

Next meeting: Wednesday 14 June 2017

ROGI News

Doors open at 6.15 so members can visit the library, shops, stalls and seed bank or just have a chat before our meeting starts. Please be seated by 7pm ready for the guest speaker.

Salvation Army Church
Cnr McDonald Rd & Macarthur St
ALEXANDRA HILLS

Admission

Members: Gold coin
Visitors: \$5

Please bring a plate of food (savoury/sweet or nibbles and preferably home-made) for supper after the meeting.

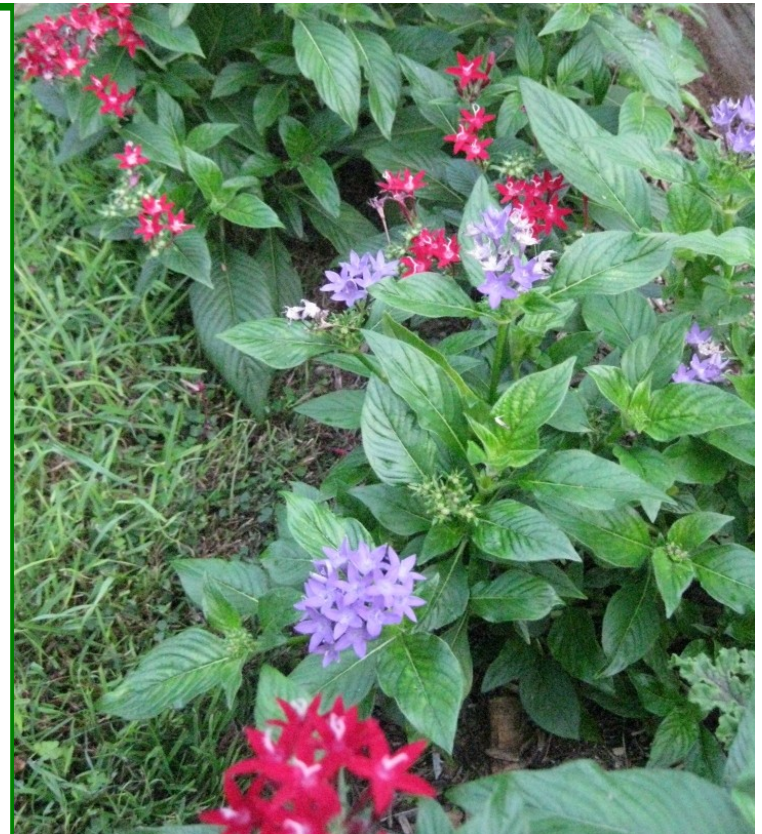
Tea/coffee provided.

You are very welcome to provide a **quality plant** to help share interesting plants with other members (**see p19**).

Remember to bring a bag/box/basket to take home your items.

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A row of pentas (*Pentas lanceolata*) makes a beautiful border adding pops of red, mauve, white and pink. Thriving in full sun, even in our hot summer, bushes can grow from 15cm to 2m high and up to a metre wide. It is a popular host plant for butterflies - meaning they lay their eggs on the leaves knowing they are perfect caterpillar food. The plant is designed for this and will recover, so don't panic and squash the caterpillars, or you'll have no butterflies!

Thoughts from the potting shed

Dear ROGI member

At a time when many community groups are seeing their membership decline, ROGI continues to buck the trend. If you come to our monthly meetings (second Wednesday of the month), you'll see we are regularly welcoming around 25 new faces wanting to find out about what ROGI has to offer.

It's another indicator that locals are very keen to learn about healthy ways to produce their own food and get involved with a great group of like minded people willing to share their knowledge.

So if you haven't managed to get to a ROGI monthly meeting yet, or to a garden visit or field trip, do try to fit them into your schedule. You won't be disappointed. You'll find lots to learn about how to improve your gardening and sustainability experience, and make new friends with similar values.

There really is a food revolution going on throughout the world and while it is quietly going on in Redlands' backyards, elsewhere it's much more apparent.

Take the *Free Food Revolution*, for example. It's described as "a powerful new movement back to not only localised food production, but also to building a strong sense of community".

In a world of seemingly endless problems, with hunger, loneliness and poverty being some of them, individuals are creating ripples in their communities through simple solutions, with extraordinary results. People are transforming unused spaces or their own front yards into food. And even more radical, they are gifting it to others.

One of our most basic needs – food – is becoming an effortless and free reality for communities around the world, through the innovations of projects like *Food is Free*, and on the other end of the scale, guerrilla gardeners who are cultivating land they don't own and growing food to share with anyone who needs it.



From the suburbs of Melbourne to the streets of Texas and the concrete jungles of downtown LA, gardens providing free harvests are popping up, as people are turning their lawns into food forests.

Sadly, closer to home, Buderim's much-lauded Urban Food Street, encompassing 200 households and 11 streets, ran afoul of local authorities because of liability insurance. The Sunshine Coast Council has now destroyed many of the neighbourhood fruit trees.

Despite this, it's gratifying to see that other Australian municipalities can see the benefit in supporting food growing neighbourhoods. For example, the City of Bayswater in Western Australia, is openly encouraging verge gardening by reducing red tape for locals and making it easy for them to grow and share. It's a much better example for less-enlightened local authorities.

Now that the weather is so much cooler and perfect for backyard gardening, I hope you'll take this as inspiration and get growing. It's always so much better to be able to share your harvest with others.

Happy Gardening

Kathy

Coming Events

June	Wed 14	ROGI meeting	
	Sun 18	Garden Visit	See p17
July	Tues 4	Herb Society meeting	See p19
	Thurs 6	BOGI meeting	See p19
	F,S&S 7,8,9	Qld Garden Expo at Nambour	
	Wed 12	ROGI meeting	
	Sun 23	Garden Visit	See p 17
August	Tues 4	Herb Society meeting	
	Thurs 6	BOGI meeting	
	Wed 12	ROGI meeting	
	Sat 20	Garden Visit (More info later)	

2017 Membership Fees are overdue

- **Cash** payment at ROGI meeting
- **Cheques** made payable to *Redland Organic Growers Inc* - pay at meeting or to PO Box 1257, Cleveland 4163
- **Direct Deposit** BSB 633000. A/C 136137296 Bendigo Bank Capalaba Central

IMPORTANT! Reference - Your initials and surname are essential to identify who has paid.

When paying your fees online, please be sure to complete a membership renewal form online at <http://www.rogi.com.au/renew-membership.php>

Member Category	Members Renewing For 2017	New member/s joining in...			
		Jan-Mar	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct16-Dec17
Single	\$30	\$30	\$22.50	\$15	\$37.50
Family*	\$50	\$50	\$37.50	\$25	\$62.50
Pensioner Single**	\$20	\$20	\$15	\$10	\$25
Pensioner Couple**	\$30	\$30	\$22.50	\$15	\$37.50

Family - two (2) adults residing at the same address and their children under eighteen (18) years

** Please provide evidence of **pensioner** status to claim discount

June Meeting

A Bountiful Backyard

Simone Johnston is a qualified dietician and nutritionist so she wanted an organic edible garden.

When she bought her Manly West block eight years ago, she couldn't wait to grow her own food and be as self-sufficient as possible - no easy feat, as the land was more like a football field: large, bare, and grass from end to end.

Hear how Simone turned her 'piece of dirt' into a beautiful and productive garden, how she designed the garden and the principles it operates on, the successes and setbacks ... all done while working full time.



Shane Gishford will be selling fruit and vegetables as usual. Most of them are certified organic; some are guaranteed 'spray-free'.

Mt Cotton Organic Farm 'Muriel's Farm'

Ashley Palmer spoke at our March meeting and so inspired us that we were very keen to see his farm. The visit certainly did not disappoint. The setting was beautiful—really lush and green, though there had been some damage to trees from Cyclone Debbie.

Adept at sowing seeds, Ashley can set out a tray in a couple of minutes doing two rows at a time. He uses seeds mainly from Green Harvest in a mix of vermiculite and peatmoss with a little blood and bone and **guano**. Seed Start is sprayed on top. <http://www.nutri-tech.com.au/products/liquid-fertilisers/premium-liquids/seed-start>

He grows about 30 different crops from seed.

Guano: accumulated excrement of animals such as seabirds, cave-dwelling bats and seals. As a manure, it is a highly effective fertiliser due to its exceptionally high content of nitrogen, phosphate and potassium: nutrients essential for plant growth.

Genoa and Brown Turkey figs were planted out last September and are already producing fruit. Clearly, the soil is really fertile and the trees are receiving exactly what they need.

Different varieties of **avocado** are growing so that there is fruit from now until December. **Fuerte** is the first to fruit but is subject to **anthracnose** which shows up as little black spots and, while it doesn't affect the fruit's taste, it is not good for selling.

Sharwil fruits from June to August followed by **Wurtz, Hazzard**, then **Hass** in about November. Hass is a good cropping tree but the fruit is not as big. However it is a tough tree and resistant to diseases such as anthracnose and the fruit transports well.

Right: The fruit is ready to pick when it becomes dull, unlike this shiny one.
Below: Avocado trees need good water and drainage. Here they grow in rows on mounds going down the hill with water being channelled between the rows down to the dam.



The trees are grafted and he was asked if you could grow avocados from seed. He showed us a very old tree that had been affected by a storm and the grafted part had gone so it was just the root stock. It was a very vigorous tree and had lots of fruit but they were small.

He said that the rootstock of grafted trees was much more vigorous than that of a seedling and produced more fruit. However, in time a seedling would produce fruit true to type, but the fruiting would be less reliable.

Another tip was - when pruning or after damage from a storm, cover the exposed trunk with hessian or some other cover so that the stem doesn't burn, as the plant trunk is sensitive to too much heat from the sun.



This enclosed shade house is where the action begins. All the vegetables on the farm are raised from seed. Most are sown in trays in this covered area, except a few such as pumpkin, beans, corn and watermelon, which are planted directly into the growing position.

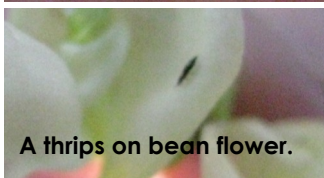
Mt Cotton Farm Visit cont'd

Fenced to exclude rabbits and wallabies, vegetables grow in rows with grass between—we were amazed at the well-maintained edges. Ashley plants something new every few weeks.



We saw *Redland Promise* strawberries, zucchini, Lebanese cucumber, cauliflower, kale, cabbage, beans (round and flat), corn, onions and beetroot. He has no problems with pollination with the corn planted in two rows as there is no predominant wind direction.

Right and below: Ashley was asked about **beans curling** and explained that it was caused by thrips in the flower. When in flower he sprays with eco oil once a week.



A thrips on bean flower.

For bean fly it is better to drench the soil with neem which is absorbed through the roots and also doesn't affect the bees.

Growing vegetables in rows enables crops to be rotated. Eight months, he thought, is a sufficient time lapse between planting with a vegetable of the same plant family.

Unfortunately, the fence does not keep out rats—they love zucchini flowers. Over winter rat numbers build up as carpet snakes go into hibernation. He tried to trap them using chicken food, but they prefer zucchini flowers.

Asked what vegetables he found most difficult to grow, Ashley said **tomatoes and capsicums** ... because of fruit fly. Besides Qld fruit fly there are others such as cucumber fly, and no effective bait for them as yet. Covering plants to prevent fruit fly is expensive and time consuming on a farm. For aphids and mealy bugs, he uses bugs from *Bugs for Bugs* (integrated pest management specialists) to deal with them. <https://bugsforbugs.com.au>

In the hillside orchard, there are forty-year-old **Pink Mammoth custard apple** trees which are pruned so there are low branches, as from November to January he hand pollinates them with a soft-bristle brush during late afternoon or first morning light to ensure a bumper crop. There is a native cockroach that 'should' pollinate them but it and the bees are not very reliable. He showed the difference in the appearance of the fruit when it is mature and ready to be harvested as, like avocado, it doesn't ripen on the tree. He leaves the high fruit for the birds, bats and possums.

When the fruit turns a paler yellow green and the bumps have smoothed out a bit, it's time to pick them.



Long rows of **pawpaw** (papaya) trees. Ashley grows them in clumps and then culls leaving one male for eight – 10 females. They are given seaweed, lime, composted chicken manure and extra potash, and sprayed with sulphur and copper to keep the leaves and fruit clean.

There are also long rows of **citrus trees** and Ashley uses eco oil on these, spraying them late in the afternoon when they are not going to be burnt. He also uses sulphur spray but there has to be a gap of 22 days between application of the oil and the sulphur.

Other trees include Ladyfinger bananas, macadamia and pecan nut (they're in the chook pen). Ashley also has chooks, roosters, geese, turkeys and guinea fowl. And 20 cows.



Mt Cotton Farm Visit cont'd



Above: The herb garden near the poultry enclosure.

After not hearing roosters in suburbia, it was great to hear them and their contented companions foraging for food.

When we went to the shed to have afternoon tea, Ashley was still working, attending to the cows and later the poultry, so it is very full-on work running a farm like this.

Thank you to Ashley for his hospitality and sharing his knowledge and experience with us. It is encouraging for us amateurs to see how well a professional like him can grow such a



Above: The passionfruit pergola

variety of fruit vegetables and nuts. I can thoroughly recommend those custard apples - they're the juiciest and tastiest I've ever had. It is great that we can buy fresh organic produce so close to home.

Mount Cotton Organic Farm has been an organic operation for about 20 years, ever since Muriel (Ashley's mother) started getting sick all the time and they saw the need to switch to growing organically.

Reported by Mary Irmer and Ann Roffey

The farm shop is open to the public Monday to Saturday, 9am to 6pm.

Ashley brings along some of his produce for us to buy at ROGI meetings.

Right: This is what was for sale on the day we visited to farm.



Our fifth annual 'Win a ROGI Mini Garden Makeover and Workshop'

Saturday 16 September 2017

Linda Brennan, our organic gardening horticulturist from Ecobotanica, will plan the makeover of a compact area of the winner's garden in consultation when she visits prior to the workshop.

The lucky person then will have the necessary items ready for the day so several ROGI members can learn while helping to create a bountiful patch.

For more about Linda go to
www.ecobotanica.com.au

An entry form is attached to this newsletter. Please read carefully and think about whether your garden, or part thereof, would be a suitable candidate for a ROGI makeover.

Previous winning gardens have been:

- Jenny's backyard vegetable patch where we did soil testing and included trench composting
- the southern section of Sharr's garden where we planted fruit trees and companion plants
- an enclosed garden at Mena's acreage to keep out the marauding wildlife
- Bryce's acreage property, last year, where we learned about and then planted out a four-bed rotation vegetable garden along with companion plants (and cuddled the baby lamb).

May meeting: Reusing and recycling in the home and garden



Clockwise from right:

Margaret Sear demonstrating the alternative uses for items that would normally be thrown away. Blue basket on table contained kiwi fruit imported from Italy; these baskets were being disposed of at the 'tip' in the hundreds.

Fruit fly trap from a water bottle

Watering can from a fabric softener/detergent bottle

Strawberry pot from a milk container

Pigeon pea seedling in a take-away coffee cup

Converted large milk container being used as a scoop

Two different sizes of bottle-top waterers. They fit on soft drink bottles and deliver a soft delicate spray.

The makings for an 'insect hotel'



Taking cuttings.



Julia (below centre) demonstrated how to take various types of cuttings from several different types of plants.



May meeting



Want a winter bounty?

Linda was based at the seed bank and seedlings table and talked about what is best to sow and plant at this time of year for your best chance of achieving a good harvest in the weeks and months to come.



From garden to plate

Sharr and Angela showed how to make dips from weeds, and tea bags filled with various herbs.



What is your soil pH?



Chris instructed members how to measure their soil pH, and about why it's a good thing to know. ROGI has soil test kits in the library available for you to borrow for one month.



May meeting

There were seven activities for members to choose from. Next time we may give you more time at each activity. We'd appreciate your feedback and suggestions to make next year's activity meeting even more successful.

Make a kokedama

Right and below: This was where you could get your hands dirty—although there were plastic gloves on hand if you wanted to stay clean. Jan had a table full of materials with which to make kokedama (also known as Japanese moss hanging balls).

I wonder how many are still hanging in pride of place in people's homes.



May meeting: Gardening 'Brains Trust' - Q & A Session

Blueberries

Q. The flowers are not setting fruit. Why?

A. There were several possibilities:

The flowers were not being pollinated

The temperature was too hot

Stress factors shown by the older leaves looking

weak and the younger leaves healthy, maybe due to nutritional factors.

Most probable cause being that blue-berries need two different varieties for effective cross fertilization. Suggest that a tall variety and some other variety is often needed.

Blueberries B

Q. What are the necessary trace elements?

A. Australian soils are deficient in boron and copper. Blueberries need copper, magnesium, boron and potassium for flower set. Always check the soil pH to ensure nutrient absorption.

Coffee Grounds

Q. Are copious amounts of coffee grounds harmful to the soil or compost?

A. Coffee grounds are an excellent source of nutrients especially nitrogen and help the C/N (carbon/nitrogen) balance in your compost.

Q. What is the minimum amount of sunlight for vegetables to flourish?

A. Five to six hours is recommended for most vegetables, however many herbs need less. Too little and they will grow but without vigour.

Rockmelon

Q. My rockmelons are splitting. Why?

A. The most likely cause is irregular watering.

Boron

Q. What form of boron should I add to the soil?

A. Boron is an essential element that helps pollination; however it is needed in small amounts. Don't use sodium-based boron, use boron with humates where calcium and magnesium are also present.

Eggplant

Q. When picked, the eggplant fruit is under-developed - the suggested time for ripening was followed. The squeeze test was tried and the fruit seemed to soften before picking.

A. It is hard to determine when the fruit is ready to pick. The only suggestion was to leave them on the bush to give more time for full development.

Fungus

Q. I have a fungus ripening that smells like rotten meat. Is this normal?

A. Yes. This fungus breaks down dead leaves and twigs, especially wattle tree waste, and is essential to return nutrients to the ground.

A further discussion ensued about the **ratio of fungi to bacteria** needed for healthy soil.

Fungi prefer a low pH (5), bacteria a higher pH. For **fruit trees** the ratio fungi:bacteria is 5:1, whereas in a native forest the ratio is 1000:1

Too much sawdust in the soil or potting mix will create an unhealthy amount of fungi.

Improve this by adding **molasses** which encourages bacterial growth; however too much will reduce earth worm populations.

Reported by Dave Praeger

Bindii *Soliva sessilis*

You may think that we in ROGI go on a lot about making good use of weeds—mainly eating them. This weed is NOT one of those!

We had a story in October last year about eradicating bindii. <http://www.rogi.com.au/uploads/ROGI%20News%20October%202016.pdf> p12.

Unfortunately, October is when they're putting out seeds—rather too late. Now is the time to deal with bindii—before that happens.

Use a daisy grubber to easily dig out each plant and/or use horticultural vinegar in the form of *Burnoff*. No nasty poisons needed.

Having bindii in your lawn tells you a few things about it:

- You are keeping your grass too short
- The soil is compacted (ie is being walked on or driven over)
- You have acid soil (ie low pH)

There are various ways to deal with these to help prevent bindii returning. See <https://jerry-coleby-williams.net/2007/10/03/listen-to-bindii>

Last week the only places where I found bindii was where we regularly walk—ideal strategy to get its seeds spread via the soles of shoes. Our soil is naturally acidic. None in our lush long lawn though.

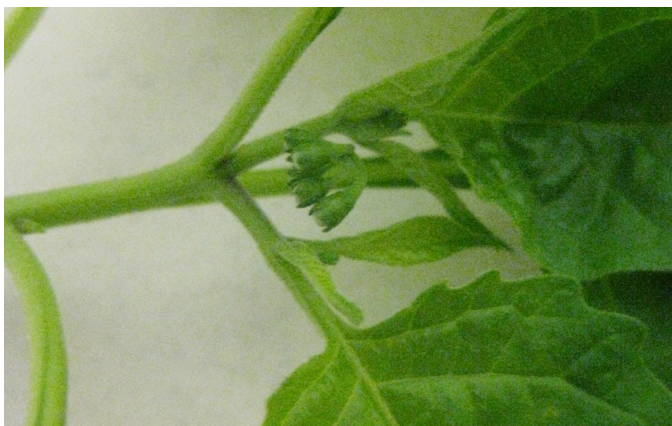
See Linda Brennan at the ROGI meeting—she has *Burnoff* for sale cheaper than online.



L-R: Dave, Margaret, Janet, unknown, Ashley, Shane and George [the 'Brains Trust'], Frank.

Plant Clinic

Q. What weed is this?



A. Nobody had a definitive idea of the identity so a search was conducted. The flower buds were evident but not the flower colour or fruit.

Biosecurity websites have numerous weed searches but, by far, the BCC website, <http://weeds.brisbane.qld.gov.au> has the best search criteria (what is the growth form, what is the leaf arrangement, what is the leaf form, what is the flower colour,

what is the foliage colour, keywords). Because of similar leaf form, Chinese burr or Chinese Apple were two suggestions, but leaf venation and flower arrangement discounted them as possibilities.

The best fit was ***Solanum nigrum* (blackberry nightshade)**, a widespread environmental weed found in all areas of Australia. Reproduction is by seed, often spread by birds. The weed is easily pulled out, and this should be done before the black seeds develop. A search shows the weed has some culinary uses **provided** it has been washed several times and has a list of supposed medical uses, however its **poisonous** nature makes it too much of a risk. Taken in relative small doses, poisonous symptoms occur after 6-12 hours which include fever, vomiting, cardiac and respiratory failure.

Q. What causes these markings on citrus?



A. 1) The markings were assigned to **Citrus Rust Mite *Phyllocoptula oleivora* or Brown Citrus Rust Mite *Tegolophus australis***. The mites feed on the green and undeveloped fruit giving the fruit shiny or polished brown colouration when the fruit ripens. The mites are controlled by ladybirds, oil sprays and lime sulphur.

2) Melanose *Diaporthe citri* was another suggestion. This fungus produces rough pinprick dots covering leaves and sections of fruit. The fungi take hold in dead twigs and then moves down into live stems, branches and fruit. The best defence is hygiene with the removal of dead or fallen leaves and twigs.

The fruit is still okay to eat.

ROGI Library has the book Citrus by Allen Gilbert, which is a wonderful source of information about citrus diseases.

Dave Praeger

Plant Clinic

If you have an interesting-looking pest, wonder if your plant is a weed or has a deficiency or a disease, Plant Clinic may help.

Bring along the insect or plant (as many parts as you can (in a sealed plastic bag if diseased or seedy) and fill in the form. Place the plant parts together with the form on Plant Clinic table well before the meeting starts. Someone will look and may be able to answer your questions.

Please be aware: we do our best but there may not be anyone who can identify your plant, especially if not related to organic gardening.

Library News

Book Reviews

The first two books are new in the library this month.

Leu has 40 years of experience in organic agriculture and agro-ecology, running an organic tropical fruit orchard in the Daintree.

He has published widely about organic agriculture, climate change, the environment and the health benefits of organic.

He says he wrote the book "because every time we have a campaign to get a pesticide banned, we're told, 'Where's your data? Where's your science that it's dangerous?'."

The book consolidates the science and outlines five large myths about pesticides (a blanket term for all the 'bioicides' - fungicides, herbicides, insecticides, miticides and so on).

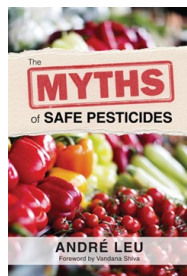
1. The **Rigorously Tested** Myth
2. The **Very Small Amount** Myth
3. The **Breakdown** Myth
4. The **Reliable Regulatory Authority** Myth
5. The **Pesticides Are Essential to Farming** Myth

This book should be required reading for everyone who eats. It convinced me to eat organic as much as humanly possible.

For more information about the author, this is good: <http://www.mofga.org/Publications/MaineOrganicFarmerGardener/Winter20142015/KeynoteAndreLeu/tabid/2892/Default.aspx>

Jill Nixon

Bees are our most important pollinators and they are in decline the world over. They love to live in urban environments, where it's a short flight path from one type of flowering plant to the next.



Conventional gardens that favour lawns, low maintenance, architectural plants and pesticides over flowers and edible plants are scaring the good bugs away.

This book is a guide for gardeners to make our green space inviting to bees and other good bugs. Purdie encourages us to put on our 'bee goggles' and scan our environment as a bee would.

Includes:

- **How bees forage** and why your garden needs them
- A comprehensive plant guide to **bee friendly plants**
- **Simple changes** anybody can make
- **Ideas** for gardens of all sizes
- **Natural pest control** and **companion planting** advice

Jill Nixon

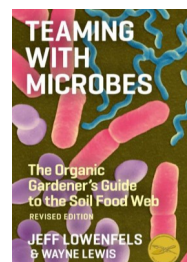
Everyone at ROGI knows that it is our soil that supports all life on this planet. These authors explain it all in two parts.

Part One looks at the soil food web - the biology and microbiology of soil. They emphasise the importance of the biology of soil, ideally teeming with bacteria, fungi, other microorganisms and larger creatures including earthworms and insects.

They discuss relationships between soil and other organisms, for example, plants are central to the soil food web by secreting sugars and proteins to enhance growth of bacteria and fungi near the root zone, which attract larger organisms such as earthworms, which also impact the health of soil.

Application of chemicals into the soil food web is also covered, highlighting issues that can impact on the gentle balance that nature applies to the system.

Part Two is about applying soil food web science to your yard and garden care. An activated web improves soil structure and nutrient retention as the organisms hold materials



that will be broken down into plant nutrients. As organisms die, or are consumed by a nematode or protozoa, nutrients are left behind for the plants. As plants attract fungi and bacteria to their root zone, the nutrients they provide are right there for the plant to use.

A healthy food web also has defences against disease and overpopulation and it influences pH at the root zone.

It is possible to have a strong and flourishing soil food web without tilling, applying chemicals and fertilisers.

The authors have a set of rules to guide the gardener in using their knowledge of the soil food web. They:

- espouse the use of quality **compost** which is full of microorganisms
- identify that **organic mulch** (leaves, grass clippings and wood) is beneficial – mulch should contain these three components (eg forest mulch) describing it as a 'cold compost'
- discuss the use of actively aerated (aerobic) **compost teas** which can help build the soil food web. (It is the microorganisms in aerobically-made teas that are the beneficial ones to the soil.)

These three components are looked at in depth.

The authors have done a fantastic job in making a complex system easy to understand by using common terms and language. The electron microscope pictures included in part one are reason enough to borrow this book.

Linda Barrett

These books are among the many available for loan from your ROGI library. We also have pH test kits and needles for sewing shade cloth for you to borrow.

If you read a book that you consider would be valuable for our library please let a committee member know about it—see back page. We welcome reviews from readers of ROGI library books you've read. Please!

Plant of the Month

Dill *Anethum graveolens*

The common name for dill is from the Anglo Saxon language meaning "to lull", as the plant was highly esteemed for its calming, soothing benefits and was cherished as a lullaby remedy.

Lucky it got its name from Anglo Saxon because many years later, if it was taken from the Aussie lingo, it would mean something else completely ... and not represent a wonderful useful herb!

Growing dill

Dill is easy to grow from seed and it is said that if the seeds are stored correctly (away from heat, light and moisture) they can keep for up to 10 years, making this a wonderful seed to seed save.

Dill will produce wispy leaves growing on a single stem about 75cm high and grows up to 100cm tall, so plant it in the back of your garden bed. Growing plants close together will help them support each other because they can blow over easily on a windy day.

Dill, just like most herbs, grows best in the sun, and is a wonderful companion plant with things like asparagus, the brassicas (broccoli, Brussels sprouts, kale, cabbage, cauliflower and kohlrabi), corn, cucumber, lettuce and onion.

On the other hand, opponents to dill are things like carrot and fennel (plants in its own family - the Umbelliferae family) as they can cross-pollinate.

Dill attracts a number of beneficial insects into your garden. Bees, hoverflies, ichneumon wasps, other types of wasps and the swallowtail caterpillars particularly enjoy dill. I think you would enjoy seeing a swallowtail caterpillar/butterfly in your yard too.

Dill plants are said to be an effective natural insect repellent as they are great against cabbage looper, spider mites and squash bugs ... making them wonderful plants to have for eating and as an attractant for good insects.

Using dill

As some of you have noticed by now, I love to use my garden products and dill is always welcome in my home and kitchen.

Dill seeds are wonderful to use in a little **sleep pillow**, as they are known to calm and settle the mind. I fill sleep pillows with dry dill, mugwort, rosemary and lavender when I have a new baby starting in my care.

To make, sew up 150mm x 220mm squares and place the mix of dried herbs inside. Hand sew the opening of the square. Now you have a little sleep pillow to place under your pillow.

In the kitchen a bunch of dill can be chopped into cooled boiled sweet

potatoes, a few homemade dill pickles (tiny cucumbers) chopped up finely, a day's worth of suburban backyard eggs boiled, and a good scoop of homemade mayonnaise all mixed together for a fresh winter **German sweet potato salad**.

The ROGI seed bank has dill seeds and plants for sale. **Dill plants** from \$1 to \$3. **Seeds** - Members \$1, non-members \$2.



Healthy dill plant at Mt Cotton Organic Farm. Dill goes well with eggs, cheese, vegetables and especially fish.

The scientific principles of gardening

The long, hot and unusually dry summer is finally over. It is time to prepare soil and plant the cool season crops and generally maintain our gardens.

The strategy for planning this activity brings me to reflect on gardening as a medium for applying scientific principles. Chemistry, geology and biology are the basis for planning soil improvement. Biology, chemistry and physics are the basis of plant cultivation. Anatomy, physiology and neuroscience are the basis of our interactions with the garden. The fundamental principles of gardening and science are very similar.

A garden plan might be called a hypothesis by the science community. The plan gets implemented and the outcome is observed, recorded and the findings are incorporated into the development of the next plan. Success is not necessarily achieving the desired outcome, but rather learning not to make the same mistake again.

For the most part, the garden is not a controlled laboratory environment, but it just makes us gardeners more aware of the external factors that contribute to the outcome of the experiment.

The ability to keenly observe must not be under-rated. The same applies to good record keeping.

For the few keen observers of geology

and horticulture, **volcanic soils provide ideal conditions for vegetable growing** while **granite soils provide ideal conditions for growing fruit**. Volcanic soils are found in Toowoomba and the Lockyer valley. The fruit growing area of Stanthorpe lies in the Granite Belt. While these rich soils are not wide spread, they are dotted widely over southeast Queensland.

Key elements for plants in volcanic basalt soils are calcium, magnesium and iron, while the granite soils are rich in calcium and potassium. In my own impoverished shale soil, adding basalt crusher dust and decomposed granite greatly improves soil mineral content.

Other key elements are nitrogen and phosphorus. Nitrogen is derived from bacteria, legumes and animal waste or decomposition, while phosphorus is largely derived from marine sources – fish and seaweed or from rock phosphate.

Soil texture and soil biology are largely controlled and promoted by soil carbon. This is the basis for the fixation of organic gardeners on compost and mulch. The microbes that feed on the organic carbon are critical in breaking down the key elements that are locked in the rock or rock additives.

The issues of water control, atmospheric management and erosion control are largely applications of the laws

of physics. Frequent observation of plant health gives an indication that some intervention is needed.

Pest and disease control understand the biology of pests and diseases. Pests are just some animal seeking for its well being at the expense of us gardeners. When we understand the biology of the pest and its environment, we are in a position to manage it. A similar approach applies to disease where some weakness in our plants makes them vulnerable to attack.

The sciences of anatomy, physiology and neuroscience, which are the basis of our interactions with the garden, are even more complex and will be considered in another article.

It is not necessary to understand the science to be a good organic gardener. The understanding of the relevant sciences is however useful in reverse engineer our congested and contaminated environment to create a healthy and nutritious landscape.

Happy and healthy gardening -

Bruce Ham

President

Brisbane Organic Growers Inc (BOGI)

Newsletter, April 2017

I read this article recently and found it very interesting, so I wanted to share it with you. Bruce has given permission for it to be reproduced here.

Editor.

Success with tomatoes by Ann Roffey

My octogenarian friend down the road LOVES growing tomatoes! His favourite is the *Mini Roma*.

Because he grows tomatoes all year round, and even though he practises crop rotation in his garden, he has found that his soil is becoming riddled with root knot nematodes. To combat this, he grows mustard *Red Giant* as a green manure crop in between plantings.

John also grows tomatoes very successfully in pots. He will buy a small tomato in a punnet, pot it into a larger 20cm pot with a good quality potting mix and some blood and bone.

Once the tomato has grown to a reasonable size he repots it into a much larger 45cm pot, with the following mix:

- Small rocks on the bottom of the pot where the weep holes are, with a layer of sugar cane mulch over it.
- Fill the pot with one third compost, one third of a bucket of dried cow poo, and the rest good quality potting mix.
- Add to this 1 handful each of lime (dolomite), rock minerals, blood and bone, and then pot up your plant.
- Use a sturdy stake, as when the tomato grows it will need support.
- Water in well, with liquid sulphate of potash and liquid 5 in 1.
- Use sugarcane mulch, to combat

weeds and keep the moisture in.

This might sound like a lot of nutrients, but, believe me, when the tomato starts fruiting it will need it. He adds blood and bone or liquid 5 in 1 every few weeks, if the plant needs it

He excludes fruit fly by bagging the fruit with bags home-made from mosquito netting.

The pot sits on his patio facing north. It is watered each day, especially in hot dry weather.

Right: The trimmed plant and support structure. Below right: He insulates the pot with cut-to-shape polystyrene foam to prevent overheating in summer.

Below: The big bunch has 18 tomatoes, and generally John gets a crop size of up to 3kg from one plant. A huge saving ... and they're organic too!



Fixing tomato problems

Right: Bagging tomatoes in mosquito net is a positive way of stopping fruit fly strike, especially if your neighbour is letting rotten fruit stay on the vine. It's a painful process with standard sized Roma tomatoes, but Mini Romas hang in bunches of eight, so one bag is used on each bunch.

Below: Root knot nematodes make the plant unviable, but can be prevented by using mustard Red Giant leaves as a fumigant. Allow the leaves to mature, cut up with secateurs, and then spread in the bottom of the tomato hole. Put alternate



layers of soil and mustard until the hole is filled. Cover with black plastic and leave for a couple of weeks before planting.

by Ann Roffey and friend

Red Giant mustard seeds are available in the ROGI seed bank.



NEMATODE DAMAGE TO TOMATO GROWN WITHOUT
FIRST GROWING CROP OF RED MUSTARD(DIG IN)

We want your help

Can you help at our reception area on meeting nights?

Apart from a nice welcoming smile, no experience is necessary.

However, knowing Excel spreadsheet program would be an advantage. Maybe you'd like to update rusty skills or learn the program and at the same time further your involvement in ROGI. Excel aside, we need a few additional people to give our current workers, who do a fantastic job, some time to shop and mingle occasionally.

Please talk with a committee member - see p 21.



HELP! This shrub has lightly scented white flowers with pale pink filaments. If you can identify it, please contact Gail Bruce on 0438 176 981 or info@rogi.com.au

What are soapnuts?

S*apindus* is a small tree in the lychee family native to warm temperate to tropical regions in Asia and the Americas (the Latin means 'soap of India'). Its claim to fame is that its drupe fruits contain **saponins**—natural surfactants. Look on your laundry detergent container and you'll see the word 'surfactant' featured.

Ancient peoples used them for washing and now they are available for us to use — most commonly instead of detergent, but also as fabric softener, shampoo, hand soap, all-purpose cleaner — whatever your imagination can come up with.

The **benefits to humans and the environment** are numerous.

They:

- leave no residue so can remain in the washing machine during the rinse cycle
- can be used several times
- can be composted after they've 'run out of juice' so to speak, thus leaving no plastic containers in the waste or recycling stream
- are safe and natural - containing no nasty chemicals found in most washing products
- are cheaper than other detergents and soaps
- are recommended people with eczema, psoriasis and other skin conditions
- have been organically certified in USA
- are not nuts, but berries, so are okay for those with nut allergies

There are many Internet references to soapnuts. Mine come from <http://greenlivingaustralia.com.au> in Underwood, where I sourced most of this information and the photos.
Jill Nixon



Above: soapnuts dried ready for use.

Right: drupes on the tree. They're golden and sticky before drying.

Below: workers in Himachal Pradesh, India removing seeds from the husks of dried fruits.



Garden Visits

Sunday afternoon 18 June
Rhonda's garden in Cleveland

Sunday afternoon 23 July
Greg and Louise Lindner's garden in Wynnum

Field Trips

September: Kemp Killerby's property. He runs *Bushfood 4 Biodiversity* and *Flora 4 Fauna*. See how he incorporates his principles into his own yard.

October: Gary Donaldson's property. In February Gary spoke to us—mainly about chooks. See what else he does at his permaculture site on Macleay Island.

Green Harvest & Bugs for Bugs. We're still working on this, so a date is yet to be confirmed. More information later.

As always, spaces are limited, so get in early.

Please book with Toni B. on 0402323704 or events@rogi.com.au or at the ROGI meeting.

Toni welcomes suggestions for workshops and field trips related to ROGI's organic growing interests.

Also, discuss with Toni when you'd like to host a Garden Visit at your place.

ROGI Shop News

Members at the last meeting will have noticed the return of Life Members Frank and Marion with their extensive range of organic soil amendments and fertilisers. After an excellent response to the products on offer, they'll be returning monthly for the foreseeable future. For more information on bulk purchases of products, please see them at the next meeting or phone 0449031606.

An item in stock from the old ROGI Shop is Diatomaceous Earth. We still have the Fine Food Grade for humans and pets and the coarser Pet and Garden Grade for pest control.

These will be available at a bargain price on the Seedbank/Plant Stall until sold out.

Diatomaceous Earth or DE

DE or Fossil Shell Flour consists of the fossilised remains of tiny hard-shelled aquatic algae (diatoms) that were deposited in lakes and oceans over 50 million years ago. Through tectonic forces these turned into chalk-like soft rock layers which can be mined and turned into a fine white powder with a very high percentage (80 to 90%) of silica.

While DE has many industrial and cosmetic uses, for our purpose we'll consider its use in organic pest control for pets and gardens.

Fine Food Grade DE is a sterilised product said to be safe for human and pet consumption for the control of intestinal worms and general gut health. While not disputing claims for the efficacy of DE, I don't see ROGI's role as a health care advisor, so if you want to consume this product or give it to your pets, consult a suitably qualified health care professional.

See the next page for the uses of DE in the home, garden and for animals.

Seed-raising Mix

The ROGI seed bank **seed-raising mix** (a blend of coir peat, vermiculite, perlite and biochar) works quite well. You can get some for your own use. We put it in used yogurt or ice cream containers.

Fifty cents per litre.

We are able to offer wonderful prices as we source well and we are a not-for-profit group.

Our passion is to get you gardening and growing more food.

Sharr Ellison

Special Offer

For every five packets of seeds you buy from the seed bank, you'll receive one litre of seed-raising mix to sow them in.

Please **return seedling pots** the month after you have bought the seedlings so they can be reused. Especially the 4-cell ones.

Other clean used pots—small sizes only up to 12cm diameter. The almost-square ones are good.

Seed Sowing Guide

June

Artichoke; Jerusalem artichoke
Asparagus
Bean: Broad, French
Beetroot
Cabbage
Capsicum/Chilli
Cauliflower
Carrot
Celery
Chicory
Endive
Florence fennel
Kohlrabi
Leeks
Lettuce
Onions/garlic
Parsnip
Peas
Potatoes
Radish
Silver beet
Spinach
Other spinach: Brazilian,
Warrigal
Swede
Sweet potato
Tomato
Turnip

This guide is for sowing seeds, not seedlings. There may be several days or even weeks between the optimal time to sow a seed and to transplant a seedling.

For an up-to-date list of the seed bank stock, please go to:
<http://www.rogi.com.au/uploads/seed%20bank%20list%20March%202017.pdf>

July

Artichoke; Jerusalem artichoke
Asparagus
Beans, French
Beetroot
Cabbage
Capsicum/Chilli
Carrot
Celery
Chicory
Endive
Kohlrabi
Leeks
Lettuce
Peas
Potatoes
Radish
Silver beet
Swede
Sweet potato
Tomato
Turnip

Keep in mind that these are only guides. Be aware that micro-climates and weather conditions may mean that certain seeds may be sown before or after the recommended times. ROGI Seed Bank is available at ROGI meetings and Garden Visits.

\$1 per packet for members.
\$2 for non-members.

Exchange plants, cuttings, seedlings and home-grown produce

Please consider contributing to any or all of these at various times.

ROGI Rewards

Good quality plants and other garden-related items brought along by members. Everyone who attends is eligible for a ROGI Reward. **Please label plant with its name and variety before placing it on the table.**

Members' Sales

Items you have produced that are surplus to your requirements and that **you wish to sell** to other members eg eggs, honey, seedlings, jam, lemons – things that have cost you money (and time and effort) to produce. Please ensure items are labelled, named and priced. It is preferable that you staff the stall yourself.

FREE swap/share/give-away

(This is for members only)

For those items you don't want payment for eg shredded paper, unwanted volunteer plants (named, please) or cuttings, surplus chillies, empty pots or strawberry runners and so on. This is where you may want to work out an arrangement with other members to do some swapping outside of the meetings.

Remember to bring a bag/box/basket to take everything home

ROGI is a beneficiary of the My IGA Card Program for **Cleveland IGA** store. This is how it works:



- Pick up a My IGA Card at the Cleveland store
- Register online
- Tick ROGI as the community group you wish to support

Then, every time you shop in the store and use your card, not only do you receive discounts, you are also helping to raise funds for ROGI. .

Did you know?

You can go online and read every edition of ROGI News since September 2014. Go to www.rogi.com.au and browse.

We'd like to hear from you.

For example, send us:

- A story about your garden
- A photo of an interesting plant
- An article about an unusual plant
- A request for items or information
- Specific garden or nutrition info
- A recipe for home-grown produce
- A notice that you have something to give away or sell
- A handy technique or tip
- A gardening problem solved
- A current affair to do with organic growing
- Anything else to do with organic growing
- A review of a ROGI library book

Please send your items to the editor and help keep ROGI News topical, interesting, local and relevant. info@rogi.com.au

July Newsletter Deadline Please send your contributions to the newsletter editor by 26 June.

Pet and Garden Grade DE

- An excellent alternative to bicarbonate of soda (baking soda) as a cleaning agent when mixed with white vinegar for bathrooms and kitchen appliances.
- Can also be used dry to sprinkle in pantries or cupboards as a deterrent for ants, cockroaches and silverfish.
- Rub into dogs', cats' or other pets' fur and sprinkle on their bedding to deter fleas
- Rub into your chooks' feathers and sprinkle into nesting boxes and housing to deter lice and mites. DE can also be added directly to their food at the rate of 2% of their body weight.

- Dust onto plants to deter aphids, mites, whitefly, ants etc. Ensure both sides of leaves are covered by using some kind of duster eg old pantyhose or a net bag. Also spread on the soil around plants. Repeat process after rain or watering or at least once a month.
- Strengthens cell walls of fruits and vegetables
- Will not harm plants but do not spread liberally onto bare soil as the sharp particles may harm the worm population

For more information on diatomaceous earth, go to <http://www.fossilpower.com.au> or <http://www.mtsylviadiatomite.com.au>

Julia Geljon

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The views
expressed
in ROGI
News are
those of the
editors and
submitters,
not
necessarily
those of
Redland
Organic
Growers Inc

Other gardening groups using organic methods:

Brisbane Organic Growers Inc (BOGI)—1st Thursday every month (ex Jan), Albion Peace Hall, 102 McDonald Rd, Windsor, 6.30 for 7.30pm. 33573171 <http://bogi.org.au>

Qld Herb Society—1st Tuesday every month, Albion Peace Hall. 7.30pm. 54268299 <http://www.qldherbsociety.org.au/qhs>

Oaklands Street Community Garden—Wednesday & Friday 9am - noon, Sunday 2 - 5pm. Oaklands St, Alexandra Hills.



We're not the only ones who need a drink of water. Bees, butterflies and other beneficial insects do too, and need to sit out of the water while drinking.
Above: In your birdbath place rocks to protrude above the water line.
Below: Put two bagsful of marbles in a 28cm pot saucer. Place it near foliage where the insects will feel safe. Be sure to keep the water fresh and clean.

