

SEPTEMBER 2026 NEWSLETTER

TURBOCHARGE YOUR GARDEN

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“When we share what we know, everyone harvests the rewards”

New president, Monica Richter

PLANT OF THE MONTH: CALENDULA

Edible, beneficial insect attractor and a living mulch

Although often called ‘pot marigold’, this useful annual *Calendula officinalis* belongs to a different genus (*Calendula*) whereas marigolds belong to the *Tagetes* genus.

The edible petals are rich in Vitamin A and the carotenoid lutein. Slightly smoky in flavour, use in cheese balls, dukka and salads. I also use them, when infused in sweet almond oil, as a dry skin treatment. They attract parasitic wasps and other beneficial insects to your garden and provide food for stingless bees.

Grow calendula in pots, under fruit trees or amongst the vegies.

Linda Brennan



Above photo: Calendulas grow 30 cm tall/L. Brennan

Top photo: Linda and Damien Brennan's garden/D. Worthington

TOP TIPS

✿ Only eat flowers you can positively ID.

✿ Don't eat flowers from polluted areas or that have been sprayed with fungicides or pesticides as flowers accumulate these in petals and pollen.





Welcome to the September newsletter from ROGI, and from your new President. I am honoured to have been chosen to lead the committee, and ROGI, over the next 12 months.

My parents emigrated from the Czech Republic (there's a long story there). We came to Australia in the early 1970s and settled in Birkdale in 1977.

They ran a wholesale nursery in Birkdale for years supplying subtropical plants to retail nurseries.

I studied economics at UQ and left Brisbane to work for the federal government. Over the past 25 years, I have lived in Sydney, working for a range of conservation organisations. I still work full-time and serve on a number of boards. Last July, following my daughter's third year at university and the passing of my father, I moved back to Birkdale to live with my 96-year-old mother.

We live on nearly an acre with a large garden. I am gradually adding more fruit trees and native edible species, while also establishing a vegetable and herb garden.

Outside gardening, I enjoy birdwatching, bushwalking, going to the theatre, music (classical is a favourite, but I enjoy most genres), pickleball, and nerding out on podcasts.



Photo (right): My parent's wholesale nursery in Birkdale.

Photo (below): My current garden.



Learning to grow my own food and forage for edible wild plants feels like valuable skills. These are the types of skills that may become increasingly important in the years ahead.

The Bureau of Meteorology indicates **El Niño conditions** are likely to bring warmer than average temperatures and drier than average conditions.

At the same time, the **devastating impact** of Varroa mite (*Varroa destructor*) on European Honey Bee populations in South East Queensland reminds us that gardening and food production are becoming more challenging. Successfully growing food in a changing environment will require us to learn, adapt and support one another.

"Every seed shared, every success celebrated, every failure discussed, and every question answered makes us all better gardeners"

That is where ROGI comes into its own. The greatest strength of our organisation is not our gardens, our tools or even our harvests. It is the collective knowledge, experience and generosity of our members. Every seed shared, every success celebrated, every failure discussed, and every question answered makes us all better gardeners.

After all, the best crops in ROGI are not always the ones we grow in the ground, but the knowledge we cultivate together and pass on to others. When we share what we know, everyone harvests the rewards.

Monica Richter,
President, ROGI



REV UP YOUR SOIL

More than dirt

Once you delve into soil science, you'll never see it as 'just dirt' again. At ROGI's August meeting, Linda Barrett gave great tips on understanding and building fertile soil and why it's critical to a healthy organic garden.

Soil structure

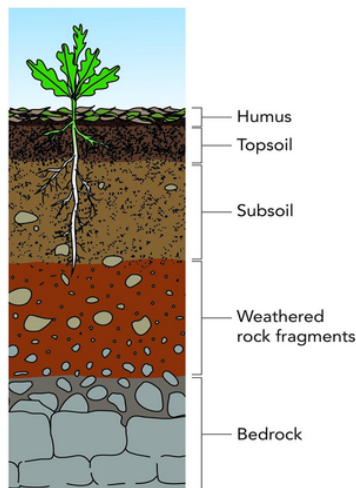
Good garden soil has a mix of:

- 20-30% clay;
- 30-50% silt;
- 30-50% sand;
- 5-10% organic matter.

Air and water exist in the spaces created by this structure.

The "Soil Food Web" (Dr Elaine Ingham)

The soil is an interconnected web of relationships (see chart below). Linda Barrett says the key to organic gardening is supporting and protecting this system.

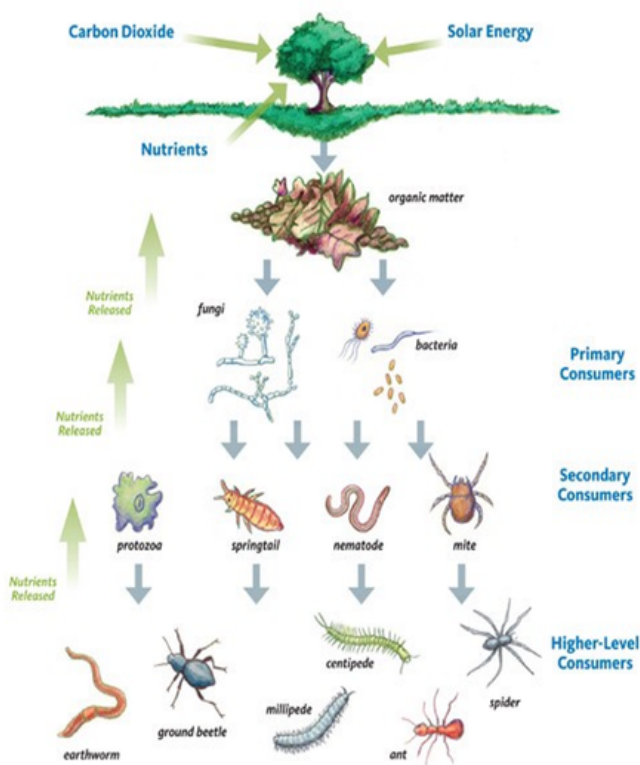
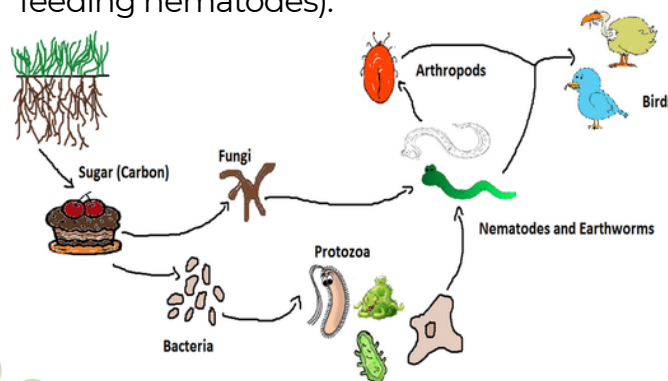


Key elements of the web

Organic material includes both live and dead matter. Dead organic matter includes leaf litter and dead organisms and living organic matter includes bacteria, fungi, protozoa, nematodes, worms, arthropods, insects and plant roots.

Protozoa also consume bacteria and are then eaten by arthropods who also eat fungi. Both nematodes and protozoa release nutrients for the plant.

They all serve a function. Bacteria and fungi decompose organic matter; extract nutrients and retain nutrients in the soil; plus build soil structure. Nematodes, in turn, eat fungi, bacteria and other nematodes (predatory nematodes eat root-feeding nematodes).



TOP TIPS: PROTECT YOUR SOIL

Maintain this finely balanced system by:

- practising minimal no till or **no dig methods** where possible.
- adding cover crops, mulch and compost to increase organic matter.
- using organic options including seaweed solutions or Eco-Rose instead of using synthetic fungicides, pesticides or herbicides. Avoid proprietary pesticides, they are usually not organic. In place of glyphosate (eg Roundup), use 'Slasher' or hand weed.



REV UP YOUR SOIL (continued)

Elements

Elements in the soil such as carbon, nitrogen, potassium and phosphorus are essential for building healthy plants.

Minerals like calcium and magnesium are also important for both plant and human health. Seaweed and fish emulsions are a good source of trace elements.

TOP TIPS: IMPROVE YOUR SOIL

- Assess what you have.
- Mulch.
- Make and apply compost (often!).
- Trench composting.
- Get rich, fertile soil or compost from a friend's thriving leaf-rich garden and put it in your garden to inoculate yours with microbes.
- Ask neighbours – get leaf piles from their yards (beware of translocating fireants).
- Purchase microorganisms.
- Check the soil pH.
- Use Linda Brennan's inputs on the next page to boost your soil and plants.

“By continually adding organic matter and minerals, the ecosystem will build enriched soil within a couple of years”

**Ashwanden Sept 2017
Permaculture News**



GARDEN HACK

Use a powered auger to turn compost. Linda Barrett uses a Renegade Auger 75 x 600mm and an Ozito battery-powered hammer drill (pic below).

Note: the auger doesn't kill microbes but it could take out a few worms.



All images supplied by Linda Barrett. For more details about soil, read Mena's previous newsletter article on Linda's soil presentation: [Mena Stoke's 2021 article](#).



ORGANIC INPUTS FOR ABUNDANT GARDENS

We were very fortunate to visit Linda and Damien Brennan's beautiful one and a half acre garden in Capalaba during August. The garden is a testament to their hard work and creativity, with many features making it unique such as the Labyrinth and Hobbit's house. Linda has shared the organic inputs she uses to achieve such amazing results.

Soil preparation

Soil preparation is key to Linda's success. She uses the 4-crop rotation method to minimise pests and diseases, build soil health and maximise yield. Garden beds are prepared weeks before planting using compost, aged manures (not horse), soil improvers such as chopped up green manure and chopped up greens (e.g. comfrey leaves/spent crops), and an annual **biodynamic soil preparation**.

TOP TIP: ADD HUMATES

Each time she plants, Linda also adds to the soil *Instant Humates* (Nutri-Tech Solutions).

Apply 1-2 teaspoons in 9 litres of water for 4 square metres.

Seedlings

Once her seedlings are established, Linda uses *Fulvic Acid Powder* (Nutri-Tech Solutions) as a side dressing (1 teaspoon in 9 litres of water for 4 square metres). This significantly reduces the amount of disease.

TOP TIP: SPRAY THE LEAVES

On alternate weeks, actively growing plants are given a liquid foliar spray with *OCP Eco-Aminogro* (major retailers) alternating with *Seachange KFF Organic* (Nutri-Tech Solutions).



Photo (above): Linda holding a radish 'Cherry Belle'/A. Roffey

Photos: Top L: Hobbit's house; Top right: Labyrinth/D. Worthington

Photo (middle): Cottage built from wood milled onsite from a fallen tree. Photo (bottom): Vegie patch/D. Worthington



Photo: Vegie bed of lettuce, beetroot and flowers/A. Roffey



ORGANIC INPUTS FOR ABUNDANT GARDENS (continued)

Bananas

We were very impressed by Linda's banana crop. She grows the *Goldfinger* variety, and it is a prolific fruiter. Such is the size of the bunch and fruit (up to 750 grams per banana) that she has had to scale back how much she feeds them! Every 10-12 weeks, they are given compost, humates and manures.

TOP TIP: BOOST YOUR BANANAS

When a narrow leaf appears, signalling the start of a bunch, apply 60ml of liquid potassium *K-Rich* (Nutri-Tech Solutions) in 9 litres of water per plant. This will boost the potassium levels in the fruit.



Photo: 'Goldfinger' banana bunch/L. Brennan

Fruit trees

Other fruit trees in the garden (all 71 of them) are fertilised once each season with humates, compost, manure or *Searles 5 in 1 Organic Fertiliser Pellets*. Annually, Linda applies *Gyp-LifeOrganic* liquid gypsum, boron and/or magnesium, as required.

Longer term applications

Laboratory testing of her garden soil is done annually through *Vital Soils*, who provide a laboratory report and deficiency recommendations for organic gardens.

Liquid gypsum *Gyp-Life Organic* (Nutri-Tech Solutions) is applied annually to her vegetable garden. Every three years, organic boron (in granule form) is applied to correct boron deficiency, which commonly occurs in soils in the Redlands. (*Organibor* is available from farm and produce suppliers OR use an annual liquid application of *Boron Essentials™ Organic Liquid Boron Fertiliser* (Nutri-Tech Solutions).



Photo: Meyer lemons
[/ecobotanica.com.au](http://ecobotanica.com.au)

Thank you

It was a delightful afternoon spent in tranquil surroundings. Thank you, Linda and Damien, for sharing your peaceful garden oasis with us.



ORGANIC GROWERS GATHER

What a stunner of a day for the BOGI Fair on the last weekend in August! It was lovely seeing so many ROGI members amongst the crowd at Albion, and it's always a treat catching up with fellow gardeners outside our usual patch. A number of the stallholders were Redlands locals too, which says a lot about how connected our community of growers really is.

The speaker program was a highlight this year. Dr Ketah Silvester from Brisbane Edible Gardens kicked things off with a session on frugal gardening. The talk covered worm farms, wicking beds, and growing on a budget, no matter your space. Horticulturist Jillian Coomb followed with a talk on recycling and upcycling in the garden, and Vicki Brun rounded things out with a practical guide to composting green waste at home.

Chatting with BOGI committee member Chris really brought home just how much work goes into pulling off a day like this: a full 12 months of planning! It's a good reminder of the effort behind these community events, and it was an inspiration for some of our new committee members who attended, like Marissa Hughes (pictured bottom left).



WELL DONE, BOGI

A huge congratulations to Chris and the whole BOGI crew on another brilliant fair. If you missed it this year, keep an eye out for next time as it's well worth the visit.



Photos: All above LHS/
D. Worthington

Photos: All above RHS /M. Hughes





FREE SEEDS

Did you know ROGI members can choose six free Seedsavers packets each month?

The seeds are collected by your fellow members from their gardens with a focus on heirloom

varieties (no F1 hybrids). Then, at Seedsavers meetings, the dried seeds are separated and packaged.

At the August Seedsavers meeting, apart from the usual activities, Linda Brennan also gave tips on growing root crops (see right). About 15 members learned, worked and chatted over cups of tea.

Photos (below): Seedsavers L-R: Pal, Nooshin, Chumie, Gail/Karin Adam



Seedsavers meetings are free for all members, held bi-monthly (morning or evening) in Capalaba.

- Receive expert tuition on how to save seeds plus organic gardening topics.
- Learn how to separate seeds.
- Share seeds with other members.
- Add to the ROGI Seedsavers collection of locally adapted seeds.

FOR THE DIARY

Monday 19 October - 7pm-8.30 pm.

Next Seedsavers meeting.

Topic: "Organic treatment of common fungal problems".

Book on Team app.



Seedsavers packets/ D. Worthington

BOOST THE ROOT CROPS

Warm season and perennial root crops

As the cool nights fade and the days warm, it's time for spring root plantings:

- Arrowroot
- Cassava
- Ginger
- Jerusalem artichoke
- Sweet potato
- Taro
- Turmeric
- Yam
- Yam bean
- Yacon

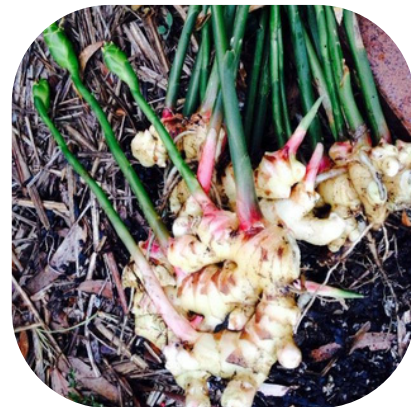


Photo: Ginger/L. Brennan

TOP TIPS

- Most are perennial crops suited to our subtropical conditions, and most grow from root or stem parts.
- Grow in fertile, friable, moist soil with compost added.
- Gypsum added annually contributes calcium to the soil and aids in breaking down clay.
- Side-dress with an organic fertiliser every six weeks in the growing season.
- Tall plants eg Jer. artichokes need a stake (see garden hack below). Yam bean (grown from seed) requires a trellis.
- Many of these crops can be 'bandicooted'. Dig up only the roots you need and leave the rest to continue growing.



GARDEN HACK

When sowing plants that will need a stake or trellis, install these at the time of planting so the roots aren't damaged when the stakes are driven-in later.

ROGI ALSO HAS A SEED BANK

Seeds are purchased in bulk, repackaged and sold to members for \$2 per packet.



SEEDS TO PLANT NOW

Vegies and herbs

- Asparagus
- Basil
- Beetroot
- Beans: French
- Capsicum/Chilli
- Carrot
- Chives
- Chicory
- Choko
- Cucumber
- Dill
- Eggplant
- Kohlrabi
- Lettuce
- Okra
- Melons: Water, Rock
- Pumpkin
- Radish
- Silverbeet
- Squash
- Sweet corn
- Tomato
- Zucchini



Photo: Kohlrabi/L. Brennan

Flowers to attract beneficial insects

- Calendula (*Calendula officinalis*)
(see 'Plant of the Month', page 1)
- Snapdragon (*Antirrhinum majus*)
- Native paper daisy (*Xerochrysum bracteatum*)
- Sunflower Evening Sun (*Helianthus annuus*)
- Sweet William (*Dianthus barbatus*)
- Zinnia (*Zinnia elegans*)



Photo: Sunflower 'Evening Sun'

Jobs in the garden: September

- Observe plants closely: as the weather warms, pests may (will!) appear.
- Apply mulch and compost (if needed).
- Sow seeds for spring and summer.
- Plant seedlings.
- Winter kale will keep producing but watch for aphids.
- Check irrigation/watering.
- Apply biodynamic paste to fruit trees.
- Plant out citrus and tamarillo.
- Apply gall wasp pheromone traps to your citrus trees.
- Citrus: Flowering will occur this month. Increase irrigation. Fertilise tree with organic fertiliser with sulphate of potash. 1kg for large trees and ½kg for smaller trees.
- Figs: Prune. Be very vigorous. 1/3 can be cut off. Figs only produce on new wood of the new season's growth. Give a good feed of organic fertiliser with sulphate of potash. Mulch well.
- Passionfruit: Vines will start to grow this month. Apply a little organic fertiliser with sulphate of potash and mulch vines at least two to three metres out from the base.



Sources: BOGI Newsletter Sept 2026, Savour Soil Permaculture, Linda Brennan. Photo: Grapefruit tree/K. Adam





Next ROGI meeting

Thursday, 10 Sept – 6.15 for 7pm start at Bayside Community Church,
corner McDonald Road and MacArthur St, Alexandra Hills.

Growing Food in Small Spaces

New ROGI member Sue Mitchell will share how she has created a productive garden on a north-facing 40 sqm courtyard.

All 24 crops are perennials and produce regular small harvests for fresh eating or preserving.

Sue also helped her mum Val transition her small villa garden in the last year.

Both gardens have productive elements ... just not in the traditional sense. Interesting!

If you know someone who would like to experiment growing edible plants in a small area, why not bring them along?



The usual attractions will be there: the well-stocked library, seeds and seedlings (at bargain prices), local honey, organic produce for sale ... and more.

Bring along your questions for Plant Clinic - we'll try to give you answers.

Members—\$2 entry. Visitors most welcome—\$5 entry.
Please, if you can, bring finger food (preferably home-made) to share for supper after the meeting. Free tea and coffee.



Doors open at **6.15pm** so you can visit stalls, seed tables, buy seedlings, visit the library or have a chat over a cuppa.

Meeting starts at **7pm**.

Supper is served afterwards.



Select your six packets of free seeds each month.

(For ROGI members from ROGI Seedsavers).



Seedlings for sale at great prices.



Bought-in seeds available at low cost
\$2 per packet.



Remember to bring:

- Cash (no EFTPOS available).
- Entry fee: \$2 members/ \$5 non-members.
- Plate of fingerfood to share (home-made, if possible).
- A basket/box for your goodies.
- Washed pots/punnets (leave at plant table).
- Swap and share items.
- ROGI Rewards contribution if you have it.



ROGI Rewards are good quality plants and other related items. Everybody who attends is eligible for a reward. Please label donated plants with your name and some growing details.



Members' Sales: items you've produced surplus to your requirements that you wish to sell. It might be seedlings, eggs, honey, lemons, jam, craft items. Please make sure these are labelled, named and priced.



Free swap/share/give on outside table. This is for items you don't want. It could include pots, unwanted plants, surplus produce, strawberry runners. Remember to take home what's left.



See you on Thursday 10 September. Bayside Community Church. Corner of McDonald Rd and MacArthur St, Alexandra Hills.



ROGI GARDEN VISITS OCTOBER

Sunday 11 October, 2-4pm
Mike and Ella's place,
Wellington Point

Mike and Ella purchased their property in 2022 and started working on the garden in mid-2023. Grassed and gravelled areas were converted into garden beds for veggies and some 15 fruit trees. The heavy, red clay soil required a lot of effort initially, but, now the soil has improved, results are coming in fast. Ella and Mike took pains to grow according to their microclimate but it took a few misadventures to get there – and it's still a work in progress.



Sunday 18 October, All Day
Margaret's garden and The Harvest, Witta (Glasshouse Mountains, Sunshine Coast)

We head north to former Capalaba local and former ROGI member Margaret's sustainable home, on about half an acre, as part of her son's property. Margaret moved in October 2024 but established her fruit trees before then. She has many varieties including stone fruit plus plenty of native plants for wildlife. Margaret will give us a guided garden tour and discuss strategies she has used to reduce her 'footprint'. Then we plan to visit **The Harvest** which used to be the seed and nursery business Green Harvest.



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

This will be a full day. Car pool (approx. a two hour drive). Coffee and tea provided. BYO cup, morning tea and lunch. Wear closed-in shoes and bring a chair, hat and water. ROGI members only. Bookings via Team app. Enquiries to Marissa Hughes: clubevents@rogi.com.au

GARDEN EVENTS IN SEQ

Saturday 5 September

***Indigiscapes Eco Markets.** 8am-12pm.
Native nursery open. Free entry.

***Brisbane Garden Expo.** 8am-4pm.
Rocklea Showgrounds. Adults \$10.

Saturday 5 and Sunday 6 September

Eastern District Orchid Society 60th Anniversary Spring Show.
Sat 8:30am–3:30pm. Sun 8:30am–2pm.
Belmont Shooting Complex. Adults \$4.00.

Saturday 12 September

Native Plants Market. 9am-3pm.
Belmont Shooting Complex. Free entry.
Run by Native Plants Qld.

18 September - 5 October

Toowoomba Carnival of Flowers

Friday, Saturday & Sunday, 25-27 September

Tamborine Mountain Garden Club Springtime On The Mountain Open Gardens Trail.
10am-4pm. Tickets online: \$25 for all 6 gardens.





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;
- Your story about your organic garden/gardening;
- Your harvest or recipe for home-grown produce;
- Something you've noticed in your garden.

FOR THE NEWSLETTER:

October newsletter deadline is Thursday 24 September. Email ideas before then, and any feedback, to Karin. newsletter@rogi.com.au (or chat at a gathering).

FOR FACEBOOK: Please **Post** (ideas above), ask questions and 'like' and comment.



ROGI Gift Certificate

Give the gift of gardening

A great present for a birthday, thank you or Christmas.

It's easy: just fill out an application and either pay cash at a meeting or online via bank transfer.

For details, please email Colin: membership@rogi.com.au

What, there's more?

Head to the [ROGI website](http://rogi.com.au) for more information to help you garden. Find ROGI's month-by-month Seed Sowing Guide, no dig gardens, good bugs and more.

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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.

