

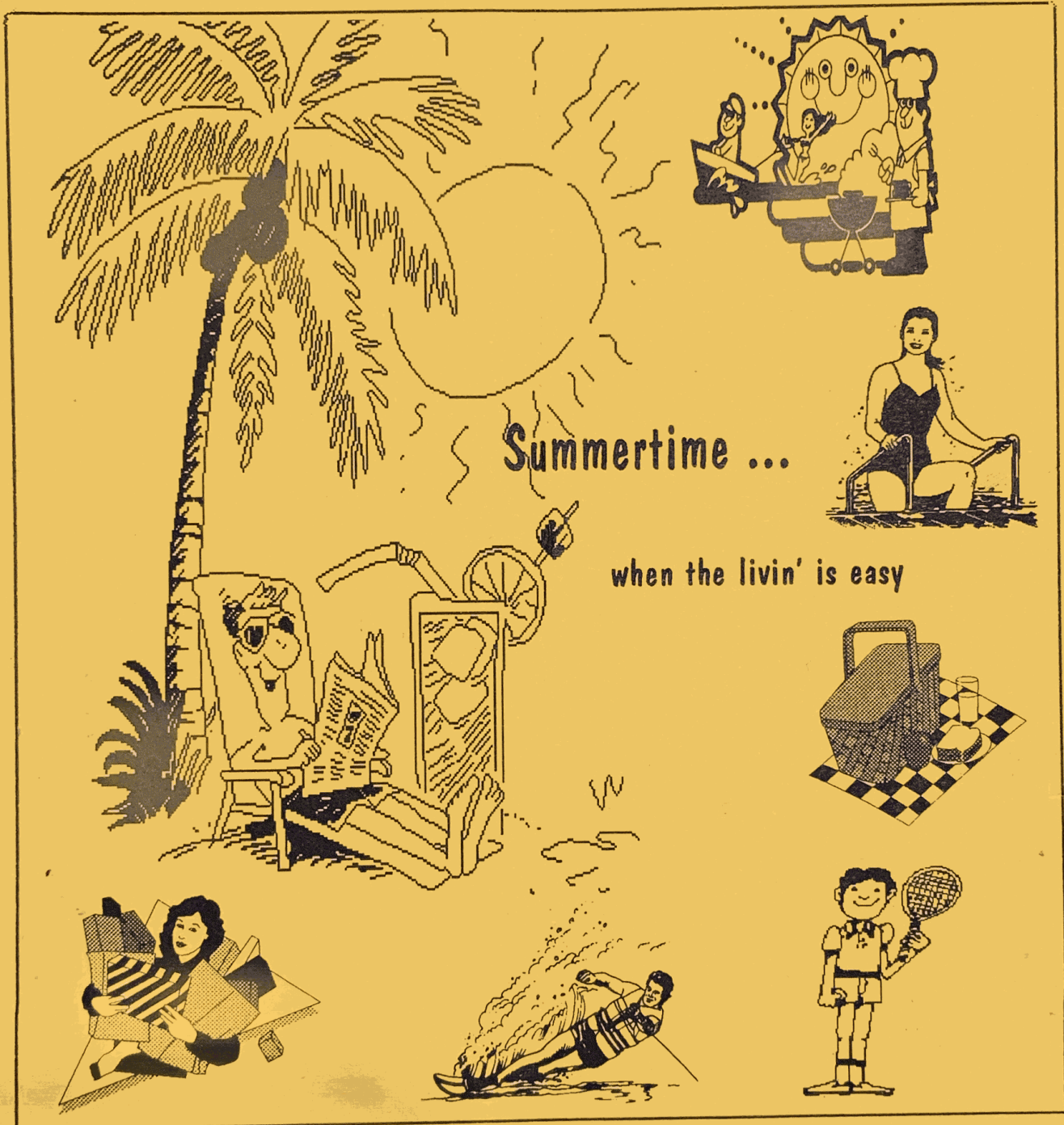
Summer '95/'96

Hunter Organic Growers Society

Inc.

H.O.G.S.

Quarterly Magazine



Editorial

I hope you find this edition of our magazine interesting and helpful. There are some really great articles this time, and I am very grateful to all who have sent their contributions in so promptly. It has actually been a struggle to fit everything in, and some material has been held over till another time.

So what do we have for you? There is an interview with Mary Hardy, our HOGS expert on worms; an interesting report of a visit to the Greenpatch Seed Farm; the MOG bows out with his final instalment; some well written reports of interesting field days; recipes for summer soups; book reviews and the other usual bits and pieces.

The thing that excites me most about this issue is the number of different contributors. They have their own styles, and it makes for very interesting reading.

We will soon have some articles from some members who are living in Fiji for a while, telling of life and gardening there. And I would like to get stories from members about their own experiences in organic gardening, how you have done things and coped with particular problems. Don't ever think that what you have done will not be of interest and help to others. I can assure you it is.

Summer brings busy times in the garden, maybe some holiday time, family visits, and I hope, a bit of time to read our mag.

Summertime also means that the new year is close. Our field day program for next year looks very promising. Put the dates in your diary now, and resolve to join in at our field days. Meanwhile, have a happy Christmas and the best year yet.

Athol Walter.

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The President's Word

SUMMER....Summer when I was young meant holidays on the coast, trips to the beach where you could earn pocket money by collecting bottles. Now, when the temperature rises I head for the shade with my tools, dreaming of sitting in that same shade with a good book and a long cool drink. Summer also means being diligent in keeping an eye on our surroundings for those of us who live close to the bush, as the danger of bushfires is always in the front of our minds.

The months since the A.G.M. in August have been busy ones. In September the weather dampened the venue but not the spirits of those at the Wildflower Spectacular, the rain was welcomed even if it did keep numbers down.

October had us run off our feet with two functions, the field day at John and Dorothy Priestley's and the Hunter Valley Garden Festival held at Maitland. Both were successful in different ways.

We're always grateful to John Priestley whose knowledge is vast and generously shared with our members when we visit his orchard. At the Hunter Valley Garden Festival, we talked and talked about No-dig Gardening in particular and everything else in general. Our book sales were not high but we gained five new members and many people took away membership forms. We hope to see them at future field days. A big thank you goes to all HOGS members who gave their time so generously to work on our stall.

In the near future we have our Christmas Field Day at Scrymgours', where we'll be able to stroll through a very interesting garden, after which we can enjoy sharing a Christmas feast and unravelling our garden mysteries.

Making new friendships and renewing old ones is something all of us look forward to during the coming year.

Sandra Hare.



Happy Christmas to all

Committee Cogitations

October.

The committee has authorised Ern Hades to purchase a new trailer to house the equipment that is required for field days and special events like Tocal and Garden Shows. Tony Honson has agreed to help Ern choose one that is reliable and suitable.

The proposed Kurri Kurri TAFE weekend has been cancelled.

The committee felt that the space allotted to us at the last Tocal Field Days was too small to suitably display our books. We are therefore going to enquire about renting a tent site for ourselves. This will mean moving from the Craft area to the Sustainable Agriculture area. We will ask for the option to move back to our original spot if this doesn't work out to our satisfaction.

There was some disappointment regarding the attendance and interest in our stall at the Wildflower Spectacular. We are looking for ways in which we can promote ourselves better, and of enhancing our displays.

We are discussing the feasibility of having a Market Day incorporated in a Field Day, in which goods such as vegies etc. and craft items can be brought and bought. We also discussed the possibility of having a working Field Day.

November

Ern Hades reported that a good trailer had been found, and he was authorised to buy it.

We will have our own tent site at next year's Tocal Field Days, hoping to have more room for displays and demonstrations.

Committee members are testing the viability of seed in the seedbank.

The book shop is overstocked with some titles and it was decided to sell off excess stock at reduced prices.

Those involved thought the Hunter Garden Festival was successful. Book sales were only moderate, but a number of new members were gained, and many people showed keen interest in the no-dig garden demonstrations.

Priestley's Citrus Orchard, Paterson.

By Mark Brown.

A glorious spring day greeted us at "Tillimby" just north of Paterson, where we were hosted by John and Dorothy Priestley.

I believe "Tillimby" is aboriginal for cold and windy, and though the wind did pick up everywhere but in the orchard, the day was far from cold.

We were welcomed by Sandra Hare, our President, who introduced us to John with the wish that we would find the day interesting and informative. For me it was both - and then some. John spoke in a way that was easily understood and it was obvious that he had a great love for and a great knowledge of the land.

He told us that citrus was introduced to the area just after the establishment of Richmond in 1780. By 1938 there were 143 orchards in the district. In the 1940s the emphasis was on juicing but the shortage of stainless steel during the war prevented the industry taking off. The relatively high price available for dairy products led to the establishment of a dairy industry on the orchard land. Degradation followed on the alluvial flats as the sandy loam had difficulty supporting the dairy cattle. It is very important, says John, that we grow what is suitable for an area, and not try to modify an area for what we want to grow.

The Paterson area is suitable for growing citrus. Set between two ranges, there is the effect of the ocean (32 km away) without the salt spray, and it is protected from the severe frosts experienced over the range to the west. Fungus is avoided by planting the trees in rows running north/south to catch the sun. Frosts are experienced but not with the ferocity of areas to the west, and frosts are vital to the trees to put them into dormancy. This dormancy affects the acid level - controlling the sweetness of the fruit. Other aspects of siting the orchard include :-

- ♦ an olive grove for birds such as cat birds,

bower birds, king parrots and others. The birds would rather eat the olives than the citrus.

- ♦ a diversity area between the two orchards providing habitat for pests and their predators, so maintaining the balance.

- ♦ possums are fed on the ground. If a tree is identified as having been visited by a possum, it is targeted as a feeding station.

John told us that insects are instruments of natural selection. They work to eradicate plants that are not working, and allow worthwhile plants to reproduce. An analogy can be drawn with the sheep industry, where we have bred the most drench resistant worms when we could have bred the most worm resistant sheep by not keeping sheep with a low resistance to the worms.

Rivers, too, are vital to the continued viability of the land. John told us of his belief that rivers have become just drains, and that degradation is not slowing or being turned around, but is accelerating even as we become more enlightened. If we look after the ecology, says John, that ecology will lead to the viability of the land. Nature has the ability to heal itself - just look, for example, at the oceans which have healed themselves after the ravages of war and the sinking of countless ships left oil slicks of huge proportions.

After John's introductory talk, we moved towards the orchard area, and passed an area covering 2½ hectares that had been planted with as many trees from the local ecology as could be obtained. The point was made that it makes very good economical sense to devote this much land to original species that will return all the diversity of the original ecology and assist the river system to stay alive.

There was also a compost heap which was spectacular. I had to grab a handful and feel it. The compost was made of lucerne hay, feathers, certified chook poo and cow poo, and fish - tonnes of it. The final ingredient was basalt rock dust which adds many minerals to the soil. The feathers contain about 40% protein, vital in promoting bacteria in the heap. Molasses could be added for the same effect. Just break it down in water and add it to your

pile.

The citrus leaves go through four shades of green in a growing period. A serious misconception is that the lack of "black green" in the leaves shows a lack of nitrogen.

Leaves can also indicate the phase of the moon since at different times of the moon phase the leaf will be flat or curved to varying degrees. It will be interesting to observe this in the coming weeks.

After the fruit is harvested, compost is applied to the trees, then mulch is added. Caloona peas are sown into the mulch, then prairie grass and other pasture is sown between the rows. This grass has two jobs. The first is to support machinery when the ground gets wet, and the second is to provide a suitable mulch material. The trees are sprayed with a liquid compost made up of fish, seaweed, cow manure and Biodynamic preparation 500. Hydrated lime is also sprayed - 5 lbs per 100 gallons of water - to control fungus. The lime creates an alkaline moisture during wet periods and the fungus does not like the alkaline condition. Two sprays are given per crop, or sometimes three.

The ground between the rows is not worked. The possible exceptions to this are when the ground is aerated with a big spiked roller and when the roots are pruned to stimulate vigour. This root pruning can be done if your tree is not growing as vigorously as you may like. John suggests you prune around half your tree one year, and the other half the next. Prune by driving a spade down into the soil inside the drip line. Pruning the branches is important to open up the centre of the tree and to provide new wood which gives better fruit.

Forty six different herbs grow in the rows between the trees in John and Dorothy's orchard, including scatterings of yarrow, comfrey, geraniums and clover. Wandering Jew grows under the trees to utilise the water. In a test conducted on the property, bare ground took one third more water than the mulched areas, but the areas with Wandering Jew required no water at all. It is suggested that the plant can draw moisture from the air and place it at its own, and the tree's, roots.

Bugs are a feature of the orchard. Good bugs, like five varieties of wasp and three types of ladybirds feature in the control program. A test done on site showed there was on average 8% marked fruit, when 14% is the acceptable figure in orchards

PATERSON'S CURSE

I travelled up to Pato
To see how citrus grow.
The property was new to me,
I didn't know where to go.
No matter how I tried,
I couldn't find the way.
But there were many people...
Lost on Priestley's Field Day.
The weather was a winner,
The day was really great
Once our wanderings were over
And we found the right gate.
Now John is no fanatic,
But set your mind at rest,
He grows it all organic
And it really is the best.
He covered many topics
Too numerous to mention,
But I'm sure all those present
Were thankful for his attention.
From all the newcomers like me,
To the organiser I make this
plea!!
Please narrow the gap
And print a mud-map!

Little Boy Lost

controlled by a chemical regime. Not bad control!

There is a wasp that follows the vinegar flies and will zero in on the fruit fly and attack it on sight. A strategy worth considering is to place pumpkins in the orchard to attract the vinegar fly. Another bug discussed was the "bronze olive" or "stink bug". Hunt them down at lunch time, when the temperature reaches 36 deg. At this time the bug can be

found at ground level. With goggles and gloves in place, pick them up. Squash them and add the juice to water to make an effective spray for any other stink bugs you encounter. Or, vac them up with a portable vacuum cleaner. A parasitic wasp that attacks bug larvae uses the draughts created by mulberry trees to escape the heat in the orchard.

There are some critical times in the orchard that have to be respected for successful citrus growing:-

- ♦ the six weeks following petal fall is the time for cell division in the fruit. Water is vital in these 42 days for the fruit to reach its full size potential.
- ♦ watch for when summer crosses into autumn and growing stops. This is the time when grasses etc. naturally pile around the tree and nitrogen is drawn to break it down. Piling grass around your trees in autumn will assist the balance between nitrogen and potassium which in turn will work to ensure sweetness in the fruit.

There was much more happening at various parts of this day, too much to be noted for this report. The only real answer to finding this information is to join us on the field days.

The perfect end to an interesting and informative day was to taste the delicious fruits of John and Dorothy's labours. ♦

C. J. Dennis on Gardening

But it must not be thought that I abjure all physical effort. Only the day before yesterday, I pulled up a dandelion. Next week I shall probably be busy pulling up the two other dandelions that will inevitably spring up in that place to avenge their brother. Dandelions are like that.

Professional gardeners are usually rather earthy uncommunicative men with a deliberate manner, a slight stoop and the dull fish-like eye of the confirmed pessimist.

For many years it has been my habit to divide gardeners into three classes. These are professional gardeners, professional amateur gardeners and amateur amateur gardeners.

Taken from "Great Aussie Quotes" by Bill Wannan.

Bert Anderson's Garden, Boolaroo.

By Sandra Hare.

Bert and his family live in close proximity to the Pasmenco Smelter at Boolaroo. There has been a lot said about the lead in the soil surrounding the smelter and to combat this, Bert's gardens are built up approx. two feet above ground level. The garden is a long standing one as his parents lived there before him and lived to a ripe old age.

In the raised garden beds, there is a mixture of soil, manure from Bert's goats and sand containing the urine. It is unusual to have goats in suburbia, and the council has visited the property regularly and Bert is very particular about the pens being cleaned out twice a day and fresh sand being laid for the goats.

The goats are very finicky. If their food is fouled by hair or manure they won't eat it, so it is recycled into the chook pen where there are Silver Spangled Hamburgs which have black spots on a white background - beautiful birds. The chooks eat all the seeds from the hay and straw, and every three months the pens are cleaned out and the residue is spread around the garden as required.

Bert likes to keep a rooster so that the eggs will be fertilised as he thinks these eggs are better for you. He thought he could probably live from his garden if the local supermarket closed down, except maybe for flour.

With such an abundance of manure eventually his growing medium becomes a rich black soil. It's no wonder everything grows larger than life. The plants are disease free and extremely healthy, and according to Bert, they taste great. There were a few holes in the cabbages, but Bert told us that he eats around the holes. There was even a very late crop of broad beans.

Bert explained that he puts his cabbages into freshly made beds, and follows that crop with carrots. Everything grows quickly and to a great height, with Grosse Lisse tomatoes climbing to 15 feet (that is not a typing error, yes, 15 feet high). I would need a ten foot

ladder to reach those at the top. Bert is already eating tomatoes from those planted in early September, that crop already five feet high. To combat fruit fly, Bert makes up a strong mixture of garlic and then dilutes it 3 to 1 and sprays the fruit rather than the whole plant.

Following a question about onions, Bert informed us that a mid-season onion available last year was not on the market this year, and instead, he had planted brown Spanish onions that he'd been pulling already. He had not yet bent the tops over which helped them bulb up better. This needs to be done without cracking the stems.

Bert always leaves some plants of each type, so that he can collect his seed for the next season. This statement gladdened the heart of our seed bank curator, as he asked members to share the open pollinated seed they save to ensure the survival of the various species. While Bert was talking about onions, he noticed that corn he had planted five days ago had popped its head up through the soil.

His watering is done each evening between 6 and 7 pm at the bottom of the plants with a gentle stream of water. This is also the time he does his weeding.

It is the goats which are Bert's true love. He took them when their original owner was unable to keep them. They are more than just manure producers. They are charmed with music during the day and while being milked, and these beautiful white animals have saved the lives of many young children who were not able to digest cows' milk, but instead thrived on goats' milk. They certainly live the life of Riley with Bert and a long life it is with some living to sixteen years. Bert had a young kid, which the children could pat. It was obvious that the kid was more apprehensive than the children.

The goats are fed on lucerne hay, chaff, mulberry leaves, bananas, gum leaves, sally wattle and all the left overs from the garden. Goats can be milked for up to four years without them having to kid, and after kidding they can produce up to two gallons of milk. Young milk-fed kid of eight weeks is a prized meat, and it took Bert a while to come to the decision to eat it.

We all enjoyed the walk around Bert's garden of abundant varieties of vegetables, and also appreciated the little tips like having black cotton crisscrossed over young lettuce plants to keep the birds off. We were also invited to taste the goats milk - which I found to my liking.

Unfortunately, Bert has some concern that he will not always be allowed to have his goats as suburbia slowly closes in around him. We wish him all the best and thank him and his family for allowing us the privilege of visiting his garden. ♦

DO-IT-YOURSELF GARLIC SPRAY.

Taken from Henry Doubleday Research Association in Australia's magazine, Natural Growing.

Take 3 oz of chopped garlic bulbs and let them soak in about two teaspoonfuls (50cc.) of mineral oil (toilet paraffin) for 24 hours. Then slowly add a pint of water in which ¼ ounce of oil-based soap (Palmolive is a good one) has been dissolved, and stir well. Strain the liquid through fine gauze and store it in a glass or china container because it reacts with metals.

Try it against your worst pests, starting with a dilution of 1 part to 20 parts water, then going down to 1 - 100. The effective mortality of the spray is as follows: cockchafer larvae 83%; wire-worms 87%; snails 73%; aphids 92%; codlin moth caterpillar 98%; cabbage white butterfly 98%.

A 1% solution on the palm will knock out the malarial mosquito.

Organically grown garlic is the most effective as it contains a higher percentage of "Allicin", the active principle of garlic. One way to start your own stock is to buy bulbs from a grocer or health food shop, split them into their 6 to 10 individual cloves, and plant them with their pointed noses just below the surface. Keep six inches apart and a foot between rows so they can be kept clean of weeds by hoeing, or mulch, on well composted soil in full sun. Lift them when the foliage dies, and store in an old nylon stocking hung in a dry shed, just as if they were onions or shallots. ♦

A Morning with Mary Hardy

by Athol Walter

A couple of months ago, my wife, Eveline, and I spent a delightful morning with Mary Hardy and her family at East Maitland. Mary has been in HOGS for many years now, and has become an expert in breeding compost worms. Not only did we want to find more about worms ourselves, but I thought a condensed version of our conversation with Mary could be of help to other HOGS members. We thank Mary for her wonderful hospitality that morning, and her willingness to share the knowledge gained from long experience, in spite of her not being very well. Mary's son, John, was present for most of the time, and contributed to the conversation, as did my wife, but for the sake of simplicity, I have just used the initials AW to denote the questioner, and MH to denote the answers, regardless of who asked the question or who provided the answer.

AW: How did you get into HOGS, Mary?

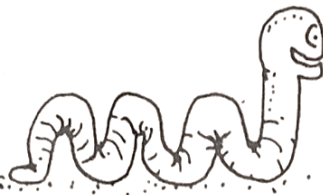
MH: I met Judy Miller, as she was then, who was working with unemployed youth in Cessnock. And she introduced me to HOGS. I think she was the editor of the magazine back there, and she used to write about what she was doing in her garden, and that was good.

AW: OK Mary, let's talk about worms.

MH: Right. I suppose mine go back 12, nearly 13 years, when I first got my worms. They came in the first place from Temora. We (farmers in the area) paid for a chap from the Dept. of Ag. to go down and get some worms for us, and he came back with \$100 worth of worms for each of us.

AW: Why did you have to get them from out there?

MH: Where was I going to get them from? There was nowhere around here. We had heard about the worms from the piggery officer in the Department. He came and asked my boys, who were running the farm, if they would like to be in a trial using worms. Well, we didn't know anything about them, so I decided that I would get them and have a go.



When they arrived, we didn't know what to do, but the piggery officer told us to dig a pit 18 inches into the ground. We found out that doing that is not always successful, unless you can have a good cover over it to keep the water out, otherwise it will just fill up with water.

The worms came in a cardboard box about the size of a shoe box, and I nearly died when I saw them. The box was full of manure, and I couldn't see any worms. The piggery man said that I was lucky because some of the others didn't get as many as I did.

AW: So what was the idea of getting the worms in the first place?

MH: We wanted to get something more out of the pigs than just pork, and the idea was for the worms to use the manure up.

We started with the worms in late June, and I sold my first lot of worms in the second week of September. It was a garbage bin full that I sold, so I tell you what, they really did get busy, those worms.

One thing we found out early was about how wet to keep them. I had to go away at this stage, and I had told the boys that they didn't have to worry about keeping the worm bin wet. If they left the lid off, the rain would do the job.

Well, there was a real downpour, and the

worms just took off.

AW: They got away?

MH: Yes, they were everywhere, hanging like grapes all over the place.

AW: So the soil or whatever you have them in, has to be damp but not wet?

MH: Yes, that's right. You must remember that. I have seen worms practically floating in some places. But they are very thin and cold looking worms, and you have to be careful.

I used to have some terrible arguments with the piggery officer. He wanted to put some gypsum in my worms once, and I nearly ate him. You don't do things like that.

That first year was very dry and we were just putting our dams in. So we used our bath water. We were carting water from town for domestic use. We pumped water from the dam for bathing, and after we had our baths, I would put the water on the worms. That's how I kept my worms alive, and I was the only one in the area who harvested worms. I think that all the others lost their worms that year.

Anyway, I approached various councils in the area about putting worms into the rubbish dumps, and I was the village idiot.

AW: So they thought you knew nothing?

MH: Yes. Now, of course, they are doing it. So, with worms, always make sure that they are damp, and that they don't overheat. Cow manure for instance, is a cold manure. You don't have much trouble with that. But horse and pig manure, and of course, chicken manure are apt to heat, so use them very carefully. Never use those manures over the whole area at once. You can use cow manure, although you will find that the worms won't go into it until it is about three days old.

In fact, the worms don't go into any food until they are ready. I don't think you can put fresh vegetable scraps into your worm farm. What I do, is put my fresh scraps in a bucket or drum with the lid on, for about three days before feeding it to the worms. And I just rinse that bucket, I never wash it. Because it contains the bacteria that will break down the vegetable scraps. It seems they have to go off a bit, for

the worms to really get into them.

AW: So the drum has to be sealed?

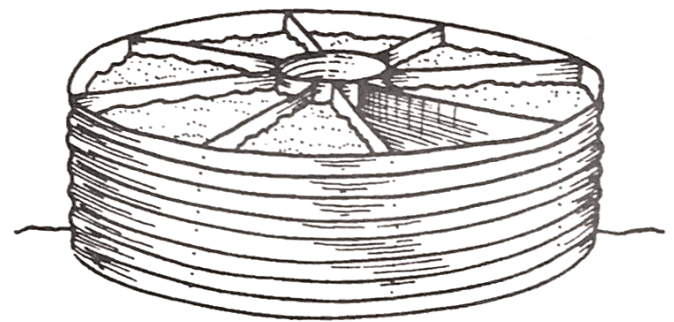
MH: Not necessarily. It just needs to be covered so flies etc. can't get into it.

If you pick up hard (cow) manure from the paddock, don't put it straight in to the worms. Soak it overnight, then put it in. Then you have the liquid manure for your garden - strain it off - and put the manure into the worms. Then they will get straight into it. There is no need to break up the big pats. Put them in whole, they seem to like it like that.

All worm farmers have different ways of doing things. I've never gone into the theory of it much. All I know has come from my practical experience. Really, growing worms is very simple. I don't think it is a complex thing at all.

AW: What about containers, what sort of things can you have the worms in?

MH: There are so many things you can use to put your worms in. The most successful container we ever used was an old water tank which we cut down to about 2 feet deep. No bottom in it. The worms won't leave, providing you keep them moist, feed them properly, and keep the container covered 24 hours a day. The worms do not like light, so if you keep them covered, they will work 24 hours a day for you.



"Our most successful container was a water tank"

AW: So apart from selling worms, how do you use them?

MH: We use the castings in the garden.

AW: How do you get the castings out? Just lift them out?

MH: Open the top on a nice sunny day. If it is the winter time, you can put a lamp over it

if you want to. And the worms will go down. The light forces the worms to go down deep. But once the worms have worked an area, they will have moved on anyway. So that is another thing you can do. Put their food on one side of the container, and the worms will go over to that side, leaving the other side free to get the castings out.

Of course, what you will have in the castings are the capsules, which will hatch out new worms. From about September until Christmas, they will breed like mad, and then they will breed well again in the autumn. They will lie dormant for about one month in the hot weather, and they will be dormant again in the really icy cold weather - probably about a month again.

AW: What do you think about the sort of worm bin you see in magazines which has a trap door on the side at the bottom. Do you think they work?

MH: I really can't comment, as I have never used one. What you will find is that all the material at the bottom is compacted. And there won't be many worms in it.

AW: So how do you get it out?

MH: Well, you can use your hands to push the looser material on top, where the worms will be, to one side, and take out the more compacted castings lower down. You can use a spade or something like that, but I like to use my hands, because the tools will knock your worms around.

Another idea I have seen is to use a couple of wooden boxes with an open side. This has a mesh of some sort put across it to keep the manure and worm food in. Use one box first, and work it until it is full. When the worms have worked it through, butt the open end of the other box up against it, and start filling the new one with manure etc. Expose the first box to the light, and the worms will go through the mesh into the other side. When you see they have all gone through, take the first box away, (cover the side of the second box to keep the light out), tip it out onto a table or a big sheet of something, and you will be able to pick out

the few worms that may still be there.

Also pick out the capsules if you want to keep breeding more worms, and return them to the material in the second box. Or start a new box with them.

"From September to December they will breed like mad."

It is also worthwhile to save the liquid that drains through.

You should always provide for drainage out of the bottom. That liquid that drains through is a very rich fertilizer.

AW: Now talk about the proper way of feeding the worms.

MH: OK. As I said before, I don't put fresh scraps or manure into my bins, but I suppose you can put fresh vegies in if you want to. But you must give the worms time to get into it. Manures - rabbit manure is the best if you can get it, and sheep manure will break down beautifully. Now, I have heard other worm breeders say that you must not use sheep manure under any circumstances, but I have found that after using sheep manure, the castings are unreal.

We have also found that we could mix the manures, sheep, cow, horse, but the castings from the sheep manure seemed to be better.

We also found that the worms bred very well in pig manure, but it had to be old, very aged. Once the worms got into it they went very well, but it was very slow to break down.

But it is not good to use pig manure by itself, because pig manure has a lot of salt in it. Not many plants can take a lot of salt, so it is best to mix it with other manures.

With any type of manure, you must make sure that the animals which supplied the manure have not been wormed for a period of a fortnight, because if they have, the worming medicine will kill the worms straight out. You could lose all your worms.

If you are going to sell worms, you must not oversell. I think you should not sell more than 10% of your stock at any one time, otherwise you will deplete your breeding stock too much.

AW: Now I see you have newspaper and carpet on top of your worms, Mary. What is that for?

MH: Well, that is to keep the moisture in, and the light out. When you first make your worm farm, soak your newspapers in a big bucket, and then put them on top of the worms. From there on, just keep the carpet and paper damp. This keeps the soil underneath moist. You must not let the mixture underneath get dry.

Then on top of the carpet, put a sheet of tin. This will keep the rain out, and also in the winter time it helps to keep them warm. In the summertime, lift the tin up and put it on a couple of pieces of wood to hold it off the carpet. This will allow the air to circulate under it, so it will not get too hot.

When you build your worm bin, or whatever you have them in, either have it open to the ground, or make sure there is drainage. I have my worms in two old bathtubs outside, and the plugholes are open to the ground, so the moisture can drain out.

If you don't feed your worms, or if you run out of food for a while, and the bin is open to the ground, the worms have somewhere to go. When you put feed into the bin again, they will come back.

Always have a sprinkling of sand or gritty soil on the top of your pile to give the worms something to grind up the food in their gizzards.

AW: How did you sell your worms, Mary? Did you advertise?

MH: No, I never advertised. It was all by word of mouth. I once sold a \$1000 order of worms to someone in Queensland, and I have sold three separate lots of \$700 each at times. I used to sell a lot of worms by mail, and sent them all over the place by rail.

We are still selling worms in small lots, and of course, use the castings in our own gardens. ❖

TWO TIPS FROM MARY.

If you need greens for your chooks, plant a little wheat around the edges of your gardens

Put a tblspn of cider vinegar in your chooks' water each week and they won't get worms

COLOUR FROM NATIVES.

By Lila Reay.

Australian natives can provide a colourful display of flowers all year round so long as they are grouped according to requirements.

Most of them like fairly deep, poor sandy soil and a deep watering once a fortnight. Planted thickly, they provide their own mulch. They include:

Banksia, Grevillea, native Frangipanni, Correas, Geraldton Wax, Callistemon, Proteas, native Rosemary and many other whose names I don't know.

But Christmas Bush likes a little blood and bone and the Calliandras like a rich soil with plenty of water.

Sturts Desert Pea is difficult because it likes the wide open spaces, but hates getting its leaves wet.

Waratah seeds germinate readily, but don't use a punnet - the seedlings have a long tap root.

Some wild strawberries make a thick ground cover that excludes weeds. The white berries run fast but I have contained mine by edging with the little red berries that clump.

Leschenaultia and Boronia like shade best. Brown Boronia grows wild in the swamps of W.A. And their Kangaroo Paws are used to winter water.

Others which like stoney or sandy ground and little water (from my reference notes) would be : Prostanthera, Hemigenia, Hemiandra, Wrixonia, Microcoris, Westringia, Teucrium.

Cool Ideas For Hot Days

1. When making your usual pot of tea, add a sprig of mint or balm to the pot before pouring on the boiling water.

2. Ice-cold peppermint tea is an excellent beverage to revive one on a hot day. Make a litre or so in the morning and chill it. To make: pick a cupful of fresh peppermint leaves (or use 1 tblspn of dried leaves) and put into a bowl. Pour 625 ml (1 pint) boiling water over, cover and infuse for 10 mins. Strain and sweeten with a little honey.

3. Pick a generous bunch of Eau-de-Cologne mint and arrange in a bowl of water: the strong perfume is refreshing and the hot atmosphere helps to draw it out.

From *Herbs for all Seasons* by Rosemary Hemphill.

SUMMER SOUPS.

By Lila Reay.

CONSOMME BASQUAISE

Fry 100g diced red pepper in a little butter. Boil 900ml brown stock and pour it on the pepper. Add 4 tblspns of boiled rice. Season with salt and pepper to taste and sprinkle with 4 teaspns of chopped chervil. Chill to serve 4.

JELLIED CONSOMME.

Make some clear brown stock which includes 100g mushrooms. (Vegetable water with a teaspoon of yeast extract is OK.) Allow it to cool. Sprinkle on 1 tblspn of agar-agar. Bring it back to the boil and simmer for 15 minutes. Allow it to cool, then add 100ml sherry and chill till jellied. Chop it up to serve sprinkled with parsley, lemon wedges and thin brown toast.

AVOCADO SOUP

4 large avocados, juice 1 lemon, 400ml natural yoghurt, 400ml white vegetable stock, pepper. Peel and chop avocados, mix with juice, stock and yoghurt. Blend to smooth, and chill.

ORANGE AND LEMON SOUP

225g cooking apples, peeled and cut but with cores in. 225g pears. Bring to the boil in 900ml of water. Add 5cm strip of lemon rind and 5cm strip of orange rind. Simmer 20 minutes. Remove the rinds and sieve. Add 2 tblspns of flour, mixed smooth in 4 tblspns water. Bring back to boil and simmer for 5 minutes. When cool, add ½ teaspn grated orange rind, 4 tblspns orange juice and 2 tblspns lemon juice and a little sugar, if desired, to taste. Serve with a slice of orange on top and thin almond biscuits.

APPLE SOUP

450g cooking apples, 900ml water, 7.5cm strip of lemon rind, 100g sugar, 5cm strip of cinnamon. Cook the apples to a pulp, then rub through a sieve. Add 2 tblspns of flour mixed in 2 tblspns of cold water. Bring the soup to the boil, simmer 5 minutes and allow it to cool

before chilling serve with nut biscuits.

PEAR SOUP

450g unripe pears. 1 vanilla pod. A little sugar to taste. Cook as for apple soup.

ALMOND SOUP.

225g almonds, blanched, skinned and vitamised. Press them through a fine strainer collecting all the milk. Make the milk up to 900ml with water, mix in 225g boiled potato, and a small pinch of salt. Sieve again. Add a few drops of rose water. Chill to serve with almond biscuits.

POTAGE BON FEMME.

350g thinly sliced potato. 100g chopped onion. Fry these in a little butter. Add 100g sliced leek, 200g sliced carrot, 900ml water or milk and water. Bring this to the boil, simmer 20 minutes. 25g thinly sliced carrots are cooked separately. Blend all else with their cooking liquid.

Adjust the thickness of the puree, season with salt and pepper. Cool, then chill. Serve with the extra carrot that has been cooked separately floating on top. Thin slices of wholemeal toast is the accompaniment.

CUCUMBER SOUP.

450g Lebanese cucumber peeled and thinly sliced. Cover with salt for 30 minutes, then wash under running water and pat dry. Add 400ml natural yoghurt, 2 teaspns finely chopped mint, ½ teaspn grated lemon rind, 1 tblspn lemon juice, 400ml iced water, freshly ground pepper. Put all in a blender till smooth. Chill 2 hours and serve with warm Pitta bread.



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HOGS Quarterly magazine is printed and bound by GOANNA PRINT P/L, Lot 10 Cessnock St. CESSNOCK. (049) 90 5439.

Field Day Organiser: Diedre Honson.

February 10th. 1996. Fragrant Gardens (043 677 322) Erina. Lunch is at 12 midday. BYO or partake of a light lunch at the new restaurant. We will have a guide at 1 pm who will take us around and explain various benefits and uses of fragrant and medicinal herbs.

The Fragrant Garden is a delightful place with many interesting features. To reach the Gardens from Newcastle, turn off the Sydney Freeway at the Ourimbah roundabout, follow the main road into Mann Street, Gosford and continue straight on to East Gosford. Continue on through Erina. At the big roundabout at Erina, take the Terrigal road. There are signs to the Gardens.

If you are unsure of the way, call into the Tourist Bureau, 200 Mann St, Gosford, just across from Gosford railway station, where you will receive directions.

March 9th, 1996. Summerhill Waste Management Centre, (550 355). "Introduction to Earth Works". Ian Gordon will give us an overview lecture showing various home composting bins, a worm bed, a selection of herbs growing in no dig gardens with future plans using Permaculture principles.

We will then have a tour showing recycling methods and what can be done with the green waste stockpile. The Throsby Creek Land Care Group have been helping with this project. Directions later.

April 13th, 1996. A visit to Michael and Jeanette Birchley's property, Palmers Lane, Rothbury.

Michael and Jeanette have 100 fruit trees, herbs and tomatoes which are grown with other vegies and lots of native trees. The soil is often very dry and we will be shown how these conditions are dealt with.

Fruit fly is controlled mainly by using various baits, and there is also a campaign to eradicate coddling moth. The property is nestled between Little's Winery and Pokolbin Cabins.

The Program for Our Field Days

The HOGS field days are usually held on the second Saturday of each month, excepting January. Any change of date will be noted in the calendar.

The committee usually meets at 10 am each field day, and members are welcome to attend. They may join in the discussion, but may not vote.

Lunch is at 12 noon, and you are invited to come and join us. It is stressed that members attending field days are responsible for their own meal and other refreshments. The committee arranges for hot water to be available, but it is not the responsibility of the hosts to provide food and drink for anyone attending the field day.

Field days usually commence at 1 pm unless otherwise stated in the calendar. We ask a donation of \$2 a family of those attending, to help with the general running of HOGS. The bookstall and the seed bank are usually operating at field days, and we hope you will patronise them.

Saving Seed

by Greg Murphy, Seedbank Curator.

Thank you to those members who have offered me their support and encouragement since I have taken over as the keeper of the seed bank. The reason that I took on this task was because I felt that when one belongs to a group, one only gets out of it what one puts into it.

I wanted to become an active member and thought that looking after the seeds would be a special way of being involved. I must say that I didn't realise that I would be called upon to prepare articles for the journal, nor give information on how to collect and save seeds. I thought my task was to look after, and sell the seeds. What do I know about collecting and saving seeds? Not much! I guess that there are a lot of members with little knowledge like myself. That's the answer; we can help each other. I am prepared to put the effort into reading articles on how to save seeds and to seek information from our informed members so that I can pass this information onto you. However, my expectation from you is that you have a go and save some seeds for yourself, and for the seed bank. It's a two way trip.

To assist the beginners, like myself, in saving seeds, let's look at the easiest types of seeds to save. These seeds include tomatoes, lettuce, peas and beans. We should all be able to save some of these seeds which will give us encouragement to save seeds that are more difficult to save next year.

"Take care that (plants) do not cross-pollinate."

Some of the points we need to consider when saving seed are as follows:

A. The most important point in saving seed is: **use self-pollinating, (non-hybrid) seeds.**

B. TOMATOES:

#1. Tomatoes are self pollinating. If you are growing different varieties of tomatoes, be careful that they do not cross-pollinate by insect or wind action. To avoid this you can place a paper bag or stocking over the flowers until the fruit has set. Then remove the bag or stocking and place a tag on that fruit so that you can easily identify them for seed collecting. If you are growing only one variety, you don't need to do this. Some gardeners plant a high crop such as climbing beans, between the different varieties of tomatoes, so as to prevent cross pollination.

2. When choosing which tomatoes to save, choose the best of that variety. Look at such things as the taste (a forgotten characteristic in the hybrid tomato); the size, if this is important to you; how healthy the plant is; how fast the plant grows; the plant that fruits the earliest; some gardeners even take into consideration the leaf density for shade in the summer period.

3. The experts say that it is advisable to choose tomatoes from a number of plants rather than from just one. These seeds are then mixed together so that you achieve a good cross section of seed.

4. Don't pick the seed tomatoes until they are overripe and choose the ones low down in the plant.

5. The best time to pick the tomatoes is in the morning.

6. Make sure you tag the tomatoes you are saving for seeds so that they are easily identified and are not picked for the table by mistake.

7. The seeds of tomatoes need to be fermented. This process removes unwanted seed-borne diseases from the seeds by the action of bacteria and yeasts. It is also the easiest method of removing the flesh from the seeds.

Saving Seed. Cont. from previous page.

8. When tomatoes are harvested they are cleaned by a process called wet cleaning. This is done by scooping out the seeds (dont forget to save the flesh for puree),into a bowl containing a small amount of water to cover all seeds and leave to sit for a few days at room temperature. You will find that after a period of a few days a foam or crust will form on the surface indicating that fermentation has occurred. As soon as this happens,scoop it off and carry out point 9.

9. Rinse the seeds by allowing running water to fill the bowl and at the same time gently stir the seeds with your hand. This will allow the debris and empty seeds to float, and slowly pour them out of the bowl.

10. Place the seeds in a sieve and give them a final wash under running water.

11. The seeds are then dried by spreading out firstly on kitchen paper to absorb the excess water, and then move to greaseproof paper for final drying. After a couple of days you will need to turn the seeds over to make sure they are completely dried.

12. Label your seeds; you may think that you will remember which is which; however, mistakes can be made.

13. When drying out the seeds, don't store them in the sun or in a draughty position.

14. Drying time varies with the weather conditions, but count on approximately 10 days. The best test is if they snap they are dry & if they are pliable they are still not dry enough.

15. Storing of the seeds is the final and very important process. Make sure that the seeds are DRY before you store them. It is suggested that you store them in a small paper bag and then store in a brown jar. Store in the coolest area.

So much for tomatoes, let's have a look at some seeds that are even more simple to save.

C. BEANS & PEAS:-

1. Choose the plants that have the most desirable characteristics for your needs, e.g.the earliest maturing, most healthy and

vigorous grower,abundance of fruit with good seed pods.

2. Dont forget to tag the plants you are going to save seed from and place a no-touch label on them.

3. Leave the seeds on the bush until they are dry. The dry pods can be harvested on an individual basis as soon as they dry.

4. Open up the pods and remove the seeds. It is as simple as that.

5. It is now necessary to test the seeds to determine if they properly dried, noting that larger seeds take longer than the smaller ones. Test by biting the seed with a reasonably firm bite. No bite marks indicates the seed is ready. If not, dry a little longer and then test again.

6. Seeds can be dried in many ways such as in a bowl in a warm position out of direct sunlight; on paper; they can be placed in paper bags and hung in a place where there is a breeze.

7. Discard any seeds that are blemished or shrivelled.

8. Bean seeds can be attacked by weevils. It is a good idea to put the beans in a jar and freeze for 48 hours prior to storage. This will destroy any larvae already under the skin of the bean.

9. After you have frozen the beans make sure you thaw them out to room temperature in the jar, prior to opening the jar and that they have dried out prior to storage.

10. Store in a paper bag and in a dark bottle. The method of storage of seeds is debatable. The reason this method is suggested is that the paper will absorb any excess moisture and the jar will keep our weevils. I have used many bean seeds that have been kept in a paper bag or a plastic tablet container.

#11. Peas are picked from the vine when they rattle in their pods. They are treated the same way as for beans. Simple isn't it.

D. LETTUCE:-

1. Lettuces are self pollinating. Nevertheless,if you are growing different varieties, it is a good idea to separate them

Saving Seed. Cont. from previous page.

either by a distance of 2 to 3 metres, or by a high crop.

2. Choose the best of your crop to go to seed and stake the seed stalk.

3. Cut the plant at the stage when approximately 2/3rds of the flowers have turned a fluffy white colour. Prior to this you may wish to cover the seeds with a stocking or paper bag to collect the seeds.

4. Place the seeds on a large sheet of paper to dry. As the seeds are so light find a place that is free of draughts.

5. After COMPLETE drying, rub the seed heads in your hands until such time as the thousands of little capsules pop open.

6. Then place everything into a bowl and shake the bowl which will result in the lighter material coming to the top. This can be picked out with your fingers, or if you are game, try lightly blowing it off. You can also try sieving with a suitable gauge mesh. This will give you reasonably clean seed.

7. Store the seeds in a dry, cool and dark place in a paper bag in a container.

Well that wasn't too bad for a beginner, but let's recap on the important points in saving seeds.

Firstly, it is necessary to choose a non-hybrid variety of seed for saving.

Secondly, we choose the best of our plants. We don't want to save seeds from a plant that is not healthy or doesn't have great fruit.

Thirdly, we ensure that the fruit is picked at the correct time.

Next, we take care in preparing the seed for saving. There is a right way and a not so right way.

Finally, we store the seed under the best possible conditions.

Just a minute! I have forgotten something. What about a donation of your seed to our seed bank? When donating seed, the seed bank curator requires the following information :-

- the name of the seed and its characteristics;
- how many generations it has been home grown;
- the source of the seed (heritage, seed company, seed bank, etc)
- when and where the seed was collected;
- your name, telephone number and the district it was grown in.

I hope I have given beginners sufficient information to start saving your own seed. If you require further information, there are many books available, e.g. the Seed Savers Handbook, which assisted me in this article and which can be purchased through our book stall.

I am happy to make myself available to discuss seed saving and any problems you may be having in this area.

A point of warning!

I am not in a position to accept seed that has not been properly cleaned nor has the required information accompanying it. The seed bank presently has a number of seeds in this category. It is embarrassing when purchasers ask me questions about the seed and I have no information to give them. If our seed bank is to be viable so that we can save seeds for our children's grandchildren, we need to follow the basic guidelines I have indicated.

Have fun with your seed saving. ♦

A Children's Christmas Wreath

By Lila Reay.



Take a thick piece of cardboard and mark on it two circles, one inside the other.

Use a compass or two plates as outlines. Cut out the wreath. Cover all the front thickly with craft glue and pieces of bow pasta.

When it is thoroughly dry, paste a loop of ribbon on the back at the top to hang it. The whole can then be spray painted with gold. Decorate it with a sprig of holly or whatever. Simple and effective

Greenpatch Organic Seed Farm Open Day

Report by Anonymous.

Fellow members of HOGS kindly invited us to join them on a trip to GreenPatch Organic Seeds Open Day near Taree on Sunday, 29th. October. A number of workshops were to be held that our friends thought we might be interested in.

The trip there took three hours by car, through beautiful countryside, driving inland through Wingham towards Elands. The weather was delightful and we had a thoroughly enjoyable and informative day.

Unbeknown to us, however, there was an ulterior motive behind this invitation. - at the end of the day we were asked to write an article for HOGS magazine on the day's events. Write an article? Who, me? No way! I wouldn't know where to start.

When we arrived at Greenpatch, my first impression was of peace and tranquillity. Surrounded by mountains, we were in a lush, green valley, with a river running through the property for their water supply. Everything was neat and tidy and the place gave you the feeling that it was tended by people who loved and cared about what they were doing.

At Greenpatch, non-hybrid fruit, vegetables, flowers and trees are grown 100% organically for their seed content.

The first lecture was by Neville (the owner) explaining the dangers of "Genetic Engineering" (GE) and patenting of seeds. What is GE and patenting of seeds? The tampering with our fresh food chain, and the control so that we can no longer keep and freely trade our seeds.

We have already lost hundreds of various fruit and vegetables, so that now, for example, there are only a few types of cabbage, a few types of apples, tasteless tomatoes etc.

With GE, genes are inserted into the cells of

fruit and vegetables for various reasons, for example, to delay the rotting time, thereby extending the shelf-life, and to prevent fruit such as apples going brown when cut.

Herbicide-resistant genes found in one plant can be transferred to other plants, which means that chemical manufacturers can produce more toxic products because it will not be harmful to the genetically engineered plants. And what of the accidental gene transfer from the pollen to weeds? Will those herbs then also be herbicide resistant?

GE does nothing to guarantee the nutritional value of our food, and we would no longer know the contents of our fresh fruit and vegetables. Chicken and meat are examples of food that contain additives such as antibiotics.

Then there is the "patenting" of the seeds after "they" have altered the food chain. At a cost of around \$800 to patent each type of seed, it will be inhibitive for the small producer such as Greenpatch.

So, who are "they"? They are the corporate giants and chemical organisations. "They"

"Genetic Engineering is ... tampering with the food chain ..."

will own the seeds, you will lease (not buy) the seeds, so that each time you want to plant some more you will have to buy more seeds.

We have heard these warnings many times before. Are we listening? Or are we going to wake up a few years down the track and find that we are no longer allowed to grow our own non-hybrid, organic fruit and vegetables? Or that our fruit and vegetables have no taste and contain additives of who knows what?

(If you care, and would like to know more, there is a very good article in Permaculture International Magazine, Issue No. 55 - D.N.A. - The Organic Rip Off.)

The second workshop was conducted by

Keith, who helps out at Greenpatch, and also grows bamboo and water chestnuts, amongst other things. Keith explained that there are two types of bamboo - running and clumping. The running form is one we all think of when bamboo is mentioned, as it's the one that takes over wherever it is planted. The clumping form, however, as its name suggests, stays together in a clump. It does increase in size, and if you don't want it to get out of hand, it should be cut back periodically.

Bamboo can be used for all sorts of purposes. Keith demonstrated how to sliver the bamboo into four strips, so that it will bend perfectly to make dome stakes which can be placed over your vegetable patch, adorned with bird netting. After the bamboo demonstration, Keith showed how to grow water chestnuts.

The next workshop, run by Neville, turned out to be most informative. We were shown how to extract seeds from the plants. This was done by placing the collected dry plants in a large sack (the big white ones such as is used by Dynamic Lifter etc.) and the end tied. The sack was placed on the ground and Neville proceeded to jog on it. He then removed the stalks and was left with the seed husks and small debris.

This material was put through several sieves until the seed was separated from the unwanted husks and debris. In the case of the really small seed, Keith placed it all in a dish, gave it a few gentle shakes which caused the seed to go to the bottom of the dish with the unwanted material on top. He then softly blew the unwanted parts away. Simple! Oh, the hours I have spent trying to pick seeds off the stalks, and more often than not, I've thrown half the seeds away because it was so time consuming.

Next came the demonstration on how to mix your own potting/seed raising mix. (It does help if your soil is reasonably good. Ours isn't - it's clay.)

Equal amounts of hardwood sawdust, soil and washed river sand were used. The sand

Neville used was from the river flowing through the property. The sawdust has to be prepared by adding something like blood and bone to it in the ratio of 1 part blood and bone to 15 parts sawdust. This is left in a heap to break down for about 7 to 10 days. When it is ready, sieve it (about 10 mm holes). The dry soil is then sieved on top of the sawdust mix, and finally the river sand is put through the sieve. (Anything that won't go through the sieve is discarded.



The sieved sawdust, soil and sand is then thoroughly mixed together. To this, add something like Dynamic Lifter. It is now ready to be used to sow your own seeds, or to pot up your plants.

And talking of seeds, Greenpatch have a great variety of non-hybrid, organic seeds and a free catalogue is available by writing to them.

(See their advertisement on this page.)

We ended the day with a tour of the farm. If you have been wondering about going to the Greenpatch Open Day, I can recommend it as well worth while.

A really enjoyable, informative day was had by all. There is no way, however, that I could write an article about it. I just wouldn't know where to start. ❖

(Editor's Note: The author's name is withheld by request. I hope that a more detailed article on Genetic Engineering might be forthcoming.)

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The Mog Rides Again

(For the sake of readers who have not read the previous instalments, MOG stands for Mug Organic Gardener.)

Some Plans Come into Being.

Time slips by so quickly, it seems. It is hard to believe that it is nearly 12 months since we moved onto our little farm. When we first came here, I wondered how we could get everything done, but I am pleased to say that at least some of those things have started to take shape.

In our last chat, I was telling you about my little 12 volt solar pump. I had used it to run a sprinkler, but I had greater visions for it than that.

So several months ago, my wife and I ordered three galvanised iron tanks. I had originally wanted a concrete tank, but my wife pointed out that galvanised iron tanks cost much less. You can see who has the brains in this family, can't you. As it turned out, we got the three tanks for less than what one 2000 gal. concrete tank would have cost.

One of these tanks, of 1000 gallons capacity, was to go on the top of the rise above the vegetable gardens. The solar pump would fill it from the large dam, and we would water the gardens below by gravity. The second tank of the same size was for the end of the shed, to catch all the lovely rain water cascading from the roof. A general back up for the house.

The third tank is 1200 gallons, and is to take the runoff from the house verandah roof. This water is now fed into the main house tank through a badly designed downpipe system, and more water overflows from the gutters than goes into the tank. I intend to connect this tank up to the toilet cistern, by-passing the house pressure system. So we will not be taking the toilet water from the main house tank, and also, the cistern does not need high pressure water to fill it, and so will lessen the use of the pump considerably. Country readers

will be well aware that the toilet is one of the major users of water and the pressure pump in the house.

So they were the plans. We had the tanks built in Maitland, and by transporting the tanks ourselves, we would save at least \$100. We brought one tank home on the back of our utility one day, and went back the next day, with the trailer, for the other two. It so happened that it was rather windy the second day, and although the tanks were roped down quite securely, it was a nerve-racking ride home. Every gust of wind seemed to push and pull at the tanks. I could see the trailer in the rear vision mirror, swaying and rolling in an alarming manner.

**"I could see the trailer swaying
in an alarming manner".**

We stopped a number of times to check the ropes, and settle things down (my nerves, mainly), and

finally got home without any mishaps. But I was almost a nervous wreck.

Well, I soon discovered that bringing the tanks home was the easy part. Now came the job of building stands for the tanks. I had been wondering about different materials such as pipes or bricks to make the stands, and finally realised that I had stuff on hand that would serve very well for the tank on the hill, and make the job easy.

I had some lengths of poles which had been treated against termites and rot. These were about 2 metres long, and 30 to 40 cms in diameter. I had a flat area where the tank was to go, so I chose two of the logs about the same size, and dragged them up the hill to the site. It didn't take long to get them level, and lay three large pieces of timber across them as bearers. These were among a heap I had been saving for some time. I always knew they would come in handy one day.

I bought enough 6" x 1" planks for the floor of

the stand and had it all nailed together in a couple of hours. It was easy to put the tank on the stand, and I had taps and fittings ready to go. So in went the nipple and tap, and then we used the petrol pump to fill the tank about a quarter full to hold it down in case the wind came up. It took another day or so to rig up the poly pipes from the dam to the tank, and from the tank down to the garden, where I put in a stand pipe with a 19 mm tap on it. From here we run hoses to the gardens we want to water, and I was delighted to find that there was enough pressure to drive a spinning sprinkler quite effectively.

Eventually, I will have pipes running to each garden bed with small spray or dripper units controlled by their own in-line taps, and we won't have to drag the hoses around all the time.

For the technically minded, I have used 19mm poly pipe from the dam to the tank because that is the size pipe the little pump takes. The feedline down to the gardens is 25mm, which gives considerably more pressure and flow than a 19mm pipe would. And the distance from the tank to the vegie garden tap is 30 m.

I was very interested to see how long it would take to fill the tank with the 12 volt pump. It was already a quarter full you will remember, so that meant 750 gallons to go. It took the little pump just over six hours before water ran out of the overflow pipe. I was ecstatic, and since then, the little pump has kept the tank full without any trouble whatsoever.

And what of the other two tanks, I hear someone ask. I was hoping no one would ask that. They still sit patiently on their temporary stands waiting to be connected up properly. Now you know why I merit the title of Mug Organic Gardener.

I must say, however, that I am very pleased with the way the plans have worked out so far. There is still more to be done, as we want to take the line down to the house. That means another trench about 30 metres long, not an easy job in our rocky soil. Which brings me to the next part of my story.

Boys And Their Toys.

One of the desires of my heart when we came here was to have a tractor with appropriate attachments to make our life easier. For some time I scanned the papers to see what was offering, and would you believe it, hardly anything in the price bracket I had in mind. People I spoke to kept saying that there were plenty around, and that they had known of a marvellous buy the week before, but that was gone. Big help!

As with all our other projects, the available cash was a limiting factor, so all the \$8000 plus marvels were out of the question. I had it in mind that a little Massey Ferguson would be just right, but there seemed to be nothing of any make that was any good.



After some weeks, I saw an ad for several tractors that seemed interesting and rang up about them. Lo and behold, there was a Fergie TEA20 amongst them. We arranged to go for a look, and after a trip of about 60 kms, we found the place. There was a David Brown 880 for sale and although I would have liked that one, it was really too expensive. So we settled on the Fergie, which was nicely painted up, and we also got a slasher and carryall with it. It was a little more than I had hoped to pay, but I had not found anything else, and the owner was prepared to deliver it to us for no extra the next day.

I could hardly wait for him to arrive, and when he did it was like Christmas in March. I have had a lot of fun using the tractor since, and it has certainly proved useful. For instance, the lengths of poles that I mentioned earlier had been lying around the front of the house. They were too heavy to move by hand, but now I had them shifted to a better spot behind the woodheap in about 30 minutes.

As many readers will know, the MF TEA20s are quite old. They stopped manufacturing

them in about 1957, but they are still very popular, and best of all, parts are easily obtained. Mine is a petrol model, and has a high and low ratio gearbox. It is well worn, but has worn quite well, and so far has performed OK.

The slasher is a 5' model, which is a bit big for the tractor, but these little tractors have big hearts, and it handles it very well. We have slashed the front paddocks, and a little bit up the back, and it has certainly improved the appearance of the place. I am hoping that the slashed grass, left to break down where it lies, will help to improve the soil.

I have told in earlier instalments how I have picked up stones and rocks using the wheelbarrow. The job has been so much easier with the carryall on the tractor. I soon found out, however, that there was a limit to the amount of rocks we could put on at one time. The hydraulics would lift them alright, but if the load was too heavy, the front wheels would rise off the ground, and this made for very interesting steering characteristics. All part of the fun.

I borrowed a single tine ripper from a friend, and this has proved very useful.

One of the things most needed here were some contour drains across the slope to stop the rains carrying away the meagre top soil we have. So having marked out a level line across the slope, and having attached the ripper, I made my first pass. It was a disappointment. The tine just bounced across the hard ground. We needed more weight.

I had a long length of heavy chain, which I draped on the ripper, and that worked a little better. I had to leave it for several days then, and before I could have another go, it rained. When I tried it after that, the tine sank in reasonably well, and I started to get my drain.

I then had another brain-wave. I called out my wife, who is very keen to share in all I do. After a bit of coaxing, she climbed up on the ripper frame, and stood there holding on for her dear life, while I made another pass along the line. The difference was dramatic. The tine went in to its fullest extent, and after several passes, we had the soil loosened wide enough

for the drain. I still had to dig the soil out, as the ripper does not throw it out by itself. It was hard work, of course, but much easier and faster than without the Fergie and the ripper.

Since then, I have ripped the channels for the water pipes, and it will not be long before we have our watering system complete, pipes in the ground, with taps etc. at appropriate spots.

I can hook the trailer onto the back of the tractor as well, so it is handy for getting firewood, rocks and whatever else has to be carted around. So having the tractor and its attachments makes life easier.

Learning by mistakes

If you have the impression that life here is just one success after another, then I must quickly correct that. We have made plenty of mistakes, and a fairly standard catch-phrase at MOG Hollow is, "Well, we will do better next year". Here are some examples.

We were impatient to get things growing in the garden so we could be eating our own vegies, and we had successes with the first crops such as beans, beetroot, lettuce and tomatoes. But we tend to get a bit carried away, and while we are sitting back patting ourselves on the back, time goes by and we forget to plant the next crop.

So by the time we got the cabbages, caulies, broccoli and brussel sprouts in it was really too late for most of them. Why brussel sprouts, I hear someone shudder. Well, we had never grown them, and thought it might be worth a try. I had prepared a couple of new no-dig straw gardens, and in they went.

The growth was slow at first, as the days were closing in and getting colder, but after a while they took off, and particularly the sprouts, grew thick and tall. The leaves were dark green and looked great and again we started to feel quite proud of ourselves. The cabbages (sugar loaf) hearted up nicely and have given us many a tasty meal. The caulies grew and grew, but no hearts. The brussel sprouts seemed to be trying to imitate sky scrapers, but no little sprouts. We are so green ourselves, we were not even sure where to look for them. After several months small tufts of leaves started to form in the junction of the leaves and stems.

We waited but they got no bigger. I had read that the bottom leaves should be broken off as the fruit forms, so I did that on the one plant that had sprouts. It had very little effect on the sprouts, but the bush itself shot up and gave every sign of wanting to go to seed.

Then, in a new book I got from the HOGS bookstall, I read that brussel sprouts must be in around Christmas, certainly no later than the end of January. I am ashamed to say, dear reader, that it was late April when we put ours in. No wonder all we got was lovely big green leaves. We did get one little serve of sprouts which were not bad, and it was worth the try, but next year, they will be in on time. I hope. I promise.

As I said, the cabbages were wonderful. We thought the caulies were a dead loss, but three or four have hearted, and they are a bonus.

What other sins have we committed? Oh yes, the peach tree. I went to the field day at Honson's place, where I heard Tony say you must spray peach trees at bud swell with a Bordeaux mix, otherwise it is too late. You will probably get curly leaf. I even wrote that wise advice in my little notebook.

Did I observe the bud swell on our peach tree? Yes, I did. (The blossom had been beautiful, too.) Did I spray with Bordeaux mix? No, I did not. Did we get curly leaf on the peach tree? Yes, we did. Well, why didn't I spray? I don't know, but what else can you expect from a Mug OG?

I also have two big bins where I compost sawdust and other exotic ingredients. Have I turned them as often as I should? No, I confess I have not. How often have I turned it? Once in about two months. No wonder it is not breaking down very quickly. Well, you may ask, why haven't you turned it more frequently? What can I say? It is hard work, and there are so many things waiting to be done. One cannot play - oops I mean work - on the tractor and turn compost heaps as well, now, can one? And there has been firewood to cut, and books to read, and grass to be mown, and stumps to burn out, and books to read, and garden shows to go to, and field days to go to, and books to read, and family to visit ... Well, you know how it is.

But let's finish on a more positive note. My wife and I look around our little kingdom every so often, and we see all the things waiting to be done. It can be a bit depressing. Yet, when visitors come they tell us that so much has been done since they were here last. Which is encouraging. So let's list some of the good things.

We have made more garden beds, the pile of rocks from the future garden area is getting larger and larger, the tank for the gardens is in place and working. And we are currently picking celery, shallots, carrots, silver beet, spinach (almost finished), cabbage, caulies, strawberries, half a dozen different herbs and some straggly mandarins.

Seeds that are coming up are beetroot, lettuce, swedes, parsnips, carrots, spring onions, marigolds, nasturtium, tamarillo, cucumber, pumpkin, water melon and rock melon. Several self-sown tomatoes are fruiting, with more plants hard on their heels. My wife has planted a couple of passion fruit vines and a choko up the hill. And our neighbour has given us a couple of small mulberry trees.

We have been given quite a number of bottle brush and grevilleas, and have also bought some ourselves, and these are slowly being planted around the place. The liquid amber trees lining the driveway are in full leaf, and have made good growth since we first came. All in all, we are finding our life here very satisfying and rewarding in spite of our mistakes.

What more can we need than a few acres of our own, a wonderful family close by, good friends all around who visit often, and nature providing for the needs of body and soul?

My wife and I wish you a very happy Christmas and a great new year. Hope to see you at the next field day.

(Editor's note: We bid farewell to the MOG as he rides off into the sunset on his trusty Fergie. He informs me that this will be the last instalment, at least for a while, as he thinks that he has brought us up to date with their doings. I join with the MOG and his wife in hoping that this account of their experiences on their little property has been of interest and help to our readers. I would be very pleased to hear from anyone else who would like to share their adventures with us.)

COMPANION PLANTING by Brenda Little. Drawings by Ken Gilroy.

Reviewed by Bob Brownbill.

I chose this book after a very interesting field day at John and Dorothy Priestley's orchard; and the mandarins - they were the sweetest our family had ever tasted.

Now there was no intention on my part to review a book - never volunteer being the call during the service days - but the choice was made easy because I knew little or nothing about the subject. Oh sure, I knew about garlic with the roses to repel the dreaded aphids, and marigolds and garlic alongside the tomatoes.

Then judgement time. After reading the book which is very well presented from A to B; plants, diseases, pests and predators all well described and drawn; herbs, which are my wife's interest in so much as she has in a small herb garden alongside our old shed where there is already Aloe Vera, mint, not to mention chokoes, rhubarb, Ern Harde's experimental corn, and weeds doing well amid the ever persistent onion grass.

Now with the new-found knowledge, our veggie garden was assessed and found wanting, or rather I was. The dwarf peas had been grown alongside the main garlic crop, peas fine, garlic terrible (fortunately). Luckily, there was a back-up crop planted as next year's seed - lesson learned. That crop was in with the goodies - lettuce and cabbage.

Then a failed bean crop. The book says field mice like the seed. Lesson learned. Dip the seed in kero before planting. Now another no-no. Planted parsley alongside mint. Write off parsley.

Many years ago as a boy, I worked on farms in England, and the old farmers told me they always rotated their crops year by year, with some fields allowed to lie fallow - unplanted or ungrazed. Now another lesson in the book is that this situation applies in gardens too. Different plants use different nutrients out of the soil. Legumes put in nitrogen but compost is the best builder of humus.

But I digress, the lesson learned is that from now on there will be a diary kept of the whole previous year's plantings, fertilizers applied (organic, of

course), so that a rotation system can be planned. To some of our members, this may seem like preaching to the converted, but there may be some beginners among our ranks who may learn from the mistakes of others like me, and this I believe, is what our organisation is all about.

So to give you my opinion on the book, it is very well written in simple terms that will help most gardeners old and new. I think it is so well worth its price, that this one is not going back onto the book table. I'm buying it for myself. The price on the HOGS book stall is \$10. ♦

Book Bargains

A TO Z OF USEFUL PLANTS by Jackie French

In Jackie French's usual style this book is well documented and gives a practical use for the plants that are growing in your garden. Each plant is divided into cultivation, use and recipe, so you can try out a wide variety of things from roasting your own coffee to making candles from banksias.

Usual Price: \$14.00. Sale price : \$11.00 plus \$2 postage.

BASIC HERB GROWING by Joanne Warren

This small hard covered book gives a simple outline for anyone wishing to grow herbs. It is designed for Australian and New Zealand.

The book is divided into twelve chapters, starting briefly with history, and then taking the reader through growing, companion planting, propagation, cooking, health and beauty, herbal remedies and herb drying. Ideal for a beginner.

Usual price: \$15.00. Sale price: \$12.00 plus \$2 postage.

These specials will be available at our Christmas Field Day. There also will be other titles reduced for a Christmas Sale. ♦

ORGANIC GARDENING by Peter Bennett (Revised Colour Edition)

Review by Athol Walter

I acquired this book at the field day back in June, and have put it to good use since then.

Peter Bennett is a journalist, broadcaster, specialist lecturer and professional consultant in alternative horticulture and agricultural ecology. The book was first published in 1979, and has gone through many printings since. The author is based in South Australia, which makes his work relevant to southern temperate Australia.

Organic Gardening is a large book of 208 pages, the pages being almost A4 size, so there is plenty in it.

The author's commitment to organic gardening and alternative styles of horticulture is undoubted, and organic gardeners, whether beginners or more experienced, will learn a great deal from this book. I found the style of writing easy to read, and the information is presented in a logical manner. There are many tables and photographs to support the text.

There are 9 chapters, 7 appendices, a bibliography and an index. The first two chapters deal with the life of the garden, and the living soil. I found these academic at first, and I tended to skip them, but I realise now that I will need to master their contents if I am going to advance in my understanding of organic growing. These two chapters can be ignored without interfering with the understanding of the rest of the book.

Chapter 3 is titled "The preparation and maintenance of an organic garden", and is very practical. Succeeding chapters are; Fertilisers; Poisonous Chemicals and the Alternatives; Composting; Cultivating your Plants; Out of Season Growing and Community Gardens.

In the Appendices, there is advice concerning gardening tools, compost ingredients, sowing guides for flowers and vegetables, a list of goods and services, and also a list of useful contacts. The Hunter Organic Growers Society is listed,

but the address given is now out of date.

The chapter on Cultivating your Plants has subsections on: root and leaf vegetables, planting in hot weather, solanum fruits, curcubits, legumes, cereal crops, stem vegetables, fruit trees, mushrooms and flowers. The section on flowers is rather brief, and it seems to me that the main thrust of the book is towards vegetable growing.

I found the last chapter very interesting and different from the rest of the book. Here the author tells of his experiences in oversighting the establishment of two community gardens, one at Ceduna on the edge of the Nullabor Plains and the other in Adelaide. Both of these gardens were projects for unemployed Aboriginal youth, and the results have been remarkable to say the least. I found myself wanting to know more about these projects.

Are there any negatives about this book? Yes, there is one that I can think of. I mentioned earlier that the author's commitment to organic growing was undoubted, and yet in the chapter on poisonous chemicals he recommends the use of Glyphosate, and repeats the manufacturer's assertion that it is not harmful to the soil. It seems likely from more recent research, that there are long-term, harmful effects stemming from its use. One other small negative is that the author pushes several products in which I think he has a commercial interest. Apart from those two points, I have found this a very helpful book.

Organic Gardening has become a much used addition to our library and both my wife and I constantly refer to it for specific information, or just to have a good read in it for its own sake. If readers are looking for one book to help establish themselves and make progress as organic growers, then this could well be it.

"Organic Gardening" by Peter Bennett, published by National Book Distributors. Paperback, large format, 208 pages, colour photographs. Available from HOGS, \$24.00. ♦



NEW ORGANIC FARMING COURSE

TAFE NSW will be offering a revised version of its Certificate of Organic Farming course at the Kurri Kurri campus in 1966. The revisions were made after wide consultation with organic producers, graduates and staff.

The new course aims to assist agricultural producers to change farming methods and access the burgeoning organic market. Participants could expect to obtain the knowledge and skills to farm organically and sustainably, and to improve farm management. Reducing the use of artificial chemicals is a specific goal.

The course has a distinct commercial focus and requires that students have some skill and knowledge of farming. A major exercise will be to prepare a plan for managing a farm organically and enhancing its profitability. Any without farming skills, should consider a preliminary program in agriculture, such as a short course in Farming Small Areas or Livestock Husbandry before enrolling for the Organic Farming course.

HUNTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

KURRI KURRI

Agriculture Courses 1966

Full-time

- *Rural Business Management (Associate Diploma)
- Rural Operations (Certificate)
- Horse Industry Operations (Certificate)

Part-time

- Beef Cattle Husbandry □ Farm Workshop Skills
- Farming Small Areas Grape Production
- Horse Industry Practice Hydroponic Production
- Organic Farming Permaculture Practices
- Rural Business Studies Rural Welding
- Saddlery *Veterinary Nursing
- Vignerons

Enrolment

Courses marked (*) require application by 12 January 1966. All other course enrolments will be on 2 or 5 February from 1.00 - 7.00pm. Telephone (049) 360 300 for course brochures.

Subjects in the Certificate of Organic Farming include:

- # organic farming principles and ecology
- # organic plant and animal production
- # farm conservation
- # managing an organic farm
- # enhancing profitability

Enrolments will be taken Friday 2 Feb., or Monday 9 Feb. between 1.00 and 7.00 pm. Admin. cost of course is \$160. Classes are 1 evening a week for a year. Farm visits and practical work will be conducted at weekends. See the advert. on this page for information, brochures and other courses. ♦

WEEKEND WORKSHOP SOUNDS GOOD

Nick Douglas-Morris of Permaculture North has sent details of an Applied Permaculture Weekend to be held next March on a property 25 kms west of Nahiack.

There is a camping area, and also a large shed is available for others to bunk down in. The weekend is fully catered for with both conventional and vegetarian food.

Cost of weekend for non-members of Permaculture North is \$42 per adult, and \$14 for children aged 5-15. Bookings close on Feb. 23rd. 1966. Full information and map will be sent when you book.

Weekend activities include: inspection of passive solar house and discussion of house design and zones 1 & 2; inspection of aquaculture, contour ripping, swales, farm catchment plan, visits to nearby properties, discussions of soil preparation and tree selection, and for the first 30 bookings, a visit to a private observatory. A visit to a mud brick home built without mortgage finance has been arranged, where high quality leadlight items will be available for purchase.

Participants may arrive after 4pm on the Friday, but activities do not commence till 9am Saturday.

Further information and registration forms available from N. Douglas-Morris, 39 Chelmsford Ave, Lindfield, 2070. Phone: 02 416 2495.



SUMMER PLANTING GUIDE

DECEMBER

- Beans,
- Beetroot
- Cabbage
- Capsicum
- Carrots
- Celery
- Chicory
- Cucumber
- Eggplant
- Endive
- Lettuce
- Marrow
- Melons
- Okra
- Spring Onions
- Pumpkin
- Radish
- Salsify
- Silverbeet
- Squash
- Sweet Corn
- Tomato

JANUARY

- Beans
- Beetroot
- Cabbage
- Carrots
- Celery
- Cucumber
- Eggplant
- Lettuce
- Marrow
- Melons
- Okra
- Spring Onions
- Radish
- Salsify
- Silverbeet
- Sweet Corn
- Tomato
- Turnips

FEBRUARY

- Beans
- Beetroot
- Broccoli
- Brussel Sprouts
- Capsicum
- Carrots
- Cauliflower
- Kohl Rabi
- Leeks
- Lettuce
- Spring Onions
- Parsnips
- Peas
- Potatoes
- Radish
- Salsify
- Silverbeet
- Spinach
- Swedes
- Turnips



**Hunter Organic
 Growers Society Inc.**

P.O. Box 403, Cessnock, 2325



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