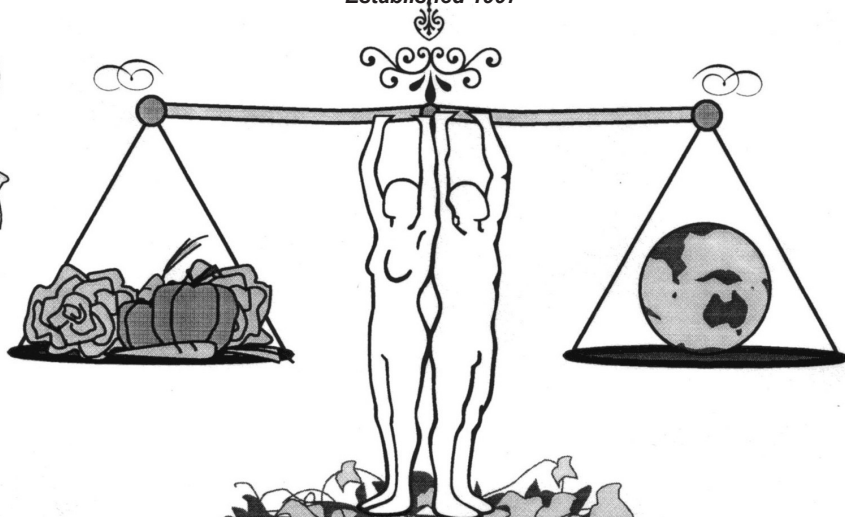


# GOLD COAST ORGANIC GROWERS Inc.

Established 1997



## NEWSLETTER

Volume 26, 2022 Issue 2  
GARDENING IN SPRING

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OUR NEXT MEETING: AUGUST 25, 2022

### Notice Board

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

**Meetings Held:** The fourth Thursday of the month at the Elanora Community Centre, 26 Galleon Way, Elanora.

#### Annual Membership Fees:

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

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

**Name: Gold Coast Organic Growers**

**Bank: Suncorp BSB: 484-799**

**Account: 0014-21651**

**Membership Renewals: If paying online include your Name and Membership #**

**Overdue:** Debbie Casey (442), Dianne Casey (461), Chui McDonald (476), Gai Morrow (309), Rachel Peate (477), Mary Courtney (482), Penny Schulze (483).

**August:** Murray & Judith Olver (105), Ian & Margaret Lee (118), Jill Barber (290), Robyn Penfold (439), John & Lee Drakes (485), Melanie Glenister (486)

**September:** Shelley Pryor (72), Jan Wright (191), Cathie Hodge (304), Beth Orme (343), Bill Smart (386), Deborah Phillips (408), Rebecca Bowen (422), Janet Shearer (452), Justin Rogers (487), Jenni Pocock (488).

**October:** Amy Lukens (356), Jenifer Skues (460), Cathy Sugerman (492), Di Gunther (493).

**November:** Megan Keeler (358), Tanasia Park (490).

**Seed Bank:** Packets are \$2.00 each.

**Members' Market Corner:** Please bring plants, books and produce to sell or trade.

### 2022-2023 Committee

President	Maria Roberson
Vice President	Diane Kelly 0403 473 892
Treasurer	Diane Kelly
Secretary	Deb Phillips 0422 680 784 debraps@gmail.com
Assistant Sec	Penny Jameson 0411 639 558
Membership Sec Membership Asst	Diane Kelly Penny Jameson
Newsletter Editor Newsletter Assts	Leah Johnston leahbryan9@gmail.com Diane Kelly Jill Barber
Website Editor Social Media Ed	Jorge Cantellano Maria Roberson
Grants	Maria Roberson, Lyn Mansfield Sue Webb
Guest Speaker Liaison	Leah Johnston leahbryan9@gmail.com Sue Webb
Librarians	Lyn Mansfield Bill Smart
Seed Bank Seed Assistants	Lyn Mansfield Bill Smart Heather Ryan
Supper Co-ordinator	Deb Phillips Heather Ryan

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

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

**View our Newsletters On-Line at:**  
[www.goldcoastorganicgrowers.org.au/](http://www.goldcoastorganicgrowers.org.au/)

**Thanks to this issue's contributors:**

Jorge Cantellano, Leah Johnston, Diane Kelly, Kerry Lason, Maria Roberson and Janet Shearer.

**President's Notes**  
By Maria Roberson

Hello Everyone,

Another Winter has passed and Spring is now upon us. I love Spring because it is one of the best planting periods for those of us who live on the Gold Coast and surrounding areas. There are so many new herbs, vegetables and fruits to look forward to when you eat seasonally. I am sure that I do not need to remind you how inexpensive it is to grow your own food and these days this seems to be ever more important. Make sure to compile a shopping list for the seed table and pick up your Spring seeds at the upcoming meetings.

The July meeting was a little different to our usual format as we decided to have a soup night and 4 of our members generously volunteered to cook for us. This was very successful indeed and the recipes are featured in this newsletter for you all to make and enjoy at home. Thank you to our volunteers who provided the lovely breads and cakes to add to the feast.

Our library is ready for borrowing again with much thanks to the members who helped with the transition from the old hall to the new hall. Lyn Mansfield took on the mammoth job of cataloguing the entire contents and streamlining a borrowing system for us. You will now be able to borrow from our extensive educational range of books, CDs, research material and magazines by checking them out through the seed table on meeting nights. As an added bonus the executive committee has voted to abolish the library fees and make borrowing free to financial members.

We also had the opportunity to try out all of the new technical equipment we purchased with money from a grant we received last year. So, when our guest speaker had to cancel at the last minute due to car problems, we were able to hold a Zoom conference. A few learning curves were straightened and all in all it was a successful presentation by Dr Kit Prendergast on Native Bees. By utilising this technology, we have the ability to open up a whole new world of potential speakers from all over the country, a very exciting prospect indeed.

As most of you will know, it is GCOG's 25<sup>th</sup> Birthday this year and we are holding a celebration at the October meeting, so please save the date. We have been busy coming up with special ways to mark this Silver Anniversary and members have pitched in with plenty of great ideas. A few of them include having members past and present write a paragraph on a special memory that they have of the club. I'm sure there will be a few long tales and funny stories from quite a few members. We asked John Palmer to write and perform a song for us and will be contacting other talented members to share a little something with us too. If anyone has some photos of meeting nights or club outings, we would love to display them on the night. Someone suggested that we present awards and have some funny ones as well. If you have any ideas to contribute towards a great evening, please let me know. It will be a very big milestone for our little club and we would love as many past and present members there to celebrate as possible. If you could pass the word around and invite any past members, we would be very grateful.

Happy growing,

Maria

## Meeting Recaps By Leah Johnston

### MAY MEETING

At our May meeting we welcomed speaker Gavin Bullock, who rightly predicted all the rain we have had when he spoke to us last year!

This time Gavin talked about different ways of propagating plants: seeds, division and cuttings, and gave us lots of useful tips on the topic.

When you're propagating seeds, you want to be clean and smokers should wash their hands as there is a virus which can be transferred from nicotine onto the seeds. Propagating from seeds gives you biodiversity in your garden as the plants won't be identical to the parent plant. When propagating it's better to use a fresh growing medium rather than reuse one from last time as it could have diseases in it which will affect your results.

Separation can be used to propagate plants that have bulbs or grow in clumps like chives. Try to separate them rather than dig into them and leave half a bulb in the ground that could rot. You can trim the roots by a third too. Chop the green leaves back as much as you cut the roots back as smaller roots can't sustain all the green tops. Dip them into a diluted (weak tea colour) seaweed emulsion to help clean them and encourage new hair roots to grow. Don't plant bulbs too deeply - you want them just underneath the soil. If any of the bulbs are soft don't plant them as they could rot.

Gavin's saying for bulbs (including garlic) is: "If you plant bulbs by May, it's

OK". You can start the bulbs in a brown paper bag in the crisper in the fridge to help them start to shoot so they have a head start when they go into the ground.

If you have a plant that's really fantastic (like a fruit tree and it's the best fruit you've ever had) taking a cutting from it will give you a genetically identical plant. Take a cutting that has several nodes on it, any nodes planted below the soil will grow roots and any nodes above the soil will grow leaves. Plant it so that two nodes are beneath the soil and ensure it has room for the roots to grow down into the pot. Remove any leaves that will be going under the ground and leave a few leaves on above the ground but they can be cut in half if they are large leaves.

Dwarf citrus and tropical stone fruit are grafted onto rootstock that can handle our climate. You won't want to grow from a cutting from that plant as it won't behave the same as the mother plant you're taking it from – unless you take a cutting and graft it onto suitable rootstock.

Dipping the cuttings into rooting hormones before planting can help activate new roots to grow and help kill any germs in the soil.

Cuttings started in water won't have strong enough roots to grow through soil. You can transfer them to perlite as it is easier for the roots to push through, and then when they are stronger move them to a soil medium.

When making a potting medium sand is important in soil at 10-12 per cent. Coarse washed river sand is good for the minerals (not beach sand as it's salty). Sand has a negative charge and pushes things away, creating space in the soil. Clay is positively charged and holds onto itself. Peat moss holds the moisture and

had some acidity.

Gavin's recipe for a potting mix is: ½ bag charcoal; 3 small bags Searles orchid mix; 1 small bag perlite; ½ small bag Searles Premium Potting Mix. If it's too airy add more potting mix.

Vermiculite or perlite should be wetted first to keep the dust down so you aren't breathing it in. The difference between them is vermiculite is used as a covering over the seeds and perlite is mixed into the soil.

To aerial layer a cutting: peel some of the bark off around the branch, wrap a little bit of peat moss with a little bit of perlite around it, wrap that in aluminium foil and then gladwrap. In two or three months time you can open it and should find it full of roots. Then cut it from the mother plant, soak it in the Seasol to kill any pathogens and then plant it into the next pot or into the ground. If you can weight the branches down to touch the ground they can layer and grow roots straight into the ground.

## JUNE MEETING

At our June meeting Damian White and Narelle Power taught us about the many species of frogs we can find on the Gold Coast.

Over the last 20 years Damian and Narelle have been running their environmental consultancy partnership "ddwfauna", and have surveyed more than 250 sites. During this time, they have documented and photographed the species they have encountered and this massive photographic database when combined with extensive local knowledge culminated in their publication *Frogs of the Gold Coast*.

They explained that the Gold Coast has

great environmental diversity and is home to 36 of the 240 frog species that are found in Australia.

In the 1980s people would give tadpoles to friends to raise and release in different areas but they were unknowingly spreading an invisible fungus that killed a lot of frogs. It's now illegal to move frogs or tadpoles around.

Narelle said "When searching for frogs wear a head lamp or hold your torch up next to your eyes and the light will bounce back off the frogs' eyes and help you see them." She said spiders also look amazing by spotlight.

Damian and Narelle explained that we can try to control cane toad numbers but we won't ever be able to completely eradicate them. It was reassuring to hear that cane toads do the most damage when they first move to a new area – which is why trying to control their spread is important. Once they have been in an area for around sixty years the local species learn either not to eat them or to eat them safely by turning them over and eating their bellies, avoiding the poison on their backs. The local species numbers can drop during this time but once they learn then their numbers can recover. Damian said there is no evidence of toads killing native frogs, but they do both compete for the same food sources of insects.

Damian informed us that not all amphibians with warts are toads; some are frogs so don't kill them unless you're certain it's a cane toad, or you could be doing more harm than good.

## JULY MEETING

At our July meeting Dr Kit Prendergast shared some of her vast knowledge of native bees with us, via our first live

Zoom presentation using our new projector.

Kit explained that bees evolved 125 million years ago, back in the time of the dinosaurs. They played an important role in driving the diversification and success of flowering plants.

It was interesting to hear Kit say that while there are 1,500 species of native bees in Australia new species are still being discovered and she has identified two new species herself.

“It’s hard to get funding for native bee studies because they don’t make money and we live in a capitalist society,” Kit said.

Kit said that bees are closely related to wasps and are essentially a group of wasps that became vegetarian (wasp larvae are carnivores).

Some interesting facts that we learnt include:

- Most bees are not yellow and black.
- Bees have an amazing sense of smell which they sense through their antennae.
- Bees can’t see red but they still visit red flowers using their sense of smell and UV vision.
- Male native bees can’t sting.
- Most bee species don’t produce honey
- European male bees die after their penis (or as Kit calls it: “beenis”) explodes during sex.

Kit explained that the more native plants you have in your garden, the more native bees you will attract. While native bees



***The Amegilla cingulata - blue banded bee***

can feed from some of the exotic flowers we grow, they don’t *need* them, but they *do* need native flowers. There are also many exotic flowers that native bees *can’t* feed from, so while your garden may look nice it may not actually be beneficial for the bees.

Kit says some of the best native flowers for native bees are: callistemon, corymbia, eucalyptus, thryptomene, melaleuca, hardenbergia, jacksonia, daviesia, rod-anthe; and non-natives: salvia, duranta repens, gazania, basil and brassicas.

Native bees have been struggling with loss of habitat and, more recently, extreme weather events, droughts and climate change, all of which affect flower growth. To help native bees, besides growing more flowers for them, you can provide them with bee hotels or nesting areas. Kit warned that many bee hotels on the market aren’t suitable but you can make your own by putting some blocks of wood in a bucket and drill some holes into them. Pack any gaps between the blocks with bamboo. Situate it horizontally in a sunny spot around 1.5m above the ground. You can also leave patches of bare soil that some bees burrow into, don’t put down fake grass and don’t till your garden beds in case bees are nesting there.

For more bee info you can join Kit’s Facebook group ‘The Buzz on Wild Bees’. Her book *Creating a Haven for Native Bees* is \$18 for an ebook or \$30 plus postage for a hardcopy. You can email Kit to order at [kit.prendergast21@gmail.com](mailto:kit.prendergast21@gmail.com)

## Getting to Know... Heather Ryan

By Diane Kelly

One of the fun things about going to do an interview at a Club member's home to which I haven't been before is to try and guess which house in the street it is. Approaching Heather Ryan's home last week, there was very little doubt – I've not seen a front yard with so many pot plants and gardens in it!

Heather's backyard is also one of the most challenging that I've seen – the area in front of the house is level, but as you head down the driveway to the backyard, it is steep! But that has its advantages too, as the views from the southern windows of the house are impressive as you look out over Elanora and down towards the Currumbin Creek estuary and its surrounding hills.

As with many of our Club members, Heather's early memories include the family veggie garden and fruit trees. Growing in the black soil of her parents' 110-acre property were orange, lemon, mandarin, apricot, plum and mulberry trees – along with crops of barley, oats, wheat, sorghum and lucerne. The family also had dairy cattle; poultry; ducks; a dog and "Charlie" the sheep.

Heather's childhood was spent on the farm which was located in Swanfels in the Southern Darling Downs – to get there from the Coast you head out past Beaudesert and take the Cunningham Highway toward Warwick. Swanfels is 25kms from Warwick and is a small town – at the 2016 census there were 132 people living there. So probably not much has changed since Heather lived there – when she attended the state school in Swanfels there were 18 children there, and three pupils in grade seven when she left. There were also

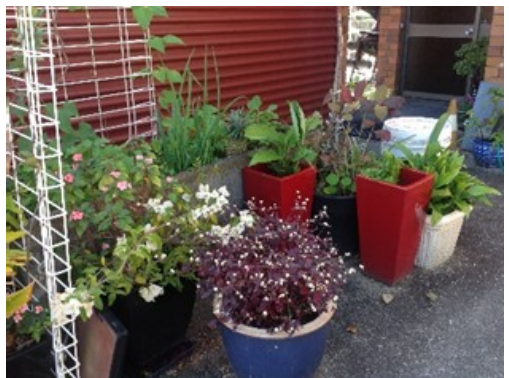
three choices for how to get to school – walk, ride a bike or ride your horse.

Each child at the school had an area of garden to look after, and the little community celebrated Arbor Day, which is a day dedicated annually to public tree planting.

With a background such as Heather's, it is not surprising that in each of the places she lived (including Emerald, Rockhampton, Mackay and Toowoomba) she enjoyed looking after their flower gardens.

In the year 2000, Heather met her partner Bruce Kelly, and in 2001/2002 she moved to the Gold Coast. Bruce had designed and built the house in which Heather now lives, and he certainly made the most of what is definitely a challenging property. The block was just grassed areas when Heather moved there but then – and I like this part of the story – she said she would like a garden, and so Bruce built her one. Actually, he built quite a number of gardens, and the neat, strong retainer walls around them still look good.

The soil of the block is basically clay, but very little of that is used for gardening – the soil for the gardens was brought in. Added in to improve the soil's quality was



compost from the Lismore Council, and Heather still has a composting area and a “Swag” worm farm. As a solution to building garden beds in the steep area at the back of the block, Bruce got a number of bathtubs, and these have proven successful for growing a variety of vegetables, flowers and fruit. Stones and weed matting are put in the base of the tubs to assist good drainage.

There are a few problems associated with such a steep block. Generally, any rainfall drains quickly away, but in the flat area at the bottom, the soil tends to become soggy. There are also visiting possums and these enjoy the fruit from the passionfruit vine that Heather has growing. Bats and grasshoppers are also annoying visitors – and weeds (although Heather spreads sugar cane mulch to help control those). The back of the block also gets shaded by the house, and the avocado tree generates a fair bit of shade over the garden. (If I were Heather, I wouldn't remove the tree – I was given an avocado to take home, and when it ripened, it was one of the tastiest I've enjoyed.) Also growing down in the back area are lemon trees, an orange tree, paw paw trees and a number of pineapples (all grown from the tops of previous fruit). There are also lavenders, salvias and the biggest leafed nasturtiums I've ever seen!

The front garden and the many dozens of pot plants are at the front of the house, on level ground, and they enjoy plenty of sunshine. I asked Heather what her favourite flowers are and she listed freesias, sweet peas, native violets and crucifix orchids. Plus she grows bathtubs of chrysanthemums (they keep self-seeding) and takes along bunches of them to give away for Mothers' Day at the Op Shop where she volunteers. Most of the plants in Heather's pots are grown

from cuttings – I asked her about watering, and she said that this needs to be done about twice a week to keep the plants happy.

I also asked Heather what her favourite vegetables were – Asian greens were number one, along with peas (snap in particular), beans, and cherry tomatoes. Like I suspect many of us, Heather has little success growing carrots, and has noticed a problem with them becoming forked. She grows her vegetables by sowing straight into the garden soil, as she tried growing seeds in punnets but found they dried out too quickly.

Seeds saving is a topic about which Heather would like to learn more – she enjoys learning new and different things, and values coming to our Club meetings and getting to know like-minded people.

Learning is an important thing for Heather and she feels it is wise for any gardener to research about the crops or garden plants that they would like to grow, finding out when and where to plant them and how to care for them. But I did enjoy Heather's final comment to encourage us – because I think sometimes we all get to the stage when our gardens become a bit too challenging – **“Just go for it”**.





## Well, that's an interesting idea...

By Diane Kelly

Back in 1999 we decided that we would like to move from our duplex in Burleigh Waters and, looking in the “Houses for Sale” section of the Gold Coast Bulletin, we soon found our “forever home”. This was a ranch-style home which is set at an east-west angle (perfect for the Coast’s hot summers and cold winters) that is on a large block at the back of Mudgeeraba. Quiet area, no close neighbours, lots of trees and plenty of space for a vegetable garden and a chook pen – and two special goats, Whitey and Chocolate. But there was one draw-back – with the house came an in-ground swimming pool.

Now it is not that we don’t like water. My husband goes to the beach most Saturday mornings, and some time ago I swam every day for a full year when we lived in another house that had a pool. But we seldom use our pool now, and so it sits there both costing money to maintain and making us feel guilty!

So, my interest was caught recently when I was reading an article titled “Wild Things”. It was about “rewilding” i.e. the rescuing of endangered plants and animals in parks, farms and backyards. The article told of how “Bangalow Koalas” (a non-profit organization) planted some 81,000 trees last



year in six shires of northern rivers of New South Wales. The goal is to provide food and habitat for koalas, kangaroos, bandicoots, gliders, possums, birds, platypus and bees. The article goes on with a number of stories, and then it mentioned that backyards can also be “rewilded” – and one way to do this is to turn your swimming pool into a habitat pool.

Now this concept is one I had thought about over the years, and in particular when I saw what the late Jude Lai had done with the swimming pool on his property in Gilston. But – putting my financial hat on – it always concerned me that not everyone who may want to buy our property in the future will want a habitat pool. So, I was interested to read on a Sunshine Coast Council website an article by Dr Julie O’Connor, a Senior Conservation Partnerships Officer, in which she mentioned that she had converted her pool to a pond in 2013; enjoyed eight years of wildlife – and last year changed the pond back into a pool because she was selling the property.

Reading further in the “Bangalow Koalas” article, examples were given of how the wildlife quickly comes to the converted pools. Also, if the placement of plants is done correctly, then water remains clear enough to swim in – and there is no need for chemicals or a pump – in fact, to quote one example, “it needs no maintenance at all”. The question about mosquitoes being a problem was answered by the fact that they do not like water deeper than 30cms – so they are much happier living in the bottom of your flowerpots! Besides, the fish you choose for a pond will take care of any wrigglers that do happen by.

Returning to Dr O’Connor’s article, the changing from pool to pond is as simple as stopping adding chlorine, or allowing

your salt chlorinator to use up all its salt as the case may be. The pool will turn green, but for once, this is OK! Then the “change to pond” may need professional help to ensure that the correct plants are chosen to add – after all, they are the key to good water quality, as they filter excess nutrients and deliver oxygen into the water, which is vital for the overall ecosystem health. Plants can be planted on shelves or in tubs, or in floating baskets.

Advice about the best choice of fish to have in your rewilded pond is also included in the article – there are eleven types listed, ranging from Australian smelt (a pretty gold and silver fish) through to ornate rainbowfish (a colourful blue) to Pacific blue-eye (a tiny blue-eyed fish first identified back in 1866).

There are some things to be aware of with a converted pool and keeping water at the right height is one of the things to watch. Some plants like total inundation and some only periodic, so it is the same as with growing vegetables - it is important to learn how to grow each type. And a word of wisdom - be patient – it may take up to 6 months to have the pond’s eco system in balance, with the plant and fish numbers at a sufficient level.

It was interesting to learn that the Ku-ring-gai council in northern Sydney has been assisting residents in converting their unwanted swimming pools into ponds for the past 14 years. More than 40 households have been assisted in the conversion by the provision of technical advice, native fish and native aquatic plants. The water quality of these ponds are well within the Australian standards, and is far above that of the quality found in

Ku-ring-gai streams. The council states the benefits of the change-over being saving up to \$1,000.00 per year by not running a pool pump and filter and adding chemicals, and also the avoidance of releasing approximately 400 tons of greenhouse gases. The ponds can still be used for swimming – and they become useful in breeding threatened native fish such as the rainbow fish or gudgeons – they do well in such environments.

So, what happens when it is time to sell your home? There is some encouraging advice about when a pond might be turned back into a pool. The best timing is in winter, when the frogs have disappeared into the surrounding vegetation and the dragonfly nymphs have both emerged and departed. Hopefully some of the greenery can be preserved – again, this is time to seek professional advice. A wise idea is to provide alternative water areas – have a pond ready for the frogs when they return in the spring, and to keep dragonflies and lizards happy.

Obviously, this article doesn’t apply to everyone – and those who have a pool may well prefer a cooling dip in the hot weather. But, if you are like us and are looking for a beneficial alternative to your lonely backyard pool, then maybe a “pool to pond” alternative is something that may interest you.



## SPRING Stands For...

By Diane Kelly

*“Spring is the time of Plans and Projects” – Leo Tolstoy*

Winter is finishing and, as Millard Kaufman wrote, we can “glance out of the window at the signs of spring. The sky is **almost** blue, the trees **almost** budding, the sun is **almost** bright”. The days are just starting to get longer – the birds start singing earlier – and so it is indeed a “time of plans and projects”.

As many of us have noticed, spring is coming earlier to the Coast these days. So what can we plan for August and the following months?

### **Spring... stands for Silver Beet.**

This is a vegetable that doesn't like the humidity of summer, so planting it now is wise if you want to avoid fungal leaf diseases and stem rot. (Alternatives for the warmest months are New Zealand spinach or Ceylon spinach.) Silver beet seeds can be sown directly into garden beds to a depth of 1-2 cm or popped into seed trays for transplanting as seedlings. It's a good idea to soak the seeds in warm water prior to planting, and they should germinate within 10-14 days. Prepare the soil well and give the plants plenty of nitrogen, potassium and water to ensure large, well-shaped leaves, and also because water or nutrient-stressed plants are more likely to bolt to seed.

When it is time to harvest your silver beet, only pick the largest, outer leaves, always ensuring that 4-5 leaves remain on the plant. How many to pick can be judged by the rate of replacement foliage, and you can see the new growth forming from the inside of the plant. As the plants age and approach flowering

the stem length increases and the flavour diminishes. So... **Silver Beet...** easy to grow and a very productive vegetable.

### **sPring... stands for Pumpkin.**

Although it is very easy to come across little pumpkin plants growing in your compost heap, there may be times when you want to plant some intentionally. As with silver beet, pumpkins are easy to grow, and their leaves are also subject to leaf diseases. But if your plants are healthy, you can enjoy eating the shoots, tendrils, flowers and seeds as well as the fruit. Sow the pumpkin seeds directly into the soil. Alternatively, you can plant them into a raised mound of compost – but remember to create a circular moat around the mound top to allow for deep watering of the roots. Another way to grow them is to dig deep, cylindrical planting holes. Fill them with compost and manure, top them up with a little soil, and then plant the seeds.

Pumpkins will grow in a range of soil conditions but they do require good drainage. If the soil where you are growing your pumpkins is not the best, apply some liquid seaweed or compost tea to boost growth. As the plants begin to produce, place some straw or other dry material under each fruit to reduce the chance of fruit rot brought about by contact with the soil. Storing the fruit must be done when it is fully matured and cured. Curing involves exposing the skin of the pumpkin to the sun and allowing it to dry completely. Clip the fruit from the vine, keeping at least 5cm of the stalk intact.

### **spRing... stands for Rockmelon.**

Plan what variety of rockmelon you would like to grow. “Hale's Best” and “Planter's Jumbo” are both hardy and disease-resistant. “Passport” is particu-

larly fast-maturing, and compact-growing types such as “Minnesota Midget” are well suited for small gardens. Give your rockmelon plants plenty of warmth and perfect drainage and remember that their root systems are shallow and spreading, so avoid cultivating around them. Watering regularly in the early stages will assist in growth and fruit formation, and you can wrap the fruit in newspaper to protect them from sunburn and fruit fly. For maximum sweetness, allow the fruit to ripen fully and only harvest when they come away easily from the vine – and then leave them a further day in cool conditions before eating.

### spring... stands for Iberis.



This is perennial plant that actually belongs to the *Brassicaceae* (i.e. cabbage) genus. The name “Iberis” is derived from Iberia, the Roman name for Spain, and the name we know the plant better as – “candytuft” – comes from the name “Candia”, which is a port city on the island of Crete. This is a wonderful little plant for growing in rockeries or along the borders of gardens, and the flower colours range from a pure white through to pink, mauve and then purple. Some varieties have flowers that are fragrant. Remember not to confuse it with sweet alyssum, whose flowers are smaller, in smaller clusters and that bloom longer.

Iberis (candytuft) likes to be planted in full sun (to produce the best blossoms and to prevent legginess) and well-drained soil – watch that the soil does not include clay, as that will retain too much moisture. Prune the plants back after they have completed flowering, both to stimulate new growth and to ensure compact plants. A dressing of dolomite will be appreciated, and the plants can be propagated from seed or small cuttings, or divided and transplanted.

### spring... stands for Nasturtiums (also known as Indian cress).

These are plants that are very easy to grow – just pop the seeds in very well-drained soil; don’t over-water for 5-7 days until the plants start to emerge, and then just leave them to take over your garden! Not really, but you will need to keep the plants pruned. So get some seeds from a neighbour or gardening club friend and add some greenery and vibrant oranges and yellows to your garden.

Instead of “how to grow”, here is a “how to eat” the seeds by turning them into mock capers. You need:

Young, green nasturtium seeds

3 cups white vinegar

½ teaspoon peppercorns

½ teaspoon cloves

½ teaspoon coriander seeds

A fresh bay leaf and/or any other pickling spices you enjoy.

To make mock capers, soak the nasturtium seeds overnight in very generously salted water (this helps to remove any bitterness). Combine the vinegar with the remaining ingredients in a saucepan and boil until well infused. Add the washed nasturtium seeds to very small, clean glass jars and pour over the hot vinegar (either strained or not). Seal the jars and set them aside for a few weeks to mature. Use them as you would traditional pickled caper flower buds. **Njoy** nastur-

tiums!

### **sprinG... stands for Gladioli.**

My little “Gardening on the Gold Coast” book tells me I can plant gladioli in September and that is good as their vibrantly coloured flowers really add to a garden. Gladioli are so named because the leaves are like swords (as in gladiators), and they are actually also known as “sword lilies”. Gladioli are grown from corms; are easy to grow; and will tolerate a variety of soils, as long as they are not water-logged. Prepare the soil by digging in a little blood and bone, or some well-broken down cow manure. Plant the corms flat side down to a depth of 10-15cm and 8-15 cm apart, but it is recommended that you don’t use a dibber as this can leave an airspace under the corm. Instead, add a small handful of sand in the hole and rest the corm on that. The plants should be in full sun in a sheltered spot and keep them moist but not soggy as they grow. Add a complete fertilizer just prior to flowering – you will notice that the flowers start opening from the bottom of the stem.

Growing some African marigolds near the gladioli will help stop any thrip-type attacks. Plant some gladioli this season – they are beautiful.



## **Overview of the Permagarden Method** By Jorge Cantellano

The overall goal of a permagarden is to provide household members with a viable, practical and sustainable method to increase their household food and nutrition security. By implementing the permagarden process, gardeners can grow food for their household or community without needing a large garden. It is a sustainable method that uses local materials and builds the environmental health of the garden. Also, with proper water management, this method works in both the rainy and dry seasons. Overall, the permagarden way has five aims:

1. Ecological – enhance natural resources and ecosystem services through:

- improving soil and water health
- increasing biodiversity
- reducing erosion.

2. Economic – increase economic income by:

- reducing input costs
- diversifying and intensifying production.

3. Energy – increase energy efficiency through:

- better garden design that works with natural influences to maximise the efficiencies of an integrated system and reduce time and energy expended tending crops and animals.

4. Nutritional – contribute to increased nutritional status by:

- increasing access to a diverse diet
- improving critical nutrient uptake.

5. Social – strengthen the skillset, capacity, and confidence of home gardeners by:

- supporting innovative local gardeners to become leaders
- understand how to maximise local resources and utilise influences to

improve their ability to adapt and test technologies.

The permagarden method is a combination of permaculture and bio-intensive agriculture.

'Permaculture', a combination of the words 'permanent' and 'agriculture', focuses on designing the garden to include permanent, soil-based structures. In essence, permaculture helps gardeners understand natural influences that affect the homestead and results in a better garden location and design that optimises available resources. For example, swales are used to direct and capture rainwater. Specifically, swales are used around the edges of permagarden to control and manage water, for pest management, and to provide the potential for year-round supplemental food production on the berms.

'Grow Bio-intensive agriculture' refers to the efficient system of planting, deep healthy soil structure, diet design, composting, and management of annual crops in beds that are found within protective and productive berms.

The permagarden method teaches how to design and integrate multiple agroecological practices to increase production and create a more resilient garden. The success of a permagarden often depends on three things:

1. understanding of key permagarden concepts
2. how well is the garden designed to capture water and nutrients
3. incorporating as many agroecological practices are fulfilling each key concept as possible.

### **Empowering gardeners to make decisions.**

Building resilient households include empowering people to make decisions together to improve their livelihoods.

Building a permagarden can be a pro-

ductive decision to improve food availability, but it requires upfront time and labour commitment.

Permagardens should encourage households to consider what decisions to make to maximise their livelihoods carefully.

This permanent garden is a small-scale, high-yield, nutrition-focused instrument of food security that anyone can create close to home.

### **Fundamental concepts of a sustainable home garden:**

- **Utilise local resources.**
- **Create an efficient garden design.**
- **Improve soil health.**
- **Increase water management.**
- **Plant for maximum benefit.**
- **Conduct proactive crop health and protection.**

A permagarden does not rely on expensive material from outside the community; it can be successfully created and maintained using only local tools and seeds. This productive space is not always used to produce the same crop. Instead, it is designed and managed in such a way that, like a house, once built, it continues to provide protection from the elements and production for the family for many years.

With a permagarden, a family can have a diverse supply of fresh, nutritious fruits and vegetables year-round. The pathways between the permanent growing beds allow easy access to the growing vegetables, fruits, and other valuable crops. In addition, the protective berms around permagarden borders can hold local medicinal, herbal, and flowering plants that live from year to year and never need replanting, yet continue to provide valuable products.

## Final thoughts

Building healthy soil, improving water management, and proactively protecting crops are activities that must be maintained year after year after year. Understanding the underlying processes of soils and plants helps a gardener to care for a healthy, productive permagarden.

As the permagarden method is implemented obstacles and setbacks can be encountered. However, this should not discourage the gardener. On the contrary, a valuable part of the permagarden approach is experimenting with the garden, observing how an intervention succeeded or failed, and adapting the technique further. A successful permagarden entails more than garden design; it also involves a creative mindset that can adapt to problems in a way that following strict instructions cannot. Keep in mind the aims of a successful permagarden: ecological, economic, energy, nutritional, and social. By investing the time and effort to build permagardens, practitioners are investing in a valuable resource that will ultimately improve food security and household welfare.

## Permagarden 3-Day Training

The Permagarden 3-Day Training aims to gather gardeners who want to improve their gardens and increase the production of nutritious foods near their homes. The aim of the training is to enable gardeners to adopt key principles and create a permagarden.

### Aim and objectives

The aim of the training is to enable gardeners to adopt key principles and create a permagarden.

At the end of the 3-day training in permagarden, participants will be able to:

- describe the key components of the

permagarden method

- demonstrate practical knowledge to use and implement key messages of the permagarden method apply the permagarden method.

## Methodology

Classroom discussion will be conducted at EdibleScapes Gardens. The program facilitators will lead the gardeners through the permagarden method by creating a garden bed.

Take away:

- shared learning and experience from fellow gardeners on the practical implementation of permagarden.
- understanding of how to create and maintain a permagarden.

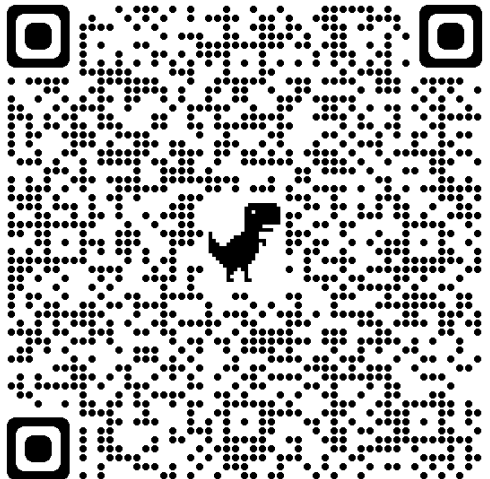
## Location

The training takes place at the EdibleScapes Gardens on Tuesday 6, Thursday 8 and Saturday 10 September. From 8:30am to 3pm.

**Inaugural coupon code BBPROMO01**

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<https://ediblescapes.corsizio.com/>



## **There's Nothing Quite Like a Home-made Soup!**

By Diane Kelly

It has been said that *“There is no point in making soup unless others eat it. Soup needs another mouth to taste it, another heart to be warmed by it.”*

Sharing some very flavoursome and warming soup (with accompanying bread) was one of the highlights of our Club meeting on Thursday the 28<sup>th</sup> of July, and so to pass-on that pleasure, here are the recipes of the four soups that we shared.

### **Janet's Pumpkin & Sweet Potato soup**

#### **Ingredients:**

1kg Jap pumpkin  
350g sweet potato  
1 large onion diced  
1.5 litres of good quality veggie stock  
2 level teaspoons smoked paprika  
1 teaspoon grated ginger  
1 level teaspoons turmeric  
2 tbsp good quality oil

Add salt to taste, taking into account any salt that may be in the stock.

#### **Method:**

Peel and roughly chop the sweet potato and pumpkin.

Place the empty soup pot onto the stove top and add the oil. Turn on heat. When oil is hot add onions, stirring, and then add the spices to cook while still stirring. When onion is wilted and becoming transparent remove pot from heat and add the sweet potato and pumpkin and give them a stir around to distribute the spices a little. Pour in the stock until the vegetables are not quite covered for a thicker soup and then place back on

heat. Bring to a simmer and cover with a lid. Simmer for approximately half an hour until the vegies are soft. Take off the heat and let sit for a while. When a bit cooler blend carefully with a stick blender.

### **Maria's Minestrone soup**

Minestrone was first tasted during the Crusades when Italian soldiers boiled up meat in water to make a simple broth, then asked the neighbouring villagers to contribute vegetables and herbs. A humble beginning to “the most famous soup of all”!

Maria's minestrone soup had carrots, beans and rice in it – but there is no particular recipe that she uses – as she wrote “soups are so simple to make”. Her version last Thursday evening was vegetarian and gluten-free. So dig out your recipe books and see which combinations of ingredients appeal to you.

### **Leah's Pea and Ham soup (voted by her son as his favourite of the evening)**

#### **Ingredients:**

1 packet green split peas  
1 onion  
2 cloves of garlic  
1 carrot  
2 big potatoes  
A few stalks of celery with leaves  
1 bay leaf  
A bunch of parsley  
1 packet of frozen baby peas (or fresh peas if you have them!)  
1 smoked ham hock.

#### **Method:**

Soak the split peas in water overnight. Cook the chopped onion and garlic in the oil until translucent then add the ham hock and cover with water and add the bay leaf. Cook until the meat is falling off



the bone (3-4 hours on the stove or 8 hours in a slow cooker on low). When the meat is ready take it out to cool a little. Chop and add all the other ingredients, drain the split peas and add them too. While that's all cooking until soft you can deal with the hock: discarding the skin, fat and bones and cutting the meat down into smaller pieces. When the veggies and split peas are cooked you can either put half into a blender, or gently blend part of the soup with a bamix or just use a potato masher. Make it as smooth or chunky as you like. Add the frozen peas and the meat back in and serve when the peas are warm. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

### ***Penny's Potato and Leek soup***

Both vegetables grow easily and plentifully in Irish soil, so here is Penny's salute (or maybe that should be "slainte!") to her family's heritage.

#### **Ingredients:**

4 leeks – white part only  
 30g butter  
 3 floury potatoes, chopped  
 3 cups vegetable stock  
 1 cup milk  
 ¼ tsp ground nutmeg  
 Cream and chopped fresh spring onions to garnish.

#### **Method:**

Wash the leeks thoroughly before use – slice them down their length, but without cutting off the root, so they still hold together. Then rinse under running water to get rid of any grit hidden in the layers. Now chop well. Heat the butter in a large, heavy based pan. Add the leek and cook for 3-4 minutes, stirring frequently, until softened. Add the potato and stock. Bring slowly to the boil, then reduce the heat and simmer for 20 minutes, or until the vegetables are tender.

Cool the mixture slightly then transfer to a blender or food processor and puree in batches. Return to the pan, stir in the milk and nutmeg, and season well with salt and cracked black pepper. Reheat gently and serve garnished with a swirl of cream and a scattering of spring onion.

### ***Thank you!***

I am sure that all those who enjoyed the food at the meeting would also like to say a big **“thank you”** to the volunteers who contributed their ingredients and cooking skills to making the evening extra enjoyable.

## 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.

**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.

## 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.

## HERBS

### AUGUST

**Annual:** Borage, Calendula, Chervil, Chamomile, 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.

## VEGETABLES

### AUGUST

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

### SEPTEMBER

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

### OCTOBER

Artichoke, Asian Greens, Beans (French), Beetroot, Capsicum, Carrot, Celeriac, Chili, 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.

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.

## Recipes

### Easy Healthy Carrot Cake

Kerry Lason shared this Healthy Carrot Cake on the supper table at a recent meeting and received rave reviews. She found it on the [www.ifoodreal.com](http://www.ifoodreal.com) website.

#### Ingredients

Cake:

2 large eggs  
1 cup plain Greek yogurt  
1/3 cup oil (neutral flavour like rice bran)  
2/3 cup maple syrup or honey  
1/2 cup any type of milk  
1 tablespoon pure vanilla extract  
2 cups whole wheat or spelt flour  
1 tablespoon cinnamon  
3 teaspoons baking powder  
2 teaspoons baking soda  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
1 cup walnuts, chopped  
1/2 cup coconut flakes  
2 cups carrots, finely grated  
Spray oil

Icing:

2 cups plain Greek yogurt  
1/2 cup icing sugar  
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract  
Long coconut flakes for garnish

#### Method

Whisk the eggs for 10 seconds; add the yogurt, oil, maple syrup, milk and vanilla extract and whisk well.

In another bowl mix the flour, cinnamon, baking powder, baking soda and salt.

Add the wet ingredients to the dry and gently combine (don't overmix).

Fold in the carrots, walnuts and coconut flakes.

Pour into a baking dish sprayed with the cooking oil and bake at 180 degrees Celsius for 40 minutes.

While the cake is cooling make the icing: line a strainer with paper towel and put it over a bowl. Pour the yogurt in and let it strain through in the fridge for a few hours. Then discard the whey and add the icing sugar and vanilla extract to the strained yogurt.

Spread it over the cake and garnish with the toasted coconut flakes.

### Chocolate Balls

Janet Shearer shared this healthy treat recently and many members asked for the recipe.

#### Ingredients

250G (12) Medjool dates (pitted)  
2 tbspn raw cacao  
1 cup almond meal  
2 tbspn honey or agave syrup  
Half a cup shredded coconut  
Extra desiccated coconut for rolling

#### Method

Blend all ingredients together in a food processor until well combined.

Roll into approximately 22 heavenly chocolate balls. Toss in coconut and store in a container in the fridge until needed.

Great for lunch boxes or a quick energy snack on the run.