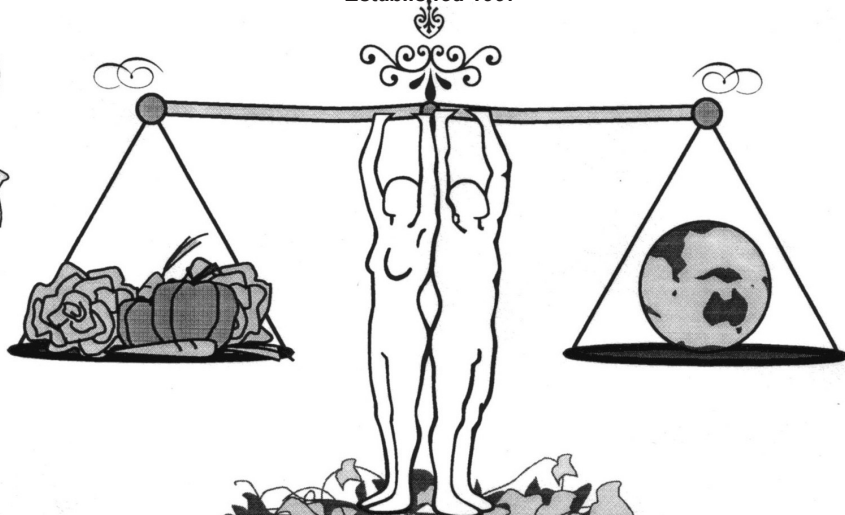


GOLD COAST ORGANIC GROWERS Inc.

Established 1997



NEWSLETTER

Volume 24, 2020 Issue 5
GARDENING IN SPRING

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OUR NEXT MEETING: TO BE ANNOUNCED

Notice Board

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

Meetings Held:

Meeting dates and venue TBC, members will be invited to meetings via email while restrictions on numbers are in place.

Annual Membership Fees:

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

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

Name: Gold Coast Organic Growers

Bank: Suncorp

BSB: 484-799

Account: 0014-21651

Seed Bank:

Packets are \$2.00 each.

Members' Market Corner:

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

Raffle Table:

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

Library:

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

Advertising: (Note 11 issues/year)

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

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

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

W: www.goldcoastorganicgrowers.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/gcorganic

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Vice President	Diane Kelly 0403 473 892
Treasurer	Diane Kelly 0403 473 892
Secretary	Deb Phillips 0422 680 784 <i>debraps@gmail.com</i>
Assistant Sec	Penny Jameson 0411 639 558
Membership Sec Membership Asst	Diane Kelly Penny Jameson
Newsletter Editor Newsletter Assts.	Leah Johnston <i>leahbryan9@gmail.com</i> Diane Kelly Jill Barber
Website Editor Social Media E.	Jorge Cantellano Pete Sypkens
Grants	Stacey Panozzo 0406 007 583 <i>staceypanozzo1@gmail.com</i> Lyn Mansfield
Guest Speaker Liaison	Leah Johnston <i>leahbryan9@gmail.com</i> Stacey Panozzo
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Supper Co-ordinator	Paul Roberson Deb Phillips Dianne Casey

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

Notice Board

Membership Renewals

Pay online:

Name: Gold Coast Organic Growers

Bank: Suncorp

BSB: 484-799

Account: 0014-21651

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

Overdue (as of August 18th) Overdue: Barry O'Rourke (185), Bill Smart (386), Angela Anderson (323), Lana Beloff (363), Maggie Golightly (365), Rachael Lebeter (367), Bev Geraghty (404), Elizabeth Grippo (405), Stacey Panozzo (420), Rebecca Bowen (422), Christine Yeomans (433), Ashley Corpaci (448), Michele Miller (449), Kerstein True-man (346), Sue Beckinsale (373), Nancy Hageman (388), Elizabeth Hughes (389), Deborah Phillips (408), Celia Forrest (431), Carmen Martin (432), Fiona Ennis (450), Peter Meppem (436), Lynn Cal-ligros (451), Janet Shearer (452), Shelley Pryor (72), Jan Wright (191), Karen Hart (198), Cathie Hodge (304), John Trama (437), Mark Pickard (453), Justin & Jerry Rogers (275), Liliana Morgan (438), Marek Janczewski (455).

August: Bev Carlson (87), Murray & Judith Olver (105), Ian & Margaret Lee (118), Gordon & Dorothy Singh (241), Jill Barber (290), Lyn Mansfield (306), Jan Guest (307), Dayne Petersen (377), Robyn Penfold (439), Melanie Strang (440).



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

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

Upcoming Guest Speakers

At this stage our meetings can resume in September.

Pop Thursday September 24 in your diaries. The venue will be the Elanora Community Centre, 26 Galleon Way, Elanora.

It will be RSVP by invite only, due to only being permitted 50 members in the hall.

Check your emails soon for details.

Workshops

EdibleScapes Gardens welcome visitors and volunteers. Gardening activities occur Monday from 2pm, Tuesday to Saturday from 9am to 12noon.

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

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

Gardening Lunch – all welcome

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

Want to share your event with our members?
Email it to leahbryan9@gmail.com

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

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

www.goldcoastorganicgrowers.org.au/

Thanks to this issue's contributors:

Jill Barber, Rebecca Bowen, Leah Johnston, Diane Kelly, Maria Roberson, Melanie Strang and Christina Yeomans.

President's Notes
By Maria Roberson

Hello Everyone,

Though we remain in uncertain times, it is with a more optimistic outlook that I write this page. I am certainly thankful for the relative freedom and beautiful surroundings of where I live, and through the many conversations I have had with our members over the last few months, I know that you feel the same. We are truly lucky to be living in this part of the world and I couldn't imagine how difficult it is for those who are, shall we say, less geographically blessed.

Unfortunately we cannot hold any club meetings at our regular venue for the foreseeable future as there is a maximum limit of 24 people for that space. We have been seeking an alternative venue and have a couple of leads. We have, however, secured the Elanora Community Centre for a meeting on September 24th. Please pencil it into your calendar and check your email soon for an invitation, which you will need to RSVP to so that we don't exceed our limit of 50 people.

I have no doubt that your garden is thriving and, like me, you may have planted a bit too much of everything. I reckon that's not a bad problem to have and it can be fun coming up with ways to deal with the overabundance. I spent my time in Lock-down making pickles, jams, vegetable dishes that could be frozen, kimchi and tons of pumpkin chutney. The pantry now resembles an old fashioned corner store and the freezer is chockablock, and as they say "when life hands you limes - make limenade", bottles and bottles of the stuff. Yeah, it's not a bad problem to

have.

You may be relieved to know that most seed companies and outlets have restocked their seed supplies, though most have had to cut down the number of varieties available and lower bulk seed quantities. This of course will not be a problem for those who regularly save seed from their own gardens and have a good stock of favourite and acclimated fruit, vegetable and herb seeds.

Spring is here and there is no need to wait for the month of September to make it official as Spring begins in August here in our subtropical climate. Aren't we lucky? You will have noticed mango and stone fruit trees are flowering and the winter tomatoes are ripening. The grass is starting to grow and rose bushes have new shoots. Spring is one of the best and most rewarding growing seasons so check out the planting guide in this newsletter and get to it - you wouldn't want to miss out, would you?

Happy growing,

Maria.

***"Spring!
It's nature's way of saying
Let's Party!"***

- Robin Williams



Let's Celebrate Spring!

By Diane Kelly

There's nothing like the pleasures of warmer days, plants starting new growth, birds collecting twigs for their nests and the scent of change in the air to make you look forward to Spring.

On the Coast we know Spring starts early so hopefully you have already done some preparatory work during August, and even in June and July. So, instead of focusing specifically on September, October and November, let's have a look at three months that basically suit this time of year. And next year, as you watch the weather and the seasons change, you might like to slot some of the ideas into your planning.

MONTH ONE

Peter Cundall writes in his *Practical Australian Gardener* book – "Spring brings enormous activity". Jackie French advises us "Spring usually comes with a bump – anything you want to put in, put it in now." And even my trusty "Gardening on the Gold Coast or Thereabouts" quotes "As you sow, so shall you reap" and there is now "a wide range of flowers to plant, and the vegetable possibilities are as vast as your merchant's seed racks".

Vegetables:

It's now time to get serious about crisp, summer lettuce. Raise the seeds of your variety of choice, keeping them sheltered and moist. Prepare a patch of well-drained soil for them and ensure it contains plenty of well decomposed compost and manure – lettuce have high requirements for nitrogen, but young plants will be burnt if fresh fertilizer is used. For any

seedling transplants, watch the weather. If the meteorological forces are with you, then plant after a late-afternoon shower – and if it continues to rain, wait until the weather abates. Mulch lettuce with compost and feed them with liquid fertilizer each fortnight – apart from root and legume varieties, most of your veggies will enjoy this treatment.

What other vegetables are good to grow in Month One? Over-lapping from the previous month are Asian cabbages (but get them in now); beans and beetroot; celery, eggplant and cucumbers; kale, pumpkin and silver beet; and, of course, sweet potatoes and tomatoes. New to the veggie patch will be Ceylon spinach, rockmelon, squash, water chestnuts and watermelon.

Water chestnuts add a crunch to stir-fries, poultry stuffing, curries and puddings and can be eaten raw in both green and fruit salads. If you have an old bath-tub or similar container, fill it with 20cm of good, rich soil that has a pH level of 6.5 – 7.0. Position the container in full sun for optimum growth. Plant the corms 60cm apart (or use 5-6 corms to fill a bath-tub) and put them in pointy-side up to a depth of 10cm. Water chestnuts are an aquatic sedge that produces hollow, reed-like foliage up to 1.5m tall and up to 50 offspring from each corm in a season. Water as a conventional potted plant, and when the foliage is 20cm high, inundate the plants with 10cm of water, and continue to do so as the foliage growth continues up to a water depth of 30cm. When the foliage yellows (next year in the cooler months) allow the water to evaporate. By the time the foliage is dead, the soil should have dried to just moist. Leave the corms to harden and sweeten for three weeks, and then enjoy! The corms can be stored successfully in the ground until the

following spring.

Water chestnuts sound like they take a long time to produce – but the crunchy, crisp results are well worth the effort.

And before we leave the veggie patch, here is a hint from Peter Cundall: “For extra-quick germination of tomato, capsicum, eggplant or melon seeds, place them in moist potting soil, in a container. Enclose the lot in a plastic bag and place on top of the refrigerator at the rear, where the warm air is. As soon as the seedlings emerge, get them into better light immediately.” This may only be something necessary in cooler climes, but if it is relevant have a go and see what results you get.

Flowers:

Moving now to the flower garden, it is time to find a warm, sunny spot and plan carefully from the varieties of annuals, biennials and perennials, bedding, border, dwarf, medium and tall plants – in other words, a wonderful range.

As with vegetables, pick a late afternoon on a cloudy day to plant your flower seedlings – and follow similar good husbandry and preparation that you have done for your vegetables garden. And remember to water your seedlings daily if needed.

Colorful flowers to plant now are alyssum (which can make a stunning show of white and also comes in pink or mauve), snapdragons, carnations, chrysanthemum, lobelia, marigolds, statice, zinnia and the epitome of spring color – pansies and petunias!

Petunias make a wonderful display

and come in quite a range of colors. They can be grown in pots, baskets or garden beds and are truly easy to grow. Give them a light soil with plenty of organic matter and a dash of lime. They love the sunshine and once they have flowered, cut them back. Give them a weak dose of liquid fertilizer and enjoy them flowering all over again.

Remember during this month – and the next two – that Spring is the time to feed plants, either because they are newly planted and need to get off to a good start, or because they are growing quickly in the wonderful weather and are using up the existing nutrients in the soil. Organic matter is particularly suited to new plantings as, when dug into the soil, it improves the soil structure as well as providing nutrients.

The most important nutrients for plants are the trace elements nitrogen, phosphorus and potash (which have the codes N, P and K respectively). Nitrogen is good for leafy plants such as lettuce and silver beet, and foliage plants (such as house plants). Shortage of nitrogen will cause poor leaf color (usually yellow) and a starved look. Phosphorus assists a plant in its root and early growth development. Remember that plants such as grevilleas, banksias and hakea dislike phosphorus, so be careful when spreading it.

Potassium is essential for the plant's development – adding potash (a form of potassium) will enhance the color of flowers and leaves and will aid fruit development.

Trees:

Here are some hints from on shrubs and fruit trees:

Jane Edmanson:

- Lightly trim winter-flowering shrubs.
- Prune your hibiscus as the weather gets warmer.
- Feed azaleas and camellias once their flowering has finished.
- Prune your wisteria immediately after flowering.

Gardening on the Gold Coast:

- The first two weeks of Month One are ideal for planting out hibiscus.
- Sun, shelter and drainage are needed for most trees, shrubs and climbers.
- When planting, and if your soil is clay, make life easier for the plant by digging its hole half a metre wider than the root ball. Mix compost and sand with the soil you have removed and fill the hole. Mulch, then water and water some more.

Jackie French:

- "Just keep planting – the rest can wait!"

MONTH TWO

This is an exciting month – hopefully it will have all of Spring's growth without Summer's heat to knock it back.

Vegetables:

Month two is important for sowing or planting vegetables, as there are a number of growing months ahead.

One of the tastiest veggies to eat is home-grown sweet corn, and you should be able to plant it now. Remember that corn is a heavy-feeding plant as it grows rapidly. Make life easy for it by selecting a sunny position that is protected from strong winds – the plants can grow up to



two meters. Watch out for caterpillars making a meal of young corn cobs – a way to protect the cobs is to place a paper bag over each of them following pollination. Ants can also be a problem.

Vegetables to **stop** growing now include beans, carrots, rocket and watercress.

Vegetables to **keep** growing are capsicums, cucumbers, eggplant, pumpkins, squash, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, Warrigal greens and lettuce. (Poultry litter sprinkled around lettuce plants and then watered in will give them a valuable lift.) Lettuces planted now will mature in the hot months, so start choosing cooler spots for growing them.

Peter Cundall recommends that mulching materials (such as old hay, straw or pea haulm with added Blood & Bone) can be applied as soon as your seedlings are big enough to cope.

And for your veggie patch... have a think about planting a green-manure crop that can be slashed and ready for January plantings of winter vegetables.

Flowers:

Zinnias are a humble but very long-blooming bedding plant, and one that you can grow in pot, or along a garden edge. They do well here because they love full sunlight and heat and are quite hardy.

But remember to water around the plants (don't spray them) because they are subject to mildew.

Nasturtiums will grow happily now and they should be welcomed in your garden as they dispel nematodes. Add the leaves to salads or pickle the seeds as a form of caper.

Don't overfeed nasturtiums or else there will be lots of leaf and few flowers.

Continue planting the same flowers now as in Month One. You can take cuttings from houseplants at this time of the year for propagating – these do well planted into coarse sand and granulated peat. It is also a good time to re-pot any houseplants that have become rootbound. To water hanging baskets, dunk them in a bucket of water and then allow them to drain fully.

Trees:

The quote is “No-one’s bananas are as good as your own!” To grow them successfully, select a warm, sheltered position with a northerly aspect and deep, rich well-drained soil. If your soil is water-logged, build a mound, adding some sand and organic matter. Be generous with manure and/or compost, because bananas are heavy feeders. Mulch well and be careful with watering as the young suckers can rot. Top-dressing and liquid fertilizing every four to six weeks will create large fruit.

Other tree hints for Month Two:

Prune your tibouchina (also known as the “purple glory bush) for new growth. Fertilize the plants in your garden that have flowered – azaleas, camellias, roses. Note: if your roses have black spot, then there is too much nitrogen in the



fertilizer and not enough potassium. Also the plants will need extra good air circulation, so keep their centers pruned, or stake them to an open shape.

Feed any Australian natives with Blood & Bone or a slow release fertilizer specifically for natives.

MONTH THREE

As summer approaches, remember some information from the Anti-Cancer Council: “More people get sunburnt while gardening than during any other outdoor activity”. So remember those hats, long sleeves and blockout cream! And it is wise to garden when the UV radiation is at its lowest – check your local weather report for guidelines.

Vegetables:

Plan growing pumpkins, melons, cucumbers and squash this month. A trick with these plants is to select a patch six months before planting and use it as a compost heap, digging lots of it in well before sowing. Make concave mounds, and when the seed has germinated, water around the roots and not by overhead spray. This reduces the risk of mildew.

Remember to fertilize your lettuces, sweet corn and tomatoes with fortnightly feeds of liquid fertilizer – healthy plants are far less susceptible to disease and insect attack. And keep the hose up to your celery – Peter Cundall advises it cannot be over-watered!

The versatile zucchini can be grown during these months – the young fruit are called “courgettes”, and the fully-mature ones are called marrows – but

they are all actually a type of summer squash. Plant zucchinis directly into the soil, as the seedlings resent root disturbance. Zucchinis should also be planted into mounds of compost or a mixture of good garden soil and manure. The mounds provide the desired good drainage, and the organic material provides the plant's nutritional requirements. A hint for windy weather (when the large leaves of the plant can act as sails and cause the plant to be torn from the ground): Make some wire pegs out of recycled coat-hangers and bend them over the main stem to help secure the plant.

Have a go at taking cuttings from your tomato plants. Bury a branch under some mulch and stake the end to force it to grow upwards. When new roots form after a couple of weeks, cut the rooted branch off near the stem of the parent plant, and replant the offshoot somewhere for a new vigorous tomato plant! Cheap, easy, successive planting – and they fruit much earlier than seedlings – so year-round tomatoes!

Flowers:

Keep going with the flowers from Month Two – but do give them a sprinkle of compost or manure under their mulch to improve the quality of the blooms.

Remember to dead-head the spent blooms of your plants. If you don't do this, your plants will have less strength to form the next lot of flowers. Roses will appreciate both being dead-headed and pruned back to the next healthy leaf-junction.

Annual and perennial plants will also benefit from having their tips pinched off. Doing this will strengthen the plants, make them bushier and more compact,

and will force the plants to produce more blooms later. Chrysanthemums and carnations in particular will grow well when this is done.

Trees:

It is time to watch your fruit trees for grubs and borers. The presence of borers will be evident by the presence of masses of dark brown, saw-dust-like debris, usually in the junction of two branches. A borer is actually an extremely active caterpillar, and you can use a short piece of wire thrust into the hole to kill it. There are usually only a couple of holes per tree, but borers can cause great damage at this time of year.

Keep the water levels up to your fruit trees if there is a dry spell – the trees are producing both foliage and fruit at this time and their moisture requirements need to be met to keep them strong and resilient to disease. Higher yields will also be maintained.

Other hints:

- Check any citrus trees for scale insects
- Keep your passionfruit vine well mulched or the fruit may drop.
- Lightly prune native shrubs such as prostanthera (also known as mint bush, this has pretty mauve or white flowers) grevilleas and bottlebrush.

Conclusion:

So, three more months to mark off your gardening calendar. Exciting months, with lots of activity in the garden. Let's end with a quote from Leo Tolstoy and enjoy!

“Spring is a time of planning and projects.”

Let's Share our Local Knowledge

By Diane Kelly

I'm sure many of us have had the experience of going to our local library and heading to the gardening section – and then finding that very few of the available books are written specifically for our region. Even on my own book-shelves I find the same thing – there are many good principles in my books by Peter Cundall, Jane Edmanson, Jackie French, Esther Dean, Ian Spence, Michael Roads and Dan Pearson – but I find I need to sift through the information and see how it applies in my backyard, rather than in Tassie, the Araluen Valley in the Southern Tablelands of NSW and certainly rather than in Northamptonshire in the UK!

So I thought it would be helpful to have a chat to one of my friends who has been a gardener for many years; who gardens organically – and who lives on the Coast. We talked about a number of topics relating to this time of year, and here are some of the things I learnt.

1. What plants flower now?

Azaleas headed the list for “flowering now”. Tall, single-bloom plants are sun-lovers, and the shorter, double blooms enjoy the shade.

Other plants that flower now are poppies, allysum, calendula, marigolds, petunias, dianthus, cosmos, amaranth, violas, gerbera, ornamental peach blossom, salvias, pentas and gaura, so there are plenty to enjoy.

For making hedges, photinea (with their brightly-tipped leaves), plumbago (with their delicate blue, white and even red

flowers), Indian hawthorn, and Spirea (which we might know better as May bushes) will all do well and add colour down your driveway.

Natives that flower now are grevillea, banksia, callistermon and leptospermum are hardy and will attract the birds to your garden

Fruit trees: Flowering now will be peach, citrus, avocado (these will just be in bud now) and mulberry trees.

And don't forget the herbs! Basils, lavers, mints and thymes will be flowering now (and staying local, check out the Mudbrick Cottage Herb Farm website for more ideas.)

The recommendation about anything you are planning to grow: It is helpful to research where each plant comes from originally – what were the location's climate, altitude, seasons, weather and soil? And it is also very useful to know what pH levels a particular plant is happy in – for example, blueberries and camellias like acidic soils, and persimmons and lavender enjoy alkaline soil. Then you can plant similar plants together, and separate them from their opposites.

2. How and when do you prune plants?

For decorative shrubs, prune after blooming (not fruit trees, obviously). The same for climbing roses and olde “once-a-year” roses – don't prune in winter or spring, but wait until after they've flowered. Training your roses to grow horizontally to increase the number of blooms – bend and train the young, soft canes horizontally and tie them in with soft twine.

To avoid over-pruning, remember the “One Third” rule. This can be done by

cutting One Third off the top, or One Third of the branches throughout the bush or tree. This will reward you with many more blooms.

Taking the top off your plum and peach trees works well, because then you can keep them at “net size”.

A good idea is to shape your larger bushes such as camellia sasanquas now as they will have finished flowering. They will provide an umbrella of shade for your lower plants such as japonicas and azaleas. Hybrids, higos (a camellia that originated in Japan) and reticulatas (camellias which come from the Yunnan Province in China) will keep blooming for many more weeks.

Poinsettias need a hard prune now, and then a tip prune before and after Christmas.

With gardenias you can exceed your One Third rule and prune them by a half now.

It's a bit late for pruning frangipanis (it is better to do that in June) but you can still have a go. Remember to rake and bin all the leaves.

3. How do we prepare our plants for the months ahead?

Having read our newsletter, my friend commented that the advice given about fruit trees, vegetables and herbs in the back two pages of each edition is very well suited for our area. (This information comes from the Brisbane Organic Growers' Handbook, and their website is well worth a look at.)

The BOGI's (as they are known) stress that we mustn't be tempted to fertilize citrus trees when they are in bloom because doing so will cause fruit drop. Wait until the fruit is approximately one

third of its final size, and then fertilize little and often – but not during winter.

Another piece of advice to help us prepare for the “Ekka westerlies” is to stake any brittle plants we may be growing, such as tamarillos.

A few other jobs we can do now:

a. It's time for division of many perennial plants (such as agapanthus, shasta daisy, michaelmas daisy etc) now, just before their growth spurt.

b. For bush daisies, you can take cuttings or make layers now – or at any time!

c. Salvias – in all their glorious colours – will have new growth down low in the plants – this makes good material for cuttings.

d. And for the veggie patch - start planting summer varieties now, including Roma and cherry tomatoes. These are thicker-skinned against fruitfly.

4. The next gardening topic was PESTS!

All pests increase in spring/summer. You will find that caterpillars start to invade everything, especially brassicas, lilies and cycads. The recommended reading on prevention are Annette McFarlane's books.

For grasshoppers, go out early and catch them while they are still slow – they will become more energetic as the sun brightens. Grasshoppers are excellent for chook food, and their protein improves egg laying.

Many of us have somewhat larger problems as well – possums, wallabies, bandicoots, bush rats and crows. They will all be trying to take whatever food they can as they start to raise and feed their young. Encourage these larger visitors to change their routes through your garden and leave your plants,

veggies and fruit alone – you can exclude them with fences, or you can locate rags appropriately that have ammonia and/or Oil of Cloves added to them. Or you can consider leaving a little patch for your visitors to enjoy wa.a.aa..y.y over in a back corner!

5. When do our gardens start to change?

Growth in our gardens actually starts to speed up after the shortest day of the year (21st of June), and so it's good to have annual vegetables and flowers start from April. In this way you get the harvest before pests and disease build up with the warmer weather. In South East Queensland, our veggie gardens have good production in winter – and then there is usually another spurt from just before the full moon in July. That's the time to watch those lettuces increase in size and start picking the outer leaves!

Many of you may remember that Spring used to start around Ekka week – but now it is quite a bit earlier, and you can get 30 degree days in late August. So keep your plants cool and pest free by covering them – your brassicas for example. September tends to be hot and dry these days, so really it is the start to an early summer. So mulch everything!

6. And about a “Rose by any other name”...

A few hints include:

(a) Choose varieties for South East Queensland – a good place to start for advice is the Qld Rose Society at www.qld.rose.org.au. Also have a read of Paul Hain's book “Growing Roses” – it's all about growing roses in subtropical climates.



(b) Always water roses on the ground rather than on the leaves.

(c) Water in the mornings, rather than the afternoon or evening.

(d) If your roses are suffering from black spot, check out the nitrogen (too high) and potassium (too low) ratios in the fertilizer you may be applying.

(e) Remember that good air circulation for your roses is important – otherwise the humidity will be a problem.

7. Be kind to your herbs and plant them early.

Herbs such as sage, cherville, savories and some of the thymes don't like the summer humidity, but do enjoy the milder spring weather. For advice on herbs – how to grow them and what they are good for – have a look at the Mudbrick Cottage Herb Farm website. They are local (just along the Springbrook Road out of Mudgeeraba) and are Australia's largest seller of organic herb plants – they grow and supply over 400 different types of herbs, and many spices, teas, medicinals and oils. Their gardens are definitely worth a visit and a stroll around.

So... Spring may indeed have already Sprung! But there are plenty of things to plan and enjoy in your garden in the weeks ahead. And here is a final suggestion from the kind person that helped me with all the above:

“Remember that we all have different levels of gardening experience. We all live in different areas of the Coast – some of our blocks are steep and some are easy to work with. We all work with different soils, ranging from sandy to red, and from rock to clay. So all we can do is our best.” And, may I add, really take the time to enjoy the experience.

**Butterfly Profile:
Richmond Birdwing**

By Leah Johnston

The Richmond Birdwing Butterfly is a stunning native butterfly that has become endangered because of both habitat loss and host plant confusion. Their host plant, the Richmond Birdwing Vine, is very similar to introduced species the Dutchman's Pipe. The butterflies can mistakenly lay their eggs on the introduced vine, but the caterpillars can't survive by eating this vine and will die.

If you want to grow the Richmond Birdwing Vine you should first make sure you aren't unknowingly growing the introduced plant. As a human it's easy to tell the difference: just rub the leaves and the Richmond Birdwing Vine will have no discernible scent, while the Dutchman's Pipe will have a strong tobacco smell. If you find the imposter vine growing rip it out from the roots, then start planting the correct one.

It's best to plant as many of these vines as you can as each mumma butterfly will only lay one egg per vine, thinking she's giving the baby caterpillars the best chance of having a good food source.



The smaller and more colourful male is on the left and the larger female is on the right.

As we already know, only one or two out of every 100 eggs will develop into a butterfly, so the odds aren't good. If you have some room on a fence, trellis or some tree trunks you can grow this vine up, plant as many as you can. This is traditionally a rainforest plant but I have successfully grown it in a sunny spot in Elanora. So if you have a spare spot why not plant some vines at your place and together we can help support this beautiful species. Michelle's Native Plants often has the vines in stock.



A Richmond Birdwing Caterpillar (left) and chrysalis (right). Pics from Qld Gov

Plan for Gardening Success!
A Book Review
 By Diane Kelly

Gardening can involve quite a bit of planning as we think about the soil, what we are going to plant, and how we are going to maintain our gardens. So with this new season, why not plan to try something different?

In his book *Square Meter Gardening* author Mel Bartholomew includes in his introduction the valid question “Why would I want thirty cabbages to be ready all at the same time?”

In 1975 Mel retired from his career as an engineer and decided to take up gardening as a hobby – and then started to question the efficiency of the conventional gardening practices that have been taught. He asked himself:

- Why is fertilizer spread over the entire garden area, but plants are only placed in long rows with wide paths on both sides?
- Why does an entire vegetable plot get watered when the plants are only growing in a 15cm wide strip?
- And why is all the soil in a garden cultivated when plants only take up a fraction of the space?
- And why indeed would I want 30 cabbages to be ready all at the same time?

Mel began to realize that single row gardening is a hand-me-down technique from large-field arable farming. Single rows make sense when you depend on a tractor to plough up the soil, but a home garden does not need all that wasted space!

Then he started to experiment with his 10m long garden bed. He planted two rows 15cm apart and the plants grew just as well as in a single row. Then he

did a triple row, where he placed plants 15cm apart in all directions. And then he realized that he was still getting too large a harvest. So he began to shorten the rows, and so on until he ended up with 30cm square areas and that became the basis of his “Square Meter Gardening”.

Mel soon found that if plants had to be thinned to 30cm apart, he could put one in a square. If they should be 15cm apart, you can plant four per square. And if plants can be thinned to 10cm apart you can grow nine in the square, and if 8cm apart, then you can grow sixteen in that same square.

Now what all these numbers mean is that you can plant a different crop containing one, four, nine or sixteen plants in the one 30cm square. If you are growing cauliflowers, then one plant per square; if you are growing lettuce, then you could fit four plants; and if you are putting in parsley you can plant nine; and if planting carrots, then put in sixteen.

After experimenting with the 30cm square areas, Mel then worked out the benefits of using those measurements in a 1-meter square box – you will get nine sections in it. This has a number of advantages:

Instead of a permanent location being needed for, say, a 1.8m wide and 6m long edged garden bed like mine is, you can move square meter boxes to whatever spot is good for the plants you are growing. You can place your new garden where it is sunny for your vegetables – or not so sunny for the more delicate plants, and these locations can change with the seasons.

You can put your square meter garden beds where they look really great as they grow an abundance of fresh produce, or you can tuck them away so that you

aren't under pressure to garden tidily! Of course, having a box of herbs just near your back door will work well and make flavoring your salads and sandwiches easy.

You can plant a different variety of vegetables in each 30cm square, and therefore grow nine different types of food in a 1m square box. This means that you can have a variety of produce growing and maturing at any one time, and you don't have to worry about wastage. And so then you plan and plant out your next 1m square box with either the same or a different variety of vegetables – in this way you stagger your crops, and you can continue to harvest throughout the season.

You don't have wastage – you can just sow a pinch of seeds in each section. In this way, if your plants are growing healthily, you don't need to have a large number that you really would rather not have to worry about using or storing. If you do have several seedlings come up at once, just snip the spares off at ground level with your scissors, leaving the strongest one. This is also a good way to reduce root disturbance due to thinning out.

Because he knew that soils vary greatly and because Mel used raised garden beds, he developed his own recipe for “the perfect soil mix”. He had three requirements – it had to be lightweight so that it is easy to work with and easy for plants to grow in; it had to be nutrient-rich and supply all the minerals and trace elements that plants need without adding extra fertilizer; and it had to hold moisture and yet drain well. After much experimentation, “Mel's Mix” was developed by its ingredients being combined in equal portions **by volume**:

- 1/3 peat moss
- 1/3 vermiculite

1/3 garden compost or blended compost (the most important of the three ingredients).

Because of the quality of the soil, it only needs to be applied at a depth of 15cms – it is only when you are growing carrots or potatoes that you need to use more.

And the book continues on – all the above is covered in the first 17 pages! Mel takes us through how to build the garden boxes; how to plan your new-style gardens; the easy way to make “Mel's Mix”; how to grow from seed; and how to care for a range of vegetables, herbs and flowers. Some of the information needs to be reversed, as it is written from the northern hemisphere perspective.

Mel developed and practiced this way of gardening for over thirty years and, at least up until 2016, his first book “Square Foot Gardening” was the largest selling gardening book in American history. His gardening show ran on television for eight years and in 1996 Mel founded the “Square Foot Gardening Foundation” to pursue his mission of solving world hunger by teaching people how to grow nutritious produce with limited resources. Today the Foundation continues to fulfill his legacy with humanitarian projects around the world.

Summary: *Square Meter Gardening* is an interesting read. Initially the calculations seemed a bit daunting, but there are plenty of diagrams and hints, and the thought of growing vegetables much more efficiently is an appealing one. Already I can see how I can use the principles to divide up my large vegetable garden. Nil wastage; a soil that does not need to continually be fertilized; and a range of vegetables coming to maturity as they are needed sounds like an experiment well worth trying.

Look What We Grew!
By our members



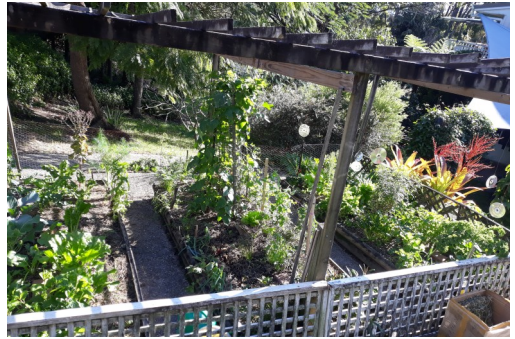
Melanie Strang is enjoying these beautiful organically grown berries. She grew the strawberries on her balcony garden and the native Atherton raspberries at her community garden plot. Yummy!



Christina Yeomans has been letting her inner child have fun in the garden making this cute fairy garden. The top photo is when she planted it and the bottom photo is three weeks later. The plants grew so much the fairies were hidden by them so she moved them to the front and added some tall gnomes to the back.

"Not organic vegetables... but a lot of fun! I found the little girl in me," she said.

Rebecca Bowen grew this gigantic Winter Melon and is looking forward to bringing the seeds to our next meeting to share. Her neighbour (and gardening friend) is pictured holding it up.



Jill Barber's garden (photos o the right) is looking glorious after all that rain.

"I'm so happy with my garden this winter: fully matured, bug-free broccoli the best ever! Just waiting for the cabbages and cauliflower to head up. It's all because of that copious rain followed by lots of unseasonably warm sunshine! I thought I had everything in so late, what with tricky germination and everyone selling out of seedlings, but the weather has saved the day for me.

GCOG members are most welcome to call me (0404 449 753) and come over if they'd like any seedlings."

FRUIT TREES

AUGUST

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SEPTEMBER

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

Figs: Pruning can be carried out. Be very vigorous. 1/3 can be cut off. Figs are only

produced on new wood of the new season's growth. Give trees a good feed of organic fertiliser with sulphate of potash. Mulch well.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

OCTOBER

Custard Apple: Increase irrigation. Mulch trees. Apply 2g boron/sqm.

Figs: Pruning should be done. Figs only produce on new wood or new season's growth. Mulch well.

Lychee: Peak water needs. Mulch. Apply gypsum 20gms/sqm.

Low chill stone fruit: Spring prune new growth. Continue with high irrigation. Prune

out water shoots and dense foliage for better size fruit. Use fruit fly control programs, for example netting or an attractant method.

Mango: Peak water needs. Apply organic fertiliser with sulphate of potash, 1kg for larger trees and 1/2kg for smaller trees. Spray with copper based spray or leaf microbes for anthracnose per fortnight.

Passion-fruit: Plant out new vines. Pruning carried out this month. All dead parts to go. Keep up the water.

Paw-paw: Increase irrigation. Apply 20 gms per sq m of organic fertiliser.

Strawberries: Apply small amount of organic fertiliser with sulphate of potash, about 10g /plant. Keep up with fish emulsion or kelp spray weekly.

Bananas: Have one plant with fruit on, one half grown and one sucker. Discard all others. De-sucker plants by cutting down to centre with a sharp knife taking the centre out and add 1teaspoon of kerosene in the well.

Citrus: Keep up the water. Add lime or gypsum. Mature trees 1/2kg, 1/4kg for small trees. *Brisbane Organic Growers Handbook*

VEGETABLES

AUGUST:

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

SEPTEMBER:

Artichoke, Asian greens, Asparagus, Beans (French), Beetroots, Capsicum, Carrot, Celeriac, Chilli, Choko, Cucumber, Eggplant, Gourd, Kale, Leeks, Lettuce, Luffa, Marrow, Melons, Mustard Greens, Okra, Peanut, Pumpkin, Radish, Rosella, Shallots, Silverbeet, Squash, Sunflower, Sweet corn, Sweet Potato, Tomato, Zucchini.

OCTOBER:

Artichoke, Asian Greens, Asparagus, Beans (French), Beetroot, Capsicum, Carrot, Celeriac, Chilli, Choko, Cucumber, Eggplant, Gourd, Kale, Lettuce, Luffa, Marrow, Melons, Mustard Greens, Okra, Peanut, Pumpkin, Radish, Rosella, Shallots, Squash, Sunflower, Sweet Corn, Sweet Potato, Tomato, Zucchini.

AUGUST

Annual: Borage, Calendula, Chervil, Chamo-

HERBS

mile, Coriander, Dill, Herb Robert, Italian parsley, Misome, Mizuna, Giant Red Mustard, Mustard Lettuce, Nasturtium, Rocket.

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

SEPTEMBER

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

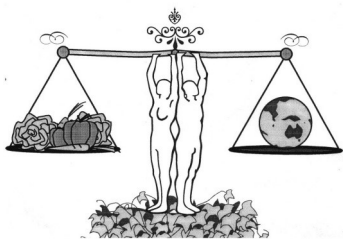
Perennials & Bi-Annuals: Catnip, Ceylon Spinach, Chicory, Chilli, Chives, Comfrey, Perennial Coriander, Echinacea, Fennel, Hyssop, Lavender, Lemon Balm, Licorice, Lovage, Marjoram, Mint, Mushroom Plant, Oregano, Parsley, Rosemary, Sage, Salad Burnet, Stevia, French Tarragon, Thyme, Upland Cress, Watercress,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

OCTOBER

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

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, Thyme, Upland Cress, Watercress, Winter Savoury.

*GOLD COAST ORGANIC
GROWERS Inc.*



NEWSLETTER



Meetings held:
3rd Thursday of the Month
Doors open at 7pm, meetings
start at 7.30pm and run
until approximately 9.30pm

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

Next meeting:
TBC

