



GROWING NATURALLY



Toowoomba Community Organic Gardens Association Incorporated

May 2020

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SOCIAL GARDENING

Sadly, due to the Corona Virus...

Wednesdays—Cancelled until further notice

Sundays—Cancelled until further notice

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What Has Been Happening in The Gardens?

During this crazy time of COVID-19 and government restrictions, the gardens have been quieter. A skeleton group of us have been maintaining the gardens to ensure that the plants stay alive and the weeds are kept at bay. There are no social gatherings and we have all been observing the social/physical distancing rules whilst working in the gardens.

Jeanette has been propagating seedlings and these have been used to fill up empty spots to keep the weeds at bay and to provide some nutritious vegetables for our members. We are focusing our weeding efforts in the permaculture area, as this has become quite overgrown in the last five or six weeks.

The continuation of the warm weather has meant that the usual planting times and seasons of the gardens are all topsy turvy at the moment. I am sure that you have noticed the increased numbers of butterflies in gardens at the moment and this is also the case at the Community Gardens.



I would encourage you all to check out our Facebook page where we try and keep you up-to-date with what we are doing in the gardens. Hopefully you have all been busy in your own gardens during the COVID-19 crisis. Being out in nature, whether gardening, or just taking a walk, certainly helps deal with the social/physical distancing we are all dealing with at the moment.

We would love to hear about the gardening projects you have undertaken in your own home whilst you are socially isolating. Pass on pictures or comments to tcoga.vicepresident@gmail.com and with your permission we would be happy to post them on our Facebook page.

We trust that you are all well and are managing to stay in good spirits whilst we are all following the governments' guidelines about staying home and minimising contact with others. Australia is doing a great job of combating this horrid pandemic, but we must all stay vigilant. Complacency will be our biggest enemy in the coming weeks, so we must continue to follow governments' guidelines.

Here's hoping we will all be back in the gardens sharing a tea and a chat very soon.



Strange Plants in The Organic Gardens



Have you ever wondered what this vibrant plant is coming up in different parts of the Gardens?

Do you think it is a weed?

Actually, it is highly nutritious **Amaranth**.

The leaves are eaten across South East Asia and are rich in vitamins A and C. They are also a source of calcium and manganese. In Australia you are more likely to come across the seeds in a health food shop as they are a protein packed seed, eaten long ago by the Aztecs and Mayans of Central America. Some shops might sell amaranth as a flour; you can use it as a thickener for soups and stews as it does contain starch.

Similar to quinoa, amaranth is actually a seed which acts like a grain. It has a mild flavour and can be used as a breakfast cereal. Use 1 1/2 cups of liquid (water or apple juice) to 1/2 cup amaranth seed. Bring to the boil and simmer for 20 minutes. Do watch over the saucepan: when left for too long you will end up with a gummy blob! Serve immediately with fruit and nuts.

Alternatively, add some amaranth (1/4 cup) to brown rice (3/4 cup) when cooking for a different flavour.

- Linda



Herbs

What to Plant in May

Vegetables

Angelica	Fennel	Nasturtium	Artichoke	Celery	Parsnip
Anise/Hyssop	Florence Fennel	Parsley	Beetroot	Celeriac	Peas—Climbing, Snow & Dwarf
Borage	Fenugreek	Salad Burnett	Bok Choy	Garlic Cloves	Radish
Buckwheat	Feverfew	Salad Rocket	Broad Beans	Kale	Rhubarb
Calendula	Linseed	Sage	Broccoli	Kohl Rabi	Salsify
Catnip	Lupin	Thyme	Brussels	Leek	Shallots
Camomile	Marjoram	Vetch	Sprouts	Lettuce	Silverbeet
Chervil	Mustard	Watercress	Cabbage	Mizuna	Spinach
Chickpea			Carrots	Mustard	Strawberries
Chickory			Collards	Greens	Swede
Chives			Corn Salad	Onions	Turnip
Coriander			Cauliflower	Pak Choy	
Dandelion					
Dill					
Endive					
Evening Primrose					



Lupin



Strawberries

Update on Fruit Fly at The Gardens

Back in the December 2019 issue of our newsletter was an article on Fruit Fly.

At the Garden, we used two methods:

1. Enclosure in the homemade traps. We were unable to monitor their effectiveness as we couldn't actually trap and count them because the traps we made were not fully enclosed.
2. Wild May* is the pheromone solution. We started with two commercial traps, but because of their effectiveness the Club has increased them to 10, all spread throughout the garden. It is unbelievable how many (male) fruit flies were caught. Each trap was collected twice a week, on Sundays and Wednesdays. The fruit fly was strained off, and it was estimated (we didn't actually count them) that there would have been 20-30 in each bottle twice a week. We were able to reuse the solution after it was strained. It was a little discoloured, but it still worked.



The pomegranate/citrus were not stung. Plot holders with tomatoes (cherry/Tommy Toe) reported positive results also.



This is exciting news for the garden as we have limited some of the damage, and we were able to increase our harvest with no nasty surprises.

More broadly, the Queensland fruit fly (Qfly) (*Bactrocera tryoni*) is native to Australia, and it is considered a pest capable of destroying 100% of the crops. It can infest almost any fruit or vegetable with the consequent costs for the agricultural production, or in our backyard

gardens. The distribution range goes from tropical to temperate climates, which makes this species highly invasive. Qfly is found in New South Wales, the Northern Territory, Queensland and Victoria. By contrast, Western Australia, South Australia and Tasmania are free of Qfly.

Different control methods are used to prevent the damage caused by the Qfly. In our context as organic gardeners, on the one hand we are concerned for the protection and conservation of the environment, but also on the other hand we are worried about the costs associated with the control of the Qfly. Accordingly, we

are orientated to the organic Qfly controls to reduce the level of their population. Using specific male pheromone traps gives 90% accuracy that we are catching the right fruit flies. Furthermore, the traps are re-usable. This method is not 100% effective to eradicate the insects; however, the birds and the other natural predators do their job and we also collect and destroy the rotting fruits on the plant, or on the ground, to reduce the risk of fruit fly maggots developing.



- Emilio & Joanne

* [Wild May Fruit Fly Attractant is a pesticide free organically safe attractant. Ed.]

Sukama Wiki

There is sukama wiki growing at the Gardens. Never heard of it? It is a new vegetable for most of us as it comes from East Africa and is a type of collard. It has been eaten for over 2000 years.

Description

Collard refers to certain loose-leafed cultivars of Brassica oleracea, the same species as many common vegetables, including cabbage and broccoli. Collard is part of the Acephala Group of the species, which includes kale and spring greens.

Sukama wiki is a Swahili phrase leaning 'to stretch the week'. You can work out why it might be called this! Like most green leafy vegetable, it is rich in vitamins A and B and supplies plenty of roughage.

It is best cooked quickly by stir-frying with onions and maybe add some chopped tomatoes.

- Linda



Planning Survey Results

Some of you may remember receiving a planning survey at the beginning of the year. The aim of the survey was to get some initial feedback from the members about how they would like to see the gardens evolve.

Approximately 30 surveys were given out to members and I have received 15 surveys back. After collating the survey, it seems pretty clear that members would like to see more individual and communal plots in the gardens. All of the respondents were keen to see workshops taking place in the gardens and were interested in topics such as; healthy soil, pruning, bees/bee-hives, organic sprays, companion planting, making good compost, drought tolerant plants, wicking beds, native plants, medicinal plants and healthy insects.

Members were keen for the group to have more social activities such as trips to gardens, meals out together, trivia night and shared lunch at the garden. It was suggested that we could have working bees at the garden and then finish them off by sharing a meal together such as a BBQ. Quite a few members suggested that we could have a 'Plot to Plate' presentation which could be run by willing members who shared and demonstrated their recipes with the produce they are growing.

Strong support was expressed for improving facilities and ideas for new things to consider. There was an overwhelming response for a kitchen and meeting area, improved toilet facilities fencing of garden area and a propagation shed. The following facilities were also suggested: solar panels to provide electricity and lighting in the gardens; more shaded areas and seating for gardeners to sit in and some sculptures to be incorporated into the garden design.

Survey respondents also suggested a need for more raised garden beds and the importance of factoring in access of the gardens for those with mobility difficulties. People were also interested in having areas in the gardens for succulent plants, medicinal plants and drought tolerant plants. Some members suggested that the plot surrounds/borders needed some attention to ensure that they did not create a potential hazard for members.

All responses supported the need for being water wise in our gardens and suggested exploring water wise practices that could be used in the gardens.

The responses to this survey will help us to formulate a 3 – 5 year plan for our gardens. As mentioned previously the Toowoomba Regional Council is assisting us with this process, however, like many things at the moment, it has been put on hold due to COVID-19. Despite COVID-19 we can still think and formulate our ideas so that we are ready to engage with the Landscape Architect when we are able.

If you did not receive a survey and would like to pass your ideas onto the committee, please use the email below to convey your ideas and/or request a survey form.

- Wendy Snigg - tcoga.vicepresident@gmail.com

Quick Notes for Your Calendar

3-9 May—**International Compost Awareness Week**—You can still compost!

<https://www.compostweek.com.au/>

Sunday 21 June—**Sausage Sizzle at Bunnings North**

All suspended by Bunnings indefinitely

Rescheduled to 19-21 September - **Qld Garden Expo**— Nambour Showgrounds

<https://qldgardenexpo.com.au/>



Florence Fennel

This plant is a perennial grown as an annual for its swollen stem bases which form a bulb-like growth about the size of a clenched fist. The plant comes from the Mediterranean where it is particularly popular in Italy. The stems grow up to 60cm which are shorter than those of common fennel which is grown for its leaves and seeds. The bulbous base has a mild aniseed flavour and can be used in much the same way as celery. It can be used raw, sliced thinly in salads, or cooked and served with a variety of dressings and sauces. When finely chopped the young ferny foliage makes a fine garnish for salads and soups.

Fennel grows best in a sunny position in well-drained soil as a winter crop. Dig the soil thoroughly and mix in a generous dressing of well-rotted organic material as well as some complete fertilizer. The seeds can be sown direct from mid-summer to early autumn. Sow them approximately 15 cm apart in rows 30 cm apart. To keep the newly planted seeds moist until they germinate the rows can be covered with a light mulch of fibrous material such as finely sieved leaf mould or compost.

Crops sown in summer should mature in about 14 weeks, while those sown later may take up to 20 weeks. The plants become stringy and the aniseed taste stronger with age, so do not leave them in the ground too long after they mature.

- *Illustrated Guide to Gardening, Readers Digest*

Mexican Marigolds

For those of you who have had the recent pleasure of visiting The Gardens to tend to your plot, you will have noticed the myriad of beautiful butterflies flitting about and alighting on the yellow daisy-like flowers lining the pathway outside the permaculture area. I am lucky to also have these flowers at home and my yard is also delightfully full of these colourful creatures.

These plants seem to self-seed readily and we have newcomers appearing at The Gardens each year. Another benefit of these flowers is that they attract great numbers of bees, which will help with pollination of our vegetables, as well as providing food for the bees in our community.

“The Mexican Marigold (*Tagetes lemmonii*), originates from Arizona through to Mexico. It occurs at an elevation of 1,200 to 2,400m above sea level which is how it received one of its common names, mountain marigold. This plant was named after the Lemmons, a husband and wife team of plant collectors who found it in the late 1800’s.

Mexican marigold is a fabulous plant that has an extended flowering period, from autumn right through to winter. It has beautiful yellow daisy flowers, and is well known for its leaves. They possess an aroma which can be easily smelt when the wind passes over the foliage, or when the leaves are crushed. It smells like an exotic ripe passionfruit!

There are a lot of annual type marigolds that are used in horticulture as bedding plants for flower displays, however, the Mexican marigold is a pure perennial that will survive for many years in your garden.”

- *Botanic Gardens of South Australia*



German Potato Pancakes

While closeted at home you may be doing more cooking, trying exotic recipes as well as renovating your house! This is a recipe using ingredients that you should have on hand during the Corona Virus stay-at-home pandemic. It is also nutritious, easy to prepare and very tasty for a breakfast, lunch or side dish.

Ingredients

1/4 cup plain flour

1 1/2 tsp salt

1/4 tsp baking powder

Pinch pepper

2 eggs

1 tbsp chopped onion

1 tbsp chopped parsley

1 kg potatoes

50g butter

Method

1. Sift dry ingredients into bowl
2. Beat eggs well and add to dry ingredients with chopped parsley and onion, blend well
3. Wash, peel and grate potatoes. Place in a cloth

and squeeze out excess liquid. Add potatoes to egg mixture. Beat thoroughly with a wooden spoon.

4. Gently heat 50g butter in frying pan. Spoon about 2 tbsp batter into pan, flatten slightly with spoon. Cook over medium heat until golden brown and crisp on one side. Turn carefully, brown other side.

5. Drain on absorbent paper. Add more butter to pan for remainder of pancakes if necessary.

- Australian Women's Weekly Cookbook



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2019—2020 COMMITTEE

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New Member Coordinator: Joanne McClelland

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Newsletter of Toowoomba
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