

NEWSLETTER

December 2023



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What has been Happening in November

Hi all,

It has been great to have some cooler days with very much needed rain recently, the tanks are almost full which will be great as we come into the warmer months through summer. Another year almost gone which doesn't seem real, like many I have no idea where 2023 has disappeared to but in saying that we have accomplished many things at the gardens this year.

Thank you to all that have been involved and worked on the numerous projects we have undertaken. I know I will forget some and I thought I'd just highlight some of them. Starting with the implementation of the Hugelkultur gardens we have two of these established in the gardens and have utilised this method in one of the new raised garden beds.

The replacement of the garden beds in the members area, thank you to Ron Dalton who provided his bobcat and services free of charge to assist us in the removing the six old garden beds and preparing this area for us to put the new garden beds we purchased through Birdie. We were able to get eight replacement garden beds with a special and some negotiations with Birdie for this area and we thank them for their support of the gardens.

We have now got the greenhouse up and running and will continue to grow and sell seedlings to members. The revitalisation of the field plots with the bordering of the beds with the sleepers, this project is still ongoing and the cleaning out of the shipping container and reorganising this, finding lots of treasures along the way. We have had numerous donations from members of the community which have included multiple fruit trees, two raised large garden beds, two smaller garden beds and a garden shed donated by a member.

We had the concrete slab poured by Ron Dalton and the installation of the garden shed by members and their family members who got roped in.

Another major accomplishment was the revision and updating of our governance documents, thank you to Nette and Susan Sheppard for all their work around this and the development of a new website through a partnership with the University of Southern Queensland with students from the IT degree.

To the coordinators for their vision and progression of their areas in the gardens, thank you to you and the teams that have been working with you. The gardens have progressed a lot this year.

Thank you to the schools that have contributed to the gardens over this last year with their volunteering program, we very much appreciate their efforts and time they spend at the gardens assisting with various projects.

We undertook numerous workshops this year with the grant from Australia Post and have had multiple visitors to the gardens such as our local member Trevor Watts, Therapeutic Horticulture Australia and the president of Community Gardens Australia to name a few.

I look forward to 2024 and the exciting and beneficial projects and activities we will be undertaking in the gardens, and of course, this is not possible without the continued support, dedication and enthusiasm of our members. Thank you.

Hope to see you at the end of year celebrations on Sunday 10 December.

Take care and see you at the gardens.

Kylie



December

Events



Public Hols



Market Days



SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT
Multiple workshops at Mt-Coo-tha Botanical Gardens					1st Enchanted garden, roma street parklands, 1 parkland blvd, brisbane city, until 20 th december	2nd Crows nest Christmas markets, Community hub 3-8pm Toowoomba Farmers Market Lindsay st Yarraman markets Corner D'Aguiar & New England Highways Toowoombas Christmas wonderland 7pm-10pm 43 lindsay st, until the 24 th December
3rd Propagation & Seedling workshop, The hub civil church, 258 spring street, Kearneys spring PCYC Markets near TCOGA	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th Cambooya Community Christmas markets, recreation grounds, 8am-1pm Christmas makers market, victoria street, Toowoomba, 3pm Toowoomba Farmers Market, Yarraman markets
10th TCOGA Christmas Gathering PCYC Markets & Vintage christmas market, Royal bulls head in, Drayton, 8am-1pm Carbarlah Markets	11th	12th	13th	14th	15th	16th The Makers Market - christmas edition - highfields cultural centre Toowoomba Farmers Market, Yarraman markets
17th PCYC Markets & Queens park markets Oakey Lions Sunday markets Campbell St, Oakey Queens park christmas markets 9am-1pm	18th	19th	20th	21st	22nd Summer solstice	23rd Toowoomba Farmers Market, Yarraman markets
24th PCYC Markets, CHRISTMAS EVE	25th CHRISTMAS DAY	26th BOXING DAY	27th	28th	29th	30th Toowoomba Farmers Market, Yarraman markets
31st PCYC & Bunya Mountains Markets NEW YEARS EVE						

Mary Mountford

There is a new tree at the Gardens: it is a quince tree planted in memory of long-time member of TCOGA, Mary Mountford. For the 'old' members, it was a chance to swap stories of Mary and remember our times together. Our current president, Kylie, welcomed us to the tree-planting and Peter Pendlebury (a past president of TCOGA) spoke of the first time he came to the Gardens and met Mary: we could only nod in agreement as he talked of the very forthright Mary. She was a 'no nonsense' person. We also welcomed Lily who spoke most lovingly of the Mary who helped the first maize growers to settle in at the Gardens. Andrew Mountford (Mary's son) led us in placing soil around the quince tree, cheered on by brother, Bruce. We shall watch our new tree thrive and remember the dedication of one of many members of our community gardens.



Andrew Mountford is the first to add soil to Mary's tree



Ex- president of TCOGA, Peter Pendlebury, shares his memories of Mary



Old and current members gather to remember Mary Mountford

Plant profile at the Gardens-Lady Finger Banana



Description/Taste

Lady Finger bananas grow on tall, slender trees that can reach 7.5 metres in height. They are thinner than the more common cavendish bananas and have a cigar-like shape. Its pseudostem is slender and streaked with reddish brown, but it has a heavy root system that makes it resistant to wind damage. It is resistant to drought and Black Weevil, but is susceptible to Sigatoka. It is monocarpic and is propagated asexually.

The fruit is 4 to 5 inches (10 to 12+1/2 cm) in length, and light yellow. The skin is thin and the flesh is sweet. 12 to 20 fingers are borne in each hand, with each bunch typically having 10 to 14 hands. They grow up to 5 inches long and are roughly half an inch in diameter. Lady Finger bananas have thin, bright yellow skins that will develop dark flecks when fully ripe. The fruit has a creamy consistency, with a sweeter flavour than common bananas.

Seasons/Availability

Lady Finger bananas are available year-round in tropical or semi-tropical regions.

Current Facts

Lady Finger bananas are a popular South Pacific variety of *Musa acuminata*. They are often grown as an ornamental in its dwarf state, but can grow up to 25 feet tall when planted in the soil and properly fertilized. Lady Finger bananas are the second most popular bananas in Australia, next to the cavendish. One unique characteristic of the Lady Finger banana is that it doesn't turn brown when cut, making it a good choice for fresh applications. Lady Finger bananas are also known as Sugar bananas, Date or Fig bananas and Finger bananas.

Nutritional Value

Lady Finger bananas are high in potassium, and dietary fibre. They are also full of good pre-biotic bacteria which is good for gut health. Lady Finger bananas are also rich in vitamins C and B5, with lesser quantities of vitamins A, E and K. Bananas are also high in minerals such as manganese, magnesium, calcium and zinc. Bananas are also very low on the glycemic scale and are ideal for those on a diabetic diet.

Applications

Lady Finger bananas are good for fresh eating, as well as adding to baked goods or smoothies. The thin fruits do not oxidize as quickly as the more common banana, so they are perfect for fruit salads. If Lady Finger bananas are slightly overripe, they are ideal for a loaf of banana bread. Use Lady Finger bananas for a creamy banana pudding, or use them in banana foster. Bananas will keep on the counter for up to a week. To preserve, peel the banana and freeze or puree and freeze for up to three months.

Geography/History

Lady Finger bananas are native to Australia and Southeast Asia. The plants are not actually trees, they are perennial herbs. Leaf stalks grow straight up from the soil and new leaves emerge from the centre. The bananas have fuchsia flowers that bloom before making way for the fruit. There are two cultivars of Lady Finger banana, both a regular variety as well as a dwarf variety, which can be kept indoors in areas that are too cold. Lady Finger bananas are propagated by dividing the rhizomes, or underground stems of the plant and replanting. Lady Finger bananas are more common in tropical areas, like the Southeast Asian countries of Taiwan and Indonesia, as well as Australia.

TCOGA Open day

Our open day was on Sunday the 26th November, Thank you to all the members who assisted in the activities throughout the morning for the open day, it as always is very much appreciated.

The morning was a success with approximately 50 members of the community coming through the gardens to explore and learn about what we do, hopefully this will turn into some new members. We sold a few tickets for the raffle and had donations from the morning tea which will benefit the gardens in supporting activities/projects around the gardens.

These events are important to showcase the gardens, increase our membership base and awareness in the community.

Thank you to Permaculture Toowoomba and the Friends of Escarpment Parks for joining us on the day.





What to Plant in December

Alfalfa
 Amaranth
 Basil
 Beans
 Beetroot
 Borage
 Burdock
 Chamomile
 Cape gooseberry
 Capsicum
 Carraway
 Carrots
 Celery
 Celery
 Chilli
 Chives
 Choko
 Coriander
 Corn
 Cucumber
 Echinacea
 Eggplant
 Honeydew
 Horseradish
 Kohl Rabi
 Leeks
 Lemon Balm
 Lettuce
 Marigold
 Marrow

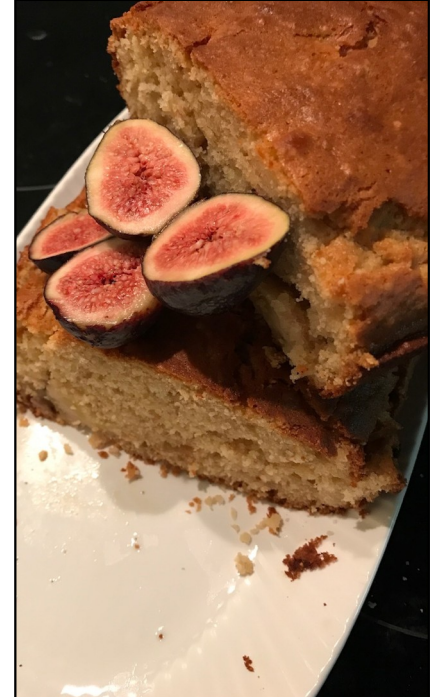
Mint
 Mustard greens
 Okra
 Oregano
 Osteospermums
 Parsley
 Petunias
 Plumeria
 Poinsettias
 Portulacas
 Pumpkin
 Purslane
 Radish
 Rockmelon
 Rosella
 Sage
 Silverbeet
 Squash
 Strawberries
 Sunflower
 Sweet Potatoes
 Tarragon
 Tomato
 Watermelon
 Yam
 Zucchini

**What to look for
 Harvesting
 (Toowoomba -Darling
 Downs/TCOGA)
 approximate:**
 Apples
 Bananas
 Beans
 Beetroot
 Berries -
 Raspberry,Boysonberry,
 Strawberry,Blueberry
 Broccolini
 Cape Gooseberry
 Capsicum
 Carrots
 Cherries
 Chilli
 Corn
 Coffee
 Cotton
 Edible flowers
 Fenugreek
 Ginger
 Grapes
 Herbs
 Kale
 Heat tolerant Lettuce
 Mangos
 Melons
 Mustard Greens
 Onions
 Passionfruit
 PawPaw
 Potatoes
 Pumpkins
 Radish
 Rocket
 Sapote
 Spinach
 Stone fruit
 Tomato
 Zucchini

Recipe of the Month -Lady Finger Banana bread

INGREDIENTS

- 3 to 4 medium very ripe lady finger bananas, peeled (about 1 1/4 to 1 1/2 cups mashed)
- 1/3 cup (76g) butter, unsalted or salted, melted or coconut oil
- 3/4 cup (150g) sugar (1/2 cup if you would like it less sweet, 1 cup if more sweet) or brown sugar
- 1 large egg, beaten
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract or bean paste
- 1 1/2 cups (205g) self-raising flour
- A little bit of milk if too thick
- Optional items such as figs or nuts



METHOD

1-Preheat the oven to 350°F (175°C):
Butter or oil spray an 8x4-inch loaf pan.

2-Mash the bananas and add the butter:
In a mixing bowl, mash the ripe bananas with a fork until completely smooth. Stir the melted butter into the mashed bananas.

3-Mix in the remaining ingredients:
Stir in the sugar, beaten egg, and vanilla extract. Mix in the flour and any other ingredients. If mixture too thick add in a small amount of milk.

4-Bake the bread:
Pour the batter into your prepared loaf pan.
Bake for 55 to 65 minutes at 350°F (175°C), or until a toothpick or wooden skewer inserted into the centre comes out clean. If the outside of the loaf is browned but the centre is still wet, loosely tent the loaf with foil and continue baking until the loaf is fully baked.

5-Cool and serve:
Remove from oven and let cool in the pan for a few minutes. Then remove the banana bread from the pan and let cool completely before serving. Slice and serve. (A bread knife helps to make slices that aren't crumbly.)
Wrapped well, the banana bread will keep at room temperature for 4 days. For longer storage, refrigerate the loaf up to 5 days, or freeze it.

Served at TCOGA March & October

Membership Renewals

Membership and Plot renewals

The annual membership and plot renewals are due in March. You will receive your renewal documentation via email in February for completion and return with your payment by 1 st March 2024.

Gardening Tips for December

It is pretty warm, so if you are heading away for a while, it's probably best to avoid planting at this stage. If you are hanging around at home, why not try some of these favourites; silverbeet, lettuce, leek, beans, corn, squash (summer), leek, eggplants, beetroot, carrots, chilli, cucumber, pumpkin and zucchini.

For some super herbs in the temperate areas, try basil (both sweet and purple), parsley, pyrethrum and lemongrass. Mint can be planted now but you might want to keep it in a nice sized pot, just to prevent serious mint invasion!

Why not try some lovely flowering stuff in your patch as well: Nasturtium, verbena, petunias, marigolds, phlox and celosia are great at attracting pollinators and beneficial insects to your patch. They add a touch of pretty to your patch too.

Consider a green manure crop to add some life and love to an overworked patch. At this time of year, try cow pea, mung bean, soy bean and millet. This will improve your soil incredibly, and return some nutrients that are needed for healthy vigorous growth. With a bit of forward planning you'll find it well worth the effort!

Plants feel the need for a feed at this time of year. A seaweed tea or low environmental impact liquid fertiliser is perfect, especially for the seedlings planted in during November. They'll be ready for a bit of a feed by now. Apply to the soil early in the morning.

Top up mulch on your veggie patches, herb gardens and ornamental beds, especially important if you are heading off this holidays. A hot summer tip is to mulch after watering the patch; to a depth of about 7cm. Keep mulch clear of plant stems, especially young seedlings. Choose sustainable, low environmental impact mulch, one that will enrich your soil as it breaks down like pea or lucerne straw.

On non-gardening days, why not head out to the shed, and construct a couple of shade cloth tents. They don't have to elaborate, just a simple, moveable structure that you can pop over the top of some of the sun sensitive veggies (like eggplant, capsicum and others) as the heat becomes more intense. Think of it as slip, slop, slap for plants! Pop these around where required, especially on high UV days, windy days, and during your holidays.

Going away? Consider installing a drip irrigation system in your patch before you leave. These systems deliver water where it is needed, the roots, and when covered by mulch, are invisible garden lifesavers! Install on a tap timer and you're set! Make sure you choose one appropriate to the needs of your plants; they come with a variety of 'drips per minute.'

Weeding is an awesome job to do at this time of year. Cut down the competition between your tasty treats and these space invaders and tidy up your patch. It may sound tedious, but it's incredibly rewarding! Weeds use nutrients that you have set aside specifically for your produce plants, don't let it leach away!

Protect your pot plants while you are away this summer. Mulch the top of the pots, sit them in a saucer of water, or the bathtub if it gets enough light, and you'll be set! Or even run dripper lines to them from your main irrigation pipes.

As it gets hotter and wetter, many Pests and Diseases will be very active, so be vigilant with control to prevent buildup of pest populations. (When the rains come, don't forget to check around the yard for mossie-breeding sites, too.)

Visitors on the way? Quick spruce-up tips for the garden

Of course, removing or fixing safety hazards (overhanging branches, slippery or loose paving etc.) are your first priority, but if you're pressed for time, here are some tricks to improve the look of the garden in a hurry:

1. Remove dead and yellowing leaves from plants.
2. Remove as much visible weed growth as you can (do the job more thoroughly or spray when there's time)
3. Lay a fresh layer of an attractive mulch over garden beds. However, it's hot sweaty work - definitely not something you want to do the morning guests arrive (freshly laid mulch can be a bit smelly, too). If you're not up to doing the job yourself, consider an engaging mulching service that employs a blower applicator.
4. Crisp, clean edges on gardens and lawns.
5. Lightly trim hedges and other foliage shrubs (cut back too hard and they might not regrow in time for the party)

If you have a little extra time, create some feature container displays for high-visibility spots like the front door or patio area. Blooming annuals ("potted colour") can be purchased from the garden centre. You might even tuck in potted plants you might already have as accents (e.g. cordylines, succulents, bromeliads) in a mixed arrangement.

Committee and Contact

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