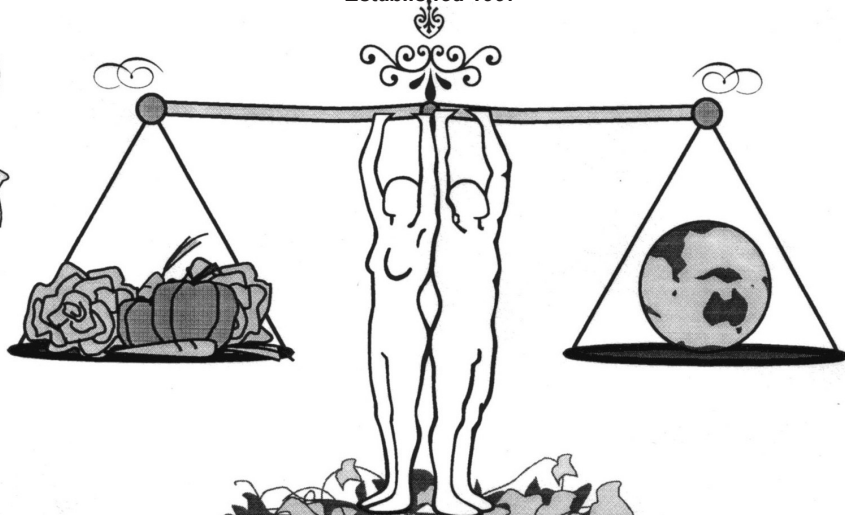


GOLD COAST ORGANIC GROWERS Inc.

Established 1997



NEWSLETTER

Volume 25, 2021 Issue 4
GARDENING IN SUMMER

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OUR NEXT MEETING: NOVEMBER 25, 2021

Notice Board

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

Meetings Held:

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

Annual Membership Fees:

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

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

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

Seed Bank:

Packets are \$2.00 each.

Members' Market Corner:

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

Raffle Table:

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

Library:

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

Advertising:

1/4 page: \$15 an issue

1/2 page: \$25 an issue

Full page: \$40 an issue

W: www.goldcoastorganicgrowers.org
Facebook: www.facebook.com/gcorganic

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

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.

Membership Renewals:

Overdue: Melanie Strang (440), Beth Orme (343), Kerstein Trueman (346), Rachael Lebeter (367), Bev Geraghty (404), Liz Grippio (405), Stacey Panozzo (420), Peter Meppem (436), Lynn Calligros (451), Marek Janczewski (455), Katrina Julienne (458)

October: Evelyn Douglas (383), Doug & Sally Beitz (441)

November: Jan Guest (307), Rodney & Cathy Boscoe (347), Leah Johnston (416), Gary & Sue Webb (445), Dorothy Coe (471), Amanda Harvey (472), Terri Ange (473)

Newsletter:

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

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

View our Newsletters On-Line at:
www.goldcoastorganicgrowers.org.au/

Upcoming Guest Speakers

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

There is no meeting in December.

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

Workshops

EdibleScapes Gardens welcomes visitors and volunteers. Gardening activities occur on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday from 9am to mid-morning.
<https://www.facebook.com/n.ediblescapes>

EdibleScapes is also holding a Summer Solstice morning tea on Saturday December 18 from 8am.

For more info visit: <https://www.facebook.com/events/558642451894913>

Thanks to this issue's contributors:

Steve Gill, Leah Johnston, Diane Kelly, Lyn Mansfield and Maria Roberson.

President's Notes
By Maria Roberson

Hello Everyone,

Summer in the garden can be quite challenging for gardeners and plants alike. With that in mind I always try to get most of the planting completed by mid December. Heat loving plants such as corn, pumpkins, herbs and vegetables that are at home in the tropics will continue to thrive but tender lettuce and other soft greens will succumb to the heat and humidity.

The Sub Tropics are the reverse of the colder southern climates where summer is looked upon as a fabulous growing opportunity. Not so for us, we like to take a break from gardening during the hottest periods of summer then gear up again at the end of March for a big Autumn planting season. Having said that, gardens don't have to remain bare whilst resting, they can still be quite productive and filled with the ongoing growth of what was planted earlier. I have been experimenting with beetroot and have found that if I can make my last planting of seed in November, it will usually just keep growing through the hottest months. Weekly mini plantings of radish and rocket will also be viable until late January and February too. Garden beds can be left to rest with a thick layer of mulch on top to protect soil from heat and weed growth or alternatively filled with a green manure crop that will be chopped up and dug into the soil ready for the Autumn planting.

Thank you to everyone who has been able to attend the monthly meetings, I know it hasn't been easy with the changing Government regulations on hall capacity numbers and we really appreciate

your efforts and patience in this regard. We have tried to maintain the friendly vibe but have had a few challenges along the way and hopefully the easing of restrictions will see us reinstating the supper table and bringing back the social aspects of the club that we have all missed so terribly. The raffle table, swap table, seed table and for sale table all still managed to kick along without any interruptions and I would like to give a big thank you to those who made contributions to these.

We have applied for a grant to purchase a PA system to enable members to hear our speakers more effectively, which, I know has been a problem for some members due to the bigger hall size. Next year we hope to set up our library at the Elanora hall which should also make it feel more like our home and it will be great to have access to this fabulous resource again after so long without it.

Just a reminder that the November meeting is the last one for the year and there will be no meeting until January next year. Our November meeting has always doubled as our end of year break up get together and I hope to see you all there. Wishing you all a happy time with family and friends till we meet again in 2022.

Happy growing,
Maria

Meeting Recaps
By Leah Johnston**OCTOBER**

At our October meeting Kim Martin from 'Grow' talked all things microbes.

Grow is the only fertiliser type product that comes in refillable packaging. It's

reducing plastic waste as customers receive a good discount for reusing their bottles rather than buying a new bottle. I've been refilling my bottle for four years. Locally we can refill them at the Mitre 10 in Currumbin.

Grow is now exported to China, USA, Cambodia, Singapore and Vietnam. It is used by the gardeners at Gardens by the Bay in Singapore. The fuchsias there weren't flowering because the soil didn't have enough nutrients. After using Grow they flowered and the leaves became so shiny that people thought they had been polished! Also in Singapore, a passionfruit vine growing up the Oasis Hotel hadn't ever flowered. After they used Grow there were passionfruit falling from the building, which was thought to be dangerous, and they had to remove the vine!

Kim said that Grow imitates the natural process of nature and that's why plants love it. She likened the process of microbes in soil to our own gut health. When the microbes aren't happy the whole thing fails, when the microbes are happy, the whole being thrives. Healthy soil has more than 7 billion microbes in a teaspoon. It's incredible to think of that microworld underneath our feet.

Farmers with over-extended fields have found their pasture dying and didn't know why. It's because the mycorrhizal fungi is missing from the soil. Traditionally farmers used to rotate their crops over four yearly cycles, which let the nutrients build back up. In the last 70 years farmers have reused the same paddock for the same crop year after year.

Kim said that good soil should have around 25 earth worms per shovel full. Sadly some farmers have never seen an earthworm in their soil.

Grow helps to improve root development; enhance nutrient uptake; increase efficient utilisation of water; minimise stress impact on plants; reduce impact of crop infestations; put carbon back into the soil; and improve production levels by around 33-50 per cent.

Kim explained how the Brix Meter rates plants' nutritional levels. The higher the number, the healthier the plant. Home-grown is around 12, hydroponically grown is around 4. Because of the way our food is grown commercially it has depleted mineral levels. So, keep doing what you're doing, organic gardeners!

Kim said that foliar application allows the plants to uptake the goodness 9 times faster than watering it onto the soil and waiting for the plant's roots to take it up. "You can even spray it on your plants the same day that you eat them. It won't hurt you, your pets or your bees," she said.

SEPTEMBER

At our September meeting we welcomed back Jerry Coleby-Williams.

He spoke of the difference between living self-sufficiently and sustainably, and that these two terms are often used interchangeably but are actually quite different. To be self-sufficient is to not need anyone or anything outside of your own property. Jerry said he lives sustainably as part of his local community. This means that he buys second hand clothes, and has them repaired when required, which is a sustainable practice – rather than the self-sufficient practice of making his own clothes. Sustainable living means he doesn't keep chickens (because he doesn't particularly like them or have time to care for them) but he always has eggs because he can trade with people from his local community. Likewise, he doesn't

have an avocado tree but he always has avocados.

In these uncertain times many people are fearing the worst and some are leaving life in the city for a self-sufficient existence in the country. Jerry had a reassuring view on the situation though: he doesn't imagine there will ever be a time that we cannot buy rice or pasta, he sees society as continuing to function, while adopting more sustainable practices.

Growing his own food and being able to exist exclusively on the food from his own backyard, if he had to, brings Jerry peace of mind. His number one survival food is the Winged Yam. He said a garden bed of this can provide two people with a solid supply of starch all year, if required. He also cited the Jackfruit as a valuable prepper food as it is so versatile: eaten green in savoury dishes or ripe as a fruit, and packed with nutrients.

If you want to rely more on your own backyard and less on the supermarkets think about when different vegetables and fruits are ripening and plan to have something ready to eat every month of the year. Traditional practices including pickling, jarring and making preserves and jams can extend your harvest.

He does caution that a survivalist life can be very boring for your tastebuds so he adds flavour to meals by making sauces with herbs, spices and chillies.

OCTOBER

Our October Speaker was Gavin Bullock with an entertaining and informative explanation of what pH is, how it affects our gardens and how we can improve it—see Diane's article on the right for more information.

Summer is Coming!

By Diane Kelly

At our October meeting, the comment was made "We garden like crazy in Winter, and then try to ignore Summer". But summer is a-coming regardless, so what can we do in our gardens during the next three months?

Doing the pH Test:

Also at the October meeting, guest speaker Gavin Bullock spoke about the importance of pH testing. Since then I have come across an interesting article in Organic Gardener with the heading "Doing the pH Test" and so I thought some of its highlights would complement Gavin's comments. We probably all know that pH ranges between 1 (very acidic) and 14 (very alkaline), with 7 being regarded as neutral, but we may not have realized that how much the acidity level of your soil affects plant nutrient take-up. For example, a lower pH increases the availability of trace elements such as boron, copper and manganese, but makes it harder for plants to absorb calcium. Alternatively, if your pH gets higher and more alkaline, then copper, iron and zinc become less available. And remember too that the pH level can also affect the micro-organisms and fungi in the soil.

So once you have bought or borrowed a pH tester and checked out the levels in several areas of your garden, then you have a choice. You can either grow plants that will do well in your existing soil, or you can change the pH of your soil in specific areas to allow you to grow a wider range of crops. Here are five ranges of pH and a list of which plants should do well in them:

pH 5.0 - 6.5: Apple, blackberry, kiwifruit, mango, pineapple, pomegranate, olive, potato, strawberry & sweet potato.

pH 5.0 – 7.5: Banana, carrot, cauliflower, cucumber, pumpkin, sweet corn, tomato and turnip.

pH 6.0 – 7.0: Broccoli, cabbage, celery, lettuce, nectarine, peaches and spinach.

pH 6.0 – 7.5: Artichoke, bean, beetroot, garlic, grapevine, lemon, mulberry, onion, orange and pea.

I find it amazing how exact nature is, but I am also relieved that we can do something about the pH levels in our soil so that we can grow a wide range of food.

Save some Carrot Seeds:

Carrot seeds are easy to collect. Each plant produces a large amount (enough for the next sowing for an average family) so you need sacrifice only one or two edible roots. Because carrot seed loses viability quickly, collect fresh seeds each season. Fresh seeds germinate quickly and evenly.

The *Seed Savers' Handbook* says that carrot are biennials and so they generally take two growing seasons to flower. However, in the sub-tropics, the plants may go to seed at the end of their first growing season. So it is recommended that you leave some of the best plants in the ground over winter and protect them with a thick mulch. In their second season a seed stalk will emerge from the centre of the leaves (using the energy the plant doesn't need for the root). The flowers will emerge white and quite beautiful. When the seed heads are completely dry, rub them between your hands over a mesh. Then use a finer screen to remove any finer chaff. Winnow with care – the seeds are very light and can easily blow away.

Make the Most of your Harvests:

As our climate changes and seasons tend to blur, here are some tips on how

to maximize the production of your crops:

Harvest early: Eat zucchini flowers, broad beans tops, baby peas and very young green beans. Eat thinnings as micro greens or baby carrots. Space leeks and garlic a little closer than recommended and eat the thinnings when still young.

Harvest late: The flowering heads of many brassicas are perfectly edible... even delicious! They may not look like anything you would buy in the shops, but they are perfect for quick steaming or stir fries. You can tell when they're too old to eat because stems feel tough and woody when you cut from them, but even then they can be used to flavour soup. Blend the unsightly leaves and soft stems of old basil and rocket plants into pesto. Let the last French beans mature and dry on the plant to eat as dried beans as well as for seed.

Harvest individual outer leaves and stems rather than cutting the whole plant. This practice is ideal for silverbeet, endive, spinach, non-heartening lettuce, celery, kale and collards. Keep plants producing. Pinch out flower stems of leafy herbs as they form; pick beans and peas daily to promote continual flowering; and let zucchinis and squash form marrows only towards the end of the season.

Succession plant beans – put bush varieties in a few weeks earlier than climbing ones. This minimizes harvest overlap.

Plant a mixture of seeds and seedlings. Seeds are cheaper but seedlings planted from punnets will produce earlier than seed sown at the same time. So you can spread your production! Choose sunny and slightly shady locations for planting the same plants – they will mature at different rates, thus prolonging their harvest. Encourage any self-sown plants

that pop up in your garden. They often fruit earlier and for longer than the ones that you plant. In our warm climate, shade tomatoes, eggplant and capsi-cums on the hottest days to reduce flower drop and encourage continued cropping.

Grow some Cucumbers – it's Cool!

Annette McFarlane grows a different variety of cucumber each year – one year she planted “Straight Eight” which is a prolific heirloom variety whose fruit has a dark green skin; the next year she grew “Lemon”, and this bears round fruit with yellow/orange skin – and they kept perfectly for weeks just sitting in the fruit bowl. So, seeing this is the season for salads or gazpacho, let's see how Annette recommends we grow cucumbers.

Prepare the soil: Cucumbers need good drainage and are hungry feeders, so Annette builds a mound of compost-enriched soil. Mix sheep, chicken, cow or horse manure with your compost and aim for a pH level of between 6 and 7.5.

Put a trellis in place: You can use a simple tripod system, or you can build a pergola or tunnel-like structure which gets covered with mesh through which the fruit can hang and be harvested. Annette has settled on star pickets and wire – remember that cucumber vines and fruit become heavy, and flimsy structures won't last the season.

Sowing the seed and maintaining the plants: Into the mound, push three seeds 2cm deep – this doesn't sound like many, but cucumbers are incredibly productive. Water the seeds in with liquid seaweed – or you could use liquid compost or worm juice. But Annette chooses the seaweed because it stimulates microbial activity and makes the nutrients from the compost readily

available to the young plant roots. As the plants grow, apply repeat applications. The main problem affecting cucumbers is mildew, so choose disease-resistant varieties and use the liquid seaweed to help toughen the leaves against disease attack.

Cucumber seeds germinate in under a week. Once the first true leaves emerge, then Annette applies mulch (seedlings emerge more easily from unmulched soil). Then it is a matter of watering regularly – cucumber foliage tends to be succulent and thirsty, and flowering and fruit filling also requires a lot of water so don't neglect the plants after they are established.

Cucumbers are pollinated by insects – so make sure any netting you may have around plants doesn't completely exclude insects. Native bees love cucumber flowers! Male flowers occur in groups; female flowers are single blooms and have a mini cucumber at their base. Failure to set fruit can occur early in the life of the vine when they are intent on growth and leaf production. Also, a plant can only carry a certain amount of fruit to maturity, so harvest fruit regularly to encourage the vine to set more young fruit. Pinching out the tip growth also promotes branching and can help flower production. When harvesting, clip the fruit from the vines – don't pull them off, as yanking the vine will disturb the roots and cause wilting and the possible death of the vine.

And saving the seed... Not all the seeds will be viable, so check as you are cleaning the seeds and separating them from the flesh. Viable seeds will be plump and full rather than flat and empty. Allow the seeds to dry on a plate (out of direct sunlight), then label and store them for next season's planting – or to share with others.

Getting to Know - Danny Li

By Diane Kelly

Having visited dozens of Club members' gardens when writing articles for the "Getting to Know..." series, there has always been one thing about each interview that has made a particular impression on me. Sometimes it is the breadth of someone's gardening experience; sometimes it is the quality of their vegetable or flower garden; and sometimes it is something in particular that they have said.

At the end of my visit last weekend to Danny Li's garden, I asked him to sum up his organic gardening experience in a few words. Danny's answer was a paradox – "Nature is always giving and sharing. Keep learning from nature, because the more you give, the more it multiplies and comes back to you – and the more you have to give again". And this concept is well reflected in Danny's life – he enjoys continually learning about gardening, and as his story unfolds, you will see that his knowledge has turned into giving.

Danny was born in Hong Kong. The population of Hong Kong is 7.5 million people and as the area is only 1,108 square kilometers, it is one of the most densely populated places in the world. (To put it in perspective, mainland Tasmania covers an area of 64,519 square kilometers.) Although the rural areas of Hong Kong are decreasing as the population increases, there is still farming areas that produce fruit and vegetables – although much of the produce needed now comes from China. Most people – Danny and his family included – live in high rise units, so visiting Australia with its space, lesser population and less air pollution had an

impact on Danny. He and his wife Amy and their two children came to Australia and did a tour that took in Melbourne, Canberra and Sydney. When the tour ended, they visited friends on the Gold Coast and eventually decided that they would migrate here. The year was 1993.

After renting a townhouse for several months so that they had time to find a suitable house, Danny and his family purchased a home in Clear Island Waters. North facing with high walls all around the backyard it seems to have its own environment – and it is peaceful, quiet and sheltered from the winds that hit the front of the house.

When the house was purchased, there was lots of bougainvillea ("very prickly!", Danny says) and coco palms. The bougainvillea and palms were removed and Danny has planted a row of fox-tail palms (his favorites) that make an impressive display along the eastern boundary. The soil at that stage was very clayish, and it was also sandy, so Danny has had quite a challenge to improve it.

Danny has always enjoyed growing colorful flowers, but about 10 years ago his wife asked him to "grow something to eat". So, as one of Danny's mantras is "Happy wife; Happy life", he decided to do just that. So that he could have good soil, Danny installed 10 or 12 raised garden beds and he has gradually developed a mixture of soil and compost to



which he has added regular amounts of comfrey tea and Organic Xtra fertilizer. Another rather unique addition to the soil is fermented diluted soy milk. When a packet of soy milk has been used in the kitchen, Danny fills it with water and makes a solution with the remnants of the milk. The packet is then placed out in the garden in a sunny spot until the contents ferment – and then it is sprinkled onto the garden!

Other additions to the gardens are sugar cane and lots of netting and mesh. I was curious about this as I did not think the plant protection would be needed very much in suburbia. But, apart from bats that come and eat the paw paws, the main problem is crows – they come and dig under the mulch and eat the earthworms. An unusual price to pay for having good enough soil that it is filled with worms!

So what does Danny grow? Apart from the paw paw tree which is fruiting well, there are eggplants, capsicums, a very strong yellow tomato plant, sweet potatoes (Danny grows the white variety, not for the tubers but for the leaves that make a tasty addition to his cooking), comfrey, lettuce, cucumbers, bok choy, asparagus (lovely, thick spears – the plant is now three to four years old), kale, beans, turmeric, garlic chives, Madagascar beans and a couple of other plants that I was not familiar with (and missed writing down the names of).



So why does Danny grow vegetables?

Danny has always wanted to gain more knowledge (not just about gardening) and goes to different groups and presentations to learn as much as possible. About seven years ago, he went to a talk at the Helensvale library which turned out to be presented by Maria. Danny was very impressed with what he learnt in the Q&A session, and that is how he came to join the Gold Coast Organic Growers. Danny feels he has learnt so much from the Club and that the knowledge shared is very practical. He has found the members to be generous, genuine and very welcoming, so well done GCOG!

Danny has also enjoyed the working bees we've had and likes going to other people's gardens. So perhaps that is why one of the main interests in Danny's life is the Mermaid Multicultural Community Garden. Situated just off the intersection of Markeri Street and Sunshine Boulevard, the garden is a place where "friendships are formed and cultures shared". The Club has met to garden and to share morning tea each week for the past seven years, and they enjoy a "cook up" every few months where the members bring produce from their own garden to add to what the group is growing and then they all share a meal. The garden, which is in Crocker Park and has no surrounding fences, has recently changed from having two long beds in the main area, and then three other timber-framed beds which were set up as herb gardens, to 12 smaller raised beds. Small groups of gardeners are responsible for looking after each bed, and there are now two new hexagonal beds. One of these is devoted to edible flowers and the other to succulents.

Danny is a founding member and a main contributor to the group and regards its



success as a miracle. To get together every week; to commit to being on the watering roster; to take along a snack; to “share and care” for each other; and to not judge how each other gardens – it has all combined to make a true community garden. (If you would like to read a bit more about this particular community garden, have a look at the October 2019 newsletter on the GCOG website.)

So what else does Danny do? Danny enjoys helping people to learn, and after spending some time as a student at “Seniors on the Net” in Southport, Danny now volunteers at the centre one day a week helping organize the bookings. The centre offers one-on-one classes showing older people how use their phones, computers and other associated equipment. All those who teach the classes are volunteers.

Danny also enjoys cooking – he describes himself as a “full-time domestic engineer in a private company of which his wife is the Director.” He makes a lot of stir-fries and soups and in particular likes to add in Madagascar beans that he grows in his garden. The beans can be stir-fried when they are young and as the plants tend to be prolific, you can dry the beans and use them throughout the year (a good source of protein in soups and stews). Or you can just store them to grow

more plants later – but just remember to have a good, strong trellis for them.

So ... some closing comments?

Danny’s advice to new gardeners would be to join a group or a community garden. Then you can interact with others and learn – and remember to start small!

Watch lots of gardening YouTubes so that you learn what others are sharing. Gardening is something to treasure. It is a time to recharge empty batteries, and it is a true “me” time.

I enjoyed seeing Danny’s garden and learning about the things he does in his life. His garden is peaceful and every single plant that I saw in the vegetable beds looked strong and healthy. And I was given a little package to take home with me – Danny had prepared some turmeric, bok choy seeds, Madagascar beans and a potted capsicum for me. A generous gift which took me back to the original concept – “Nature never takes... it just gives”.

What is Composting... And Why... And How? By Diane Kelly

During my interview with new Club members Philip and Helen Rowlands (see the article introducing them in the Spring newsletter) they mentioned that one of the goals for their new property is to build a compost bin so that they can add compost to their vegetable garden. So that made me think – what is compost; why do we produce it; and more importantly – how? And then, of course, what do we do with it?

Although I have been gardening – and composting – for many years, both have been with varying success. I am sure we

all have seasons when nothing grows well in our veggie patch, or the wallabies eat the rose bushes – or even the lemon tree; or the currawongs eat the grapes; or the king parrots feast on the green tomatoes. So we learn from experience and we do things to counteract these problems in our gardens.

And I think we can do the same with compost. There have been times when the compost my backyard produces is lack-luster; when it is added to the garden but doesn't seem to help. And yet there are other times (and I'm very happy to say, one of those is now!) when adding compost into your garden works well.

So... what is compost? One book says “compost means collecting as much material as possible at one time, pile it up loosely so that air can move into the heap, add enough water to thoroughly wet the heap, and let it rot.” Another – slightly more technically – says “compost is a fundamental plant food emulating and assisting natural processes of enriching soil from which all your plants draw their nutrients”. Even Wikipedia provides a reasonable definition: “Compost is a mixture of ingredients used to fertilize and improve the soil. It is commonly prepared by decomposing plant and food waste and recycling organic materials. The resulting mixture is rich in plant nutrients and beneficial organisms, such as worms and the vegetative parts of fungus.”

So we collect organic (plant) matter and other materials (e.g. animal waste) and then we add water and air – and then we leave it. So far so good.

Then, if we know what compost is, why do our gardens need it? A simple answer comes from *The Compost Book* by David Taylor – “After a season of fruiting, flowering and vegetable production, your soil



A tumbler compost system



Green compost bin systems



A two-bay compost system

will be tired and need revitalizing.” Again, so far so good – anything that relies on resources becomes depleted when they are used and it will need replenishing. And we know that adding compost to our



A pallet compost system



A mesh compost system

soil increases moisture absorption and retention; it maintains good aeration of the soil; it aids soil drainage; it keeps soil temperatures constant; and – most importantly – it feeds beneficial soil organisms.

So then the question becomes “How do we make compost” – and that’s when it becomes interesting. A bee-keeper friend of ours once commented that “if you ask two bee-keepers about how to look after bees, you’ll get three answers” – and it’s much the same with asking how to make compost, and especially if you ask about how to apply compost to the garden.

Where can we make compost? *The*

Compost Book has eight options, and personally I’ve tried at least five of them. My first one was an open pile that was next to the boundary fence – and which had our neighbours complaining about the smell. (I’ve learnt a lot since then!) My next attempt was with the usual black bins (like the green ones pictured) which had moderate success – accessing the material was a bit awkward. And then my husband built a timber frame with an opening door from an old swimming pool fence – it worked well, as long as I had the energy to remove the decomposing material to the front and then return it to the bin on the same day (so the bush turkeys didn’t spread it for me). I’ve also been given two tumblers, and I struggled to make compost in either – they are very heavy to turn if you have any amount of compost in them. Then there is the “dual-cab” version – and probably this would be my preference – although the version I have at the moment works extremely well. If you are able to collect a cubic metre of material and let it decompose for a time, and then you can turn it over into the next bay (and then back again later on if you wish) – then that will work well. (Note that the wall slats are spaced to allow for aeration, with the front timbers removable for easy access.)

Pictured left is my current set-up. A friend of ours built me two bins from recycled mesh. Both tops have two flap lids for putting the materials in, and both “bins” have opening doors with hinges on the back and front – so that the whole thing can fold up if needed. The units are very light to move; allow plenty of aeration; and keep the bush turkeys out! To “turn” the compost, I just lift the frame up, relocate it, and then fork the compost into the bin in the new location. Easy! Plus I can compost two amounts of material at once.

So that describes what you can make compost *in*, and I am sure there are many variations of the above. So what materials do you use and how?

My two books devoted to compost say 25:1 carbon to nitrogen – and NEVER more than 30:1. Sustainable Gardening Australia's website also says 25-30:1, and a number of other websites I looked all agreed with the 30:1 ratio. But the Garden Myth's website also raises an interesting question, one that I have pondered on in the past, along with other Club members. Simplified advice is often given that the material for composting should be 25 brown to 1 green. We know that green material (fresh plant matter) is in fact – green! And therefore it is contains nitrogen. But it then changes colour – to brown. And lucerne hay is brown – but it is high in nitrogen, and it is not green. So the recommendation is that we forget “green and brown” and concentrate on carbon and nitrogen for making our compost.

The reason for these particular ratios is that, if you have too **much** carbon, the production of carbon dioxide will be rapid and much of the material will have been consumed. The resulting compost will be greatly reduced in volume; it will be light in colour; and it will be nutrient deficient. Too **little** carbon will inhibit the production of energy in the pile and this will slow the composting process – and a dark, smelly mess will result!

Another couple of ingredients to add to your compost – **air** (the organisms that make compost are all aerobic – in other words, they need to breathe!); and **water** (but not too much because it will displace the air that the organisms need) – the recommendation is to have your compost like a squeezed-out sponge – i.e. thoroughly damp but not wet enough to drip water when wrung. This will result

in your compost heap being at about 40-60% water – this sounds high, but seems to be the consensus of opinion. But don't add **lime**. The correct pH for the bacteria and fungi in a compost heap is ideally 6.0 to 7.0, but don't worry about trying to correct the levels, because the heap will adjust its own pH as the composting occurs, with the result being neutral or a wonderful 7.0.

And getting back to the original question – what materials do you use and how? I'm sure we all know the basic ingredients to compost – grass clippings, garden waste, legume hay or pea straw, animal manure, seaweed liquid concentrate; paper; saw dust; weeds (but be careful of what kinds); ash (but don't overuse as it can be too alkalizing); bananas and banana waste (a good source of phosphorus and potassium); finely ground egg shells; cardboard (rip and pre-soak first); citrus waste (adds potassium); lucerne (a useful compost accelerator); comfrey (another accelerator) and kitchen waste. The general advice is to add all these wonderful ingredients to your compost heap in layers, and remember to chop them finely – the smaller the pieces, the faster the decomposition. These will, of course, get a bit muddled if you turn the heap – and remember to put the drier, outside material into the middle when you do turn it over.

So once you've made all this wonderful, rich compost what do you do with it? Tim Marshall's *Composting* book gives four main things to do with compost:

- Dig it into the soil
- Use it as a surface mulch
- Make it into a liquid preparation
- Use it in potting soil.

A few hints come with these uses:

- Only use fully-matured compost close

to plant roots – otherwise, plant growth can be hindered because the decomposition process will still be continuing.

- When digging compost into the soil, only do so to the depth of a couple of centimeters – or else just spread it on top of the soil. Worms and other soil “friendlies” will gradually bury the compost and its goodness into your garden for you.
- Don’t worry about not producing enough compost. For most vegetable gardens, adding 20-40 mm of compost each year in one or two applications will be adequate. If making even this amount is a challenge, make a mixture of what you do have with water and sprinkle it onto the soil (not the plants) – and remember to remove the rose from your watering can so that it doesn’t clog up!
- You can add compost around trees and shrubs and cover the area out to the drip line. But remember not to put the compost close to the trunk or stem, otherwise stem rot will result.

And now to throw a spanner – or perhaps more suitably, a gardening fork – into the discussion about compost. The vast majority of what I’ve read about compost says to mix the compost with your soil to plant into, or as Tim Marshall writes, plant into soil and use the compost as a mulch on top of your garden beds.

However, let me introduce you to Charles Dowding and “Homeacres”. Charles is a gardener with some 40 years of experience, and he runs two very successful market gardens in England (for this exercise, location is irrelevant). Charles produces vast amounts of vegetables (and herbs, flowers and fruit) via (a) the no-dig method and (b)

by planting directly into a layer of **well-matured** compost on top of the garden soil, or seeds into seed trays filled with compost. For a new un-weeded garden bed, he may add 15 cm of compost and plant straight into it, or if the plot has been cleared, maybe 10cm. The seeds will germinate and seedlings will initially be fed by the compost and the roots will gradually work their way down to the soil. Once throughout the year he will add 3cm to 5cm more compost to the gardens, again planting directly into it. He grows two crops of vegetables in the same plot during the year, and matures his compost over six months, only turning it once. I was curious about his methods, and so on the 23rd of May 2021, I planted lettuce, celery, Brussel sprouts, tomatoes and snow peas directly into small pockets (maybe 10cm deep) of compost. So this concept just adds an option – and as Jerry Coleby-Williams said at one of our meetings, “experiment to see what works in your garden.” (To learn about what they do at “Homeacres”, just Google “Charles Dowding YouTube.”)

After that, a few comforting words to finish with:

- Don’t worry if your C:N (carbon to nitrogen) ratio is not perfect. It is hard to have enough of the right materials at the right time – and who knows exactly what is the chemical makeup of each ingredient that is available.
- The reality is that if you simply add your ingredients to the compost pile as you get them, and if you turn the pile to aerate them, you will make compost. It may take longer, but it will happen – you only need “perfect” C:N ratios if you are making compost quickly.

And one final principle from *The Gardening Myth*:

Don’t make composting complicated!



Ediblescapes Social Enterprise fundraising to support EdibleScapes Gardens to grow healthy food, provide nutritional food to people in food insecurity and run community education programs.



BIOL-SOL is dissolved in water to make liquid bio fertiliser (BIOL)

BIOL-SOL is a concentrated ferment Biofertilisers prepared to nourish, recover, and reactivate life in the soil, to strengthen plant fertility while acting to stimulate crop protection against insect attack and diseases.

Bokashi Organic Fermented Food Fertiliser



BIOL-SOL Biofertiliser mixed with compost bokashi style gives a biological boost to soil living organisms and promotes plant growth and bio-protections.

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

Ediblescapes Inc, What It Does

By Steve Gill

Ediblescapes exists at Country Paradise Parklands, Nerang due to the vision and persistence of Jorge Cantellano and the support of Cr. Peter Young.

The site occupied by Ediblescapes at Country Paradise Parklands was originally stripped of all topsoil and is an extremely difficult site on which to grow fruit and vegetables; in fact anything other than grass. This situation required significant holistic thought and investigation, resulting in soil being manufactured on site and innovative approaches to using only plant-based fertilisers on the site and avoiding the use of both animal products and synthetic fertilisers, as well as detrimental insect sprays; the resultant produce is high in nutrition and bio-protection properties. In avoiding commercial insect sprays the lives of many beneficial insects are saved so as to effectively control garden pests, and carry out that all important task of crop pollination.

Jorge has engaged in time-intensive experimentation involving fermented fertilisers and varied production techniques, to produce what is now recognized as local leadership in sustainable urban fruit, vegetable and herb production.

In summary, Ediblescapes is an ecologically sustainable urban food community which researches sustainable food production and techniques, and applies those research outcomes in order to provide to the community education and practice in food production. Additionally, the community is provided access to the gardens to see and taste that food, and experience satisfaction when that food is distributed to people in need.

Ediblescapes is therefore owned by the

community and operates to benefit the community.

Of additional benefit to the community is the ability of people to purchase organically produced fertiliser which will enhance production and plant and soil health in their own gardens. People can volunteer at the Ediblescapes gardens so as to learn first hand how best to garden in an ecologically sustainable manner without the use of synthetic fertilisers and insect sprays; the resultant education and practice can only benefit ourselves and our shared environment.

The current Ediblescapes gardens are uniquely designed and cultivated so as to embrace a wide range of edible and native fruits, perennial plants and beneficial herbs. The produce is high in nutrition and is greatly appreciated by the wider community of people in need of assistance.

What follows is a summary of the output in produce and services from the EdibleScapes gardens:

- EdibleScapes Gardens and Community Composting – only plant-based nutrition and hand-made soil is used, making the use of synthetic and animal based fertilisers unnecessary
- Social engagement and ecological training, education and hands on experience is provided at low to no cost
- Ecological Art – the use of geometric and nature-based garden patterns and designs leads to the promotion of an attitude of peaceful coexistence and acceptance, and demonstrative core values of sustainability and ecological healing
- Sustainable Urban Food - a co-operative approach to research, ex-

perimentation, implementation and communication, has resulted in a well-nourished, healthier and more accepting community

- Social Enterprise – Trading in food ecology and sustainably produced Bio-fertilisers and services.

The Products:

1. Knowledge – shared through regular workshops and training days
2. BIOL-SOL – A product manufactured from fermented vegetable material which is dissolved in water and sprayed onto the ground and on the underside of plant leaves
3. BOFFF – Short for Bokashi Organic Ferment Food Fertiliser which is mixed with BIOL-SOL to boost the numbers and health of beneficial soil organisms which in turn promotes strong plant growth which in turn causes plants to become rich in bio-protectors which makes the use of synthetic sprays unnecessary
4. Goodwill – If we can find a way to farm effectively and sustainably we generate much good will in the community.



A gardeners' toast! Cheers!
Julz, Denice and Zoe volunteers



VEGETABLES

NOVEMBER:

Artichoke, Asian Greens, Beans (French and Snake), Capsicum, Chili, Choko, Cucumber, Eggplant, Gourd, Kale, Lettuce, Luffa, Marrows, Melons, Mustard Greens, Okra, Peanut, Pumpkin, Radish, Rhubarb, Rosella, Shallots, Squash, Sunflower, Sweet corn, Sweet potato, Tomato, Zucchini.

DECEMBER:

Asian Greens, Snake Beans, Capsicum, Chili, Choko, Cucumber, Eggplant, Gourd, Lettuces, Luffa, Marrow, Melons, Mustard Greens, Okra, Peanut, Pumpkin, Radish, Rhubarb, Rosella, Shallots, Squash, Sunflower, Sweet Corn, Sweet Potato, Tomato, Zucchini.

JANUARY:

Asian Greens, Capsicum, Chili, Choko, Cucumber, Eggplant, Gourd, Lettuces, Luffa, Marrow, Melons, Mustard Greens, Okra, Peanut, Pumpkin, Radish, Rhubarb, Shallots, Snake Beans, Squash, Sunflower, Sweet Corn, Sweet Potato, Zucchini.

HERBS

NOVEMBER & DECEMBER

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

Perennials & Bi-Annals: 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, Winter Tarragon.

JANUARY



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

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

FRUIT TREES

NOVEMBER

Custard Apple: Increase irrigation. Mulch trees. Apply fertiliser with Sulphate of Potash -

1kg-mature trees, 1/2kg-small trees.

Figs: Pruning should be done. Figs only produce on new wood or new season's growth. Keep well mulched and watered.

Lychee: Peak water needs.

Low chill stone fruit: Use fruit fly control programs. When fruiting is finished and harvested, prune trees.

Mango: Peak water needs.

Passion-fruit: Prune. All dead parts to go. Keep up the water.

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

Strawberries: Keep well watered to encourage runners for next year.

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. Apply fertiliser, 1kg/stool.

Citrus: Keep up the water. Spray with pest oil for leaf miner. Paint trunks with a white waterbased paint.

DECEMBER/JANUARY

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

Figs: Keep water up and mulch well.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Bananas: Keep them well watered.

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

Brisbane Organic Growers Handbook

This is a general planting guide for the Gold Coast, however, your properties micro climate will determine the end results. Results will vary from year to year with the broader effects of Climate change becoming more noticeable.



Community Gardens Australia By Lyn Mansfield

Community Gardens are more than just about growing vegetables.

It is about growing a community!

When you walk into any of the community gardens on the Gold Coast you will see a passionate gardener. If you don't know what to grow you will always find someone that will share their knowledge and teach you a thing or two.

Some of the activities in a community garden include:

- Growing organic vegetables, herbs, fruit, and nut trees
- Recycling
- Composting
- Community meetings
- Education through workshops
- Activities for children of all ages
- Arts and cultural activities

The benefits of community gardens:

- Improves the quality of life for people in the area by building strong relationships.
- Fosters community engagement.
- Preserves the precious green spaces in urban environments.
- Provides opportunities for intergenerational and cross-cultural connections.



COMMUNITY
GARDENS
AUSTRALIA

- They are a great way of getting fresh air and exercise with no gym fees!
- Great places to learn about gardening and share local and traditional knowledge.

So, if you have a green thumb or just want to make new friends - community gardens are for everyone.

They are a place of creativity, inspiration, and friendship.

We hope to see you all soon in one of the many community gardens on the Gold Coast.

Contact Lyn Mansfield the Gold Coast Rep on 0409 645 888 or by emailing: lynmansfield14@bigpond.com to find your closest community garden or visit

<https://www.communitygarden.org.au/>

<https://www.goldcoast.qld.gov.au/Things-to-do/Parks-gardens-reserves/Community-gardens>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/2664470147141733>

