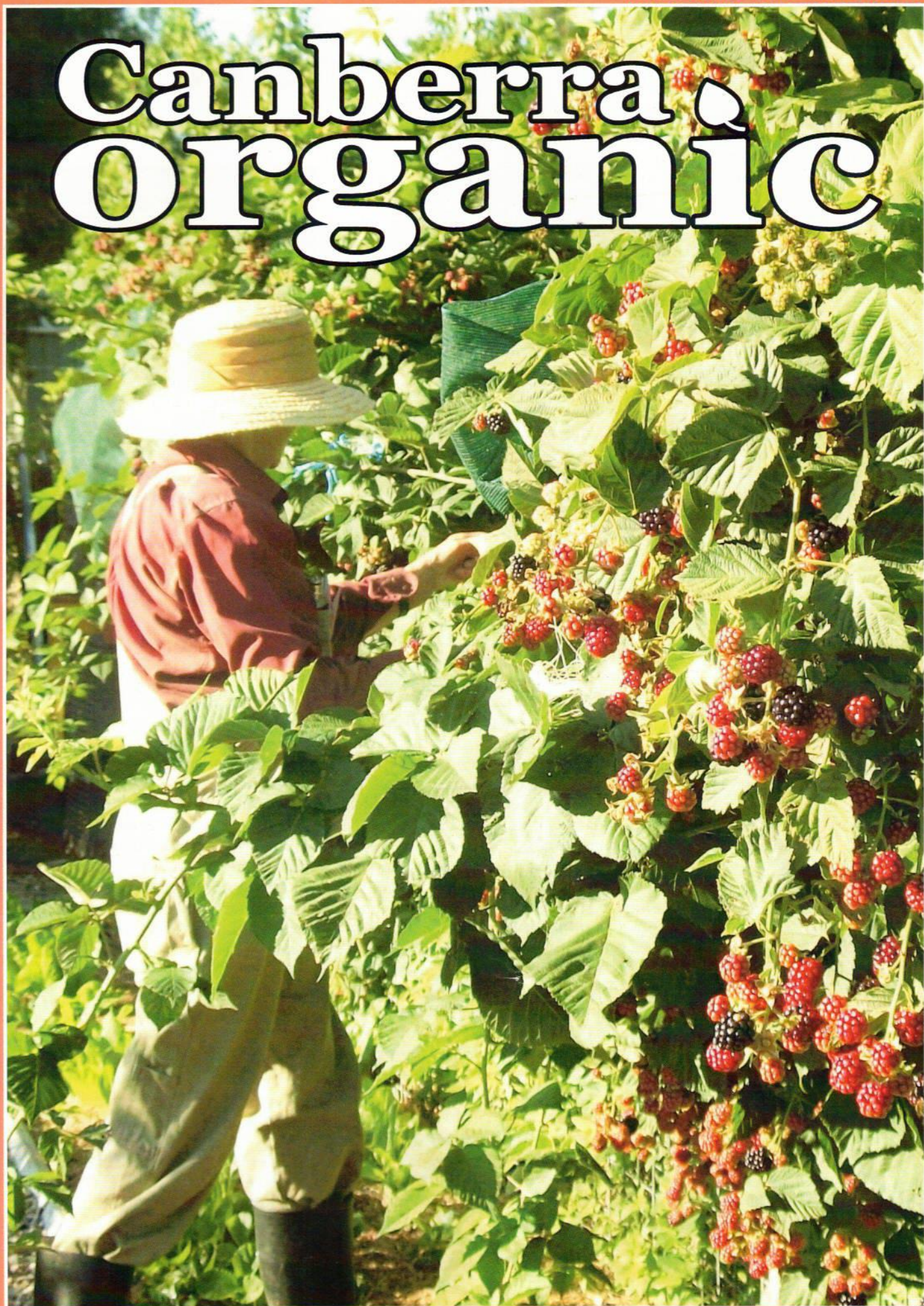


Canberra Organic



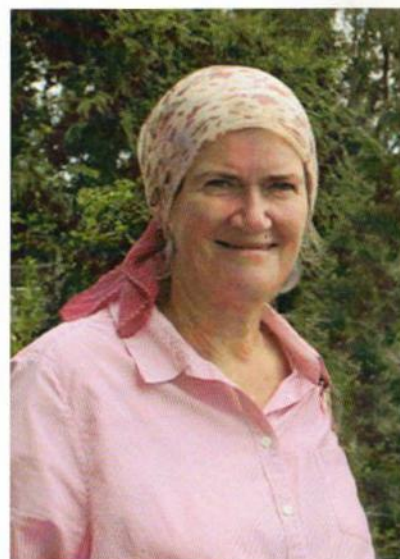
President's report

Your new Committee

Autumn is fading and soon all those lovely leaves will be safely stored and working hard in our compost bins. For your new COGS Executive it is also a time of renewal, growth and some hard work too!

I am privileged to have assumed the President's gumboots following our AGM in March, with a great Executive team in support looking out for your interests as members. You are lucky enough to have some wise old heads continuing on the Committee, including Walter our immediate past president; Keith Colls, who is also a past president; Andy Hrast (Betty Cornhill garden) continuing as Treasurer, and Glynis Kennedy (Cook garden) now Vice President. Jo McMillan (Charnwood garden) is continuing in the very important role of Gardens Coordinator; Patricia George (Betty Cornhill garden) has signed up for another year as Membership Secretary; and Terry Williams (Oaks Estate garden) and Neville Jackson (Kambah garden) are continuing on the Committee, with Sue Pavasaris (previously your chicken-loving Magazine Editor) joining the Committee in a changed role. Newcomers are Peter Weddell (Cook garden) as our new Secretary; Diana Cozadinos (Crace garden) our new Magazine Editor; and Narelle McLean (Mitchell garden) a new Committee member. What a great team combining experience, enthusiasm and new ideas!

What are we missing? Yes, a Librarian! COGS has a quite extensive hard copy borrowing library, which cannot operate without one of you. The role is not arduous, essentially involving management of the borrower database, offering books for loan at our general meetings, and pur-



chasing suitable new books for loan. If you are able to take this on and keep our library as a valuable member resource, please let me or one of the Committee know.

Your new President

I joined COGS four years ago and am currently the convenor of Holder garden. By trade a lawyer, I began gardening at Holder garden in recent retirement and I now have regard to the laws of botany, climate and the seasons—with varying degrees of success and non-success (no such thing as failure in gardening, because it all adds to one's experience), which makes it all the more interesting and challenging, of course.

I have learnt such a lot (off a fairly low knowledge base, admittedly) from my incredibly generous fellow Gardeners at Holder. I enjoy gardening in a community garden context so much that I am a most passionate advocate for the many benefits of community gardens. And COGS members are lucky enough to have a choice of twelve gardens, with another two in the pipeline! I am recently widowed, and have four adult children and two grandsons, all of whom live in Canberra. That's me.

Our community gardens

Your Committee is developing priorities for the year—and we welcome your input.

We see our most important role is to manage our twelve community gardens. We rely on garden convenors and garden committees to undertake the day to day management, but the Executive involves itself in strategic and planning aspects and garden disputes, and has responsibility for all financial management (membership fees, plot fees, payment of insurance, water and other garden expenses).

We hope to visit most community gardens this year, and to meet more gardeners. We are also in dialogue with the ACT government regarding extension of our tenure at the gardens that are on government land. Current tenure expires in about three years, and from discussions to date we have no reason for concern about our licence renewals.

Your monthly meetings

Monthly members meetings are rarely well attended. They are held on the fourth Tuesday of each month at 7.30pm, except in the colder months, from May to August, when they are held on the last Sunday of each month, at 2pm. We typically organise a speaker, and from those who attend we get very positive feedback. However, as a new Committee, we need to ask our membership what it wants and expects. Currently, our members seem to be voting with their feet.

Please tell us—do you want monthly meetings to continue, if so in what format, and do you have other suggestions for education and networking that might work better?



Sue presents outgoing President Walter Steensby with his COGS lifetime membership in recognition of his service to the organisation.

If there is continuing limited support and attendance, one option would be to meet less often, and enhance other means for education and networking, such as via our website and Facebook page, and site visits, or alternatively not to meet at all other than the AGM. Should this be actively considered, it would ultimately be a decision for our membership, involving a change to our constitution, possibly at the next AGM.

Our fellow urban horticulture groups

We aim to further strengthen and consolidate our position in the Canberra urban horticulture community. We currently enjoy a close relationship with Canberra City Farm, including through cross-Executive links with Walter and Keith, and education links such as monthly speakers. We also have a mutual cooperation and promotion memorandum of understanding with Southern Harvest. I believe it is fair to say that your COGS is the pre-eminent organic grower organisation

in the ACT. The local Government and developers continue to consult us on the design of community gardens, and our Facebook following is over 2,100 people—well over five times our formal membership numbers!

Winter gardening

In conclusion, may I wish you all the best of luck with your winter crops. For most of you, your garlic and brassicas will be in, and that nuisance white cabbage moth will have lost interest. You will be nurturing your onion seedlings, and planning on when best to divide your rhubarb and/or asparagus or propagate your strawberry runners. You will have pruned your berries, planted your green manure, and turned your compost heaps. I wish I could assure you I was as organised as you. You will also be dining on delicious fresh potatoes, making pumpkin soup, and harvesting the last of your late summer beans.

Isn't self-sufficiency fantastic?

—Sue

ISSN 2203-5125 (print)
ISSN 2203-5133 (online)

Vol 25 No 2 Issue 95

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.

Articles may be reproduced for non-profit, educational purposes or with prior permission from COGS.

Editor: Diana Cozadinos
Layout: Matt Mawson
Proofreading:
Walter Steensby,
Sue McCarthy,
Jenny Clark



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

www.cogs.asn.au

Enquiries
info@cogs.asn.au

Postal address
COGS
PO Box 347
Dickson ACT 2602

COGS committee

President	Sue McCarthy — president@cogs.asn.au
Vice President	Glynis Kennedy — glynken@iinet.net.au
Treasurer	Andy Hrast — treasurer@cogs.asn.au
Secretary	Peter Weddell — secretary@cogs.asn.au
Membership Secretary	Patricia Georgee — membership@cogs.asn.au
Gardens Convenor	Jo McMillan — charnwood_convenor@cogs.asn.au
Magazine Editor	Diana Cozadinos — editor@cogs.asn.au
Librarian	Position vacant — librarian@cogs.asn.au
General Members	Neville Jackson — kambah_convenor@cogs.asn.au Keith Colls — collskeith@gmail.com Terry Williams — riverstreetrat@gmail.com Sue Pavasaris — sue.pavasaris@grapevine.com.au Walter Steensby — walter@steensby.id.au Narelle McClean — narellemac8@gmail.com

Community gardens

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

Betty Cornhill	Richard Horobin — cotter_convenor@cogs.asn.au Ann Smith — cornhill_convenor@cogs.asn.au
Charnwood	Jo McMillan — charnwood_convenor@cogs.asn.au
Cook	Mike Avent — cook_convenor@cogs.asn.au
Crace	Alan Timmiss, Liz Myszka, Peter Newbigin — crace_convenor@cogs.asn.au
Dickson	Maya Beretta — dickson_convenor@cogs.asn.au
Erindale	Nathan Banks — erindale_convenor@cogs.asn.au
Holder	Sue McCarthy — holder_convenor@cogs.asn.au
Kaleen	Louise Sasaki — kaleen_convenor@cogs.asn.au
Kambah	Neville Jackson — kambah_convenor@cogs.asn.au
Mitchell	Gwen Bates — mitchell_convenor@cogs.asn.au
Oaks Estate	Mark Jarvis — oaks_estate_convenor@cogs.asn.au
O'Connor	Jenny Clark — oconnor_convenor@cogs.asn.au

We welcome your input!

Please send any comments, articles, photos, news items, event information or recipes to

Email: editor@cogs.asn.au
Post: PO Box 347 Dickson ACT 2602.



Editor's note



It's hello and goodbye! I'm pleased to introduce the new editor of *Canberra Organic*, Diana Cozadinos. I've really enjoyed putting the magazine together over the last four years and am thrilled to be able to leave it in such good hands. In the photo you can see Diana and me chatting about the magazine on my terrace in the fresh autumn air.

Thanks so much to everyone who has contributed articles and photographs to the magazine during my time as editor. I was constantly amazed by the fantastic material you sent in ... and I was lucky enough to always have the first read! I'm looking forward to being able to contribute the odd article and photograph to the magazine in the future. Sharing information is such an important part of what we do as community gardeners. I hope you will continue to send in your material as there is no magazine without it.

Happy gardening!

—Sue

Contents

President's report	inside front cover and 1
COGS committee and garden convenors	2
Editor's note	3
Around the COGS gardens	4
Kambah	4
Charnwood	6
Crace	8
COGS Backyard Gardeners' Group	9
Autumn visit to Diggers Club gardens	10
More to spud farm than meets the eye	12
Feijoa project reaches its peak	15
City Farm ploughs ahead	16
Downsizing the fruit and vegetable garden	18
COGS General Meeting	20
World Environment Day dinner	20
The weather report	21
The wheel of the year	21
COGS membership application	23
Autumn planting guide	24
What's on	inside back cover

This month's cover:

Gita harvesting blackberries at Charnwood community garden (photo: Jo McMillan)

What an amazing organisation we have in the Canberra Organic Growers Society—no matter how long we have been gardening, we are all part of a community that is shaping the world around us by growing beautifully fresh and organic food for our families, friends and ourselves.

Sue has edited this magazine beautifully for the last four years, and I know you'll join me in thanking her for her dedication and professionalism. I'd also like to thank all of our regular contributors whose wisdom and experience ensure we have such a high calibre magazine.

Canberra Organic is not just a source of useful advice on gardening in our diverse climate, but a connection point between the community gardens, our backyard growers group and several other great community groups, as demonstrated by several articles in this edition.

But the magazine is more than that. It is the voice of COGS members, written and edited entirely by volunteers. Because of this, I would love to hear from every one of you on what you want from *Canberra Organic*. What do you love about the magazine? Which regular features mean the most to you, and what else would you like to see in here?

I'd also like to see more of our members (and their backyards or community garden plots) contributing to the magazine. Your letters, articles, photographs, book reviews, recipes, poetry, even questions you'd like answered by experienced gardeners—all are welcome.

Please get in touch by emailing me at editor@cogs.asn.au

—Diana



Kambah community garden

During early autumn, the Kambah garden community largely finished the autumn planting and cleaned up the plots for winter. We have planted a lot of green manure to replenish the soil from our summer crops and what a difficult summer it was. Even those of our gardeners who had well prepared and maintained plots (for example, with good mulching and regular deep watering) were challenged by the prolonged, and sometimes extreme, heat and dry conditions. The usual cooperative spirit in the garden was demonstrated as everyone shared the watering.

Despite the tough conditions, there were successes with many vegetables—including zucchini, squash, pumpkins, peppers and eggplant—but a lot of disappointments with beans, cucumbers and tomatoes. A new variety of pumpkin, Kabocha Tetsukabuto F1, planted in our sharing garden produced around 30 of this very tasty green-skinned Japanese type.

One consequence of the prolonged hot conditions was our first ever infestation of big-bud phytoplasma in tomatoes. This hit most of our gardeners' plots without any preference for particular varieties

evident. Seemingly healthy plants developed pathological tip growth with little or no fruit being produced. Plants affected came from a range of sources with a lot sourced from clean home propagation. Our good weed and pest management, including beneficial insect attracting plants, seemed to have no effect on the invisible infestation of the carrier brown leafhoppers early in the season. We hope that there is a reprieve from this disease next summer because it was very discouraging for some of us.

Over recent months we have said goodbye to a small number

Vacant plots at the Kambah Community Garden





(above) *Kabocha Tetsukabuto F1 at the Garden*
 (right) *Growing tips of tomato infected with Big Bud Phytoplasma*

of our gardeners and welcomed some new volunteers and plot holders, including a young family whose boys are enthusiastic about their new winter project growing organic vegetables. We still have vacant plots available that are in very good condition.

In March, we had afternoon tea in the garden with our friends from the Queanbeyan Sustainability Group who manage the community garden there in Railway Park. It was great to share knowledge and insights into growing fruit vegetables organically and managing a community garden.

—Neville Jackson
 (story and photos)



Charnwood community garden

The garden participated in the Open Gardens Canberra Scheme over the weekend of 4 and 5 March. We had a very wet start to the event on the Saturday, however this did not deter visitors—keen gardeners are not fazed by a bit of rain! Approximately 140 people visited during the two days, raising \$195 in gold coin donations which were gratefully accepted by Canberra City Care (CCC), who operate nearby on Cartwright Street in Charnwood.

We have an ongoing relationship with CCC, regularly donating produce to their Harvest Swap event each week over the warmer months. A group of Year 10 boys from Kingsford Smith School in Holt are involved in running the Harvest Swap, so as an extension of this activity, the boys visited the Charnwood garden in April to learn about growing and harvest-

ing produce. Teresa coordinated the visit, and as they roamed the garden they munched on organic apples and asked, “how do you make the apples taste so good?” Lots of love, care and water!

Around the garden generally, recent frosts have prompted the harvest of potatoes, eggplants and pumpkins. Our resident Willy Wagtail family have been extra friendly of late, showing no fear as they come in close to search for worms while gardeners turn the soil to plant winter crops. The garlic is in and popping up, as are leeks, cauliflowers, broccoli, broccolini and brussel sprouts.

The garden will host the COGS Monthly General meeting on Sunday 28 May at 2 pm. The meeting will be held at the Charnwood site, located on Sports Way off Lhotsky Street. Troy Lloyd will present on the Back to Eden method of gardening that



One of the resident Willy Wagtails

he has had great success with since implementing in 2016. See further details on page 20 of this issue.

—Jo McMillan (story), and Teresa Rose and Rebecca Lloyd (photos)

COGS executive committee members Glynis Kennedy, Sue McCarthy, Sue Pavasaris and Jo McMillan at the open garden event





There was a great turnout at the open day



Around the COGS gardens



Crace community garden

A perfect autumn afternoon provided an ideal backdrop for Crace garden's working bee on 29 April. We had a lovely autumn day to work in and over half of our plot holders were represented. As usual it was work first then a free sausage sizzle for all to enjoy. Most participants also brought a plate of something extra to share. We had lots of jobs to do. The cedar shed had to be oiled, the embankment weeded and mulched, the shed emptied and cleaned out and, of course, the usual organic-friendly spraying for weeds in our crushed granite paths, which are a constant source of maintenance. Two of the compost bins were cleaned out of their rats nests—new 'visitors' who have decided that we can provide warm homes!

With a 3.30pm start, I was worried that we had started a bit too late for an autumn afternoon but by 4.30pm almost everything was finished and we enjoyed an hour of each other's company. We have a very diverse community



Bob and Alan oil the shed's cedar walls

including age, cultural background and gardening experience but have found the gardens provide a strong link between us all. The numbers of gardeners who support these working bees is evidence of this.

We will probably have our next working bee in early spring but the banter and friendship will continue as we continue gardening between now and then.

—Liz Myszka (story)
and Diana Cozadinos (photo)

Membership and Plot Invoicing Arrangements for 2017



After successfully trialling electronic invoices last year the COGS Executive Committee has decided to roll out electronic invoicing to all members for the 2017-2018 year.

Electronic invoicing saves COGS volunteers a lot of time and effort, and has the added incentive of saving nearly \$1000 a year in printing and postage.

It is important that we have correct email addresses so please let me know if you have recently changed your email address. We will also be following

up by phone those members for whom we don't have an email address.

Members without an email address or who wish to opt out will continue to receive their invoices by mail. If you do not wish to receive your invoice by email or have any question please phone me on 0408 247 360.

Thank you for your ongoing support.

—Andy Hrast, Honorary Treasurer, Canberra Organic Growers Society

COGS Backyard Gardeners' Group

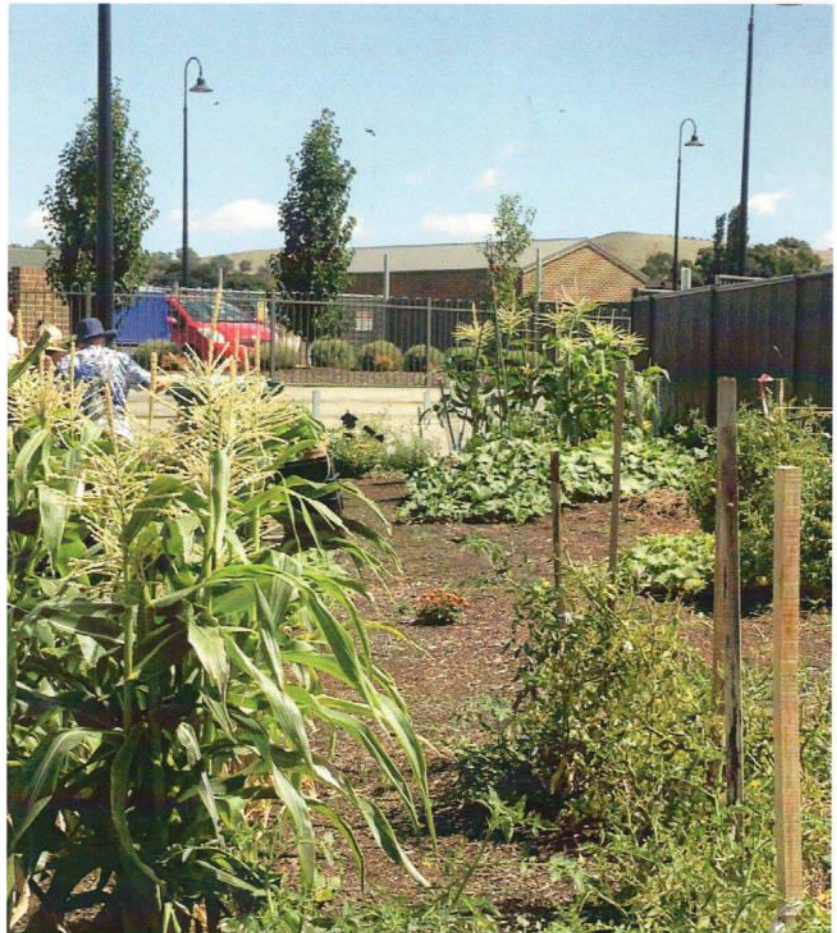
On a very hot Sunday morning on 12 February, 16 COGS members had a lovely morning tea in air-conditioned comfort as we listened to the spokeswomen for The Grove, Ngunnawal giving us details about the new retirement village. The Grove is being constructed in stages and, when completed, will have 161 single level independent living villas and a community centre, pool (15 metres), gym, maintained gardens, work shed, arts and crafts room, library and computer facilities.

The village is the second retirement village in the ACT that the multinational development company Lend Lease has developed. The Ngunnawal village is being constructed on a six-hectare site adjacent to the Gold Creek Homestead.

Jan Jenkins, who is a COGS member living at the village, set up a community garden. The garden was established on a communal basis and interested gardeners could work in the garden when they want. All excess produce was made available to other residents at the village for a small fee, with all money received used to buy items for the garden. Jan advised us that the land where the village is located used to be the orchard garden for the Gold Creek Homestead—hence the name 'The Grove'.

The community garden was about 200 sq metres and, despite the drought conditions we have experienced, had lots of summer produce ready to harvest. It also had herbs and fruit trees.

After the tour of the community garden we inspected two villas, which appeared to be very comfortable homes that would be somewhere I could live when my garden at home gets too much for me.



The community garden at Ngunnawal

A big thanks to Jan Jenkins and Jeannette Heycox who organised the outing for the Group and also a big thank you to The Grove for showing us around and donating \$500 to COGS.

Unfortunately, following the visit, Lend Lease bulldozed the community garden to enable them to construct the next stage of the village. Jan was very upset about it and understandably so. I thought the community garden was a highlight for the village and should be included in all retirement villages. RIP little garden. I think I have changed my mind about The Grove being somewhere I could live.

—Glynis Kennedy (story and photos)



Jan Jenkins stands next to a worm farm which is to be dug into the garden

Autumn visit to Diggers Club gardens in Victoria

Work on my computer or spend the day visiting world-class gardens? It was a no-brainer. On Monday 24 April my partner and I swapped computers for nature and visited Heronswood and Cloudehill, both just outside of Melbourne.

I'm a member of the Diggers Club and have always wanted to visit their gardens. I buy their seeds and organic fertilisers, read their gardening magazine and electronic newsletter, and am inspired by what they have achieved.

Heronswood

Heronswood is the home of the Diggers Club and it is their flagship garden. Located at Dromana on the Mornington Peninsula, Heronswood has its own micro climate so the temperature doesn't drop below 4 degrees in winter. This is probably why it has a surprising number of subtropical plants. According to the Diggers Club, Heronswood and sister garden St Erth in Blackwood have Australia's largest collection of food plants and are organically certified.

The centrepiece of Heronswood is the historic house built in 1864 in the Gothic Revival style. The granite blocks and limestone used in the house were sourced locally and the entire property was built by hand. The lower floor and terraces are now used by the Fork to Fork restaurant, which serves meals made from produce from the Heronswood gardens.

The kitchen garden at Heronswood flourishes on a well-drained terraced slope, but there are many other fruit and vegetable gardens in the grounds. I loved the Villandry-inspired vegetable parterre and the herb garden. Even in autumn, the massive perennial borders were a blur of pastel colour—apparently the blues, mauves, greys and pinks are chosen to suit the house and look cooling in the hot summers. Plants are also chosen for shape and there is a striking juxtaposition of spiky, soft, round and hard shapes. It's a beautiful and productive garden, inhabited by three very contented looking geese.

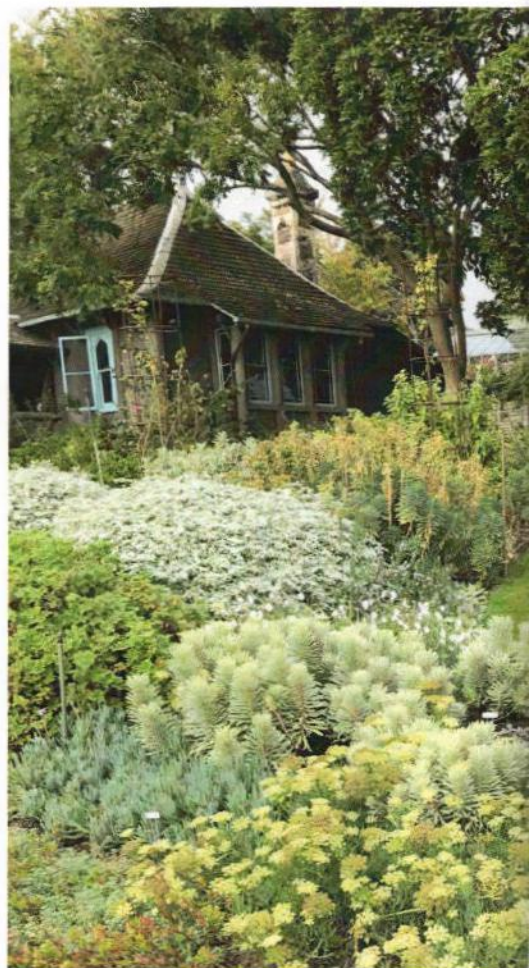
Cloudehill

A great contrast to Heronswood is Cloudehill located, as the name suggests, high in the Dandenong Ranges. Cloudehill was originally a flower farm, then after 20 years of neglect, it was purchased by Jeremy Francis, who set about making a flower garden in the Italian renaissance style.

Today Cloudehill is a fabulous series of garden surprises, where art enhances garden vistas. The backbone of parallel paths branch off to secret gardens, and strategically placed benches and seats allow one to sit in meditative silence. Our meditative silence was broken by the shriek of a pair of lyrebirds racing across a clearing. It's a real treat to see these extremely shy and elusive birds in the wild—although one of the gardeners told me they do their share of damage in the garden!

Cloudehill also has a restaurant sourcing fresh produce from their garden, and both Cloudehill and Heronswood have shops filled with organic seeds and garden equipment.

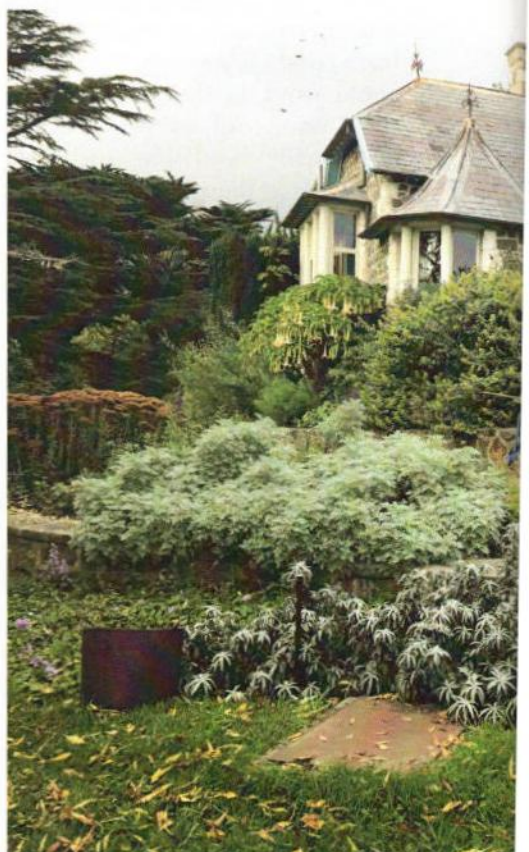
—Sue Pavasaris (story and photos)

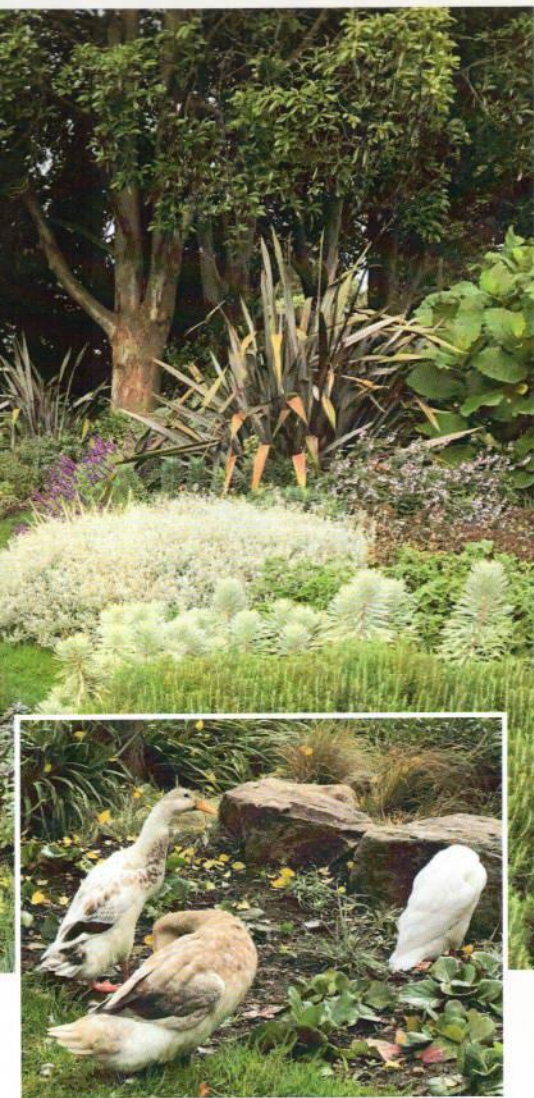


(above) The Heronswood border

(right) The geese at Heronswood

(below) The beautiful Heronswood house





(above) The picturesque Cloudehill
(below) The Cloudehill walled garden



More to spud farm than meets the eye

A hayride was an unexpected but rather fitting way to spend an afternoon touring environmentally restored land and potato country before tucking in to a hearty long table lunch.

The first joint COGS and Slow Food visit was held on Sunday 2 April, and a success it indeed was. Twenty people travelled to 'Rosedale', the home of potato grower and environmentalist extraordinaire Garry Kadwell on the outskirts of Crookwell, about 90 minutes north of Canberra.

This isn't the first time COGS has been involved with Slow Food; in 2015 they visited us at the O'Connor garden to enjoy with us our good, clean and fair food. This April's event was jointly organised and booked, with proceeds shared by both organisations.

In the Winter 2015 issue of *Canberra Organic*, Sue Pavasaris wrote that Slow Food Canberra is part of an international group founded to counteract the 'fast food and fast life' concept. There is an obvious alignment between the COGS philosophy and the Slow Food principles of:

- good—a fresh and flavoursome seasonal diet that satisfies the senses and is part of the local culture;
- clean—food production and consumption that does not harm the environment, animal welfare or human health; and
- fair—accessible prices for consumers and fair conditions and pay for producers.

There is also strong alignment between the Slow Food philosophy and that of Garry Kadwell.

Crookwell is at the relatively high altitude of about 900m—Canberra is 570m at the GPO—and by Australian standards has



Garry with a potato plant, and Nathan Banks and Tracey Bool of Erindale community garden

a cold climate. It gets snowfall comparatively often, and in this climate the basaltic soil makes for ideal potato growing conditions. Crookwell is one of the cleanest seed potato production areas in the country.

Garry is a specialist potato grower, one of only four growers left in the district. Some 40 years ago there were over 200, but this era of 'get big or get out' is taking its toll. The industry is becoming more vertically integrated, a trend made especially clear after the nation's largest supplier, Oakville Produce, went into receivership last year, potentially leaving many

growers on family farms as the last in a long line of creditors to receive payment.¹

It takes five years from planting mini tube seedlings to selling certified seed potatoes. With 20 varieties and several hundred thousand dollars' worth of potatoes in the ground, Garry cannot afford a single crop failure. In times past a farmer could survive with three successes every five years, but no longer. The responsibilities on his shoulders are not small, to say the least. He undertakes careful monitoring of pests, diseases and nutrient levels, and uses integrated pest



Garry describes his operations, with large potato field in background

management techniques to avoid pesticides wherever possible.

His land has been home to his family for four generations. Not content with the enormous amount of work needed to grow his livelihood, Garry has taken on the large task of managing his land along sound ecological lines. He takes a holistic view of the land, its vegetation, the livestock and, of course, the people. He does not share the old attitude that a paddock with no sheep or cattle in it is a waste. Of his 295 hectares,

about a third has been set aside so far for permanent conservation: Garry knows that forcing the land is no good in the long run, a belief and approach reinforced by his family's long association with it. He recalls planting a stand of trees with his grandfather, and being told that "you will think of me every time you go past these trees." Well, he sure does!

Over the years Garry has planted tree belts to shelter stock and provide wildlife habitat. He uses seeds from centuries-old trees to

grow new generations of natives. The belts are fenced off to keep livestock out. It all works. Natural rejuvenation over the last 10 years is significant. Dozens of species of plants, birds and other animals are reappearing, and surprisingly large open areas of land provide shelter even in snowy times. The lake has platypus in it.

One concern is that the town has been 'discovered' and is becoming popular. House and land prices are rising, and some prime agricultural land is soon to be destroyed for housing.

Garry is currently growing some new varieties under licence which will appear in the supermarkets this year. He's not at all happy with the supermarket system which cares more about appearance, ease of transport and presentation than nutrition, and he is concerned that nutrition levels in our potatoes are declining.

Not all of his varieties are grown under licence; he has a number which he can use as he wishes. He's looking into ways to sell potatoes direct to the public, a plan which we should all support. To build up an appetite for our

(continued on next page)



Harvesting Garry's gift potatoes



Ian Ryall of Slow Food thanks Garry during the long table lunch. Walter also presented Garry with 2 bottles of wine

lunch, Garry let each of us gather a large bag of these potatoes which he first loosened. Fair enough, the energetic man had the only fork—but we had to pick them up!

The lunch was the usual Slow Food long table lunch, where diners bring their good, clean and fair foodstuffs to a row of tables set up in an attractive place. Having the food arranged like this encourages people to move around and talk to each other. The afternoon ended with the sharing of good food, good company and good spirits. Everyone went home uplifted.

Back in Canberra, the Charnwood garden members on the tour said that they're keen to host the next combined COGS and Slow Food event. Yes! Charnwood would be a great place for it.

—by Walter Steensby (story and photos) and Tracey Bool (story)

References:

1. www.ahea.com.au/latest-news/ausveg-potato-growers-could-be-left-out-of-pocket
2. www.potatoessa.com.au
3. www.traditional-foods.com/decline/nutrient-decline-Potatoes
4. www.livescience.com/45838-potato-nutrition.html

Some potato production facts²

- Globally over 8,000 varieties of potato are grown in over 130 countries.
- Potatoes came to Australia quite early, with 4.5 ha under cultivation by 1797 in Parramatta.
- Australia's multiple growing areas means we can supply potatoes all year with no need for long periods of storage.
- Nationally, 1.25 million tons are produced annually, 20% of all our vegetable production. We grow on average 35 tons/ha, double the yield in 1970. The world average is 18 tons/ha; the US, France and Netherlands harvest 43 tons/ha. US nutrition levels could be in slow decline.³
- The area under potatoes in Australia has fallen by 26% in the last 100 years but production has risen five-fold. South Australia produces 80% of the nation's fresh washed potatoes—only "washed" potatoes are not really washed. They're not dirty because they were grown hydroponically in sandy soils.
- Some 55% of households purchase them weekly; 63% purchase the leader, the carrot.

Some potato nutritional information⁴

- Potatoes are high in phytonutrients such as carotenoids, flavonoids and caffeic acid, which promote good health—provided they are not all eaten fried with tons of butter or sour cream!
- They contain high levels of Vitamin C, an antioxidant, and are a good source of potassium which helps lower blood pressure.
- Their Vitamin B6 is a precursor to serotonin and dopamine which can help with depression and stress. No wonder many people find them a comfort food.
- Some studies indicate that potatoes may help reduce the inflammation of arthritis.
- The high fibre content helps keep one regular.
- Almost all of the nutrients are in the skin. Try lightly frying potato skins in coconut oil with various herbs: they make a delicious snack.
- A potato baked in its jacket loses the least amount of nutrients, boiling it loses the most.

Feijoa project reaches its peak

In the last edition of Canberra Organic, we were introduced to Mark O'Connor's search for the 'the best feijoa trees in Canberra' and subsequent grafting efforts.

This year's feijoa season is well under way with all those who gave me scions from good feijoa trees, mostly in Canberra. This project, as you'll recall, has resulted in 39 selected new 'cultivars' (mostly named after the person who has donated them and given permission for their tree to be propagated) being planted at the Lindsay Pryor National Arboretum.

The arboretum is on the opposite side of Lake Road from the National Arboretum, and right against the cycle path that runs alongside Lake Burley Griffin. If you park in the car park on that side, next to the Lindsay Pryor open-air exhibition of Australian rock types, and walk downhill along the cycle path for about 150 metres you'll find them on your right. These trees are still quite small, though several of them tried to fruit this year. Unfortunately they are not labelled, though there is a list kept of which is which.

Thanks again to all those who took the trouble to get in touch following articles in The Canberra Times about my project to discover and make available to the public new varieties of feijoa suitable for Canberra, and who brought round cuttings and samples of fruit.

This project is not quite over but I won't continue to spend nearly so much time on it. I'm still on the lookout for any truly exceptional or very different feijoa trees, although with so many varieties already selected the bar is now pretty high. I think the main



interest is to find trees whose fruit is very early, or late, or has different or exceptional flavour, or a ripe colour other than green. (I still haven't tasted a ripe sample of the one whose owner maintains it tastes of wild strawberries, but perhaps that will happen this season!)

So if you do come across an exceptional tree, please see if you can get the owner to give you some cuttings/scions and a sample of its fruit, and let me know.

Finally, a few thoughts for those who are looking forward to their harvest this autumn.

Because of dry periods this year, most unwatered trees have only small or undeveloped fruits, and probably most are still up to several weeks away from dropping their main crop. Trees also vary as to whether the fruit is ripe when it drops, or requires a few days or even a week or two of storage before it is fully ripe. I know one tree that is over-ripe when it drops.

Until a week or so back, much of the fruit that did fall was not as good as it seemed. Fruits often drop early if they have been

'stung' by the Queensland fruit fly, whose grubs accelerate ripening but rapidly spoil the fruit. We do get Queensland fruit fly in Canberra, and by early autumn, after multiplying through a few generations, it is quite prevalent in many gardens. By mid-autumn the colder weather makes the adults inactive, and winter frosts usually go close to eliminating them. Hence the mid-season and late feijoa crop is not normally affected. You can usually see the pin pricks, often like little black spots, on a fruit that has been stung. But from now on the only problems are rats (use bait), possums and parrots (although usually the crop is big enough to glut these).

And overall, I must say I don't know of any other fruit-tree that gives so generously and with so little risk of us losing the crop to pests and birds. And they self-harvest too!

If you've any news about your feijoas this autumn, I'd love to hear it. This includes the date when they began to drop significant amounts of fruit.

—Mark O'Connor

City Farm ploughs ahead

One of COGS' sister organisations, the Canberra City Farm (CCF), is making encouraging progress in its development and growth. Here is a quick look at what's going on and where you as a member of COGS may wish to become involved. You don't need always to be a CCF member—for instance, CCF will happily sell seedlings to anyone!

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Scheme

Contact: Micah Wood,
www.urbanagriculture.org.au/food-box-initiative

This is a scheme that directly connects local farmers with local customers. As a customer you are part of a network of people who purchase a share of a farmer's produce ahead of time and then receive the fruits and vegetables as they are harvested. Both growers and customers share the risks and benefits of food production. We come to value each other as people and not as economic units.

The Scheme will have six fortnightly food boxes of fresh seasonal local produce for \$350. This consists of:

- \$300 going directly to the farmer. Farmers will provide six \$50 fortnightly food boxes of fresh seasonal produce.
- \$40 going to the Southern Harvest Association coordinator.
- \$10 is a facilitation fee to CCF.

Each quarter you will be able to sign up for the next quarter's food boxes and assist with planning of the project.

The aim is to also have one farm visit per quarter.

Southern Harvest Association will coordinate with farmers, assemble the food boxes and deliver the boxes to the CCF at Dairy Road, Fyshwick. The volunteers will distribute the boxes from 5pm to 8pm fortnightly on Wednesday. As there are no storage facilities, boxes not collected by close of pick up will be donated. For further information about Southern Harvest, visit www.southernharvest.org.au/about

Seed savers

Contact: Arian McVeigh,
www.urbanagriculture.org.au/seed-savers

Canberra Seed Savers grows and harvests an abundance of herb, vegetable, and bee-food seeds in



backyards and on farms across our region: It's easy to be part of our network.

Everyone is welcome to come along to the Seed Savers sessions. They're interactive and fun! Join in, and learn how to be part of preserving our precious heritage of heirloom seeds. Help us save seeds and make seed packets. Bring home-grown seeds (if you have any), old gardening magazines, or just yourself. Come for as long as you want to, and kids are welcome. If you need a lift, or would like to join the mailing list, please e-mail Arian.

If you can't come to a Sunday Seed Savers Session, you can still be part of the network: get in touch and have a chat about how to contribute to growing and saving Canberra's seed heritage.

Propagation Group

Contact: Peter James,
www.urbanagriculture.org.au/propagation-group

The CCF Propagation Group is a small group of people who grow seedlings for home use, to raise them for use at Dairy Road, or as a fund raiser for

CCF. If you would like to participate in the Propagation Group, you would be most welcome.

This year began with tomato sales, a February propagation workshop run at Dairy Road, a very memorable visit to Allsun Farm, and a morning's seed planting. It is all about learning and 'making a difference'. Admittedly progress has been slow while we learn not only about propagating, but also about what seedlings to grow, when to grow them, and who to sell them to. The next big thing is this upcoming spring's propagation.

We are thankful for the many COGs members who have purchased seedlings from us in the last nine months. Please give us your feedback. What varieties would you like repeated? Which were a waste of time? What didn't we grow that you would love to have available?

If you would like to pre-order seedlings, let us know what you would like, when, and how many

We will try to fulfil your request. This would make a huge difference to our operation and simplify it considerably.

This coming year is shaping up as one of major challenges and opportunities. Planning will start in June for the spring planting. A key part is learning the many options involved in raising seedlings. Highlights on the calendar will be a grafting workshop in late winter and the development of seedling growing facilities at Dairy Road that will allow us to grow a wider range of seedlings more easily.

Allotments

Contact: Walter Steensby,
www.urbanagriculture.org.au/allotments

CCF are creating nine allotments for COGS-style gardening at Dairy Road, Fyshwick, each 8m x 5m. The soil is good and fertile, with few weeds. Most have full sun; one is partially shaded by an elm tree which may be pruned or removed, but this has yet to be decided.

They will be run on similar lines to COGS plots, with rules and policies drawn from COGS gardens. We haven't settled on the fees yet, but it will be in the region of \$5-\$6 per square metre.

You won't need to rent a complete allotment—we can subdivide if that helps.

Please get in touch if you're interested.

Volunteers

Contact: www.urbanagriculture.org.au/get-involved

The CCF has two regular working bees, one on Monday mornings and one on Thursday. Each typically attracts several people, but we could do

with more. Jobs include preparing garden beds, removing couch grass, laying paths, pruning the orchard and grape vines, planting, general weeding, grass cutting.

If you wish to help out (and become a CCF member), please get in touch.

Value-adding

Contact: Trish McEwan,
www.urbanagriculture.org.au/value-added-group

Canberra City Farm has started a 'value-add' project to turn produce from the farm, and any other excess seasonal produce available, into preserves. These preserves are sold at events to help fundraise and promote CCF. At present we are running this project as a pilot with the idea that it may become an enterprise and contribute to the longer-term sustainability of CCF.

By the time you read this we should have a new enterprise located at the CCF: a fully-equipped commercial kitchen! It's being relocated from the Westside container village in Acton, which closed at the end of April. It's a for-profit enterprise that provides other businesses with hired access to a commercial kitchen, the equipment and the facilities to start their own food businesses, or to assist with their current operations. It is not a charitable venture, but if you wish to start or test a food idea and don't have the funds to hire the kitchen, it will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Working bees are held when produce is available and are a great opportunity for people to come together and share their preserving techniques. So far the preserves we have made from CCF fruit are: fig jam, relish and buttons; plum compote, sauce and jam; and shiraz jelly. We are currently experimenting with shiraz vinegar.

You can get involved in, or assist with, this project by:

- joining the Value Added Group, which coordinates preserving activities including working bees
- donating any excess produce to CCF suitable to be turned into preserves
- giving us any spare clean jars that we will replace with new lids and fill with preserves
- helping out on a market or festival stall selling preserves and promoting CCF
- contributing your favourite preserve recipes for working bees or CCF newsletter
- attending a working bee to help build up our stock of preserves or learn preserving tips from other volunteers
- buying our preserves!

—Walter Steensby

Downsizing the fruit and vegetable garden

My husband and I have just moved back to Canberra after twenty odd years of living the good life on a five-acre block in the village of Gundaroo. Our large vegetable garden was 16m by 20m and we also grew lots of fruit, berries and nuts. In fact, we grew way too much; two people simply can't eat their way through the bounty of such a productive garden. The freezer and pantry groaned from the burden of preserved produce and our long-suffering friends smiled wanly as they were given yet another bottle of fig chutney.

We put a lot of hard work into our garden and are proud of the fact that for some time we were almost self-sufficient in vegetables, grown organically, eaten seasonally and enjoyed along with our own fruit, meat and eggs. But doing this and working fulltime was a bit of a challenge for which our backs and knees have not forgiven us. Now

that we are retired we have been lured away overseas. Although we travelled in the depths of Canberra's winters we discovered that the garden was not as senescent as we expected at such a bleak time but in fact had been living in a riotous manner. This was especially true last year when it never stopped raining over winter and there were no frosts to dampen plants' enthusiasm for growth. When we returned from cruising the Pacific in early September we discovered weeds rampaging over most of the property. It took some time to beat them into submission and we were rather demoralised by the effort.

So, we decided to sell up and move into an apartment with benefits—that is, a retirement village in one of Canberra's newly created suburbs—Crace. We only have a 30m² balcony. Our friends are horrified. How will we manage without being surrounded by

gardens, how will we cope with four small windows and a balcony that looks over to other apartments and a small garden? Wouldn't a little suburban home be better or at least a townhouse with a courtyard?

But we don't see our move as a second-best option, rather as an opportunity for a new way of life—of getting out and about and enjoying all that Canberra and its environs has to offer, which is a lot. It really is quite liberating. We will be able to do activities with our fellow residents, time that would normally have been spent maintaining our five-acre plot can be spent reading, writing, listening to music and generally relaxing. We are growing a wide range of herbs on our balcony so we have freshness at our fingertips to add to our cooking.

One thing I think I will miss, aside from the wonderful birdlife, privacy and peace of living in

The spacious vegetable garden at Gundaroo



the village of Gundaroo, right up against the village common and so far from the madding crowd, is the company of fellow gardeners. Gardeners, generally, are people with a deep commitment to making the world a better place by growing things and nurturing things with the lightest possible impact on the environment. For this reason, I was very happy to have been allotted a plot in the Crace community garden. I have always admired the allotment system; it seems such a boon to people living in cities.

I have been quietly contemplating what I might grow in my allotted plot. All the usual things sprang to mind at first but then I started to think about what I would miss most if I was forced to buy all my fruit and vegetables from a supermarket. And here is my list:

- Ripe strawberries—they might look red but they are never succulent or sweet.
- Ripe tasty grapes—even when they should be in season they are watery and lacking flavour in the supermarket.
- Raspberries—simply because they don't travel well and often go mouldy within a day of taking them home.
- Figs—they are only ripe for a very short time after which they turn into a jelly like sludge—I am going to get a dwarf brown fig and grow it in a pot in the community garden because they have very vigorous roots but like being confined.
- French beans—like so many vegetables available from supermarkets these seem to be kept in cold storage for ages so that, although they look brilliant when they are first displayed, once they warm up and you get them home they go limp and start to go mouldy.
- Tomatoes that taste like tomatoes—fully ripe, aromatic, and flavoursome and sweet.



Healthy, leafy crops in the Gundaroo garden

- Apricots—take some of those hard but beautiful looking balls home and you will discover that instead of ripening they stay tart and then turn mushy. I did think a dwarf peach in a pot would be a good idea but I am not sure of an effective organic approach to controlling curly leaf.
- Sweet corn—you can never tell how old the sweet corn is that you buy in a supermarket—if you are unlucky you could be eating tasteless cardboard instead of succulent morsels that burst in your mouth.
- There are two other vegetables that I would like to grow in the community garden. Broad beans and Brussel sprouts. We would only need a couple of plants. Brussel sprouts in the supermarket simply don't have the sweetness and flavour of the home-grown variety and often individual broad beans

have black marks indicating they were picked too late and will be floury.

The other plants I would like to grow in an allotment garden are flowers. Living in an apartment means that you need to bring the garden into the house to get a feel for living things. Shop bought flowers are terribly expensive for what you get and often they have been kept in cold storage so that once home they do not last very long at all.

My favourite cutting flowers would include a few plants of chrysanthemums, dahlias, zinnias, gladioli, sunflowers, carnations, gerberas, tulips, sweet peas and my favourite flower of all—nasturtiums. How could one be unhappy with the scent and sight of these beauties in the house—oops—apartment.

—Elizabeth Dangerfield
(story and photos)

COGS General Meeting, 28 May 2017

Presentation by Troy Lloyd on the Back to Eden method of gardening

Venue: Charnwood Community Garden, Sports Way off Lhotsky Street, Charnwood
COGS members and friends are invited to attend the next COGS General meeting to be held at 2pm, Sunday 28 May 2017, at the Charnwood Community Garden. Troy Lloyd, a member of the Charnwood garden, will talk to the group about the Back to Eden method of gardening which he has experimented with successfully over the past 12 months.

The concept behind Back to Eden gardening is to cover the soil to protect against the elements of nature, using materials that are readily available in the local area. Troy will demonstrate how the use of wood chips to improve the soil has resulted in increased yields, with significantly less time spent weeding and watering.

The presentation will be followed afternoon tea of scones and homemade jams, hosted by Charnwood's gardeners. For more information, please email gardens@cogs.asn.au

—Jo McMillan (story) and Rebecca Lloyd (photos).

(top) Troy Lloyd demonstrates the Back to Eden method

(right) A bumper harvest



World Environment Day dinner

The Conservation Council World Environment Day Dinner is on 7 pm Saturday 3 June at the National Arboretum. The dinner is an annual fundraiser for the Conservation Council ACT Region. It will be a great night with inspiring speakers, great entertainment, beautiful venue, quality local food and, of course, the best company. Your ticket includes a three course meal and wine at your table.

Janet Jeffs of Ginger Catering is planning large beautiful platters to share, using local, seasonal produce, with an emphasis on highlighting some vegan and vegetarian dishes and making them the 'stars' among the wider menu. There will be a three course meal plus champagne and canapes to start.

Tickets are \$135. Bookings can be made through the Conservation Council office (02) 6229 3202 or at www.conservationcouncil.org.au.



**WORLD
ENVIRONMENT
DAY**

Warming tropical Pacific Ocean results in El Nino watch alert

The Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) report issued on 26 April 2017 says all El Niño indicators are neutral but because of the warming trend in Pacific Ocean temperatures it is maintaining an El Nino WATCH. El Niño WATCH means there is around a 50 per cent chance of El Niño developing in 2017, which is approximately twice the normal likelihood of an El Nino developing.

Tropical Pacific sea surface temperatures have warmed since the start of the year and in the central tropical Pacific are now 0.5°C warmer than average but below the threshold for an El Niño.

Atmospheric indicators remain firmly neutral.

International climate models suggest the tropical Pacific Ocean is likely to continue warming in the coming months, though in recent weeks some models have reduced the expected extent of warming. It should be noted that models have lower accuracy at this time of year.

El Niño is often, but not always, associated with below average winter-spring rainfall over eastern

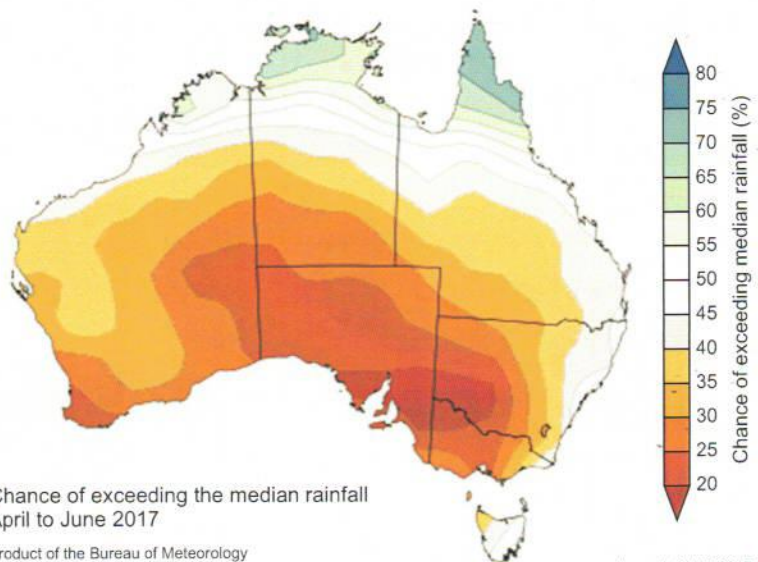
Australia. Of the 27 El Niño events since 1900, 18 resulted in widespread dry conditions for parts of Australia.

The Indian Ocean indicator is currently neutral. Four out of six climate models suggest a positive Indian Ocean indicator is likely to develop during winter. When a positive Indian Ocean indicator coincides with an El Niño, this generally has the effect of extending below average rainfall over eastern and central Australia.

—Andy Hrast

Dam levels in the Canberra region and capital cities

	% FULL April '17	% FULL April '16
ACT storages	87	74
Murray-Darling Basin	66	33
Burrinjuck Dam	66	33
Blowering Dam	66	43
Sydney	96	88
Melbourne	64	60
Brisbane	77	82
Adelaide	63	46
Perth	25	18



The wheel of the year

Back to the Cotter Garden. Desolate. My plot's been totally neglected for four hot dry months. Everyone else's plot is green and thriving. Well, I've had a series of medical and surgical adventures including a hip replacement and a pacemaker. Unable to ride a bike for most of the summer I haven't been out here. Now there's almost nothing left and couch grass is rampant. My friend B comes out with me, helps to weed what seems to be a remnant patch of leeks. We pull out the seeding remains of kale and silver beet. Will they sprout again if it rains? Will it ever rain again? We clear up for an hour or so and I start to see a new beginning.

—Gerry Jacobson

the wheel
of the year turns us
slow cooking
occasional basting
we shall be done by autumn



EDUCATION

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

Ferments and Probiotic Food Workshop – 24 June

Growing a small farm business – 25 June, 16, 30 July

PDC (Modular) – select weekends Aug-Oct

Forest Garden Workshop – 2-3 September

**Help us create a vibrant
local food community**

Courses, farmers market, local food news and events

COGS members get 50% off membership

**Bookings
essential**

www.southernharvest.org.au
hello@southernharvest.org.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

Facebook: Slow-Food-Canberra-and-Capital-Convivium

Eco Meats

YOUR ORGANIC BUTCHER

ORGANIC beef and lamb cuts
including rump, porterhouse and
T-bone steaks, sausages, mince,
kebabs and fillet, cutlets and chops

Free range pork and organic chickens

FREE RANGE GAME MEAT including
emu, goat, crocodile, kangaroo, wallaby,
rabbit, duck and venison

CONTINENTAL DELI including pepperoni,
cabanossi, trout, salmon, cheeses,
organic stock, salami and smoked meats

FAIR TRADE Jasper coffee

LINDSAY and EDMUNDS homemade
organic chocolate



**Specialists in organic
pesticide-free meats**

**Shop 1 Building 2
Belconnen Fresh Food Markets
Lathlain Street, Belconnen**

**Open Wednesday to Sunday
8 am to 6 pm**

**Phone 6251 9018
Fax 6251 9017**

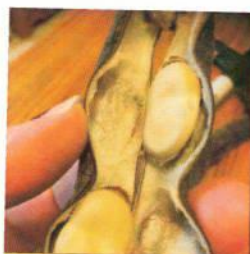


What's On

Want to contribute?

We'd love to hear from you!
Please send contributions to:
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



Canberra Seed Savers at the Canberra City Farm

Canberra Seed Savers had a great year in 2016: more seed savers from all across the region joined us growing and saving vegetable, herb and flower seeds. Seed savers start by planting and nurturing a seed, that becomes a strong plant that flowers and is pollinated, and sets an abundance of seed that is selected and saved and replanted by seed savers. Come and join us and be part of this magical cycle of life.

Seed Savers get together on the first Sunday of every month, from 2–5pm at Canberra City Farm. In peak season, we will also meet on some weekday afternoons at the Food Co-op in Acton. For more details go to www.ccfarm.org.au/get-involved/attend-a-workshop or follow us on Facebook or email Arian at arian.mcveigh@bigpond.com

Everyone is welcome to our get-togethers—you don't need to be an expert and you don't need to have a garden. Bring seeds, old gardening magazines, nibbles or drinks to share—or just bring yourself and help us to harvest and save the abundance of seeds.

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.



Find us on:
facebook

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

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

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

**The Holder garden community display table
at the recent Autumn Flower Show held by
the Canberra Horticultural Society**

photos: Kelli Campbell

