



GROWING NATURALLY



Toowoomba Community Organic Gardens Association Incorporated

July 2018

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SOCIAL GARDENING

Wednesdays 9.30-11.30am

Come along and join in the fun!

Sundays 8.30-11am

All Members & Visitors Welcome



Wonderful winter rain has just freshened up The Gardens after such a long dry spell. It certainly put a smile on everyone's faces on Wednesday. It wasn't enough to put much water in the tanks, but it's a start.

Be happy, we are now past the shortest day and heading towards spring!

Winter Solstice - An Excuse for Pizza



The winter solstice marks midwinter and it is the period of shortest daylight hours. We always mark the winter solstice by lighting the pizza oven and sharing lunch.

Oliver was able to hop over his back fence and light the oven for us and he has now perfected the timing to obtain the best oven temperature. We just had to turn up at midday and line up with our pizza!



Our gardens are about community sharing, so lots of different pizza tastes were on offer for all to taste: gardeners make good cooks. The day was warm and the conversations flowed.

Thanks to everyone who contributed their culinary skills. - Linda

Annual General Meeting (AGM)

Saturday 4 August

We plan to hold our Annual General Meeting on Saturday 4 August to elect a new committee for the coming 12 months. The Committee is vital to the smooth running of the gardens, for progressing the gardens, liaising with the Council and promoting organic gardening.

Please consider standing for the Committee. We hold meetings about every 6 weeks, so being on the Committee is not onerous. We all have lots of ideas for making the gardens more successful and as a Committee Member you have the opportunity to raise issues and ideas.

In next month's newsletter there will be a nomination form. Talk to any of the current Committee Members about what we do. - President

Where it all Started...

This article appeared in "The Coffee Gazette" February 2018
It's like reading about our "family tree" for the Organic Gardens!

Toowoomba Community Organic Gardens Association Incorporated is a not-for-profit community group promoting natural gardening and farming practices. Previously known as the Darling Downs Natural Growers Group, established in 1982 by a group of concerned citizens, the organisation partnered with philanthropic landholders and the then Toowoomba City Council to set aside land in 1995 that was to become "Toowoomba Community Organic Gardens".



The first on-ground work commenced in November 1996. TCOGA members have stewardship of the gardens today, continuing to progress and refine the original concept plans for the site.

Our Charter—Aims and Objectives

- To farm the garden in ways that improve soil fertility and biological activity, maintain biodiversity and protect sensitive habitats and landscapes
- To avoid using artificial pesticides, herbicides, fungicides and fertilisers
- To embrace the collection and growing of open pollination seeds, including heirloom varieties
- To provide a group for like-minded people to exchange ideas and support each other
- To educate members and the wider community about sustainable organic practices and assist people to adopt these practices
- To use renewable resources, recycle materials and minimise pollution and waste
- To provide fair and safe working conditions for workers and volunteers
- To learn from the aboriginal communities, ethnic groups and traditional farmers about plants and farming methods
- To utilise new scientific work that is consistent with our mission
- To treat livestock humanely and respect the habitat of native birds and animals
- To grow healthy quality crops, with any processing to be of a high organic standard with recognised certification where appropriate
- To support local people using sustainable systems of food production and processing
- To encourage government action and support issues that relate to our mission and charter, including incentives for growers/producers to convert to suitable organic systems and to provide more consumer information.



Winter Work at The Gardens

The coming of winter has not meant that we have slackened our pace in the Organic Gardens as there have been many jobs to do.



In the plots adjacent to the large water tank one of the volunteers, Andrew Hawke, has been busy digging up one of the plots to install a wicking bed. He has removed most of the soil in this raised garden to install a water reservoir below the level of the soil. We wish Andrew all the best in making a success of this water-efficient way to garden.

Over in the other plot near the tool shed, the Special School Students have been planting out their winter vegetables in a bed loaned to them by Crystal. They have also planted their normal bed with a green manure and legume crop of mostly oats, peas and broad beans. This is designed to add nitrogen and humus to the soil. The school students are proving to be motivated gardeners and have planted beetroot, carrots, cabbages, lettuce, broad beans and garlic. Thanks are also due to the tireless teacher aides Melinda and Anthony who have worked very hard to help the students and me to establish their gardens.

Over the school holidays I will be collecting tomato, lettuce and Japanese radish seeds. For my next article I promise I will give instructions on how to ferment, dry, prepare and store tomato seed for next seasons planting. The tomato we are using for seed harvest is a special large cherry tomato suited for the Toowoomba area.

Recently vandalism and theft have been a problem. This is burdensome and annoying to volunteer gardeners who put a lot of time and hard effort into the gardens. It also wrecks community property as fences and other hard landscaping was damaged in the process. Unfortunately, we had to cut back the passionfruit vine to repair the boundary fence of the plot enclosure near the tool shed. Thanks are due to Matt and his son-in-law, who cut and removed the foliage of the passionfruit vine and also repaired the extensive damage done to the fence.

Thanks go to the council for providing us with a four loads of mulch up in the native garden. We need more volunteers to help spread the mulch, to continue the good work of Max, Matt and the Special School Students to get another covering of mulch there to control the weed problem. The fruit trees in the orchard and the Permaculture area have also been given a load of compost thanks to Jo, who took the time and did the hard work necessary to ensure our fruit trees age healthily.

Our President, Linda, has worked tirelessly in the background supporting the gardeners, coordinating and promoting The Gardens to move forward with a positive relationship and support from The Council. She has also encouraged exposure through filming opportunities, integration with the Seed and Feed Workshops, Facebook and Newsletter production. Thanks for your hard work Linda.

All in all, the gardens have benefited greatly from the number of willing workers who are prepared to get in and do the work. We hope this trend is set to continue as more people join us to keep the gardens going.

- Colin



Quick Notes for Your Calendar

Winter Garden Workshops with Brian Sams—Free

Bookings are essential and can be made by calling TRC Customer Service Centre on 131 872

Workshop 1: Productive Winter Gardens -Tuesday 3 July, 1.30 pm to 4.30 pm
(All sessions have afternoon tea included)

Where: Double Seminar Room, Community Rooms, 3rd floor Toowoomba City Library

Workshop 2: Inspirational Winter Gardens—Thursday 5 July, 1.30 pm to 4.30 pm

Where: Single Seminar Room A, Community Rooms, 3rd floor Toowoomba City Library

Workshop 3: Productive Winter Gardens - Tuesday 10 July, 1.30 pm to 4.30 pm

Where: Double Seminar Room, Community Rooms, 3rd floor Toowoomba City Library

Workshop 4: Inspirational Winter Gardens— Thursday 12 July, 1.30 pm to 4.30 pm

Where: Double Seminar Room, Community Rooms, 3rd floor Toowoomba City Library

Friday 13—15 July—Queensland Garden Expo, Nambour

<http://www.qldgardenexpo.com.au/>

Green Tomato Chutney

I rescued some green tomatoes before our school children were about to throw them into the compost. When I turned up next week with the green tomato chutney, members realised that green tomatoes should not be thrown away.

Ingredients

2.25kg green tomatoes (chopped)
500g chopped onion
6 tsp salt

Method

Mix in a bowl and leave overnight. The next day drain the mixture.

Place the mixture in a pan with:

1 1/4 cups raisins
1 1/2 cups sultanas
15 g grated fresh ginger

1 tbs whole pepper corns
1 tbs coriander seeds
12 cloves
3 cups sugar
6 cups of vinegar.



If you are fussy, place the spices in a muslin bag.

Boil the mixture and simmer until thickened .

Remove the spices (if you wish) and pour into hot sterilised jars. Cover with lids immediately.

I had only 1/2 kg of tomatoes so made only two jars.
- Linda

This is delicious chutney—Ed.

Testing the pH of Your Soil

There are soil tests you can experiment with using kitchen items such as vinegar, bicarbonate of soda and even the water after boiling red cabbage, or for about \$15 you can purchase this test kit.

Knowing the acidity of your soil is vital as you may be creating more problems if, say, you put dolomite, or lime into your soil when it is already alkaline (pH above 7.0). Soil should be neutral, 7.0 or slightly alkaline. Acidic soil is 6.0 or less.

Different plants can thrive in slightly acidic or slightly alkaline soils. Luckily compost is usually neutral and can be added to soils and can help adjust pH levels.



Jobs & Planting in July

- ⇒ Plant asparagus crowns and raspberries, winter herbs, chervil, camomile and coriander. Lift and divide rhubarb if needed
- ⇒ Plant beetroot, cabbage, carrot, lettuce, onion, parsnip, peas and silverbeet
- ⇒ Sow spring vegetable seedlings and keep inside on a warm windowsill
- ⇒ Cut citrus galls off your citrus trees to stop the spring hatching of Citrus Gall Wasps. Put them in a sealed bag & bin!
- ⇒ Prune raspberries and other berry vines
- ⇒ Liquid fertilise winter vegetables and prepare for spring planting

2017—2018 COMMITTEE

PRESIDENT: Linda Mangubhai

SECRETARY: Donna Carroll - secretary@toga.org.au

TREASURER: Sharon Wendt—treasurer@toga.org.au

REPRESENTATIVES: Oliver Rook, Joanne McClelland, Brian Pierce,

Chris Walpole, Colin Walpole

Coordinating Volunteers

Australian Plants: Chris Walpole

Compost:

Garden Plot Hire: Joanne

Newsletter: Carlene

Permaculture Interest Group: Vacant

Newsletter of Toowoomba
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