

# ROGI News

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

Salvation Army Church  
Cnr McDonald Rd & Macarthur St  
ALEXANDRA HILLS

## Admission

Members: Free  
Visitors: \$5

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

Tea/coffee provided.

You are very welcome to provide a **quality plant** to help share interesting plants with other members (see p 21).

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

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*Thai basil (Ocimum basilicum var. thrysiflora)* growing well in Ruth's garden. It has a distinctive aniseed smell and taste and is used in S.E. Asian cuisines.

To grow it for cooking, remove the flower stalks to encourage lush leaf growth.

It's a good idea to grow extra plants and allow them to flower profusely as they are great attractants for beneficial insects; they will self-seed from then on.

# Backyard Burlblings

Hello ROGI member,

This is the time of the year when most of us appreciate living in South East Queensland, as the hot humid weather has gone. Instead we have beautiful sunny days that are ideal for working in the garden.

Tasks like clearing away spent plants, pruning fruit trees and shrubs, refurbishing garden beds with compost and even making compost all become a pleasure rather than a chore.

We are also lucky that the soil is still warm enough to grow crops like beans, peas, zucchini and brassicas.

Salad vegetables like lettuces, rocket, cress, mizuna and coriander are also much easier to grow in the cooler weather.

The cooler months are also a great time to do a bit of a review of our gardens to see if we need to make changes to garden beds, repair structures such as trellises, making protective covers for next summer, build compost bins etc.

It might also be necessary to replace ailing trees and shrubs.

For ROGI too, it has been a time of change as our long serving treasurer

Garry Bromham has had to resign from his position due to illness.

However, we are fortunate that ROGI has some very capable people amongst its members who are able to step into the breach.

Shanthie Goonetilleke has offered to be our treasurer, while Mena Stoke has offered to be his assistant treasurer.

Therefore, the Committee has accepted their offers until the Annual General Meeting in August where their positions can be ratified by the wider membership. Shantie and Mena are now in the process of being briefed by Garry, and Shantie will assume the treasurer's role before our next meeting. We welcome them on board.

We thank Garry for his excellent stewardship of ROGI's finances and wish him well with his recovery and his garden.

Garry's illness brought home to me the fact that sometimes some of our members may need a helping hand in their gardens and that, at this point in time, ROGI does not have a structure in place for that eventuality.

Fortunately Garry and Sophie were able to call on their family to assist but other members may not have that support.

You will see elsewhere in this newsletter reports on the very successful May meeting workshops.

One of the reports, from Steve

Gayner, outlines a proposed project for ROGI members to work together to protect our crops. At his workshop around 20 members signed up to be part of this project.

It seems to me this could be a very good starting point that could improve the scope of our current Buddy System. See pages 5 and 12.

While I'm on the topic of helping each other to realise some of our reasons for being a member I would like to float the idea of our large ROGI membership organising its own organic gardening event next year.

Some of the committee members have made the suggestion we could do something along the lines of the recent *Redlands Living Green Expo* at Indigi-Scapes or the *Medieval Herb Fair* or even something like the *Green Heart Fair* at Carindale.

We have enough members (over 160) to help make this a reality!

For now we have our annual Garden Makeover, supervised by Linda Brennan coming up sometime in August. This is a free makeover project for one lucky ROGI member. To qualify all you have to do is submit a written application stating your reasons for applying for the makeover. See page 12 for more on this.

Julia Geljon  
ROGI president

## Coming Events

June	Wed 13	ROGI Meeting	
	S/S, 23/24	Open Garden	See p 15
	Sun 24	Garden Visit	See p 17
July	Tues 3	Herb Society meeting	
	Thur 5	BOGI meeting	
	Wed 11	ROGI meeting	
	F/S/S, 13/14/15	Qld Garden Expo	See p 15
	Sun 22	Field Trip	See p 17
	Sun 29	Garden Visit	See p 17

## 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 633000. 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 2018	New member/s joining in...			
		Jan-Mar	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct18-Dec19
Single	\$30	\$30	\$22.50	\$15	\$37.50
Family*	\$50	\$50	\$37.50	\$25	\$62.50
Pensioner Single**	\$20	\$20	\$15	\$10	\$25
Pensioner Couple**	\$30	\$30	\$22.50	\$15	\$37.50

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

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

## June Meeting

# Fantastic fabulous fungus

Maree Manby is R.C.C.'s Senior Habitat Protection Officer at IndigiScapes, a job which involves environmental education and visiting properties, where she often encounters fantastic fungal fruiting bodies .

In fact, fungi have fascinated Maree for years; so much so that she trained to be an expert.

At our June meeting Maree will explain how necessary fungi are in our garden (indeed in our lives) and how, without them, we'd be up to our armpits in leaf litter and deadwood!

We will learn the characteristics of fungi and how to identify the various fungal groups.

Did you know that without fungi we wouldn't have cheese or wine? They are *that* important!



*Marasmius haematocephalus*

Ashley from Mt Cotton Organic Farm will have his selected organic produce for sale inside the building. Remember - bring your reusable bags, boxes, baskets etc.

# Notes from April meeting

## Merits of Different Garden Beds

When planning and planting your garden beds, be aware of the impacts of different factors on your garden beds.

### Shade vs sun

Food needs sun. It's easier to manage a sunny space than a shady space.

Note these characteristics:

- Seasonal movement of the sun
- Morning/afternoon differences
- Structures, trees, buildings that create shade

### Water

Garden may need daily, weekly or deep watering depending on the crop

Note these issues:

- Cost – raised garden beds require more water
- Quality – bore water can be too saline; chlorine from town water may not be desirable for veges
- Availability – remember the drought years!

### Time

This is about you, the gardener - be wary of creating garden beds that are too difficult for you to maintain

Note these personal factors

- Health – all year round or seasonal
- Fitness – eg dig vs no dig beds
- Money – how much do you want to spend
- Materials – can you scavenge or reuse discarded materials to build beds

### Wind

Dries out garden beds

Note these considerations:

- Prevailing wind – which direction

- Wind tunnels – can destroy blossoms and break branches
- Shelter – can be created to protect plants from wind

### Soil

Some aspects of the soil can be changed or improved but not others.

Note these characteristics:

- Drainage – is it poor, like clay or rocks, or is it excessive, like sand
- Structure – what type of soil and how deep
- Fertility – less of an issue because it can always be improved

### TIPS

- If you need to remove a tree, you can have it milled on site and use the timber to build garden beds
- *Green Fingers* potting mix from *Rocky Point* is organic and recommended
- Blue 200 litre drums and ag pipe make good raised garden beds
- Check out Rob Bob's Backyard Farming <https://bitsouttheback.com>
- Raised garden beds are easier to control weeds and can be moved to cope with seasonal shade or sun
- Shade and predator protection structures can be built with bamboo, bendable polypipe and shade cloth
- Be careful if using bamboo that it doesn't take root!
- Root crops like potatoes are good for breaking up the soil

Presented by Chris McIvor  
Reported by Roberta Bonnin



## Offer to help with chooks

I'm happy to visit anyone who needs guidance in housing/managing backyard chooks - be a 'chook whisperer' if you like. I've always had chooks and can sort behaviour problems pretty quickly, too. I must admit though, I have never tried fermenting grains but will. Gail 0438 176981

## Caring for chooks

Those at this session learned the benefits of feeding fermented grain to chickens for breakfast.

By soaking grains in water for 24 hours, the softened mash enables a greater release of nutrients resulting in stronger and heavier eggs. It also satisfies laying hens' ferocious appetites for longer; they still have dry grains during the day but tend to eat less, which saves on food costs.

Davina brought along sample bags of grain and explained their different qualities.

Whole wheat, lupins, and micro pellets are all high in protein as is lucerne crumb, which can be fed in place of greens in winter.

Whole corn has more nutrients than cracked corn and keeps chooks warmer in winter.

*Livamol* has amino acids and vitamins and gives a boost to moulting chickens, while pollard variants make the mash more 'meaty' or bulky.

Avoid laying mash with too much sorghum as chickens don't find it palatable.

Davina recommends *Cooloola* or *Heritage* organic layer mixes. (See page 14 for bulk buy offer)

Final tip: when introducing different feed to chickens, do it gradually to first get them interested.

Presented by Davina Carmichael  
Reported by Gail Bruce



Different coloured eggs produced by some of Davina's chooks. She talked about the size and colour of eggs as well.

See p 18 for more on chooks

## Protecting our crop

I agreed to facilitate this workshop with some trepidation. While I have been working on some measures in my own yard, I don't consider myself an expert. I had no idea that the problems I faced on acreage were going to be applicable to people in suburban house blocks.

So I would like to extend a big thank you to all the participants in the group for helping me out. With a lively contribution of pests, plants, and a stack of potential strategies to consider, some considerable territory was covered.

I know personally how hard and time-consuming it is to research the best answers to things of interest. On our own it is almost impossible. However, given that everybody has a little piece of the puzzle, it was helpful to hear from the group what worked and what did not. However, with only twenty minutes, we could only cover topics very lightly.

Some of the strategies discussed and subject to further research (see box right) are:

- Traps
- Deterrents:
  - SMELL (Possoff, Peppermint Oil, Elderberry, Tansy, Cinnamon, Tarragon, Garlic, Putrescent Egg, Dead Possum, Urine)
  - SOUND (Ultra-sound repellents)
  - LIGHT (Strobe, flashers – Fox Light)
  - FEEL (Tinsel on fence rails etc)
  - SIGHT (CDs etc)
- Companion Planting
- Predators (good bugs)
- Electric Fences
- Barriers:
  - Sticky Surfaces eg George Allen's carpet glue experiment
  - Water/Oil "moats"
  - Spikes
  - Fences Incl. Floppy & Rolled Tops

## Notes from April meeting cont'd

Cages  
Grow Tunnels – Wire / Nets etc

One other aspect of the workshop was the astounding willingness to help each other. Ruth, one of the participants, indicated that she needs a little help with the problems she faced. A visit to Ruth's house is now being organised. A few helpers will see what can be done to help Ruth overcome her pest problem.

We are hoping this kind of 'buddy approach' will continue for some time.

Presented and reported by Steve Gayner



## New pest research project

With the blessing of our committee, the overwhelming support from the group and their willingness to help with the topic, a project has been established to address this topic further.

The idea is that, as and when preferred methods are established and tested, we report back to the entire ROGI membership so that everyone benefits.

This would include preferred control methods, plant applications, as well as construction materials and methods.

See Steve at the sound desk for more info.

## Taking care of tools

The message from Steve Holliday of Bayside Mobile Sharpening is a simple one: take care of your tools and your tools will take care of you.

I confess I have been a very forgetful gardener when it comes to looking after my main garden weapon: secateurs. So it's no wonder the blades seemed to get sticky and rusty, and tend to hack, rather than cut smoothly.

That's all a thing of the past now I have been introduced to a few simple protective steps.

Use a lubricant every time you use your tools. Steve highly recommends locally made *Inox* spray, available in major hardware stores for about \$11. He uses this because it is highly effective on a wide range of tools including garden shears, branch loppers and hedge trimmers. If you look on the can you can see it has a wide range of other industrial applications.



In between half-yearly professional sharpening, we should spray our tools every time they're used, wiping off the excess oil with a soft cloth - use the same cloth to wrap the tool when not in use. For secateurs, he also says that making a protective pouch from soft cloth is also a good way to extend their life – particularly when it comes to the salt air of the Redlands.

Steve also quickly went over the many sharpening tools he uses in his work including grinding wheels, various files and sharpening stones.

Several times a year ROGI invites members to bring a garden tool in for free sharpening by Bayside Mobile Sharpening during a monthly meeting. Stay tuned for the date of Steve's next visit.

Reported by Kathy Petrik

## Notes from April meeting cont'd

### Making & using wax wraps

*Instead of using plastic wrap or ziplock bags many people are turning to using these, as they can be re-used many times and finally composted!*

#### Equipment

Beeswax; Jojoba oil; Olive oil and resin; cotton fabric squares, baking paper; pastry brush; iron; rope or line for drying.

#### Process

Melt approx 300 to 600 grams of beeswax gently and slowly on heat source. An old saucepan (that you can leave the wax in later) and an electric frypan work well.

Add several drops of Jojoba Oil and of Organic Olive Oil (infused with Eucalypt tree resin) to the wax as it's melting.

Place a sheet of baking paper onto a thick towel. (Cut a second similar-sized paper to use on top of the fabric later.) Use two sheets overlapping if larger fabric is required.

Place material on top of the paper so that there is a reasonable space around the edges of the fabric. (This will contain the melting wax while ironing).

Using pastry brush spread hot wax across the material starting at one side, ensuring the wax is spread evenly and right to the edges. Do not overdo the application of the wax but make sure no area is left unwaxed. Work

To infuse oil with resin – crush resin finely and add to olive oil in a glass jar. Place jar in a warm spot (out of direct sunlight) for several weeks. Shake occasionally. Resin can be left in the oil to strengthen infusion.



**Equipment laid out ready. It's best to have everything on the same table or bench.**



*Below: a basket of rolled wax wraps of various sizes, and a wrap moulded over a jar instead of plastic wrap.*



reasonably quickly and in one direction. Keep wax temp as warm as possible for better spread. Cool wax tends to congeal and not spread evenly.

When finished, apply the second sheet of paper to the top of the fabric and using a dry hot iron move the iron across the paper and fabric, to ensure that the wax melts further and penetrates the fabric completely.

Wax will move out from the fabric – so try to ensure that it remains inside the paper or the iron will become coated with wax.

Carefully lift the paper from the fabric and then also carefully peel the fabric from the lower paper and place fabric on line to cool and dry. (This only takes a few minutes usually).

Begin a second wax wrap using the same papers and technique.

You can usually use these materials several times before needing to warm the wax again.

The process works best when the wax is quite warm and becomes harder as the wax cools.

*Presented and reported by Margaret Sear*



ROGI library: Chumie browsing a book while Treina and Sophie write up cards.

# Garden visit Robyn Dwyer

We visited Robyn's garden in mid-April.

It comprises three acres on busy Cleveland-Redland Bay Road, adjoining Moogurrapum Creek. It has varied terrain – some quite difficult— and the land slopes steeply down to a rather damp area near the creek.

They have been there 18 months, and Robyn has planted several trees on this slope.



One of these trees—a lime—had a problem, with shoots growing out below the graft. Gennaro produced his ever-present army knife, borrowed secateurs, and got to work. The result is a clean graft without shoots from the rootstock growing out.



Rootstock shoots



Nice clean graft

Robyn has a lot planned for the garden and has already got stuck in to some of it, but it's a big job and will take considerable time and work. You are welcome to some agave plants. Please!



Some of the things they have done so far:

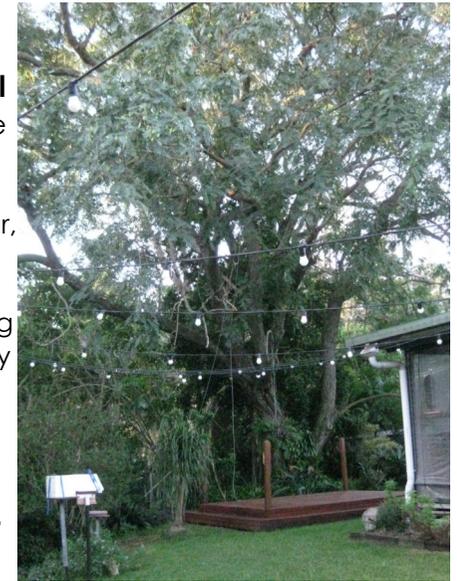
**Predator-proofed** the chook-house. It is fully-enclosed including mesh below the ground level. The chooks are let out to free range when someone is home. Note the secure container to store feed.



**Accepted donated soil** to help level parts of the site that need it. It was still awaiting dispersal



**Built an external deck** beside the house. This was used for their wedding last year, and will be multi-purpose. Note the towering tree, one of many on the site.



**Installed a beehive.** There is a



basil plant below the beehive and this gives a particular scent to the honey. We were queuing up to give it the sniff-test.



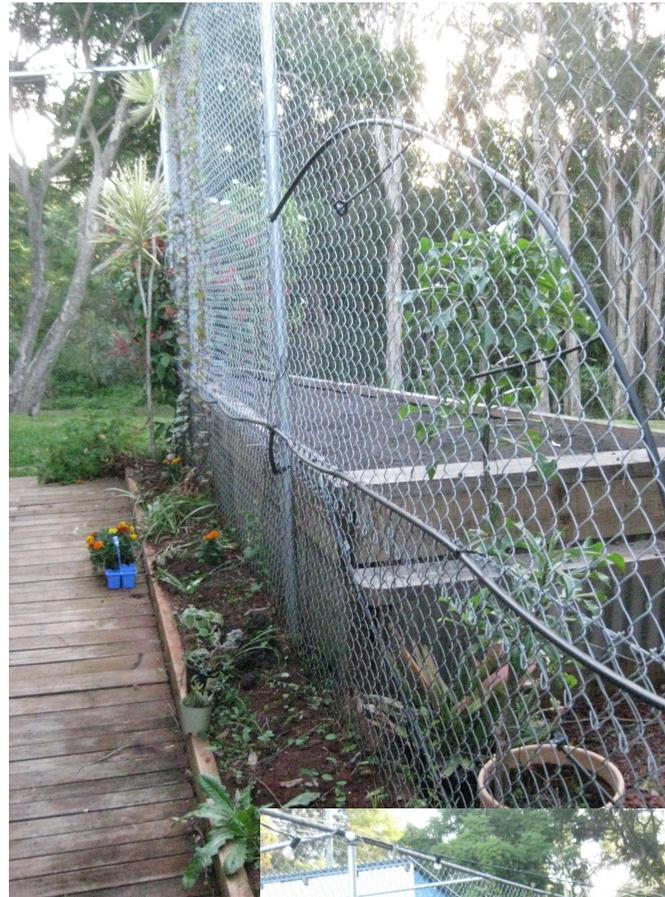
Basil plant in flower

## Garden visit continued

**Created storage for gardening tools** using an old pallet.



**Made a worm farm** with whatever they could find—an old bath, timber, corrugated sheeting, concrete blocks etc.



**Constructed a trellis ...** and what a trellis!  
It's very high and double-sided with a raised garden bed on one side. Perfect for tall growing climbers such as peas, beans and tomatoes.



Future plans include:  
Deciding what to do about:



**The low area** where the slope falls away steeply. This is damp and can become flooded.

**The front section** which is beside the noisy and busy road. The fence doesn't block noise, it is weedy, the soil is compacted, but there are pavers.



## Garden visit continued

Some other features of our visit:



Russell tidied up the *Strelitzia regina* (Bird of Paradise plant) near the front fenceline.

An old holey wheelbarrow has a new life as a portable garden pot—full of weeds so far.



Francke, Ruth, Sharr and Robyn discussing what to do in this shady area beside the house.

The chooks are cosy and well-protected from foxes.



There's always room for some quirkiness.



The perennial basil that's below the beehive.



Part of the afternoon tea, always a highpoint.

Reported by Jill Nixon

## Garden visit Ruth Bolomey

On a beautiful sunny Sunday afternoon, ROGI members visited Ruth Bolomey's amazing garden in Capalaba. Ruth only moved here from Sydney two years ago to be near family in Brisbane. She brought a lot of her plants in pots from her previous garden, but was unable to plant them as she found the garden was too wet when it rained. It was also quite overgrown with large palms and other tall shrubs that were blocking the sun on her north-facing backyard. Therefore she undertook major earthworks to get better drainage as well removing the surplus vegetation.

Ruth did a lot of the work herself. For instance, she dug out approximately 12m<sup>3</sup> of clay from the backyard and barrowed it to front of the house so it could be trucked away. She then proceeded to fill the sloping site with compost and garden soil behind professionally-built retaining walls. After that, she herself built a solid set of steps to divide the garden into two levels and give access to each side. As if that wasn't hard work enough, Ruth then



wanted to have some wicking garden beds. So she dug down 50cm in four sites, assembled bought garden beds, filled them with compost and potting mix, and then put protective covers on them.

All this took a considerable amount of time. Therefore, Ruth was only able to start planting her backyard from last January.

When we saw the garden on May 20<sup>th</sup> it looked as if it had been growing for years. It was lush with tomatoes, herbs, roses and fruit trees. Ruth admitted she had some help with the colourful array of tomatoes as they had all initially sprung up from the compost. There must have been at least six varieties of various shapes, sizes and colours.



## Garden visit continued



Her raised beds had kale, lettuces, parsley, strawberries, herbs and garlic growing under cover in full sun.

However, she had found that the protective covers seemed to lead to explosions of insect pests. It was suggested by the group that the covers might be inhibiting beneficial insects.



In front of the house, after more hard work and removal of more sticky clay, Ruth had created a large mulched bed in which she'd planted

colourful hibiscus, roses and various native shrubs. Apart from the native plants, most of these were propagated by Ruth.

A large flourishing finger lime had also been raised from seed.

Ruth still has a lot of trees and shrubs sitting in pots waiting to be planted, but I feel sure if she can keep up this level of energy her garden will be even more amazing in the near future.

Maybe ROGI members could help with a working bee.

*Reported by Julia Geljon*



Ruth has a cassava growing in a large pot. Since they are grown for their large fleshy tubers, they have to be dug up at harvest time. But by growing your cassava in a very large pot you can have a much easier time of it—just tip over the pot and give it a big shove, then pull them out, instead of all that heavy digging.



Ruth has a thornless blackberry plant growing in a large pot. These plants have a reputation for endeavouring to take over the world, which is why it's in a pot. It is a climbing/trailing plant so loves nothing better than growing around things. Because of this Ruth has put tall poles at intervals around the inside of the pot; as the plant grows, she weaves it in and out around the poles in a basketweave fashion. Ruth suggests that a much larger pot would be better—both wider and deeper—which she plants to do when she gets time to do so ...

Blue witches hat (*Pycnostachys urticifoli*) in Ruth's garden. It produces its deep blue flowers from autumn through to spring. It can grow from 1 to 3 metres high and about 1 m wide, and attracts birds, bees and butterflies.



## ROGI buddies

ROGI has long had a system whereby new members are offered a 'buddy' in the form of a longer-term member. It has come to my attention that there is some misunderstanding about just what being a buddy, and having a buddy, entails.

### To be a buddy:

(for 'old' members)

1. Exchange your phone number and address with the new member at their first ROGI meeting.
2. Arrange a time to meet together at the home of one of you.
3. Then meet together at the other's home.
4. Be prepared to answer questions about ROGI and how it operates, who to get in touch with about various things, and suchlike.
5. You are NOT required to be an expert in gardening or to be expected to answer difficult gardening queries.
6. After a few months, the new member may have made connections with other members and your buddy-ship may come to an end. Or ... you may stay gardening buddies for ever.

### To have a buddy:

(for new members)

1. Exchange your phone number and address with the 'old' member at your first ROGI meeting.
2. Arrange a time to meet together at the home of one of you.
3. Then meet together at the other's home.
4. Feel free to ask about ROGI and how it functions eg 'How often are garden visits held?', 'What is the expo?', 'When does the newsletter come out?', 'When is the next meeting?'... so on.
5. Don't expect your buddy to be an expert on gardening, unless they have demonstrated expertise in certain aspects. Of course, there's no harm in asking, and he/she may be able to point you to someone in ROGI who will know the answer.

We usually try to find buddies who live fairly close to one another, although this isn't really necessary.

It's good to meet other people interested in the same things, and this is one way to do it. So put your hand up next time we're looking for buddies.

## Our annual Mini Garden Makeover & Workshop is back again in 2018

Linda Brennan, our organic gardening horticulturist from Ecobotanica, will plan the makeover of a compact area of the winner's garden in consultation when she visits prior to the workshop. The lucky person then will ensure the necessary items are ready for the day. Several ROGI members will gather at your place and we'll all learn together while helping to make your garden flourish.

For more about Linda go to [www.ecobotanica.com.au](http://www.ecobotanica.com.au)

### How to enter:

- Write, in up to **50 words**, why you'd like your productive garden to have a makeover.
  - Attach **two photos** of the area that needs a makeover.
  - Include your full name, street address and phone number
  - Closing date **11 July**
- Email entries to: [info@rogi.com.au](mailto:info@rogi.com.au) Post entries to: PO Box 1257, Cleveland 4163

To be eligible to enter, you must:

- be a ROGI member
- be the garden owner
- live in the Redlands
- be willing to host ROGI members at your garden for this workshop
- agree to your name and photos of the workshop being used in ROGI News, internet sites and local media.

**The workshop  
date will be decided upon by  
Linda and the winner to suit both  
of them**

*Please read carefully and think about whether your garden, or part thereof, would be a suitable candidate for a ROGI makeover.*

### Previous winning gardens have been:

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

# Logan Eco Action Festival - LEAF

by Ann Roffey

It was a toss-up on Sunday May 27 whether to visit the LEAF in Meadowbrook, or the Qld Herb Society's Medieval Herb Awareness Day in Albion. LEAF won out this time, it being so much closer, and what a mecca for anything **GREEN** it was!

From small community garden groups to TV star Costa Georgiadis, Logan's Griffith University was a teeming site of more than 90 exhibitors and activities. Loads of family entertainment, as well as stuff for the adults.

They say a picture is worth a thousand words, so here are some images from my morning . . .



Native plants for sale

Logan Food Gardeners Inc. had a vegetable seedling stall - you could buy 10 little seedlings for \$3.



Gardening Australia host Costa Georgiadis engages with a local



Greeted by Lizzie . . .



Logan has several Neighbourhood & Community Garden Groups - they had an impressive display of lettuce growing in broccoli boxes



Children could plant their own tomato in this productive workspace



ROGI is not the only one with boomerang bags!

Substation 33 share some of their latest projects



Green to the end . . . there was even a display of eco-friendly coffins!!!



## For you ... chook owners

We want to make another bulk purchase of certified organic feed from **Country Heritage Feeds** so we all can take advantage of the savings. The minimum order is 50 bags. We plan to place an order at the beginning of every third month (the last was for April) for you to pick up at the ROGI meeting that month. Please order in advance, or set up a regular order that will last three months. (If people order more, we could change it to every second month).

### Why feed organic to chooks?

The wisdom is that 'we are what we eat', and also 'we are what we eat, eats'. If our chooks eat food that's laced with various agricultural chemicals, their eggs will be too. We eat the eggs, we get the chemicals. Surely that's what we, as organic growers, are trying to avoid.

### How much should I order?

A chook needs to eat 120gm of food a day. If she has 20gm food scraps and bugs from free-ranging, she'll need 100gm of feed. Six chooks eat 600gm a day or about 18kg a month - one bag a month: three bags every three months.

### How much is it?

Coarse Layer \$23.35+2.50\*+2.35\* = \$28.20

Backyard Layer Pellet \$23.80+\*\*=\$28.68

\*Delivery of \$2.50 per bag and GST apply.

See the wholesale price list below and look up the products the website to check them out - <http://www.organicstockfeed.com/poultry/layer-birds>

CHICKEN FEEDS	20KG BAG	PRICE*
ORGANIC BACKYARD LAYER MASH		\$22.45
ORGANIC BACKYARD LAYER PELLETS		\$23.80
ORGANIC BACKYARD LAYER VEGETARIAN MASH		\$22.75
ORGANIC BACKYARD LAYER VEGETARIAN PELLET		\$24.10
ORGANIC BACKYARD LAYER SOY FREE MASH		\$22.75
ORGANIC BACKYARD LAYER SOY FREE PELLET		\$24.10
ORGANIC BACKYARD LAYER SOY FREE VEGETARIAN MASH		\$22.75
ORGANIC BACKYARD LAYER GLUTEN FREE SOY FREE MASH		\$22.75
ORGANIC CHICKEN STARTER GROWER MASH		\$23.85
ORGANIC CHICKEN STARTER GROWER CRUMBLE		\$25.45
ORGANIC COARSE LAYER		\$23.35
ORGANIC COARSE LAYER SOY FREE		\$23.65
ORGANIC COARSE LAYER VEGETARIAN		\$23.65
ORGANIC FREE RANGE LAYER MASH		\$23.40
ORGANIC FREE RANGE LAYER PELLET		\$24.80

We are keen to buy the highlighted feeds, but you may order other items.

### How much cheaper is it?

Quite a bit. The retail price of **Coarse Layer** is \$36.95 at a local produce store and up to \$39.95 + freight of \$9.95 if ordered online. So it's at least \$8 cheaper per bag - about 21% off.

**We are doing this as a service to you, our ROGI members. Please let us know what else you think we may be able to organise to help you.**

### To order

Please **order at the June ROGI meeting or by phone or email** and make your **payment** online or by arrangement by phone

- BSB 124001. A/C 21654983. J M Nixon

Please contact Jill on 0418 717 735 or [info@rogi.com.au](mailto:info@rogi.com.au) **well before** the deadline for ordering of **Monday 2 July**.

Pick-up will be at the July 11 meeting or by pre-arrangement.

## Examples of the feeds available:

These are the most popular

### Coarse Layer



#### DESCRIPTION

CHF Organic Coarse Layer is a wholegrain ration similar to the old fashioned "Scratch Mix". Typical ingredients may include wheat, sorghum, barley, triticale, pearl millet, sunflower seed, mung beans and corn. These are mixed without any milling, giving it the "wholegrain" consistency. The diverse mix of colours gives the feed an appearance similar to muesli, making it very appealing to the chicken and owner alike.

#### APPLICATION

The CHF Organic Coarse Layer is designed solely for laying birds in the backyard environment, and offers the daily requirement of cereals needed for healthy laying hens. Incorporated into the wholegrain blend is a "protein pellet" which contains essential vitamins and minerals, protein meals and trace minerals. This ensures the integrity of the feed is maintained and avoids the separation issues that can occur if adding these ingredients individually.

#### FEED DIRECTIONS

CHF Organic Coarse Layer is formulated for laying birds. (Approx. 18 - 20 weeks). For young pullets, it is advisable to begin blending the CHF Organic Coarse Layer with the CHF Organic Chick Starter Grower Mash from around 16 weeks to allow a smooth transition onto the layer feed, and to ensure extra calcium is provided to the birds as they mature and begin egg production. Typical feed consumption is between 130g - 150g per head per day and is best made accessible through a specially designed self-feeder. To obtain minimal wastage, ensure your feeder is elevated so the birds can comfortably access the feed, but high enough so they cannot scratch it out onto the ground with their feet. Always ensure that birds have access to plenty of clean potable drinking water.



### Backyard Layer Pellet



#### DESCRIPTION

CHF Organic Backyard Layer Pellets are a blend of certified organic grains which are finely milled and then pressed into a pellet; offering a consistent, nutritionally balanced diet ideal for backyard laying chickens. Typical ingredients may include certified organic cereals such as wheat, sorghum, barley, pearl millet and corn. The feed also contains certified organic vegetable protein meals such as soybean meal, sunflower meal, sunflower meal, fishmeal, meat meal, and other essential vitamins and minerals.

#### APPLICATION

Formulated to the same high specifications as the CHF Organic Backyard Layer Mash, this pellet ration provides the birds with all the essential vitamins and minerals necessary to maintain good health and to promote consistent, strong shelled, vibrant yoked eggs.

#### FEED DIRECTIONS

CHF Organic Backyard Layer Pellet can be fed to birds at point of lay (18-20 weeks) but can be blended with CHF Chick Starter/Grower from 16 weeks.

Typical feed consumption for backyard laying hens is between 120g - 140g per head per day. Feed is best provided ad lib as the birds naturally regulate their consumption according to their energy requirements. A specially designed self-feeder is the most suitable method of doing this. To obtain minimal wastage, ensure that the feeder is elevated so the birds can comfortably access the feed, but high enough so they cannot scratch it out onto the ground with their feet. Always ensure that birds have access to clean potable drinking water.



#### KEY POINTS

- PRODUCT OF AUSTRALIA
- CERTIFIED ORGANIC
- NUTRITIONALLY BALANCED FOR EGG PRODUCTION
- WHOLEGRAIN RATION
- 20KG PACKAGING
- FEED FROM POINT OF LAYER (18-20 WEEKS)



Queensland Garden Expo is a 'must see' for green thumbs and novice gardeners alike.

Held in Nambour, this three day expo is Queensland's premier gardening event attracting 40,000 + visitors from Australia and New Zealand. Some of Australia's leading gardening experts take part in three days of lectures, demonstrations and workshops.

See plants, plants and more plants with over 55 nurseries represented and over 360 exhibitors. There is a full program of free lectures and demonstrations on eight "live" stages every day covering a vast array of gardening topics.

Head to the Gourmet Garden stage for some great tips on growing your own produce and

turning it into delicious gourmet meals.

The 'Giant Kitchen Garden' features a totally organic food court with a fully-planted sustainable garden constructed onsite.

Get help with gardening problems and plant identification from the onsite Plant Clinic.

Be inspired by the fantastic arrangements in the Floral Design Competition.

**Adult Entry: \$20**

**Aged Concession: \$18**

**Children 15yrs and under: Free**

**Groups of 10 or more: \$18**

More info at <http://www.qldgardenexpo.com.au>

Open garden & plant lovers' fair  
Lindmar Garden, 130 Blewers Rd, Morayfield  
Sat 23rd and Sun 24th June,  
9.30am - 4pm  
\$8 for adults—children free



Specialist growers of cottage garden perennials, orchids, tropical and carnivorous plants, bromeliads, cactus, succulents and rare and unusual plants will be in attendance for advice and plant sales.

There will be 27 stalls covering a wide array of gardening interests, including gourmet catering.

Three speakers will give presentations.

## Plant Clinic

Q: What is this tree?  
We don't know, and would welcome some information if you know.



Q: My passionfruit doesn't look right and it is not setting fruit.



A: There was doubt that this leaf was from a passionfruit, but Francke sent a photo of the nursery tag which stated it is a 'Black Magic' passionfruit. In the intervening weeks, the plant is looking much better and the leaves now actually look like they should. It is developing some fruit that appear to have been pollinated.



Q: What is this fruit growing in gardens in Alice St Brisbane?

A: Elephant apple *Dillenia indica*. They prefer a tropical climate and can reach 15m. The edible fruit is favoured by Asian elephants who 'disperse' the seeds

## Plant Clinic

If you have an odd looking pest, think 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 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 solve your problem or identify your plant, especially if it is not related to organic gardening.

Q: What is wrong with my tomato plant? The leaves are curled and don't look right.

A: It appears to be tomato spotted wilt virus, probably caused by thrips. There is not really much that can be done for this plant.



Remove plants and practise crop rotation (no night-shade plants—tomato, capsicum, potato, cape gooseberry, chilli—in that spot for three years).

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.

## Dogs and koalas do not mix

Did you know that Redland City Council is proposing amendments to the Animal Control Laws, which would allow up to four dogs to be kept on properties over 6000 square metres, Including those in designated Koala Areas?



In all other areas a permit will still be required to keep a third dog (or cat). Current regulations require compassionate grounds and neighbours' concurrence. Both of these grounds will be removed in the proposed changes. If this concerns you, please make a submission by 29 June

### For more information:

Online at <https://yoursay.redland.qld.gov.au>

Email: [rcc@redland.qld.gov.au](mailto:rcc@redland.qld.gov.au) writing "Local Law Amendment" in the subject field

Post: Local Law Amendment, PO Box 21, Cleveland, QLD, 4163

Phone: 3829 8999

Reported by Gail Bruce

## Plant Clinic News

We are trialling another way of running Plant Clinic to hopefully provide more value to members:

- Chris McIvor will coordinate the area and glean as much information as possible about the specimen.
- Various people will research the problem and report back directly to the member involved.
- Findings will be published, along with photos, in the following newsletter.
- Please continue to bring items along and fill in the form with the required details.

## Plant of the month

### Chervil *Anthriscus cerefolium*

Chervil is known mostly as the subtle little look-alike to parsley; after reading this I hope you will see it for its own beauty and give growing and using it a shot.

It is not a show off and only grows about 30 cm high - ideal for container growing - and forms a rosette of sweetly scented, delicate ferny foliage with small umbels of tiny flowers.

An annual that thrives in cool conditions, it grows well during our winter months here in the Redlands. It does not tolerate heat. Maintain soil moisture to prevent bolting.

Germination is best between 12 - 20°C soil temperature, and takes 10 - 14 days. Soaking the seed overnight helps to speed it up. It prefers a shady spot and prefers to be sown directly where it is to grow as it dislikes being transplanted. Press the seed lightly into ROGI seed raising mix and put it in a light position (it needs light to germinate). It does best in rich, moist, compost-enriched soil with pH 5.5 - 7.

Give it about 30-40 days to harvest and you should have a lovely yield of chervil.

History-wise, it is linked to Easter in parts of Europe being eaten as part of the ceremony for Holy Thursday. It is associated with Easter because its aroma is similar to that of myrrh and because of its early spring sprouting which symbolises renewal.

Chervil also has a long history with being used as an eye wash. It was made into a tea (1 heaped teaspoon of fresh cut chervil into 1 cup of boiling water), cooled and soaked on to a clean rag and layered over the eyes to

soothe things like inflammation, cataracts, conjunctivitis, glaucoma and detached retina.

In culinary use, chervil's flavour is lost very easily, either when drying, or from too much heat, so it should be added at the end of cooking or sprinkled on food in its freshest form.

Its aniseed/parsley smell and taste makes it one of the most important herbs in French cookery (as are parsley, chives and tarragon). One of my favourite ways to serve chervil is to mix in a bowl: lemon juice, salt and pepper, chopped fresh chervil and little bit of fresh olive oil poured over a beautiful creamy halved avocado, scoop and eat.

The best foods are the simple foods.

Another beautiful way to celebrate chervil is to add fresh chervil to my egg mixture when making egg and lettuce sandwiches.

The seed bank will have chervil seedlings and seeds next month. \$1 for members and \$2 for non-members. *Sharr Ellson*



## Garden Visits

**Sunday 24 June**—Heather Clark at Victoria Point—a large suburban garden with many ornamentals and a fenced vege patch.

**Sunday 29 July**—Francke and Ken Latter at Wellington Point

**Sunday 12 August**—Karina Lay at Redland Bay

## Field Trips

**Sunday 22 July**—Peter Kearney, Samford. Peter spoke to us about biodynamics recently so this will be an interesting trip.

As always, space is limited, so book early. Please indicate your interest at the June meeting to Toni

Our Garden Visit calendar is full for 2018 (except for December). If you'd like to put your garden on a waiting list in case of cancellation—as happened in 2017—please get in touch with Toni at [tonibowler@hotmail.com](mailto:tonibowler@hotmail.com); or 0402 323 704

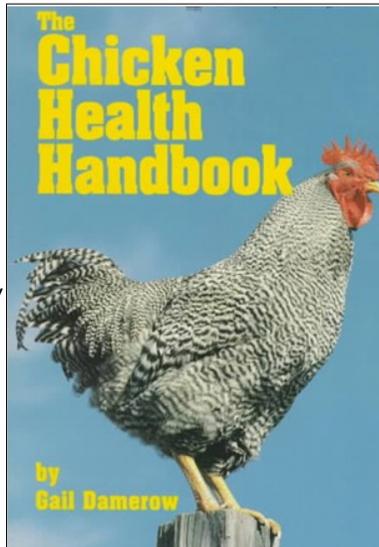
Toni also welcomes suggestions for field trips and workshops related to ROGI's organic growing interests.

## Book Review

### The Chicken Health Handbook

Gail Damerow

This book caught my eye as it looked to me rather like a manual or a text-book, and I'd read all the other chook books in the library.



I think the other books are all Australian and this is from USA, so we must overlook the Americanisms in it and appreciate it for its thoroughness and ease of reading.

I wasn't disappointed. It's a good compromise between all those other chook books and an actual veterinary text book about commercial poultry.

There is way more information than you think you will ever need ... you hope. We've only had chooks for nearly five years; if I had read this book before setting out on chook ownership I don't think we would have gone there! Who knew there were so many things that could go wrong!

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!

You are given advice on chicken health and housing; nutritional requirements (in great detail); the anatomy of a hen, as well as how to conduct your own post mortem (should you need and wish to do so); parasites, and diseases both infectious and environmental.

A very useful section has guides to enable you to diagnose what is wrong with your hen/s and what you can do about it. You can also learn all about how to incubate your own chickens.

The chapter titled *Health and Nutrition* has the following piece of information that I found interesting;

*'Vitamin B deficiency was not an issue in the days when chickens roamed pastures, freely picking in cow patties and horse apples. Health problems occurred when breeders started to specialize and began penning their chickens. In those early days, poultry keepers kept their flocks healthy by tossing them fresh horse or cow manure, but no one knew why it worked until 1948, when researchers discovered that manure contained vitamin B12. This B vitamin is unique among nutrients in being found almost exclusively in animal products.*

*Today, deficiency is not a problem where poultry keepers have returned to the practice of letting chickens run with other livestock. Chickens raised on built-up floor litter get enough vitamin B12 by picking in the litter. Deficiency can occur in housed flocks, especially those fed soymeal as the sole or*

A while ago our 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.

*main source of protein.'*

This may sound gross to some, but it replicates Nature and chooks love it, so it's worth doing.

Another chapter about *External Parasites* has this;

*'A common mistake that can lead to a warm-weather fly explosion is to remove litter without thoroughly cleaning the coop. When manure accumulates and dries out, it attracts fly parasites and predators that naturally control flies. If you remove litter and manure, you also remove the natural fly predators.*

*Letting manure accumulate during warm weather, and making sure it stays dry, is a good fly-control method. Another is cleaning out litter and manure at least once a week.'*

This advice also may sound gross, but I'd rather follow the 'leave it there' suggestion rather than thoroughly cleaning it out every week!

I'm pleased I read this book just for those tidbits and would recommend it if you're serious about your chooks.

Reviewed by Jill Nixon

If this has made you interested in sourcing weed-free horse manure, you're in luck. One of our members lives on a horse property and the manure just keeps on coming! You're welcome to get some (a bucket or a trailer load: do your own shovelling) with no money changing hands—it's a barter system. Ask a committee member for the details.

**This book is 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.

# ROGI seed savers' group

The Seed Savers Group was established in March.



We have been busy learning how to save various seeds. Our tutor, Linda Brennan, has been teaching us about the background to seed saving.

## WHY save seed?

- To have a greater range of seeds in the seed bank
- To have seed that's adapted to our environment
- It is more sustainable
- To save money
- We can learn new skills
- And perhaps breed something new!

## WHAT should we save?

- Seeds of disease resistant plants
- Seeds of plants that can reproduce
- Plants that do well in particular conditions

- Save your best seeds (biggest and healthiest, when the plant is at its peak)

## WHAT *shouldn't* we save?

- The seeds of genetically modified plants
- The seeds of diseased plants
- F1 hybrid seeds

We learnt that we should save 10% of our crop. For example, if you have 50 sweet corn plants, you should save seed from five, and save from five *different* plants.

Heirloom seeds are those before 1952. They will reproduce true to type, unlike a hybrid, which will revert to the parent plant. Some plants have male and female flowers on the same plant, and they are termed *monoecious* – for example, pumpkin, corn and hibiscus. Other plants have male and female plants, and they are termed *dioecious* – like pawpaw and asparagus.

Most seeds need a period of rest before they are planted; that is, they should be dried. Store your seeds somewhere cool, not in your hot backyard shed.

The seeds saved at our first meeting include Echinacea, Feverfew, Celtuce, Tansy, Cosmos and Amaranth. You should see them in the seed bank sometime soon!

Our second meeting focused on wet and moist seed-saving. Have you ever saved seed from an eggplant? I didn't know you could! Cut the eggplant into segments and put them into a food processor. Add some water and pulse. The good seeds will fall to the bottom.

Pictured top right are Purple Kohlrabi seeds that have been germinated. We made a mini green-

house using a takeaway food container and lined it with a moist paper towel. The seeds were placed in the container and covered with a lid. Two to three days later, the 'good' seeds had germinated, and were ready for planting.



Seeds that have jelly around them, such as cucumber, tomatoes and passionfruit, need to be fermented. The seeds are placed in a jar with water, and then left in a warm spot for two to three days. The 'good seeds' will fall to the bottom of the jar - put these into a strainer and rinse under water. Then dry them on a paper towel, and they are ready to be stored.



Photo by M Manby



Photo by M Manby

As you can see, we are learning heaps! If you wish to join us, the ROGI Seed Savers Group is open to all members of ROGI.

We meet every second month, at Linda's house in Capalaba. Our next meeting will be on **Tuesday, 17<sup>th</sup> July at 7-8.30pm**, and will focus on pods and small seeds.

Talk to Linda or someone at the seed bank at the next meeting if you are interested in coming along.

Ann Roffey

## Seed bank news

### Plant your own seed

at the next ROGI meeting

We'll supply a container to sow the seed in, ROGI seed-raising mix and the seeds.

At home, you need to:

- keep the mixture moist
- keep pots in a protected well-lit, shaded spot
- harden off new seedlings by gradually increasing their exposure to sun and heat
- water with weak Seasol solution or worm liquid when the second set of leaves appears (the first 'true' leaves)
- transplant into a larger pot or the garden

**The seeds this month will be lettuce, cauliflower and lucerne.**

### Seed savers' group

See page 19 for the latest.

Our **seed-raising mix** (a blend of coir peat, vermiculite, perlite and biochar) works quite well.

Now you can get some for your own use.

We put it in used yogurt or ice cream containers.

**Fifty cents a litre.**

We can offer good prices as we source well and we are not-for-profit.

### Special Offer

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

Please **return seedling pots and punnets** to be reused – especially the 4-cell ones like this.



**Other clean used pots**—small sizes only up to 12cm diameter. Square pots are good too.

This seed sowing 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.

## Seed Sowing Guide

### June

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

### July

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

Keep in mind that these are only guides.

Be aware that micro-climates and weather conditions may mean that certain seeds may be sown before or after the recommended times.

**ROGI Seed Bank is available at all ROGI meetings and Garden Visits. \$1 per pack for members. \$2 non-members.**

For a 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.**

### 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.**

## Supper at July meeting

Cheryl will not be able to do supper at our meeting on July 11th.

We would love for someone to step in and offer to do Cheryl's job on that evening.

Please see Cheryl at the June meeting so she can show you the ropes—you would need to be there at about 6:00pm.

You'll even learn how to make ROGI's signature lemongrass tea.

**Flat to let** Large one bedroom self-contained flat, with carport, on large acreage, with room for a garden. No pets or children. Please text to 0413 944 622 or phone 3206 0551 evenings.



**Room to let** Large room with sunny northerly aspect in an older style home. Bus outside. Chooks and great soil for growing food. Phone 0438 176 981

## We'd like to hear from you.

For example, send us:

- A story about your garden
- A photo of an interesting plant
- An article about an unusual plant
- A request for items or information
- Specific garden or nutrition info
- A recipe for home-grown produce
- A notice that you have something to give away or sell
- A handy technique or tip
- A gardening problem solved
- 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)

### July Newsletter Deadline

**Please send your contributions to the newsletter editor by 27 June**

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.

### Did you know?

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

## MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

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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 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



This weed was commented on during our recent garden visit as it was growing prolifically in Ruth's garden and we commiserated with her on its presence.

However, she said in South America (Ruth is from Chile) it is a medicinal herb used for treating kidney stones—its Spanish name means 'stonebreaker'. Its botanical name is *Phyllanthus niruri*.

Stonebreaker can reach 30 - 60cm. Its oblong, emerald leaves grow on angular stems; it produces copious yellow-green flowers.

The round fruit capsule that grows below the branch is small - almost stone-like in appearance - and yields three seeds.

It grows well in our climate and is an annual that self-sows readily. It has almost disappeared from my garden now (late May), so it may not like the cooler weather.

You will have noticed it in your garden. Apart from its medicinal value, it's also a 'good' weed in that it's really easy to pull out.

Research is being undertaken to ascertain its effectiveness and safety, although it has been used for over two thousand years to treat (or prevent) kidney stones, hepatitis B and gout.

A black dye can be made by boiling and concentrating the leaves and stems. It is also used to help catch fish!

Jill Nixon