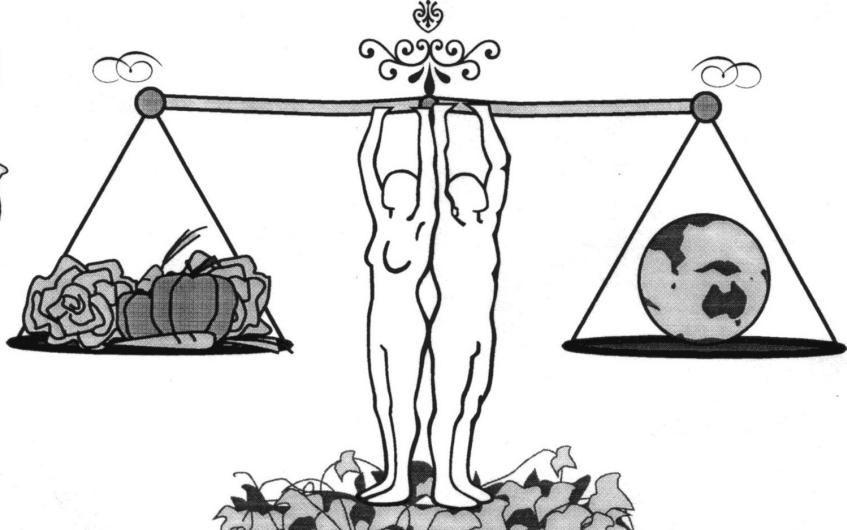


GOLD COAST ORGANIC GROWERS Inc.

Established 1999



NEWSLETTER

Volume 15 APRIL 2012 Issue 4

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OUR NEXT MEETING: Thursday 17 May

The Aims Of G.C.O.G. Inc.

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

Meetings Held: 3rd Thursday of the Month

The Meeting Place, Cnr Guineas Creek Rd.
and Coolgardie St, Elanora.
Doors open 7.00 pm; Begin at **7.30 pm**
Entry is \$1 members, \$3 visitors.
(No meeting in December)

Annual Membership Fees:

Single: \$20. Family: \$30.
To renew or start memberships please send
cheques (payable to GCOG) to Diane Kelly -
or just pay at the door.

Seed Bank: \$2.00 ea.

Members Market Corner: Please bring
plants, books and produce you wish to sell.

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

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

Advertising: **1/4 page:** \$10 an issue, or
\$100 per year (11 issues),
1/2 page: \$20 an issue or \$200 per year,
full page: \$30 an issue or \$300 per year.

Newsletter:

Contributions and ideas welcome.
Email Angela at w.a.anderson@bigpond.com
Please put [GCOG] in email 'subject' box.

2012 Committee

President	Maria Roberson (07) 5598 6609
Vice President	Cathie Hodge (07) 5533 8642
Treasurer	Diane Kelly (07) 5522 7444
Secretary	Karen Hart (07) 5527 7484
Membership Membership Asst	Diane Kelly Jill Barber
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Trip Co-ordinator	Ross Davis (07) 5599 7576
Librarians Library Assistant	Cathie Hodge (07) 5533 8642 Judy Reiser (07) 5532 7198 Greg Wiltshire
Seed Bank Seed Assistant	Roger Griffiths (07) 5530 5067 Peter Seymour-Smith (07) 5596 5678
Supper Co-ordinator	Jenny Davis (07) 5599 7576

Thanks to other contributors: Diane Kelly,
Ross Davis, Jill Barber, Dorothy Coe &
Maria Roberson.



Notice Board

Membership Renewals

Overdue: Linda Beleski, Cassie James, Marion Wilson, Katie Culpin, Mark Raynham, Judy McCracken, Tali Filip, Sylvia Rolih, Daniela Guitart, Jannette Janssen, Penny & Allan Jameson, Greg Wiltshire, Louise Newell, Daniela Willis,

April: Barbara Talty, Margaret Reichelt, Jude Lai, Stephen Dalton, David Tangye, Rebecca Bowen, Kay Schiefelbein

May: Chris Larkin, Clive Canning, Karen Auchere, Mary Frawley, Bruce Kelly, Heather Ryan, Leanne Cane, Chantel Geldenhuis, Brian & Lyn Dick, Robert Turner, Robert Faulkner, Virginia Jacobson

Welcome to our new club member:
Judy Reiser, Guy Lewington

Guest Speakers

April - Alf Orpen on Polyculture
May - Graham McDonald on Native Trees, Butterflies and other insects.
June - Sandra Nanka from Mudbrick Cottage on various Herbs
July & July - TBA
Sept - Gina Winter on Using Herbs as Food and as Medicine

If any members would like to share something that would be of benefit to our members please contact Jill Barber to discuss.

Newsletter Theme

Gardening in Autumn

Website

www.goldcoastorganicgrowers.org.au
www.facebook.com/gcorganic



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President's Message

Hello Everyone,

What a difference a couple of weeks can make when it comes to the weather, it really does feel like Autumn now. I find it a very energising time of year and positively itch to get all my gardening projects started and in a lot of cases finished.

At the moment I am busy making jam from the wild raspberry harvest in summer (I froze the berries until I had the time to cook them up). We also had a lovely lot of rhubarb which I turned into a really delicious rhubarb and ginger jam, good on toast or even better on homemade vanilla ice-cream. After filling the pantry with jars of preserves I am turning my attention to making sure I have lots of vegetables growing for the coming months.

I want to grow plenty of beetroot which is good pickled as well as raw. Beetroot is actually a really versatile vegetable it can be steamed or roasted, made into soup, grated for salads, pickled or made into juice. Beetroot is easy to grow this time of year and doesn't require much gardening skill to get a good result. I think seeds give better results than using seedlings because it is easy to damage the root of a beetroot seedling. Don't use a lot of fertiliser instead add rock minerals and a little compost and keep the plants weed free till they get going. Remember weeds are competing for the same nutrients as your vegetables so it's important to give the veggies a fighting chance.

Another must have veggie in the garden has got to be carrots, I reckon if you could only grow a couple of things per year they would have to be on the top of everybody's list. Again, another versatile veg that can be enjoyed in many different ways not to mention that home grown organic carrots would have to be far superior to pretty much any you could buy. Carrots are not hard to grow though there are a few tips to get the best results in your garden.

Choose a short fat type of carrot like Chantenay if you have shallow soil or heavy clay. Great Western or pretty much whatever you fancy if your soil is deep, friable and loamy.

They don't require much fertiliser and are best when they follow a heavy feeder crop like corn, just add some good rock minerals back in to the soil. I wouldn't recommend using mulch this time of year so you will need to keep them weed free by hand till they get a good go on. They can be eaten when quite small as you thin out the rows, after that harvest as required by pulling up and twisting off the green tops, pop the carrots straight into a plastic bag and store in the fridge for the best keeping results.

Last month's AGM went very well with a new committee elected, in the end all positions were filled with some new faces joining the mix. I would like to thank all volunteers for stepping up to the plate and I hope you enjoy your role in making our club an enjoyable and real benefit to all its' members.

We have a new Newsletter Editor for which we are very grateful and shall continue making our newsletter the best little publication we can. If you have articles or bits for the newsletter you will need to email them to Dianne as usual or to Angela (w.a.anderson@bigpond.com).

Please keep sending in contributions for the "Three things I can't live without" page each month, we have had lots of good feedback so far, keep up the good work everyone!

Happy growing, Maria.

Previous newsletters from 2010 onwards can be downloaded from our websites at:

www.goldcoastorganicgrowers.org.au

**GCCC - Active & Healthy Program
Community Gardening Workshops**

If you have always wanted to grow your own vegetables, fruit and herbs but just don't know where to start, then this series of workshops is just for you. A variety of free gardening workshops are regularly held at community gardens across the city. The workshops will provide you with a hands-on introduction to growing your own food with all the tips and tricks to ensure that your garden thrives and survives.

Time: Saturday 2pm to 3pm

Small Space and balcony gardening
May 12 - Broadbeach Community Centre

Intro to Organic Gardening

June 9 - Coombabah
July 14 - Oxenford

For more information contact:
Gold Coast Permaculture (07) 5539 3973
or permaculturegc@gmail.com
Gold Coast Permaculture also run low cost
permaculture workshops. Contact them for a
full program.

Composting and Worm Farming

Come along to Council's free sustainable
gardening workshops where you can learn
all about composting and worm farming to
recycle your waste and improve your
garden.

Time: Saturday between 10am and 12pm

April 21 - Broadbeach Community Garden
May 19 - Robina Library
June 23 - Helensvale Community Centre

To find out more information or to register for
a FREE workshop near you, call (07) 5581
6855.

Tea and coffee are provided and all you
need to bring are closed shoes.

Editor's Message

Hi Everyone,

Well the first issue has put me to the test ...
with a week to go until I head to the printer for
the first time, it's school holidays, my husband
is out of the country, my son's 12th birthday
(more like a birthweek!) and then the internet/
phone goes down!!! OK if we have a newsletter
this month we should be right from here on in.

I am a newby gardener and have learnt two
things that will bring success in the garden.
Firstly, you actually have to get your hands
dirty! Your next best chance of success is to
listen to everybody's tips and get your hands
dirty again.

I have just finished putting together all the
usual articles for the month and am left with
some spaces. Everybody has had a win or an
epic loss that we can learn from. Anything
from your favourite seed raising mix recipe,
how you got your rosemary seeds to sprout or
perhaps you have a question. How to kill
those little shiny black bugs all over my egg-
plant? What's the recipe for that oil that I
spray on my citrus leaves that are covered in
black stuff?

Send your hints to me by email or handwrite it
and hand it to me at the meeting. If you email
your articles by the Friday before the meeting
I will be sure to put it into the current newsletter.

Looking forward to hearing from you all,
Angie
Email: w.a.anderson@bigpond.com

Miami Organic Farmers Market

Where: Miami State High School
2137-2205 Gold Coast Highway, Miami
When: Every Sunday, 6am to 11am
Telephone: 3358 6309 or 1300 668 603

Guy Lewington—Diatomaceous Earth
By Jill Barber

The evening that Guy Lewington came to talk to us about his Mt. Sylvia Diatomite Mine and Basalt Quarry was certainly an eye-opener for me, and, judging by the attentiveness of his audience, for most of us! With the assistance of one of his sons, Joe, on the computer, we were able to get some visuals of the mine and some of its products, as well as a few very informative articles that made Guy's very knowledgeable experience come to life for us. This translated to direct value for our gardens, and concluded with people flocking to Guy's truck outside and actual hands on purchasing of said products. Even though I don't have a pet, I even felt impelled to buy a bag of a product that I can give to friends to protect their pets from fleas and other nasty insect pests!

Guy's background led him to recognise the value of the Mt. Sylvia Mine and Quarry over six years ago, when he bought it. Having an honours degree in geology for a start, plus his extensive work and travel in South America, Europe and Zambia, as well as having studied organic agriculture and farming in NSW for some years, helped him to see the value of this place. It's very isolated, being four or five kilometres from any people, so not likely to disturb anyone, and it has the best diatomite in Australia, being two to four meters thick! This diatomaceous earth was formed in a lake beside a volcano, and was the result of the minute organisms, diatoms, thriving on the silica from the volcano, then falling to the bottom of the lake, and eventually forming the four metre thick layer there.

The marvellous outcome for gardeners is the plant-available silica in the products made from the diatomaceous earth. As revealed in the 2004 "Organic News", higher silica levels result in a reduction of moisture loss, an improvement in the photosynthetic capacity of the leaves, more flowers and firmer fruit. Furthermore, silica is essential for calcium to be taken up by trees, and calcium silica not only

gives firmer fruit, but also increased sugar levels and a reduction in insect problems

Various other products for other purposes can be obtained from diatomaceous earth: purasil, absorbacide, molodri and palagonite. **Purasil** is uncooked diatomite and is used as a silica fertiliser.

Absorbacide is the finest form of diatomaceous earth, and this dust can kill unwanted insects for organic farmers not wanting to resort to chemical pesticides. This DED (Diatomaceous Earth Dust) can control, for example, weevil infestations in silos, SHBs (Small Hive Beetles) and bed bugs. Also, it often works when chemical pesticides fail due to the insects breeding strains resistant to the chemicals. Note that it only works when dry, so it can't damage the worms we want to continue their good work aerating the soil.

Molodri is simply diatomaceous earth combined with molasses! This is fed to animals with parasites in their gut, which when killed results in stronger animals, with stronger fleece (if they're sheep). Note here, too, Guy assured us, that no scientific research has been done on the efficacy of molodri; just anecdotal reports of sheep, goats and horses thriving with it.

The layer of basalt formed from the lava flow from the volcano into the lake, gives us **Palagonite**, which is oxidised rock mineral, or decomposed crusher dust, with a water-holding capacity of 68.2%. It is a perfect mineral fertiliser for remineralising depleted soils.

Now, this is all a relatively new source of these marvellous products, and Guy is the mine and quarry director and CEO, with currently no method of distribution to suit the likes of us...just a vet's here and a garden centre there. A couple of us encouraged him to bring a load down once a month to our meeting for our members to buy off his truck (it's bagged up in \$10, \$15, \$20 lots). If you missed out or would like some more, let us know and you might just be lucky...

Gardening with Ross

Parsnips

Parsnips are easy to grow here in the sub-tropics. There are two things that you must do. Sow the seed Now, April is the latest for good results. Get only variety that is proven to produce parsnips in this climate.

I have seed to sell that has proven over two year now to produce good quality large white parsnip.

Sowing the seed. To make life easy I use seed raising mix from Bunning's "Amgrow" "Seed raising Mix" Black label.

The row indentation needs to be about 1 inch deep. I put about one inch of mix on the bottom of the row I have marked out. Sow the seed sparingly on top then cover the seed lightly with more seed raising mix.

The secret is to turn the rake over and compress the seed raising mix onto the seeds so the seed make contact with the soil. This takes out all of the air around the seed and the result is a good strike.

Parsnips only grow successfully from Fresh seed & that's why I save my seed every year.



Potatoes

Growing Potatoes is easy here in this climate. There are three varieties that I grow successfully.

Dutch Creams:

a waxy potato that boils well and mashes with Cream. Bad for but nice to eat.

Pontiac:

The best baking potato, a red skinned spud.

Sebago:

A very floury Potato and one that I grow less and less. It tends to mush in the pot if boiled to hard.

PLANTING:

Dig a trench about 8 inch / 200 mm deep, run a good coating of Blood & Bone in the bottom of the trench and pull a 3 pronged tine through to mix the B & B together with the soil.

Now plant the spuds about 12 inch / 300 mm apart in the row/ trench & only cover lightly with soil. When the potatoes sprout, add more soil and again & Again till the row is hoed up to about 4 / 5 inches.

If you follow this process you will have NO WEEDS and clan crop of beautiful potatoes.

I have potatoes at \$3.50 a kilo. Orders are being taken now.

Happy gardening
Ross





Getting to Know Chris & Dorothy Winton Interview by Diane Kelly

When I first met Chris and Dorothy Winton, they were living in a home in Palm Beach which was a few hundred meters from the Gold Coast Highway and the beach. Their block was postage-stamp size, with sandy soil in which any plants struggled to grow. Then, just over five years ago, they decided on a goal – they wanted to have some space to garden.

Now Chris and Dorothy live on a two-acre block in Tallebudgera Valley, and they have a flower garden, a vegetable patch, the start of a fruit tree orchard, chooks, a fish pond and (as a special bonus for Chris) a very large work-shed! They also have koalas, possums, wallabies, bandicoots, a variety of wild birds, and a peaceful lifestyle.

I asked Chris and Dorothy where their interest in gardening had come from. Both Chris's mother and grandmother were avid gardeners, and there were always roses and vegetables being grown in the places they lived – which ranged from suburban Melbourne, near Mount Egmont in New Zealand, and then the Sunshine Coast. Cooking was an interest in the family, and they would often experiment with cooking food from various countries on different nights of the week.

Dorothy lived in Kent and London in the UK, and this was where she and Chris met in 1995. They lived in Brisbane for a year, and then decided to settle on the Gold Coast. As well as operating their own website business from home, they keep busy with other interests. Dorothy enjoys dance classes, yoga and all things healthy, and Chris is a group leader and training officer for the SES in Coolangatta. I asked Chris what started his interest in the SES, and he spoke of the floods on the Gold Coast several years and watching the water come to within an inch or so of entering their Palm Beach home. Next time, he thought, he wanted to be prepared and to know what to do. So he joined the

SES, and now has had wide range of community service experience, including helping during cyclone Yasi, and the storms in Cairns last year.

Along the path to the front door of Chris and Dorothy's home, there are some of Chris's favourite plants. There are large rosemary bushes, the leaves of which are used in cooking pumpkin soup and roasting lamb. There are a number of chilli plants; a small bay tree, a cinnamon tree, and, further away, a passionfruit vine and a pomegranate tree. Around near the back door there is a large cardamom plant, so I've been provided with the recipe for cooking snapper with white wine, herbs, lemon slices and capers – you wrap the layers in the cardamom leaves, and then cook them in tin-foil on the BBQ for 15 minutes. (I was also given a piece of the plant to strike, so I'm looking forward to a good meal one day!)

The original vegetable garden area is toward the west of the block, and was made up of a large number of raised soil beds – about 30cm high and 2 metres long. In this area, parsnips, turnips, tomatoes, Greek basil (for winter usage), carrots, Ceylon spinach and black pepper are still growing. However a couple of years ago Chris and Dorothy decided that the garden was too far from the house, the soil quality was too hard to maintain, and that there was too much of a problem with erosion. So, with the use of some heavy equipment and the hard work done by a number of WOOFERS who have stayed with Chris and Dorothy, a hill was cut into, a rock retainer wall built; a water tank installed; and a new vegetable patch created on the other side of the house. (WOOFERS are international workers who volunteer to help on organic properties, in return for their accommodation and experiencing of other countries).

Now the garden has a wide range of herbs and vegetables. Chris's favourite plants are herbs, so there are turmeric, amaranth, ginger, lemon grass and parsley (the parsley is well-protected because the possums like to

eat it, but it is also the herb that Chris uses the most in his cooking.) The amaranth leaves are used in quiches and omelettes.

There are also purple elderberries (for use as a cough medicine and cordial); chai (the seeds of which Chris and Dorothy sprinkle on salads or cereal. They also soak them with yoghurt, resulting in a dish that tastes similar to tapioca.); eggplants, tomatoes, strawberries, corn, asparagus, comfrey, leeks and raspberries.

In the fruit tree area, there are mango, fig, nectarine, lime, orange and olive trees. I asked Chris and Dorothy if they plan to extend their garden and orchard areas much further, but the grasses further down the block carry a lot of ticks, so they've decided what they have is sufficient for now.

During our walk around the property, we were accompanied by six or eight chooks (which I was glad to see lined up at Chris and Dorothy's front door begging for food just like our "girls" do when we let them out to free-range) and Walter, a rather magnificent rooster that has been hand-raised. We inspected the chook-house, and I realized just how much I would like one of the timer mechanisms that Chris has attached to the door – at a certain level of day-light, the door swings open and the chooks are free to move out into their yard. No need for bleary-eyed owners to get up at the crack of dawn! (There are a couple of other gates around the fenced-off garden areas that have counter-weight-controlled pulleys that close the gate automatically after people leave, so the chooks and other animals can't access the vegetables and herbs - another of Chris's innovations.)

So, a final question what would Chris and Dorothy's advice be to new gardeners? Their answer was to "start small". In this way, more time and attention can be given to one area, and the best use of resources can be made before you move onto the next project.

And one final observation it was impressive to see a plan come to fruition. Dorothy and Chris have now obtained their space, and they are filling it with the things they enjoy, projects they have achieved, and the opportunity for good eating and healthy living.



The hill cut away for the retainer wall, tank and vegetable garden



"The girls" waiting for Dorothy to give them lunch!

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or contact Ross Davis for more info:
rossco12@bigpond.com

The Garden in May From Diane Kelly

May is the last month of autumn, with sunny days, cool nights and less humidity. By this month, there is a hint or more of winter, but many plants flourish in this weather. Many people might regard this as the end of a season, but it is really a beginning – work done now can save a lot of time and effort when spring comes around.

Planting & transplanting:

May is a good time to plan new trees, shrubs and vines – it is a good month to move plants because there is still some warmth in the soil left from summer. Larger plants are best moved first, with as much soil around the roots as possible. If they are large trees or shrubs, remember to stake them if you garden in an exposed place. Water plants well after moving them and mulch with a thick layer of organic matter. Remember to keep watering them well throughout the next season.

Continue sowing green manure crops on bare ground. Winter rye can be sown well into May. These crops can be dug in during the spring and they will return valuable organic matter to the soil, improving the soil structure and its organic content.

Repair fences, pergolas and trellises. Late autumn and winter are good times of year to repair any of these structures if necessary. There is less plant growth on them, with the leaves mostly gone, and that makes it easier to see what you are doing, and to untie or cut back the plants and get on with the repairs.

Trees & Shrubs:

Check tree ties & stakes: These should be checked on a regular basis to see that the stakes are sound and that ties are not cutting into the trunks of the plants; if so, they will eventually strangle the plant as the trunk expands outwards over the years.

Make sure that all newly planted trees and shrubs are well staked and tied if needed – after spending a lot of money, it is a job worth

doing well. The stake should come at most about a third of the way up the trunk, and often even shorter stakes are recommended. The only exception is when staking top-grafted standards such as dwarf weeping trees, when the stake should reach the graft point. But for all other trees, a low stake allows the top of the tree to flex in the wind, strengthening the trunk.

Shield camellia flowers from early morning sun in areas where there is due, or pale flowers can be badly marked. Feed and water camellias during their flowering period.

Propagation: Collect seeds from native plants such as Queensland silver wattle or grevilleas when they are ripe. Seeds can be sown most of the year in warm climates. Use a seed-rising mix, or 3 parts coarse river sand to one part peat or peat substitute. Sow thinly on damp mix. Cover seeds with their own depth of fine, sieved coarse sand or seed-rising mix. Germination may take from a week to months.

Citrus:

Check for swellings or lumps on branches that could be citrus galls. Prune off immediately. Spray with white oil if there are scales. Protect young plants such as citrus, tropical fruit trees and young kiwi fruit vines, from winter frost. Use a covering at night, or make a shade-cloth shelter.

Vegetables:

Looking after crops:

Feed recently planted vegetable seedlings and leafy vegetables such as broccoli, cabbage, silver beet, spinach and lettuce with liquid manure. Organize irrigation for the dry season.

Asparagus: This is easy to grow, but it is a long term crop and will occupy a place of its own for many years. Planting is done in June. So this month prepare the soil by digging thoroughly, removing perennial weeds completely, and incorporating plenty of organic matter. If you garden on heavy clay, improve the drainage.

Rhubarb: To propagate, lift a large root and split it into smaller pieces, with each piece having at least one bud. Plant the divided portions 90 cm apart in soil that has been well enriched with plenty of organic matter.

Sow:

Broadbeans, broccoli, peas, spinach, radishes. Plant artichoke tubers, garlic and shallots.

Harvesting:

Parsnips: Parsnips taste better when they have had a touch of frost on them, but they can be lifted and stored in the same way as carrots. Pack them in boxes of sand.

Brussels sprouts: Start harvesting from the bottom of the plant upwards, as the largest sprouts form at the base of the plant first. Very tall plants that may blow over in high winds can be staked.

Source: Ian Spence -
Gardening Throughout the Year in Australia

What to Plant - May

This is a month for all the major garden jobs it's usually too cold or too hot for – May is perhaps the one month of the year when it's a pleasure to do some hard work!

General:

Watch out for slugs and snails as snail-eating lizards grow sleepy. Spread the contents of your compost bin so you can fill it with prunings and perennials that die back in winter.

Harvest rose hips for winter teas and syrup – every rose bush will produce some hips, and as long as they haven't been sprayed with pesticides or fungicides you can use them in cooking, or save the seeds to plant in spring. Roses too can be grown from seed! The seedlings probably won't be like their parents though – each one will be an adventure!

Clean out greenhouses now, and leave them open to the sun for a time. Take shelves out to air, and wash them in disinfectant or vine-

gar if there is a chance they're harbouring fungus or disease spores.

Make use of a slow garden and the warm weather to revamp the chook house; build more compost heaps, and make potpourri with the last of the rose petals and scented leaves.

What to Plant:**Plant to eat:**

Just about anything can be grown now. Put in lots of mixed salad leaves, apple cucumbers, basil, butter beans, capsicums, chokoes, sweet corn, eggplants, shallots, okra, chillies, pumpkins and tomatoes. Try above ground beds for parsley – the roots may rot in hot damp soil.

Plant for beauty:

Alyssum, calendula, coleus, gerbera, petunias, phlox, saliva & zinnias.

Fruit:

In warm areas, evergreen fruit trees can be planted now – they won't be burnt by harsh summer sun.

Lawns:

Keep your grass trimmed fairly high – it will survive frost better. Keep mowing it right into the cold weather to stop lawn weeds from setting seed.

Pests:

This is a month of prevention. Prune off dead twigs; band apple trees with grease, corrugated cardboard or old wool to help control codling moth and oriental peach moth, and clean up old ladders and fruit boxes where moths may shelter. Let hens scavenge round the orchard to pick up old fruit or insects on the ground.

Check that there are no stink bugs on your citrus – spray with glue spray so the birds can find them, or just slow them down with soapy water.

Source: "The Wilderness Garden" Jackie French

Three Things I Can't Live Without

By Jill Barber

First of all, I presume we're not going to talk about our spouses/partners, family and so on, because they're definitely top of my list, and my spiritual path, so I'll stick to garden-related items for this. I'm steering clear of the kitchen, too, because there are lots of indispensable items in there...

Just bridging over from the kitchen, top of the garden list for me is **salad greens**. When other things fade out with the season, some greens are almost always available for my salad, from kale to sorrel, mustard greens, basil, parsley, coriander, rocket, cos lettuce, crinkly lettuce, perennial spinach (alias Ceylon or New Zealand, or other), beet tops, asparagus and even BQ mulch (my green manure crop) of late. These all come from my garden, at various times. Add some avocado and colour, like tomato, grated beet or carrot, red capsicum and olives, and you have the mainstay of my lunches. Add some protein, and hey presto, nutritious, filling, sustaining, healthy and delicious to boot! Helps to keep my weight in check as I can thereby steer clear of bread, that oh-so-popular and easy to eat food that contributes to the overweight of the bulk of our population. Couldn't live without it – salad, that is!

Closely linked to salad greens is my **compost** because this is what feeds the organisms in the soil that help to create the healthy environment for my veggies to grow well and be loaded with all the live-sustaining goodies of enzymes, vitamins and minerals that our bodies need. I first made compost in Canada, during the three or so vibrant months when the sun shone warmly enough for plants to grow vigorously...and vigorously they did!

They just had that short window of opportunity to make their mark, and away they went like racehorses galloping to the finish line. I knew nothing much about gardening, but I did know about eating nutritiously and preferably organically. I read a bit, like "*The Organic Home Gardener*", and learned that first and

foremost you need to have compost, and the cheapest and most available was what you made yourself. And our garden was the best in the block, including that of the next door, older, more experienced Dutch couple. We had bumper crops of beans, which we froze for use throughout the snowy winters, massive beetroot and rhubarb bunches, fabulous, healthy sugar snap peas, great carrots, to name a few, and I attribute this almost solely to our home-made compost. Of course, there was all that delightfully loamy soil which magically emerged from under all the blanket of nutrient-bearing snow once spring warmed and thawed it all, but everyone else had that, too, so it had to be the chemical-free compost that did it. It consisted simply of garden and kitchen waste, with a bit of compost starter occasionally added.

Though we've never had such a good garden here, it still served to have me committed to compost for life. Here, I do add manure, usually composted chicken manure. We've always had the compost in some form of wooden bin, and here I've used lattice, to allow air in and keep birds out. Initially, I found that the sides were always too dry to break down properly, so reduced the air by lining it with weed matting, with the bird-proof lid covered in dense shade cloth. I have to admit that it's a perpetual learning experience to get the compost right, and so far I haven't managed it because the heap's not warm enough. Here, where we contend with varying weather conditions and an array of creatures to mess it up (crows, mice, bandicoots, dogs...), I have to admit it's a bit of a struggle. I was spoiled in Canada it seems, where our ignorance and seemingly adverse conditions did not prevent us having a beautifully warm compost and great garden results in a short space of time.

Okay, so on to the third thing I (or more correctly, my garden) can't live without: **mulch**. Even with the continuous watering from the heavens that we've been having here for some time, making mulch seem not so imperative for moisture retention, it is still

essential for aerating the soil by creating humus, and feeding the organisms in the soil so they can create a good soil structure, too. The other value of it, of course, even more when it rains, is to keep the weeds under control. Although I would love to have just lucerne hay on the vegie garden, and have done that, last year, now what I can best afford is somewhat coarse sugarcane mulch that I get delivered 10 bales at once (for \$6, no delivery charge). As long as I apply chicken manure or Organic Xtra first, to avoid the depleting of the nitrogen from the soil as it breaks down, I feel okay using it, and I think the garden thanks me for looking after it.

Recipe for your Pests

White Oil

Kill aphids, small caterpillars, leaf miners, mealy bugs, mites and scale.

Pour 250ml Vegetable Oil and 50ml Liquid soap into a jar and shake vigorously until blended. Store in a cool spot.

To use, shake well then use 1 Teaspoon with 250ml water in a spray bottle.

Use in the morning to smother pests. (Don't use on hairy or soft leafed plants or when over 30 degrees).

Chilli Spray

Traditionally used to kill caterpillars on contact but also inhibits feeding, so acts as a repellent too.

Blend a cup of small hot chillies with a cup of water and strain. Use fresh, but wear gloves and protect your eyes.

Garlic Spray

Spray on soft-bodied insects. Will repel slugs and snails and prevent fungal disease.

Soak 3-5 cloves of crushed garlic in a splash of mineral or vegetable oil for 24 hours. Mix with 1 litre of water with a little liquied soap, then strain.

Organic Gardner, Essential Guide

"Thai Style" Sweet Chilli Sauce From Chris Winton

Ingredients:

250g long fresh red chillies, stems trimmed
3 garlic cloves, peeled
2 cups white vinegar
645 g (3 cups) castor sugar
250g capsicum
2 cups water



Method:

Halve 100g of the chillies and place in the bowl of a food processor. Halve and de-seed the remaining chillies and the capsicum. Coarsely chop and place in the food processor. Add garlic and 250ml white vinegar. Process until finely chopped.

Place the chilli mixture, remaining vinegar and castor sugar in a large saucepan over a low heat. Cook, stirring, for 5 minutes or until the sugar dissolves.

Increase heat to high and bring to boil. Reduce heat to medium and simmer, stirring occasionally, for 35-40 minutes or until the sauce thickens. Pour into sterilised airtight bottles and seal.

Makes 6 cups (1 litre).

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What to Do with Fruit Trees in May

From Diane Kelly

Custard Apples: Peak harvest period. Harvest every 3 to 7 days. Watering can be tapered off. If you have not done your spraying for mealy bug, do it now. Spray individual fruit with pest oil or wipe on metho and water (30% metho & 70% water).

Figs: Taper off the water.

Lychee: Don't let trees dry out. Check for Erinose mite and spray with wettable sulphur.

Low Chill Stone Fruit: Fertilise trees with a high organic potassium fertilizer 50 gms per sq m to the drip line of trees. Prune trees now. 1/3 to 1/4 of the tips can be taken off. Any inward or downward wood can be pruned.

Mango: Apply gypsum if soil pH is 6 or more. If below 6 pH, apply lime. 50 gms per sq m of either. Continue with copper based spray for anthracnose or with 25 mls leaf microbes and 5 gms wettable sulphur per 1 litre of water.

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

Pawpaw: If you have not applied boron, apply now. 1 teaspoon per mature tree. 40% of annual fertiliser can be applied now to mature trees (20 gms per sq metre of a high organic potassium fertiliser).

Persimmon: Main harvest time. Declining water needs. Apply a little super-fine lime and gypsum, 20 gms of each per sq m.

Strawberries: Plants should be coming away well. A little organic potassium fertiliser can be applied now. Use fish emulsion or kelp spray regularly over plants to keep in good health. Add 20 mls molasses per litre of water + 10 mls leaf microbes.

Bananas: De-sucker plants, cutting at ground level. Cut out centre with a sharp downward motion around the circumference to the centre forming a well. If they do not die, use 20 mls of kero to the bottom of this well.

Citrus: If any scale and fungal problems still exist a further spray with pest oil and leaf microbes will be needed. Add the pest oil + 15 ml per litre of the leaf microbes. Early varieties can be picked this month.

Pruning

Citrus trees need little pruning. If over crowded, thin out after fruiting, as flowers and fruit are carried on the ends of branches. Don't thin oranges or grapefruit severely but mandarins can be shortened back to the second or third shoot down the branch. Lemon trees are taller and less compact so keep them to a size easier to handle. Old trees can be cut severely but will take a year or two to recover and bear.

Source: Queensland Planting Guide, BOGI



Did You Know? ... Worms

What not to feed your worms ...

Citrus
Onions
Potatoes
Coffee

Finely cut your scraps in a food processor for a special treat for your worms. They will breed faster and reward you with worm castings much sooner.



VEGETABLES

APRIL:

Asian greens, Asparagus, Beans, Beetroot, Broad beans, Broccoli, Brussels Sprouts, Cabbage, Carrot, Cauliflower, Celery, Celeriac, Kale, Kohlrabi, Lettuce, Leek, Onion, Parsnip, Pea, Potato, Radish, Rhubarb, Shallots, Silverbeet, Spinach, Squash, Strawberry, Tomato, Turnip, Zucchini.

MAY:

Asian greens, Asparagus crowns, Beans, Beetroot, Broad beans, Broccoli, Cabbage, Carrot, Cauliflower, Celery, Celeriac, Endive, Kale, Kohlrabi, Leek, Lettuce, Onion, Parsnip, Pea, Potato, Radish, Rhubarb, Shallots, Silverbeet, Spinach, Strawberry, Tomato, Turnip

HERBS

APRIL

Annual: Borage, Calendula, Chamomile, Chervil, Coriander, Dill, Garlic, Italian parsley, Misome, Mizuna, Nasturtium, Rocket.

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

MAY

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

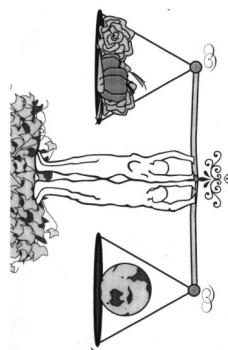
Perennials & Bi-Annuals: Catnip, Chicory, Chives, Perennial Coriander, Fennel, Hyssop, Lavender, Lemon Balm, Lovage, Marjoram, Mint, Mushroom Plant, Oregano, Parsley, Rosemary, Sage, Salad Burnet, Winter Tarragon, Thyme, Upland Cress, Watercress, Winter Savoury.

Can still plant, but it is getting towards the end of the season as they like warm weather – Basil, Ceylon Spinach.

Whilst every effort is made to publish accurate information the association (including Editor, Executive Officers and the Committee) accepts no responsibility for statements made or opinions expressed in this newsletter.

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

***GOLD COAST ORGANIC
GROWERS Inc.***



Meetings held:
3rd Thursday of the Month

Meeting place:
Cnr Guineas Creek Road
& Coolgaddie Street
Elanora, Gold Coast

Next meeting:
Thursday 17 May 2012

NEWSLETTER