

NEWSLETTER

February 2024



What has been Happening in Dec & Jan

Welcome to 2024 and happy new year!!

The year is already quickly moving with the end of January already upon us. It has been great to have some decent rainfall through the end of December and into January, which has been great for the gardens and rainwater tanks. Please remember to ensure that you have mulched your garden beds, keep them free of weeds and clear any weeds around your garden bed. If you are going to be away and need someone to water your garden, please put this up on the whiteboard in the Shed.

Also a reminder to members, that when you attend the gardens to please sign into the diary in the shed, this is part of the requirements for insurance purposes, especially if it is outside of the open hours.

Thank you to all the members who attended the end of year get together. I am pretty sure that everyone had a good time, enjoyed catching up and having a chat.

Congratulations to the winners of the raffle prizes who have all been notified and collected their prizes. A huge thank you to Toowoomba Landscaping, Mitre 10 Ruthven St, North Toowoomba Bunnings, Early Settler, True Blue Nursery and Bokashi Composting for their very generous donations of the prizes. Also a thank you to members who took the time to sell the tickets:we made a few hundred dollars from this fundraising.

There are already several activities planned for the new year, with a visit from the federal member and an open meeting for members in March (more information later in the newsletter). Wilsonton High School will be commencing their volunteering program again with us in March and the Toowoomba Show will be held from 18 – 20 April.

We have secured a spot at Bunnings West for a BBQ on Saturday 13 April. We will be putting a roster on the whiteboard in the Shed: can you please put your name against a time slot to assist with making this a successful fundraising event. We really need the support of our members to ensure that we can undertake these activities to provide the gardens with the money to carry out projects or purchasing of equipment. Just a reminder that we have various seedlings available for members to purchase, there is a list on the whiteboard. Please let Brett or one of the Committee members know if you would like something additional to be grown.

Unfortunately we have again experienced vandalism in the park during the school holidays with a number of banana trees being cut down near the shipping container and a large metal rod being smashed through the skylight in the shed creating a hole. We are still waiting for Council to come and inspect the damage to the shed.

The Committee looks forward to supporting our members in 2024 with lots of great ideas and projects to be undertaken in the gardens. Take Care and see you at the gardens.

Kylie

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TOOWOOMBA
community
ORGANIC GARDENS

February

Events ■

Public Hols ■

Market Days ■

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT
				1 st	2 nd	3 rd Toowoomba Farmers Market Lindsay st Yarraman markets Corner D'Aguiar & New England Highways
4 th PCYC Markets near TCOGA	5 th	6 th	7 th	8 th	9 th	10 th Toowoomba Farmers Market, Yarraman markets
11 th PCYC Markets Makers Market, The Goods Shed Valentines twilight markets, Aberfeldy farm and barn,Westbrook	12 th	13 th	14 th Valentine's day	15 th	16 th	17 th Toowoomba Farmers Market, Yarraman markets St annes car boot sale, St annes Church ,Highfields road,Highfields
18 th PCYC Markets & Queens park markets Oakey Lions Sunday markets Campbell St, Oakey	19 th	20 th	21 st	22 nd	23 rd Stanthorpe Apple and grape harvest festival, until 3 rd March	24 th Toowoomba Farmers Market, Yarraman markets
25 th PCYC Markets, Carbarlah Markets, Bunya Mountain Markets	26 th	27 th	28 th	29 th		

TCOGA News

Tool Coordinator

There is now a Tool Maintenance book which is located on the work/tool bench in the Main Shed. Please use this to jot down any tool or other shed items which needs attention or fixing. Alternatively you can report directly to the ever helpful Tool Shed Coordinators. Wishing all our Gardeners a happy and safe holiday season. -Nette.

Worm Farm Coordinator

We are encouraging more members to supply more food scraps, tea leaves and coffee grounds from home for the worms to keep them well fed and with more variety in their diet. -Sharon

Shadehouse Coordinator

Just a reminder to let Brett know of anything specific members would like to grow in the shadehouse as he is happy to help out.

Seeds are cheaper than seedlings so you might find useful a recipe for seed-raising mix. Gather together,

2 parts sieved compost

1 part coarse sand (from a landscape company)

2 parts hydrated coir fibre (buy a coir brick and soak it in water)

1 part worm castings (or extra compost).

Alternatively, buy your seedlings from TCOG where Brett has done all the hard work!

Open Member meeting – Sunday 17 March

We will be holding an open member meeting to get ideas for the action plan for the gardens until the end of this financial year and into the 2024-25 financial year. We would like to include in this meeting our five year plan for the gardens. There was a plan developed by previous Committees and we want to get ideas from our current members on what they would like in the gardens.

One of the projects which we are currently working on is the building of a clubhouse/education centre. This will also be an opportunity to provide ideas for fundraising activities, workshops and any other ideas or suggestions you would like to provide.

Toowoomba Show – Expressions of Interest

Last year we were going to put in for the art sculpture with the growing of our vegetables and fruit from the gardens, unfortunately our harvest wasn't enough to put something together.

We are seeking interest from members if they would be interested in participating this year. There is a document in the shed with the various entry areas for vegetables and the art sculpture.

The show will be held from 18 – 20 April and we are also looking into having a stall to promote the gardens depending on costs. If you are interested in participating, please email tcoga.president@gmail.com as soon as possible so we can get the seeds going to grow some great produce.

Membership renewals – 1 March

The annual membership and plot renewals will be due on 1 March. An email will be sent to members in early February with payment to be made by 1 March. The handbook will be included to remind members of their responsibilities at the gardens.

If you are not going to renew your plot, can you please email tcoga.secretary@gmail.com to advise.

Plots Available

We have a number of plots currently available in both the founders and members garden. If you know of anyone that might be interested please pass on the information to email tcoga.secretary@gmail.com or go to the website www.tcoga.org.au to download the forms.

Education Centre/Clubhouse

Just an update for members, from the previous five year plan we have started the paperwork on quotes for the building of a shed to hold workshops and host as a clubhouse with the inclusion of an accessibility toilet. We are in the very early stages of this project and have support from the federal member in relation to applying for a grant. This will be a very long process and it still needs to be approved by Council so it isn't guaranteed that it will go ahead. Information on the progress of this project will be provided at the open members meeting.

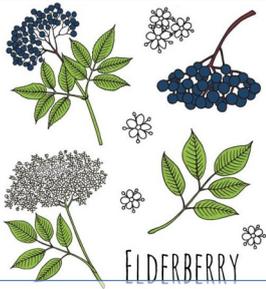
Coordinators

We have the permaculture / forage garden coordinator position open, if you are interested in assisting with this area, please let one of the Committee members know or email tcoga.president@gmail.com. This can be multiple people as it is a large area to be coordinating.

Facebook

We are also looking for someone to assist with Facebook, if you have an interest in social media and would like to help in promoting the gardens through facebook, please let Kylie know or email tcoga.president@gmail.com.

Plant profile at the Gardens-Elderberry



Description/Taste

Elderberries are small in size, averaging less than one centimetre in diameter, and have a round, ovate, to oval appearance with somewhat uniform, curved edges. The berry's skin is smooth, taut, and delicate, showcasing purple-blue, blue, to dark purple, almost black hues. When the berries are unripe, they appear in shades of green and darken to purple-blue hues, often developing a powdery blue-grey bloom with maturity. Underneath the surface, the flesh is semi-firm, moderately juicy, and tender. Elderberries are toxic when unripe and mature berries should never be consumed unless cooked. The berries are also unpalatable in flavour when raw, having a tart, sour, and astringent taste. Once cooked, Elderberries will reduce in astringency but still retain a tart, tangy flavour. When mixed with sweeteners, they can also release subtly floral and fruity nuances, depending on the variety. In addition to the berries, the flowers are edible and are used as edible garnishes.

Current Facts

Elderberries, botanically a part of the Sambucus genus, is a general descriptor for several species of pigmented berries belonging to the Adoxaceae family. The tiny berries form in clusters on shrubs or small trees reaching 7 - 9 meters in height and are an ancient plant revered for its medicinal, culinary, and cosmetic uses. There are over 30 species of Elderberries worldwide, and the five main species include Sambucus nigra, or the European Elder, Sambucus canadensis, the American Elder, Sambucus ebulus, the European Dwarf Elder, Sambucus ceulea, the Blue Elder, and Sambucus racemosa, or the Red Elder. Red Elders are typically considered more ornamental for home gardens, and Elderberries, in general, are favoured as a quick-growing plant in landscapes, often used as a hedge. Outside of home gardens, Elderberries are primarily foraged from wild plants and are commercially cultivated on a small scale for syrups, beverages, candies, sauces, and other cooked preparations. It is important to note that Elderberries are toxic when raw and must be cooked before consumption. Not all species of Elderberries are edible, so it is also worth mentioning that foraging for Elderberries should be done by a seasoned expert to ensure the species being collected is non-poisonous.

Nutritional Value

Elderberries have been used for thousands of years in folk medicines throughout the Northern Hemisphere. The berries are traditionally cooked and added to tea, syrups, and lozenges and are thought to strengthen the immune system against colds and flu. The berries were also incorporated into infusions to topically soothe skin irritations or reduce fevers. Morning dew from the plants was collected and used to wash the face, believing it would bring rejuvenation and repair. While there has not been enough research and studies to prove these claims, Elderberries are touted as a source of vitamin C to strengthen the immune system, fibre to regulate the digestive tract, iron to develop the protein haemoglobin for oxygen transport through the bloodstream, and potassium to balance fluid levels throughout the body. The berries also provide vitamin A to maintain healthy organ functioning and anthocyanins, plant pigments that give the berries their dark purple-blue, almost black hue. When diluted with water, the pigments will create a red-purple liquid, used as a natural food dye. Uncooked berries contain cyanogenic glycosides, which are considered toxic and may induce diarrhoea, nausea, and other harmful side effects.

Backyard Birds

We all need to add more water containers in our gardens in this very hot weather for thirsty birds and some on the ground for the lizards and other creatures.

Help your backyard birds stay cool this summer with our top tips on providing water for birds

Things are heating up in Australia, and, just like us, birds get hot and bothered too! You may find them popping into your backyard in search of a drink and somewhere to cool off.

Providing a source of safe, clean water is a great way to help local native birds – especially in times of extreme heat but is also great year-round.

Check out

<https://birdlife.org.au/providing-water-for-birds/> for even more great tips.

Got a thirsty bird in your yard?

Here are our top tips to safely provide water for birds this summer



James Vernon

Choose your vessel:

- Bird baths
- Containers
- Hanging pots
- Buckets
- Ceramic dishes
- Shell pools

Tip: avoid metal as that can get too hot for birds



Keep it fresh

Birds are using this water to drink and bathe in, so it will need to be replaced daily to avoid the spread of disease (and mozzies!)



Keith Ward

Keep it clean

Clean and scrub your bird bath regularly. You can clean and disinfect containers in your dishwasher, or by soaking them in a bleach solution (one cup of domestic-strength bleach to four litres of water).



Patrick Kawangoh

Keep it cool

Keep it cool by placing the water source in shade, away from direct sunlight.



James Tyrrell

Keep it safe

Place water sources close to trees and shrubs, so birds can have an escape route and a safe place to hide and keep watch.

Keep pets away or indoors, where they can't reach the water source or the birds using it.



Geary



What to Plant in February

Amaranth
 Basil
 Beans
 Beetroot
 Brussel sprouts
 Capsicum
 Carrots
 Celeriac
 Celery
 Chilli
 Chives
 Choko
 Collard Greens
 Coriander
 Corn
 Cucumber
 Echinacea
 Eggplant
 Endive
 Florence Fennel
 Honeydew
 Kohl Rabi
 Lemon Balm

Lemongrass
 Marigold
 Mint
 Mustard greens
 Okra
 Onions
 Oregano
 Parsley
 Potato
 Radish
 Rockmelon
 Rosella
 Sage
 Salsify
 Silverbeet
 Squash
 Spring onions
 Strawberries
 Sunflower
 Sweet Potatoes
 Tarragon
 Tomato
 Watermelon
 Zucchini

**What to look for
 Harvesting
 (Toowoomba -Darling
 Downs/TCOGA)
 approximate:**

Apples
 Avocado
 Bananas
 Beans
 Beetroot
 Berries -Raspberry,
 Strawberry,
 Capsicum
 Carrots
 Chilli
 Coffee
 Corn
 Cotton
 Cucumber
 Eggplant
 Elderberry
 Figs
 Grapes
 Guava
 Heat tolerant Lettuce
 Mangos
 Melons
 Onions
 Passionfruit
 PawPaw
 Potatoes
 Pumpkins
 Radish
 Squash
 Stone fruit
 Sunflowers
 Tamarillos
 Tomato
 Zucchini

Recipe of the Month -Elderberry Syrup

INGREDIENTS

- (1kg) elderberries, (see note below), woody stems removed and rinsed
- 4 cups (1L) water
- 2 1/2 cups (500g) sugar
- one nice-sized squirt of freshly-squeezed lemon juice
- Infusions such as cinnamon or citrus peel(optional)



METHOD

Step 1: Put the elderberries in a large, non-reactive pot with the water. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to a low boil and cook for 15-20 minutes, until tender and soft.

Step 2: Pass through a food mill, then discard the skins.

Step 3: Pour the juice back into the pot, add sugar, and cook at a low boil over moderate heat for 15 minutes, until the syrup has thickened. Add a squeeze of lemon juice. Cool completely. Pour into a bottle or jar and store in the refrigerator.

Note: Some varieties of elderberries are not meant for consumption and none should be eaten raw, especially the leaves. Remove all of the hard, woody stems as well before cooking. The berries are used in natural home remedies worldwide and are cultivated on a small scale for culinary, medicinal, and cosmetic use. When in season, fresh Elderberries are found through speciality grocers, distributors, and farmers markets.

Storage: In the refrigerator, I've kept this syrup up to one year. If it shows any signs of mold, scrape it away, and bring the syrup back to a full boil again.

Elderberries pair well with other ingredients such as berries, stone fruits, apples, dried figs, roasted nuts, vanilla, coffee, chocolate, and spices, including nutmeg, ginger, allspice, and cloves. Whole, unwashed Elderberries will keep for a few days when stored in the refrigerator.

<https://www.davidlebovitz.com/respect-your-el/>

The 1,2,3 of Fruit Fly Prevention

Interesting facts about Fruit Flies: They have four cycles in a lifetime

Egg—which is laid in the fruit

Larvae—eggs hatch into larvae and munch inside the fruit, (they look like maggots) Pupae—fruit fly mature in the soil where the stung fruit has fallen

Adults—emerge from the soil and the cycle repeats The female needs to feed on protein to be able to produce eggs. To get this protein the female feeds on animal droppings, bacteria in the garden and the juice in the fruit. The female can lay up to several hundred eggs. The fruit fly can live for many weeks. In their search for food they can travel several kilometres in a lifetime. The pupae need soil warmth to mature, so in summer they can be quite prolific. Signs to look for- punctured fruit, maggoty fruit, small yellow and black flying insects. Check Google for pictures.

Control -There are a few organic methods of control

EXCLUSION - netting the whole fruit tree with special fruit fly netting. Advantage - organic Disadvantage—expensive, time consuming, if the net has a hole the fruit fly will get in, stops other pollinating insects.

BAGGING - using waxed paper bags/mesh bags to cover each piece of fruit. Advantage - organic, cheap Disadvantage - time consuming, if not tied properly blows away in the wind.

REMOVAL OF THE FALLEN FRUIT - place all of the fallen/stung/damaged fruit into a black plastic bag and leave in the sun to cook. This will kill the larvae.

SPRAYING - some of the spray may not be organic. Disadvantages - harming the good bugs, withholding period for the fruit, much of it could be wasted, has to be re-sprayed after rain.

TRAPS - These are designed for the fruit fly to enter the bottle. It can either drown in the solution or die from the insecticide solution. Advantages- reusable and can monitor the insect kill in the bottle. Disadvantage - expensive There is a great variety of solutions on the shelf at the hardware store.

WILD MAYS - is a pheromone. It will attract the male. The solution can only be put into a trap.

ECO NATURE LURE - Insecticide attracts both the male and female. Can be put into a trap or it can be sprayed. Traps should be placed 1-1.5 metres apart and 1.5-2 metres from the ground. It does take 3-5 days to kill the fruit fly. Don't rely on just one method of control but use as many as possible so that you get the fruit and not the fruit fly.

Some handy, interesting and easy to read information can be found on: ABC iview for past episodes of Gardening Australia about fruit fly. Eco Organics - The makers of the Eco Naturelure product have a very good website,ecoorganicgarden.com.au

Growing Tips

We all remember George's wonderful crop of Ceylon spinach. (It is now climbing over the back fence of the Founders Gardens.) This perennial spinach is a good vegetable to grow in our hot humid summers. And it is highly nutritious. Before you think of what to plant, check this list of tips for beating the heat.

1 Prepare your soil with plenty of organic matter

2 mulch thickly

3 Water appropriately and at the cooler part of the day

4 Provide shade

5 Protect from wind

6 Chose your vegetables well.

Having thought about the above, it is time to plant. Apart from Ceylon spinach, think about planting Kangkong, snake beans, Egyptian spinach, heat tolerant cultivars of Lebanese cucumber, eggplant, zucchini and squash. Do not forget the Mediterranean herbs such as garlic chives, society garlic, oregano, thyme and rosemary. Za'atar is a new herb for me - if I can find it.-Linda

Committee and Contact

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