



# GROWING NATURALLY



Toowoomba Community Organic Gardens Association Incorporated

March 2021

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## What Has Been Happening at The Gardens

Well, another month has whizzed by. We have had just enough rain to keep the weeds and grass growing at a very fast rate, but unfortunately, not enough to really penetrate the soil. Fingers crossed that the promised rain finally eventuates.

We look forward to a new year and welcome the many new members that have joined this wonderful community. Our social gardening days on Wednesday and Sundays are a hive of activity and chatter as members get to know one another and share their gardening interest.

Representatives from the Council popped in for a visit and were delighted to see so many people actively involved in the gardens. We were very excited to receive the draft plan for the 1 – 5-year plan for the gardens. As mentioned in an email to all of you, a copy of the draft plan is near the membership Sign-on book in the shed. The committee is planning to have a Social Get-together on March 14 where we will have the draft plan out for people to view. There will be some refinements made to the plan but from the feedback so far everyone seems very happy with it.

The committee is working closely with the council regarding funding for the proposal in the draft plan. Money for these changes will come from Grant applications and fundraising. We are hopeful that the council will assist us with some of the infrastructure changes (new toilet facilities), but negotiations for this are at the very early stages.

One of our members brought along her gardening group to view the gardens, and we spent a lovely Friday morning in the gardens. The 30 or so ladies who attended were both surprised and delighted by the gardens. Many of them were not aware of the little oasis tucked away in the CBD.

We welcome back the students and staff from Clifford Park Special School. They will be working on a section of the community gardens. It was great to see them helping to weed in the permaculture area last week. This area is getting out of control again and will again be the focus of our next working bee.

Thank you to all those members old and new who have joined us for another membership year in the gardens.

Hope to see you all in the gardens soon.

Wendy Snigg

President  
TCOGA



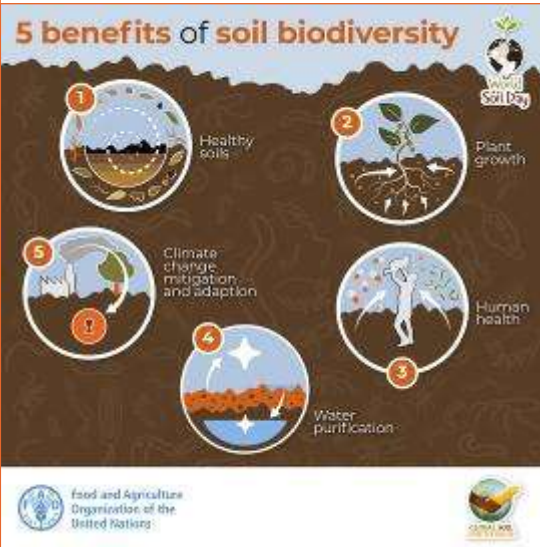
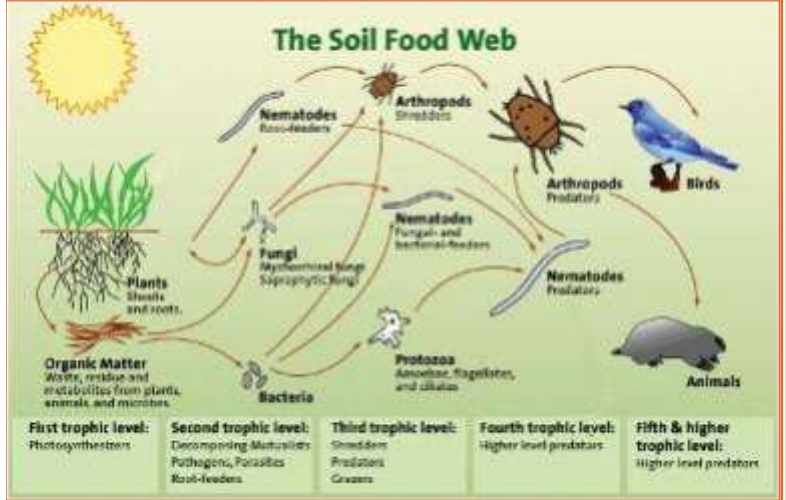
**TOOWOOMBA**  
*community*  
**ORGANIC GARDENS**



# Soils: Easy to Lose, Hard to Recover: How to Build and Maintain Soil Health

People's motivations for being members of community gardens can include growing and eating fresh fruit and vegetables, health promotion, social inclusion benefits, environmental concerns, feeling connected to nature, knowledge building, addressing food security, etc.

One of the purposes stated in the mission of our organisation is to practise sustainable organic gardening, based on the fact that one of our key principles is to **"Build and maintain soil health"**.

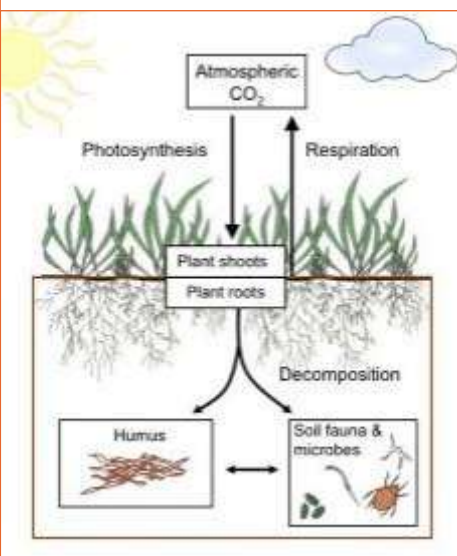


Soil is a network of interacting living organisms

within the earth's surface layer, which supports life above ground - that is, plants and animals, including humans. Soil is an ecosystem that can be managed to provide nutrients for plant growth, absorb and hold rainwater for use during dryer periods, filter and buffer potential pollutants from leaving our fields, serve as a firm foundation for agricultural activities and provide habitats for soil microbes to flourish and diversify to keep the ecosystem running smoothly.

Soil health, also referred to as soil quality, is defined as the continued capacity of soil to function as a vital living ecosystem that sustains plants and animals, including humans. This definition highlights the importance of managing soils so that they are sustainable for future generations. Soils play a key role in absorbing carbon and filtering water. Soil destruction creates a vicious cycle, in which less carbon is stored, the world gets hotter and the land is further degraded.

In our community gardens, we are committed to restorative practices to protect our precious asset: the soil. This can be achieved through ensuring minimal soil disturbance, practising crop rotation, adding compost and aged manure, and using mulch, or growing cover crops (green manures) as restorative practices. In winter, we must not leave the soil bare; this will deprive the microorganisms of the benefits that growing plants provide, by interrupting vital relationships and starving the soil fauna and microbes.



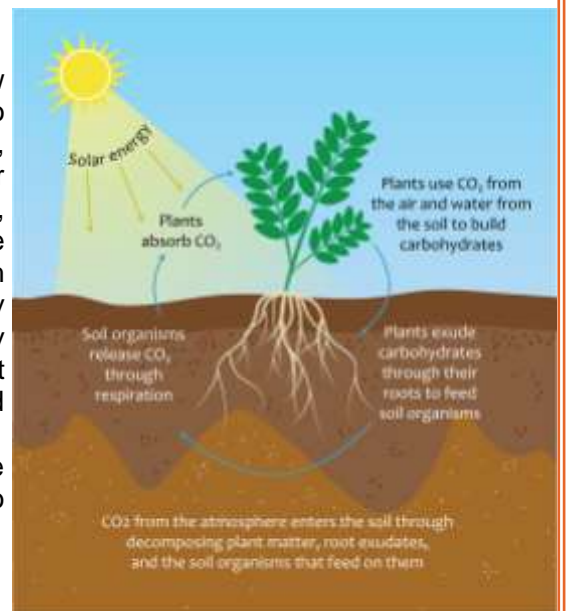
Bad soil management practices will produce infertile soils and erosion.

During the World Soil Day on 5 December 2017, Maria-Helena Semedo, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Deputy Director, said: "Maintaining the soil's important functions and ecosystem services to support food production and increase resilience to a changing climate calls for sustainable soil management practices."

It is our responsibility to follow regenerative organic practices to increase and protect biodiversity, enrich the soils, improve water quality, work with the ecosystem, and produce healthier and more sustainable crops. As soil health improves, input requirements may decrease, and crop yields may increase as soils are more resilient

(in the face of extreme weather conditions), and harbour fewer pests and pathogens.

Soils are easy to lose and hard to recover, so please follow the advice and recommendations established in our community gardens, and help to protect the environment.



## Plants for Sale

We are planning to have a plant sale day in the Autumn (date yet to be set). so we would like members to grow potted plants to help with this sale.

It would be wonderful if we could present a wide variety for the public on the day. If members would please grow individual potted vegetables, flowers, succulents or cacti, it would help greatly with our fund-raising efforts. These would need to be started as soon as possible so that they are a good size on the day.

As we do not have a propagation shed members growing plants for sale will need to take care of them until the day of the plant sale.

Jeanette will be growing punnets of seedling vegetables, if you also wish to grow some please check with Jeanette on what to grow so that we do not have too many of some varieties. Thank you for your help.



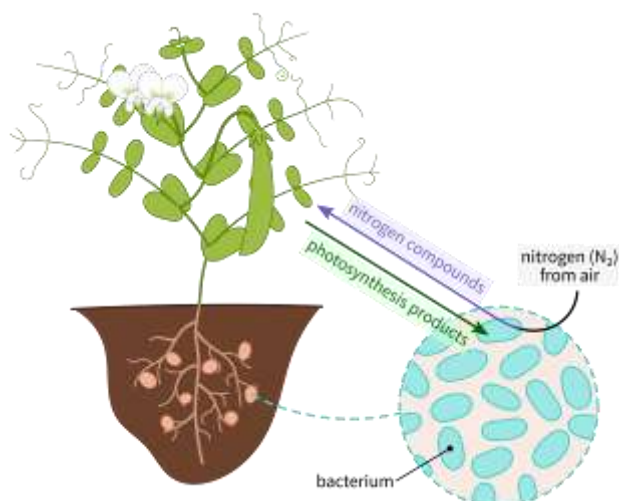
You may not achieve this in time!

## Nitrogen in Garden Soil

It is essential that plants have nitrogen, potassium and phosphorus to be able to grow and these are the key to strong healthy plants in your garden.

Understanding the nitrogen cycle is the key to success in organic gardening. Nitrogen forms most of the Earth's atmosphere but plants need the action of bacteria to process it into nitrates which can be taken up by plant roots.

Plants can easily deplete all the nitrogen in the soil and nitrogen is also leached naturally by the action of sun and water. These essential plant nutrients are added to the soil in manures and compost (which are broken down by bacteria) and also by nitrogen fixing plants.



Plants that fix nitrogen in the soil have a symbiotic relationship with a bacteria called Rhizobia within the nodules in their root systems and nitrogen is drawn from the air by the bacteria and is stored in these nodules. The nitrogen is released into the soil around the roots of the plant assisting other plants close by. Nitrogen fixers can and should be included throughout annual and perennial garden systems.

When a nitrogen fixing plant dies or is dug back into the soil as a 'green manure' this nitrogen is released from the plant and enriches the soil for the next crop.

Most legumes are nitrogen fixing plants and if looked at closely you will notice that most have a pea type of flower. These are some of the nitrogen fixing plants which you may wish to use in your garden: All pea and bean varieties, Alfalfa, Clover, Lupins, Peanuts, Chickpeas, Soybeans, and Sweet peas.  
- Jeanette

## Quick Notes for Your Calendar

**TCOGA Meeting at The Gardens—Saturday 6 March at 10.00am**

**TCOGA Social Get-together—Sunday 14 March, 12.30pm at the Gardens—Bring pizza to cook or other food to share**

**13 & 14 March 2021—Brisbane Garden & Plant Expo – Rocklea Showgrounds**

[www.plantexpo.com.au](http://www.plantexpo.com.au)

**17 & 18 April—Showcasing Pittsworth & Surrounds**

[gardensofthedowns.com](http://gardensofthedowns.com)

**15 & 16 May 2021—Pine Rivers Garden and Plant Fair—Pine Rivers Show Ring,**

757 Gympie Road, Lawnton [pineriversgardenandplantfair.com.au](http://pineriversgardenandplantfair.com.au)

**9—11 July 2021—Queensland Garden Expo— Nambour**

[www.qldgardenexpo.com.au](http://www.qldgardenexpo.com.au)

**25 & 26 September—Grow Expo—Gatton Showgrounds—**

[www.growexpo.com.au/](http://www.growexpo.com.au/)

## Recycle, Reuse, Repel



This year looks set to be a bumper year for fruiting trees in the Toowoomba area after the falls of rain we have enjoyed recently. This has given my Tropical Guava a real boost. In order to prevent the fruit from being attacked by fruit fly I decided to “upcycle” a pair of old fine net curtains to use as fruit fly excluders. Tropical guavas carry their fruit in groups along the branches, so a sleeve excluder works best. The curtain was cut into eight equal rectangles, sewn into a cylinder with a fold on each end to hold a length of string.



Each cylinder was threaded onto the tree branch and the string drawn tight at each end enclosing the fruit. The groups of fruit can now mature safely away from the fruit flies. - *Carlene*

## The Question of Perennials

Our Garden Etiquette poster mentions perennials. The reason this is mentioned is because a plot rental is only on an annual basis and perennials are a permanent plant. Because many are large and have deeper root systems, they may overshadow or possibly move into neighbouring plots. If the plot rental is not continued such plants may become a problem to remove.

Of course, there are many exceptions to the rule and plants such as thyme, even though it is a perennial, will not cause a problem. This is simply mentioned to remind members to be considerate of other plot holders and the rule is there in case we do have to ask someone to remove a problem plant.

If you are unsure about any plant you wish to put into your plot, please ask a committee member, who will be only too happy to help or advise where they can. - *Jeanette*



### Herbs

Catnip	Salad Rocket
Chickory	Sage
Coriander	Thyme
Dandelion	Vetch
Dill	Watercress
Feverfew	
Lemon Balm	
Marjoram	
Oregano	
Parsley	
Salad Burnett	

### What to Plant in March



Bok Choy



Carrots

Beetroot  
Bok Choy  
Broad Beans  
Broccoli  
Brussels Sprouts  
Cabbage  
Carrots  
Cauliflower  
Celeriac  
Celery

### Vegetables

Chickpea  
Garlic  
Kale  
Kohl Rabi  
Leeks  
Lettuce  
Onions  
Parsnip  
Peas—Climbing  
Peas—Dwarf  
Radish  
Rhubarb  
Salsify  
Shallots  
Silverbeet  
Spinach  
Swedes  
Turnip

## Peach Crumble Slice

Peaches and apples are in plentiful supply at the moment, so using some to make this delicious slice for weekend visitors is a happy way to welcome them with your own home baking.

### Ingredients

- 3/4 cup self-raising flour
- 3/4 cup plain flour
- 1 cup desiccated coconut
- 150g butter
- 3/4 cup soft brown sugar
- 410g tinned or stewed peaches (or apples)
- 1/3 cup rolled oats
- 1/4 cup currants
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon

### Method

1. Preheat oven to 180C and line a lamington/slice tray with baking paper extending over two sides.
2. Sift flours into a large mixing bowl and add coconut.
3. Combine butter and sugar in a small pan. Stir over low heat until butter has melted and sugar has dissolved. Remove from heat.
4. Pour butter mixture into dry ingredients. Using a wooden spoon, stir until well combined.
5. Reserve one cup of mixture. Press the remaining mixture into the tin, smoothing the surface with the

back of a spoon. Bake for 10 minutes, allow to cool completely.

6. Spread peaches over cooled base. Combine reserved mixture with oats and currants. Using fingertips, crumble mixture and sprinkle over peaches. Dust with cinnamon.
7. Bake for 30 minutes or until top is golden. Cool before cutting into slices.



Toowoomba Mower  
Centre  
Supplying & Servicing

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Supplying & Servicing

### 2020—2021 COMMITTEE

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Newsletter of Toowoomba  
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Past Newsletters [Link](#)

<https://tcogardens.wordpress.com/newsletters/>