

# ROGI News

Doors open at 6.15pm so that members can :

- renew membership in person
- hand in labelled tool/s for sharpening
- deposit Christmas gifts for the Salvo's hampers
- drop off e-waste for collection by Substation33
- return or borrow books from library

**Salvation Army Church**  
**Cnr McDonald Rd & Macarthur St**  
**ALEXANDRA HILLS**

**Admission:**

**Members: Free**

**Visitors: \$10 for this night**

**Please note: There will be no stalls or selling, and no plant sharing.**

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*A border of comfrey at Green Harvest in Maleny. Just one of the many plants they grow to build up their soil. A deep-rooted plant that has leaves full of nutrients. Also useful as a weed barrier, it can be added to compost and slashed and used as mulch.*

# Gill's Gottings

For many years now I have had the feeling that perfectly manicured grass lawns do not make sense in the back yards or even the front yards of our country. However, I had never really thought about why so much of the world aspires to the perfect lawn ... until Frances Michaels from Green Harvest explained it on our recent field trip.

When European aristocracy lived in castles, they needed to be able to see incoming invaders, so they kept a space clear of trees around the castle. This was usually some type of local grass that tends to come up naturally if there are no trees or shrubs.

Once things became a bit more civilised (from the 1500s), they continued to deliberately cultivate lawns around their castles. Chamomile and thyme were commonly used rather than grass.

Then in the 1600s, grass was in vogue, with Versailles setting the trend among the well-heeled – and well-staffed. Mostly animals were used to keep the lawns 'mowed', but the very rich had servants to do it – usually with scythes, but often on their knees with scissors! It was a status thing – no nasty animal droppings.

Meanwhile, the rest of society had cottage gardens (if they had a house with land). These had herbs, vegetables, fruit trees, flowers for picking and animals such as poultry, a pig or two, a milch cow and/or a goat. The front yard was no more precious than the back yard.

Then the industrial revolution happened. The middle classes evolved and became wealthier. They wanted to emulate the upper classes, but they couldn't stretch to a castle. Once the

lawnmower was invented in 1830, there was no stopping the growth of lawns! Lawns were established around large middle-class homes, a smaller version of the aristocratic homes.

From this has continued the notion that houses should have lawns, at the very least at the front. In some places it is forbidden to *not* have a front lawn! In our dry continent, it makes no sense at all. Maintaining a lawn is expensive – not just in financial terms, but also in environmental terms. Synthetic fertilisers, herbicides to kill the weeds, chemicals to kill lawn grubs, water to keep it alive, and then fuel for (and emissions from) the mower to cut it when it grows. Why?

But there is hope – cottage gardens are back, and the upsurge in back (and front) yard organic growing, and interest in permaculture in particular is heartening.

ROGI is a part of all that; and you are a part of ROGI – you are part of the solution ... to show Australians that using scarce resources to keep a stretch of lawn, purely to look nice, is old-fashioned and wasteful. A sustainable garden has no room for something that has no use apart from aesthetics.

If you aspire to a sward, these alternatives are worth considering: 'kidney weed' (*Dichondra repens*) an Australian native groundcover; creeping herbs such as woolly thyme (*Thymus pseudolanuginosus*) or oregano (*Origanum vulgare*); edible native violet (*Viola hederacea*); legumes such as white clover (*Trifolium repens*) or pinto peanut (*Arachis pintoi*) which will improve your soil; or even alyssum which adds beauty and a delicate sweet perfume.

As with many groundcovers (including grasses commonly used for lawn such as couch, buffalo and kikuyu), they are, by their very nature, invasive. So, this needs to be taken into consideration.

## Jill's Jottings (continued)

Our Organic Christmas Feast is next week. If your name isn't on the list, I'm afraid you've missed out. Last year ROGI members generously donated an overwhelming number of items for The Salvos to distribute to people in need. Please peruse the suggestions in the newsletter (*on page 13*) and see if we can break our 2018 record.

May your garden flourish and your harvest dreams come to fruition ... despite the difficult weather.  
*Jill Nixon, ROGI President*

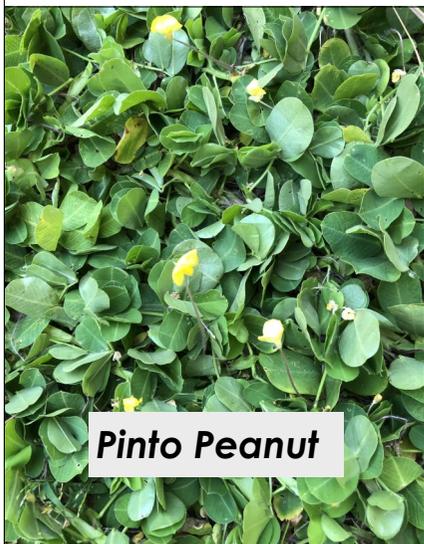


**Oregano**

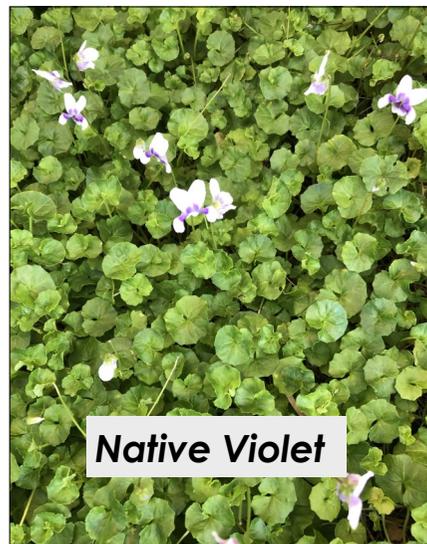
*These are our front and back yard lawn-alternatives:*



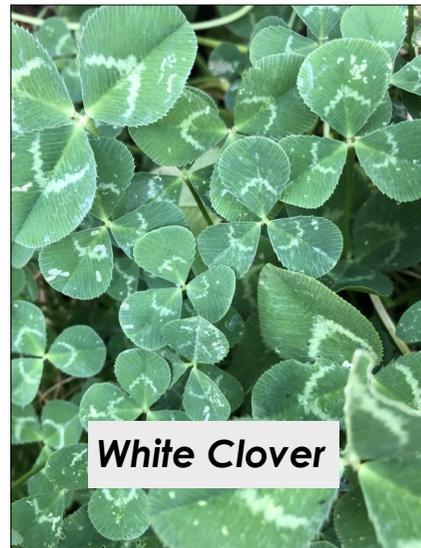
**Alyssum**



**Pinto Peanut**



**Native Violet**



**White Clover**

## Membership renewal time -

*Yes, it's that time of year again!*

### How to renew your membership

#### ... fast and easy

1. Go online to <https://www.rogi.com.au/renew-membership.php>
2. Fill out the application, press SUBMIT.
3. Go to your online bank to make a transfer to ROGI - you will need:  
**BSB 633000, Account Number 136 137 296**  
**(Use your name as a reference please).**
4. Pick up your receipt at the next ROGI meeting.
5. Find your 2020 Membership card name tag on the hanger near the sign-in table.

#### 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 name tag at the following meeting.

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

1. Fill in form online as in 'fast and 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 Management Committee.

## Coming Events

**December** Thurs 5 BOGI Meeting

**Wed 11 ROGI Christmas Party**

**January** NO MEETING

**February** Tues 4 Qld Herb Society

Thurs 6 BOGI Meeting

**Wed 12 ROGI—first meeting for 2020**

## Membership Information

- **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 633 000. A/C 136137296 (Bendigo Bank, Middle St, Cleveland) **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 2020	New member/s joining in...			
		Jan-Mar	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct19-Dec20
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 of age.

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

## December Meeting

### Organic Christmas Feast

Following the overwhelming success of our last 3 Christmas feasts, 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.

**PLEASE NOTE THE DECEMBER MEETING IS NOT A REGULAR ROGI MEETING. IT IS FULLY BOOKED. PLEASE ATTEND ONLY IF YOU HAVE ALREADY INDICATED THAT YOU ARE COMING.**

Please bring:

- Your own **dinner plate, dessert plate/bowl, cup and cutlery** – bring in a cloth bag and take home to wash.
- Clean, named **secateurs** and other hand tools for **sharpening** (free for members). More information on page 13.
- Instead of exchanging gifts, we'd like you to give something to the **Salvation Army Christmas Hamper**, if you wish. See page 13 for suggestions.
- E-Waste for collection by Substation33 (see page 13).



2018 Christmas Feast



#### PLEASE NOTE:

There will be no stalls on this night—no seed bank, plants or selling. However, the ROGI library will be open.

## November Meeting — Paul Sattler, Apiarist

### Sustainable Beekeeping

ROGI members and visitors were buzzing with anticipation when guest speaker Paul Sattler of Mt Cotton Apiaries arrived to tell us about sustainable beekeeping. Paul has been an apiarist for over 50 years—his Dad was an apiarist, and now his daughter is as well.



*Three generations of bee keepers*

*Pictured are Paul's daughter Melita, his brother Ross and Dad Gus.*

Pollination by bees in Australia is worth \$19 billion per annum, compared with honey of a \$100 million! 65% of Australian agriculture depends on the European honey bee. A major concern is the Varroa mite, which is found worldwide, but hasn't reached Australia yet. The mite kills bees, magnifies viruses, and is already in Papua New Guinea and New Zealand. Other threats include:

- Asian honey bee
- Small hive beetle
- Colony collapse disorder
- Fungal diseases
- Bacterial diseases
- Viral diseases

The current drought is the worst Paul has seen in 50 years of bee keeping. It has had a huge impact on bees and honey production. Either plants are not flowering or, if they are, there is no nectar. He has had to feed his bees a pollen supplement. Bees need water, especially in drought. They suck it out of mud (a source of minerals), or suck the moisture off leaves and sticks.

Our warming climate also means that flowering is early, so production is not as good. Elsewhere overseas, earlier flowering has been observed to be 'out of whack' with insect emergence. This may be contributing to the world wide decline in insects.

Warwick and Inglewood are known as good bee country. There used to be a good year every second year, now it has declined to two out of nine years. A lot of country has been cleared of trees—we need to protect remnant vegetation.

Honey is the third most defrauded agricultural product (following olive oil and dairy). Examples of fraud include adding sugar (eg. corn syrup) or not allowing honey to be naturally ripened. Ten thousand tonne of honey is imported into Australia per annum!



*Paul's bee hives at his property in Mt Cotton. Trees that his bees visit include Ironbark, Brush Box, Blackbutt and Blue Gum. Eucalypts are notorious in not producing nectar every season; Brush Box only once every few years.*

November Meeting — Paul Sattler, Apiarist (continued)



Healthy brood showing worker bee grubs being capped off to pupate. Bacterial diseases such as American and European foul brood sends the brood rotten.



Good season with bees building burr comb on top of frames.



Checking combs prior to placing a clearer board on to take off a super of honey.



Left—perfect new comb just drawn from foundation comb and ready to go through the uncapping machine.

Above—Combs going through the uncapper with reciprocating knives cutting the cappings off the cells.



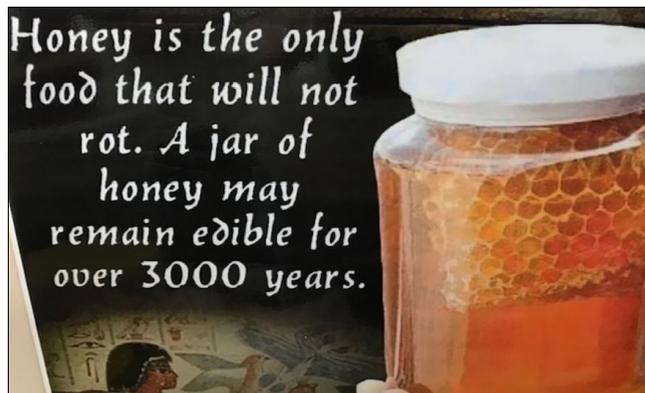
Above—Line of uncapped frames ready to go into the extractor.

Right—Petah at the extractor where honey is spun out of the frames.



### Paul's tips for a quality and sustainable product:

- Excessive heat kills honey—keep below 45°C.
- Moisture is bad for honey—make sure at least 3/4 of each frame is capped, and that buckets have tight lids for storage.
- Storage—honey is acidic. Don't use galvanised drums as the honey reacts with the zinc.
- Storage of spare combs—wax moths can destroy. Fumigants such as Phosphine are used by some producers to control infestation. Paul puts extra combs back on the hives and lets the bees keep them. Cold rooms or freezers are another organic solution to control wax moths.
- Don't be greedy and take too much honey off, especially in autumn. Leave at least 1/2 box of honey for winter stores.
- Check regularly for pests and diseases, and dispose of old combs.
- No antibiotics for bacterial diseases.
- Beware of chemical sprays and toxicity labels.
- Reduce stress—low stores; old queens; moving hives; opening hives (don't look at too often, as this exposes them to stress); diseases; don't position in dank locations.
- Barrier system and keep records.
- Identify floral sources and label accordingly.
- Reduce vegetation clearing; encourage plant diversity.
- Carbon footprint—food miles both in production and sale; use sustainable energy sources



# FINDING & REPORTING VARROA



Varroa mites target honey bee brood cells and lay eggs on the larva

1

Inspect hives regularly (about once a month for hobby beekeepers) from Spring to Autumn

2

Know how to identify Varroa mite and parasitic mite syndrome (PMS)

3

Report any sightings of Varroa mite or PMS immediately to 1800 084 881

The Varroa mite is expected to decimate bee populations when it reaches our shores – something experts say is inevitable.

However, with early detection and good hive management, Australia's honey and pollination industries can continue to prosper.

Regular inspections are a key part of maintaining hive health. Unless identified early Varroa could spread quickly, making it almost impossible to eradicate.

It's therefore vital that all beekeepers are aware of Varroa and its symptoms and immediately report any sightings by calling 1800 084 881.

Early detection will provide an opportunity for an eradication program to be carried out by state government apiary officers.



Varroa mites suck the blood of adult honey bees and spread viruses, leaving them more prone to infections



## REPORT ANY SIGHTINGS OF VARROA MITE IMMEDIATELY TO 1800 084 881

### IDENTIFYING VARROA MITE

The presence of mites feeding on the drone brood is very obvious; the brown sesame seed-sized pests are very distinct against the white of the drone pupae. However, even if mites are not visible, they will be present in any hive with symptoms of 'parasitic mite syndrome' (PMS).

These include:

- rapid decline in population
- sick bees crawling at the entrance
- bees with deformed wings
- superseding of queen
- brood appears to have multiple diseases eg early stages of EFB, AFB and Sacbrood.
  - spotty brood pattern
  - larva do not rope out
  - scale is not brittle
  - scale is easier to remove than typical AFB scale
  - no distinctive smell



[WWW.RIRDC.GOV.AU/POLLINATION](http://WWW.RIRDC.GOV.AU/POLLINATION)



The Pollination Program

## Green Harvest Field Trip, 16/11/19

by Ann Roffey

Operating since 1992, Green Harvest is a family owned organic seed and gardening product business in Witta, near Maleny. It started out as mail order, and then five years ago the shop and their “incredible edible display garden and nursery” was built. We were taken on a guided tour of this garden, and what a feast it was! The owner, horticulturist Frances Michaels, has been an organic gardener for more than 35 years. She is passionate about teaching Australians how to live in healthy, natural homes with gardens full of nutritious, chemical-free vegetables and fruit—focussing on edible plants, organic garden management and permaculture.

Whilst they are fortunate to have volcanic red soil and bore water, the garden is situated near the escarpment, so they experience a lot of wind and hail, as well as heavy frosts in winter. Other challenges include feral rats—they recently lost 2,000 chilli plants to some very hungry rats. They do live trapping to control them.

In our tour of the garden, we learnt about:

1. The value of biodiversity
2. How to achieve organic soil improvement
3. What plants to select that do well in south-east Queensland

Frances explained that there are a lot of excellent heirlooms that are great for south-east Queensland, and it would be a tragedy to lose them. Green Harvest tries to maintain heirloom varieties, to ensure that biodiversity is not lost. The garden is not only a teaching tool, but also provides mother plants for propagation. Seeds from vegetables, fruit and flowers are saved to sell. Seed is also sourced from growers all over Australia as well as overseas.

Elements of a successful garden are:

- The presence of dragonflies
- Movement of small birds
- Aphid colonies are being parasitized
- Not having to control cabbage white butterfly

Less than 2% of insects are classified as pests. Children are taught to be scared of them, when in fact they do more good than harm!

It was so inspirational to tour the Green Harvest garden—the wide variety of edibles grown, and the knowledge Frances imparted made for a very worthwhile visit. The shop and garden are open Monday-Friday 9am to 5pm, and on the third Saturday of each month 8am to 12.30pm. Green Harvest’s website is also a valuable teaching tool, with loads of growing information and organic gardening tips—go to <https://greenharvest.com.au/>

An arbour of Madagascar beans—now drying so Green Harvest can save the seed to sell. A vigorous, climbing tropical lima bean, it will last for many years in the ground.



Sweet potato Purple Raven—grown for its edible leaves and flowers; a good source of purple pigments called anthocyanins. Useful as a ground-cover, it will grow 20-30cm high. It is not an aggressive runner like cropping sweet potato.



## Green Harvest Field Trip (cont'd)



*Pineapple Sage*—like most salvias, attractive to honeyeaters and bees. Grows 1.2-1.5m high, prefers full sun. Edible leaves and flowers. Crushed leaves smell like pineapple.



**Pineapple Sage**

*Alyssum* (Sweet Alice), a member of the Brassica family—grow around edges of gardens. It is the world's best insectary plant!



**Alyssum**

**BEE AND INSECT FOOD**—Flowers are grown throughout the garden to attract bees and beneficial insects. Vegetables are left to go to flower to attract insects and to collect seed from. Frances' advice is to try to plant so that you have successive flowering times. Did you know that native bees prefer small flowers to large?

**Bees vs Flies**—We discussed how bees are being threatened by the Varroa mite. Frances told us it has been found that flies are more successful pollinators than bees! Mango farmers move dead kangaroos under their trees for pollination. Flies visit the flowers more often than bees and live longer!



**Californian Poppy**

Right—*Cosmos* flowers grown for good bugs, and the edible *Paco fern* (*Diplazium esculentum*)



**Cosmos and Paco Fern**



**Salvia Mystic Spires**



*Salvia Mystic Spires*—a compact salvia (40cm high), hardy and low-maintenance. Very free-flowering, attractive to bees and beneficials. Grow in full sun to light shade. A perennial in warmer areas.



**Queen Anne's Lace**



**Sunflower Evening Sun**

## Green Harvest Field Trip (cont'd)



**Qld Arrowroot—rare red leaf form 'Rojo'**

Qld Arrowroot—a hardy clump-forming perennial plant to 2m high. Grow in a sunny position. Tubers have a high potassium content and 1-3% protein; the young leaves and shoots are nutritious and contain 10% protein. Leaves can be cut and used for mulch, and the plant used as a weed barrier, low windbreak or as animal fodder. Grow in a chook pen to provide natural air conditioning.

**LIVING MULCHES:** All plants on this page are used by Green Harvest to build up their soil. Comfrey is cut every 6-8 weeks in the growing season, the rest are cut seasonally 2-3 times a year. All are used as mulch. This improves the soil by retaining moisture, keeping it from over-heating, preventing erosion and improving soil structure, feeding the soil as it breaks down, reducing the spread of fungal disease spores, and creating habitat for soil-dwelling predators such as ground beetles and centipedes that control pests.

<https://greenharvest.com.au/GreenGardenNotes/Mulch.html>



Comfrey—a perennial herb, it has one of the widest range of uses in permaculture. No organic garden should be without it! Leaves contain silica, nitrogen, potassium, calcium, magnesium and iron. A useful addition to compost. Also an excellent soil conditioner, as the roots penetrate deep into the subsoil and are able to access nutrients.



**Cardamom Leaf Ginger**

Cardamom Leaf Ginger (*Alpinia Nutans*), also called Shellflower and False Cardamom—one of the hardiest members of the ginger family. Will grow in full sun, but prefers partial shade. Leaves have a distinctive cardamom fragrance when crushed. Use in desserts, to add flavour to rice, or to wrap fish. Flowers prolifically. Drought tolerant and resistant to pests and diseases. Plant somewhere it is going to stay, as it is hard to dig out. (Flower photo: Green Harvest)

Vetiver Grass (right)—a living fence! It is sterile, and doesn't produce seed. Very good for erosion.

<http://greenharvest.com.au/Plants/Information/Vetiver.html>



**Pigeon Pea**



Pigeon Pea—a perennial, nitrogen-fixing, drought tolerant shrub 2-3 m high. Uses include animal forage (cattle, pigs, poultry), mulch production, green manure and as a windbreak. An important food plant in India; the seeds are 25% protein and can be eaten fresh or as split dried peas.

(Photos: Green Harvest)



**Vetiver Grass**

## Green Harvest Field Trip (cont'd)



Sambung Nyawa will grow in the shade of a tree. Leafy greens prefer shade as they often evolved as groundcovers in tropical forests. Growing them in the shade helps the leaves to stay tender and mild in flavour.

**WATER FOR BEES**—bird baths are NOT suitable for bees, as they like to suck the water up and land on something shallow. Place shallow plastic or terracotta dishes with rocks in them in your garden to help bees stay alive in our hot summer.



Red Tower Ginger, *Costus comosus* (below) - the flowers are edible. Note the grevilleas either side. They are good natives for birds.



Moringa tree (left) has lots of health benefits. Put the leaves in soup or curries. It is hot when raw, but not when cooked. The World Health Organisation use its leaves to purify water!



Above—Southern European silverbeet which has gone to seed. It is a perpetual spinach type. Hardy, drought resistant, and more resistant to disease. Sweet in flavour. It will self-sow readily.



Spiders eat everything! They are important to have, so keep their webs. Budworm flies at dusk/night, and fruit flies will get caught in a spider's web. In the mid 1980's, farms in Britain got rid of their hedgerows—they then found they had more pests, as spiders and birds no longer had habitat.



## Green Harvest Field Trip (cont'd)



Brown Honeyeater enjoying nectar from Salvia.



Superb Fairy Wren

Having small birds (not large) in your yard is a gauge of biodiversity. Frances' advice on how to attract birds to our gardens is to remove their major predator—cats. Either keep them inside, or put a bell on them. Motion activated sprinklers work well too. There are 25 million feral cats in Australia! All birds need water, so provide lots of bird baths (shallow and deep) and a pond. For small birds, dense or prickly shrubs where they can hide are great. Grevilleas and salvias are excellent shrubs for birds, as both flower a lot.



Water growing plants—Water celery and Arrowhead, left; Pickeral Rush, right (flowers far right). Edible flowers and bee forage; frogs also love this plant. <http://greenharvest.com.au/Plants/Information/WaterPlant.html>

Sweet potato growing extremely well in a 400 litre planter bag—[http://greenharvest.com.au/tools/pots\\_and\\_planter\\_bags\\_prod.html](http://greenharvest.com.au/tools/pots_and_planter_bags_prod.html)  
When asked what medium to use, Frances told us that potting mix is designed for aeration and holds little nutrient. To feed the plant, Green Harvest makes up a weak seaweed fertiliser/compost tea/bag of manure soaked in water etc. and applies little and often.

## December Meeting—Christmas Party

As a celebration of the year we have had together, we will once again be holding our annual . . .

### Organic Christmas Feast!

On offer is a *locally sourced* organic feast—buffet style serving, with nibbles, drinks and desserts.

**Wednesday 11 December**  
**6.15 for 7pm start**

#### Please bring:

- \* Your own **dinner plate, bowl, glass, cup, and cutlery, in a bag** (take home to wash).
- \* A **donation** to the Salvo's Christmas appeal of non-perishable goods (see suggestions on right).
- \* **One-two hand tools** (with your name on it) to be sharpened for free, for members only—a gift from ROGI.

If you can help before, during or after the event, please contact Mena at [events@rogi.com.au](mailto:events@rogi.com.au).

#### FREE TOOL SHARPENING:

Steve from Bayside Mobile Sharpening will be sharpening tools at our December meeting.

ROGI members may bring 1-2 tools per family/person for sharpening. Please bring clean hand tools, not spades.

Please write your name on each tool in indelible ink or name tag them. Your second tool will be sharpened if there is enough time.



#### Salvo's Christmas Hamper Suggestions:

- 1 litre long life milk
- 1 litre long life custard
- 375g Weetbix or similar cereal
- 500g family assorted biscuits
- 1 kg rice
- 1 litre fruit juice
- 825g tinned fruit
- 500g pasta and/or 500g pasta sauce
- 3/5 pack instant 2 minute noodles
- **100g teabags (approx. 50 teabags)\***
- **100g coffee (either instant or flavoured coffee sachets)\***
- 1 pkt potato chips, corn chips, Pringles or pretzels
- 500g tin baked beans or spaghetti (or 4 pack of smaller tins)
- 400g tin salad item (e.g. peas/corn/beetroot)
- Tinned fish (e.g. tuna/herrings/salmon)
- Nuts
- 1 fruit cake/Christmas pudding
- **200g Jam or spread (vegemite, peanut butter, honey, Nutella)\***
- 1 large bag confectionery
- Christmas bonbons and/or napkins
- Gift for young male

**\*heavy demand**

#### E-WASTE COLLECTION:

ROGI will be having an E-Waste collection at our December 11 meeting. **Substation33 will set up their vehicle in the first parking bay to the right (opposite disabled parking)—please give your e-waste as you arrive.** What Substation33 accepts:

- Computers
- Monitors
- Servers
- Office Equipment
- Televisions
- Household Appliances
- All obsolete or unwanted electronic equipment

At **Substation33**, we say if it had a plug or a battery we can recycle it. We are seeking your help in diverting e-waste from landfill!

## Plant of the Month—Chillies

Chillies are the hot fruits of the capsicum species that originally came from the warm regions of Central America. In the past 500 years, they have been traded across the world, and today chillies are an integral ingredient in many different cuisines.

There are two main species—*Capsicum annuum* with its white flowers and *Capsicum frutescens* with white, cream or mauve flowers. Both self-pollinate. They are members of the Solanaceae family, are closely related to capsicums, and also related to potatoes, eggplants and tomatoes. Fruit colour ranges from green, through to yellow, orange, red and purple. The shape of the fruit also varies between varieties.

Chillies contain a chemical called capsaicin that stimulates the nerve endings in your mucous membranes; that's what makes the hot taste you feel when you bite into one and your eyes and mucous membranes burn. The variety, the maturity of the plant and the local growing conditions determine how hot your chillies will be. They range from sweet and mild to extremely hot. The scale of hotness is called the Scoville Heat Scale and is rated: 0 (neutral) to 10 (volcanic heat). Our large 'bell pepper' capsicums are '0', a Cayenne pepper is a '5-6', a Birds Eye chilli is an '8', while a Habanero chilli is rated a '10'. All chillies are edible, even the ornamental variety.

### Growing chillies

Chillies like a warm, sunny spot, well-drained soil, regular watering and can tolerate higher humidity. Most people grow them in full sun, but from experience, in the Redlands, they will still grow well with a bit of shade. Chillies grow easily from seed, but they need temperatures of 20°C to germinate, and high 20s-30°C (or more) for the fruit to ripen. Night temperatures should not drop below 15°C—at least not on a regular basis. The odd cool spell is okay.

Prepare your soil with organic matter and some dolomite lime, and add in a small amount of nitrogen such as aged poultry manure. The N helps the plant to initially grow and establish

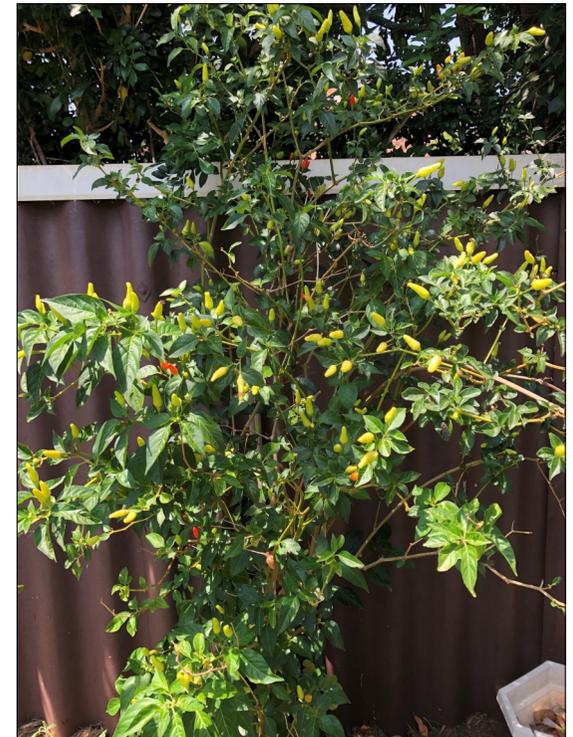
strongly. Seed germination usually takes 7-10 days. Chilli plants can grow for a year or so, producing consistently, so once the first fruits have set you can feed with a low nitrogen/high potash fertiliser.

Chillies are shallow-rooted plants and benefit from mulching to help conserve moisture and suppress weed growth. They are very hardy and can recover from leaf drop as a result of drying out, and can be pruned back in winter and will re-shoot with fresh new growth.

Also remember to: pinch out the growing tip of the first flowering shoots to promote more branching and a better harvest; water regularly but sparingly. It's best to keep your soil a little on the dry side, because slightly stressing your chilli plants helps to produce hotter peppers.

Chilli plants grow into bushes from half a metre to two metres tall. How big they get depends on the species and variety. Most chillies are grown as annuals, even though they can live for a few years in warm climates.

The process of harvesting chilli fruits encourages the plant to set more flowers and produce more fruit, so for this reason it is good to keep the fruit picked to give a maximum harvest. The fruits need to be picked when they are fully ripe, as they do not ripen after they have been picked. The green fruit has a different flavour to the red ones. Not all chillies are red when they are ripe, some are green, and others are yellow, orange and purple.



### Problems when growing chillies

Chillies can have weak branches. If they are loaded with fruit, they can snap off, so pruning and staking will help prevent the whole plant from toppling over.

Over fertilising can lead to excessive foliage and fewer fruit, (just like with tomatoes). They are also prone to blossom end rot. This is caused by a calcium deficiency and irregular watering, and can be prevented by watering regularly and applying a dressing of dolomite lime. They can also get two spotted mite, which can be controlled by applying a wettable sulphur or spraying with horticultural oil.

Like their solanum cousins, chillies are prone to root knot nematode. These are microscopic roundworms which attack the roots of the plant and cause it to wilt. Reduce the risk by building up organic matter in the soil, and practise crop rotation. If you're growing chillies in pots, simply replace the potting mix each time you replant.



### Using Chillies

Chillies can be used to add spice to all sorts of dishes. They can be added fresh, you can add them to oil and vinegar to give them flavour. Hot chillies are great to dry to make chilli powder. While the larger and milder chillies are great for stuffing, or eat them just as they are.

To preserve your chillies:

- Dry chillies: Take a needle and thread the stems of the chilli peppers together so that they form a "daisy chain" of peppers, then hang them

in a warm, well ventilated spot and let the air dry them over a 4-5 week period. Or spread them on a tray and use a dehydrator,

the oven on low heat with door slightly ajar, or your car in the hot sun with the windows open.

- Freeze chillies: No preparation required. Straight after picking, wash and then cool your chillies in the refrigerator and then place in airtight container in the freezer. After you defrost your chillies, you'll find the flesh slightly softened, but don't worry, they'll taste just as fiery.

### Medicinal qualities of chillies

The therapeutic potential of chilli has been well documented; however, they act as a double-edged sword in some physiological circumstances, as the benefits seem to be dose related. In traditional medicine, chilli has been used against various gastrointestinal complaints such as dyspepsia, loss of appetite, gastroesophageal reflux disease and gastric ulcer. More than 200 constituents have been identified in chilli, and some of its active constituents play numerous beneficial roles in various gastrointestinal disorders such as stimulation of digestion and gastromucosal defense, reduction of gastroesophageal reflux disease (GORD) symptoms, inhibition of gastrointestinal pathogens, regulation of gastrointestinal secretions and absorptions. However the authors state that further studies are warranted to determine the dose ceiling limit of chilli and its active constituents for their utilization as gastroprotective agents. Source: *Phytochemistry and gastrointestinal benefits of the medicinal spice, Capsicum annum (Chilli): a review*. Amal K. Maji and Pratim Banerji, 2016, Journal of Complementary and Integrative Medicine.

In their 2008 study, Fang, Wang and Gong found that chilli has the strongest total antioxidant activity among the vegetables studied (*Study on Antioxidant Activities of Fifty Kinds of Fruits and Thirty-Three Kinds of Vegetables—Food Science*). External application of chilli is suggested for arthritis and sprains. Isabell Shipard lists many medicinal uses for chilli in her book *How Can I Use Herbs in my Daily Life?* For further information you can borrow her book from our ROGI library.

Linda Barrett

*I can understand why many people want to shut down their vegie patch in summer and take a break from the hot work out there. Many of us holiday over summer, and going away means the garden may be left to its own devices. Not so good in the heat and dry!*

*Last year I didn't use a section of my vegie patch, and I bedded it down for a few months. I concentrated on a smaller productive area. But this year I'm watering and planting out the lot. Let me tell you what I'm planting, how I prepare the soil for heat and dryness, and what to do in order to bed down a section of vegie garden.*

## **First up avoid the worst of the heat while working outside**

Early morning starts in the garden, and then getting into it again later in the day avoids the hottest part of the day for us gardeners. By planting later in the day, the cooling temperatures allow the plants to acclimatise for a short while over the cooler night time, before the onslaught of the next hot day.

Before planting, I soak all plants, regardless of size, for five minutes in a weak seaweed solution. After planting, I puddle the water and soil in around the roots for good contact and moisture availability. I also cover with shade cloth or branches if I think the plant is heat tender.

## **Preparing the soil**

When digging over the patch ready for planting, I add liquified humates (*I like Instant Humus from Nutri Tech Solutions*). It's known to increase the water holding capacity of soil. I also find it helps to reduce fungal disease in humid weather.

I add compost to increase fertility, soil biota and organic matter. It acts as a sponge in the soil, and organic fertiliser. Then I water and finally mulch the patch straight away to minimise moisture loss. I go back in later in the day as it cools down, to

plant seeds or seedlings, just pulling back the mulch for each plant or row of seeds.

## **Planting seed**

In summer I find that many plants do better when grown from seed in situ. Their root systems are established quickly with regular deep watering, and are not damaged in transplanting. They also seem to acclimatise well.

Heat sensitive plants like lettuce or coriander can be positioned in a shady spot or grown on the east side of a trellis or under a bean tepee. Heat or water stress will cause plants to run to flower and seed prematurely, so once you've committed to growing, keep the water up to your plants before they wilt.

**Mulches** protect the soil, keeping it cool and moist. I use sugar cane applied about 5cm thick over moist soil. It also helps prevent erosion when it does rain heavily. I top it up regularly to avoid exposed soil.

*Shade tunnel for  
lettuces in summer.*



### Food plants that flourish in the summer

I grow a wide range of vegies and herbs over summer. For us, it's a terrifically productive time of the year, and we wouldn't be without our summer produce. This summer we will harvest sweet corn, eggplant, beans of all sorts, kohlrabi, radish, tomatoes, melons, spring onions, beetroot, Pak choy and bok choy, chilli and capsicums, ginger, turmeric, yacon, okra, rosellas, zucchini, sweet potato, cucumber- 3 varieties, basil, leeks, edible flowers, lettuce, coriander, Gai Lan (Hong Kong Broccoli), sugar beet, caigua (like a cucumber), edamame soy beans, cape gooseberry, kale, mizuna, Warrigal greens, Ice plant, rocket, snow and snap peas, daikon radish, 3 sorts of spinaches, jicama, Ceylon spinach and lots of herbs. We are expecting to visit the grocers very little, and to be picking most of our vegies and lots of fruit from the garden.

### Still too hot for you?

This is how I close down sections of the vegie garden:

1. Chop down old crops to ground level, leaving the roots and the leaves in place.
2. Set the chooks onto the area to clean up grubs and scraps. They fertilise and scratch as they go.
3. Then I add humates, a dose of liquid gypsum (as our soil shows calcium deficiency on lab testing), a little organic fertiliser and compost, and incorporate it into the soil with a 3-pronged cultivator or dig it shallowly with a fork.
4. In some areas I plant a green manure crop such as edamame soy beans, buckwheat or mung beans. These need just a little water to keep them going.
5. If there's no green manure crop, then water the bed well and mulch with 5cm depth of cane straw. I've found that light rain of about 5mm will penetrate the mulch this deep, but will not get into the soil if the mulch is thicker. (Many of the rainfalls we measured were just 5mm or so.)

So that's it. Whether you shut up shop and head to the beach, or plant and harvest, I wish you a wonderful Christmas and New Year. See you back in 2020.

Cheers,  
Linda Brennan



Cow pea and rocket green manure



Sweet Corn

## Plant Clinic *(Managed and reported by Rohanne Young)*



Thanks go to Linda Brennan, who filled in for Rohanne as she was unable to make it to the meeting. Only one item for this month—Robert brought in some mint leaves which looked a little worse for wear.

The mint has been growing in a hanging basket for the last 12 months.

Linda explained the issue is that the leaves have a v-shaped brown patch at the tip of each leaf. This is caused by dieback in the

feeder roots of the plant, which has gone on to cause dieback in the tip of the leaves.

The plant is obviously too dry—dunk the whole plant in water, by filling a large tub and pushing the plant under the water. This will fill up air pockets around the roots so they are completely drenched. Being a heavy feeder, the mint may also need repotting after being in the potting mix for 12 months.

**LIBRARY NEWS:** The ROGI library will be available at our next meeting in December. If you would like to look for a book before the meeting, go to the ROGI website: <https://www.rogi.com.au/resources.php>. You can look for a book under its **category**, or if you already know the name, under its **title**. Librarian Viga has kindly offered to hold books for you if you wish—just email her before the meeting at [library@rogi.com.au](mailto:library@rogi.com.au)

## Tomatoes and Budworm

My plan is to bag tomatoes in the flower stage using a fine mesh drawstring bag, either individually or in pairs (if they're large tomatoes), or as trusses if they're smaller. Tomatoes self-pollinate, so it's okay to exclude all creatures with the bags.

This is to protect them from budworm infestation.

The problem with this particular pest is that the moth lays its eggs in the flower bud. This is why its common name is budworm. You don't know anything about it until the resultant caterpillar pops out of your otherwise perfect-looking tomato. Very disappointing! It's time-consuming doing this, but if I want untainted tomatoes this is what I do. Of course, I use bags where the mesh is also fine enough to prevent access by fruit flies.

The picture on the right shows what happened when I was too late with the bag. The budworms continued eating their way out of the bag as well!

*Jill Nixon*



## IndigiScapes Update

### The Power of Pollinators

They may be small, but pollinators sure do pack some punch in our gardens and local farms pollinating our plants so they can grow fruit and vegetables, and produce seeds. Without our pollinating friends many of the foods we eat everyday just wouldn't be available – almonds, blueberries, avocados, carrots, broccoli, and more.

When you think of pollinators, you might think of the European honey bees, but there are a wide range of insects and some animals that fill this role including native bees, butterflies, moths, flies, wasps, birds and bats.

You can help pollinators by providing food, shelter and water. Consider creating a pollinator haven to entice this diverse range of insects and animals into your garden? Plant a garden with a broad range of species including flowering trees and bushes, low growing shrubs and herbs to create an exciting pantry of food for pollinators.

If you've had enough of weeding we've got the best reason not to – these beneficial bugs will thank you, they love flowering weeds in the garden. Why not give yourself a weekend off!



### Love is in the Air . . .

Romance is in the air throughout the Redlands, as our local koalas seek out love. When you are driving, please slow down and keep alert for koalas attempting to cross the road in search of their true love.

You may also find more koalas moving through your property at this time of year. If you're a pet owner, keep your pets confined, restrained or inside at night between now and December. Even small dogs can do big damage to a koala.

Koalas will use escape devices. Consider adding a rope or flotation device in your pool, or poles against backyard fences.

If you see a sick or injured koala contact the [Redlands Wildlife Rescue Service](#) on 3833 4031.



### Tips to Reduce Waste

National Recycling Week is just around the corner and is a great opportunity to reflect on other ways we can reduce our waste. Of course we can always recycle, but better than that is to reduce the waste that goes into the bins in the first place. Here are eight tips to help you waste less:

1. Reuse jars and containers.
2. BYO water bottle.
3. Shop with reusable bags.
4. Remember your reusable coffee cup.
5. Start a compost bin or worm farm and get a green waste bin –many of our red bins contain food scraps and garden waste that can be composted at home.
6. Take your own container next time you order takeaway.
7. Shop mindfully.
8. Practice living with less – you'll be amazed at what you don't need.

## IndigiScapes Update (*continued*)

### How are we Doing? Healthy Land and Water Report Card

The 2019 Healthy Land and Water Report Card has revealed the Redlands Coast has improved on last year's rating for the environmental condition of its catchments.

The Healthy Land and Water Monitoring Program delivers an assessment of the environmental condition of waterways in south-east Queensland.

The Waterway Benefit Rating for Redlands stayed at 3.5 stars (from 5 stars), indicating residents continue to gain social and economic benefits from their waterways. Redlands Coast catchment conditions jumped to a C+ from a C rating last year.

If you'd like to get involved in protecting and enhancing Redlands Coast waterways, consider joining a [Bushcare or Creek Crew Group](#) or if you have a dam or creek on your property join our [Waterways Extension Program](#).

### The Wait is Almost Over . . .

If, like us, you've missed your regular dose of IndigiScapes while its been closed, we thought you might like a bit of a sneak peak at what you can expect when we open the doors in January.

With a bright light feel and timber features all around, we've made the most of the beautiful location and expanded the cafe so you can enjoy the peaceful surrounds while sipping your latte.

You'll also find lots to see and do at the all new discovery zone, plus plenty of space for events and activities in the new conference facilities and theatrette.

We can't wait to welcome you back! In the meantime, soak up some nature at the playground and display gardens open via the Native Nursery.



## Garden Visits & Field Trips

There are no more garden visits planned for this year. If you would like to host a garden visit in 2020, please see Toni Bowler or Kathy Petrik at the next meeting or email [events@rogi.com.au](mailto:events@rogi.com.au) to put your garden on the schedule. Suggestions for field trips and workshops related to ROGI's organic growing interests are also welcome.

### 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 information
- 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
- 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 contributions to the newsletter editor by 29 January 2020**

If you are unable to get identification of a plant from your local nursery, go to <https://www.qld.gov.au/environment/plants-animals/plants/herbarium/identify-specimens> .

Fill out the Botanical specimens cover sheet, and send with your plant cutting (between two sheets of newspaper) to:

*Botanical Information & Advisory Service,  
Queensland Herbarium, DSITI, Brisbane Botanic Gardens  
Mt Coot-tha Road, TOOWONG QLD 4066*

They will identify your plant for free and send you a reply by your choice of post/email/fax/phone.

## Seed Bank Info

Please **return seedling pots and punnets** to the seed bank so that they can be reused – especially the 4-cell ones like these.



Also other clean used pots (small sizes up to 120mm diameter). Square pots are good too.

*Bigger pots, such as those you get through ROGI Rewards can be put on the swap/share/giveaway table in the foyer.*



ROGI is a beneficiary of the My IGA Card Program for **Cleveland IGA** store.



This is how it works:

- Get 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, but you also help to raise funds for ROGI, which we use to benefit our members.

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

## Seed Sowing Guide

### December

Asparagus  
 Beans: Snake, Madagascar, Lablab, Soy  
 Beetroot  
 Capsicum/Chilli  
 Carrot  
 Choko  
 Cucumber  
 Eggplant  
 Jicama  
 Lettuce  
 Melon: Honey, Rock, Water  
 Okra  
 Pigeon peas  
 Pumpkin  
 Radish  
 Rosella  
 Silverbeet; other leafy greens  
 Squash  
 Sunflower  
 Sweet Corn  
 Sweet Potato  
 Tomato  
 Zucchini

### 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

Keep in mind that these are only guides. 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 pack for members, \$2 non-members**

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[www.facebook.com/groups/redland.organic.growers](https://www.facebook.com/groups/redland.organic.growers)

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

Other gardening groups using organic methods:

### **Brisbane Organic Growers Inc (BOGI)—**

1st Thursday every month (except Jan), Albion Peace Hall, 102 McDonald Rd, Windsor, 6.30 for 7.30pm. 3357 3171 <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 9 - noon, Sunday 2- 5pm. Oaklands Street, Alexandra Hills. 0408 259 445

## Oaklands Street Community Garden

Do you:

- Have a love of gardening and the outdoors
- Want to learn how to grow fresh fruit and vegetables organically
- Want to reconnect with the land and our food supply
- Seek companionship in an informal setting
- Want to build community

Then **Oaklands Street Community Garden** at **Alexandra Hills** welcomes you! Our garden includes common shared beds (not individual plots), and the produce grown is then shared and enjoyed by everybody, and is a regular talking point. **We are open on Sunday 2-5pm, Wednesday 9am-12pm, and Friday 9am-12pm.**

Our annual membership fees are kept to a bare minimum to cover our costs and allow anyone to participate.



**Family \$20-00,  
Single \$15-00,  
Concession \$10-00.**

For enquiries, please call:

**Glenda Brown -  
0414 735 417/  
Terry Sullavan -  
0408 259 445**

The Management Committee would like to wish all ROGI members a very Merry Christmas, safe holiday and all the best for the New Year. See you in 2020!