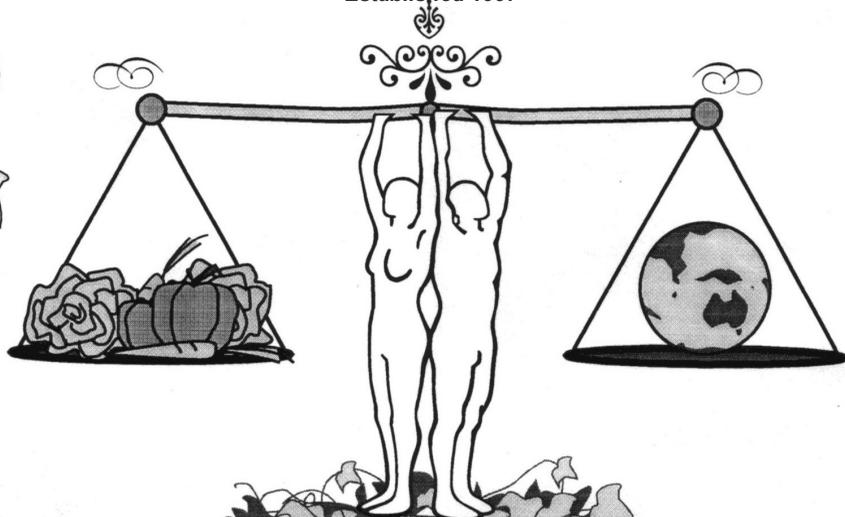


GOLD COAST ORGANIC GROWERS Inc.

Established 1997



NEWSLETTER

Volume 27, 2023 Issue 2
GARDENING IN WINTER

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OUR NEXT MEETING: MAY 25, 2023

Notice Board

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

Meetings Held:

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

Annual Membership Fees:

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

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

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

Seed Bank:

Packets are \$2.00 each.

Members' Market Corner:

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

Raffle Table:

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

Library:

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

Advertising:

1/4 page: \$15 an issue

1/2 page: \$25 an issue

Full page: \$40 an issue

2023-2024 Committee

President	Maria Roberson
Vice President	Lyn Mansfield
Treasurer	Diane Kelly 0403 473 892
Secretary	Deb Phillips 0422 680 784 debraps@gmail.com
Assistant Sec	Penny Jameson 0411 639 558
Membership Sec Membership Asst	Diane Kelly Penny Jameson
Newsletter Editor	Leah Johnston leahbryan9@gmail.com
Newsletter Assistant	Diane Kelly Jill Barber
Website Editor Social Media E.	Jorge Cantellano Maria Roberson
Grants	Lyn Mansfield Penny Jameson
Guest Speaker Liaison	Lorraine James Sue Webb
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Whilst every effort is made to publish accurate information the association (including Editor, Executive Officers and Committee) accepts no responsibility for statements made or opinions expressed in this newsletter.

Notice Board

Membership Renewals

Pay online:

Name: Gold Coast Organic Growers

Bank: Suncorp

BSB: 484-799

Account: 0014-21651

Remember to put your Name and Membership Number (the number in brackets after your name) in the comment field.

Overdue: Anne-Maree Andrew (337), Belinda Rennie (462), Colleen Rohan (491), Astrid Connolly (465), Stacey Hearne (467), Catherine Goodacre (496), Terry Lewins (427), John Trama (437).

May: Alison Gilbert (479), Leila Howe (480), Christina Yeomans (489), Simone Fullagar (497), Gill Sandwitz (497), Brenda Stuttle (498), Margo Rankin (499)

July: David & Sally Cheetham (484)

August: Ian & Margaret Lee (118), Jill Barber (290), Lyn Mansfield (306)

Newsletter:

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

Contribution deadlines are:

Autumn issue: end of January

Winter issue: end of April

Spring issue: end of July

Summer issue: end of October

Upcoming Guest Speakers

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

May 25 - Damian and Narelle Power from [ddwfawna](http://ddwfawna.com.au) speaking about dragonflies and wildlife on the Gold Coast.

If you would like to suggest a speaker for 2022, or would like to speak for five minutes on one of our Members' Nights please contact Lorraine James via lorrainejames@hotmail.com

Workshops

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

Thanks to this issue's contributors:

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

View our Newsletters On-Line at:

www.goldcoastorganicgrowers.org.au/

President's Notes

By Maria Roberson

Hello Everyone,

Winter is quite a busy time for food growing and harvesting. Vegetable plots are lush and full of greens for salads, soups and stir fry.

Citrus trees are decorated with golden fruit which look amazing as the last beams of sunlight shine through on sunset. The pumpkins are wrapping up and need to be picked carefully for storage over the coming months. Harvest when fully ripe and leave the stem a couple of centimetres long, store in a cool dry place.

Each year I like to set myself a challenge and try growing something new. This time it's purple cauliflower, dwarf snow peas and broccoletti. I know it doesn't sound super exciting but I am keen to learn if these varieties can perform as well as the "normal ones" do.

I also like to get the big jobs done in the cooler weather, such as, mulching big areas in the orchard, repairing fences and out buildings. Getting rid of Camphorlaurel is an ongoing process and requires many hours on the chainsaw, the real work starts when the tree is down as it needs to be cut into manageable pieces for removal which can take days for really big trees.

Pest maintenance is less of a concern in winter. I use the word maintenance rather than control because its more appropriate to the organic gardeners' way of thinking. The cooler temperatures have seen some insects settle down for a rest, however, one pest that has not, is the white cabbage butterfly caterpillar.

Caterpillars can withstand frosts and will cause devastating damage to brassicas. The spray marketed as Dipel is excellent because it only affects caterpillars. It stops them feeding and is a naturally occurring type of gut rot bacteria. I usually find just a couple of applications per season is enough to keep plants in good condition.

We have a fantastic line up of Guest Speakers this year with topics to suit everyone. We always put a lot of thought and effort into obtaining our speakers and which topics we think you may be interested in. Members have suggested, that this year we spend some of the clubs' funds on securing even more great speakers so that is what we've done. Keep an eye out for the list.

Thank you to our members who served on the committee last year, we really appreciate your hard work and efforts in making our club such a wonderful thing to be involved in. I would like to welcome our new committee, some of which are quite new to join us but are becoming fast friends and valued members.

Keep those plates of deliciousness coming each month for our supper table please. I love seeing home produce served up either au natural or creatively prepared by you. After the absence of the supper table caused by Covid, it's so great to have it back and be the little social hub once again.

Happy growing,
Maria

“Winter forms our character and brings out our best”
- Tim Allen

Meeting Recaps

By Leah Johnston

March meeting: Lise Racine

At our March meeting we welcomed back Lise Racine who shared the 'Guiding Principles of Natural Health' with us, which she learnt when studying herbalism.

1. The Healing Power of Nature

Given the proper conditions the body has self-healing power which is part of every living organism. The body always looks and strives for balance.

2. First Do No Harm

The chosen course of action has the least force, side effects and is the least invasive.

3. Find the Cause

We consider the root cause of health issues rather than the symptoms. Disappearing symptoms does not necessarily mean the issue is resolved. Symptoms are not the disease. They are indicators.

4. Care for the People in its Totality

Health is the result of a complex interaction between elements such as physical, emotional, social, spiritual, environmental and more.

5. Prevention

Health is a global sense of wellbeing. Supporting the body's equilibrium process is considered day by day. Hindrances are removed, weaknesses cared for. Care is acted on early, and consistently with dedication.

6. Doctor as Teach (Docer)

The therapist plays the role of an educator for the client aiming at fostering action and habits promoting a global wellbeing. The education encourages self-responsibility for the client to embrace life choices enhancing his/her life and promote health.

Over her 30 years of working with medicinal herbs and natural remedies Lise has some of her own guiding principles to add:

7. Herbs Act as a Whole

Herbs act as a whole in themselves with their many components: they are not simple; they are complex living organisms.

8. Herbs Have Different Actions

An herb can often act in more than one way. Herbs can hardly be limited to "A" type of action. They are versatile in their action; they can be particularly effective in one area, yet they are more than a list of actions. Experience and observation can reveal other mode of action. Some of the actions they can have include: nourishing; anti-bacterial; anti-viral; anti-inflammatory; analgesic; anti-parasitic; rubefacient; adaptogen; anaesthetic; and more.

9. Respect the Herbs

Herbs are potent; identify them well (use the right one); take the source into consideration; dosage "more is better" is not true. The absorption is quick to the frequency needs to be taken into consideration. The Length of time herbs are taken is carefully assessed. Sequential approach with one herb or type of herb taken, followed by another one and another one can be appropriate.

10. Herbs Support You

Herbs accompany you and your body in

your work.

11. Local Issue is Addressed Locally

Once this is addressed, the overall systems are supported.

12. Connect Directly with the Herbs

As much as this is possible, connect with the herb from seed to seed.

13. What Grows Around You is For You

The best herbs are fresh and close to you.

April meeting: Gavin Bullock

At our April meeting, Gavin Bullock spoke about the wet weather we've been experiencing and the dry winters he expects us to get in the coming years.

He said the east coast of Australia is as wet as we have ever seen it in recorded history: so if you have plants heavy with rain, try to raise their branches up so they can get some breeze and don't get too humid.

Gavin spoke about the different ways plants can be propagated. Growing from seeds creates new plants that are not clones and gives us biodiversity. Plants grown from seeds can be slightly different to the parent plant. When you're propagating seeds you want to be clean, for smokers they should wash their hands as there is a mosaic virus which can be transferred from nicotine. In propagation it's better to use fresh mediums rather than reuse one from last time as it can have diseases in it.

Another form of propagation is through cuttings, which gives us a clone of the parent plant. So if you have a plant that grows the tastiest fruit and you want a

replica of it you need to take cuttings from it (not grow from its seeds). Use sharp tools and make sure they are clean. Bypass pruners make a sharper cut: anvil pruners squash the wood. Don't bruise the wood that you want to keep—so don't bruise the cutting part. Don't put the cutting too far into the pot, place just two nodes beneath the soil. Give it room for the roots to grow down into the pot. Any nodes above the soil will grow leaves and any nodes underneath the soil will grow roots. Cut the leaves in half as the cutting doesn't need the leaves to be that big.

Dipping the cuttings in rooting hormones can activate new roots to grow, they can also help kill any germs in the soil

If you start your cuttings in water they won't have strong enough roots to grow through soil. You can transfer them to perlite as it is easier for the roots to push through, then as they get stronger you can introduce soil.

Separation is another way to create more plants and it works well for bulbs and chives. You can trim the roots by a third too. Chop the green leaves back as much as you cut the roots back as smaller roots can't sustain all the green tops. A dip into a diluted (weak tea colour) seaweed emulsion can help to clean it and encourage new hair roots to grow.

For bulbs: don't plant them too deeply. You want them just underneath the soil. Remember the saying: "If you plant bulbs by May it's ok". You can start the bulbs in a brown paper bag in the crisper and they can start to shoot. If the bulbs are soft don't plant them as they could rot

Another way to propagate is to layer or marcot the branches from the living tree, covering them with dirt or growing medi-

um and allowing them to shoot roots while the branch is still growing on the mother tree. Once the roots have grown you can cut the new plant from the mother branch and pot it up.

Grafting is another way to grow new fruit trees. Dwarf citrus and tropical stone fruit are grafted onto rootstock that can handle our climate. If you have a plant that's grafted you won't want to take a cutting of that plant as it will grow the top but not have the strong rootstock like your original plant.

Peel some of the bark off around the branch and wrap that area with a little bit of peat moss with a little bit of perlite. You can wrap this in aluminium foil and then gladwrap to hold it together. In two or three months time you can open it and find it full of roots. Then cut it off the mother plant, soak it in the Seasol to kill any pathogen then plant it into the next pot or into the ground. You can also use plastic margarine containers to wrap the marcotted branch in while the roots are growing.

You can also weight the branches down so that they touch the ground, cover that with dirt and they can grow roots straight into the ground.

If using vermiculite or perlite in your potting mixes they should be wetted before using them to keep the dust down so you aren't breathing it in. The difference between the products is vermiculite is used as a covering over the seeds while perlite is used in the mix.

When using seaweed solution for potted plants you don't need it too strong as they are getting it all - there aren't any nearby plants stealing it. For plants in the ground it can be stronger as there's a lot of competition.

Have a Bountiful Winter!

By Diane Kelly

My annual planting guide has an alphabetical list of vegetables and then a tick to show what can be grown when – and the biggest groups of ticks are definitely during June and July, and then reducing slightly into August and September.

Hopefully we have some space in our vegetable gardens and some well-prepared areas – and to help you plan out what to put in those areas here is a quick summary of six vegetables that will happily grow now.

Firstly, Phil Dudman (of Organic Garden and ABC radio fame and a previous guest speaker at our Club) gives some good advice: If you have limited space, consider what you are going to eat most of and concentrate on these. If you have a large vegetable garden, then do a rough plan of what you want to grow and the best spot for each vegetable (e.g. don't plant your tomatoes on the northern side of your garden so that they block the winter sun from your lettuces or cabbages). So here are some options that just might be a few of your favourites:

1. Broccoli: Six plants are all you need to keep an average household eating their greens for months. And a follow-up crop planted after six weeks will get you through the season – the smaller florets that grow lower down the stem can be picked once you have harvested the central head. You can plant your broccoli through until July, and as a bonus, remember that the leaves and stems are edible too.

Spacious planting (30-60cms apart) will encourage more sustained growth of

larger side shoots. Broccoli is regarded as a heavy feeder with high demands for all the major nutrients and some trace elements, so make sure the area selected is well prepared. A lack of nutrients and insufficient watering will result in the formation of poor heads that will quickly run to flower. The plants can become top heavy, so watch in case they need to be staked. After the initial harvest, give the plants a bonus top dressing of compost or an application of seaweed or fish-based fertilizer.

Recipe: Jamie Oliver keeps it wonderfully simple – cook your fresh, crispy broccoli until tender, drain, add a pinch of salt and pepper, add some butter and mix to coat. Place in a serving dish and enjoy!



2. Peas: These definitely fall into my favorites category – there is nothing quite like enjoying a freshly-picked snow pea or sugar snap! Sugar snaps are good to plant because they can be either dwarf or tall varieties, and they produce pods over an extended period.

Remember that peas like neutral to slightly alkaline soil (7-7.5) and they don't mind being grown in pots and added to your patio or balcony. Growing hint for peas – they don't need to be planted in nitrogen-rich soil as they supply their own nitrogen. Too much nitrogen will produce lots of vegetative growth at the expense of flowers and then pods.

Pods should start being edible after 10-

14 weeks and tip-pruning will encourage branching and therefore increased production.

Recipe: Combine raw cashews, ginger, chilli, garlic, snow peas, soy sauce and a dash of dry sherry and cook – 6 minutes will give you a wonderful addition to your evening meal.

3. Silver beet: Perhaps not on everyone's favourites list, but it is easy to grow and the plants will continue to produce for up to twelve months. A rule of thumb is that the paler the leaves of a silver beet plant are, the more subtle the flavor – (think of Swiss chard), and it is a good idea to plan for three successive plantings to enjoy a continual supply.

Silver beet is one of those plants that will actually appreciate being planted behind your tomatoes or other tall crops as they will enjoy the shade on hotter days and will benefit from being protected from the wind.

Give your silver beet plants plenty of nitrogen and potassium and keep them well-watered – plants that are water or nutrient stressed are more likely to bolt to seed.

Recipe: Creamy silver beet and potato soup – silver beet, raw cashews, potatoes, olive oil and seasonings are cooked, blended and served with a drizzle of olive oil and some parsley.

4. Carrots: Further advice from Phil Dudman – “walk straight past the carrot seedlings at the nursery and make a beeline for the seed racks”. Direct sowing is the best way to grow carrots, and the seeds should be kept moist to achieve maximum germination – baby carrots should be ready to enjoy in less than 10 weeks. Keep the garden area well weeded – otherwise you will be pull-

ing up little carrot plants!

Nematodes and fungal diseases can be avoided by rotating the crops around your garden and don't plant into rich soil or else the carrots will fork. Remember to water your carrot plants regularly to produce sweet and juicy crops.

Traditional advice is that the soil in your carrot plot should be worked to a fine tilth (so that the carrot roots can grow easily). But Phil Dudman stopped digging his vegetable garden soil about ten years ago and he still achieves long, straight carrots. The idea is that "undisturbed soil allows the soil organisms to form a good permanent soil structure which will include plenty of spaces for plant roots to explore".

Recipe: Carrot cake, carrot and zucchini fritters, honeyed carrot salad, roasted carrots (served with pea hummus) and carrot and cauliflower tabouli will all make good use of your carrot crops – but a simple recipe from my childhood is to simply steam carrots and parsnips and then mash them together and serve with your dinner.

5. Celery: Celery can be planted between April and August and, like silver beet, has a very long harvesting life. "All" the books say to keep your celery plants well-watered, otherwise their stalks will become dry and fibrous, so remember to check the soil regularly.

Celery is a very shallow-rooted plant, so there is a fine line between not planting them too shallowly (so they don't topple over) and not planting them too deeply as this will cause the crown to rot. The advice I could find is to set the root crown top level with the soil. The other advice is to not plant celery and carrots together as carrot fly can attack the roots of the celery plants.

Recipe: You can always make celery soup or a smoothie with celery, apple, banana and ginger – or you could try a "Celery Gratin" which you make with celery, cheese, cream and a dash of nutmeg. A topping of breadcrumbs finishes the recipe.

6. Florence fennel: This vegetable has a bulbous stem and is topped with delicate fern-like leaves. The stem has an aniseed flavor and the foliage can also be eaten.

Florence fennel is best grown from seed as transplanting tends to restrict the plants growth for a while. This fennel (and there are other types) is another vegetable that can be grown between April and July and it will tolerate any soil – just remember that soil that is too heavy or compacted will limit the bulb's ability to swell and grow.

Keep your Florence fennel plant well-watered – this will help the bulb to grow and avoid the plant bolting to seed. Fennel plants can be blanched like celery and this is done when the bulb reaches golf ball size. Blanching helps remove any traces of green and will also reduce any bitterness. You can make paper or cardboard collars; place them around the bulb; and then cover them with hilled soil. The collars stop soil getting in between the stalks – something that often occurs with leeks. Harvest when the bulbs reach the size of a tennis ball.

Recipe: The bulbs of fennel can be eaten raw and added into salads, and the leaves can be used as flavoring. Try making fennel gratin; pickling the bulbs; or cooking a chicken, fennel and tomato ragout.

A Fine Variety of Fruit Trees

By Diane Kelly

At our April club meeting guest speaker Gavin Bullock's presentation was on the topic of planting and maintaining healthy fruit trees. Gavin is a qualified horticulturist and runs a business assisting people create new backyards or advising on existing gardens. During the evening it was mentioned that Gavin had done a consultation at Lorraine James's property in Helensvale.

Lorraine moved to her new home four years ago and, with the clean slate of nothing in either the front or backyard, she set to planting a number of food-producing trees and other plants to provide privacy from the houses being built around hers. She has done a wonderful job, and walking towards her home it was very obvious a keen gardener lived there.

It was interesting to walk around Lorraine's garden to see the trees and then to hear the comments and suggestions that Gavin had made.

Out the front of Lorraine's home is a tall Illawarra flame tree. These produce a brilliant display of red flowers in summer time, and I imagine the tree provides good shade from the western sun for the house. The thing about this tree is that its leaves had been eaten by leaf cutter bees. They haven't done a lot of damage, and the reason they do cut large circular pieces out of the leaves and petals of certain trees is that they use it as nesting material for their young. Gavin's take on this is that we should allow insects and birds to do some "selective pruning" – it helps the plants and doesn't usually do major

damage.

Under the Illawarra flame tree, the garden is full of star jasmine, which will have a beautiful perfume when it flowers. In front of the flame tree, and somewhat in its shade, are three other trees – a South African guava, a white peach tree and a small lime tree. The guava is doing quite well, but the peach and lime trees have a few challenges. The white peach tree also looks to have been enjoyed by the leaf cutter bees, and there are a number of yellow leaves which have bacterial leaf spot. The recommendation is that it be treated with white oil or eco oil. The other comment that Gavin made related to the mulch that had been put around the tree. As an alternative to the nitrogen-rich lucerne that had been applied it was suggested that Lorraine alternate one mulch of lucerne followed by two mulches of sugar cane mulch. The reason for this is that the tree had grown too fast and regularly produced soft, fresh leaves that encouraged pests – a diet of milder mulch would slow that down. Gavin also felt all the fruit trees could benefit from an application of gypsum to help the trees distribute their minerals around.

The lime tree is only a meter or so high and has a couple of small fruit on it already. Its yellow leaves indicated a



magnesium deficiency, and an application of gypsum was recommended to strengthen the cells of plant and help it to take up nutrients, along with an application of trace elements. Gavin also recommended that the branch with the two fruit be trimmed back to allow the plant to put its energy into recovering.

Around to the back of the house, Lorraine has a mulberry tree. It is doing quite well, in spite of not being in full sun, and it has produced lots of sweet fruit. The advice was to prune the tree, taking out any branches that were crossing each other, and make a “vase” shape of the branches. Gavin also recommended an application of seaweed emulsion every 3-6 weeks.

There were two blackberry vines under the mulberry tree, but they have not fruited as they do not get enough sunlight.

The next tree was not planted for fruit, but for its practicality. The block to the northern side of Lorraine’s house causes run-off during heavy rainfall, and a New Zealand cabbage tree has been planted to effectively take up the excess water. (By the way, it was called a cabbage tree because that’s what Captain Cook called it when he discovered the young leaves were edible, and the name has stuck.)



Along Lorraine’s east-facing verandah is a row of pots and they contain some very happy blueberries. They were planted in a rose and azalea potting mix because of their liking for an acidic soil. They do have a bit of a problem with mites, and Lorraine will be applying eco oil for them. These plants can be pruned selectively throughout the year.

Forward in the backyard is a feijoa tree which apparently got a tick from Gavin! The recommendation for this tree is that it needed a second one for cross-pollination, and also it needed to be staked to help it to grow a bit straighter. On from there is a guava which Lorraine is treating for fruit fly with a pheromone trap.

A mandarin is next and it is not a happy one. Gavin’s suggestion is that, as the plant has sunk in the ground, it should be dug up and the hole well filled with soil so that the drainage improves for when the tree is re-planted. The tree is also suffering from citrus leafminers – the ones that make pretty patterns on leaves and make them curl up.

A tamarillo is next and it is growing well. Lorraine plans to prune it back hard, taking it back to half, which apparently these trees can take. Across from the tamarillo is a white flesh nectarine (these are apparently sweeter than the yellow version) and it also going to receive a prune – this time it will be to a “spear” shape, rather than a “vase” shape. This tree is also being visited by leaf cutter bees.

The banana trees also got a tick! It currently has one main stem and three lesser ones coming through, and when the tree has finished fruiting the main

stem will be removed. There is a very large bunch of bananas ripening at the moment.

A large trellis is covered by a healthy looking passionfruit vine – it has produced lots of fruit previously. It is going to receive a dose of gypsum, and the advice is for it to be cut back hard every three years. It was interesting to hear that Gavin had explained that, because the passionfruit has white flowers, they are pollinated at night by moths rather than bees in the daytime. A bright display of pansies planted nearby is to provide something for the bees so they don't miss out. The trellis and vine create a very good privacy barrier.

In general Gavin felt it was better to fertilize the fruit trees earlier in the season, around July rather than September/October, so that when the pests come along the leaves have already been hardened off a bit.

We pass a very healthy looking loquat tree on our way to check out a couple of (dwarf) plum trees. The leaves of these are also being eaten, again Gavin puts this down to them being overfed and the resultant growth that was happening too fast – the sweet, soft leaves attract the pests.

On the southern side of the backyard, and high in a raised bed, are Lorraine's vegetables and herbs. She is growing spinach, rocket, mint, garlic chives, spinach, nasturtiums and basil at the moment. In the same area are purple salvia (for the bees) and a native hydrangea plant.

Next, a patch of canna lilies - these have been eaten by grasshoppers but are recovering. Although DiPel is better

known for controlling caterpillars, Lorraine has applied it to the canna leaves and they are now being left alone to grow strongly.

Finally, not being a dog owner, something I'd not seen before. One of Lorraine's principles is that no waste produced on the property leaves the property, so any plant cuttings, weeds, leaves etc get put in the compost bin or straight back on to the gardens. This includes the contributions by Billy the dog – but his are put into a "dog poo composter" (Ensopt). All you can see is a 20cm wide lid – the basket is buried into the garden soil near the cannas. The dog poo goes in and then the worms come and distribute it. There is no aroma, and no starter grains are needed any more as the input and the worms are in the right balance. (You can just see the basket's lid in front of the cannas.) Lorraine adds a micro-organism mix about one a month which accelerates the breakdown of the waste, eliminates smell and helps remediate any pathogens. Note: dog poo composters must be placed at least one metre away from edible plants.

Lorraine's garden is rich and impressive and makes a real haven. It will be interesting to see the changes as Gavin's advice is applied and the garden becomes even better.



Figs... Not a Fruit but a Syconium!

By Diane Kelly

I received a text the other day from one of our Club members which was a short piece about figs. This, of course, challenged me to go to my gardening books because one of the facts in the article was that a fig is not a fruit.

So, let's take the opportunity to learn more about figs – a bit about growing them; a bit about the structure of their "fruit" and how it is produced; and then a recipe to try at the end.

Growing fig trees:

Figs originated in western Asia (think Lebanon, Jordan and Kuwait) and have been grown for thousands of years around the Mediterranean. So plant your fig tree in full sun if possible, or at least where it will get eight hours of sun each day. Keep the trees away from any competing trees and shrubs as this will help the fruit to ripen and lessen the problem of the shade retaining ground moisture that may lead to diseases. Remember that fig trees can reach five to ten meters in height and that their canopy can spread equally as wide, although that can be controlled by pruning (and, of course,

the trees can be espaliered).

Fig trees, as well as liking good drainage, will grow in a range of soils and are moderately salt-tolerant. But they do not appreciate very acidic soils, preferring a ph of 6.5 to 7. Fig trees have shallow root systems and these can spread up to three times the diameter of the canopy of the tree. So, remember to plant your tree well away from any clay pipes.

There are four main types of figs and they are all from the same species *Ficus carica*. Firstly there is **caprifig** and **Smyrna** fig trees which are pollinated by a particular species of wasp; **san pedro** fig trees whose first crops are able to grow without pollination and then the second crop requires it; and **common** fig trees (such as Brown Turkey or Genoa) – these do not require pollination for either crop.

Before planting your new fig tree prepare the soil with extra compost. Then it can be fertilized twice a year using a pelleted fertilizer high in potassium and phosphorus. In dry weather water the tree deeply each fortnight until it is fully established. Fig trees can live very productively for up to fifteen years, and then their crops will become



Penny's fig tree (left) and its new fruit (right)

progressively lighter.

Fig trees bear two crops each year. The *breba* or early crop is of lesser quality and is borne in the spring on the previous year's wood. Pruning is done in the winter and the main crop then grows on the new wood and is harvested between February and June. Louis Glowinski, writing in his *The Complete Book of Fruit Growing in Australia*, says that the best time to pick figs is when the neck softens and the fig begins to droop with its own weight. Don't pull, but always gently twist the stem when picking. Be aware that the sap from unripe fruit can be irritating to the skin.

The prunings from your fig trees can be used as cuttings, and the tree should be pruned into a "vase" shape and be open in the middle with four or five main structural branches. Remove any damaged or diseased branches and then lightly prune the whole tree. You can cut back any particularly long branches by one half, and every few years you can prune more heavily (up to two-thirds) to really encourage new wood.

The structure and growing of pollinated figs:

The fig fruit develops as a hollow, fleshy structure called the *syconium* that is lined inside with numerous unisexual flowers. There will be a small opening or *ostiole*, which is visible on the middle of the fruit, that is a narrow passage that allows a specialized fig wasp to enter



the fruit and pollinate the tiny flowers.

Here is how it works:

After mating inside a fig, which contains the minute flowers, the pollen-laden female flies off to find another fig. She burrows into it with her long head and sometimes loses her wings and antennae in the process. She then attempts to lay her eggs inside the flowers and, in the process, pollinates them with pollen from the last fig she visited. The fig tree chemically detects the presence of the egg and surrounds it with plant tissue. This provides the larva, which hatches inside the fig, with enough food to grow and restart the cycle.

The males spend their entire yet short lives inside the fig, where they mate with females and die soon after. (Don't worry about the male wasps remaining in the figs - their exoskeletons break down and become absorbed by the fruit.)

A lot of the recipes using figs that I came across seemed rather exotic – and probably rather expensive! But this one sounds quite very simple and tasty.

Roast chicken with Fig & Balsamic Dressing: (This recipe serves 4)

1 tablespoon olive oil
 500g bone-in chicken thighs
 75ml balsamic vinegar
 2 cloves garlic, peeled, minced
 1 tablespoon dijon mustard
 1 half teaspoon rosemary, chopped
 2 teaspoon honey
 8 large figs, stems removed, cut into quarters
 2 teaspoon unsalted butter, cold, diced into small cubes

Heat a large, heavy-bottomed pan to

medium heat, adding in the olive oil for 1 minute. Pat the chicken dry using a paper towel before seasoning it on both sides with salt and pepper. Sear and brown the chicken on both sides for 6-8 minutes.

Whisk the balsamic vinegar, garlic, dijon mustard, rosemary and honey together in a medium sized bowl. Mix in the figs before added everything to the pan with the chicken. Lower the heat to a simmer for 10 minutes reducing the balsamic vinegar, turning the chicken in the pan every few minutes to coat the meat.

Remove the chicken from the pan onto plates. Add the butter to the sauce, mixing until the butter has incorporated into the sauce. Spoon the sauce and figs onto the pieces of chicken. Serve warm.



Moringa/Drumstick grown from cuttings

Ediblescapes became the mother placenta of the new agroforestry project.

Why do we propagate trees?

Since January 2023, the Department of Environment and Science has presented us with a perfect grant opportunity to develop a three-year biodiversity gardening project; we have been enthusiastic about creating a food-producing agroforestry demonstrative zone near the Ediblescapes Gardens at Country Paradise Parklands.

The agroforestry idea has collected significant community support, including a strong support from Cr Peter Young. However, permission from the relevant council stakeholder departments goes less smoothly than we initially thought. The expectation is now another year, if Ediblescapes complies with council prerequisites.

Once again, Ediblescapes is embarking on an active waiting period. However, on this occasion, we have the vast resources of the gardens to prepare the element that an agroforestry zone will need, trees and fertile soil. That is why we start heavily propagating trees at Ediblescapes placenta and adapting the gardens to nurture the sapling. Still, the city council permit planting it at the new

Ediblescapes Approaching Winter

By Jorge Cantellano

At Ediblescapes the trees have sprouted new growth, wood, leaves, flowers like it's spring. The garden soil has a good moisture reserve, which will last until August, thank to the Ediblescapes forest garden ecosystem. We thought the deep and humid soil were well conditioned to propagate trees from cuttings by inserting the wood directly into the ground. In just three weeks some of the cuttings have begun to show new shoots. From now on, we will propagate trees in the garden dense together like crop cultivation.

agroforestry zone, and Ediblescapes volunteers amend the soil appropriately for agroforestry bio-intensive garden beds, which is a job already begun done now by composting in situ along pathways and add extra composting soil to gardens beds.



A typical example of Alley Cropping Agroforestry practice

Ediblescapes Gardens doesn't need more composting soil. We already have 60 to 80cm deep soil to sustain the forest garden ecosystem. However, storing extra composted soil in the gardens will not hurt, which can move to the agroforestry zone when the council's permission comes.

We thank the city council officers who have challenged us to show the value of Ediblescapes resources. But, unques-

tionably, it is a complex endeavour to attempt to simplify the complexity of the biodiverse ecosystem into an economic, monetary value.



Mother placenta dense diverse cuttings propagation

Our incomplete answer is that Ediblescapes volunteers have added \$230,000 worth of monetary value to the Country Paradise Parklands' Ediblescapes gardens site in five years.

As a result, the Ediblescapes site now contains the value of:

- \$60,000.00 on 600m3 Composting, soil amendment and cultivation.
- \$80,000 included in 100 fruit trees.
- \$20,000 value of vegetables and fruits grown in the garden; volunteers donated 80% to Nerang Foodbank, and volunteers, people, wild fauna visitors and the soil consumed the other 20%.
- \$7,000 represent 363 tonnes of carbon dioxide storage at Ediblescapes' deep organic soil.
- \$20,000 is the value of 1000 hours of free community education.
- \$50,000 worth we have given to the Ediblescapes living ecosystem, which welcomes 10k peoples, 100k wild fauna, 200k birds, 21M insect visits and permanent residents, 200M soil fauna, 21G soil biota and counting.



Ediblescapes Agroforestry presentation

How much Ediblescapes had cost the Gold Coast community?

- The project has cost the city council \$16,000 in 4 grants. Thanks to the support of Councillor Peter Young.
- Ediblescapes members and friends have donated \$8000 to pay for the Organisation and the garden's operation cost.
- Volunteers have contributed 8000 gardening hours = \$200,000

We are aware that the above answer attempts to give an equivalent monetary value to an organic natural gardening ecosystem is a hypothetical exercise that needs scientific, academic research and standard trade consensus-validated tools, which we do not have because we are landless humble volunteer gardeners only. And yep, the whole community gardens and food communities initiative enterprise could benefit from academic and practice-based knowledge that can develop tools of value validation to agroecological ecosystems sites.



***Testing: Unseen Soil Ecology project
In construction... watch this space***



***Photo taken by a drone at
Ediblescapes in May 2023***

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, Tomatoes, 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.

AUGUST

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

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-Annals:

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

Perennials & Bi-Annals:

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.

JULY

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

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

AUGUST

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

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

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.

AUGUST

Custard Apple: Leaf loss should occur this month. Low irrigation. Mulch trees. This month is the best time to prune custard apples. 1/3 of old wood needs to be taken off.

Figs: Pruning can be carried out. Be very vigorous. 1/3 can be cut off. Figs are only produced on new wood of the new season's growth. Give trees a good feed of organic fertiliser with sulphate of potash. Mulch well.

Lychee: Increase irrigation. Flowering should start this month. Fertilise trees with an organic fertiliser with potassium sulphate. Give mature trees 1 kg and small trees ½ kg.

Low chill stone fruit: Carry out final thinning. Stone hardening will occur this month. Continue with high irrigation. Prune out water shoots and dense foliage for better sized fruits. Use fruit fly control programs, for example netting or an attractant method.

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

Passionfruit: Vines will start to grow this month. Apply a little organic fertiliser with sulphate of potash and mulch vines at least 2 to 3 metres out from the base. 1kg for large vines and ½ kg for smaller vines.

Pawpaw: Spray with wettable sulphur in the evenings for spider mite.

Persimmon: Flowering will start in early varieties. Mulch trees. Low irrigation.

Strawberries: Apply small amount of organic fertilizer with sulphate of potash. Keep up irrigation. Pick fruit when fully ripe.

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

Citrus: Flowering will occur this month. Increase irrigation. Fertilise tree with organic fertiliser with sulphate of potash, 1kg for large trees and ½ kg for smaller trees.