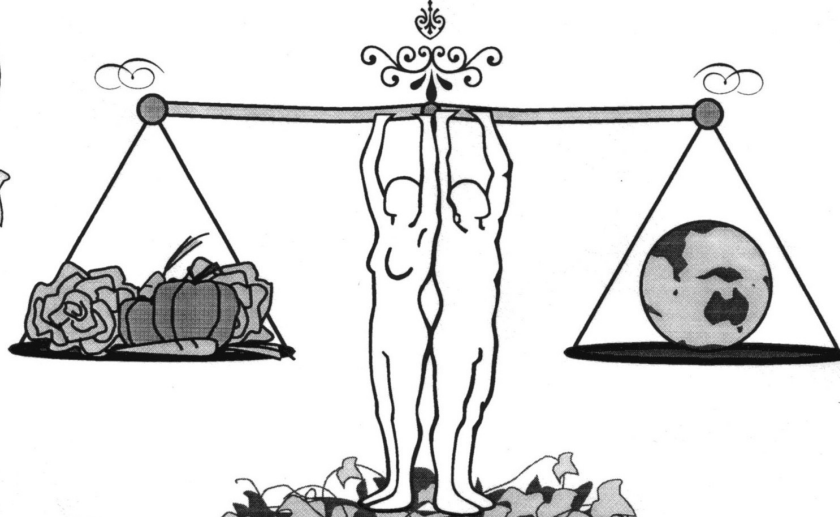


# GOLD COAST ORGANIC GROWERS Inc.

Established 1999



## NEWSLETTER

Volume 15

FEBRUARY 2012

Issue 2

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**OUR NEXT MEETING: Thursday 15 March**

**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: 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 for 11 issues (1 year), **1/2 page:** \$20 an issue or \$200 per year, **full page:** \$30 an issue or \$300 per year.

**Newsletter:** contributions welcome by post or email (preferred). Please send to Dorothy at webprint@onthenet.com.au  
Please put [GCOG] in email 'subject' box.

**2012 Committee**

<i>President</i>	Maria Roberson (07) 5598 6609
<i>Vice President</i>	Lise Racine (07) 5533 9505
<i>Treasurer</i>	Diane Kelly (07) 5522 7444
<i>Secretary</i>	Karen Hart (07) 55277484
<i>Membership</i> <i>Membership Asst</i>	Diane Kelly Jill Barber
<i>Newsletter Editor</i> <i>Newsletter</i> <i>Assistant</i>	Dorothy Coe webprint@onthenet.com.au  Diane Kelly
<i>Website Editor</i> <i>Website Assistant</i>	Dorothy Coe webprint@onthenet.com.au
<i>Advertising</i>	Ross Davis (07) 5599 7576 Dorothy Coe webprint@onthenet.com.au
<i>Guest Speaker</i>	Jill Barber jillbarber611@gmail.com (07) 5534 4753
<i>Trip Co-ordinator</i>	Justin Sharman-Selvidge (07) 5539 3973
<i>Librarian</i> <i>Library Assistants</i>	Heather Ryan (07) 5534 4047 Pauline Behrendorff & Greg Wiltshire
<i>Seed Bank</i> <i>Seed Assistant</i>	Peter Seymour-Smith (07) 55965678 Scott Godfredson
<i>Supper</i> <i>Co-ordinator</i>	Jenny Davis (07) 5599 7576

Thanks to other contributors: Diane Kelly, Maria Roberson, and Pauline Maxwell.



## Notice Board

### Membership Renewals

**Overdue:** Justin & Vanessa Sharman-Selvidge, Mel Kidd, Owen Brown, Greg & Val Sbeghen, Ross & Jenny Davis, Linda Beleski, Cassie James, Marion Wilson, Peter & Patricia Edwards, Anissa Loades, Roger Griffiths, Katie Culpin, John & Jessica Steytler

**February:** Terri Groth, Barry O'Rourke, Roger & Pauline Behrendorff, Mark Raynham, Barbara Morgan, Ken & Pat Jenyns, Judy McCracken, Alison & Suzanne Blatcher, Tali Filip, Sylvia Rolih, Marino Canala, Gaynor Allen, Daniela Guitart, Yukiyo Copley

**March:** Jannette Janssen, Allan & Penny Jameson, Regina Lacgalvs, Greg Wiltshire, Louise Newell, Daniela Willis, Angela Anderson

**Welcome to our new club member:**  
Deborah Anker

### Guest Speakers

**March** - Guy Lewington on  
Diatomaceous Earth - TBC  
**April** - Alf Orpen on Polyculture - TBC

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

### Club Outings

**Sunday 26th February** - Refer to page 4

### Newsletter Theme

Preparing for Autumn

### Website

[www.goldcoastorganicgrowers.org.au](http://www.goldcoastorganicgrowers.org.au)  
[www.facebook.com/gcorganic](http://www.facebook.com/gcorganic)



## HERB FARM

Michael & Sandra Nanka  
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MUDGEERABA. 4213

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### Presidents Message

Hello Everyone,

January was as predicted hot and very wet, I hope you all came through it without too much damage and trouble. We live on top of a mountain so not much chance of flooding here however the rich red soil soon turns to mud which in turn has its own set of challenges for us and the animals. All told we were only inconvenienced and a lot luckier than a lot of others around the country.

As a consequence of the weather, our outing to Peter and Patricia Edwards' garden had to be postponed till late February, while this was disappointing it may be an opportunity for those who couldn't make the first date to come along after all. All the details are on the bottom of this page.

We have been able to purchase some really interesting new books for our library. I have had the pleasure to read them over the holidays and can highly recommend all of them. The library is in the process of swapping over to a bar code system which should simplify the way books are recorded when borrowed. Unfortunately the planned option of pre-ordering your library books on line has had to be shelved for the moment, as we are struggling with the technical side of things, so it's a no go at this stage of the game.

As was mentioned last month the newsletter is undergoing a few changes with the emphasis being on seasonal information and good local knowledge on a broad range of topics. We have introduced a spot for members to talk about the "Three things they can't live without". We are asking everyone to get on board with this and have tasked a few people already to kick off the next couple of months, so have a think about the topic so you can contribute as well. We have asked Jill Barber our "guest speaker finder extraordinaire" yes that is her official title, to report on what our previous months' speaker talked about so it can be included in the newsletter. I think it will be great not only for those who missed the

meeting but also as a refresher for those of us there who didn't take notes on the night.

The newsletter theme for the next 2-3 months will be all things related to Autumn, including what to grow and how to grow it. We are looking for recipes for those particular fruits and vegetables, as well as how to deal with the specific pests and problems that this time of year brings. We are looking forward to your upcoming contributions to help make this years' newsletter the best one yet.

The seed table as always will be stocked with the seeds you will need for the coming change in season, each monthly meeting we will profile different varieties so you can learn how to grow them at their best.

We also request that when you have a plant or pest that you wish to enquire about at question time, please bring in a sample for us to view. It's not at all easy to address the problem without a bit of visual backup or verification. So, tag it and bag it and let's see what we can come up with.

Happy growing, Maria.

### **Club Outing 10.00am on Sunday 26th February**

Peter & Patricia Edwards have an acreage property in the foot-hills of Mudgeeraba, and we have been invited to visit.

**When: Sunday 26th February**  
**Time: 10am - morning tea (please bring a plate to share) 10.30am - Guided tour**

**Address: 300 Monaro Rd, Mudgeeraba. Ph 5525 1688.** Drive almost to the top of the hill. Look for the **Australian flag** proudly flying on the right in front of an Australian Federation homestead three houses from the end of the street. We have two entrance gates to the street. Plenty of parking right along the street.

### Sustainable Gardening Workshops 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.

The workshops are held on a **Saturday** between **10am and 12pm** at the following locations:

**18 February** - Nerang Library

**17 March** - Southern Beaches Community Garden, Tugun

**April 21st** - Broadbeach Community Garden

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.

### Edible gardening workshops

There are a series of organic edible gardening workshops across the city.

Learn the basics of setting up a vegetable or herb patch and enjoy growing without the use of chemicals, using recycled, local and organic materials. All workshops are designed for the beginner gardener and will have you on your way to growing your own edible garden in no time.

Bookings required. For bookings please email Leah on leg30@hotmail.com. To find out more call 0406 897 195.

### 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

### Community Gardens Active & Healthy Program - Community gardening workshops calendar

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**

#### 10 March

Introduction to organic gardening  
Ashmore Community Garden, Glenmore Park East, Cnr Glenmore Drive and Ashmore Road

#### 14 April

Introduction to organic gardening  
Joan Park Community Garden, Joan Street, Southport

Contact: Gold Coast Permaculture 07 5539 3973 or permaculturegc@gmail.com

### LIFE CHANGING EVENTS FILM SCREENING - OCEANS

Stunning images await as you journey into the depths of a wonderland filled with mystery, beauty and power. It's an unprecedented look at the lives of these elusive deepwater creatures through their own eyes. Incredible state-of-the-art-underwater filmmaking will take your breath away.

**When:** Monday 20th February

**Time:** Doors open 5.45pm — Movie 6.30pm

**Where:** Gold Coast Arts Centre

**Cost:** \$15 (Club members receive **20% discount** - To receive the **discount** you must purchase tickets **online** and enter the customer code: "**VIP**" when buying tickets.

**organic food and wine** will be available.

### Three things I can't live without By Maria Roberson

The other day I was applying the gooey gel from the inside of an Aloe Vera leaf to my sunburnt shoulders, the results of a bout of enthusiasm to weed the vegetable patch at the wrong time of the day (mid day). Obviously sometimes I don't even display the sense I was born with.

Anyway getting back to the Aloe Vera I was smearing on, the relief from the prickling heat was exquisite, I thought 'this has to be one plant I can't live without'. Then I got to thinking, what other things here at home are really useful? I made a list and it was on the lengthy side but I managed to whittle it down to just three. Choosing three things sounds easy enough, however, I had a lot of trouble limiting myself. So here's my pick and why they made it into the final cut.

1. The **Aloe Vera** plant gets a gold star above all other medicinal plants in my garden because to me it offers the most obvious, dramatic and speedy results of all of them. I am always burning myself on the hot oven racks when doing some baking and I find that if I apply some gel from a peeled Aloe Vera leaf it not only relieves the pain, I don't seem to scar either. This fabulous plant is super easy to grow and will tolerate a range extreme growing conditions. For my family the main use of Aloe Vera is for burns and stings, however its' medicinal qualities don't just end there, pick up any good herbal reference book and read from the list of other healing and healthful properties.
2. Next would have to be my long **handled garden fork**, oh how I love this little beauty. Well actually it's not very little it is in fact a very strong and sturdy everyday garden fork that has been super modified with an equally strong and sturdy long handle. Short handled garden tools are real contributor to sore backs if you are on the tall side. Having a long handle eliminates bending and

gives much better leverage when needed. When you have clay based soil, a fork is needed to break up soil clods and can even be used to dig holes when planting trees. I owe my entire vegetable patch and fruit orchard to this fork and without it I would probably have given up gardening altogether and just shopped at 'the fruit barn' years ago.

Lastly would have to be **eggs**. Or is it **chooks**? Well I guess it's the eggs because that's what I can't live without, we have tried and it's the pits. Now in our family a carton of eggs is more than just a simple carton of eggs, for us there is a whole heap of considerations that come to bear. First, we have the moral issue of the lack of animal welfare in the production of cheap eggs, I can't support it and I don't. Then there is the nutrition side of things, I know what our hens eat and what environment they occupy, so in turn I know when we eat their eggs we are getting a nutrient dense little package. I am also concerned about the over use of medications such as antibiotics and the use of pesticides and the like that go into factory style egg production.

I have at times had to purchase eggs from the supermarket and of course I choose 'organic free range' but they just aren't same as the eggs from our own hens. Eggs from our girls are tastier, more vibrant and they are always much fresher.

I would encourage you to get a couple of chooks, they are better at food waste disposal than anything else and you get the benefit of the best eggs you have ever tasted.

So there you have it, that's the 'three things I can't live without'. I now invite you to think about what in your castle and its surrounds you can't live without.

**PRESENT**  
By Pauline Maxwell

I love her.

One of the amazing things about my wife of forty years is she is such a content person. Put her outside in the fresh air with a pile of dirt, a wheelbarrow, some tools and she will create a garden. She plays around the greenway collecting bits and pieces; canna mulch, kangaroo poo, parrot feather from the swales, lemon grass mulch, the odd lump or two of horse manure from the local oval, and tips her brews of seaweed or comfrey over her 'compost cake' regularly.

On our south veranda her worm farm thrives on our kitchen scraps and that mass of wrigglers are producing the soil which brings her joy. Her compost bin is a work of art, and there should be an honorary degree awarded by the U3A for such achievements. And she's practical. I never have to stand in front of a perfume counter, overwhelmed by the heady vapours, wondering which smell would suit her best.

'Happy anniversary,' I say.  
'You remembered! I'm impressed.'

I take her outside and place her next to our strawberry patch which is producing strawberries from June to December – the sweetest I have ever tasted.

'Close your eyes, and wait here.' I shuffle off to the garage where I have hidden her gift in the boot of the car and return.  
'Surprise.' I stab the long-handled fork into the ground behind her.

She turns, sees her present, and gives me such a warm hug. I want to hold the memory of her radiance forever.

'Perfect. I can handle the tough stuff now. Thank you.' And off she goes to the mound of dirt that needs turning and I hear her

humming as she works the soil.

'You will let me have a turn?' I ask as I come alongside.

'Happy Anniversary,' she says as we lock fingers and lips in the hand-over.

This year we were in London for her birthday, so she had to wait until we returned home. I had her present in the garage.

One of the things I do in retirement is to go out with a party of men to remove barbed-wire and old fencing wire from the land which we all share. Years ago this area was a farm, and runs of the fences are still present in the hoop pine forest, on the terraces, or in the remnant bush. Native animals get caught in the wire and it can be hazardous to people exploring the landscape.

I found her absorbed in checking her green manure crop.

'Here's your birthday present. Happy birthday.'

'Perfect,' she responded. 'That's just what I needed to grow the snow peas on.'

The roll of recycled fencing wire is covered in produce ready to pick. She's a clever girl.

**Green Manures**  
From Diane Kelly

Much has been discussed at Club recently about green manures, and one of the members asked "what should you plant when?".

I came across an article in the June 2006 newsletter, which I found interesting, and which gives a planting guide for 10 more common plants to use. Here is an extract.

**Legumes:**

- Alfalfa is hard to establish unless your soil is well drained and fairly neutral. It has deep taproots and is a very productive nitrogen-fixer. Alfalfa can be cut several times annually for mulch. A stand of alfalfa can last many years if not turned over.

- Clovers tolerate humid and acidic conditions much more than alfalfa.
- Soybeans and other warm-weather beans are ideally planted November or December to serve as both a food and a cover crop.
- Field peas fix the least nitrogen of the legumes. It is a good weed competitor, especially sown with oats.
- Lupins have deep roots and make a dependable first crop in a rebuilding scheme
- Chickpeas or garbanzo beans are among the highest nitrogen-fixers and are also a nutritious and delicious food.

#### Grains:

- Barley is highly drought-tolerant.
- Buckwheat is an excellent soil-builder. With an early start, gardeners can turn under two or three crops a season, adding great amounts of organic matter to the soil. Buckwheat draws up phosphorus from deeper soil levels and is high in calcium. It will grow in poor soil; its white flowers are much sought-after by bees; and it reseeds itself if not turned under.
- Oats can be grown in a variety of soils, but do best in cool, moist conditions. As a green manure planted in spring, it works well with peas and beans. For a winter cover, oats should be planted early in the autumn as it dies after the first hard frost.
- Annual ryegrass also dies in winter, so it should be planted by late February to leave a thatch of stubby residue through till spring.
- Spring wheat and winter wheat both tolerate low-moisture conditions.
- Rye and wheat both contain natural toxins that will suppress not only weed growth but also insect pests in subsequent crops.

#### Further Considerations:

- After turning under a green manure, delay planting for at least a week in the case of legumes and two weeks for grains. Early decomposition gives off ethylene gas that

inhibits seed germination; also multiplying micro-organisms temporarily use up available nitrogen as they break down the green manure. Winter rye and winter barley release toxins that can affect emerging veggies as well as weed seedlings. Most green manures are incorporated into the soil while they are still lush and green and therefore break down fairly fast. If they mature past this stage, plants start to consist of much more carbon than nitrogen. In this case, the addition of composted manure or other nitrogen sources can speed up the decomposition process, as can a dusting of lime if your soil is on the acidic side.

#### Green Manure: Alfalfa

**Sowing Time:** Late spring - Midsummer

**Growing Period:** 1 year

**Soil Type:** Avoid acid or wet soils

**Nitrogen Fixer?** Yes

#### Green Manure: Buckwheat

**Sowing Time:** Late spring - Late summer

**Growing Period:** 1-3 months

**Soil Type:** Thrives on poor soil

**Nitrogen Fixer?** No

#### Green Manure: Broadbeans

**Sowing Time:** Autumn - Early winter

**Growing Period:** Over winter

**Soil Type:** Prefers heavy soil

**Nitrogen Fixer?** Yes

#### Green Manure: Clovers

**Sowing Time:** 2-18 mths or more

**Growing Period:** Spring-summer months

**Soil Type:** Most soil types with good drainage

**Nitrogen Fixer?** Yes

#### Green Manure: Lupin

**Sowing Time:** Early spring - Midsummer

**Growing Period:** 2-4 months

**Soil Type:** Light, acid soils

**Nitrogen Fixer?** Yes

#### Green Manure: Mustard

**Sowing Time:** Early spring - Late summer

**Growing Period:** 1-2 months

**Soil Type:** Most

**Nitrogen Fixer?** No



**Green Manure: Oats****Sowing Time:** Autumn/spring**Growing Period:** 3-4 months**Soil Type:** Most well- drained soils**Nitrogen Fixer?** No**Green Manure: Peas****Sowing Time:** Autumn/spring**Growing Period:** 2-3 months**Soil Type:** Well-drained soils**Nitrogen Fixer?** Yes**Green Manure: Ryegrass****Sowing Time:** Autumn/Spring/ Summer**Growing Period:** Varies depending on Species**Soil Type:** Most soils**Nitrogen Fixer?** No**Green Manure: Wheat****Sowing Time:** Autumn/spring**Growing Period:** 3-5 months**Soil Type:** Well-drained soils**Nitrogen Fixer?** No**Making the Most of Vegetables  
From Diane Kelly****Using Waste Bits:**

Parts of vegetables can be harvested even if they aren't really mature. Try parsnips tops. Use them like celery in stews and soup, or finely grated in salads. Beetroot tops can substitute for silver beet, as can turnip tops. If these are young and tender they are also excellent raw. Try young turnip tops grated up in mashed potato. Try eating garlic tops instead of the bulbs – again, raw or cooked – and try the leafy tips of broad beans, broccoli or Brussels sprout leaves, young sweet corn teased out from next to the stalk, or zucchini or pumpkin flowers.

The latter are wonderful. Stuff them with leftover fried rice and stew them in stock, or dip them stuffed or empty in egg, then bread-crumbs, and deep-fry them. Serve with lemon juice or hollandaise sauce. (You can tell the male flowers, most of which are expendable, by looking for the swelling at the base of the flower.)

**Using Immature Vegetables:**

- Try very young cucumbers. Pick them when they're no longer than your little finger or even smaller. Slice them thinly so they are almost transparent and quickly stir-fry them.
- Immature corn cobs can be kept on the stalk by bending it over them, to shelter them from frost and rain so they won't rot before they mature. They will continue to mature slowly this way until the stalks are almost brittle. Young corn, Chinese style, is delicious. Whenever you pull out a corn stalk, run your fingers down the leaves to make sure an immature cob isn't forming. If it is, pluck, stir-fry and enjoy!
- Pumpkins can be eaten as soon as they form behind the flower – just like small squash, which is, in fact, what they are. They won't taste as sweet as mature pumpkins. They are more mellow and nutty, like zucchini.
- Try pickling small watermelons before they turn pink inside. Use a sweet, well-spiced marinade. Not that the melon will taste of much – all you will taste will be the pickling solution – but the texture will be excellent.
- Carrots, beetroot, parsnips, turnips and the like can be picked and eaten as soon as you can be bothered. The smaller the sweeter. But all should continue to mature through winter as long as the ground doesn't freeze – especially under a thick bed of mulch.
- Cook lettuce that hasn't hearted, in stock, to eat by itself and for lettuce soup, or wrap it round rice for stuffed "cabbage".
- Pickle green tomatoes, or make green-tomato chutney or jam.

**Source:** Jackie French, *The Wilderness Garden*



**Getting to Know ....  
Roger & Pauline Behrendorff**

*Interview by Diane Kelly*

My first conversation when I arrived at Roger and Pauline Behrendorff's home was about keeping a worm farm at the correct temperature. My second conversation was about the native violets that fill the area underneath the southern veranda of their house, and the third was about the soil in the garden behind the garage. By then I knew I had met up with some dedicated gardeners.

Roger and Pauline moved to their home in the Eco-Village in the Currumbin Valley three and a half years ago. Prior to that, they had been living in Traralgon in eastern Victoria. In 2004 they sold their house, travelled around Australia in a caravan, and ended up at the Gold Coast. In 2006 they decided to live in the Eco-Village. They bought an 800 sq meter block, built their home, and learnt a lot about sustainable housing and the importance of shade in this sub-tropical climate.

Across the road from Roger and Pauline's house is the Currumbin Creek. Their block is flat, and spoon drains have been developed to divert the over-flow water from the tanks (which hold a total of 54,000 litres) down to the swales that follow the "green way" at the rear of the property. In this section of the Eco-Village, a hamlet of ten houses share the "green way", which is a pathed and lawned area where community fruit trees grow, and kangaroos sleep in the shade.

Gypsum and 5-in-1 were applied when the Behrendorff's first started to develop their yard, because they were working with mounds of clay and limited top-soil left by the builders. The first gardens were built and then edged with lemon grass plants, and the first crop planted were potatoes. Since that time, a number of raised beds have been developed around the property. Pauline (whom Roger cheerfully acknowledges is the REAL gardener in the family) uses a "compost cake" theory for developing the soil – she starts with

cardboard or newspapers, and then adds layers of green/dry/activators/manure/water weed (from the nearby creek) and a comfrey brew. Added to those are worm castings, dry cow manure, kangaroo droppings and an occasional dose of Sea Sol. Now much of the block is producing healthy vegetables, bird-attracting native shrubs, and fruit trees.

I asked Roger and Pauline if they had a design in mind when they started to establish their garden. They did, but once they actually moved into their house, they soon realized that the plan would have to be modified to solve the drainage "challenges". As with most gardeners, they see their garden as a "work in progress".

So where did this interest in gardening come from? Pauline's mother grew vegetables, and her father was a landscape gardener, nursery man and bonsai expert. When Pauline lived in Victoria, she had a small vegetable garden, but her main focus was their family of three sons. And Roger? As Pauline commented "Roger's first love is sport".

But now Roger prunes trees, collects lemon grass for mulch, does the heavy lifting, moves soil and mows. He and Pauline are active members of the Ecovillage Earth Carers, who plant out area on the Eco-village site once a month. They have also joined the Currumbin Creek Care Group who, in conjunction with the GCCC, have now weeded, planted out and revegetated an area of 2.4 kms along the bank of the creek. They seemed to enjoy the experience, in spite of the ticks, leeches and spiders!

And in their spare time? Apart from participating in the community cricket games (after all, Roger needs some reward for his hard work!), Roger and Pauline enjoy monthly visits to the local amateur theatres on the Coast, and they also give time and support to Teenage Adventure Camps Qld (TAQ). TAQ is a non-profit volunteer group that raises funds and provides an annual camp for teenagers with life-threatening ailments, many of

whom are in wheel-chairs. Pauline's comment was that "the reward is in the participating", and she tells stories of the young people sharing in helicopter rides, karaoke nights, water cruises and Harley Davidson rides.

So what else did I learn about Roger and Pauline Behrendorff?

- Roger's best gardening moment: January 2010 – sitting on the back deck – sharing their most successful watermelon crop yet with their family – and spitting the seeds over the railing.
- Pauline's best gardening moment: Her pride & joy (the fruit of which won a prize in our Club's "Biggest ....." competition) is the strawberry patch, and her 2 ¼ year old grandson Harvey helped Grandad pick a bowl full to share for breakfast.
- Roger's worst gardening moment: The two seasons when no watermelons grew – they missed planting early due to the wet summers.
- Pauline's worst gardening moment: The discovery of Mullumbimby couch in the lawn.
- Pauline finds weeding therapeutic – "being out in the early morning, working in the garden, sipping on a cup of tea .... it's just wonderful".
- On holidays, Pauline enjoys reading. She also writes creatively, and belongs to a local writing group.
- Pauline has enjoyed making 3-fruit marmalade; rosella jam and minestrone soup from the produce of her garden and the greenway. Most meals are supplemented by greens and herbs from the garden.
- Roger's favourite foods from the garden include pineapples, paw-paws, chillies, Brazilian parsley, strawberries, and – of course – watermelons!
- The Behrendorff's enjoy attending the GCOG meetings because we help each other learn the value of soil in growing vegetables – they always come away

with ideas to try, and good solutions. Also, coming from Gippsland, they needed help in learning to garden in the sub-tropics.

Roger and Pauline also had some hints for new gardeners:

- Begin with what you can manage – "start in a small way".
- Understand the soil – "read and be informed".
- Look around at what you can use that is freely available.
- Find people to learn from (one of Pauline's favourite author's is Esther Dean, with her "Growing Without Digging" book).
- Don't push plants that don't grow – they produce when they are ready.

So if you want to learn more about developing a garden in clay soil, or growing good watermelons and strawberries, or creating a productive but peaceful environment, have a chat to Roger and Pauline Behrendorff.



"The Jolly Roger" - an innovative raised garden bed!



Asparagus, harvested lemon grass, grape vine and a kangaroo in the green-way

### What To Do in March

#### March:

March is a gentle month. The sun isn't so fierce and there's a touch of lushness in the growth: the autumn flush before winter. The cooler air and warm soil start to tempt you into the garden again after the harsh days of summer:

- Move shrubs and small trees while the weather is cool, but still warm enough for them to put out new roots.
- Leave pumpkins in a sunny spot (e.g. the shed roof or on paving) for a few days to "cure" so their skins will harden before storing them (on their sides – moisture collects in the tops and bottoms and the pumpkin may rot).

#### What to Feed:

- Scatter blood and bone or any of the "extras" on citrus and other evergreen fruit trees.

#### Pests:

- Most pests will be vanishing as the weather cools down. Keep up fruit fly lures until none have been caught for three weeks.

#### Other Jobs:

- Plant more peas or broad beans for "green manure" – slash them in late winter or early spring, just as they start to flower, to provide mulch and fertiliser for spring planting in a "no-dig" garden
- Start to prepare for frost now; work out which trees are vulnerable – like avocados, citrus and tamarillos – and start building shelters for them
- Cover part of the garden with weed-mat or clear plastic to make a weed-free area for winter-planted onions

- Get rid of most of your tomato glut by drying them: just halve the tomatoes, place them on aluminium foil in the sun, and take them inside or cover them at night. They should take about three to four days to dry. Place them in a jar and cover them with olive oil – and garlic and herbs if you want to.

*Source: Jackie French, The Wilderness Garden*

### MORE ON....What To Do in March

#### Around the Garden:

Damage from pests and diseases will be slowing down at this time of year, but it is still necessary to be on the look-out to prevent pests overwintering and becoming a problem next year. Clear any debris in beds, consigning it to the compost heap, or burning it if it is diseased. Yellowing leaves on plants should be removed as they will encourage mildew and botrytis. Any pests like aphids still around can be dealt with by squashing them. Shoots tips heavily infected with mildew or overwhelmed by aphids can become distorted under the attack. Trim these back to healthy growth and burn or destroy the prunings.

#### Cultivating Clay Soil:

This type of soil can be difficult to cultivate, especially if it has not been worked for several years. Now is a good time to dig it, when the soil is reasonably dry. This will give the winter weather plenty of time to play its part in breaking down lumps of soil, ready for making seed beds or planting out in the spring. Roughly dig the soil, incorporating plenty of organic matter and leave it rough for the winter. To permanently improve the drainage, dig in, if you can order it, some coarse river sand. Combined with the organic matter, this will also raise the level of the soil

slightly, making it drain more easily and helping it to warm up faster in spring.

#### **Trees and Shrubs:**

Autumn and early spring are good times to move evergreen shrubs, while the soil is relatively warm. Dig around the base as far as you can, and as deep as you can, to take as good a root system as possible. Wrap the roots in hessian or polythene sheeting eased under the rootball to retain moisture. Tie the sheet up and move the plant to its new location. Dig a hole big enough to take the rootball without having to cram the roots in. Be sure to plant to the same depth as before. Put the plant in the hole, pull the wrapping out from under the roots and gradually fill the hole. Water in well, and stake the plant if in an exposed place. A windbreak of hessian on the windward side of the plant will help reduce evaporation of water from the leaves.

#### **Climbers:**

- Sow climbing sweet peas now. Run a trellis for sweet peas north to south, so that the vines receive as much sun as possible.
- Plant the climbing vanilla orchid which produces delicious vanilla beans. The pods are harvested when yellow and unripe – the vanilla flavor only develops during the curing process when enzyme activity turns the pods dark brown. Pods can be used many times over if they are washed afterwards and redried.

#### **Vegetables and Herbs:**

1. Cut down asparagus foliage now that it is turning yellow. After doing so, give the plants a generous mulch of organic matter. This is also a good time to prepare a site for planting new asparagus crowns this winter. If your soil is a heavy clay it is worth ordering some sharp sand to incorporate into the soil to improve drainage, as asparagus likes a well-drained soil.

2. Pick marrows, pumpkins and squashes. Harvest marrow and squash before the flesh becomes coarse. They will keep in a cool place for some time, and can be deep frozen for longer storage. Pumpkins to be stored must be picked when fully ripe without any green skin or stem. Choose pumpkin from early sowings, which have had a longer time to ripen. Cut from the vine when the fruit stalk begins to turn brown and wither.
3. Vegetables such as beetroot, carrots and turnips can be lifted and stored for use over winter. Parsnips are best left in the ground as they taste better when they have had a bit of frost. To store all the others, select only undamaged roots. Any damaged ones should be used straight away and not stored, as they are liable to spread disease. Lift the roots and twist or cut off the foliage, leaving a few centimeters of stem. Put the roots in boxes between layers of sand or old potting compost. This prevents them from drying out too quickly and keeps them in the dark, discouraging them from growing again.
4. Lift potatoes in areas where they are cropping. Do this on a warm, sunny day and leave them on the surface of the soil for an hour or two to dry out. Again, store only undamaged ones, in paper sacks tied at the neck. Potatoes must be kept dark, otherwise they turn green.
5. Continue to blanch celery, leaving just a tuft of foliage poking out at the top, if you are growing the blanching type. Harvest self-blanching types before the first frost.

#### **Sowing and Planting:**

In mild, temperate areas and warm areas, we can sow:

Beetroot, broccoli, carrots, cauliflower, chicory, cress and other herbs, khol rabi,

**Contd...**

leeks, mustard, onions, parsnips, peas, radishes, silver beet, swedes and turnips. Also – beans, capsicums, cucumbers, eggplant, melons, potatoes, squash, sweet potatoes, sweet corn, tomatoes and zucchinis. We can also sow a winter variety of lettuce and also cabbages.

#### Protected Crops:

Pick tomatoes, peppers and egg-plant. Continue harvesting tomatoes as they colour up. Removing some of the leaves from around the trusses of fruit will let more light in, hastening the ripening process. This will also increase air circulation around the plants, reducing the possibility of botrytis affecting the ripening fruits.

Harvest peppers regularly. If you are growing the chilli type of peppers, bear in mind that the riper they get, the hotter they will be. If there are any fruit still to ripen at the end of the month, remove these plants from the ground, shake the soil off the roots and hang them up in a warm place with the fruits still attached to the plant; they will soon ripen.

Eggplants should be picked when the fruits are well coloured but the skin still taut and shiny. If they are left any longer and the skin begins to wrinkle, they will taste bitter. They are harvested by cutting the stalk at least 2.5cm away from the fruits. They don't keep long, so use them quickly. In tropical areas, they can still be planted.

#### Lawns:

Towards the end of March, most gardeners start the annual round of work on the lawn to reinvigorate it. (This can also be done later in the year, say September.)

- **Remove thatch from the lawn:** Over a period of time, a layer of dead grass and other debris accumulates in any lawn; this is called "thatch". If it is left in the lawn over the years it restricts air movement around the grass and can cause problems with surface drainage, encouraging moss and other weeds to colonize the lawn.

- **Aeration:** Like any other plant, grass needs air, and the surface of the lawn gets very compacted over the summer with constant use and cutting every week. Aerate the lawn with a fork pushed into the ground to a depth of 15cm at 15-18cm intervals.
- **Top-dress immediately after aerating:** Top-dressing ensures that aerating holes stay open and revitalizes the upper layer of soil. A mix of three parts sieved garden soil, two parts of sharp sand, and one part sieved garden compost is the best top-dressing to use.
- **Established lawn can be fed now:** Don't use high-nitrogen feeds – at this time of year you need one of the low-nitrogen fertilizers, as you don't want to encourage soft, sappy growth.

*Source: Ian Spence, Gardening Through the Year in Australia*

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Postal: 12 Benaroon Crt, Tallebudgera

#### Prostate Awareness Twin Towns & Tweed Coast

Just a click away:

[www.prostateawarenessaustralia.com](http://www.prostateawarenessaustralia.com) or

contact Ross Davis for more info:

[rossco12@bigpond.com](mailto:rossco12@bigpond.com)



### VEGETABLES

**FEBRUARY:** Artichoke, Beetroot, Carrot, Celery, Cucumber, Eggplant, Endive, Lettuce (under shade cloth), Marrow, Parsnip, Potato, Pumpkin, Radish, Rhubarb, Shallots, Squash, Sunflower, Tomato, Zucchini.

**MARCH:** Beans, Beetroot, Broad beans, Broccoli, Brussels Sprouts, Cabbage, Carrot, Cauliflower, Celery, Celeriac, Kale, Kohlrabi, Lettuce, Leek, Onion, Parsnip, Pea, Potato, Radish, Rhubarb, Shallots, Silverbeet, Strawberry, Tomato, Turnip.

### HERBS

#### FEBRUARY

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

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

Echinacea, Fennel, Hyssop, Lavender, Lemon Balm, Licorice, Lovage, Marjoram, Mint, Mushroom Plant, Oregano, Parsley, Rosemary, Sage, Salad Burnet, Stevia, French Tarragon, Winter Tarragon, Thyme, Upland Cress, Watercress, Winter Savoury.

#### MARCH

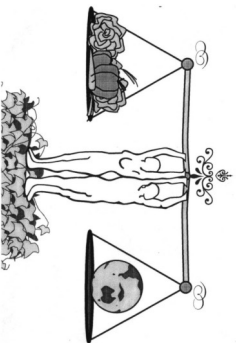
**Annual:** Borage, Calendula, Chamomile, Chervil, Coriander, Dill, Garlic, Italian parsley, Misome, Mizuna, Nasturtium, Rocket.

**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.

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.*



**NEWSLETTER**

**Meetings held:**  
3rd Thursday of the Month

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

**Next meeting:**  
Thursday 15 March 2012