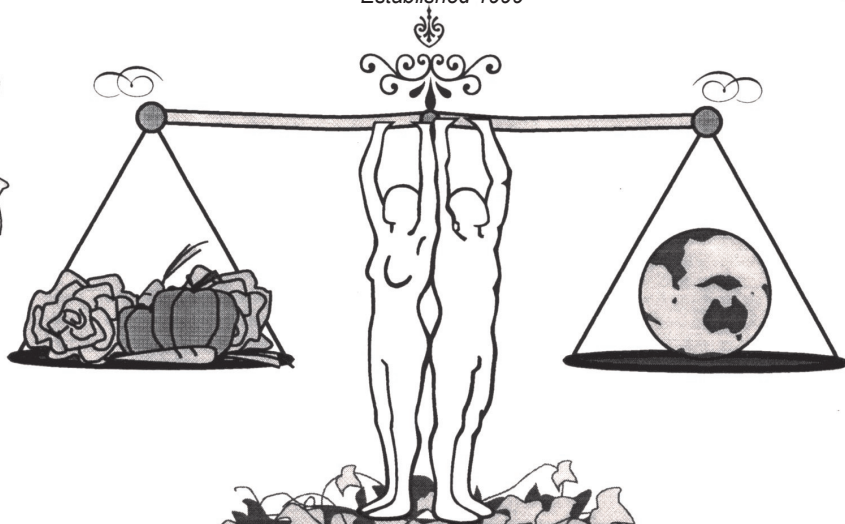


GOLD COAST ORGANIC GROWERS Inc.

Established 1999



NEWSLETTER

Volume 17 February 2014 Issue 1
GARDENING IN SUMMER

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OUR NEXT MEETING: Thursday 20 March

Notice Board

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

Meetings Held:

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 transfer funds directly into our bank account, send cheques (payable to GCOG) to Diane Kelly, or just pay at the door.

Name: Gold Coast Organic Growers

Bank: Suncorp

BSB: 484-799

Account: 0014-21651

Seed Bank:

Packets are \$2.00 each.

Members' Market Corner:

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

Raffle Table:

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

Library:

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

Advertising: (Note 11 issues/year)

1/4 page: \$10 an issue, or \$100 per year

1/2 page: \$20 an issue or \$200 per year

full page: \$30 an issue or \$300 per year

2013 Committee

President	Maria Roberson (07) 5598 6609
Vice President	Roger Peterson (07) 5534 8061 rpeterson.1@bigpond.com
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Secretary	Karen Hart (07) 5551 1297
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Seed Bank	Roger Griffiths (07) 5530 5067
Seed Assistant	Lyn Mansfield 0409 645 888
Supper Co-ordinator	Paul Roberson (07) 5598 6609
The position of Trip Co-ordinator has been abolished.	

Newsletter:

Contributions and ideas welcome. Send in a photo of what's going on in your patch. Email Angela at w.a.anderson@bigpond.com or text a photo - 0439 488 166.

Thanks to Contributors:

Diane Kelly, Maria Roberson, Jill Barber, Neil Ross

Website:

www.goldcoastorganicgrowers.org.au

Notice Board

Membership Renewals

NEW: You can now pay your membership fee directly into the GCOG bank account.

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

Remember to put your Name and Membership Number in the comment field.

Note the number in brackets after your name is your membership number - you will need to quote this number in the comment field, if you pay via online banking.

Membership Renewals:

Overdue: Henry Blonner (108), Debbie Jones (254), Glenn & Joan Jones (266), Ross & Jenny Davis (199), David Wyatt & Helen Wainwright (284), Marion Symons (155), Peter & Patricia Edwards (163), Anissa Loades (228), Roger Griffiths (272), John Stytler (313), Winsome Gunning (314), Julie Abraham (315)

February: Terri Groth (125), Barry O'Rourke (185), Roger & Pauline Behrendorff (232), Barbara Morgan (246), Ken & Pat Jenyns (273), Judy McCracken (274), Jerry & Justin Rogers (275), Suzanne Blatcher (276), Tali Filip (277), Marino Canala (316), Gaynor Allen (317), Anne-Marie Andrew (337), Andrew, Helen & Claudia Blum (344)

March: Regina Lacgalvs (208), Greg Wiltshire (320), Louise Newell (321), Angela Anderson (323), Judy Reiser (338), John Clarke (345)

Welcome to our new member: Doris James

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President's Message

Hello Everyone,

Due to a couple of logistical difficulties in January this is the first newsletter for the year, so let me take this opportunity to welcome you back. Our January meeting was pretty quiet, though we did have a lot of new people visiting, with some even joining up on the night. You may have noticed that there are always a few new faces at each meeting and I would ask you to make them feel welcome when you get the chance. Naturally we are all about exposing as many people as possible to organic gardening and the outstanding benefits of growing your own food.

The vegetable patch sure had some challenges over the last three months or so, with plants having to cope with much less rain than we usually get this time of year. Hand watering was time consuming and became pretty tedious after the first five minutes, let alone weeks. However, there is an upside to the lack of rain as not too many weeds were able to survive and seed saving was a breeze. I was able to collect a much larger variety of plant seeds as they had the opportunity to mature and dry rather than rot or moulder as usually happens this growing season.

Now is the time to prepare for the autumn planting season, this is a super time to get plants growing. Check out the planting guide in the back of this newsletter, it is reliable and suited our region's climate. One of the most common mistakes in vegetable gardening is to follow a planting guide that is not specific to where you live. I might add that I have seen planting schedules shown on a popular gardening show as well as gardening books that have all been incorrect and would lead more than just the new gardener down the wrong path.

New seeds for the autumn and winter growing season will be available at the March meet-

ing. As always, we are looking for seed donations from our seed saving members. Donation can be given to me on meeting nights rather than presenting them to the seed table convenors. We are still looking for some Mouse Melon seeds and some pretty flower seeds are needed too. The cost of seed we have to buy has nearly doubled over the last few years, so the more seed donations we receive the better, as it is the only way we can keep our prices low.

A new year brings an old reminder for members to participate in bringing a plate of something to share for supper and or a prize for our highly prized raffle table. All members and visitors are asked to wash, dry and put away their cups, plates and cutlery and to help with the tidy up at the end of the night. Also, those wishing to sell anything on meeting nights, please check with me so I can give you the low down on what is required. The "barter and swap" table is going through some teething problems, however it is expected to morph into something we will come to love and value, so keep bringing your stuff in.

Members are to be congratulated on returning books to the library on time and keeping a protective eye on our wonderful resources and books. After the devastating loss of so many articles over recent years, I am sure none of us wishes to see that repeated so keep up the good work. Just a reminder, only members are able to borrow from the library, just one of the perks of being a member of GCOG.

Happy Growing
Maria

Garden Hygiene

Cleaning stakes: After clearing crops such as runner beans, always clean the stakes. Brush off the soil, remove plant debris and dislodge any insects. Overnight soak the ends that were in the soil in a bucket of household detergent or horticultural disinfectant. Rinse, allow to dry, and then store them in a dry place.

*1001 Hints & Tips for the Garden
Readers Digest*

Grey Water - Health & Safety From Diane Kelly

We have had a number of discussions at our Club meetings over the years about the advantages/disadvantages of using household greywater on our gardens. Recently our surlage pump decided to stop working automatically, so we have been manually dispersing the water as the tank became full – so I found this article in a 2012 Organic Gardener magazine to be very relevant.

Untreated household greywater (as opposed to treated greywater) can contain harmful pathogens so it has the potential to cause ill-health, but when you follow these general handling rules the risks are greatly reduced, making it safe to use in certain areas of the garden. **Note:** All references below relate to the reuse of untreated greywater.

- Don't store greywater
- Don't let greywater come directly in contact with humans. Avoid spraying greywater around in the air.
- Always apply greywater directly to mulched garden beds.
- Use greywater on shrubs, trees and ornamental perennials.
- Don't use greywater on vegetables, ground-dwelling edible herbs and potted plants.
- Greywater is safe to use on fruit trees, but avoid splash and avoid irrigating those trees where fruit that falls could be eaten.
- Don't use greywater in areas where children or pets play.
- Don't allow greywater to run off into storm-water drains, neighbouring properties or a water-course.
- Avoid irrigating with greywater within one metre of boundary lines, buildings, inground pools, and inground water tanks.
- Don't allow greywater to pool on the ground
- Don't use greywater from washing of nappies or soiled clothing, or when a household member is sick or has diarrhoea.
- Always wash your hands thoroughly after contact with greywater.

Organic Gardener - January/February 2012

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GC Visitors Guide 2013



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Rose Adams
“Finding Your Inner Green”
 By Jill Barber

Last month, I invited Rose Adams, Secretary of Gecko, Gold Coast and Hinterland Environment Council, to come and speak at the GCOG meeting about the organisation. Gecko is the Gold Coast’s peak non-government, not-for-profit, environment group, and its volunteers have been working to protect and enhance the natural environmental assets of our region since 1989. Rose has been a volunteer at Gecko for the past fourteen years, and she feels that its ethos is similar to that of the GCOG in its care of the environment and love of nature. Interestingly, Maria pointed out that its building, by Thrower’s Bridge, on the bank of the Currumbin Creek, was where the GCOG’s meetings were first held, and which was originally the first school in the area, Rose told us.

Rose herself has always been fascinated with the living world, and is passionate about the restoration and conservation of nature, and dedicated to caring for her own bushland garden. She joined Gecko within a week of arriving here from South Africa in 1999, and “has never looked back”, loving its advocacy side as well. It has hundreds of members, who are not radical, being from all walks of life. It was founded following community involvement with Currumbin’s first community group, “Friends of Currumbin”. This campaign was the movement against reclaiming the land on the north bank of the Currumbin River for marine development. Instead, it became the Taerrabora Reserve, and, due to the work of the bushcare group and the Gold Coast City Council, it is now a lovely recreation area, with walkways and picnic spots.

The Gecko building has been beautified in recent years by volunteers, with a dreamtime mural created by a local aboriginal female artist, and decorative pathways and little gardens. Its operation is run using a business framework, with policies and procedures, including care for its volunteers, many of whom are sent by Centrelink. It has become almost

a training centre in this way. Its operation encompasses different areas, and there is an Events Team Coordinator to ensure the smooth running of each public event. For example, the annual “Green Day Out” festival in June to celebrate World Environment Day was held for many years at Winders Park along the banks of the Currumbin River and then at Karrawa Park in Broadbeach. This event has now been re-styled as “Green Week”, a week-long, city-wide event showcasing the work of environmentally minded groups and individuals.

There are also numerous events organised throughout the year, including the monthly Guest Speaker Night on the 4th Wednesday of each month. Gecko invites interesting speakers on environmental topics, and has over the years presented frogs, spiders, bats and even the famous Wolf Blass eagle, “Soren”, to the audience. As well, issues such as plastic pollution, marine protection, Currumbin’s shorebirds and other topics are covered. All are welcome and there is no charge.

Gecko’s Mission Statement is “To conserve, protect and enhance the environment”, so Gecko campaigns to prevent environmentally destructive projects going ahead. Following research and public consultation, Gecko offers concrete solutions to better outcomes for the environment, and even entirely rejects some proposals, such as the Naturelink cableway proposed for Springbrook in the late 90’s. Its construction would have been highly destructive, introducing many pathogens into the environment and increasing fire risk. As well, it would have involved a lot of clearing of native habitat to make way for the towers and access roads.

Another campaign opposed a Cruise Ship Terminal in the GC Broadwater, proposed under the Beattie government in 2005. This proposal was defeated, but development of the Broadwater, including a cruise ship terminal, has again been proposed. This will require enormous, costly and ongoing dredging, alienate public open space at the Spit and have major environmental impacts on the

marine ecosystem as well as the loss of jobs in industries currently based in the area. At the same time, developer, Bob Ell, has put forward a similar project at Bilinga, which has met with strong public opposition. Gecko continues to campaign against all land grabs of our public open space.

Falling under the umbrella of the Qld Conservation Council in Brisbane, Gecko also joins with other Conservation Councils across the State in various campaigns, including Wild Rivers Protection and protection of the Great Barrier Reef.

Rose turned at this point to talk about the satisfactions of volunteering with Gecko, which are numerous, and preferably involve daily connection with nature. When you know and love something, she feels, you naturally want to protect it. She referred to the book, *Last Child in the Woods* by Richard Louv, which is about “nature deficit disorder”. Our children today are lacking the outdoors experiences we enjoyed as children, and this may be remedied by walks in the bush, picnics and the like, thereby improving our psychic health. Philosopher Glen Albrecht coined the phrase “solastalgia”, which is the distress that is produced by environmental change impacting on people while they are directly connected to their home environment. These feelings can be alleviated by connecting with beautiful natural places. It’s joyous to celebrate nature, and, as a volunteer, one can help to foster this awareness in others.

Rose ended with a brief mention of climate change, for which a wealth of scientific information exists, she explained. She quoted an oft-repeated, ironical question to respond to nay sayers of the negative contribution of mankind’s pollution and destruction on the planet’s climate: “What if it’s all a hoax and we create a better world for nothing?!” Hmm, how about that? About 380 people recently participated in the local rally for Climate Action Day at Burleigh, where Gecko and other environmental groups spoke. Recently, Rose further added, Australian representatives joined others from around the world at Warsaw to discuss the next round of commit-

ments towards reducing our carbon footprint. Australia did not shine at this forum, failing to send a government minister for the first time, and winning this year’s Colossal Fossil award for its failure to support meaningful cuts in greenhouse gas emissions.

Someone asked about the building of Gecko’s cob oven, and we learnt that it is built with hemp straw and clay, and was to be officially launched on Saturday November 30th, Gecko’s awards night, at 6:30pm. It will be dedicated to the memory of the late Chris Walton, from Eco Village, as that night is when people throughout the community are recognised for their hard work for the environment. This year’s nominations include a 10-year-old girl for her work in koala protection.

Gecko’s monthly newsletter can be found on their website: www.gecko.org.au. Membership in Gecko requires just a one-off fee of \$16.50 for pensioners and students, \$25.00 for singles and \$35.00 for families. New members are warmly welcomed.

We were all very appreciative of Rose taking the time and effort to come and fill us in on the valuable work of the Gecko volunteers in our community! This was especially so, considering the challenge she faced in not having our technology “come to the party” to allow her to do the powerpoint part of her presentation. She rallied admirably to carry on gracefully without it. We were very happy to award her with a basket of our own assorted home-grown/made goodies as a token of this appreciation.

Lavender – Cutting For Drying

To dry lavender, pick it when the flowers show colour but before they are fully open. Cut off the full length of the flower stalks, tie them together in small bunches, and hang them upside down in a cool, airy place to dry.

*1001 Hints & Tips for the Garden
Readers Digest*

**Getting To Know
Val Sier
By Diane Kelly**

Usually when I'm going to a Club member's house to do an interview, I obtain the address and then look up 'Google' to work out how to get there. But this time I had to turn to the dictionary, because Val told me to go to the Eco Village in the Currumbin Valley and "look for the yurts".

A "yurt" is a house based on a design that has been used in Central Asia for over three thousand years. Historically they were circular buildings made of wooden frames and felt, which were fully portable, and which could be located to take advantage of the direction of the sun and wind. Today "yurts" are still designed to make the most of winter sun, and to reduce the intensity of summer sun, as well as to optimise ventilation and air flow.

So this was a pretty good indication that I was going to learn a lot during this interview with Val Sier, and indeed it was a morning filled with gardens, fruit trees, jams and chutneys, compost bins, lead lighting, orchids, black sapote cake and yurts!!

Fulfilling a life-long wish to live in the country, Val moved to the Currumbin Valley three years ago, after having lived in the same house in Balmoral in Brisbane for 55 years. As a young girl, she often (and I quote) "wagged school so that I could get out and play in the flower garden". This interest developed into the idea of running a flower shop, and ultimately Val became a successful florist who designed and arranged floral displays at shows and other major events. Val also taught floral arranging, and her students have been very successful. Her interest in flowers took her on a number of trips to Japan, where every two years she and her husband would travel on the famous "fast train" to various major cities to attend floral competitions.

As a member of the Mt Gravatt Lapidary Club, Val cut opals for twenty years. She and her husband also had the shared interest in lead lighting, and set into the walls of her kitchen are multi-coloured windows that each of them made. Now, apart from her garden, Val keeps busy cooking, making jams and chutneys, swimming and going to the Murwillumbah Markets. Val's favourite meals to cook are baked dinners, curries, Chinese food and baklava! Her jams have been very successful – she won 1st prize in the Rosella Jam section of the Mudgeeraba Show last year, and then 1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes in the Open Category. The jams she had entered were Finger Lime, Kemembilla (Ceylon Gooseberry) and Mangosteen, Passionfruit & Ginger – not just your average strawberry or plum!



The jams ready for friends & customers to enjoy!

Val had just returned from the Murwillumbah Markets on the day that I visited her, and she was very pleased because she had been able to buy a basketful of pink finger limes for her next batch of jam. It takes considerable time to soak the limes (to remove the bitterness from the skin) and then to cut the fruit finely and evenly. I asked Val what made a good jam, and she used a jar of finger lime jam as an example, showing how the fruit was evenly spread throughout the mixture, and that there were no air bubbles in the jar. (I was given a jar to take home, but I'm afraid there are only about 2 or 3 teaspoons of it left now!)

Val purchased her block of land – which slopes slightly, backs onto farmland, and

overlooks a park and a lake – six years ago. Her daughter designed the house, which is actually five separate “yurts” joined by a covered timber verandah. Four of the buildings are for accommodation, and the fifth is the kitchen and pantry. All the rooms are made of timber, and give an impression of peace and warmth. In the middle of the circle created by the rooms and the verandah, there is an open area of rock garden that takes care of any water run-off, and which I imagine could make a delightful small waterfall when there is adequate rain. At the front of the property are vegetable gardens (raised with round timber logs) fruit trees and flowering bushes. Down to the northern side is more garden, and then the compost bays and a large pile of wood-chips for future garden use.

Val’s block of land was vacant when she purchased it, so the garden has been developed from scratch. She has used the “lasagne” method of no-dig gardening, using layers of cardboard, woodchips, soil, horse manure, lucerne, mushroom compost, then “regular” compost and then the seedlings. Everything is organic, and to enrich the soil, Val operates two Bokashi composting buckets to utilize any kitchen scraps. Out in the yard there are standard compost bins, but also a bay of sugar-cane husks from the stall that sells juice at the markets – it’s good for the garden – and the water hens love it!

Currently Val’s main interest in the garden are her fruit trees, including one that she brought with her from Brisbane and which is doing well. (I think it may have been a red lime.) We walked across to the garden next door, where there was a mulberry tree that Val has helped her neighbour with. The main branches have been weighted down with ties and bricks at each corner, so that a canopy of leaves is now starting to form down to the ground – a perfect castle for children to play in. Val wants to plant more fruit trees, using raised beds formed by bales of lucerne hay surrounding the soil in the middle, and would like to try her hand at espaliering some of them.



The “Mulberry Castle” in the making.

Apart from herbs (native basil is dotted around the garden to encourage bees), flowering bushes, vegetables and fruit trees, Val grows orchids, and has trays of seedlings and cuttings benefitting from the sunshine on the front steps. We talked about how there is always lots of work to do in a garden, and we thought a get-together at different Club members’ gardens for a few hours weeding or pruning and then a shared snacks would be a really good way to spend a morning.

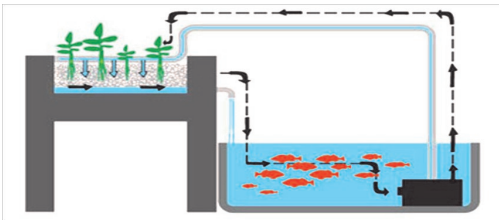


A colourful welcome to the yurt

It started to rain softly as I was leaving, and the valley became misty and everything was quiet, and it was obvious why Val enjoys living in her yurt in the country.

Aquaponics From Neil Ross

- Aquaponics is the "perfect synergy". Fish for consumption, produce ammonia and other waste, which food plants use up to clean the water. It is as organic as the sole input – fish feed
- Between fish and plants is a micro-organism filter to break down the fish wastes into plant feed
- Queensland's best aquaponics water animal species are Barramundi, Jade Perch and Red Claw



To Those members that expressed an interest in the Aquaponics unit being established at the Nerang Community Garden, please contact Neil at the February meeting or email Neilandhelen7@bigpond.com

*Learn more about Aquaponics
in the August 2013 issue*

Jill's Garden Update

Remember that peach branch in our garden that the wind blew down (see last newsletter)? Well we left it partially attached, in case they decided to ripen anyway, and recently, as fruit began to soften, we harvested them, intending to eat them as they gradually ripened in our box. Unfortunately, they were rather bitter tasting, and tended to go bad as they ripened, so they were all pretty well wasted. Having watched the remaining larger, healthier, better tasting crop still on the tree carefully till it also began to soften, out I went one day to bring them all in... and not a peach was to be seen! Not even one little one! No half eaten fruit on the ground, no seeds in the whole area - all gone!! Netting would have worked against the birds (which we assume it was...), but the branches have

tended to go through it in the past and get tangled in it. It's just not worth the trouble and cost. I don't think we'll keep that tree.

Something strange now: those different varieties of bush bean that I bought at our club turned into climbing beans, so up they go now on the trellises which are conveniently nearby. Maria is right, too, the climbers produce much better for me as well, so I'm happy to have them, with their straight beans. The Purple King beans are also producing handsomely, and so quickly! I only have half a dozen plants all in a 30cm in diameter tepee-shaped arrangement of trellis, and that's enough for a good little meal regularly for us.

Shade cloth is the saving grace of this area for us for summer greens. The lettuces do bolt fairly soon, but not before we get a good few meals from them, and it doesn't matter as we have other ones coming on after them. Purple mustard greens are a wonderfully hardy plant, providing a tasty addition to salads, as does the lovely lemony sorrel.

As for root vegetables, I grew quite a few parsnips this season, and I love the way they add to soups. It's been a major excavation job to get them out of the ground, however! I must remember to get my husband, Graeme, to really dig deep before next planting as they sure do send down deep roots! After numerous plantings of carrot seeds last year, which I thought I watered pretty religiously, nothing germinated, and the only ones that finally did were the mixed coloured ones. They're interesting to harvest: many look like parsnips (pictured)... don't taste like them though.



One more thing, for some time, we have not been entirely happy with our single, lattice-sided bin composting method. We have just been continually adding garden prunings and kitchen scraps to it till we need some compost, then pushing aside the top uncomposted layer to enable digging up of the ready compost on the bottom. Recently, I cajoled Graeme into adding an improvement to this existing system by simple dividing the bin into two compartments. The first holds the ready compost; the second one is where we continue to add the waste as it's available... till the first bin of compost is all used, and then we can leave the second to continue breaking down while we begin again in the first bin. We've also added a drain pipe with holes (aggie pipe) down the middle of the second one to allow some airflow through it, hopefully removing the need to turn it (which has always been too difficult for us).

This little "trick" with the airpipe and not turning the heap I picked up at the Biodynamic workshop at Lise Racine's one year. You can hear her tell us all about Biodynamic farming at the GCOG's next meeting in February.

The Bay Tree

The bay tree, or *Laurus nobilis* (bay laurel) was the plant the Romans used in ancient days to crown victors and successful students. Its leaves were fashioned into a wreath, which gives us the word "baccalaureate" (literally "laurel berry"), or bachelor, which is still applied to the first degree taken at university.

The bay tree originated in the Mediterranean region. It should therefore be planted in a warm, sheltered position in the garden to protect it from winter chills. A bay tree can be grown as a standard in a container and will thrive best against a north-facing wall. To train it, cut off the lower branches when it is about 75 cm high. This will encourage growth at the top. When the central leading shoot has reached the height you want your tree to be, pinch out the tip.

1001 Hints & Tips in the Garden-Readers Digest

A Chance to Help Drought Affected Queenslanders From Diane Kelly

Here's a way that we can help our fellow-Queenslanders who are being affected by the on-going drought – this is an excerpt from the ABC news of the 6th of February 2014:

Gardening enthusiasts across Queensland are being encouraged to register for a scheme to help drought-affected families rebuild their gardens when the drought breaks.

The scheme is being run via social media, asking people in coastal or city areas to consider propagating cuttings and potting up plants, so they are ready to be distributed when rain arrives.

Organiser Gay Tully, from east of Windorah, south-west of Longreach, says many gardens have been lost during the drought.

She says people have had to stop watering gardens to conserve water and this is a simple way people can help. "We have had droughts, many times - I don't want this to be a hard luck story at all," she said.

"We just thought this wouldn't cost people money, so if they are willing to pot plants, then we can start again when the drought breaks."

A register of people who would like plants, as well as people who can donate, is being put together and more information is available on the Green Thumb Express page on Facebook.

Gay Tully can be contacted on 07 4656 4764. The link to the idea is:

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-02-06/gardeners-urged-to-help-parched-outback-queensland/5241676>

Handy Hints
Organic Gardener – Jan-Feb 2014
 From Diane Kelly

Ashes

Surround plants that are attractive to slugs and snails, with ash from wood fires. Spread the ash in a circle around the plants. Slugs and snails will avoid the ash, as they find its gritty texture unpleasant to cross.

DIY Bio-Char

“Over the past few years I’ve learned to save buckets of charcoal from our wood stove or bonfires because this stuff has proved so useful for increasing sweet corn yields. Charcoal never decomposes, so it has a unique ability to lock in and stabilise nutrients.

The method is simple: I first wet, then pulverise, any large charcoal piece into small, pea-size fragments. Into every bucket of pulverised charcoal I pour a cup of fish emulsion (I prefer that made from carp – a pest fish), plus a cup of seaweed concentrate and mix well. This wet brew is then bulked with the same amount of potting soil with enough water added to create a kind of black slurry.

After making 15cm deep and wide sowing grooves in a sweet corn bed, this slurry is poured thickly along the base of each groove and then covered with soil. Sweet corn seeds are then sown into the soil – out of reach of the enriched charcoal slurry – and then the grooves back-filled.

Germination – even with the notoriously erratic seeds of sugar-sweet varieties – is remarkably even and rapid. And the plants, constantly nourished by the high-nitrogen fertilisers secured within the porous charcoal, grow with unusual vigour and, from my own experience, produce huge yields of outstanding cobs. It’s worth the extra effort!”

When Watering, Replenish Nutrients

High heat and increased watering in summer will rapidly leach nutrients from the soil, so keep nutrient levels up. However, don’t give too much at once or you will produce weak, sappy growth vulnerable to pests and diseases.

The best approach is to top up with small amounts of organic fertilizer every three weeks or so at half the general recommended application rate. That goes for liquid formulations too, such as seaweed extract and fish emulsion. Mix these at half strength and apply them every fortnight.

Organise Seeds for autumn/winter

Check the planting guide and start sowing some of them in punnets in February. Raise them in a spot that gets a few hours of morning sun and cover with 30% shade cloth to protect them from the heat. Pot them on or plant them out in March.

Take cuttings

Take cuttings of Mediterranean herbs to increase your stock. Rosemary, thyme and lavender strike well now. Make your own cutting mix - mix equal parts of coir peat and coarse river sand.

Harvest Notes

Cucumber: Timing is crucial when picking cucumbers. Once flowers are pollinated, the fruit grows very quickly, so check plants every 1-2 days. To judge readiness, see that the size matches the harvest recommendations for the variety you are growing. It’s okay to let some grow bigger, but not too much or they will become bitter. Snip the fruit from the vine to avoid damage and harvest regularly to keep plants productive.

Eggplant: Harvest anytime, from when the fruit start to form up, to when growing to their full size. They should have a plump shiny appearance. Don’t wait until they lose their shine and go hard - that’s when the fruit becomes seedy, bitter and tough. Never pull them off; always prune the fruit stems with a sharp pair of secateurs to avoid damage to the fruit and bush.

Pumpkin: Pick when the fruit is swollen and the skin lacks shine. Handle with care as any damage opens the fruit up to rotting organisms. Cut them off the vine with a sharp pair of secateurs, leaving a length of stem on the fruit, which will act as a seal. Store on a shallow bed of straw in a cool, dry, well-ventilated space.

1001 Hints & Tips for the Garden-Readers Digest From Diane Kelly

Fruit Drop

This has happened to our orange tree recently, so I thought others may have noticed the same thing.

Seasonal drop: Many trees may lose flowers and fruit during the season. This may just be the tree's response to particular conditions rather than something you have done. It is a natural phenomenon and may be due to a variety of causes. The tree may be getting rid of poorly pollinated or badly positioned fruit or reducing an over-abundance of fruit. Well-fed trees can support more fruit, so feeding in spring and watering regularly will reduce the amount of fruit that a tree sheds.

Citrus drop: Citrus trees often shed surplus fruit at the end of flowering, when the fruit is pea-size, and again when the fruit is about 20mm in diameter. Careful attention to watering, fertilising and pest and disease control are the best measures to avoid this problem.

Pesticide damage: Dimethoate is commonly used in Australia to control fruit fly and other pests. Note that this pesticide can damage early varieties of stone fruit and may cause leaf and fruit drop, especially in apricots and early peaches.

Lettuce & Japanese Greens

Loose-leaf lettuces do well in pots as long as they are well watered. Grow several varieties in a pot near the kitchen and harvest them leaf by leaf. Pick loose-leaf lettuces regularly to stop them from bolting.

Pick-again lettuces and Japanese Greens:

Some varieties such as "Cos" and "Mibuna" and "Mizuna" can be harvested by cutting the whole plant to 3 cm above ground level. Fertilise and water well, and the plant will re-sprout ready for cutting again in a few weeks' time. This can be repeated 2-3 times before the plants deteriorate.

Prepare for March From Diane Kelly

According to Jerry Coleby-Williams, the gardening year starts in March, so it's time to get cracking!

- Complete controlling summer weeds, then mulch before winter weeds germinate
- pH test vegetable and flower beds, using results to guide soil conditioning
- Sow or plant sweet peas, garden and snow peas in prepared ground or containers
- Plant subtropical bulbs like blood lily, eucomis, alstroemeria and hippeastrum
- Take tip cuttings of grey-leaved plants, like lavender, after pruning bushes to shape
- Plant winter tomatoes where they receive six hours sunshine each day
- Swap from nitrogen rich fertilisers to flower and fruit fertilisers to reduce the risk of foliar fungal diseases
- Complete mail ordering new season stock. New, unusual or rare varieties can quickly run out.

Quote from 612 ABC Brisbane web-site



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**WE BELIEVE EVERYONE SHOULD
HAVE ACCESS TO GOOD CLEAN
AND FAIR FOOD**

Corn From Diane Kelly

I've recently planted out sweet corn seedlings in two different locations – one lot is doing well, and the other patch is growing but not enthusiastically! So I thought I would see what Pete Cundall recommended about growing sweet corn in the January/February "Organic Gardener" magazine.

Grown your own – sweet, juicy Corn!

It's easy to understand why sweet corn continues to have a significant place in most Australian suburban vegetable patches. The plants grow and crop to perfection in all parts of Australia, and although most grow tall, even a tiny patch of sunny, well-prepared ground can produce surprising yields of fat cobs studded with sweet, juicy kernels. Superb flavour is no doubt corn's key attraction, but this vegetable also has high nutritional value. Corn contains no cholesterol, is completely gluten-free, and is a significant source of antioxidants.

When looking for cultivars, there are two main groups for corn to be eaten fresh - the traditional open-pollinated varieties, and the super-sweet hybrids, which were developed over 20 years ago and are now highly popular because they store better and are extra sweet.

Soil conditions:

Sweet corn is easy to grow, although in cool climates the seeds must only be sown after the last frost, as corn is frost-tender. In hot areas, problems can arise when temperatures remain consistently above 35C as cobs begin to mature. This over-heating causes kernel flavour to deteriorate as sugars turn to starch.

Sweet corn grows in most soils from light clay to sandy loams. Ideal acid-alkaline balance is between pH 5.5 and 7. However, soil packed with organic matter and given constant moisture ensures big yields of well-filled cobs. Adding plenty of organic matter is particularly important in light, sandy, quick-drying soils.

Here's how to enrich a vegetable bed prior to

sowing sweet corn seeds: Start with a mixture of mushroom compost, supplemented with sheep, cow or well-rotted horse manure. Spread in a 100mm-thick layer over the cultivated surface and work it deeply into the soil. For extra nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium, scatter pelletized poultry manure over the surface at the rate of a big handful to every square metre. Rake it in while working the surface to a good tilth and levelling the seed bed.

If the soil is dry, water deeply so it soaks down into the subsoil and then leave for about three days to allow the fertilizers to mature and the soil to settle.

Planting:

It is far better to purchase sweet corn seeds by the packet rather than buying seedlings. After being sown out in the open garden into warm, moist soil, most sweet corn seeds germinate in about seven days and quickly form wide-spreading roots. Consequently the undisturbed plants will continue to grow fast and never look back.

Keep in mind that it is a mistake to mix different varieties of sweet corn together in one bed. They easily cross-pollinate with each other and when this occurs, the resultant kernels become starchy and relatively tasteless. So either stick to one variety or stagger sowing times so flowering never occurs at the same time.

Before sowing seeds, use the edge or handle of a hoe or rake to create 5cm-deep groves at least half a metre apart in the bed. Sow the big seeds about 20cms apart along the bases of groves and then backfill with 2cm of soil to cover, then water deeply. This initial watering is enough to carry them through to germination when the first green shoots pop up.

Growing tips:

Over-watering is the most common cause of sweet corn seeds rotting in the soil before full germination. That's because the seeds are large enough to absorb and hold water until they sprout and send out strong roots.

Sweet corn must always be grown in blocks rather than long, straight lines for efficient gravity and wind pollination because the female ears, which carry the cobs, form halfway up the stalks. As they swell and mature they produce pale golden "silks". Each separate strand leads to an immature kernel within each leafy sheath.

The male flowers sprout high in the air, well above the females and soon become festooned with heavy, loosely clinging pollen grains. They need this extra weight in order to fall directly onto the female "silks" to complete the pollination process. Block planting will ensure more accurate pollination and cobs that are fully filled.

One of the most effective methods of achieving rapid, sweet corn growth is by heavy, deep mulching. Use moist straw, spoiled hay or any other type of soft organic matter enriched with pelletised poultry manure and heavily diluted fish emulsion. The best time to apply this type of feeding mulch is when plants have grown about one metre in height and the base of each stalk has started to form small, wart-like buds just above the soil level. These are dormant stem roots. Tucking this enriched mulching material firmly against them immediately stimulates them into growth to take advantage of this extra source of nutrition.

It is essential that soil and mulching materials remain constantly moist at all times until harvest. However, as the corn ears begin to form, there is a big demand for even more water. At this stage, deeply soak the bed at least once weekly, or up to three times in the hottest weather, so cobs become fully filled with kernels. Insufficient moisture during the final weeks of maturity is one reason – along with poor pollination – for "bald-headed" cobs, or empty gaps in the rows of kernels.

Harvesting:

A good indication that the cobs are ready to be harvested is when the silk begins to turn brown and wither. The easiest way to remove the filled husks is by gripping the tops and pulling down sharply so they snap off cleanly.

Organic Gardener – Jan-Feb 2014

Ants From Diane Kelly

Ant colonies range from simple groups of a few insects to complex nests of millions. Most species are harmless and are useful as biological indicators – the greater the diversity of ant species in your garden, the healthier your environment is likely to be.

There are more than 1,100 species of ants in Australia, with many more as yet un-named. Those most encountered in and around the garden include the sugar ant, meat ant, green ant and bull ant.

Many ants found on garden plants such as citrus "herd" aphids, which excrete a food source called honeydew. Ants may protect aphid eggs during the winter, then place them on plants to hatch in spring.

Some plants, such as acacias and proteas, use ants to disperse their seeds. The seeds, which have a food source attached, are carried away by the ants, who eat the food and leave the seeds to germinate.

To deter ants, plant, tansy, rue or wormwood.
1001 Hints & Tips in the Garden-Readers Digest

Organic Wetting Agents From Diane Kelly

Help seedlings establish quickly by using an organic wetting agent.

To make your own: gradually dissolve two tablespoonfuls of powered agar agar (available from supermarkets and health food stores) in two cups of hot water. Gradually dilute this with 10 litres of tepid water, thoroughly stirring. Apply immediately to seed beds and seedlings.

This will last for two to three weeks, which is sufficient time for seedlings to establish. (If you are using commercial wetting agents, ensure they are certified organic.)

*Beat the Heat", Jerry Coleby-Williams
Organic Gardener- Jan/Feb 2013*

Peas - How to Obtain Massive Yields From Diane Kelly

It will soon be time to start planting peas – garden peas, dwarf peas, climbing peas – and sweet peas (traditionally on St Patricks Day on the 17th of March).

So start planning now – with a bit of advice from Peter Cundall.

The Gardening Australia Book

Of all the vegetables we can grow, peas are amongst the most popular. When we grow peas in our gardens, we actually replenish the soil with nitrogen, which is why this crop can often **follow** greedy plants such as sweet corn, pumpkins or some root crops. Peas can usually **be followed** by nitrogen hungry vegetables, such as cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli, sprouts and cottager's kale.

Enormous yields of peas are possible, providing the ground is carefully prepared before planting. They need full sun and a soil which is well drained. Peas always thrive in soils containing plenty of organic matter. Acid or heavy clay soils are unsuitable and should be corrected prior to sowing seed.

One effective of virtually doubling previous yields of well-filled pods is by trenching. This method is suitable in all parts of Australia, and is exceptionally valuable in impoverished, sandy soils. The method is simple:

- Dig a narrow trench about the width of the spade and as deep as the blade (about 25cm wide by 35 cm deep).
- Line the base and lower sides of trench with newspaper, several pages thick. On top of this spread a thick layer of old straw, wilted weeds, leaves, lawn clippings and other mixtures of partly decayed plant materials.
- Spread plenty of bulky animal manure, such as sheep, horse or cattle droppings – the older the better – thickly over and among the organic matter. Add a good handful of blood and bone to each half-metre trench, with a tight fistful of sulphate of potash. If your soil is acid, sprinkle enough dolomite or ground limestone over the trench mixture to thoroughly whiten the surface. Mix some

of this into the excavated soil too.

- Some well-diluted seaweed concentrate (two tablespoons to a full bucket of water) can be sprinkled generously over the trench mixture.
- Finally, backfill the trench, burying the organic matter and raking the surface to an even tilth.
- Sow the pea seed in double rows, 10 cm apart, either way, each double row being one metre from the next trenched system. In new soil, add two tight fistfuls for each two metres of drill. Push the seed down into the seed holes up to the first knuckle of your finger. Finally, go over each drill, pressing down the head of the rake in order to ensure good seed-to-soil contact.

As the peas germinate and grow, the mixture down below decays. When the pea roots have reached this valuable larder, it will be almost fully broken down, ready to the feed the plants as they are starting to pod. The role of the newspaper is to prevent too rapid water loss, especially in sharply drained sandy soils.

And a few hints from Annette McFarlane *(Organic Vegetable Gardening)*

- Remember to erect supporting structures **prior** to planting climbing peas. Tall varieties require staking, while dwarf varieties are usually self-supporting. Dwarf varieties can also be grown in hanging baskets.
- Peas prefer well-drained soil that is neutral to slightly alkaline (7 to 7.5).
- Avoid growing peas in a bed that has previously grown a summer bean crop, as pest and disease problems may be transferred.
- Comfrey used as a mulch or prepared as a liquid fertiliser is useful in supplying additional elements.
- **Harvesting:** Peas grow flowers and fruit in 10-14 weeks. Tip-pruning encourages branching and increases production. Once pods begin to form, they need to be picked continuously.
- The main harvest period is usually 2-3 weeks for garden peas and 5-6 weeks for snow peas. In frost-free zones, sow suc-

cessive crops of three x 2m long rows at 2-3 week intervals.

Potential problems:

- Where viable seed fails to germinate, over-watering or excessive cold is generally to blame. Try sowing the seed into moist soil, but do not water until germination occurs.
- Mice, rats, bandicoots, slugs and snails can also dine on seeds, while birds love to peck seedlings.
- A grey, talcum-like appearance on the leaves indicates attack by powdery mildew, and plants deteriorate quickly, often taking on a burnt appearance. Avoid overhead watering during the cool of the evening. To build disease resistance, apply liquid seaweed fertilizer over the foliage on warm, sunny days. You can also use potassium bicarbonate-based sprays and dusting or wettable sulphur against powdery mildew.

Welcome to the World of Bunyas From Diane Kelly

Can you imagine a tree that can live to well over a hundred years old and can reach heights of up to 45 metres – and at the same time can produce timber that can be used for acoustical guitar soundboards and cabinet making, and nuts that can be used in pestos, puddings, on toast blended with honey, and in curries?

The bunya tree (*Araucaria bidwillii*) is native to South East Qld, and historically has played a large part in indigenous Australian culture, with bunya nut ceremonies being held each two or three years when the harvests were prolific.

There is a large bunya pine in Mudgeeraba which has an estimated height of 20 or 30 metres, and as the nuts are now maturing and falling, I had the chance to watch an arborist scale the tree and remove about 25 nuts. Now this may not sound dramatic, but once I realized that each nut can weigh about up to 10 kgs, I could understand why you read advice not to stand or park your car under the trees when they are fruiting.



The foot-ball sized bunya fruit consist of fleshy, fan-shaped cones which contain the nuts. The nuts can be removed from the pods and eaten raw when fresh, or they can be roasted, sliced or pureed, and then added to spreads, desserts and savoury dishes. The nuts can also be milled to produce a flour that has the advantage of being gluten-free.



The nut is considered nutritious, with a unique flavour similar to potatoes or chestnuts. The nuts consist of 40% water, 40% complex carbohydrates, 9% protein, 2% fat, 0.2% potassium and 0.06% magnesium.

There can be up to 100 nuts in each cone, and they are a similar size to large macadamia nut. The "Happy Earth" website has some good pictures on how to harvest, prepare and cook the nuts, as well as some interesting stories about them – and as it says, bunya nuts are a "wonderful bush tucker".

Gardening on the Gold Coast & Thereabouts From Diane Kelly

This is one of the months in which you make it or break for Spring. It is an important time of the gardening calendar, so plan and plant now.

No garden, no matter how large or small, should be without strawberries. Even if you don't eat them, your visitors will! Grow them in pots, tubs, baskets or beds, and this is the month to begin. They love well-rotted animal manure, compost, lime, ashes, heaps of mulch and liquid fertiliser.

Cut the runners from last year's strawberry plants and re-plant, give away, or compost. Divide old clumps, if necessary. Top-dress the bed with manure, compost, lime and mulch. Strawberries love a coat of pine needles, if available.

Among the vegetables to be planted for winter and spring is the unpretentious **onion**. Early crop seed can be sown now, but plantings can continue through to the end of June. Onions will grow under a great variety of conditions, but particularly like our moist, warm climate.

Grow from seed in boxes or sow direct and thin later. Onions do not like root disturbance and after transplanting, thinning or weeding, give a moderate-strength feed of liquid fertilizer to compensate for the shock. Mulch between the rows, for weeding onions is not the most entertaining garden chore.

Pea planting can begin now and as most gardeners know, there are few more delicious tastes than the first fresh-picked peas. Climbing peas, dwarf peas and snow peas – all can and should be cultivated. Bear in mind that they actively dislike proximity to your onions, garlic and shallots.

FRUIT TREES

Custard Apples: Peak water needs. Apply organic fertiliser with sulphate of potash, 1 kg for mature trees and ½ kg for young trees.

Figs: Net trees to protect figs from birds. Pick fruit every two days. Fertilise with 1 kg organic fertiliser with sulphate of potash.

Low shill stone fruit: Moderate water needs.

Lychee: Peak water needs. Mulch trees. This is a good time to "skirt" trees (skirt-trim all growth to 500mm above ground). Prune so 20% light can be seen through trees. If Erinose mite is a problem, spray with wettable sulphur every 10 to 14 days from pin head size new growth to fully open, and harden off.

Mango: Apply organic fertiliser with sulphate of potash. Keep up water. Prune trees after harvest. **Pruning:** If it is a very large tree that needs to be pruned to a manageable size, the correct way is to cut back 1/3 of branches each year for three years. In the first year remove one of the largest branches, the following year remove another branch, and so on until the tree is of an acceptable shape and size. In this way you will have some fruit each year while at the same time reducing the size of the tree. Spray with copper based spray or leaf microbes for anthracnose every fortnight.

Passion-fruit: Keep up the water.

Pawpaw: Plant pawpaws in threes (thin out to strongest). Plant out seedlings as the soil is still warm and by Autumn they will be stabilised, and then be ready to get an early start for Spring. De-bud your first year trees (keep one flower to try the fruit – if you must!) Keep one male to eight female trees. Pawpaws are heavy feeders. Spray copper based spray or leaf microbes to prevent black spot.

Persimmon: Make sure trees are fully netted. Harvest time for early varieties.

Strawberries: Prepares sites for runners to

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, Spinach, Silverbeet, Strawberry, Tomato, Turnip.

FLOWERS

Sweet peas – lime and organic matter, raked into the top of sandy soil and dug into heavy soil, will suit these flowers. Give them a sunny, sheltered position. Climbing sweet peas need a trellis, as they reach a height of over two metres. But there are semi-dwarf and dwarf varieties which don't require support.

Plantings of calendula begin March and continue until early winter. Grow from seed or seedlings. Bedding, borders or clumps – they are hardy, easy to maintain and will self-seed. Sprinkle the petals in soup for good health, and they can also be used as an ointment or tincture to treat wounds.

FEBRUARY

Bedding begonias, bulbs (many prefer April though), calendula, carnations, cornflower, foxglove, Iceland poppy, larkspur, Livingstone daisy, lobelia, lupin, marigold (French), pansy, poppy, primula, snapdragon, stock, sweet pea and viola.

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.

Cont'd ... Fruit Trees

be planted out at the end of the month. Keep well-watered to form new runners.

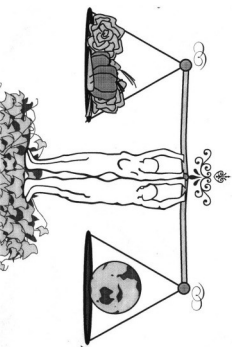
Bananas: Fertilise with organic fertiliser with sulphate of potash – 1 kg per stool. Keep up water; bag fruit; and cut off bells.

Citrus: Fruit thinning should be done this month. Leave one fruit every 150mm. Fertilise tree with organic fertiliser containing sulphate of potash, 1 kg for large trees and ½ kg for smaller trees. Keep up sprays of pest oil for leaf miner. Keep up the water.

Queensland Planting Guide - B O G I

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 20 March 2014