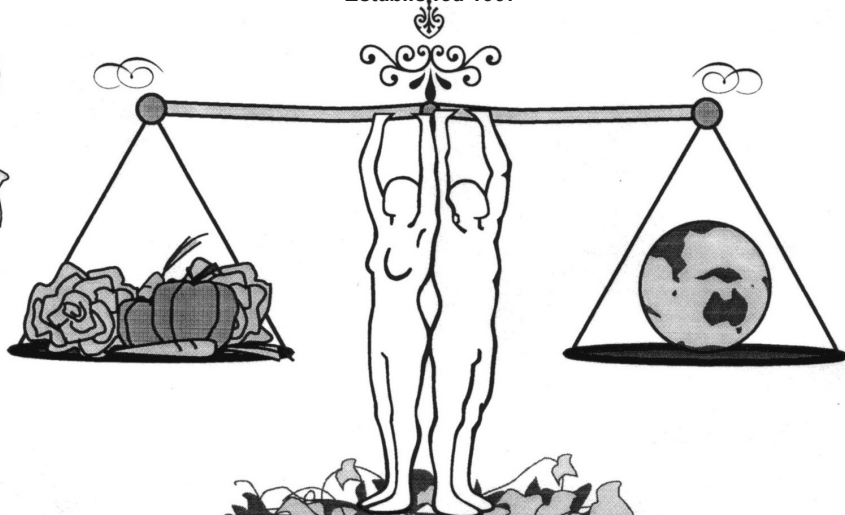


GOLD COAST ORGANIC GROWERS Inc.

Established 1997



NEWSLETTER

Issue 4 - 2020

GARDENING IN WINTER

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OUR NEXT MEETING: TO BE ANNOUNCED

Notice Board

1. **To promote organic sustainable food raising for home gardens and farms.**
2. **To foster research into improved methods of organic farming and gardening.**
3. **To provide information and support to all those interested in the various aspects of organic growing.**

Meetings Held:

3rd Thursday of the Month

The Meeting Place, Cnr Guineas Creek Rd and Coolgardie St, Elanora.

Doors open: 7:00 pm. **Begin at 7:30 pm**

Entry is \$2 members, \$5 visitors.

(No meeting in December)

Annual Membership Fees:

Single: \$20. Family: \$30.

To renew or start memberships please transfer funds directly into our bank account, send cheques (payable to GCOG) to PO Box 210, Mudgeeraba Qld 4213, or just pay at the door.

Name: Gold Coast Organic Growers

Bank: Suncorp

BSB: 484-799

Account: 0014-21651

Seed Bank:

Packets are \$2.00 each.

Members' Market Corner:

Please bring plants, books and produce you wish to sell or trade.

Raffle Table:

This relies on the kind generosity of members to donate items on the night. Tickets - \$1 each or 3 for \$2.

Library:

Books 50c, Videos, DVDs \$2, Soil Test Kit \$2. Available to members for 1 month.

Advertising: (Note 11 issues/year)

1/4 page: \$15 an issue, or \$145 per year,

1/2 page: \$25 an issue, or \$250 per year,

full page: \$40 an issue, or \$400 per year,

W: www.goldcoastorganicgrowers.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/gcorganic

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Newsletter Contributions are welcome.

Send in a photo of what's going on in your patch or write an article about something interesting you've learnt recently. **Deadline for contributions is two weeks before the meeting.** Send articles and photos to Leah at leahbryan9@gmail.com

Notice Board

Membership Renewals

You can now pay your membership fee directly into the GCOG bank account.

Name: Gold Coast Organic Growers
Bank: Suncorp
BSB: 484-799
Account: 0014-21651

Remember to put your Name and Membership Number (the number in brackets after your name) in the comment field.

Overdue:

Barry O'Rourke (185), Bill Smart (386), Angela Anderson (323), Lana Beloff (363), Maggie Golightly (365), Rachael Lebeter (367), Bev Geraghty (404), Elizabeth Grippo (405), Stacey Panozzo (420), Rebecca Bowen (422), Christine Yeomans (433), Ashley Corpaci (448), Michele Miller (449), Kerstein Trueman (346), Sue Beckinsale (373), Nancy Hageman (388), Elizabeth Hughes (389), Deborah Phillips (408), Celia Forrest (431), Carmen Martin (432), Fiona Ennis (450), Peter Meppem (436), Lynn Calligos (451), Janet Shearer (452)

June:

Shelley Pryor (72), Jan Wright (191), Karen Hart (198), Cathie Hodge (304), John Trama (437), Mark Pickard (453)

Upcoming Guest Speakers

Until restrictions lift our meetings are cancelled. We will inform everyone via email and Facebook when our meetings are set to resume.

We have some exciting speakers in the pipeline and hope to bring them to you as soon as we can.

In the meantime you can ask gardening questions and share your gardening successes in our Facebook group 'Gold Coast Organic Growers Members'.

Workshops and Events

If you have a free event or workshop you would like us to share in our newsletter please let us know about it by sending the details to: leahbryan9@gmail.com

If you have a paid workshop or event you would like to promote in our newsletter you can purchase an ad by contacting Stacey via staceypanozzo1@gmail.com

Whilst every effort is made to publish accurate information the association (including Editor, Executive Officers and Committee) accepts no responsibility for statements made or opinions expressed in this newsletter.

View our Newsletters On-Line or Collect at our Meetings:-

www.goldcoastorganicgrowers.org.au/

Thanks to this month's contributors:

Jill Barber, Jorge Cantellano, Leah Johnston, Diane Kelly, Chelsea Panozzo and Olivia Panozzo.



**GCOG MEMBERS
NEWSLETTER
CONTRIBUTIONS**

**DEADLINE FOR CONTRIBUTIONS IS
DUE THE FIRST THURSDAY OF THE MONTH**

Send your content to
Leah at:
leahbryang@gmail.com

President's Notes
By Maria Roberson

Hello Everyone,

I hardly know where to start as there have been so many changes to our lives since our last meeting. I hope you have kept safe and well during what could be described as the most unusual time of our lives.

No doubt most of you will have found your gardens to be a place of stability and solace and maybe, as in my case, they've given you a sense of purpose to otherwise long days of no set or usual routine. There's always something to do in a garden and I don't think I have ever heard a gardener say "Well that's finished" without following it up with "Now I'll just go and do this".

By all reports it would seem that a lot of others have felt the need to garden too. Did some inherent need to provide for ourselves and families get awakened in the crisis? Looks like it. I do find it a bit regrettable that it took such an event to stir people into action but I hope that most will find growing food to be something that they enjoy and stick with.

Of course, one down side to everyone's new eagerness to gardening was that the rest of us found that seed providers ran out of seeds in a startling amount of time. The Club was not immune to this predicament as we have to buy in the majority of seeds that we sell at meetings and our supply chain dried up within two weeks. I contacted as many other companies as I could find, only to be turned away or ignored. I can tell you that the realisation that our ability to purchase seed had ceased within a fortnight was a frighten-

ing experience. That is why I am imploring you to save your seed; this skill must not be lost and we need to be prepared for any scenario or we will suffer the consequences.

Having said that, those of you who did have access to seeds, seedlings and plants will have no doubt had great results in the garden. I reckon Autumn is the best season for growing things in our region, especially after such a long, hot and dry Summer.

As always, the committee and I are constantly looking for ways to provide better services and perks for members. One item on top of the agenda has been our Newsletter - it has always been an integral part of the Club but also carried the biggest workload for those few involved in its production. We have come to what we believe will be a positive step in the right direction and will suit everyone. We will produce a Newsletter seasonally every three months, with each edition focusing on the season ahead. We believe this will not only cut the workload but also the escalating costs in its production, thus making it a more sustainable benefit to members. The monthly Newsletter was initiated 22 years ago, long before emails or social media were around and was our only means of communication – but that is not the case anymore. It is our intention that the quality of content be relevant, accurate and highly informative as usual and we will be inviting all members to make contributions towards its success.

We are also asking that as many members as possible to download their copy of the Newsletter from the internet rather than having it posted while we are still unable to hold monthly meetings. The cost of a mail out to all members is prohibitive and we ask for your understand-

ing during the lockdown. However, we know that here will be a few members that do not have internet access and we are still able to post out to them.

It is, at the time of writing this, still unclear when we shall be able to hold a regular meeting. As soon as we are able to do so we will notify you by email and we will make an announcement on Facebook too. Let's hope it's not too far away and in the meantime...

Happy growing

Maria

Looking Forward to Winter By Diane Kelly

As the days begin to shorten and the nights become chilly, it is time to think about what to do in your garden during the end of autumn and through winter.

Rifling through my gardening books recently, I came across a rather classic book written by Jane Edmanson back in 1992. A lot of gardening principles don't date, so here are a few interesting hints that Jane gives us that I thought worth sharing.

Compost:

This is especially important if you are gardening in clay belt areas, as it will make these sticky clays much more open and easier to work with. In sandy soils, compost or any organic matter will help retain moisture, thus cutting down on the watering.

We all know to use a variety of ingredients in our compost, but do we know why – apart from adding a variety of nutrients back into the soil. If you only put leafy

vegetable scraps and lawn cuttings into your compost, you will find it will be too slow to decompose and it will become wet and sludgy. This is because water is produced as the materials ferment and decompose, and this makes the mass too wet.

Be aware that large leaves (such as from banana trees or birds nest ferns) will tend to stick together and form a thick wad that will not easily rot down.

The herbs tansy, comfrey and yarrow can be added to your compost in small amounts – a few leaves only are required – to help activate the decomposition process. (Tansy will add potassium to mix; yarrow will add copper, nitrates, phosphates and potash; and comfrey leaves are rich in potassium, nitrogen, calcium and phosphates.)



A dash of tansy colour

House plants:

Sometimes we are so busy out in the vegie patch or flower garden that we neglect our indoor plants. But as the days grow shorter, they can add a cheery note to our environment.

One of the most common mistakes made with indoor plants is how much moisture they need, both in the soil and in the air. Even in the cooler months (and especially if you have artificial heating) plants

grown indoors need moisture. There are several ways to keep the humidity up in a dry room. The simplest way is to spray the leaves all over with a fine mist of water – this needs to be done quite regularly. Another method is to put a saucer of water containing some gravel somewhere nearby or even underneath the pot. The water will boost humidity around the plant. Another easy method is a decorative one as well: Fill jars or brandy balloons with shells – pretty ones – and then water. Stand these next to your indoor plants so they can avail themselves of the increased humidity.

Dust is a problem for indoor plants, especially in air-conditioned rooms, as it blocks the leaf pores and stops light reaching the leaves. Occasionally wipe dust from the leaves with a soft rag or use a leaf-shine oil-based product which will polish them up nicely.

Overwatering house plants causes browning tips and edges on the leaves: let the plant dry out completely before its next watering.

Most African violets that die do so from being overwatered. Use a wick such as a piece of wool, threaded through the bottom drainage hole and into a saucer of water.

Then the book becomes more detailed and it continues on to tell us what we can do in June:

Jane says that “June is a relatively quiet month in the garden, unless you are planting new rose bushes or deciduous trees, or unless you have finally decided to face up to weeds”.

Roses are one of Jane Edmanson’s main loves, as we have seen on the

television over the years. She comments that if roses are pruned over June, they will always flower better and look much tidier. If you neglect the bushes, they are also more likely to suffer from fungal disease.

Jane recommends: Cut all dead or weak wood right back to the stem, leaving no stub. For bushy or standard roses, cut out a lot of the middle of the bush, so that light and air can get in. Using clean, well-sharpened secateurs, cut out any small, twiggly stems, as these are not productive. Then cut back the stronger, main branches as hard as you like – aiming for any outward-facing bud along the stem. Cut at an angle away from the bud and leave about 3cm above it. Jane writes about pruning roses – “Treat them as they were your worst enemy” – in other words, cut them hard back for fresh growth.

If you aren’t interested in roses, then how about planting fruit trees in June: All fruit trees need plenty of sunlight to grow well and produce fruit, so a northerly aspect is best for a maximum of sunlight. Good drainage is another consideration – if the soil is too wet, strong roots will not develop.



The vibrancy of an African violet

Fruit trees generally like to grow in ample space and not be overcrowded with other trees or too close to houses or fences. A five meter spread between will give you a fine canopy of branches. But if your garden is smaller, then you can try espaliering your fruit trees along a fence or wall, or you can have a go at “duo planting”, which is where you have a single tree with two or three different varieties grafted onto the root stock.

If you are growing fruit trees in tubs, ensure that the containers are big enough to let the trees come to fruit. A tub the size of a half wine barrel is big enough, and you can plant a lemon, such as a Meyer, or a dwarf-growing tree, such as a nectarine, in a tub. Dwarf mulberry trees can also be grown in a pot.

As Jane goes through ideas for growing plants in June, and then into July, she reminds us that “Winter is a prelude to Spring”, which I find an encouraging thought. So, what can we do in our gardens in July?

One thing we can do is pruning. Why do we prune trees and shrubs? The most usual reason is to improve the appearance of any plant that has become untidy and misshapen. Other reasons for pruning are to cut out diseased or damaged

parts of plants, and to improve their fruiting and flowering. It is also a good idea to check whether any branches of your trees need pruning because they are dangerous.

Jane gives a list of herbs that will need cutting back at this time of the year – basil, chives, lemon balm, mint (all varieties), oregano, sage and thyme.

Other jobs to be done in July include cutting back plants that have flowered on long stems (such as agapanthus or day lilies); trimming herbaceous plants after flowering; lifting and dividing perennials; cleaning out all withered plants and debris from your vegetable patch – and cover your fences with climbers! Try growing kiwi fruit (also known as Chinese gooseberry) along an ugly fence or a too-hot pergola – they are deciduous, so they will let through the warm, winter sunshine. Or you can turn to climbing flowers – jasmine always has a beautiful perfume. Alternatively, grow some ivy – but remember that it tends to take over the garden, so consider growing it in a pot.

So... the months of June to August may not be the most exciting of the year, but there are plenty of things to do and enjoy in your garden.



The beautiful blue of agapanthus



A colourful array of day lilies

**How Can We Help?
Buy Recycled**
By Leah Johnston

This issue let's talk about buying more products made with recycled materials. Ok so this seems like an obvious one, but it's easy to overlook how important it is. Doing our best to recycle what we can is only half the picture; we also need to buy products that are either made from, or packaged in, recycled materials. Otherwise all our recycling has nowhere to go and no second life.

Without the demand for products made with recycled materials, companies won't bother making them. Every dollar we spend is like our way of voting, on a daily basis, for the type of world we want to live in. When we spend our money on a recycled product, rather than one made with virgin materials, we give that preference more power.

We can see the growing shift of companies making more products using recycled materials, in response to consumer demand. In the last few years there's been a lot of noise about how many plastic bottles are sent to landfill, where they will take at least 450 years to degrade. In 2017 it was estimated that a billion bottles were thrown out worldwide every day. Since then there's been a shift in societies around the world with some towns, including Bundanoon in NSW, banning them. We're seeing them banned at some festivals, including the Botanical Bazaar, and visitors are told to bring their own refillable bottles to fill with the free, chilled, filtered water available onsite.

Last year Coca-Cola announced that seven out of 10 of its plastic bottles range will be made from 100 per cent

recycled plastic. This includes Coca-Cola, Mount Franklin water varieties, Fanta, Sprite, Lift, Pump water varieties, Powerade, Fuze Tea, Keri, Glaceau, Barista Bros and Nutriboost.

The Organic Care brand of shampoo, conditioner and body washes are sold in packaging made from recycled bottles, and the packaging can be recycled when you're finished with them too.

It shouldn't need to be said, but why wipe your bum with a tree, when you could wipe it with recycled toilet paper. My sons asked me one day "Why does our toilet paper look dirty, and not white?" I explained that the white toilet paper was made from trees, and ours was made from recycled paper. I asked them if they thought it was a good idea to cut down a tree to wipe their bums with. They agreed with me. This is one of the easiest and most readily available recycled products we can buy, yet I'm still surprised by how many people buy the white stuff made from trees. Buying recycled toilet paper and paper towel creates a demand for old office paper, so it gets another life instead of going to landfill.

It's estimated that if every household in Australia switched to recycled toilet paper it would stop 4 million trees from being cut down every year and reduce landfill by more than 1 million cubic metres (as stated on icare brand recycled toilet paper packaging). There are lots of options of recycled toilet paper available now and they aren't more expensive than the white stuff. There are brands readily available in the supermarket and often on special, there's even a Coles home brand version, and the supermarket ones are all made in Australia (according to my research). They are packaged in soft plastic wrapping which isn't ideal but you can recycle that

at the RedCycle collection bin at Coles and Woolworths supermarkets remember. If you want to get a warm fuzzy feeling from your toilet paper purchase, some people like buying the 'Who Gives A Crap?' brand, which you order online or can buy in person at some health food shops. I like that it's not packaged in plastic wrapping and I like the charity concept: 50 per cent of their profits go towards building toilets in less fortunate countries. The only shortfall for me is that the products are made in China and shipped over. Personally I feel better about buying Australian made products and making my own charity donations. But whichever brand and company connects best with you, buying recycled toilet paper is an easy and great way to increase the demand for recycled products.

Of course, avoiding buying plastic bottles in the first place is a great action to take, for the plastic bottles already in the system and waiting to be recycled and live another life there are different products that they can be turned into. As well as new plastic bottles, they can be made into reusable shopping bags, handbags, ballpoint pens, clothing, carpet, sleeping bag filling and more products (source: recycleandrecover-plastics.org).

Building a deck? Instead of virgin timber you can get composite decks made from 95 per cent recycled wood and plastic film. Aluminium foil can be recycled and you can buy 100 per cent recycled aluminium foil. It uses 95 per cent less energy to produce the recycled version than the original version. Wet-suits are being recycled and turned into yoga mats. Recycled fishing nets are having a new life as Jenga games and stockings. Bottle caps are being turned into prosthetic hands and surfboard fins.

Ocean plastics are being turned into dog collars. Rubber is being recycled and turned into plant pots. Recycled textiles are becoming new blankets.

The possibilities really are endless when we vote with our spending and tell companies we prefer to buy products made from recycled materials and live in a more sustainable world.

Butterfly Profile: Swallowtails

By Leah Johnston

These are some of the largest, most stunning (and most controversial) native butterflies. The Orchard, Dainty and Fuscous Swallowtails are larger size butterflies. The caterpillars are bright green in colour to camouflage with the leaves, and with a very cool defence mechanism to scare away predators: when provoked two red prongs will protrude from behind their head, emitting a strong citrus oil scent. The scent they exude will depend on the variety of citrus they have been eating. If you find some in your garden put your finger near their head and watch them exude the amazing scent. When I was raising some inside my living room the beautiful mandarin scent was enough to fill the whole room, talk about a natural air freshener!

The chrysalis of these species have a great camouflage trick, making themselves blend into the tree and look like a curled dried leaf. If you have citrus trees go have a search for one of these chrysalis.

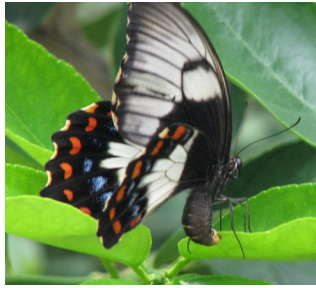
This butterfly is one of the more controversial ones because gardeners feel it is damaging their citrus trees and

threatening their future harvest. When nature is in balance there's a natural solution for every 'problem'. The food chain dictates that every pest has a predator that will eat it, and so on, and so on. Parasitic wasps are attracted to the garden by small flowers like alyssum, buddleja and many herb flowers. The parasitic wasps lay eggs inside young caterpillars which can kill the caterpillar before it has the chance to form a chrysalis, or after it has created its chrysalis, when instead of a butterfly emerging, parasitic wasp grubs will come out. (Eww). This means less butterflies and caterpillars in your garden, and more parasitic wasps. Ants can also eat caterpillar eggs and young caterpillars.

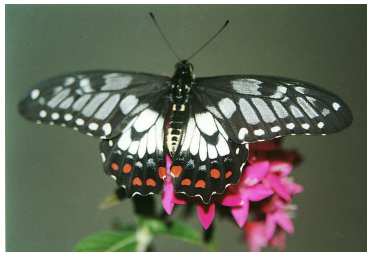
I encourage all the butterflies in my garden and help out their populations by bringing caterpillars inside my house to raise in netted enclosures, safe from parasitic wasps. My kids and I (ok, probably me more than them), love to watch the process from caterpillar to butterfly. We release the hatched butterflies back into the garden when their wings have dried out. Even with my efforts to try to boost the butterfly populations in my garden I still don't have an abundance of swallow-

tail butterflies and my young citrus trees are not overrun with caterpillars or suffering at all.

If you really feel that your tree can't cope with the amount of caterpillars feeding on it you can remove a few of the smaller ones but let some of the larger ones live and go on to become butterflies. Remember, no caterpillars today means no butterflies tomorrow. I'm always happy to accept any extra caterpillars to raise if you have too many on your trees.



An Orchard Swallowtail laying eggs on citrus



Dainty Swallowtail



Fuscous Swallowtail



Swallowtail caterpillar showing its defence mechanism



A Swallowtail chrysalis looks like a dried leaf

Grow Some Plants to Provide Winter Food for Bees

By Diane Kelly

A piece in the magazine of the Australian newspaper for the weekend of the 9th and 10th of May had an interesting article about bees – or the lack thereof! Here is a summary of what Sydney horticulturist Helen Young wrote:

“The past year has been tough for bees. Bushfires destroyed nearly 20,000 beehives across Australia, with another 90,000 made unproductive in NSW alone when vast tracts of the state’s best nectar-producing forests burned, taking the field bees with them. European honeybees are essential for producing crops such as almonds, cherries, apples, avocados, mangoes, canola and blueberries, leading to serious concerns that there won’t be enough “hives for hire” to service our orchards. In July, nearly 250,000 hives will be needed just for the pollinating of almonds, macadamias and avocados.

Then there’s honey. It has been predicted that the state’s honey production could take a decade to recover from its expected thirty per cent drop. The burnt forests will take many years to get back to full flowering. That’s potentially going to affect Australian food security and prices.

All this means home gardeners should do everything they can to help. We can make a difference. It can be as little as putting out shallow, pebble-filled dishes of water in dry times or letting weeds flower. Dandelions flower in late winter when bees are hungry; other bee-friendly weeds include cat’s ear and clover.

To make your garden a bee haven,

grow a wide variety of native and exotic flowers, with several blooming at any time of the year. Autumn flowers are vital for bees to build up quality food stocks going into winter. They prefer flowers in sunny locations and out of the wind. They also favour larger clumps of the same plant together and are especially attracted to blue, purple, yellow and white blooms. “Single” flowers – with one ring of petals around an open centre – make it easy for bees to access pollen compared to “double” flowers with tightly packed, layered petals; these are sometimes sterile, producing no pollen and little nectar. With a mix of flower shapes, colours and patterns you’ll cater for a broad range of bee species and other beneficial insects too.

Of our 1,700 odd species of native bees, some are stingless, many solitary, and their nests can be in soil, wood, mortar or hollow stems. These are the bees you can provide a “bee hotel” for, made with bamboo or pithy stems, and drilled wood or clay bricks.”

The article concludes with a recommendation for Doug Purdie’s book *The Bee Friendly Garden* (Murdoch Books) and also you can download a free 330-page guide called “Bee Friendly – a Planting Guide for European Honeybees and Australian Native Pollinators”. It is written by Mark Leech and is an Australian Government Rural Industries Research &

Development Corporation production.

The document is well worth looking at – educational, easy to read and with lots of pictures



Let the “cat’s ear” weed grow

and detailed descriptions of plants for bees:

<https://www.agrifutures.com.au/wp-content/uploads/publications/12-014.pdf>



Clay blocks drilled and set in a block to create a home for native bees

Current drought and bushfire events aside, it is always hard for bees to obtain adequate pollen and nectar during winter, so it's a great idea for us gardeners to grow some winter-flowering plants to support them. You may have read about the bee-keeper on the Sunshine Coast who had 10 of his hives stolen recently. He commented that he had been hand-feeding his bees sugar water to stop them starving during the toughest 12 months he had experienced in 35 years in the industry.

So, what can we as gardeners do to make the collection of food just that bit easier for the bees in our backyards? In addition to the plants already mentioned, I asked Margaret Lee for her selection. Remember that bees appreciate easy access to pollen and nectar – that's why "simple", open-faced flowers are good to grow:

- Basils – all types.
- Lavender dentata – also known as "fringed" or "French".
- Pawpaw (male).
- Cosmos - two types; pink/white and orange/yellow.

- Rondeletia – this shrub will grow in shade and is very drought tolerant
- Camellia sasanqua in May.
- Camellia japonica in June and July (not formal doubles).
- Clover in lawns and orchards - not sprayed!
- Allysum – also known as "Carpet of Snow" – and you can see why!
- Perennial salvias - pink or blue – and our bees love the purple bush in our backyard, especially the blue-banded ones.
- Olde roses bloom well in autumn and winter here. Give them a light prune in spring.
- Wattles in July – providing plenty of pollen.
- Chrysanthemums - daisy types.
- Marguerite daisies.
- Weeds: English dandelion, bidens (better known to us as cobbler's pegs), Ageratum.
- Tagetes lemonnii - you may know them as "Mexican marigolds".
- Pigeon pea and all veggie peas; sweet peas.
- Natives: some grevilleas, Davisea ("bitter peas"), Hovea, Hardenbergia (a leguminous vine).
- Jonquils and poppies.
- Aloes major - flowering from now on and the birds enjoy them too.
- Jasmine sambac (white blooms) and Jasmine pollianum (gentle scent only) – it has pink buds, and is an evergreen, twining climber - native to China and Burma.
- Bacopa and Nemesia Petunias.

So, as you can see, there is actually plenty we can do to help our bees. If you aren't familiar with some of the plants listed then look them up – they are often quite stunning. Plant some now in your backyard for future years and the bees will thank you.

Welcome to our two New Authors

by Diane Kelly

This edition of our newsletter includes two very special articles. I asked club member Stacey Panozzo if her daughters might like to write a piece about "something gardening", and here are the results from Chelsea (aged 12) and Olivia (aged 11).

If gardening is something you enjoy sharing with your children or grandchildren, or even the kids next door, how about inviting them to write a story, or draw a picture, or take a photo of their favourite activity in the garden. Send them into our newsletter editor Leah at leahbryan9@gmail.com

Perspective of a Bug

by Chelsea Panozzo

Jumping from leaf to leaf was a daily need when you lived in the vast, green and leafy 'jungle' like Gil did.

Gil considered himself to be a very brave bug, braver than all of the other crickets and moths who fled at the sight of the enormous giant who brought the mysterious rains down on them each morning. Instead of fleeing, Gil bravely tucks the food that he had gathered for the next few days under his protective shell and dives under one of the leafy green 'trees.' This time, from experience, Gil decides to hide under one of the 'trees' that have wider leaves. Just in time too, because right on time, the mysterious rains start falling from the sky, but something seems off; cautiously poking his tiny bug head out from under the leaf, Gil notices that the rain drops seem to be a lot smaller with a strange, almost toxic, smell coming

from them. Slowly but surely, Gil started to feel light-headed so he decided it was time to move.

Uncertainly, Gil placed his tiny feet on the leaf to find a burning sensation shoot up his little legs!

Gil decided to make a run for it, trying his best to ignore the pain in his little legs Gil dashed out of the leafy green 'forest' and didn't stop running until he had reached the vast, green 'meadows'. This place at least seemed safe... feeling exhausted and afraid Gil slowly gets to work on building a small shelter under a 'tree' to spend the night in.

Finally, after working for a couple of hours his new temporary house was ready... Gil had made sure it was nice and safe, he didn't need any more dramatic events tonight.

Notes:

Perspective of a bug is about a bug named Gil and insect spray/pesticides that are used in gardens (non- organic, not eco-friendly).

Moral:

When growing your own fruit and veggies try and avoid pesticides and insect sprays at all costs.



The Benefits of Free Ranging Chickens in Your Gardens

By Olivia Panozzo

Recently we were lucky to get an extra big pen built for our chickens. We called it 'HenStar Hotel'. My sister and I designed it and Marek built it. Marek also goes to Gold Coast Organic Growers.

Although we have a pen, we will also let them out of our pen every couple of days. This is good for your chickens so that they can peck the insects off your garden and do some composting while they are there.

So often people think that the only way to feed chickens is straight from the "science perfect" bag of chicken food you can get at your local feed store. **Newsflash!** That's not the healthiest for your chickens.

Here are some insects that you can feed your chickens: Earthworms, Mealworms, Black Soldier Flies, Maggots, Roaches and Crickets. All of these insects are healthy for chickens because they have nutritious values that can also make their eggs taste better.

Here are the definitions for why each of those insects and bugs are good for your chickens:

Earthworms are great as chicken feed and for your garden. They only take a little bit of work for the immense rewards you can reap!

Mealworms are a nutritious and easy to breed at your own house. They are also a great source of protein for your chickens and they sound easy to care for.

Black Soldier Flies are unique bugs.

Out of all the bugs listed, these are the only ones that will self-harvest themselves right into your feed! These look like one of the best on the list here. They are easy to care for and you can set them up so they go right into a feed bucket or even a feeding trough where the chickens can help themselves.

Maggots. This system doesn't cost anything and is easy to implement in your backyard. The basic idea is to place a dead piece of meat or animal in a bucket, suspended over the chickens, with holes in the bottom. The flies lay their eggs in the rotting matter and then the larvae crawl out and fall out of the holes in the bucket to the happy chickens, who eat them below.

Roaches and Crickets, I'll talk about another time.

If these bugs are too hard to do, I've also put down a couple of plants that are healthy and nutritious for your chickens.

Sunflowers - Not only will the seeds of this plant provide you with a delicious treat, but your chickens will love them as well. These flowers look great in a garden and are very hardy; in fact, these plants grow anywhere that has full sun and good drainage. To make a chicken-friendly treat out of your sunflowers, cut the seed heads down and dry them in a place where birds can't get them. Feed the dried seeds to your little roamers.

Fennel - Not only will fennel produce some delicious seeds for your chickens, but the lacy pods attract insect pollinators, which will provide a treat that your chickens can snack on. The seeds also improve the reproductive health of chickens, and the plant itself will thrive when you grow them in a sunny area of your garden. Your hens will eat the leaves from the fennel, and you will repeat the

benefits in daily eggs! The plant can survive in winter conditions outdoors and does well in cold weather.

Swiss Chard also known as Silver-beet. The leafiest varieties of Swiss chard almost always work the best for satisfying the appetites of your bird buddies. While the stem may often be overlooked by the chickens, the leaves are a treat that they seem to love. For this plant you can grow it almost all year long just not in super cold temperatures.

Cucumbers are a major favourite of chickens, and they can feed off the same cucumber for days. To feed your chickens cucumbers, you can simply slice off a few pieces and leave it for them to eat. Additionally, the seeds seem to do a great job at getting rid of nasty intestinal worms. The plants like it warm and humid and thrive in most areas.

Watermelon - if you're growing watermelon in your garden your chickens will devour the entire melon – seeds, rind, and the flesh. They really seem to love this massive fruit, and watermelons can be grown in most places in Australia, just remember that these melons need up to three months just to grow.

Corn is one of the more common feeds for chickens, which is why growing it can be very advantageous. As a rule, these birds seem to love corn that's on the sweeter side of things, so grow a row or two to feed your chickens. You can choose to dry out the kernels or feed your chicks straight from the ear.

Oregano not only makes for a delicious food additive, but chickens love it too. Additionally, oregano seems to provide a healthy boost to chicken immune systems since it works as an an-

tibiotic. Just be sure to water your oregano regularly, and grow in light, well-drained soil.

Dandelions. Unlike humans, chickens seem to love this particular breed of weed. Dandelions seem to flourish in just about every region of the country and can be cultivated or let grow freely. This plant tends to love wet soil and areas with at least partial shade. In most states, they will grow just about all summer.

Carrot Greens. When you're growing carrots, don't toss the greens once you've pulled them out of the ground. This is due to the fact that chickens seem to love this leafy part of the plant.

Beet and Beet Greens. One of the best features of beets is that your chickens can eat both the greens and the vegetables as well. Beets do a great job at cleansing the blood of your birds, and chickens will simply peck them apart until they are fully consumed. Just remember, even though they can grow across the country, beets don't grow as well in hotter places.

Thank you for reading, I hope you got something useful out of this. Please try not to feed them only store-bought seed 'cause like me you don't want them to get unhealthy or sick.o



Olivia and her chicken in the new coop

Gardening on the Gold Coast and Thereabouts...

By Diane Kelly

There are two things that have been continually stressed at our Club meetings over the years – one is that we grow things that suit our geographical location, and the other is that we grow things at the right time of year.

So what can we do in our gardens in this region during the months of June, July and August as the weather cools and the days grow shorter?

June:

In the vegie patch: Plant out cabbages, onions, peas, silver beet, potatoes, carrots, celery and kale – and if you want even more variety, check a local planting guide.

In the flower garden: Plants added to your garden now will still produce a reasonable spring display. Add colour to your backyard with balsam, calendula, poppies, impatiens (also known as “touch-me-nots”), marigolds, petunias, nasturtiums and phlox.

In the orchard: June is a good month for planting deciduous fruit trees. Deep holes aren't necessary, but good preparation is! Break the resident soil up in the bottom of the hole, and churn in some organic matter. Make a type of potting mix with the soil you have removed from the hole by adding organic matter, sand if it is high in clay content, and more organic matter if it is sandy. Tease out the roots if they are pot-bound or tangled and splay them out over a mound of mix in the bottom of the hole. Fill in with the mixture, apply an undercoat of organic matter, an overcoat of mulch, a feed of liquid fertilizer, and water regularly. Treat

vines in the same way.

July:

In the vegie patch: In addition to the cabbages, onions, potatoes and silver beet planted in June, you can now plant out Chinese cabbage, spinach, carrots and lettuce. Lettuces are heavy feeders and require plenty of nitrogen – because they are shallow-rooted, lettuce require a ready source of nutrients and moisture. Maintaining steady moisture levels will help avoid your lettuces becoming bitter and bolting to seed.

In the flower garden: Here are some more flowering plants to add to your garden in July – aurora daisies (the pink ones are beautiful!), gypsophila, dianthus, Virginian stock (considered one of the easiest of all plants to grow) and calendula.



**Calendulas will brighten
your winter garden**

In the orchard: The same guidelines apply as in June.

In the herb patch: Have a look in your pantry and consider filling your shop-purchased jars of dried flakes with your own fresh, nutritious produce. Herbs generally need a friable, drained soil and the occasional weak liquid fertilizing. Most herbs prefer full sunlight, but many will tolerate semi-shade – and grow them in a

garden, in a rockery, in pots, tubs or troughs, or as borders to other gardens.our herbs fresh, but when annuals mature, cut at ground level and hang the plants upside down in a shady, well-ventilated and dry spot until completely dry. Store in air-tight jars.

Plant now: Basil, borage, chamomile, chives, coriander, fennel, lemon balm, marjoram, mint, oregano, parsley, rosemary and thyme.

August: As our thoughts anticipate Spring coming, we still have one month of Winter opportunities to enjoy. So start to prepare your gardens as the soil starts to warm.

In the veggie patch: It's time for the cucurbits to go in – squash, zucchini, pumpkins and cucumbers. Mildew is often a problem with these vegies, so here are some hints on how to grow them:

- Soak the seeds for 12 hours. Place them between several layers of newspapers, place in a plastic bag on top of the hot water service and check daily. When the first rootlet emerges, plant out.
- Pick a well-drained position in good, rich soil.
- To further reduce mildew attack, water around the roots rather than overhead.
- Other veggies to plant now include eggplants, capsicum, celery, tomatoes and chokos.

In the flower garden: Ageratum, snap dragon (antirrhinums), cosmos, dahlias and statice can all go in now.

In the orchard: Historically backyard gardeners used to cultivate an orchard site for vegetables. Then, after three or so years, they would move the

vegetables elsewhere and leave behind soil ready for an enriched and thriving orchard. Alternatively, a couple of fruit trees were planted in the chook-pen and everyone benefited – the chooks got any grubs, insects, windfalls and shade; the fruit trees got the manure; and the humans got big, bug-free fruit.

When planting fruit trees, remember that the graft must be well above ground level, and the top-dressing of organic matter should not touch the trunk (that encourages disease and pests). Take the time in August to examine your mature citrus trees, cutting off and burning any citrus gall which shows as swelling on branches.

The tamarillo (also known as the “tree tomato) is a tree you can plant in August. Susceptible to wind damage, choose a sheltered spot for the tree. Tamarillos need a rich, moist, well-drained soil – they will not tolerate either waterlogging or drought. As these trees have a shallow root system, keep them well mulched. As the tree reaches about a metre high, tip to encourage branching.

Tamarillo fruit can be eaten raw, in salads or fruit salads, cooked as a fruit sauce or made into jam. And a hint to help your tamarillos keep well... pick them with their stems attached.



Tamarillos: eat with a spoon, leave the skin

Summary: There are certainly lots of gardening things to look forward to in the next three months. So start planning your vegetable and flower gardens, and your herb patches, now and reap the rewards.

Things I've Learnt Since We Last Met

By Diane Kelly

Due to the COVID 19 pandemic, our last Club meeting was in March. Since then we've probably had the opportunity of spending lots of time in our gardens – and taken the chance to learn a few things.

Here are some random bits and pieces that I've found out recently.

I went to Maria's place in the Currumbin Valley to collect the seed potatoes that the Club purchased on behalf of our members. I asked Maria about preparing the potatoes for planting:

- Leave the potatoes in a dark spot until they "chit" – in other words, grow sprouts. This means that once you plant them, the potatoes will start growing earlier and also their yield should be increased

- If some of the potatoes are large enough to grow a couple of sprouts, when they are ready cut them in half – in this way you double your potential. Then place them cut-side up in the sunshine for 24 hours – this hardens them ready for planting, and reduces the potential for rot or disease.



Chitted potatoes - ready to plant



The sieve – 395mm wide and 100mm deep

Here's a wonderful new toy I picked up at Bunnings for about \$10.00 – a bona fide garden sieve. In the past I've used compost for planting seedlings into, and

I've noticed that there was a certain amount of roughage in the soil. But my new sieve works really well – it takes out all the un-composted pieces, and I've now successfully planted out seeds and flowering plant cuttings in the concentrated compost.

I asked Maria about my chokos – the fruit only seemed to be growing at the end of each section of vine. But I was assured that the plant should just set along the vine as it grows – and I must admit that since I've had a good look among the foliage, there are fruit there. I was also advised that the plants will set more fruit as we get more rain.

Maria showed me the veggie seedlings she had recently planted, and so I asked her for the recipe:

"Seed raising mix is vermiculite, sifted commercial seed raising mix and a powdered fertiliser like Turf Master. Unfortunately, it may be difficult to find small bags of vermiculite and fertiliser for a reasonable price."

Most – probably 95 per cent - of my normally reliable navel orange tree harvest has been affected by "something". A spot would appear on the skin, and then the surrounding area would turn a beige colour, and the flesh beneath it would become dry and need to be chopped out. Sometimes the rot would end up covering most of the

orange and it would be totally inedible. If anyone else has had this problem – and I know a few of us have – and if you have found either a name or a solution to the rotting, please let us know so that we can avoid the problem next year.

Another problem that my veggie patch has encountered this year is a lot of visitors – and not the welcome sort! The tiny brown moths I can cope with – they don't seem to damage anything. But the slugs and small green grasshoppers have chomped into my silver beet, bok choy, lettuce and even the bean leaves. Going out early in the mornings and removing anything I can catch didn't fully solve the problem – although the cooler weather is making a difference. But for next year, here is Jerry Coleby-Williams' advice:

A snippet of interest from Jerry's website in regard to grasshoppers:

"In my subtropical food garden, grasshopper control starts in my sweet potato. Grasshoppers lay their eggs in my sweet potato during the warm seasons and use it as their nursery. As the grasshoppers grow, they leave my sweet potato to feed on other plants."

Jerry still uses his grandad's organic grasshopper and caterpillar solution: dissolve 1 part molasses in 14 parts luke-warm water in a bucket (prevents spray nozzle blockages); pour it into a pump sprayer and apply so as to wet foliage of leafy plants being eaten by these pests; repeat fortnightly, or after heavy rain.

Another thing I have noticed for the first time this year is that my dwarf beans grew curly – this was not the plant (which can be caused by curly top virus) but the actual edible part. "Gardening Know How" says:

"Irregular watering is a common cause of curling in straighter bean varieties. Like

other garden produce, beans need regular, even watering during fruiting, to ensure that pods develop evenly. If you want to know how to fix curly beans on straight varieties, most experienced gardeners will recommend you apply a mulch layer about 2 inches thick and water your beans on a schedule."

I've had a look through my gardening books but can't find any other solution to the problem. But if you've had a similar problem and solved it, please let us know!

To end this article, a success story – at least, so far! I was given a lemon tree in a pot by one of our club members who didn't have space for it in their garden. It was covered in sooty mould, but I was willing to plant it and see how it went. Sooty mould is a fungus which causes of the blackening of the leaves of citrus trees - the fungal growth feeds on the honey-dew waste of soft scale insects such as scale and mealy bugs. Ants tend to protect these bugs as they enjoy eating the honey-dew. One of the disadvantages of black soot is that it blocks the sunlight getting to the plant's leaves and stops vigorous growth.

So, not remembering what I'd been told in our Club meetings, I decided the quickest thing to do was to remove the black soot. I did this with a brush and water, and so far (a couple of weeks) the leaves are still looking clean, and fresh new ones are growing. I've read that I have to remove the bugs that produce the honey-dew, but none are appearing, and there are only a few ants left as well.

If you've had a similar experience with black soot and have treated it successfully, please write in to us with your method, it would be good to share the knowledge. Meanwhile, here's my lemon tree.



A citrus tree with sooty mould



My lemon tree looking happier

If you've discovered something interesting, beneficial, exciting – or discouraging – whilst gardening in the last two months, please share it with us. Any hints or ideas can be sent to our newsletter editor Leah Johnston via email at leahbryan9@gmail.com and hopefully we will get enough home-grow information to make an article in the next newsletter.

Biointensive Growing Methods

By Jorge Cantellano

The method appears to allow any soil to be turned into a bountiful garden or mini farm.

As shown in the pictures below, diverse plants grow close together in the same space as sapling edible trees and flowers. This multi-crop garden is an adaptation of biointensive growing methods.



1 - Lettuce, corn and sunflower



2 - Radish, lettuce, rocket, corn



3 - Amaranth in lettuce garden bed

The set of pictures below show how flowers and overhanging leaves attract and entertain bugs, luring them away from edible vegetable leaves underneath. The bugs are eaten by birds, which in turn distracts the birds from ripening fruit. Flowers attract beneficial insects that eat the bugs too. This is a natural pest control method.



7 - Biointensive growing: lettuce, tomatoes, flowers and herbs planted at the Women's Week Working Bee, March 2020

In the photo above, a new garden bed accommodates dense and diverse plants. This is possible because the growing garden substrate had been prepared with a consistent percentage of organic matter mix in a double depth of loose soil, allowing plant roots to grow to a depth of 60cm if needed.



4 - Bug eats amaranth leaf and ignores the lettuce leaf



5 - A larva on the amaranth flower



6 - An insect eats a bug

Steps to create a typical EdibleScapes garden bed:

1: Micro-catchments

Each garden bed is designed with rain-water micro-catchments: deep trenches dug along a contour and filled with composted mulch. The top trench harvests rainwater while the lower trench is designed to retain infiltrated water. In one to two years the mulch in the trench will become humus rich with living organism and will be the perfect organic matter to mix into the garden bed.



8 - Typical deep trench, filled with mature mulch all along garden borders

2: Amend soil structure

In order to augment the volume of 'growing soil' and amend the soil structure, soil is mixed with up to 25% of aged organic composted mulch. The objective is to produce a garden bed with loose soil to the depth of 60cm. The garden in Pic9 has been cleaned up and prepared for the Autumn – Winter season, as shown in Pic12. From 1 metre wide the garden was extended to 2 metres wide. The mulch on the walking track was incorporated into the garden soil. Two catchment trenches were dug deep along the upper and lower garden 2 metres apart and filled with aged composted mulch.



Add Biosol and Vermicompost



10 - Add compost and bokashi



11 - Bio-fertiliser layers

The diverse combination of fertilisers introduces macro-organisms to increase the living soil, inoculate it with microorganisms, mycelium and mycorrhizas, activate fungi, bacterial, yeast and humic substances that decompose the organic matter into humus, and secure sufficient mineral trace elements presented in the growing soil.



12 - Garden worms

9 - One year old garden, of 1m wide and with mulch track borders

To be noted: As this garden is one year old, it has two trenches with aged mulch. The new dig reveals the mulch is halfway transformed into humus. This satisfies EdibleScapes' objective to cultivate living soil that healthy and nutritive edible plants will grow in.

3: Add solid fertilisers

After the garden bed is prepared, EdibleScapes adds 4 layers of organic solid fertilisers composing:

1 cm of fermented green manure
(BIOSOL)

1 cm of vermicompost

2 cm of aged compost

3 cm of bokashi





13 - Mycelium



14 - Mycorrhiza

4: Double-digging

Pictures 16 to 22 show EdibleScapes' adaptation of the 'Double-digging Procedure' (described in chapter 1, 'Deep Soil Creation and Maintenance' – General Double-Digging Procedure, from John Jeavons', "How to Grow More Vegetables" 8th Edition). (PDF link). This method is also known as GROW BIOINTENSIVE Sustainable Mini-farming. The method appears to allow any soil to be turned into a bountiful garden or mini farm.



15 - Dig out the upper 30cm of the trench and move it forward into the anterior trench



16 - Loosen the lower part of the trench another 30cm deep



17 - Move back the working digging board about 30cm



18 - Spread a portion of the fertiliser layer into the loosened trench soil



19 - Continue to dig out the upper part of the new trench and move it forward into the front trench



20 - Continue the complete texturizing double-digging process for the remaining garden bed



21 - The complete texturised double-dug bed is completed

To be noted: EdibleScapes adds small garden beds to the landscape each time. Each garden bed is produced with only collected organic matter from site or very close to site. We do not utilise any commercial acquisitions nor use any energy consuming prefabricated elements, such as trees cut into wooden beams, mined metal or plastic products from fossil fuels. Nor do we utilise any machinery.

More importantly, the EdibleScapes system is \$0 budget farming. By developing healthy and nutritious soil that will remain as fertile humus for a very long time, we are creating a positive regenerative system that is fully self-sustaining.

This garden will not require any new external organic matter in the future, because the soil cultivation system increases available organic matter from the crops grown here. The system is efficient in its use and retention of infiltrated water due to the micro-catchment trenches that are integrated with organic matter. These provide a living environment for macro and microorganism to reproduce, which transforms organic matter into stable fertile humus.

5 Seed Propagation

Parallel to preparing the garden bed, seed propagation is another essential element to growing healthy food. Chapter 5 of Jeavons' book has a system to learn from which EdibleScapes is adapting to grow seedlings and transplant them into garden beds. The EdibleScapes journal is documenting the experience to share our learning with the local grower community and website enthusiast.



22 - Open-pollinated seeds



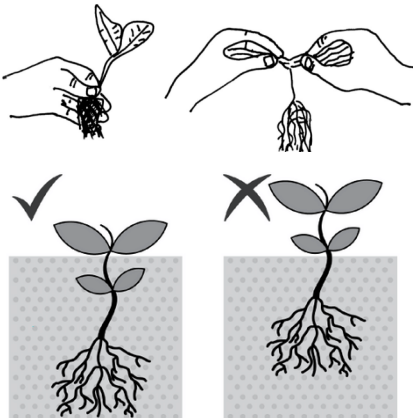
23 - Seeds planted in a diagonally offset spacing pattern



24 - Seeds can germinate 2 to 7 times faster in a mixed growing substrate because of the humic acids in the compost



25 - Transplanting into a second 15 cm deep soil tray



26 - Correct seedling replanting

Biointensive growing references:
 John Jeavons, "How to Grow More Vegetables". <http://norsemathology.org/longa/research/Ag/how-to-grow-more-vegetables-eighth-edition-and-fruits-nuts-berries-grains-and-other-crops.pdf>

EdibleScapes - a dream; hard work; and achievement

By Diane Kelly

International Women's Day in 2019 was held on the 8th of March, and to celebrate the event several of our Club members were invited to choose a commemorative tree to plant. The offer came from Jorge Cantellano on behalf of EdibleScapes Inc who have created an edible garden at Country Paradise Parklands in Nerang. When we arrived on site that weekend garden plots had been prepared and the trees were ready to plant. We spent an enjoyable morning gardening – and having morning tea and scones to celebrate the occasion.



Enjoying 2019 International Women's Day

Fast forward one year. Again we were invited to celebrate International Women's Day at the EdibleScapes Garden. The development of the gardens was quite remarkable – vegetables, herbs and fruit trees and flowers were growing strongly, and the area under cultivation had increased considerably. Our project for the day was to plant out tomato, lettuce and herb seedlings. The goal for doing this was to contribute healthy, fresh produce to the Nerang Neighbour-

hood Centre's emergency food service. (If you would like to be inspired, have a look at the EdibleScapes Facebook page and see the abundance of food that has been given to the Centre – the ninth car load of crates of vegetables was delivered a few weeks ago.)

Arriving a bit early for the day's activity, I had the chance to have a look at the small greenhouse where Jorge had been growing the seedlings were to plant out, and I must admit I was a little worried. Planting anything to schedule is a challenge at the best of times, and Jorge had found that the seedlings were a bit over-grown for today's activity. They were strappy and appeared a bit weak. But here are the "before and after" photos at the bottom of this page.

When I went back to Ediblescapes on the 18th of April and saw the vegetable greenery and the rich soil, I really had to find out how this all happens. I had several questions:

(1) How could these vegetables grow so well so close together? We had been told to plant the seedlings very closely together, and I was a bit hesitant at the time.

So why did it work? (I knew it wasn't my green thumb!)

(2) Why didn't the leaves of these lettuces have holes created by grasshoppers or slugs?

(3) What sort of soil could achieve such productivity?

The answers started at the entry to the property where Jorge has created this oasis. There is a set-up of containers, a large worm farm (constructed from bamboo poles and shade cloth), several covered areas of compost, and a number of piles of mulch.

The worm farm

Let's start with the worm farm – Jorge uses "California Red" worms to produce vermi-compost. Californian Reds eat their own weight in material every day and 55 per cent of that is transformed into vermicompost. Their population doubles every 40 days, and they will probably enjoy the coming winter as the best temperature for their reproduction is 20 degrees. Jorge commented that they eat most effectively at 25 degrees.



The seedlings on the 14th of March and bountiful plants a month later!

Then there is an area of compost. This is received from various sources around the property and no more than 10 kms away. After the heap is left for twenty days, having been turned six times, it is spread more widely in the same location and then left to cool and cure for some two months. During that time more bacterial activity occurs.

And then there is the anaerobically fermented compost area. This is where Jorge has set up a number of enclosed drums which are also filled with material collected from the garden and near the property and then mixed with the composted bokashi that Jorge produces on site as well. Because of the materials that are used the resultant liquid is bacterially based and is good for adding mineral elements to the soil. This is in difference to the compost material because hot composting causes nutrient loss by the leaching of liquid and evaporation - but compost is richer in decomposed organic matter and micro-organisms.

And then there is the mulch. This is material that has been sourced and then aged - yes, this is quite impressive - for two years.



The worm farm

So we end up with four composted products - vermiculture; compost; Bokashi; and fermented liquid fertiliser and aged mulch.

Jorge then takes all the materials down to the garden area, and this is what he builds the garden beds from.

Firstly the bulk of the garden beds is made of a mixture of native soil and the mulch that is two years old. The beds are some 60 cm deep - the lower 30 cm is a mixture of mulch, compost and clay material. The upper 30 cm is made up of the mulch that has been aged for two years. Neither of these two levels are particularly rich in nature, which enables the concentrated materials to be added into which the seedlings are planted.

When the garden bed has been built, holes are made ready for each seedling to be planted into. In March we put a trowel full of a mixture of bokashi liquid, vermi-compost and compost into each hole, and that is where we planted the lettuce, tomato and herb seedlings.

Jorge explained the process by which we were able to plant the seedlings very close together. When making compost in general, turning it makes it lose nutrients into the air as it dries out. You then need to keep adding water - and this in turn leaches more nutrients into the ground. But with the fermenting process of Bokashi, the nutrients don't get lost. When you add the fermented liquid to soil the a high nutrient level is maintained, and this is how you can plant seedlings very close together. There is plenty of nourishment for the plants, and the 60 cm of garden bed, plus the concentrated bokashi liquid, vermi-compost and compost, enable the plants to freely go down into the soil and build healthy root systems.



The next garden bed has been prepared and planted out

Here are another couple of hints Jorge gave us as we were planting out the seedlings:

When planting in winter (when the sunlight is coming more from the north) put large plants at the back of the garden patch (in other words, to the south). An example of this is in the photo dated the 18th of April of the tomatoes and lettuce – the higher tomatoes are at the back of the bed so that they do not block sun access to the lower lettuces.

If you have good quality garden beds and plenty of nourishment for your seedlings, make the planting spots about 10 inches deep. You can space them about a hands-width from each other, and plant in triangles to make the most use of the area.

If the compost you are using is well aged, you should be able to plant straight into it. If it is less aged, just add a layer to the top of your garden bed.

So I ended up having my three questions answered.

You can plant seedlings close together if your garden bed is rich and full of nutrients. The plants' roots can go straight down and be nourished and grow strongly – they don't need to spread sideways.

The soil in the garden beds that Jorge plants into is healthy. It has often been said that if your soil is good, your plants will be good. And if your plants are strong and healthy, then the pests will leave them alone – they will be more likely to attack any weaker plants in your garden.

As for what sort of soil can achieve this level of productivity – well, I think it all depends on our knowledge, time, resources and experience. Jorge puts a lot of effort into producing good soil, and he has learnt a lot about the technical side of what he is doing. All of us are gardening at different levels, and I think it is up to each of us to learn as much as we can about our own garden soil and our plants. And then it is a matter of “just having a go”. Try different combinations of ingredients in your garden; work out how to make good compost; learn how much moisture your garden needs; and learn how to grow good, strong seedlings. And then observe the results. Plus, always seek advice – one of the advantages of belonging to a gardening club is the opportunity to chat to each other and learn from what other members are doing.

So my three visits to the EdibleScapes gardens in Nerang have been memorable – planting a commemorative tree; planting out seedlings; and then seeing the results.

You would be welcome to call by the garden and have a chat to Jorge; see how he produces good compost; and see what he is achieving; and especially what he is growing to give away to those in need.

FRUIT TREES

JUNE

Custard apples: Harvest every 3 to 4 days as fruit matures. Don't let trees dry out.

Figs: Dormant period. Don't let trees dry out.

Lychee: Do not let trees dry out. Minimal watering is needed. Check emerging flowers for flower caterpillars. If more than ½ are infested, spray with pyrethrum or garlic spray.

Mango: Don't let the trees dry out.

Passion-fruit: Don't let the vines dry out. Keep up the fish emulsion or kelp sprays every month. Small amount of organic fertiliser with added sulphate of potash can be applied to vines, 20 gms per sq m – for example, large vines = 100 gms; small vines = 50 gms.

Pawpaw: Spray with wettable sulphur if powdery mildew is a problem. Minimal water. Pick fruit at mature stage with ½ colour to have full flavour.

Persimmon: Dormant period. Minimal water required at this time.

Strawberries: Feed with organic fertiliser with added sulphate of potash. Also use fish emulsion and kelp spray regularly over plants to keep in good health. This will prevent fruit rot. Pick fruit when fully ripe. Keep plants fully watered – try not to wet the berries. This will prevent fruit rot. Mulch plants so the berries do not lie on the soil. Pine needs are good.

Bananas: Keep up the water and bag fruit. When fruit are formed, bag fruit with banana bag, tie bag to top of stem and drape down to bell. Leave open at bottom for air. Cut off bell to get larger fruit.

Citrus: Harvesting should be well under way. Keep up watering.

Avocado: Early flowers should appear this month. Keep up water needs. If you have not applied garden lime and gypsum, apply now as per June instructions.

JULY

Custard apple: Harvest every 3 or 4 days as fruit matures. Don't let trees dry out. Apply

garden lime to soil – 20 grams per sq m to drip line – for example, a mature tree, 1kg.

Figs: Keep well mulched.

Lychee: Do not let trees dry out. Minimal watering is needed. Check emerging flowers for flower caterpillars. If more than ½ are infested, spray with pyrethrum or garlic spray.

Low chill stone fruit: Peak water needs. Water trees 2 weeks before flowering and 3 weeks later. In late July start blossom thinning. Winter prune late varieties. 50g of organic fertilizer with sulphate of potash added per sq m to drip line of trees. Mature trees – 1 kg.

Mango: Don't let trees dry out. Continue with copper based spray or leaf microbes for anthracnose if visible.

Passion-fruit: Don't let the vines dry out. Keep up the fish emulsion or kelp sprays every month. Small amount of organic fertilizer with sulphate of potash can be applied for vines. Large vines – 1 kg; small vines – ½ kg.

Pawpaw: Spray with wettable sulphur if powdery mildew is a problem. Minimal water. Use copper based sprays or leaf microbes if black spot is about. Pick fruit at mature stage with ½ colour to have full flavour.

Persimmon: Minimal water required at this time.

Strawberries: Feed with organic fertilizer with sulphate of potash. Spray fish emulsion and kelp regularly over plants to keep in good health. This will prevent fruit rot. Pick fruit when fully ripe. Keep plants fully watered, but try not to wet the berries. This will also prevent fruit rot. Mulch plants so the berries do not lie on the soil. Pine needles are best for this.

Bananas: Don't let the stools dry out. Keep fruit covered and cut off bells.

Citrus: Pick mature fruit when fully ripe. Keep up irrigation.

AUGUST

Custard Apple: Leaf loss should occur this month. Low irrigation. Mulch trees. This month is the best time to prune custard apples. 1/3 of old wood needs to be taken off.

Figs: Pruning can be carried out. Be very vigorous. 1/3 can be cut off. Figs are only produced on new wood of the new season's growth. Give trees a good feed of organic fertiliser with sulphate of potash. Mulch well.

Lychee: Increase irrigation. Flowering should start this month. Fertilise trees with an organic fertiliser with potassium sulphate. Give mature trees 1 kg and small trees ½ kg.

Low chill stone fruit: Carry out final thinning. Stone hardening will occur this month. Continue with high irrigation. Prune out water shoots and dense foliage for better sized fruits. Use fruit fly control programs, for example netting or an attractant method.

Mango: Don't let trees dry out. Once flowering occurs spray with copper based spray or leaf microbes for anthracnose, if visible.

Passionfruit: Vines will start to grow this month. Apply a little organic fertiliser with sulphate of potash and mulch vines at least 2 to 3 metres out from the base. 1kg for large vines and ½ kg for smaller vines.

Pawpaw: Spray with wettable sulphur in the evenings for spider mite.

Persimmon: Flowering will start in early varieties. Mulch trees. Low irrigation.

Strawberries: Apply small amount of organic fertilizer with sulphate of potash. Keep up irrigation. Pick fruit when fully ripe.

Bananas: Don't let stools dry out. Keep fruit covered and cut off bells.

Citrus: Flowering will occur this month. Increase irrigation. Fertilise tree with organic fertiliser with sulphate of potash, 1kg for large trees and ½ kg for smaller trees.

Brisbane Organic Growers Handbook

VEGETABLES

JUNE:

Asian Greens, Asparagus Crowns, Beans (French), Beetroot, Broad Beans, Broccoli, Cabbage, Carrot, Cauliflower, Celeriac, Celery, Endive, Kale, Kohlrabi, Leeks, Lettuce, Mustard Greens, Onion, Parsnip, Peas, Potato, Radish, Shallots, Silverbeet, Snow Peas, Spinach, Tomatoes, Turnips.

JULY:

Asian Greens, Asparagus Crowns, Beans (French), Beetroot, Broad Beans, Broccoli, Cabbage, Carrot, Cauliflower, Celeriac, Celery, Endive, Kale, Kohlrabi, Leeks, Lettuce, Mustard Greens, Onion, Peas, Potato, Radish, Shallots, Silverbeet, Snow Peas, Toma-

toes.

AUGUST:

Artichoke, Asian greens, Asparagus, Beans, Beetroots, Capsicum, Carrot, Celeriac, Celery, Chilli, Cucumber, Eggplant, Endive, Gourd, Kale, Leeks, Lettuce, Luffa, Marrow, Melons, Mustard Greens, Okra, Peanut, Potato, Pumpkin, Radish, Shallot, Silverbeet, Squash, Sunflower, Sweet Corn, Sweet potato, Tomato, Zucchini.

HERBS

JUNE

Annual: Borage, Calendula, Chamomile, Chervil, Coriander, Dill, Garlic, Giant Red Lettuce, Herb Robert, Italian parsley, Misome, Mizuna, Mustard Lettuce, Nasturtium, Rocket

Perennials & Bi-Annals:

Catnip, Chicory, Chives, Perennial Coriander, Fennel, Hyssop, Lavender, Lemon Balm, Lovage, Marjoram, Mint, Mushroom Plant, Oregano, Parsley, Rosemary, Sage, Salad Burnet, Winter Tarragon, Thyme, Upland Cress, Watercress, Winter Savoury.

JULY

Annual: Borage, Calendula, Chervil, Chamomile, Coriander, Dill, Giant Red Lettuce, Herb Robert, Italian parsley, Misome, Mizuna, Mustard Lettuce, Nasturtium, Rocket.

Perennials & Bi-Annals: Catnip, Chicory, Chives, Perennial Coriander, Fennel, Hyssop, Lavender, Lemon Balm, Lovage, Marjoram, Mint, Mushroom Plant, Oregano, Parsley, Rosemary, Sage, Salad Burnet, Thyme, Upland Cress, Watercress, Winter Savoury.

AUGUST

Annual: Borage, Calendula, Chervil, Chamomile, Coriander, Dill, Herb Robert, Italian parsley, Misome, Mizuna, Giant Red Mustard, Mustard Lettuce, Nasturtium, Rocket.

Perennials & Bi-Annals: Catnip, Chicory, Chives, Perennial Coriander, Fennel, Hyssop, Lavender, Lemon Balm, Lovage, Marjoram, Mint, Mushroom Plant, Oregano, Parsley, Rosemary, Sage, Salad Burnet, Thyme, Upland Cress, Watercress, Winter Savoury.