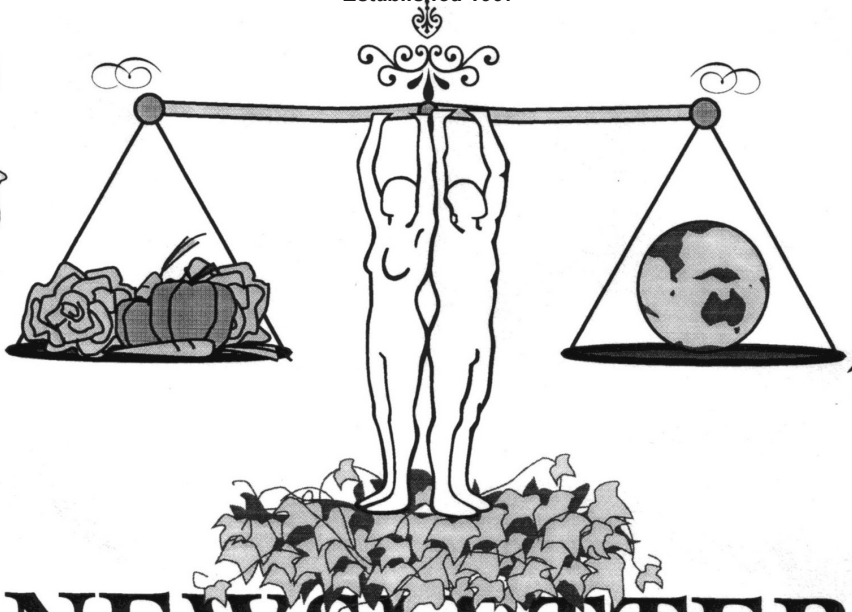
GOLD COAST ORGANIC GROWERS Inc.

Established 1997



NEWSLETTER

Volume 23 - APRIL 2019 Issue 4

GARDENING IN AUTUMN

OUR NEXT MEETING: Thursday 16th MAY 2019

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 Diane Kelly, 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 - $1each 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

2018 –2019 Committee

President	Maria Roberson (07) 5598 6609
Vice President	Diane Kelly 0403 473 892
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Librarians	Evelyn Douglas
Seed Bank Seed Assistants	Lyn Mansfield Maggie Golightly Bill Smart
Supper Co-ordinator	Paul Roberson, Deb Phillips, Bev Geraghty
Veggie Swap Co-ordinator	Dorothy Coe

Newsletter Contributions are welcome. Send in a photo of what's going on in your patch. **Deadline for contributions is one week before the meeting.** Send your content to Jorge C. at: jcantellanoc@gmail.com

Notice Board

Membership Renewals

NEW: 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 in the comment field.

Note the number in brackets after your name is your membership number - you will need to quote this number in the comment field, if you pay via online banking.

Membership Renewals
Overdue: Marion Symons (155), Winny Hu Shouhe (414), Danielle Bowe (426). Angela Anderson (323), Beverly Geraghty (404), Julie Abraham (421), Christine Yeomans (433), Emma Litchfield (434), Daniel Tucker (435)

April: Gai Morrow (309), Kerstin Trueman (346), Sue Beckinsale (373), Nancy Hageman (388), Elizabeth Hughes (389), Deborah Phillips (408), Celia Forest (431).

May: Mary Frawley (150), Keith Meppem (436).

Latest newsletter can be downloaded from the site at **goldcoastorganicgrowers.org**

Thanks to Contributors this month:
Diane Kelly, Leah Johnston, Jorge C.

Upcoming Guest Speakers

May 16 our speaker will be Kane Dabbouss, from Red Soil Organics, speaking about gardening according to the cycles of the moon. June and beyond TBC.

We are currently seeking Guest Speakers for throughout 2019. If you have an idea for a potential speaker, or a topic that you think would interest our members, please contact Leah Johnston at leahbryan9@gmail.com

View our Newsletters On-Line or Collect at our Meetings:
We are encouraging our members to read our monthly newsletters either on our website - www.goldcoastorganicgrowers.org.au/ (and then select "newsletters"); on our Club Members' Facebook page; Gold Coast Organic Growers Members or by collecting their printed copies at our Club meetings.
Enjoy the coloured editions on-line.

Workshops

Gardening Lunch – all welcome
We meet monthly for lunch and have a chat.
11 a.m. to 2 p.m. – at a trendy café somewhere (any recommendation welcomed)
If you would like to know when the next lunch is on email Lyn Mansfield
Lynmansfield14@bigpond.com
Mobile – 0409 645 888

EdibleScapes
working bee/workshop 2nd Saturday of each month - 8:30am to 10:30am
Edible Landscape gardens Project.
http://ediblescapes.org/

LIKE A GARDEN THAT LOOKS AFTER ITSELF?

A TOOWOOMBA GARDENER'S CLEVER CREATION SUPPORTS DROUGHT-PRONE PLOTS AND BUSY WOULD-BE GARDENERS.

Drought can be a gardener's worst nightmare. In 2006 Alan Singleton, a keen organic gardener, had no way of sustaining his crops through the severe water restrictions. Alan set about refining the wick garden system he had come across.

In 2011 he went full time building what are now known as Watersaver Gardens. Besides cutting water use by 80% other advantages include significant reduction in weeding and no regular watering even in hot conditions.

The science behind the Watersaver Gardens is the wicking system - capillary action sees water drawn up through the soil by plants only as required, meaning the plant is never overwatered or not watered enough. Great for those without a green thumb. The reservoir only needs checking every four weeks - great if you're going on holidays. With intermittent rain they can go six months without needing watering. All kinds of herbs and vegetables can be grown in the gardens. Not watering from the top reduces mould and rust that attacks the wet leaves.

FAST FACTS

- five sizes up to three metres
- all colorbond colours
- easily assembled flat pack
- ideal height for seniors
- suits busy people
- delivered to your door
- prices start at $225

Like to know more?
watersavergardens.com.au
Phone Alan for a chat on **0424 996 540**
Established Watersaver Gardens
on display at 20 Jennings Street,
South Toowoomba

WATERSAVER GARDENS
Made in Toowoomba

My magic tree
by: Diane Kelly

…... (Look on the GCOG website to see the coloured pictures)

About six months ago I was visiting one of our Club member's garden, and she offered me some cuttings of a small tree that is known as a "Rose of Sharon". The taller piece had leaves and roots from being grown in water, but the roots of the smaller piece had totally broken off as it was being removed from the bucket, so we weren't sure how well it would do. I planted the cuttings – one was about a metre tall, and the other probably half that. Both cuttings have grown easily, and now the taller one has flowered – and this is why I call it "my magic tree".

I have since learnt that "Rose of Sharon" is a catch-all name for a number of species of plants. The most likely type of my tree is "Hibiscus syriacus - double bloom", and yet the stems and leaves are quite different to the common hibiscus. The blooms are indeed doubles (they rather remind me of a peony flower), and the magic thing about them is that each flower comes in three colours. I had been told that the flowers would be white, pink and deep pink, and I had envisaged something like a "yesterday, today & tomorrow" bloom. But here are some photos of what actually appeared – and you have to be quick to ensure photos, as the flowers only last a day or two.

Day 1 – the bud appears

Day 2 – the white bloom ….

(Day 2 or 3) … turns a stunning pink

and then the bloom turns rose and wilts

So, regardless of what my "magic tree" is botanically named, it is proving to be a beautiful and entertaining addition to my garden.

Gardening advice from Jerry Coleby-Williams
By Leah Johnston

At our March meeting we welcomed Jerry Coleby-Williams as our guest speaker and enjoyed a great turn out of members coming to see the Gardening Australia presenter speak.

In case you weren't able to make it, here's a few tips and photos from the night.

Jerry spoke of the importance of saving our own seeds and replanting them each year.

"Genes are memories of things which served a plant well," Jerry told us how it takes roughly five years for a plant to adapt to his garden. He took some celery seeds from Tasmania and after saving and replanting the seeds each year for five years the plants adapted from being an annual down south to growing for most of the year in Wynnum.

"All life on earth is now experimental," Jerry told us. With global warming changing our seasons, not just the temperatures but also the rainfall, we have to adapt as gardeners. Saving our own seeds is important as the heirloom varieties can adapt and change each year with the climate. Genetically modified seeds which big agriculture plants don't have this ability – they can only perform a certain way within a specific set of conditions, and these conditions are changing all the time. Jerry predicts a hiccup in the food supply chain and believes that as growers of our own food our skills and knowledge will become increasingly valuable to the world.

"Growing your own food is not only water wise, it's reducing your virtual water footprint," Jerry explained to us how home gardeners use much less water than industrial farming. Practises like using grey water and saving rain water improve this even further.

Other tips included digging the herb stinking roger into your garden to kill nematodes and planting choko to attract more ladybugs to your garden, "it's like the Sydney International Airport for ladybugs," Jerry joked. The ladybugs will help you out by eating aphids and caterpillar eggs from your plants.

Our members asked him what his top five crops to grow in a subtropical food garden were and he listed: Jackfruit, Tahitian lime, winged yam, cocoyam and sweetleaf. The next day on his Facebook page he expanded the list to include:chilli, onions (spring onion, chives, garlic chives, leeks and at least two kinds of society garlic) because he uses these at least once daily to flavour his food. For his husband he grows ginger, galangal, la lot, gac, turmeric, Mexican coriander, basil, elephant foot yam, pawpaw, lemongrass and sweet potato. If you still have room he adds banana, celery, eggplant, tomato, mint, corn, wall rocket, bitter melon, turnip, radish and winter melon to the list.

Sadly climate change means he has given up growing cold weather favourites such as peas because he doesn't get a good crop anymore, but he is adapting his garden and his palate and now uses sweetleaf (cooked) to give his food those flavours he is missing.

Jerry, Thuan and Maria

May 16 our speaker will be Kane Dabbouss, from Red Soil Organics, speaking about gardening according to the cycles of the moon.

He will also have Bioactive Compost 25L bags for sale for $17 each and Humus Rich Bioactive Compost and Innoculant 25L bags for sale for $14 each.

This is enough to cover 2.5-3m2. As the microbes in the compost quickly break down the hessian bags it's transported in Kane bags it freshly for sale. For more info visit www.redsoilorganics.com.au If you would like to pre-order some to buy at our May meeting please message Leah at 0428 028 042 or leahbryan9@gmail.com

Send in a photo of what's going on in your patch. Just short article 450 words with 1 or 2 pictures or 750 words with 2 or 3 pictures.

DEADLINE FOR CONTRIBUTIONS IS ONE WEEK BEFORE THE MEETING.

Send your content to
Jorge C. at: jcantellanoc@gmail.com

EdibleScapes' community Composting
By Jorge Cantellano

In May 2018 EdibleScapes commenced a modest community composting program. Its aim was to produce composted soil, fertiliser and composted mulch, for the Edible Landscape Gardens project.

This program has been extremely successful, saving from landfill 3 cubic metres of organic waste per week. The composted soil produced comes from diverse mulched trees and leaves, surplus from local farmer markets and fruit shops, coffee grounds, water weeds, horse manure and grass clippings. It is produced by a hot compost method. The heat kills bad bacteria and most weed seeds. Beneficial bacteria grows and, in turn breaks down organic matter. EdibleScapes' composted heap contains in mixed layers approximately:

For a total C:N Ratio of 30:1 mix

- 1 part(s) under 20:1: Vegetable waste, fresh lawn clipping
- 2 part(s) 20-30:1: Horse manure, water weeds, coffee grounds
- 1 part(s) 30-40:1: Fruit waste
- 2 part(s) 40-100:1: Dry leaves, dry lawn clipping, bamboo fragments
- 2 part(s) over 100:1: Trees mulches (226:1)

In 2019 EdibleScapes plan to aim higher by establishing an on-site learning and demonstration site for community composting and organic fertilizers. **The Primary Vision of EdibleScapes is** community composting; production of sufficient cultivated, organic soil to meet the needs of the edible landscape gardens project. Other goals are to provide soil for local organic food growers, as well as provide social food for the disadvantaged in our community. Edible Landscape gardens are experiential educational sites, open to the community, who, with the permission of gardeners, are free to taste the ripe fruits.

EdibleScapes strive to meet the "GROWING LOCAL FERTILITY: A GUIDE TO COMMUNITY COMPOSTING"

Guiding Principles:

- Resources recovered: Waste is reduced; food scraps and other organic material are diverted from disposal and composted.
- Locally based and closed loop: Organic materials are a community asset and are generated and recycled into compost within the same neighbourhood or community.
- Organic materials returned to soils: Compost is used to enhance local soils, support local food production, and conserve natural ecology by improving soil structure and maintaining nutrients, carbon, and soil microorganisms.
- Community-scaled and diverse: Composting infrastructure is diverse, distributed, and sustainable; systems are scaled to meet the needs of self-defined community.
- Community engaged, empowered, educated: Compost programming engages and educates the community in food systems thinking, resource stewardship, or community sustainability, while providing solutions that empower individuals, businesses, and institution to capture organic waste and retain it as a community resource.
- Community supported: Aligns with community goals (such as healthy soils and healthy people) and is supported by the community it serves. The reverse is true too. A community composting program supports community social, economic, and environmental well-being.

"Well managed composting system ensure adequate microorganisms are necessary to digest organic materials, as well as adequate oxygen, adequate moisture, adequate food for microorganisms (that is, a balanced carbon to nitrogen ration), diversely sized food particles that provide pore space for oxygen to travel, and an adequate volume of material to best allow the microbial population to grow and thrive (usually a cubic metre or more). Food scraps represent materials high in nitro-

gen; thus, any food scrap composting program must find adequate supplies of carbon-rich materials such as wood chips, mulch, straw, leaves and brush. In addition, compost needs time and space to stabilize and mature after an initial phase, typically characterized by high temperatures, and frequent monitoring and management".

EdibleScapes aims to recover 'waste' and to do so by ensuring high-quality compost at well-managed sites that pose no public nuisances. EdibleScapes will make sure that the community composting operations comply with performance-based standards. This means Ediblescapes will not create public nuisance odours, generate pathogens, or pollute groundwater or surface waters. For community composting, particularly in urban areas, addressing odour and rodents are a paramount issue. Adequate aeration or oxygen is essential for optimizing the composting process and preventing it from going anaerobic, which can produce nuisance odours. A periodical schedule for turning will ensure minimal odours. The bins will be wrapped with ¼-inch hardware cloth to be rodent-proof, including the top hatch (rats will climb the sides to get in through the top). To prevent habitat formation at the base, EdibleScape will make sure to air and dry the bare earth for two days between batches and add dry mulch to the foundation of new batches.

EdibleScapes future plan is to double the value proposition of the project by further developing the community composting and adding the benefit of providing organic compost. This model can be a valid strategy to generate local jobs though public support, if it is scaled-up by duplicating it in other sites with government support. In addition, community participation and education may be instrumental for persuading all levels of government that taxpayer and private funds are appropriately spent on community composting and communal edible landscape gardens.

Nevertheless, we are aware that government support for communal food production is a difficult proposition. This is why EdibleScapes propose a community run social enterprise structure, which will eventually develop revenue streams, which in turn, will ensure solid financial sustainability. Nonetheless, even if money is not the ultimate factor in the project's implementation or long-term operation, EdibleScapes want to balance Social food grown with social enterprise and generate income via valuable organic fertilizers products offered to Gold Coast organic growers.

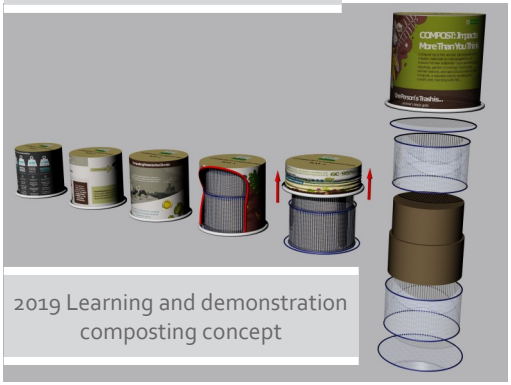
After the success of the past two years, in 2019 EdibleScapes will set up a model for a Community Composting system. This will function as a learning and demonstration site, producing on-site organic fertilisers, which will service the needs of the edible landscape gardens as well as the local organic grower community.

Edible Landscape Gardens
regular monthly activity
2nd Saturday of the Month

at Country Paradise Parkland - Nerang.
74 Billabirra Crescent, Nerang
8:30 am -10:30 am
Everyone is welcome!

(Check details out on the Facebook page: Edible Landscape gardens Project

Actual composting system



2019 Learning and demonstration composting concept

Where it all began ……
by Diane Kelly

When I keyed the word "Gardening" into Google, it came up with 1,380,000,000 results. So then I asked the question "How to start a garden club", and I got 443,000,000 results in 51 seconds.

Apart from getting the impression that gardening is a very important activity in the lives of many people, I also decided that it would be much easier for me – instead of paging through 443,000,000 results – to talk to Maria Roberson. In 1997 Maria decided that starting the "Gold Coast Organic Growers" would be a welcome contribution to the community, and she has given the resultant Club (and the wider community) the benefit of her expertise and leadership over the past 21+ years.

We usually have presentations by guest speakers at our monthly meetings, but every now and then we have "5-minute" talks (fortunately no-one has ever stuck to that 5-minute limit yet!) by our Club members who have particular skills and interest in gardening and other related topics. So far we've heard about attending a horticultural course in Ireland; plant propagation; bush fire safety; aquaponics; bush tucker; medicinal herbs; and much more. One thing the Club has come to realise is that our members have a wealth of knowledge, and so over the next few months I'm planning to visit with some of our members, and have a chat to them about their areas of expertise. Already I know that I can learn about growing citrus; nature-friendly gardens; making good compost; growing Asian food; the value of bees; making jams & conserves; land restoration, and again, much more. Hopefully those chats will morph into interesting articles for our newsletter.

But back to the beginning. I thought the place to start for this series would be to have a chat with Maria, and find out the "why's, how's and wherefores" of the Gold Coast Organic Growers. Here are the questions I wanted to know about, and Maria's answers.

Q: The idea of the CGOG commenced around 1996/1997. What was your gardening, or organic lifestyle interest prior to that date? Your family had a banana plantation – was it run on organic principles, or was there something else that motivated your interest in organics?

A: I've always gardened – from the age of ten I was growing flowers. My dad had a vegie garden, but it was my great-grandmother who was really the gardener and herbalist. I made my first marmalade at thirteen – my grandmother had brought a pressure-cooker out from England, so I used to use that. As a teenager I used to read sustainability magazines, one of which led to the starting of the Gold Coast Organic Growers club. From then on I grew things, but they were always for a purpose – after I was married, we lived in Ipswich and the backyard was full of vegetables, chooks and ducks (and nut grass!). We used to sell jams and pickles at the local market.

Q: Once the idea began, how did you go about actually starting a Club? Was it primarily word of mouth?

A: One of the magazines I would read was "Warm Earth", and around 1996 Maree Rudd (who worked for SAFE) placed an ad for their products in one of the editions. So I rang up and asked her did she know of any organic gardening clubs around – to which she replied "No, why don't you start one?" As they say, the rest is history. We put an ad in the local paper, and our inaugural meeting was held at Gecko House in Currumbin with ten people in attendance. After six months, there were 50-60 people in attendance.

Q: What were the basic principles of the Club, and have they changed over the years?

A: One of the main goals of the Club (apart from the principles of the Mission statement of:

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)

was to help people learn so that they didn't have to make the same mistakes as we did.

Thanks for 20 year, Maria
November 2017

Q: The Club members are continually amazed that the scope of your expertise. Has this come by reading, or listening to the radio, learning from others, or mostly from personal experience? (I've often heard the quote from others "Oh, Maria says that if she can't eat it, then she doesn't grow it", and I assume that is still your approach to your garden.)

A: We do enjoy watching "Gardening Australia", and learning from various Facebook pages. I find I have the ability to retain information. But really, the way to learn is by "doing".

Q: What books would you recommend for (a) a beginner gardener, or (b) those with a bit more experience.

A: In my early days of gardening, I would read books that were more for inspiration rather than technical knowledge - an example would be Jackie French's "Backyard Self-Sufficiency". Now I find Joel Salatin's books excellent – they have a good perspective, a good mind-set. We should take his ideas and apply them to our specific circumstances. Isabel Shipard's herb books are good to teach us how to use what we grow.

But we always need to realize that books and magazines are often written for a different climate to ours – it is more useful to come along to our Club and learn how to grow things in our specific region.

Also there is a potential danger in reading and studying too much about gardening. It is better to start; make the mistakes; and then get advice. That's the best way to learn.

Q: If you were starting out planting a garden, what would be the first principles you would consider/ For example, we are often reminded to grow vegies and fruit at the right time of the year, and – more importantly – growing plants that suitable for our region. Where else should we begin?

A: 1. Start small. Learn about what you are doing and then expand.
2. Always grow your vegie patch in full sun. This means not just six hours in summer, but in winter as well.
3. Make your pathways w-i-d-e-r than you anticipate needing – it is frustrating to trying to turn a wheelbarrow or bend over to weed in a confined space
4. Always consider pests. Think about how to protect what you are growing.
5. Make sure you have plenty of water for your garden. Consider your grey water usage.
6. Wash everything before eating it! We may not need to wash off pesticides, but there are always dirt and other contaminates that need to be taken care of.
7. Don't panic about pest attacks. Find the problem; identify them (ask for help at Club if you are unsure) and destroy. But learn about pests so that you understand them.

Q: From a personal perspective:

(a) What has given you the greatest pleasure in your garden over the years?

A: Apart from the enjoyment of good tasting food, home grown productivity makes good dollar sense.

(b) Have you had any disasters over the years?

A: In gardening, there is always something going wrong. Rats or mice eat the pumpkins or the corn. But we just need to learn from the disasters. We need to realize that the dry weather is a major problem – the climate is changing – as Jerry Coleby Williams said last month at the meeting (paraphrased) "everything now is in a state of experimentation". Nothing is happening as it has always happened in the gardening world.

(c) What are your current main interests in your vegie garden / orchard?

A: Although we have been up to 85% self-sufficient in our food production, with our family having left home, we tend to be less focused on vegetable production. More interesting now is sustainability, and a more holistic approach. We are starting to plant things to attract the birds and butterflies to our property.

(d) What plans do you have for your garden in the future?

A: Realistically, we are starting to be "age-specific" in our garden. Be realistic about how you garden; incorporate low maintenance with high productivity gardening. Consider raised gardens for easy access. But from an enjoyment point of view, we are focusing on bringing more wildlife into our property.

Q: And more ….
(a) How would you describe your gardening style – cottage, structured, "most useful", "favourite foods" etc?

A: Our garden is still based around food. What we do has to have a use and a purpose – for example, planting food for insects will help the overall food production of the garden.

We always have picked flowers in the house. Last year my favourites were poppies and cornflowers, and I have always grown fragrant roses. My favourite vegies would probably be zucchinis and eggplants.

(b) What types of mulch and compost do you use?

A: We use sugar cane to mulch with, and buy mushroom compost by the cubic metre for feeding the soil.

(c) Do you still have your cows?

A: Yes, we still have our cows – but we consider them just as lawn-mowers now. Cow manure is good to use as dried pats which are chopped up and used as mulch.

Q: And if you had one final piece of advice for our Club members, what would it be?

A: Turn up at **meetings** !!! 

So …. some background, and some incentive, and some encouragement to all of us – and a "Thank You" to Maria for her time providing her perspective on gardening, and also her contribution in general to our Club. Next month there will be another topic of interest to us all – in the February newsletter Terry gave us some guidelines about making compost (surely the most basic thing of all to learn), so we'll progress on from there.

200 Dragon-Fruit & a Garden Make-over:
by Diane Kelly

Back in February 2016, a group of us spent the morning at Maggie Golightly's property in the Eco Village in the Currumbin Valley. Maggie had hurt her hand badly and as she was unable to work in her garden, we got together to weed her large productive food area and give it a bit of a tidy up. The block slopes down from the road, and Maggie had been developing large beds in which to put edible plants.

But now, three years later, the garden is getting a make-over. Maggie is putting in terracing for each of the garden beds and has grown an impressive green manure crop, and is now starting to harvest vegies and herbs. But the main thing that caught my attention in a recent email from Maggie was her comment that she had harvested over 200 dragon fruit, and that the third flush of fruit was about to happen. This was from only four dragon fruit plants.
So I went to the Eco Village, and had a tour of

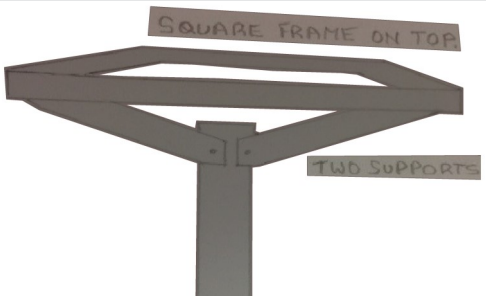
The terracing taking shape .....

Maggie's property – she has achieved so much in the last three years, both in the food area and her beautifully designed floral gardens. Maggie showed me what she had done with the dragon fruit plants. Previously they had been growing on along a wire fence, but it was only when Maggie moved them and established them on stands that are about 2.5 metres high that they really began to produce. I have included a photo of the new look dragon fruit patch, along with my very amateurish representation of what Maggie built. The frame allows the plants to grow tall, and then when they reach the horizontal frame, they branch outwards and cascade down. This achieves several things – the area is able to be kept clear of weeds; the plants get plenty of sunlight; and they also are well ventilated. The fruit is then able to grow freely – and profusely!

The green manure crop

I'm looking forward to hearing how many fruit the third harvest produces – red dragon fruit (which these are) are very sweet, and quite delectable when slightly chilled. So if you need any advice about growing them, or putting up a support for your dragon fruit plants, have a chat to Maggie.
p.s. NEWS FLASH !! – Maggie emailed me today (14.4.19) saying that there are about another 100 fruit formed.

The dragon fruit plants & stands



Hope this helps !!

How Does Your Garden Grow? With Ashley Corpaci

By Leah Johnston

Ashley Corpaci, one of our newer members at GCOG, is making his acreage home at Tallebudgera as self-sustainable as he can.

When he was growing up, his Poppy, Charlie, was his greatest influence in the garden and they still work together in the garden, and are now teaching Ashley's kids Emily and Matthew about growing their own food. Four year old Emily loves wheelbarrow rides and even helps to spread the horse manure around. But her favourite thing to do in the garden is to eat the mulberries!

Together Ashley and his Poppy have turned their swimming pool into a fish pond where they can grow edible water plants, including water mimosa, and raise silver perch fish.

"It's great when my wife Ghai says she feels like fish for dinner, and I can come downstairs with a bit of bread on a hook and catch our dinner from out in the backyard. You can't get fresher than that," Ashley said.

They have four massive water tanks, which can hold 90,000 litres of water – this is enough to fulfill all their water needs and has allowed them to switch off the mains water. The fruit trees are watered with grey water. They also have about 35 chickens so they always have eggs.

Ashley's favourite things to grow are bananas, because they grow fast, and fruit trees because they are so abundant. Ghai loves to cook Thai meals for the family but she often can't find the ingredients she needs locally. Since fresh from the garden tastes best Ashley tries to grow as much as he can for her including kaffir lime, chilli, lemongrass, galangal, Thai eggplant, Thai basil and coconuts. They also grow nasturtiums and marigolds for the pollinators, and pumpkins and passionfruit because they grow readily at their home. The fruit trees are grown in slightly raised boxes to provide them with some drainage when those massive summer rains come.

"Poppy's favourite thing to grow is chicory, which he drinks as a tea every day and of course the Prickly Pear Cactus. He reckons both of these are keeping him feeling young at 89 years of age," Ashley said.

Ashley tells me Charlie stays home from Christmas to February every year because the Prickly Pears are ripening and he doesn't want to miss out on them. He eats about ten a day. Searching Prickly Pear on Google brings up lots of articles listing its health benefits including: reducing risk of osteoporosis; preventing dental issues; boosting the immune system; helping to manage weight; preventing cancer; relief from arthritis and muscle strain; and prevening heart disease. They are also easy to grow, needing little water and having no pests or diseases that attack them – though Ashley often busts his chickens perched on the top of one of the plants enjoying the fruit! As well as the delicious fruit the pads of the plants are edible too and can be eaten year round in lots of different ways including stirfried, grilled, stuffed, in a soup and even pickled. While Charlie is obsessed with eating the Prickly Pear it's Ashley who has become obsessed with growing them. He now has more than 350 growing in the ground and another 250 potted up ready to sell.

Ashley's garden grows with horse manure from his property as fertilizer and straw from the chicken coops as mulch. To minimise any grass seeds getting into the horse manure (and bringing weeds into his veggie patch) he dosen't let the grass in their paddock grow long enough to go to seed.

Ashley works nights so that he can spend his days with his family and out in the garden but of course there's still not enough time to get everything done. His best advice for other gardeners is to "only grow what you can handle, I make so much work for my self." Another tip he shares is to protect fruit from fruit fly by wrapping it in newspaper, then putting a plastic bag over it with a hole in the bottom of the bag to let the water run out.

Thanks for showing me around your garden Ashley and thanks for the bananas.

I would love to visit more of our member's gardens. If you would like to share some of your gardening tips with fellow GCOG members in a future issue please contact me at leahbryan9@gmail.com or text me on 0428 028 042.

Ashley, his wife Ghai and their children Emily and Matthew

Ashley and his Poppy (Charlie) in the Prickly Pear patch

Prickly Pear fruit ripe and ready to eat

Emily helping her dad Ashley to find a ripe lime

Indigenous Microorganisms (IMOs)
from DR. CHO'S NATURAL FARMING

NATURAL FARMING INPUTS
Natural Farming (NF) has a concrete approach as to how best to practice farming while observing and respecting the laws of nature utilizing only what nature provides. NF has farming inputs that are proven to be very effective in the cultivation of crops. These inputs can increase yields better than the harmful commercial fertilizers and pesticides.

IMPORTANCE OF IMOs
Natural Farming produces a good yield when the land cultivated has an excellent soil condition for crops. Microorganisms play an important role in making soil good for growing plants. These microorganisms can also be collected and cultured.

Natural Farming promotes the use of Indigenous Microorganisms (IMOs). The microorganisms that have been living in the local area for a long time are best for farming because they are very powerful and effective. They have survived and can survive the extreme climatic conditions of the local environment much better than artificially produced microorganisms, which are cultured in some foreign or artificial environment. And since they are already available in the field, they are considered the best inputs for conditioning the land.

Organisms that are found under the heat of the sun are largely different than those found in shaded areas such as under the bamboo trees. Dr. Cho advocates that it is better to culture microorganisms from different areas in order to collect different kinds of microorganisms **(Microbial Diversity).**

It is also good to culture microorganisms at different weather conditions and to mix different types of microorganisms.

In "**Non-Chemical**" agriculture practices we do not feed the plant. We nurture the soil and the soil nurtures the plant through the IMOs.

Microorganisms have two major functions in farming:

1. Microorganisms decompose complex organic compounds such as dead bodies of plants and animals and wastes into nutrients, making them easily absorbable by plants.
2. They can create compounds such as antibiotic substances, enzymes and lactic acids that can suppress various diseases and promote healthy soil conditions.

IMOs are used primarily to create fertile and healthy soil condition that is ideal for farming and to prevent plant diseases. In Natural Farming, IMOs are used in treatments applied to the soil in order to improve its fertility and health.

The best material that can be used in culturing IMOs is **steamed rice**. The rice should not be too soft or too sticky since aerobic micro organisms do not prefer to live on it. Hence, it is best to use left-over rice. In making IMOs using plastic as containers should be avoided. Containers made of Wood or Bamboo is recommended.

Collecting IMOs: Indigenous Microorganisms can be collected in many ways and in many places. They can be collected from surrounding hills and mountains. It is also possible, to a certain extent, to collect specific types of microorganisms.

COLLECTION OF IMO
Method - I
COLLECTION FROM NATIVE SOIL

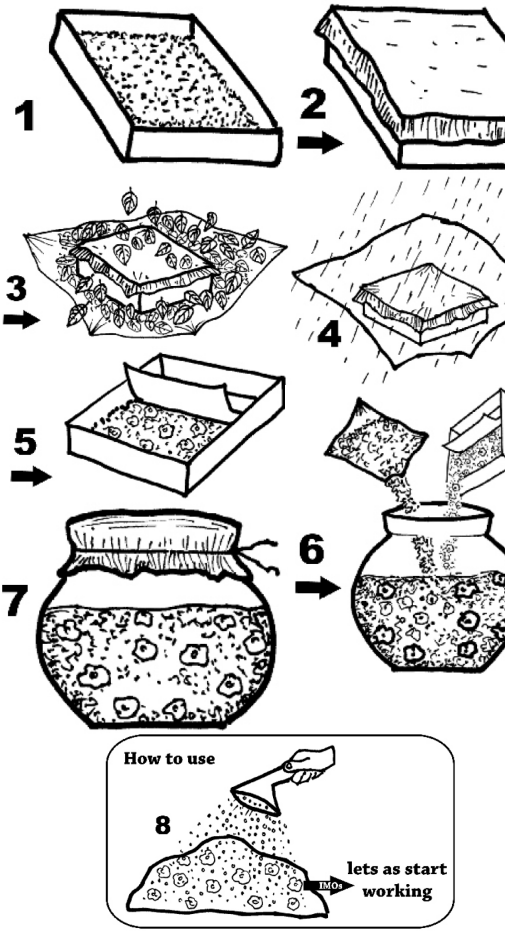
Materials / ingredients needed
1. Wooden box (made of Natural wood / bamboo / cedar, etc)
2. Hard-cooked rice (Less moisture to collect aerobic microbes)
3. Porous Paper (paper Towel)
4. Rubber band / Thread
5. Container Box / Basket made out of Bamboo
6. Jaggery / Brown sugar (Unrefined sugar)
7. Glass jar / Clay pot

How to collect IMOs
1. A wooden box of Length 12 inches x Width 8 inches Height 4 inches is made with ½ an inch thickness wood.
2. Fill the wooden box with steamed rice. Its moisture content will attract the indigenous microorganisms living in the local soil. Allow

adequate air supply by not stuffing the rice higher than 3 inches **(do not hard the rice in the box)**. Without sufficient supply of air, the anaerobic IMOs will get collected. Aerobic IMOs are more commonly recommended.

3. Cover the wooden box with white plain paper **(avoid news paper)** and use a rubber band or thread to hold the paper to the box. Paper allows air to pass through.
4. Mark an area 12 inches x 8 inches in the soil and excavate 2 inches of soil. Place the rice-filled wooden box in this pit, where IMOs abound, such as in a forest / field or at the site where many decomposed leaf molds are found. Cover the box with leaves.
5. The container box or basket is placed on this set-up to protect the wooden box from stray animals.
6. Prevent rain from getting through by covering with leaves. **(use plastic sheet only if necessary during excess rains)**
   At 20°C, it will take about 5 to 6 days to grow the microbes in the box filled with IMOs. Collection will be faster if the temperature is higher than 30°C to 35°C it will take 2 to 3 days
7. After 3 days the rice will be covered with microorganisms. Move the IMO formed rice to a clay pot / glass jar. The IMOs thus collected is called as **IMO-1**.
8. Mix jaggery with the IMO-1 in 1:1 ratio. For Eg 1 Kg of jaggery should be mixed with 1 Kg of IMO-1. This mixture of brown sugar and IMO-1 is called as **IMO-2**.
   The closer the state of sugar is to nature, the better. The less process the sugar has undergone, the more effective it is. Therefore, white refined sugar is not recommended. Brown sugar is advisable, but crude and unrefined sugar (jaggery) is better.
9. Cover the container using paper and hold in position using a rubber band or thread.

NOTE : It will take 3 days in summer and 5 days in winter. Black molds on the steamed rice indicate that you have exceeded the number of days



1. Steamed Rise
2. Cover a wooden box with a sheet paper and tie with a string
3. Bury the box into leaf mould deeply
4. Cover it with plastic sheet to prevent from rain
5. After 3 days in hot area 5 days in cool area when you open it looks like white mould it is called as **IMO-1**
6. Mix jaggery and IMO-1 equal quantity and put in a jar
7. Now it is called as **IMO-2**. Cover and keep the pot in a cool place
8. 2:1000 ratio can be used to apply on rice bran along with FPJ & FFJ same ration to make **IMO-3**

FRUIT TREES

APRIL

Custard Apples: Peak harvest period. Harvest every 3 to 7 days. Watering can be tapered off. If you have not done your spraying for mealy bug, do it now. Spray individual fruit with pest oil or wipe on metho and water (30% metho & 70% water).

Figs: Taper off the water.

Lychee: Don't let trees dry out. Check for Erinose mite. Spray with wettable sulphur.

Low Chill Stone Fruit: Fertilise trees with a high organic potassium fertilizer, 50 gms per sq meter to the drip line of trees. Prune trees now – 1/3 to ¼ of the tips can be taken off. Any inward or downward wood can be pruned.

Mango: Apply gypsum if soil pH is 6 or more. If below 6 pH, apply lime. 50 gms per sq meter of either. Continue with copper based spray for anthracnose or with 25 mls leaf microbes and 5 gms wettable sulphur per 1 litre of water.

Passion-fruit: Water can be tapered off. Harvest fallen fruit every 3-4 days.

Pawpaw: If you have not applied boron, apply now. 1 teaspoon per mature tree. 40% of annual fertiliser can be applied now to mature trees (20 grams per sq meter of a high organic potassium fertiliser).

Persimmon: Main harvest time. Declining water needs. Apply a little super-fine lime and gypsum, 20 gm of each per sq m.

Strawberries: Plants should be coming away well. A little organic potassium fertiliser can be applied now. Use fish emulsion or kelp spray regularly over plants to keep in good health. Add 20 mls molasses per litre of water + 10 mls leaf microbes.

Bananas: De-sucker plants, cutting at ground level. Cut out centre with a sharp downward motion around the circumference to the centre, forming a well. If they do not die, use 20mls of kero to the bottom of this well.

Citrus: If any scale and fungal problems still exist a further spray with pest oil and leaf microbes will be needed. Add the pest oil + 15 ml per litre of the leaf microbes. Early varieties can be picked this month.

MAY

Custard Apples: Peak harvest period, harvest every 3-7 days. Don't let trees dry out.

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

Lychee: Don't let trees dry out. Fertilise trees this month. Mature trees (5 years and older) 1.5 kg organic fertiliser with sulphate of potash added per sq m to the drip line of trees. (For trees under 5 years, use only 50 grams.)

Low Chill Stone Fruit: Fertilise trees with 50 gms of organic fertiliser with sulphate of potash added per sq m to the drip line of trees. Prune off 2/3 of new growth.

Mango: Apply gypsum if soil pH is 6 or more. If below 6 pH, apply lime, 50 gms per sq m of either. Mature trees (5 years and older) 1.5 kg organic fertiliser with sulphate of potash added per sq m to the drip line of trees; water in well.

Passion-fruit: The water can be tapered off. Harvest fruit every 3-4 days under vines.

Pawpaw: If you have not applied boron, apply now. 1 teaspoon per tree. 40% of annual organic fertiliser can be applied e.g. 20 gms per sq m.

Persimmon: Decline water needs. Apply a little garden lime and gypsum, 20 gms per sq m.

Strawberries: Plants should be coming away well. A little organic fertiliser with sulphate of potash can be applied now. Use fish emulsion or kelp spray regularly over plants to keep in good health.

Bananas: Keep up the water. 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: Harvest should start this month, and continue until August. Keep up watering.

Avocado: Add garden lime, 20 grams per sq m to drip line and gypsum 20 grams per sq m again to drip line. Early varieties can be picked. Don't let trees dry out.

VEGETABLES

APRIL:
Asian Greens, Beans (French), Beetroot, Broccoli, Cabbage, Carrot, Cauliflower, Celeriac, Celery, Endive, Garlic, Kale, Kohlrabi, Leek, Lettuce, Mustard Greens, Onion, Parsnip, Peas, Potato, Radish, Shallots, Silverbeet, Snow Peas, Spinach, Sweet Potato, Tomato, Turnip.

MAY:
Asian Greens, Beans (French), Beetroot, Broad beans, Broccoli, Cabbage, Carrot, Cauliflower, Celeriac, Celery, Endive, Garlic, Kale, Kohlrabi, Leek, Lettuce, Mustard Greens, Onion, Parsnip, Pea, Potato, Radish, Shallots, Silverbeet, Snow Peas, Spinach, Tomato, Turnip.

HERBS

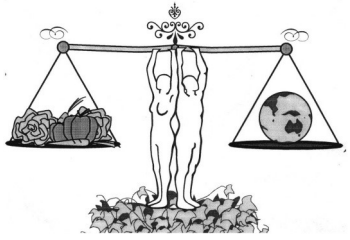
APRIL
Annual: Borage, Calendula, Chamomile, Chervil, Coriander, Dill, Garlic, Italian parsley, Misome, Mizuna, Nasturtium, Rocket.

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

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

If not claimed in 14 days, please return to:
GCOG, PO Box 210, Mudgeeraba Q 4213

GOLD COAST ORGANIC GROWERS Inc.



NEWSLETTER

Meetings held:
3rd Thursday of the Month

Meeting place:
Cnr Guineas Creek Road
& Coolgardie Street
Elanora, Gold Coast

Next meeting:
Thursday 16th MAY 2019