



E: newsletter.bundyorgard@gmail.com M: PO Box 4158, Bundaberg South QLD 4670

E: secretary.bundyorgard@gmail.com Secretary Karyn Ennor 0447 360 882

Website: <https://www.bundaberg-organic-gardeners.com/>

NEWSLETTER MARCH 2021

Hello and Welcome to our March edition. Well, I'm sure most of you have noticed that it finally happened, yes RAIN! I travel around our area a lot for work and over the last year have noticed dams getting lower, drying out, and getting dusty. Today I saw not just water in these dams but life was returning too. Birds and other animals were returning and everything is starting to look green again. It certainly makes gardening more fun when the challenge of dry conditions has gone (for now).

BOGI Meeting

CLUB MEETING

March Meeting will include AGM

Time: Doors open 6.30 pm For a 7 pm start

Venue: McNaught Hall (Uniting Church hall) Corner Barolin and Electra Street,
Bundaberg

Attendance \$3-member, \$5 visitor, Tea Coffee avail

Tuesday 30th March

Please check your contact details are correct when you sign in to the Meeting

AGM in March at the meeting. Nomination forms will be available on the night. As always we will have the Free / Swap Table, Lucky Draw, BOGI Shop, Library, Seeds to share and Workshop Sign on Sheets.

Important Notice:

The change of start times was trialed at the February BOGI meeting. The trial has given members an experience of a new start time. The time is now opportune at the March meeting to have a ballot to establish a permanent start time **of either 6pm, 6.30pm or 7pm start.**

Members are encouraged to attend the March meeting so the result of the ballot will indicate a fair consensus of member's opinion on monthly meeting start time.

Proxy votes will be accepted.

From the February meeting... Hints for worm farming



The guest speaker for the February meeting was George Mingin from Kookaburra Worm Farm, Gin Gin. George produces composting worms for sale.

Some facts:

Earthworms have been around for over 300 million years and were actively recycling organic matter before the dinosaurs. (A t-rex's poop must have kept them busy for a while???)

There are around 7 000 species of earthworms, and about 2 000 species live in Australia. The largest being the Gippsland earthworm reaching to 6-7 metres in length.

An earthworm's job is to make topsoil by eating organic waste. This includes anything that was ever living and pooping out worm casts – what people refer to as natural “living topsoil”.

Aristotle quoted that “earthworms are like the intestines of the earth.”

There are three different types of worms: the Epigeic, Endogeic and Anecic.

Epigeic (epi-jay-ic) worms – these live on or near the surface eating organic matter, fallen fruit, leaves, grass, animal poo and dead and decaying animals. These include – reds, blues, tigers and night crawlers. These worms help to make the topsoil and are referred to as “the composters.”

Endogeic (en-do-jay-ic) worms – live down to 1 metre in the earth. They love clay soils and are grey/green in colour. The endogeic worms structure the soil by taking the compost down to their layer to make a solid base to anchor trees, mixing and gluing the layers of topsoil to form “aggregated” soil. In doing so, they drought-proof the soil allowing the soil to have a higher water holding capacity. They also feed on decaying wood. Their poo is almost 100% humus which is highly organic and carbon, and together, these act like a slow-release fertiliser. (These worms are also good for fishing worms).

Anecic (an-ec-kick) worms – live down to where the soils finish, and the rock starts. These worms pick up the high nutrient granite, chew it up and bring it up to re-mineralise the depleted top-soil above.

So, what do worms do?

Worms work in conjunction with the microbes in the soil. When worms ingest soil, they incubate the microbes in their digestive process and can release up to 10 times the microbe loading on discharging their wastes. Microbes are part of the engine of the soil. Worms work in symbiosis with the microbes and provide nutrients for plants.

George said that worms can be very sensitive to the fluctuating temperatures of the soil around them. Worms will tolerate temperatures up to 30°C. Worm farms are not a good idea because the soil temperature is consistently too high, even during Winter, if the worm farm is exposed to the sun. If the daytime temperature is too hot, the worms will eat at night when it is cooler. Worms belong in the soil. George displayed a solution to this problem. Called a "Little Rotter", this square black bucket sits on the ground. Kitchen scraps, dog and cat poo and organic matter are placed in the bucket and the worms will come into the bucket, eat, and go out to deposit their worm casts in the surrounding garden. The Little Rotter bucket comes complete with worm eggs and will cover about 10 metres square. This will process at least 10 times that of an above ground compost system. The worms and worm eggs require food, water, bedding and shelter from the sun.

Worm bedding? This can be any well aged or rotted down organic matter, such as horse, cow goat, or sheep manure, aged and stable good quality compost, wetted down and shredded newspaper or cardboard, peat moss and coconut coir. Different types of worms live in different types of soils, but all compost worms live in the top layer of rich organic matter in nature, so trying to replicate those conditions will keep them happy and productive. In dark, moist conditions, worms will continue feeding 24 hours a day. Avoid soaking them, worms need air to breathe, while they do need some moisture, they won't survive if they are drowned!!! If you pick up a handful of worm bedding, you should be able to squeeze a few drops out. If the bedding is too dry, moisten with a bit of water until you get the balance right.

Being at the bottom of the food ladder, they are good tucker to many omnivorous and carnivorous animals, especially our native birds – so keep them covered!!! (Bunnings sell a 'worm blanket' that is ideal.)

Some interesting facts:

- Worms breathe through their skin.
- Worms don't have teeth.
- Worms are not usually found in light sandy soils or heavy clay soil.
- **Worms don't eat any living plant matter.** They start eating once something starts to decay.

Don't:

- Don't cover with plastic – it will suffocate them, they need air!
- Worms don't like the light and will die from long exposure to the sun.
- Worms don't like compost made from pine bark or pine shavings.
- Don't put bones or nut shells into compost – worms can't eat these.
- Don't put bird or chook manure directly into the compost worms – excess nitrogen can cause the worm bed to overheat, and the release of ammonia gas can also kill them. (Also be careful with freshly mown grass for the same reason)
- Don't overfeed the worms – 1000 worms will eat about half a cup of food per day.

False Facts:

- Compost worms **will** eat onions, garlic and citrus – they love squishy fruit like bananas, watermelon and tomatoes. (Be sure to add plenty of dry brown leaves or dried grass, so it doesn't become too wet and suffocate/drown the worms).
- Worm wee/Worm pee – worms don't wee or pee!!! The liquid coming out of worm farms is leachate from the decomposing organic material. Pouring water through it only leads to diluted leachate.
- Worms will eat meat, dairy and bread, but only in small amounts (make sure meat scraps are secure – so as not to attract rodents and flies).

Kookaburra Wormfarms sell containers called Little Rotter Garden Bed Worm Farm, for use in vegie beds. They also sell packets of worm eggs called Worm Bombs, to help start the process. The packets contain eggs from five species with complementary habits. Place the eggs under food that is already decomposing.

Hatchlings are called “threads” as they look like very small threads of cloth-material. They need to find food soon after they hatch.

For further information, visit www.kookaburrawormfarms.com.au

Moon Planting – have you tried it?

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In an effort to improve- no, restart my desert summer vegetable garden- I have endeavored to search for some information on MOON PLANTING. There are some good reports by enthusiastic gardeners that this system of planting by the tides, created by the moon, are quite accurate and will hopefully give very good crops. So, with cap in hand, I rang my good friend and ex BOGI gardener, Pam Burgess, who is as keen as ever to assist, but extremely busy. So here we go-

Planting days in the month by weeks -1st, 8th, 15th, 22nd, 29th.

1st week – no moon to ½ moon. This is the time to plant all leafy plants.

2nd week – ½ moon to full moon, time to plant all fruit and vegetables, being items like broccoli, cauliflower etc.

3rd week – full to ½ moon – waning, time to plant root veges

4th week – no moon. This is a dead time, so out with pruning, mulching, and endless weeding – all called – maintenance. To google Moon Planting, you will find sites with varying aspects, but you can purchase a calendar on line, or try Chippendalls Newsagency or a good book store. Happy abundant planting – and hopefully lots of beautiful rain! Chris Jeffrey

Member profile: Maureen Schmitt



I am passionate about protecting the natural environment and this passion has shaped my life. I was born in Dorrigo which is right on top of the New England Plateau in New South Wales. My parents had a dairy and potato farm which suited the very cold winters the area experiences. My mother often jokes of how she used to fear for me as she saw me in my rubber boots at the age of two, disappearing into the fog going to see the cows. As a child I remember my mother teaching us children how to grow vegetables, look after the chooks and rear them and ducklings from day-olds. All of us children took this for granted and we just naturally assumed that everyone could tell the difference between a carrot and a cabbage plant, a rooster and a pullet and a female pawpaw tree from a male pawpaw tree. It wasn't until I was in my teens that I realized that not everyone shared my passion for growing things and I often felt a bit strange as no one else seemed interested in gardening. Not that I didn't like parties, concerts and the beach; it's just that I also loved gardening and animals.

Anyway, after many years of studying and travelling, I returned and settled back in Bundaberg in 1990 and from there my life just sort of fell into place.

As a dedicated environmentalist, I embrace the idea of not placing chemicals into our environment because of the short and long term damage they cause. Hence the connection to organic gardening, which aims to work with nature rather than trying to conquer and control it. One of my biggest regrets is not making the time to devote to my garden.

However, despite this, it still provides me with an assorted range of fruits and vegetables for which I am extremely grateful and a place where I can feel relaxed and happy.

Workshops and Garden Visits

Grafting Workshop Sunday 21 March

Lenzie was well prepared and gave a full discussion on grafting.

Firstly he stressed the importance of healthy plants and building a complete ecosystem around your plants. Then the grafting success will be improved. We need to work with nature and allow the natural soil system to assist us.

Lenzie's whole garden has been prepared to enhance soil biological life by mulching, maintaining even moisture, use of trace elements and the lack of any chemicals.

After a full demonstration, we all practised several grafts.



Lenzie preparing a stock (plant base)



Each of these plum trees have several grafts present.

Please register your interest and check out upcoming workshops at the next meeting.

What's Happening In our Members Back Yards?

From Les and Kay DeGunst



Kay sent through a picture of their marvellous peanut harvest. She says they will be eaten both roasted and straight from the shell.



This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under CC

The gumboots are on and it's time for planting once again at our place. One of our small veggie gardens has had green manure planted over summer, then chopped, then fenced off so the kids new chickens could dig and scratch and poop there, then rested once again. Now after this beautiful rain Olive and Dan have replanted. Olive discovered worms in there that were almost a foot long... a good reminder to dig gently.

Banana trees have been purchased from Bunnings so as not to spread disease and they are loving the conditions so much have sent up new shoots almost instantly.

We have had so many green frogs around over summer but have heard a new call from the pond in the last two weeks. We have worked out that it's a Striped Marsh Frog. We have now noted 4 species of native frogs in our backyard. The kids have worked hard to eradicate the toads from our area so it's nice to see the natives are taking their place once again.

To work out the species of frog we had in the pond, we recorded the call through an app called FROG ID then they narrow it down to frogs in your area. The FROG ID app is run by the Australian Museum and lets users become part of a giant backyard science project.

Upcoming Community Events

Bundaberg Show 26th, 27th& 28th May – have you ever entered your home grown produce at the show?

Bundy Flavours will be held on Saturday 12th June. BOGI will be getting involved once again. This is always a fun event to get involved with the community and share the love of growing organically.

Local Info

- ❖ Buy organic seeds locally at Woodgate, Claudia and Charlie who have a business Simply Organic Farming@gmail.com 0407699283.
- ❖ Sign the petition against Coal Mining at https://www.plantogrow.org.au/protect?utm_campaign=plan_to_grow_petition_qld&utm_medium=email&utm_source=lockthegate
- ❖ **Local honey suppliers** Bundy Honey, 5 Banks Court, Bargara 0438 882 220 Bundy Honey, 89 Honors Rd, Bundaberg 0409 921 600
- ❖ Honey Bees for sale. Contact Steve 0419541250
- ❖ Lychee plants for sale Marcotted Kwai Mai Lychee. 60cm high. \$22, 60cm high. Phone Kaye 0402207901.

Bundaberg Organic Gardeners Club

President - Maureen Schmitt, **Vice President** - Joan Smart, **Secretary** - Karyn Ennor, **Treasurer** - Lara Hawker.

Ordinary members- Kay de Gunst, Chris Jeffrey, Pam Biden, Marlene Fuller.

Non-Committee members- Membership secretaries- Ross and Ramona Lane, Kitchen- Pam Biden.

Other jobs are not yet allocated as we are all helping with reduced numbers, help with set up and cleaning is always appreciated before and after meetings.

Please be sure to check out our WEBSITE and see the new information added under
INFORMATION and then INFORMATION SHEETS

<https://www.bundaberg-organic-gardeners.com/>

**We want your feedback - is this the type of info / articles you want?
Do you want to discuss this info at meetings, garden visits?**

Give your feedback to Maureen or Trevor

Support the club by purchasing some products from our shop which is always open on meeting nights, or pick up can
be arranged at other times.

Deadline for February Newsletter

**Please send through information to the editor by
the second Friday of each month.**

We would love FEEDBACK from club members on
anything and everything.

**Tell us about your success and your failures in the
garden and help others learn along the way.**

Let us know about community events or what's up
and coming in the area.

To include notices and details of Club activities
email: newsletter.bundyorgard@gmail.com

Or ph Cathy 0403 430 969

BOGI SHOP

Products available are:

- Liquid Lime
- Liquid Kelp
- Liquid Fish
- Mineral Granules
- Microlife
- Organibor and
- Katex Organic Super Growth.

They are available for sale at our meetings,
but please contact
Bruce McKay on 41544405 for collection
from his address in Walkervale.

This is the official monthly newsletter published by and distributed to the members of Bundaberg Organic Gardeners Inc. Whilst every effort is made to publish accurate information, the Club accepts no responsibility for statements made or opinions expressed, or any consequence arising from them. For further information, contact the Secretary.