#### Volume 20 - FEBRUARY 2016 Issue 2 GARDENING IN SUMMER

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GOLD COAST ORGANIC GROWERS Inc.

Established 1997

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OUR NEXT MEETING: Thursday 17th March

#### **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 \$1 members, \$3 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 GrowersBank:SuncorpBSB:484-799Account: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: \$10 an issue, or \$100 per year 1/2 page: \$20 an issue or \$200 per year full page: \$30 an issue or \$300 per year

#### 2015 Committee

President	Maria Roberson (07) 5598 6609
Vice President	David Freeman 07 5533 0119
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Seed Bank Seed Assistants	Lyn Mansfield 0409 645 888 John Clarke Maggie Golightly
Supper Co-ordinator	Paul Roberson (07) 5598 6609 Judy Reiser

**Newsletter Contributions:** Contributions and ideas welcome. Send in a photo of what's going on in your patch. Deadline for contributions is the **second Monday** of the month. Send your content to Dorothy Coe at: dorothy@dorothycoe.com

#### **Notice Board**

#### **Membership Renewals**

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

Name:Gold Coast Organic GrowersBank:SuncorpBSB:484-799Account: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:** Lise Racine (151), Val Sier (349), Joshua Walker & Chris Viehbock (371), Sue Beckinsale (373), Roger Peterson (330), Warren & Beverly Carlson (87), Geraldine McDonald (354), Jun Yoneda (374), Graham & Flora Dunne (375), Jasen Pankhurst (376), Henry Blonner (108), Denise Goodwin (335), Ros Griffith (378), Denis Byrne & Sandra Ridolfi (380), Virginia Brown (381), Lyn Tilley (382), Evelyn Douglas (383), Paul & Maria Roberson (4), Marion Symons (155), Karen Collins (350), Danielle Bohata (359), Doris James (360), Danny Li (384), Julie Townsend (385)

**February:** Barry O'Rourke (185), Karen Hart (198), Roger & Pauline Behrendorff (232), Barbara Morgan (246), Ken & Pat Jenyns (273), Anne-Maree Andrew (337), Andrew, Helen & Claudia Blum (344), Shem Pireh (361), Keith Rowell (362), Bill & Susan Smart (386), Daniel Raper (387)

**March:** Angela Anderson (323), Judy Reiser (338), John Clarke (345), Lana Beloff (363), Alex Dimos (364), Maggie Golightly (365), Fran Janes (366), Rachael Lebeter (367), Tricia Oh (368)

#### **Upcoming Guest Speakers**

**March** – Our March speaker, Gina Winter, has a farm-acy at Springbrook and has joined us as a guest speaker in the past. I have been following her Self-Help Farm Facebook Page for over a year now, and am consistently amazed by her innovative uses for everything from dandelions and stinging nettles, to elderflowers and red clover. She will be joining us in March to share some of her ideas for using herbs to increase our nutrient intake.

**April** – In April, we will be welcoming Kylie Nation, a local health and lifestyle writer. She has her own veggie patch and is an expert on the benefits of plant foods and healthy ways of preserving them. She will talk about the benefits of fermented foods and share some tips for fermenting our own beautiful veggies.

#### Workshops

27th Feb Compost & soils — with Dan

**19th Mar** Getting your garden ready for winter — with Dan

**23rd April** Herbs - cleaning products, soap making, soils & herbs — with Haley

28th June Composting — with Dan

25th July Wonderful world of worms — with Greg

For more information contact Lyn Mansfield at Gold Coast Permaculture M: 0409 645 888 E: <u>lynmansfield14@bigpond.com</u>

#### Thanks to Contributors this month:

Diane Kelly, Jill Barber, Dorothy Coe, Karen Hart, Mansfield, Neil Ross, and Rachael Lebeter.

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

#### President's Message

Hello Everyone,

I wonder if like me you find it difficult to remain enthusiastic about vegetable gardening at this time of year. The heat makes it difficult to enjoy the outdoors and it can be either too wet or too dry for crops to thrive. I reckon that summer time in the garden could almost be classed as an extreme sport, and the plants that grow there are the elite athletes on team Mother Nature. Some vegetables and herbs will perform better under the harsh conditions than others, so it's helpful to make the right selection for the varying seasonal conditions. Bear in mind for the purpose of this discussion I am going to talk about vegetables and herbs: fruit and nut trees are a subject for another time.

Seasonal planting is the gardener's pathway leading to success. When an up-to-date, local, seasonal planting guide is followed, you can be assured that you have chosen plants proven to grow in the climatic conditions that they are accustomed to. It can be tempting to plant a particular veg or herb out of its normal growing time because you really like it; however, it is usually not worth the effort or soil space to do so. Of course, you can be lucky, and a plant may prove to be an exception to the rule; however, a successful garden is built on more than chances and good luck. The best way to garden is to rule out as many potential problems as possible. Using a local guide is necessary because of the huge variability of climatic conditions across Australia, and it is completely unthinkable to use a planting guide from another country. It's just one of the many reasons to purchase Australian gardening books.

I personally look forward to autumn, when the temperature is cooler yet warm enough to grow a broad range of plants and, best of all, the pest population is starting to wane. So now is the perfect time to plan and prepare garden spaces for the upcoming bounty that the next season will bring.

New season seeds will be available on the SEED TABLE at the March Meeting, and perhaps you could start making a list now, and bring it on the night so you don't forget anything. We are open to seed requests if you have them, just tell the SEED TABLE volunteers or let me know on meeting nights. We are always on the lookout for something new or really successful that you have trialled in your garden, and would appreciate a donation of seeds that we could sell at the seed table. As always, we require seed donations from members as this helps keep our prices down.We haven't had to raise our prices for many years, but the cost of seed has risen so much over the last couple of years that this may have to change. I also think that being more self-reliant when it comes to producing seed is a vital skill we should all master. All donations are gratefully received; however, there are a few steps that need to be followed to ensure seeds are kept in a viable state. If you have some seed or the potential of seed and are not sure how to go about harvesting or storing it, please don't hesitate to talk to me on meeting nights or phone me: I am only too happy help.

Happy growing, Maria.



#### Workshops (Contd.)

#### All You Can Eat Gardens presents - An Introduction to Natural Beekeeping

With beekeeping in crisis around the world, and a growing need to produce and pollinate our own food, we must understand and use small scale, bee-friendly practices. Permaculture designer Tim Auld reveals an exciting, old method of beekeeping, the top bar bee hive, and principles of natural beekeeping.

Date: Saturday 12th Mar 2016 Time: 9am - 4pm

#### Topics covered include:

- The basics of honey bee biology
- A brief history of beekeeping
- Threats to the modern bee
- Principles of natural beekeeping
- Products and expected production
- A taste of a variety of different honeys
- How to establish and manage a colony
- Inspecting and harvesting
- Obtaining a permit and hive placement
- Problems, pests and diseases
- Harvest honey from a live bee hive!

#### \$95 per adult, or \$55 for half the day.

Email tim@allyoucaneatgardens.com.au or call Tim 0421 405 783 to book.

Bring a beekeeping suit, or wear light coloured long sleaves, long pants and closed shoes. Veils and gloves will be supplied. Vegetarian lunch and refreshment provided.

The venue is Auld Farm: 484 Stockleigh Road, Stockleigh, QLD.

#### Basic Introduction to Aquaponics B

Discover the benefits of Aquaponics, how it works, what you can achieve and how to setup an aquaponics system.

Date: Saturday 19th Marc Time: 9.30am

Where: Nerang Community Garden Located in Country Paradise Parklands231 Beaudesert-Nerang Rd, Nerang By: Nerang Aquaponics Study Centre

Cost: NCGA Members: \$2 Visitors: \$12 or \$15 per couple

Morning Tea included

RSVP by 12th March Email: nerangcommunitygarden@gmail.com



#### Q & A - November 2015 By Karen Hart

# Q. How would it be to purchase a tropical 'Anna' Apple and use 'Golden Dorset' as the pollinator?

A. If not pollinated, then only expect to get 3 or 4 fruits. Maria suggested that it wasn't worth bothering with. You would need to cover fruit with paper bags to protect it from fruit fly.

#### Q. A pot of 'Pink Lady' apples was bought with a white sheen on the skin. Normally they are given a vinegar bath to rid of pesticides, but why has the white sheen remained?

A. Margaret thinks that it is wax on the apples.

## Q. Cape gooseberries are being attacked by a beetle.

A. It will strip all the leaves and young shoots. Hand pick the beetles off or spray.

#### Q. A Carambola Cherry fruit tree was purchased from Tropical Fruit World. It has lots of flowers, but why doesn't it set fruit?

A. Maybe it's a Gramichama? It does not need pollination but may have been overly fertilised. Maria neglects hers and gets lots of fruit, but it is 6 or 7 years before fruiting.

# Q. Jill brought in some kale with mould and holes in the leaves.

A. It has been a bad year for bugs. Broccoli and cauliflower are also suffering. Suggest feeding it to the chooks! Shelley cuts hers down to around 8", and it reshoots, but the leaves are smaller. 'Red Russian' kale is best for the Gold Coast, and grows continually.

#### Q. How best to grow zucchinis? The fruit

#### grows to about 3" then gets tip rot.

A. It could be fruit fly sting. Do not compost rotten fruit – best to bin it instead or put it in black plastic bags and leave them in the sun to solarise.

# Q. 'Neem' works well on stink bugs, but what else could it be used for?

A. Maria thinks that it is a hormone disrupter so she is a little dubious. She used it for 'madagascar fly' for her cattle, but it didn't seem to be successful. Shelley has put neem pellets in the ground near plants as it is systemic.

Q.+ A. Vinegar and salt can be used as a weed killer - 2 litres of vinegar with ½ cup of salt. You can try vinegar without the salt, with a little molasses in a spray bottle for weeds. Sea water reduced to 1:10 and molasses added is an alternative. Boiling water also works well, especially on paths not near other plants.

#### Q. Is this a crazy season for mangoes? The tree had lots of flowers and was starting to set fruit, but now there are none?

A. Last year we had late rain – not until December, but this year we had heavy rain just when the fruit was setting.

#### Q & A - January 2016 By Karen Hart

#### Q. Megan brought in some mulberry leaves with yellowing on the edges of the old leaves. She thought that it gets plenty of nitrogen?

A. It is thought to be some mineral deficiency so it was suggested to add rock minerals. Yellowing on new growth is usually a nitrogen deficiency.

# Q. Is there anything one can do about a neighbour's trees which are causing problems?

A. It is best to keep on friendly terms so that one may be able to approach them for a solution.

# Q. Tropical pears were brought in with blackened patches on the skin? Could it be fruit fly or another problem?

A. Paul cut one open and decided that it was stung by fruit fly as it contained larvae.

#### Q. Heather found some moths in the garden, and wondered if there was cause for concern?

A. 'Gardening Australia' did not think they were a problem.

# Q. A snake bean question. Why are purple snake beans are being chewed down one side?

A. Possibly a native rat or mouse doing the damage.

#### Q. Shelley asked what variety of avocados she should get that are good pollinators and suitable for the Gold Coast?

A. David suggested Type A and B – Wurtz are late season; Reed are the best eating and Shepherd are coming in now – the earliest in the season. They are the hardest trees to grow and need the 'Rolls Royce' treatment – ie the soil biology and weather need to be right. They are a rainforest tree, needing lots of organic matter. They are heavy calcium feeders, and ideally need a pH of 6.5. They like organic Lucerne hay or sugar cane mulch. Avocados can suffer from 'phytofera' disease which can be controlled by 'Phytoguard', a dip available from Dean Metcalfe from Tamborine.

## Q. What has happened to Daleys as they have not got any supply of avocados?

A. Margaret River farmers are buying up Fuerte avocados to plant out so stocks are being depleted. There is a new breed, 'Secondo" being trialled.

# Q. A photo of an eggplant with 'crocodile skin' was produced? What might be causing it?

A. It could be dry or something rubbing against it. Possibly sunburn. They need to be picked when shiny and glossy and young. They should have some weight to them. Grow in full sun but possibly at the end of January/February they would benefit from shade cloth, the white one with 50% blockout. Our best growing season is winter, the opposite to the southern states, who rest their crops in winter; we rest in January/February as there is too much humidity and rain.

#### Q. A plant with seed pods was in the garden when residents moved in, and they are was wondering what it was? Could it be a mung bean?

A. The suggestion was that it be dug up and disposed of as dangerous to eat, if it's something that one was unsure of.

#### Q. What is the best way to go about starting a new garden?

A. Add plenty of compost to the current soil. Do not buy any in. Purchase a Manutek soil pH tester to check the soil before you do anything! Check the colour chart: a neutral soil is around 7, the ideal 6.5pH. If it's too alkaline, it needs flowers of sulphate or use a neutral pH compost. If it's acidic, use agricultural lime calcium carbonate. If using lime, do not fertilise within 2 weeks. Mushroom compost is very alkaline. Our library has books on organic gardening or, if you're not a member, try the public library. A green manure crop is good to start with (6-7 weeks). Lise adds raw manure (cow's is best) and then must grow 2 green manure crops - 70% legumes and 30% grains – before planting vegetables.

## Q. What are your thoughts on 'dynamic lifter'?

A. It is a strong manure with lots of nitrogen, so needs to be applied sparingly.

#### Presentations by Club Members from our January meeting by Rachael Lebeter

Yet again I was blown away by the wealth of knowledge shared by the wonderful club members who stood up to present at our last two meetings. There is something so festive about seeing people we know so well get up there and blow us away with their specialized knowledge; it creates a real sense of community and all of the volunteers are so appreciated. We will be doing this again in the future, so let me know if you have a 5-minute lesson -bite that *you* would like to share!

#### Angie – Thermomix Demonstration

In December, Angie tempted our taste-buds with a cooking demonstration. I don't think our meeting room has ever smelled so good! Not only did she make some wonderful treats for our "harvest" themed supper table, but she also showed us some great ideas for using our wonderful produce to make gifts and goodies!

We might have to get the proper recipes for Jill's wonderful column, but the demo included:

- Salt rub: Gently roast star anise, fennel seed, cinnamon sticks, pepper and 5-spice. Blend it up with sea salt to make a nice rub for meats.
- Dukkah: Roast and blend hazelnuts, coriander seed, cumin seed, fennel seed and sesame seeds.
- Ginger and turmeric paste: Perfect for freezing and an easy, fresh addition to curries and stir-fires
- Red curry paste: Roasted coriander seed (which I find easier to grow than the leaves!), chilli, ginger, ground paprika, garlic, lime juice and zest, lemon grass and a little peanut oil added slowly to emulsify the spices. This is another great thing to have in the freezer.
- CADA: Blended coconut, almonds, dates and apples makes a surprisingly

tasty and filling snack, or add yoghurt and breakky is sorted.

- Sundried tomato and cashew dip: The title characters plus capsicum, garlic, parmesan, verjuice or vingegar and olive oil.
- Garlic and herb dip: An easy way to use any herbs you have is to blend with garlic, a shallot and philly or feta cheese. Yum!

#### Cathie Hodge – Bushfire Preparation

September to November is our most severe fire season, and while we have had a fairly mild summer this year, everything can dry out really quickly. The last big fire on the Coast was in 1991, and while it may have faded from recent memory, it is ever more important to avoid complacency. Cathie, a member of the Tallebudgera Valley Rural Fire Brigade, suited up in her high-viz to give us a timely reminder of the importance of bush fire safety. The most important point? Make a plan! Cathie directed us to a range of excellent resources to help with this, in particular the Bushfire Survival Plan Booklet, and the local fire brigade. Do you have a plan?

#### Ian Lee – Honey Extraction

The breadth of lan's knowledge about plants and bees never ceases to amaze me, and then there are all of the marvelous flowers and fruits that come out of his and Margaret's garden and grace our raffle table! At January's meeting lan opened the year of speakers for us by putting on his bee-suit and showing us how to rob a hive. We have heard a few speakers talk about the importance of bees and the basics of bee-keeping, but we had not really considered the extraction process until this meeting. It turns out that it is not so simple as avoiding stings; and arm muscles are definitely required!

Once you have established that the hive has enough honey to rob, you smoke it with pine needles. Frames are removed from the center of the box working outwards, and the bees need to be gently brushed off of them. The caps of wax are removed from the cells of honey with a knife before the frame is placed in an extractor, which is essentially a big bucket with a spinning frame-holder and a tap at the bottom for removing honey. Frames may contain 2-3 kilos of honey and need to be spun in the extractor for 15 minutes. changing directions midway through. While some bee-keepers have electric extractors, Diane's hand-operated version, which she brought for lan to use in his demo, is certainly enough to tire those arms out - I tried it! Honey is strained on removal from the extractor, and capped as soon as possible - the more contact that it has with air, the more viscous it is.

Just as a demonstration of how knowledgeable you all are, it turns out that Ian was instrumental in designing a widely-used trap to combat hive beetles, which are a common pest affecting bees and bee-keepers alike. Who would have thought we had someone so prestigious amongst us? And who else among us is hiding a great achievement, I wonder?

#### Ann-Maree – Coombabah Community Garden

Ann-Maree has graced us with a presentation at a couple of our Members Only nights. She is an engaging speaker, and this time I was so interested in what she was saying that I completely neglected to take notes for the second half of her speech. Therefore please forgive any glaring errors or omissions here!

Ann-Maree spoke about the 4-year-young Coombabah Community Garden, which is a community garden with a real difference: rather than have individual beds in a communal area, all of the 25 beds at the garden are farmed communally. The garden now has about 20 members, all of whom pay \$20 and have unlimited access to the space.

The plots used to be operated on a "bring what you want, do what you want, plant what you want" basis, which sounds a bit like hap-

py anarchy to me (that might just be the result of being a school teacher though!). But according to Ann-Maree, even that approach worked. That said, the gardens do now have a To Do board with a list of jobs that people are surprisingly good at working through, and she did say that this has led to a much more organized approach to managing the beds. The list is made on a Thursday (by Ann-Maree, incidentally), and an informal working bee is held on Sunday mornings, with 10-12 members working and then splitting the produce available at the end. It almost sounds too idyllic to be possible, but I just love the idea of this communal farming so reminiscent of the past, and it is so uplifting to know that it is successful in a world where so often we hear that people, and the community, have gone to the dogs. Coombabah Community Garden is guite an inspiration, and I hope that it keeps on farming communally far into the future.

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#### Veggie Swap by Dorothy Coe

Our Veggie Swap concept has now taken off. After the local Sun newspaper did an article promoting what I was trying to achieve, the local Southern Beaches Community Gardens at Tugun contacted me and asked if we would like a space every week to do our veggie swaps.

Of course I jumped at this opportunity and we held our first veggie swap meeting on Thursday 11th Feb. We had about 10 people turn up including myself, Chris Winton, Maria Roberson, Angie Anderson, Ian and Margaret Lee, and Shem Pireh from our club.



Everyone bought at least 2-3 veggies to swap and some bought an abundance of produce to swap. I traded eggs, limes, pumpkin, kombucha, seeds and worm juice for pineapple, Wampee fruit, bananas, honey, eggplants, chillies and lemons.





My abundance of produce to bring home.

Margaret Lee bought along some lovely varieties of tropical fruit such as pineapples, cherry guavas, carambola (star fruit) and Wampee fruit which I tasted and was delicious!



It was also a nice social afternoon and we spent some time catching up and looking around the community gardens to see what their members were growing and one of their members had several large lettuces growing in full sun (that had NOT gone to seed) so looks like you can grow lettuce in the heat of Summer. I need to track down the lettuce guy and find out what his secret is but I imagine it's LOTS of water!





We will be holding the veggie swap now on an ongoing basis every Thursday between 4-5pm at the Southern Beaches Community Gardens at Tugun which is in Tugan Street, just behind the [Behind Tugun Community Center], 414 Coolangatta Rd ,Tugun.

As time goes on and more people become interested in the veggie swap concept we maybe able to organise more meetups in other locations and on weekends but once a week on Thursday is a great start.

Feel free to check out and LIKE the facebook page I created www.facebook.com/ veggieswapgoldcoast. I have also created a GROUP page whereby if you click on the JOIN button I can send you a weekly reminder about the meetings and you will also be able to chat with other members and organise some swaps directly with others. The GROUP page link is at <u>www.facebook.com/</u> groups/veggieswapgoldcoast/

Any questions just let me know — 0412 382 989 or dorothy@dorothycoe.com



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#### Getting to Know... Margaret Reichelt By Diane Kelly

Recently I received an email from Margaret Reichelt asking me if I thought our Club members would like some spare gardening magazines that she had. I offered to call by and collect them, and not being one to miss an opportunity for a newsletter interview, I asked Margaret would she be interested in sharing with us a bit of her organic gardening story.

Since then I have learnt a couple of things about Margaret:

- There are only half a dozen or so names before hers on the chronological membership list, so she's been a member of our Club for at least eleven or twelve years, and
- when I looked on "Google Earth", I realized that the hill behind her property must have a magnificent view over the Little Nerang Dam.

Margaret and her husband Russell moved to Mudgeeraba in 1990, after living in places as diverse as Townsville and Canberra. Russell had family here, and he and Margaret knew they liked the area, so they bid by phone at an auction to buy five acres of land in the Mudgeeraba hinterland. The property is reasonably hilly, but that just means the views to the Coast are better, and there was a small house which the Reichelts made their home (it is only recently that a large verandah, pizza oven and storage space has been added to the original house).



The entrance to Margaret's home is quite dramatic, with slate tiles, a Fraser Island creeper, and a depiction of an owl flying through ghost gums that Margaret asked a local artist to design for her. The verandah extends around two sides, and you can catch views of the Gold Coast at Nobbys Beach through the trees.

When Margaret and Russell moved to their new home, the main vegetation problem was lantana - and as Margaret said, lots of it! There were also jacaranda and poinciana trees, which are now fully grown, and provide shade and delicate foliage. Also on the property, as you come up the driveway, is a plantation that the Reichelts planted twelve years ago, which is made up of native timber trees red and white cedars, white beech and blue quondongs. I asked Margaret about watering trees - they have two 20,000 litre tanks, but no town water, and she said that basically she waters trees when they are first planted, but after that they learn to survive on rainfall water.

Now to the problem trees. There is a row of fig trees below the verandah of the house, and they have started to cause problems with their invasive root system. Margaret has an area behind the house that gets plenty of sunshine for growing vegetables, but unfortunately the tree roots have grown so that they are now moving into that area. It is quite amazing to see how the feeder roots have moved through the soil, and into the retainer wall below the house.

They are not causing any structural problems to the house or the retainer wall, but they sure like the soil in the vegie patch!



## The roots of the fig trees – hopefully not heading for the tanks!

And now to the "good" trees. I asked Margaret what her plan had been for growing trees on the property, and it was to "grow natives". This is something she certainly has done, because Margaret is part of the GCCC "Land for Wildlife" program, and has planted around 100 tree seedlings a year on her property. This program is one that "aims to protect native wildlife and flora for the benefit of future generations", and to date has worked on protecting over 50,000 hectares of habitat for wildlife in South East Queensland. Part of this program is also the eradicating of "bad" plants from properties, including things like lantana and tobacco plants.

Margaret is also involved with "Landcare", a group that works on handling environmental issues – each month 30 or 40 people join together in the Austinville area to work on clearing weeds and bushes like tobacco plants, cassias and lantana from the creek areas, and planting appropriate trees as replacements.

I asked Margaret about her other interests, and these range from membership of a book club and an acapella choir (definition: without musical accompaniment) to knitting and to cooking. The singing group is travelling to Russia to compete in a "Choir Olympics" in July, and this will include the chance to tour some of the country. They've already competed in Vietnam and China. I also asked Margaret about her knowledge of plants, which is obviously quite wide. She has not done any formal studies, but has read a lot, and obviously knows a considerable amount about some very unusual plants. Her dream for the area at the back of the property was to grow exotics, then native fruits, then other fruits. The soil is not good, but Margaret has learnt that if you put a tree in its right spot. then it will grow with very little maintenance (hence the avocado tree, with many fruit on it, less two that are now in my fruit bowl waiting to ripen!). One of the trees in this area is a guava, and you will need to look at the newsletter on the website to see the beautiful colours of the bark – and the fruit of the pomegranate tree.



The guava tree, and its richly coloured bark



The beautiful colours of the pomegranate fruit.

I asked Margaret about the wildlife that visits her property. There are wallabies (much to the delight of an English visitor who recently came to stay); green frogs; and carpet snakes. There have also been regent bowerbirds, which have beautiful yellow and black feathers, and who come to eat the native raspberries, and there are rosella who come to eat the mulberries. Other (unwelcome) visitors have been some peacocks that were released into the bushland near Margaret's place, and who badly damaged the vegetable garden.

#### Getting to Know... Margaret Reichelt (Contd.) By Diane Kelly

So, at the end of the interview with Margaret. I asked her a few guestions about gardening as a way of life. Although not from a strongly gardening background (her parents did grow strawberries, sweet corn and peas in the backvard of their suburban block in Annerley). Margaret has always known that "organic is the only way to live". Her advice for any gardener - old or new - is to "feed the soil", because that where it all starts. As far as her garden is concerned, Margaret knew that it was never going to just be land-care she viewed it as a picture, and says "it was always going to be beautiful". And in the midst of the peace and serenity of the Mudgeeraba hinterland, far above the Little Nerang dam, I think she has got that absolutely correct.

#### Jill Barber's Garden Update Eternal Optimism

I loved that phrase in Rachael Lebeter's article last month, "the eternal optimism that is gardening". How true! I am writing yet again about my garden, not because it's so successful, but just to share with you some of my trials, tribulations and joys, in the hope that you may be both encouraged to continue in your garden, despite possible setbacks, and to also write an article to share some of it with me.

For all I know, I may be the only one of us whose seeds continue to not germinate, time after time of planting, despite religiously keeping them moist, sundrenched and verbally encouraged daily. There may be no one else out there who expires in the humidity, and becomes overwhelmed with all the prolific growth...of everything needing cutting back or pruning. Who else but me planted brassicas seeds time and time again last autumn, as my nicely prepared garden beds sat prepared and waiting for my seedlings...only to have a few pitiful ones finally emerge way past the right planting time, so that they grew up eventually in summer, when they would, of course, be infested with bugs. How about the carrots, which I finally discovered the trick of germination for...that the little rat(s) decided were choice morsels. Ditto for my sweet potatoes!

Never mind: I am of the eternal optimist variety (I did, after all, dash out, trapped a rat, and pulled up the remaining carrots so we could have some at least. And the bulk of the sweet potato is underground, anyway - hah! See pic). Furthermore, our beans gave us lots of good pickings for ages, and our mizuna, parsley, basil and Ceylon spinach (see pic) continue to serve us well. Moreover, the unseen benefits of gardening I find a blessing every time I work out there: the delight in early morning fresh air and fragrances; the physical strength I gain with the countless different tasks; the upliftment of my spirit as other problems recede into the background or disappear when bathed in nature spirits' lightness; my contribution in whatever measure to the wellbeing of my family and the planet, nutritionally and spiritually. I feel connected in such a nebulous yet powerful way to all living beings through my humble activity.

So, back to the drawing board, or the coal face, thinking I'd be smart this year, and get a jump on the winter/spring planting situation, I decided to *accept* the pitifulness of my poor struggling summer vegies instead of bemoaning it. Instead, in mid-December I planted a green manure crop of Cowpea and Japanese Millet in two beds, and at the end of January the same again plus Lablab Beans in another two, this time adding compost and biochar as well. These crops have thrived happily, I've been delighted to see.

However, whoops, be careful what you plant – the first lot have now flowered (see pic), so are well and truly ready to chop down and fork under, to add their goodies of nitrogen and humus to the soil, but it's still too humid for me to really do this work ... unless I tackle it in stages, at the crack of dawn (see pic), so this I did this morning. I also added compost at this point, and covered it with a light layer of lucerne mulch, to let it all rot down nicely, then voila! I'll have nice loamy soil. Did I mention that at this point I'm a total wreck and take the rest of the day and night to recover a semblance of my former lively self? I don't mind, mission accomplished, for another day. There's nothing to compare with the satisfaction of this completion. Now bring on the seedlings!



Sweet Potato



Green Manure ready to chop down





Green Manure chopped down and forked under

**Ceylon Spinach** 

#### Dorothy Coe's Garden Update Getting Ready for Autumn/Winter

A quick run down on my garden. Last week I wanted to prepare the soil in one of my garden beds for the Winter crop but I have left it a bit late to plant green manure crop so I I used my weeds instead. I had plenty of weeds growing in my garden bed due to letting it go a bit wild so I chopped back all the weeds (excluding seed heads) and dug those into the soil. It's a bit of an experiment but hopefully it will be ok.



The reason for the weeds being there in the first place is because I prefer to have weeds growing than nothing at all when I have no veggies growing.

When I was digging the weeds into the soil, the soil looked nice and there were plenty of worms.

A few days ago I planted heaps of seeds into trays and they are just staring to come up. For the first time I made my own seed raising mix instead of buying it from Bunnings and all good so far! (seed mix recipe pg 17)





Asian Greens and Rocket



Bush Beans and Climbing Beans

I do have a few things growing in two of my beds including capsicums, bell chillies, a random tomato plant which came up (probably from the compost) sweet potato which is taken over one whole bed, pepino which the animals seem to like and pumpkin.



Pumpkin vine with two very small pumpkins

I am also growing ginger, turmeric and lemongrass, as well as plenty of herbs.



Sweet Potato taking over one garden bed

I also have a miracle cucumber plant which died and came back to life about 3 times while it was a seedling—it was very neglected and was in a tiny seedling pot for months. I finally put it into the ground a couple of weeks ago and it has it's first cucumber coming on now.

#### Seed Raising Mix Recipe

This is just my recipe that I am trying out so only use it as a guide — feel free to modify.

- 1 Soil
- 1 Compost
- 2 Sand
- 1/4 Worm Castings
- 1 Perlite
- 1 Vermiculite

I sieved everything apart from the sand just to keep it fine as possible.

Perlite and Vermiculite purchased from Dave. His details are below.







#### Eco Challenge 2016 joins Toolona St Bleach Festival

Eco Challenge Gold Coast 2016 will join with Toolona St (Currumbin) as part of Bleach Festival on **19th March**.

And thanks to Climate Wave Enterprises for providing sustainable event management practices we're all going PLASTIC FREE & SOLAR POWERED, Yew!

Tugun's most famous resident, the iconic 90 year-old Moreton Bay Fig Tree takes centre stage once again as Bleach Festival's series of infamous street parties roll on.

Arrive early for the Surfrider Foundation Eco Challenge presented by Climate Wave Enterprises, a 100% solar powered, sustainable surfing lifestyle event that evolved from a love of the ocean, and features a wooden surfboard competition, displays, eco-market stalls and much more.

Discover the history of 'Jungen' (Tugun) as Banaam Events share the rich ties of the Gold Coast's 'Saltwater Mobs,' through expressions of art, music, workshops, food and storytelling from Elders.

After making new friends at one of the long communal dining tables, stroll beneath the lantern lights and branches of that beloved fig and wander into a twilight bliss as the sounds of Electrik Lemonade, Robbie Miller and Ivey emanate into the night." Thanks Bleach\* Festival

As this event is Plastic Free please bring your own water bottle which can be filled for a gold coin donation at the Water Swallow mobile hydration station & bring your own reusable coffee cups also. Ride your bike and leave it at the bike racks kindly provided by Active Travel Department, City of Gold Coast.

Also please take particular note of our 4 bin waste stations which include an Organic & Compostable bins as well as the traditional Landfill & Recycling bins. The idea being food scraps will be scraped off into the organic bin and the plates & cutlery will go in the compostables. At the end of the event the organic/food scraps will be collected by a lucky beneficiary. The compostables will be ground down into a manageable size to be composted through the Southern Beaches Community Garden rather than wasted by the standard practice of being dumped into landfill. This practice is one component of sustainable event management that this event encourages and we plan to assist other events to similarly lighten their impact on local resources and our environment.

#### 19th March

Eco Challenge: 12.00pm - 5.00pm

Toolona Street Festival: 4.00pm – 9.00pm

#### For more information goto ..

www.facebook.com/EcoChallengeGoldCoast www.climatewave.com To connect with event organisers contact Greg Howell 0414 939 942

## For more information about the Bleach Festival goto

www.bleachfestival.com.au

#### How Dirt Makes You Happy By Dorothy Coe

#### Antidepressant Microbes In Soil: How Dirt Makes You Happy

Prozac may not be the only way to get rid of your serious blues. Soil microbes have been found to have similar effects on the brain and are without side effects and chemical dependency potential. Learn how to harness the natural antidepressant in soil and make yourself happier and healthier. Read on to see how dirt makes you happy.

Natural remedies have been around for untold centuries. These natural remedies included cures for almost any physical ailment as well as mental and emotional afflictions. Ancient healers may not have known why something worked but simply that it did. Modern scientists have unraveled the why of many medicinal plants and practices but only recently are they finding remedies that were previously unknown and yet, still a part of the natural life cycle. Soil microbes and human health now have a positive link which has been studied and found to be verifiable.

#### Soil Microbes and Human Health

Did you know that there's a natural antidepressant in soil? It's true. Mycobacterium vaccae is the substance under study and has indeed been found to mirror the effect on neurons that drugs like Prozac provide. The bacterium is found in soil and may stimulate serotonin production, which makes you relaxed and happier. Studies were conducted on cancer patients and they reported a better quality of life and less stress.

Lack of serotonin has been linked to depression, anxiety, obsessive compulsive disorder and bipolar problems. The bacterium appears to be a natural antidepressant in soil and has no adverse health effects. These antidepressant microbes in soil may be as easy to use as just playing in the dirt. Most avid gardeners will tell you that their landscape is their "happy place" and the actual physical act of gardening is a stress reducer and mood lifter. The fact that there is some science behind it adds additional credibility to these garden addicts' claims. The presence of a soil bacteria antidepressant is not a surprise to many of us who have experienced the phenomenon ourselves. Backing it up with science is fascinating, but not shocking, to the happy gardener.

Mycobacterium antidepressant microbes in soil are also being investigated for improving cognitive function, Crohn's disease and even rheumatoid arthritis.

#### How Dirt Makes You Happy

Antidepressant microbes in soil cause cytokine levels to rise, which results in the production of higher levels of serotonin. The bacterium was tested both by injection and ingestion on rats and the results were increased cognitive ability, lower stress and better concentration to tasks than a control group.

Gardeners inhale the bacteria, have topical contact with it and get it into their bloodstreams when there is a cut or other pathway for infection. The natural effects of the soil bacteria antidepressant can be felt for up to 3 weeks if the experiments with rats are any indication. So get out and play in the dirt and improve your mood and your life.

#### Source: By Bonnie L. Grant , Gardening Know How www.gardeningknowhow.com



### GCOG

#### If you Only do One Thing this Month ..... Grow Some Celery By Diane Kelly

We tend to think of celery as a vegetable that we add to stock, soups, stews and casseroles for additional flavour. But a couple of tasty ideas are to mix thinly sliced celery with cooked beetroot cubes, or to make the classic Waldorf salad with pieces of fresh apple, seedless grapes, sliced celery and walnuts – which are then tossed in a good-quality mayonnaise.

Celery can be planted from March through to October, and requires a well-drained soil with a high level of organic matter and good water retention. Celery also likes an open, sunny position, is shallow-rooted, and can be grown on either level ground or in trenches. Trenches are used as a method of blanching the plants, which provides a more tender, subtleflavoured harvest. Another way to blanch the plants for the milder flavour and less stringy stems is to put a cylinder of cardboard or polypipe around them, or straw.

Celery seeds take 14-21 days to germinate, and should be soaked for 24 hours prior to sowing. Do not cover the seeds, but simply press them firmly into punnets of seed-raising mixture or sieved compost. When they have germinated, prick them out into small pots to be grown on prior to planting out (around six weeks). Plant the seedlings at 20-25 cm intervals, with 60-90 cm between rows.



Take care when planting, as shallow planting will result in plants that topple over, while planting too deeply will cause the crown of the plant to rot.

Your celery should be ready to harvest at around 14 weeks, and one advantage of growing plants at home is that you can harvest individual stalks and leaves as required. (I add the leaves in with the other ingredients when making tomato soup for extra flavour.) The remaining stems can be left to grow and produce flowers and seeds in the coming season.

Celery is a biennial plant, and plants that bolt to seed in the first season should be discarded. Ideally, if seed is to be suitable for saving, plants should pass through a cold winter period – a process called vernalisation. Plants are insect-pollinated – and be aware that celery and celeriac will cross-pollinate.

Another couple of hints:

- Celery is subject to leaf-spotting fungi, but you can keep the incidence to a minimum by regularly watering with seaweed products.
- Avoid growing celery and carrots together, as carrot fly will attack the roots of celery plants.
- Nutrient-stressed plants will be tough and stringy – remember that the plants have a high demand for water and nutrients.
- When blanching the stems, watch out for snails and slugs.
- When keeping celery in the fridge, store it separately – unwashed and wrapped – as it tends to absorb the odour of other foods. Consume within ten days.

So plan on planting some celery next month – add a generous bucketful of well-rotted manure or compost to a square metre of soil, and aim for a pH of 5.8 to 6.8. Then you will be ready to enjoy a crop that is well worth the effort.

#### **Recipes Column**

#### Homemade Mayonnaise

I just made this today and wanted to include it because it's easy and takes about **6 mins** to make and is free from the added preservatives, sugar etc would be in the store bought meyo.

It's based on Jamie Oliver's recipe.

#### Ingredients

- 2 free-range egg yolks
- 1 heaped teaspoon Dijon mustard
- 500 ml mixed oils (you can go less oil, to taste so just keep tasting it as you go.
- 1-2 tablespoons white wine vinegar
- ½ lemon
- sea salt to taste

#### Method

Whisk the egg yolks in a bowl, then add the mustard and whisk together. Gradually add about half the oil, VERY VERY SLOWLY at first using ONLY A COUPLE OF DROPS for the first minute then whisking continuously for around 4 minutes, or until thickened. NOTE: I had to make this twice because I didn't add the oil slowly enough the first time and then the meyo wouldn't thicken.

Once you've added about half the oil, whisk in 1 tablespoon of vinegar – this will loosen the mixture slightly and give it a paler colour.

Continue to gradually add the remaining oil, whisking continuously. Season with a pinch of salt, a squeeze of lemon juice and a little more vinegar, if needed.

Store in a sterilised jar in the fridge for up to one week.

#### Homemade mustard

This is another Jamie Oliver recipe but not one I have tried so if you do try it, let me know how it goes.

#### **Ingredients**

- 100 g yellow mustard seeds
- 150 ml Champagne vinegar , (you can also use cider vinegar)
- 150 ml white wine
- 4-5 sprigs of fresh tarragon

#### Method

Place the mustard seeds, vinegar, white wine and 2 teaspoons of sea salt in a glass bowl and cover with clingfilm. Set aside for 3 days.

On the third day, place all the ingredients in a food processor, picking the tarragon leaves first, then blitz until smooth. Add a few splashes of water to loosen, if needed.

Taste, adjust the seasoning if necessary, then store in a sterelised jar – it will keep in the fridge for up to a month.

#### By Dorothy Coe

Please email your yummy recipes to Jill for inclusion soon: jillbarber611@gmail.com

# Recipe submission deadline is the second Monday of each month.

#### 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 shill 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:** Prepares 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  $\frac{1}{2}$  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

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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.

#### Brisbane Organic Growers Handbook

#### VEGETABLES

#### **FEBRUARY**:

Asian Greens, Beans (French, Snake), Beetroot, Brocolli, Cabbage, Capsicum, Carrot, Cauliflower, Chilli, Choko, Kale, Leeks, Lettuce, Marrow, Mustard Greens, Onions, Parsnip, Pumpkin, Radish, Rhubarb, Shallots, Silverbeet, Sunflower, Sweet Potato, Tomato.

#### MARCH:

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

#### 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 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.

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.

Next meeting: Thursday 17th March 2016

Meeting place: Cnr Guineas Creek Road & Coolgardie Street Elanora, Gold Coast Meetings held: 3rd Thursday of the Month

# NEWSLETTER



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