

ROGI News

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

Salvation Army Church
Cnr McDonald Rd & Macarthur St
ALEXANDRA HILLS

Admission

Members: Gold coin
Visitors: \$5

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

Tea/coffee provided.

You are very welcome to provide a quality plant to help share plants with other members (see p 22 for more on this) Remember to bring a bag/box/basket to take home your purchases and/or winnings.

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Brazilian spinach (*Alternanthera versicolor*) comes in two forms, both of which are eaten raw or cooked. It does particularly well in summer. Your chooks will love it.

Thoughts from the potting shed

Dear ROGI member

It never rains, but it pours – particularly if you live in SE Queensland!

Nothing could be truer, as I looked out of my window last week at the deluge bucketing down, courtesy of ex Tropical Cyclone Debbie.

My column last month lamented the drought and its effect on our backyard gardening efforts. I said I had decided to ignore future weather forecasts, since they appeared to be so disappointingly wrong.

What a difference a month makes in the sub-tropics. Probably like you, I was transfixed by nature's unpredictable wrath that was TC Debbie in Far North Queensland.

But I hadn't really any idea that there would be such a sting in ex TC Debbie's tail, as she crossed the coastline, became an east coast low and headed south to our neck of the woods - and far beyond.

During the height of the storm, our suburb in Capalaba lost power for about five hours. I found it quite frightening to hear the wind howling and quite a few crashes

and bangs of falling trees on our acreage block - and not be able to see anything at all.

Surveying the damage the next morning, we found quite a few trees and large branches fallen. One tree sadly destroyed part of my raised garden bed – but it's all fixable compared to many others.

One tree also fell in the gap (luckily) between the four beehives we host for ROGI members Joy and Tony Gallagher. If the tree had fallen few centimeters either way, there would have been some bees with serious headaches.

So probably like many ROGI members, our weekend was spent chain sawing, generally picking up the debris, planting and mulching.

Already our gardens are showing their appreciation for the rain – with fresh flushes of growth and flowers – and new buds appearing over night.

As we see the news reports of the destruction up and down the east coast of Australia, we know we got off very lightly. It will take many communities a long time to recover.

I'm sure you share my thoughts and good wishes for those local people and those communities who haven't been so lucky

up and down the coast. There are flood relief funds that have been set up and I urge you to contribute if you are able to.

Happy Gardening

Kathy



Coming Events

| | | | |
|-------|-----------|------------------------|----------|
| April | Tues 4 | Herb Society meeting | |
| | Thur 6 | BOGI meeting | |
| | Wed 12 | ROGI meeting | |
| May | Sun 23 | Garden Visit | See p 20 |
| | Tues 2 | Herb Society meeting | |
| | Thurs 4 | BOGI meeting | |
| | Wed 10 | ROGI meeting | |
| | S&S 20&21 | Plant Collectors' Fair | See p 19 |
| | Sun 28 | Herb Awareness Day | See p 19 |

2017 Membership Fees are overdue

- **Cash** payment at ROGI meeting
- **Cheques** made payable to *Redland Organic Growers Inc* - pay at meeting or to PO Box 1257, Cleveland 4163

• **Direct Deposit** BSB 633000. A/C 136137296 Bendigo Bank Capalaba Central
IMPORTANT! Reference - Your initials and surname are essential to identify who has paid.

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

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

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

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

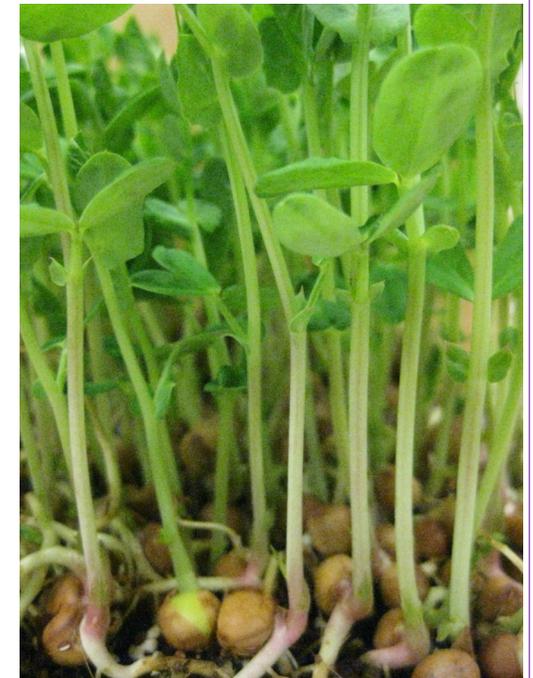
April Meeting

All about Microgreens

Jody Wall is owner operator of The Urban Food Company which supplies fresh organic, high end produce to restaurants and farmers markets across the Great South East of Queensland.

Jody will give a presentation explaining the growing and consumption of microgreens including pea shoots, radish, sunflower and wheatgrass.

He will cover various aspects including a short breakdown of the nutritional benefits of these young plants, why are they microgreens and not sprouts, when are they seedlings and not microgreens, what types grow best in our subtropical climate, where he grows them and where others can grow them.



Shane Gishford will be selling fruit and vegetables as usual.
 Kemp Killerby will be selling Australian native food plants.

March speaker

Ashley Palmer

Ashley's family have farmed at Mt Cotton for decades.

They have 50 acres of fruit, vegetable small crops, greens, pumpkins, 60 avocado trees as well as custard apples, macadamias and pecans. Also there are cattle and heritage chooks.

Ashley's grandfather grew bananas for 60 years. A cyclone took the bananas so they changed to zucchini. Later they moved to better land at their current site in Seaview Rd.

Their passionfruit was made into juice at the Orchy factory in Thornlands. Locals used to come in to help pick strawberries. They grew watermelons as well, but had not much luck with these due to lack of water.

Ashley used to staff a roadside stall near Mt Cotton school after school (while doing his homework). The rest of the time it was an honesty box system. That had to give that idea away because of dishonesty—someone even stole the table once! They now sell from the on-farm shed selling what is in season.

Twenty years ago the Palmers converted to organic growing because Ashley's mum became sick and this was most likely caused by the toxic sprays being used in the neighbourhood. Some of the neighbours have changed to organic as well.

WOOFers now help out Ashley and his parents on the farm.

In summer they grow corn, cucumbers, zucchini and pumpkin.

Ashley is doing his own seedling trays and saving seed from the crops. Currently has trays of onions, kale, lettuce, shallots and spinach, and he'll put these in the ground soon.

Time to start planting potatoes from now through to September if weather is good. Also to plant now: *Redlands Promise* strawberries, peas, beans, carrots. (There are spare strawberry runners available for sale.)

Get your soil ready in advance, do a pH test (add lime if pH is too low, it should be 6.5—7), add compost.

He recommends getting a proper soil test done; this will cost about \$150. this will pick up excesses as well as deficiencies. [He gets soil tested through Nutritech. It takes about two weeks to get results in a very comprehensive report. <https://www.nutritiongardening.com.au/pages/soil-testing>]

Rather than removing grass and weeds from between the rows of plants, Ashley chips the sides of the rows and leaves the grass as paths. The benefits of this are:

- The grass slows down the flow of water during heavy rain allowing it to soak in, particularly on sloping spots.
 - It's also easy to work from grass and to walk along it.
 - Worms and insects can retreat to the sanctuary of the grass.
 - The lawn clippings enrich the soil
 - Grass is a mix of clover, couch and dock
- They keep compost, cover crops and mulch on the ground in summer to prevent



Well-chipped and mowed pathways of grass growing between rows of plants

WOOFers are Willing Workers On Organic Farms. They have the opportunity to work on Organic Farms, exchanging 4 - 6 hours work per day for meals and accommodation, usually in the family home. See more information on their website: <http://www.wwoof.com.au>

Ashley Palmer

soil drying out and to add nutrition.

Originally the soil was quite stony, and now it is good (amongst the rocks).

How do you have success with lettuce in the heat of summer?

- If you use too much chook poo you could end up with excess nitrogen and phosphorus. Too much nitrogen will create weak plants that will be prone to insect attack. Make sure chook manure is well-composted before use.
- Keep calcium up in this heat. Use lime if pH is too low. Otherwise use gypsum. The extra bit of calcium will help with lettuce in summertime.
- Lettuce stress easily in the heat. As well as calcium, adding liquid kelp/seaweed can help. Ashley recommends *Summer Harvest*, *Cos* varieties and *Salad Bowl* in red and green.
- Using bird netting or white shade cloth takes the bite out of the heat in summer.
- Ashley may water lettuce for two hours between 10am and noon every day in summer.
- Before watering anything, Ashley checks the wind and cloud cover on the day. In summer he usually waters three or four times a week for up to four hours—'a good drink'. In winter maybe once a week. Mostly overhead watering.
- Planning to try Trickle Tape irrigation

How do you grow potatoes?

- Mix composted manure into the soil, then make a furrow and add potato.

- As the plant grows, mound it up.
- He saves his own seed potatoes (the biggest ones) and keeps them in the cold room where it is cool and dark ready for next season.



How do you keep pests off brassicas (kale, broccoli, cabbage etc)?

- *Dipel** works well. We spray it late afternoon and after rain.
- Spray it along with Eco oil to make it stick

Do you till the soil?

- Yes. Carrots like friable soil, but don't use nitrogen-rich fertilisers such as chook poo.
- Better to use a foliar spray for nutrients for carrots.

Other points

- Hollow stems on broccoli indicate boron deficiency (see Plant Clinic on page 14)
- If phosphorus levels in your soil are low, add microbes and then some molasses which feeds the microbes
- Soil has a deficiency of zinc, boron and copper—this is common in Australian soils.
- We use neem, but as a soil drench; not on the leaves as it can affect bees.
- We make compost using wood chips, chicken manure, tree clippings plus various additional agents. Can't make enough for our use, so get some from a friend.



ROGI will be going on a field trip to Ashley's family farm later in the year. See p 20

* *Dipel* contains *Bacillus thuringiensis*, (Bt) which is highly effective and specific against most species of leaf eating caterpillars. This biological control is a bacterial stomach poison for all caterpillars, which is mixed with water and sprayed onto both sides of foliage. It must be ingested by the actively feeding caterpillar which dies 3-4 days later. It is not a contact spray. It is totally safe for beneficial insects, including ladybirds and bees as well as fish, birds, mammals and pets. Bt is broken down by sunlight within a few days, so repeated applications may be necessary.

Adapted from <https://www.greenharvest.com.au/PestControlOrganic/CaterpillarControlProducts.html>

Nixon Garden Visit

In just one year, what a transformation Jill and Ian have made to the gardens in their new home! Unlike in ABC's *Dream Gardens* where they inevitably go over budget, over time and cost a fortune, Jill and Ian have created a life-giving, sustainable, thriving and productive garden in just one year true to their plan and on a minimum budget. The variety of plants growing on their property is astounding and shows that with some planning you can have a beautiful garden that also supplies you with abundant fruit, vegetables and herbs.



Above from beside rear of shed—January 2016
Below from beside front of shed—March 2017 (for orientation, note position of clothesline above and then below - in the upright position)



A productive garden needs good soil so Jill was very selective when looking for a house – it had to have the rich red Redlands soil.

While this property had been vacant for a year, it had in its early days been a farm and then the house of a Polish lady who was a keen gardener and worked and enriched the soil. Consequently, while the gardens were overgrown with weeds, the soil had potential.

Secondly, you need an abundant water supply. So, to minimize the use of town water, Jill and Ian have added a 3,000 L and two 5,000 L tanks, as well as a wheelie bin with a tap at the bottom on one side of the shed. The tanks were empty in October and have filled and emptied since then. Two of them don't have a pump so watering cans are used with these.

Then of course the hens, while producing three to four eggs a day, are put to work (play?) to help with weed and bug reduction.

A year ago, we visited Jill and Ian's new house with Naomi Wynn and looked at what was there already that would be useful and good to keep and what had to go to make room for what they wanted to grow and had brought with them. With tips from Naomi about how to plan a garden we left them to it. We were amazed to see how it had worked out.

A tiller was used to cultivate the soil in the entire front garden and along the western side of the shed. The grass and weeds were picked up and given to the chooks to do their bit. The front garden faces north and is ideal to grow vegetables. Fortunately, it rained after the tilling so the soil was covered with wet newspaper and then tea tree mulch so that it wouldn't dry out. The mulch requires nitrogen to help in its decomposition (to prevent nitrogen draw-

down) so a natural source was used (human urine!).

When planting, the mulch and newspaper were pulled back. As planned, deciduous fruit trees (mulberry and fig) were planted in two of the three garden beds at the front. A surprise crop of gladioli popped up in the third garden bed and the third tree will go in there once the bulbs have been removed. Even the gladioli petals are edible!

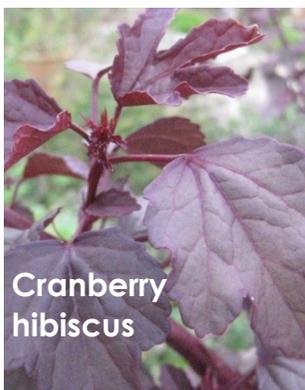
Jill has grown six crops of corn during the summer and there was a patch in the front and one in the back. They need to be planted close together in a block as they are wind pollinated. Gennaro recommends planting corn, beans and a crop like cucumber together so the beans can grow up the stalks when the corn has finished and also provide nitrogen to the growing corn while the vine provides a living mulch. Corn is best eaten soon after harvest as the sugars turn to starch with time and it is not as tasty. Jill blanches the excess and freezes it for later use. The hens love fresh corn as well.

Right:
Backyard block of corn.
Guisaro fruit tree in front. It's a type of guava.



Garden Visit

An old Jolly Jumper frame was being used to grow jicama which is a vigorous climbing crop with a tuber growing to eight kg. It tastes like a crunchy apple, and contains inulin which is good for you and particularly so for diabetics. (Jerusalem artichoke and yacon also contain inulin.) All parts of the jicama growing above the ground are poisonous, as is the skin, so care needs to be taken about where to plant it. The advantage of that is that jicama plants are not troubled by pests. Salvia and Thai basil have popped up from seed (many self-sown) and give the front garden a



cottage garden look as well as attracting the bees to pollinate the plants.

Members of the hibiscus family that are edible and decorative (rosella, cranberry hibiscus and aibika) had been planted to take advantage of the sunny outlook in the front garden. Several rosella plants had provided Jill with an excess that she is able to sell to a company who make jam as they are not readily available in the shops. She gave us a sample of the jam the company make from dragon fruit and ginger which was very colourful and tasty.

Along the western side of the house is a long strip of garden that had become overgrown with weeds. After identifying the plants they wanted to keep, Ian weeded the garden, mulching it and planting what they wanted.

The lillypilly tree produces edible fruit and has been left to shade the western side of the house and a variety of edible plants, herbs, fruits and flowering plants that are now growing happily together. This was deliberately planned to provide a variety of sizes, shapes, colours and smells to confuse the bugs but to



Corsican mint will fill and overflow this pot.

attract the bees, butterflies, birds and lizards. Jill and Ian are delighted with the variety of these creatures in the garden.

Many of the flowering plants that were already in the garden remain, including old-fashioned single gerberas. A wheelbarrow each of native violets and stinging nettle (used in soup and making), a variety of mints (apple, pepper, spear, Moroccan and Corsican) day lilies, Mexican tarragon, ruby salt bush, purslane (great source of omega 3) and many native plants have been added.



Native violet flowering in this leaky old wheelbarrow



Garden Visit



Above: Lillypilly is surrounded by plants of various shapes, colours and textures in the garden. The coleuses attract butterflies. There is a Richmond Birdwing vine starting to climb the tree trunk

Below: One of the three birdbaths positioned beneath trees. Note the rock—a landing spot to prevent some creatures from drowning.



Above: *Salvia* and *alyssum* flowers abound as they help attract pollinators and predatory insects to the garden—part of the pest control system.

Above right: The beautiful and sweet smelling *Buddleja* which butterflies and birds love.



Below left: *Pentas* attract butterflies—leave the caterpillars on them. The plants always recover.

Below right: One of the dozen or more self-sown Thai basil bushes that have sprung up. They may be uninvited, but they are very welcome. It seems as if they are the most attractive plants to the bees.



Update on the fennel aphids 3 April 2017

At the garden visit on 18 and 19 March, visitors noted that the fennel was covered in aphids. We made a conscious decision to not spray them with anything, not even eco oil.

Here's why.

Last year we bought and released lacewing eggs from Bugs for Bugs and we were pretty confident that there were still lacewings in the area whose larvae would feast on the aphids. I'm happy to report that the fennel is totally clear of aphids, and I'm eagerly awaiting the arrival of the first seeds.

As the saying goes ... It won't happen overnight, but it will happen.



Garden Visit

The back garden borders on the train line and has two fences – a very tall train line fence and a metre inside that a smaller garden fence which is ideal for growing passionfruit. This section is the orchard and has the hens' palace in the eastern corner.

The incredibly productive old persimmon



The chook fences have various plants growing on them. This is native passionfruit.



Persimmon being protected by a bag.

tree is the star performer and was covered with some of the 300 drawstring bags Jill had made from double thickness curtain netting. They're meant to exclude fruit fly, possums and bats. This persimmon is a non-astringent one and the fruit is delicious eaten while still crisp.

The area had had pumpkins growing and the chickens were let in to clean it up, but they'd forgotten about some warrigal greens growing beneath the pumpkin leaves; the chickens made short work of them!

The hens had done a great job clearing up the grass and weeds from this area at the



To protect the roots around the newly-planted fruit trees from the busy hens, Ian has put rocks and concrete pieces. This is a black sapote.

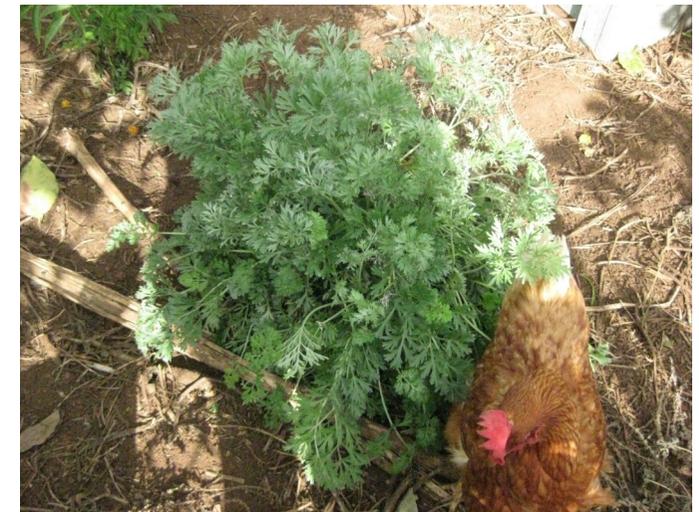
same time as fertilising it.

Some interesting fruit trees in this area include the cherry of Rio Grande, jaboticaba, mulberry, guisaro, pitomba and a black sapote (chocolate pudding fruit), as well as cumquat, lemon and lemonade, and a few elders for the annual elderflower cordial-making session.

Elsewhere there are three finger limes, a tangelo and two mandarins, none of which have fruited as yet.

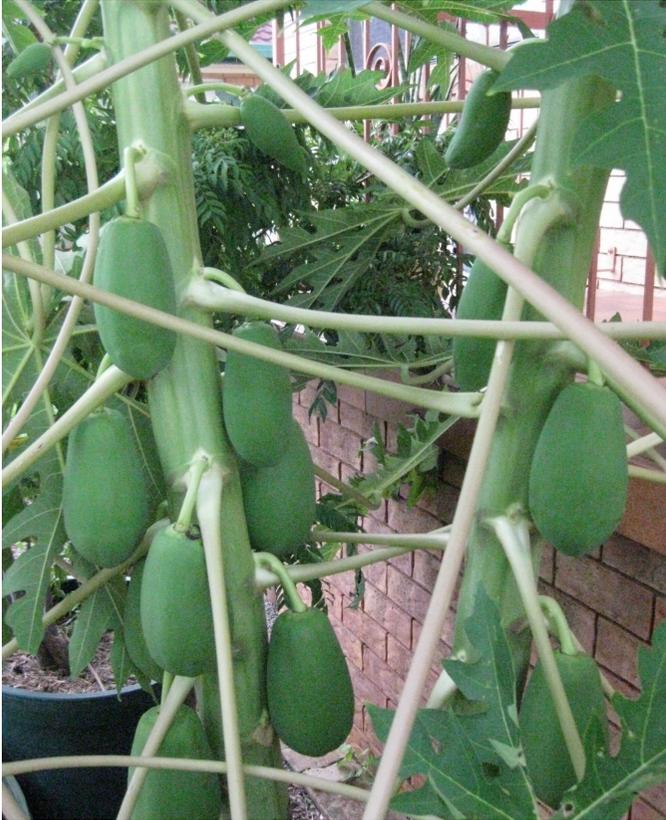


Willamette raspberries grow along one of the chook yard fences. Chooks don't eat them.



Wormwood in the chicken area is handy to pick and use in the nesting boxes to discourage mites.

Garden Visit



Above: A red bisexual pawpaw gifted from Gennaro is thriving.

Below: Pineapples grow in pots and in the ground in several places. They take around two years from planting out the tops to producing fruit.



In the back yard a variety of interesting plants are growing such as thornless blackberries, liquorice plant (the roots are used to make liquorice), rosemary, okra, kaffir lime and Malabar spinach climbing the chook fence.

There are a few varieties of marigolds including French, African and *Tagetes minuta* (tall growing). Besides brightening the garden with their cheerful colours, they fumigate the soil. Marigolds are well known for their ability to control root-knot nematodes by releasing anti-nematode compounds into the soil. They are very useful to be grown in an area that has had tomatoes or other plants from the Solanaceae family. They will be 'chopped and dropped' on the garden bed and compost will be added before planting out a food crop.

Below: Jill had made this dual-purpose enclosure out of fruit fly netting. At the moment it is protecting the brassicas (cabbage, kale, cauli, broccoli) from being devastated by the white cabbage butterfly's caterpillars.



Next season it will revert to being home to the blueberry pots so that the birds don't eat all their blueberries.

Right: Malabar spinach (*Basella rubra*) growing up one of the chookyard fences. It provides shade for the Clucker Tucker seeds sown in the chook run and provides another source of greens for hens, guinea pigs and humans.



Above: Old lace curtains and large beach umbrellas were used during the long hot dry summer to shelter sensitive plants such as lettuce to ensure a constant supply.

Garden Visit

Blueberry plants are growing in pots as it's easier to maintain adequate moisture and the requisite very acidic pH of 4- 5 in a pot.

Jill used azalea and camellia potting mix and adds elemental sulphur as required to keep the pH down.



Vietnamese mint (rear) and kangkong (aka water spinach) growing in pots sitting in a huge tub of water. Kangkong can be harvested in 4—6 weeks.



Gennaro harvested the roots from the galangal (aka Thai ginger) that had been growing in a planting bag for about three years. Galangal is a member of the tropical gingers and likes a moist shady spot. The rhizomes were separated (slashed with a knife—it's a tough plant!) and several ROGI members grasped the opportunity to take a rhizome home to plant (see inset). It can be used as for ginger in recipes such as curries and soups and for flavouring meat and fish.

Other spices they had growing were ginger, lemon grass, turmeric and krachai (aka Chinese keys).

It was inspirational to see the variety of edible plants that Jill and Ian have grown so successfully in their new garden in just one year. Good planning has ensured that it should be fruitful and sustainable.

Two visits were held on the weekend, so different aspects of the garden may have been highlighted. Please get in touch with Jill if you wish to visit.

Mary Irmer



Asparagus in an old bath tub as it loves water. The open plug hole allows for drainage. They will leave it to grow for two years before harvesting it. This enables it to become well established. Asparagus plants can live for decades, so it's worthwhile.



An ingenious pole made from 90mm pipe covered with shade cloth to grow dragon fruit with bike tyre at top to enable it to spread over and down when it reaches the top. Fruit tends to form on branches growing downwards which the tyre will support.

Healing your sodden garden

Cyclone Debbie treated us all to a big drenching after a desperately dry summer.

How is your garden looking after the deluge last week?

We had big puddles, broken plants and the loss of a couple of shallow rooted native plants such as *Hibiscus tiliaceus*.

If things are still looking a bit grim in your garden, here are some tips that may help the garden recover with minimal losses.

Problem: Puddles of water lying around will create anaerobic conditions in your soil. The water replaces air in the soil and the soil can hold no more water. This is called 'field capacity'. Anaerobic bacteria flourish. These produce methane gases (smelly soil), soil acidity increases and plants will start to droop and die.

Treatment: Dig trenches and drain away the excess water. This will allow air to once again take up some of the pore spaces in the soil for plant roots to 'breathe'. Once the soil is drained and has dried a little, apply beneficial microbes or fresh worm tea to replenish some of the soil microbial balance.

Problem: Wet soil is heavy soil, especially if you have a clay component. It may stay wet for a week or more after a good drenching. Working the soil at this stage will break down the structure in a soil and remove air spaces. Soil can become compacted, hard and more difficult for plant roots to penetrate once it dries.

Treatment: Avoid digging, rotary hoeing or planting into soil that is sodden. You can start again after the soil has drained.

Problem: Plants may have sustained broken branches with lashing winds and rain. Branches that tear off, leaving a rough break, can be an entry point for fungal infection that may kill the plant down the track. (See photos below right)

Treatment: If branches have fallen or broken, check the break is clean. Using sharp pruners, trim off broken branches with a clean cut. Prune to just a little past an outward and upward facing bud.



Above: *Hibiscus tiliaceus* showing fungal rot in the trunk, blown over in the storm.

Problem: Plants have broken off at the base. This can be caused by them being top heavy, or it may be the result of an incursion of fungal disease (rot) entering the plant close to ground level. Disease enters due to insect attack or even whipper snipping damage to the trunk.

Treatment: Remove the plant and as many roots as possible. If rot caused weakening, it is not advisable to replant in the same spot immediately. Replanting may result in the rot being transferred to the new plant. Treat the soil in the area with a brew of beneficial microbes (fungi and bacteria), some fresh compost and comfrey tea to help rebalance the soil. Replanting can be undertaken at a later stage with greater confidence that the new plant will not be affected.



If you'd like a microbial brew, I'd be happy to order some in for you. The beneficial bacteria and fungi will help to rebalance the equilibrium in your soil and boost your garden health. Email Linda@ecobotanica.com.au or check www.ecobotanica.com.au for garden classes and growing tips.

Linda Brennan

Our storm story

Not so sure that living amongst the gum trees is quite so great after the remnants of tropical cyclone Debbie hit on Thursday. Just glad that we didn't get the full force as in north Queensland.

First we lost power on Thursday at 2 pm – a problem with high voltage box down the road. They fixed that relatively quickly and we had power back at three only for it to go out again at five but we were pleased it came back on so we could watch the news, but that was not to be and during the news it went out for good. Energex reported trees had blown down on the line.

So we had cold dinner by candlelight on Thursday and Friday nights. It came back on this morning and took me by surprise—all of a sudden the light came on by itself.



Ironbark tree cut up

During the night on Thursday it was quite scary as we could hear trees blowing over in the wind and I half expected to find the roof off one of the sheds the next morning. In the morning there were tree branches down everywhere.

The worst damage was caused by our old ironbark tree that had been standing like a sentinel for the last 30 years and a home to the cockatoos whom we saw having some fierce fights with the crows over possession. We had thought it would fall down the hill but the wind was coming in the opposite direction to normal.

It broke a few of the fruit trees but the one we were really upset about was our big jaboticaba tree that has been there for at least 25 years. It was our favourite tree and had produced so much fruit over the years that even the greedy possums couldn't eat it all. It had flowers and fruit on and would have had ripe fruit in a few weeks.



The jaboticaba with the downed ironbark over it.

The other main casualty was the Geisha Girl that has been growing in the middle of our driveway since mum died. It was split as well but I think it will be okay. Not sure about the plants under it though that I put there to enjoy the shade.

We are so enjoying the electricity now. You really don't appreciate it until something like this happens and you find you can't use the television, computer, oven, microwave and so on, or even charge your phone. We used the outdoor solar lights to give us some diffused light inside.

We really feel for the people in North Qld who must have feared for their lives and lost so much. So many of them are still without power and the food in their freezers will be rotten. We have a lot to be grateful for.

Rai and Mary Irmer



A 'delicate' orchid that was buffeted by the wind and was not affected one bit.

Plant Clinic

Q: What is wrong with my tomato? The leaves seem to be shrunken.



A: There are a few possibilities:
Mineral deficiency plus excessive heat.

- **Zinc deficiency** known as 'Little Leaf' is common in Australian crops because our soils are low in zinc. Zinc is essential for the production of growth-promoting substances
- Use foliar spray of chelated zinc
- Check pH of soil—alkaline soils (above 7) prevent absorption of zinc

Could be **a virus** – but no markings

May be **Broad Mite**

- Best treatment for mites is to buy the predator *montdorensis* from *Bugs for Bugs*. It is an Australian predatory mite that feeds on thrips, whitefly, other small insects and mites. <https://bugsforbugs.com.au/product/montdorensis>
- wettable sulphur will deter, but don't use at same time as the predator, so use wettable sulphur first

- Don't spray in middle of day
- Also affects capsicums and potatoes

Discussion then moved to:
Using **diatomaceous earth (DE) for ants**

The need for **boron** in plants

- Boron is needed for flowering and fruiting
- Boron is the most unstable of the trace elements and is easily leached from soil especially soil that is low in humates.
- Stabilised boron is fused on humates, so it is slow release and not washed out of soil
- Do not use borax – it is highly soluble and highly toxic
- Use boron once a month for first year and then a little every now and then next year. Do not overdo as an excess can easily occur and is toxic.

Plant Clinic

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

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

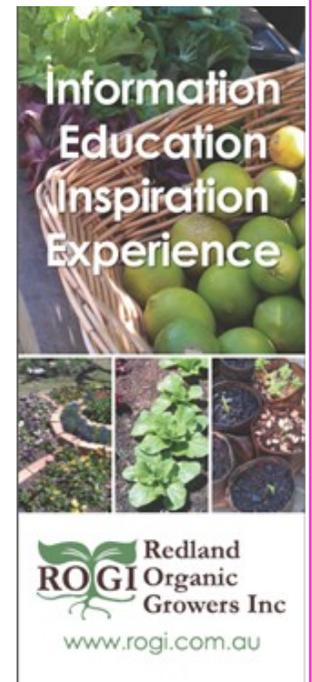
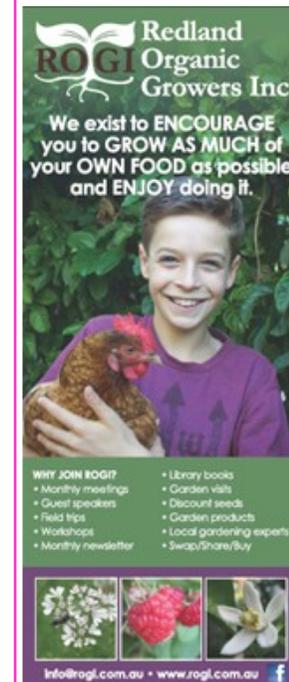
Please be aware: we do our best but there may not be anyone who can identify your plant, especially if not related to organic gardening.

My IGA Card a big winner for ROGI

Thanks to the myIGA Card Community Benefit Program and to those members who shop at IGA Cleveland, ROGI has been able to reprint and reframe its pull-up promotional banners - to the tune of \$420.

These banners, which were looking a bit worse for wear, are really important promotional tools for ROGI. They are put to good use at community displays and at our monthly meetings to identify our organisation. We have been able to afford sturdier framing so they can remain upright in windy conditions.

We encourage you to support the myIGA card program and earn points for ROGI at the Cleveland store for future acquisitions. See page 22.

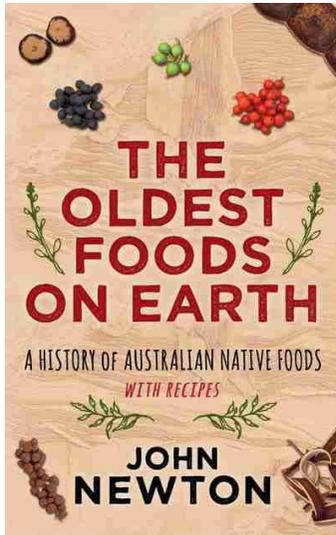


Library News

Book Reviews

We have two new books in the library this month.

This is a book about Australian food, not the foods that European Australians cooked from ingredients they brought with them, but the flora and fauna that nourished the Aboriginal peoples for over 50,000 years. It is because European Australians have hardly touched these foods for over 200 years that I am writing it,' so says John Newton.



What a revelation!

It seems that pretty much everything we learnt at school about how the first Australians lived and ate is wrong.

Carefully researched, insightful and fascinating in its detail, this book had me up and reading until late into the night.

Why couldn't the colonists manage to survive on foods the original Australians grew, foraged, prepared and ate?

Even when there was the very real risk of starvation in the first year, it was a lack of knowledge and a rejection of local food as

being inferior because it was unfamiliar and not 'civilised'.

Now the tide is turning. Many chefs have compiled recipes using native ingredients. We are starting to accept, even relish, the flavours of Australia—more than just macadamia and finger limes.

Newton provocatively suggests that farming and eating currently-protected animals such as the scrub turkey (tender and delicious, apparently!) would mean they'd never disappear from the land. Cows and chickens aren't likely to die out, after all.

I highly recommend that everyone reads - nay, digests - this book and tells their friends about it.

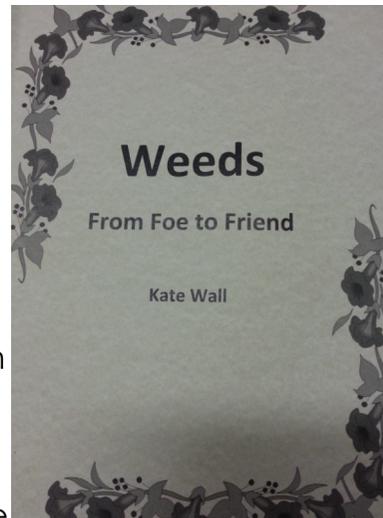
Bring on the food revolution.

Reviewed by Jill Nixon

Kate Wall spoke at our meeting last October on sustainability in our gardens.

In this new booklet, Kate turns her attention to the world of weeds.

From providing descriptions of the various categories of weeds she ventures into the current common methods of getting rid of weeds (poisons, mostly) and gives other suggestions.



I like that she has explained that many weeds are reliable indicators of the type of soil (sandy, clay and so on) and the condition of that soil. Change that and often the weeds can't survive! She provides us with many examples of these weeds and their favoured conditions.

Then there's the section which could have been titled 'If you can't beat them, eat them!'

The edible weeds and the medicinal weeds. This part could even have you actually planting weeds (for example, I sow cobbler's pegs seeds so I can feed the leaves to our chooks! It's not that easy to grow them on purpose, either).

As this is an unillustrated booklet, it can only give descriptions of the weeds. But, using the Latin names provided for 34 weeds (common names should be avoided as they vary in different parts of Australia), you will be able to search for their colour photos on the internet to ascertain accuracy before you do indeed eat those weeds.

Reviewed by Jill Nixon

Both of these books are now available for loan from your ROGI library.

If you read a book that you consider would be valuable for our library please let a committee member know about it.

We welcome reviews from readers of ROGI library books that you have read.

Redlands Good Gardening Expo

A big 'thank you' to the large contingent of ROGI members who helped at our display at this year's Expo at IndigiScapes.

Led by our public events coordinator Bronwen, we spread the word to locals who wanted to learn more about the benefits of organic gardening. Visitors had their gardening questions answered by ROGI experts during a full program of talks as well as a demonstration of how to build a no-dig garden.

We signed up new ROGI members, gave out a number of free passes to future ROGI meetings and distributed hundreds of fact sheets on composting, good garden bugs and no-dig gardening. Regular activities such as plant and seed sales, raffle for garden boxes and potting up seeds in a hand-made paper pot were also popular.

About 700 people attended the annual event - a joint initiative of Council and ROGI.

Kathy Petrik



Above:: Sharr setting up the seed bank area



Above: Setting up the ROGI gazebos—Margaret S, Julia G, Chris M, Bronwen T, Steve P and Phillip B.

Below: the ROGI display in idyllic surroundings



Above: Gennaro giving one of his talks



Redlands Good Gardening Expo



Clockwise from left:

- One of Gennaro's talks;
- A busy time in the seed bank;
- Julia's talk;
- Our famous ROGI box gardens were in blue baskets this year;
- Rhonda in the plant area;
- The display no-dig garden.



Plant of the Month

Radish *Raphanus sativus*

Radishes are one of the first fast foods! They grow really quickly and can be ready to pick in just three to eight weeks from seed. They are beautiful, colourful, round or oblong red, white or black. They are crisp and crunchy and ideal for slicing thinly into salads, pickling, sprouting or making into fun edible critters!

In Oaxaca Mexico they have had a radish festival on December 23rd each year since 1897. This festival is known as "the night of the radishes". Everyone gathers in the Plaza where an exhibition of sculptures made from many types of red radish (which some can weigh up to 3kg) are on show. Sculptures are made to look like religious items (eg. nativity scenes, as it is so close to Christmas) and other local folklore characters. The town's mayor created the festival to lift the local spirits.



The radish is a cool-season crop. The high temperatures of summer cause the plant to develop small tops and roots rapidly become pithy and strongly pungent after reaching maturity.

Grow radishes in full sun or partial shade, in loose sandy, well-drained soil as this allows for even root development and ease of washing after harvest.

Remove soil lumps, rocks, and roots from radish planting beds. Obstructions can cause roots to grow malformed.

Add organic matter to beds before sowing the radish seeds straight into the bed. Radishes prefer a soil pH of 5.5 to 6.8.

Radishes like to be kept moist but not wet. Even, regular watering will result in quick growth. Radishes that receive too little water will become woody tasting.

I was looking into companion plants for radishes and I kept seeing carrots as the best plant. I have never grown carrots with radishes but the theory is that the radish germinates first and helps make the soil softer for the carrots to grow afterwards. I like this idea, doubling the crop, confusing the insects, not wasting any space for weeds to grow, and a good crop of carrots to follow on. If you have done this please share with other ROGI members on how it went.

If you are out in the garden looking for a few leaves for your salad bowl, you can pick a few of the radish leaves for salads before the roots are ready to be harvest, They have a lovely peppery note to them.

Radishes can be picked when they're quite small up to when they are a few centimetres across. The earlier they are picked, the more sweet and tender they are, so please don't leave them in the ground for too long.

Another way to grow radish is to sprout the seeds on your kitchen bench. Our guest speaker this month will talk more about this other wonderful way to grow the first fast food.

Radish seeds in the seed bank:

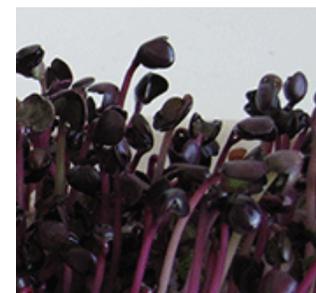
China Rose (heirloom, rose skin, white flesh, good for garden and sprouting).



Cherry Belle (red skin white flesh)



Pink Beauty (rose pin, round shape, white flesh)



Red Rambo (sprouting purple- burgundy leaves)

Red Sango (sprouting spicy - can be hot to some)



Members \$1 non-members \$2 per packet

Sharr Ellison

MEDIA RELEASE

The Brisbane Plant Collectors Fair

2017

Discover rare, unusual and hard to find plants from around the world.

Brisbane Botanic Gardens Auditorium

Saturday 20th May & Sunday 21st May (8.30 - 4pm Both Days)

Cost : \$5.00 per adult (Children Under 15 Free)

Plant Sales ,Rare plant display, prize giveaways
& Plant cloak room in support of ACT for kids

Food service by Lions International and

Hot beverages served by Billy Beans Coffee.

Guest speakers Include

Jerry Coleby-Williams * Dale Arvidsson * Barbara Wickes

Dennis Hundscheidt * Sam Cowie * Noel Burdette & Wes Vidler

ATM's will be available at venue

Proudly supported by



Herb Awareness 2017

QUEENSLAND HERB SOCIETY ANNUAL SHOW

For everyone who wants to learn more about growing and using herbs!



- Herbs and plants for sale.
- Lots of herb related stalls.
- Café Sage herb inspired food.
- FREE demos and talks.
- FREE entry.

Go to www.qldherbsociety.org.au closer to the date for guest speaker and demonstration timetables.

Albion Peace Hall,
102 McDonald Rd,
Windsor, Brisbane



9am to 4pm
Sunday 28th May

This event is supported by the Lord Mayor's Suburban Initiative Fund and Hamilton Ward Councillor, David McLachlan.



ROGI Shop

It would seem, from the lack of response to my article in the last newsletter re the shop, that on the whole, there is little enthusiasm amongst the membership for ROGI running a shop at all.

As you may recall, there was a brief questionnaire asking members to indicate what they would like the shop to stock and sell. No replies were received, so it would seem that running a ROGI shop at meetings with fertilisers and soil amendments is superfluous to member's requirements.

On the other hand, there are tables at each meeting where various people like Shane and Linda sell products on their own behalf. Maybe that is the preferred way forward for now.

In the meantime ROGI still has some products in stock such as:

Therefore, we have asked Frank and Marion to bring some of their own products like biochar and rock dust etc to the next meeting in April.

**diatomaceous earth,
blood and bone,
Aloe vera liquid fertilisers,
potassium silicate,
paper pot makers and
fruit fly mesh bags.**

All at excellent prices.

I have been asked to explain the use of potassium silicate. It was recommended by a guest speaker for members to use on their tomato plants and, as it comes as more than a lifetime's supply for a backyard gardener, the

ROGI shop purchased it and had it put into small containers...

Potassium silicate

- Strengthens cell walls in plants, thus making them more resilient to pests and diseases.
- Improves photosynthesis and therefore raises Brix levels (of sugar and other nutrients—the higher the better) in fruit and vegetables.
- Reduces palatability of plants to invading insects like aphids and scale.
- Helps to restore nutrient balance in the soil.
- Application rate is 25ml per 10 litres of water (2.5ml per litre).
- One application per year is generally sufficient.

Julia Geljon



Some wet weather approaching Mt Cotton farm.

Garden Visit

Sunday 23rd April

Toni Bowler at Sheldon

This will be a garden visit with a difference.

After looking over Toni's garden, we'll be getting hands-on making a mosaic for our own gardens.

Field Trips

Mt Cotton Farm 'Muriel's Farm'

Date to be confirmed

Following on from Ashley Palmer's March presentation to ROGI, we will visit his family's organic farm at Mt Cotton.

Green Harvest & Bugs for Bugs

Mid-year - date to be confirmed

More information closer to the date.

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

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

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

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

Seed Bank Request

- Please **return seedling pots** the month after you have bought the seedlings so they can be reused.
- **Other clean used pots**—small sizes only up to 12cm diameter. The almost-square ones are good.

Seed-raising Mix

The ROGI seed bank **seed-raising mix** (a blend of coir peat, vermiculite, perlite and biochar) has proven to be quite successful at getting the little blighters to come up!

We put it in recycled yogurt or ice cream containers.

One litre = \$0.50

Two litres = \$1.00

Four litres = \$2.00

We are able to offer wonderful prices as we source well and we are a not-for-profit group. Our passion is to get you gardening and growing more food. *Sharr Ellson*

Special Offer

When you buy five packets of seeds from the seed bank, you will receive one litre of the special seed-raising mix to sow them in – free!

Seed Bank News

We are selling micro greens and sprouts.

In stock now:

Snow pea sprouts and fenugreek seeds

Mung bean

Radish

Broccoli

Alfalfa

For an up-to-date list of the seed bank stock, please go to:

<http://www.rogi.com.au/uploads/seed%20bank%20list%20March%202017.pdf>

Seed Sowing Guide

April

Artichoke; Jerusalem a/choke

Asparagus

Bean: Lablab, Madagascar

Bean—French

Beetroot

Broccoli

Brussels sprouts

Cabbage

Capsicum/Chilli

Cauliflower

Carrot

Celery

Chicory

Endive

Florence fennel

Kohlrabi

Leeks

Lettuce

Onions/garlic

Potatoes

Radish

Silver beet

Spinach: (Brazilian, Egyptian, Warrigal, Kangkong)

Sweet potato

Tomato

Yacon

May

Artichoke; Jerusalem a/choke

Asparagus

Bean: Broad, French

Beetroot

Broccoli

Brussels sprouts

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, Egyptian, Warrigal, Kangkong

Swede

Sweet potato

Tomato

Turnip

Please note: this guide is for sowing seeds, not seedlings. There may be several days or even weeks between the optimal time to sow a seed and to transplant a seedling that you may have bought from a nursery.

Keep in mind that these are only guides. Be aware that micro-climates and weather conditions may mean that certain seeds may be sown before or after the recommended times. ROGI Seed Bank is available at ROGI meetings and Garden Visits. \$1 per packet for members. \$2 for non-members.

Exchange plants, cuttings, seedlings and home-grown produce

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

ROGI Rewards

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

Members' Sales

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

FREE swap/share/give-away

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

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

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



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

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

See story on p 14.

Did you know?

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

Available for rent

Private downstairs room and shower, shared kitchen (pictured) \$110 weekly plus light yard duties. Organic garden. Suit retired person preferably with plant/soil knowledge. Available now. Please phone 0438 176981



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 current affair to do with organic growing
- Anything else to do with organic growing
- A review of a ROGI library book

Please send your items to the editor and help keep ROGI News topical, interesting, local and relevant

info@rogi.com.au

May Newsletter Deadline

Please send your contributions to the newsletter editor by 26 April for the May edition.

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Gotu kola (top) is a herb used for its anti-aging and anti-arthritis properties. Brahmi is used in Indian medicine to improve memory and cognitive ability.

They are best grown in large pots to control their ground-covering nature, and require moisture and good soil.

Both plants grow easily from cuttings, so ask around if you'd like to grow your own preventative medicine.

info@rogi.com.au

www.rogi.com.au

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www.facebook.com/groups/redland.organic.growers

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