



Spring 2019
Vol 27 No 3 Issue 104

Canberra organic

La Communauté in a cold climate

Fermented food and gut health —
join the revolution

The quarterly publication of the Canberra Organic Growers Society Inc.



President's column *

In any talk of spring clichés abound. The earliest signs of spring growth in our gardens bring joy to many of us. Even in the midst of mid-to-late winter, on a frosty morning when we are picking our slow growing winter greens and the purple sprouts of broccoli have yet to fully show themselves, we engage in mindful contemplation of the promise of spring and our plans for the garden into the summer. Some of us will start our propagation indoors to get a head start on spring planting.

I have been a student of Japanese Zen haiku poetry almost as long as I have been a serious organic gardener. Haiku communicate a timeless message and encourage deep

insight through brevity and simplicity. Forgive me for a little indulgence in sharing one with you about the first buds of spring.

I have met many COGS members in my visits to the community gardens since becoming President this year and I have been encouraged by their support and dedication to growing food and community spirit in the gardens. I met many of them at the two COGS members' meetings held since the last edition of the magazine – one in the Holder community garden in May and one indoors at Dickson in June on the topic of food security and food sharing. Both events had good attendance and lively discussion, and they provided yet another positive opportunity for COGS members to meet and share knowledge as well as a great afternoon tea.

At the Holder meeting we listened to Lesley, an original member of the garden, tell the story of the garden since its establishment in 2001. This included the impact of the 2003 bushfires, how the garden community has grown in strength and spirit over the years and the resilience

one plum blossom

a single blossom's worth

of warmth

—Hattori Ransetsu



and dedication of the garden members in dealing with a challenging site. Holder gardener, Maarten, also shared his knowledge of the techniques applied in organic agriculture to build soil carbon and soil fertility.

At the June members' meeting we had a presentation from the Operations Manager of Canberra City Care on the problems of food insecurity experienced by vulnerable people and households in the Canberra commWunity. They talked about the work of their organisation and others to help address this need, with reliable access to affordable, healthy, sustainable and culturally appropriate food.

Greg Blood from the Cook community garden also spoke about the food sharing initiative undertaken by the Cook and Charnwood community gardens, to supply the Canberra City Care 'HandUp Food Store' with fresh fruit and vegetables. In the discussion, both Greg and I encouraged COGS community gardens to consider doing more 'outside the fence', such as engaging more with the

community by supplying quality fresh fruit and vegetables to socially disadvantaged people.

COGS manages 12 community gardens with around 1.5 hectares of land under cultivation. There are around 430 members, including 300 plot holders. COGS and its members are in a fortunate position and well placed to give something back – to share and help meet the challenge of food insecurity.

I am sure the good work being done by the community gardens in Cook, Charnwood and Crace will continue; but I am still encouraging COGS members to do more. We have an opportunity to scale-up the level of activity and participation including in the propagation, cultivation and distribution of fresh vegetables and fruit to a number of organisations including Canberra City Care and Community Services #1 at Narrabundah. Some vegetables such as leafy greens are in demand right throughout the year because the supply of supermarket excess is often unreliable and of poor quality. Other vegetables and fruit are always needed and your contribution of produce can be small or substantial. If you would like to be involved in any of these activities, please get in touch with me (nevilleveggies@gmail.com). Even COGS backyard gardeners can get involved as growers or volunteers.

From my time working with COGS and my contact with many community gardens in Canberra and interstate, I have learned that the success of community gardens is as much about people as it is about infrastructure and gardening. People join COGS gardens because they want to grow food organically in a community of people who support a healthy sustainable environment of harmony, goodwill and cooperation.

The framework of the COGS constitution, governance, policies and garden rules promote this and, almost invariably, it works well. Garden committees and convenors have a vital role in administering the gardens in a manner which promotes a spirit of harmony, fairmindedness and goodwill amongst garden members.

Under the COGS constitution, garden committees and convenors must be elected by the financial members of the community garden. As we move toward the annual general meetings of each of the COGS community gardens, I encourage you to engage positively with this democratic process. This process provides us with the opportunity to choose leaders who can serve the interests of COGS and garden members, and demonstrate a commitment to promoting the harmonious spirit so important to a thriving garden community.

All the best for spring!

—Neville Jackson

*** Neville Jackson resigned as President with effect from 17 July 2019.**



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The Canberra Organic Growers Society is a non-profit organisation providing a forum for organic growers to exchange information and supporting the adoption of organic growing methods in the community.

COGS encourages the use of natural methods to improve our soils, promote sustainability and produce fresh, nutritious food.

For information about COGS and organic gardening, visit the COGS website

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Community gardens

COGS operates 12 community gardens in the Canberra region, with the support of the ACT Government. The convenors and contact email addresses are listed below.

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We welcome your input!

Please send any comments, articles, photos, news items, event information or recipes to

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Editor's note

As I write this, we are still in the depths of winter—waking to sub-zero temperatures and crisp frosts on the ground. However, spring is just around the corner and it's one of my favourite times of year. As Canberra starts to wake from winter, we see the trees starting to blossom, the days slowly becoming lighter for longer and the weather starting to warm.

Thank you for all your contributions to the spring edition of *Canberra Organic*. I particularly enjoyed learning about how other people are approaching community gardening, both interstate and overseas. I also loved reading about what is going on in our COGS gardens, with the colder weather not slowing down our wonderful achievements.

COGS also has many members who grow outside of the community gardens. Michael sent me a wonderful photo of his own 'Floriade' growing in his garden in spring and Ange also let me know what has been going on at the National Arboretum's Discovery Kitchen Garden, which she manages with a small team of volunteers.

For me spring is a time for planning and planting. Having learnt through this edition you can grow some more

unusual things in Canberra, I'm keen to think outside the box when planning what to plant this year in my own plot. I hope to try something new and look forward to updating you as I progress.

As always, I welcome your feedback on this edition and I look forward to your contributions to the summer edition, due mid-October.

I hope as the weather warms to see more of you in the gardens. In the meantime, enjoy your preparation and spring planting.

—Rebecca Travers

(below left) Michael practises organic gardening at his home in Lyons and enjoys his own 'Floriade' in spring with these beautiful flowers.

(below) National Arboretum's Discovery Kitchen Garden decorated for Warm Trees 2019. Partnered by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and Pedal Power, this year's theme is 'orange', (the royal colour of that country) and 'bicycles' (an important mode of transport there).



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This month's cover

All the colours of Ange's Charnwood garden plot (photo: Ange)

Cook community garden

Half yearly report

Cook community garden can report on a very busy six months and a very prolific past growing season. Our rainfall records indicate a particularly dry period since Christmas and as a group we have taken care with our watering and renewed taps and fittings as required. The drought has taken its toll on several perimeter plants which have been replaced by new local native tube stock and so far they are surviving quite well.

So what's been happening?

We have farewelled several long-term gardeners and welcomed a number of new plot holders keen to join in the fun.

Our seasonal working bee program over the past year has concentrated on replenishing mulch throughout the common areas of the garden and mulching down the pathways between individual plots. This has greatly reduced the regular mowing task.

Our working bees are also the focus for social interaction between plot holders and the sharing of produce,



Derek Archer from St. John Ambulance presenting to the COGS Members Meeting

homemade preserves and wine brings us all together. On top, we also organised special morning teas on Australia Day and Anzac Day.

Over the past few months we have hosted several meetings including the February COGS Members' Meeting, which featured Derek Archer from St John Ambulance. Derek presented on dealing with snake bites, which was most appropriate at the time due to many sightings of brown snakes.

A fact finding visit by members of the Queanbeyan Community Garden also occurred on one of the wetter autumn days, but our conversation was very productive and informative.

We were also fortunate to host the COGS Convenor's Meeting and a COGS Committee Meeting, again bringing more visitors to our wonderful garden.

Our contribution to Canberra City Care's community outreach program has been enthusiastically led by Greg Blood – and we look forward to doubling our production of produce for the program later in the year.

The working bee team making a huge difference to the common areas of the garden



Michele reports on the COGS Members' Meeting, 24 February 2019

Gardeners from the Cook community garden hosted a talk in February on 'dealing with snake bites,' presented by Derek Archer. Derek is a retired paramedic and currently works for St John Ambulance ACT, as the head of the training department. As well as working as a paramedic in the Northern Territory, he also has several years' experience in the military side of pre-hospital care.

This topic was of particular interest to Cook gardeners who share their

Around the COGS gardens

gardens with several brown snakes. There was a good roll up from Cook, as well as visitors from other COGS gardens.

Derek emphasised that possible snake bites should never be ignored; people can be bitten without seeing the snake, a bite may not result in two punctures, but can be a single puncture or an almost invisible scratch.

Snake venom is transported via the lymphatic system and the best treatment is to call for an ambulance, while staying as still as possible and applying compression bandages to the affected limb.

Recent research at Charles Darwin University has shown that elasticised bandages provide better compression for longer, than the previously used crepe bandages that are still in some people's first aid kits. The St John Ambulance fact sheet (stjohn.org.au/first-aid-facts) is a useful and up-to-date source of information, and St John Ambulance also sells snake bite kits.

Derek then distributed bandages to the audience, and we were invited to practise putting compression bandages on each other. Yes, it is possible to bandage one's own arm, but getting it really tight requires a bit of practice!

Derek was asked whether it was useful to call an ambulance using one of the mobile phone apps such as Emergency+. He noted that this was helpful, because they provided a GPS location for the patient: ambulance staff didn't need to spend time looking for places (like the Cook community garden) that are set back from the road and are not signposted.

It was a wonderful meeting and we thank Derek for coming to speak to us.

News from Janet's Garden

Janet had a great harvest of brassicas from mid-April to the end of June, in no small way attributable to lucky timing of the late summer planting. Good



Janet's wonderful crop of cabbage, silverbeet, carrots and lettuce.

timing seems harder to predict each year — will hot conditions persist/ how early will the first frosts come?

Janet believes the secret was planting seedlings of broccoli, cabbage, kale and cauliflower, and transplanted volunteer silverbeet seedlings in mid-February. The planting holes for each seedling were saturated first with water and followed with a solution of seaweed and fish emulsion. The brassicas were then protected with hooped netting. For good measure she also made some white cabbage moth decoy shapes (cut from a cheap plastic document holder) and taped these to bamboo stakes, with a few shapes just scattered on top of the netting. Janet had been amazed in a previous year when another Cook gardener managed to grow brassicas without netting but with a good scattering of 'fake moths' – worth a try!

At the time of the COGS' Members Meeting, held at Cook garden in February, you could barely see the seedlings under the netting structure, but they grew very quickly with the decent rainfall we had from mid-March, and again just on Easter. Janet said, "I wasn't expecting to

harvest anything other than kale and silverbeet before spring, but I found the first huge head of broccoli at Easter. From then until the end of June I had a continuous harvest of broccoli (about 10), cauliflower (2), red and green cabbages (10), as well as an abundant supply of the kale and silverbeet".

The hooped netting seems to have kept out the white cabbage moth and also the rodents that attacked unprotected brassicas in other plots at Cook. "Possibly the marauders were just too late because Peter noted that some of my broccoli plants, from which heads had already been harvested, were showing signs of attack similar to that in other plots – lucky timing again!"

Janet also had a great crop of carrots. She said these were the best carrots she had grown in her plot for ten years. They were a 'seed tape' planting, also in February. 'Seed tape' beetroot were also successful, and tasty, but cropped modestly in quantity and length of harvest compared with the carrots.

—Peter Weddell, Michele Barson and Janet Popovic (articles and photos)

More plots at Charnwood community garden?

The waiting list for plot spaces at the Charnwood community garden (CCG) reached 20 earlier this year. Although the waiting list waxes and wanes, our committee wanted to see how we could meet this need. Following verbal feedback from gardeners and a meeting related to the importance of providing more plot spaces, the committee decided to draft a Strategic Plan for the garden. Its objective is to *'discuss if, and how, the CCG can provide more garden plot spaces within the existing garden boundary, while maintaining its pleasing visual, emotional and physical amenity, i.e. gardener satisfaction'*.



Ange's garden plot at Charnwood

The first part of the Strategic Plan comprises gardener feedback and research into what the COGS garden rules, the local garden rules and available reports say about providing more plots to community gardens in the ACT.

This draft of the Strategic Plan was provided to all members of the garden, with verbal and written responses encouraged. Half of the gardeners provided feedback, assisting the committee to develop a questionnaire that referred to the issues raised through the responses.

This formed the second part of the Strategic Plan.

Formulation of the questionnaire went through several iterations following gardener feedback. The final version of the questionnaire

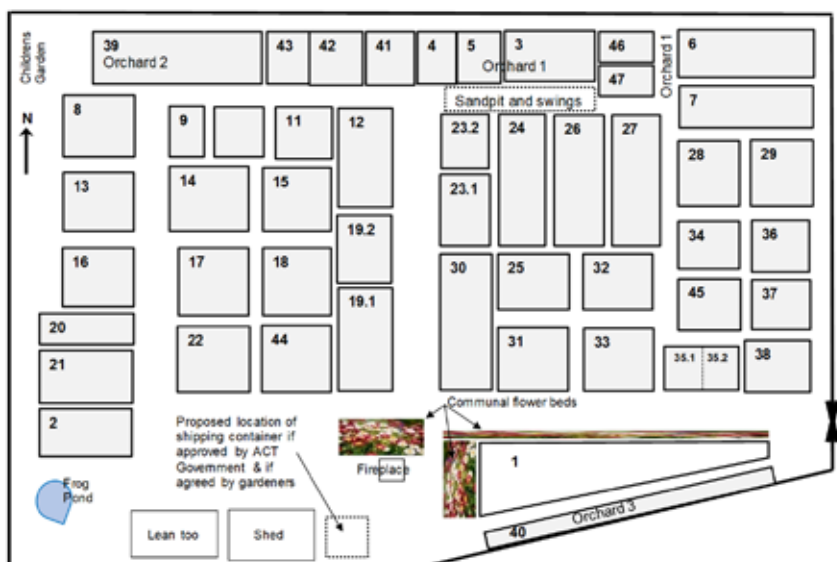
covers six main topics (see below), with multiple questions listed under each topic and room provided for comments.

1. **Pressure for more plot spaces** – should more be provided?
2. **Watering capacity** – current system and rules.
3. **Local garden rules** – minimum and maximum plot sizes.
4. **Ways to provide more plot spaces** – subdivision of large plots.
5. **Types of plot spaces** – communal plot spaces, raised beds.
6. **Effects on garden management** – committee workload.

Printed questionnaires were left on all gardener's plots, with a 10 July 2019 deadline for responses. Watch this space for the results of the questionnaire...

—Teresa Rose (article)

Charnwood community garden site plan



Celebrating the Holder garden community

On 22 May 2019, the COGS monthly meeting was held at the Holder community garden. It was with some trepidation that we agreed to hold a meeting at such a time, because the 'display' is over. Harvesting the summer bounty is complete. What can we showcase without the oversize, but still succulent zucchini or the red jewel-like currants and chillies, rows of purple aubergine and the great variety of pumpkins? And yet we welcomed about 35 people to our garden with a display of hospitality, celebration of our community and sharing of knowledge.

For those who missed our meeting, the afternoon began with afternoon tea and the two tables were laden with delicious food, many dishes made using some of that summer bounty. Thank you to those visitors who brought a plate. I have always loved this tradition as this was part of my local childhood tradition in rural NSW.

The President of COGS, Neville, then briefly spoke to the group giving us a summary of the latest deliberations of our Executive. It was another opportunity to reflect on the amount of time and energy the volunteers in our organisation contribute, so that we can all enjoy the privilege of gardening in community spaces. This is an organisation we can all be proud of and it is important to regularly say thank you to those who make it so.



Lesley Pattinson, talking about the history of the Holder community garden

Lesley Pattinson followed, talking about the history of our garden. Lesley is one of four gardeners still gardening with us at Holder, who were part of the original group when the garden began in 2001. Lesley has been teaching Horticulture at CIT since 2003, with a special interest in supporting people with a disability. She also volunteers at Fetherston Gardens in Weston Creek and I have garden-envy when I walk past her early raspberries in in spring!

Lesley told us about the considerations made when the first gardeners were

designing the Holder community garden, as well as the work of creating the space out of a paddock and how the fires of 2003 affected the gardens. We heard about the hard work required to change the entry to the garden in preparation for the change of the Cotter Road to Molonglo and the opportunity this created for planting our orchard. We also heard about the great spirit of community, shared obligation and passion that began in those first few years of establishment which still resonates today.

Maarten Stapper then spoke to the group, focussing on the importance of carbon in our soils. Maarten, who was born in the Netherlands, has lived, studied and worked in the Netherlands, Canada, USA, Iraq, Syria, and Australia. He has an agricultural engineering degree from Wageningen University, the Netherlands, did his PhD on wheat production systems with the University of New England, Armidale and was employed by the International Centre for Agricultural Research in Dry Areas at Aleppo, Syria, where he did his field work. Maarten then worked from 1983 to 2007 with the CSIRO.

Maarten has become an advocate of biological-organic farming systems. He is a strong critic of current industrial agricultural practice, as it continues to degrade the soil, environment and food. Maarten now works as a private consultant assisting farmers in the transition from industrial to biological farming systems.

Maarten has written an article that appears in this magazine (pg. 8) which supports his talk. Maarten has been gardening in Holder Community Garden since 2014.

Thank you COGS executive, who believed we at Holder community garden had something worth displaying and we do — a community made up of individuals who give generously, are knowledgeable and passionate about organic gardening and a space to be proud of, even in the quiet autumn.

—Margaret Stapper
(article and photos)

The wonderful brassicas and cauliflower on display at Holder



Holder community garden talk and walk with Dr Maartin Stapper

Importance of soil organic carbon

Higher organic carbon content in soils means higher natural soil fertility, which allows substantial reduction in the need for synthetic fertilizers. More organic carbon means a better soil structure and a bigger, more effective 'sponge' that holds more plant available water and nutrients. Therefore, we have to increase and protect carbon in soils. Humus is the most valuable soil carbon compound. Humus is made in biodiverse soils by earthworms and microbes. Earthworms convert dead plant material into worm cast (new soil) which is half humus. Microbes decompose dead plant material, organic waste and manure to create humus.

Plants communicate with roots and each other. The plant asks for the building blocks to make new growth resistant to diseases and insects, and microbes make the required minerals available. Mycorrhizal fungi networks have been proven by science to be responsible for inter-plant communication within ecosystems. Abundant and diverse microbes feed and protect the plant with plants feeding them carbon compounds (exudates) through their roots. Any left-over carbon exudate is transformed into humus by microbes. This is seen as a black soil layer around roots, the rhizosphere (see couch photo – pg. 9). The more biological activity, the more soil organic carbon produced. New soil!

Regenerative farming

Regenerative farming uses farming practices that improve soil carbon, the foundation of quality food production in biodiverse ecosystems. Current industrial farming maximises crop and pasture production with synthetic fertilisers



*Dr Maartin Stapper, giving his talk at the COGS members meeting
(photo: Margaret Stapper)*

and chemicals. The more you use the more is needed as ecosystem functioning is increasingly affected.

Under conventional organics, soils often remained poor. Regenerative organics is now recognised as a path to actively improve the soil biology and raise soil organic carbon to increase production, while maintaining quality. Use biological inputs and practices to manage soil health rather than managing the produce.

Why is a change to regenerative farming needed? Why has soil carbon been decimated by up to 80 percent in modern farming and gardening? Organic carbon is lost into the sky as carbon dioxide every time you till and turn soil. Soil carbon is also lost when you maintain a bare fallow in cropping/gardening or overgraze

a pasture. Use of modern, water soluble nitrogen fertilisers also has a negative impact.

The power of nature. Plants leak carbon into soils to feed the beneficial microbes and keep soils healthy. Thus, green cover needs to be maximised in time and space to restore and maintain functioning ecosystems. Using a multi-species green manure between production periods rather than fallowing will achieve this (see green manure photo – pg. 9).

Making this practice of change has big incentives with improvements in productivity, profitability, health and wellbeing for producers. As well, healthy, nutrient dense food with low chemical residues is produced for consumers, much lower use of synthetics enriches landscape

Around the COGS gardens

biodiversity, and global warming can be stalled. Soil organic carbon is crucial for a healthy planet to feed 9 billion people.

Carbon credits

Soil organic carbon will be a hot topic for the next decades, as it is an effective way to reduce carbon dioxide from the atmosphere into soils through regenerative farming and thus help slow global warming. Producers can now finally receive carbon credits for soil carbon by changing to regenerative farming that improves soil organic carbon and reduces emissions associated with much lower use of synthetic fertilizers and chemicals, and less diesel use.

The world's first soil carbon credits have been audited and delivered to the Olsens for sequestering soil carbon on their 100ha farm in Gippsland under the federal government's Emissions Reduction Fund (ERF). This was achieved by developing and using the Soilkee Renovator as a pasture cropping implement to regenerate soils and improve productivity. The Soilkee Renovator supports the principles discussed above.

—Dr Maartin Stapper
(article and photos)



(above) During the talk examples of plants with rhizospheres were shown from healthy, crumbly soils with green cover, while bare plots with dusty soils had plants with bare roots. Even couch grass in a healthy soil keeps improving soil carbon through its active rhizospheres on many roots. All the black in the rhizosphere around the root is humus! This couch grew under the pumpkin-squash-corn plants during summer. After harvest the couch could be pulled from the loose, healthy soil as half metre strings. Shake off the fertile soil made by the couch and plant your green manure for the winter!

* * *

(below) After the talk we walked around the garden and saw this green manure (COGS mix of oats, ryecorn, peas and vetch) on a plot following pumpkin-squash-corn. All woody stems had been cut to 100mm pieces and left on the surface with the other plant residues. They are an effective mulch, activate fungi, add soil carbon, recycle minerals and are gone within half a year under a green manure. Green manure seed was broadcast and a fork was used to penetrate the soil, loosen it without turning and wiggle the seed to the soil surface before watering.



Kaleen community garden

Many new gardeners have recently been welcomed to the wonderful Kaleen community garden and it is fantastic to have such a cross-section of nationalities bringing different ideas and expertise to our community.

Kaleen community garden was established on a former horse paddock attached to the University of Canberra High School Kaleen. The garden has the school's agricultural facility on one boundary and a bustling building site on another... this comes with the expectation that the high-rise buildings will likely impact us with overshadowing during winter.

The plot sizes suit the needs of the different gardeners and range in size from small fruit tree squares to 50 sq m. We are fortunate to also have a gardener who is establishing a pollinating garden beside the



Kaleen community garden from the air

fence, to both beautify the area and encourage bees. We are all looking forward to spring and the results of this effort.

Amazingly, there are 17 children (and a few grandchildren) who are connected to our garden. Of course,

the neighbouring goats, llamas, ducks, chickens, geese and sheep are attractions, as well as the dirt-digging!

We also farewelled some original members not long ago (which is always a bit sad), but these situations always provide a great excuse for a garden party and a great opportunity to get together as a gardening community.

With two large loads of mulch having been recently delivered, Kaleen gardeners will not be resting during these cold months!!

— Joanne Widdup
(article and photos)



Garden party farewell

Kaleen community garden statistics

- 6 fruit tree plots
- 24 garden plots ranging in size from 8 sq m to 50 sq m
- 2 large areas, with communal fruit trees
- a pollinating garden
- 2 sheds and a wonderful pergola providing welcome shade for our group relaxation sessions!



One for you, one for me and one for baby! New gardeners Phil and Mari.

Mitchell community garden

Members of the Queanbeyan Sustainability Group (QSG) visited the Mitchell community garden this past June for a tour of our lovely oasis. They are a community not-for-profit organisation who manage the Railway Park Organic Community Garden in Queanbeyan.

Spending over an hour with Jennie (and Jack), they observed the greenhouse, composting processes, weed management and rainwater tanks.

The QSG were quite impressed with the size of our plots, as their largest spaces are half the size of ours. They commented on the high level of organisation in running and managing a facility as big as ours. There was a sense of envy when they checked out our shed, commenting on the available mulching machine and the huge amount of quality secure storage space for all of our tools.

Frank, the President of QSG, commented “our little group really valued gaining access to your facility and sharing some of Jennie’s gardening management insights.”

Mitchell community garden has also been working to strengthen their ties with their local community, including

the Mitchell Traders Association. These partnerships have provided the garden and its gardeners with some very generous donations from local suppliers including:

- a large truck load of good quality composted soil from Weilwun Landscape Supplies (formerly Gungahlin Landscape Supplies), Morisset Road, Kenny, in conjunction with Mitchell Traders Association;
- the services of a builder from Mitchell Building Supplies (Huddart Ct, Mitchell), to assist with the erection of a wall in the garden seating area;
- a large load of mulch from TreesRUs, after they undertook work just up the road from the garden; and
- horse manure, donated by Liss at the horse stables in Hume, a friend of one of our members.

The garden is very grateful for the support of their local community and we look forward to continuing these partnerships into the future.

— Jennie (article and photo)

Visit to Mitchell community garden by the Queanbeyan Sustainability Group



Our first year at Betty Cornhill garden

Our first year at the Betty Cornhill community garden has been a very fruitful one. The question posed to myself as autumn was coming to an end was what to do with almost 40 pumpkins? Many of them weighing 15+ kgs! Thankfully pumpkin is my all-time favourite vegetable.

I trawled the internet and every recipe book I own (I could seriously open a cookbook library) for ideas on how to consume this gorgeous vegetable. They have also been foisted onto friends and family until they are refusing any more. I looked and looked but I have not found a recipe book actually dedicated to the noble pumpkin. Maybe I should write one myself as we aim to grow a similar amount next year. I have been incredibly successful in my search and now almost every meal contains pumpkin. Here are a few of our favourites.

—Jo Kirwan (article and photos)



Jo's wonderful pumpkins grown at Betty Cornhill

Pumpkin and apple scones

(Makes 6)

Ingredients

300g steamed/cooked pumpkin
1 large apple grated
3 tbsp macadamia oil (or whatever oil you bake with)
2 cups wholemeal self-raising flour + 1 tsp baking powder
1 tsp ground cinnamon
½ tsp mixed spice
½ tsp ground ginger
2 tbsp milk of your choice

½ cup pumpkin seeds or sunflower seeds or mixture of both.

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 180°C.
2. Mix all the ingredients, except the milk and seeds together.
3. Knead the dough and add a bit more flour if it is too sticky.
4. Roll out on a lightly floured surface. I make a large circular scone about 2 cm thick and mark 6 pieces.
5. Brush with milk and press on the seeds.
6. Bake for about 20–25 minutes or until golden.

Pumpkin and date muffins

(Makes 12)

Ingredients

300g steamed/cooked pumpkin, pureed
1 ⅓ cup self-raising flour + ½ tsp baking powder
½ cup coconut, shredded
¼ cup sugar
1 tsp mixed spice
½ cup oil (grapeseed, vegetable or canola)
2 eggs
¼ cup honey
⅔ cup milk of your choice
6 dates, finely chopped

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 200°C.
2. Combine all ingredients in a bowl.
3. Divide mixture into muffin tins and bake for 15–20 mins or until golden.

This recipe can be altered to feature chocolate chips, chopped dried apricots and almonds. Just remove dates and mixed spice. All work really well—they have been tested and given the tick of approval!



The delicious baked goods featuring Jo's pumpkin

Dickson community garden

Winter is a quiet time of year for most members of the Dickson community garden. Some members have winter crops of greens in with some impressive snow peas growing strongly, while others are giving their plots time to recover.

We are also using this quieter time to continue to refurbish the triple compost bin system that was shown in the autumn magazine article, and rethinking how we organise our working bees so that we develop an annual plan of monthly 'to do' lists. During our winter working bees, we intend to do all of our fruit tree and berry pruning, washing of our spare plastic pots ahead of spring, and our garden tool maintenance consisting mainly of cleaning, sanding and oiling wooden handles, and putting an edge back onto some tools using a sharpening stone. This year we will also be rebuilding the trellis for our caned berries, with a more sturdy structure made of star pickets and wire.

In recent months we have had some interesting engagement with other members of the community. Firstly, I was contacted by year 12 students from Dickson College who are looking at initiatives to increase the school's environmental sustainability. They are exploring with us about how food scraps from the school's cooking classes and from the canteen can be regularly collected and composted in our community garden.

Secondly, we are trialling a partnership with the Hackett Composting Collective (HCC - see www.compost.org.au). The HCC is a curbside collection and composting service that takes kitchen scraps and turns them into valuable soil amendment, avoiding the generation of methane in landfill. The scraps are collected or delivered from local shops as well as from the many and constantly increasing number of apartment dwellers in the inner north. The HCC Founder, Brook Clinton, reached out to see if the community garden could take the compost that is created, as the volume is increasing beyond her current demand. Some of the excellent compost has gone into our garden – as per the blog on the HCC website – and I hope that this perfect match can continue into the future. Maybe the college and HCC could connect as well.

At this time of the year, my plot is nearly always in the shadow of Dickson College throughout the day. Taking advantage of this, I have been growing greens and have had the pleasure and satisfaction of constantly harvesting baby oak leaf lettuce and spinach leaves, coriander and garlic leaves and snow pea tips for salads and stir fries, which I will be able to continue to do for many months. Nonetheless, I'm really looking forward to this end of the earth spinning closer towards the sun, and the coming of spring!

—Teresa McMaugh
(article and photos)



(above) Asian greens and broad beans, and (below) winter lettuce and spinach growing at Dickson



To edge or not to edge — another viewpoint

There are a number of different approaches taken to edging in COGS gardens. In the Summer 2018 issue of *Canberra Organic*, Peter White advocated various styles of edging, illustrating his discussion with four photographs, all of which showed the edging projecting above the surrounding paths.

It is an approach that works well for younger gardeners but I have noted that, the older one gets, the more one thinks one is lifting one's foot high when it is barely leaving the ground. Projecting garden edges can be a trip hazard! Fortunately, garden beds and surrounding paths in the Betty Cornhill garden are soft enough to cushion unintended landings. I know this from several experiences.

It was also suggested that edging may help keep out couch grass and weeds. However twenty-eight years of Betty Cornhill garden experience has taught me that couch grass loves edging. It's thigmotactic. If you give it a barrier, it will grow profusely around it before creeping underneath. At least garden edging has shown me where to find the couch proliferating. It's a starting line for the frequent program of digging out the couch, yet again.

So a couple of years ago I thought... what about a barrier which is not above ground but so deep that the couch will not be interested in growing underneath it?

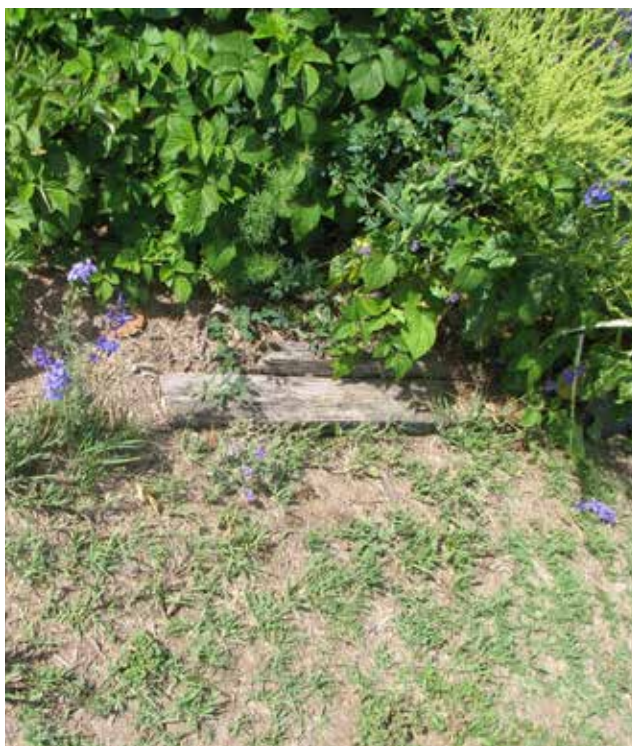
For my trial edge, I selected a roll of White's 30cm deep x 8m long recycled plastic garden edging from the well-known, ubiquitous chain of hardware stores. A big thanks go to Nikola from the Betty Cornhill garden for volunteering to dig the first, five-metre long trench. Unfortunately, he could not dig to 30cm along the whole length because he struck hardpan. So instead, we decided to bend the bottom of the plastic away from the path and towards my plot in those places, even though I thought that the couch might grow down the side of the plastic and under it. One year later, there was no sign of that. The only couch I could see near the new edge was from bits of root which were previously in that part of the plot.

The experiment was declared a success and further trenches were dug, a metre or two at a time, around the 5 x 10m plot. This time, extra big thanks go to Peter, another Betty Cornhill gardener, who threw himself into trench digging with gusto!

Now it is three or four years after the plastic edging was buried, with its top edge barely visible above the soil. The couch is still staying on its side of the edging and I'm not tripping over my own traps any more. Hurray!
—Ann Smith (article and photos)



Making the edge of her plot more visible, Ann has laid old boards and palings on the inner side of her black plastic garden edging.



Borage, nettles, blue larkspurs, raspberries, lucerne and silverbeet are among the plants enclosed by the black plastic and board edging.

Gorgeous gourds (*Curcubita*)

Gourds belong to the plant family *Cucurbitaceae*, along with pumpkin, squash, cucumber, watermelon and zucchini. Ornamental gourds range from small (approximately five centimetres in length) to large (approximately 30 centimetres in length) and are oblong, pear-shaped, curved, bulbous, or cylindrical in shape. They come in an array of colours including shades of green, orange, yellow, blue, cream, tan, brown, and multi-coloured; they often have stripes, spots, or mottling. The gourd's surface may be smooth or covered in warts and horns.

Although there is a long history of growing gourds in Africa, South America and Asia, they are not so familiar in Australia. One of the earliest domesticated types of plants, subspecies of the bottle gourd, *Lagenaria siceraria*, have been discovered in archaeological sites dating from as early as 13,000 BC.

There are two types of ornamental gourds, those with soft skins having large, edible yellow flowers, *Cucurbita pepo*; and those with hard skins, *Lagenaria siceraria*, having smaller white flowers.

Some gourds, including the bottle gourd, *Lagenaria siceraria*, and the dishcloth gourd, *Luffo cylindrica*, can be eaten while the fruit is young.

A more rustic look compliments an outdoor setting.



Harvested gourds

In India and Asia, gourds are a very popular food and are specifically cultivated for consumption.

Members of the *Cucurbitaceae* family are annual or perennial herbaceous plants, native to temperate and tropical areas and many are climbing or trailing vines with characteristic tendrils. Gourds do best in a hot summer with the large types taking about 125 days to ripen. Most are grown as vines and require a trellis or pergola to grow over. They need a warm position and are gross feeders requiring lots of decomposed animal manure to grow well. Wet conditions encourage the growth of downy mildew, so it is better to water at their base and not on their leaves.

Most gourds are grown for practical or ornamental use, rather than for food. When ripe they are picked, washed and placed on a rack to dry. Drying takes from two to 12 months. The gourds are then made into items such as utensils; tools; bowls; cups; bottles; scoops; ladles; fishnet floats; whistles; rattles; pipes; birdhouses; musical instruments; wash basins and other useful objects. They can be dyed, waxed, wood-burned, carved and polished. There is also an ancient Chinese craft of shaping gourds as they grow.



Gourds can be painted and decorated and make a beautiful design feature in the home.

Pick gourds only when the stem dries out or starts to shrivel, or just before a frost, which kills the plant. Once picked, dry gourds in the sun in a protected spot where they will not get wet for two to three weeks after picking, to harden the skins. There are many ways of treating gourds so they last longer and keep better, but generally coloured ones will maintain their colour for many years in a bowl out of direct sunlight. Ripe and hardened gourds can be drilled, or cut with sharp or serrated knives.

— Ange McNeilly
(article and photos)



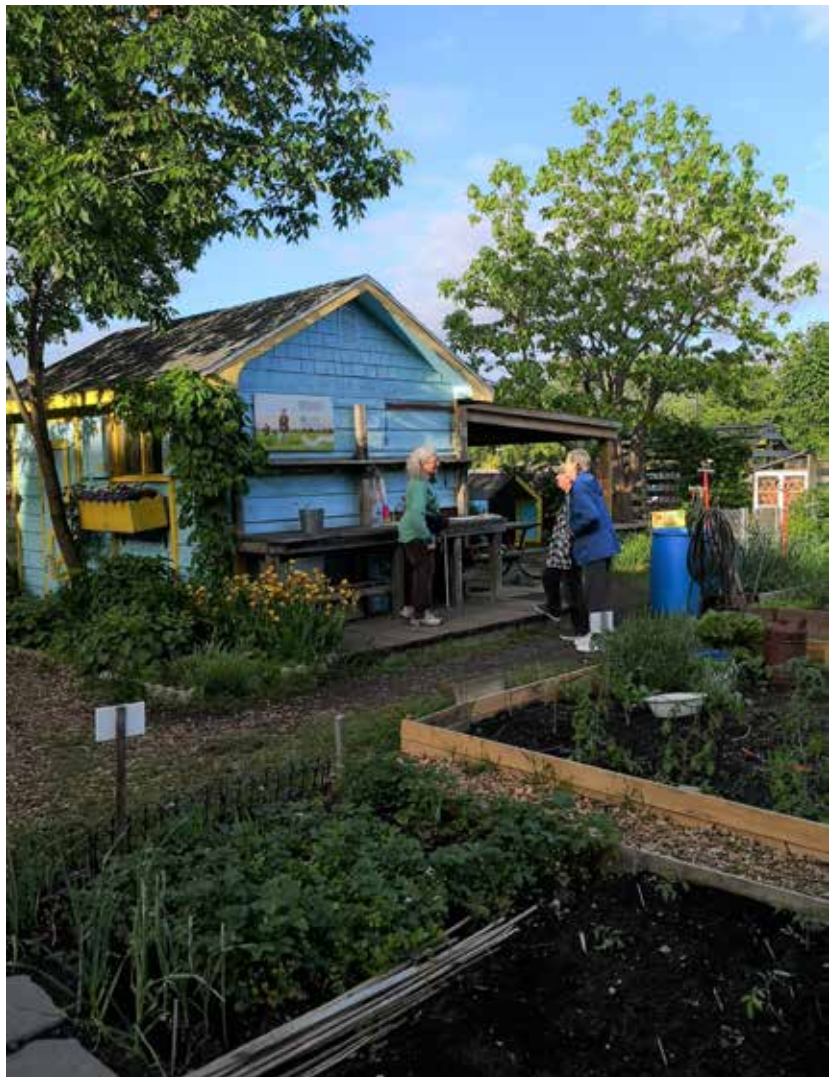
***La Communauté* in a cold climate**

A Google search before a trip to Quebec last year led to a visit to a community garden in a highly disadvantaged suburban area of Montreal. It is an inspiration in its enrichment of community connections, education and participation in the organic cultivation of food. The *Jardin Communautaire Basile Patenaude* was established in the early 1980s on land loaned by the adjacent Maxi supermarket, that had previously been a dumping area for industrial waste and snow. The garden has achieved much since its rejuvenation around 10 years ago.

I met David Alexandre-Boutin at the garden on a balmy evening at the beginning of June 2018 and he showed me around. David is the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the garden. He talked about its history, his vision and the significant projects undertaken in recent years, including the 'farmhouse', the '*Jardin des enfants*' and the green lane of edible plants and interpretive signs outside and alongside the fence. Financial assistance has been provided from time to time by a local bank and the borough (local council).

There are around 250 people participating in this one-half acre garden which includes around 100 families, small children, senior citizens and around 20 different multicultural backgrounds and languages. The cross-cultural and inter-generational connections achieved through the work of this garden are truly incredible.

There is only a low fence around the garden with a locked gate (for safety) and no barbed wire. Gardeners pay only around \$10 a year to join and there are around 70-80 small growing spaces which are actively cultivated for home produce. With only six months of growing season, Montreal is a challenging environment for growing food. The average minimum temperature between December



A chat in the evening by the garden shed and children's play area

and February is between -15°C and -10°C , with on average 57 days of snow between November and March. Plant adaptation to this climate means that when spring arrives growth is fast, and gardeners engage with the new season in an absolute frenzy of activity. The whole area of the garden is actively and productively used.

The '*Jardin des enfants*' or children's garden is a dedicated area of planters, fishponds, fruit trees and playhouse designed to stimulate interest in plants, gardening and the joy of discovery in the children. According to David, families with small children make active use of it and have great

fun in a safe area they claim as their own.

In 2016, with the support of the local borough, the garden established what is called a green alley along a 200-metre strip of land outside the fence with a wall mural and public seating. This was planted with fruit trees and other food plants, including corn and indigenous berry fruits as well as fragrant plants and milkweed to encourage the endangered monarch butterflies. They even included an oyster mushroom patch in an area of deep moist shade. A grant from the David Suzuki Foundation was used to install interpretative signage with

Community gardens around the world



The green alley



Marmad and his daughter proudly showing off their garden

the help of students from the local university. The alley is one-of-a-kind in Montreal. The harvest party held in this space in September each year is a huge success.

So, what can we learn from this community garden on the other side of the world? Despite the dominant French language and the geographics, we aren't that different. We can learn something from other community gardens and change our perceptions about what is possible and worthwhile in our gardens. Personally, I was impressed by how well the garden works and the extensive participation from the diverse local community, as well as the sense of pride and ownership they hold in the garden. This garden lives in the heart of this Rosemont community in every sense of the word.

[You can follow the *Jardin Communautaire Basile-Patenade* on Facebook.]

—Neville Jackson
(article and photos)



Chairman David surveying the garden

Unfenced community gardening

The Southern Beaches Community Garden sits on an unfenced corner of parkland close to Coolangatta airport and just a few minutes walk from the beaches of the Gold Coast. The lack of fencing is intentional, as the organisers believe an open garden “has the ability to act as an educational tool”.

Visitors are encouraged to explore the garden in the hope that they will be inspired to grow their own food. The members pay \$20 a year for a plot (in the form of a raised garden bed), and there is a long waiting list. Plot allocation requires the member to participate in communal activities such as compost creation and fundraising events like sausage sizzles.

The sub-tropical climate means that the garden beds are full of healthy vegies, and there are also fruit trees, native bee hives, a worm farm, and plenty of garden furniture to relax on and soak up the ambience. I spoke to one of the members who admitted that the lack of security resulted in the occasional loss of bounty to midnight raiders, but that it was a minor price to pay to achieve the garden’s aims, which include “encouraging people to become organic gardeners, developing a more loving relationship with the earth, enjoying friendships and connections to other groups, reaching out to be of service to the larger community, and helping make the world a better place”.

The land is leased from the Gold Coast City Council.

— Matt Mawson (article and photos)



*(top) the garden is a nice spot for plane-watching;
(above) Buddy regularly inspects the plots;
(below) the gardens include a shed/meeting rooms.*



Fermented food and gut health – join the revolution

Fermented foods are easy to make yourself at home, and organic growers have the added benefit of healthy produce that is fresh and not contaminated with sprays. It is also a good way to preserve food when you have a glut. Many of the foods have been fermented for thousands of years, particularly when refrigeration was non-existent. It is very difficult to purchase some of these products from shops as many are pasteurised to prevent food spoilage. They can be purchased at organic and health food shops in their refrigerated areas, but read the labels carefully or ask if they have been pasteurised. If they have been then all beneficial bacteria has been killed.

Sauerkraut, kimchi, kefir, yoghurt, kombucha are all the best known ferments but you can ferment almost anything. Fermented foods contain a huge number of different microbes. The best of these is Milk Kefir. Research has shown that milk kefir does show up in stool tests, proving that it can survive and make it through to the lower intestine. It also has beneficial yeasts as well as microbes.

Milk kefir

Milk kefir is simple to make. You can purchase a special jar with a filter on top and a screw-down lid, but I have also made it in a jar with a tissue or coffee filter paper lid held down with a rubber band. You can purchase the grains or obtain excess grains from a friend. Pour in the milk on top of the grains and cover it. Leave for about 24 hours or less and just give it a swirl whenever you pass it. Taste and thickness will tell you when it is ready. It can separate if left too long but you can often strain it and shake it up to mix it. Keep in the fridge once strained to prevent further fermentation.

Many people cannot tolerate cow milk but it can also be made with goat milk. Nut milks can be used but the grains need to be placed back into cow or goat milk to allow the grains to feed on the sugars in the milk and replenish themselves. I have taken it in turns to make goat milk one day and then almond milk the next. This



Kombucha, Kefir grains, fermented milk

worked well and the grains flourished. Over winter it took about 24 hours to ferment the milk, but it depends on the warmth in the room, so each home can be different. I use the kefir on cereal or in smoothies or just drink it straight. This tastes like a tangy thin yoghurt. You can also obtain water kefir grains if you cannot have cow, goat or nut milks.

Kombucha

Kombucha is all the rage at the moment and is made with cooled black tea and sugar. You have a scoby (symbiotic colony of bacteria and yeast) floating on the top of your ferment and you tip off what you are going to use, leaving some behind with the scoby. Pour in the cooled tea and sugar, cover jar and leave on bench for around 2 weeks or until it has lost its sweet taste. This can then be poured off (leaving the scoby and some of the liquid) and fruit can be added for a second ferment. This makes it fizzy and is apparently a very popular drink in the USA. My grandchildren love it without doing the second ferment and, as the sugar has all been consumed by the bacteria, it is a good healthy drink for them instead of soft drinks.

Sauerkraut

Sauerkraut is great for using up red and white cabbage. Beetroot, carrot and

fennel can all be added. It used to be done in large fermenting pots but you can now purchase pickle pots which are glass mason jars with a silicon lid with a nipple in the centre to let out fermentation gases. There is also a glass stone which holds the contents down under the liquid. Keep them in the cupboard for about two weeks until they have the fermented tangy taste. Your cupboard will smell amazing for a couple of weeks after. It can then be placed into another jar and stored in the fridge while it is consumed.

Kimchi is similar but usually made with the softer chinese cabbage and lots of spices, although these can be toned down to your taste.

Carrots, beetroots and many other vegetables can be fermented in the pickle pots with ginger and other spices. You are only limited by your imagination.

I purchased what I needed through nourishmeorganics.com.au. They have a terrific website that explains in great detail all the processes, even using videos. You can also join their Facebook site where others put up problems they are having, often with photos, and experts answer them. There are also recipes and ideas for different ferments.

—Robyn Power (article and photo)

Growing edamame (soybeans)

In a possible first for gardeners in the local area, I recently managed to raise edamame (soybeans) to their full maturity at my plot in the Holder community garden. I like to attempt things that are challenging and not known to be easily done, which is why I chose to try and grow edamame.

The seeds for this crop were purchased from Green Harvest Organic Suppliers, although on a previous occasion

edamame germinated in my green manure/compost mix that was picked up from Bellchambers!

Edamame must be cooked before eating and I like to enjoy them as part of a soup or a salad. They can also be boiled whole, then salted – a favourite Japanese snack.

Why not have a go at growing them yourself!

—Tammy Hamers (article and photos)

Edamame seedlings starting to sprout...



Planted in the ground and starting to grow...



Starting to flower...



Ready to harvest...



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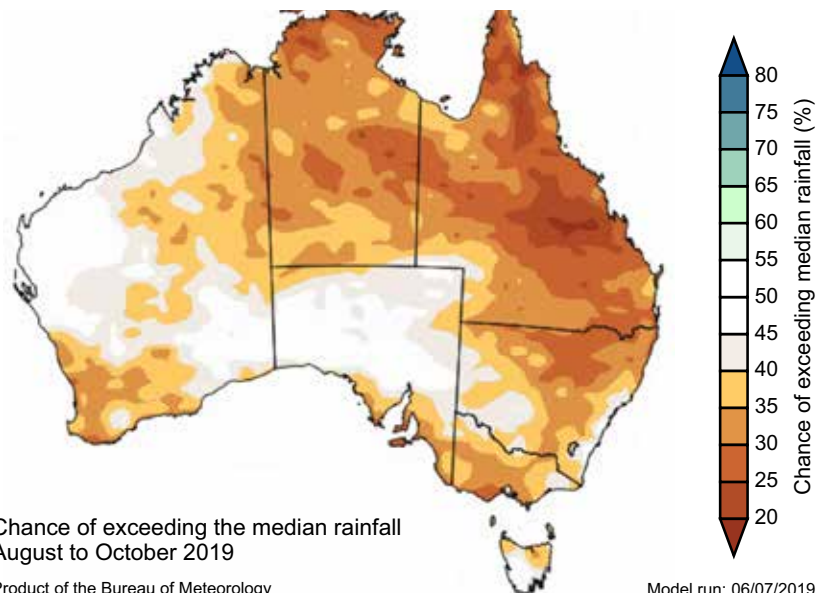
Below average winter–spring rainfall, above average temperatures, and an earlier start to the fire season for southern and central Australia

The Bureau of Meteorology Report released on 9 July 2019 says conditions in the Indian Ocean are likely to be the dominant influence of the weather in Australia for the remainder of the year.

The El Niño/La Niña indicators in the Pacific are currently neutral. Climate models indicate that they will remain neutral through the austral winter and spring. However, the possibility of an El Niño can't be completely ruled out for 2019.

Climate models indicate that Indian Ocean conditions are likely to be the dominant climate driver for Australia's weather for much of the rest of 2019. The Indian Ocean sea surface temperature and atmospheric patterns are consistent with a positive Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD). Typically, a positive IOD brings below average winter–spring rainfall, above average temperatures, and an earlier start to the fire season for southern and central Australia.

—Andy Hrast



Chance of exceeding the median rainfall August to October 2019

Product of the Bureau of Meteorology

<http://www.bom.gov.au/climate>

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Model run: 06/07/2019
Model ACCESS-S1
Issued: 11/07/2019
Base Period: 1990–2012

Dam levels in the Canberra region and capital cities

	% FULL July 2019	% FULL July 2018		% FULL July 2019	% FULL July 2018
ACT storages	56	69	Sydney	52	68
Murray–Darling Basin	31	55	Melbourne	50	59
Burrinjuck Dam	31	40	Brisbane	67	79
Blowering Dam	44	69	Adelaide	46	46
			Perth	41	38

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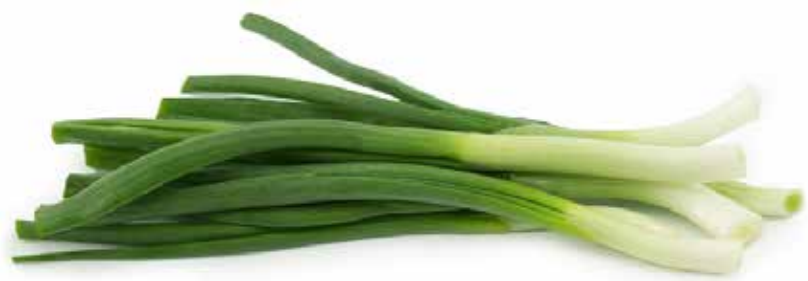
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Of leeks and love



in the garden
this sunny windy
spring morning
planting the leeks
for autumn soups

Fifteen years of successive leek harvests at the Cotter garden. Sometimes two crops a year. But January and February are so hot now that I can't get out there on the bike to water and weed. This dodgy heart doesn't cope with days over 28 degrees, of which there are many. I let the plot go and with it the potatoes and the leeks that I planted in spring.

I'm not sure how I fell in love with leeks. They weren't part of my childhood. Perhaps it was the recipe for vichyssoise in the "Passionate Love Cookbook". I cooked it occasionally when we had children at home. But it wasn't until after they left home that I took on an allotment and grew the leeks. This autumn I've

been buying leeks for the first time, and preparing beds in the home garden, to plant next spring.

The cookbook is tattered and torn: its title is actually *The Encyclopedia of World Cookery* by Elizabeth Campbell, published in London. It carries a faded handwritten inscription dated 1962: "To darling R, with all my love, C". I call it the "Passionate Love Cookbook". It's been in our kitchen a long time and I've found it useful. Reader, I married R and I think this book was part of her dowry along with a record player and a slide projector, important in the student households of the 1960s.

— Gerry Jacobson

for better
for worse ... sometimes richer
often poorer
often rough ... sometimes smooth
never plain sailing

Recipe for *Vichyssoise*

3 medium leeks, sliced finely
1 large onion, sliced finely
4 medium potatoes, sliced finely

1 tbsp olive oil
1 litre vegetable stock
handful parsley, chopped.

Fry leeks and onion, until transparent. Add potatoes and stock. Simmer until potatoes cooked. Zap, and stir in parsley.

The original recipe called for half a cup of sour cream to be added. I now use this as a basic recipe for vegetable soups, perhaps adding a small cauliflower (broken into florets) for cauliflower-leek soup, or a bunch of spinach for spinach-leek soup.



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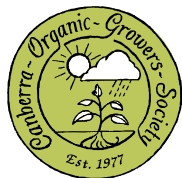


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spring planting guide

Spring is the main planting season in Canberra. The timing of some plantings may need to be varied depending on the particular year.

Be prepared to protect your frost-tender seedlings, as harsh frosts can occur right through spring. Make your own cloches from plastic bottles with the bottoms cut out, or use row covers for larger plantings.

Using seeds

When direct planting with small seeds—e.g. carrots—bulk out first by mixing the seeds with sand. You can help the plants pre-germinate by keeping them in moist sand for about four days before planting out (do not let them actually germinate).

When planting out large seeds—e.g. pea or corn—soak overnight in a weak seaweed solution prior to planting; alternatively, keep seeds moist between two pieces of kitchen paper for 3 to 4 days until seeds germinate, then plant out carefully. This is particularly useful if you are not sure of the seeds' viability.

Check your seed packets for their use-by date as poor germination may result from planting after that time, or plants may show a lack of vigour when the seedlings come up.

A seed should be planted at a depth 2 to 3 times its diameter, although it is better to plant too shallow than too deep.

Crop rotation

Remember to rotate the crops you grow in a particular garden bed. Crop rotation is a most important practice for organic gardeners. Successive crops should not come from the same plant families nor make the same demands on nutrients; i.e. follow heavy feeders with light feeders.

Also, successive crops should not share the same diseases or attract the same pests—this prevents a build up of disease problems, and reduces losses from pests.

There are numerous crop rotation schemes used, but try to keep to at least a 4-year rotation period and do not grow members of the same plant family in the same bed in consecutive years; e.g. tomatoes, capsicums, eggplants and potatoes are all from the *Solanum* family.

Plant varieties

It is important with crops such as cabbage and lettuce to choose the appropriate variety for the time of year. Lettuce varieties best suited to early spring are cos, salad bowl, butterhead and mignonette.

	SEP	OCT	NOV
Globe artichoke	T	T	
Jerusalem artichoke	T		
Asparagus	S	S	S
French beans		S	S
Beetroot	S	S	S
Broccoli			S
Brussel sprouts		S	S
Cabbage	ST	ST	ST
Capsicum*		S	ST
Carrot	S	S	S
Cauliflower			S
Celery	S	ST	ST
Cucumber*	S	S	ST
Eggplant*	S	S	T
Endive			S
Leeks	ST	ST	T
Lettuce	ST	ST	S
Melons	S	S	ST
Onions	T	T	
Parsnips	S	S	S
Peas	S	S	
Potatoes	S	S	S
Pumpkins*	S	S	ST
Radish	S	S	S
Rhubarb	T	T	
Silverbeet	S	S	ST
Snow peas	S	S	S
Spinach	ST	ST	
Squash*	S	S	ST
Sweet corn		S	ST
Tomatoes*	S	S	ST
Turnips (white)	S		
Zucchini*	S	S	ST

S = seed sowing; T = transplanting

* When planting these seeds before November, the seed should be started in punnets indoors and the young seedlings kept in a warm sheltered place. Plant out the seedlings once the soil has warmed and the danger of frost has passed.

What's On



Members meetings

- August** No meeting
- September** Individual garden AGM meetings
- October** Sunday 27 October,
Time/Venue to be notified
- November** Tuesday 26 November, 7.30pm
Northside Community Centre, Dickson
Christmas Party and Seedling Swap

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Our Facebook community is growing every week.

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Nature's bounty from
Holder community garden



A rainbow moment at Southern Beaches Community Garden on the Gold Coast (photo: Matt Mawson)