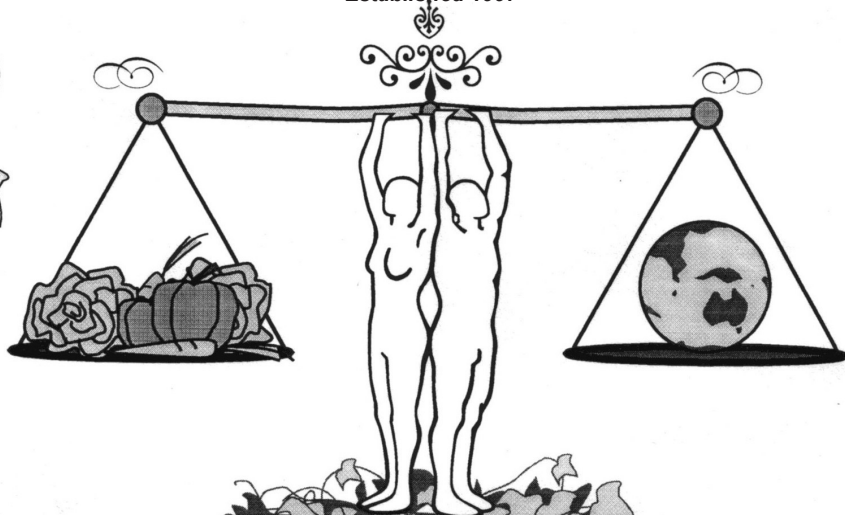


# GOLD COAST ORGANIC GROWERS Inc.

Established 1997



## NEWSLETTER

Volume 26, 2022 Issue 1  
GARDENING IN AUTUMN

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OUR NEXT MEETING: FEBRUARY 24, 2022

## 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:

The fourth Thursday of the month at the Elanora Community Centre, 26 Galleon Way, Elanora.

### 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:

**1/4 page:** \$15 an issue

**1/2 page:** \$25 an issue

**Full page:** \$40 an issue

**W: [www.goldcoastorganicgrowers.org](http://www.goldcoastorganicgrowers.org)**  
**Facebook: [www.facebook.com/gcorganic](http://www.facebook.com/gcorganic)**

## 2021-2022 Committee

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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.

## Membership Renewals

Pay online: **Notice Board**  
 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:** Melanie Strang (440), Kerstein Trueman (346), Rachael Lebeter (367), Bev Geraghty (404), Liz Grippo (405), Stacey Panozzo (420), Peter Meppem (436), Lynn Calligros (451), Marek Janczewski (455), Katrina Julienne (458), Doug & Sally Beitz (441), Jan Guest (307), Rodney & Cathy Boscoe (347), Gary & Sue Webb (445), Dorothy Coe (471), Amanda Harvey (472), Terri Ange (473).

**January:** Anne-Maree Andrew (337), Ira Appel (417), Debbie Casey (442), Dianne Casey (461), Belinda Rennie (462).

**February:** Henry Blonner (108), Penny Jameson (201), Roger & Pauline Behrendorff (232), Kerry Lason (402), Cheree Holland (475), Chui McDonald (476)

**March:** Gai Morrow (309), John Palmer (357), Tricia Oh (368), Danny Li (384), Astrid Connolly (465), Peter Sypkens (469), Rachael Peate (477), Frances Janes (478).

## Newsletter:

GCOG members are welcome to contribute photos and articles to our newsletter. Please send any contributions to Leah via the email leahbryan9@gmail.com

Contribution deadlines are:  
 Autumn issue: end of January  
 Winter issue: end of April  
 Spring issue: end of July  
 Summer issue: end of October

## Upcoming Guest Speakers

Our meetings are held on the fourth Thursday of the month at the Elanora Community Centre, 26 Galleon Way, Elanora. Doors open at 6.30pm with the meeting starting at 7pm.

March 24 - AGM and member talks

If you would like to suggest a speaker for 2022, or would like to speak for five minutes on one of our Members' Nights please contact Leah Johnston via leahbryan9@gmail.com

## Workshops

EdibleScapes Gardens welcomes visitors and volunteers. Gardening activities occur on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday from 9am to mid-morning.

<https://www.facebook.com/n.ediblescapes>

## Thanks to this issue's contributors:

Jorge Cantellano, Leah Johnston, Diane Kelly and Maria Roberson.

## View our Newsletters On-Line at:

[www.goldcoastorganicgrowers.org.au/](http://www.goldcoastorganicgrowers.org.au/)

**President's Notes**  
By Maria Roberson

Hello Everyone,

It seems funny to be writing for the autumn edition of our newsletter when the outside temperature is hovering over 32 degrees which is a bit of a shock to the system after such a cool summer. I expect for some of us it may well have been the wettest summer in many decades too, although I shall have to wait and see when the official statistics come out if my observations are correct.

My garden has really suffered this summer and instead of dying from heat it has been pushed to the brink by the constant rain. Whilst I have lost my cucumbers and zucchinis to the wet, the basil is growing amazingly well and has large fat leaves that resemble hydroponically grown basil.

I have visited a few friends' gardens lately and they all seem to have fared differently. Some gardens have thrived and others just plodded along but all have had unexpected results. The many little eco systems up and down the Gold Coast will have also played a part in varying results too. It just goes to show that we are definitely not a one size fits all kind of place.

With a new season comes a whole new garden planting plan. This is something I always look forward to. I find that when you mainly eat from your garden it's easy to become bored with the same herbs and vegetables. By the end of each season, I long for a change of things to eat.

Our club seed table is a source of constant change too. Not only do we stock the different seeds needed for each growing season, we also have an ever-changing list of seeds on offer which are kindly donated by our members. Seeds are saved for many reasons; sometimes it's just practical and because a plant grows well in our region or it may have a long harvest time. Other seeds are saved because they provide a link with our heritage or have sentimental value and remind us of a person or an event. Whatever the reason; seeds are a prized and important part of our lives in so many ways. Come and have a look at our new range of autumn seeds at the next meeting, you never know what you might find.

Unfortunately, our January meeting was cancelled due to the new variant of Covid 19 as it was predicted to be hitting the peak for infections. We chose not to go ahead with the meeting as we felt many members would prefer not to mix in numbers at this time. Let's hope the worst is over and that there will not be any further disruptions to monthly meetings.

Some good news is that we managed to win a \$2,000 grant for the club. We will be using this to purchase some tech equipment such as a portable microphone and speaker to enable our members to hear our guest presenters more clearly and loudly. This has been an issue for some members since moving to a bigger hall and needing to observe social distance seating arrangements. We also hope to purchase a projector for our use and for those guest speakers that require one for their presentations.

Happy growing,

Maria

## Meeting Recaps

By Leah Johnston

At our November meeting we enjoyed asking Maria all of our gardening questions and learning more about the important task of seed saving.

### Q: How to know when corn is ripe?

A: On the underside of the cob carefully split the green husk and have a look, rather than wasting a whole cob by opening it completely. If there are grubs in the top of the cobs you can squish the tops of the silks against the corn to kill them.

### Q: A zucchini with all male flowers.

A: Zucchini's will grow male flowers first and then female flowers later. If it's raining a lot there won't be bees flying around to pollinate them, so you may need to hand pollinate them. Early in the morning is best so you don't miss your chance.

### Q: How long do fruit fly nets need to stay on?

A: If you have netted a fruit tree to protect from fruit fly you need to leave the net on until you're ready to harvest. Net when the fruit are thumb nail size; don't wait until they are bigger or it will be too late.

### Q: How to feed native birds.

A: Rather than feeding wild birds bread or bird seed that can be fattening you can grow pigeon peas and they can snack on those straight from the tree.

Another tip for healthy wild birds: if you have a bird bath you'll want to empty it, scrub it and refill with fresh water daily as there is a fungal disease affecting them at the moment and it is spread via water.

### Q: How to save lettuce seeds?

A: Put the whole dried head of lettuce into a large brown paper bag and let it dry out for another month and then shake the stalk and most of the seeds will drop out. Tip the bag out into a large bowl, get any husk off them and then gently swirl the bowl and blow the chaff off outside. In the old days this was called winnowing. Then store the seeds in a glass jar inside a polystyrene box to help maintain an even temperature. Put the box inside a cupboard in your house, not a hot shed or veranda. Lettuce are self pollinating. Each lettuce can create 30,000 seeds. So you don't need to let a whole bed go to seed, just let one plant go to seed and pull the others out and start growing your next crop.

Other seed saving tips: The smaller the seed is the less time it's viable for. Smaller seeds will last around 2-3 years but larger seeds could last for 4 years.

The best way to save seed is to keep planting it and replanting the next years seeds so you always have fresh seeds. As a back up it's always good to share it with your friends (or our GCOG seed table!).

### Q: Why can't I propagate lavender in Queensland?

A: Buy lavender Debtana variety as it does best in our climate and is easy to propagate.

### Q: How to tell if a seed is still viable.

A: Put it on some paper towel. Wet it, roll it up and put it somewhere warm. Check the germination rates and check to see if it's sprouted. It's more reliable than planting them to see if they grow as there are too many variables and it could be a light, water or soil problem not a seed viability problem.

## **Slugs, Snails and Other Bits 'n' Pieces**

By Diane Kelly

It is Australia Day and I am sitting in my study at home. I am also looking out of the window at the rain trying to get inspiration to write something suitable for some of the most challenging gardening times that I can remember.

The main challenge has of course been the rain. According to the Bureau of Meteorology the Gold Coast received 276 ml of rain in December – and to date for January the figure is 185 ml. Of course we can't say we weren't warned ... at our October Club meeting, guest speaker Gavin Bullock said he believed that the Coast was in for a wet six months, and so far his forecast is looking very feasible.

Now the news is not all bad. My flower garden is growing profusely and I don't think I have lost anything due to the on-going wet, even if some of the plants are looking a bit strappy as they seek out the sunshine. But moving into the vegetable garden area it is a different story. Having been growing tomatoes, celery, silver beet, cucumbers, bok choy, lettuces and beans prior to the rains starting, I am currently left with some spinach plants (which we will talk about separately).

I was expecting the silver beet to finish – Maria mentioned at our October meeting that such plants would soon start to get mildew or other fungal diseases. But I had high hopes for the cucumbers, lettuce and other greens and the celery (which last year produced for many months). Instead, once the continual rain started, the cucumbers rotted on the vine; the celery rotted and went brown; and the bok choy and lettuce made good meals for the slugs and a few early

grasshoppers.

But, as Vita Sackville-West (the co-creator of Sissinghurst, one of the great English gardens in Kent) wrote “the most noteworthy thing about gardeners is that they are always optimistic”. So I decided that, even though my gardening fun is being reduced by rainy weather and soggy ground, one of the things I can do is “know your enemy” (a quote originally made by the ancient Chinese general Sun Tzu who lived in the late 6<sup>th</sup> century BC – maybe he was a gardener!) I then decided that my main enemies at the moment are slugs (seeing I can't control the rain) and so I read up on them – and their cousins – snails.

Slugs and snails are both mollusks, and this means they can only survive in moist or wet places (such as my vegetable patch!) But there is the obvious difference – snails have a shell, and slugs do not. This means that snails can find a hidden corner and hide in their shells. But slugs have to find their own protection, and they are able to squeeze themselves into soil, coming back out again to feast on our veggies after dark.

A slug is actually rather a fascinating creature to learn about. Their heads have two telescopic tentacles, one of which acts as its eyes and the other as its nose. They have a mouth with rows of teeth, and behind the mouth is a slime gland which can exude large quantities of slime which helps the slug slide along and which are distasteful to many other animals and therefore protects them. (Snails use a similar protective system.)

Behind the head of a slug is a mantle which is the equivalent of our diaphragm and lungs and which allows a slug to breathe. The whole of a slug's body can be withdrawn under the smaller mantle in

order to protect it from danger – including making it harder for us to see and to remove them from our garden! Under the trunk is the slug's body (which contains the heart, one kidney, and its digestive and reproductive system) and then under the body is the "foot". This is the whole underside of the slug and is almost entirely formed of muscle which contracts and relaxes to enable the slug to move forward. (Slugs can only travel in one direction – there is no reverse gear!)

So what options – apart from a torch and a visit to your vegetable patch each morning and evening – do we have to make our gardens "slug and snail free"? Here are a few suggestions:

- Natural predators: Lizards and frogs eat slugs and snails, so create homes for them with piles of leaves or fallen branches in a patch of wild garden, or by installing a small pond. Make birds welcome in your garden so they can help as well – as pictured.



- Make a gritty rampart. Keep slugs and snails away from their favourite plants by surrounding the plants with a ridge of sharp sand, cinders, lime or crushed oyster shells. Ensure there are no gaps for the creepies to

crawl through. A barrier of coffee grounds can also help.

- Rough-surfaced paths made from gravel, wettable sandpaper or nutshells are a way of keeping slugs and snails away, so surround your vulnerable plants with them.
- Try burying plastic cups half-filled with beer close to endangered plants. Be careful not to sink them below ground level otherwise beneficials such as ground beetles (which actually eat slugs) can fall in. Covering the cup with an upturned plastic flowerpot with a hole cut in the bottom can also protect beneficial bugs from falling in.
- Scooped out orange halves can be used in the same way as the containers of beer, or you can try cutting a little doorway in an upside-down grapefruit half (like a tiny igloo). The slugs and snails will be attracted by the smell; will congregate inside the shell; and will be ready for you to remove in the morning.

When I was learning about slugs and snails, I came across a number of other little snippets that relate to water, how plants grow – and how they die – and a few other more cheerful topics.

**How to tell when a plant needs watering:** Maybe not a problem at the moment, but it's handy to be aware that when a plant gets to the stage where it is wilting and showing a dull, grey colour in its leaves, then it has already been damaged. The plant's growth would have stopped; it would have become more vulnerable to pests and disease; and in some cases it may have stopped key parts of its reproductive cycle, such as setting seeds.

To prevent this, we need to remember to check the soil of our plants, especially



those being grown in pots. Soils can sometimes look damp when they are not. For example, clay soils have very tiny particles and water can be locked in them so tightly that it is unavailable to plant roots. So clay needs to be watered before it shows any sign of drying out. On the other hand, sandy soil may look dry, but if you pick up a handful, you might find it to be quite damp – and because of its structure, the moisture will be available to the roots. So rely on touch as well as sight.

**When a plant dies, what happens to its roots?** Above the ground, when a plant dies, either we remove and compost it, or it lies undisturbed and eventually rots away back into soil. But under the ground, there are also things going on. As the roots of a plant rot, fungi, bacteria and wood-boring insects break down the material and are thus provided with food. However, decaying plant roots also service the soil. As they disappear, they leave open spaces that separate the earth and make drainage more efficient.

Unfortunately, at the same time, rotting roots can also encourage root-rotting fungi – and these do not all limit themselves to dead matter. There are some (such as honey fungus) that are highly efficient and may spread to healthy plants or trees and kill them. This is why the forestry industry often grubs out the stumps and roots of dead or felled trees.

**Why do flowers close at night?** Not every flower that closes does so at night, but those that do can have a variety of reasons. A closed flower can be protecting its delicate reproductive parts from a range of potential damage such as can be caused by cold air, dew or even frost. A flower may also want to protect its pollen and nectar from night-flying insects that are not as effective for its specific

needs as more favoured daytime pollinators.

The opening/closing pattern of plants appears to be controlled by light and darkness, which control the time-related activities of plants so that they are available to their pollinators. Plants can be very fast-acting when adjusting the genes that regulate the amount of sugar in its flowers' petals on and off. When the gene switch is on, the petals are rich in sugar and osmosis ensures more water flows into them, thus holding them open. But when the gene switch is turned off, the amount of sugar reduces and the petals dehydrate and close up.

**How do seeds know which way is up?** Seeds don't usually get it wrong when they germinate – no matter how the seed is planted in the ground, the emerging roots head into the soil, and the shoots starts growing toward the light. The question is... how do they know?

Roots need to grow downwards (the technical term is "gravitropism"), otherwise the seedling would have no access to water and no secure anchorage, and so will not survive. This is thought to occur via "statocytes" (i.e. cells that may be able to sense gravity) which are located in the root tip. If the tip is destroyed, the root will not grow downwards until it is repaired.

Shoots heading upwards also have statocytes arranged all along them. The cells of the statocytes are rich in starch, and that starch settles down under gravity and promotes upward growth. Even if the shoot tip is damaged, the actual shoot will continue to grow because these cells are all along it.

**And one last question... why don't fig trees have flowers?** The answer is, they do. Sort of. Even though the Chi-



nese historically call the fig *wu hua guo* (the fruit with no flower), fig trees actually have a flower-bearing organ (called the synconium). The synconium is what we would commonly call the fig fruit – but they are in reality an extension of the stem of the tree, and they are formed of a hollow chamber which is lined with tiny individual flowers.

Most fig trees now grown in Australia area self-fertile – meaning that the fruit develops without pollination. But in other species, the fruit cannot ripen without pollination by tiny specialised wasps. Each synconium has an opening through which the female wasp squeezes – even though she may lose her wings and antennae as she does so (due to the size of the access) this does not affect her ability to pollinate the flowers inside with the pollen she has carried with her from the parent fig (the one in which she was born). Once the eggs are laid, the female wasp dies. The eggs hatch; the larvae develop into pupae; and the pupae emerge as mature wasps. The adult wasps mate and the female starts the cycle starts all over again.



Other plants that have specialized relationships between them and their pollinators include the Cardinal flower which can only be pollinated by hummingbirds, and the moth orchid, whose mothlike flowers flutter in the breeze, thus attracting moths that transfer the pollen from bloom to bloom.

### Getting to Know... Astrid Connolly By Diane Kelly

I must admit I had a new experience today. Having done a number of interviews with Club members over the years I have learnt a lot about gardening and seen a lot of wonderful front and backyards and vegetable gardens. Our Club members have so much experience and knowledge and I have enjoyed the chance to share their stories with you.

But this time it was different. Today I met with Astrid Connolly and, although she is now an enthusiastic gardener in spite of not coming from a gardening background, I feel that her personal story overshadows her gardening experience. Astrid describes herself as a “lazy gardener”, but “lazy” is definitely not how I would describe her life!

Astrid was born in Surabaya in Indonesia. Surabaya (or “Soerbaja” in the local language) is the capital of the province of East Java, and the city is only second in size in the country to Jakarta. Astrid’s father was English and her mother was born in Indonesia – her mother’s parents were Danish and had come to Indonesia to serve with the Dutch forces. The Dutch had colonized Indonesia in 1595 when they came to the region as part of the spice trade – you probably remember references in school to “The Dutch East Indies Company”.

In 1942 Indonesia was occupied by the Japanese and this was to continue until 1945, after the Allied forces bombed the area in 1944. Astrid, her brother and her parents thus became prisoners of war and were to live in a camp for three years. Her father died

there.

When Astrid was seven years old, the war had ended. She and her brother went to live in England – whilst their mother was Danish, she felt that the children should live where their father would have wished them to grow up. So Astrid and her brother were placed in boarding schools and their mother returned to Denmark. Astrid's mother spoke five languages, and Astrid speaks both English and Danish.

Astrid attended boarding school in Hertford from when she was 10 years old until she was 18, whilst travelling to Denmark during the holidays each year to see her mother and having the occasional visit to Ireland. She enjoyed boarding school – and loved the snow! Meanwhile her brother attended boarding school in Sussex – that school has now amalgamated with the school Astrid attended.

After Astrid completed her secondary schooling, her life of varied experiences began. Her first challenge was to study management for two years at tertiary level – and at which she achieved a first class pass. Her thesis title was “Time is Money”. However management did not appeal to Astrid as a career path, and so for the next two years she worked as a caterer/cook at Christ Hospital School in Sussex. This was followed by doing similar work at Charterhouse school in Surrey. Astrid's next project was to go to Denmark (where her mother was living) for three months and then to have an au pair's job in Oslo. Then, returning to England, she worked as the head cook for the Ministry of Overseas Development (the department responsible for administering foreign aid). This office is located at Victoria Station in London, a

stone's throw from 10 Downing Street, Westminster Abbey, the Houses of Parliament, and – of course – Buckingham Palace.

Then the opportunity opened up for Astrid to travel to Hawaii – a country that she loved. Apart from the challenge of helping with a family with seven children ranging in age from one to twelve years old, Astrid also had a cow to milk – and she experienced her first tidal wave. She also learnt to drive – albeit on the “wrong” side of the road! Astrid has asked the previous au pair what she would recommend anyone coming to Hawaii do, and the answer was “learn the hula and learn to play the ukulele”, so Astrid promptly learned to do both. She also learnt an amount of the Hawaiian language.

After living in Hawaii for two years, Astrid immigrated to Australia, arriving in Brisbane in March 1968. Again she worked in the catering industry – interrupted with a five week visit to New Zealand (where her brother now lived). She spent eleven years managing the catering for the Ballymore Rugby Union Club, and during that time she bought a house in Bardon. I asked Astrid did that home have a garden – the answer was “no”, but the property backed onto the Ithaca Creek, a waterway that feeds into the Enoggera Creek catchment. There Astrid moved the rocks around to make a swimming hole – so that became her garden.

During that time, Astrid travelled back to Denmark to see her family for three months at a time. And then, in 1985, she moved to the Gold Coast after meeting her husband-to-be by chance on a weekend visit to Tugun. The house in Miami in which Astrid lived had lots of bromeliads (a favourite

plant) and paw paw, fig, cumquat and banana trees. Also growing was a lemonade tree, a passionfruit vine and some sugar cane.

Since moving in 2002, Astrid now lives in a ground-floor unit in a quiet cul-de-sac in Mermaid Waters. Her home is within walking distance of the library, the shops and the Multi-cultural community garden in Markeri Street and from this convenient location Astrid enjoys her garden, going to a craft group, being part of the Multi-cultural group, knitting and crocheting, reading and cooking “from scratch”.

Firstly – her gardening. Each wall of the unit and garage has a garden bed along it and they are planted out with a variety of edible and decorative plants. Along the garage wall, which faces west out over the canal, there is a paw paw tree; Surinam spinach (which keeps popping up throughout the garden); a pineapple plant (currently fruiting) and amaranth plants. Astrid harvests the amaranth and grinds it into a flour to add to her baking. Along two other walls are bromeliads – the red tonings in these are brilliant, and some are climbing up the brickwork, which I’d not seen broms do before. Near the back patio is a tansy plant with its cheery yellow flowers; an aloe; a ginger plant which smells beautiful; a flowering frangipani in a pot; and to Astrid’s excitement a miniature banana tree (which is about 3 meters high) which is just starting its first-ever fruit.



***The black swans that live in the canal behind Astrid’s house***

From the back patio the lawn sweeps down to the canal and planted along a low terrace is a deep red rose and a very healthy looking passionfruit vine. Adding to the pleasure of the canal is the family of black swans and two large white ducks that visit.

At the front of Astrid’s unit there is a small garden of rose bushes (which flower profusely) and an area under the stairs leading to the top unit which features several types of ground cover; a large frangipani bush; a “geisha girl” plant (or more correctly, *Duranta erecta*) and Astrid’s worm farm. And further around the front of the block of units, Astrid has developed a small community bed for anyone to enjoy. Here are growing rosella plants; chives; society garlic; rosemary; another small banana tree; some kale which is just finishing; and sweet potato vines.

I asked Astrid how she joined the Multi-cultural group. Apparently she saw the members working in the garden and so she went over and asked what was happening. The rest is history, and Astrid goes there each Thursday morning to garden and to socialize, and she is also on the watering roster for the gardens. One of the things Astrid enjoys most about gardening is weeding – she commented that being out in the fresh air and methodically removing unwelcome plants is a form of meditation to her. Astrid also shares a raised garden bed with one of the other group members and they have a wide variety of herbs growing it.

So what else does Astrid do?

- She enjoys watching gardening shows and reading books about gardening.
- Astrid recycles as much as she can. She showed me her shopping bag,

which has small, cleaned bags in it to recycle and re-used paper bags ready for buying mushrooms. She doesn't waste any packaging and estimates that she has only five or six tins of food in her kitchen.

- As I mentioned, much of Astrid's food preparation is done from scratch.
- She makes her own baked beans – she cooks whatever beans interest her at the time (pinto or chick peas etc) and then makes her own tomato sauce to add to them. Astrid makes bulk amounts of sauce and other foods and freezes them in individual serving sizes. One of her favourite meals is roast vegetable lasagne, and she eats basically no processed food.
- Astrid makes up a flour mixture ready to add at about a 50:50 ratio to regular flour. She combines her amaranth with (if I remember correctly) buckwheat and almond flour for this – and for my visit she made Anzac biscuits with the combined grains, along with a bit of honey and molasses, and they were yum!
- Astrid enjoys learning about anything that is self-sustaining and easy to do – that's one of the reasons she enjoys coming along to the GCOG meetings. Astrid has always been a knitter, but she also joined a craft group so that she could learn to crochet. Now she knits her own dishcloths (you just boil them in water for



*The amaranth Astrid adds to her flour*

a minute after using – they dry very quickly); her own back-scrubber or body washer (these are about 18 inches long for those “hard-to-reach” parts of your back); a washing bag that doubles as a carry bag when travelling; and her own soap holders. These are made from jute; they allow your soap to drain dry; and as the soap liquid gradually absorbs into them, you can use them as a soapy washer.

- She enjoys making her own teas – lemon grass; mint or myrtle are favourites.
- Astrid very firmly believes in the concept of resting the soil in your garden and is very much in favour of mulching to preserve moisture.
- At the end of our chat, I asked Astrid what advice she would give to other gardeners. It was “get rid of any weeds as soon as you see them”. Weeds take up space; they use up nutrients that should be enjoyed by plants; and they take over plants. And as Astrid said, when she is weeding, “time just goes”.

And to sum up her own gardening experience? “Always keep learning – keep listening to others and hearing the things they know.”



*Astrid's knitted dishcloths*

## Enjoying Ceylon (Malabar) & Sambal Nyawa (Longevity) Spinach

By Diane Kelly

It's amazing what you can learn when you start researching spinach. For example:

- Did you know that spinach is believed to have originated in ancient Persia over 2,000 years ago?
- Did you know that China produces the world's largest annual spinach crop, with the USA coming in second?
- Did you know that the 26<sup>th</sup> of March is National Spinach Day?
- And did you know that when Popeye ate his spinach, his biceps immediately swelled to three times their normal size?
- But, more importantly, did you know that there are two types of spinach that can be successfully grown even when the weather is very wet and hot? My Ceylon spinach (also known as Malabar spinach) and my Sambung Nyawa (also known as Longevity spinach) have been the mainstays of our salads, stir fries and green smoothies over the past couple of months when it has consistently rained and all the other greens in my garden have struggled.

### Sambung Spinach:

I was originally given a couple of cuttings of Sambung spinach by one of our Club members about a year ago. Put in water, the cuttings grow roots very quickly and easily, and they don't seem to be set back by being planted out. This spinach is not fussy about the type of soil it is planted in, but it does like loose soil and to be kept well-watered. The plants can survive in the full sun, but I found that mine grew much more happily when planted in

part shade – the plants in the front garden that were in full sun tended to be slightly more woody and the leaves a more faded colour.

Sambung spinach is a rather fleshy-leaved perennial plant which can grow stems up to 80cm. The young stems are green, but as the plant becomes older, the base becomes thicker and turns a brownish colour. The leaves can grow up to 10cm long, and they grow in an alternating pattern up the plant's stems – in other words, they don't grow immediately opposite each other. The leaves tend to develop very slight serrations as the plant grows older and their colour darkens.

As the plant grows, you can keep it trimmed back to make it bush out and produce more tender leaves. Alternatively, you can let the stems grow so that it can be used as a ground cover. Where the stems grow touching the soil, they will send out shoots and start bushing out into a new plant.

The leaves of Sambung spinach are very mild to eat, with no particular



flavour. As with spinach generally, this plant is listed as having many nutritional benefits – I just find it a useful addition to my lunchtime salads and I enjoy the very gentle texture of the young leaves.

Sambung spinach has a small orange/yellow flower that looks a bit like a miniature thistle flower (but is not prickly). When my plant was flowering a few months ago, I was amazed at the number of blue and brown winged butterflies that came into my garden to visit the blooms. Poultry also enjoy Sambung spinach as a forage plant.

So... Sambung spinach. Easy grow; easy to look after; and a good addition to meals.

### **Ceylon Spinach:**

One of my gardening books describes Ceylon spinach as being a “scrambling perennial climber with thick, succulent, delicious leaves.” Annette McFarlane assures us that it is a very easy plant to grow, and that it can be grown all year round. Annette also comments that “it is an ideal summer vegetable in areas that are too hot and humid for traditional English spinach and silver beet”.



Ceylon spinach can be grown either up a trellis or a tripod, or it can be grown as a ground cover. (Just don't do what I did and let it take over your compost heap as pictured on the left!)

Plants can be grown from either seeds, cuttings or self-layered sections. To plant from seed, just squeeze the purple fruit to remove the seed from the pulp (remember to wear an old shirt as the rich red colouring will stain – and in fact can be used as a dye or a colouring in food). Ceylon spinach appreciates being grown in compost-enriched soil, but can tolerate poor soil. It does like to be regularly watered and can do well in either part shade or full sun – I have one lot growing up a bamboo tripod in the middle of my vegie garden in full sun and it is doing very well. It tends to grow bigger leaves than the plant that has taken over my compost heap – it is in the shade.

Tip cuttings can be struck easily in compost or seed-raising mixture and will also grow roots in water like Sambung spinach. Plants can be grown in pots and will train happily along verandah railings. Once plants grow to a good size up a trellis or a tripod, they can be used as a shade for sun-sensitive plants.

Tip prune your plants to encourage branching and thus the production of more leaves. The young leaves are mild and can be eaten raw in salads, but the larger ones will have a stronger flavour and will be better cooked (although they are fine in a green smoothie). Replace English spinach or silver beet in your recipes with the Ceylon spinach – it can be steamed, stir-fried, used as a topping for pizzas and added as a thickening agent to soups and stews. Or you could make

“palak paneer” – a spinach curry whose traditional ingredient is Ceylon spinach.

Ceylon spinach plants are rarely attacked by pests – a grasshopper may visit occasionally, but I've not noticed a problem. Also Ceylon spinach keeps well in the fridge and will last a week or more without deterioration.

The seeds of Ceylon spinach can be saved for the next season – just remove them from the fruit; take away the pulp and then place the clean seeds on paper to dry. Store them in an airtight container.

So... Ceylon spinach. Also “Easy to grow, easy to look after, and a good addition to meals”.

### **A Simple (but yummy) Recipe for Ceylon Spinach**

1. Pick a handful or two of Ceylon spinach leaves (probably 6 medium leaves per person).
2. Chop up as you would for steaming silver beet.
3. Cook in a saucepan in a little bit of water until soft.
4. Drain off any excess liquid (I use the potato masher to take out as much as I can.)
5. Add a few pinches of garlic salt to taste.
6. Break in a beaten egg and stir until the egg is solid. Serve immediately.

Enjoy.

I use the same recipe for silver beet when it is in season – it is a tasty combination of flavours.

### **EdibleScapes Gardens plans transition into Ecological Interpretive Garden** By Jorge Cantellano

After two years of responding to the COVID-19 induced local food crisis, EdibleScapes Gardens have demonstrated the efficiency of their “biointensive growing” method by increasing food production tenfold over an average urban edible garden’s production.

Nonetheless, in 2022 EdibleScapes will refocus its efforts on the demonstrative and experiential learning functions of their public project.

In a strategy to become a Food & Ecology Interpretive Centre by 2026, EdibleScapes Gardens will now transition into an Ecological Interpretive Garden.

Ecological Interpretive Gardens offer community education opportunities that promote pro-conservation views and an understanding of human dependence on the ecological systems that provide our food, materials, climate control, and other benefits. Visitors can engage with ecological relationships in the garden to learn about the interactions between living organisms, including soil nutrients, pollinating insects and birds, native and cosmopolitan edible plants, even humans.

Visitors can access information via visual and audio signage, storytelling, interactive elements, workshops and other modes of communication.

At EdibleScapes, interpretation is now possible because the fruits trees planted three years ago are now fruiting. The

vegetable beds now give turn to perennial plants under the tree canopy and a recognisable edible food forest is taking shape.

Like any other public park, the first immediate tasks are to display flora labels to inform visitors about the species in the garden. Each sign will link to an online listing, via a QR code, to provide more information to mobile users. This approach will reduce limitations and costs associated with printed signage.

After flora identification labels, with the help of volunteers and student internship placements, we will aim to develop creative content for integrated media to entertain and educate a diverse range of visitors from different age groups, cultural backgrounds and interests.

As you can see, the interpretive task will become a recurring activity for gardener volunteers, and it will extend beyond these concepts. We aim to provide garden tours and host celebrations and cultural activations. We want to host community education programs like workshops on propagation, wild herbs and natural pest control, composting, plant adaptations, and more. The common denominator with all of this effort is volunteers! Without the contribution of volunteers, there will be no accomplishment.

## Join us

Whether you are an experienced gardener or a new gardener, you are welcome to volunteer with us at your leisure to enrich the community with your own skills and knowledge.

Suppose you are a student looking for an internship to learn fundamental job skills. In this case, we can help you with your community engagement services and personal development.

Suppose you are in job transition or a solo parent and you need to comply with Centrelink's mutual obligation task. In this case, we can provide volunteer job engagement to add to your resume and which allows you to connect with potential job opportunities or further your education.

Or maybe you are a mature person transitioning to retirement and you need to comply with Centrelink's mutual obligation task by serving the community as a volunteer. In this case, we provide a respectful, active volunteer work environment where your lifelong learned skills will be appreciated.

Our volunteers meet every Tuesday and Thursday morning and work until noon. You are welcome to come to the gardens for an induction and to explore how you can participate with us.

## Contact us

Coordinator at  
[ediblescape.nerang@gmail.com](mailto:ediblescape.nerang@gmail.com)

**Web:** <https://www.ediblescapes.org/>

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/n.ediblescapes>

**2022 Facebook Members Group:**  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ediblescapes22>



# SUN GARDEN



Work InProgress




Persimmon



Work InProgress



Tamarillo



Work InProgress



## EdibleScapes residents

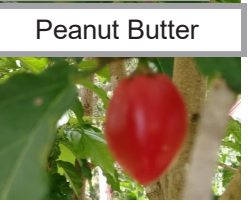


## Fruiting now at Ediblescapes

Acerola



Peanut Butter



Cherry Guava



Avocado



Fig - Brown Turkey



Mulberry



## VEGETABLES

### FEBRUARY:

Asian Greens, Snake Beans, Beetroot, Capsicum, Cauliflower, Chili, Choko, Leeks, Lettuce, Marrow, Mustard Greens, Pumpkin, Radish, Rhubarb, Shallots, Sunflower, Sweet Potato, Sweet Corn.

### MARCH:

Asian Greens, Beans (French), Beetroot, Broccoli, Cabbage, Capsicum, Carrot, Cauliflower, Celeriac, Celery, Chili, Endive, Garlic, Kale, Kohlrabi, Leeks, Lettuce, Mustard Greens, Onions, Parsnip, Peas, Potato, Radish, Shallots, Silverbeet, Snow Peas, Sweet Potato, Sweet Corn, Tomato.

### 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, Sweet Corn, Tomato, Turnip.

## HERBS

### FEBRUARY

**Annual:** Amaranth, Basil, Dill, Herb Robert, Misome, Mizuna, Nasturtium, Italian parsley Rocket, Giant Red Mustard, Salad Mallow.

**Perennials & Bi-Annuals:** Catnip, Ceylon Spinach, Chicory, Chilli, Chives, Comfrey, Perennial Coriander, Echinacea, Fennel, Hyssop, Lavender, Lemon Balm, Licorice, Lovage, Marjoram, Mint, Mushroom Plant, Oregano, Parsley, Rosemary, Sage, Salad Burnet, Stevia, French Tarragon, Winter Tarragon, Thyme, Upland Cress, Watercress, Winter Savoury.

### MARCH

**Annual:** Borage, Calendula, Chamomile, Chervil, Coriander, Dill, Garlic, Italian pars-

ley, 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.

### 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.

## FRUIT TREES

### FEBRUARY

**Custard Apples:** Peak water needs. Apply organic fertiliser with sulphate of potash, 1 kg for mature trees and ½ kg for young trees.

**Figs:** Net trees to protect figs from birds. Pick fruit every two days. Fertilise with 1 kg organic fertiliser with sulphate of potash.

**Low skill stone fruit:** Moderate water needs.

**Lychee:** Peak water needs. Mulch trees. This is a good time to “skirt” trees (skirt-trim all growth to 500mm above ground). Prune so 20% light can be seen through trees. If Erinose mite is a problem, spray with wettable sulphur every 10 to 14 days from pin head size new growth to fully open, and harden off.

**Mango:** Apply organic fertiliser with sulphate of potash. Keep up water. Prune trees after harvest. **Pruning:** If it is a very large tree that needs to be pruned to a manageable size, the correct way is to cut back 1/3 of branches each year for three years. In the first year remove one of the largest branches, the following year remove another branch, and so on until the tree is of an acceptable shape and size. In this way you will have some fruit

each year while at the same time reducing the size of the tree. Spray with copper based spray or leaf microbes for anthracnose every fortnight.

**Passion-fruit:** Keep up the water.

**Pawpaw:** Plant pawpaws in threes (thin out to strongest). Plant out seedlings as the soil is still warm and by Autumn they will be stabilised, and then be ready to get an early start for Spring. De-bud your first year trees (keep one flower to try the fruit – if you must!)

Keep one male to eight female trees. Pawpaws are heavy feeders. Spray copper based spray or leaf microbes to prevent black spot.

**Persimmon:** Make sure trees are fully netted. Harvest time for early varieties.

**Strawberries:** Prepare sites for runners to be planted out at the end of the month. Keep well-watered to form new runners.

**Bananas:** Fertilise with organic fertiliser with sulphate of potash – 1 kg per stool. Keep up water; bag fruit; and cut off bells.

**Citrus:** Fruit thinning should be done this month. Leave one fruit every 150mm. Fertilise tree with organic fertiliser containing sulphate of potash, 1 kg for large trees and ½ kg for smaller trees. Keep up sprays of pest oil for leaf miner. Keep up the water.

## MARCH

**Custard Apples:** Fertilize trees – 20 gms of organic fertiliser per sq m to drip line. Harvest every 3 to 7 days. If mealy bug is a problem spray individual fruit with pest oil or wipe on metho and water (30% metho + 70% water).

**Figs:** Close to end of season.

**Lychee:** Less watering is required, but don't let the trees dry out. If Erinose mite appears, spray every 10 to 14 days with wettable sulphur from pinhead size new growth to fully open and hardened off.

**Low Chill Stone Fruit:** Water needs to

taper off now as trees begin to defoliate.

**Mango:** If any anthracnose fungus is visible, spray with a copper based spray every 2 weeks, or with 25 mls leaf microbes and 5 grams wettable sulphur per 1 litre of water.

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

**Pawpaw:** Plant out new trees. Apply boron now. 1 teaspoon per mature tree. Spray leaf microbes (25 ml leaf microbes per 1 litre of water) if black spot is seen.

**Persimmon:** Main harvest time. Decline water needs. Apply a little super fine lime and gypsum – 50 gms per sq metre of each.

**Strawberries:** Plant out new runners. If you want to leave last year's plants, prune only.

**Bananas:** Give stools a high organic potassium fertilizer – 200 grams per stool (any organic fertilizer that has added sulphate of potash).

**Citrus:** If any fungal problems arise, spray with pest oil and leaf microbes. Add the pest oil + 15 ml per litre of the leaf microbes. This will also control the citrus leaf miner and scale.

**Pruning Citrus:** Citrus trees need little pruning. If over-crowded, thin out after fruiting. Don't thin oranges or grapefruit severely but mandarins can be shortened back to the second or third shoot down the branch. Lemon trees are taller and less compact so keep them to a size easier to handle. Old trees can be cut severely but will take a year or two to recover and bear.

## 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.

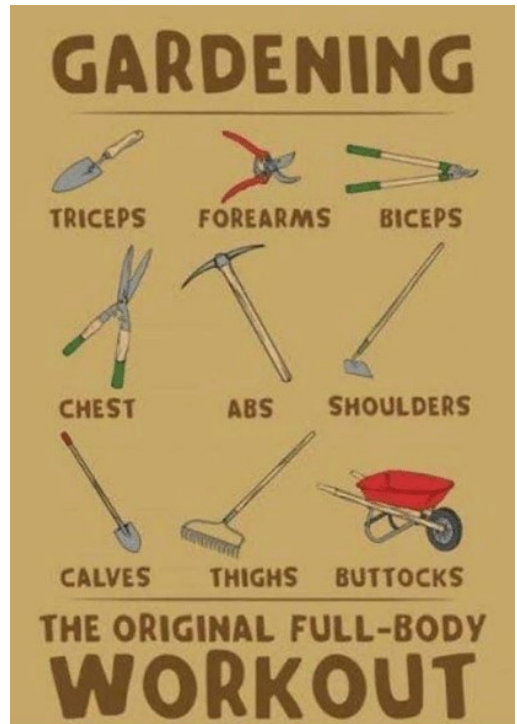
**Strawberries:** Plants should be coming away well. A little organic potassium fertiliser can be applied now. Use fish emulsion or kelp spray regularly over plants to keep in good health. Add 20 mls molasses per litre of water + 10 mls leaf microbes.

**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.

***“I cannot endure to waste anything so precious as autumn sunshine by staying in the house.”***

***- Nathaniel Hawthorne  
US author 1804-1864***



***“Someone has to stand up and say the answer isn't another pill. The answer is spinach.”***

***- Bill Maher***