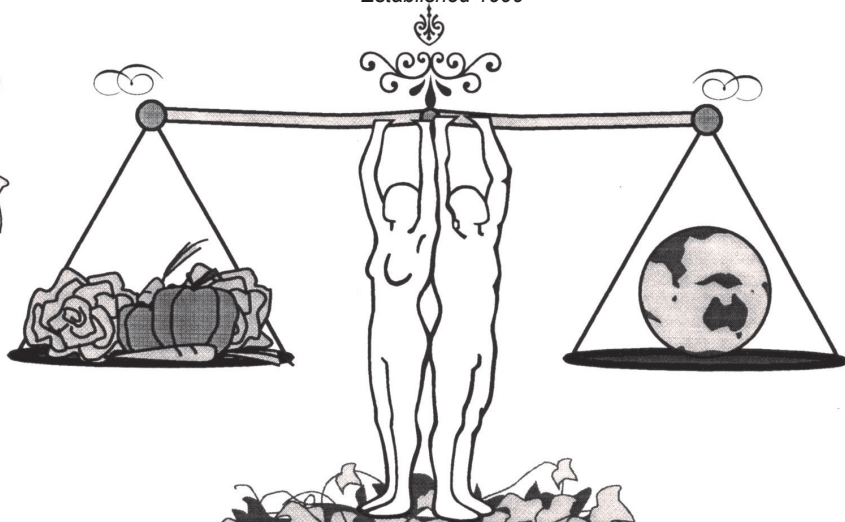


GOLD COAST ORGANIC GROWERS Inc.

Established 1999



NEWSLETTER

Volume 15

NOVEMBER 2012

Issue 11

GARDENING IN SPRING

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OUR NEXT MEETING: Thursday 17 January

The Aims of G.C.O.G. Inc.

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 Growers

Bank: Suncorp

BSB: 484-799

Account: 0014-21651

Seed Bank: \$2.00 each.

Members Market Corner:

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

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: \$10 an issue, or \$100 per year (11 issues)

1/2 page: \$20 an issue or \$200 per year

full page: \$30 an issue or \$300 per year

2012 Committee

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Seed Bank	Roger Griffiths (07) 5530 5067
Seed Assistant	Peter Seymour-Smith (07) 5596 5678
Supper Co-ordinator	Jenny Davis (07) 5599 7576

Newsletter:

Contributions and ideas welcome.

Email Angela at w.a.anderson@bigpond.com

Thanks to Contributors: Diane Kelly, Jill Barber, Maria Roberson, Chris Winton

Notice Board

Membership Renewels

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

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

Remember to put your Name and Membership Number in the comment field.

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

Overdue: Ross & Helena Kelso (184), Gary & Jenny Spence (327), Renato Morandini (213), Liz Spittall (154), Justin Robinson (332), Jase Hillyer (333), Leah Galvin (292), Geoffrey Williams (293), Greg & Val Sbeghen (120), Robert & Donna Boston (197), Roslyn Griffith (264)

November: Paul & Maria Roberson (4), Marie Rudd (12), Karen Hart (198), Ross & Jenny Davis (199), David Wyatt & Helen Wainwright (284), Scott Godfredson (311)

January 2013: Marion Symons (155), Peter & Patricia Edwards (163), Anissa Loades (228), Roger Griffiths (272), John & Jessica Steytler (313), Winsome Gunning (314), Julie Abraham (315), Deborah Anker (336)

GCOG on the Web

From the Library

All library books and DVDs are listed online.
<http://www.goldcoastorganicgrowers.org.au/library-books.pdf>

Newsletters

To look up past newsletters from 2010:-
<http://www.goldcoastorganicgrowers.org.au/newsletters.html>

Facebook

We are now on facebook:-
<http://www.facebook.com/gcorganic>

Gold Coast City Council Active and Healthy Program

Community Gardening Workshops Composting and Worm Farming

Come along to Council's free sustainable gardening workshops where you can learn all about composting and worm farming to recycle your waste and improve your garden. Tea and coffee are provided and all you need to bring are closed shoes.

Time: Saturday between 10am and 12pm
Nov 17th - Banksia Park Community Centre
Dec 8th - Robina Library
Jan 19th - Southern Beaches Community Garden, Tugun

For more information or to register for a FREE workshop near you, call (07) 5581 6855.

Visit one of the Community Gardens
<http://www.gcparks.com.au/activities.aspx?page=37>

- Southern Beaches Community Garden
- Varsity Vegies Community Garden
- Peachey Community Garden - Ormeau
- Joan Park Community Garden - Southport
- Nerang
- Loders Creek - Southport.
- Labrador - Olsen Avenue, Labrador Park

GCCC's Healthy Cooking Workshops
<http://www.gcparks.com.au/events.aspx>
and choose the cooking category.

Classes are held all over the coast - Coomera, Labrador, Nerang, Currumbin, Kirra with themes such as Cooking with Herbs, 5 Great Salads, Super Smoothies, and Healthy Cooking on a Budget.

Veggie Swap on Facebook

Setup by club member Debbie, for local people to swap their excess veggies. It's quite active already so have a look ...

<https://www.facebook.com/HomeGrownSwapGoldCoast>

President's Message

Hello Everyone,

As most of you will know, Paul and I have just spent a month in France and though I'm happy to be home, I must say it was a bit of a shock to see how dry it is here. My father said to me the other day that "Every day is a day closer to rain". I hope it is sooner rather than later, as it makes gardening nearly impossible when the soil is this dry. Like me, you probably had grand plans for a bountiful spring/summer vegetable patch, brim full of the season's bounty. Now is probably the time for a rethink on what to plant and what is worth keeping alive. You need to be a bit of a gambler when it comes to extreme weather periods, sometimes you win and sometimes you lose, here's hoping we all pick a winner.

So what do we plant? My advice is to plant what you love to eat and maybe put off the more 'experimental' for when the growing conditions are more kind. We will get some rain pretty soon I reckon but in the mean time, don't overlook using grey water or water from the washing machine to make up the shortfalls in your water regime. If you are concerned about chemical contaminants in your grey water, it is pretty easy to swap over to garden friendly laundry products. Supermarket shelves are full of suitable choices, just read the labels for peace of mind. Some may find the idea of using grey water in the garden unpalatable; however, I find the idea of all that water just going down the drain and not being used for a good purpose extremely unpalatable.

Some plants worthy of consideration for planting would be pumpkins and sunflowers, both of which are pretty hardy and can take a bit of hot dry weather. The club has a number of different varieties of pumpkin on the seed table for just \$2 per pack. There is the obligatory Butternut and my favourite Jap (also known as Kent) which I find extremely versatile. It can be used for soups and roasted or mashed, it has a lovely sweet flavour and practically grows itself.

Sunflowers are really simple to grow and kids seem to be fascinated by them. What better way to introduce the next generation to gardening, than by having them help you to plant a packet of Sunflower seeds? We have two varieties for sale, Giant Russian and Sunbird. Giant Russian as its' name suggests, is tall growing to 2 metres with a large flower head spanning 12cm. Sunbird is more of a standard size and has a bright happy face. Both make a lovely addition to the summer garden.

Thanks go to everyone who chipped in to help out during my absence at the last meeting and a special thank you to Cathy Hodge our vice pres for taking the meeting for me at such short notice. We are very lucky to have such a great bunch of people at GCOG, members and committee alike, every one rubs along together quite nicely I think.

Hard to believe that it is the end of 2012 already, I think it has been a good year for the club. The membership is strong and we have made a few subtle changes to keep up with modern technology. We have had great guest speakers and good hearty discussions during member Q and A sessions. Everyone has been doing a great job at bringing a plate of food for the supper table and an item for the raffle table, both of which always have an amazing array of diversity, please do keep up the good work.

I hope you all have a special Christmas and fabulous New Year and look forward to seeing you at the next meeting in January 2013.

Happy growing, Maria.

Prostate Awareness Twin Towns & Tweed Coast

Just a click away:

www.prostateawarenessaustralia.com
or contact Ross Davis for more info:
rossco12@bigpond.com

Organic Vegetable Growing *Did You Know?*

Grown for their abundant leaf harvest, **silver beet** and **Swiss chard** are selections of beetroot that fail to develop a bulbous base.

Dedicated **seed savers** are desperately needed to save cauliflower varieties, because many have already been lost to cultivation through cross-pollination with other Brassicas. Flowering annuals, including stocks and alyssum, belong to the Brassica family.

Radish flowers and **Rocket flowers** like all brassica blooms are very attractive to native bees, parasitic wasps and other species of insects. Leave some plants to run to flower because of the beneficial insects they attract to your garden.

Some gardeners use **sweet potato** as a colonising groundcover to **improve poor soil**. Planting sweet potato provides a protective cover to the soil, and also helps to retain soil moisture and build up levels of organic matter by creating its own mulch. The harvest from crops grown in this manner is less than for crops planted in good soil, but as this is not the prime purpose of this planting, any harvest obtained is considered a bonus.

Planting Tip: Slow-germinating seeds such as parsnips and carrots are easily lost or forgotten. Using fast-growing marker plants such as radish or lettuce when sowing slow-germinating seeds can have several benefits.

Mixing and sowing the fast growers with the slow-germinating seed can help to spread the seed over a larger area, thereby avoiding overcrowding. You can harvest the radish and young lettuce when the parsnips and carrots have reached seedling stage, thereby overcoming the need to thin them out. Sprinkling fast-growing seeds between rows of slower-growing seeds also ensures that watering is not forgotten, and other seedlings are not mistakenly planted over the top.

Annette McFarlane



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An Evening with Gina Winter By Jill Barber

Gina has come and talked with us before, but this evening was different. She began her topic of "Using Herbs as Food and as Medicine" very clearly coming from the perspective of her previous occupation, nursing, with an emphasis on self-help and self-healing, as she encourages people to take responsibility for their own wellbeing and health. She hopes to encourage people to grow and use plants daily that are freely available and safe, both to maintain good health and for use if illness occurs.

So somewhat surprisingly, Gina began with the importance of **water!** Most people are dehydrated, we learnt! Being 75% of our bodies, and 95% of our brains, water is so important for our health and wellbeing. We need it to lubricate our joints, carry hormones throughout our body, release toxins and keep our digestive tract in working order to not overwork the liver. Without enough of it, Gina informed us, there is a build up of plaque in our veins, we can get headaches from dehydration (thirst being the last sign of it!), our kidneys are compromised, and we can experience aches and pains in our joints as well as indigestion and dyspepsia. A healthier way to go is to eat low processed food and minimise our tea, coffee and juice or sweet drink intake as the latter are diuretics to be avoided.

Instead, water is best drunk, at least half an hour before meals, and preferably free of poisonous additives such as fluoride (This we can obtain in its natural and beneficial form from celery). Water is a great solvent for herbs, which together hydrate and add nutrients to our body. And so we moved on to **Gina's herbs**, which she encouraged us to grow within handy reach of our kitchens so that we can just grab handfuls of different ones everyday to give us all the vitamins and minerals we need in their healthiest and most absorbable form, just adding them to our salads or making them into teas. Most of the following she had samples of to pass around for our closer inspection.

There was **meadowsweet**, which is high in vitamins A, B, C and K, is great for in/digestion or heart burn and can be drunk in a tea, with various additions for different reasons. Examples are slippery elm, which coats the mucous membrane, astragalus for the immune system, cinnamon to regulate the blood sugar, magnesium as a muscle relaxant, nasturtium leaves as an antibiotic, aloe vera for cleansing and toning of the bowel, lemon or apple cider vinegar for its alkalinity, as well as alfalfa and raspberry leaf as they are also high in vitamin K.

Yarrow contains so many vitamins! There are vitamins A, B, 1, 2, 3...magnesium and more. The leaves can be used in a salad or as medicine, using two teaspoons of chopped leaves to make a cup of tea. It is a healing agent, being used to lower temperature if there is a fever, to help stop bleeding, as a blood cleanser if the body is toxic or as a tonic if it is rundown, and can be used as an antiseptic to wash cuts. Also, it helps compost breakdown (as does comfrey).

Aloe vera is another healer, being a cure-all for pain relief generally, such as for sunburn, abrasions, cuts and as an antibiotic. No wonder it is so effective, containing vitamins A, B, 1, 2, 3, 6, potassium....and lots of micro minerals. Just a little can revitalise the system; when the pulp is blended with lemon juice it helps to break down mucous.

Pain is an indicator in the body, Gina told us: we need to listen to it, and nurture ourselves with natural things, such as fresh air. It is purer, fresher, more invigorating to have real plants rather than processed ones, she assured us. One such wonderful herb with lots of vitamins is **Marshmallow**. Being high in vitamin A especially, it acts as an antioxidant and aids in tissue repair.

Rosemary, sage, thyme and marjoram are all high in antioxidants and chlorophyll. **Rocket** and **coriander** both take the mercury out of our body, and are great for the gut and liver, as is **Dandelion**, which can be taken as a liver tonic, being high in potassium. A tincture can be made from dandelion by covering it with apple cider vinegar and leaving it

for two weeks.

Salad Burnett is high in A, B, C, K, calcium and magnesium and is also high in antioxidants, so it is good for the digestion, helping to absorb nutrients. It can also be used as a gargle for a sore throat and a tonic, strengthening the lungs and purifying the blood.

Parsley, also high in A, B and C, is good for the kidneys, being a diuretic. When prepared in the blender, **aloe vera** and **lemon** make a healthy and pleasant addition.

All of the **Nasturtium** plant can be used – its leaves, flowers and even seed pods – and they go well in a sandwich, salads or smoothies. Being high in vitamin C, iron, sulphur, potassium, calcium and magnesium, it's a natural antibiotic and antibacterial agent, and is good for lung infections, cancer, candida and the aiding the digestion.

Another name for **Globe Artichoke** is milk thistle, which has *lots* of vitamins (you'll have to Google it), and is great for protecting and repairing the liver. Just sauté it in garlic and oil, and add salt.

Lemon Balm helps you relax and soothes the nerves, so busy blood type As should appreciate it. Containing vitamins A, B and C, it can be made into a tea, and creates a strong antidepressant. It is also an antibacterial, anticonvulsant and fungicide.

Last but not least came **Elderflower**, which dries out the mucous in the upper respiratory tract, so it's good for those with sinus problems, flu or fever. You don't eat the leaves, just the flowers and berries, and you can make them into fritters, adding yarrow and peppermint.

Gina's enthusiasm for the topic of health extended beyond herbs as she mentioned that eating bread every day isn't good for us: once or twice a week is enough. As for health in general and the effect of those herbs, Gina is a walking example of it! Her energy and evident enjoyment of the topic was very refreshing, and I'm sure we all want to plant some of those herbs right outside our back door, if they aren't there already.

Three Things I Can't Live Without From Chris Winton

1. Herbs and spices

I keep my pantry stocked with over 80 herbs and spices, and use them all throughout the year. The spice mix that I use the most would be a simple Italian Mix, that I use in most tomato sauces and egg dishes. They say that variety is the spice of life, and my spice rack reflects this.



2. My shed

That's where I make things, break things and invent stuff. It holds all my tools, half started projects and bits and pieces. It's probably my "man cave". To the untrained observer it would seem like chaos, but for me chaos provides inspiration. Currently I would call it tidy, which means I can get from one side of the shed to the other without moving stuff.

3. Coffee

A great day starts with a great coffee. A great coffee starts with a great bean. I like to roast green Arabica coffee beans from near Byron Bay in my converted BBQ roaster that can do a kilo in about 35 mins. Not exactly commercial, but quite therapeutic (when I don't burn my self getting the beans into the air cooler machine.) I love the smell of freshly ground coffee.

Handy Hint

One space-saving idea is to sow the sweet corn first, and when it has grown about 1m high, sow climbing beans seed between each corn plant. By the time the corn is harvested, the beans will be twining their way up the corn plants.

Watermelon seeds may be roasted and eaten in the same way as pumpkin seeds.

Annette McFarlane

**Getting to Know
Warren & Bev Carlson
Interview by Diane Kelly**

A couple of months ago I received a membership renewal slip in the mail from Warren and Bev Carlson, and attached was a letter which included the following extract:

“The local kangaroos and wallabies enjoy our property, and are quite happy nibbling away while we are gardening. All the adjoining properties have work dogs, and as we don’t have a dog, I think they feel safe and secure and not threatened. We have several generations from the original eight roos.

The birds love the native blossoms and bird baths. We are still growing our vegies and fruit trees.”

As I read Bev’s description of their farm, I thought it sounded like the ideal place to visit for our December interview. So last Saturday I headed out to Innisplain, which is about thirty kilometres south of Beaudesert on the road to Kyogle, and spent a day chatting with Warren and Bev, and having a walk around their property.

Back in the early 1970’s, the Carlson’s were living in Koala Park. Their house was on a steeply sloping block on the ridge up to which Taliban Street rises, and one of the disadvantages of the location was the run-off when it rained. Being an extremely practical person, Bev started digging drains – until Warren suggested that she buy a pot-plant instead. In addition to buying some plants to stabilize the soil, Bev also bought a Yates gardening book for \$4.99 – and “within two years, everything was like a green house”. The block next door was terraced, but without a house, so that was planted out too and this is how Bev and Warren’s interest in organic gardening began.

In December 2001, Warren and Bev began to fulfil their life-long dream of living in the country. When visiting some friends at Innisplain, they saw those original eight kangaroos, and decided to purchase thirty acres of farming land. Their goal was to “have their own national park; to revegetate the cleared land;

grow vegetables; and live sustainably.” The area around Innisplain used to be covered in hoop pines, but the original settlers were obligated to clear a certain amount of their farms within twelve months. Now Warren and Bev are working with “Land for Wildlife” to plant out ironbarks, Moreton Bay ash and other trees with the goal of creating a koala track. The soil is alluvial clay and sandstone, and much work has been done to counter-act the effect of soil erosion – up the back of the property is a large plateau, which is the top of a volcanic hill.



The view from the house – usually a picture of green grass & full dams

After living in a large, colour-bond shed for about two years, Warren and Bev started to build their new home. They had learnt a lot about the weather patterns of the area during those months, and so designed a house with windows and sliding doors on all sides to take advantage of the cooling breezes and magnificent views. Innisplain is part of the Scenic Rim area, and the Carlson’s house looks across to the Fassifern Valley and the foothills of the Great Dividing Range – this is where the thunderstorms form, and where the winds sweep up the valley.

The house has 20ft ceilings; it is framed and floored completely in hardwood; it has 10ft verandas around four sides; and all paint used is non-toxic. The house is cool in summer, and a bit chilly in winter, although neither Bev nor Warren feels the need of a fire-place. Water comes from rainfall - two large tanks supply the house - and from a bore down towards the front of the property (water was struck at 106 feet). The bore water contains no salt, and has good mineral content.

The bathroom has a composting toilet, and no chemicals at all are used on the property. I asked Bev why she and Warren decided to garden and farm organically – “we always wanted things to be natural, so to us organic is normal”. As we walked around the home garden, it was evident that lots of sugar cane and lucerne mulch, horse and cow manure, and rye hay have been applied to improve the soil, as well as rock dust. There were about a dozen bags of material ready to compost lined up on the veranda, including the shredded trimmings from a friend’s large mulberry tree. Even though the season has been dry, and the winds coming up from the valley to the north and west can be quite strong, the plants in the garden look healthy.

The vegie garden is producing well – and the rhubarb plant has leaves big enough to use as an umbrella! The capsicum plant won’t stop fruiting, and Bev only bought tomatoes because I had been invited to lunch – usually they are totally self-sufficient with cherry tomatoes for salads. (I must admit it was a yummy lunch, with slices of home-made bread, cheese, the tomatoes, and lettuce leaves straight from the garden.)



Bev and the rhubarb leaf (The plant was only put in on 28/8/2012!)

We walked around the garden, and enjoyed looking at the November lilies, the golden penda (a bird attractant and a native), the ginger plants, a large mulberry tree (covered in new fruit), rose bushes, the bearded purple irises and the lady-finger banana trees. There are a couple of large olive trees that provide shade for the chooks and ducks, and there are grevilleas that a large variety of

birds visit. In a normal season, the grass of the house block can grow to a metre high, at which point the brush-cutter is used, and the grass is spread to continue feeding the soil and maintaining moisture. Again, protecting soil and plants from the wind is a major challenge, and various trees have been used as wind-breaks.

A couple of other things were captivating:

- When the house was built, the top soil was removed and mounded for future use in gardens. But using this soil has to be scheduled for only three months of the year – little pardalote birds (also known as “peep wrens”) form nests in the face of the mound, and so they are left in peace to breed.

- “Patch” (the male duck) and his female Muscovy friend, and some magnificent roosters (father and son, who are not on talking terms) and their family of “girls” live in luxury in several runs at the back of the house-yard. Their areas are well-fenced off against foxes and dingoes, and well shaded.

- The wallabies that are feeding down along the drive-way – much darker furred than our local ones; and the half-dozen kangaroos that hop across the road as I am leaving.

Apparently there are also dragon lizards, black and brown snakes, green tree frogs, goannas, bush rats, possums, hares, and echidnas around the farm. Bev listed the birds that they have seen there – wedge tailed eagles, goshawks, barn owls, mo-pokes, king parrots, galahs, corellas, storm birds, olive-coloured honey-eaters and blue-faced honey-eaters, and swallows are just some of them.

The two words that Bev used to describe what she feels when she is out in the garden were “peace” and “tranquillity”. The garden, the poultry area, the fruit trees and the outer paddocks are being worked on to enrich the soil so that it produces good food and healthy plants – it all seems very holistic and rewarding, and the farm well deserves its name of “Harmony Hill”.

The Garden in November

Pot up special plants such as herbs, succulents or autumn-flowering bulbs for gifts in some of the lovely containers available. And what about a Christmas tree? Instead of a young tree cut from the ground and destined to fade away, buy a living tree in a large pot that can be kept from year to year on a terrace, or be planted out after Christmas. This month nurseries will display all their available small dwarf or immature conifers.

Apply & renew mulches over the soil, a good idea at any time of year, but especially now, to reduce water loss from the soil and suppress weeds. The most important thing to bear in mind when putting down a mulch is to make sure the soil is moist beforehand. If the soil is dry, the mulch is just as good at keeping water out as it is at retaining it in the soil.

Water plants thoroughly during hot spells, concentrating on new planted plants, young vegetables and plants in containers, which need it most. If there's a lot to do, it is no good going out every night and splashing a little water everywhere. In drought periods, divide the garden into areas, and every evening give a different one a good soaking, which should last for up to a week. This is more beneficial to the plants, because the roots will go deeper into the soil in search of water. Smaller amounts of water encourage the roots to come to the surface of the soil, causing more harm in the long run; roots near the surface make the plants even more vulnerable in drier conditions.

Hoe or hand-pull annual weeds while they are still small, to save a lot of work during the rest of the summer. Choose a dry day, and leave the weeds on the surface of the soil where they will wither in the sun. Perennial weeds will have to be dug out completely, leaving no trace of the roots in the soil. If any piece of root is left, it will start to grow again, effectively propagating the weed.

Deadheading is a regular task in all parts of the garden as some flowers go over. With many plants – perennials, repeat-flowering

roses and annuals – the flowering period can be extended considerably if old flowers are removed as soon as they fade. This will prevent the plant's energy going into the production of seeds, and channel it instead into new growth, and flowers later in the summer and autumn. Most deadheading can be done with secateurs, cutting back to just above strong buds lower down the stems of the plant. Some plants, like the true geraniums, can be quickly trimmed back hard with a pair of garden shears when the flowers fade. It may seem rather drastic action, but new foliage soon appears.

Trees & Shrubs:

Control aphids on roses by spraying them with hose water – many will not return to the plant. Also control nearby ants, which protect aphids.

Watch out for caterpillars on roses. The caterpillar of the light brown apple moth curls a leaf around itself and seals it. It feeds on young buds and leaves. It moves quickly if the leaf is unsealed, so squash the leaf before opening it. Minor infestations can be treated by picking off affected leaves and putting them in the bin. The caterpillar of the painted apple moth has four tufts on the back like a toothbrush, and chews leaves. Remove by hand the cocoon and larvae of these moths.

The rich fragrance of gardenias now pervades the garden. Gardenias flower for many weeks but need organically rich, slightly acid soil and moist warm conditions during spring and summer. Yellowing of older leaves may be due to a lack of magnesium (cured by a dose of Epsom salts). Yellowing between young leaf veins may be due to iron deficiency, so apply iron chelates or sulphate of iron.

Perennials:

Continue to pot up cuttings of perennials taken earlier in the spring. As soon as the plants have made a good root system, pot them up. Otherwise, if there are several cuttings to a pot, the roots will become entangled and you will damage them as you try to

separate them. Water the cuttings before and after potting them up. A shady sheltered corner will be suitable over the summer. Water them regularly.

Divide warm-climate plants such as heliconias and gingers. These and spathiphyllum can be planted this month. Divide gerberas.

Plant out cannas and also lily bulbs that were potted up earlier in the year.

Annuals & Bedding:

Plant out summer annuals. Plant out all summer display or bedding plants, including petunias and alyssum. Plenty will be available from garden centres if you have not grown your own; look out for heat-resistant plants such as salvias and zinnias, as well as favourites such as Felicia and brachyscome. Make sure any old spring planting is removed, if this was not done last month, and lightly fork over the soil. Spread a little general fertilizer before planting, but not too much, otherwise the plants will produce a lot of lush growth at the expense of flowers. Water the plants well an hour or so before planting them out. This is particularly important where young plants are growing together in a seed tray and the roots will be disturbed when they are planted out.

Containers:

If going on holidays, group pot plants in a sheltered shady spot with the hose nearby, and arrange for a plant sitter, or install a drip system with a time clock. Another option is to place pots in a trench filled with wet sawdust or wet coarse compost. Indoor plants will absorb moisture through porous pebbles or a wick placed in a bowl of water – or use self-watering pots.

Vegetables & Herbs:

Keep sowing salad vegetables in small quantities at regular intervals of two or three weeks. This will provide a continuous supply of fresh salad over a long period, rather than a glut at one time. One point to bear in mind now is that lettuce seed will not germinate in high temperatures, so if the weather is hot and dry, sow the seeds in a shady part of the

garden, or sow them in seed trays and put them in a shady part of the garden. Transplant the seedlings when they are large enough to handle. Choose a variety suited to summer growing.

Plant tomatoes: These can be planted in the garden at intervals of 50-60 cm. Tomatoes prefer a sunny spot, but tall types need staking with a 1.2m cane. When planting tomatoes outside, leave a slight depression in the soil. This helps retain water around the roots of the plants when watering them in. Feed all tomatoes with a high-potash fertiliser every week from now on through the season to get a good crop. Be careful not to let tomatoes go short of water. If they are neglected or watered irregularly, going dry in between times, they will be prone to blossom end rot. This appears as a sunken brown area at the end of the fruit furthest from the plant. It is due to calcium deficiency, brought about by a lack of water, even for a very short period. Regular watering is the key to preventing this problem. Another problem that may be caused by irregular watering is splitting of fruits. Sunburn shows up as yellow to white bleached areas on the exposed side of the fruit. The leathery area becomes sunken in the centre as the problem develops. In hot areas and hot summers, maintain enough leafiness to protect the fruit from being scorched by the sun.

In general, the indeterminate, tall-growing tomatoes should have the sideshoots, which form at the leaf axils, removed. Do this when the shoots are small, by rubbing them out with your forefinger and thumb, and it won't be such a shock to the plant.

Sow or plant out cucumbers in soil that has been enriched with plenty of organic matter to retain as much moisture as possible. Pinch out the growing tips of the plants when they have made six pairs of leaves, to encourage sideshoots to form and produce the cucumbers. Feed and water regularly with a high-potash fertiliser through the summer and you'll get delicious cucumbers all summer long.

Hot Weather Hints

Hoe bare ground to keep down weeds as they germinate. Weeds are more easily killed off at this stage – then there is also no chance of them setting seeds which will be spread around the garden. Hoe on dry, sunny days and the weed seedlings can be left on the surface of the ground to dry out and shrivel up in the sun.

Cut back and **divide spring-flowering perennials**

Take soft-wood cuttings from shrubs. Most shrubs in the garden will now be producing plenty of young, fresh shoots, and these are excellent for making soft-wood cuttings through until January, when the wood begins to ripen. Take a few shoots from any parts of the shrub where they will not be missed – about half-a-dozen should ensure you will get at least one new shrub.

Have a polythene bag to hand when you take the cuttings. Cut shoots about 8-10 cms long, cutting just above a bud or leaf. Pop the cuttings into the bag straight away and keep the bag out of the sun – this prevents the cuttings from wilting.

Trim the cuttings below a leaf joint with a sharp knife and remove the lower leaves, leaving them about 5-8 cm long. Dip cut ends into hormone rooting solution, and plant in pots containing a 50-50 mix of seed-raising mix and vermiculite, or a mix of peat or coir and sharp sand. Place the pots in a shady part of the garden, and the cuttings should root in 6-8 weeks. They can then be potted up to be grown on.

Prevent slug damage to seedlings as they germinate. After sowing the seeds, cover them with plastic lemonade or water bottles that have had the bottom cut out, pushing them into the ground. To get the bottle around a cane, cut it lengthwise. These improvised cloches will also act like mini-greenhouses, hastening germination.

Grow Something to Eat Every Day

Compost Problems! From Diane Kelly

Getting the right proportion of moisture and the right combination of ingredients in your compost may take a little practice, but most problems can usually be overcome.

Too Wet:

Add sawdust or shredded newspaper to help absorb moisture, and turn regularly.

Not Heating:

Add a source of nitrogen, such as animal manure or blood and bone meal or vegetable scraps.

Too Dry:

Water lightly.

Fly or Cockroach Breeding:

Fully enclose the compost. Make sure the compost is hot in the centre and turn it regularly to “cook” fly and cockroach eggs. Make sure there is no seafood, fat or meat. (Should maggots be present, cover with garden lime.)

Too Hot:

Should the mixture go grey and smoke, turn and spread it out to cool the compost down.

Smelly:

Reduce smell by keeping the compost damp but not wet. If there is not enough air, turn the heap or bin contents more often to improve drainage and aeration. Sprinkle heap with garden lime before turning.

Slow Decay:

Add a small amount of compost activator/nutrients – i.e. comfrey leaves, blood and bone, or chicken manure. Turn heap or bin contents more often. Sprinkle compost with water until it is only damp, not soaked.

Mice and Rats:

Avoid bread, grains and meat. Turn heap or bin contents regularly and if compost is too dry, moisten.

A Few Ideas for January

Beans

- **Sow autumn beans** – act now, and there's still time to grow a late crop in time for autumn. Climbing varieties crop over a longer period than dwarf varieties.
- **Sow the seed:** Prepare the soil by digging in compost or well-rotted manure. Rake smooth and water. Sow seed 10cm apart.
- **Protect seedlings:** Slugs, snails and birds can decimate young seedlings. In dry weather, water the young seedling frequently.
- **Support plants:** Climbing beans grow a couple of meters tall, so make sure that your trellis or tepee is high enough.
- **Encourage your Beans:** In hot, dry summer weather, runner beans flowers may be less likely to set, which means that no beans will start to form. To help prevent this, give the plants plenty of water at their bases; soak them well at least two or three times a week if the weather is particularly dry. You can also mist the flowers with water using a fine spray. If you have a persistent problem, it's worth experimenting with white-flowering varieties, such as "White Lady", which seems to set beans more reliably in hot weather.

Cabbage White

- **Caution:** When you see white butterflies flitting above brassica beds, you can be sure they are laying eggs. Fine netting will keep them out.
- **Eggs:** Check the undersides of brassica leaves. If you have good eyesight, you will see clusters of the cabbage white butterfly's tiny pale eggs.
- **Caterpillars:** Green caterpillars soon hatch out and devour leaves. They then pupate, and later emerge as cabbage white butterflies.

Pest Watch:

- Treat large infestations of aphids on your crops – they can spread mosaic virus, causing leaves and fruit of cucumbers and zucchini to become blotchy and distorted. De-

stroy any plants showing symptoms.

Blanching:

Blanching whitens and sweetens stems and leaves. Blanch endive when it matures. Cover the centre with a plate, or put a pot over the whole plant, for about ten days. With celery, either tie the stems loosely with twine and gradually earth them up, or tie a collar around them when the stems are about 30 cm tall.

What to Harvest:

Cucumbers now:

Sown in October, cucumbers will be ready for picking now. Cut the fruit with some stalk, once they are a usable size. Baby fruit are especially delicious. Pick regularly to avoid over-mature cucumbers. Pickle whole small cucumbers or slices of larger ones.

Tomatoes Now:

Tomatoes are a sure sign of summer, and the first fruit, sown in spring, are ready to harvest. Pick them as soon as the entire fruit turns red or yellow, depending on the variety. Cherry types should ripen first, followed by salad tomatoes, plum varieties, then the mighty beef-steaks. Pick regularly to encourage a prolonged crop. Best eaten fresh, if you have surplus tomatoes, try oven-drying them.

Zucchini & Summer Squash:

These two crops are closely related and are grown in the same way. They can both be picked when tiny, tender, and at their tenderest, or left to grow large for stuffing.

- **Patty Pan:** This variety produces a large crop of saucer-shaped fruit that can be eaten whole when small and young, or allowed to grow to full size.
- **Golden Ruffles:** Produces bright yellow fruit that can be harvested as a baby vegetable, or allowed to grow on. They taste delicious when mashed or fried.
- **Tromboncino:** These elongated fruit can reach up to 1m long, but are best cut when they reach 30cm. Allow plants to trail, or train upwards.

Grow Something to eat Everyday
Jo Whittingham

FRUIT TREES

Custard apples: Hand-pollination of Pink Mammoth and Hillary White.

Figs: Keep water up and mulch well.

Low chill stone fruit: Prune trees. Apply organic fertiliser with sulphate of potash – 1 kg for a mature tree and ½ kg for young trees.

Lychee: Peak water needs. Cover trees with net for protection from fruit piercing moth, birds and bats. Fertilise with an organic fertiliser with sulphate of potash – 1 kg for a mature tree and ½ kg for young trees. Harvest only when fruit on the pendant stalk are sweet and full colour.

Mango: Net trees or bag fruit to protect from birds and beasts.

Passion-fruit: Apply 1 kg organic fertiliser with sulphate of potash. Keep up the water.

Paw-paw: Apply organic fertiliser with sulphate of potash – 1 kg for mature trees and ½ kg for young trees. Apply a copper based spray or leaf microbes for black spot control.

Persimmon: Apply organic fertiliser with sulphate of potash – 1 ½ kg for mature trees.

Strawberries: Keep well watered to form new runners for next year. December is the time to mark old strawberry plants. Watch for their new runners to develop. This makes it easier to define plants when you are ready for new planting.

Bananas: Keep them well watered.

Citrus: Water tree well. Keep up pest oil spray for citrus leaf miner.

*Queensland Planting Guide
- Brisbane Organic Growers*

Lift & Dry Bulbs

After a long growing season, spring-sown onions and garlic planted last autumn are now ready to harvest. Lift garlic bulbs with a fork once leaves start to yellow, being careful not to bruise the bulbs. The cloves may sprout if left too long. Leave onions and shallots until the foliage has died down, before gently lifting them. Spread out on a wire mesh or wooden slats in the sun to dry for 7-10 days.

Grow Something to Eat Every Day

Handy Hints From Diane Kelly

Testing Seeds:

If you're using new seeds, you should be fine as long as you check their use-by date. If you're using older seeds that you've had for a while, or seeds given to you by a friend or seed swapper, you can test them for viability before you plant.

Sprinkle some of the seeds you want to test over some moist paper towel or newspaper. Roll the paper up in a long cigar shape and fold in the ends. Keep the cigar moist for seven to ten days and then check to see if any of the seeds have germinated. If they have, the seeds are fine to use.

Sowing Seeds in the Garden:

You can sow very small seeds like radish and carrot together. Get an old spice or salt shaker and put the seeds in it, along with a spoonful of fine dry sand. Prepare a trench for sowing and shake the seeds into it. Cover with soil, and water in very gently with a fine spray. In about a week, the radishes will germinate and grow; the carrots take longer. By the time the radishes are ready to pick, the carrot tops will be showing and they'll be putting on root growth. Harvesting the radishes will make way for all those carrots!

Egg shells:

Egg shells are a good natural supplement to help keep the hen's calcium levels at a healthy level. They need that to produce egg shells. Keep the shells of the eggs you use and wash them out so they don't smell. When you have quite a few, put them in the oven, on a medium setting, for 10 minutes to dry out. When they are cool, put them in a blender and blitz them, or crush them inside a tea towel with your rolling pin. Store them in a jar. The crushed shell powder can be added to a small dish left in the coop so the chickens can help themselves if they need extra calcium. Keep the dish off the ground so the chickens don't kick dirt into it.

*Excerpts from "Down to Earth"
- Rhonda Hetzel*

It's Time To Get Growing



VEGETABLES

NOVEMBER:

Artichoke, Capsicum, Carrot, Choko, Sweet corn, Cucumber, Eggplant, Gourd, Lettuce, Luffa, Marrow, Okra, Peanut, Pumpkin, Radish, Rhubarb, Rockmelon, Rosella, Spring onion, Silverbeet, Squash, Sunflower, Sweet potato, Tomato, Watermelon, Zucchini.

DECEMBER:

Artichoke, Capsicum, Choko, Sweet corn, Cucumber, Eggplant, Gourd, Luffa, Marrow, Okra, Peanut, Pumpkin, Radish, Rockmelon, Rosella, Spring onion, Squash, Sunflower, Sweet Potato, Tomato, Watermelon, Zucchini.

JANUARY:

Artichoke, Capsicum, Sweet Corn, Cucumber, Lettuce (under shade cloth), Marrow, Okra, Peanut, Pumpkin, Radish, Rockmelon, Rosella, Squash, Sunflower, Sweet Potato, Tomato, Watermelon.

Pinching out Herbs

Many herbs need pinching out now to encourage bushy growth, so take advantage and use the shoots in your cooking. Most of the soft new growth should be tender enough to pinch off between your fingers, but scissors are better for woodier plants like rosemary and some thymes, and neater for chives. Pick the large leaves of basil as required, and pinch out the flower shoots as they come. **Grow Something to Eat Every Day**

HERBS

NOVEMBER & DECEMBER

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

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

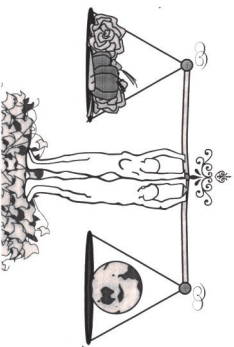
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If not claimed in 14 days, please return to:
GCOG, PO Box 210, Mudgeeraba Q 4213

*GOLD COAST ORGANIC
GROWERS Inc.*



NEWSLETTER

Meetings held:
3rd Thursday of the Month

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

Next meeting:
Thursday 17 January 2013