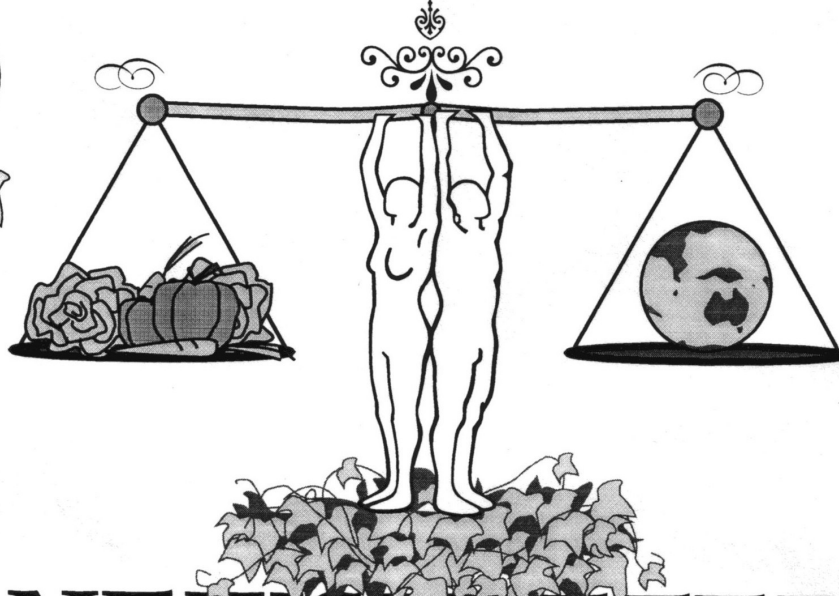


GOLD COAST ORGANIC GROWERS Inc.

Established 1999



NEWSLETTER

Volume 15 MARCH 2012 Issue 3

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OUR NEXT MEETING: Thursday 19 April

THE AIMS OF G.C.O.G. Inc.

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

Meetings Held: 3rd Thursday of the Month

The Meeting Place, Cnr Guineas Creek Rd. and Coolgardie St, Elanora.

Doors open 7.00 pm; Begin at **7.30 pm** Entry is \$1 members, \$3 visitors.

(No meeting in December)

Annual Membership Fees:

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

To renew or start memberships please send cheques (payable to GCOG) to Diane Kelly - or just pay at the door.

Seed Bank: \$2.00 ea.

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

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

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

Advertising: **1/4 page:** \$10 an issue, or \$100 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

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<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, Pauline Maxwell, Cathie Hodge, Pauline Behrendorff, Patti Barton, Rebecca Bowen, Dorothy Coe & Maria Roberson.



Notice Board

Membership Renewals

Overdue: Justin & Vanessa Sharman-Selvidge, Owen Brown, Ross & Jenny Davis, Linda Beleski, Cassie James, Marion Wilson, Anissa Loades, Katie Culpin, Pauline & Roger Behrendorff, Mark Raynham, Ken & Pat Jenyns, Judy McCracken, Tali Filip, Sylvia Rolih, Marino Canala, Gaynor Allen, Daniela Guitart,

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

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

Welcome to our new club member:
Anne-Maree Andrew

Guest Speakers

March - AGM & Guy Lewington on Diatomaceous Earth

April - Alf Orpen on Polyculture

May - Graham McDonald on Native Trees, Butterflies and other insects.

June - Sandra Nanka from Mudbrick Cottage on various Herbs

July & July - TBA

Sept - Gina Winter on Using Herbs as Food and as Medicine

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

Newsletter Theme
Gardening in Autumn

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



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President's Message

Hello Everyone,

Well the February meeting sure proved to be one out of the box. Due to the small number of members in attendance the AGM had to be postponed until the March meeting. Also the newsletters were not available on the night and had to be posted out to all members later in the week and you could say the cherry on the top was that the club outing to the Edwards garden had to be cancelled yet again due to the wet weather.

We will schedule the Edwards garden in a little further along in the year when there is less chance of big rainfalls (if that is possible). Perhaps we shall have better luck in late Autumn or Winter. We will keep you posted on future arrangements.

I hope we are in for better gardening weather from now on as there is so much to do this time of year. Jackie French might think it is a "gentle time of year", but I reckon we need to get cracking. Vegetable beds are in serious need of a good revamp with plenty of summer weeds to clear and it's a good time check the soil Ph and make small adjustments if required. Add compost and manure which should be dug in for best results. Mulch is not necessary in the cooler months as it keeps the soil too cool for good growing results. If you have heavy clay soil it may have become even more compacted after the recent drenching and could possibly benefit from the addition of gypsum to open up the soil structure a bit.

If you plan to plant garlic this year it needs to go in during March for the best harvest results. Other not to miss vegetables are beans (they need to go in this month), sugar snap peas, Asian greens and lettuce. Check out the planting guide in the back of this newsletter for the full list of vegies and herbs. I like to choose a vegetable and herb every year that I have never grown before as it's always interesting and a worthwhile challenge.

This year I will be planting lots more medicinal herbs too, I am finding them to be beneficial to our life style and have had some really good results from their use.

The seed table is now well stocked with all the seeds you will need for Autumn/Winter and still a bargain at just \$2 per pack. We gratefully receive seeds that members have saved from their own gardens and if you wish to participate please ask me what is required to do so. The more members that get involved the more we are able to keep our prices down.

A few members have commented that they think the new seasonally themed newsletter is very helpful and makes planning their gardens easier. What do you think? Let us know as we are keen for some feed back on the changes that are made from time to time. Keep your articles and information tid-bits coming in as we rely on them for a great newsletter.

Thanks as always to members who generously supply lovely things from their gardens for prizes on the raffle table it sure does make for an interesting display. I think you will agree with me that the food on the supper table has been pretty special lately, well done to those members for all their culinary efforts.

Happy growing, Maria.

Edible gardening workshops

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. Please email Leah on leg30@hotmail.com or call 0406 897 195.

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:

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.

Gold Coast City Council Healthy Cooking Classes

Cooking classes with a healthy twist. Learn how to cook yummy recipes that take into account the Dietary Guidelines for Australians.

Your new take-home recipes include a variety of foods from the five food groups, are low in fat and limit added sugar and salt. Workshops are held at the beautiful Currumbin Farm Campus so why not make a day of it and discover the farm after the workshop. Bookings required.

When: Sunday 1st April

Time: 10am to 12noon

Where: Currumbin Farm Campus
1226 Currumbin Creek Road, Currumbin Valley

Cost: Free

Contact: Currumbin Farm Campus
(07) 5533 0312 or email at ...
info@currumbinfarmschool.eq.edu.au

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

14 April

Introduction to organic gardening

Joan Park Community Garden, Joan Street, Southport

12 May

Small space and balcony gardening

BroadbeachCommunity Garden,
Old Burleigh Road, Broadbeach

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

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WANTED

If anyone has cuttings of the following they wish to pass on - or I'm happy to pay for them:

- BABACO
- FEIJOA seedlings (different types please)
- CAPE GOOSEBERRY
- RED TAMARILLO (I already have the YELLOW)

Sorry – I don't have anything to swap.

Contact Rebecca Bowen, 5531 4297
SOUTHPORT

FREE RANGE EGGS FOR SALE

Fresh organic free range eggs for sale or swap.

1 dozen eggs = \$4.50

Or swap for fruit, veggies, honey, or other produce I can use.

If interested in an ongoing supply or just a one off box of eggs please contact me.

If you live locally between Tallebudgera and Palm Beach I might be able to deliver if you are on my route, as I make the trip that way once or twice per week.

Dorothy Coe & Chris Winton
5533 9905 or webprint@nothenet.com.au
Tallebudgera

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

Paul Chermak – Kombucha Tea By Jill Barber

In case you missed this interesting presentation by Paul on the health benefits of **kombucha tea** and how to make it, I'll share my notes with you, as it refreshed my interest in this beverage that I and a few others of you used to make several years ago. Coming from a very old tradition, dating back to China, as least two thousand years ago, not only is it highly beneficial for us, it is very easy and inexpensive to make. Paul had samples set out for us to try, and explained how it can even be made in different flavours!

After researching health and sustainability for some years, Paul and his partner, Samanta, have been brewing it and sharing it with their community since 2009, and now sell it at various markets. He referred us to Sally Fallon's *Nourishing Traditions*, in which she espouses the virtues of fermented food in cleansing the gut through the introduction of beneficial bacteria.

Genghis Khan, Mongolian warrior and conqueror, apparently sustained his army by carrying fermented milk in leather sacks strapped to their horses. Fermented vinegar is also an adjunct to health which comes from ancient times.

These foods act as cleansers of the plaque in arteries, and the gluconic acid helps to cleanse the liver and decalcify deposits in the joints. This reminder alone was enough to convince me to return to this marvellous beverage; however, there was more. The introduction of intestinal flora cleanses the digestive system, and thereby deals with the candida that we all carry to some degree, and that for many has become a problem due to eating too much starch. Kombucha brings the alkaline-acid balance back to our bodies and helps to combat the imbalance of the modern diet.

To begin the fermentation process in making kombucha, a scoby or mushroom is needed, which is a symbiotic culture of bacteria and yeast. Paul had some there for those of us who wanted to buy some, and is happy to get

some for anyone who missed out (globalsov@gmail.com 0435 173 759). He had a handout detailing the process to follow, which basically requires the starter to be added to tea, black, green, mate or other herbal tea, plus sugar, and left in a warm place for a few weeks. The sugar is virtually used up in this process, after which other flavours can be added, like fruits or dried fruits. This makes a slightly fizzy, very refreshing drink, especially if a dash of lemon or lime is added.

Paul had acai berry and ginger flavoured teas for us to try. Delicious! He suggested drinking some early in the morning or twenty minutes before meals to aid with digestion. What a painless way to good health!

Thank you, Paul, for an informative and useful evening.

THREE THINGS I CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT

By Cathie Hodge

1. I couldn't live without my **scythe**. I stumbled across scything, mostly because of a bit of a 'machinery-phobia'. My late husband had always done our mowing using a ride-on mower &/or a whipper snipper. But firstly, I had always *hated* the sound of the whipper snipper. Even more significantly, many times I had lost parts, or maybe even all, of a plant to over-zealous whipper snipping. (I still get a bit edgy when I see a male of our species armed with a whipper snipper or secateurs near a garden). Finally, I have to admit that I was scared of using the ride-on mower. However, I live on small acreage in subtropical Queensland, where copious quantities of grass grow, oh so readily. How to manage this? Maybe with a scythe? Eventually I perfected peening the blade (i.e. sharpening) and perfected using the scythe (i.e. sweeping the blade across the ground in both directions, as opposed to a golf-swing type of action). Nowadays I find the scythe is especially useful for those uneven, hard-to-mow places. *And*, I really enjoy scything. Armed with a properly peened blade & the correct technique, it is surprising how quickly an area can be mowed. Scything can be done at any time, including in the rain or when the grass is wet. Scything also offers a pleasant, noise-free, pollution-free, outdoor, at-home fitness programme. (By the way, I'm not afraid of the ride-on mower anymore & do use it occasionally).
2. **Chooks!** Our younger daughter, who is still living at home, thinks I'm overly-bonded to my chooks. She may be right, but that's okay. In last month's newsletter, Maria very adequately described the clear advantages of having chooks plus their eggs; plus the ethical aspects regarding egg & chicken-meat production. I thoroughly concur. But apart from all of that, I do love chooks! Over the summer I have delighted in watching some of our hens hatching out & then rearing their chicks – without any training, guidance or support from me. Wow! It has been a sheer pleasure, a kind of meditation even, to watch those hens doing what comes so naturally – I can 'waste' a lot of time watching them. Maybe I am overly bonded?
3. **Creating mulch & compost from on-site resources.** (This is more of an approach, rather than a thing). Scything or mowing can create a lot of mulch, especially during our summer. This has inadvertently led to a way of combining chooks & scything, to create value-added mulch/ compost. Our chook pen is fairly large. The chooks are left in there for about half the day, until they have laid their eggs. The rest of the day they are free to roam in a very large paddock. To prevent the ground in the chook pen from becoming a scorched-earth zone from the concentrated chook droppings, large quantities of scythed grass are deposited in their run each day, as well as scraps from a local organic cafe. Naturally, the chooks 'scritch' & scratch over these deposits & also add their own manure to the inputs. Eventually this creates value-added mulch and eventually compost. It also attracts worms & other decomposers to the site, and these are very appealing to the chooks. In all, it's a very satisfying Joel Salatin type of arrangement.



**Getting to Know
Peter Seymour-Smith
(and Rockcote)**

Interview by Diane Kelly

Each Friday morning for the past four and a half years I have driven to a street in the industrial area of Nerang to go to one of my book-keeping jobs. And each Friday morning for the past four and a half years, I have admired the sweet potato plants that fill part of the front garden of the Rockcote property.

The reason these plants have intrigued me is because sweet potatoes are not the standard ground cover for the garden of a commercial building on the Gold Coast. But in addition to them, there are paw-paw trees, dragon fruit plants, passionfruit vines, snake bean plants, a Davidson plum tree, a lemon myrtle tree, a South African frangipani, three mango trees, banana trees and a coffee bean tree to fill the garden areas that surround the Rockcote building. There is also a chook run, a veggie patch, an out-door pizza oven, a pond and some very impressive retaining walls to make any organic gardener feel quite at home. I had the opportunity to do a tour of the Rockcote building and the surrounding property last Friday, and my host for the visit was Peter Seymour-Smith, whom many of you would know as being the person who looks after the seed table at our Club meetings, and who has had wide experience in organic gardening.

Peter joined the staff at Rockcote in 2004, and is responsible for the garden and the maintenance of the building. After doing his certificate 3 course in horticulture, Peter realized that organic gardening is a preferable way to maintain landscaping and food-supplies, and this fitted in well with the philosophy of the Rockcote mission statement.

Rockcote Industries produce non-toxic renders, paints and primers, and the founder of the company, Bob Cameron, began manufacturing his products in a backyard shed in

1987. Bob's goal was "for Rockcote to become the first fully sustainable and regenerative company on the planet". When the office complex and production areas were designed and built, natural heating, cooling and lighting systems were used. Solar energy is utilized and sky-lights let in natural light, and with an intriguing building design, the reception and office areas do not need any air-conditioning. This results in 80% less electricity being used than in a comparable commercial building, and the site is able to return power to the grid.

The interior walls are made of a number of materials, including treated clay and compressed straw. Even the west-facing walls are cool to the touch – and as Peter said, if you need to cut a window in a compressed straw wall, then the removed materials can just be recycled out in the garden! There is no waste such as occurs with gyprock, brick or tile constructions. Another benefit of such building materials is that no off-gassing or VOC's occur, and the insulation and acoustical benefits are notable.

Outside in the green of the garden, there are several large tanks holding 120,000 litres of water. The water used by the manufacturing section here is actually extracted from the drying process of Rockcote's Yandina factory and recycled– no council water has been used on the site in Nerang since 2005. For human consumption, the water is captured from the metal roof of the building - the twice-filtered drinking water for visitors in the reception area was cold and very refreshing.

Returning to the design of the building - as you can see from the photos, the Rockcote building has deep verandahs and curved roofs. The building runs east/west, and so in the winter the warming sun comes into the building, and in summer the area remains shaded and cool. The day that I visited, the offices were actually a very comfortable 31 degrees – the design of the building, with its open plan and cross ventilation made it feel about 24 degrees, and the working conditions were pleasant.

The lighting system in the offices is designed that, on bright and sunny days, the lights dim, and then become brighter on over-cast days. The main roof slants to allow any hot air to move through, up and out through the louvers, and the roof of the outside staff area is curved because it is actually supports the solar power panelling, and the shape allows the most sun-impact throughout the day.

During my tour of the offices, I occasionally heard a rooster crowing and I was very pleased to hear that Peter actually did have a chook-yard out the back of the car-park! The whole property covers 8,000 square meters, and the land-scaping is impressive. Originally the block was a steeply-sloping, basically unusable piece of land. But, working with engineers and the local council, Rockcote cut into the hill, built large retainer walls, and then the garden became established.

I asked Peter about the garden, and what plans did he have for it. Along the top section of the block he would like to install a waterfall, a creek and reed beds, where fish could live and there could be the visual impact of flowing water. I also asked him what he enjoyed most about the job. After debating between "knock-off time each afternoon", and the day he roasted one of the home-grown chooks and baked some potatoes in the pizza oven, and the staff shared a meal with him, he eventually decided that his favourite part of his job is mango season.

So my visit to Rockcote was a good one – it was something different, and it was a real education to see both Peter's garden and the building. As Bob Cameron envisaged, it is "a commercially viable, people-friendly building that would have minimum detrimental effect on the environment during its construction and through its life". So next Friday when I drive to my job in Nerang, I will know that those sweet potato plants are just one part of an organic and sustainable project.



The Rockcote building, with its curved roofs and large verandas (and one of Peter's mango trees).



The external staff area, with its curved roof and solar panelling



The back of the property, with its large retainer walls, and lots of potential!

The Garden in April From Diane Kelly

Time for Planting:

This is a good month to start planting trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants, while the soil is still warm enough for the roots to get a hold before winter sets in. You can choose plants that will give you a good show right now – there are autumn-flowering natives such as grevilleas, paperbarks and banksias, and late-blooming flowers. There is still time to sow all the winter and spring-flowering annuals such as calendulas, cinerarias, pansies, and lobelia, and vegetables such as broccoli, peas, onions, celery, capsicums and eggplants. Fruits such as citrus, passionfruit and paw-paws can also be planted.

Seedheads to Save:

Keep on watching out for ripening seeds to propagate, and collect them before they are shed. Dry the seeds off and put them in paper envelopes, storing these in turn in an airtight container, which you can place on the bottom shelf of the fridge. If you're not sure when to sow the seeds you've collected, it is a good idea to sow half of them now, but store the other half and sow those when spring arrives.

Around the Garden:

Pests are generally on the decline now that the weather is turning cooler, but diseases such as botrytis and mildew are still quite prevalent. Practice good garden hygiene – don't leave rubbish lying around – either compost it, or put it in the bin if it is diseased. Clear weeds, as they act as host plants for many pests and diseases. Rake up fallen leaves at regular intervals from lawns and amongst plants in the borders. If leaves are left in a thick layer on the lawn for even just a few days, they will kill off the grass. Fallen leaves left lying over and around plants can encourage slugs and snails. Set traps for slugs and snails by placing shallow containers of beer with the rims just at soil level. Pour the beer about 3cm deep. Wood ash, sawdust or crumbled eggshells spread around plant bases help to deter snails, but re-apply after any rain. Also rake up fallen leaves from roses

to prevent blackspot spores from overwintering in the soil. This is a job that should be done regularly, and the leaves burned or put in the bin. On no account add these leaves to the compost heap, as the heat generated may not be sufficient to kill off the blackspot spores. It is difficult to make a large enough compost heap in a small garden which will generate enough heat to kill off all harmful organisms.

Now is the time to feed tropical shrubs, including hibiscus, frangipani, ixora and mussaenda. Choose a fertilizer with a high potassium, low nitrogen content as wintering is approaching. Water camellias to make sure they have a good flowering season. If it is dry, do this with all autumn and winter-flowering shrubs.

Cannas must be cut back after flowering. Divide in autumn or winter. They have a thick, fleshy root rather than a true bulb, and can be treated like other tender perennials. If lifting, trim, clean, pot up and store in a cool dry place.

Finish planting winter and spring-flowering plants:

To be sown now: alyssium, candytuft, carnations, coreopsis, cornflower, cyclamen, delphinium, dianthus, everlasting daisies, forget-me-nots, French marigolds, gypsophila, hollyhocks, lupins, polyanthus and primulas.

If planting late, add a little fertilizer high in phosphates like blood and bone or seaweed meal to the soil rather than a general feed. This encourages root growth, which is what we want at this time of year. Soft growth made now is more easily damaged during winter.

Lawns: Reduce frequency of mowing. Established lawns should be mown less frequently now as growth slows down. Also, raise the height of the cutting blades on the mower. Grass which is cut too short over winter will not stand up to the poorer weather conditions, and will be more likely to become infested with moss and weeds, because it is

weaker. Rake out thatch, aerate and top-dress lawns. This autumn overhaul will make a tremendous difference to the lawn after a summer of hard use.

Vegetables, Herbs & Fruit:

Asparagus: Cut down asparagus fern now if it has turned yellow. Be aware that there are small, sharp spines on asparagus stems and they can give you a nasty cut, so wear gloves when pruning them. After cutting down the foliage, top-dress over the crowns with garden compost or well-rotted farmyard manure.

HINT: If you don't have a lot of compost available, it is better to give enough to a smaller area, rather than trying to spread it too thinly over of the ground. (With a good crop rotation system going you should plan to incorporate organic matter into at least a third of the vegetable garden each year.)

Jerusalem artichokes: It is the swollen roots, rather like potatoes, of these plants that are eaten. The tops can grow to over 2m, making this an excellent plant to use for screening, and they produce quite attractive yellow flowers. These plants can be invasive, so keep a check on them, and harvest the roots regularly in summer and autumn from about five months after planting. As with potatoes, the smallest tuber left in the ground will re-grow.

French & climbing beans: When these have finished being harvested, leave some pods on the old plants until they turn brown, so that you can collect the seeds. The plants can be cut down and composted, but leave the roots in the ground, as beans return nitrogen to the soil. Beans can be followed by leafy crops such as brassicas which have a high demand for nitrogen. By doing this, less nitrogen will have to be applied to the soil in the form of additional feeds.

Onions: Sow onions and plant out onion seedlings, being careful to choose the early or mid-season varieties that suit the area. A short-day heirloom variety "Barletta" can be pickled at 70 days, or eaten when mature at about 114 days.

Remove Yellowing Leaves from brussels sprouts and other winter brassicas such as cabbages, cauliflowers and broccoli. Old

yellowing leaves are of no use to the plants – they will just encourage diseases such as botrytis or grey mould to invade, reducing the overall crop yield. Also clear out old tomato, eggplant and capsicum plants and all their debris as they finish cropping.

Broad beans: Sow broad beans direct in well-limed, fertile soil. They must not be in flower when it is too hot or too cold. Take out a shallow trench about 5 cm deep with a spade or hoe. The seeds are quite large, and so can be spaced at intervals of 15 cms. Cover with soil and tamp it down with the back of a rake. The seeds will germinate fairly quickly and then grow slowly through the winter, producing a crop of succulent beans in spring and early summer.

Chinese Greens: White or green pak choi can be planted this month in mild areas. Pak choi grows best in quite mild temperatures (13-20 deg C); it tends to run to seed if it is too cold or dry, but varieties vary in their needs.

Basil outdoors will not survive now. If grown in pots, you can bring them in to a greenhouse, or harvest all the leaves and freeze in ice cube trays topped up with water.

Strawberries: Clean up strawberry beds. Remove any yellowing foliage and old runners which have been overlooked, and generally weed the area to tidy it up and lessen the risk of pest and disease problems next year. Any older plants showing signs of virus infection (stunting or mottling of the foliage) should be taken out and put in the bin. New certified, virus-free plants can be brought in – it is still planting time.

Codling Moth is a major pest of apples and other fruit. The insects over-winter as caterpillars or pupae in bark crevices or nearby litter, having chewed their way through into the fruit core, filling their tunnels with webbing and droppings. Remove all infested fruit on the ground and trees regularly, and destroy it. Band the trunk with corrugated cardboard or hessian, or grease bands, and regularly remove trapped insects. Remove any loose bark and litter on branch forks. Grow nectar-rich flowers to attract the parasitic wasps that prey on the moths.

Source: Gardening Throughout the Year in Australia – Ian Spence



Ratatouille From Jill Barber

Marion Williams made a delicious Ratatouille one night for our club supper (for the February meeting I think).

She said that it is a great way of using up garden vegies.

RATATOUILLE, a dish from Provence in France, can be eaten cold or warm with meats or salads, as a dip with crusty bread or you can add a spoonful to omelettes for a tasty meal.

When recipes for eggplant or aubergine (as it is often called) say "degorge", cover the slices of eggplant with salt, let stand for 30 minutes, then wash under cold running water and pat dry. This is done to draw out any bitter juice from the eggplant before cooking. This is especially necessary with old eggplants.

- 2 eggplants
- 3 zucchini sliced
- 2 onions sliced
- salt freshly ground
- olive oil for frying
- pepper and sugar
- 4 garlic cloves crushed
- fresh basil or parsley for garnish
- 4 ripe soft tomatoes, skinned
- 2 red capsicums sliced

⇒ Slice eggplant, sprinkle with salt and place in colander for 30 minutes. Wash under cold water, press out any moisture, then cut into chunky cubes.

⇒ In a large saucepan or wok, gently fry the onion in oil, add eggplant and saute until eggplant is golden.

⇒ Add all other ingredients, cover and simmer until soft. If mixture is too dry add a little water.

⇒ Season with salt, pepper and sugar to taste. Garnish with fresh basil or parsley.

NOTES:

Two things to note about this Ratatouille recipe:

1. It originally came from the Queensland Fruit & Vegetable Growers some years ago.
2. It contains mostly vegetables belonging to the Nightshade family. Some people have an allergy or intolerance to this family so it is wise to try it first in small servings.

Occupy the Food System: Willie Nelson and 300,000 Other activists sue Monsanto

From Patti Barton

Little did Willie Nelson know when he recorded "Crazy" years ago just how crazy it would become for our cherished family farmers in America.

Nelson, president of Farm Aid, recently called for the national Occupy movement to declare an "Occupy the Food System" action. Nelson said that, "Corporate control of our food system has led to the loss of millions of family farmers, destruction of our soil," and much more.

Hundreds of citizens, including New York City chefs in their white chef hats, joined Occupy the Food System groups and Food Democracy Now, and gathered outside the Federal Courts in Manhattan on January 31, to support organic family farmers in their landmark lawsuit against Big Agribusiness giant Monsanto (Organic Seed Growers & Trade Association v. Monsanto).

More info online at:-
<http://theragblog.blogspot.com.au/2012/02/jane-ayers-willie-nelson-and-300000.html>

Source: By Jane Ayers / Reader Supported News / February 16, 2012

STUMPED
By Pauline Maxwell

It's a funny place out here where I live. Got a few weird and wonderful people who share my space. Our home has an oriental theme; the four sections form a square around an internal Zen garden.

One view is across an extensive grassed area, past our extra garden plot to an attractive straw bale building – part community room, part waste water treatment cons room. As the area behind is a temporary facility for the collection of household waste and recycled materials, we have a continuous stream of people on foot, or residents in cars accessing the area. They have to pass our home and beautiful garden.

On a sparkling early morning, when the first sun rays lit up rainbows in the dew, I saw this old girl go past in gumboots, all covered up – red beanie and woollen jumper, long pants and scarf, puffing wispy breaths into the crisp valley air. She was carrying one of those green shopping bags. I performed my ablutions, and from the bathroom window, I spied her bending every now and then to pick something up to put in her bag. *Looks like a chook I mused.*

'Hey darl,' I said, pulling on my work clothes in the bedroom, 'Meg's out there early. Looks like she's picking mushrooms.'

The mound in the bed stirred, but pulled the covers over her head.

'It's not really the right time for mushrooms.' I scratched my head. We've had so much rain and warm weather lately. I guess anything is possible with Mother Nature.'

From the bedroom window, I watched, focused on Meg's antics. Sure enough, I could see her bobbing along, gathering more.

Out in the kitchen, I put on the kettle and flung a couple of teabags into two mugs.

Curiosity got the better of me and I sidled out along the veranda. Yep, she was almost at the end of the lane, heading home – I thought of the pile of mushrooms she had collected.

Steaming my way to wake up my missus, I grumbled. 'Bet she's picked them all.'

A mop of hair emerged. Sleepy eyes opened. 'What's up?'

'That Meg. She's out picking mushrooms. You know how I love mushrooms. They must have come up in the last week. I've been so busy I've missed them.'

'If it's bugging you...' She struggled to sit up. '...why don't you go and have a look?' Her two hands encircled the mug. 'Go on, check it out.'

Boots on, coat buttoned, I grabbed a container and headed out. I tramped through the wet grass to where she had left a trail in her wake. Nothing. I searched. Not one left. I was stumped.

Back in the house, I yelled my annoyance. My missus, dragging out in my dressing gown and thick socks put her mug on the bench.

'Listen Bob, don't go on about it. Next time you see Meg, ask her.' She shrugged her way into the pantry while I salivated on mushrooms a la herbs cooked in butter in the pan.

My missus broached the subject with Meg at a local party.

'Not mushrooms, love,' she laughed at my query. 'Kangaroo poo – great for the compost.'

**Prostate Awareness
Twin Towns & Tweed Coast**

Just a click away:
www.prostateawarenessaustralia.com or
contact Ross Davis for more info:
rossco12@bigpond.com

What to Do with Fruit Trees in April From Diane Kelly

Custard Apples: Fertilize trees – 20 gms of organic fertiliser per sq m to drip line. Harvest every 3 to 7 days. If mealy bug is a problem spray individual fruit with pest oil or wipe on metho and water (30% metho + 70% water).

Figs: Close to end of season.

Lychee: Less watering is required, but don't let the trees dry out. If Erinose mite appears, spray every 10 to 14 days with wettable sulphur from pinhead size new growth to fully open and hardened off.

Low Chill Stone Fruit: Water needs to taper off now as trees begin to defoliate.

Mango: If any anthracnose fungus is visible, spray with a copper based spray every 2 weeks, or with 25 mls leaf microbes and 5 grams wettable sulphur per 1 litre of water.

Passionfruit: The water can be tapered off. Harvest fallen fruit under vines every 3-4 days.

Pawpaw: Plant out new trees. Apply boron now. 1 teaspoon per mature tree. Spray leaf microbes (25 ml leaf microbes per 1 litre of water) if black spot is seen.

Persimmon: Main harvest time. Decline water needs. Apply a little super fine lime and gypsum – 50 gms per sq metre of each.

Strawberries: Plant out new runners. If you want to leave last year's plants, prune only.

Bananas: Give stools a high organic potassium fertilizer – 200 grams per stool (any organic fertilizer that has added sulphate of potash).

Citrus: If any fungal problems arise, spray with pest oil and leaf microbes. Add the pest oil + 15 ml per litre of the leaf microbes. This will also control the citrus leaf miner and scale.

Source: *Queensland Planting Guide, BOGI*

WHAT TO PLANT

Vegetables & herbs: Anything you plant now will go to seed in spring. So plant broccoli, cauliflower, broad beans and peas – you want them to go to seed, because it's the seed heads that you eat. Start putting in brown-skinned, long-keeping onions now. Also capsicums, parsnips, carrots and beetroot.

Coriander rushes to seed in hot weather – try it now!

OTHER JOBS:

- Dust plants with potash-rich wood ash – potash helps make plants more frost resistant. So does a weekly foliar spray or seaweed spray or home-made nettle or waterweed spray. (Spray leaves in early morning or late afternoon.)
- Gather up whatever will be spoiled by winter cold: green tomatoes to ripen on newspaper indoors or to make into green tomato pickles; immature cucumbers and pumpkins to slice and stir fry, or to hang by their vines in the garage to keep ripening for a few weeks. Dig up tomatoes and capsicum bushes with as much soil as you can and try to pot them for a continuing crop.
- Scatter radish seed for a quick crop to help protect other plants. The radish will go to seed in spring and can be hauled out easily, leaving your garden relatively weed-free and deeply dug – and with a weed-free mulch.
- Consider leaving a few weed patches alone in your garden. They probably won't seed or run until spring anyway – and they'll protect the soil and help insulate your plants.

Source: *"The Wilderness Garden" Jackie French*



VEGETABLES

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.

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

HERBS

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.

APRIL

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

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

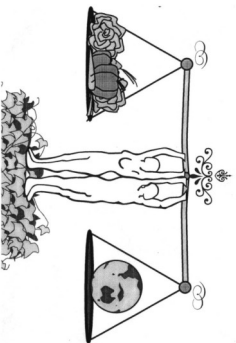
Previous newsletters from 2010 onwards can be downloaded from our websites at:

www.goldcoastorganicgrowers.org.au

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 19 April 2012