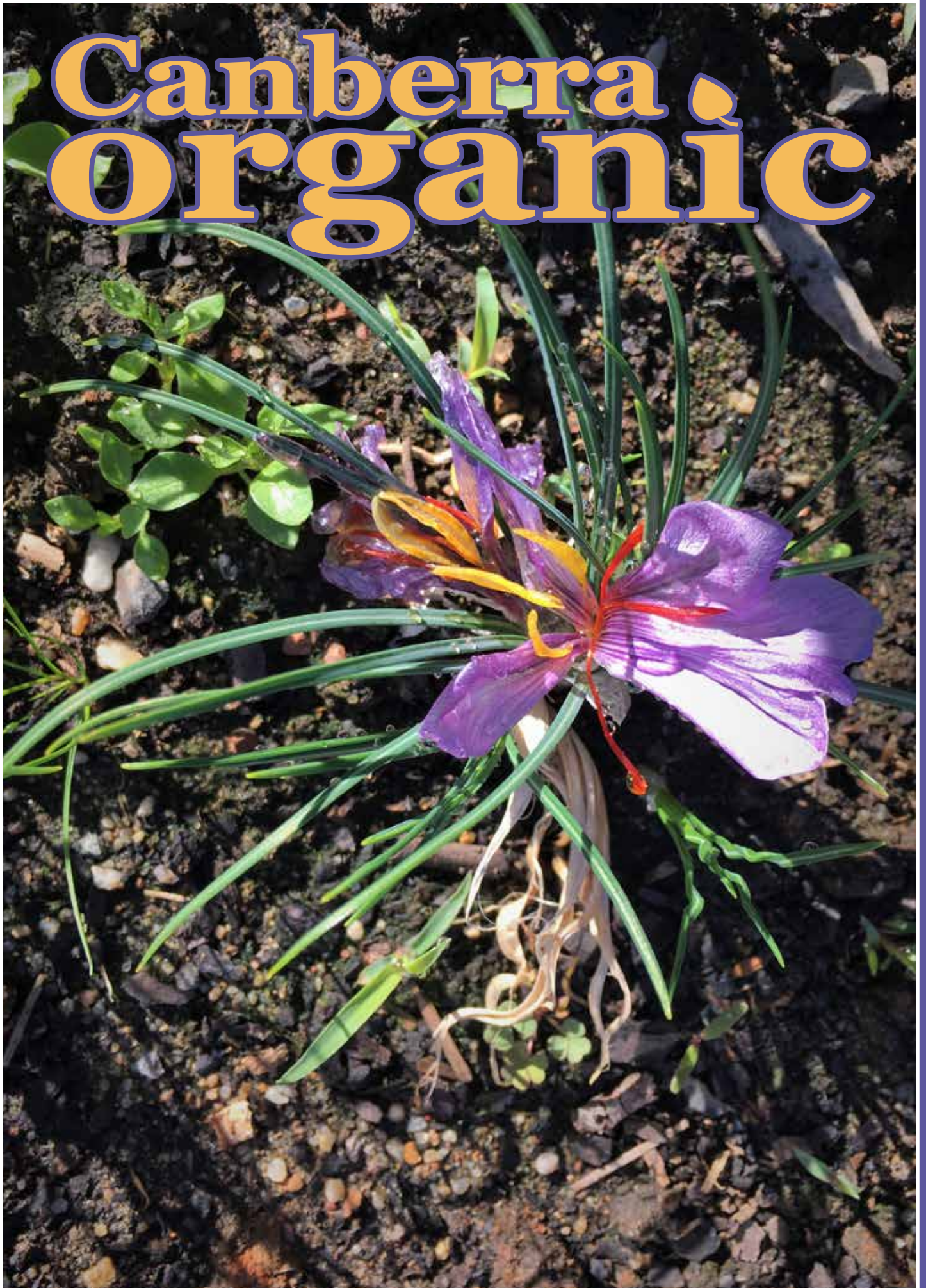


Canberra Organic



President's report

Winter solstice in the rear view mirror

With the winter solstice behind us as I write this, though the days (and nights!) remain crisp and bracing for all but the hardest of plantings and gardeners, it is a time for dreaming and planning for the bounty of the coming seasons. If winter wasn't at least a little bit frosty and chilly in Canberra, then we would have cause for even greater concern with climate change, and in the meantime we enjoy our brassicas, broad beans, beetroot, spinach, spring onions and winter lettuces (and more) while composting, manuring and mulching for the future, and sorting our seed collections for Spring. Reliable experience tells us warmer days will come, just like every other year!

Community garden visits

As foreshadowed in the last issue, the Executive has commenced its program of visits to our community gardens. Our first visit was to Mitchell garden, an extensive and nicely kept community garden in a semi-rural setting on the periphery of Mitchell. We met with a large group of gardeners, several of whom are fairly new to this garden, admired the outcomes of the recent tree management program (safety, much more direct sunlight, and extra space for additional plots), learnt of future plans for a new garden shed and shelter, and while enjoying a lovely al fresco afternoon tea, we chatted about COGS and how as an organisation it can better support and enhance the community gardening experience.

Charnwood community garden hosted our May members' meeting, with a very interesting and well-attended presentation

by Charnwood gardener Troy Lloyd on the method and success of his 'Back to Eden' mulching approach, a garden tour, and again a lovely afternoon tea hosted by the Charnwood gardeners.

Discussions with government on community gardens

A number of the Executive have now met with ACT government officials in preliminary discussions on the renewal of our community garden licences on ACT government land. Since the current licences were granted, the government has established and published Community Garden Guidelines (<http://tinyurl.com/ya5yb54r>) in July 2016, and while we were left with no sense of concern about the licence renewals, we anticipate that the new licence terms may better reflect developed thinking on what makes a good community garden. In the meantime, each of us as plot holders should reflect on the privilege that access to our plots provides, and ensure that we use them consistently and well, and keep visual amenity enhanced to the extent possible for the predominantly residential communities in which our gardens sit.

Our COGS turns 40!

What happened on 24 August 1977?

Yes, the Organic Gardening and Farming Society of the A.C.T. was formed. That's what we now know as our COGS!

We plan to celebrate our origins, show you where we came from, and look to the future, in the next issue of our Magazine.

Organic gardening was once a marginal, almost radical pursuit, whereas today it is a mainstream approach for tasty, healthy, urban food production in backyards and community gardens.



From a recorded 30 members in 1981, COGS now has well over 400 financial members and an extensive social media following (see COGS Facebook below). We manage 12 community gardens, and have been the go-to resource for developers of proposed new community gardens in recent years.

Where would you like the next 40 years to take us? Share your thoughts with your fellow members, by submitting your ideas to our editor Diana at editor@cogs.asn.au. Hopefully we can enjoy a selection of these in the next issue.

Your monthly meetings

I again ask you to consider and let us know what you, our members, want and expect from the monthly members' meetings. Attendances can be disappointingly patchy, and the Executive needs to know what are the contributing factors—is it the format, the times, the frequency, the presentation topics, the venue(s), the pre-publicity or something else? Please tell us what you want.

Could you be our new Librarian?

Regrettably, we still need a volunteer to facilitate borrowing from our hard copy library. What a pity to have a valuable member resource locked away for want of an administrator! Please consider volunteering—could this be a low

impact way for you to usefully contribute to our organisation?

COGS Website and COGS Facebook

The new website continues its development, with review by an Executive subcommittee of content migrated from the old site, and creation of new material. This is an ongoing project. Should you feel able to contribute to expedite this project please contact me or any member of the Executive.

The Facebook page is steadily growing its audience, with more than 2,200 followers. It offers a mix of organic growing education, events information, gardening tips, networking and just good fun, with an immediacy and whimsy that a website cannot realistically offer. For those who don't already follow us, find us on Facebook!

COGS in the news

Our organisation continues to enjoy publicity in the press celebrating the activities of our gardeners. Susan Parsons (*Canberra Times*) and Tracey Bool (*Canberra Weekly*) both featured aspects of Troy's 'Back to Eden' demonstration (see Tracey's article republished on page 7). Sue has recently profiled Gita Curnow of the Charnwood garden, Josh Broomfield of the Holder garden and activities of Alan Robertson of the O'Connor garden.

COGS and Canberra City Farm

We continue to enjoy a close relationship with our 'sister group' Canberra City Farm and assist in promoting its activities. For example, our recent Facebook 'advertisement' of its newly developed community garden plots attracted an almost-record (for us) 5,559 people accessing the post, with (in Facebook parlance) 57 likes, 31 shares and quite a few comments. The power of networking between like-minded groups.

Gardeners for the future

In closing, I sadly note that the world lost a fine dedicated gardener around winter solstice time, as my family farewelled my aged mother Elsie. But even more reason to encourage a replacement generation of keen young gardening enthusiasts, such as the Joeys (Cub/Scout movement) and Montessori primary school aged groups who were hosted by Holder garden to dig and plant during Autumn (see separate report).

Until next time, may your self-sufficiency dreams become reality, and your gardening achievements outweigh your disappointments.

—Sue



COGS 40th anniversary

Photography competition

Theme:

40 years of organic gardening

1st and 2nd Prize:

**Vintage Fowlers Vacola
preserving jars and accessories**

Email your photos to

editor@cogs.asn.au

by 30 September

**For full details read the Editor's Note
on page 3.**

Watch this space

40th anniversary celebration

November 2017

For COGS members, families and friends

Details to come via Facebook.

COGS website and email

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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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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.

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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

Welcome to the spring edition of *Canberra Organic*! I promise you it's an interesting read, featuring our regular experts and columns as well as some insights into other great community groups and even a little magic.

Thank you to all those who have responded to my request for feedback in the winter edition. John Brummell emailed with invaluable advice on an organic method for dealing with curly leaf, which can be found in our new Tips and Tricks feature on page 5.

Huge thanks also to Julia Trainor, who has written the fantastic article on page 16 on preserving techniques to ensure we make the most of our summer crops. Julia has generously donated a range of vintage Fowlers Vacola preserving jars plus accessories, which will be the major prize in our 40th anniversary photography competition (see below).

Please keep your feedback and input coming.

40th anniversary celebrations

As Sue mentioned in her President's report, we have now entered COGS's 40th year. This gives us a great opportunity to reflect on and celebrate how far organic and community gardening has progressed in Canberra over the last four decades.

The summer edition of *Canberra Organic* will be focused on the 40th anniversary, and the people and events that have made these four decades so special. Whether you've been with COGS for a year or 40 years, we want to see your photographs and read your memories and insights about:

- COGS's inception and memorable occasions in its history
- gardening in your local community or your backyard
- the COGS members past and present who've played a special role in your gardening journey.

We will also be celebrating COGS' 40th anniversary with a fun afternoon event in November, for all COGS members and their families and friends. We will send out further details closer to the date.

40th anniversary photography competition

I'm excited to announce that COGS is holding a 40th anniversary photography competition! The best photo will be featured on the front cover of the summer *Canberra Organic* magazine, and win a selection of up to 18 of the Fowlers Vacola preserving jars mentioned earlier.

The theme is '**40 years of organic gardening**', which can include:

- historic gardening photos, particularly of COGS community gardens, including comparisons of 'then' and 'now'
- organic gardening
- your gardening community
- the seasons, plants and insects.

Eligible photos need to be:

- of the highest possible resolution (minimum 1.5MB in size)
- emailed as JPEG (.jpg) files, rather than embedded in a Word document or PDF
- accompanied by a description of the photo, including where and when it was taken

Send your photos to editor@cogs.asn.au—there's no limit on the number of photos you can enter.

The competition closes Saturday 30 September 2017.

— Diana

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This month's cover:

Saffron crocus, ready for harvest
(photo: Narelle McLean)

Spring is the time to harvest cabbages

There are often lean pickings in the vegetable garden in early spring before newly planted seeds grow. However, if you have planned well you should have a few cabbages to pick. But don't take too long; these tightly packed coils of green leaves are hell bent on reproducing in spring and once the weather warms up flower buds will thrust their way up through the leafy crowns and your beautiful cabbages will be no more.

Cabbages are good for you

Cabbages have lots of health benefits: they contain sulphur (the chemical that can be quite smelly) which is great for your hair, skin and nails. Cabbages, especially those with deep green leaves, are packed with vitamins and nutrients including vitamin C, vitamin K and vitamin B6 as well as vitamin B1, choline and folate.

They are also full of minerals such as potassium, copper, phosphorus, magnesium, calcium, selenium, iron and other goodies. Red cabbages are particularly good for you because they have high levels of vitamin K and anthocyanins which help brain functioning. They are full of fibre and low in calories. So, the humble cabbage packs a punch.

Some tips for growing cabbages

- Choose a place where you haven't grown cabbages before, and enrich the soil.
- Plant your seedlings fairly deep so that the stems are well supported by the soil.
- Put a collar of material e.g. felt, around the seedling or sprinkle something rough such as coffee grounds or sawdust around the plants to deter cutworms and slugs.



A gorgeous savoy cabbage

- Cover the seedlings with vegie net or something similar to completely exclude cabbage white butterflies. Be very diligent in making sure there are no holes for the butterflies to get through. The caterpillars of the butterflies will make short work of seedlings and, even if they survive, the plants will suffer a severe setback.
- If the weather is warm and humid, especially in spring, watch out for aphids.

Cabbage Varieties

There are many different types of the cabbage family or brassica but this article is about the typical cabbage-shaped brassica of European origin. You can use Chinese cabbage or wombok in many traditional recipes. You can find a cabbage to suit any time of year, although I think it is great to grow them in winter when there is not much else ready to harvest in the garden. My favourite cabbage is the crinkly savoy, as it is not only beautiful and hardy but

also mild in flavour with a good texture.

Green or white cabbages pack a lot of cabbage into their dense balls and are very hardy. I prefer a looser cabbage such as the sugarloaf or spring greens. The greener the cabbage, the better it is for you and of course anything purple, such as red cabbage, is very good for you. I have grown mini cabbages which serve two people rather than the twenty souls that a large winter cabbage could feed. Of course, if you want coleslaw in summer you will have to grow them in warmer weather but you will be plagued by cabbage white butterflies.

Cooking cabbages

The humble cabbage is often much maligned, no doubt because some of us remember from our childhood the limp, smelly vegetable that was boiled for 30 minutes so that the cooking water was more nutritious than the cabbage. A good way to cook cabbage is to sauté it in some

(continued on page 18)

Simple plant protection and pest control

Worm juice for curly leaf

I noted in the recent excellent Winter edition of *Canberra Organic* that Elizabeth Dangerfield in her article, page 19, indicated she did not know of an organic method of controlling curly leaf. You may like to pass on to Elizabeth and other readers that some years ago when I had a nectarine tree, I was able to control the disease very effectively by spraying the tree monthly from May to October with a strong solution of worm juice.

Plan for next winter

Also, a tip which reduces the irksome task of weeding young carrots, parsnips and beetroots grown from seeds in situ is to prepare the plot by the end of June, water well if necessary and cover

with a sheet of clear plastic, held down firmly around the edges to build up the temperature so that the spring sprouting weeds will germinate and grow prematurely. In August remove the clear plastic, and organically spray or pull out the weeds or cut with a dutch hoe. Disturb the soil as little as possible. Replace the plastic for a few weeks and then plant your seeds.

Protect seedlings with bottles

Finally, you can significantly increase the survival rate of young plants, grown from seed or seedlings, by covering them with plastic milk or juice bottles, with the bottoms and caps removed. Push the container into the soil two centimetres or so until firm. This not only protects the little

plants from frost, wind, heavy rain, snails and birds, but creates a little hot-house. Remove the containers when leaves touch the sides, and store easily by pushing them into one another. Keep them in a shed or garage ready to use again.

—John Brummell

Have you got some practical tips or tricks for growing great fruit, vegetables or flowers, tackling pests and disease, and otherwise making life a little easier around the garden?

Email your ideas to editor@cogs.asn.au

Create your own seed ribbons

I recently bought a packet of red onion seeds and when I opened the packet there were three ribbons inside with appropriately separated seed. Great idea. I know that they have been around for some time. I love parsnips but you do not see seed ribbons for parsnips.

I generally plant my carrots, parsnips and onions with all the best intentions to thinning them out down the track. I was thinking whether the gardener could make seed ribbons at home on cold winter's nights ready for spring.

I tried several methods newspaper ribbons—this does not dry well and crinkles in curves, not straight lines. Flour and water glue to hold seeds in place is messy. Toilet paper is soft and basically melts in water. I noted that in restaurants the fork/spoon/knife is wrapped in a

serviette and the end is 'glued' closed with a bit of water.

Last winter I tried several methods using different papers and glues. In the end the easiest method was to use soft toilet paper and water.

Get a length of toilet paper—I used about one metre of toilet paper because my garden bed at the community gardens is about two metres wide and I can reach about that far into the bed from the edge. I rolled the one metre of toilet paper up and cut it into three equal width ribbons. I unrolled the ribbons and folded them in half lengthways to give a folding crease. Open them up and place your seeds at recommended intervals from the seed packet. Use a water spray bottle to wet the slightly opened ribbons and then fold them shut and simply pat them fully closed.

Allow them to dry overnight and be sure to label them.

Come spring, plant them at recommended depths.

—John Myszka
(article and photos)



John's homemade seed tape

Charnwood community garden

While our gardeners scale back their crops over the winter months, the brassicas, garlic, leeks, root vegetables and green manure are all doing well. Raspberry and blackberry canes have been pruned, strawberry patches renewed and asparagus lifted and divided.

The garden community hosted the May COGS general meeting, where Troy Lloyd presented on the Back to Eden method of gardening that he has been experimenting with very successfully. We also caught up with our friends from the Charnwood-based Canberra City Care (CCC) who celebrated their 10th Birthday with a delicious pizza lunch cooked in their fabulous big pizza oven. The latter event was attended by volunteers and representatives from the many organisations that contribute to the success of the CCC operation.

In June we hosted a Slow Food Canberra event, with warming winter soups on the menu made with produce grown at the garden. We were very lucky with the weather—albeit with a somewhat chillier wind than wished for. In the closing moments, between tidying the tables, people gathered round the warmth thrown out by the wood fire.

The weekend prior to the Slow Food event we hired a large chipper mulcher to recycle the prunings from fruit trees and natives from around the boundary that were in need of a spruce up. The unusually dry weather has meant weekly watering trips to plots for those who still have winter produce growing. From the distance of July, spring seems a long way off but already there are seed potatoes at the local plant nursery and the seeds of most root vegetables can be sown as they will germinate in temperatures of less than 10°C.

—Jo McMillan (article and photos)

(See back cover for photos of Charnwood gardeners at the Slow Food event and the COGS general meeting.)



Alan and Peter with the hired chipper

Celebrating Canberra City Care's 10th Birthday with Danielle Bate, Bill and Glenda McDevitt, Jo McMillan, Isabel Griggs, Teresa Rose & Julie Southam



Celebrating the Winter Solstice

On Sunday afternoon, 25 June, the Charnwood garden and Slow Food's Canberra Capital and Country Convivium (4Cs) held a combined do at the garden to celebrate the Winter Solstice. The weather forecast hadn't been the most optimistic but we went ahead anyway. About 30 people came for a yummy lunch: some garden members created a variety of excellent soups and other

people contributed a wide variety of extras. One extra I enjoyed in particular was Ian Ryall's mulled wine with cinnamon. He can do that again!

Before lunch we ambled around the garden, with the Slow Foodies appreciating the obvious love, care and attention put into the plots and indeed the entire garden. The event had been written up by Susan Parsons in the *Canberra*

Times which encouraged two or three totally new people to visit us, one from way down south somewhere, and they were well pleased with what they saw.

The cold winds took a break at just the right time, enhancing our enjoyment of the good, clean and fair food. Everyone went home happy. We can do that again!

—Walter Steensby

Back to Eden gardening

I was recently introduced to the organic gardening method, Back to Eden gardening, at the Charnwood community garden. Garden member Troy Lloyd and his partner have been trialling the concept for the past year with exceptional results. This system requires less water, fertilising and labour, and is practically cost free!

Creator of the Back to Eden gardening method, Paul Gautschi, from the US, was motivated to adopt a more efficient and low water use approach to growing vegetables and fruit trees when he purchased small acreage some years ago.

Pulling ideologies from permaculture and no-dig gardening, Back to Eden gardening is about replicating nature to sustain soil life and grow nutritionally dense produce. The system is designed to be cyclical and constant meaning a steady supply of nutrients is maintained to feed plants and the soil ecosystem. Back to Eden gardening is about balance.

Essentially, by utilising an organic approach to gardening such as Back to Eden, growers nurture the soil biology and promote healthy soils. It is well documented that

organic soils are more efficient at utilising available nutrients and feeding plant roots than those maintained using synthetic fertilisers and pesticide sprays.

One of the outstanding perks of Back to Eden gardening is less work for increased yields. It utilises resources such as wood chips, deciduous leaves, general garden and kitchen leftovers, animal manures, and green manure crops. The chips are laid on the soil surface without being dug in. Different sources of wood chips feed different crop types—for example, fruit tree prunings are ideal for fruit tree crops, as they contain the range of nutrients required for healthy growth. However, ensure the wood chips are free from pests and diseases.

Over time, adding wood chips to the soil surface also creates superior soil aeration, drainage, and water retention meaning less water is required overall. They also assist in sustaining healthy beneficial insect populations and subsequently all but eliminate pest and disease problems.

Troy explained that weeds are almost non-existent when using the Back to Eden gardening method,

as the drier surface prevents their germination. Any weeds which do manage to grow can easily be removed from the loose chips.

At planting time, Troy rakes the chips back from the seedlings until they are more established. For success, it is important to grow seedlings in the soil beneath and not in the wood chips. Troy has access to pigeon manure, which he adds readily to the surface to feed the plants and counter-balance nitrogen drawdown, a natural situation that occurs as organic matter decomposes. Blood and bone is also commonly utilised with Back to Eden gardening as it's somewhat of a super food for soil ecosystems and plants.

Back to Eden gardening, in essence, is about re-connecting people with the landscape and growing plants organically and with minimal impact on the environment. There is a free download available on how to grow a vegetable garden using the Back to Eden gardening method online at www.backtoedenfilm.com

—Tracey Bool

Originally published in Canberra Weekly magazine.

Troy Lloyd demonstrates Back to Eden gardening (photo: Jo McMillan)



Mitchell community garden

Mitchell Garden has grown a lot this year, with many new arrivals from the Gungahlin area and as far as Lyneham. Our number of plots is now 41 in production and a few more in the planning stage.

We have also extended our orchard to prepare for some winter plantings of blueberries and miniature types of other fruits. Fruit salad for the summers ahead with some jams in the winter months.

The Mitchell Garden recently had over 30 trees removed from three areas of the garden, and now the sun shines through to the gardens and the whole garden area will benefit from more water in the subsoil. Many of the trees were



Committee members Peter and Jo touring the garden with Gwen and Richard

diseased and old but many have provided us with a good supply of wood chip mulch for the winter.

This year, one of our members built us a tumble sieve to help sift the couch and other weeds from our gardens. We were lucky to also have a cold frame built for

us to help propagate our seeds and keep the tiny seedlings warm through the winter.

Our newly purchased shredder/mulcher means we are very busy making fine mulch to add to our compost making and to use on our gardens. We also purchased a



(left) The cold frame

(below left) One of our gardens covered from the birds

(below right) Garden member Phil on a recently felled tree's stump



Around the COGS gardens

new mower so we are loving our new toys, especially on working bee days.

Our other new activity has been making compost bays and other holding bays for shredded materials, soil, manures, and green waste items. These bays will be shared throughout the garden for improving our soil each season and providing much needed additives for our new gardens.

Unfortunately, many of us are learning that the local bird and animal life are also enjoying our winter produce with many of the early crops 'munched to the core'. While sharing is a wonderful trait for us to have, getting the message across to leave some for the humans seems a bit difficult. Some gardens have netting and some gardeners just cross their fingers. Any suggestions will be gratefully received.

Our flower garden has taken a hit from the frost but we are hopeful many will return in the spring from the spread of their seeds and some new plantings in spring. Luckily just before the frost, Gwen and I harvested a small crop of saffron from the saffron crocus' first effort.

Recently, four members of the COGS Executive Committee visited our garden for a couple of hours, touring through the garden and talking to many of our gardeners. We are very grateful for their time and knowledge and sharing with us the part COGS plays in the Canberra region, what is planned for the next COGS year, and what assistance they can offer us as members.

Mitchell Garden will hold an open day later this year and we welcome all COGS garden members to come and see our garden and share your tips and expertise with us. Details will be advertised closer to the event.

—Narelle McLean
(article and photos)

Cook community garden

The Cook community garden held a couple of working bees in May to prune the fruit trees, tidy up the garden and tidy the toolshed.

Both of these events were well attended and some of those who could not attend got in and did a bit of weeding at their leisure. My thanks to all who contributed.

Winter has been slow but many gardeners now have their vegies in, particularly onions and garlic, with a splattering of broccoli and cabbages.

Winter has also brought on a few split pipes and leaking taps, which the resident plumber (me) has fixed. Weeding has been a major task and will no doubt continue when the warmer weather arrives.

We have had a couple of recent changes to membership and it is good to welcome the new faces to the garden (Monica, Mathew, Lucy/Robert and Sue-Anne).

I am always intrigued by the cleverness of gardeners when it comes to protecting their produce but the latest effort, by Karl, is the best I have seen in years.

There has been a bit of localised damage to plants which is probably a result of vermin seeking a feed. Vermin (mice and rats) like dry and warm conditions so removing or digging in compost piles will assist in their eradication. This applies to home as well as the community garden.

—Mike Avent
(article and photos)



(above) Karl's impressive garden protection

(below) Pruning the fruit trees





Muck and magic

COGS Backyard group meets Canberra Biodynamic Gardeners, Sunday 21 May 2017

Since joining COGS, I think in 2009, I've heard the term 'muck and magic' used in relation to organic gardening occasionally and found it mildly puzzling. I get the 'muck' bit—I often get covered in it when out in the backyard or chook run—but have never been quite sure about the 'magic'. I have always loved nature, and my affection has increased over the years that I've been hooked on growing things and tuned in to all the levels of life around and inside us humans, but even so I've never thought of it as truly miraculous. Well, I am a dyed in the wool atheist, but I think last weekend I did finally find that missing magic in my first face-to-face encounter with practising biodynamics enthusiasts.

I understood the event was to be a COGS Backyard group event, on compost making. It seemed to be a hands-on sort of thing, which is unusual for our group, but I like the idea of working bees. I was also interested in the chipper that would be there (we were invited to bring prunings etc to add to the compost heap). Mine will need replacing at some stage so I thought it would be a good chance to try out another brand.

So, complete with as many banksia rose cuttings as I could squeeze into the back of the Yaris and something for lunch, I turned up at the address in Kambah, only to discover that it was in fact a Canberra Biodynamic Gardeners (CBG) event and COGS members were just invitees. I met the house owners, Renate and Ross, who were to host the compost heap, and thereafter a lot of other people as they arrived, dragging bags of autumn leaves, lawn clippings, kitchen scraps and summer crop debris.

Petra Cram was in charge of heap construction and was very happy to educate us—that is, myself and the other COGS member who turned up—in the biodynamic compost-making method. Perhaps the other COGS people had forewarning that most of the Biodynamic members are younger than us Backyarders, which means they are able to work for almost four hours without so much as a sip of water, let alone the lavish tea break we are used to after an hour's gentle amble through somebody's backyard. But there was a reward for the compost builders once the heap was completed, in the form of a huge potluck lunch in Renate and Ross' sunny backyard.

I have certainly heard of biodynamics, even had some of its mysterious preparations explained to me, but I admit to never having really investigated it in depth. I had a vague idea that its origins were somehow connected with Rudolf Steiner and that buried cow horns loomed large in its practices. However CBG member Paul Harris subsequently sent me a useful link. For those similarly uninformed and interested to learn



Holding hands around the heap

more, have a look at <https://tinyurl.com/ybm658cv>. The article dates back to 1999, but the original Steiner lectures which started it all were delivered in 1924. There are holistic and spiritual aspects to biodynamic farming underpinning its practical applications.

I wasn't expecting to learn much about building a compost heap. I personally make all my compost in several plastic bins, following the usual carbon/nitrogen/odd bit of chook manure mix and trying to remember to keep them moist and aerated. I've also seen huge piles constructed and witnessed the steam coming out of them, and wished I had the room and the materials to make one, but I've never helped build one.

This pile was different in a number of ways. Firstly the shape was rectangular and of a substantial size (approximately two metres wide by just over one deep), with definite corners and sides, although the sides did gently slope inwards as the pile grew. At the bottom, twiggy branches were inserted into the ground teepee-style to create a wind tunnel. Petra explained that normally more structural plant material would be laid on top of the branches to increase aeration, but only some frondy leaves were available in this case. Then thin layers of green and brown material were added, intermingled with sloppy mixes of diluted cow manure. The manure was sourced from a biodynamic

Around the COGS gardens



dairy. The layers continued upwards with the type of nitrogen and carbon materials being varied as much as possible, and all the while being sprayed with water. Eggshells, basalt rock dust and dolomite were also added at various intervals. The materials ran out when the pile was about waist high, which seemed very low considering how much went into it.

But it was the final stages that were really different. A stainless steel bucket was used to prepare a valerian preparation, the valerian being a small amount of essence in a phial to about two thirds of a standard bucket of water. The water was kept in vortex motions of alternating directions for twenty minutes by hand before it was sprinkled over the heap, again by hand and to the accompaniment of quiet chanting by Renate (which is in fact not part of biodynamic practice but an aspect of Renate's personal spirituality). The valerian preparation apparently creates a blanket of warmth over the pile, to counteract the winter frosts.

Meanwhile some deep holes had been pushed into the sides of the heap and into this were placed some biodynamic preparations. There are nine different preparations, the first being BD 500 (about which more shortly). Preparations BD 502-506 are made from separate complex fermentation processes of yarrow, chamomile, stinging nettle, oak bark and dandelion flower. Small balls of these were pushed into the holes in the heap and then covered in. Next came a reasonably thick layer of straw laid over the entire surface. Finally we held hands and blessed the heap, which was given a name by Renate.

**Now there's a fair bit in all that to challenge
a non-believer in magic.**

I'm betting though that that pile will be steaming away like a train pretty soon and in six months it will be making a lot of plants very happy. And I can do reverence, particularly to something as down-to-earth as a compost heap.

But back to preparation BD 500, which is made from cow manure placed in a cow's horn and buried for six months over the autumn-winter months. A small ball of the final preparation was available for use on Sunday. Held in the hand, it was the consistency of a moist loamy soil, easily crumbled and equally easy to form into a ball, and it smelled quite sweet. This was added to tepid water (which should either be rainwater or town water allowed to sit long enough for the chlorine to dissipate) in an old copper bathtub half-filled and stirred repeatedly in alternating directions, until a vortex was created and broken, for an hour. This was going on as we built the heap, and as there was no equipment to do the stirring, it was being done by hand. Happily, there were many willing workers. This dilution was not added to the compost heap, but was sprayed onto the garden to improve soil and plant growth.



The final heap.

It was a very interesting day and a great opportunity to learn and mingle. Whilst my compost-making won't substantially change, I will definitely be giving it more attention, particularly with regard to moisture. Oh and the chipper had a petrol motor which was a new experience for me. However, whilst it could definitely chomp through branches more effectively than my electric one, the hopper was a bit too tall for a short person—something I hadn't previously considered.

Anyone wishing to learn more about Canberra Biodynamic Gardeners can contact them via email: bdgardeners.canberra@gmail.com

—Donna Vaughan (article)
and Petra Cram (article support and photos)

**The O'Connor Garden is close
to the end of its waiting list.
Potential gardeners in the
local area interested in a
22m² plot, please email
gardens@cogs.asn.au**

Joeys and the A Team in the Holder garden

An early autumn afternoon took a nice turn in the Holder community garden as a small group of Joeys, under the supervision of an Echidna (pack leader) and accompanied by a handful of Joey parents, called in and undertook some enthusiastic tilling and planting in a dug-over but unplanted plot.

Joeys (6-8 years of age) are the youngest members of the Cub/Scout movement, and what they lacked in years and experience they made up in enthusiasm, energy and genuine inquiry.

Armed with a motley collection of hand digging tools, they planted garlic (pointy end up, as nature intended), broadcast saved parsnip seed like there was no tomorrow, and exclaimed upon the gruesome contents of our compost bins. Most popular of all was our apple tree, which generously and rather conveniently gave up one whole sweet and juicy apple to each of the group as they prepared to depart. Thanks to Holder gardener Heather for assisting with this visit.

Some weeks later (but what a difference those few weeks make—no apples left this time!) the 'A Team' arrived. Half a dozen switched-on kids from the local Canberra Montessori School descended mid-morning, with their gardening teacher in tow. All but one of them were A-kids (two Alexes, an Angus, an Aaron and an Atticus), plus an outlying Noah (sunny morning though, with no need for Arks). This time, they looked for commercial opportunities for their in-school activities, and left with divided rhubarb plants, some herbs and lots of fledgling globe artichoke seedlings.

In between digging up spare plants for later sale, and inspecting early winter plantings, they were diverted by a rather relaxed blue tongue lizard sunning itself nearby, which showed absolutely no plans to vacate its sun trap despite six sets of eyes at close quarters. One great feature of the A Team was their genuine love of eating vegetables, and their descriptions of their backyard produce at home. Future urban self-sufficiency and minimisation of food miles starts at the grassroots, with kids like this! Thanks to Holder gardeners Lesley and Paulene for assisting with this visit.

—Sue McCarthy (article and photos)
and Heather Campbell (photos)



Joeys plant garlic, pointy end up



The A team get their hands dirty



Meeting the blue tongue lizard

Around the COGS gardens



The Joeys busy at work in the garden



The A team learn from the Holder gardeners

Fundraising and cooking for Timor Leste

Local initiative Cooking Circles gathers to fundraise for a student-owned vegetable garden in Dili

On a bitterly cold Canberra winter's night, 28 of us gathered at the Currie Crescent Community Centre in Kingston for Timor Leste. Themed 'Timor Leste in the Future', the event was designed to raise funds for a student-owned community garden in a small suburb of Dili, Hera. Our event was based around a discussion panel by three Australian women who have lived and worked or travelled to Timor Leste: Beth Parkin, Gaye Aube, and Katrin Hewitt, and was facilitated by Sarah Burr, an active member of Cooking Circles who has facilitated past events.

Huddled into the lounge with warm cups of tea in our laps, we were moved by the stories that Beth, Gaye and Katrin shared on their perspectives and experiences in Timor Leste. Beth had worked in women's community organ-



The student-owned vegetable garden

isation and shared stories about the benefits of micro enterprise. Katrin worked as an Engineer and was involved in roads and the Dili Airport, and she spoke about the passion for employment that many women expressed, plus the many benefits of having work to communities and gender equality.

Gaye spoke about her project and fundraising work with Rotary and Canberra Friends of Dili and the women and children she met on her travels to Timor.

Somehow the night flew. It was a great pleasure to listen to the stories and struggles of Timor Leste on Saturday night. Sarah invited speakers to end with a word that sums up what Timor Leste might be in the future. Each word perfectly encapsulated Timor Leste. Hope. Friendship. Strength.

The student-owned vegetable garden is a simple but important project. The garden benefits students socially and economically, and strengthens their independence and professional development. The plot of land was allocated by the Timorese Government to a group of students from the National University of Timor Leste (Universidade Nacional Timor Lorosa'e) in 2016.

The leader of this student group is a young, enthusiastic, man named Benny. The students are growing spinach and mustard and plan to

Timorese brothers enjoy the fundraiser



Around our community

grow much more. The students plant and grow their produce, and then sell everything at a local vegetable market. Students distribute the money they make from selling produce between themselves, and so fund their university studies. Tertiary studies are expensive for most Timorese young people, and untenable for families living in poverty.

Benny requested funds from a few community groups and networks who support Timor Leste last year, because the students wanted to install bore water to manage the garden during the dry season (about May-October each year). Cooking Circles decided to hold this fundraiser because the garden was an automatic fit for Cooking Circles' principles of celebrating cultural knowledge, empowering women and promoting women's rights, promoting the concept that communities inherently have strengths, and mitigating social isolation. Furthermore, as a project that is not established as a not for profit and without governance, process and procedures around it, the impact and importance of raising funds for the student garden was apparent. 'Timor Leste in the Future' was a truly great night. Everyone



Sarah Burr and Kersten Wallace

was talking and mingling. There was a light supper put on by Cooking Circles, and crumbs all over the floor, and there were many newcomers to gardening, or Timor Leste. But importantly, good money was raised—the goal was \$500, and we received \$1,035. This is half of what Benny needs to install bore water, and there's interest in other organisations in Canberra in raising the remaining amount.

The last word goes to Benny. I wrote to him on Sunday after the success of the fundraiser, and he replied with:

'Thank you so much for your kind attention for my Dili garden, You've telling to fundraiser about my Dili garden, we all so happy to hear this information, thank your hard work, your kind attention for our Dili garden will help us to sustain more our need in our garden and encourage more us to keep studying and also how guarantee for our garden. I was so lucky to cooperate with you.'

—Heidi Zajac (article and photos)

The student-owned vegetable garden



Cooking Circles is a community based initiative operating in Canberra for women and girls to build connection and community through cooking. Heidi Zajac is the Founder and Director and was inspired by the people of Timor Leste to establish Cooking Circles after two short trips to the small nation.

Cooking Circles is open to women and girls across Canberra: email cookingcirclescbr@gmail.com or visit www.cookingcircles.org. Men are welcome to join as supporters and there are rumblings of a men's Cooking Circle network.

Preserving your harvest with Fowlers Vacola

Remember harvest time in a year of glut? You get up at dawn, gather buckets and boxes and crawl under the nets to harvest the fragrant ripe stone fruit. Each beautifully ripe peach or nectarine is examined—perfect fruit into one bucket, blemished fruit into another bucket. As you take your buckets into the house, you can feel the sun beginning to beat down on the land.

The refrigerator is full of course, but even if it were empty it would never accommodate a day's harvest. Stone fruit is best harvested ripe, ready-to-eat, so there is no time to waste. You need a plan: eat as much as you can, distribute fruit to friends, preserve what you can, and put the excess in the compost heap because there will be more fruit to harvest tomorrow morning.

My fruit trees are on our remote rural property. I acquired my Fowlers Vacola preserving kit after one of those long summers of glut harvests. Every day I would harvest buckets full of gorgeous fruit and try to keep it cool for a few days before it started to perish. Time is of the essence. After a three hour drive to Canberra, I would drive around the suburbs delivering boxes of stone fruit. People are too busy to 'come and get it' at short notice. We praise the grower and bless the customer, but we spare little thought for the much-maligned 'middle man', who packs and delivers fresh produce from the grower to the consumer. I needed to get out of the delivery business, so I purchased a Fowlers Vacola Preserving Kit.

I chose bottling because it is comparatively quick and easy, and it is a healthy way to enjoy preserved food. Fruit can be cut into halves or quarters, with no need for fussy slicing and dicing. The pieces are easily stuffed into clean jars. The jars are filled with cold water, no need for sugar syrup. With Fowlers

Vacola jars and accessories, the seals and lids can be fitted effortlessly.

Next comes the heating of the jars. They need to spend an hour in the steriliser. You can do this on the stove top, but that will heat your kitchen on a summer's day. During a harvest glut you may be preserving multiple batches each day. On hot days, an electric bench top steriliser may be used outside on the verandah, where it will not heat the house.

The best fruit to preserve

As a lazy gardener and lazy cook, I prefer to preserve fruit that has good acid and requires minimum fuss. My best results have been with sprightly acidic fruit, especially Granny smith apples and Satsuma plums. Their natural acid helps to preserve them successfully, and they taste good when the jars are opened.

Least successful for me has been Asian pears, especially the very sweet Shinsui variety. Preserved Shinsui pears are sweet to eat off the tree, but they taste very unexciting when they come out of a preserving jar. The more acidic Nijisseiki variety of Asian pear would probably bottle well, but this is my favorite Asian pear. It has moderate yields and I have always been able to eat and distribute all the fresh fruit straight off the tree.

The preserving kit

Fowler's Vacola jars come in different sizes. They vary in height and in the size of the opening. Depending on the dimensions of your steriliser, a mix of jars of different sizes will make the most efficient use of the space inside the steriliser.

Each jar has a groove around the neck, into which you pop a rubber ring that provides a seal. Then you place a metal lid on top of the jar, and clip the lid down with a temporary clip. The jars and the clips last forever, but the rings and lids have a limited life. Rings and lids must be undamaged to provide a safe and reliable seal. Lids can be purchased in standard or stainless steel. I have found the standard lids may only be used once. They tend to become corroded by the acid in the fruit, and they are easily damaged when you open the jar. Stainless steel lids seem unaffected by acid, even after long storage. Stainless steel lids are stronger, and it is often possible to open them without damage to the lid. Remember that even the slightest bend in the lid will make it impossible to seal the jar, and the contents will not be preserved safely.

Size does matter

Once a jar of preserves has been opened, it may be kept in the refrigerator for a few days, but you will need to consume it within that

The winner of the COGS 40th anniversary photography competition will win their selection of up to 18 jars plus matching accessories. Second prize will be a selection of up to 12 jars plus accessories. See the Editor's note on page 3 for more information on the competition.

If you would like to register your interest in purchasing the remaining jars and accessories, email editor@cogs.asn.au. Please list which jar sizes and accessories you are interested in.



An amazing summer's harvest, ready for preserving.

time. Choose a jar size to match your household consumption. You can buy glass caps to cover the open jars, in both 3 inch and 4 inch sizes. Although the glass caps just sit on top, they fit surprisingly tightly and are not easily knocked off. The glass caps are only available in the second-hand market. You can also buy new green plastic caps for the open 3 inch jars, but I find the glass caps superior in both fit and performance. You only need a couple of these caps, consistent with how many jars of preserves you have open at one time.

Over the years Fowlers have manufactured preserving jars in a large range of sizes, but today only three sizes are still being manufactured: 1

litre (size 31), 600mls (size 20) and 350mls (size 14). There is a thriving second-hand market for used jars, and even for the various markings on the bottom of the jars.

The largest jars, size 36, have a capacity of 1200mls. Their production ceased in 1978 and are too tall to fit in the modern plastic electric bench top preserver. You will need to heat these jars on the stove top in a tall Fowlers steriliser, or in a soup pot. But once they are full of preserves, these tall jars look absolutely gorgeous, so if you like to show off your preserves, these jars will do the job!

For more information on equipment, methods and recipes, visit <http://fowlersvacola.com.au>

Quantity matters too

Just as it is possible to produce too much fruit, it is also possible to produce too many preserves. Sooner or later, harvests must be eaten, either by yourself or your friends or the worms under the compost heap. After initial unbounded enthusiasm, I have decided that 90 jars of preserves are excess to requirements for a household of two people. It is time to downsize.

I acquired my collection of jars at 'mates rates' and would like to reciprocate the favour. I am offering a range of jars and accessories at competitive prices to COGS members, with all profits to go to COGS (see page 16 for details).

—Julia Trainor (article and photo)

Jars

Size 20* (600 mls)
Currently manufactured
Lid size 3 inches
12 jars \$3.00 each

Size 27** (850 mls)
Ceased manufacture 1970s
Lid size 3 inches
18 jars \$3.00 each

Size 31 (1 litre)
Currently manufactured
Lid size 4 inches
11 jars @ \$3.00 each

Size 36 (1.2 litres)
Ceased manufacture 1978
Lid size 4 inches
7 jars @ \$3.00 each

* Some jars are size 200 which is almost imperceptibly taller than size 20, effectively identical.

**Some jars are size 270 which is almost imperceptibly taller than size 27, effectively identical.

Accessories

Standard metal lids (new)
4 lids size 3 @ \$2.00 the lot

Stainless steel lids (new)
4 lids size 3 @ \$3.00 the lot

Rings (never used)
16 rings size 3 @ \$2.00 the lot

Preserving clips
20 clips size 3 @ 50 cents each

Glass cap
3 caps size 3 @ \$5.00 each

Plastic caps, green (new)
3 caps size 3 @ \$2.00 each

(continued from page 4)

butter, margarine or olive oil or stir fry it with other vegetables such as onion and carrot.

Cabbage goes really well with bacon, as well as apple, carrot, potatoes, leeks and onions, and strong cheeses such as parmesan, feta and blue cheese.

It can be seasoned with fennel or caraway seeds, garlic, thyme, nutmeg or cinnamon and nuts such as walnuts and pine nuts. It is often served with fatty meats such as pork and duck, especially if tiny amounts of brown sugar and balsamic vinegar are added. Cabbage can be a very comforting food when combined with potatoes—just take the classics: colcannon, bubble and squeak, corned beef with boiled potatoes cabbage and onion, and cabbage, bacon and potato soup. Of course, raw cabbages, especially red cabbages, are delicious in salads.

And if you are worried by the gas that cabbage can produce in the digestive system try blanching the cabbage in boiling water for five minutes then drain it and continue cooking it in your preferred way. If you want to

separate the leaves of a cabbage, remove the core and place the cabbage in a pot of boiling water for one minute and drain and dry on paper towels. This way the cabbage leaves can be used as receptacles for all sorts of stuffing. Try stuffing blanched cabbage leaves with savoury mince or other leftovers. Then simmer the rolled-up leaves in a rich tomato sauce with a little wine, stock and herbs.

Preserving cabbages

I have to confess I have had no luck with preserving ordinary white cabbages. I tried freezing cabbage but the result was decidedly unappetizing. People have had to preserve cabbages by necessity and sauerkraut has been one outcome of this parsimony. I don't really care for sauerkraut but I do love pickled red cabbage. There are lots of recipes on the internet but try this one for a traditional pickle that uses up a lot of cabbage—<http://www.goodtoknow.co.uk/recipes/496731/pickled-red-cabbage>

—Elizabeth Dangerfield
(article and photos)

Young cabbages growing in a raised garden bed



Broad bean, yogurt and mint soup

Serves 4

Ingredients

- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 stick of celery, thinly sliced
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 2 tbsp brown rice
- 1 generous sprig of thyme
- 350 g shelled broad bean (about 1.3 kg/3 lb before podding)
- 1 litre vegetable stock, plus about 100 ml/3½ oz more if needed
- 100 g shelled pea (about 350 g/12oz before podding)
- Pepper to taste

- 8 tbsp Greek yogurt plus 4 tablespoons of Greek yogurt to serve
- 8 tbsp fresh chopped mint leaves

1. Fry the onion and celery gently in the oil in a covered saucepan over a low heat for about 10 minutes until very tender. Tip in the rice, add the thyme and cook for another minute, uncovered. Now add the broad beans, pour in one litre of stock and season with pepper. Bring to the boil, simmer for about five minutes, then tip in the peas and cook for a further five minutes, by which time the rice will be tender.

2. Remove the thyme sprig and blitz the soup using a food processor, or use a hand blender.

3. Shortly before serving, reheat the soup and add more stock if the consistency is too thick for your liking. Take the pan off the heat and stir in one tablespoon of the yogurt and the chopped mint. Continue to stir in the yogurt, one tablespoon at a time, until it's all incorporated. Taste for seasoning, then serve in warmed bowls with an extra tablespoonful of yogurt stirred into each and a grinding of black pepper on top.

Winter is the time for hearty soup. Here is Glynis Kennedy's twist on a few popular recipes that use broad beans, silverbeet and pumpkin—all readily available during winter.

Pumpkin and ginger soup

Serves 4

Ingredients

- 1 kg pumpkin
- 2 shallots
- 75 g ginger
- a few sprigs of fresh herbs, such as chives, mint, coriander
- extra virgin olive oil
- 1 litre organic vegetable stock
- 125 ml coconut milk, plus extra to serve (see note below).
- ½ tablespoon chilli powder
- 1 lime
- Pepper for seasoning



© Can Stock Photo / sharqfmaksumov

1. Deseed and roughly chop the pumpkin, peel and chop the shallots, then peel and finely grate the ginger. Finely chop the herbs.
2. Place the pumpkin, shallots, ginger and some oil in a large saucepan and sauté until soft.

3. Add the stock, coconut milk and chilli powder. Season with pepper, then bring to the boil and simmer for 40 minutes.
4. Blitz in a food processor then serve with the fresh herbs, lime juice and a splash of coconut milk.

Note: The coconut milk can be replaced by Carnation coconut-flavoured milk, which is much lower in saturated fat. Both are available at supermarkets.

Silverbeet, broad bean and rice soup

Serves 4

Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, plus extra to drizzle
- 1 onion, roughly chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 200g silverbeet, stems finely chopped, leaves shredded
- 200g (1 cup) white long-grain rice
- 1 litre vegetable stock
- 220g double-peeled broad beans (see note)
- 1 lemon, zested, juiced
- ¼ cup chopped basil leaves

- 1/2 cup chopped flat-leaf parsley
- 110g fresh mozzarella, (see note) torn
- pepper

1. Heat oil in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add onion, garlic and silverbeet stems, and cook for five minutes or until softened. Add rice and cook, stirring, for one minute to coat grains. Add stock and 250ml (1 cup) water, bring to the boil, then simmer for 10 minutes or until rice is almost tender. Add broad beans, silverbeet leaves and lemon juice, and cook for two minutes or until leaves are wilted and beans are tender. Add three-quarters of the herbs. Season with pepper.

2. Divide soup among bowls, scatter with mozzarella, the remaining herbs and zest, and drizzle with extra oil to serve.

Note: To double-peel fresh broad beans, blanch beans in boiling water for two minutes. Drain and refresh in iced water. Squeeze gently to remove the outer skin. If using frozen broad beans, place beans in a bowl of water to thaw. Once thawed, you can easily remove the outer skins. You do not need to blanch frozen broad beans as they are already tender. Fresh mozzarella can be found in some selected supermarkets and delis, or several small bocconcini can be used instead. For an extra vegetable boost, add chopped green beans with the broad beans in step 1.

Grasping the nettle

Betty Cornhill Garden is in an equestrian area and was grazed by sheep for a hundred years. So it's not surprising that exotic weeds turn up. Weeding a self-seeded forest of silver beet, I put my hand in. Ouch! Something prickly. A nettle?

Out there in the Basque country, walking down the pilgrims' route. I catch up with J at the hilltop before Arancon. Our first glimpse of the Pyrenees, in the clouds, mysterious. We descend towards the village together. A text message from our friend up ahead. She has found the next *gîte* (hostel). There is some tinned food there, could we provide fresh vegies. Fresh vegies?

Well, there are nettles in the roadside verge. We pick nettles till our hands are raw. Then on hands and knees J susses out several different herbs.

We pass a farm. In halting French we beg onions and a lettuce. Ah! 'Les Oignons' 'La Salade!' No charge. After all we are pilgrims

on the ancient track to Santiago de Compostella. Bon Courage! At the hostel we chuck everything into a pot. Simmer and zap. Nettle soup—delicious! Our friend asks for a second helping. Who needs tinned food? *allez hop ...*

we raise our weary bottoms from the grass verge shoulder packs ... onwards



Recipe for Pilgrims' Nettle Soup

Nettles, an armful
Two onions
A lettuce
Fennel, a handful
Thyme, handful
Mint, handful
Marjoram, handful
Plantain, handful
Dandelion, handful
Salt and pepper

Put everything in a pot with two litres of water. Bring to boil and simmer 15-20 minutes. Zap. Serve with a crust of stale bread from a corner of your rucksack.

—Gerry Jacobson

Book review

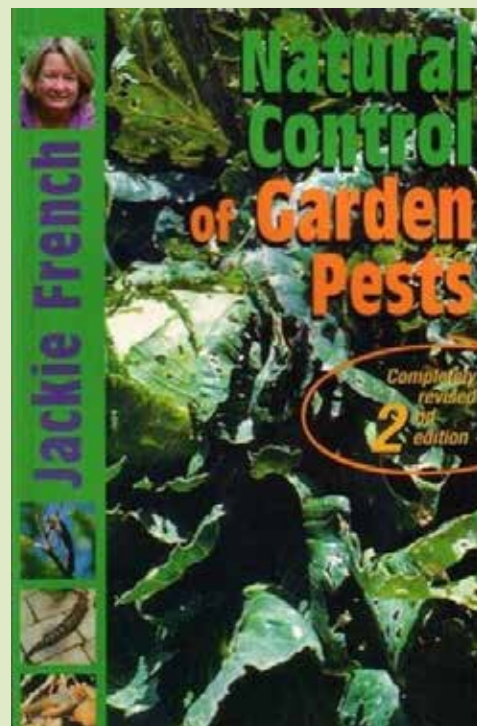
Natural Control of Garden Pests, Jackie French 2002, (2nd rev. edn), Aird Books, Melbourne

If you picked up this book with the idea of finding out how to get rid of garden pests—albeit, organically—veteran organic gardener and prolific sustainability writer, Jackie French, dispels this in the introduction. *Forget about killing pests Jackie tells us, and concentrate on growing crops well.* If we understand our gardens and work with them she tells us, we'll have much better and long-lasting results.

And I can vouch for the truth of this. I bought this book in 2002 in

desperate attempt to stop possums and scrub turkeys from ravaging my sub-tropical Brisbane garden. Possums, as you may know, are territorial and rarely survive relocation; scrub turkeys are mound builders and love freshly planted gardens. After experiments with quassia chip tea, bright lights, mirrors, and putting out alternative food for them I finally realised we had to co-exist. I used innovative physical protection devices and just learnt to share the harvest. As Jackie French comments in her book, getting rid of one pest can result in a plague of another sort of pest so the key is control rather than extermination.

If this is your philosophy, you'll find this a marvellous book. Chapter 1 explores aspects of holistic gardening, using techniques like

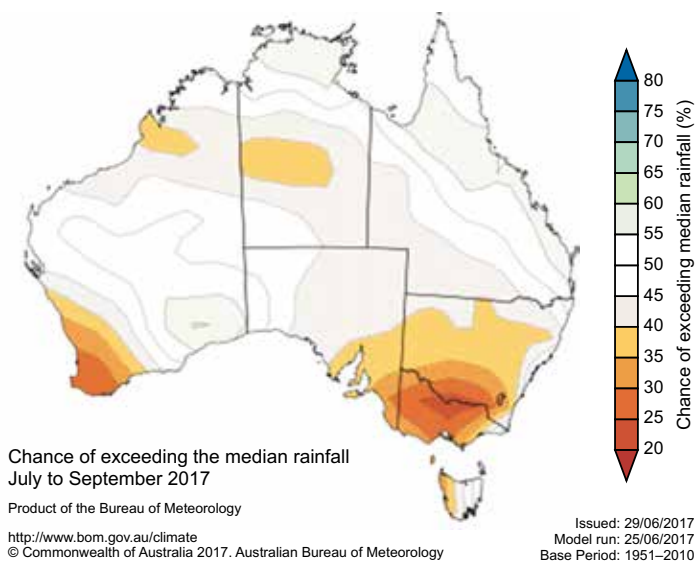


The Weather Report

Chance of an El Niño downgraded

Since the last edition of *Canberra Organic* the Bureau of Meteorology has downgraded the chances of an El Niño from ‘WATCH’ (about 50 per cent chance of an El Niño) to ‘INACTIVE’ (neither El Niño nor La Niña are expected to influence Australia’s climate this year).

However the Bureau of Meteorology report of 4 July 2017 says that while the likelihood of El Niño developing in the coming months is low, modelling for winter suggest below average rainfall for southeastern and southwestern Australia, combined with warmer than average days.



In the tropical Indian Ocean, the Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) is also neutral, with no sign of either negative IOD or positive IOD present in the ocean or atmosphere. However, some climate models suggest a positive IOD could develop in the coming months. Positive IOD events are typically associated with below average winter and spring rainfall over central and southern Australia.

—Andy Hrast

Dam levels in the Canberra region and capital cities

	% FULL July '17	% FULL July '16
ACT storages	81	84
Murray–Darling Basin	68	43
Burrinjuck Dam	62	60
Blowering Dam	80	70
Sydney	93	98
Melbourne	62	60
Brisbane	75	83
Adelaide	56	54
Perth	25	21

companion planting, encouraging beneficial pests to eat less desirable pests, and maintaining healthy plants and soil.

Then Jackie devotes separate chapters to look in depth at having a pest-free orchard, vegetable garden and flower garden.

Chapter 5 focuses on working with some of the common pests all gardeners deal with: ants, birds, fruit bats, grasshoppers, possums [I had that one bookmarked], rabbits, slugs and snails, wallabies, and finally, cane toads. Jackie has a winning way of drawing the reader in: *think like a snail* she encourages when converting a plastic ice-cream container into a smooth and tempting snail trap, *imagine you have a soft tender tummy and that's what you slime around on*. Workable ideas—growing

dwarf trees to deter parrots and other birds who destroy orchards; keeping chooks to control pests like grasshoppers; sprinkling blood and bone around plants to deter rabbits—are mixed with some more eccentric suggestions, like asking your local zoo for lion droppings to deter wallabies. It's helpful, and always entertaining reading.

If you do want to make your own sprays and fungicides Jackie tells you how in Chapter 6. Jackie's favourite is 'Glue spray', which works by suffocating small pests like aphids, mites, slugs, thrips etc. It's easy to make: mix 1 cup of white flour with 1 cup of boiling water, add 4 to 6 cups of cold water, strain, spray thickly on and under leaves and wash off the residue a couple of hours later. Harmless but effective.

The final section of the book is a pest control calendar (designed for temperate areas) which outlines what you need to do each month to effectively control pests in your garden.

Sure you could do a Google search to find ways to deal with pests in your garden but the beauty of a book—particularly a book like this—is that it gives you the whole picture rather than treating problems in isolation. Like nature really. This book asks for common-sense and warns against the *magic bullet* cures *complete ning nongs* are looking for. If you're a *ning nong* Jackie suggests you put this book down at once.

—Sue Pavasaris



EDUCATION

Food and
Farming related courses
in the Canberra Region

● **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



Canberra Organic Growers Society MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

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

Member details—Please print clearly, especially your email address

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

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

(tick relevant box)

Volunteer details

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

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

Garden plot request

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

Membership agreement and signature

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

(signature) _____ Date / /

Payment details

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Payment by direct deposit to

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

BSB 032-719

Account 291247

Date / /

Reference _____ (please use your surname)

Payment by cheque/money order to

'Canberra Organic Growers Society' or 'COGS'

Payment attached to completed application

Direct deposit is the preferred payment method.

COGS Administration only

Membership No. _____ Bank ID _____ Receipt No. _____



spring planting guide

Spring is the main planting season in Canberra. The timing of some plantings may need to be varied depending on the particular year.

Be prepared to protect your frost-tender seedlings, as harsh frosts can occur right through spring. Make your own cloches from plastic bottles with the bottoms cut out, or use row covers for larger plantings.

Using seeds

When direct planting with small seeds—e.g. carrots—bulk out first by mixing the seeds with sand. You can help the plants pre-germinate by keeping them in moist sand for about four days before planting out (do not let them actually germinate).

When planting out large seeds—e.g. pea or corn—soak overnight in a weak seaweed solution prior to planting; alternatively, keep seeds moist between two pieces of kitchen paper for 3 to 4 days until seeds germinate, then plant out carefully. This is particularly useful if you are not sure of the seeds' viability.

Check your seed packets for their use-by date as poor germination may result from planting after that time, or plants may show a lack of vigour when the seedlings come up.

A seed should be planted at a depth 2 to 3 times its diameter, although it is better to plant too shallow than too deep.

Crop rotation

Remember to rotate the crops you grow in a particular garden bed. Crop rotation is a most important practice for organic gardeners. Successive crops should not come from the same plant families nor make the same demands on nutrients; i.e. follow heavy feeders with light feeders.

Also, successive crops should not share the same diseases or attract the same pests—this prevents a build up of disease problems, and reduces losses from pests.

There are numerous crop rotation schemes used, but try to keep to at least a 4-year rotation period and do not grow members of the same plant family in the same bed in consecutive years; e.g. tomatoes, capsicums, eggplants and potatoes are all from the Solanum family.

Plant varieties

It is important with crops such as cabbage and lettuce to choose the appropriate variety for the time of year. Lettuce varieties best suited to early spring are cos, salad bowl, butterhead and mignonette.

	SEP	OCT	NOV
Globe artichoke	T	T	
Jerus. artichoke	T		
Asparagus	S	S	S
French beans		S	S
Beetroot	S	S	S
Broccoli			S
Brussel sprouts		S	S
Cabbage	ST	ST	ST
Capsicum*		S	ST
Carrot	S	S	S
Cauliflower			S
Celery	S	ST	ST
Cucumber*	S	S	ST
Eggplant*	S	S	T
Endive			S
Leeks	ST	ST	T
Lettuce	ST	ST	S
Melons	S	S	ST
Onions	T	T	
Parsnips	S	S	S
Peas	S	S	
Potatoes	S	S	S
Pumpkins*	S	S	ST
Radish	S	S	S
Rhubarb	T	T	
Silverbeet	S	S	ST
Snow peas	S	S	S
Spinach	ST	ST	
Squash*	S	S	ST
Sweet corn		S	ST
Tomatoes*	S	S	ST
Turnips (white)	S		
Zucchini*	S	S	ST

S = seed sowing; T = transplanting

* When planting these seeds before November, the seed should be started in punnets indoors and the young seedlings kept in a warm sheltered place. Plant out the seedlings once the soil has warmed and the danger of frost has passed.

What's On

Let's talk about gardening

Our Facebook community is growing every week.

Our page includes the latest on the events, news and gardening advice that matter to Canberra gardeners.

Just search for the Canberra Organic Growers Society and 'like' the page.



Dates for your diary: MONTHLY MEMBERS MEETINGS

The monthly members meetings provide a great opportunity to learn from some of Canberra's best gardening and organic growing experts, and to connect with other COGS members and the broader gardening community.

Sunday 27 August 2017, 2pm

Graeme Davis,
How to grow prize-winning dahlias organically
Majura Community Centre,
Rosevear Place, Dickson

Sunday 24 September 2017, 2pm

Visit to Majestic Mushroom Farm,
Murrumbateman

Tuesday 31 October 2017, 7.30pm

Speaker to be advised
Majura Community Centre,
Rosevear Place, Dickson

November 2017

COGS 40th anniversary party.
Date and other details to come.



Canberra Seed Savers at the Canberra City Farm

Canberra 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.

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

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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

Slow Food lunch at Charnwood

*Enjoying lunch and the warmth of a fire at the Slow Food event.
(See 'Celebrating the Winter Solstice' on page 6)*

