

ROGI News

PLEASE NOTE:

ROGI meetings will resume in July, with some changes. In line with COVID-19 regulations we will :

- observe social distancing
- no supper, tea or coffee
- no swap and share
- no ROGI rewards
- maximum 100 people

However, we will still have plant and seed sales, and members' stalls such as sustainability products, soap and honey.

Our next meeting will be held on **WEDNESDAY 15 JULY** (stage 3 starts on the 10th).

This meeting will only be open to ROGI members (no visitors allowed). **YOU MUST BOOK TO ATTEND.** Please book your spot after the 15th June at info@rogi.com.au

Inside this edition

	Page
President's Message	2
Coming Events. Membership	3
Drinking in the Garden	4,5
What's Happening in our Garden	6,7
Worm Farming	8-11
Plant Clinic—Bean Fly	12
Veg Out Community Garden	13
Plant of the Month—Cabbage	14
Plant of the Month—Parsnip	15
Gardening Tips	16
Bugs for Bugs Info	17
Rats. Mystery Fruit. Qld Garden Expo	18
Used Pots. My IGA. Seed Sowing Guide	19
Garden Visits. Deadline. Important Info	20
ROGI Committee and Office Bearers	21
Hive Parking for Native Bees	21



Linda Brennan's little cinnamon tree (*Cinnamomum zeylanicum*) is beginning to show its fresh leaf growth. A beautiful fiery red for autumn. Her tree is about 5½ years old, and while it won't be able to be used for cinnamon quills for many years yet, she does use the leaves for flavouring. They give a mild cinnamon flavour and the fragrance when you crush them is, well, cinnamony!

Jill's Jottings

Hello fellow growers,

You often read about the benefits of gardening – exercise, fresh air, being one with nature, stress reduction etc. When you add growing food (organically) to that, you include the benefits of eating what you have grown.

Debate still rages about whether organically-grown food is more nutritious. However, I think most would agree that eating food from plants that haven't been doused in harmful chemicals has to be much better for us.

A big plus for growing your own is that you can have a greater variety of food on hand. For example, currently we are using the produce from more than thirty-five different plants, and we can harvest in the quantities we want and when we need them. Many of these plants are herbs and spices, which we use in small but important amounts. To purchase such variety would be expensive and much would end up being discarded e.g. herbs in plastic sleeves.

Why eat so many types of plants? Well ... it's all about phytonutrients. We know about macronutrients (carbohydrates, fats and proteins) and micronutrients (vitamins and minerals), but knowledge of phytonutrients is relatively new. They are the natural chemicals produced in plants so they can cope with the stresses of life – e.g. insect attack, high UV exposure, etc. Many phytonutrients give the plants their distinctive colours, hence the exhortation to 'eat a rainbow'. You have surely heard of resveratrol, found in red grape skins and thus in red wine - an excuse for many to drink the wine for 'health' reasons! Other phytonutrients are carotene, flavonoids, phytoestrogens, curcumin, ellagic acid, glucosinolates. Look them up to see which foods have them. Some of them are more abundant in plants that we know as weeds!

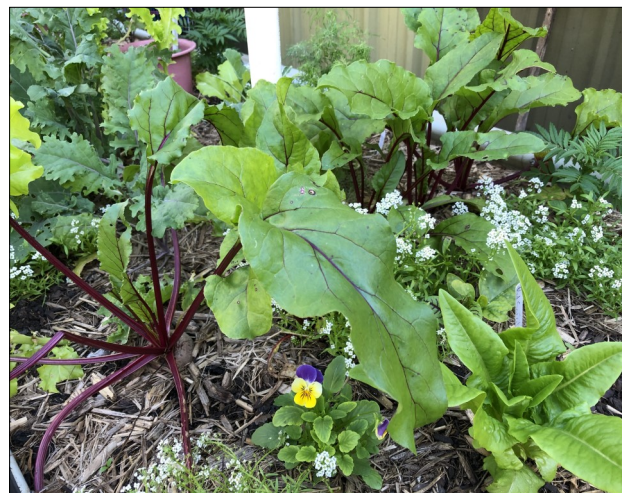
When farmers pre-empt insect attack and spray with pesticides, they prevent those plants from needing to produce the optimum amount of phytochemicals. When an organic gardener

grows plants, the aim is to allow the natural balance to take place: the plant develops the phytochemicals to deal with the insects while waiting for the beneficial predatory insects to step in to take over (in an ideal world – sometimes there's a delay while the beneficial numbers build up!). This is why organic is better for you, and those leaves with nibbles are the best. Also, this is why our grannies told us to eat the skins and outside leaves (granny hadn't heard of the concept of spraying poisons onto our food, and I'm pretty sure she wouldn't believe it: "*Oh, my giddy aunt, whatever will they come up with next?!*" mine would have exclaimed). But then, she grew her own, so what would she know!

Our modern diet has a considerably smaller range of foods than our ancestors', particularly for those who ascribe to the SAD (Standard American/Australian Diet) in which speed, cost, consistency and convenience seem to be the main factors. By growing as much as possible of our own food, we can go from SAD to GOOD (Growing Our Own Diet).

Autumn is the best time of year to be planting and sowing a huge range of plants in our climate, so go for it. When everything gets back to the 'new' normal, we hope we can learn more about how to grow productively to achieve maximum benefits from our food.

Happy and productive gardening, *Jill Nixon* (ROGI President)



Can you identify the nine edible plants in this photo? They are: viola, beetroot, lettuce, mint, cauliflower, dill, kale, marigolds and red sorrel. Alyssum is also edible (although it's a bit peppery) - however, Jill grows alyssum for its appearance, its perfume and attraction to beneficial insects, as well as a living mulch.

Coming Events!

JUNE	Sunday 21	Garden Visit (see page 20)
	Thursday 25	Film Night (see page 20)
JULY	Sunday 12	Garden Visit (see page 20)
	WEDNESDAY 15	ROGI MEETING
AUGUST	Wednesday 12	ROGI Meeting & AGM

Membership Information

- **Cash** payment at ROGI meeting
- **Cheques** made payable to *Redland Organic Growers Inc* - pay at meeting or to PO Box 1257, Cleveland 4163
- **Direct Deposit** to BSB 633 000, Account Number 136137296 (Bendigo Bank, Middle St, Cleveland)
- **IMPORTANT!** Reference - Your initials and surname are essential to identify who has paid.

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

Member Category	Members Renewing For 2020	New member/s joining in...			
		Jan-Mar	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct-Dec
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



Read about this vibrant community garden on page 13.



Drinking in the Garden

For some of us, the confinement to our homes and gardens has been quite a blessing, with the chance to get some of the summer abundance (read weeds) under control.

In our garden it's been a time of reviving forgotten projects and finishing them off, of starting afresh with others, and of having the time to plan, observe and take in more of garden life than our busy lives normally permit.

I've enjoyed taking the time to check in on the daily sunflower progress, of having time to water my seedlings and get into soil preparation and improvement. I've bought some Biodynamic supplies once again from the Biodynamic Association <https://biodynamics.net.au/> and have added Compost Balls to the compost heaps to enliven and enrich the developing compost with biological activity. And I couldn't resist the promise of all-over soil improvement, so purchased a spray application called Biodynamic Soil Improver. These will complement the annual Biodynamic tree paste applications that I start in June. Painting the preparation onto the trunk and stems of the fruit trees and roses is strangely meditative and enjoyable.

But it has been the daily Cup of tea, plucked from the herb garden and beyond, that has been my most creative and enjoyable routine. I shared a 'Cuppa a Day' on my Ecobotanica Facebook and Instagram pages, so you can catch up on the variety, together with their stories on there if you like. I chose a different pot and pretty cup each time and took a series of photos around the garden and in the old/new slab cottage (another project). How it worked was that each day, I'd make a herbal drink from the garden – usually a Herbal Tea, and share the recipe and the story behind it with all who were interested. There were teas made from Yerba mate growing in the garden, native mints, leaves and herbs, lovely pink or blue teas, spicy chai and lots more.

I'd like to share one of my delicious herbal tea favourites with you...

The Cuppa a Day is rosella, spearmint, licorice root and lemon-grass. It's earned a score of 10/10 from us. Our plump, late season rosellas are now in fruit. I thought they would never amount to much, but one of the plants that survived the February deluge has been kind and has produced plenty of fruit.

I use rosella fresh or dried, in tea, preserved in syrup and made into jam, jelly, cordial, chutney and Indian style kasoundi pickles. It's really a versatile plant, and the young leaves are edible fresh or cooked too. The plants die off in winter, so I plant new seed in late spring.

The spearmint in the shade tunnel is happy. It has grown out of the pot and into the soil in the plant sling that holds the pots. It doesn't need much to thrive. Some sun, regular water and a little fertiliser every now and then. I'm so pleased I didn't plant it into the garden though. It would have enjoyed the domination that the licorice could have had.



A line up shows the ingredients in each pot of tea, many freshly picked from the garden.

Left: A cuppa at the cottage.

Drinking in the Garden *(continued)*

My licorice root plant is a dead loss. I know for many in a cooler climate, planting licorice is like planting a weed that desires world domination, but here it's pathetic. So, I buy in organic licorice root chips from @australherbs instead. It's rather lovely using licorice root in teas, as it adds flavour and natural sweetness with almost no calories. But be aware that you need to avoid more than five cups of pure licorice tea per week I'm told, if you have high blood pressure.

The lemongrass is a bit rusty, but I'll chop off those leaves at about 20cm tall in a couple of weeks and add them to the compost heap. Lemongrass loves the boggy spot where I could technically be growing a rice paddy over summer! Chopping off the leaves still allows you to use the base of the stems, while tidying up the whole plant for winter. I don't dry and keep these leaves as I prefer to keep the summery new growth which is perfect in colour and rust free.

And that pot! It was a set that included creamer and sugar basin. Silver plated and just \$15 from a St Vincent's store. They said they had so much silverware and crystal they could hardly give it away. I was delighted.



It's quite amazing once you start to look around the garden, the number of edible flowers and leaves that you can use in your herbal cuppa. I posted a different herbal tea from the garden for 50 days, and when spring comes around, I'll probably start them over again with all the spring flowering herbs and flowers in the garden.

Linda Brennan, Ecobotanica



At least one rosella survived the summer deluge.



The spearmint grows happily in the shade tunnel with daily water.



Above: Lemongrass has a big haircut in the garden each autumn. It still allows us to use the succulent basal stems.



Above Right: A project for the garden, our slab cottage—built from the reclaimed timbers and windows of an old Canungra farm and its sunflower drying shed.



Right: The rosella tea was pretty in pink.

What's Happening in our Garden this Month

Over the autumn "stay at home" period we have certainly done a lot of work in our gardens.

With the settled cooler weather it was a great time to do lots of pruning and cutting back of overgrown or "finished" plants. We also took the opportunity to clear paths and replenish mulch around all types of gardens, both productive and ornamental. It is worth noting that generally your vegetables will prefer a bacterial based or greener type mulch, while fruit trees, natives and other shrubs prefer a fungal based or woody type.

Wicking Beds!

We were so impressed with the performance of one we created late last year by re-purposing a raised garden bed, that we decided to build another out of materials we had on hand. In this instance, square concrete blocks.



Blocks with plastic liner in place



Water lines in place above hardwood chips



Geotech permeable layer



Bed filled with compost and soil ready to plant

There are many reasons why you might benefit from a wicking bed apart from the constant, regular supply of water to plants. Perhaps you have invasive tree roots taking all the water and nutrients from your veges, or your best north facing area might be in the rain shadow of your house or a shed. Generally, it is better for plant health to access water from below, eg tomatoes - thus saving you time and the amount of water you need to pay for.

To build one just follow the general principles of creating a reservoir for water, half filling it with non-degradable materials such as hardwood chips or gravel, and installing an inlet and feeder tube for the water (we used 19mm irrigation pipe and fittings we had on hand). Cover with a layer of permeable cloth (the wick), and fill with fertile soil and you're ready to plant (see photos).

What's Happening in our Garden this Month (cont'd)

Composting

We have always preferred to collect plenty of varied materials over time, a good mix of green and brown, (nitrogen and carbon) and then build a one cubic metre compost heap to generate the heat required. Without a paddock to sit it in, we now use bins of the same size. We've had time to build new bins from old boards and very old fencing that we had, and decided to make three 0.5m³ bins. Two, on top of each other give the required size while the other is to turn the (much smaller) cooked heap into. The top section is therefore moveable onto either of the bases. We are looking forward to having some great compost to get the beds really working for the next season's crops.

Apart from regular compost, pelletised fertiliser, rock dust and liquid fertiliser, we use frequent applications of worm juice to keep hungry crops growing well. This is especially important for all the winter brassicas in our gardens at present. To clean the soil between crops we often use mustard as a green manure crop.

Other crops growing in our garden beds are carrots, beetroot, tomatoes, salad greens, leeks, sugar snap peas and many herbs.

Julia Geljon and Chris McIvor



0.5 cubic metre bins built from scrap timber



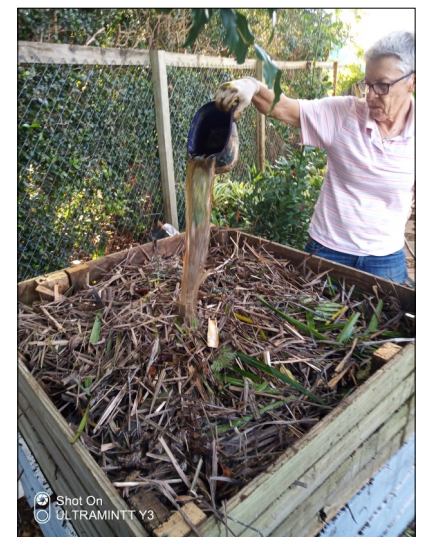
Fitting together



Double layer filled



Making compost



Pouring worm juice into compost

Worm Farming

Worms have been around for millions of years, they truly are dinosaurs from beneath the earth. In Australia, there are over 1000 species of earthworms, and globally there are over 7000. They've even been ranked the number one most influential species in the history of the planet!

Why do gardeners like worms so much? Well, earthworms are like free farm help! They help to increase the amount of air and water that gets into the soil, and break down organic matter like grass and leaves into things that plants can use. When they eat, they leave behind castings (poop) that are a very valuable type of fertiliser. Just like compost, they recycle our organic waste.

Scientists classify earthworms into three major groups based on where in the soil they live:

1. *Anecic*—these deep soil dwellers construct permanent deep vertical burrows which they use to visit the surface to obtain plant material for food, such as leaves.
2. *Endogeic*—the medium depth soil dwellers. They generally move parallel to the surface, leaving horizontal burrows and eating organic material found beneath the ground, like dead plant roots.
3. *Epigeic*—the top layer dwellers. These worms are nonburrowing and live at or near the soil surface. They eat decomposing organic matter, everything from decaying leaves and grasses, fallen fruit, and even animal faeces. These are the worms who make our topsoils.

The third group of worms, *Epigeic*, are often called compost or manure worms, and these are the worms used in worm farms. The three species of worms commonly used for composting worldwide are the Tigers (*Eisenia Fetida*), the Reds (*Lumbricus rubellus*), and the Indian Blues (*Perionyx Excavatus*). They almost sound like football teams, don't they? Jokes aside, you should remember that worms are living creatures who need regular looking after. Like all animals, they require the basic necessities for life—habitat (shelter and bedding), food and water.

Shelter

There are so many choices when you are looking at what to house your worms in! You can buy a commercial worm farm online or from most hardware stores; you can even add compost worms to a standard compost bin. You can also make your own worm farm—some suggestions are in a bathtub, Styrofoam boxes, wheelie bin, or even an old fridge. All of these worm shelters must be well drained and well aerated. Here are some ideas:

https://www.google.com/search?q=make+your+own+worm+farm&ie=&oe=#kpvalbx=_KEaZXsPvMfPE4-EPqZ6w-A853

<https://www.littleecofootprints.com/2014/08/how-to-build-a-worm-farm-in-an-old-laundry-tub.html>



Worm bathtub



Plastic commercial worm farm

Bedding

When it comes to worm bedding, any well aged and rotted down organic matter is good. Wetted down and shredded cardboard or newspaper, aged and rotted horse or cow manure, peat moss and coconut coir are a few examples. The bedding should be moist, but not soaking wet (they can drown otherwise).

Worms don't like the light, and work best with a cover over them - you can use a piece of hessian, old carpet, cotton cloth, several sheets of newspaper, or a tailor made "worm blanket". Position your worm farm out of extremes of weather (sun and rain). They will need to be fully shaded in our hot summers to avoid overheating. Worms live comfortably in bedding temperatures of between 10-30°C.

Worm Farming (continued)

Food

Worms don't have teeth, so their food should be cut up into small pieces. They can't eat anything hard like branches, sticks or bones. They love fruit and vegetable scraps, eggshells, tea leaves, coffee grounds as well as animal manures (sheep, horse, cow, goat etc). Chicken poo needs to be composted first to remove excess nitrogen (which can cause heating of a worm bed and may kill all the worms). They should also be fed with carbon material (browns) - such as shredded cardboard, brown leaves or brown dried grass. Fresh green grass should only be given in moderation, as it has a high nitrogen content and can also lead to excess heat and ammonia generation. You should feed your worms regularly, and in small amounts. One of the most common causes of worms dying is overfeeding. Just like your compost bin, a worm bed should never smell. Any unpleasant odours mean the worms have been fed too much or the wrong types of food.

Water

Chlorine will kill the bacteria that worms are making, so ideally use tank or rain water. If you can't avoid using town water, fill up a bucket and sit in the sun for 24 hours so the chlorine evaporates out of it. Moist conditions in a worm farm are ideal for worms, but too much or too little can be detrimental. You want enough moisture so that the worms can breathe freely and easily. A good way of telling is to pick up a handful of worm bedding and give it a squeeze—a few drops of water is perfect. If there is too much water, add heaps of dry browns to soak up the excess. If it's too dry, water lightly with a misting or spray bottle.

There are many excellent websites about worm farming, some of which I used to research this article. For more information, go to:

https://www.redland.qld.gov.au/info/20251/composting/607/create_your_own_worm_farm

<https://www.kookaburrawormfarms.com.au/> (download free e-book)

Ann Roffey



Francke Latter has two "Can-O-Worms" farms. She has success with them as she doesn't use the lid that comes with it—the lid makes it too hot. They are given shade always. If there is dappled sun in summer, she puts a car windscreen sun visor over them. The tap stays open with a bucket underneath to catch the worm wee. Francke feeds them kitchen scraps, except for onion, citrus and dairy. She also adds tea leaves (very much like composting), and they like to eat the hessian sack they are covered with. The feet of the worm farms have containers with water in them to keep out the ants. The worms only get rain or tank water, never chlorinated town water. They like a little rain, but need to be covered in heavy rain.

Sharr Ellson has four "Can-O-Worms" farms in her chicken coop, and another one which does okay in the sun (pictured right). She uses the worm wee (diluted 1:4 with water) on everything! Castings get mixed in with the compost. When using castings, there may be worms in with them, she just puts it all into the compost bin.



Worm Farming (continued)

John Borg recently purchased a worm farm container with worms included. Besides worms there were also a number of beetles. He found out they are called feather-winged beetles - they do no harm to the worms, and are beneficial to the farm as they eat fungi and break down what is put in there.

The worms are fed not only kitchen scraps, but also alpaca poo and lots of shredded paper. The paper absorbs the moisture and the worms travel through it. On top he uses two sets of hessian bags, as they love living and eating in between the two layers. He has found with past experience the hessian bags will be eaten in three to four months time.

This is not John's first worm farm, he bought one when he won a cash prize for being 2002 Runner Up for Environmental Farmer of the Year (presented by Bundaberg Canegrowers). It was successful at first, but was sadly neglected as he got very busy on his cane farm and lost the worms.

Ten years later John got reconnected with compost worms again, this time on a much larger scale. He had sold his cane farm but managed to subdivide five acres off with the house and a very large machinery shed. He teamed up with a partner and went into selling organic fertilisers. He had many products for sale, and came across a fellow in Gayndah, west of Bundaberg, who had built a shed that housed thousands of compost worms - he invented a way of drying the worm castings and extracting the worm liquid to produce a clear liquid and dry castings.

Unfortunately, the partnership broke down, and in part payment John landed with many, many kilograms of the castings. He has had it tested over the years for nutrition, and was told that it gets better with age. Unfortunately the fellow who invented the procedure went bankrupt. When compost worms are mentioned, John always thinks of this fellow and his clever mind—he was way ahead of his time!



This is the complete worm farm that John purchased



Worms and beetles living together between the two hessian bags



Worms, alpaca poo and shredded paper under the two layers of hessian



Wet casting from John's worm farm—ready to be used in the garden



Dry worm castings from Gayndah entrepreneur—still viable after many years!

Worm Farming (continued)

Bill Mellor has many worm farms, and he has made most of them out of recycled containers (washing machines, old incinerator, 44 gallon drums). He covers the worms with an old piece of carpet, as they don't like the light. They get fed fruit and vegie scraps, as well as cooked and crushed eggshells, dried mown grass and leaves—but not meat, citrus, onions or garlic.

The worm farm below is a free-range worm tower which is buried into the soil. The plastic container has holes all around so that the worms can come and go as they please. There is a hose which drips water into the farm to keep it moist.



The worm farm on the right is also made from a washing machine. Bill often has plants germinate from seed in the moist, rich environment the worms are living in.



Above: Bill made this worm farm out of the drum of a top load washing machine. The hole where the agitator was provides drainage, and he has a container underneath to catch the worm juice.



Julia Geljon and Chris McIvor's two worm farms have greatly benefited from a new feeding regime. Their share of the vege and other food scraps is saved in the fridge, then gets pulverised in the food processor. After all, they only have tiny mouths! This way they can also add in small amounts of some food wastes that are otherwise hard to recycle, such as bread and dairy. Now they are getting much faster production of the vermicast that so enriches garden beds.



Left: Vegetable and fruit scraps ready for the food processor.

Right: Vegetable and fruit scraps after pulverising.



Below: Pulverised food scraps in worm farm.



Below: One day later worms gobbling up the food.



This month in Plant Clinic we will be looking at **bean fly**. Several members have complained about very poor crops of beans this year. The bean plants either died prematurely or failed to thrive and produce beans. It has been suggested that bean fly could have been the reason.

Bean fly are small black flies that are about 3mm in size, so roughly the size of a stingless bee, but with transparent black wings. The bean fly affects legumes including snake beans, butter beans and French beans.

The bean fly attacks plants by stinging the leaves, causing a distinctive white puncture mark and laying its eggs within the leaves. Once the eggs hatch the pupae travel down the leaves to the stems, and then down the stems to the base of the plant. They damage the plant along the way, as they eat out much of the stem structure. The stem can become swollen indicating an infestation. The bean fly tends to attack young plants, although it can also attack mature plants, leading to leaf wilt.

Advice was somewhat mixed with respect to treatment. All agreed that bean fly thrives in hot, humid conditions in tropical and sub-tropical gardens, which certainly describes conditions in the Redlands and bayside suburbs in summer this year! However bean flies only affect legumes in coastal regions, not further inland.

Because the larvae travel down through the centre of the stem, most organic pest sprays will not be effective, as the larvae are protected by the tissue of the plant. However, if you notice the stings on your leaves and apply either Neem oil or a chilli, garlic, onion and soap spray liberally to both sides of the leaf, you may succeed in killing the larvae before they travel down towards the base of the plant.

One site recommended not planting beans or legumes in the affected bed for three years, but I could find no evidence on agricultural or gardening sites that suggested the bean fly overwintered in the soil. So, apart from being a good crop rotation

practice, I don't see that this would have much impact, except if the bean flies came looking for legumes in a similar position next season.

As with nematodes, all advice recommended applying generous amounts of compost to build up the soil. It was also recommended that compost be mounded up around the stems of the affected plants to encourage higher root formations, which may help weakened plants survive. It was suggested that legumes planted in soil that was deficient in boron or potassium could be more susceptible to bean fly attack. As soils in the Redlands are generally deficient in boron, this could be well-founded. I always apply small amounts of boron to my soil before planting silver-beet, otherwise they show the classic brown lines on their stems that come from boron deficiency.

TIP OF THE MONTH

I recently purchased an attachment for my drill which is specifically designed for use in the garden. It's known as a garden auger or power planter™ and it certainly makes it easy to dig holes in the ground where there is a lot of root competition. I like to think that the soil at my place is quite friable, as I have put in lots of organic matter over the years. However, I have also planted lots of trees and shrubs and my garden is quite established now. This means I can have problems with roots when I want to plant something new, even though I have the space for it.

This drill bit makes life a lot easier. A friend of mine told me about the power planter a few years ago, but I kept thinking "it's not that difficult to dig a hole!" Since buying the auger, I have had lots of fun digging holes. Digging holes before definitely wasn't fun! I'm not sure if I am the last gardener in Brisbane to discover this device and actually buy one, but I thought I would share this with other ROGI members in case anyone else needs to dig a hole without breaking their back!



Veg Out Community Garden, St Kilda

Community gardens come in all shapes and sizes - and Veg Out in St Kilda, Victoria is no exception. I stumbled on it during a trip to Victoria at Christmas and am so pleased I did. I felt quite at home in a place that was very welcoming to locals, children and visitors alike.

Founded in 1998, it's an organic, chemical free community garden run by volunteers, appears well resourced and has other facilities including an art studio.

Formerly a lawn bowling green, the land Veg Out is situated on is supported by the local council for the State of Victoria, and has been permanently reserved for public use since 1881.

There are about 140 garden plots, where members, friends, families and community groups enjoy getting their hands into the soil. Many have little or no gardening experience – but they soon learn, as advice, seedlings and friendships are readily shared. Regular farmers' markets are held there.

Veg Out has no rigid barriers between common land and each plot; the paths curve and meander; flowers, vegetables and artworks have equal standing; the rabbits, chickens, budgies and quails add yet another dimension; and the friendships that have sprung up between gardeners, artists and visitors make the gardens an oasis of calm in one of Melbourne's busiest tourist precincts.

So, when we can all travel again, and if you're heading to Melbourne, make a stop at the St Kilda Veg Out community garden. You'll feel right at home too.

By Kathy Petrik



Plant of the Month—Cabbage & Parsnip

I am going to profile two vegies for this month. Firstly, cabbage which I believe is easy to grow and good for new gardeners, and secondly parsnip, which is more of a challenge.

CABBAGE

A casual search of the Internet will show multiple sites expounding the qualities and health benefits of eating cabbage. I'll let you do that if you're interested.

For my purposes there are two types of cabbage:

Asian cabbages - these are faster growing (usually around 50 days to harvest) and seed can be planted from March through to September.

Hearted cabbages - these are slower (usually 60-65 days to harvest). Seed can be planted April to July.

I sow cabbages in seed trays using a seed raising mix. Lightly cover the seed and keep moist but not wet. Plant out when seedlings are well established.



Cabbages require a fertile soil, good drainage, and pH around 6-6.5. They are heavy feeders so adding compost and fertilisers will help make the plant grow healthy and strong. Keep the water up to the plants.

While there are many pests and diseases that can attack cabbages, the main one is the

white cabbage butterfly and its caterpillars that devour and decimate the plant if left unchecked. If the plants are kept healthy, many other pests and diseases can be avoided. The

best defence against these bugs is to put a net over the plant. However, if you already have the caterpillars, spraying with a molasses spray or Dipel will kill them.

I find cabbages are less likely to go prematurely to seed compared to cauliflower and broccoli. Depending how many cabbages you want, the season can be extended by progressive planting of seed several weeks apart. If you do want to collect seed, you will need to sacrifice one plant and allow it to develop flowers and seed.

Cabbages are often cooked by a variety of methods, but they can also be used in coleslaw, fermented sauerkraut or kimchi.

Varieties I often grow are:

Bok Choi (Chinese) **H**

Chinese One Kilo Slow Bolt **F1 hybrid**

Sugarloaf *Early Jersey Wakefield* Heirloom variety **H**

Red Express

H = Good for hot climates

F1 hybrid (seed is produced by cross breeding specific varieties but the seed produced from an F1 hybrid is not true to type thereafter, so can't be used for seed saving.)

PARSNIP

I have fond memories growing up and having parsnips as part of a baked dinner. I have noticed parsnips being used recently in cooking shows to make purees etc. Parsnips are a similar shape to carrots except they are white.

Parsnips have a far shorter growing period here in the subtropics. May or June are the best time to sow them, although since weather patterns change from one year to another this can vary. Parsnips become sweeter if they are subject to frost but I enjoy them despite that not occurring here.

Plant of the Month—Cabbage & Parsnip

The recommended soil temperature is 10°C to 20°C. The seeds are not as fine as carrot seed but are more like flakes. The viability of parsnip seed is not very long, so I buy new seed each year and plant the whole packet.



Parsnip and cabbage seeds. The parsnip seed is the larger one.

Like all root crops, they require a deep, friable soil (a little on the sandy side is good). The preferred pH is 6-7. Avoid applying fresh manures to the soil. Soil fertility for parsnips is often good after growing brassicas etc. Sow the seed directly where they will grow – they do not like being transplanted. Keep moist but not wet.

Varieties include: *Hollow Crown*, *Cobham Improved*, *Gladiator*, *Harris Model*, *Lancer F1 hybrid* and *White Gem*.

Days to harvest - usually around 120 days.



Left: Parsnip (white vegetable) shown with other home-grown produce.

MYSTERY FRUIT:

Can you identify the yellow fruit at the front of the photo? The answer is on page 16.

WATERMELON HARVESTING TIP

How do you tell when a watermelon is ready to harvest? I know we are at the end of the season and I have one watermelon left to harvest and it is ready now.

Some say tapping gives a hollow sound, however I find this to be subjective. Some say a yellow patch forms on the bottom where it has been resting on the ground. This can occur but not if the watermelon has been turned or grown on a trellis.

I found a tip which I think is bullet proof. When the **tendrils closest to the stem** where the watermelon is attached to the vine dries off, the watermelon is ready for harvest. It has worked for me every time.

By Greg Lindner



Yellow spot on watermelon



Green tendril indicates the watermelon is not yet ready to be picked



Dry tendril on watermelon = ready for harvest!



Cut watermelon

Gardening Tips

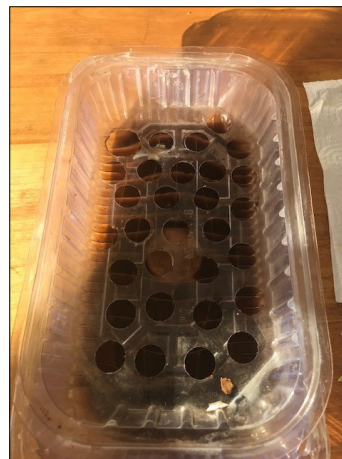
BLUEBERRY MAINTENANCE

If you grow blueberries in pots, now is the time to repot them (while they are dormant). Repot with Azalea and Camellia potting mix, OR a 50/50 mix of pine bark fines and the above potting mix. This works for blueberries because they are not high nitrogen users and the bark helps to keep the pH low—between 4.5 and 5.5.



John Borg has made his own pine bark fines from pine cones, using his mulcher (and wearing a mask). Otherwise, they are available from CSG Landscape Supplies, Capalaba in 20 litre bags.

GARLIC GROWING TIP



John Borg punched holes in a plastic container from the supermarket, and then found another that fit inside it. After refrigerating the garlic bulbs for two weeks, he then placed individual cloves into the holes of the container and watered them with a mixture of 1 teaspoon Powerfeed (or you could use Seasol) to 1 litre of water. He soaked them for six days, and by the end they were sprouting green shoots and growing roots.

BUGS FOR BUGS specialises in Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and is one of Australia's leading suppliers of biological control agents. Their mission is to help Australian growers achieve best practice pest management with minimal pesticides.

It is a science-based company that:

- has been providing crop protection solutions and bio-control organisms for more than thirty years
- breeds beneficial insects and mites (good bugs to control bad bugs)
- is highly experienced in the field of fruit fly management
- offers a range of non-toxic alternatives to conventional pesticides
- conducts ongoing research and development into biological control and fruit fly management
- provides contract research in the field of integrated pest management

Bugs for Bugs has a close relationship with other research providers, including the departments of agriculture, universities and CSIRO.



Whilst the information on the next page is aimed at large scale operations, you can apply the same principles to your vege plot.

NEWS FROM BUGS FOR BUGS—LOOKING FOR WAYS TO PRESERVE, ATTRACT AND ENCOURAGE BENEFICIALS IN YOUR CROP?

One of the most important things you can do to improve your pest management outcomes is to get the environment right for biocontrol agents to thrive in your crop. This applies for both the willing army of naturally occurring beneficials and those that you strategically release.

The list of opportunities for you to improve your IPM outcomes in this way is endless, and the strategies you employ need to be tailored to suit your crop and circumstances.

A couple of basic principles apply in most situations:

- **Increase plant biodiversity and habitat for beneficials** (monocultures favour the pests that feed on them and are typically hostile environments for beneficials)
- **Minimise environmental extremes** (many beneficials are sensitive to hot, dry or dusty conditions)
- **Take great care with the use of pesticides** (minimise use and choose softer products)

Here are a few ideas to inspire you . . .



Tree crops grown as a monoculture are typically hostile environments for beneficials. A diversity of grasses and other flowering plants in the inter-row provides shelter, pollen and other alternative food sources for predators and parasitoids. These plants also help reduce dust and buffer changes in temperature and humidity. You can guess which of these almond orchards is more susceptible to pest outbreaks!



Mowing alternate rows (or mowing less frequently) in orchards and vineyards helps boost populations of predatory mites.



Flowering plants can add value in a variety of protected and field-grown crops. The examples above show (left) a strip of buckwheat breaking up the monoculture of a brassica crop and (right) alyssum planted between the rows in a protected rose crop where it acts as both a trap crop for thrips and a banker plant supporting populations of predatory mites and other beneficials.



Mulches help to create a favourable habitat for many soil-dwelling predators. Mulching around onion and garlic crops for example, helps boost populations of predatory mites that feed on onion thrips.

RATS & OTHER PROBLEMS

When it is very dry and food scarce, bush rats can be a problem, so I was very interested in the article in the May edition of ROGI News on the subject.

Rats are very destructive. They will eat through plastic if there is food inside and will eat greens and herbs to the ground.

We are also very reluctant to use baits and obtained one of the new style plastic rat traps from Capalaba Produce. We found it very effective provided you tied it to a secure stake, as an instant kill is not always guaranteed.

We used cheese in the trap but found it more effective if we used grain, cut up cheese or strawberries leading up to the trap. They are very cunning and will on occasions eat everything leading up to the trap but leave the cheese in the trap. We have even had them take the cheese in the trap without setting it off. However, on the days we never caught anything perhaps it was the magpies that took the food before we got up. I know when we set the trap the magpies were always trying to get the food, so we had to cover the trap and food with a bucket and go out on dark and remove the bucket.

Unfortunately, baits do not only kill the rat they can also affect anything that eats the rat once poisoned, so members with poultry or pets need to be extra careful. Obviously, care must also be exercised that only the rats can get to the bait.

Last year the problem was something eating a piece out of some of our strawberries when they were almost ripe. We had to cover them with netting which was large enough to let the bees through but small enough to keep everything else out. We never did find the culprit, but I suspected the magpies. We know it wasn't the blue tongue lizard that we occasionally see, as when he wanted a meal, he ate the whole strawberry and didn't care if it was green or ripe! If anyone has had the same problem and identified the culprit, we would appreciate their advice.

Garry Bromham



The yellow fruit pictured on page 15 is **BABACO**.

The babaco fruit is seedless and the smooth skin can be eaten - it is said to have the taste of strawberry, papaya, kiwi and pineapple. The fruit is pentagonal in shape, therefore giving it the scientific name of *Carica pentagona*. It is originally from Ecuador, and grows well in warm temperate and subtropical climates. Good drainage is required, as the plant is prone to root rot. It can produce 30-60 fruit a year, and has a lifespan of about eight years.



The Queensland Garden Expo is normally held in July, but this year has been rescheduled to be held on the first weekend of the school holidays in September. Mark these dates on your calendar:

Saturday 19, Sunday 20 & Monday 21 September 2020
Nambour Showgrounds, Sunshine Coast

For more information go to: <https://qldgardenexpo.com.au/>

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:



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

At this stage, we ask that you NOT bring larger pots, as there will be no swap/share/giveaway table.

ROGI is a beneficiary of the My IGA Card Program for **Cleveland IGA** store.

This is how it works:

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



Every time you shop in the store and use your card, not only do you receive discounts, you also help to raise funds for ROGI which we use to benefit our members.

Seed Sowing Guide

June

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, Warrigal
Swede
Sweet Potato
Tomato
Turnip

July

Artichoke: Jerusalem Artichoke
Asparagus
Beans, French
Beetroot
Cabbage
Capsicum/Chilli
Carrot
Celery
Chicory
Endive
Kohlrabi
Leeks
Lettuce
Peas
Potatoes
Radish
Silverbeet
Swede
Sweet Potato
Tomato
Turnip

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

Keep in mind that 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.**

Please Note: This guide is for sowing seeds, not seedlings. There may be several days or even weeks between the optimal time to sow a seed and to transplant a seedling.

Garden Visits & Other Important Info

Upcoming garden visits will be limited to 20-30 people only. Please ring Toni on 0402 323 704 or email her at events@rogi.com.au to book your spot and specify the time and which garden you wish to visit.

Sunday, 21 June (10am & 2pm)—Garden visit to Vicky Leggatt, Capalaba
Vicky's 1 acre property features vege gardens, chickens and she has great expertise in aquaponics. She is also establishing a food forest.

Sunday, 12 July (2pm)—Garden visit to Linda Brennan, Capalaba
Linda's 1.5 acre property features over 350 plants—fruit trees, vegetables and edible flowers. There is also a bush tucker area, herb terrace, and an old-fashioned slab cottage (featured in her article on page 4-5).

There will be plant sales at the garden visits, but no afternoon tea. If you wish, bring a chair and your own drink and food.

We'd like to hear from you!

For example, send us:

- A story about your garden
- A photo of an interesting plant
- An article about an unusual plant
- A request for items or information
- Specific garden or nutrition information
- A recipe for home-grown produce
- A notice that you have something to give away or sell
- A handy technique or tip
- A gardening problem solved
- Anything to do with organic growing
- A review of a ROGI library book

Please send your items to the editor and help keep the ROGI Newsletter topical, interesting, local and relevant.
info@rogi.com.au

The July Newsletter deadline is 1 JULY 2020

YOUR ROGI LIBRARY BOOKS ARE NOW DUE!!!

Please return your ROGI library books at the next ROGI function you attend—garden visit, meeting or film night.

Thank you.

BIOCHAR FOR SALE

Jill Nixon has more biochar from Spinifex Country Products for sale. She will bring it to garden visits, the film night and the ROGI meeting.
Please text Jill on 0418 717 735.

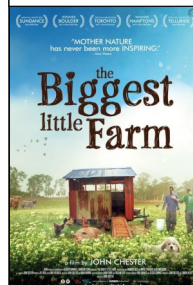
8 Litre:	\$12.00
20 Litre:	\$24.00
50 Litre:	\$44.00

For a new bed, the recommended quantity is 3 litres per square metre. This is a 'once only' application, as the biochar stays in the soil forever.

For more information, refer to the May ROGI Newsletter article on pages 20-21.

CHICKENS!!!

Please write in and tell us about your backyard chickens—any tips or info you might want to share (for the next newsletter).



FILM NIGHT

The first film night will be held on **Thursday 25 June at 6.30pm** in Capalaba (address given in email). For anyone who wishes to add their name to the list, please contact Linda at Linda@ecobotanica.com.au

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

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TREASURER	Greg Lindner	treasurer@rogi.com.au
COMMITTEE MEMBERS	Rhonda Binns, Toni Bowler, Ann Roffey, Terry Sullavan	

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SEED BANK	Seed Savers Grp	seeds@rogi.com.au
SUPPER	By Roster	group@rogi.com.au
WEBSITE	Pal Juvancz	pal@pcpals.com.au

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 St, Alexandra Hills. 0408 259 445

These groups may have temporarily stopped their face-to-face operations to comply with Covid-19 regulations. Please check with them for further details.

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

HIVE PARKING FOR NATIVE BEES

We are always interested in keeping our native stingless bees in other people's backyards. We need new spots for the coming season.

Here are some requirements:

- * Suburban acreage
- * South, east and south-west side of Brisbane and also south of Brisbane along the coast to say Ballina.
- * The site needs to be safe, secure, tamper-proof, shady and accessible

We would like to keep at least 12 colonies at each site. Please get in touch if you think this is possible for your place, or you know someone who would be able to help.

Some ROGI members are already happy hosts to our bees (talk with Margaret Sear or Ann Roffey).

We do not pay an agistment fee - the benefit to you is that you enjoy the pollination services provided by our bees.

Russell and Janine Zabel
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