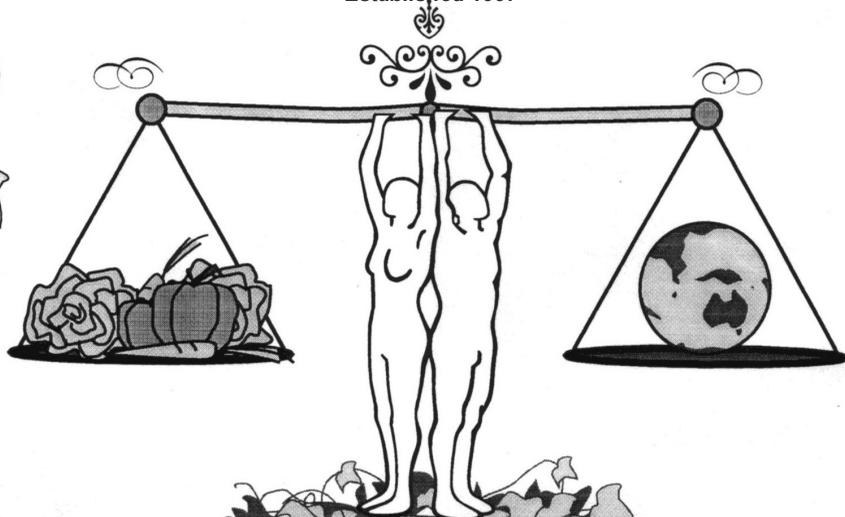


# GOLD COAST ORGANIC GROWERS Inc.

Established 1997



## NEWSLETTER

Volume 24 - JANUARY 2020 Issue 1  
GARDENING IN SUMMER

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OUR NEXT MEETING: Thursday 20th FEBRUARY 2020

**Notice Board**

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

**Meetings Held:**

3rd Thursday of the Month

The Meeting Place, Cnr Guineas Creek Rd and Coolgardie St, Elanora.

Doors open: 7:00 pm. **Begin at 7:30 pm**

Entry is \$2 members, \$5 visitors.

*(No meeting in December)*

**Annual Membership Fees:**

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

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

**Name: Gold Coast Organic Growers**

**Bank: Suncorp**

**BSB: 484-799**

**Account: 0014-21651**

**Seed Bank:**

Packets are \$2.00 each.

**Members' Market Corner:**

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

**Raffle Table:**

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

**Library:**

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

**Advertising:** (Note 11 issues/year)

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

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

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

**W:** [www.goldcoastorganicgrowers.org](http://www.goldcoastorganicgrowers.org)

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

**2018 –2019 Committee**

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Librarians	Evelyn Douglas
Seed Bank Seed Assistants	Lyn Mansfield Maggie Golightly Bill Smart
Supper Co-ordinator	Paul Roberson, Deb Phillips, Bev Geraghty
Veggie Swap Co-ordinator	Dorothy Coe

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

## Notice Board

### Membership Renewals

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

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

### Remember to put your Name and Member-ship Number in the comment field.

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

**Overdue:** Henry Blonner (108), John Palmer (357)

**January:** Denise Goodwin (335), Anne-Maree Andrew (337), Micheline Lazaroo (401), Ira Appel (417), Jane McLennan (446)

**February:** Barry O'Rourke (185), Penny Jameson (201), Roger & Pauline Behrendorff (232), Danny Li (384), Bill Smart (386), Kerry Lason (402), Terry Lewins (427)

GCOG MEMBERS  
**NEWSLETTER**  
CONTRIBUTIONS

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

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

## Upcoming Guest Speakers

February 20 - AGM and Member Talks

March 19 - Kevin Redd 'Fruits to Grow in the Subtropics' (with fruits to taste and plants to buy!)

April 16 - Colin Johnson from Earthlife (with soil conditioner products to buy)

May 21 - TBC

To suggest a speaker that you think our members would enjoy listening to please contact Leah Johnston via leahbryan9@gmail.com

## Workshops

### Gardening Lunch – all welcome

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

### EdibleScapes Open Day

8 February 8:30am, including demonstration on Urban Agroecology, Fermented Composted Bio Fertiliser and Making Process. Ediblescapes Gardens site, more info at:  
[www.facebook.com/pg/n.ediblescapes/events](https://www.facebook.com/pg/n.ediblescapes/events)

If you have a free event you would like us to share in our newsletter please let us know about it by sending the details to: leahbryan9@gmail.com

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

[www.goldcoastorganicgrowers.org.au/](http://www.goldcoastorganicgrowers.org.au/)

### Thanks to this month's contributors:

Jill Barber, Jorge Cantellano, Leah Johnston, Diane Kelly.

## November Meeting Q&A

by Leah Johnston

Jill brought along some tomatoes that had blossom end rot. Maria said that this was caused by a lack of calcium in the soil. The solution is to add lime to the soil as that will increase the calcium - follow the instructions on the back of the packet. Some members suggested eggshells, but Maria said that it would take too long for the calcium to be available to the plants that way.

Dayne brought in some green tomatoes and Maria determined they had been stung by fruit fly.

Jill asked where to store garlic while waiting to plant it next year. Maria keeps hers in the coolest part of the pantry. If stored in the fridge it can think it is winter and start sprouting ready to grow.

Duane asked about how to keep a bush turkey out of his garden. Members said there are professionals that will catch it in a cage that has a mirror in it, as turkeys are attracted to the other turkey they see in the mirror. However, they need to be taken out of the cage quickly because they could injure themselves. Dominic suggested that a bowl turned upside down and placed in the area can be a deterrent: the turkeys worry about what could be underneath the bowl and will stay away. Margaret places palm leaves over the garden to stop them digging. Shelley uses some metal reo to keep them out. Anna said lay some sticks across the garden because they don't like that and will stay away.

Danny asked about where to source green manure seeds. Maria suggested RM Williams at Murwillumbah, or Green

Patch online. Maria said you want to include a mustard seed in your green manure to kill the nematodes, particularly in areas that have grown tomatoes.

The question was asked about a chilli bush she's had for around seven months which used to be spicy, but now has no flavour. It was suggested to try applying liquid potash.

Jill asked about growing potatoes. She grew them in jeans like Jorge does, but only got a small yield of small potatoes. Maria said it's too hot here to get a good crop - sadly we can't get the yields Peter Cundall used to get, pulling out wheelbarrow loads from each plant. Maria said it's not worth growing them here. Paul said it's still worth it, though, because they taste so good.

## November Speaker Recap

by Leah Johnston

Members who joined us at our Christmas break-up meeting in November were entertained by our own John Palmer. The theme on the night was "wear your favourite weed". Surprisingly, no one walked through a patch of farmer's friends or cobbler's pegs for an easy accessory. John showed us some specimens of edible weeds that we are likely



to find in our own gardens which we could be taking advantage of. If you enjoy a green smoothie you can get free nutrients by adding some of these to it. Instead of trying in vain to grow things that aren't happy here, or spending more money at the supermarket, just walk outside and pick a few edible weeds to add to your cooking. I made a cream cheese dip that had some of the edible weeds in it (instead of the traditional parsley, basil and chives I normally use) and you wouldn't know it had weeds in it if you weren't told.

One of the weeds that grows in our area, gota cola, is even sold in Bunnings, and we could be picking it for free.

John looks to balance the six

flavour profiles when selecting edible weeds to add to his food: bitter (dandelion); sweet (chickweed); pungent (mustard); sour (sorrel); savoury (clover); and salty (slender celery). Each of these elements will give your body different nutrients and benefits too. The trick is to add them alongside other flavours that you enjoy so that the weedy taste isn't overpowering. In preparing for the night, John and Amy met me at the Currumbin Ecovillage and we found lots of edible weeds and made a wrap by adding avocado, tahini and sauerkraut to the weeds we had found. Of course, John also eats



***Plantain***



***Mustard***



***Yellow Wood Sorrell***



***Gota Cola***

them by themselves, including the ones he says don't taste good, because he knows they are doing his body good.

So, get out there and see what free goodies you can find in your garden. After all, a weed is just a plant growing in the wrong location.

Of course, please don't eat anything that you aren't 100 per cent certain is edible.

John and Dominic also treated us to their musical stylings with a song they wrote for the night, with lyrics about how cells work, how we are like cells, how plants are cells... "You gotta shift stuff around continually, because you can't find what you're looking for, and cells do that..." A video of it is on our members' only Facebook page, so if you weren't able to make it on the night' go check it out when you need a smile.

Thanks John!

### Ediblescapes Spring Season

by Jorge Cantellano

In the October 2019 GCOG Newsletter, Ediblescapes announced the end of its empirical learning cycle of how to make bio fertilisers, and announced its intention to test the fertiliser in a seasonal crop, growing veggies among the fruit trees and perennial plants.



14 September Ediblescapes working bee: a group of home-schooling kids sowed seed direct into a prepared garden bed, including beans, zucchini, corn, carrots and cabbage.



As well, small seeds like lettuce and tomato were sown in seeding trays.



A few weeks later, seedlings were planted into a garden bed



Remember the fruit trees that were planted by women from the GCOG on March 2019, celebrating “Women’s Week”?



We’ve expanded a little, the growing bed.



To accommodate multi-crop cultivation around the trees...



Two months later, those veggies growing well



That crop has been remarkably productive.



Other crops have some room to grow! The corn has been very irregular, and none of them are a decent size, and some are deceptively small. Most of the slow growing crops, like tomato, corn and summer red cabbage,

were trapped in the early summer hot and windy days that dry the environment a lot. This is one explanation for why these plants have not yet shown their best.



Also, we celebrated the sweet fruits.



Sunflowers showing off their golden faces, attracting the native pollinators, butterflies and bees.



King Parrots after happily eating sunflower seeds, unashamed to take dessert with tomato juice.

Not only recurrent amiable insects, birds, and casual wallabies, but also wild deer visitors have benefited from the flowering season at the Ediblescapes garden.

However, most proudly, Ediblescapes, in five consecutive weeks contributed harvest fresh edibles to Nerang food emergency services, giving people with very low-incomes access to healthy and nutritious fresh organic food.



Second harvest delivery on 29 November - NNC Emergency Food Service volunteers.



Fourth harvest delivery on 13<sup>th</sup> December - NNC Emergency Food Service volunteers and coordinator.



Fifth harvest delivery on 20<sup>th</sup> December – Nina, an Ediblescapes volunteer, and an NNC Emergency Food Service volunteer.

Ediblescapes can report with satisfaction that in the first crop of the season, the application of Bio liquid (BIOL) + Bio Solid (BIOSOL) fertiliser diluted in water (BIOL-SOL TEA) has demonstrated efficient performance. Ediblescapes believe that we have developed a valuable product that can help grow edible gardens in the city.

### **Ediblescapes Open Day**

8 February 8:30am

Demonstration:

-Urban Agroecology

-Fermented Composted Bio Fertiliser Making Process

All welcome. Ediblescapes Gardens site  
more info at:

[www.facebook.com/pg/n.ediblescapes/events](http://www.facebook.com/pg/n.ediblescapes/events)

## Change How You View Your Leftovers

by Diane Kelly

Oz Harvest is Australia's leading food rescue organisation – they collect quality excess food from commercial food outlets and then deliver it directly to more than 1,300 charities supporting those in need across the country. Their statistics tell us that 35 per cent of the average household bin is food waste and that \$3,800.00 of groceries per household in Australia each year end up in the bin.

Being members of an organic growing Club, it would be nice to think that the statistics for our group might be a bit more responsible. But I am sure it would also be nice for us to know a few more ways to reduce the amount we put either in our compost heap, our chook pen, our worm farm, or our rubbish bins.

People today tend to “buy with their eyes”. Only the best-looking produce is purchased from our supermarkets or farmers markets – which often means we buy too much, and then it goes to waste because we don't get around to using it fast enough. But we can plan our menus and shopping, and we can buy local and seasonal produce – and move a few steps closer to the goal of a zero-waste kitchen.

There are five initial steps we can take:

1. **Shop** locally and seasonally – and be willing to buy the imperfect.
2. **Plan** your meals and menus.
3. **Store intelligently** – unpack quickly, remove packaging, use jars, close packets.
4. **Freeze and preserve.**
5. **Save** leftovers and re-use.

**Locally grown food** is good because

there is less time from producer to user – and that means it will last longer in your fridge.

**Imperfect food** tastes the same – it just doesn't look beautiful! But it can still be delicious. **Plan** your menu for the week, and don't over-buy. Keep a check on what is in your fridge and pantry. **Store** your food well. Check if there is even one bad item that may cause the rest to spoil. Use sealers to close open bags.

**Use your freezer.** Don't forget to label your food. Save left-over vegetable peels and ends – when you have frozen enough of them, they can be used to make stock. Even left-over wine can be frozen in ice-cube trays and used for cooking sauces or stews! **Think** about ways to preserve your food. Pickling your food can add flavor to your dishes and make food last longer. **Save** your leftovers – small portions of leftovers can be re-used as snacks or added to future dishes with ease.

Make your freezer your best friend – there are many bits and pieces you can save by freezing. Save the ends of pastes, dried herbs, sauces or drinks and use them whenever you want. Standard ice-cubes trays hold 2 tablespoons. Pour or spoon your leftovers into a tray, and when they are frozen, pop them out into a labelled zip-lock bag.

### SPECIFICS:

**Vegetables:** If you buy organic, good-quality, local produce and wash it well, there is no need to peel or chop off the ends – include them all in your dish.

### EXAMPLES:

Make a radish leaf frittata – just boil the leaves you would normally discard for

two minutes and use them to flavor the dish.

Red cabbage – ensure you wash the tough outer leaves of the cabbage – and then you can toss them with garlic and radish leaves, add them to pasta and feta cheese – and enjoy!

Carrot top pesto – simply blend the leaves, basil, garlic, pine nuts, oil and parmigiana – and then save in a small jar or freeze until needed.

Leek scrap omelette – something I wish I had known about ages ago! The outer leaves of a leek can be tough, but they can still hold so much amazing flavour. Slice or dice the leaves, and with cream, eggs and a bit of cheese, make a yummy omelette!

Tomatoes: With one kg of tomatoes you can peel the skins, de-hydrate them in the oven for three hours, and then store them in a sealed jar. Grind them when needed – they will add a wonderfully concentrated flavour to what you are cooking.

**Fruit:** Of all the produce groups, fruit is one of the fastest to ripen – and so can often be wasted. So how do you store over-ripe fruit – or use the bits we may have regarded as rubbish?

#### **EXAMPLES:**

With the peels and cores of a kilo of apples (around 500g), water and 200g of castor sugar, you can put them in a wide-mouth jar and put them in a warm, dark place. After a month or so, start tasting the mixture until you get the vinegar of your preference! It will then keep for about three months.

Candied citrus peel can be made from

combining orange peel with castor sugar. The ingredients are cooked and baked and then used as required. Alternatively, you can turn the peel into a delicious gift. Melt some dark chocolate, dip the peel into it, shake off any excess, and put on baking paper to set. Pack into small bags and tie with ribbon!

Over-ripe banana bread – I'm sure many of us have tried this. Past-their-date bananas, sugar, butter, eggs, milk, flour and vanilla combine to make a wonderful loaf to serve with a dash of butter.

Or ... if not making a loaf .... try over-ripe bananas in choc ices! Peel the bananas, cut them in half and insert a lollipop stick. Melt some chocolate and dip the banana in. Freeze and enjoy!



#### **Dairy and eggs:**

##### **EXAMPLES:**

Never-ending yoghurt – use the end of a yoghurt you have in the fridge to mix with milk to produce a much cheaper home-made dessert or snack.

Egg-white meringues – if you have leftover egg whites from a recipe that only calls for yolks, use them to make meringues. Beat, mix with castor sugar and cook – what could be an easier and cheaper way to use leftovers? And you can always add orange peel, vanilla or

berry coulis for flavour.

Egg yolk coffee ice cream – a mixture of left-over egg yolks, castor sugar, milk, cream and used coffee grounds can be combined to make a cheap and easy ice -cream that can be kept in the freezer for up to a month.

**And So On ...** you can use left-over bread, meat, seafood, rice, cheese, spaghetti and even porridge to make scrumptious meals or snacks. It just takes a bit of research, planning and consideration to reduce your output, and increase your input of very special, cheap and ethical food. Enjoy!



**Leftover pasta frittata - enjoy with salad**

**Be (very) Water-wise!**  
by Diane Kelly

According to the Bureau of Meteorology the average annual rainfall for the Gold Coast since 1992 has been 1,259.2 mm. Last year the rainfall here was 877.8 mm, and seeing we received 159.0 mm of that rain on the one day (18<sup>th</sup> of March), there wasn't much left to spread over the rest of the year. So, leaving aside any discussions about climate change, we obviously need to do every-

thing we can to preserve the rainfall that we do receive.

Firstly, some quotes:

"Water is the most critical resource issue of our lifetime and our children's lifetime. The health of our waters is the principal measure of how we live on the land."

"No matter how much rich you are, you can't live without water."

"Life depends on water - the reservoir depends on you."

Jackie French points out in her book *The Wilderness Garden* that there are very few truly wet areas in Australia. Most city water is transported at great cost – both in monetary and ecological terms. She also mentions that all water contains some dissolved salts – some more than others. Therefore the more we water, the more salts are deposited and accumulated in the soil, which is not good for our plants.

Sometimes mild water stress is good for plants because it makes them send down deeper roots so that they become more drought tolerant. Sometimes if fruit trees are forming flower buds and they are mildly water stressed, it does make them produce more flowers. But plants are 80% water. They wilt when they don't get adequate water, and ultimately they can die from lack of water because they cannot take up sufficient nutrients through their roots without adequate moisture.

So, whether the cost be financial or in terms of lost production, or just because we love our plants, we need to use as little water as possible without causing water stress. What advice does Jackie provide for gardeners in times of low rainfall?

**Water only when needed.** Don't water at 5pm each evening just because that's

when you water your garden. Test your garden to see if it needs watering by sticking your finger into the soil or under the mulch to see if it is damp. If it is, leave it – surface dryness is no indication of dry soil – just as a moist surface doesn't mean there's moisture below. Even during these hot, dry weeks I have been surprised how little water my vegie patch actually needs. It is well nourished and well mulched, and that seems to be enough to keep the plants from wilting for days on end. It has been a good lesson for me: even though we have a 25,000 litre tank, it is almost empty so we don't have water to waste.

**Water only as deep as the roots.** Not all areas of the garden need the same amount of water. Shallow-rooted plants such as lettuces and strawberries will need more frequent, but shorter watering than carrots or shrubs. My kale and silver beet seem to need watering each evening, but the potatoes (grown as an experiment this year in 4 inches of compost) only need dampening every third day or so. It is worthwhile checking what your plants actually need.

**Mulch!** Any mulch – even stones and newspapers – is better than nothing. Be liberal with whatever you use – it will increase both the availability of moisture to the plants and the humus levels of your soil. Mulch will also reduce evaporation and stop that thin crust that forms on top of your soil and prevents moisture penetrating. Remember – even humus-rich soil can repel water if baked hard enough!

**4. Keep your plants healthy.** Strongly growing plants are better able to take up moisture, and they are also more able to cope with a temporary lack.

**5. Time your watering.** If you know

there are a few hot and windy days ahead, give your garden an extra drink. Don't bother watering when the water will evaporate, or when it is windy. And water consistently – plants do best with a regular watering, rather than one weekly waterlogging. Provide enough water to penetrate to the roots, and then water again just before the plants begin to wilt. And observe... any person who closely watches their garden soon learns how to judge what their plants need.

**6. Increase the area of shade.** Doing this will cool your garden generally – the more greenery, the less heat and the more light will be reflected. Broken light will keep soil and plants moist, so make some shade – a pergola, a trellis to stop the afternoon sun (being stronger than the morning sun), some trees, or even taller vegetables – corn, Jerusalem artichokes or sunflowers planted through your vegie patch will produce some cooling shade for the plants growing below them.

**7. And finally, a word of warning from Jackie:** Read up about grey water if you have access to it. It is water (which is good), but it can have a number of disadvantages. Grey water can contain organisms that should not be splashed onto vegetables, so it is probably only safe if used on trees and ornamentals.

Kitchen wastes – oil and grease for example – can clog the soil and actually stop moisture penetrating.

Salt is a by-product of detergents, highly perfumed soaps and water softeners.

So, whilst we all hope it will rain very soon, let's still do what we can to preserve and use wisely the water that we have. And here are a few closing words: **“Conserve water, conserve life.”**

## Let There Be Water!

by Leah Johnston

Even children in kindergarten know that plants need sunshine and water to grow. Now the sunshine part is easy here in Queensland, but more than once I have planted something new, with full enthusiasm and the best of intentions, only to forget about its very existence... forget to water it... until I finally remember, only to find that it has perished.

It can be relaxing to stand outside with hose in hand, checking on how things have grown, while blessing them with the life-giving force that is water. However, it takes a lot of time, it's easy to get too busy, and it's easy to forget. Of course, then there's going away on holidays, only to come back to a sad garden where only the weeds have thrived.

Well, no longer!

One of the first GCOG meetings I attended featured David from Easy OyYa talking about his automatic sub-surface irrigation system, inspired by the olla (pronounced 'oy-yah') pots which have been used in Northern Africa and China for more than 4,000 years. The unglazed terracotta pots are buried in the ground



**An example of a traditional olla pot**

and filled with water. Plants are planted in circles around the pots so that their roots can access the moisture as they need it and the water slowly leaches into the soil. The narrow tops of the pots poke above the ground so that they can be refilled with water as required.

The Easy OyYa system had terracotta olla pots attached to a drip line system, making it automatic. I was sold on the concept, but couldn't justify the cost at the time. So, I made my own kind of olla pot by joining two terracotta pots, burying them in the garden and topping them up with water as required. It worked well... when I remembered to top them up, which wasn't often enough. So now I was ready to invest in the real system, but now the Easy OyYa website is down, he didn't reply to my email and it looks like he isn't selling them anymore.

So I made my own.

I found some small ceramic water spikes online (for around \$1 each on the app AliExpress - search for "automatic ceramic spikes") which have a skinny tube attached. They are designed to water your house plants when you go away, so you just pop the end in a bucket of water.



**An homemade olla pot made of terracotta pots glued together.**

However, I need to automatically water a 30-metre-long garden bed, so we got some old black poly pipe that's been sitting behind the shed for years, and hubby bartered some lawn mowing for a

water tank from someone he knows. The system uses gravity for pressure, so the water tank is raised about 30 centimetres above the garden bed and the black poly pipe is cable tied to the edging of the garden bed, about 10 centimetres above the soil height. It was easy to push holes into the pipe on a hot day as it was a little softer, and I poked the ends of the skinny pipe of each water spike into it, and planted them at regular intervals with just the tops of them visible amongst the mulch. I put extra ones where I'm going to plant water-loving plants like cucumbers, and I can put more spikes in later if I need to. If I need to move them later to make it easier to spread compost or something, it's easy to find them by following the tube from the poly pipe to where the water spikes are buried. The tubes they came with are less than a metre long, so I needed to buy some extra-long pipe online to reach further to the back of the bed. We fill the tank from other water tanks around the house, and in a pinch we can add some tap water if we need to. As the water is delivered into the soil, not on top of the soil or on top of the plants, none is lost to evaporation. The little ceramic spikes don't take any more water in if they are full. As the soil around them starts to dry out, the spikes fill with more water, so overall, I think I'm using a lot less water this way, saving a whole lot of time, and keeping my plants alive. Everyone is happy! Ideally, longer ceramic spikes would be better to deliver the water to a deeper section of soil, but these are certainly working.

I don't want to turn the plants into water-junkies, so I don't have the water on all the time, just a few hours every other day, or when it looks like they need it. When going away for more than a few days, I leave it on though.

I installed my new irrigation system in

November. Thanks to the free tank and the poly pipe we already had, it cost me less than \$200. We went away for 10 days at the end of November and five days in January and came back to an alive garden both times!

I am happy to say I've been growing cucumbers and capsicums (my sons' favourite foods at the moment) without having to water with a hose at all.



**Left— the ceramic water spikes I bought from AliExpress.**  
**Right—piercing the poly pipe with a nifty little tool (buy at least two as I broke one and lost one. Alpha PMS at Currumbin sell them as well as pipe ends and tank connectors you may need. Note- the black Bunnings one broke, these yellow ones are better).**  
**Below— the water tank and the poly pipe against the garden edging.**



## Jill's Garden Update, Jan 2020

by Jill Barber

Sometimes I feel a little daunted by Leah's and Diane's wonderful articles in the GCOG newsletter, they do such a great job! And sometimes it seems unnecessary to write again about my garden. However, I also feel the need to share the work of writing, and think how enjoyable it is to hear of others' trials and successes in their garden. Besides, there are always new things happening in my garden, as I assume there are in others' as well, so here goes again.

Speaking of daunting, I frequently think that we have to be a little insane to try to grow things in this climate of hot and windy and dry, not to mention the constant invasion of pesky little creatures determined to get in first to any plants we do manage to help grow. Furthermore, I have no doubt, after several fruitless attempts, that very few veggies grow in this area over summer: it's mostly too hot for them to germinate, let alone grow to any usable size. So, having watched my tiny beetroot and tiny carrots actually grow no larger after a month or two (!), and my cabbages never get any larger than an egg or tennis ball, I've admitted defeat and looked for the next step.

This step is green manure! Green manure is a great way to fertilise the garden and add much needed humus to aerate the soil. It also helps it to retain moisture and feed the microbes that'll give me healthy plants, and it's best planted in December or January... if I can get out there early in the morning before the heat zaps me. I want it grown then chopped down and dug in early enough in autumn to allow planting of those brassicas to be able to grow over winter and mature before the spring bugs have

a chance to annihilate them. It's all in the timing.

I needed to work around some still productive tatsoi and rocket, beans and cherry tomatoes, and newly planted



out silverbeet, as well as carrots and parsnips yet to be pulled. There are also some salad greens gone to seed, which I've tied up out of the way, till they've dried out.



So, January 1<sup>st</sup> saw me out early, having previously cleared out most of the non-productive plants in most beds, and inoculating then broadcasting a variety of green manure seeds. Instead of trying to plant each of the big seeds, I just left on the mulch, and raked them in, adding more mulch and watering them all in well. Hey, presto, mission accomplished!

The stripes in the photo are from the slats in the shade cloth covering over the pergola; essential covering in the heat of summer, I find.

I'd planted a few pigeon peas (big

plants!), mung beans, lablab beans, Japanese millet, buckwheat (all from Green Harvest), as well as a variety of some older seeds I'd saved from a couple of years back. It took me a couple of mornings, but now I can relax, just watering every day for a while, till February. Then it will be back to the harder work of chopping it all down and forking it under, to capture all that wonderful nitrogen.

It's very satisfying to have the garden at work in this way, even over the heat of summer.



**Look What We Grew!**  
by Leah Johnston

*Melanie Strang has been using her Microbe Brewer to make 40 litres of worm farm 'cordial' each week. She says the difference it has made to her container balcony garden and hügelkultur garden plot is incredible.*



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staceypanozzo1@gmail.com**



Please show us what's going on in your gardens by sending a photo or three and a few descriptions to Leah via email:  
leahbryan9@gmail.com

**A Most Versatile Plant  
- Ceylon Spinach**  
by Diane Kelly

Known also as Malabar or Indian vine spinach, Ceylon spinach makes a welcome addition to salads, stir-fries, pizza toppings, stews, soups and green smoothies.

While silver beet and even perpetual spinach struggle with our warm summers, Ceylon spinach just keeps on growing. Leaves can grow to saucer size and are more tender and mildly flavored than other spinaches.



Fast-growing and hardy, Ceylon spinach can either be allowed to spread in a garden bed (or in an old bath if you have one!) or attached to a trellis or living supports such as an agati tree.

Ceylon spinach can have either red or green stems (which are indistinguishable in taste – but the red looks better in the garden or cooking!) and can be propagated easily from seed, cuttings or self-layered sections. The seeds grow in a fleshy, purple berry and do not need to be dried prior to sowing. Simply squeeze the fruit between your fingers, remove the pulp and sow the seed straight away. If you do have any dried seeds that you want to use, add hot water and

allow them to soak overnight prior to planting. Tip cuttings can be struck easily in compost or a seed-raising mix and will also form roots if left in a glass of water.

Ceylon spinach can be grown in full sun or part shade; is quite drought-tolerant and thrives in heat and humidity. Plants grown in almost full shade (as in the bath photo) have softer and fresher leaves, but the leaves on the trellised plant grown in part shade are just as large and are only slightly firmer in texture.

Remove any flowers that form on the plant to encourage it to produce more shoots and leaves as they are the tasty part of the plant. Remember that if any seeds fall on the ground plants will self-sow. If you are saving the seeds of Ceylon spinach it is recommended that you wear old clothing and gloves, as the purple fruit pulp does tend to stain.

So ... Ceylon spinach – highly recommended!



**Recipes**  
by Jill Barber

**Amy's Fat Bombs**  
**From the supper table at the**  
**November 2019 meeting**

Mix together:

- 1 cup almond meal
- ¼ cup coconut flour
- ¼ cup hemp seeds
- ¼ cup macca powder (Amy added cacao and pea protein mix)
- ¼ cup ground flaxseeds

Add:

- ½ cup coconut oil
- 7gms butter (melted)
- 1 tsp vanilla

Mix all together, shape into balls, and place in fridge until ready to eat.

(Jill's suggestion: A little honey would be nice, too)

**Leah's Cucamelon Pickles**

With an abundance of cucumbers it's a great time of year to make pickles! They are great on a homemade burger - I especially love these little cucamelon pickles on mini slider burgers, made with mini brioche rolls.

You could use any kind of cucumbers you have, but I do find the cucamelon/mouse melon/sour Mexican cucumbers (whatever you prefer to call these cute little cucumbers) make the nicest, crunchiest pickles, probably due to their naturally sour taste. Best of all, you can get most of the ingredients from your garden!

Ingredients:

A few cups of cucamelons, with both ends removed and cut in half, washed

Bring to the boil then remove from the heat:

- 1 cup organic apple cider vinegar (with 'the mother' for extra goodness)
- 1 cup water
- 1 tablespoon salt
- 1 teaspoon raw sugar

Into each sterilized jar (the dishwasher does a good job) add:

- A few slices of garlic
- 1/2 teaspoon dill seeds or some sprigs of leaves (whichever you have)
- 1/2 teaspoon coriander seeds
- 1/2 teaspoon mustard seeds
- A bay leaf

Pack the sliced cucamelons into the jars, top with the hot pickling brine and secure the lids. Sit them close together and cover with a towel. If your jars have pop lids and seal overnight you can store them in the cupboard. If they don't pop and seal you should store them in the fridge.

The quantities are always a bit of a mystery. Sometimes there's not quite enough liquid so I quickly heat up some more of just half water and half apple cider vinegar; other times there's extra liquid so I go pick some more cucamelons.

## FRUIT TREES

### JANUARY

**Custard Apples:** Peak water needs. Apply organic fertiliser with sulphate of potash, 1 kg for mature trees and ½ kg for young trees.

**Figs:** Net trees to protect figs from birds. Fertilise with 1 kg organic fertiliser with sulphate of potash.

**Low shill stone fruit:** Moderate water needs.

**Lychee:** Peak water needs. This is a good time to “skirt” trees (skirt-trim all growth to 500mm above ground). Prune so 20% light can be seen through trees.

**Mango:** Apply organic fertiliser with sulphate of potash. Keep up water. Prune trees after harvest. **Pruning:** If it is a very large tree that needs to be pruned to a manageable size, the correct way is to cut back 1/3 of branches each year for three years. In the first year remove one of the largest branches, the following year remove another branch, and so on until the tree is of an acceptable shape and size. In this way you will have some fruit each year while at the same time reducing the size of the tree.

**Passion-fruit:** Keep up the water.

**Pawpaw:** Spray copper based spray or leaf microbes to prevent black spot.

**Persimmon:** Make sure trees are fully netted. Harvest time for early varieties.

**Strawberries:** Keep well-watered to form new runners for next year.

**Bananas:** Keep up water; bag fruit; and cut off bells.

**Citrus:** Fertilise tree with organic fertiliser containing sulphate of potash, 1 kg for large trees and ½ kg for smaller trees. Keep up sprays of pest oil for leaf miner.

### FEBRUARY

**Custard Apples:** Peak water needs. Apply organic fertiliser with sulphate of potash, 1 kg for mature trees and ½ kg for young trees.

**Figs:** Net trees to protect figs from birds. Pick fruit every two days. Fertilise with 1 kg organic fertiliser with sulphate of potash.

**Low shill stone fruit:** Moderate water needs.

**Lychee:** Peak water needs. Mulch trees. This is a good time to “skirt” trees (skirt-trim all growth to 500mm above ground). Prune so 20% light can be seen through trees. If Eri-nose mite is a problem, spray with wettable sulphur every 10 to 14 days from pin head size new growth to fully open, and harden off.

**Mango:** Apply organic fertiliser with sulphate of potash. Keep up water. Prune trees after harvest. **Pruning:** If it is a very large tree that needs to be pruned to a manageable size, the correct way is to cut back 1/3 of branches each year for three years. In the first year remove one of the largest branches, the following year remove another branch, and so on until the tree is of an acceptable shape and size. In this way you will have some fruit each year while at the same time reducing the size of the tree. Spray with copper based spray or leaf microbes for anthracnose every fortnight.

**Passion-fruit:** Keep up the water.

**Pawpaw:** Plant pawpaws in threes (thin out to strongest). Plant out seedlings as the soil is still warm and by Autumn they will be stabilised, and then be ready to get an early start for Spring. De-bud your first year trees (keep one flower to try the fruit – if you must!) Keep one male to eight female trees. Pawpaws are heavy feeders. Spray copper based spray or leaf microbes to prevent black spot.

**Persimmon:** Make sure trees are fully netted. Harvest time for early varieties.

**Strawberries:** Prepares sites for runners to be planted out at the end of the month. Keep well-watered to form new runners.

**Bananas:** Fertilise with organic fertiliser with sulphate of potash – 1 kg per stool. Keep up water; bag fruit; and cut off bells.

**Citrus:** Fruit thinning should be done this month. Leave one fruit every 150mm. Fertilise tree with organic fertiliser containing sulphate of potash, 1 kg for large trees and ½ kg for smaller trees. Keep up sprays of pest oil for leaf miner. Keep up the water.

## VEGETABLES

### JANUARY:

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

### FEBRUARY:

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

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.

## HERBS

### JANUARY

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

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

### FEBRUARY

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

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

## GRANDAD'S ORGANIC GRASSHOPPER AND CATERPILLAR SOLUTION

- 1 part molasses;
- 14 parts luke warm water;
- Dissolve molasses in water in a bucket (prevents spray nozzle blockages);
- Pour into a pump sprayer and apply so as to wet foliage of leafy plants being eaten by these pests;
- Repeat fortnightly, or after heavy rain;

This solution increases the brix (sugar) level of leafy greens making them unappealing and indigestible to chewing insects.

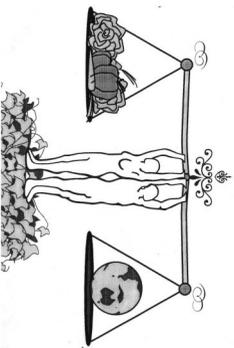
Gives good protection to sweetpotato.



Left: Jerry Coleby-Williams shared his grandad's pest-control recipe on his Facebook page. If you give it a try let us know how it works for you!

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

*GOLD COAST ORGANIC  
GROWERS Inc.*



**NEWSLETTER**

**Meetings held:**

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

**Meeting place:**

Cnr Guineas Creek Road  
& Coolgardie Street  
Elanora, Gold Coast

**Next meeting:**

Thursday 16th JANUARY 2020