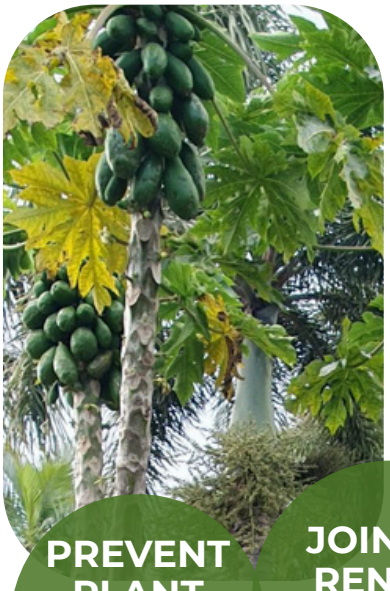
Redland Organic Growers Inc

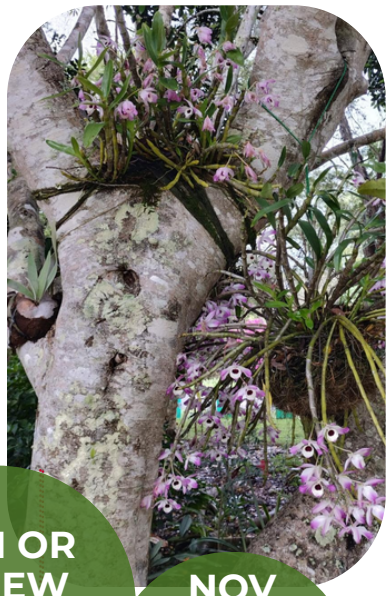
NEXT MEETING 12 NOV 6PM EARLY OPENING



NOVEMBER 2026 NEWSLETTER

TWO MEMBERS' STUNNING GARDENS Pages 10 & 12





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"It strikes me that being part of a community like ROGI gives us quite a few ingredients for a healthy life"

President, Monica Richter, on healthy ageing

TIPS OF THE MONTH



Keep your tools clean and disease free. Wash all the soil off trowels, spades, forks, etc before storing them.

DON'T USE SALT

Avoid using salt as a weed killer in your garden. Sodium is a difficult to remove contaminant in your soil, affecting desirable plants for many years.

Linda Brennan

SECURE YOUR 2027 MEMBERSHIP

NOT YET A MEMBER? **JOIN NOW**

ALREADY A MEMBER? **RENEW NOW**

(Top left) Papayas in Mike and Ella's garden/M.Hughes. (Top right) Margaret's garden/L.Barrett

Thank you to Ann Roffey, Donna Worthington and all the proof-readers. Linda Brennan for your expertise. All the other wonderful contributors. Words in green within the text body are links.

Could ROGI Help Us Become 'Super-Agers'?



I've been thinking a lot about the incredible connection between ROGI, healthy ageing and gardening.

Dr Norman Swan's new book, The Brain Cliff, explores brain health and ageing. I was keen to hear his talk at The Brisbane Writers Festival last month but, unfortunately, his talk coincided with our October ROGI meeting. So ROGI won out! Luckily, I had already bought the book.

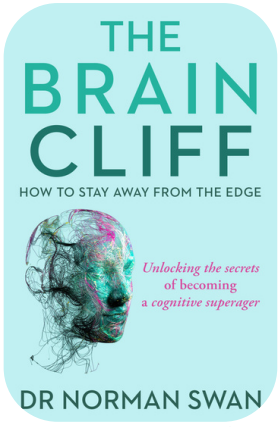
As I've been reading it, I've been struck by how many of the ingredients for healthy ageing resonate with what we do at ROGI.

Food is obviously fundamental. Whether we follow something like a Mediterranean-style diet or simply focus on a varied diet rich in whole foods, what we grow and what we put on our plate matters. I'm personally a believer in a little bit of everything in moderation, with plenty of fresh, whole foods.

Then there's the fascinating relationship between the gut microbiome and our health. As gardeners, we already instinctively understand the importance of diverse living systems. We know that healthy soil isn't just dirt. It is a living ecosystem, teeming with microorganisms. Perhaps there's a nice lesson there for us: diversity, above and below the ground, matters.

"I've been struck by how many of the ingredients for healthy ageing resonate with what we do at ROGI."

But healthy ageing isn't only about food. Staying physically active, challenging ourselves mentally, learning new skills, maintaining social connections and enjoying a variety of activities all have a role to play.



And that got me thinking about ROGI.

At every meeting, garden visit or conversation, we are learning. We share knowledge about improving soils, growing flowers, vegetables and fruit, managing pests and weeds, pollination, saving seeds, companion planting, encouraging biodiversity, gardening in small spaces or shade, making nutrient-rich soil additions and so much more.

I often go home from a ROGI meeting with my mind buzzing, trying to remember everything I've heard and deciding which new ideas I'm going to experiment with in my own garden.

But perhaps just as important as what we learn is who we learn it with. I have really appreciated getting to know the people in the ROGI community. There is something quite special about a group of people willing to generously share their knowledge, experience, successes and occasional gardening disasters with one another.

Lifelong learning, staying active, eating well, nurturing our connections and remaining curious are wonderful aspirations at any age. We can't control everything about how we age, of course, but it strikes me that being part of a community like ROGI gives us quite a few ingredients for a healthy life.

So perhaps while we're busy cultivating healthy soil and healthy gardens, we're cultivating healthy minds and communities too.

And if that helps make us *super-agers*, all the better!

Monica

Monica Richter, President, ROGI

THURSDAY 12 NOVEMBER

SHOPPING 6PM-7PM, SPEAKERS 7PM-8.15PM (APPROX.)
THEN MORE SHOPPING AND SUPPER

All welcome
Entry:
$2 members
$5 visitors

KEY TALK: CREATE A HEALING GARDEN

Kim Healey grows medicinal herbs and plants for their traditional uses and natural healing properties. Learn about this wonderful world. Kim will show us how to build a small home apothecary first aid kit.

How the meeting works and what to bring



SHOPPING STARTS EARLY - 6PM

BRING CASH

CHRISTMAS MARKET

Local, homemade, homegrown, organic or eco-friendly gifts

Infusion Chilli Farms / Herbs and Blooms
Local family-owned business. Herbs, potted colour, desert roses, indoor plants and a variety of chillies all grown on our farm.

The Herbal Estate
Handmade, organic herbal skin care. Organic tallow, herbal creams, soap, balms, salves, oils.

Ecobotanica
Gourmet and delectable small-batch fruit cordials, jams and relishes created with home-grown ingredients plus soothing herbal teas.

Pachamama Regen
Biochar, biofertilisers, fermented honeys, pesto. Healthy soil, healthy gut.

Nap and Sun
Locally handmade soaps, soy wax flower bouquets, eco-resin soap dishes, jars.

Shellz Shenaniganz
Lovingly crocheted and knitted products, handmade cards, quilted and other items.

Redlands Cancer Council Qld
Jams and teatowels.

Gramps Honey: Raw, organic honey plus honey, bee and wildlife-related Christmas packs.

Holistic Herbs
Organic tallow balm, comfrey balm, local honey with turmeric, capsules (digestive blend, super c) and tomato sauce.

Lana: Art, biscuits and herbs.

Ann: Fabulous homemade heat sacks.

Donna: Yummy biscuits.

Mena: Handmade pottery items, small acrylic artwork & rustic “rope and stick” ladders.

Jen: Handcrafted cards and bookmarks.

Luisa: Indoor plants plus homemade casserole holders.

1111 Enliven You: Handmade organic skincare with particle gold and silver. Organically-grown essential oils and bees wax candles.

Wynnum Manly Boomerang Bags

ROGI Library book clearance: Gold coin donation for selected gardening titles.

Plus the usual ROGI offerings:
Plant stall, Seed Bank (seed packets $2), ROGI Seedstarting Mix
ROGI 2027 Gift memberships
Members only: Seedsavers, Library

+underline indicates link

CHRISTMAS DINNER
THURSDAY 10 DECEMBER

Redland Organic Growers Inc

MEMBERS ONLY CHRISTMAS DINNER

Celebrate the end of the year with ROGI friends over a Christmas dinner feast! Members only.

DETAILS

- No entry fee
- Bring a plate to share (savoury or sweet). *Label 'name of dish and ingredients'.* Bring serving utensils needed for your dish *(label utensil/s with your name).*
- Confirm attendance on the list at the entry desk at the November meeting. You can also email committee1@rogi.com.au to confirm you're coming. Indicate if you're bringing savoury or sweet.
- Bring your own plate, bowl, mug and cutlery. Then take home and wash at home.
- BYO soft drink. No alcohol.
- Christmas table decorating competition *(details right).*
- From 6.15pm-6.45pm only: seed tables and seedlings (no library) or chat over a cuppa.
- Dinner starts at 7pm.

CHRISTMAS TABLE DECORATING COMPETITION



Show off your creativity, bring your festive ideas to life and transform your table into a beautiful Christmas masterpiece. Whether you prefer a traditional Christmas look, an Australian themed look or a unique festive design, let your imagination shine! Please, no candles unless battery operation. PRIZES for the winning table.

QUIZ

Fun quiz based on the year's newsletters - with prizes.

PRIZES ON OFFER

BAYSIDE SALVOS CHRISTMAS FOOD APPEAL

All year we have our meetings at the Bayside Salvos and ROGI supports their efforts to provide holiday hampers for local families in need.

Instead of giving each other gifts, please support this initiative. Bayside Salvos have supplied a list of a food item/s *(right)* but you can donate any long-life food suitable for a yummy Christmas meal. Bring to our December meeting. Donations go in the box in the foyer.

- Please check food items have expiry dates well into next year.
- Please purchase a brand item (not 'no name' brands, please).

- 1 litre long-life custard or custard powder
- Gravox sachet or cranberry sauce
- Bon Bons
- 400g or 825g tinned fruit
- Christmas napkins
- Family Favourites biscuits
- 175g bag of potato chips
- 1.25 litre/2 litre soft drink
- 500g-1kg bag wrapped/unwrapped lollies
- Packet of jelly
- Christmas pudding or fruit cake or mini pavlova shells
- 400g tin whole baby potatoes or peas or carrots or corn
- Roll of wrapping paper

Bayside Salvos. Corner of McDonald Rd and Macarthur St, Alexandra Hills.
Questions? Email: info@rogi.com.au

No meeting in January
First 2027 meeting:
Thursday 11 February

SOW AND GROW NOW

Vegies

- Asian Greens eg pak choy, choy sum*
- Beetroot#
- Cucumber*+
- Ginger, galangal and Kra chai^
- Kohlrabi#
- Lettuce* *Need shade and water*
- Melons* *Need full sun*
- Radish*# *Make a great border plant*
- Rosellas* *Allow at least 1.5 metres per plant*
- Beans eg wing beans, climbing rattlesnake, Purple King, snake beans*+
- Onions eg spring onions & red salad types*
- Snow peas/snap peas*+
- Tomato* & seedling
- Tromboncino*+
- Turmeric^





Edible flowers and herbs

- Basil*
- Blue Butterfly Pea Vine *+
- Celosia*
- Coriander*
- Cosmos*
- Dahlias^
- Gomphrena*
- Marigolds*
- Phlox*
- Snapdragons - seedling
- Sunflower*
- Zinnia*



BUY SEEDS FROM THE ROGI SEED BANK

Seeds are bought in bulk, repackaged and sold to members for $2 per packet. Run by Geoff and Cheryl, the Seed Bank complements the free Seedsavers stock.

New Seed Bank stock

Seed Bank has a new range of organic flower seeds in the Seed Bank including Alyssum, Sunflowers, Chamomile, Cleome, Coreopsis dwarf.

Current Seed Bank stocklist

Growing key

* Grow from seed
+ Provide a trellis
# Recommend only 'direct sow' seed into prepared bed
^ Root or Tuber
P Potted Plant

Photos: (top right) Purple King climbing beans. (Middle) Turmeric. (Bottom) Dahlia. Supplied L.Brennan

Jobs in the garden: November

Check your soil under the mulch

October rain started the spring growth in earnest. Be aware that dry soil may hide under a thick mulch, so check the soil moisture regularly and water slowly and deeply.



Compost needs aeration and water

Turn compost bins and heaps. Composting works more rapidly when air and water are added to the mix. Turn and water the heap to encourage composting processes.

Prune cumquats

If you have cumquats, trim them as soon as possible before they start to flower again.

Feed hibiscus

Your hibiscus will have been pruned in the cooler months. Fertilise hibiscus plants now with an organic manure-based product. Follow with a deep watering to stimulate flowering.



Save seeds

Collect seeds of spent crops from winter. Seedsavers welcomes your excess seeds and you'll have no need to buy seeds next year with your own in stock.

TOP TIP: NEW PLANTS FOR FREE

New growth in many plants means it's the perfect time to take cuttings and grow new plants for free! Dip the cut tip of cuttings in honey to promote healthy cuttings and root development.



Grow now for Christmas

Plant up flowers and food now for your Christmas dinner. Seedlings should be ready by Christmas. See the previous page for a selection of summer-loving plants.



Photos: (top) Hibiscus rosa sinensis. (Middle) Compost aerator/screw on top of open compost bin. (Bottom) Salad with edible flowers. Supplied by L.Brennan.

October Seedsavers had a team of enthusiastic savers and three first-time attendees. Many dozens of seed varieties from our own gardens were packaged to share with ROGI members. Find out how Seedsavers works.

Warm Season Fungal Diseases of Plants

- Be aware of the sudden rise of fungal disease with the warm, wet weather.
- Treat powdery mildew with twice weekly foliar sprays of Ecocarb OR milk, potassium bicarb (Ecocarb) or Purecrop1, an organic allowed input.
- The incidence of tomato blight is reduced by choosing resistant heirloom tomato varieties eg Brandywine and Tommy Toe.
- Copper sprays are the organically certified application for this disease. Use sparingly.
- Anthracnose in avocados and mangoes reduces your crop. Biological controls using organisms that outcompete the fungus include *Trichoderma harzianum* and the probiotic product *Tricho-Shield* from Nutri-Tech Solutions. Studies also show garlic extract or ginger extracts are the most effective biological controls for anthracnose when applied at a 10% concentration.





SEEDSAVERS CHRISTMAS



Sunday 13 December
9am-11.30am
Seedsavers Christmas breakup celebration.
Book on Team app.

Garden Hack

Milk sprays for fungal treatment are best using full cream or unpasteurised whole milk. Dilute 1 part milk to 3 parts water. Unpasteurised Bath Milk is available from Capalaba Organic Butchers.

How to prevent plant fungal diseases and stop the spread



- Don't compost affected material
- Rotate crops
- Clean up and dispose of all affected plant material
- Space plants for air flow and sun
- Keep water and nutrition up to plants. Cultivate healthy, living soils
- Remove all diseased plants asap.
- Treat stored seed with *Tricho-Shield* from Nutri-Tech Solutions.

Garden Hack

Using sodium bicarb as a fungal treatment will add salt to your soil. Instead, use potassium bicarbonate (Ecocarb) which is also a plant growth nutrient.

Garden Hack

If you are using sulphur sprays to treat fungal plant disease, be aware that they are only allowed intermittently with organic approval. Do not apply when it's over 30C. Apply 10-14 days before, or after, any oil sprays.

Photos: (far left) Mango affected by anthracnose. (Middle left) Powdery Mildew on snow pea leaves. (Above) Treat avocados before fungal disease begins to show.
All photos: L.Brennan.

FINAL 2026 ROGI GARDEN VISIT!

Sunday 29 November, 3pm-5pm
Kim's place, Alexandra Hills



A Walk Through Kim's Healing Garden 🌿
After a major renovation two years ago, Kim started from scratch, creating a garden filled with medicinal herbs and plants chosen for their traditional uses and natural healing properties.

A once blank canvas has grown into a beautiful little sanctuary, full of life and discovery. Kim will share the stories behind her plants and explore how they have traditionally been used to support our wellbeing. Kim also grows edible plants and is making raised veggie garden beds.

Bring a small plate of food to share. Share table if you have excess produce. Coffee and tea provided - BYO cup. You may want to bring a seat. Wear closed-in shoes and bring a hat and water. ROGI members only. Bookings via Team app. Enquiries to Marissa Hughes: clubevents@rogi.com.au

EVENTS FOR THE DIARY

Saturday 7 November
Moreton Bay Eco-Fest
9am-1pm, UniSC Moreton Bay. Free.

Thursday 12 November
ROGI Meeting including Christmas market
EARLIER 6pm opening for shopping.

Saturday 14 November
Repair Cafe Brisbane Bayside Inc.
2pm-4pm. Wynnum. Book here.

Sunday 15 November
Rochedale Crop Swap (Facebook group)
8am. 160 Rochedale Rd, Rochedale

Sunday 29 November
ROGI Garden visit, 3pm-5pm
Kim's place, Alexandra Hills
Book on Team app.

Thursday 10 December
ROGI Christmas dinner

Sunday 13 December
Seedsavers Christmas breakup celebration.
9am-11.30am. Book on Team app.

SHARE: POST, PUBLISH, CHAT

Let's keep sharing our knowledge and experiences about organic gardening, from novice to expert, in the newsletter, on Facebook and the Team app (and always over a cuppa):

- A photo from your garden
- A handy technique or tip
- A gardening problem solved/needing help to solve
- A favourite: vegie, flower, fruit, native, insect
- Something you've noticed in your garden
- Your story about your organic garden/gardening
- Your harvest or recipe for home-grown produce

Email Karin any pitch ideas: newsletter@rogi.com.au
(or chat at a gathering).

The views expressed in the ROGI Newsletter and at ROGI meetings are those of contributors and guest speakers, not necessarily those of Redland Organic Growers Inc.

2027 ROGI MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

Start, or continue, your membership with like-minded organic gardeners, supporting each other to grow healthy, organic and nutritious food in the Redlands.

What you'll get out of joining this local organic gardening community.

How monthly meetings work

ALREADY A MEMBER?
RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP NOW FOR 2027 (link)

IF YOU'RE NOT YET A MEMBER,
JOIN NOW (link)



GIVE THE GIFT OF GARDENING: A ROGI GIFT MEMBERSHIP (link)



Great for Christmas and birthday gifts or a thank you present.
It's easy: just fill out an application and, either pay cash or electronically at a meeting, or online via bank transfer.

ROGI Gift Certificates are also available. For details, email Donna Spencer: membership@rogi.com.au or see Donna at the entry desk at the monthly meeting.

Save your strawberry containers

Please collect the cube-shaped high top 250g strawberry containers.
Bring them to the next meeting. ROGI uses them at public events.



Find out more about regular activities:

Go to the ROGI website for more information to help you garden. Find ROGI's Seed Sowing Guide, no dig gardens, good bugs and more.

GRAB A BARGAIN AT THE ROGI LIBRARY CLEARANCE



The ROGI library will have surplus books for sale at the November meeting.

- Many general gardening titles for a gold coin donation
- Used but in good condition
- Perfect for you or as a gift for a gardener near and dear

Got a question or idea? Current committee contact list.

MEMBERS' NEWS

Thank you, Gail

A huge thank you to Gail Bruce who has resigned from the PR and Communications position after many years in the role. Your journalistic skills, employed over many years to promote ROGI in the local media, have been instrumental in getting ROGI to where we are now. We really appreciate all your time, Gail. See you at the next meeting.

If you're interested in promoting ROGI, please contact Donna W: vp@rogi.com.au

New Membership Secretary

Existing ROGI committee member Donna Spencer is the new Membership Secretary after Colin Rosewall resigned due to unforeseen circumstances. Thank you for your efforts, Colin.

Say hello to Donna at the entry desk at the next meeting. Donna will happily help you renew your membership and/or gift a membership. Email Donna Spencer with any questions: membership@rogi.com.au

MIKE AND ELLA'S LITTLE PARADISE

Garden visit: by Michael Qualmann

Redland Organic Growers Inc

Ella and I bought the house in early 2023. Then, it was just a blank canvas with lots of grass (I should say weeds) and a few ornamentals *(photo, right)*.



Our first project was to get rid of these terrible ground cover conifers at the front. It took us several days and lots of sore muscles. In August 2023, we were finally ready to plant our first four citrus trees without even improving the soil. They grew anyway, albeit a bit slower than the 12 trees that followed over the next 12 months, planted in improved soil.

Our ROGI friend (and former ROGI president), Jill Nixon, proved to be a never-ending source of inspiration and help. She was not the only one helping us with advice and, often, hands-on help.



We are probably not the typical ROGI gardener. We value our pool (taking up valuable space) and the big shed (which was there when we bought the place) as much as we value our fruit trees, our veggie beds and the shrubs and flowers. We try to use every single spot in the garden for some useful plant or flower for pollination, and we are still discovering 'under-used' areas. It's amazing what you can do on 760sqm, even with a pool!



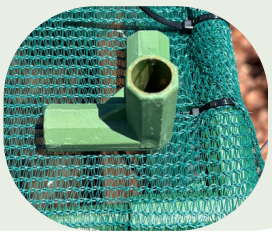


It is very satisfying to see that, over the past 12 months, we have been 80-100% self-sufficient with veggies we regularly eat. These include tomatoes, cucumbers, beans, potatoes and sweet potatoes, mustard greens and lettuces. We are looking forward to our first substantial crop from our variety of fruit plants including blueberries, raspberries, mulberries and from our super dwarf Cavendish banana tree.

TOP TIP: DIY shade structure (right)

Materials: the clip that holds the structure down; corner connectors; the rods are green plastic coated tomato stakes; zip ties; shadecloth. I bought from here - reasonable prices and fast delivery.







Photos: Top: Supplied/M.Qualmann. (Second from top) M.Qualmann. (Third row) (left) Papayas (right) growing in pots/M.Hughes. (Bottom) Some of our guests commented on our rather clever clip-on shade structures used during hot and windy days/M.Hughes. (Left) Shade structure connectors/M.Qualmann.

Starting with two raised garden beds alongside the patio, growing good crops of rocket and leafy greens, we now have several more above-ground beds growing brassicas including our favourite, kohlrabi, plus radishes, chicory, radicchio and more.

Our bamboo screen on the northern side proved much more than just a visual screen: the leaves provide good mulch, and are great for composting, and there are dozens of uses for the sticks. We find the variety *Bambusa textilis 'Gracilis'* easy to control with good strong shoots.

Lately, we have had good success with growing berries such as blueberries and raspberries in 'wicking pots'. These are large ceramic pots with scoria at the bottom, covered by geotextile fabric and a hole drilled into the side maybe a third of the way up. The raspberries particularly seem to love it.

One recent discovery of mine is the use of this Sun Tracker app. It helps you determine how much sun a spot in the garden gets for every week or month of the year. Now we use it before planting anything.

Our most spectacular success has been the passionfruit vine which had finished at the time of the garden visit. Three plants, two yellow and one purple, along an 8m long espalier facing the road gave us hundreds of fruit over many months until mid-September.

We are looking forward to utilising the now vacant caravan carport for more wicking beds on castors, so we can follow the sun all year round.









Photos: (top left) Climbing structure (top right) Using all spaces/M.Hughes. (Middle) The passionfruit in full swing around June/July/M.Qualmann. (Bottom) Using all spaces/M.Qualmann. (Left) Turmeric in storage/M.Richter.

TOP TIP: Storing turmeric



To keep for longer, store this delicious rhizome in Styrofoam boxes (from fruit and vegetable shops) filled with river sand. Separate and brush the dirt off the turmeric (don't wash it) and completely bury the rhizome in the sand. Store in a cool area with the lid on (we keep it in our insulated shed). Ours is still good from last year's harvest.

Thank you for hosting, Mike and Ella

"Mike and Ella have done a fantastic job of utilising the space. I liked how they talked about some mistakes they made early on, for example, planting the citrus tree into poor soil, and how they learned from that." Marissa.

BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE HOME

After 48 years at Capalaba, and ten-plus years in ROGI, I decided it was time to move. I ended up building on one half of my son's rental property (not too steep or shaded) and close to his place in the Maleny hinterland.

A local designer and builder started construction in February 2024. Despite a very wet start, he finished on time in September. I chose a simple design to suit my future. The main living area is open plan and most storage is in easy roll drawers. The halls and doorways are wider, most of the doors are internal sliders and the bathrooms are wide and walk-ins with no step. The toilets are higher, I've got grab rails and a minimal step to the outdoors. As a new build, it is well-insulated with lots of louvres to capture the breezes, high ceilings, efficient lighting, ducted air-conditioning (it gets cold here), large north-facing patio and a small wood burner for cosy winter nights (the timber is sourced from my son's property).

I have two x 22,500 litre water tanks plumbed to the house with a large filter and another 20,000 litre tank in the front yard to help with watering gardens. Our in-ground septic system treats all water from both my house and the small rental cottage on the block and the treated water is automatically sprayed across my yard – mainly on lawn, gardens and fruit trees.

Power is offset by 34-14.96 kW solar panels on the north and east, a 10kW inverter and 9.6kW battery. Although the credits are so much lower than my previous system, my power bill is in credit.

I began potting and moving plants from Capalaba in late 2023 and planted across the front fence-line with natives and flowering shrubs – preparing for moving my stingless bees.









Photos: (top) ROGI crew at Margaret's place/L.Barrett. (Left second row) Plantings around trees/M. Richter. (Right second row) Planting out/M.Sear. (Bottom) ROGI in Margaret's front garden. Huge fig tree heavily pruned now provides a growing area underneath for shade loving plants /L.Barrett

CREATING THE GARDEN

On completion of the build, I began organising the yard. My soil is acidic, black clay which gets very wet and holds water. Then, when it dries out, it cracks! I have used imported local soils combined with compost to build garden areas prior to planting and then heavily mulched. The builder constructed several swales above and below the house to assist in water management. I had made a landscape plan of the garden zones across the property and began planting the front areas at Christmas 2024.

After having another local team do major landscaping with drainage, paths and plant infrastructure around the house, at Christmas 2025 I began planting out the rest of the gardens. A raised bed veggie area was built above a swale, on a flat area at the front (south-side) of the house due to a complete regrowth of nut grass across the back of the house. My citrus trees are planted in this area as well.

At the back, I have fruit trees, (KP) Bowen and dwarf Ono Mango, grumichama, Jaboticaba 'Costada', red tamarillo, Cape Fear Pecan, several olives, achacha, macadamia and two dwarf tropical pears to the west side. I also have asparagus and rhubarb, with thornless blackberry and heritage raspberries in large pots. These were planted in December/January 2025/26.

On the east side, I have a banana area with dwarf Ducasse, dwarf Ladyfinger, dwarf Cavendish and dwarf Red Dacca. All from suckers gifted from ROGI members. Below them are my stonefruit – peaches, plums, nectarine and twin tropical cherry – planted Jan 2026. These trees were brought with me as potted plants.

Across the rest of the property, I am planting areas of natives, camelias, magnolias and assorted flowering shrubs and groundcovers in layers, below the established trees, to encourage the local birds and wildlife. So far, I've recorded 40 birds, wallabies, bandicoots (great at soil cultivation!), brush turkeys, and assorted snakes.








Photos: (top) Methodical planning/M.Richter. (Middle left) Swale/M.Sear. (Middle right) Tromboncino/M.Richter. (Bottom left) Pecan/L.Barrett. (Bottom right) Blueberries. Margaret uses exclusion netting to protect her crops from animals/L.Barrett.

Thank you for hosting, Margaret

"Margaret has a very special place and garden and there is so much love that she has brought from her original home in Capalaba. I think the key to her success is the planning and her amazing layout." Monica.

How these cuties 'mow and fertilise the lawn' ... plus more



HOW GUINEA PIGS HELP IN THE GARDEN

- They will eat some vegetable and fruit scraps:
  - Leafy greens (eg lettuce), corn (husk and leaves), peas, beans, cucumber, carrots, pumpkins, tomatoes, oranges, apples.
  - Some foods they can't eat: beetroot tops and rhubarb, potatoes (sweet potato is okay), onion, garlic.
- They will eat the weeds in your garden:
  - Thistles, nutgrass, dandelion *(small amounts).*
  - Don't feed oxalis *(toxic)* or lawn clippings from the lawnmower as these could be contaminated by the engine and/or have started to decay quickly, upsetting their stomachs.
- Their faeces make excellent fertiliser.
- Their leftover hay makes excellent garden mulch or can be added to compost.
- They encourage random vegetables to grow in the garden or lawn. They can digest seeds, and don't leave traces of them in their droppings, but are not natural seed eaters so may leave them behind to grow.
- They will 'mow' your lawn and fertilise it.





Photos: (Top) Fun in the garden. (Middle) When I first purchased my house about 13 yrs ago. (Bottom) One year ago/K.Berwick



GUINEA PIG FACTS

- They are also called cavies (*Cavia porcellus*)
- They originate from Sth America
- They live for about 5-8 years
- They can weigh 700g–1.3kg
- Come in a variety of breeds and colours

Photo: Cute guinea pig/K.Berwick

How these cuties 'mow and fertilise the lawn' plus more (cont.)





THINKING OF BUYING ONE?

- You can purchase second-hand hutches at discounted prices from Gumtree or another online marketplace.
- Best to get two of the same gender as guinea pigs prefer company.
- Cost is approximately $40-$60 each from a reputable breeder or pet shop. Also check with a local shelter for what they have available.
- They don't require vaccinations or registrations.
- More information on the Sunshine Coast Cavy Club Facebook group.

HOW TO CARE FOR THEM

- They are housed in hutches or indoor cages.
- Best to feed morning or night (when they are most active).
- Require minimum space.
- Can be kept indoors or outdoors.
- Inexpensive to feed and keep.
- The main part of their diet (80%) should be a good quality hay such as: lucerne, barley, oaten, rye or Rhodes grass. A good quality pellet should be given in their bowl and a small amount of fresh vegetables daily.
- Protect from predators like snakes, foxes, birds of prey and dogs.






Photos: (top) I always keep the guinea pigs in hutches due to predators. (Bottom) Proof is in the produce and awards. I've grown a 7kg pumpkin before!/K.Berwick

Thank you, Kate!

ROGI member Kate Berwick is an award-winning guinea pig breeder. Kate is registered with the Australian National Cavy Council (ANCC).

No, she doesn't eat her guinea pigs - she loves them!

IT'S ALL CONNECTED By Karin Adam

October Meeting Speaker: Jordan Alexander

Redland Organic Growers Inc

Jordan Alexander invites us gardeners to become stewards of our green spaces. Observe. Be curious. See yourself as part of the ecosystem. By taking this holistic approach, we play a role in creating a harmonious, healthy and productive environment. The aim is balance, bringing everything together as one moving system. So, how do you do this?

Firstly, consider the context of your place. If you sent up a drone, what would you see? Are you in a gully or on a rise? Are you south-facing? Where does the water flow on your property? Where does the sun go in summer and winter? How does the wind travel through the property? Where are the big trees with large roots? Do your neighbours use synthetic sprays on the fence line? (If so, as an organic gardener, you wouldn't put your vegie patch in that spot.) You need to know how nature and people are working and flowing in and around your landscape to plan and plant for success.

Jordan believes we are part of the garden. Consider how much time and energy you have to put into your garden then plan your garden around that. Planting many annuals each year may not be time-effective for you, so you may consider lower maintenance plants and perennials.

Pests are really just undesirables in the garden. Rather than focus purely on removing the pests, think about preventing them. It's about having healthier plants which is all about having healthy soils. Consider the types of pests and what they want. Aphids and rats are both after food but in different ways. Possums and rats don't exist just to knowingly ruin our hard work - they are opportunistic feeders. Some of what kept them in check are predators like snakes but most people aren't keen to attract them to their garden! So, exclusion is key using netting, wires underneath compost bins, etc. In contrast, pests like aphids are an indicator of an unwell plant. Plants can look vibrant but be in a pre-disease state and that's when scale/aphids move in. You want to prevent this occurring: you need living, healthy soil.

TIPS FOR BUILDING SOIL

You want to improve the microbes and they can't survive in a dry, barren soil with no roots. To do this:

- Assess your soil makeup by doing the jar test: put some soil in a jar of water. Let it sit for a few days. It will separate into sand, silt and clay layers.
- Add organic matter. Key to this is compost. You can also use ferments like brews and teas, rock minerals and other additions.
- Cover the soil: 100% cover, 100% of the time with mulch and plants. Once you remove all roots, no photosynthesis is occurring which means you have minimal microbes in the soil.
- Diversity and function: build resilience. Put different plant types together eg fruit trees and comfrey. They have different root depths, need different nutrients, perform different functions. Symbiotic plants share and trade resources. It's a whole community support system, just like with humans!

TIPS TO IMPROVE COMPACTED CLAY SOIL

- Stimulate microbial activity so they can make minerals and elements in the clay available to the plant
- Dig a hole to see the soil profile
- No dig will take a long time. Dig initially to aerate the soil then leave it
- Add gypsum as a clay breaker - use in small amounts at first. Add as needed.
- Add organic matter to build the soil web
- 15cm layer on top

Thanks for speaking at the meeting, Jordan! Jordan Alexander is the founder of The Shed Organics and hosts *The Shed Organics Show* podcast. Watch his ROGI talk.