

ROGI News

ROGI meetings are held on the 2nd Thursday night of the month, with doors opening at 6.15pm. Members can visit the plant table, seed bank, library and stalls or just have a chat before the meeting. Please be seated by 7pm ready for the proceedings.

Bayside Community Church
Cnr McDonald Rd & Macarthur St
ALEXANDRA HILLS

Don't forget:

- Pay your membership dues (only fully paid members may attend)
- Observe social distancing
- BYO mug if you want tea/coffee
- There will be no supper
- Swap and share has resumed
- ROGI Rewards has resumed
- Bring a basket/box/bag for your purchases
- Return washed seedling pots
- Any questions for Plant Clinic

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Native bees (*Tetragonula carbonaria* species) were enjoying nectar from this nasturtium. To learn more about these amazing creatures, read the report on our March speaker Russell Zabel on p. 4-6.

Jill's Jottings

On Wednesday afternoon we made the decision to cancel our April meeting because of the then-current COVID lockdown and the uncertainty of when it would end. Was it the right decision? Only time will tell.

I am so heartened by the increasing numbers of people keen to grow their own food, judging by our influx of new members. All of us, as organic growers, can do our small bit to help mitigate climate change. The mere fact of being gardeners makes us aware of the weather, the seasons and the effect of the changing climate. Many of us have talked about these issues. So what can we do, apart from talking about it?

Just **growing our own food** is a start. You can walk outside, have a tour of your garden, decide what to have for dinner and then harvest what you need. This reduces your food miles (should that be food 'kays' – for kilometres?) to food metres! Even growing a range of culinary herbs is a start until you can sort out your vegetable patch and plant the fruit trees you need to provide the other main foods you eat.

If you have minimal space to grow much food, then grow those plants that you like and *will eat* and perhaps those that are usually heavily sprayed, such as strawberries, spinach and kale, which really should be grown organically. (For a list, see <https://www.ewg.org/foodnews/summary.php>) **Reducing chemical use** is a good thing. Read *The Myths of Safe Pesticides* by Andre Leu, available in the ROGI library.

To **reduce food waste**, learn how to store your fresh food, and how to preserve a surplus (whether you take advantage of a glut in the store or in your own backyard) and how to make use of

leftovers instead of throwing them away. At the very least give the spoiled leftovers to the **compost** bin, **worm** farm, **Bokashi** or **chooks**. If you have a glut, you can bring it along to a ROGI meeting or Garden Visit and sell it or swap it with other members. Once you have grown food yourself, you do not want it to be thrown away. It's not just the waste of the food, it's the water and nutrients and time and effort that went into the growing of it. Make it a policy to not allow anything food-like to leave the property! You could even take this one step further and ask your non-gardening neighbours to contribute their food waste to your compost, worms and chooks. We do.

Did you know that the 'typical' food basket contains food that is very well-travelled? Over 20,000 kilometres actually, according to estimates done by Ceres in Melbourne. **Choose food in season, and locally-grown if possible:** it will be better quality, more nutritious, fresher and cheaper. Visit your local organic farmer, or buy from the local farmer's market. If you want cherries, wait until early summer. Grapes? If they're available in winter, then they're not even from Australia, much less local. Here's another policy: think about the frequent flyer credentials of food before you buy. ROGI offers you lots of information and opportunities to learn more about organic gardening, so take advantage of this and turn up at everything you can. Also, please let us know if you can think of other ways we can help you to grow as much of your own food as possible, organically.

May your garden flourish and your harvest dreams come to fruition.

Jill Nixon, ROGI President

Coming Events

APRIL	Thursday 8	ROGI Meeting CANCELLED
	Sunday 11	Oaklands St Workshop (see p. 15)
	Sunday 18	Field Trip (see p. 14)
	Tuesday 20	Seed Savers Meeting (see p. 13)
MAY	Friday 23	Field Trip (see p. 14)
	Thursday 13	ROGI Meeting
	Sunday 16	Field Trip (see p. 14)

Membership Information

- Team App** (preferred method of payment)
Please click here: https://www.teamapp.com/user_session/new?_detail=v1
- Direct Deposit** to BSB 633 000, Account Number 136 137 296
Bendigo Community Bank Victoria Point
Bendigo Community Bank Wynnum-Manly
N.B. Reference: Please include deposit ID: YOUR NAME MEMB
- Cheques** made payable to Redland Organic Growers Inc.
Pay at meeting or by post to:
Redland Organic Growers Incorporated
PO Box 1257, Cleveland. Qld. 4163.

Member Category	Members Renewing For 2021	New member/s joining in...			
		Jan-Mar	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct 21-Dec 22
Single	\$30	\$30	\$22.50	\$15	\$37.50
Family*	\$50	\$50	\$37.50	\$25	\$62.50
Pensioner Single**	\$20	\$20	\$15	\$10	\$25
Pensioner Couple**	\$30	\$30	\$22.50	\$15	\$37.50

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

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

April Meeting **CANCELLED**

Nailed it ... and Failed it

We all have successes and failures when growing our organic gardens.

Several ROGI members will tell us about their favourite plants -those they've had success with and why.

Perhaps more interestingly, we'll hear about the failures—those they might not be very happy to admit to!

Do they give up? Do they? What are their secrets?

There's sure to be a lot we can relate to.

At our April meeting, we welcome to bring your gardening problems to our Problem Clinic and we'll see if someone can help (see our website for more details).

The usual attractions will be there—the well-stocked library, the seed bank and seedlings (at bargain prices) - plus for sale are local honey, organic gardening inputs and more.



APRIL MEETING CANCELLED ... this topic postponed

To ensure that we comply with COVID-19 regulations and our COVID-safe plan, only ROGI members may attend. No visitors until further notice. To find out how to join ROGI, go to the **MEMBERSHIP** tab on our website, www.rogi.com.au.

March Meeting—Russell Zabel

Australian Stingless Native Bees

Russell and Janine Zabel keep Australian native stingless bees and European honey bees. They have about 1000 hives of native and 200 hives of honey, employ two men, and their livelihood revolves around bees.

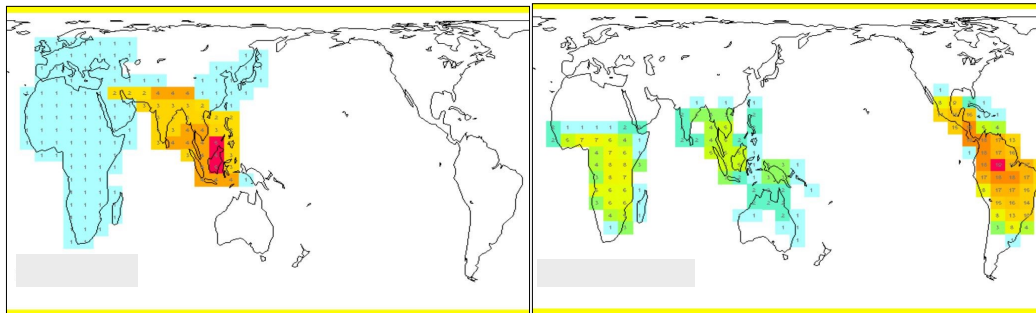
There are social bees and solitary bees—stingless bees are social, and there are 11 named species in Australia. There are about 1600 solitary bee species in Australia - these include blue-banded, teddy bear, leafcutter to name a few. All solitary bees can sting, but they will not die like the European honey bee does when it stings.

The three main species of native bees in Australia are:

Austroplebeia Australis—found in Southern and Western Qld. They are very scarce and are difficult to locate, as their activity is limited to warmer days. They are very timid in character.

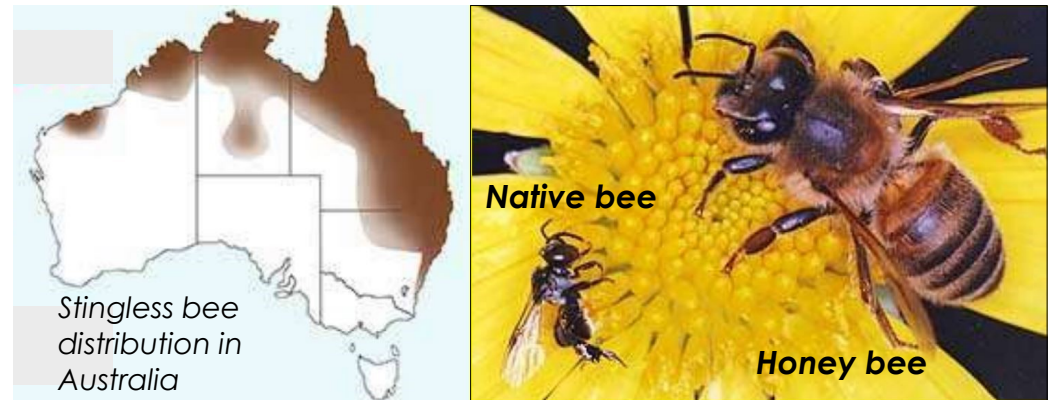
Tetragonula Carbonaria—found in coastal Qld and as far south as Bega in NSW. They are relatively common in most locations, being able to adapt to a wide variety of nest trees. These little bees are very active during all seasons and are excellent for crop pollination. This species is available in reasonable quantities.

Tetragonula Hockingsi—found in Northern Qld. These are the most powerful of all. They are very difficult to keep in cooler regions.



World distribution of honey bees

World distribution of stingless bees



Why are native bees scarce these days?

Native bees are found in the hollows of dead or damaged trees. There are several reasons for their reducing population:

- Land owners generally do not leave trees to grow old and die, therefore hollow trees are scarce.
- Dead trees are considered a danger to livestock breeders and are therefore removed.
- There is a possibility that poisons used for rural applications are killing out these delicate little insects.
- Land developers are using the technique called "selective clearing" to improve the sale potential of their allotments. Consequently, we see the trees containing native bees dozed into a heap and just burnt.

Why keep native stingless bees in your back yard?

For pollination, especially of fruit trees. Hobby farmers keep them to pollinate their small crops. Professional orchardists use them to pollinate their fruit and nut trees - they are a proven pollinator of the macadamia tree. People allergic to honeybee stings may find that keeping native stingless bees is less dangerous. Some keep native bees as a novelty item - these little creatures are amazing to watch at work, much time can be spent standing by their hive simply observing their activity. Other people sincerely believe that they are contributing towards the protection of the species.



Native Bee Box Design

Much of the research for the domestication of native bees was undertaken by Tim Heard of Brisbane in the mid 80's. Tim saw the potential of these bees as useful pollinators, so set about developing a method of utilising these bees. The box design allows strong populous hives to be split into two new hives. The success rate is excellent.

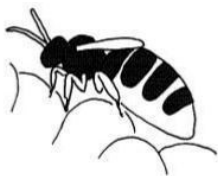
Russell has taken Tim's basic dimensions and further developed the design. His native bee boxes are made out of 45mm cypress pine for durability and lightness. They are fitted with a lid, strapped together and mounted on a star picket fence post.

What you See Inside the Hive

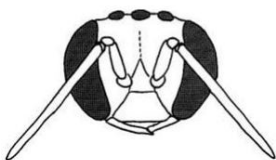
The hives consists of brood and honey/pollen storage cells. The brood is a collection of eggs, larvae and the pupae of young bees. The brood is in a spiral shape, starting at the bottom and winding up. As young bees hatch, their old cocoons are removed and replaced with new cells in readiness for another egg cycle. The old cocoons are carried out of the hive and discarded.

There are three castes of bees in a social bee hive:

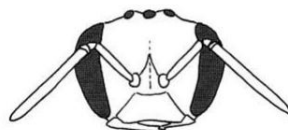
1. Queen (female)
2. Drone (male) who eats honey and mates with virgin queens.
3. Worker (female)



Queen



Drone



Worker

An unfertilised egg becomes a boy (drone) and a fertilised egg becomes a girl (worker), and in special cases a queen.

The Queen can be recognised by her long, often creamy coloured abdomen, which is full of eggs. She is usually found in the brood area. Drones have longer antennae and bigger eyes than workers. In stingless bee hives all the cells face the sky, whereas in the hives of honey bees they are sideways (horizontal).

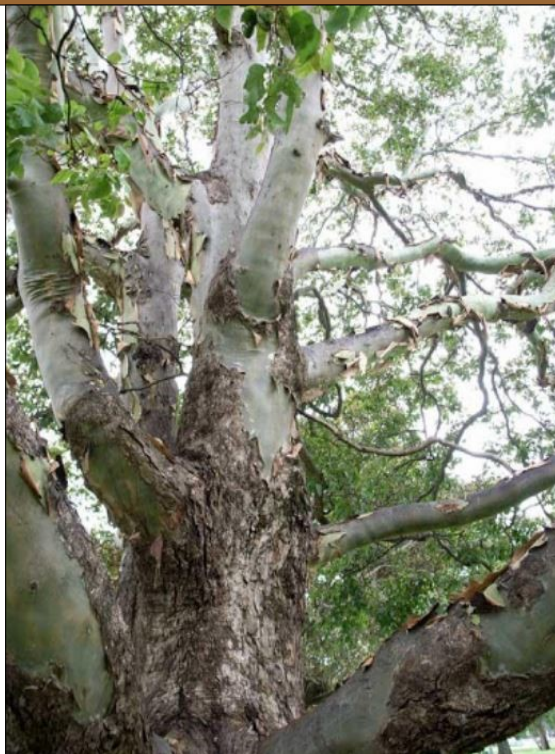


*The hive of native bees *Tetragonula carbonaria* (the most common type in Aust.) being split. It is a spiral brood.*

Insect Pests

There are two types of flies, which are very active during the warm months. One resembles a paper wasp. It belongs to the hover fly family. You will see it laying eggs on the outside of the box. The eggs hatch into maggots, which can completely destroy the hive. The other fly is about the size of a native bee, but grey in colour. This is a serious pest, as it is small enough to get through the entrance. Do what you have to do to eliminate this problem, but please don't spray them with poisons. Another pest is the small hive beetle, which arrived in 2002 from Africa. It has caused havoc in the honey bee world as well as in the stingless bee world.





The Cadaghi Tree

This North Qld rainforest tree (*Corymbia torrelliana*) was planted extensively in SEQ during the 70's and 80's as an attractive fast growing shade tree. Native bees will visit the Cadaga or Cadagi tree during the flowering season and also when the seedpods open up (Jan-Feb). The bees will be seen carrying seeds back to the hives and depositing them inside the hive and also outside the entrance. The seed has no value, but the resin attached to the seed is used as nest building and sealing material. The bees bring so many seeds home that the entrance is often clogged right up. Hives can die out due to this happening, so please clear the entrance when this occurs. Cadaghi tree has been declared a weed outside its normal habitat of the Atherton Tableland. Please do not plant this tree.

Do's and Don'ts

- To obtain the maximum advantage of the pollinating qualities of your bees, place them fairly close to your crops. Foraging range is about 500 metres. Please don't expect miracles for pollination of distant fruit trees.
- The bees cannot be stopped from going next door. You can reduce the loss by providing them with flowers to pollinate.
- Keep the star picket post regularly oiled.
- Kill spiders, which make a home on the box.
- Don't let kids shake the post!
- Cattle will knock the hive off the post.
- Cover the hive with a foam box on hot days. Temperatures greater than 40°C can cause serious melt down and hive loss. A neat fitting foam box can be left on the hive all year round. Cold weather is also not good for the hive.
- Ensure that the bees can get a drink of water somewhere close by.
- Please don't use poisons near the hives.
- Cane toads will eat native bees - keep boxes off the ground.
- Swarming may occur during summer months. This is not associated with the establishment of a new hive, which is undertaken by the honey bee. The bees hang around the outside of the hive in large numbers; we don't know why they do it. It is not something to be concerned about.
- NB: Native bees will not work below 18°C or over 35°C. They need shade by 10am in summer. Face boxes north to east, three metres apart.

Russell will be looking for properties to agist his native bees in spring. Requirements are acreage, shady, secure. Register your interest by emailing him at bees@zabel.com.au

Russell and Janine Zabel are now holding regular bee-keeping workshops at their property in Hattonvale. To book, go to: <https://zabel.com.au/australian-stingless-native-bees/bee-workshops/>

Plant Clinic

Managed and reported by Rohanne Young

We received a variety of plants for identification, and with help from Dominic Newland most of them have been named.



Sabine asked for several plants to be identified as she had recently moved to a new property and did not know many of the plants that were growing in her new garden. 1. This plant is likely *Pandorea jasminoides*, known commonly as the bower vine. It is a climbing vine which is native to eastern Australia. In spring and summer it has

white or pale pink flowers with a dark maroon throat. The flowers are often perfumed. Louise Saunders thought that it may be the native wisteria, *Callerya megasperma*, which has a similar leaf structure. Both plants are great butterfly attracting plants. Sabine will be able to be certain which plant it is when it flowers.



2. *Altermanthera dentate* is a fast-growing ornamental groundcover plant in the Amaranth family, which is chiefly grown for its coloured foliage. The plant needs to be pruned heavily after flowering to prevent it spreading seed.

3. This is most likely to be the native passionfruit or white passionflower. It is a climbing or creeping vine found widely in eastern Australia. It produces an inedible fruit which is attractive to birds, resulting in further spread of the plant. It has been listed as a priority weed in SEQ.



4. Most likely to be Pennywort, *Hydrocotyle acutiloba*. This is native to large parts of eastern Australia and is found throughout south-eastern Queensland. It is considered a weed in south east Queensland.



Mary asked for two plants to be identified.

1. This is most likely *Stevia rebaudiana*. Stevia is a plant that is grown for its intensely sweet leaves which are used as a substitute for sugar. It is a bushy plant that is part of the sunflower family. It is a short-lived perennial that is easy to grow in the subtropics.

2. Mary's plant is thought to be a member of the Lamiaceae family, possibly *Dogbane*. It will be easier to identify the plant once it is in flower.



Kirsty asked what was causing the leaves on her hibiscus tree to become disfigured. Her plant is suffering from a psyllid attack. Psyllids are tiny, sap-sucking insects that attack plants such as lily pilly, hibiscus and even quandong. Damaged plants generally

show deformed leaves which, while unsightly, are generally not harmful to the plant. If you decide that you need to spray the leaves to control psyllid attack, Neem Oil is one of the only organic controls that claim to treat psyllids. When spraying even organically accepted pesticides make sure that you don't spray when beneficial insects are foraging, as Neem will kill beneficial insects if it is sprayed directly on the insect.

Banana Weevil

By Greg Lindner



I found this bug in the base of a banana plant when I was cutting it up for compost. After doing some research I discovered it is a banana weevil. It seems that banana weevil is found worldwide, and is very common along the eastern coast of Australia and especially SEQ. If you have bananas you may have this bug without even knowing it. It is spread primarily by the sharing of banana plants.

What is the evidence of an infestation?

Minor infestations may not show any obvious problems, but severe infestations can cause yellowing of the leaves, reduced banana production and even the falling over of the banana plant.

How does it damage the plant?

The weevil (sometimes called a borer), causes tunnels in the base of the banana plant at root level and just above root level. They don't tunnel all the way up the stem. This affects the vitality of the banana plant - especially in severe infestations—by inhibiting sap and nutrients rising up the plant, thus weakening it. Although the weevil is found in northern Queensland, here in the south east, the bananas grow more slowly and therefore the weevil has more time to affect the plant.



Holes caused by weevils

Control Measures

Plantation hygiene is key. I thought chopping up the old banana plants for compost for the growing bananas was a good thing, but now I realise this is bad practice as old banana material can be a breeding ground for the weevils. Remove all waste around the bananas; remove water suckers and also dry old leaves.



Water suckers have wide leaves and are best removed



Keep sword suckers—they have narrow leaves, will be stronger and produce more fruit

There are natural predators. Ants are important; beetles predate on the weevils and surprisingly so do cane toads! Who would have thought cane toads could have an ecological benefit in the local backyard!

I haven't read anywhere that chooks or ducks could help in the control of the weevil, but I have read they are used in the control of a weevil related to grape vines. My guess is they could be helpful, although you might have to invent a way to protect the banana plants themselves from chooks.

Monitoring for Weevils

You can monitor banana weevils by placing segments (banana segments cut in half or cut into discs) and lay them around the banana plants. Five days later check and count the number of weevils. If you have an average of more than four weevils per trap then the infestation is considered significant and commercial growers would use insecticides. As the weevils are most active during the warmer months, traps should be used periodically from October through to around March/April.

Other Information

It is recommended that commercial banana plantations allow 2-3 years before replanting the same area with new banana plants. Once all the old corms have been removed – i.e. no banana material is now present, allow three months before replanting. Now,



Fallen banana and dead leaves—clean-up desperately needed.

my take on this is that if you put your old banana plants in your compost, once all the banana material has decomposed and become composted, allow three months before you use it on your banana plants. *This should ensure no weevil eggs are being reintroduced into your banana patch.*

If you are transplanting a sucker to a new area of your garden, there are ways described on the Internet how to kill off weevils on suckers. However, buying quality tissue-cultured bananas from nurseries is the only sure way to get guaranteed disease-free banana plants.

Summary

- For the backyard grower this pest is best managed rather than trying to eradicate if you have the pest.
- Don't spread the pest by sharing banana suckers
- Good hygiene is required to keep the pest at acceptable levels for backyard growers.

From the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries:

A permit is no longer required to transport a banana plant from a nursery to a residential garden. However, the banana plant must be sourced from a Qld Banana Accredited Nursery and not from sites such as Gumtree or from a private individual/friend/neighbour etc.

Please only grow the number of banana plants you can manage to prevent diseases such as panama disease, which is a major biosecurity issue.

FRUIT PIERCING MOTH

Last month I wrote about the Fruit Spotting Bug. Another pest that could be affecting your fruit is the Fruit Piercing Moth. I won't do a detailed report on it but it can cause fruit drop and damage.

It attacks at night, so if you are finding affected fruit go outside at night with a torch to see if you can find it at work. Bagging fruit is one answer. Annette McFarlane uses an insect attracting lamp that will attract the moth to hopefully minimise damage to the fruit.



Greg Lindner

Plant of the Month—Dragon Fruit

Also known as pitaya, strawberry pear, cactus fruit, and night blooming cereus, dragon fruit (*Hylocereus undatus*) is indigenous to the Americas. It is a hardy, thick-stemmed climbing succulent that is well suited to grow in the Redlands and SEQ as it loves warm temperatures and humidity.

Dragon fruit will grow easily from seed or cuttings. Growing from cuttings is best, as seedlings take several years to reach fruiting size. Plant your dragon fruit cutting against a thick stake or some other support, and tie one to two main stems to the support to encourage vertical straight growth. Flowering and fruiting will occur on new growth, so prune stems after they have produced fruit. Plants can produce fruit for 20-30 years with proper care.

Grow in full sun (preferably with about six hours of sunlight) in a well-drained spot. They only require moderately fertile soil, with a pH between 6-7. Although plants can handle heat, drought, humidity and poor soil, the fruits will be tastier with regular watering and rich soil. Add compost, manure and organically certified fertiliser.

The spectacular flowers are borne on the ends of the current season's growth, blooming for only one night. Flowers and their pollen actually glow in the dark to attract nocturnal pollinators! Some, but not all, varieties of dragon fruit are self-pollinating.

Fruit is ripe about a month after flowering, and will not ripen after being picked. Signs that fruit is ready include colour (bright and even all over), and the small "wings" on the fruit are starting to wither. Lightly press fruit with your hand, and if it gives a little it is ready.

Dragon fruit are generally tough plants, but pests such as caterpillars, snails and slugs can be an issue. Fungal diseases on stems, flowers and fruit can occur with high humidity and over-head watering. Trim affected parts, and if the plant is congested remove some of the branches to improve airflow. Fruit may split due to excessive watering or rain when it is ripening. Stem or root



Jill and Ian Nixon's stunning dragon fruit flowers in early March. The plant is growing on a star picket which was first covered with a long piece of poly pipe. Shade cloth was tied around it to replicate a tree trunk with its bark, and so the plant can climb up it. Supports (such as shelves from a shade house) have been added for the plant to climb on and hang over.

rot is most common when grown in poorly draining soil. Work on improving soil drainage or move the plant into a pot with a good quality, well draining potting mix.

There are many health benefits from eating dragon fruit. It contains antioxidants vitamin C, beta-carotene, lycopene and betalain. It is loaded with fibre, is a great source of magnesium, and is also one of the few fresh fruits that contain iron.

<https://ecoorganicgarden.com.au/gardening-tips/how-to-grow-dragon-fruit/>

<https://www.bhg.com.au/growing-dragon-fruit>

<https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/dragon-fruit-benefits>

By Ann Roffey

Plant of the Month—Dragon Fruit (*continued*)

Dragon Fruit Galore!

I had tasted dragon fruit before and was not that impressed, but on this evening at ROGI there were some on the table that were very nice, and the supplier was giving away offcuts for planting. The dark red colour of the fruit was as impressive as the taste. Of course, my wife had to pick up a couple.



What to do with them? I looked over the fence at our neighbour's dragon fruit, which had been planted in Alex Hills soil, without a trellis, and were doing nothing. To appease my wife, I planted them in small pots of sandy soil and forgot about them. As if to defy me, when one of them was about a foot high it bowed its head and produced a fruit, which tasted as good as the one we had

tasted that night at ROGI. Well, I thought, that was it. It had to be given a chance.

The internet is a wonderful thing, and after some research I selected an area of the yard where nothing would grow due to the roots from palm trees. Before long, I was filling two huge pots with sandy soil, which I thought they would thrive in. Next, a sturdy frame from galvanised star pickets and finally some mesh to support the plants. The idea was to tie the plants to the mesh until they got high enough to allow them to hang down and produce fruit.

The first year, after fertilising with palm fertiliser, we got lots of plant but only one fruit - the largest Dragon Fruit I have ever seen,

and as before it was very nice. Not much reward for all that work. Last year I changed my routine by including some potassium each time I fertilised, and on advice from Greg, we gave it a good cutback.

This year it's been a different story - the plants have been fruiting for months! The fruit are smaller, but I gave up counting at 27 (so far) to eat and share. Pick the fruit when they have turned red and are just soft to the touch.

They are great to eat on cereal, but if you want a real treat try a smoothie for tea. Whizz up dragon fruit, coconut, yoghurt, ice cream and ice. It looks as good as it tastes!

By Garry Bromham



Plant of the Month—Dragon Fruit (*continued*)

Thanks go to Margaret Sear for submitting the following dragon fruit recipes:

Dragon Fruit and Ginger Jam

(Adapted from Jeff Heriot)

5 cups thin diced dragon fruit – red or white

Juice and zest of 1 lime

2 tablespoons finely crystalized ginger (*I used finely grated fresh root ginger – about 1-2 tablespoons*)

3-1/3 cups raw sugar (2/3 cups sugar to 1 cup fruit)

Jamsetta or pectin if needed

- Place all ingredients (except pectin) into a large deep heavy based saucepan.
- Boil slowly over medium heat until it has dropped in volume and become thicker, for approximately 30-35 minutes.
- Test jam on a cold plate for set – if it is still too runny add some pectin or Jamsetta and keep boiling another 5 minutes.
- Carefully ladle into warm jars and seal.



Dragon fruit in Ginger Syrup

(Dominican Cooking)

2 dragon fruit

1 piece ginger root

4 cinnamon sticks

12 allspice berries or ½ tsp powder

½ cup brown sugar

6 cups water

- Peel Dragon fruit and cut into cubes (*be careful if using red dragon fruit as the juice stains*).
- Cut ginger into very thin slices (potato peeler) - you need 6 slices (or finely grate a small piece).
- In a deep bottomed saucepan mix the ginger, cinnamon, allspice, sugar and water.
- Boil over medium temperature until the liquid has reduced to half.
- Remove ginger strips (if peeled) and allspice (berries only) and add the dragon fruit.
- Cook until the liquid has reduced to half.
- Chill before serving.



A garden is
always a series
of losses
set against a few
triumphs,
like life itself.

- May Sarton

PLANT IDENTIFICATION

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

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

Botanical Information & Advisory Service,
Queensland Herbarium, DSITI,
Brisbane Botanic Gardens

Mt Coot-tha Road, TOOWONG QLD 4066

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

A gardener
learns more in
the mistakes
than in the
successes

- Barbara Dodge Borland

Seed Savers News

The next Seed Savers meeting will be held on **Tuesday 20 April at 7– 8.30pm** at Linda Brennan's house in Capalaba. We'll be focusing on **how to grow from leaves and runners**. We'll also take part in seed saving activities - please bring along seeds you'd like to sort, swap and share, and some paper bags and envelopes to take shared seeds home in.

Book your spot on TeamApp, or ring Linda on 0416 157 470. **All ROGI members are welcome!**



These sunflower seeds were brought in for saving at our last Seed Savers meeting. We think they are an F1 hybrid variety. That means that successive generations of plants will revert to a parent rather than stay the same as the hybrid variety.

You'll see in the photo that some of the seeds are flat and small. These are probably infertile and won't grow. However the plump seeds are likely to germinate. But being hybrids, they will not stay true to the plant characteristics from which they were collected.

As a local seedbank, we are very keen to save non F1 hybrid varieties (as Michel and Jude Fanton in their Seed Savers' book suggest). If we can save old and local varieties that are perfect for our climate and gardens, we'll be saving seeds of plants that will provide us with reliable, flavoursome and genetically diverse food plants.

Biodynamics Subgroup

The first workshop of the ROGI Biodynamics subgroup was held on Thursday 25 February.

We have had a lot of interest in these workshops, and I am pleased to report that they are fully subscribed. It is fabulous to see so many ROGI members interested in getting to know more about biodynamic gardening.

Sadly, we had a very wet start to the workshops, which resulted in the meeting ending early when 46 mm of rain was deposited on Thornlands in less than an hour! At least this year we don't need to use the biodynamic preparations to break a drought!

At our next meeting we will be covering the history and philosophy of biodynamics and after that we will hopefully get more practical and hands on, using and making some biodynamic preparations.

Rohanne Young
The Delectable Garden



ROGI Garden Visits & Field Trips

FIELD TRIP

Sunday 18 April or Friday 23 April

Tullamore Farm, Kerry (near Beaudesert)

This working farm encompasses six vegetable gardens and over 360 fruit trees and vines. The tour covers all aspects of their sustainability journey, and a lot of knowledge about how you can incorporate some of their methods into your life.

To book your spot, please go to Team App or email Toni Bowler at tonibowler@hotmail.com. Cost \$10-00 per person.

FIELD TRIP

Sunday 16 May—10am to 12pm

Epicurious Garden, Southbank

A guided tour by Southbank Garden's curator Gary Entwistle of the Epicurious Garden. Make your own way in (train is the suggested option). Meeting point advised closer to the date to those attending.

No charge. To book your spot please go to TeamApp or email Toni Bowler at tonibowler@hotmail.com



Upcoming Garden Events

Bethania Street Community Garden

Bethania Street, Lota

**Introduction to Permaculture - presented by Michael Wardle
Sunday 2nd May 2021—10:00am - 12:00pm**

Permaculture is the conscious design and maintenance of productive ecosystems which have the diversity, stability, and resilience. Learn about its foundations and ethics and how these can be applied in an urban setting. Using the Community Garden as a demonstration, we will consider how permaculture can be incorporated into our own communities, homes, and lives.

FREE - Limited Places - BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL on [0439 048 585](tel:0439048585)

**Permaculture in Suburbia - presented by Michael Wardle
Sunday 2nd May 2021—12:30pm - 2:30pm**

Learn about ways to redesign, downshift and retrofit homes, gardens, communities and ourselves to be more sustainable and resilient. This promises to be an interesting and informative workshop, with lots of discussion and hands on design work.

FREE - Limited Places - BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL on [0439 048 585](tel:0439048585)

**Art in the Garden – Making a Nature Journal
Thursday 13th May 2021—9:30am - 12:30pm**

Join local author and illustrator Megan Forward, in the Community Garden, as you explore and collect from this beautiful environment to create a series of small art works and pieces of writing inspired by the natural environment. Megan will show you how to hand bind your work into a journal as a record and memoir of your experiences. This is a morning of relaxed exploration of your own personal response to your surroundings.

COST \$5 - BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL on [0439 048 585](tel:0439048585)

Oaklands Street Workshop



Bed Prep Workshop

It's not too late to book your spot (on TeamApp or ring Terry on 0408 259 445) to participate in the bed prep workshop at Oaklands Street Community Garden on **Sunday 11th April, 2-5pm.**

Topics:

- Why prep a bed?
- Bed location and orientation
- Planning and crop rotation
- Common crop families
- Compost and fertilisers
- Planting
- Questions and Answers

Bring: Some tools and gloves are available on site, but if you have a favourite fork or shovel of your own please bring it. Please wear sturdy shoes and SunSmart clothes.

Directions: The Oaklands Street Community Garden is located behind ALDI at Alexandra Hills. Access Oaklands Street from the roundabout behind Alexandra Hills Shopping Centre - there is a sign on the corner. Turn right at the end and follow the path to the gate. Please drive slowly once you're inside.

President Jill Nixon organised participants from last year's Permaculture Potager course to use their newly acquired skills to prepare beds prior to the Bed Prep Workshop.



Bed Remediation at Oaklands

Prior to the Bed Prep Workshop, participants of the Permaculture Potager course held a bed remediation workshop on Sunday 14 March. It was great to catch up with the folks from Oaklands Street. Two beds measuring 3m by 1.5m appeared to be hydrophobic (water repellent) and lacking in organic matter. The goal was to add a great deal of organic matter in the form of well-made and mature compost, mushroom compost, cow manure (purchased), biochar and coir soaked in diluted worm exudate (aka worm wee or worm juice), with rock minerals added as a source of trace elements.

But first, there was nut grass in the beds, so these were dug out, making sure to follow each trail of the nuts (they were put in the bin, not the compost!). Then there were some tree feeder roots, which were cut off and removed. After that, we layered all the amendments over the beds, raking them in and watering (with very dilute worm wee) as we went. We also added a thin layer of good old Redlands red soil gleaned from a chook yard. The soil was starting to look rather like chocolate by now – moist, rich and dark.

Ground cover seeds in the form of already-sprouted mung beans were then sowed. These will grow to cover some of the soil within the month during which the gardens will rest before planting them out. They can then be dug into the soil prior to planting out the beds on 11 April. Finally, we added a layer of sugar cane mulch and watered (dilute worm wee again) over the top to help prevent evaporation and dehydration.

Finished compost was donated to Oaklands Street for the bed remediation workshop in March. Here's how two ROGI members make theirs:

How I Make My Compost *by Greg Lindner*

The Philosophy

For me, compost is the engine room of the garden. Healthy plants need a good balanced diet which comes via the soil. Feed the soil, feed the plants.

The Process

I use the cone type bins – I have three which are mounted on bays made of sleepers 600mm high (3 x 200mm sleepers high.) I like to fill a bin as quickly as possible so it can be left to mature into compost. Therefore I look for as many materials as I can get, even off site. I have been known to mow the council land nearby to get grass clippings! When a bin is full, I start the next one. When that is full, I start the third one and so the cycle continues. When I need to start a new bin, I empty the bin with the most mature compost and bag it so I can use it when needed. Usually I get about ½ cubic metre from each bin, and so far I empty a bin about every 2-3 months. That way I can continually process compost at the maximum rate that the three bins will allow. I also have a couple of rotating bins, but I see these as extras to my main system.

Maintenance

Often compost directions say to layer the components. I don't do that because I use an auger with a drill, and this really mixes the components. I don't keep a strict ratio of materials either, but I do aim to use about 2/3 carbon material to 1/3 green. Aerating is a must to get oxygen into the mix. I use the auger to aerate the bins every nine days, and rotate the rotating bins every three days. I use my phone to keep me on track.

Advantages

When I bag my compost, I weigh it so I can calculate the volume. A bag of my compost weighs far more than the equivalent in potting mix because of the moisture content. Some people say their plants can't cope with the heat of summer. If they had compost-enriched soil their plants would cope better because of the moisture retention in compost. Also, by adding nutrients the plants will be healthier.

Components

The ingredients going into my compost bins vary with what is happening seasonally. I find it best to cut vines into short lengths as much as possible, as they can become entwined around the auger when aerating the compost.

- Lawn clippings
- Torn up paper and cardboard *(anything that is not plastic coated)*
- Veggie scraps such as citrus and onions *(the good stuff goes to the worms)*
- Coffee grounds
- Rock minerals *(these ensure your soil has readily available micronutrients, some of which are lacking in Australian soils)*
- Passionfruit vine prunings
- Banana stalks *(chopped up)*
- Dragon fruit segments *(I cut off the segment when harvesting the fruit)*
- Horse manure from the side of the road *(I don't find weeds a problem when composting)*
- Stable manure *(I get this by the trailer load. It is full of sawdust = carbon)*
- Chook manure *(sometimes I can get this but I don't have chooks myself)*
- Garden waste such as cabbage leaves, pumpkin vines etc.
- Garden waste such as failed crops
- Old potting mix
- Water, as needed

Our Compost by Ken & Francke Latter

Our compost is a hot composting, layered construction in a series of wooden compost bins. The layers, in no particular order are:

1. Bagged horse manure purchased from the road side. We prefer stable manure, often with sawdust but without weeds (especially not nut grass).
2. Lawn clippings as fresh as possible from mowing - bringing heat directly to the mix.
3. Chicken manure and spent sugar cane mulch from nesting boxes and from the floor of the hen house and chook yard.
4. Bush leaves and small twigs. These blow into our yard from the bush that lines our property. We do not scavenge from the bush directly.

Each layer is wetted down with tank water before the next layer is added. The bins are open to the chickens, who turn over the top layers. Each bin is turned into the bin beside it until the composting material has been turned over three times. The material has had a settling period of about a month in each of the four bins. The final product should be completely homogenised with none of the original materials able to be identified, and smell as fresh as any clean soil.

I think it is worth noting that cuttings and green waste from the gardens go into another composting system in commercial plastic compost bins. Our intention is to have no green waste leave the property.



I was gifted this elephant yam plant by long-time ROGI member Gennaro a couple of months ago. It has been patiently waiting for me to repot it into a larger pot. But in the meantime, female leaf-cutter bee/s have been busy cutting the soft leaves. The leaf pieces are used to build their nests. The leafcutter bee always cuts extremely neat ovals and circles, whereas caterpillars leave irregular holes in leaves.

Ann Roffey

Used Pots Needed

Please **return seedling pots (that have been washed)** to the plant table so that they can be reused – especially the 4-cell ones like these:



Remember!

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

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



Asparagus



Potatoes

Autumn is such a wonderful time for planting...try some of these crops. Seed available in the Seed Bank, or seedlings on the Plant Table. Seed potatoes are in stock at produce stores now. Garlic and asparagus crowns available from Green Harvest.



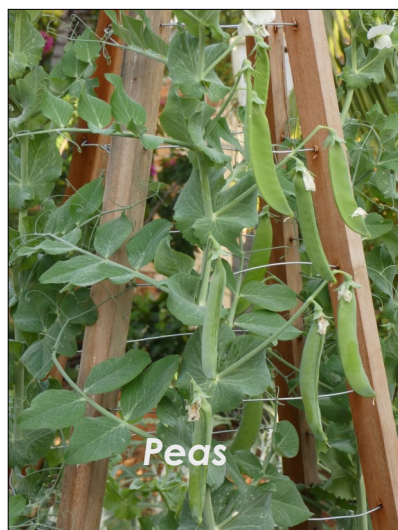
Garlic



Broccoli



Celery



Peas

Seed Sowing Guide

April

Artichoke: Jerusalem
Asparagus
Beans: Lablab, Madagascar, French
Beetroot
Broccoli
Cabbage
Capsicum/Chilli
Cauliflower
Carrot
Celery
Chicory
Endive
Florence Fennel
Kohlrabi
Leeks
Lettuce
Onions/Garlic
Potatoes
Radish
Silverbeet
Spinach: Brazilian, Egyptian, Warrigal, Kangkong
Sweet Potato
Tomato
Yacon

May

Artichoke; Jerusalem Artichoke
Asparagus
Bean: Broad, French
Beetroot
Broccoli
Cabbage
Capsicum/Chilli
Cauliflower
Carrot
Celery
Chicory
Endive
Florence Fennel
Kohlrabi
Leeks
Lettuce
Onions/Garlic
Parsnip
Peas
Potatoes
Radish
Silverbeet
Spinach & Other Spinach: Brazilian, Egyptian, Warrigal, Kangkong
Swede
Sweet Potato
Tomato
Turnip

For a list of seed bank stock, please go to the ROGI website www.rogi.com.au and click on the RESOURCES tab.

Please keep in mind these are only guides. Micro climates and weather conditions may mean that certain seeds may be sown before/after the recommended times. **ROGI Seed Bank is available at all ROGI meetings and Garden Visits. \$1/pack members, \$2 non-members.**

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WE NEED YOUR PUNNETS!

ROGI is participating in the World Environment Day in June at IndigiScapes. We will be doing our seedling pots activity. After making a pot out of newspaper, visitors sow a seed into it and take it home in a punnet for safe-keeping. **Please bring along to the next meeting 200g, 250g, 500g cherry tomato or strawberry punnets.**



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PO Box 1257, Cleveland 4163
www.facebook.com/groups/redland.organic.growers

Other gardening groups using organic methods:

Brisbane Organic Growers Inc (BOGI)—
1st Thursday every month (except Jan), Albion Peace Hall, 102 McDonald Rd, Windsor,
6.30 for 7.30pm. 3357 3171 <http://bogi.org.au>

Qld Herb Society—1st Tuesday every month,
Albion Peace Hall. 7.30pm. 54268299
<http://www.qldherbsociety.org.au/qhs>

Oaklands Street Community Garden—Wednesday &
Friday 9 - noon, Sunday 2- 5pm. Oaklands Street,
Alexandra Hills. 0408 259 445

We'd love to hear from YOU!

Have you enjoyed reading this newsletter? Articles are written and shared by ROGI members. As we were unable to meet in April and hear about 'Failed it and nailed it' stories, we'd love YOU to share your stories of success or failure in your garden. Please send your item/s to the editor and help keep the ROGI Newsletter topical, interesting, local and relevant.

Email info@rogi.com.au

The May newsletter deadline is **29 APRIL 2021**

Did you know?

You can go online www.rogi.com.au/resources.php and read every edition of ROGI News since September 2014.

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