

# ROGI News

**Doors open at 6.15 so members can visit the library, stalls and seed bank or just have a chat before the Christmas festivities begin.**

Salvation Army Church  
Cnr McDonald Rd & Macarthur St  
ALEXANDRA HILLS

## Admission

**Members: Gold coin**  
**Visitors: \$10**

**(Please rsvp that you are coming. See p 17.)**

Remember to bring a bag/box/basket to take home any items you may acquire during the evening.

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Jackfruit growing in George Allen's garden. George often brings a jackfruit to our meetings for us to sample, so it was interesting to see so many of these large fruits developing on his tree during our recent Garden Visit there. See page 6 for more.

# Backyard Burlblings

As we once again approach the end of another year I feel it's good to reflect on how lucky we are to belong to the ROGI family.

We must be fulfilling a need within our local community, as each monthly meeting brings more visitors and paid up members.

You might be surprised to learn that our membership list for the year is already over 180.

Of that number at least 90 to 100 members have regularly attended our monthly meetings over the last few months.

While statistics can be boring, they are a great indicator of the health and viability of an organisation and it would seem that ROGI is thriving.

A big thank you to Rhonda Binns for handling all the membership details so ably, and to Carolyn for her assistance at the meetings.

Of course there are many more people who do many tasks that really impact our enjoyment of each meeting.

Some who come to mind are Maisie and Cheryl who work in the kitchen to ply us with delicious herb teas before the meeting, and organise the suppers afterwards.

Another important background helper is Steve on the tech desk who ensures the visuals are in the right order. When Steve is not available, his able assistants are George and/or Gennaro.

As well as the above, there are also the willing helpers who set up the hall and clear up afterwards. All of that is done quietly and without any fuss or particular organisation.

It mostly just seems that whoever can, gives a hand. To me, that's a sign of a great group of people who care about each other.

To show our appreciation of the ROGI family spirit, your committee is giving back to the members with our upcoming free Organic Christmas Feast next week on Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> of December.

It promises to be a big event with almost 90 people booked so far.

Sharr Ellson (our hard working vice-president) and her helpers are planning a visual and culinary event that will delight the senses.

Would those who are attending the feast please remember to bring food items for the Salvos Christmas Hampers. (See page 17)

The Christmas Feast is the last ROGI event for this year, with monthly meetings resuming on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> February 2018.

There will also be no newsletter in January as our busy editor (Jill Nixon) has a well-earned break (pardon the pun) and continues her recovery.

During the recess, your committee will be finalising some of the details for the upcoming *Indigi Living Green Expo* (which is replacing Redlands Good Gardening Expo) on March 24<sup>th</sup> 2018.

This promises to be an exciting event focusing on the continuing *War on Waste*.

ROGI's part in this proposed family-friendly event is to have various displays and hands-on participation demonstrating *Closing the Circle on Household Waste*. There will be less talking and more doing, for both kids and adults, than in last year's *Redlands Good Gardening Expo*.

Wishing you all a wonderful Christmas with those near and dear to you, and I hope to see as many of you as possible at the Christmas Feast and next year's meetings.

Julia Geljon, President ROGI

## Coming Events

Dec Thurs 7 Brisbane Organic Growers (BOGI) meeting  
 Wed 13 ROGI Christmas meeting See p 17

JANUARY NO MEETING

Feb Thurs 1 BOGI meeting  
 Tues 6 Herb Society meeting  
 Sun 11 Garden Visit See p 17  
 Wed 14 ROGI—first meeting for 2018

March Sat 24 *Indigi Living Green Expo* Date claimer

## Membership Information

- **Direct Deposit** BSB 633000. A/C 136137296 Bendigo Bank Cleveland  
**IMPORTANT!** Reference - Your initials and surname are essential to identify who has paid.
- **Cash** payment at ROGI meeting
- **Cheques** made payable to *Redland Organic Growers Inc* - pay at meeting or to PO Box 1257, Cleveland 4163

Member Category	Members Renewing For 2018	New member/s joining in...			
		Jan-Mar	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct17-Dec18
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

**Please see page 4 for more membership information.**

## December Meeting

### Organic Christmas Feast

Following the overwhelming success of our Christmas feast last year, we are doing it all again this year.

The feast will be free for financial ROGI members. Visitors and guests are welcome to attend for a contribution of \$10 each.

**ANYONE INTENDING TO ATTEND MUST RESERVE THEIR SPOT.**

Please contact [president@rogi.com.au](mailto:president@rogi.com.au) or ph Sharr 0423 503 983

Please bring:

- Your own **dinner plate, dessert plate/bowl, cup & cutlery.** (You'll take them home to wash, so a cloth bag would be handy too)
- **Secateurs** and other tools for sharpening (free for members). More information on page 17.
- Instead of exchanging gifts, we'd like you to give something to the Salvation Army Christmas Hamper, if you wish. See page 17 for suggestions.



2016 Christmas feast

**Ashley from Mt Cotton Organic Farm is now selling his selected produce for sale outside the entrance to the hall. Remember - bring your reusable bags.**

# November speakers:

Colin Johnson and  
Colin Purnell  
from *Earthlife Garden Care*

**E**arthlife Garden Care is a company founded by Colin Purnell that produces a range of soil amendment products based on rock minerals and humates.

Colin Johnson is the marketing and sales manager and was the main speaker for the evening. He chose to highlight his own soil problems on his property near Mt Tamborine.

He went into great detail about his difficulties of growing anything in the heavy clay on his property until he had applied copious amounts of **Garden Mate**, a natural soil and plant conditioning product, which he claimed loosened the clay, aided moisture retention and encouraged good root systems of trees and shrubs.

Colin also outlined how their products will improve the cell structure of plants so that simple sugars can't leak out of the cell walls and attract insect pests.

A few of their other products mentioned were:

**Mulch Mate:** which is a liquid fermented product that assists in breaking down composts and mulches.

**Weedless:** another fermented liquid that helps to degrade weed seeds so that over time they vanish from the garden.

**Veggie Mate:** a natural plant food containing silica, trace elements, minerals and microbes.

None of their products contain any manures, which may sometimes attract bandicoots or wild dogs.

The two Colins had brought along a range of their products to sell at reduced prices to interested members and seemed to do a vigorous trade. They also donated some product for use as ROGI Rewards.

NB: As always, please note that the various views expressed by speakers on garden products and soil amendments are those of the manufacturers and not necessarily endorsed by Redland Organic Growers Incorporated.

Report by Chris McIvor



## Membership renewal time!

... and hasn't it come around fast?

### How to renew your membership ... fast & easy

1. Go online to <http://www.rogi.com.au/renew-membership.php>
2. Fill out the application, press SUBMIT.
3. Go to your online bank and complete payment. You will need: BSB **633000** and account number **136137296**
4. Pick up your receipt at the next ROGI meeting.
5. Find your 2018 Membership Card name tag on the hanger near the sign-in table.
6. DONE. (I just did it—it only took 6 minutes.)

(This method allows the membership team to join in the festivities.)

### The slower way to renew

1. Join the queue (between 6.15 and 6.45) at the next meeting.
2. Fill in the paper form.
3. Pay cash or cheque.
4. Collect your receipt and new Membership Card name tag at the following meeting.

### The not-quite-so-slow way

1. Fill in form online as in 'fast & easy' above.
2. Join the queue at the meeting to pay by cash or cheque.
3. Collect receipt and new Membership Card name tag at the following meeting.

Merry Christmas and Happy Gardening from Rhonda and the Membership

# Garden Visit

## Judy and George Allen

The Allens have a beautiful and productive garden. George is a very keen fruit grower and Judy grows ornamental shade-loving plants and tropical foliage beneath the trees.

When they bought here 25 years ago the soil was sterile with nothing growing, no grass and no worms. It was covered in bluestone. George dug it up, sifted it—it's now the base of his bush house floor. His soil now is deep sandy loam with moisture deep below that trees like jackfruit and avocado tap into and flourish.

They have sunk a bore and are able to pump around 600L an hour into a 3000L tank. A garden hose uses about a 1000L an hour. Judy hand hoses and thus notices and is aware of what's happening in the garden early.



George is very passionate about feeding the soil and having healthy soil to keep us healthy. His soil was originally deficient in some minerals and trace elements such as copper, boron and zinc. If the soil is deficient in an element, then our plants and food are deficient as well and, as consumers, so are we. This can lead to health issues.

Copper and boron deficiencies have been linked to arthritis. Conversely some chemicals added to the soil can lead to health problems and he mentioned the use of glyphosate, which may lead to immune deficiencies in people. Healthy soil and produce is preferable to resorting to pharmaceuticals.

Keeping an optimal balance of nutrients in the soil is a challenge when trees like jackfruit yearly produce hundreds of huge fruit. George uses stone chips which slowly release boron into the soil. He's aware of the need to add copper and zinc and to continually replenish and revitalise the soil with compost.

Possums and bats love the fruit, but George has found that if he leaves the partly-eaten fruit on the tree, they return and eat that particular fruit first before attacking another. He grows so much fruit that he doesn't mind too much if they take the higher fruit he has difficulty reaching and leave him the rest.

One problem is that, as he has trees producing fruit throughout the year, there is no period when the pests like fruit bug can die out. Consequently, he has to be vigilant.

George has observed that immature fruit that drop off trees such as mangoes and jackfruit are usually seedless. He called them nubbins and they are produced when the tree



George's well-used mulcher

flowers early and then the temperature drops and the embryos don't have a chance to form properly. Nature aborts fruits which are not capable of reproducing. Some avocados without seeds do mature and are sold as 'champagne avocados' and are popular as they are small and just the right size for one person.

If you thought fruit trees were for the back yard then this garden clearly demonstrates that fruit trees can be very ornamental and form the backbone for a stunning garden. They provide the shade for the colourful plants Judy loves to grow.



**Ceylon Hill Cherry (*Rhodomyrtus tomentosa*)** was covered with gorgeous flowers and bees buzzing, and looked spectacular at the Property entrance. It produces a plentiful supply of small round purple berries for about five months each year. These berries taste like blueberries and raspberries, are a great source of antioxidants, and reportedly delicious eaten fresh or made into jam. The tree is a dwarf grower and virtually maintenance-free. It is related to the rose myrtle.



George has an incredible array of fruit trees around his house and if you want advice on growing fruit trees, he is the man to see.

As well as the usuals—avocado, custard apple, oranges and lemons—there are unusual trees such as the **miracle fruit tree (*Synsepalum dulcificum*)** which is a small understory tree that loves shade in its natural habitat. It produces small red berries that are remarkable for affecting the taste buds so that acidic things like lemons and vinegar taste sweet after eating just one berry. It produces a few crops each year and the fruit can be kept in the refrigerator or frozen for future use.

There is a variety of **jaboticaba** trees. The small leaf variety produces small fruit 3-5 times a year often after good rain, while the large-leafed form has fruit which is double the size but usually only fruits once a year. The fruit appear on the main trunk and are great for any garden as they are not susceptible to fruit fly and are very hardy having few pests or diseases, although the possums love them. George also has a variegated leaf variety and a yellow fruited jaboticaba.



Another tree that George recommended as it rarely gets fruit fly even after it has fallen on the ground, is the **guisaro** tree. It has a small yellow fruit that tastes like a pineapple and is

related to the guava family. The only fruit George has noticed affected by fruit fly are those that had a cut in their skin. The skin appears to protect them. See George's article at <http://stfc.org.au/guisaro-or-brazilian-guava-psidium-guineense>



**Araca-Boi** has double the vitamin C of oranges and is used for flavouring ice-cream, sweets and drinks. Judy had made it into a frozen ice which was sweetened and tasted very refreshing.

**Peanut butter fruit tree**, related to the acerola cherry, is a very hardy bush or small tree that grows quickly, producing fruit from the first year. It has yellow flowers in spring followed by small dark red/orange fruit which taste like peanut butter or a sweet potato. .

There is a huge **star apple tree** near the front fence line. Like many of the fruit trees, it could be grown just for its decorative qualities as it has glossy shiny green leaves on top and in contrast the leaf underside is golden-brown. It produces masses of purple star fruit, so named because the fruit has a star pattern when cut down the middle.

**Pitomba** (below) also has no pests. It grows slowly (15 to 20 cm per year) into a small bush of about 3 metres after many years. Flowers are typically *Eugenia* eg cherry of the Rio Grande, grumichama, Brazilian cherry. The ripe fruit is very soft and juicy—looking and tasting like an apricot.



**Malay apple (*Syzygium megacarpa*)** George considers to be the pick of the *Syzygiums*. It needs a sheltered area as it is wind and frost sensitive. The crisp juicy fruit has a mild apple flavour. New growth is wine-red, changing to pink-buff. It flowers abundantly.



Another tree George grows and recommends is the **cherry of the Rio Grande** (flower and fruit above) which is a beautiful tough, fast-growing, small tree to 4-5m that produces masses of cherry-tasting fruit which look like a grumichama.

Other unusual trees that George grows are **black and white sapotes, achachas, sour sops and garcinia**.



Fruit trees that George has potted up.



**Yams** and *Canna edulis* (arrowroot) produce edible tubers.

**Red shahtoot mulberries** which are reportedly delicious and can reach 10cm in length—much longer than the common variety.



**Yellow tamarillo**, also known as the tree tomato, is a member of the *Solanaceae* family which includes egg plant, tomato, chilli, capsicum, cape gooseberry and potato.



Above: Dedicated vegetable patch

George pointed out the **radium weed** and demonstrated how to use it. He suggested it could be given to chooks. There was a question as to whether it was poisonous for



Radium weed *Euphorbia peplus*

them and he warned about the need to look at research, who it was funded by and also to look for different sources of information as some research that is reported is just hearsay. (NOTE: research into the use and effectiveness of radium weed was carried out at UQ. The active constituents were isolated and it's available on prescription as a gel in a tube.)

George thought that the **Mexican spinach** tree *Cnidocolus aconitifolius* has the highest protein level of any green leaf and is a good source of nutrients including calcium, iron, potassium, and vitamin C. It is best cooked with the water discarded (to remove the oxalates). It is a hardy, very large leafy green to 2.4 m high. The leaves are green and triangular; leaf tips are a very attractive sparkly magenta. It has a similar taste to silver beet when cooked. Young leaves have a tangy flavour and add a bright splash of colour to a salad. It is pest resistant and easy to grow. Harvesting the tender growing tips continually will help the plant to become bushy.

Several **dragonfruit** are developing behind the spent night-blooming flowers. George grows red and yellow varieties. The yellow one is not usually touched by possums as it is covered with sharp prickles but on the ripe fruit the prickles brush off easily and George uses old newspaper to handle it.





Dragonfruit like to grow up and then hang down. Jackfruit tree in background.



A colourful section of Judy's part of the garden.



Another plant George recommends is the **betel leaf (above)** which is used by the Vietnamese in salads. If it is blanched in a microwave it makes a beautiful and tasty wrap for spiced meat or other morsels. It is an ever-green, perennial creeper to 90 cm. It has shiny heart-shaped leaves with small white flower spikes. It makes a good groundcover under trees in subtropical and tropical areas. It grows vigorously in the right position and because of its habit of suckering can make it difficult to remove.



The garden was full of amazing plants like this that is just about hiding Ian (right). You could spend hours just admiring all the foliage plants. Thanks Judy and George for sharing your wonderland with us and sharing your vast knowledge and experience with us. You opened our eyes to lots of possibilities.

Reported by Mary Irmer

## Green lacewings

Last year in July I noticed that an abundance of aphids had rather suddenly taken up residence on my brassicas—kale, cauliflower and broccoli in particular.

While the chooks greatly appreciate a side dressing of aphids on their greens, we weren't so inclined—we prefer it plain, thank you very much.

I certainly wasn't about to use anything nasty on the plants, and I found that the oft-recommended squirt of water didn't make a scrap of difference.

What to do?

After a discussion with Janet (who does copious research into many and varied things) I ordered green lacewing larvae from *Bugs for Bugs*.

The package came promptly—they make sure of it, as you can see below!

Since then there have been huge numbers of lacewings on our property and very little insect damage, as the adults and their larvae work their way through huge numbers of insects, not just aphids.

Jill Nixon



# Garden Visit

## Treina Densley

Treina's garden is a really good example of the benefits of companion planting - full of colour with lots of contrasts of plants, large and small, with different leaves. We were surprised on closer inspection to see so many vegetables, herbs and fruits concealed by showy flowers. No wonder the bugs are confused. Bees love her garden. Her aim is to grow vegetables for herself, keep her bees happy and have beautiful flowers and plants.



What stands out are the magnificent roses. Each one has a beautiful scent and this one above at the entrance to her garden is special as she inherited it from her grandparents' garden—a French rose dating to at least 1890.



Why grow regular bromeliads when pineapple tops can produce a pineapple in 18 months and look so good!

A big bold beautiful dahlia – Café au Lait. When it first opens, this stunning dahlia is pink and then fades to cream.



Heliotrope. There was lots of contrast with colours and textures of plants and flowers

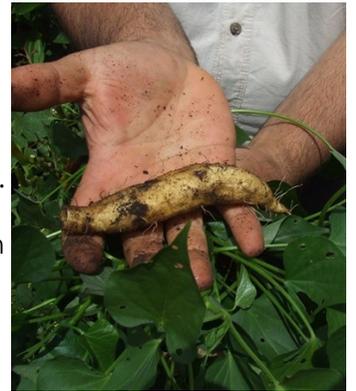
This corner of the front garden concealed a clumping yam and a yellow cherry tomato.



When Gennaro discovered the clumping yam he dug out a couple of tubers which Treina cooked in the microwave for us to try. It was delicious.



The creamy white tuber of the yam is shaped like a carrot.



Gennaro recommended eating the leaves as well. In his opinion, it is the nicest yam. He grows it in a 50 litre pot which can then be tipped out to release the yams when mature.



A tibouchina on the left with pretty pink pentas.

'Blue for You' rose.

These delightful roses have a dark centre and fade as they age. There was a bug on this rose but it didn't seem to have harmed it in any way.



'Duchesse de Brabant' rose (old name) also known as 'The Montville Rose'. It is a French rose, bred in 1857 and was grown around cottages and farmhouses in colonial days.

Treina recommended growing catmint and other highly scented plants like these red geraniums, society garlic, lavender, rosemary etc near the roses.



## Garden Visit Treina Densley

A clump of coreopsis flowers – seeds of these can be bought from the seed bank.



Sally Holmes is said to be 'a vigorous grower adaptable to temperature extremes, quite resistant to pests and disease and is nearly thornless'. It has large clusters of beautiful flowers. It can be grown as a shrub or climber. It is a good choice for a garden.



Mr Lincoln hybrid rose with its long stem is a classical red rose makes a beautiful cut flower. It has a magnificent scent.

Passers-by can stop and smell the roses growing along the fence line.

By growing the roses with so many companion plants, Treina doesn't have problems with black spot which so often affects roses in our climate. She fertilises them about every six weeks.



Yellow-flowering yarrow and Mexican tarragon are two herbs growing in full sun along the fence line.



Crépuscule is French for twilight. The colours of this fragrant rose resemble the colours of sunset. It starts orange and fades to apricot then yellow.

It is reported to be a very reliable, strong rose bred by Francis Dubreuil in France in 1904.

This climber grows profusely along the front landing and stairway and would be a great choice for anyone wanting a strong climbing rose.



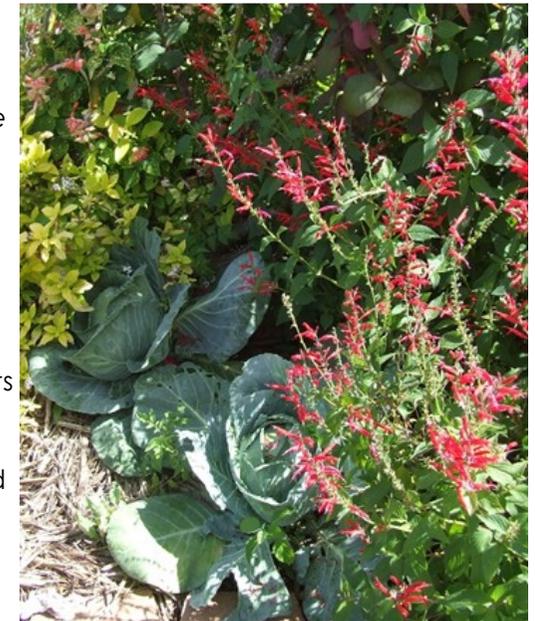
Sweet Heart rose

This rose grows at the bottom of the steps. It is pink but fades to lighter pink with small delicate but abundant and very fragrant flowers.



At the base of the stairs underneath the sweet Heart Rose, Treina had some very vigorous and healthy rainbow chard (silver beet) growing.

Even white cabbage butterflies *Pieris rapae* didn't find these cabbages hiding beneath the pineapple sage with its bright red edible flowers and fragrant edible leaves.



Garden Visit Treina Densley



There are still some bugs wanting to reproduce

Large and productive blueberry growing in a pot.

This is a good idea for blueberries so you can control the pH of the growing mix. They need very acidic soil—as low as 4.5pH. This can be achieved by using an azalea and camellia potting mix. Check pH regularly and adjust with sulphur if necessary.



Pink hydrangea. Talking of pH ... their colour changes according to the acid or alkaline nature of the soil. Pink Indicates alkaline soil.



When lemon myrtle is in flower you could mistakenly think it is just grown for the flowers and not for using in cooking and drinks.

A tall pawpaw tree growing along the side path. Treina is going to cut it back to where the rings are close together. The pawpaws are so high that she has to use a ladder to pick them.

A pawpaw had fallen from the tree - it showed a mild amount of black spot - prevent it from spoiling the fruit by placing the fruit in hot water (50 -60°C



for 5 to 10 minutes), drying and then leaving to ripen on a bench.

Left: We wondered about the possums missing this one.



The free range hen will enjoy fallen mulberries from the tree near her pen that provides shade. Treina was anxious about an avocado which had flowered profusely but lost a lot of flowers. Being the tree's first crop, it is probably okay as it wouldn't be able to support that many fruit in its first year.



Above: whimsical wash bowl of alyssum looking like a bowl of bubbles when flowering, behind comfrey used to make 'tea' for the garden.

Right: Black tomatoes growing in a pot have been trouble-free.



Thank you Treina for showing us your garden and how to have a beautiful and productive healthy garden by mixing the plants. Your roses were just outstanding and obviously were benefiting from companion planting as were your vegetables, herbs and fruits. It is amazing that the roses do so well without any spraying.

Report by Mary Imer

## Traditional Christmas plants

The earliest stories of Christmas are rooted in the Holy Land desert, and begin with the Wise Men's gifts of gold, myrrh and frankincense to the newborn child. These stories and legends of miraculous plants folded into new Christmas stories and were passed down the generations to form our own unique Christmas traditions.

At Christmas we decorate pine trees, some of us hang mistletoe in strategic places and give poinsettias as gifts. We do this without giving much thought to how and why these traditions started.

Let me tell you about three of them:

### Mistletoe

Kissing under the mistletoe is a widely-known Christmas tradition. Mistletoe also figures in a Scandinavian legend of Balder, god of peace, who was slain with an arrow of—you guessed it—mistletoe, and restored to life. Mistletoe was given as a keepsake to the goddess of love Freya. It was ordained that everyone who passed under it should receive a kiss, to show that the branch had become an emblem of love, and not of hate.

Druids used mistletoe as it is supposed to possess mystical powers which bring good luck to the household and ward off evil spirits.



Mistletoe is a wonderful plant/parasite for wildlife. Although poisonous to humans, it is a great food source for many animals. Birds live within it and spread the seeds in their droppings, butterflies lay their eggs on it and bees use the flowers' nectar.

The name mistletoe comes from the Anglo Saxon *mistel* meaning *dung* and *tan* meaning *twig or stick!* So you could translate mistletoe as 'poo on a stick!' Not exactly romantic is it?

### Rosemary

This was apparently the Virgin Mary's favourite so people thought that if this was the case it could protect from evil spirits.

It was a common garnish on the boar's head eaten by the rich at the main Christmas meal in the Middle Ages.

Also known as the remembrance herb, it was used at Christmas as this is the time that we remember the birth of Jesus and all things we are thankful for.



### Poinsettia

The last one is from the other side of the world ... Mexico.

There is an old Mexican legend about how poinsettias and Christmas came together. It goes like this:

There was a poor Mexican girl called Pepita who had no gift to give the baby Jesus at the local church's Christmas Eve services. As she walked to the chapel, very sad as she had no money or grand gift to give to baby Jesus,

her cousin Pedro tried to cheer her up.

"I'm sure that even the smallest gift, given by someone who loves him will make the baby Jesus happy."

Pepita didn't know what to give, so she picked a handful of weeds from the roadside to make a small bouquet, feeling silly only giving this small present to baby Jesus.

Walking to the altar, she remembered what Pedro said. She began to feel better, knelt down and put the bouquet at the bottom of the nativity scene. Suddenly, the weeds burst into bright red flowers, and everyone there was sure they'd seen a miracle.

From that day on, the bright red flowers were known as *Flores de Noche Buena*, or (*Flowers of the Holy Night*) - the beautiful poinsettias.

The Mexicans believe that the shape of the poinsettia flowers and leaves are a symbol of the Star of Bethlehem. The red-coloured leaves symbolise the blood of Christ. The white leaves represent his purity.



The 'petals' of the poinsettia are actually bracts. The flowers are the insignificant structures visible at the centre of the bracts.

I hope you are caught under the mistletoe sharing the greatest gift you can share this Christmas time.

Sharr Ellison

## Summer leafy greens

When temperatures and humidity soar, spinach wilts, but there are alternatives that thrive in our warm wet summers, so you can still have your leafy greens every day. Many ROGI members already grow these, so ask around for cuttings or seeds.

**Betel Leaf** *Piper sarmentosum* (photo p8)  
Evergreen, perennial creeper. A vigorous grower, it's a good groundcover although difficult to remove because of suckering—a pot may be more suitable. Likes semi-shade. Propagate from cuttings in summertime. Leaves have a mildly spicy taste and can be eaten raw when young or used to line platters or for wraps. Edible green/brown jelly-like fruits develop from the white flower spikes.

**Brazilian Spinach** *Alternanthera sissoo*  
Perennial low-growing bright green crinkled leaves, forms a dense clump to 30cm high. Grow as an edible ground cover or an attractive low-maintenance garden edging. Full sun to semi shade. Loves warmth and moisture, but not wet feet. Prefers rich loam. Propagate by cuttings 60cm apart. Nice taste without mucilage. Steam or use in stir-fries or curries – maintains its crispness when cooked. Can eat raw.

**Egyptian Spinach** *Corchorus olitorius*  
Hardy fast-growing annual to 1 metre, it has been cultivated for thousands of years and recognised for its medicinal and nutritional qualities. Sow seeds in summertime and keep moist. Self sows readily once established. Prefers very fertile soil and hot humid climate. Tolerates both wet and dry soils and needs full sun. Has weed potential, so take care. The youngest leaves and immature fruits are used in salads and the older leaves cooked as spinach. It is mucilaginous when cooked.

**Malabar or Ceylon spinach**  
*Basella alba* (green) *Basella rubra* (red)  
A twining vine with rounded dark green leaves that

vary in size with age. Needs vertical supports and hot temperature to thrive. Can be perennial in hot climate. It prefers a moist fertile soil with plenty of organic matter. Can be grown in part shade, which increases leaf size, but prefers heat, humidity and full sun exposures. Propagate by stem cuttings – just stick them in the soil and wait. Self sows from seed. Eat mucilaginous leaves raw in salad. Cook in soups, stir-fries and curries where it holds up better than regular spinach and doesn't wilt as rapidly.

**Mushroom Plant** *Rungia klossii*  
A perennial plant that can grow to 60cm, but will be straggly if left to grow without pruning (use it more). It has dark green, glossy succulent leaves and grows well in the Brisbane summer shade. Once established it can grow quite quickly. Over winter, the plant may become dormant and straggly, so tidy it up in spring. Eaten raw there's a sense of a mushroom taste. Can be cooked also.

**Sambung** *Gynura procumbens*  
A hardy perennial that grows from 30cm to 100 cm tall, with large leaves that have a rather thick, fleshy feel. The leaves may develop purple colourings. Good ground cover. Cook as for spinach.

**Okinawa Spinach** *Gynura Crepioides*  
A dense, low growing plant to 70 cm high. Easily one of the most low maintenance perennial leaf vegetables, it is hardy and relatively pest-free. Thrives in warm, wet conditions and grows best in full sun to partial shade. Cook as for spinach.

**Warrigal greens** *Tetragonia expansa*  
Long-lived Australian native with a sprawling habit and weed potential as it self-sows readily. Fleshy and succulent triangular green leaves. Tolerates heat and drought – very hardy, pest and disease resistant. Prefers loose well-drained soil in full sun to semi-shade is preferred in very dry areas. Propagate by cuttings. Cook young leaves and stems as for spinach, which it looks and tastes like. It has high oxalate content, so not for eating raw.

**Aibika** *Abelmoschus manihot*  
Many types – different leaf shapes. This is the most popular green vegetable eaten in PNG and the Pacific Islands. Aibika provides a cool microclimate under its large leaves. Easy to grow in full sun or part shade, but is prone to insect attack - grasshoppers and leaf curl caterpillars find it delicious, but it recovers. Prune it to about 1 metre – it can reach a height of four metres – to prevent it toppling and damaging neighbouring plants. The large leaves, hibiscus-like flowers and stalks can be eaten. Stalks have a crisp celery-like flavour raw or cooked. The leaves if overcooked are mucilaginous which helps to thicken stews. Must be cooked because of oxalates.

**Suriname Spinach** *Talinum fruticosum*  
Tender perennial that grows to a height of 30 to 100 cm. It bears small, pink flowers and fleshy leaves. Widely grown in tropical regions as a leaf vegetable. It prefers moist humus-rich fertile soil, but will tolerate poor soils. Propagate from cuttings which root readily or from seed (it will self-seed). Growth is very rapid if adequate water is supplied. Leaves and flowers can be eaten raw, but this plant does contain oxalic acid, so don't eat too much. It has a light bitterness that adds a nice variation to a mix of salad greens...and the flowers in a salad are lovely. Cook like regular spinach and discard any cooking liquid because of oxalic acid. Best lightly steamed, they should not be overcooked or they will become excessively soft and mucilaginous.

**Kangkong** *Ipomoea aquatica*  
Semiaquatic, tropical plant grown as a vegetable for its tender shoots and leaves. It's delicious, it grows really fast and you can pick it all year round. Propagate by cuttings. Fertilise regularly as it is very hungry. Kangkong likes to grow in very damp soil or even in a pot in water. Like most greens, kangkong is high in iron, but it's not the slightest bit bitter. Use the thin stems and the leaves in salads and stirfries (add the leaves at the end).

# Plant Clinic

Q: What is wrong with this spearmint?



A: Does anyone know? Please email.

## Plant Clinic

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

Bring along the insect or plant (as many parts - fruit, leaf, root etc - as you can, and in a sealed plastic bag if it's diseased or very 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 have a look and may be able to answer your questions.

Please be aware that, although we do our best, there may not be anyone present who can identify your plant, especially if it is not related to organic gardening.

Gardening Australia presenter and Wynnum gardening guru, Jerry Coleby-Williams opens his garden on the Mother's Day weekend every year. He has notices like this one (right) scattered in relevant places throughout the property. Why not plan ahead to go this year? It gets very crowded. The best time to go? Be the first one through the gate.

## Food with a Future

This garden grows traditional crops. They're easier to grow than modern hybrids. They're tougher and more adaptable.

Traditional cultivars are genetically variable, and this better equips them to cope with variable soils, gardening skills, and varying weather. They have a longer picking season, making it easier for a home food garden to function as an all year round larder. There are also fewer gluts to manage.

Conveniently, seed of traditional crops produce offspring resembling their parents, so you only need buy a packet of seed once. Each year you can save seed for next year's crop. Save seed from your best plants and eat the rest.

As our climate changes, crops grown from saved seed are also adapting, ensuring the future of food. Discover more about food security and become a seed saver at: [www.seedsavers.net](http://www.seedsavers.net)

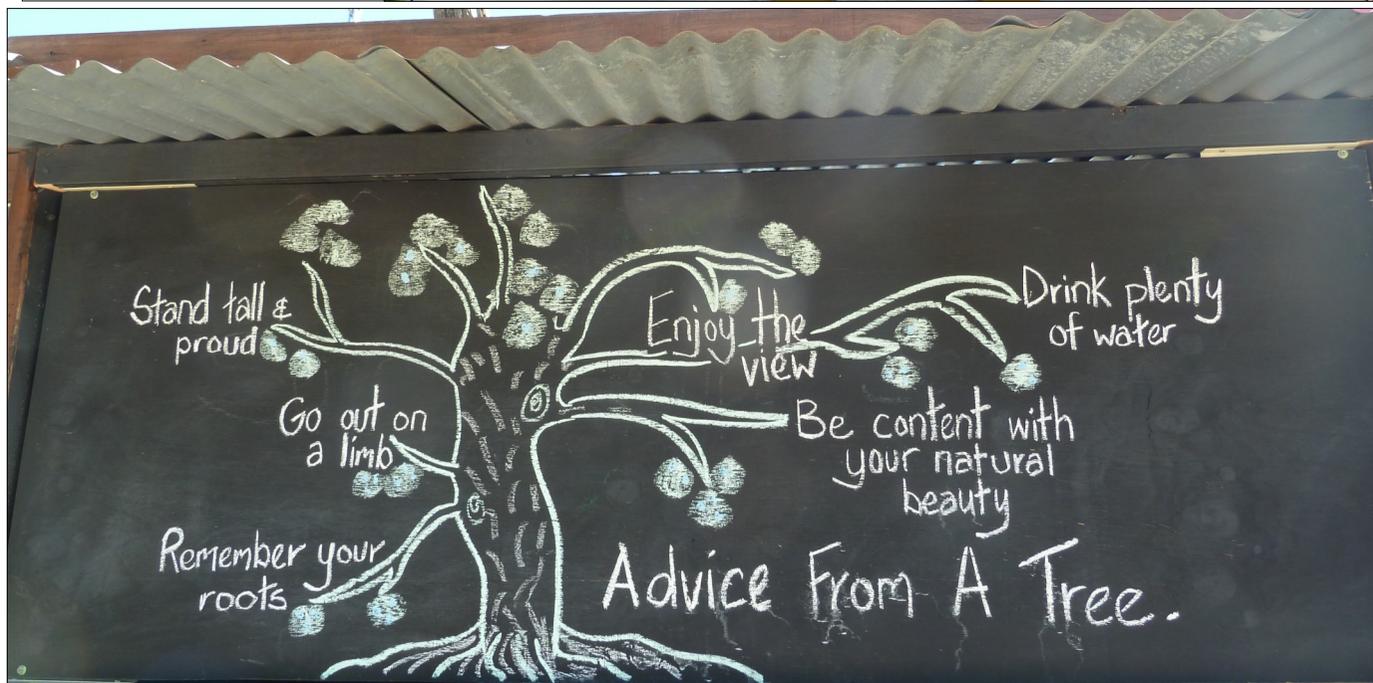


Photo by Ann Roffey, taken at The Plant Shack, at Deception Bay

## Elderflower 'champagne'

If your elder tree still has blossoms, why not make some champagne with the flowers?



I use this recipe from self-sufficiency writer John Seymour. It's a slightly alcoholic sweet drink with a nice bubble that holds to the side of your glass.

### RECIPE

12–15 flower heads picked on a hot sunny day  
0.75kg white sugar  
1 lemon (rind and juice—no pith)  
2 tablespoons white wine vinegar  
4.5 litres of water

Dissolve sugar in 1.5 litres hot water - use a large bucket or bowl. Leave to cool.  
Inspect your elder blooms to remove any little bugs and place in a bucket.  
Add lemon, sugar water and the other 3 litres of water, and vinegar, and gently stir.  
Cover the bucket with muslin and leave for 24 hours. This time allows the natural yeasts in the elderflower to start fermenting. (Leave no longer than 36 hours.)  
Strain through muslin and pour into sterilised bottles. If it's a bit too syrupy, add more water.  
Leave in a dark place for about two weeks to mature.  
Chill and enjoy.

*Linda Barrett*

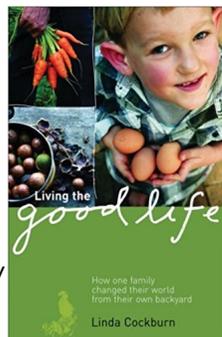


## Book Reviews

I've reviewed two very different books this month. They are new to the library - 'Living the Good Life' gifted by a friend of ROGI, and 'Dark Emu', which has won a Book of the Year and a Literary Award, as well as being shortlisted for others..

### Living The Good Life:

How one family changed their world from their own backyard



Linda Cockburn writes about the challenge she set the family (partner and young boy) to be self-sufficient for six months without spending money (apart from rates, insurance and such unavoidable expenses). Bartering was to be encouraged.

If you've ever been tempted to have a go at emulating 'The Good Life' television series from the 1970s it would be good to read this first.

They took care to be well-prepared prior to the start of the project, and had tanks, solar and other infrastructure installed, and perennial plants established

Each month is chronicled with detailed and often humorous insights into what they did and how they managed.

Because they lived in Gympie, it's easy for us to understand and recognise the

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

challenges (and joys) that living and gardening in SE Queensland presents.

Interspersed throughout are the reasons, justifications if you like, for their actions.

The experiment was really about reducing their environmental footprint, and Linda gives us plenty of facts and figures to show how to and why we should.

So, how did they go? They did spend money ... \$305 all up! They also became healthier, lost weight ... and then moved to Tasmania to do it all over again on a larger and more permanent scale.

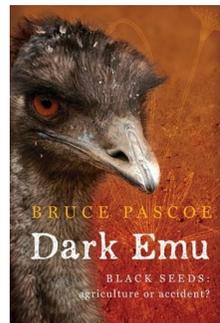
I really enjoyed this book—a page-turner.

### Dark Emu Black Seeds: Agriculture or Accident?

Bruce Pascoe drew upon numerous witness accounts by explorers (remember learning about Mitchell and Sturt) and early settlers to compile this fascinating book.

The evidence is there and the facts are compelling: far from being hunter-gatherers, Aboriginal people tended crops, stored and preserved food, built houses, dug wells, used irrigation systems and designed fisheries.

As an organic gardener, my interest was particularly piqued by the descriptions from Mitchell and other explorers of large swathes of lush fields that looked like well-tended English



Some time ago ROGI's refractometer went missing from the library. We want it back. If you know where it is, please arrange for it to appear at a ROGI meeting or garden visit. No questions asked.



gentlemen's estates, of mile after mile of tall grass—perennial grass—adapted perfectly to the locale.

These places were appropriated by the colonists who ignored what had worked for thousands of years and planted instead annual European crops, and introduced sheep and cattle, all of which have resulted in the land degradation we struggle with today.

He writes, '... what would happen if we tried some of the Aboriginal grains instead of the thirsty and disease-prone grains of Asia and Europe? After studying Aboriginal yields from yam daisy it is easy to imagine a potato farmer turning over part of his farm to yam, thus avoiding the need to use fertiliser and herbicides.'

This yam (*Microseris lanceolata*) is crisp, sweet and sounds similar to yacon in that the sugars are healthy for us.

Most Australian grains are gluten-free, and don't require heavy chemical supplements. He writes of native millet, oats and rice.

The hope is that, spurred by the release of this book, some far-sighted people will start to farm in a 'back to the future' way.

The more I read of this book, the angrier I felt. What we have been led to believe, what we were taught at school is patently untrue.

Read it and be challenged.

Reviews by Jill Nixon.

Please, someone else, read some books and write some reviews. We need your viewpoint and opinion.

**These books are among the many items available for loan from your ROGI library.**

We also have pH test kits and needles for sewing shade cloth for you to borrow.

It's been a great year for ROGI and it's time to celebrate the season with another

## Organic Christmas Feast

Vice-president Sharr Ellson and her team are creating a mouth-watering local organic buffet dinner of seasonal goodies – at no cost to members.

**Wednesday, 13 December**  
**6.15 for 7pm start**

**Visitors most welcome—\$10**  
**ROGI members—gold coin**

### RSVP essential

Email [president@rogi.com.au](mailto:president@rogi.com.au) or ph Sharr 0423 503 983 closing date 9th December.

### Please bring:

- Your own **dinner plate, bowl, glass, cup & cutlery**. (Take them home to wash)
- **Secateurs** and other tools for sharpening (free for members only). *See box far right.*
- A container to take home leftovers—there was quite a lot last year.
- Non-perishable goods for the Salvos Christmas Hamper Drive. *See list right.*

If you can help before, during or after the event, please contact Sharr 0423 503 983.

## Salvos Christmas Hamper Suggestions

- One litre long life milk
- Fruit cake
- One litre long life custard
- **Jam or other spread (eg Vegemite, peanut butter, honey, Nutella) \***
- 375g Weetbix or similar cereal
- 500g family assorted biscuits
- Large bag confectionery
- 1kg rice
- Christmas bonbons
- One litre fruit juice
- Christmas napkins
- 825g tinned fruit
- Gift for young male adult
- 500g pasta
- 500g pasta sauce
- Instant 2-minute noodles (3 or 5 pack)
- **100g tea bags (approx 50 bags) \***
- **100g coffee (instant or flavoured sachets) \***
- Potato chips, corn chips, Pringles or pretzels
- 500g baked beans, spaghetti (or 3-pack of smaller tins)
- 400g tin salad item (peas/corn/beetroot)
- Anything else you'd like to give

**\* heavy demand**

## Garden Visits & Field Trips

There are no further garden visits, workshops or field trips this year. We had some postponements recently and new dates will be set for these in 2018.

Our first club event for the year will be nice and early.

### Garden Visit

11 February at Kathy Springate's property at Wynnum West.

As this is before our February meeting, please book with Toni as soon as possible.

Please discuss having a garden visit at your place with Toni - 0402 323 704 or [events@rogi.com.au](mailto:events@rogi.com.au) or at ROGI meeting.

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

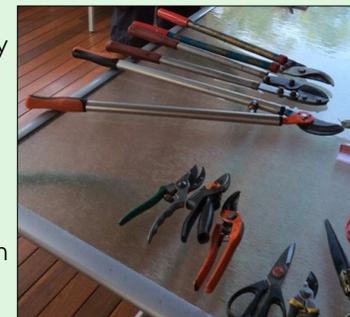
### Free Tool Sharpening

by Steve from Bayside Mobile Sharpening

You may bring several tools, although not all may be sharpened.

We want everybody to have a chance to have at least one item done before Steve starts on second or more tools.

Please write your name on each tool in indelible ink.



# Seed Bank

Please **return seedling pots** the month after you have bought the seedlings so they can be reused.

Especially the large 4-cell ones.

**Other clean used pots**—small sizes only up to 12cm diameter.

The almost-square pots are good too.

## Seed-raising mix

Our special (a blend of coir peat, vermiculite, perlite and biochar) works quite well.

Now you can get some for your own use. We out 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 not-for-profit.

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

## Special Offer

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

Keep in mind that this is a seed-sowing **guide**.

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 all ROGI meetings and Garden Visits.**

**\$1 per packet for members.**

**\$2 for non-members.**

# Seed Sowing Guide

## December

Asparagus  
Beans - snake, Madagascar  
Lablab, soy, pigeon pea  
Beetroot  
Capsicum/Chilli  
Carrot  
Choko  
Cucumber  
Eggplant  
Jicama  
Lettuce  
Melon - Honey, Rock, Water  
Okra  
Pumpkin  
Radish  
Rockmelon  
Rosella  
Silverbeet  
Squash  
Sunflower  
Sweet Corn  
Sweet Potato  
Tomato  
Zucchini

See p 13 for spinach alternatives that grow well in our summer. They can still be planted now.

## January

Amaranth  
Asparagus  
Basil  
Beans; Climbing, Snake  
Beetroot  
Borage  
Capsicum/Chilli  
Choko  
Coriander  
Cucumber  
Eggplant  
Jicama  
Lettuce  
Marigold  
Melon - Honey, Rock, Water  
Pigeon Peas  
Purslane  
Radish  
Silverbeet  
Soybean  
Spring onion  
Squash  
Sunflower  
Sweet Corn  
Sweet Potato  
Tomatoes  
Zucchini

## February

Amaranth  
Asparagus  
Basil  
Beans; Climbing, Snake  
Beetroot  
Borage  
Capsicum/Chilli  
Choko  
Coriander  
Cucumber  
Eggplant  
Jicama  
Lettuce  
Marigold  
Pigeon Peas  
Purslane  
Radish  
Silverbeet  
Soybean  
Spring onion  
Squash  
Sunflower  
Sweet Corn  
Sweet Potato  
Tomatoes  
Zucchini

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>

## Swap plants, cuttings, home-grown produce, seedlings.

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.**

**NB: There will be no ROGI Rewards at the Christmas meeting.**

### Members' Sales

Items you've produced that are surplus to your requirements that **you wish to sell** to other members - eggs, honey, seedlings, lemons, jam, sustainable craft items – things that have cost you money, time and effort to produce. Please ensure items are labelled, named and priced. It is preferable that you staff the stall yourself or time-share with a friend.

### 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), cuttings, surplus produce, empty pots, strawberry runners and so on. You may want to work out an arrangement with other members to do some swapping outside of the meetings.

**Remember to bring bags/boxes/baskets to take everything home, including purchases of organic produce from Ashley.**

### Did you know?

You can go online and read every edition of ROGI News since September 2014. Go to [www.rogi.com.au](http://www.rogi.com.au) and browse.

### Flat for rent

Acreage living at Victoria Point with city conveniences, extra large one-bedroom flat. Quiet location with security access. Ideally suited to a nature lover. Looking for someone who is honest, reliable, non smoker—a mature tenant. Text Jean on 0413944622 and she'll call you back.



Several of these baskets are available for free. Handy for storage as they stack. Line with newspaper and grow plants in them. 40 x 30 x 21H. Email [info@rogi.com.au](mailto:info@rogi.com.au) for location & collection details.



## 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 plant, garden or nutrition info
- A recipe for home-grown produce
- A notice that you have something to give away or sell or rent
- A handy technique or tip
- A gardening problem solved
- Anything 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](mailto:info@rogi.com.au)

**February Newsletter Deadline Please send your contributions to the newsletter editor by**  
**30 January**

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 you not only receive discounts, but also help to raise funds for ROGI to use to help further the reach of organic growing.

## MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

PRESIDENT Julia Geljon [president@rogi.com.au](mailto:president@rogi.com.au)  
V. PRESIDENT Sharr Ellson [president@rogi.com.au](mailto:president@rogi.com.au)  
SECRETARY Margaret Sear [secretary@rogi.com.au](mailto:secretary@rogi.com.au)  
TREASURER Garry Bromham [group@rogi.com.au](mailto:group@rogi.com.au)  
COMMITTEE MEMBERS Rhonda Binns, Toni Bowler, Jill Nixon, Kathy Petrik

## OFFICE BEARERS

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY Rhonda Binns [membership@rogi.com.au](mailto:membership@rogi.com.au)  
NEWSLETTER EDITOR Jill Nixon [info@rogi.com.au](mailto:info@rogi.com.au)  
PR & COMMUNICATIONS Gail Bruce [info@rogi.com.au](mailto:info@rogi.com.au)  
CLUB EVENTS Toni Bowler [events@rogi.com.au](mailto:events@rogi.com.au)  
PUBLIC EVENTS Bronwen Thomas [events@rogi.com.au](mailto:events@rogi.com.au)  
LIBRARY Sophie Bromham [library@rogi.com.au](mailto:library@rogi.com.au)  
SEED BANK Sharr Ellson [seeds@rogi.com.au](mailto:seeds@rogi.com.au)  
SUPPER Cheryl McWilliams [group@rogi.com.au](mailto:group@rogi.com.au)  
WEBSITE Pal Juvancz [pal@pcpals.com.au](mailto:pal@pcpals.com.au)

[info@rogi.com.au](mailto:info@rogi.com.au) [www.rogi.com.au](http://www.rogi.com.au) PO Box 1257 , Cleveland 4163  
[www.facebook.com/groups/redland.organic.growers](https://www.facebook.com/groups/redland.organic.growers)

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**—Wed & Friday 9 - noon, Sunday 2- 5pm. Oaklands St, Alexandra Hills. 0419987870



*Shade-loving cordylines and tropical foliage plants enjoying the dappled sunlight and shade under the fruit trees at Judy and George Allen's garden. Judy is skilful at combining colours, textures, shapes and heights and has turned the understorey into a garden wonderland.*

Delightful soft pastels of leek flower heads. Left on the plant, they develop seeds which fall to the ground to grow naturally.

A member of the onion or *Allium* family, leeks have a mild and sweet flavour and are useful in many dishes.

They are easy to grow and can be left in the ground until you're ready to use them. Leeks can be harvested from autumn through to spring.

These were from the final harvest in early December—they were planted in April.

