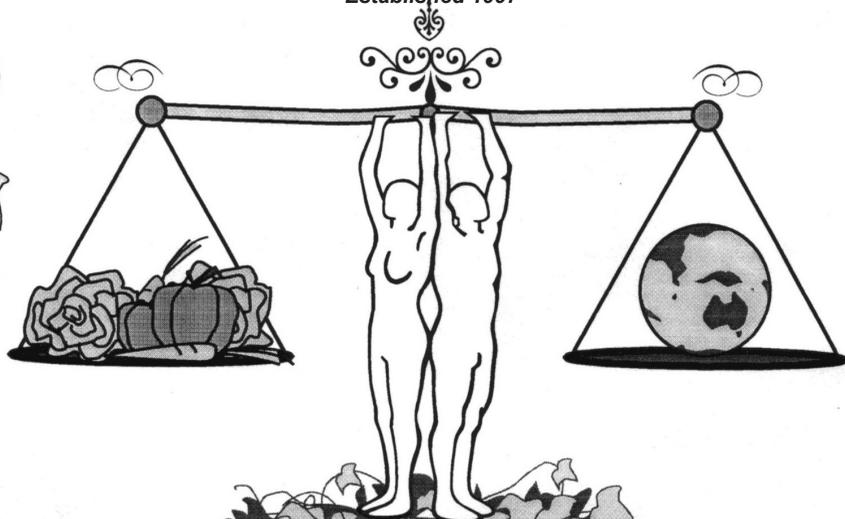


# GOLD COAST ORGANIC GROWERS Inc.

Established 1997



## NEWSLETTER

Volume 23 - NOVEMBER 2019 Issue 11  
GARDENING IN SUMMER

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OUR NEXT MEETING: Thursday 16th JANUARY 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, Mudgeraba 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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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 Membership Number in the comment field.

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

**Overdue:** Henry Blonner (108), Neil Ross (294), John Palmer (357)

**November:** Rodney & Cathy Boscoe (347), Megan Keeler (358), Leah Johnston (416), Peter Turnermann (444)

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

## Upcoming Guest Speakers

January 16 - Welcome back and extended Q&A

February 20 - AGM and Member Talks

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

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

Working bee/workshop 2nd Saturday of each month - 8:30am to 10:30am  
[Edible Landscape gardens Project.](http://ediblescapes.org/)  
<http://ediblescapes.org/>

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 Leah at: [leahbryan9@gmail.com](mailto: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:**

Rena Hofmann, Leah Johnston, Diane Kelly, Amy Lukens and Stacey Panozzo.



GCOG MEMBERS  
**NEWSLETTER**  
CONTRIBUTIONS

**DEADLINE FOR CONTRIBUTIONS IS ONE WEEK BEFORE THE MEETING.**

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Send your content to  
Leah at:  
[leahbryan9@gmail.com](mailto:leahbryan9@gmail.com)

## October Speaker Recap

by Leah Johnston

Thanks to our GCOG members Mark Pickard and Anna MacDonald, who were the speakers at our October meeting, teaching us about permaculture and how to make compost teas.

Mark took us through the principles of permaculture:

### Earth Care

#### *Rebuild natural capital.*

- The Earth is a living, breathing entity. Without ongoing care and nurturing there will be consequences too big to ignore.
- Care for the living soil.
- The planets lungs and veins – forests and rivers – are supporting many diverse forms of life.
- All life forms have their own intrinsic value, their own functions even if we don't see them as useful to our needs.
- Our duty is to reduce consumption and so reduce our impact on the environment.



### People Care

#### *Look after yourself, your friends and family, neighbours and your community.*

- The challenge is to become more self-reliant, learning to produce more of what we consume, consuming less, and focusing on our overall wellbeing.
- Working with others around us allows us to achieve better outcomes for all involved.



- Look after self, kin and community.

### Fair Share

#### *Set limits and redistribute surplus.*

- Established fruiting trees are likely to produce more than one person can eat. It takes time to pick and preserve the harvest, and there are limits to how much fruit we can use. There are many ways that we benefit from giving a fair share of the bounty to others in our community.
- The growth in human consumption and the accelerating extinction of species make clear the impossibility of continuous growth. Sometimes we need to make hard decisions and consider what enough is.
- We need to focus on what is appropriate for us to do, rather than what others should do. By finding the right balance in our own lives we provide positive examples for others, so that they can find their own balance.



### Principle 1: Observe and interact

This icon for this design principle represents a person 'becoming' a tree.



- In observing nature it is important to take different perspectives to help understand what is going on with the various elements in the system.
- The proverb "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder" reminds us that we place our own values on what we observe, yet in nature, there is no right or wrong, only different.

## Principle 2: Catch and store energy

- By developing systems that collect resources when they are abundant, we can use them in times of need.
- This icon for this design principle represents energy being stored in a container for use later on, while the proverb “make hay while the sun shines” reminds us that we have a limited time to catch and store energy.
- “Make hay while the sun shines”



## Principle 3: Obtain a yield

- Ensure that you are getting truly useful rewards as part of the work that you are doing.
- The icon of this design principle, a vegetable with a bite out of it, shows us that there is an element of competition in obtaining a yield, whilst the proverb “You can’t work on an empty stomach” reminds us that we must get immediate rewards to sustain us.



The ethics and principles are inclusive.

- ‘The inclusion of traditions, concepts and frameworks developed prior to or in parallel with permaculture’.
- ‘We may undergo many iterations before we are satisfied with the outcome’.
- Ancient Knowledge allied to current technology.
- Change ignorant consumption to responsible production.
- Foster a culture of self reliance.
- Enhance Community values.

- Value the diversity of skills.

Mark advised to observe the microclimate of our own gardens and build in contingencies to adapt to climate change: select plants that can handle the increasing heat such as Okinawa spinach and Madagascan beans. With increasing light, hotter temperatures and hot dry winds Mark is now planting under shade.

“Permaculture is a journey not a destination and like any form of horticulture/ agriculture it is hard work,”

– Mark Pickard

Anna told us how she makes amazing compost teas for her garden using different composts that she makes and specialised equipment. She looks at them under the microscope to see when they have lots of microbe activity and are ready.

“I brew it for 36 hours. I constantly look at it under the microscope. It’s so exciting to look under the microscope and see what’s happening. It’s like a whole new world in there,” she said.

For those of us without the equipment or the microscope she said there are still a lot of benefits for the garden from making ‘compost infusions’. Place some of your compost and some humus from your worm farm into a mesh bag in a bucket or bin of tepid water (you don’t want to shock the microbes with cold water). Gently massage the bag with your hands to get the microbes into the water.

**Multiply the Fun –  
Propagate Your Plants!**  
by Diane Kelly

This morning I was looking back through some photos of my garden of about a year ago, and I was rather startled at how much fresher and “alive” the plants looked, and how that some of them have since died. It made me realize yet again just how much impact the current dry spell is having on our environment, the bush, our gardens and our vegie patches.

Humans and animals need oxygen to live, and plants absorb carbon dioxide and then release oxygen through their leaves into the atmosphere. Plants also provide food for humans. So we need plants, and we need to ensure their continuity – and the way to do this is through propagation.

The word “propagation” comes from the Latin word *propagare*, which simply means “to reproduce plants”, and rather appropriately it was the Romans who took the early methods of propagating of grape-vines with them as they spread their Empire. They encouraged the rapid development of plant roots by dipping the bases of cuttings in ox dung, the precursor to the modern use of hormone rooting powders!

To learn more about propagating plants, I invited Margaret Lee over to have a chat about some of the basics of taking cuttings and other types of multiplying plants. Margie brought a bucket of cuttings for me to practice on, and enough flowers for two vases just for me



to enjoy (refer photo).

Although we went through a lot of practical information, there were four points that I found particularly helpful:

1. It is vital that once you take your cuttings that you keep the material hydrated – known as “post-harvest care”. Straight away drop the cuttings fully into water and then wrap them in damp newspaper until you pot them. (The reason for this is to allow the cuttings to put their energy into growing, rather than recovering from de-hydration.)
2. When you have planted cuttings and they are growing, don’t plant them out based on the fact that they’ve grown leaves. It is the root growth that is important – when you can see that roots have developed and are coming out the base of the medium, then the cutting will cope with being planted out. Margie’s advice – “Don’t disturb! Be patient!”
3. Propagating is an in-exact science. The way to learn about what method to use for which plant; what part of the plant to use; and what medium in which to plant the cuttings all comes from experimentation and experience.
4. To shorten that learning process, talk to other gardeners, research the answers, and share your knowledge and success.

So, let’s get into some specifics:

**Is there a “best” time of the year to take cuttings?** This varies with the genus of the plant. (The “genus” is a term of biological classification and comes above species and below family in the classification line.) Generally early spring is good, when there is a new surge of sap flow after the plant’s winter dormancy. Examples: hardwood cuttings taken from fig, hydrangea or roses. But for semi-mature new growth cuttings, summer is better. Example: camellias, bay, laurel and azalea. (These also “layer” well – more

about “layering” later.)

**Is there a best time in a plant’s life to take cuttings?** For hardwood cuttings, take them well before the plant flowers. For other cuttings, take them after flowering. Margie’s suggestion is for home gardeners to take cuttings throughout the year as a trial, because there are so many different plants – even the timing for various *Salvias* varies. Example: for marguerite daisies, you cut off all buds and keep removing any that appear.

If you are using the method of propagation called layering, you can peg a plant’s branch down when the plant is in bloom but remove all buds and blooms at the time.

In times of drought, you can still take cuttings if your plant is looking dry or sick (but not diseased!). Ensure you put the cuttings straight into a bucket of Seasol and water. A good idea for some plants is to take pieces of the plant off in early morning, soak them in the water all day, and then make the cuttings and pot them in the late afternoon.

**What is the difference between soft-wood, semi-ripe and hard-wood cuttings?**

- Soft-wood is recent growth, and can be bent.
- Semi-ripe wood has firmed up; won’t bend; is green and not yet brown.
- Hard-wood – harder texture; has grown for at least a year or more; usually brown.

**What are herbaceous, bud, root and leaf cuttings?**

Herbaceous plants do not have woody stems. So cuttings would be taken from their soft, green stems. Examples: *Salvias* and daisies; mint, tarragon, dill and perennials.

“Bud” cuttings does not refer to cutting flower buds, but rather the little bumps or nodules coming out from the stem that turn into shoots. Example: the laterals of a tomato plant. These “buds” are used for grafting. **Thin** root cuttings are taken by lifting part or all of a dormant plant and removing the roots. When they are cut into smaller lengths they are laid flat on potting mix and lightly covered with the same. **Thick** root cuttings are removed and then placed vertically in the potting medium. Example: *Wisteria*; Yesterday, today and tomorrow. Leaf cuttings are trimmed either length-wise or across, and then planted vertically. Example: *begonias* – they can be cut up or even just the veins nicked – but these can then be placed flat on the medium.

Remember, too, that some plants can be propagated in a number of ways, and some in one specific way. Experiment!

**Can any fruit-bearing trees be grown from cuttings?** Yes – mulberries, Seville oranges and some bush limes. This is an easier and quicker way to grow them than by seed and gives you a clone, not a variable offspring.

**How do you know whether to take cuttings and plant them in soil, or put cuttings into water to grow roots?** Water roots and soil roots are quite different from each other. Water roots are a more temporary root – cuttings from willows, mulberries and *coleus* can be rooted in water, but don’t leave them too long otherwise the cuttings will become depleted.

**Does taking cuttings damage a plant, or does it actually stimulate growth like pruning does?** Cuttings can increase plant growth. If you have taken a large cutting, you should paint the plant’s wound with a water-based house paint or a wound paint from a nursery so that dis-

ease doesn't get into the plant.

**Do cuttings always re-produce the same parent plant?** Cuttings are true to the parent plant "99.9% of the time", to quote Margie. Sometimes highly-bred plants such as camellias can sport (which means the cutting plant can be a different shape, color or structure). "Layering" is always true – this is when you take a branch of a plant and place it horizontally on the ground and weight it down with a rock or similar. After the section has grown roots, you can cut it off and transplant the new plant.

**Where on the branch or stem do you take a cutting?** Take a heel if possible with the piece to be cut – this is where it has grown out from the stem and it includes the "cambium" layer just under the bark. Remove the cutting very carefully and don't tear down too much. Make a cutting of enough length so that two nodes (the bit where leaves grow from) can be put under the soil, and then allow some extra length that you can lightly scrape the outer layer of the end section so that it grows roots and not shoots. Take off any bud and leaf stalk that will be underground - and remember to use a very sharp knife to avoid bruising the stem tissue.

**What leaves do you remove from cuttings – and how many are required for photosynthesis to continue?** You can trim off most of the leaves on a cutting, and even cut the remaining leaves in half. The point to remember in trimming leaves is that keeping them on can de-hydrate the cutting.

**What is the purpose of dipping the cutting end in honey or hormone powder?** These stimulate the callousing that starts the roots growing – in other words they stimulate the growth hormones. Put just a small amount of

honey or powder in a saucer to use – but don't return any excess to the container because it will contaminate it. The honey or powder can be put all the way up to the second node so that they will cover all the growing area. Note: only use raw, living honey – not a treated product.

**What is a good potting medium to use?** A mixture of 2/3 coco peat (coir) and 1/3 perlite works well for most cuttings. For succulents and euphorbias (such as poinsettias, geraniums and frangipanis) use a mixture of 1/3 of the coir and perlite mix and 2/3 washed river sand. Note: rinse the perlite in a weak seaweed solution as sometimes it can be too salty.

**How do you actually plant the cuttings, and what about additional humidity?** Plant several cuttings in the one pot – they enjoy company, and also you may lose one or two anyway. Place several wood skewers in the pot and place a plastic bag over them to create humidity – this will generate warmth and growth. Glass, plastic and misting (even with a household water spray) can achieve the same results – even putting the pots in a plastic box with a lid on will work – just add a bit of Seasol and water mixture in the bottom for food. Don't use this method for succulents as they don't like humidity – and make sure whatever method you use doesn't produce too much humidity or it will de-hydrate the plant. Again, experiment! Then leave the plants until they grow roots. Leave the cuttings and pots in the shade.

**Should cuttings be sun-hardened in pots before planting out?** Sun-hardening – i.e. getting your plants used to full or part sunshine – should be done **very** gradually. In summer, leave them in the sun only until 8.00 am, and then put them back in the shade. A trick from the "olden days" – when pansy seedlings

were put in the garden, the gardeners used to put twigs with leaves next to each one. Each day, as the twig leaves wilted, the seedlings would get a bit more sun. By the time the leaves fully dropped off the twigs, the pansy plants were growing happily!

So have a go at propagating – it is fun, it is interesting, and with the current weather conditions, it is something vital for us all to do.

### Hints for All Things Gardening by Diane Kelly

**Sweet peas:** If you were diligent enough to plant your sweet peas this year on St Patrick's day as is traditional, then you have probably already enjoyed the beautiful pinks, mauves and whites of their displays and their perfume. And if you didn't get them in this year, here are some hints for 2020!

The reason St Patrick's day is the marker for planting sweet pea seeds is that they grow best when the soil is cool – i.e. below 20 deg C. But they can actually be sown as late as winter.

Sweet peas prefer a slightly alkaline soil of a pH 7-8.

Picking or deadheading the flowers regularly encourages more flowers, and delays seed production. If you want to save some seeds for the next year, allow a few flowers to set pods toward the end of the season.

If your plants don't flower profusely, this can be caused by too much shade, compost or high-nitrogen fertilizer. Apply a complete fertilizer, then as the buds begin to form, use a fertilizer rich in potassium.

**Basil – Sweet, Greek, Thai or Holy:** Whatever type of basil you would to grow, remember they all love warm conditions. Basil seeds are small and should be sown thinly on the surface of pots or punnets that are filled with moistened seed-raising mix. Cover the seeds lightly with a 5-7mm layer of additional mix, and then water in gently. Keep moist, and the seed should germinate in a week or so.

**Beware of African Tulips:** African tulips produce orange and red clusters of flowers, and their brightness attracts all kinds of flying insects and animals that feed on the tree's nectar. The nectar, however, is toxic to native bees.

Bio Security Queensland has classified the African Tulip tree as a restricted invasive plant under the Bio Security Act 2014, which means that any trees should be removed as soon as possible, and are not subject to standard protected vegetation laws.



**Enjoy your (good) weeds!** We all know that weeds can't be avoided, but possibly we don't all know that weeds can be beneficial. Firstly, weeds stop erosion by stabilizing the soil. Secondly, they bring nutrients up so that when they decay, the nutrients are available to the plants on the surface. So if you have an area on your block that you aren't planning to use, leave it alone.

The weeds will look after the soil – without you having to do anything to it – until you are ready to use it.

You can harvest weeds and cover them with water in a bucket. Then, after a week or so, use them as a liquid manure – even dock and thistle are fine to use (as long as there are no seed heads or prickles!

Many weeds are strong smelling, so use the liquid fertilizer as a foliar spray. Spray it on the leaves of your plants (preferably at night when it is cool). It will repel pests, especially the sap-sucking ones, and may help protect the plant from black spot and rust.

#### **Grow a Clover and/or Lucerne bed:**

This is a very easy way to make your own garden bed and it is very sustainable – because you are growing your own mulch.

Establish a cover crop of either clover, or a clover and Lucerne combination. Keep the lawn cut short (with either a mower or whipper-snipper – or even hens or geese) and then plant your seedlings. While your plants are growing, the clover and/or lucerne are feeding the soil with nitrogen right where your vegies are growing. And if you have grown clover, the bees will love it!



#### **And if you are going away on holidays, Peter Cundall has this advice re your house plants:**

The bathroom is generally the coolest and most moist room in your house, and it probably has small and frosted windows. So put a couple of garbage bags over the base of the bath (but don't cover the plug hole) – this stops any staining. Then put thick layers of water-saturated newspapers over the plastic and place all your house plants on top. You can even put wet, torn-up pieces of newspaper over the potting mix surface. Water all the pots, and allow the surplus water to be absorbed by the newspaper. But remember – don't leave the plug in – even a slightly dripping tap may cause drowned plants and an over-flowing bath!

#### **Look What We Grew!**

by Leah Johnston



***Christmas decorations have come early to Diane Kelly's vegie patch! Netting bags are proving successful in stopping mice eating the ripening tomatoes.***

***How Diane Kelly's "Composta" was looking...***



***... until mice dug out the soil and then chewed a hole in the plastic to get at the compost. They must be so hungry!***



***Rena Hofmann started this garden (right) just three months ago from scratch. "This is only part of it but in the beds I have different sorts of lettuce, cucumbers, carrots, tomatoes, tatsoi, beetroot, passionfruit, miniature fig tree, raspberries, bay leaf, camomile, red sorrow, pumpkin, silverbeet and different sorts of flowers. Very happy with the crop so far."***



***Stacey Panozzo grew these beautiful carrots and celery, harvested at the end of October. She said the home grown carrots are much sweeter than the ones at the shops!***



**A Bonus with the Solution  
to our Problem**  
by Diane Kelly

Our block in the foothills of Mudgeeraba drops away very steeply at the edge of our house yard, and lantana and a 2-metre tall grass (a setaria similar to “bana” or “elephant grass”) have been the bane of our maintenance lives for the past 20 or so years.

However an item on TV recently showed us a solution – goats! So we found someone who hires out goats on the Coast – in this case, 14 miniatures and cross-breeds – and who estimated that the quarter to half acre that we needed clearing would take the goats about three weeks. With the dry weather, the long grass and the lantana were becoming a considerable fire hazard, so last Saturday, the goats arrived. They came in a by-level horse float which is fitted out with its own water tank, and that is where they sleep at night – they put themselves to bed, and don’t require any feeding, as they are obviously enjoying eating the plants that are causing us the problem. They are kept in the area by an electric fence (mostly to keep them safe from dogs), and they make sure they are up by the trailer around 5pm for their daily patting session.

But the bonus! We think it is wonderful that our property is getting made fire-safe, but in addition, when I walked around the corner of the house yesterday morning, I suddenly realized that one of the does had given birth to a beautiful little brown kid – with a white star right in the middle of its forehead!

Mum and the baby have now gone back home to the owners, and we will continue to enjoy the other friendly animals that are proving to be a solution to our problem.



***A few of the herd and their challenge***



***A well-deserved rest***



***A very placid and cute bonus***

**A Fig at the Gate**  
**A book review for gardeners who are**  
**“growing old graefully”**  
 by Diane Kelly

I recently borrowed a book from the GCCC library because it had the intriguing title of *A Fig at the Gate*. Assuming it would be something to do with gardening, I was very pleased to read an autobiography by Kate Llewellyn (well-known Australian poet and author of *The Waterlily*, *Playing with Water* and *The Dressmaker's Daughter*) which outlines in seasonal form several years of her life and garden in Adelaide during 2009 to 2012.

Kate's story takes us on a very Australian voyage of planting out gardens; keeping chooks and raising ducks; volunteering with Meals on Wheels; shopping at Bunnings and her local garden centre; making jams and chutney; and – as one of the central themes of the book – learning how to “age with grace”.

Throughout the book Kate comes across as a humble but obviously quite experienced gardener. She is always willing to listen to the advice of others and doesn't appear to assume that she knows how to solve her problems – the non-fruiting trees; the chooks that suddenly turn listless; the duck that has hidden her eggs .... somewhere! and the continual battle to keep her garden nourished and moist during the dry seasons of the Adelaide climate. She makes a habit of being hospitable; of sharing the produce of her garden and eggs with her neighbors; and of giving a hand to anyone in need.

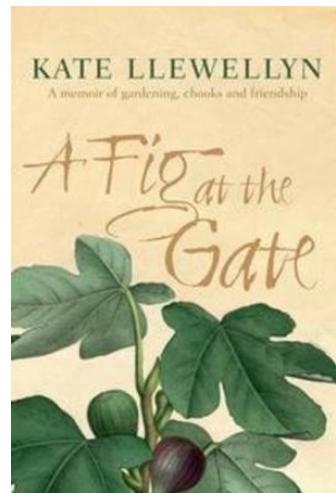
In her 70's, Kate still rides her bike – she often returns home with her panniers

full of cuttings from friends' gardens, or plants shared from deserted properties, or potted plants on sale at the local garden centre – and swims regularly; she and her friend Lindy go for long walks most days; and Kate also digs her own garden, mows her lawn and prunes her own trees.

Life has not always treated Kate kindly, but her story reads of one who makes the most of every opportunity that life offers. She approaches old age with a slight impression of startlement that it is actually happening, but also with a realistic sense of observing her limitations and learning to live around them.

*A Fig at the Gate* is a good read. It is a slow read, but I think that gives a calm and peaceful response to the passing of the years – after all, old age – and gardening – are not things to be rushed. The anecdotes about gardening are of interest, and Kate's realistic sense of humor and her very “Australian-ness” is something that I think the older – or not so old – gardeners among us would find make a good story.

*Available at the Gold Coast City Library.*



## **Eggshells in the Garden** by Leah Johnston

Eggshells are made up of about 94 per cent calcium (in Calcium Carbonate form) and also contain phosphorus, magnesium and traces of sodium, potassium, zinc, manganese, iron and copper. So how can we best use them in the garden? Up until now I've just been throwing them into the compost.

I like to give my compost heaps a really varied diet: chicken manure, horse manure, guinea pig manure, sawdust from the baby chicken coops, coffee grounds, food scraps, weeds, grass clippings, dried leaves, comfrey leaves, hair, urea, eggshells and the occasional dead chicken.

Now we are used to hearing the age-old question: "What came first? The chicken or the egg?" I can't answer that, but I can share an interesting (and potentially a little gross) fact: chickens compost faster than their egg shells! I was very surprised to see in my beautiful rich compost that there was only a few feathers left as evidence of the chicken that died of natural causes (they were on the edge of the bin so wouldn't have gotten as hot or wet to fully break down), but there were plenty of egg shells still left. When researching I discovered that duck and chicken eggshells had been found in an archaeological dig in Virginia that were 165 years old. So I really shouldn't be surprised to find eggshells still in my compost after only a year. Your eggshells may break up over time while you're turning the compost or digging in the garden but it's probably like the case of microplastics where your shell fragments are getting smaller and smaller but are still intact and not completely broken down.

Upon advice from a few GCOG members, and a little googling, I'm not adding complete eggshells to my compost anymore. Here's some other ways to use your eggshells in the garden so you don't have chunky compost later on but you can still give your garden all the calcium goodness that the eggshells contain.

Evelyn lets the eggshells dry and then whizzes them up in a food processor to add to the garden or compost. Jill rinses them and lets them dry in a cupboard, when she has a collection puts them in a brown paper bag and breaks them up with a rolling pin before adding to the compost or sprinkling around plants to deter snails and slugs.

As I hatch chickens at home and have stinky eggshells to use up I didn't want to bring them inside to whizz up in my Thermomix, so hubby bought me a mini food processor at a garage sale which I keep outside and can whizz the shells up in.

Jill has also had success using half eggshells around the brassicas as cabbage moth decoys. The theory goes that the flying moths will see the white eggshells and think there is already a moth on that plant so will move along.

Chunky eggshells can be added to the bottom of planting holes to give plants a calcium boost – tomatoes and capsicums especially love this.

Chunky eggshells can also be used as an effective garden mulch, if you can save enough to get a thick layer. It would take a lot longer to break down than other mulches too I reckon, and with my coloured eggshells (blue, green, brown and white) it would look quite pretty I think. Google says cats hate walking on crushed eggshells so this could also help keep them out of the garden.

You can use half eggshells as seed starters. Break a little hole into the bottom of the shells for drainage then pop them in an egg carton, fill with your seed starting mix and plant your seeds. When they are ready to plant out into the garden you can break them and plant the whole thing out, but you may find that eggshell still in your garden in years to come.

If you have bird feeders in your yard, you can give the birds (or your own chickens) an added calcium boost by adding crumbled or ground eggshells to their food. It's recommended to sterilise them first if you're doing this, which is easily done in an oven of around 120 Celcius for about 10 minutes.

If you're storing your eggshells inside until you have a collection ready to whizz up you may want to wash them before

letting them dry, so they don't smell. But if you can let them dry without washing them you'll leave the bit of egg in the bottom and have more organic goodness to give to your garden.

Mixing the ground eggshells with coffee grounds before adding to your compost or worm farm can offset the acidity of the coffee grounds. Worms love the calcium in ground eggshells and, like birds, can use the gritty material in their guts to help them digest their food.

I also read about making compost tea with eggshells. Just pour boiling water over the eggshells and let them sit in it for a few days, then strain the liquid off to water your garden with and then redry your eggshells before breaking them up to use in any of the other ways mentioned above.



**MAREK'S**  
MAINTENANCE & CONSTRUCTION

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## Maggie's Composting Workshops

by Leah Johnston

GCOG member, Maggie Golightly, hosted her first hands-on Composting Workshops, at her garden in the Currumbin Valley, in September and November, and they were a great success.

Maggie says “composting is the gardener’s most important skill. One teaspoon of good quality compost may contain as much as a billion beneficial bacteria and fungi. Good compost improves the soil, providing the best food for plants and increasing the water holding capacity of the soil.”

The hands-on workshops taught participants how to understand the ecology of the soil in the garden; the ins and outs of making good quality, humus rich compost; regenerative techniques to bring your soil back to life, and how to increase the nutrient density of your produce and therefore your health and well-being.

Participants said they loved Maggie’s inspirational approach to gardening, using the Japanese concept of ‘wabi-sabi’\*, and were excited to make their own compost and try growing food. One participant even described the workshop as “life changing”. Wow!



Maggie shared her composting knowledge with 10 participants attending each of the workshops. If you would like to know when the next workshop is, talk to Maggie at the seed table at one of our meetings, or register your interest online <https://tinyurl.com/compostingwithmaggie>

\*“Wabi-sabi reminds us that we are all transient beings on this planet - that our bodies, as well as the material world around us, are in the process of returning to dust. Nature’s cycles of growth, decay, and erosion are embodied in frayed edges, rust and liver spots. Through wabi-sabi, we learn to embrace both the glory and the melancholy found in these marks of passing time... It depends on the ability to slow down, to shift the balance from doing to being, to appreciating rather than perfecting. Wabi-sabi is a state of mind, a way of being. It’s the subtle art of being at peace with yourself and your surroundings,” – from the article *Wabi-Sabi: The Art of Imperfection* by Robyn Griggs Lawrence.



## Recipes

### Amy's Raw Strawberry Cake (GF, DF, Vegan, V)

Base: 1 cup. cashew nuts (soaked)  
 1 c. walnuts (soaked)  
 ½ c. dates (soaked)  
 1 tsp. vanilla

Blend (or use food processor):

- Nuts first, then dates separately
- Add vanilla, mix together and press into bottom of a springform pan
- Put in fridge (or freezer to become firm)

Filling: 1 cup cashew nuts (soaked)  
 ½ cup dates (soaked)  
 2 cups strawberries  
 ½ tsp vanilla

- Blend (or food process) nuts separately then blend dates.
- Blend nuts and dates with strawberries, add vanilla.
- Place blended strawberry mix on top of the chilled base and put back in fridge until ready to serve.
- Serve with sliced strawberry and/or yoghurt or ice cream.

### Leah's Choc Chip Banana Muffins

With growing boys who love bananas one week, and can go through a big bunch in a few days, then the next week be obsessed with eating apples, I never know how many bananas to buy, and often have lovely spotty ones ready for cooking. This recipe has evolved to become healthier over time. By using super ripe bananas I found there was no need for so much sugar so I kept cutting it down from the original recipe's 1 cup, to zero. With the dark chocolate chips and the sweet bananas, it really doesn't need any extra sugar. I make it so often I was making it from memory, but I forgot to add the

melted butter one day, and couldn't tell the difference in the muffins so you can leave that out or put it in, as you prefer. I added too much milk one day, too, and found the muffins were nicer, so kept adding extra milk.

Kids and adults alike love these muffins. The mix can also be cooked as a cake – which I've done in the past and brought to GCOG.

Ingredients:

3 super ripe bananas  
 2 eggs  
 2/3 cup milk  
 1/4 cup melted butter (optional)  
 Dash of vanilla extract  
 Pinch of cinnamon, nutmeg or mixed spice (whatever you have at hand)  
 2 cups self raising flour  
 250g dark chocolate chips

Method:

- With a cake mixer, mush up your bananas until they are smooth.
- Add the eggs, milk, vanilla, (butter if you're using it) and cinnamon and mix well.
- Add the flour and chocolate chips and mix on low speed until just combined.
- Distribute the mix into a muffin tray (I find using an icecream scoop is the fastest way).
- Depending on the size of your bananas, it might not all fit and you might make 13 muffins. Cook at 180 Celcius for around 20 minutes, or until they are lightly browned, and you can push them with your finger and they bounce back up straight away.

\*Amendment to **Jill's Seedy Crackers** recipe from last issue: they are best cooked at 150 Celcius for 60 minutes.

**Share your recipes with us by emailing them to Jill: [jillbarber611@gmail.com](mailto:jillbarber611@gmail.com)**

## 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, stool.

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

*Brisbane Organic Growers Handbook*

### 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*

## VEGETABLES

### NOVEMBER

Artichoke, Asian Greens, Beans (French & Snake), Capsicum, Chilli, 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, Beans (French), Capsicum, Chilli, 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, 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.

## HERBS

### NOVEMBER & DECEMBER

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

**Perennials & Bi-Annuals:** Catnip, Ceylon Spinach, Chicory, Chilli, Chives, Comfrey, Perennial Coriander, Echinacea, Fennel, 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-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.

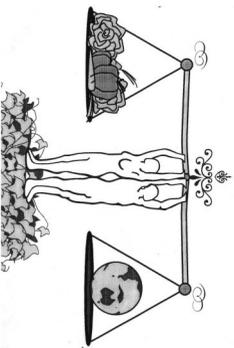
“To plant a garden  
is to believe in  
tomorrow.”

- Audrey Hepburn

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.

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