



GROWING NATURALLY



Toowoomba Community Organic Gardens Association Incorporated

June 2021

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What Has Been Happening at The Gardens

Well, winter is upon us and this presents different jobs for us to do at the gardens. Hopefully the weed growth will slow down a bit giving us a chance to get on top of it. Social gardening sessions have been busy with members working hard in the various areas of the gardens. The garden is looking lush, and the plants have appreciated the recent rain. The mandarins are certainly much juicier and more enjoyable this year. Strawberries have been planted in the permaculture area to serve as a ground cover as well as giving us delicious berries. Garlic has also been planted in the Members Garden area and we are hoping to get a good crop. This will be sold to our members at a bargain price to raise money for the gardens.

Whilst it has been great to see the rain, it is worth noting that that the current water capacity of the dams feeding Toowoomba is still only at 31.1%. This means we are still on water restrictions and need to practice and promote water wise gardening. This of course is one of the Key Principles which guides the management of the community gardens.

Members are again encouraged to come along to the Social Gardening sessions to share and discuss the draft plan for the gardens. This will be a major agenda item at our next committee meeting which will be held on Saturday June 5 at 10am in the gardens. We welcome suggestions and ideas on how we can organise and improve the garden facilities. This will be a long process as we have to raise the money via fundraising and/or grant writing, but in order to be successful, we need to have a coherent plan and direction for the gardens.

The committee has put the TCOGA back on the Bunnings Sausage Sizzle list as this is the best way we have found so far to raise money. We will let you know when we hear back from Bunnings about a date for our Sausage Sizzle.

Don't let the colder weather deter you from coming to Social Gardening Sessions. It is actually a beautiful time of year to be out in the gardens as you can do some physical work without getting too hot. It's so nice to be able to enjoy the warmth of the sun.

Please remember about the importance of signing in when you visit the gardens as we look at the news about the COVID-19 outbreak in Victoria. Our thoughts are with the people of Victoria and we sincerely hope that they are able to get things under control over the next 7 days. It is a reminder to all of us that COVID-19 is still with us and we need to continue to follow government advice and health directives. We cannot afford to become complacent.

I hope to see you in the gardens soon.

Wendy Snigg

President
TCOGA



TOOWOOMBA
community
ORGANIC GARDENS



<https://www.instagram.com/tcogainc/>





Our Own TCOGA Recipe Book

Over many years members' recipes have been included in our monthly newsletter. Some feature vegetables grown in the Gardens, others feature the cakes and biscuits brought to share for morning tea.

Let's gather some of these recipes and make our own recipe book.

I am collecting recipes from you and to make it a little different, where possible, you can add information about the origin of the recipe, or the way the vegetables have been grown or used. It is up to you! Was it your grandmother's favourite recipe?

Please send your recipes to me and I will do the rest! If you want to write the recipe by hand, you can always leave it for me in the shed.

- Linda—lmangubhai@gmail.com

Polish pancakes

- 3 eggs
- 1 banana
- 5 tbs oats.
- Pinch of salt

Blitz the ingredients and then cook on the griddle. Great!
Plenty of fibre and no added sugar!



Herbs

What to Plant in June

Vegetables

- | | | |
|------------------|------------|---------------|
| Angelica | Feverfew | Parsley |
| Anise Hyssop | Hyssop | Salad Burnett |
| Borage | Linseed | Salad Rocket |
| Calendula | Lupin | Sage |
| Catnip | Marjoram | Thyme |
| Camomile | Mustard | Vetch |
| Chervil | Nasturtium | Watercress |
| Chickpea | | |
| Chickory | | |
| Coriander | | |
| Dandelion | | |
| Dill | | |
| Endive | | |
| Evening Primrose | | |
| Fennel | | |
| Fenugreek | | |



Lupin

- | | | |
|------------------|----------------|--------------|
| Artichoke | Leek | Salsify |
| Beetroot | Lettuce | Shallots |
| Bok Choy | Mizuna | Silverbeet |
| Broad Beans | Mustard Greens | Spinach |
| Broccoli | Onions | Spring Onion |
| Brussels Sprouts | Parsnip | Strawberries |
| Cabbage | Peas—Climbing, | Swede |
| Carrots | Snow & Dwarf | Turnip |
| Cauliflower | Radish | |
| Garlic | Rhubarb | |
| Kale | Rye Corn | |
| Kohl Rabi | | |



Parsnip



A Good Quality Soil Starts with the Right pH

Everyone at some stage has come across the abbreviation **pH**, as part of a chemistry course or, when reading about what to plant. They find that the soil must have a specific pH in order to obtain better absorption of the minerals that are dissolved in the water that is stored in the soil. This will have a direct influence on the plant's growth, and therefore produce better yields.



The pH is a scale used to specify the acidity or alkalinity of an aqueous solution. This concept was devised by the Danish chemist Søren Peter

Lauritz Sørensen in 1909. The pH scale runs from 0 to 14. Any pH reading below 7 is acidic (sour), and any pH above 7 is alkaline (sweet). A pH of 7 indicates a neutral soil. pH is the abbreviation of the Latin expression "*pondus hydrogenii*", which can be translated as "potential of hydrogen", which is actually a measure of hydrogen ion concentration.

Most horticultural crops will grow satisfactorily in soils that have a pH between 6 (slightly acidic) and 7.5 (slightly alkaline). This point of view may vary according to different authors, so it is not a fixed concept. However, this is the ideal range when microbial activity is greatest and when plant roots can best access nutrients. Most plants' nutrients will not dissolve when the soil is either too acidic or too alkaline. Therefore, the solubility of the nutrients is highly dependent on the pH value.

Gardeners often give more attention to the seeds, and overlook the importance of the soil quality. This is one of the main pillars of gardening, where soil pH is related to the availability of nutrients and minerals in the soil, thereby conditioning how the plant roots access, absorb and regulate these materials. This is evident when we observe a good or poor plant growing in our gardens.

The soil's health is influenced by its acidity or alkalinity. For example, when the acidity of the soil is increased, the bacteria are displaced by the predominance of fungi,

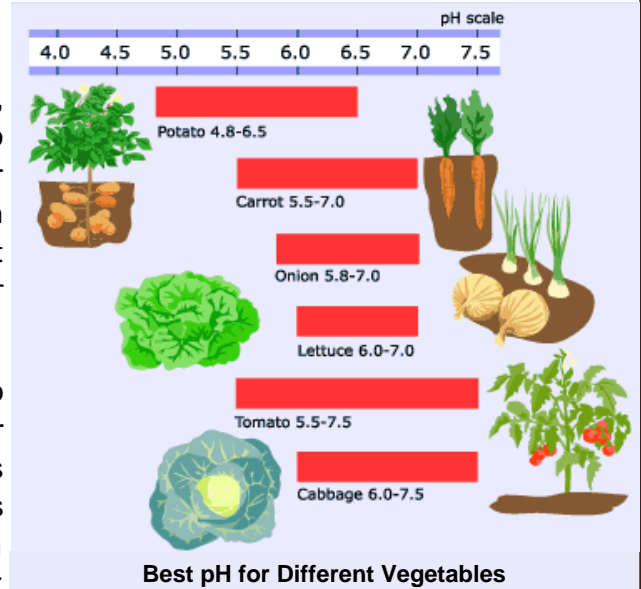


affected processes that are dependent on bacterial activity. The pH is not an indication of fertility, but it does affect the availability of fertiliser nutrients.

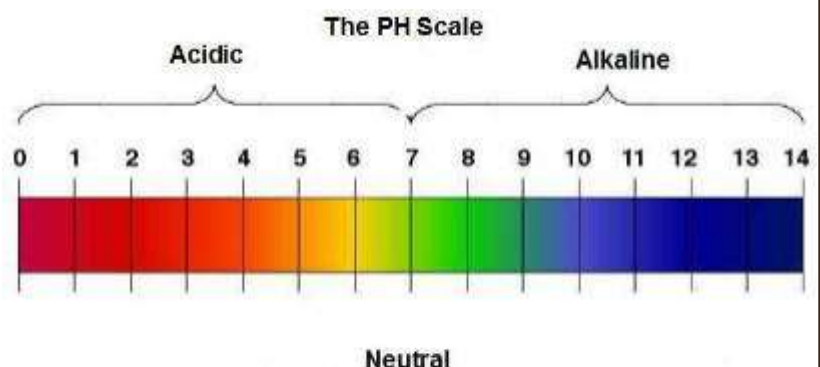
Soil testing will let you know about your soil's pH. This can be performed by a soil testing laboratory (yielding a more accurate pH value), or simply by purchasing a soil test kit (giving an approximate soil pH value). Knowing the soil pH in your garden will allow you to group plants according to their pH needs. Keep in mind the importance of growing together plants with similar pH needs, temperature tolerances and nutritional needs. Ask the advice of the experts if you want to lower or raise the soil pH in order to prevent any damage to your crops or soil

contamination by adding the wrong product.

Soil science is a fascinating field that reveals to us what is under our feet. pH is one of the unknown aspects revealed by this field that provides incontrovertible evidence of the importance of chemistry in our daily life.



Best pH for Different Vegetables



Why Grow Lupins

You may have noticed that Lupins can be planted in June. They are nitrogen fixing plants in the legume family like beans, peas and peanuts and are therefore a great asset to the soil. They draw nitrogen from the atmosphere and store it in the rhizomes attached to their roots. If you want to give your garden a rest over winter and put in a green manure crop, or have a nitrogen fixing crop that will flower beautifully in mid spring to early summer providing food for bees and beneficial insects to your garden, then try lupins.

When plants are young, the foliage as well as the roots can be dug into the garden to fix nitrogen. Grow your lupins to around 40cm tall then trim down to half putting the clippings on the surface of the soil, once they have grown back, the whole plant can be dug into the ground, or cut back and composted. Most benefit is gained if this is done a month or two before replanting.

If allowed to grow to maturity, cut the plants off at ground level to leave the nitrogen fixing roots in the ground to provide plenty of nitrogen as well as organic matter to improve the soil. Put the tops into the compost, or under trees as a mulch as they will be woody and take some time to break down.

Growing lupins also assists in weed control and protects your soil. They are much loved by slugs and snails, so ensure you take precautions to prevent infestations. However, they will grow well in rough ground that hasn't been enriched, just add a little wood ash, or a plant food high in phosphorus. Don't use a fertiliser high in nitrogen as this will promote foliage at the expense of flowers.

Seeds from lupins have been processed for food for over 3000 years in the Mediterranean region and up to 6000 years in the South American Andes. However, some species contain toxic alkaloids so specific species are grown for human and animal consumption. Lupin seeds are



Lupins in bloom in Iceland

gluten-free, high in fibre, amino acids, antioxidants and have a similar protein content to soy beans. Approximately 85% of the world's production of lupin seeds is grown in Western Australia.

- Carlene



Lupins in bloom, Lake Tekapo, NZ

Check out the seedlings at the social gardening mornings that Jeanette has raised ready for winter planting!

Quick Notes for Your Calendar

Saturday 5 June - TCOGA Meeting at The Gardens—at 10.00am

Saturday 19 June—Esk Garden & Lifestyle Fair

[facebook.com/eskgardenandlifestylefair](https://www.facebook.com/eskgardenandlifestylefair)

Friday 9—Sunday 11 July 2021—Queensland Garden Expo— Nambour

www.qldgardenexpo.com.au

31 July—1 August—Botanical Bazaar—presented by Rotary Gold Coast Country Paradise Parklands, 231 Beaudesert-Nerang Road, Nerang, Gold Coast

botanicalbazaargc.com.au

25 & 26 September—Grow Expo—Gatton Showgrounds

www.growexpo.com.au/

The Humble Choko Love it or Loathe it?

During the social gardening session last week a few of us started chatting about chokos and how some members express such dislike of them. I will admit to being one of those members who are far from impressed with them. I will also confess that I have no rational or evidence base for this dislike. During our conversation a couple of members presented a spirited defence of the Choko and talked about their delicious food experiences with this vegetable.

So, after seeing the choko used on Masterchef and the discussion at social gardening I decided to put my prejudice aside and find out more about the Choko.



Chayote (*Sechium edule*), also known as mirliton, pipinola and choko, is an edible plant belonging to the gourd family, Cucurbitaceae.

Chokos are a native of Central America and are a pear-shaped green vegetable with coarse wrinkles. They grow on vines and have a single soft seed and pear-textured pale green flesh. Some varieties have spines, and some are spineless. Colours range from green to ivory white. They have a very mild flavour, often compared to a marrow.

They belong to the cucurbit family along with pumpkins, gourds and zucchini. They have a tough skin, characterised by deep creases. The single nutty tasting seed is edible but is not often used in cooking. Chokos are popular in Asian cuisine. They are also colloquially called Vegetable Pears, or Mango Squash. They have a very mild flavour, (so mild in fact that they need a lot of added flavour....woops that is my personal opinion interjecting, so they are usually cooked with stronger tasting foods.



Chokos are a good source of vitamin C, and a source of folate, pantothenic acid and vitamin E.

Foodie Musts

Before getting into the fancier recipes, try the simplest way to serve where you can truly respect and appreciate the soft texture of the choko. Steam wedges and served with just a knob of butter and cracked pepper; or boil choko with a pinch of sugar to bring out it's natural sweetness.

Chokos can be roasted, fried, pickled, steamed or mashed and go well with spicy ingredients.

Choko halves can be stuffed, diced, cooked and served with a sauce, stir fried and added to braises or stews. They can be used in fruit and vegetable salads, or be used as a base for relishes.



A note to gardeners: The choko vine can be quite prolific and needs to be kept under control.



I have it on good authority that some of our long-term regular members can make a pretty good Choko soup. Hopefully they will share their recipe in the next edition of our newsletter. I have done a quick search and found a recipe that may, perhaps, tempt me to give the old humble choko a try.

- Wendy

Information taken from:

[Vegetables.co.nz](https://www.vegetables.co.nz/); <https://www.vegetables.co.nz/vegetables-a-z/chokos/> and Wikipedia.

Fried Choko (Chayote) with Bacon Jam

An old-time Australian classic - fried choko - dressed up with delicious bacon jam.

Bacon jam (makes 1 cup)

Ingredients

200g streaky bacon chopped
1 onion (1 1/2 cups chopped)
1 clove garlic finely grated
½ cup brown sugar
2 tbs Worcestershire Sauce
1 tbs balsamic vinegar
¾ cup water
1 tbs cocoa powder
Natural yoghurt optional

Chokos

2 Chokos cut 1cm thick
2 eggs beaten
2 cups panko breadcrumbs
1 litre vegetable oil for frying
Sea salt to season

Method

Bacon jam

Sauté the bacon in a non-stick pan over medium heat for 8-10 minutes, or until golden brown, but not crispy.

Remove the cooked bacon, leaving a tablespoon, or so, of fat in the pan.

Add the chopped onion and cook, stirring, for 5 minutes, or until golden. Add the garlic, turn the heat to low and continue cooking for 5 minutes.

Add the sugar and stir for 1 minute. Return the bacon to the onion and stir for 1 minute.

Stir through the Worcestershire sauce and balsamic vinegar, allowing to gently simmer for 1 minute. Add the water and cocoa, stir, then simmer gently for 10 minutes.

Turn off heat and allow to cool a little. Coarsely blend the mixture with a stick blender, but don't purée it. Transfer to a sealed container and store in the fridge.

Chokos

Dip the choko slices into the beaten egg, shake to drain and then coat well in the panko crumbs. Repeat the process until all of the choko is crumbed. Lay them on a plate and refrigerate for ½ an hour before cooking.

Heat the oil over low-medium heat. Cook the crumbed chokos a few slices at a time until golden, turning halfway through.

If they cook too fast, the choko will still be crunchy and raw on the inside, so get the oil temperature right. Don't have the oil too hot.

Drain the cooked choko on lots of kitchen towels and season well with sea salt before serving.

RECIPE NOTES

The bacon jam will store in the fridge for up to two weeks. Bring it to room temperature when you want to use it. Serve the fried choko with a little natural yoghurt for added freshness!

Recipe from <http://heneedsfood.com/recipe/fried-choko-bacon-jam/>



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