

Canberra Organic



Fetherston Gardens

An unknown delight

On Sunday 28 August, for the monthly meeting, a number of us went on a 'field' trip to the Fetherston Gardens in Weston. What a surprise! Completely unknown to me and yet near to where I once lived.

The garden started life 40 years ago as the TAFE/CIT School of Horticulture, designed and partly planted by the first Head of Horticulture, Tony Fetherston, during 1973-74. When the school moved to Bruce in 2009 the grounds were left to deteriorate. Only just saved from the bulldozers in 2010, the Fetherston Gardens Friends—including Lesley Pattinson and Paulene Cairnduff who are also COGS members—and volunteers have done a magnificent job in restoring the 3.4 hectares of woodland, a Secret Garden, a Native Garden, an Arboretum and more.

Camellia expert Steve Utick showed us some of the 40 cultivars on display. Forty! It's well worth a visit, and they welcome volunteers to help keep it in good condition. The entrance is on the north side of Heysen Street, about halfway up the hill between Streeton Drive and the Tuggeranong Parkway underpass.

—Walter Steensby (story and photos)



President's report

Summer is a comin' in, springs the world anew, to quote parts of the famous medieval rondo. Around here our gardens are sprouting, the flowers are blooming, and it'll be good to harvest our summer vegies. At home we are getting a small harvest of asparagus from our patch, some snow peas (those that survived), early broad beans, and are finishing our broccoli. Our perpetual leeks and multiplying onions are living up to their name, and we are enjoying them on the dinner plate.

Steady as she goes

COGS continues on its steady course. We had a good response to membership renewal time, and our treasurer, Andy Hrast, is very pleased with the way in which members renewed using the new computer-based internet-accessible system. It has saved the treasury and membership team a great deal of work and expense and will continue to do so in coming years. The new system has been a good investment. There's a report from Andy on page 21.

The Betty Cornhill Garden

The Cotter Garden has a new name in honour of Betty Cornhill who founded COGS in 1977. She was indefatigable in promoting and supporting the Society and died only last April at the great age of 95½. The Cotter garden was the first one set up by COGS and the Cotter garden members decided that in honour of Betty it was good to rename their garden as **The Betty Cornhill Garden**. Again, thank you Betty for a life well spent: we are all in your debt.

According to Betty's 1993 booklet, *Grow Your Own Vegies*, the next gardens after Cotter were the Bicentennial project (which flopped), Watson (moved in 1996 to Mitchell), Erindale, Charnwood, Oaks Estate, Theodore (now closed), and Mitchell (how did you guess?). Seven more were opened after 1993. Cotter itself was moved in 1989 to make way for the imminent widening of Cotter Road.

ACT Elections 2016

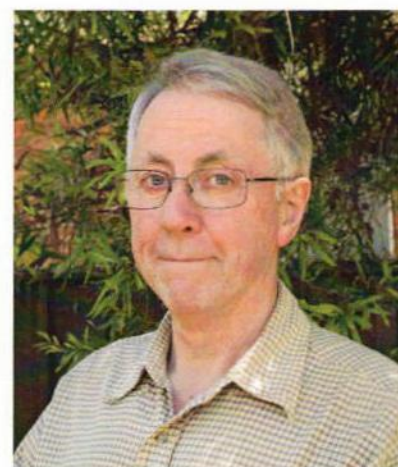
The ACT's new Legislative Assembly has 11 Liberal, 12 Labor and 2 Greens members. With a Green chairing the planning committee, we look forward to working with the government to develop and consolidate the position of community gardens and urban agriculture in the ACT, both of which are growing in popularity worldwide and in importance to the ACT economy.

Our sister organisation

Our sister organisation, the Canberra City Farm (CCF), is doing well and promises new ways for COGS and CCF to promote organic growing and urban agriculture. If you're not aware, this is a comparatively new venture set up in October 2015 on about 2 hectares of the former agricultural school land on Dairy Road at Fyshwick, just south of the Jerrabomberra Wetlands. Prior to that it ran dairy cattle and some of the dairy structures are still there. The CCF operates on organic principles. Former COGS president Keith Colls and I are on the CCF committee, and a number of other COGS members are also CCF members.

In the two years since its establishment, a great deal of volunteer work has gone into rehabilitating the land. We have cleared weeds, rooted up endless bricks and rocks, planted a goodly number of donated feijoa trees, pruned the grapevines and assorted fruit trees, and cleared out many years' accumulation of dirt, dung and rubbish from the sheds. We bought a walk-behind tractor recently and it has already saved many hours of work in slashing down large areas of knee-high grass. The Woden branch of SEE-Change are retrofitting a simple garage *cum* shed to bring it up to *passivhaus* standards (i.e. needing almost no energy for heating or cooling) and to convert it into a café. This project is going very well.

The CCF has launched a number of projects including:



- large garden plots, much larger than what COGS can offer, for people who need plenty of space
- experimental plots where a variety of cultivars and cultivation methods will be tested
- garden plots for the disabled
- an Indigenous garden
- small-scale commercial enterprises such as growing micro-greens and recycling green waste
- a seed-savers scheme which has gotten off to a flying start with a good number of participants and collaboration with the seed savers in Bega, and
- training and instructional courses on dealing with pests and diseases, growing mushrooms — and seed saving, of course.

COGS and the CCF have much in common and plenty of scope to collaborate on these and future projects. COGS has considerable gardening expertise that the CCF lacks, and the CCF can provide opportunities not available to COGS.

The CCF welcomes new members and volunteers. **Right now it needs someone with strong horticultural skills.** Is that you? We invite you to join! For more information, ask Keith or me (our email addresses are on page 2), or go to

www.urbanagriculture.org.au/canberra-city-farm/

Sumer is icumen in!

Walter

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

It celebrates organic gardening, local produce, sustainability and information exchange in the Canberra region.

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

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

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

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Editor's note

Welcome to the summer issue after a rather soggy spring!

The wet conditions have been a theme in the reports from around the COGS gardens, but rather than dampen spirits it seems to have produced a bumper crop of reports from the COGS gardens. This truly is the gardens issue. Thanks for sharing everyone! We love to know what everyone is doing in their gardens. Sharing information is one of the special things about community gardens, as is being able to garden as a family like the Dobbin family from Crace who feature on this month's cover.

And it looks like some more COGS gardens are on the horizon. See Walter's report on page 15 for more details.

It's been another great year for COGS—more success with ACT Government grants, lots of activities in the gardens, a new website and lots of energy. Come and celebrate with us at our Christmas party on Tuesday 22 November (*see inside back cover for details*).

In London recently I was pleased to come across the thriving Hogsmill Community Garden. I was also really pleased to inspect my aunt's thriving fruit and vegetable garden in Lithuania. I don't think I've ever seen cranberries growing so well!

A special thanks to everyone who has contributed to the magazine this year. The magazine wouldn't be the same without Gerry's tankas, Elizabeth's articles on growing fruit and vegetables, Glynis' recipes, Sue's book reviews, Andy's weather reports, Walter's column and all the reports from the gardens etc etc.

Let's do it all again next year!—Sue

Hogsmill Community Garden in Kingston on Thames



Cranberries growing in my aunt's garden near Klaipeda in Lithuania

Contents

Fetherston Gardens.....	inside front cover
President's report..	1
COGS committee and garden convenors	2
Editor's note	3
Around the COGS gardens	
Mitchell.....	4
O'Connor	6
Dickson.....	9
Kambah	10
Crace	12
Betty Cornhill.....	12
Cook.....	13
Charnwood.....	13
Book review—Grow your own medicine.....	14
Recipe—Plum relish.....	15
More community gardens	15
Tomatoes	16
Crop rotation.....	18
Poem—Midsummer Morning	19
The weather report	21
Well done COGS members	21
COGS membership application	23
Summer planting guide	24
What's on.....	inside back cover

This month's cover:

Daniel, Simone, Matilda and Will Dobbin planted some broccoli and strawberries during the August working bee at Crace community garden.
(photo: Diana Cozadinos)

Mitchell community garden

Mitchell Garden now has 43 plots and 32 registered gardeners. We have many nationalities who share their homeland vegetables and individual planting methods.

Our gardeners come from north Canberra, many Gungahlin suburbs and one from Bruce in Belconnen. So much can be learned from each other.

Winter came with rain and more rain and far too much flooding water for our garden, and as spring has been forecast as having more rain we hope our summer crops survive.

Almost all the unhealthy gum trees have now been felled so sunlight has found its way to the back gardens. Thank you COGS for the financial assistance to do this.

Gwen has created a flower garden for bees and butterflies to visit and stay awhile in our new friendly insect hotel.

Our old fruit trees have burst into bud and leaf so we are hopeful of a good crop again this year.

Some of our gardeners have planted fruit vines and trees—raspberries, blueberries, currants, mulberries and strawberries—so hopefully the birds leave us some.

Bunnings Gungahlin is supporting our garden with donations of pallets, wood and cardboard. We have been placed on their barbecue program which gives us a barbecue stand in November and December. Hopefully more to come next year!

We recently held our AGM and our convenor, Gwen, offered to stay on for another year. Gwen has the help of Richard, Narelle, Luisa, Kevin, Kirsty, Ed and Victoria.

This year, the committee has many plans for the garden including:

- attracting friendly bees and insects
- creating more experimental gardens
- planting natives and roses in the front
- providing a space for sharing info and sharing plants
- a meeting and barbecue area
- a concrete-floored shed for tools and our trailer
- and, of course, welcoming new gardeners to Mitchell.

Mitchell Garden welcomes visitors and friends from our 'community of gardeners'—call our convenor on 0410 656 151 to make a time to visit.

—Narelle McLean
(story and photos)

Neat garden beds





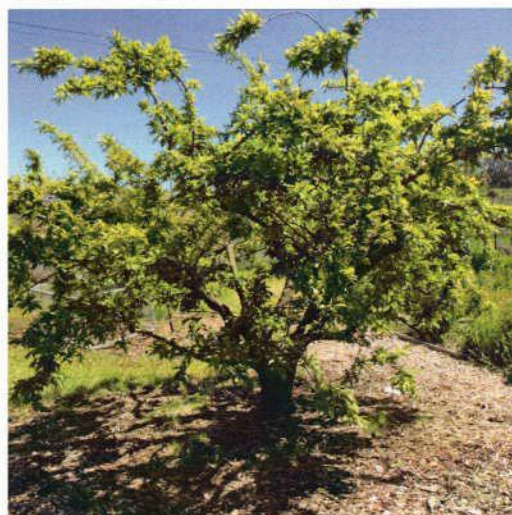
Despite the wet weather the garden is thriving



Mitchell garden's new insect hotel



Garlic thriving in the Mitchell garden



An old, but productive, fruit tree



O'Connor community garden

A very overdue report ...

Changes in the garden

We have had quite a few plot changes over the last year or so. Given the demand, all new gardeners are being allocated half plots of 20 to 22 square metres. Sam and Carly and Alex and Joel occupy a plot that was vacant for a while.

Intrepid remover-of-creepers, Andrew, has sadly left us (see spring 2016 issue of *Canberra Organic*) as he now lives too far away, has two kids, and now his own backyard. We welcome back Glen, and Lara, Paul and Sumi and young son who now work Andrew's divided former plot, and welcome Lea to where Katy, Conan and family gardened.

One of the reasons our younger gardeners leave is the birth of a second child and the heavy load of work and caring commitments this entails. That said, we have a maturing crop of young adolescents who are a very special part of our community.

Moira and Jim also each have half plots, and Trang is learning to love earthworms!

There are still about six applicants on our waitlist.

The Church hall gutters that feed our large rain tanks have been replaced, so after much protracted fuss and lessons in basic hydraulics, the downpipes now effectively deliver water into these tanks.

Uncle Fester, our wildlife rescue bluetongue is still with us! He/it hadn't been seen for a while, but re-emerged a few weeks back.

Animals and arches

Sam arrived with bees! The O'Connor Uniting Church generously offered to house these on their adjacent land so the bees are safely located behind a cyclone

fence and a locked gate. Pollination in the garden improved noticeably after their arrival. Sam has been demonstrating bee management to interested gardeners.

Our annual meeting was truncated to collect a swarm. Amazingly, Sam's bees chose to swarm on HIS garden plot! It was a Zen process as Sam quietly moved handfuls of bees into a bucket for relocation. *See inset for the bee story.*

Paul, Tom and Conan constructed an elegant Art Deco arch over one of the garden paths. Of course this was constructed from bicycle wheels and other materials scrounged from nature strips. Last season the arch became dangerous from the risk of one of the many pumpkins falling off it. This year, we are negotiating as to whether beans or more pumpkins should climb up the arch.

O'Connor is blessed ...

O'Connor is a tiny garden with no space for a greenhouse. However, we are privileged to

have an 'annexe' up the hill at Barbara's and Gary's place. Barbara is a compulsive propagator and we have seedlings grown there in abundance which we all appreciate!

We have recently re-mulched our paths with superb chips from *Eucalyptus nicholii* trees that fell over in the winter wet. Russ from Specialised Arbour especially sourced them for us. There were frustrated faces as I paid for this load as, despite the dump site being on a significant slope, the delivery truck became bogged.

I have recently seen photos of the swamps that some other gardens have become after the winter rains and now must stop complaining about the free-draining subsoil we have on our old tennis courts!

We do well as a collaborative mob, so thank you all to all who continue to make our garden function.

—Jenny Clark (story);
photos as marked

Potting on in the rain in our salubrious annexe (photo: Paul Magary)





O'Connor's winter working bee was spent half working and half eating and chatting (photo: Deb Hamilton)

Highlights of 2016

Looking back over this year, the highlights in my vegetable and fruit garden at O'Connor have included harvesting nearly 2 kg of black currants last spring and then making some delicious sauces that are sublime on vanilla ice cream!

Tomato season was also kind with beautiful sauces from some lovely, old, sweet Italian strains of tomatoes and some bountiful Roma plants I bought when passing through the Kiama Markets. It helped to discover that the excellent Italian hand vegetable press I had in my cupboard skinned and seeded the slightly-cooked tomatoes so sauce-making was a relative breeze.

And just recently, after a wait of some years, I've enjoyed several meals of home-grown asparagus—certainly worth the wait.

Aside from some good crops this year, the other highlight was spending time (with much appreciated help) to widen my paths and shore up the sides of my beds, and then transplant about 50 strawberry plants and espalier a thornless blackberry so I can harvest more easily this year.

—Deb Hamilton (story and photo)



Deb's long-awaited asparagus

O'Connor bees interrupt AGM and then move on

O'Connor had a particularly eventful AGM this year when a swarm of bees decided to interrupt proceedings. Here's the stream of email showing how things unfolded ...

8 October

Greetings gardeners,

This morning's meeting was truncated to watch Sam expertly cajole a bee swarm to relocate. DO NOT let kids, dogs or yourselves into the area cordoned off by chairs as the swarm needs to settle before being removed. A possible magic as these were probably Sam's bees that settled on HIS plot!

jenny

9 October

Hi all,

Just letting you know that I moved the swarm last night to a new home in Macgregor. I will check the hives today to ensure that they won't swarm again.

Sam

9 Oct 2016, at 2:04 PM

Hi all,

Checked the bees as well today. All in good shape, just pulled out some more swarm cells.

Sam

9 October 7.37 pm

Hi,

all is good. Some of the bees from the hive have swarmed to my plot of all locations. But I have picked these up and passed them to the beekeepers association, who have set up a new beekeeper in Macgregor with them.

Both hives still have bees and active queens. When they swarm, only some of the bees leave.

I have also inspected both hives and removed any other swarm cells, so they won't swarm again. I will keep a close eye on them in the coming weeks because it is a crazy period for swarming at the moment.

Sam



Photos: Deb Hamilton

Dickson community garden

Dickson Garden is trialling a different working bee structure this year. Instead of having a working bee around the start of every season, a proposal was put forward to have a working bee every month except December. These will occur on the third Sunday from 11:00 to 12:30. It is expected that every plot holder will attend at least four of these working bees. This proposal was discussed at the 2016 AGM and agreed to by the gardeners present.

Additionally, a set of regular chores has been determined and these are dealt with at every working bee. These chores include sweeping, maintaining mulched paths, turning the compost, dealing with green waste, etc. Special jobs such as pruning fruit trees are managed as required.

The first of these working bees was held Sunday 16 October with seven participants. It was a beautiful sunny day, although a little windy. We achieved a lot—the recently evicted possum was given a home among the gum trees, the peppermint bed was weeded, compost turned, mulch laid and unwanted weedy trees removed and mulched.

A special thanks to Ray

The gardeners at Dickson Community Garden are very chuffed to receive a new table and chairs unit after the recent disappearance of our old picnic table. The new set was handcrafted by Ray and is beautifully made and finished.

Hats off to you Ray! You're a wonderful person to have at the Dickson Community Garden. From all at DCG.

– Michele England (photos and story)



James works the mulcher at the working bee



Ray's beautiful handcrafted table and chair set



Home sweet home: Dickson garden's possum gets new digs

Kambah community garden

The gardeners in Kambah are now well into their spring planting, including in our Sharing Garden, which is expected to provide a good supply of fresh vegetables for more deliveries to Companion House and the Communities@Work food pantry in Tuggeranong over the summer. We are very happy that we managed to make regular deliveries to Companion House through winter—just a modest contribution to the food security of vulnerable asylum-seekers and refugees in Canberra.

Our Open Day on the 8th of October brought a lot of visitors to the garden to see and learn about organic gardening in practice and

our work in the local community. In the beautiful garden setting and glorious weather many people enjoyed the healthy vegetarian food from our food crops and bought a lot of seedlings ready for spring planting. When visitors to our food stall asked about the dishes on offer we were proud to be able to explain that most of the vegetables and herbs had been picked within the past hour or two within 50 metres. Now that's fresh and local!

All the funds raised from the sale of food and plants on the Open Day were donated to Companion House and, as for past Open Day events, there was tremendous effort across the garden

community that contributed to its success—and we had great fun.

At our recent AGM we celebrated our achievements over the past year, including nine new gardeners joining since March and receiving a grant from the ACT Government for a new garden shed—not to mention the great outcome from the Open Day.

I am fortunate to have been reappointed by the plot holders as convenor for another year, which I am sure will prove as productive and beneficial to the community as the last year.

—Neville Jackson (story);
photos as marked



Members of the Kambah community garden at the annual general meeting in October 2016 (photo: Neville Jackson)



(above) David and Roshan
into spring planting
(photo: Neville Jackson)



(left) Plant sales at the
2016 Open Day
(photo: Trevor Mills)

(below left) Creative
vegan cooking in the
kitchen at the Open Day
(photo: Trevor Mills)

(below right) Open Day
8 October
(photo: Trevor Mills)





Crace community garden

Spring is a wonderful time of transformation in the garden, and it is great to see so many of Crace community garden's plots full of flowering broccoli, mustard greens and borage that are keeping all the bees and their friends very happy.

The long, cold and wet winter kept many of the Crace gardeners out of their plots, but we managed to lure a good crowd to our working bee in August, and to our annual general meeting in October. Many of those attending both meetings were fresh faces, as several plots have been reallocated in the last few months.

The Crace garden holds several working bees a year, which has both practical and social benefits. Our gravel paths, hundreds of lavender plants and large communal spaces all need regular attention. At our August working bee, we also encouraged gardeners to clean the winter weeds out of their plots in preparation for spring plantings.



Bob, Liz, Peter and John take a break from mulching the communal areas

The AGM gave our members a chance to thank our committee—Liz, Alan and Peter—for their management of the garden during the last 12 months. Together with several dedicated volunteers, they do an amazing job keeping

the place running. Liz, Alan and Peter have agreed to continue for another year with the help of two new committee members, Peter Sheehan and Marguerite Perkins.

—Diana Cozadinos
(story and photo)

Betty Cornhill community garden

Like O'Connor, Betty Cornhill community garden has also had some interesting encounters with bees. Ken Farley took these photos after nearly running over a swarm of bees with the lawn mower! Local bee keeper, Eric Davies, removed the bees.





Cook community garden

The Cook garden has had more than its share of rain over the winter/spring months with minor flooding and water pooling in some places in the garden. At one stage there was a thought of introducing aquaculture to the garden as it was impossible to plant anything in the sodden soil (see photo 1 which shows the water-table at 150 mm deep in September).

It will be interesting to see if the garlic that was planted earlier this year will survive the drenching (see photo 2). Needless to say, the extended rain and now the fine weather has delivered on over-abundance of weeds and long grass, so gardeners will be kept busy this summer.

We had our annual general meeting and a working bee in early October. Thanks to those who attended, as we managed to clean up around the orchard and the pergola.



(above left) Photo 1 – waterlogged soil



(above right) Photo 2 – garlic grows in the drenched soil

I would particularly like to thank the ACT Government for funding a new shed, which will be used to house such items as the netting for the fruit trees, folding chairs and the barbecue.

–Mike Avent (story and photos)

Charnwood community garden

The Charnwood garden community sprung to life in spring. Many members participated in working bees, resulting in a well maintained garden.

We were extremely pleased to learn that our application for a new lawn mower through the ACT Government's (Environment and Planning Department) Community Gardens Grant scheme had been successful. With all the recent rain, the acquisition of the mower will be a great asset to help keep our grounds looking good over the warmer months ahead.

As the weather slowly warms, we are looking forward to the variety of produce and flowers that our diverse garden brings.

–Shane Hind (story and photo)



Shane's gardening buddy, Miss Sarah Hind!

Grow your own medicine by Mim Beim

Beim, Mim 2011

Grow your own medicine
HarperCollins, Sydney.

We organic gardeners enjoy the freshness and purity of the plants we grow for food but there are many plants that also have medicinal properties.

I've long used garlic as a powerful immune system booster, so when I saw Mim's book in an ABC bookshop a couple of years ago I was keen to learn about other plants that could be used for health reasons.

Plant medicine, Mim Beam says in the preface to her book, is humankind's oldest form of medicine and modern plant medicine is now backed up by scientific studies. In fact, as she points out, over 30 per cent of the pharmaceutical drugs used today started life inside a plant.

Mim says the book is intended to be a resource for those who wish to heal and nourish themselves

GROW *your own* MEDICINE



*A guide to growing health-giving
plants in your own backyard*

MIM BEIM

and it is designed to allow readers to 'dip into the bits that most interest you'.

The book is divided into two parts:

- part 1 is all about how to grow plants and make and take your own medicine
- part 2 is an A to Z of medicinal plants so you can easily look up plants of interest.

There are also 4 appendixes covering medicinal gardens, juices, marijuana as a medicine and suppliers and useful contacts.

The layout is simple and effective, with shaded 'tips' boxes and tables of information that is easy to scan.

The chapter on making and taking your own medicine describes how to prepare teas, tinctures, capsules, compresses, essential oils and creams—why pay a fortune for expensive hand cream when you can make your own?

Part 2 begins with an index of plants. Each plant is then covered in detail under the headings: At a glance, Medicinal uses, Good for, How to use it and Growing your own.

I continue to find the book fascinating and have found out all sorts of things I didn't know. For example did you know that eating garlic can help you reduce cholesterol—especially 'bad' LDL cholesterol? And sage can be used as a mouthwash, a tincture or a capsule and is good for improving cognitive skills and memory? And that if you want to plant a 'relaxation and sleep garden' you can't go past California poppy, chamomile, kava, lavender, passionflower, St John's wort, and valerian? Sweet dreams.

—Sue Pavasaris
(story and photos)

Garlic

If an apple a day keeps the doctor away, eating garlic will ward off your naturopath. Apart from being an indispensable ingredient in any tasty meal, garlic is one of the most therapeutic foods you can eat.

At a glance

How easy to grow	Easy
Part used	Bulb
Goes well with	For general immunity: echinacea, calendula or astragalus
Also known as	<i>Allium sativum</i>
How to use	Food, tablet, capsule
Companion plants	Roses, tomatoes, apples; dislikes beans, peas, strawberries, cabbages
Pot	Yes

Medicinal uses

Garlic has several roles in healing, the main being as a broad-spectrum antimicrobial. Effective against bacteria, fungi, intestinal parasites, worms and viruses, it also boosts the immune system.

(The above is an excerpt from *Grow your own medicine* by Mim Beim.)



How I eat garlic

As Australia brightens into summer, the northern hemisphere fades into winter. On my recent trip I visited Copenhagen and was delighted to come across the recipe below. Apparently they recommended using plums from the Danish island of Fejø but we'll have to make do with Canberra. Our plum trees have just finished flowering but come late summer, we might be looking for ways to use the excess fruit.

Plum relish

Ingredients

- 1 kilogram stoned plums
- 0.5 kilograms of sugar
- 1 cup of white wine vinegar
- 2 chopped shallots
- 1 clove garlic
- 1 crown dill
- 1 star anise
- black pepper
- fresh chilli (add to suit taste)
- grated lemon peel

Method

1. Caramelize the sugar and vinegar and boil to a thick syrup with the shallots and spices.
2. Cut the plums in chunks and add them to the syrup. Allow to boil for a moment
3. Pass the syrup through a sieve and reduce the resultant mass.
4. Add the plums again and simmer slowly, adjusting flavour to suit your taste.

Yum!

—Sue Pavasaris



More community gardens?

It seems that community gardens are in vogue in Canberra and COGS has been quick to take advantage of the positive vibe.

COGS' involvement in the West Belconnen development

About a year ago Riverview Projects invited COGS to advise on setting up a community garden in the first subdivision of their new development in west Belconnen. Sue McCarthy, Keith Colls, Andy Hrast and I formed an advisory subcommittee to visit the Riverview people and have done so twice. Construction commenced only recently; for more information visit

www.gininderry.com

Riverview and we have been discussing the terms and conditions of an MOU for COGS to manage the garden, similar to Crace. Recently we received an invitation to inspect the site to confirm that everything is on track. The proposed MOU will later be put to the full COGS committee for approval.

Coombs Garden

For a roughly similar period of time the Land Development Agency (LDA) has been taking advice from COGS about the design and equipping of a community garden in the new suburb of Coombs. In August the advisory subcommittee visited the site with the LDA representative and the landscape architect to discuss the design and infrastructure. This site is large but rather narrow, but it will still be a useful addition to the supply of community gardens in Canberra. We have received some inquiries already, even though its opening is quite a few months off.

If COGS accepts the management of both of the proposed new gardens, they will be numbers 13 and 14 on our list of responsibilities. We are becoming quite an enterprise!

—Walter Steensby

Summer is the time to harvest tomatoes

Why should you bother growing, eating and preserving tomatoes?

Because they are the most highly desirable of all vegetables (okay, so they are a fruit!). They were not called love apples for nothing.

Australians love their tomatoes—they get so desperate for them that they even buy the red, round rocks masquerading as tomatoes in supermarkets in winter, and are driven to sow seeds of tomatoes in August despite the fact the plants curl up and die with just a whiff of a frost in the air. Nothing compares to the taste of a homegrown, vine-ripened tomato. That's why it is our number one vegetable to grow in our backyards.

Tomatoes are good for you!

One of the main reason that tomatoes are good for you is they contain high levels of lycopene and potassium. *A tomato a day could well keep the doctor away.*

- The antioxidant lycopene protects against heart disease by reducing the possibility of atherosclerosis and lowering bad cholesterol and triglyceride levels.
- Research suggests that lycopene can reduce your chances of developing prostate, colorectal and stomach cancer.
- Other studies suggest that lycopene can promote bone health and help prevent osteoporosis.
- Tomatoes are a good source of potassium which is vital to nerve, muscle, heart and kidney function and can help to reduce blood pressure and decrease the risk of stroke.
- Tomatoes are also packed with vitamins and minerals, fibre and phytonutrients.

- Some phytonutrients in tomatoes can reduce the formation of blood clots and blockages in blood vessels.

Don't sprinkle salt on your tomato as this is counterproductive. If your tomato is home grown it should taste just great without salt, or try it with a drop of olive oil or vinegar.

It is good to know that cooking tomatoes doesn't make them less good for you—in fact, cooked tomatoes have more lycopene in them than raw tomatoes.

Growing tomatoes

First of all, tomatoes like warm soil so don't plant them outside on the first day of spring. You can grow them indoors to get a head start and try to get tomatoes by Christmas, but they really can't tolerate the cold and you may find that seedlings planted out later catch up with plants started earlier.

Secondly, be mean to your tomatoes—at least at first. Don't give them too much nitrogen rich fertiliser or you will have lots of green leaves at the expense of fruit. Some good compost and blood and bone should help. Once the plants are flowering give them seaweed solution or worm juice, every few weeks. A little dolomite lime worked into the soil at planting can help prevent blossom end rot.

Which brings us to the third point—keep your tomatoes moist (not wet or dry) and your fruit should not split or be prone to blossom end rot. Tomatoes like constant conditions.

There is a lot written about pruning tomatoes. I just prune and tie the plants to keep the fruit off the ground and let a little air into the plants without exposing the fruit to the sun. Tomatoes are delicate—they get sunburnt.

In fact, I use vegie net to shade the plants and reduce water consumption.

Harvesting and preserving tomatoes

One of the easiest ways to preserve tomatoes is to freeze them. This is more convenient than bottling tomatoes as you can freeze them as they become available and package them in snap-lock bags to suit your particular cooking needs. It takes no time at all.

Be careful with hygiene, as you don't want any contamination with botulism-producing soil microbes. Always keep everything clean and choose firm, ripe tomatoes without blemishes. Roma or other egg-shaped tomatoes work especially well.

1. Wash and dry the tomatoes and cut a small cross in the skin of the tomatoes at the bottom.
2. Add them to boiling water and blanch for 3 minutes.
3. Drain and cool quickly in icy water.
4. Cut out the core and peel off the skin of each tomato.

You can freeze the tomatoes whole but use only clean, blemish-free tomatoes. To freeze them whole, place the tomatoes on a tray covered with non-stick baking paper or freeze film and place in the freezer until frozen. Once frozen, remove and place in snap-lock bags or plastic containers and label. They should last 6 to 9 months and even longer if you vacuum seal them. Once they have defrosted it is easy to remove the skin, and squeeze out the juice and seeds. You can then chop them, crush them or purée them.

If you would like even tastier frozen tomatoes, follow these instructions.



1. Cut the tomatoes in half, gently remove the seeds and drain cut side down for half an hour.
2. Place them in a baking dish lined with baking paper, sprinkle them with olive oil, seasonings, herbs and garlic, if you like, and then roast them in a moderate oven until cooked but not burnt.
3. When cool, squeeze the tomatoes out of their skins and pack them in containers and freeze. These roasted tomatoes are a good base for soups and sauces.

You can also make and freeze a tomato sauce or purée as a base for dishes such as spaghetti bolognese or lasagne. This is a good way of using up less than perfect tomatoes.

1. Blanch tomatoes and peel.
2. Remove the core of each tomato and roughly chop.
3. Allow to drain while you fry some diced vegetables. For every 2 kg of tomatoes you use, sauté (without browning) one onion, a stick of celery, one carrot and a clove of garlic until soft. You can make the sauce more flavoursome with herbs, more garlic, paprika, anchovies, olives, a hint of lemon, a teaspoon of sugar, a splash of wine, a dash of Worcestershire sauce or a drop of balsamic vinegar.
4. Purée if you want a smooth sauce.
5. Once cool enough transfer the sauce to plastic containers and freeze. You can freeze small amounts of sauce in

snap lock bags. If you flatten the filled bags and place them on trays to freeze they will defrost more quickly.

You can also semi-dry halved Roma tomatoes in a dehydrator or oven and then freeze them on a tray and store in snap lock bags in the freezer. Sometimes, if I have a glut of ripe tomatoes which I can't use, I remove their seeds and slice them up evenly and dry to a crisp in the dehydrator. I then grind them up to make tomato powder. It has a most intense taste and you can add it to casseroles for some extra flavour, or mix it with a little water to make a paste. You need lots of tomatoes to get a fairly small amount of tomato powder, but in March with the frosts looming it is a good way of using up that glut of tomatoes.

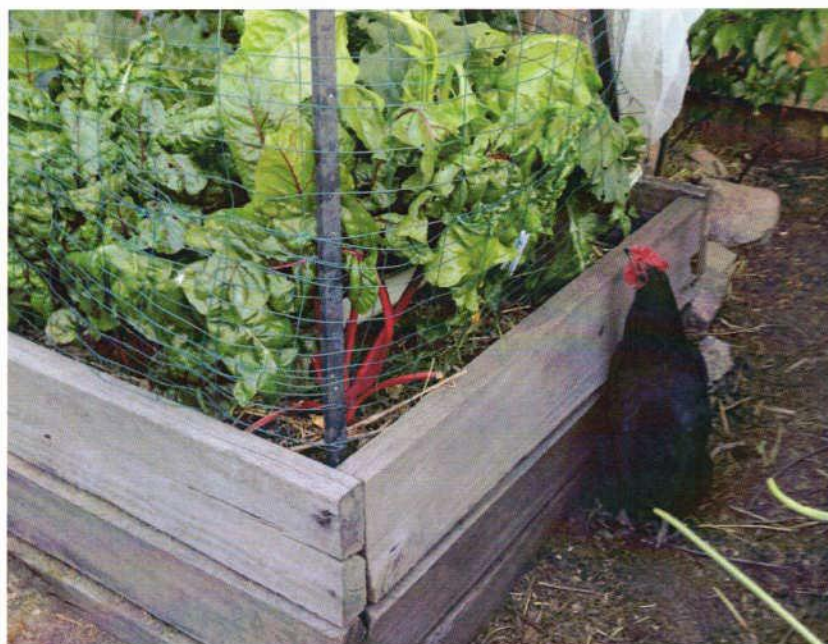
—Elizabeth Dangerfield

Crop rotation

It is said that you should not plant the same crop in the same plot over a number of consecutive years for you are liable to exhaust the soil of one or more nutrients and vegetables size, quality and yield will ultimately suffer. Most people associate crop rotation with overcoming this problem, and although this may be true, rotation plays a much more positive role. It improves the soil, not merely gives it a rest; and more importantly, it is one of the basic ways of controlling insects, disease and weeds without resorting to chemicals.

Insects are for the most part useful creatures and in many cases essential. The whole insect pest problem has arisen because of Man's insistence in growing monoculture crops at high densities. Obviously by rotating different types of vegetables in the same plot the chance of specific pest and disease build-up is reduced. The same holds true for weeds, some of which will thrive with one crop and be practically incompatible with another.

The major benefit of crop rotation is that it serves to maintain the balance of plant nutrients by alternating vegetables that use



large quantities of nitrogen (e.g. corn) with those such as legumes, which actually add nitrogen to the soil. The same holds true for growing a green manure crop that is plowed [sic] under as part of the rotation scheme.

Rotation should be planned intelligently, using a little basic knowledge of the vegetables, you want to grow. Different crops require different levels of nutrition. Celery, cucumbers, pumpkins and all leaf vegetables, including spinach, lettuce and those of the cabbage family require a fairly high level of fertility; however, carrots and parsnips produce better quality

harvests with smaller quantities of fertiliser. It is best then to grow these root crops in soil that has been heavily manured for the previous plants.

Vegetables can be considered in the following groups for the purposes of planning and rotation, with any vegetable within a group being followed by one in any other group:

Winter greens: Broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, silver beet, spinach

Salad greens: Endives, cress lettuce

Legumes: Beans, peas

Root crops: Beetroot carrot, parsnip, onion, turnip, swede turnip

Tubers: Potatoes

Cucurbits: Cucumber, marrow, pumpkin, squash, melon

Leafy stems: Celery

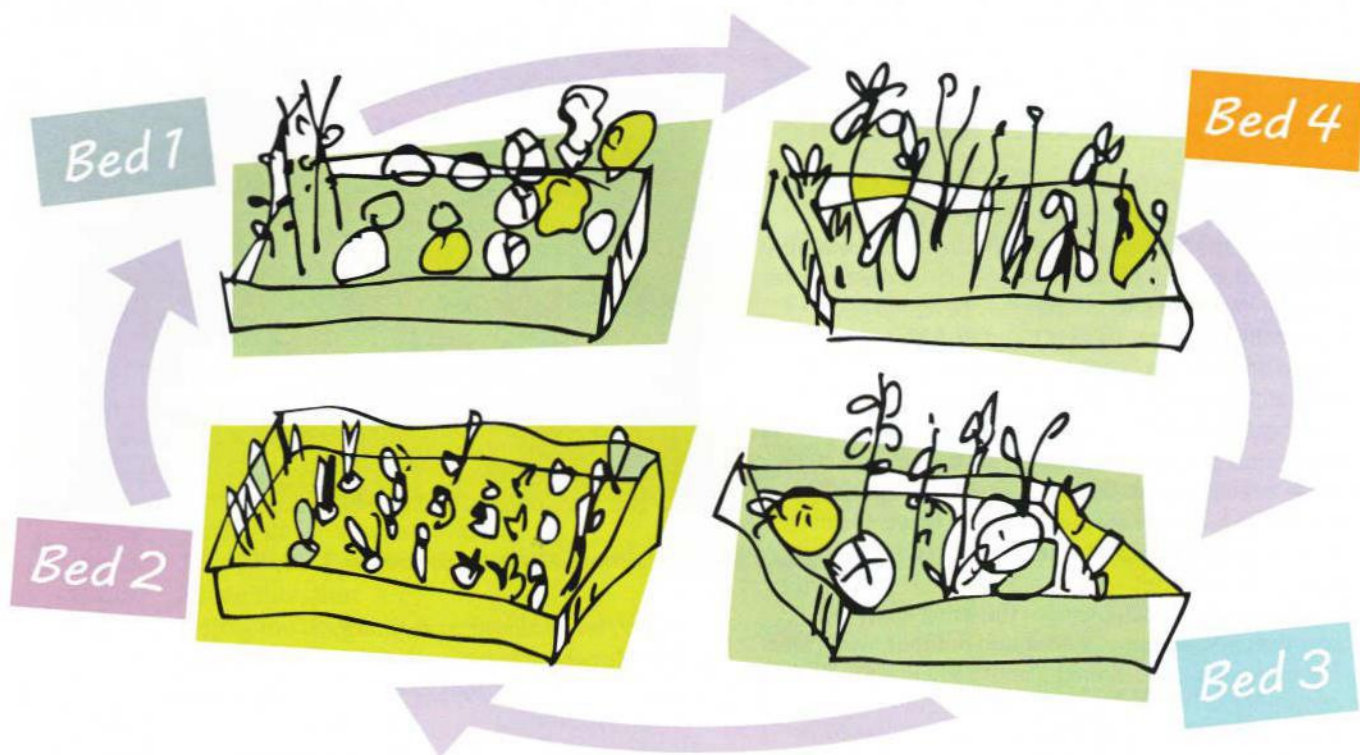
Other: Tomatoes, eggplant, peppers, sweet corn.

Reproduced with permission from Mark Peoples from *Earth guide* 1977, Food Co-operative and the Conservation Society, University of Melbourne, Australia

Photos: Sue Pavasaris



Examples of garden beds used for crop rotation



An example of a simple 4-bed garden rotation system.

Bed 1 is legumes and brassicas; Bed 2 is root crops and alliums;

Bed 3 is cucurbits and corn; Bed 4 is solanaceae family and herbs.

The idea is to rotate the types of crops grown in each garden bed to restore soil nutrients and control pests.

Midsummer Morning

An hour is enough. I'm sweating. Planting bulbs. Watering the great tangle of squash, pumpkin and cucumber vines. Harvesting armfuls of zucchini, beans, tomatoes. Chasing currawongs off the fig tree. Once the sun gets high I don't want to be outside. Retreat to a cool café, write about it?



midsummer morning
we're lemoned out
plum soaked
cherry picked
and mulberry stained

-Gerry Jacobson



House for sale

Stroll down Bluebell Walk

Live in the garden from every part of this remarkable residence! Take a book to the secret reading nook or repose on the built-in garden furniture in the beautiful Rose Garden. Architecturally designed to take advantage of stunning views and the carefully designed and landscaped gardens, this outstanding 5 bedroom home is set on approximately 2313 m² of elevated land, backing onto a nature reserve.

Computer-controlled irrigation from 50,000 litres of rain-water storage contributes to the sustainable character of these beautifully established gardens. Thoughtfully planted to have a year-round show of flowers with minimal maintenance, the gardens also produce vegetables and fruit.

Paved courtyards complement the living areas in a seamless integration of indoor and outdoor living, ideal for entertaining. A swimming pool and ample parking contribute to the quality that is evident in every part of this impressive residence, located just minutes from Queanbeyan, Tuggeranong, Woden and Civic Town Centres. Astute buyers will appreciate the beauty of these unique gardens and the exceptional value of this delightful home set high on a prime block of elevated land.



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The Weather Report

Strong chance of above-average rainfall October to December

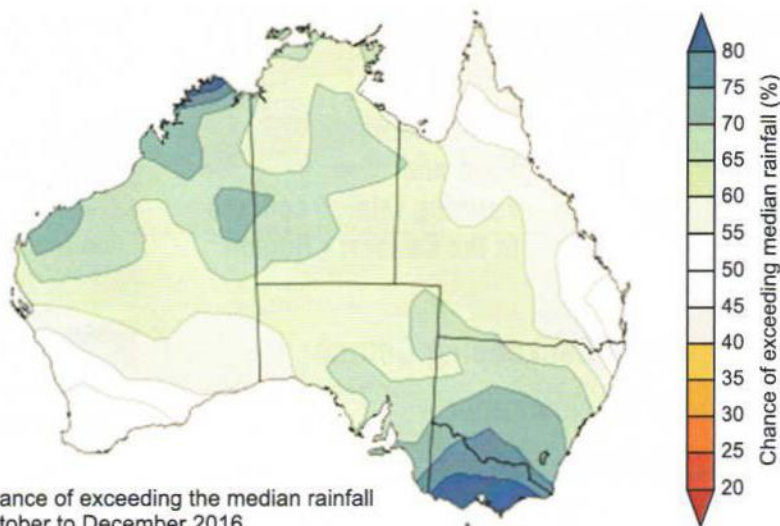
The Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) report issued on 25 October 2016 rates the chances of above-average rainfall during October to December in southeast and northwest Australia as strong. Cooler days and nights are also likely for much of the country during this time.

However, most climate models predict that a La Niña will not develop this summer. Even those models predicting a La Niña suggest that it will be brief and weak. Warmer than average sea surface temperatures to Australia's north suggest that some La Niña-like impacts are likely, even if a La Niña event does not fully develop. The BoM alert level for a La Niña remains as 'WATCH'.

Australian weather, especially rainfall, is also being heavily

influenced by conditions in the Indian Ocean. Water temperatures are much warmer than average in the region to the south of Indonesia bringing higher levels of moisture from the northwest across the country. These warm water temperatures have been in place since May but computer modelling suggests they will return to more normal levels towards the end of the year.

—Andy Hrast



Chance of exceeding the median rainfall October to December 2016

Product of the Bureau of Meteorology

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

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Issued: 29/09/2016
Model run: 25/09/2016
Base Period: 1951–2010

Dam levels in the Canberra region and capital cities

ACT storages	100% full
Murray–Darling Basin	80% full
Burrinjuck Dam	95% full
Blowering Dam	96% full
Sydney	95% full
Melbourne	70% full
Brisbane	79% full
Adelaide	98% full
Perth	29% full

Well done COGS members!

Congratulations to all COGS members and plot holders on the prompt way your membership and plot fees have been paid this year. Nearly all membership and plot fees have now been received.

Thank you!

The membership and plot fees total more than \$38,000. This money will be used during the coming year to pay for the water and other costs in the 12 COGS gardens, the production of *Canberra Organic* magazine, insurance and the administrative costs of running COGS.

For those few people who have not yet paid, please pay as soon as possible. If you have any questions about your fees or did not receive an invoice get in touch with me at treasurer@COGS.asn.au or by phoning 040 8247 360.

This year we successfully trialled electronic invoices and plan to roll this system out to all members next year. Members who do not have an email address or who wish to opt out will continue to receive their invoices by mail.

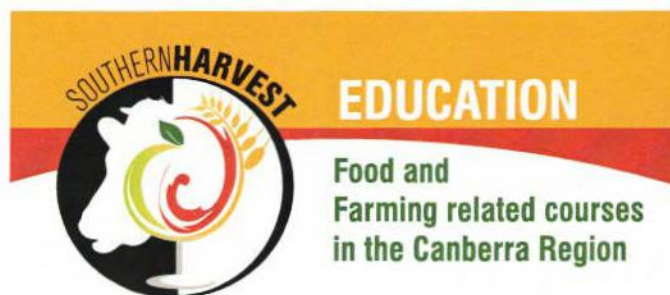
Electronic invoices save COGS volunteers a lot of time and effort and have the added incentive of saving us nearly \$1,000 per year.

More information, including how to opt out of the electronic invoicing, will be provided over the course of the year.

We will also be following up members to ensure we have their correct email addresses. Please let me and COGS' membership secretary know if you have recently changed your email address.

Once again, thank you for your ongoing support.

—Andy Hrast, COGS Treasurer



● **Beginners Beekeeping Course**

Sunday 20 November –
Caroola Farm, Mulloon.

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summer planting guide

Mulch and compost

In summer it is a good idea to mulch your garden beds to help keep the soil cool and moist. One experiment showed that a 4 cm layer of straw reduced evaporation by 73%. Be careful not to lay down a thick layer of sawdust or lawn clippings that can pack down to form an impenetrable barrier to water.

Soil with lots of compost contains all the nutrients your plants need for strong, healthy growth. In addition well-composted soil retains water and acts like a sponge to keep your plants moist through dry summer days.

Heat protection

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

Watering

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

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

Weeds

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

Pests

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

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

Harvesting

Make sure you harvest your crop regularly—in most cases this will encourage your plants to continue cropping and you can enjoy your produce at its peak.

Remember to leave space in your vegie patch for those winter vegetables that prefer to be planted in late summer to early autumn. Brassicas and other winter crops need time to mature before the extreme cold of winter sets in.

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

S = seed sowing; T = transplanting

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

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

What's On



Thanks ACT Government!

COGS thanks the ACT Government for funding submissions from Kambah, Cook and Charnwood community gardens in the recent Community Garden Grants. We appreciate the support!

Have you visited our new website yet?

On the first day of spring we launched our new website www.cogs.asn.au. We are progressively updating and adding new content so take a look!

Nature strip veg-growing stalled

If you are planning a lush food garden on your nature strip you'll have to wait a bit longer. Although the idea was floated by the ACT Government in January 2016, with 29 submissions and 327 survey responses received by March 2016, the project has stalled with no definite timeframe.

Greens' MLA Shane Rattenbury originally pushed the idea. In the recent ACT Government election he was re-elected, along with the Barr Labor government, but nature strip gardening has not yet re-surfaced.

COGS, like other local gardening groups, has a keen interest in the issue and will continue to monitor progress and provide comment where possible.

COGS 2016 Christmas party

Mark your calendar/digital device or stone tablet with the following details:

7.30 pm, Tuesday 22 November

Majura Community Centre
2 Rosevear Place, Dickson

Plant/seed swapping; refreshments;
great company and maybe wine tasting!!!



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.

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1/4 page	\$18 (\$15)	\$60 (\$50)
1/2 page	\$36 (\$30)	\$120 (\$100)
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Let's talk about gardening

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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

Bee man Sam about to
remove O'Connor bees
(Photo: Deb Hamilton)

