

ROGI News

Doors open at 6.15 so you can visit the library, stalls and seed tables or just have a chat over tea or coffee before the meeting begins at 7. Supper is served afterwards.

*Bayside Community Church
Macarthur St, ALEXANDRA HILLS*

REMEMBER to bring:

- washed pots/punnets
- swap and share items
- ROGI Rewards contribution (opt)
- a basket/box/bag for your purchases
- Questions for Plant Clinic
- Something for supper if you can

Pay MEMBERSHIP DUES before 6.45 or online (we need form filled in please)

If you'd like to surprise someone with a gardening gift or encourage a friend to join our friendly garden club, how about a **ROGI Gift Certificate**?

It's easy - just fill in an application and bring cash.

If you wish to purchase one online, complete an [application](#) and then pay online by bank transfer.

It can be posted to you or the recipient. For details please phone me 0419 987 870 or email membership@rogi.com.au Rhonda

Inside this edition

V.P.s Message: Linda's Leafy Lines	2, 3
Seedsavers.	4
Kate Wall Feb speaker	4
Worm Farm: Linda Brennan	5
Upcoming events	5
E-waste	6
Visit to Tilly's Garden	7, 8
Native plant nursery	9
Committee and contact details	10
General ROGI information	10
TEAM APP details	11
March newsletter deadline	11
Good guys in the garden	11



The dilemma—when is the best time to harvest bananas? In November, this dwarf Ducasse bunch was covered with a blue banana bag after a bat had already taken some bites out, even though the bananas were fully green and still had sharpish ridges. Daily checking revealed this single yellow banana which resulted in immediate harvesting. Within the week, all 200 had been dealt with: frozen, dehydrated, made into things, given away and eaten.



Linda's Leafy Lines

Fear certainly can sharpen priorities.

A sudden family health event can force you to refocus on strategies to improve health and recovery, and assist prevention of health concerns in the future.

A health scare can remind us that the body keeps score, and caring for it is an act of respect. Reviewing sleep, nutrition, movement, social support, stress boundaries suddenly is essential.

So – I have been taking a deeper dive into nutritional support for our health and how I can improve it from the kitchen.

Here's what I have been focusing on:

Over the past two decades, there has been rigorous research into **gut health**. Peer-reviewed articles report how a healthy gut microbiome can assist in mediating our physical health and well-being. This is a very big topic, but in a nutshell ...

The gut microbiome is the complex ecosystem of trillions of microorganisms—mainly bacteria, but also fungi and viruses—living in our digestive tracts. These microbes help break down food, produce vitamins such as B and K, regulate the immune system, protect against harmful pathogens, and communicate with the brain, influencing metabolism, inflammation, and mental health.

The takeaway (pun intended) is that **good eating habits**, those that emphasise a **wide diversity of plants**, can have a powerful impact on overall health.

Good eating habits support the gut microbiome by feeding and protecting beneficial microbes.

Fibre-rich foods such as fruits, vegetables, legumes, whole grains, nuts, and seeds act as fuel for healthy bacteria, helping them grow and diversify.

Fermented foods such as yogurt, kefir, sauerkraut, kombucha, and kimchi introduce helpful microbes directly into the gut.

A **diverse plant-rich diet** encourages balance among different bacterial species, which, through a number of mechanisms:

- improves digestion and nutrient absorption,
- gives steadier energy levels,
- strengthens immunity, and
- reduces inflammation which can lead to chronic illnesses and possibly other diseases.

The advice to **eat at least 30 different plants per week** comes from gut microbiome research showing that dietary diversity matters as much as quantity of plants eaten.

Studies found that people who ate 30 or more plant foods weekly had a more diverse and resilient gut microbiome than those who ate fewer, even if they ate larger serving sizes of vegetables (Spector et al.).

Interesting, don't you think?

He promotes **plant diversity**—not strict vegetarianism. "Plants" here includes vegetables, fruits, legumes, whole grains, nuts, seeds, herbs, spices, edible flowers and weeds making the goal of 30 practical and flexible rather than restrictive.

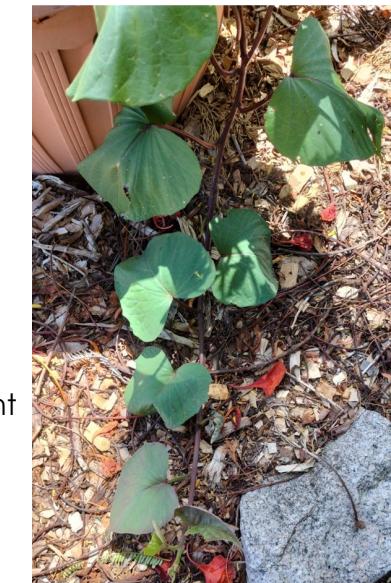
So **how does this translate to my garden** and thus into my kitchen... and yours?

- We all can increase the diversity of plants in our diet by growing foods that are rarely found in supermarkets.
- We can try unfamiliar plants through swaps and by growing "one new thing" every season.



Sweet potato

Ipomoea batatas
purple (above) and gold (left) – tubers and leaves used.



Mulberry

(below) *Morus nigra* - the perfect berry crop for SEQ. Can grow in a large pot. Grows from cuttings and fruits quickly.



Linda's Leafy Lines

For example, when planning for my temperate winter garden, I will grow a range of brassicas such as broccoli, sprouting broccoli, collard greens, kohlrabi, and red and green cabbages. This increases diversity in just the one group of plants.

So, when you are adding more diverse produce from your garden, you are strengthening the connection between food and your health.

Don't forget that our ROGI seeds (available from the Seed Bank and free from Seedsavers) can expand your range of planting options.

Being an active member of ROG builds our individual and community knowledge, through specialist speakers, field trips, and garden visits. Your diversity of plants can increase through the swapping and sharing of cuttings and produce with fellow members.

And - may you always have seeds in your pocket.

Linda Barrett
ROGI Vice President

If you are interested in this topic here is a reading list:

- **Dr Tim Spector** (Food for Life)
- **Dr. Justin and Dr. Erica Sonnenburg** (The Good Gut)
- **Dr. Will Bulsiewicz** (Fiber Fueled)
- **Michael Pollan** (How to Eat, In Defense of Food)
- **Dr. Rob Knight** (Follow Your Gut)

Photos on these pages show some of the perennial plants that continue to power through the summer with no care.



Clockwise from top left:
* **Red okra** *Abelmoschus esculentus* loves our summer.

* **Cobblers pegs** *Bidens pilosa* nutritious young leaves finely sliced in salads and casseroles.
* **Lime** juice for in salads.
* **Brazilian spinach** *Alternanthera sissoo* is good raw or cooked.
* **Mother-of-Herbs** *Plectranthus amboinicus* is used for flavour in cooking. (Variegated variety).
* **Gotu kola** *Centella asiatica* grows like a weed, leaves added to salads.



Seedsavers

How to grow bigger and better from seed

Monday 23 Feb from 6:30 to 8:30pm

I hope you had a great summer break

Our Seedsavers topic to kick us off is about what you can use to promote seed germination and growth.

There is a surprising number of organically suitable and economical things you can do for your new sowings to get the seeds off to a healthy, vibrant, turbo-charged start.

Let's explore these together.

We will also be saving seeds to share at our meetings. **Please bring along dry pods, seed heads or seeds that have been especially good in your garden.** Our members love everything, from vegies to flowers, herbs and fruits.

Something to know ... we can't grow F1 hybrids. If in doubt, check online to see if it's F1

Please remove your name if you book for the night but are unable to attend. This will allow someone on the wait list to come.

BYO cup and a small plate of food to share for supper.

We're looking forward to you joining us.

Linda

Book on Team App or phone 0416 157470

Next ROGI meeting

Thursday 12th February 6.15 for 7pm start

Bayside Community Church, MacArthur St (corner McDonald Rd), Alex Hills.

Growing Food on a Budget

It's easy to fall into the trap of thinking that great productive gardens cost lots of money.

Certainly, money makes many things easier, but money alone does not make a great garden.

Even without much money you can create an amazing garden.

Join gardening coach Kate Wall as she discusses the basics of saving money in the garden and creating your dream food garden on a tight budget.

She'll cover the key elements that cannot be bypassed for food-growing success, and how to achieve these elements without spending any money at all.

Bring your questions.



Composting Tips part 3. Worm Farms.

Linda Brennan presented on composting three ways at our September meeting. In the previous newsletter we presented her key ideas for composting in compost bins. This month we finish with her key tips for composting using worm farms.

Worm farming uses imported composting worms to rapidly convert food waste to biologically rich worm castings. A worm farm can be made from a variety of containers, but is most commonly a three-layered round or rectangular pre-purchased worm farm with legs and a lid.

Linda's top tips for successful worm farms:

Once set up with a layer of 'bedding' and 1000 composting worms, apply cardboard to the inside of the bin to protect worms from light. Feed your worms at alternating ends of the worm farm.

Feed them enough small pieces of food that they can consume in 3 days. Any more leads to smell and problems.

Keep them in a shady spot in summer to avoid killing them in the heat.

No additional water needs to be added unless the contents are dry.

Can you add:

Citrus peels? Yes. A few citrus in small pieces are digestible

Onion peels? Yes. Small bits please.

Oil, Dairy eg cheese and yoghurt? Yes. A little at a time.

Meat and fish? Possibly not. This can attract vermin.

Please do add:

Shredded paper, leaves, food scraps, hair, cotton clothes, plant waste...

Linda follows current practice* and doesn't flush

the worm farm with water any longer. She doesn't use the worm liquid either. However, Linda makes a fresh slurry with some castings in water and applies this to soil or potting mix and as an inoculant in compost heaps.

*Listen to The Joe Gardener Show podcast number 291 entitled "Vermicomposting success: What you need to know before starting a worm bin". with Rhonda Sherman. Rhonda is a world expert on Vermicomposting and provides wonderful information for anyone with worm farms.

* [Vermicomposting Success | What to Know | joegardener?](http://vermicompostingsuccess.com) This website covers pretty much everything (including Americanisms!)



Below: worm farm on legs and a compost bin. It's a good idea to have both systems running.



Bethania St Community Garden

Cox Park, Bethania Street, Lota



Seasonal Get-Together

Sunday 22 Feb, 2:30 - 4:00pm

Everyone is welcome to join us for our Seasonal Get-Together.

Bring your friends and neighbours to wander through our productive garden, talk to our friendly gardeners, meet new people and celebrate our garden and wonderful community.

Come for a cuppa and a chat.

No booking required

Workshop

Propagation for Winter & Spring Harvests

Thursday 12 March 9:30 - 12:30

Learn various methods of propagation, including starting from seed and using existing plants.

You'll take away some plants to grow at home. Cost \$5 (cash only)

Bookings essential - Text 0439 048 585 with your name and name of workshop

<https://www.bethaniastreetcommunitygarden.org>

E-waste

Most of you are aware that ROGI has facilitated the ethical disposal of your e-waste since 2017 by getting it delivered to SubStation 33. They've recently moved to new premises and the access is difficult, so we will no longer offer you this service.

However, all is not lost ...

There are ample recycling opportunities here in Redland.

The following items are accepted at **Recycling and Waste Centres** (except Lamb and Karragarra Islands):

TVs, interactive displays, digital displays, data projectors, video and tape players

Computer equipment, Laptops, Printers, copiers and multi-function printers

POS equipment

Small kitchen, bathroom and laundry appliances, toasters, kettles, hairdryers, shavers, irons (microwaves, large appliances are accepted as scrap metal)

Power drills, vacuums, sound systems

E-waste not accepted at any Council facility or in any kerbside bin includes:

EPIRBS (Beacons), Vapes, Lithium batteries / household batteries, Swollen batteries

E-waste collected from RCC's Recycling and Waste Centres

goes to Brisbane to be stripped and processed into the following commodity groups:

Plastic is shredded and sent to various markets

Metal is stripped and sent to commodity markets

Leaded glass is treated and used in smelters or as deep road base, non-leaded glass is melted down and re-used

Circuit boards are sent to Korea or Japan.

Note: Ensure data from all equipment is removed.

Or ...
save up
batches and
take them here
and have a
coffee and a
look around

IndigiScapes

Recycling Station

It's in our nature



Garden Visit in November Tilly's Garden

Tilly and her family live on a 600m² block in Redland, 282m² for garden space. She describes herself as a home grower, using **no sprays** and **low-cost techniques**. She likes to show how simple it can be to grow your own food, save seeds and share.

When Tilly moved in and realised her soil was **white clay**, she set out to build it up and spent her first year composting and adding organic material to her land.

Tilly took us on a deep dive into soil health:

- how to build soil up by adding organic matter rich in good bacteria and fungi,
- how fungi and bacteria species interact with plants and fruit trees, their benefits being supporting plants to absorb water and nutrients more effectively as bacteria help break down organic matter, making nutrients more available and fix levels (e.g., nitrogen).

Tilly's Garden is a diverse ecosystem, with chickens, guinea pigs, ducks, and 173 varieties of food-producing plants.

How **chickens** help her garden:

- contribute phosphorus, nitrogen
- turn over the compost,
- clear spent garden beds,
- eat grasshoppers, roaches, black soldier fly larvae, baby mice, other bugs but thankfully not the compost worms. Interestingly, they don't like to eat cabbage butterfly caterpillars.

Ducks feature too, eating worms, slugs, snails. Also, they poop into their pondwater, which creates nitrogen- and bacteria-rich liquid fertiliser that can be watered straight on the garden; it does not burn the way fresh chicken manure does. Ducks are gentler on gardens as they don't dig, but they can flatten plants. Their feathers are a high source of calcium, phosphorus and silicates for the soil and most parts of the feathers break down in a hot compost pile in two weeks and free up all their nutrients. The quill doesn't break down that quickly, but all the fluffy bits are good in a compost bin.

Tilly uses a no dig fencing option from Bunnings to stop the poultry entering some areas of her garden.

We learnt how torrential rain or pools of water caused a loss of fungi and bacteria. Of note - in March 2025, Tilly measured plant brix in her garden and the plant measures went from 8 prior to 1 post cyclone Alfred. Following this natural weather event, Tilly used commercial products and organic matter to rebuild her soil health and repopulate soil bacteria and fungi.

Tilly regularly measures the **Brix** in her plants. Most insects e.g. slugs won't go near plants with a brix higher than approx 3-5. To ward off grasshoppers you need a reading of 12 to 14. So, if a plant has a low brix, it's much more susceptible to insect damage.

Every 4 weeks during wet season Tilly applies black strap molasses to plants and trees 1-2 tabs to 10L to support her plants and help feed the soil microbes.

Author's research -

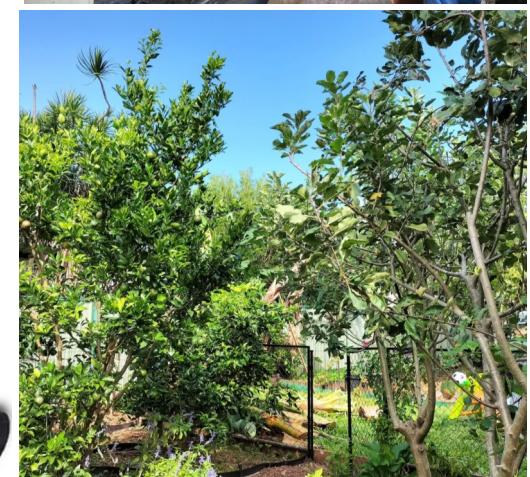
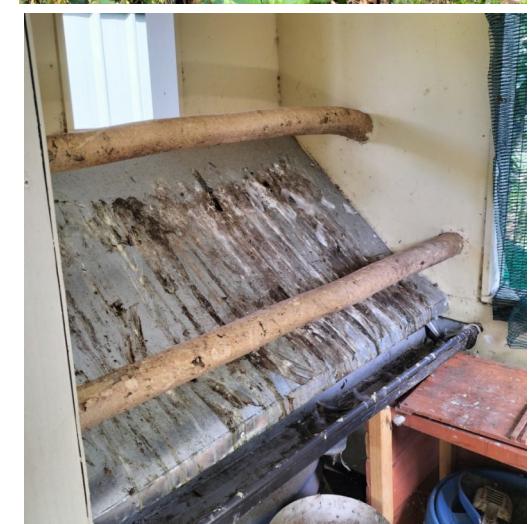
The **Brix** refractometer is an optical instrument used to measure the concentration of dissolved solids, primarily sugars (sucrose), in an aqueous solution. It works by measuring the refractive index of a liquid sample, which changes depending on the amount of dissolved material it contains.

The core principle relies on light refraction. When light passes through a liquid sample, it bends or changes direction. The more dissolved solids present in the liquid, the greater the angle of refraction. The refractometer measures this angle and correlates it to the Brix scale.

Brix Scale: One degree Brix (°Bx) is defined as one gram of sucrose in 100 grams of solution, representing the sugar concentration as a percentage by mass.

This scale is used in many contexts – in agriculture it helps determine the optimal harvest time for crops by measuring the sugar content in plant sap, which is also an indicator of plant health and nutrient density.

A brix meter (refractometer) can now be purchased for as little as \$20.



Tilly's Garden

Tilly is constantly trying to build biodiversity in her garden: she's lucky enough to have native fungus-eating ladybird (the yellow ladybug), which also eats powdery mildew. Tilly allows some powdery mildew in her garden to attract yellow ladybugs because they in turn attract lizards, which attract birds; thus more biodiversity. Tilly has a trap crop for powdery mildew, just to keep these yellow ladybugs around. Similarly she purposely stresses certain plants to get aphids, to maintain red ladybug numbers, which then keep around the assassin bugs and then she moves them around the garden wherever she needs them. At the time, Tilly was stressing spring onions to attract aphids.

Tilly's seed saving over years has provided her with a store of seed that is localised to her garden conditions. Her dill is in its fifth year using her own saved seed, and is not having any problems now from mildew – a common problem with dill in SEQ. It is strong and healthy and continues to grow into summer, being so well acclimatised.

Tilly also considers predicted climate and temperature changes and chooses her tree varieties wisely. We also understand that while trees CAN become acclimatised, it is a shorter space of time in comparison to the time frame required for their required fungi networks.

It was wonderful to meander on a wood chip path through the garden taking in fruit trees (mango, banana, mandarin), nut trees, plants such as plantain, salvia, sunflowers, oregano, sage, thyme, yarrow, comfrey, strawberries, fennel, climbing spinach and more. Then we ventured further to see moringa, elderberry, lemon, tomatoes, beans, potatoes, kiwi fruit, asparagus,

blueberries and so much more.

My take home messages were:

Soil health comes first

Diversity in the garden is very important.

A spreadsheet can be useful for garden planning – measuring quantities etc.

By Dee Armstrong and Linda Barrett

Key point & takeaways by Mike Qualmann

This is the first garden visit where we gave the members the opportunity to write in a book short comments such as 'What I loved and did not know before', or, 'What I liked best about this garden' and so on. We think this should be a regular feature. Do you?

From visitor comments:

1. Fantastic idea to always plant comfrey and yarrow under fruit trees. Their long tap roots help bring nutrients to the roots of the fruit tree.
2. Loved the way she talked about sugar in plants. BRIX value gives a good indication of plant health. Should be above 6, more than 14 is ideal (because it will deter grasshoppers!) Amazon sells BRIX refractometer for less than \$30. (Comment by Mike: we purchased one – it works, but it is not exactly easy to extract a couple of drops from some leaves, for example our lime tree.)
3. Loved your wealth of knowledge on fungi etc.
4. Loved the info on Brix and how to improve a low Brix soil.
5. Interesting to learn that taro loved wet feet. Loved the enclosed chicken dust bath and area where chickens can go over the food

scraps with other birds (pigeons) having a go! And the tall asparagus growing in the front garden beds (below).

Other points by Mike:

1. Aphids: primary food by lady beetles (red and orange). The yellow lady bug larvae eat fungi such as powdery mildew and others. All larvae eat much more than the adult bugs and beetles do!
2. Tilly uses molasses against fungi – works all the time on her mango and apple trees.
3. Sedge grass is good to fight nut grass in the garden. (Needs to be elaborated on).
4. Strawberries can be used to reduce grass areas in the garden because their runners take over and claim the grass area eventually for themselves. They basically 'eat' into surrounding areas.





Redland
CITY COUNCIL



IndigiScapes Pop up Nursery

Plants all
\$3.00

How to care for your native plants



Dig a hole that
is deeper than
the seedling pot.



Gently squeeze the pot, tip it upside
down and carefully remove the plant
while supporting its base.



Place the plant in the
hole and fill it with soil,
covering the roots.



Press the soil down
around the plant to
remove any air pockets.



Add mulch around the base
of your plant. Use a barrier to
protect your plants from wildlife.



Water your plant well,
then weekly for 4-6 weeks.
Water more often if it's dry.

in six simple steps!

Native plants come in many different guises,
including edibles and beneficial insect attractors.

Allow plenty of time when you visit.
This is just the pop-up stall. There are more.

ROGI MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

PRESIDENT	Jill Nixon	president@rogi.com.au
V. PRESIDENT	Linda Barrett	vp@rogi.com.au
SECRETARY	Mike Qualmann	secretary@rogi.com.au
TREASURER	Rose Faleafa	treasurer@rogi.com.au
COMMITTEE MEMBERS	Rhonda Binns, Tom Bohl, vacancy	

OFFICE BEARERS

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY	Rhonda Binns	membership@rogi.com.au
NEWSLETTER EDITOR	(Temp: Jill Nixon) vacancy	newsletter@rogi.com.au
PR, COMMUNICATIONS	Gail Bruce	
CLUB EVENTS	Linda Barrett	
PUBLIC EVENTS	-	publicevents@rogi.com.au
LIBRARY	Vacancy	library@rogi.com.au
Library Assistants	Lin Peart, Dee Armstrong	
SEED BANK	Geoff & Cheryl Rynja	seeds@rogi.com.au
Seedsavers Group	Linda Brennan	linda@ecobotanica.com.au
TECH DESK	Mike Qualmann & vacancy	
WEBSITE	Pal Juvancz	pal@pcpals.com.au

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

info@rogi.com.au group@rogi.com.au www.rogi.com.au
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/redland.organic.growers>

Other gardening groups using organic methods:

Brisbane Organic Growers Inc (BOGI)—1st Thurs each month (not Jan). 6.30. Albion Peace Hall, McDonald Rd, Windsor. 0438 254 673 <http://bogi.org.au>

Qld Herb Society—1st Tues each month, Albion Peace Hall. 7.30pm. 0458 798 663 <https://qldherbsociety.org.au>

Oaklands Street Community Gardens—Mon, Wed, Fri 9-12 . Alexandra Hills. 0410 974 458
<https://www.oaklandsstcommunitygardenqld.org>

Bethania St Community Garden—Wed mornings, Cox Park, Lota. 0439 048 585 <https://www.bethaniastreetcommunitygarden.org>

General Information

Please consider contributing to any of these at various times:

ROGI REWARDS:

Good quality plants and other garden-related items brought along by members. Everyone who attends and signs in is eligible for a Reward. **Please label plant with its name and some growing details before placing it on the table.**

MEMBERS' SALES:

Items you've produced surplus to your requirements that **you wish to sell** to other members – seedlings, eggs, honey, lemons, jam, sustainable craft items – things that have cost you time, money, and effort to produce. Please make sure items are labelled, named and priced. It is preferable that you staff the stall yourself or time-share with a friend.

FREE SWAP/SHARE/GIVE- on table outside

For items you don't want payment for—empty pots, cuttings, unwanted plants (named), surplus produce, shredded paper, strawberry runners and so on. Maybe arrange with other members to do some swapping outside meetings. Take home what's left after meeting.

PLANT CLINIC:

Bring along your plant problems—**insect/plant/weed** (as many parts as you can - fruit, leaf, root) in a sealed plastic bag. Fill in form on the Plant Clinic table (just inside the door to the main hall) before the meeting starts. Someone will look and may be able to answer your questions. Any solutions will be given on the night and published in the newsletter. *Please be aware that, although we do our best, there may not be anyone present who can solve your problem or identify your plant, especially if it is not related to organic gardening.*

Also, the **ROGI WEBSITE**: Under RESOURCES tab, you'll find:

- ROGI's month-by-month Seed Sowing Guide
- Seed viability Chart
- Good Bugs
- No-dig gardening ideas
- Permaculture
- Copies of all newsletters since September 2014.
- ... and lots more. Have a browse.

Good guys in the garden



Damsel fly
resting on a post

The Damselfly *Sympetrum fusca* provides significant environmental benefits as a natural, non-toxic pest controller and indicator of ecosystem health. They prey on mosquitoes, flies, and moths, reducing pest populations, while their presence signifies clean, healthy freshwater habitat.



Australian Garden Mantis *Orthodera ministralis* is a native predatory insect in Australia. It feeds on a wide variety of invertebrate pests, including aphids, cockroaches, grasshoppers, crickets, flies, and caterpillars. By eating these insects, they help protect plants from damage and reduce the need for chemical pesticides, promoting organic gardening. They are an essential part of the food web, serving as prey for larger insectivorous animals such as birds, frogs, lizards, and bats.



Jewel beetle on the kitchen bench!
We escorted it back to the garden.

Fiddler beetle or Jewel beetle *Eupoecila australasiae* is a native Australian flower chafer beetle providing several environmental benefits. The adults feed on nectar from native flowers and move from plant to plant, helping to pollinate and fertilise these flowers. The larvae play a crucial role in decomposition. They live in soil, compost, or under rotting logs, feeding on decaying organic matter, recycling nutrients and replenishing the soil. Both larvae and adults serve as food for various fauna such as butcher birds, kookaburras and Blue-Tongued Lizards. Leave fallen timber and logs in your garden, as these are critical habitats for their larvae. Using fewer pesticides, particularly those targeted at "lawn beetles," also protects them.

TEAM APP



With TEAM APP, you can:

- keep up to date with club events in real time
- not wait till the meeting to book your place for Garden Visits, Workshops, Field Trips.
- make bookings as soon as they are posted on TEAM APP.
- Cancel your booking if needed to free up a spot for someone on the waiting list

If you haven't already registered for TEAM APP, here's how to get TEAM APP on your phone or computer.

On your smart phone or tablet.

- Go to the App store (apple smart phones) or Playstore (Android smart phones)
- Look for the TEAM APP logo. (above)

If you need assistance to set up your TEAM APP account on:

- **a phone or tablet**, someone can help you at the next meeting.
- **your computer**.
- Go to <https://www.teamapp.com>
- SIGN UP using your email address and a password. Click on MY TEAMS and select your team as ROGI.

March 2026 newsletter deadline

Thursday 26 February 2026

Send contributions to newsletter@rogi.com.au