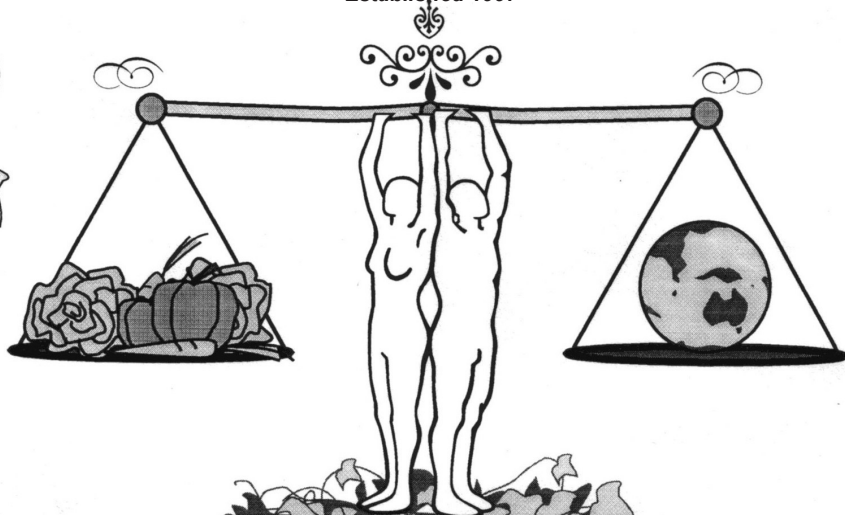


GOLD COAST ORGANIC GROWERS Inc.

Established 1997



NEWSLETTER

Volume 26, 2022 Issue 2
GARDENING IN WINTER

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OUR NEXT MEETING: MAY 26, 2022

Notice Board

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

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

Annual Membership Fees:

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

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

Name: Gold Coast Organic Growers

Bank: Suncorp BSB: 484-799

Account: 0014-21651

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

Overdue: Jorge Cantellano (425), Kerstein Trueman (346), Rachael Lebeter (367), Bev Geraghty (404), Liz Grippo (405), Peter Meppem (436), Lynn Calligros (451), Marek Janczewski (455), Katrina Julienne (458), Jan Guest (307), Rodney & Cathy Boscoe (347), Dorothy Coe (471), Amanda Harvey (472), Terri Ange (473), Anne-Maree Andrew (337), Ira Appel (417), Debbie Casey (442), Dianne Casey (461), Henry Blonner (108), Chui McDonald (476), Gai Morrow (309), Tricia Oh (368), Rachel Peate (477), Frances Janes (478), Kym O'Connell (470) **May:** Leila Howe (480), Philip & Helen Rowlands (481) **June:** Mary Courtney (482), Penny Schulze (483) **July:** Sally Cheetham

Seed Bank: Packets are \$2.00 each.

Members' Market Corner: Please bring plants, books and produce 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.

2022-2023 Committee

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Autumn issue: end of January

Winter issue: end of April

Spring issue: end of July

Summer issue: end of October

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Thanks to this issue's contributors:

Jill Barber, Jorge Cantellano Leah Johnston, Diane Kelly and Maria Roberson.

President's Notes

By Maria Roberson

Hello everyone... Welcome to Winter on the Gold Coast where gardens are at their best. We are very fortunate that the weather is mild and all manner of plants will grow and thrive. Troublesome insect populations have dipped in numbers and are more easily managed, usually hand picking and an application or two of Dipel are enough to keep plants from being destroyed. All in all, it's a great time to keep planting and growing your favourite fruit, herbs, and vegetables for the season.

All restrictions have been lifted at our meeting hall now and we are allowed to carry on as "normal" with regards to enjoying supper and full capacity seating. Our library has been reinstated in a store room on site and I hope you all get to take advantage of this wonderful resource - the books are back, baby!

This year sees the Gold Coast Organic Growers turn 25 - what a great achievement! We started with the wish to join a group that shared our ideals and a love of gardening for food and pleasure using organic growing methods, then after much searching and phone calls found that no such club existed on the Gold Coast. It was suggested that I start my own club by my Aunt, Dale Shoo, and a new friend I met through my initial enquiries, Maree Rudd, and so it was that the GCOG was formed. Our very first get together comprised of 10 people, some of whom we had never met before but had answered the advertisement we placed in a local newspaper (no social media back then) asking for interested and likeminded people to come along. From that meeting it was decided that the time was right to form an organic garden

club called the "Gold Coast Organic Growers". We formed a working committee and each person was charged with what felt like a hundred things to do to make it a reality. From there we went from strength to strength and as they say, "the rest is history".

In our June 1998 newsletter we published some advice from Ron and Myrtle Charteris, two very experienced organic gardeners and legends of the Brisbane Organic Growers. Our members had the privilege of visiting their extensive food gardens and this is what they shared with us.

BEATING THOSE PESTS

- For a spray to keep the bugs off cabbages, cauliflowers etc: 1 tablespoon of molasses and a little liquid soap in a litre of water.
- For making short work of cane toads: 3 drops of Dettol to the back of the head apparently does the trick.
- Ants a problem in your yard? Try a bit of kerosene down the hole or a stick, rotated vigorously down the hole at annoyingly frequent intervals!
- Kero, applied with a paintbrush, is also good (or bad) for nutgrass.
- Don't knock down the nests of wild wasps. These insects keep caterpillars under control.
- Don't stake tomato plants but keep the fruit fly off by tying rags over the bunches of fruit once the flowers have set.

Over the next months we will share with you some of the many stories and fond memories of all the shenanigans of the past 25 years. If you have some photos or tales you would like to share too please bring them in or email them to Diane Kelly.

Happy growing,

Maria.

Meeting Recaps

By Leah Johnston

FEBRUARY MEETING

At our February meeting we caught up with our gardening friends we hadn't seen since our November meeting.

Q&A

Q. Gary asked about keeping geese and if they attack chickens?

A. A few members said that geese can attack anything but Justy has geese, chickens, guinea fowl and peacocks living together in harmony and they get along fine because they have lots of space. If any are aggressive ones, she recommends getting rid of those individuals.

Maria told us about her 50-year-old bunya nut tree that her dad planted on their family property. Bunya nuts can be eaten raw, but they taste far better when they are cooked. This year has been a great season for bunya nuts (they only drop well every three or four years). The 45 metre trees don't start bearing until they are around 25 years old. Bunya nut trees are 200 million years old, so they were dinosaur food. The trees can live as long as 800 years. They don't need cross pollination because they have female and male flowers on the same cones, but they will fruit better with cross pollination from a nearby tree. The skin needs to be cracked before cooking so that they don't explode. They can be broken with a brick or hammer, or Mel uses long handled pruners. Maria uses a ratchet actioned poly pipe cutter from Bunnings to open the nuts. Maria boils them for half an hour and likens the taste to potato. To make flour you can dehydrate them after boiling them, then grind them. The flour will keep in

the freezer for two years. John said that when boiling the bunya nuts with their skins not to throw the water out: drink that water as it is said to be good for the immune system. Mel steams the nuts before adding to a curry or burgers.

Q. A white choko that has been growing for nine months but hasn't flowered or fruited.

A. Leave it and wait. While waiting for chokos you can eat the tendrils.

Q. Bill asked how to know when avocados are ready to pick, as they don't ripen on the tree.

A. Maria said to hold the fruit and bend it, when they break off, they are ready. The stem may also go a little yellowish. Avocados ripen here from Easter to Christmas, depending on the variety.

SPEAKER

Our February speaker, herbalist Lise Racine, taught us about using herbs to support our bodies and how to make our own herbal extracts.

Lise has raised her four daughters on her certified Biodynamic Tallebudgera property, where she creates tinctures and creams from the herbs she grows. Lise said that herbalists look at the vitality of the body and how to best support it, something that other medical professionals may not always consider.

"Our bodies are fine-tuned elements that are in a constant state of seeking balance. Right down to the cellular level... We are amazing! All of the many systems that keep our body running! Our body is constantly trying to remain healthy, constantly readjusting the temperature, needing a bit more protein, handling too much sugar... If we are aware of this, we can either hinder the process or support the balance," Lise said.

Lise said hindrances to our body's state of wellbeing can include bad habits like fried food, alcohol and sugar. She acknowledges that we want to live the way we live and enjoy celebrations, but we can help our bodies to regain their balance by having a break from those things.

"We can nourish our bodies well with the correct quantities of good quality macro nutrients: carbohydrates, proteins and lipids (fats). Rest, sleep and joy are also important. We need contact with people; we are human beings: we need to connect with people because they nourish us," Lise said.

Herbs that can help support our bodies include dandelion root for the liver. Lise recommends everyone drink nettle tea from the day they start eating foods until the day they die because it is so nourishing for the body and helps it to absorb iron and minerals. She infuses a pinch of red clover and nettle in a plunger and drinks it throughout the day. Unlike other herbal teas which shouldn't steep all day, these two can infuse for a long time without losing their benefits or taste.

Most herbs are best taken for a specific purpose, but not every day or for a long time. An example is taking echinacea when you feel unwell as it's a really nice immune stimulant.

If she becomes unwell Lise takes echinacea, garlic syrup, a hot ginger drink (juiced ginger in a cup of hot water and honey), vitamin C and stays in bed for three days. Epsom salts bath can also help to drain out the toxins from the lymphatic system.

As a gardener Lise said most medicinal herbs grow well from March to October here, so now is the time to get planting!

Herbs that support the lymphatic system are chickweed (not the round leafed, tropical one that has seeds that stick to you, but the true chickweed with pointy leaves and white flowers which pops up in the garden); calendula: start the seedlings now, then pick the flowers which is hard because they are so beautiful but the more you pick the more they grow; and narrow leafed plantain which is good for the respiratory system but also a gentle detox.

To make a tincture: sterilise your jar in the oven at 110 degrees Celsius. If the lid is plastic, sterilise it with vodka, not in the oven. Fill 2/3 jar with cut up herbs and fill the jar with either vodka or apple cider vinegar. Let it sit in a dark place for two weeks for vodka (six weeks for apple cider vinegar), giving it a shake every now and then. Then filter it through cheesecloth and store the liquid in a dark glass bottle. If you want to know the exact concentration of what you have you can use scales for better proportions: measure one part fresh plant and two parts fluid. If using dried herbs use one part dried material and five parts liquid. Tinctures made with apple cider vinegar are cheaper to make and will last in the fridge for one year; whereas tinctures made with vodka are more expensive to make, but will last many years in the cupboard.

Lise was taught by her mentor that "what grows around you is for you".

"When you grow something from seeds, you watch it grow, then you use it, you have a connection with that plant," she said.

Lise doesn't wash the leaves because she doesn't want to add fluoride and other contaminants from tap water to her tincture.

MARCH MEETING**Q&A**

At our March meeting, we thanked our committee members for their contributions to helping the club to run for the last year, and elected our new committee.

Maria talked about raised beds: while you won't have soggy soil, you'll have the opposite problem, and need to water it as it won't hold water as readily. You need to build up the organic matter in soil to hold some water in. In the subtropics where we get that heavy flooding rain, we need to choose if we want our soil to hold the water or to drain away. In the summer we want it to drain away, but during the dryer months we want it to hold the rain. Wet soil will rot the roots of some plants. Citrus and avocado don't like wet feet, so you can grow them on mounds to help with drainage, but that doesn't apply to every garden: if they are growing on a slope they will drain, so you won't need a mound.

Q. Should a citrus that's growing lots of new shoots be pruned?

A. Let it grow. They don't need to be pruned to bear fruit, you only need to prune a citrus to manage its size. If it shoots below a graft, it will be root stock that you will want to cut off or it will take over the whole plant.

Q. Strappy plants.

A. A lot of plants, such as lavender, have gone very strappy lately. Lavender should be tip pruned, leaving some green, don't cut into the hard wood.

Q If adding organic matter to the garden now, how long do we need to wait to plant seedlings?

A. Dig the mature compost into the soil and plant the seedlings, but leave the mulch on top. If you dig the mulch into the soil the microbes can't eat it and they

draw too much nitrogen out of the soil.

Q. Should weeds go into the compost?

A. Weed before they seed! If you are composting weeds that have seeds on them via a worm farm, the worms won't eat the seeds so they could grow again in your garden. Solarising (in the sun in a black bag to kill them) or in a bucket of water for the weed tea will kill them. In a cold compost the seeds won't die and can grow again when you spread your compost around the garden. Some members don't risk composting their weeds: they bin them.

Phillip told us about how he's planting more natives to attract butterflies and birds to his garden. Philip is passionate about supporting and increasing the native bird populations on the Gold Coast. He recommends the Friday morning plant sales at the Gold Coast Botanic Gardens, where he was delighted to find Richmond Birdwing Vines to support the endangered Richmond Birdwing Butterfly. Philip is pulling a few things out of his garden at a time, and then replacing them with native plants, and enjoys the butcher birds and currawongs visiting him.

Gary said his bird life increased when he put a dam into his property. If you want to host a bird bath to encourage the birds to your garden, be sure to empty and clean it regularly to help keep them healthy.

APRIL MEETING**Q&A**

Fruit and vegetable prices are going up at the shops so now is the time to grow more food! When you're comparing prices at the shops, remember that you're growing organic produce at home, so look at the organic prices at the shops, which are even higher. Maria said that now is a great time to grow things thanks to all the rain, though beans and peas

could rot if the ground is too wet so don't put them all in the one bed, spread them out so some of them might have better drainage. You could also start them in seedling trays where you can control the water and then plant them out into the garden when they are big enough.

Q. What causes blossom end rot on grosse lisse tomatoes?

A. It could be a calcium deficiency in the potting mix. Large tomatoes are hard to grow here with our rainfall and humidity. Maria asked the members if anyone had successfully grown large tomatoes year after year and no one raised their hand. She then asked who can grow cherry tomatoes, and almost every hand shot up.

Q. Penny's figs are dropping leaves and setting new fruit before she had a chance to prune them.

A: Maria said it's common for figs to drop their leaves in winter and it has been colder than this time last year. Figs will set a few crops of fruit after the main crop. This would be an unusual year for fruit trees: some will struggle and the fruit will split from all the rain, while others may do really well.

Q. Relocating suckers from miniature banana trees.

A.Wait for the warmer months to move them.

Q. Should avocado trees be pruned?

A. Maria's family were avocado farmers and had trees 50 foot high. If you don't want them that high you will need to prune them, but be aware that every time you prune a tree you risk infection getting in. Maria recommends planting dwarf fruit trees so that you don't have to worry about pruning.

Q: How to grow pineapple tops.

A: Maria said take off the bottom leaves around two centimetres around the edge, let it sit somewhere shady for a few weeks to dry out before planting it. Don't cut the top off – just twist it out. Apply a coarse wood chip mulch around them when planted.

SPEAKER

At our April meeting GCOG member, Jenifer Skues, volunteered to be our speaker, sharing some of her wealth of knowledge on the topic of Good Food for Good Mood.

Jenifer said that how what we eat affects our health and particularly our emotional and mental health, which has already been challenged due to the stress of the pandemic.

"Food is our medicine and we are what we eat, literally," she said.

Jenifer has years of experience helping people with mental and emotional illnesses, and has found that when our brains don't have the nutrients they need they don't have enough energy, which affects how the neurotransmitters work, which affects mood.

"If the body's not right, the brain isn't right," Jenifer said.

Jenifer explained that there's a lot of research into the gut and brain connection, with experts referring to the gut as the "second brain."

"The best thing to do is grow organic food. Getting out in your garden destresses you and picking it fresh and eating it when it's still full of nutrients is so good for you," she said.

The gut is made up of microbiomes, which are good and bad bacteria. Macro nutrients including protein, carbohydrates

and fats are important. Then there are micro nutrients: the very small trace elements in food that we need. When you're not well and your gut's not well it can't absorb the nutrients properly.

Organic food has much higher nutrients. Seeds, spinach and herbs have great quantities of micro nutrients. Chewing your food properly is important in helping you digest it properly and absorb the nutrients. Jenifer also says to feel positive when you're eating, focus on mindfully eating and enjoying your meal. Eat what's in season, aim for a rainbow of colours on our plate. You need at least 30 different fruits and vegetables each week to get a variety of nutrients. Jenifer said that junk food can be a problem when people crave quick pick me ups. The healthier you get, the more you will crave the right foods.

Jenifer said the gut produces a lot of serotonin, which uplifts your mood, makes you feel good and helps you to sleep. If your gut isn't making enough serotonin, you can develop depression. If you eat while stressed you produce a lot of acid and can get heartburn and other digestive issues.

If you have digestive problems your garden can help you with peppermint, ginger, chamomile and lemon balm. If you don't feel well in the mornings, having plenty of fluids in the morning can help, especially ginger and lemon in warm water. Green tea contains amino acid l thiamine, which refreshes the brain and reduces anxiety.

Inflammation can lead to auto immune disorders, arthritis, cancers, multiple sclerosis and skin problems. Jenifer said if people are acidic they can use a pinch of bicarb in some water, don't have it all the time, but it can lower inflammation quickly.

Fermented foods put in the probiotics and good bacteria our gut needs. Prebiotics are what the body needs to make probiotics and sources include garlic, chicory, peas, leeks and dandelion.

Keeping our blood sugar levels balanced with low glycemic index foods can help keep our energy stable. Stress can burn a lot of energy and lower sugar levels too much, meaning you'll need to eat to raise it back up. Stress also causes magnesium levels to plummet, which is another key element, and one that the body can't produce. If you don't have enough, you can get cramps and restless leg syndrome. Magnesium keeps your muscles supple. Sources include tahini, sesame, leafy greens and walking or swimming at the beach. Jenifer said that tablets don't absorb well as they have to be broken down in the stomach and the liver and sent around the body. Rubbing magnesium oil onto the skin means it can be instantly absorbed into the area it is needed.

Jenifer keeps charcoal tablets on hand as they are useful for removing toxins from the body; and can be made into a poultice and put onto tick bites or infections.

Jenifer believes that a modified Mediterranean diet is the best way to eat, and for more information we can Google the research Deakin University is doing into food and mood.

Green Manure By Jill Barber

January is such a hot month that not much grows veggie-wise for me (or anyone much, I think), in this part of the country, so that's the best time to plant a green manure crop, and take a break for six weeks or so while it grows. I got onto this brilliant method of looking after my

veggie soil when I did a Biodynamic workshop some years ago, and learnt of this practice (as well as the Biodynamic 500). The purpose is two-fold: to add nitrogen to the soil to foster the growth of leafy greens, plus to add organic matter to the soil for aeration, microbial feeding and water retention.

Of course, then there's the effort of chopping it down and forking it under, but the idea is that it will have cooled down by then (hah, dream on!)

So, at the end of January, I cleared four veggie beds, and planted a mix I'd bought from Green Harvest: Mung Bean, Lab Lab Bean and Buckwheat in a couple, and Japanese Millet, Cowpea and Buckwheat in the others. These either have nitrogen-fixing nodules and/or are just great organic matter. I covered the seeds with a light layer of my compost to keep the birds from stealing them and to keep them moist, and watered them in, of course. After germination I applied Biodynamic 500 spray, and added a light cover of lucerne mulch.

All too quickly, they grew to a metre to a metre and a half in height and were flowering, by mid-March – time to chop them down, continuing heat or not! Of course, this had to be done in stages, first thing in the day, and, fortunately, my dear husband, who's not a fan of gardening, nevertheless did the forking under for me.

Step 1. Chopping down the green manure. I've added any excess green stuff around the yard, such as nasturtiums growing wild all over everything,



sweet potato leaves doing the same, etc, and some comfrey leaves for extra nutrient.

Step 2. Forking under green manure. The idea is to go gently with this, covering the bulk of the green stuff, but keeping the soil structure as intact as possible. Hence, forking not digging under.

Step 3. Adding rock minerals (Veggie Mate) and Activated Charcoal helps the soil to retain moisture, and remains in the soil from crop to crop.

Step 4. Mulching forked under green manure with lucerne. Now it all sits for maybe a couple of weeks, to rot down well, in nice time, I hope, for the brassicas, which have blessed me with germinating this year (!), to be planted out. The hope is that they will mature early enough in spring to just avoid those naughty caterpillars which ate the hearts out of them last spring. Success is all in the timing, the grace of the powers that be... and all those other things.

I've recently realised that I need to be more discriminating about how much green material I should add to the soil and when, as some of the purpose is to add nitrogen, which is great for all the leafy greens I want to flourish there... but not so great for the root vegies, such as carrots or sweet potatoes, which then



put all the growing into the leaves instead of the roots! As Maria said recently, the root crops will be better as a second crop, after the green leafies have used up a lot of the nitrogen.

Welcome to Winter!

By Diane Kelly

Although the jumpers are only just starting to come out; the heaters are still at the back of the cupboard; and the grass is still growing strongly and regularly needs to be mowed, we all know that winter is coming.

There are, of course, many quotes about the season. They range from the positive ***“Winter is not a season, it’s a celebration!”*** to the bracing comment by Tim Allen ***“Winter forms our character and brings out our best”*** through to the perhaps more realistic ***“My favourite outdoor activity is going back inside.”***

Traditionally our winters have been beautiful – chilly nights and sunny, clear days – perfect gardening weather! In fact, when we first moved to the Gold Coast in 1975, the saying was “It doesn’t rain on the Coast between April and November”, and this was basically true, apart from a gentle shower of rain in the afternoon as the year turned into September. But, as we have seen over the past couple of months, the weather patterns have changed – and therefore so has our gardening.

So how do we view the coming months, so that winter does indeed “bring out the best in us”? The conclusion I’ve come to is that we need to learn as much as we can about the ebbs and flows of gardening – basically, what follows what, and what we need to do next – and then we slot that into whatever conditions we find ourselves in.

So, let’s at least look at what we “used” to grow in Winter – i.e. June, July and August – and see if those activities need to be starting in May, June and July – or months 1, 2 and 3.

Month One:

There are plenty of vegetables to plant during Month One: Asian cabbages and salad greens; beans, including broad beans; beetroot; Brussel sprouts; capsicum; cauliflower (but get those in sooner rather than later); celery; kale; leeks; lettuce (of course); onions (another “sooner rather than later” category); peas; potatoes; rocket; silver beet; sweet potatoes and tomatoes.

Peas are always a favourite, whether they are eaten raw or lightly steamed, or in the case of snow peas, added into stir fries etc. The advantage of snow peas is that they have a longer harvest period than garden peas – and they taste wonderful after being washed and then eaten straight off the vine! Peas generally are annual plants and they can have either white or purple flowers. “Bikini” snow pea vines grow to a metre high and produce sweet, 8cm long pods. Alternatively, “Sugar Snap” peas are available in either dwarf (60cm) and tall (2m) varieties – these produce early-maturing pods over an extended harvesting period. (I’ve noticed the more you harvest, the more pods the plants grows.) “Sugar Bon” is a fully dwarf variety which has a good resistance to powdery mildew. Peas are generally planted in rows – this makes harvesting easier; trellising easier (and don’t forget to put up any trellises prior to planting!); and it provides good air circulation. Seeds should be planted to a depth of 5-7cm, and you should space them at 10cm intervals – with 45-90cms between rows. Remember that dwarf varieties require wider spacing as they produce broader plants, in difference to the tall varieties that form high, more narrow plants. You can plant peas in shallow furrows, but gradual earthing up of the soil will support the stems and ensure that the roots are in a cool soil zone. By the way, you can grow dwarf peas in hanging baskets.

One good thing (of many) about peas is that they have a relationship with bacteria which enables them to supply their own nitrogen, and so the soil you plant your garden or snow peas into does not need to be rich in nitrogen. In fact, excess nitrogen will produce too much vegetative growth at the expense of flowers and pods. And remember – don't plant peas in a veggie patch that has grown beans in the previous season – this can cause the transference of pests and disease to the new plants.

Plant peas in well-drained soil that has a reading of 7-7.5, and add phosphorus and potassium as they are important for the growing pea plants. Rock phosphate or blood and bone will be beneficial, and adding comfrey and seaweed mulch or liquid fertilizer will supply additional elements.

Peas will start producing in 10-14 weeks (yum!) and remember to tip-prune the vines so that branching and increased pod production occurs. Snow peas should continue producing pods for 5-6 weeks (double yum!)

Are there problems with growing peas? Annette McFarlane warns about powdery mildew, as this makes plants deteriorate rapidly. So remember to look for disease-resistant varieties and don't do

overhead watering of the plants. On warm sunny days, apply liquid seaweed fertilizer over the foliage to assist building disease resistance.



One of my most favourite veggies - snow peas!

So, plant

some peas in May and June – either juicy snow peas or sweet sugar snaps – and see how you go – and let's hope it is a good season for them.

Month Two:

Many of the previous month's vegetables can continue to be planted – but it is now too late for broad beans, Brussel sprouts, celeriac – and strawberries! Onions, parsnips and peas finish in Month Two, along with spinach.

So, if you have a bit extra space in your backyard garden now, how about planting a few more herbs? Herbs have a rather long definition: "These are plants from which you gather leaves, seeds, fruits, flowers, buds, bark or roots for seasonings, flavouring, scents or enrichment of certain foods to make them more pleasing to the taste or smell". They are plants that can mostly be grown in any sunny, well-drained position in the garden, and they are considered very hardy; require little fertilizer; and a small amount of water. But if you want to fill a shady, moist spot in your garden, here are a few herbs that will be happy to grow there:

Angelica: Known as "Herb of the Angels" (hence its name), angelica is actually a member of the parsley family and can be used for cooking, medicinally or, in the case of "glossy angelica", it makes a useful ornamental plant. The stems of angelica can be candied and are used for decorating desserts. They can also be combined with rhubarb or apple for making pies or crumbles, and you can add them to jams and preserves. The leaves of angelica can be used in salads or when cooking fish, and when making soups and stews. Add angelica to a variety of savoury dishes, ranging from chicken stew to Persian green bean rice.

Bergamot: Coming from the mint family and producing bright, colourful flowers that range from pink through to mauve and to red, bergamot is primarily used as a tea. The teas are made from either bee balm bergamot or lemon bergamot (in difference to the citrus version which is used to flavour Earl Grey tea). Both fresh or dried herbs can be used as an infusion, and the leaves can also be used to flavour food. They are described as “a wonderful addition to pizzas, salads, breads and any dishes that are complimented by the herb’s minty, slightly spicy flavour.”

Chervil: This dainty herb is also called Japanese parsley – three stems of the plant can be knotted together and the leaves fanned out to create a delicate garnish for Japanese dishes. Remember to snip the leaves with scissors from the outside edge of the plant and then chop them finely to use fresh to enhance the flavour of chicken, fish, vegetables, cottage cheese, salads and all egg dishes. Versatile indeed!

Month Three: Artichokes, broccoli, cabbage, endive, leeks, swedes and turnips now join the “sorry, it’s too late” group at the end of Month Three. So, how about growing some swedes now? We’ve probably grown up saying “yuck” about having to eat them for our dinner, but swede cooked well (and before it has turned woody) can be sweet and tasty.

Thought of as a combination of a cabbage and a turnip, swedes form a single swollen root tuber in their first season, and then flowers and seeds in their second. Sow the seeds directly into your well-prepared garden area (add plenty of compost and decomposed animal manure well in advance) as they resent transplanting. Germination takes 5-7 days, and you should then thin the seedlings to 15-20 cm apart.

Adequate trace elements are essential for growing swedes, as otherwise the roots will be tasteless and may show internal browning. Adding seaweed sprays, rock dust or powdered trace elements may also be beneficial if your soil is poor or sandy.

An additional benefit of growing swedes for their tubers is that you can harvest the new season spring greens from the plants. Once the winter temperatures begin to warm, completely cut back the old foliage. The fresh, young green foliage can be cut several times as it re-sprouts and as it draws on the stored nutrition accumulated in the root system over winter. The swede tops can be boiled, steamed or stir-fried, making them an alternative to spinach.

Once your swedes are harvested, there are plenty of ways of enjoying them. You can mash them like potatoes – just add a bit of salt, black pepper and butter; you can roast them (this can be done in cubes or in wedges); you can make chips from them; you can add them to soups and stews – or you can make a beef, swede and potato casserole which looks like being the perfect winter dish!



Swedes are perfect for winter dishes

Now that Winter is on its Way...

By Diane Kelly



Wouldn't it be wonderful for a friend to finish a visit to your garden and be able to take home with them just a few beautiful flowers such as these?

I went over to Ian and Margaret Lee's home and garden on Saturday, taking with me an apricot cake and a list of questions. I had been thinking about how the weather is getting cooler; how different the past two seasons have been to normal; and how to look after my garden now that "Winter is on Its Way", and I had figured out that the best thing to do was to get some timely advice from some very experienced and very successful gardeners.

Ian and Margaret have lived on the Coast for many years and have gardened in sandy soil; soil with layers of shale, fill and clay; and now deep, volcanic soil. They have also gardened on flat blocks, and now their garden has many sloping areas. They have an orchard; garden areas which are divided by flower colour but also soil requirements and sun/shade availability; a Chinese garden; a vegetable area (two large raised garden beds and three beds made from a large corrugated tank cut into horizontal thirds) and a number of other gardens that follow their zig-zag driveway up to their house and beyond.

So my first question was to ask what is

growing and producing well at the moment. In the orchard there are avocados (five varieties to space the crops); custard apples and persimmons. You don't see many persimmons in the shops, but they are similar to a small tomato

and when they are very ripe, they are absolutely delicious! Doing well in the flower areas now are camellia sasanqua (there is a large bush some 3-4 metres high right at the end of the upstairs veranda where we had our morning tea and it is covered in beautiful pink flowers at the moment); salvia (a whole range of shades) and cosmos – their cheery orange and yellow blooms brighten many of the garden areas. And in the vegetable gardens, tree lettuce, shallots and the mints are doing well – plus dozens and dozens of little tomato seedlings that have come up from the last compost application!

In the vegetable area, the beds lost quite a bit of their soil depth, and their nutrients were washed away by the recent rains – the philodendrons down-hill from the vegetable beds are flourishing now! So dolomite was applied to the vegetable gardens about a month ago, in advance of fertilizing them. Since then, lots of Seasol has been added. Green manures and chopped alfalfa have been dug into the top 10cms of the beds to bring the worms back into the vegetable gardens as they had exited with the heavy rainfalls. Ian commented that you don't need a lot of alfalfa, just enough as a teaser to encourage the worms to come back and feed on the re-nourished soil.

I asked Ian and Margaret what they had done in the gardens to prepare for the cooler season. Margaret stressed the importance of being aware of the direction of the sunlight that comes into your gardens – in this way you can prune your plants to reduce the shade levels as the sun pivots to the north. Also, when putting in plants, think about their spacing – how big will they be in 2-5-7 years and where will they create shade? It was recommended that you thin out the inner branches of your jaboticaba and cumquat trees if you are growing them, as this will increase the airflow around the compactly growing fruit.

I learnt that pruning trees and bushes is a very individual thing – we need to think about each plant, and also what we want from them. For example, you can prune the tops from your pear, peach and persimmon trees now so that you can reach any future harvest. But, of more interest to Margaret (a qualified florist) are the persimmon leaves as they change colour. So perhaps a later prune? A hint about citrus trees – we've recently talked in our Club meetings about not generally needing to prune them – but when you pick an orange or a lemon, just take a bit of the branch tips off as well. Margaret says this will make the existing branch broaden out for future years.

So what else should we be pruning now? **Some** salvias (have a chat to Ian or Margaret about which ones), chilli plants; tree dahlias (they can become too rampant); sweet potatoes (but remember to add the tender tips to your stir fries or green smoothies!) and you can cut the tips off your passionfruit vine. Weed around your pineapple plants – but don't dig around fruit trees – just keep adding more light mulches. Ian has a mulcher and, in addition to various fertilizers, this is what gets added to the garden beds -

he recently discovered mulch from the property that he had put into two large drums had turned into good quality compost. If you are lucky enough to have a Cecile Brunner rose growing, give the tall plants a prune, and tidy up any other heritage roses.

After the high rainfall we have had recently, weeds are definitely an issue. If you haven't been able to get into your garden and pull them out, or if you are on acreage and the grass is daunting, at least prune, slash or whipper-snip the weed tops. Make sure this is done before the grass goes to seed (even seeds trimmed off will sprout as they settle into the soil) – and there is the added bonus of making your own green manure!

One of the questions for Ian and Margaret was what fertilizers do they add to their gardens. There were multiple answers – compost; Rooster Booster; Sulphate of Potash; Earthlife rock minerals – and then the liquids – Silica and Potash; dissolved Condy's Crystals (also known as "Potassium Permanganate") – and various complete mixtures that include the very important trace elements. The Lees add dolomite to Mediterranean plants such as lavender, rosemary, pomegranate, persimmons and citrus as their soil is a bit acidic. But remember – a light spread only!

A word about avacados: After the high rainfall some gardeners have lost their avocado trees. A reason for this can be that the tree roots have reached clay level – and in extra wet seasons, a dam can form in the clay area and so the roots rot, and the tree dies.

I discussed with Margaret the concept that, among our Club members, we live in a number of very different areas. From the sandy areas near the beaches,

to reclaimed land, to flat or sloping land, to foothills, to areas that get frosts and those that don't, and areas that get good breezes or those who are in valleys where air flow is not as consistent. So, if you are reading gardening advice, or talking with other gardeners, remember our experiences can all be different. For example, Annette McFarlane lives on acreage in a hilly area and her garden relies on rainfall, tank and dam water, so you can learn about being water-wise from her website. Josh Byrne's garden is on sand – but remember he lives in a temperate (rain in winter, not summer) climate. Jerry Coleby-Williams can teach us about a productive garden – built in a suburban-size block. So applying gardening knowledge is a bit unique to each of us.

Two last questions for Ian and Margaret:
Q. What “less common” vegetables or herbs are you growing at the moment?

A. Kang kong, wheat grass, Vietnamese mint, purple asparagus, Japanese edible chrysanthemum, lemon balm and true cardamon seeds and leaves.

Q. What (just for fun!) are each of your favourite fruit, flowers and vegetables?

Ian: Custard apple; orchids and tropicals (such as anthurium and heliconia); and butter beans. **Margaret:** Red paw-paw and new season's apples; Eucharis lily; and raw gold sweet potato.

So there are the answers to the question of “what should we be doing in our gardens now... and how should we be doing it.”

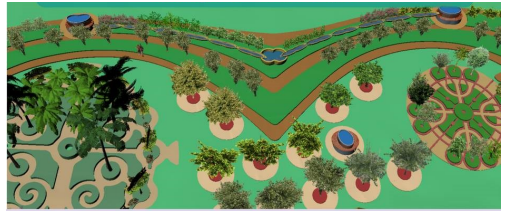


The beautiful Eucharis lily

Thanks, Ian and Margaret!

Ediblescapes “Permagarden” By Jorge Cantellano

This same month five years ago, the Ediblescapes project coordinator, Jorge Cantellano, shared his vision for an Edible Forest Landscape Project. In 2017 it was portrayed as unfenced communal gardens for the use and benefit of the surrounding community and visitors, containing edible and medicinal gardens modelled on the principles of food forests and edible landscapes.



Jorge and his team of volunteers' hosted composting sessions and veggie swaps during its first year, then in May 2018 they signed a formal agreement with the Nerang Country Paradise Association. It took another year for Gold Coast City Council to officiate the Nerang Community Parkland's hosting of the project.

The soil on the site at the time was only 20cm deep. The Ediblescapes crew knew that to plant fruit trees they would need to build the soil to a minimum of 80cm deep for each tree. They decided to produce one cubic metre of composting soil for each tree – that meant 100 cubic metres for 100 trees! With the vision to incorporate tree planting in two years time, the team turned over a new heap of hot compost every week.

Water harvesting is a principal element to any ecological garden. The Ediblescapes crew observed the site's

water flow and designed a system to harvest rainwater runoff from both inside and outside the garden, to store it underground through soil infiltration from where it would slowly release into the garden soil. In each garden patch, these water micro-catchments function as a natural organic 'wicking bed'.

As 80cm deep soil is not sufficient for tree roots to take up adequate nutritional elements to generate fruit, it is necessary to intervene and provide additional fertility through composted humus and other natural fertilisation systems.

The hot compost included a third food waste, sourced from the Nerang farmers market, collected on the weekend to lay out on the compost heap on the second weekday. They observed that substantial leaching occurred before the compost heated, and further leaching occurred each time water was added to the compost heap. Six times the compost heap was turned and was completed in six weeks. Valuable nutrients are lost through leaching, so Ediblescapes researched and innovated with natural fertilisers, including vermicompost, reproduction of microorganisms, bokashi, bio liquid and solid fertilisers.

After the first stage of fruit tree planting was complete, in September 2019, Ediblescapes embarked on garden beds for growing crops as part of their strategy to build soil for the second stage of tree planting. The crops were successful and five harvests were donated to the Neighbourhood Centre's Emergency Food Service by the end of 2019, and another five harvests by March 2020. Unfortunately, the garden was temporarily closed to the

public for the next two months due to social restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, they continued to operate using essential job volunteers who produced social food and delivered another five harvests during this period.

COVID-19 increased food insecurity within our local community. Ediblescapes volunteers responded by temporarily postponing the second stage of tree planting to implement bio-intensive food growth in a double-depth garden bed. This is a system that allows maximum food production in smaller areas, with less time, and minimum budget. The technique utilised 60cm deep loose soil that required no turning and allowed minimal disturbance to microorganisms. Additionally, vegetation was cultivated for composting.

During this time the team learnt:

- Hot composted fertiliser produced a material with a consistency too densely bonded, and therefore not appropriate in large quantities to ameliorate the soil for bio-intensive growing purposes.
- On the other hand, bokashi fermented compost was better suited to mixing in significant portions with garden soil to prepare the bio-intensive beds. The garden bed amended with bokashi resulted in soft and loose soil suitable for profound root growth, allowing more plants to grow together in hexagonal patterns to maximise the garden space.

Using this method, Ediblescapes volunteers cultivated and harvested 5,000 litres of vegetables in 400m² during 2020 and another 8,000 litres of vegetables in 600m² during 2021. Volunteers donated one hundred percent of this fresh, nutritionally dense food to Nerang's food service.

In 2021, Ediblescapes planted the second stage of the forest garden by adding 40 fruit trees. Ediblescapes' footprint is now 1000m² and comprises 100 fruit trees, herbs and crop gardens. Already in this early stage, over 20 trees have fruited. Ediblescapes demonstrates the efficiency of the bio-intensive growing method when combined with a developing ecological forest garden. This makes the project an ideal Agro-Ecological "Permagarden" and a valid proposition for urban food security during a global or systemic food crisis.

Ediblescapes halted its social food program in 2022. They now invite food crisis stakeholders to visit the Ediblescapes "permagarden" to explore and embrace the idea for replication so that the Gold Coast can increase its capacity for urban food growing, create new employment opportunities and improve access to food for all.

More information and our photo journal:

www.ediblescapes.org/composting/compost

www.facebook.com/n.ediblescapes/photos/

www.facebook.com/JorgitoNESS/photos_albums



FRUIT TREES

MAY:

Custard Apples: Peak harvest period, harvest every 3-7 days. Don't let trees dry out.

Figs: Dormant period. Don't let trees dry out.

Lychee: Don't let trees dry out. Fertilise trees this month. Mature trees (5 years and older) 1.5 kg organic fertiliser with sulphate of potash added per sq m to the drip line of trees. (For trees under 5 years, use only 50 grams.)

Low Chill Stone Fruit: Fertilise trees with 50 gms of organic fertiliser with sulphate of potash added per sq m to the drip line of trees. Prune off 2/3 of new growth.

Mango: Apply gypsum if soil pH is 6 or more. If below 6 pH, apply lime, 50 gms per sq m of either. Mature trees (5 years and older) 1.5 kg organic fertiliser with sulphate of potash added per sq m to the drip line of trees; water in well.

Passion-fruit: The water can be tapered off. Harvest fruit every 3-4 days under vines.

Pawpaw: If you have not applied boron, apply now. 1 teaspoon per tree. 40% of annual organic fertiliser can be applied e.g. 20 gms per sq m.

Persimmon: Decline water needs. Apply a little garden lime and gypsum, 20 gms per sq m.

Strawberries: Plants should be coming away well. A little organic fertiliser with sulphate of potash can be applied now. Use fish emulsion or kelp spray regularly over plants to keep in good health.

Bananas: Keep up the water. When fruit are formed, bag fruit with banana bag, tie bag to top of stem and drape down to bell. Leave open at bottom for air. Cut off bell to get larger fruit.

Citrus: Harvest should start this month, and

continue until August. Keep up watering.

Avocado: Add garden lime, 20 grams per sq m to drip line and gypsum 20 grams per sq m again to drip line. Early varieties can be picked. Don't let trees dry out.

JUNE:

Custard apples: Harvest every 3 to 4 days as fruit matures. Don't let trees dry out.

Figs: Dormant period. Don't let trees dry out.

Lychee: Do not let trees dry out. Minimal watering is needed. Check emerging flowers for flower caterpillars. If more than ½ are infested, spray with pyrethrum or garlic spray.

Mango: Don't let the trees dry out.

Passion-fruit: Don't let the vines dry out. Keep up the fish emulsion or kelp sprays every month. Small amount of organic fertiliser with added sulphate of potash can be applied to vines, 20 gms per sq m – for example, large vines = 100 gms; small vines = 50 gms.

Pawpaw: Spray with wettable sulphur if powdery mildew is a problem. Minimal water. Pick fruit at mature stage with ½ colour to have full flavour.

Persimmon: Dormant period. Minimal water required at this time.

Strawberries: Feed with organic fertiliser with added sulphate of potash. Also use fish emulsion and kelp spray regularly over plants to keep in good health. This will prevent fruit rot. Pick fruit when fully ripe. Keep plants fully watered – try not to wet the berries. This will prevent fruit rot. Mulch plants so the berries do not lie on the soil. Pine needs are good.

Bananas: Keep up the water and bag fruit. When fruit are formed, bag fruit with banana bag, tie bag to top of stem and drape down to bell. Leave open at bottom for air. Cut off bell to get

larger fruit.

Citrus: Harvesting should be well under way. Keep up watering.

Avocado: Early flowers should appear this month. Keep up water needs. If you have not applied garden lime and gypsum, apply now as per June instructions.

JULY:

Custard apple: Harvest every 3 or 4 days as fruit matures. Don't let trees dry out. Apply garden lime to soil – 20 grams per sq m to drip line – for example, a mature tree, 1kg.

Figs: Keep well mulched.

Lychee: Do not let trees dry out. Minimal watering is needed. Check emerging flowers for flower caterpillars. If more than ½ are infested, spray with pyrethrum or garlic spray.

Low chill stone fruit: Peak water needs. Water trees 2 weeks before flowering and 3 weeks later. In late July start blossom thinning. Winter prune late varieties. 50g of organic fertilizer with sulphate of potash added per sq m to drip line of trees. Mature trees – 1 kg.

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

Passion-fruit: Don't let the vines dry out. Keep up the fish emulsion or kelp sprays every month. Small amount of organic fertilizer with sulphate of potash can be applied for vines. Large vines – 1 kg; small vines – ½ kg.

Pawpaw: Spray with wettable sulphur if powdery mildew is a problem. Minimal water. Use copper based sprays or leaf microbes if black spot is about. Pick fruit at mature stage with ½ colour to have full flavour.

Persimmon: Minimal water required at this time.

Strawberries: Feed with organic fertilizer with sulphate of potash. Spray fish emulsion and kelp regularly over plants to keep in good health. This will prevent fruit rot. Pick fruit when

fully ripe. Keep plants fully watered, but try not to wet the berries. This will also prevent fruit rot. Mulch plants so the berries do not lie on the soil. Pine needles are best for this.

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

Citrus: Pick mature fruit when fully ripe. Keep up irrigation.

VEGETABLES

MAY:

Asian Greens, Beans (French), Beetroot, Broad beans, Broccoli, Cabbage, Carrot, Cauliflower, Celeriac, Celery, Endive, Kale, Kohlrabi, Leek, Lettuce, Mustard Greens, Onion, Parsnip, Pea, Potato, Radish, Shallots, Silverbeet, Snow Peas, Spinach, Tomato, Turnip.

JUNE:

Asian Greens, Asparagus Crowns, Beetroot, Broad Beans, Broccoli, Cabbage, Carrot, Cauliflower, Celeriac, Celery, Endive, Kale, Kohlrabi, Leeks, Lettuce, Mustard Greens, Onion, Parsnip, Peas, Potato, Radish, Shallots, Silverbeet, Snow Peas, Spinach, Sweet Corn, Tomatoes, Turnips.

JULY:

Asian Greens, Asparagus Crowns, Beetroot, Broad Beans, Broccoli, Cabbage, Carrot, Cauliflower, Celeriac, Celery, Endive, Kale, Kohlrabi, Leeks, Lettuce, Mustard Greens, Onion, Peas, Potato, Radish, Shallots, Silverbeet, Snow Peas.

Source: *Queensland Planting Guide*

HERBS

MAY:

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

Perennials & Bi-Annuals:

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

JUNE:

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

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NOTICEBOARD

Heal Mother Nature Meditations are held every Thursday by The Brahma Kumaris to send healing energy to Mother Nature. 8.45-9pm on Zoom.
<https://tinyurl.com/healourearthmeditations>

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.

Look What We Grew!



Leah's enjoying all the yummy fruit her garden is growing right now: mandarines, passionfruit, lemon, native Atherton raspberries, dwarf mulberries, Panama berries, tamarillo and chokos.



Jill's second crop of dragonfruit for the season. Planted three years ago; with a much more prolific crop than last year's crop.

"What good is the warmth of summer, without the cold of winter to give it sweetness."

- John Steinbeck

"A Garden Recipe

First plant four rows of PEAS
Patience
Promptness
Preparation and
Perseverance

Next to these plant three rows of SQUASH
Squash gossip
Squash criticism
Squash indifference

Then plant four rows of LETTUCE
Let us be faithful to duty
Let us be loyal and unselfish
Let us be faithful to our obligations
Let us respect each other

No garden is complete without TURNIPS
Turn up to meetings
Turn up with a smile
Turn up with determination to make
everything count for something good and
worthwhile."

Author unknown, shared by Jill
at our March meeting.

*"Winter is the time for
comfort, for good food and
warmth, for the touch of a
friendly hand and for a talk
beside the fire: it is the time
for home."*

- Edith Sitwell