions of vice-president and secretary before recently being elected to the role of treasurer. He is retired, having held positions in both the private and public sectors in transport policy.

### **Sue Pavasaris, Magazine Editor**

Sue joined COGS in 2013 when she moved to Canberra, after having been a member of BOGI (Brisbane Organic Growers Incorporated) in her home town of Brisbane. Sue and her partner John are keen backyard gardeners and also keep a flock of (very spoilt) chickens, some of which accompanied them from Brisbane. The great privilege of being magazine editor is all the wonderful things one finds out!

### **Terry Williams, General Committee Member**

Terry is our resident black-hat thinker (his own code for 'grouch'). He's a terrible gardener and not entirely committed to organics but volunteered for the committee because he claims the rest of us desperately need help.

### **Neville Jackson, General Committee Member**

Neville is a new member of the committee. He has been convenor at Kambah for the past four and a half years, promoting connections with the wider community. He is an active organic gardener with a keen interest in growing and cooking Asian vegetables as well as composting and soil food web gardening techniques.

### **Joanne McMillan, Gardens Coordinator**

Jo has recently been elected Gardens Coordinator, a role established to liaise with the convenors of COGS' 12 community gardens across Canberra. She also convenes the Charnwood community garden, where she enjoys growing flowers and vegetables.

Photo caption (L to R):

Andy Hrast, Sue Pavasaris, Terry Williams (back), Neville Jackson (back), Jo McMillan, Walter Steensby (back) Glynis Kennedy, Patricia Georgee (back), Sue McCarthy, Peter Weddell, Keith Colls (back)

Insert photos of those not present for main photograph (L to R):

Michele England, Ken Farley, Heather Campbell

Photo: Jenny Clark

### **Walter Steensby, President**

Walter and his wife Cindy joined COGS about nine years ago to learn more about organic growing —being uneasy with the industrial food system—and to expand their social circle. Two successes!

He grew up in a harbourside flat in Sydney where gardening was something other people did in the hot sun. By training as a town and country planner, he is pleased to be in the midst of an urban food system in harmony with nature and which can be accurately described as sustainable.

He's learning as fast as he can.

### **Glynis Kennedy, Secretary**

Glynis is currently secretary of COGS after being a general member for a few years. She was convenor of Cook garden for about 18 months and still has a garden plot at Cook. She also has a vegetable plot and fruit trees in her home garden. Glynis is a keen conservationist and works as a volunteer with Greening Australia planting native vegetation at various locations in the ACT and rural NSW.

### **Patricia Georgee, Membership Secretary**

Patricia works at the Cotter garden, where on a good day you can hear the lions roaring at the zoo.

### **Sue McCarthy, Vice President**

Sue has had an enjoyable relationship with Canberra soil for over 45 years. Her community and front yard gardening allows her to organically feed her family including four adult children, and a circle of friends. By back-

ground a lawyer, she accepts the rhythm of long-term gardening within the rules of nature, our climate and the seasons, but she gets particular satisfaction when she successfully harnesses those occasional short-term exceptions to the rules.

### **Peter Weddell, General Committee Member**

Peter has been a teacher in a number of Canberra schools and after his retirement he was keen to start gardening. He has been a gardener at Cook garden for almost two years and was recently elected to the Cook Garden Committee. He enjoys his time working in the garden and contributing to the upkeep of the whole community garden.

### **Keith Colls, General Committee Member**

Keith has been a gardener all his life. He first joined the COGS committee in the 1990s and remained a member of the committee for more than a decade, doing various jobs including treasurer and president. He is pleased to be returning to the committee. He was one of the founders of the Canberra City Farm in 2010 and continues to work towards its further development. Keith's initial training as a horticulturist was in amenity horticulture, but his main interest is in food gardens. He has been conducting courses on various organic gardening topics for CIT Solutions for more than a decade. He is keen to ensure that as many people as possible develop the skills to produce at least some of their own food in the most

environmentally sustainable manner possible.

### **Michele England, Librarian**

Michele, the newly appointed COGS librarian, has been a keen gardener since a young girl, where she learnt gardening by her parents' side. Recently Michele has forayed into the world of chickens and is loving their contented cluck clucking.

### **Ken Farley, General Committee Member**

Ken first joined COGS in 2014, and became convenor at the Cotter garden in 2015. Ken is originally from Casino, Northern Rivers in NSW and has a passion for growing and showing dahlias and other flowers.

### **Heather Campbell, General Committee Member**

Heather has been a gardener for as long as she can remember. Her mother was a gardener, her grandfather was a gardener and so here she is, also nurturing plants and soils. Her children and grandchildren have inherited some of the same genes and so the idea of growing food for the family continues, which is part of her COGS journey melded with gardening knowledge passed down from her family. When she's not gardening Heather is playing tenor recorder in the U3A Canberra Recorder Orchestra or great bass recorder in the South Coast Mudlarks or she is teaching iPad classes for Milton – Ulladulla U3A, pickling vegetables for the winter, making jams, completing a mosaic project and generally enjoying life.



## Remembering Betty Cornhill

Our founder and grande dame, Eleanor Elizabeth Madge Kitchener Cornhill, known to all simply as Betty, passed away on 4 April. She died peacefully at the age of 95½—not a bad innings at all!

Betty's funeral service was conducted at the Norwood Crematorium on 15 April. About 100 people attended, including her children, grandchildren, numerous friends and a good contingent of past and present COGS members. Her two sons Peter and Robert told fascinating stories of their mother's life and times. Even though a sad occasion, it still felt positive and upbeat—so typical of Betty's personality and approach to life.

Betty founded what became COGS in 1977 and for many years was THE driving force behind the group. She poured herself into its growth and development, kept it going through difficult times, tirelessly promoted and publicised it, wrote a booklet and numerous articles for the newsletter, and took up the political cudgels to fight for the cause of organic agriculture.

Hers is a fine example of enthusiasm and dedication, and hundreds

of people have benefitted from her love, concern and farsightedness.

Betty was born in 1920 in Hamilton, capital of Bermuda, the British territory in the North Atlantic. She was born into a long-established Bermudan family. Her parents were Hal Kitchener and Winifred Bluck; her paternal grandfather Frederick Walter was the younger brother of Horatio Herbert, Lord Kitchener, who in 1914 was made Secretary of State for War and whose face appears on *that* famous recruiting poster.

In Bermuda, Betty had a rural upbringing. After high school and being too young for university, she worked on the family farm where she likely discovered her love of growing plants, especially vegetables. She tells the story of the year they lost no fewer than 10,000 tomato plants when a hurricane swept across Bermuda.

The family had a number of dogs and when 10, Betty was given a pony. Her father was the first farmer to own a brucellosis-free herd and to pasteurise his milk.

At the age of 11 Betty started to go deaf, like both her parents. This growing handicap seems to

have made little difference to her academic abilities, as she always topped the class at both high school and later at McGill University in Montreal, Canada, where she read for a degree in agriculture specialising in horticulture, in which she was only the second woman to graduate, in 1942. Was it disappointing to be only the second? Not really—the first woman to graduate was her aunt. In most classes Betty was the only female.

World War II kept Betty in Canada where she met her husband, Louis, a ship designer who had been seconded by the British Admiralty to the Royal Canadian Navy. After the war they returned to England where they were married in 1946, and where their first son Peter was born. Post-war Britain was a difficult place to live—rationing didn't end until 1954—and a job with the Australian Navy Department brought the family to Australia in 1958. In 1963, the department relocated from Melbourne to Canberra, which is where we meet Betty.

Betty joined the Second Canberra Gardening Club (which had been formed in 1966) and remained an active member until 2013.

In late 1970 Betty's husband Louis became ill with mesothelioma from inhaling asbestos dust while working as a shipwright for the Royal Navy. Betty looked after him for over a year, including using naturopathic treatments, but he died in late 1971.

Some time later Betty was encouraged to think carefully about what she wanted to do most in life. How she felt is revealed, perhaps, in her 1993 booklet *Grow Your Own Vegies, A Handbook of Organic Community Gardens*, where she wrote,

*A death in the family changes a person's outlook on life completely, often with devastating results, but I have seen a wonderful healing take place just from working two or three times a week in the peaceful atmosphere of one of these community gardens. The quiet telling of problems to a friend who is interested can ease the pain so much.*

Betty realised she had always wanted to have a farm, so she bought one: 128 acres of steep, gravelly land with a few acres of creek flats on the Yass River Road just past Murrumbateman.

---

*Betty with Paul Whalan, then Minister for Industry, Employment & Education, at the Erindale garden opening in November 1989. Erindale was the third COGS garden.*



### **The farmer had divided off his worst land and sold it to Betty.**

Betty's son Rob said that when she took him to see it, she was all ready to start farming, armed with a spade, a fork and a trowel. To say she was optimistic would be an understatement. The land had a boundary fence and absolutely nothing else—not even a driveway or a gate. Rob had to use a shovel to dig a driveway into the cutting on the side of the road, and then cut a hole in the fence to enable his Mum to get onto the property.

The CSIRO had several trial blocks fenced off on the land; Betty decided one of them would be rabbit-proof and hence an ideal place to start her garden ... so she started digging with her spade and planting flowers and vegetables. One day while she was working a man from the CSIRO came along and asked what she was doing—this was a CSIRO trials plot and she couldn't do that! Betty told him she had bought the land with all fencing included and would sue him if he tried to take it. The CSIRO gave up in the end; they knew when they were beaten.

It was all very well to start an organic farm, but what Betty had learned in Canada in 1942 had little relevance to Australia in the 1970s. Even so, she was adamant she could make the 'desert' bloom.

Working on the farm encouraged son Peter to do the Horticulture Course at Weston TAFE, leading to his 25-year business in gardening and landscaping. Likewise, son Rob's interest in agriculture was also awakened, and he did three years at agriculture college while trying to make his mother's farm into a profitable enterprise.

The farm's produce was sold mainly to the Belconnen Markets and directly to various Canberra restaurants, as there were no specialty shops for organic produce. However, this was an idea before its time and eventually the farm, which was losing more and more money, had to be sold. It wasn't profitable, but profit wasn't the point to Betty.

Over the years many people have asked Betty: why organic? Her answer was for them to read *The ABC of Chemicals in the Home*, a little book put out by the Toxic and Hazardous Chemicals Committee of the Total Environment Centre in Sydney. Another book she often quoted from was the *Market Basket Survey* put out by the National Health and Medical Research Council every few years. [Started in 1970, this survey is now known as the *Australian Total Diet Study* and is managed by Food Standards Australia New Zealand.] In her own words, it was,

*a shocking revelation of the number and amount of chemicals in our food. An example of this is the 9 chemicals found in celery. Of course all the products tested are conventionally grown, not organic or Biodynamic.*

In 1977, on 24 August to be precise, Betty and some like-minded people from the Natural Health Society formed the Organic Gardening and Farming Society of the A.C.T.

### **The new society enjoyed the tortuous acronym of OGFSACT.**

In late 1981 Shirley Carden suggested changing the name to the Canberra Organic Growers Society, or COGS as it is known these days. So much easier.

We have a copy of OGFSACT's very first newsletter, issued in September 1977. The first committee members

were Betty Cornhill (President), Hanna Enders (Vice President), Ian Brown (Secretary), Joanne Hodge (Assistant Secretary), Peter Tuckerman (Treasurer), Gail Dadds (Librarian), and ordinary committee members Shirley Carden and Jeff Byrne. You'll recall that Shirley Carden died in January this year and her obituary appeared in the autumn edition of the *Canberra Organic* magazine.

Betty was variously president, vice president or committee member a number of times during the next 15 years, her last stint as co-vice president ending in March 1992. She continued attending meetings until about 18 months ago. Betty's son Peter was also a founding member and continues with COGS today.

The newsletter reveals that from the very start they were planning the first of many educational presentations by playing a tape from the 1976 Organic Festival at the Luddenham Showground. In addition, they asked for surplus fruit and vegetables to sell at the next meeting, books to purchase for the library, and topics for future meetings.

**Education was an important part of the society's earlier years.**

OGFSACT and later COGS tried to change the common belief that organic growing was all about



'muck and magic' producing only floppy fruits and vegetables of little nutritional value.

Early newsletters describe the great excitement at the monthly meetings as people shared techniques, knowledge, ideas and produce. A former president, David Odell, recalls feeling rather like a medieval monk, bearing the light of organics through a time of darkness.

With a lot of effort she secured both land and funding grants for a number of the early community gardens. An early ally was an employee of the then City Parks, Jim Laity, who identified vacant land for the first garden in Watson and persuaded the bureaucracy to let them use it.

Betty's self-confidence made her quite unafraid to approach bureaucrats and help them see her point of view. In *Grow Your Own Vegies* we read of the troubles they were having in getting permission to use grant money for a shed and tools instead of a fence. Letters from the committee had been ignored, so Betty wrote a new letter, took it in person to the office and insisted that the recipient read it while she watched him. The man said that he would provide an answer without delay. Two weeks later with no answer, Betty phoned the office and next day got a favourable reply from the Minister.

The premature death of Louis from an industrial disease had its effect on Betty's approach to healthy living. Betty always found time to encourage many people to grow vegetables and make compost

organically, as well as advising them on health issues, normally from an alternative health point of view. Her library contained a large number of books on natural healing methods, health promotion via the diet, food grown without using chemicals, promotion of bio-dynamic systems, and so on.

Betty loved gadgets. At the age of 73 she took up using a Macintosh computer for her writing, and a PC for share trading a bit later. She had an insatiable appetite for using a movie camera and later, a video camera. She loved to travel, and in her mid-80s went to a conference in Armidale, driving herself there in one day—roughly nine hours—and back again in another day. No trouble at all. She was SO angry when her driving licence was taken away at age 90.

**Betty was an extraordinary person, larger than life, generous, strong-willed, stubborn, feisty and absolutely sure of her views.**

In 2016 we can be so grateful for her contributions to the Canberra community: a well-known gardening society almost 39 years old, managing 12 community gardens with more on the way, supported by 400 members of whom about half till garden plots, a long waiting list for plots with no advertising at all, a backyard group to share experience and ideas, a good library, well-visited internet sites, garden plots to help migrants settle into Australian society, and the respect and willing co-operation of a variety of community organisations and a series of ACT governments.

Many hundreds of people over nearly four decades have benefitted greatly from a better diet, healthy exercise, a place to unwind from the hectic pace of modern life—the list goes on.

What a legacy! Many thanks, Betty, for a life well spent.

—Walter Steensby

You can read more about Betty, Shirley and more COGS old-timers in our 2013 history book, *From Bare Earth to Bounty*. A copy is in the COGS library. A copy of *Grow Your Own Vegies* is also in the library.





In the summer 2015 issue of *Canberra Organic* we published Walter's report on speaker Ross Bennett's July talk about snakes. That talk generated a huge amount of interest so even though snakes are hibernating at the moment, we've published a shortened version of Donna Vaughan's report of the talk to get you prepared for later in the year when snakes reappear.

It's a pity that more members were not present at Ross Bennett's talk, as they would undoubtedly have left with new insights about the behaviours of the snakes and been more confident about the best treatment for snake bite—in the unlikely event that this should happen.

Some people will never be reassured about snakes, but Ross's lifelong fascination with reptiles and his background in land, wildlife and fire management means he is a passionate advocate for the animals. Whatever your approach, it makes sense to understand that snakes are just another life form trying to survive in a changing world. In fact, it may not be reassuring to some people that for every one snake we see, there are probably 100 that have come and gone without being spotted at the same place.

Here are a few facts from Ross that might lessen your anxiety.

Although there are eight species that inhabit the ACT (and a ninth just across the tracks in Queanbeyan), the only 'dangerous' snakes you will encounter around the ACT are red-bellied black snakes and brown snakes. (Further out, there are tigers and copperheads.)

Snakes generally don't inhabit built-up areas, although if your block backs onto a reserve you may well see them, or even find brown snake eggs in your compost heap. By the way, brown snakes do not guard their eggs. They lay them in a warm place and leave the babies to fend for themselves, so they do not aggressively protect their babies.

These days, you are more likely to die from a shark attack than a snake bite—there are about two or three deaths Australia-wide per year. In



fact, unlike sharks, crocodiles and humans, snakes don't attack unless provoked.

Black snakes eat mainly frogs, so will often be seen around water and live particularly along the ACT's western margin, for instance along the Murrumbidgee and Gininderra Creek. Being lizard eaters, brown snakes are more likely to be seen in arid areas. However, they also eat mice (not eggs), so may be seen where these are present, for example, around chook yards.

**Ross brought a friend along to the COGS meeting: a 30-year-old female red-bellied black snake about one metre long, which he handled throughout most of his talk.**

Ross's snake remained calm as it coiled around his hands, occasionally flicking out its tongue. Ross explained that he rescued the snake as a 12-inch (about 25 cm) long newborn baby after it had been brought in by a cat in a Tuggeranong suburb. Black snakes are live-bearers (not egg-layers) with each baby born in a sac, and he was able to identify its age by an umbilical cord that was still attached. The snake's docility is due to it living in captivity all its life.

In fact, Ross was at pains to stress that, apart from a small number of accidental bites each year, most snake bites occur as a result of people approaching the reptiles, usually to do them harm. Venom is used by snakes to efficiently

procure food, not for defensive reasons, but if you attempt to hit them with a stick or a gardening fork, they will probably fight back.

**Question time brought up some other useful snippets of information.**

If an animal is bitten, unfortunately the problem is often not recognised. Also, they are most likely to have been bitten on the face. Ross's advice was to get to a vet ASAP.

In terms of deterring snakes—for example, around the edge of a community garden—keep the perimeter mown and tidy, with no piles of rubbish. Wetting a compost heap won't deter snakes. Nor will keeping blue tongue lizards.

Snakes rarely stay in one place. So if you see one under a sheet of tin, it is probably just passing through and in the process of cleaning up the mouse nest that's there.

Snakes can be difficult to identify, as colour and markings can differ widely. Ross's book, *Reptiles & frogs of the Australian Capital Territory*, is a valuable field guide on the subject with lots of coloured illustrations.

Ross's talk was very relevant to situations many gardeners find themselves in, as well as being extremely informative, and to me, really reassuring. Let's hope it will help change a few attitudes and help people understand that it's better to keep a respectful distance if you encounter a snake.

—Donna Vaughan

# Winter is the time to harvest brussels sprouts

**B**russels sprouts are back—those intensely cabbage-flavoured nuggets that as children we were duty-bound to detest and loathe.

## Why should you bother growing, eating or preserving brussels sprouts?

Brussels sprouts are a new super food, along with just about every vegetable and fruit grown on the planet. As every organic gardener knows, fruit and vegetables are nature's capsules of vitamins and minerals, and the greater the quantity and variety you eat, the better your health.

## Brussels sprouts are good for you!

Of course they are! My mother always said: 'Eat your brussels sprouts, they are good for you—and there will be no pudding if you don't'!

- It seems steamed brussels sprouts can help lower cholesterol because fibre type substances in the sprouts bind with bile acids and in doing so help the body excrete cholesterol.
- Brussels sprouts contain high levels of glucosinolates which are responsible for the pungency of crucifers.

The term *crucifers* comes from *cruciferae*, the older name for brassicas, which relates to the four petals of mustard flowers that resemble a cross.

- Brussels sprouts have important health benefits because they are the starting point for the making of a variety of substances, such

as sulforaphane, which help protect the body against cancer. These sulphur-containing compounds make crucifers, especially brussels sprouts, taste somewhat bitter.

- Brussels sprouts have very high levels of vitamins K and C, very low GI and are low in calories. In fact, brussels sprouts are among the top 20 most nutritious foods in the Aggregate Nutrient Density Index which measures vitamin, mineral and phytonutrient content in relation to caloric content.
- If you want to increase your vitamin C intake then eating brussels sprouts may be better than having a glass of orange juice. Vitamin C from brussels sprouts can help improve your skin—even if it is sun-damaged—because it promotes collagen production. Collagen provides the support structure for skin.

Are you getting more convinced that Mum was right? Instead of, or as well as, an apple a day, eat its volume in steamed crucifers, especially brussels sprouts, and you will keep the doctor away.

**But don't do what a lot of mums use to do in the past and cook them until the whole house smells of sulphur. If you do, they will have no nutritional value at all. You might as well eat boiled socks.**

## Growing brussels sprouts

Like all crucifers, brussels sprouts like a rich soil, so add lots of compost, well-rotted manure and a little lime if your soil is acidic.

As they grow, add some nitrogenous organic fertiliser. Don't grow brussels sprouts where they have been recently planted before.

They take a long time to grow so plant seeds in mid-summer. When transplanting seedlings make sure they are planted fairly deeply and press the soil down around them to ensure they do not fall over. Surround them with a disk of material such as felt or mesh, to protect the seedlings from cutworms and slugs. Coffee grinds seem to deter most pests. I cover our brussels sprouts' bed with vegie net to make sure no white cabbage butterfly can reach them and lay eggs.

## Harvesting and preserving brussels sprouts

Brussels sprouts are great because they like frost and come into their best just as early cauliflowers and broccoli are finishing. Start picking the tightly packed sprouts from the bottom of the stem as soon as they are bite sized. Keep doing this until you have eaten your way up to the top. The sprouts last a long time on the stem in cold weather. Twist the sprouts downwards to remove them, take a few extra leaves with you to encourage more growth.

Brussels sprouts are easy to freeze—much better than cabbage that goes rather limp and flavourless. Pick tight young sprouts, remove any tough outer leaves, inspect for grubs, wash, cut a cross in the stem end, and blanch in boiling water for 2 to 4 minutes, depending on their size. Plunge into icy water to cool. Drain thoroughly. Pat dry. Freeze individually on trays then pack into vacuum bags and seal or place into zip-lock bags.



## Cooking with brussels sprouts

Although some of us may be scarred for life from our encounters with overcooked brussels sprouts in our childhood, young, freshly picked brussels sprouts are surprisingly delicious. They can be used raw, steamed, sautéed or roasted.

### Brussels sprouts salads

- Start off with some finely shredded brussels sprouts then you can add chopped toasted nuts, e.g. walnuts, pine nuts and Brazil nuts.
- Try something crisp such as julienned apple, very finely sliced radish or celery. You can also add some sultanas or dried cranberries.
- Add a touch of savoury with crumbled fried pancetta or bacon, or some crumbled blue cheese, feta or shaved parmesan. Baby beetroots would also go well or some marinated artichokes or maybe some rocket or segments of orange.
- Add a good French dressing with plenty of mustard and serve with some good bread.

### Steamed and sautéed

You can add the same ingredients as above to lightly steamed brussels sprouts that have been sautéed in olive oil or butter. Try macadamia nuts, almonds or hazelnuts. Add some garlic and anchovy for extra flavour. Pull the leaves of the sprouts apart and add them to a stir-fry. Steamed sprouts are delicious with a herb butter or pesto.

### Baked and roasted

- Place some lightly steamed brussels sprouts in a gratin pan and cover with a cheesy white sauce, top with some breadcrumbs and pine nuts and brown in the oven.

OR

- Cut a cross in the base of washed brussels sprouts and place in an oiled baking pan.
- Add other vegetables if you like; e.g. chats, baby carrots, parsnips, or even apples.
- Add about ¼ cup of olive oil, ½ cup of vegetable stock, ¼ cup of lemon juice, garlic, salt, pepper and herbs.
- Toss the ingredients in the liquid and roast in the oven until the liquid has been absorbed.

- Remove before the vegetables start to burn.
- Serve topped with some crispy bacon, or fried chorizo, toasted nuts and dabs of butter or soft feta.

### Spicy chilli and coconut brussels sprouts

The sky is the limit when it comes to brussels sprouts. Here is a recipe from [www.taste.com.au](http://www.taste.com.au):

- Lightly steam brussels sprouts.
- Cook a sliced onion in oil until soft.
- Add fresh garlic, ginger, chilli, garam masala and turmeric and cook until fragrant.
- Add some shredded coconut and the sprouts and cook until sprouts are golden and crisp.

You can even add brussels sprouts to pasta.

–Elizabeth Dangerfield

*[Editor's note: Thanks Elizabeth for this enthusiastic acknowledgement of brussels sprouts! I have always loved them: in fact they are one of my favourite vegetables. Now I also know how good for me they are!]*

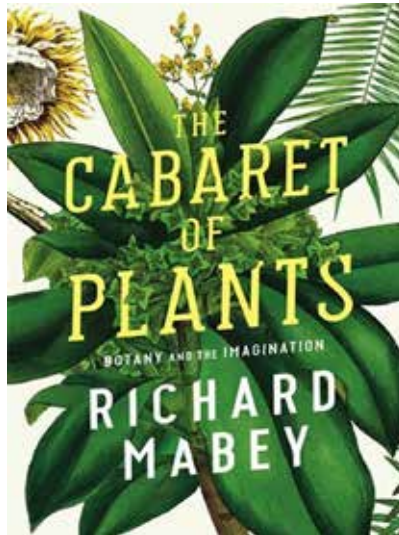
**The Cabaret of Plants—  
Botany and the Imagination  
by Richard Mabey**

This fascinating book gives an eclectic account of the author’s personal interaction with the plant world and in doing so covers a wide range of topics. It delves into science, philosophy, culture and history, leaving the reader with no doubt about the importance and marvel of plant life.

**There is more to plants than meets the eye.**

Plants deserve our respect for their intrinsic worth, their fabulous nature, the intertwining of their fate with ours. Far from being just fodder for our animals, food for our table, essential for our very survival, they are more complex and intriguing than most people have ever suspected.

According to Mabey, the increased understanding of the centrality of plants’ role on earth



might be expected to encourage a new respect for plants as autonomous organisms. Instead, because our society now seems to measure everything in terms of its monetary value, even some conservationists have abandoned the idea of arguing for plants’ intrinsic value in favour of stressing their economic potential. In this way, the marketplace may decide to value them—at least some of them!

Mabey argues that while plants are useful they are far more

than that and we ignore their true worth at our peril. He gives many examples of this, from the scant attention paid to plants by Palaeolithic cave artists, to the reverence paid to trees of great antiquity while humbler vegetation is ignored. He goes on to discuss carnivorous plants, gene hopping, plant intelligence and symbiosis—just a few examples that blur the boundaries between plants and animals. Indeed, it seems ‘vegetable mudfish’ are much more common than we thought.

This is an easy-to-read, entertaining and thought-provoking book on botany.

–Elizabeth Dangerfield

***The Cabaret of Plants—Botany and the Imagination* by Richard Mabey**

**Profile Books Ltd, London  
2015, ISBN: 9781861976628  
(hardcover)**

Available Australian National Library shop and online



The benefits of being an 80/20 gardener. Last year’s overlooked potatoes that got inadvertently left in the ground have morphed into this year’s golden find under the pumpkin vines. Yummy russet Burbank, particularly delicious fried or roasted.

–Susan McCarthy

**Out of the Scientist's Garden:  
A Story of Water and Food  
by Richard Stirzaker**

Many of you will know Richard Stirzaker, either personally or at least by reputation as a Canberra-based 'water guru', and perhaps have heard him speak about his soil water measuring device at a recent COGS monthly meeting. However, not all of you will have read his work.

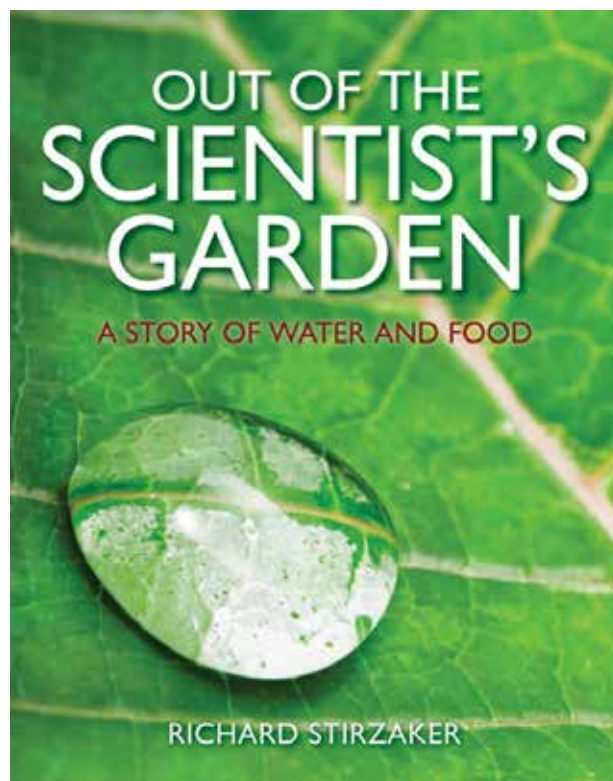
We gardeners are typically a time-poor lot, always thinking about what we should be planting, digging, watering, picking or clearing from our garden even when we are not actually in the garden. So, lest you regret spending time reading a book that does not match your expectations, let me be clear up front about what this book is not.

If you are looking for a 'how to' manual, in the sense of one offering specific gardening advice or cultural notes, this book is probably not what you are after. However, the author's narrative does assist the reader in thinking about water resources and usage issues, and therefore will appeal to those attracted to a 'how to think about things' style.

Different themes in the book will appeal to readers differently—rather than presenting one cohesive narrative, the book is really a series of essays rather loosely linked by the common broad theme of turning water into food. I suggest for context that you jump straight to the Epilogue (Reflections in the scientist's garden) on page 187, and then go to the Prologue (Entering the scientist's garden) before tackling any of the essays, which you can then sensibly read in any order.

**Part 1 (The view from our garden), and in particular Chapter 2 (A year in the vegetable garden) was the standout for me**

These essays [in Part 1] draw from the author's experiences in his own vegetable garden and orchard in Canberra. There is a wonderful lyricism in his outline of the yearly cycle of crops as the seasons unfold, and as times of bounteous plenty segue into winter and the late-winter 'hungry gap'. Which Canberra gardener cannot identify with the author lamenting the swags of beans that moulder too long in the fridge during the summer/autumn glut, despite the family eating them every night? Who too, like the author, would want to avoid putting themselves to the trouble of warding off cabbage white moths from a summer crop of broccoli, given they will have an unrelieved surfeit of brassicas, without that trouble, to consume over the colder months?



Other chapters, particularly in Part 3 (Feeding ourselves) focus on the role of water in commercial food production, panning out to a broader global outlook, featuring a short history of agriculture and an examination of the most effective crops for feeding the world. These will appeal to those seeking a global perspective and perhaps looking for answers to first-world moral dilemmas arising from living in circumstances of plenty while so many people elsewhere in the world do without.

As one would expect, there is also an informative discussion of soil water monitoring tools, including their use in water-poor Africa, where the author has worked with local small-scale farmers.

The book is a lively and personable read—several reads, really—arising from the author's own life experience trajectory, and is nicely illustrated.

Will it change the way you view water as a garden resource? At the very least, I expect it will give you a fresh perspective on your use of water. As the author points out, water is regarded as a renewable resource, with a cycle of rain, evaporation, condensation and evaporation again. Yet it is often in short supply. Our challenge as gardeners is to use it efficiently.

—Sue McCarthy

***Out of the Scientist's Garden: A Story of Water and Food* by Richard Stirzaker, published in Australia by CSIRO Publishing, 2010, ISBN 9780643096585 (pbk)**

This book is in the COGS library.

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*This extraordinary creature is 'Dave's rat scarer' in the Holder garden. Whether it actually works is a matter for debate but as a sculpture it is remarkable.*

*(photo: Sue McCarthy)*

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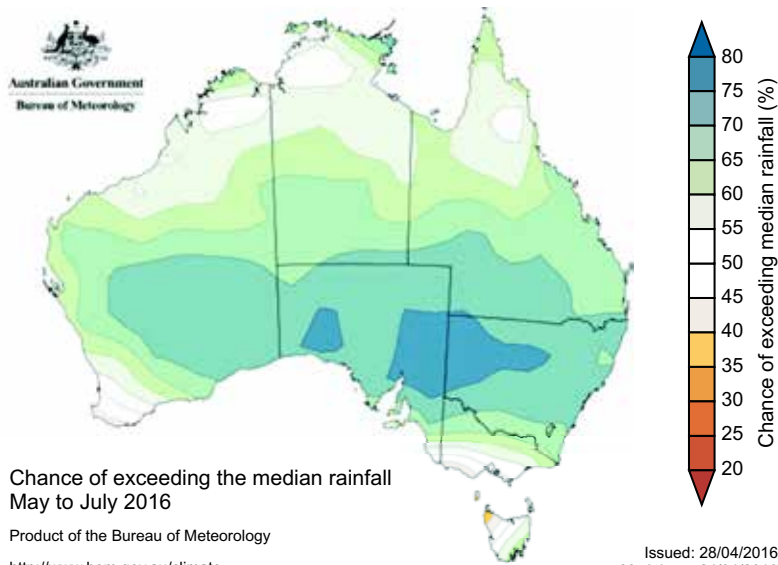


## The 2015–16 El Niño enters its final weeks

The Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) report issued on 26 April says that the 2015–16 El Niño is in its last stages. Climate modelling by BOM based on recent changes in the tropical Pacific Ocean and atmosphere suggest that El Niño is over and that there is around a 50 per cent chance of a La Niña forming later in 2016.

Eastern tropical Pacific sea surface temperatures have cooled significantly, and are now approaching neutral levels. As temperatures under the surface are below average, more surface water cooling is expected. However, the atmosphere is only slowly responding to these changes, and hence the Southern Oscillation Index (SOI) and cloudiness near the Date Line continue to fluctuate around El Niño thresholds.

Six of eight international climate models suggest the tropical Pacific Ocean will return to neutral levels within the next month. By September, seven of the eight models suggest a La Niña is likely, but individual model outlooks show



Chance of exceeding the median rainfall May to July 2016

Product of the Bureau of Meteorology

<http://www.bom.gov.au/climate>

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Issued: 28/04/2016  
Model run: 24/04/2016  
Base Period: 1981–2010

a large spread between neutral and La Niña scenarios.

La Niña is often, but not always, associated with above-average winter–spring rainfall over northern, central and eastern Australia.

Australia’s climate is also being influenced by record warm temperatures in the Indian Ocean. The warmth in the Indian Ocean may provide extra moisture for rain systems as they cross Australia during the southern autumn.

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

ACT storages	74% full
Murray–Darling Basin	46% full
Burrinjuck Dam	34% full
Blowering Dam	43% full
Sydney	88% full
Melbourne	60% full
Brisbane	82% full
Adelaide	46% full
Perth	18% full

National Circuit. I’m on the bike, going across to Manuka. Riding through an avenue of pin oaks, russet red and golden brown. Blinking the sunlight. Canberra so brilliant, this time of year.

It’s 8th May and the autumn trees have peaked. But didn’t they used to peak around Anzac Day, 25th April? And then the first frost and we lit our first log fire. Chimney cleaned and tons of firewood stacked ready for the winter.

*cold bites  
fireside cosy  
cups of tea ...  
happiness equals  
four feet on the fender*



It’s all happening again. But it’s a couple of weeks later now. The first frost struck only yesterday. Killed the zucchinis and beheaded the dahlias. Forgot to have the chimney cleaned this summer. Haven’t bought firewood, we still have some from last winter. Not so many fires these days.

I missed most of last winter. Travelled. When I got back late August I noticed our rhubarb was still thriving. It survived winter for the first time. We’ve grown rhubarb for 40 years. And all those years it died off with the frosts. Not sure what it takes to kill rhubarb. Is it -5 or -8? But it’s an indicator. We’re not getting such intense frosts. Blind Freddie should be able to see that things are warming up.

*oh there’s  
carbon in the air  
and the levee is dry  
for the climate  
is a changin’*

–Gerry Jacobson



## EDUCATION

**Food and Farming related courses in the Canberra Region**

- **All Season Cool Climate Vegetable Growing**  
Sunday 3 July – Wynlen House, Braidwood
- **Raising Animals Organically**  
Sunday 10 July – Wynlen House, Braidwood
- **Introduction to Permaculture**  
13 and 14 August – Caroola Farm, Mulloon
- **Permaculture Design Certificate Course**  
August to November 2016 – Caroola Farm, Mulloon

COGS members get the 'early-bird' price!

### Bookings essential

[www.southernharvest.net.au](http://www.southernharvest.net.au)  
[www.permacultureexchange.org.au](http://www.permacultureexchange.org.au)  
E: [education@southernharvest.net.au](mailto:education@southernharvest.net.au)

## Beautiful Holiday House

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

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

House sleeps eight, with a large fenced garden where children can play within sight ■ 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 _____
			Age _____
<b>Adult 2</b>	First name _____	<b>Child 3</b>	Name _____
	Surname _____		Age _____
	Occupation _____	<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. \_\_\_\_\_



# winter planting guide

## VEGETABLES

### Asparagus

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

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

Remember this is a long-term investment.

### Broad beans

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

### Kohlrabi

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

### Lettuce

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

### Onions

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

### Peas

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

### Rhubarb

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

### Other possibilities

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

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

Frost-sensitive vegetables such as capsicum, eggplant and tomatoes can be started early in August indoors

but may need a heated glasshouse or warm spot to germinate and will certainly need protection before being planted out in spring.

## FRUIT

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

### Strawberries

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

### Berries

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

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

### Currants

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

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

S = seed sowing; T = transplanting

# What's On

## Nature strip gardening in Canberra

Here's a timeline of events:

**19 January to 2 March 2016:** ACT Government invites community feedback on draft guidelines

**31 January 2016:** *The Canberra Times* publishes an article entitled 'Canberra to allow food to be grown on nature strips'

**26 February 2016:** COGS submits feedback  
Despite lots of publicity, as far as we know, the new guidelines have not yet been released.

## COGS monthly meetings

Visit to Canberra City Farm—  
Sunday 22 May, 2 pm to 4 pm

Here's an event you won't want to miss!

COGS members will get their own special tour of Canberra City Farm on Dairy Road. Keith Colls will be conducting the tour.

There is plenty of car parking on site. About halfway along Dairy Road on the eastern side you'll see some small buildings and the entrance gate. GPS coordinates are -35.317036°, 149.163647°.

If people wish to car pool, please contact Walter Steensby at [president@cogs.asn.au](mailto:president@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@inet.net.au](mailto:glynken@inet.net.au)

## 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

## Let's talk about gardening

Did you know that you can now find COGS on **Facebook**? Just search for the Canberra Organic Growers Society and "like" the page to receive interesting links and tips in your newsfeed or to debate a topic.



## Diggers masterclasses

Saturday 21 May

9.30am: **Backyard Heritage Fruit Trees**

1.30pm: **Simple Cider Making**

Details at

[www.diggers.com.au/shop/events/canberra/](http://www.diggers.com.au/shop/events/canberra/)



**FARMERS MARKET**  
**AT BUNGENDORE**

Every Saturday 9am to 1pm  
Bungendore Memorial Hall

*Patricia Georgee from Cotter garden looking through the mice-damaged pumpkin (see page 4)*

