



Bundaberg Organic Gardeners

~ working with nature ~

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NEWSLETTER APRIL 2024

Hello and welcome to our April Newsletter!

It has been wonderful to welcome more rain – not the torrential variety – to our gardens! It is also lovely to have that drop in temperature. I immediately change my eating/cooking to wanting warmer type meals – lentil soup/stew is one of our favourites – lightly flavoured with curry spices!

As you know, we refer to Isabell Shipard's important book *How Can I Use Herbs in My Daily Life* in our articles. It is a book we plan to put into our library.

So, I was interested to read her book on Self-sufficiency! Her opening question – *Why do we need to be prepared?* – is thought provoking! We live in very different times to our forebears and we need to look to the future, without fear or concern on how we would live without shops for our food! I'm sure you will agree that the modern supermarket, along with the trappings of modern life, has led to an explosion of artificial food, which can be linked to many modern illnesses. Growing organic food is one aspect to care for our health and another consideration is to remove processed food from our diet. Our speaker in April, Francine and Val in May, will inspire us to try different plant options! Happy gardening, Deltry

April Meeting

We are looking forward to hearing Francine Gerraty at our monthly meeting on 30th April.

Francine has a great deal of knowledge and experience in working with the healing properties of plants which has important implications when working with people in her Care BnB at Branyan.

Could members on our supper roster (see last page) provide a list of the ingredients of your contribution due to various dietary concerns of our attendees!

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CLUB MEETING – Tuesday 30th April 2024

Club meetings are always the last Tuesday of the Month.

Time: Doors open 6.00 pm for a 6.30 pm start

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

Attendance \$3-member, \$5 visitor, supper available

Members, please wear your badges to the meeting.

Get your lucky door ticket (free with entry), bring along produce to show on the 'From My Garden' table and share in the free seedlings at the end of the meeting.

May Speaker

Our speaker for May will be member Val Wright. She has a wealth of knowledge re weeds – often thought of as the bane of the life of gardeners! Val will give us a totally different outlook on the beneficial benefits of these important plants. We should come away with very valuable information and also have the ability to identify them as either Friend or Foe!



**Your Library
Needs
YOU!**



Do you have gardening books at home that would like a new home? Joy, our librarian, would love to hear from you! Our library supply has reduced in size and we would love to offer more choice to our members! Are there particular topics you would like to refer too? Please use the suggestion box or speak to one of our committee members! Thank you!

March Meeting Report – contributor Lara Hawker

Do you know the pH balance of your soil? Members who had brought in a sample of their garden soil, were keen to discover the answer to this question! Lenzie was on hand, with assistance from Maureen, to help us work out that answer! This was a case of learning from experience as some soil samples were too wet to get a correct answer. Lenzie explained that the soil sample had to be dry to get the right pH reading.



The testing kit consists of a pH indicator solution, white barium sulphate powder, a colour chart, mixing plate and mixing rods. It is noted in the instructions that it is best not to take just one reading, rather to take measurements in various areas and average out the readings. For large garden areas, test samples from different areas of the garden. Take a soil sample from the garden bed at 5-10cm deep. The club had bought 6 test kits – 2 now remain in the club library - and the remainder were part of the Lucky Door prize for some lucky recipients.

Maureen reiterated using dry soil and then adding the liquid in the kit until the soil reaches a toothpaste consistency. The two brands used to test the soils were Manutec and Searles.

Once we finished following all the steps as per the kit, the colour changed and we were able to match this to the colour guide to read the soil pH. Sour or acid soil is below a 7 whereas sweet soil is above. Much of the local soil is about a 5 and this does not suit everything that we might want to grow. It is possible to change the pH of your soil.



pH COLOUR GUIDES



Demonstration from Lenzie!



Waiting for the result!



Checking the guide!

The pH of the soil affects plant growth. If the pH is **too acidic (less than 5.5)** or **alkaline (over 7.5)** particular nutrients become increasingly less available to the plant. This can result in plant growth and performance being greatly affected.

Adjusting pH

To **raise** the pH of your soil mix in some **Garden Lime or Dolomite**. You can also use poultry manure.

To **lower** the pH of your soil mix in sulphur powder as per packet directions.

You can increase the acidity of your soil by adding things like compost and manures, leaf litter and mulch. Iron chelates work too. In extreme situations, you can use powdered sulphur - one handful per square metre, once a year. Sulphur works very slowly and you won't notice a change in your pH for about 6 months.

Lastly, lightly rake into soil surface & water in. Re-test again in 2 – 4 weeks to check results.

**** FOR THOSE WHO MISSED OUT ON TESTING THEIR SOIL, WE WILL BE HAVING ANOTHER TESTING SESSION IN MAY DURING OUR TUESDAY MONTHLY MEETING ****

At our successful AGM on March 26 the following Executive and Committee positions were confirmed!

President Marlene Kent-Fuller
Vice President Maureen Schmitt
Treasurer Kay de Gunst
Secretary Karyn Ennor

Committee Members (5)

Deltry Dickie
 Jo-Anne Callaghan
 Pam Biden
 Dee Dee Sorensen
 Lenzie Duffy

The following non-elected Co-ordinators Positions were appointed by the incoming Management Committee.

POSITION	CO-ORDINATOR
Workshop co-ordinator	Linda Cameron
Supper	Pam Biden
BOGI Shop	Chris Jensen
BOGI Shop Support	Bruce McKay
Tea Person	Tony Wolfe
Library	Joy Millet
Member & Visitor tables	Kay de Gunst and Rose Apap
Website Co-ordinators	Trevor Galletly and Peter van Beek
Microphone Manager	Mike Apap
Newsletter Editor	Deltry Dickie
Assistant Newsletter Editor	Joan Smart
Assistant Treasurer	Rose Apap
Meet and Greet	Lyn McIlwain and Chris Jeffrey

Many thanks to those members who have volunteered to take on these positions!
 Our club is only as good as the people who contribute to ensure its successful continuity!

BOGI Executive 2024



L-R Karyn Ennor, Marlene Kent-Fuller,
 Kay de Gunst, Maureen Schmitt

BOGI Committee 2024



L- R Jo-Anne Callaghan, Dee Dee Sorensen,
 Deltry Dickie, Pam Biden, Lenzie Duffy

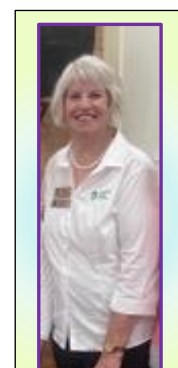
WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS



Marven Harkness & Marlene



Allan Harkness & Marlene



Joy Duke & Howard Duke

In My Garden with Maureen

Okinawan spinach is an attractive plant with shiny leaves that are green on top and purple underneath. Its flowers are very small and orange in colour and it takes several years before it will set flower. It is very hardy, and grows to about 70 cm in height. It can be grown in the ground or in a pot. It will grow in most soil types and will start to wilt when it needs watering. It seems to prefer a semi-shady spot.

Okinawan spinach is a member of the chrysanthemum and daisy family so it is not really a spinach at all. It is native to China, Thailand, and Myanmar but grown in many other places as a vegetable and as a medicinal herb.



Propagation: The easiest method is to take stem cuttings about 10cm (4") in length and place them in a glass of water. After a couple of weeks, roots will start forming at the leaf joints and when there is a reasonable quantity of roots and root length, the cuttings can be planted into pots or put straight into the ground.

Uses: Okinawan spinach is an edible leafy vegetable. Its leaves can be eaten raw, fried steamed and made into soup.

Nutritional Value: According to research I have done, it is a rich source of protein, fiber, and various vitamins including vitamin C, E and B-group vitamins. It is also a source of vitamin C to strengthen the immune system, vitamin A to maintain healthy organ functioning, potassium to balance fluid levels within the body, and calcium to build strong bones and teeth.

Kale provides more calcium and vitamin C than spinach whereas you will find more folate, vitamin A and vitamin K in spinach than kale. Per cup, they contain 3 similar amounts of fibre.

Minerals found in Okinawan spinach are potassium, phosphorus, calcium, magnesium, iron, zinc, manganese, and copper.

Recipe Idea



Easy Winter Herb Pesto

Ingredients:

3/4 cup fresh basil (or parsley, coriander, tarragon)
1/4 cup fresh spinach (e.g. okinawa)
1 – 2 cloves of minced garlic
1/4 cup grated parmesan
1/4 cup olive oil
1/4 cup toasted pine nuts (or almonds, walnuts, macadamias)
Salt and pepper to taste
2 tbsp of lemon juice or balsamic vinegar

Method:

Pop all ingredients minus the olive oil into a kitchen processor. Blend to desired consistency. With the blender on, gradually drizzle in olive oil. Add extra oil if the mix is dry. Season to taste.
Tip: Pesto browns if exposed to air. To slow this process, cover the pesto before refrigerating.

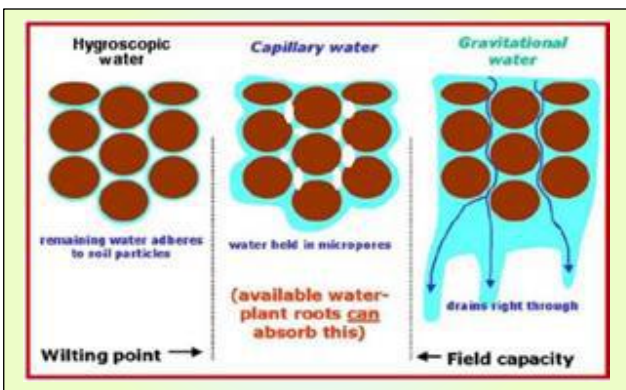
<https://greengoddess.co.nz/easy-winter-herb-pesto/>

Organic Gardening with Trevor



Trevor has further information re a zinc deficiency in sweet corn. He explains that in this photo zinc deficiency shows as yellow pinstripes on the lower green leaves. A zinc sulphate application generally fixes the issue. As this is a good nutrient indicator, now the gardener needs to adopt maintenance zinc applications for several seasons to ensure soil reserves are increased. Zinc sulphate application rates: foliar 3g/L water and soil applications: 1g/sq m.

The topic of **Wicking beds** can attract a lot of conflicting information on the best method to use, so we are very fortunate to have the expertise of more experienced members to put us on the right track! Our BOGI website has great information on wicking beds and this link will explain the benefits and procedure in more detail. https://www.bundaberg-organic-gardeners.com/files/ugd/76f78d_987b7c1bda63440a802e64572c51dd86.pdf Wicking beds are a useful way of growing plants whilst conserving water. Water is made available to plants from the bottom rather than by top watering. Trevor shared a few pictures of a wicking bed that wasn't working properly and had turned anaerobic. The problem was with the soil used to fill the bed. When making a wicking bed it is important to use soil with less woodchip. *See photos at the end of this article!*



Soil showing water in various forms.

Right – after rain soil is full and excess water drains away

Centre - 24 hours later – excess water has drained leaving water around soil particles for plants

Left – tightly held water remaining, not available to plants

We need to use a soil with a range of particle sizes e.g. clay, loam and sand. If there is too much bark, the soil won't wick. Wicking is the movement of water by capillary action. We want water held in the micropores so that the plants can access it. If there are too many small particles (such as all clay) then the soil will over saturate whereas too many large particles like bark or all sand will hold less water. Add organic matter to your soil that is already broken down or mill mud. It is important to sieve the bark out!



Wicking bed initially with soil that would not wick – yes, Allan is frustrated. The nursery mix was too sandy and contained excess pine bark that would not allow natural capillary water movement.



Water in reservoir not wicking upwards, so it lacks oxygen and becomes stale and smells badly! Yuk!



New soil mix used – organic matter and some clay added to initial sandy nursery mix – now wicking is occurring.

Herb of the Month – Betel Leaf, Piper sarmentosum

Hi all! This time the 'Herb' of the month is a plant. Did you know that a herb is a plant that is beneficial to mankind, usually in the kitchen, but also in the medicine cabinet? That gives me much greater scope to share information with you, as, for those who know me, you know that this holds true for me; (and you too if you think about it).

We live in the sub tropics, not the cold country (England), therefore... it makes more sense to me to grow, use and eat plants that thrive in the sub tropics and reserve English veg for winter growth only.



The bugs, heat and drama are all avoided and one's body actually thrives on the diet from a subtropical garden. I harvest continually all summer long. Most of my plants live in the shade. Most of my greens are 'herbs' or 'plants' so this time it is **Betel Leaf, Piper sarmentosum**, not to be confused with Betel nut. They are different plants but are sometimes used together.

Betel Leaf is a slow sprawler, grows to about one metre in height, has a straight stalk with lovely glossy dark green leaves; it needs to be tucked into a shady spot. Mine is in a raised garden, (behind logs) around a huge Poinciana tree and the leaves are eaten.

I use it as one of the many greens collected to make up my salad - chopped finely, I add my honey mustard dressing (Chris shared that recipe at the meeting last month) and a spoon full of mixed nuts, dried fruits and seeds. That salad is a whole other level of yum! Also, it makes awesome fritters; collect dozens of leaves (let it grow and spread a bit, give it a meter square or 4) and then in the kitchen, wash and chop them up finely, make up a rice flour batter with icy cold water, add pepper, salt, chilli, turmeric, garlic, whatever flavours you like - then mix in the cut-up leaf, put dollop spoonfuls into a pan with hot oil (I use coconut) either shallow or deep fry and cook till golden. Yum! Lovely when paired with home-made Chill Jam! Mmmm!



Now to the other stuff! Betel Leaf has many traditional uses; Malaysians use the leaves for headaches, arthritis and joint pain. In Thailand and China, the roots are crushed and blended with salt to relieve toothache. (Good to know!) In Indonesia, leaves are chewed with the Betelnut, and the masticated juice swallowed for relief from coughs and asthma. (However, be warned - it leaves the teeth stained red!)

It is also valued as a tea - Indonesians drink it daily to benefit health and it keeps the body free from unpleasant odours - both male and female. Also, their senior citizens value it to keep their teeth and gums strong and healthy! The herb has strong antibiotic qualities and has been used in cancer treatments.

To make the tea, according to info, Isabell Shipard says take 7 mature leaves into a pot with 2 cups of water, simmer till down to 1 cup, strain and drink daily. (I would add honey)

Back to the food - in South-East Asian cooking, leaves are used both raw and cooked.



While the traditional way is as a wrapping for spiced mincemeat, other fillings such as sprouts and shredded veggies are a great and healthy option. In Thailand, these wraps are a favourite snack using an assortment of fillings, such as peanuts, shallots with lime, rice and raw ginger. They are also used as a base when decorating a platter and used to scoop up other foods to pop into the mouth. All in all, this is a great addition to one's food forest gardens which will satisfy one's needs, free, because you will not find it the shops, only in the garden. Another advantage is that it is perennial, so once planted, you are always harvesting. (It loves a feed of manure occasionally).

The leaves which have a spicy peppery taste, can be cooked like spinach and used as a vegetable or can be shredded and added to soups, stews and stir-fries at the end of cooking to take advantage of the subtle peppery flavour. Raw Vegetable Pepper leaves can also be torn or shredded into salads and are particularly nice in rice salad. *Reference: Isabel Shipard's book, How can I use Herbs in my Daily Life is a source of inspiration!*

Cheers, Pam

Seeds and Seedlings Give-away

Several club members collect seeds from their own gardens. At club meetings these selected seeds and seedlings are available for members to plant out in their own gardens. This a good chance for you to try some new varieties.



Give Away Table

Many thanks to our members for bringing in a wonderful selection of plants and seedlings for our Give Away Table!

Also, thanks to everyone for providing prizes for our Lucky Door prize!



Lucky Door Prizes

SAVE THE DATE - SATURDAY JUNE 15th - SWAP MEET

Soccer Club Shed – North Bundaberg

9am – 2pm

*This is a great opportunity to sort through unwanted goods! One man's trash is another man's treasure!!
Morning tea and Lunch provided! Lovely time to enjoy each other's company!
More details to come!*

Planting by the Moon – May - submitted by Kay de Gunst

(Last ¼ to New Moon) 1 – 7 May: The waning moon is good for balanced growth. No sowing or planting during this phase. Harvest vegetables, weeding, digging, pruning and cultivate. Apply mulch.

(New Moon to ¼ Moon) 8 – 14 May: Influences balanced growth; a lower gravitational pull decreases and this stimulates root growth. The best time to sow or transplant leafy vegetables.

(First ¼ to Full Moon) 15 – 22 May: Increased light from the waxing moon benefits leaf growth, and root growth slows down. Best time to sow/transplant fruiting annuals.

(Full Moon to ¼ Moon) 23 - 30 May: Gravitational pull decreases and moonlight decreases, so leaf growth reduces and root growth increases. Plant root crops now.

What to plant in May:

Asian vegetables; Beans; Beetroot; Broad Beans; Cabbage; Carrots; Cauliflower; French Beans; Garlic; Endive; Kohlrabi; Lettuce; Leeks; Mustard Greens; Onions; Parsnips; Peas; Potatoes; Radish; Shallots; Silverbeet; Spinach; Sweet Potatoes; Turnips.

** Plant these in seedling trays first: *Broccoli; Cabbage; Capsicum; Cauliflower; Celery; Lettuce; Silverbeet.*



**Members – Do you have herbs to share for our teas at supper time?
Tony would love to hear from you on 0497 173 169 or 4159 9559 before the meeting
to tell him which herbs you are bringing in for our supper tasting. Thank you!**



BOGI SHOP – See Chris Jensen before or after the meeting to purchase any of the following gardening inputs. This is one way that the club supports its members by buying in bulk and sharing the savings.

Products available are:

- Liquid Kelp
- Fish Hydrolysate
- Mineral Granules
- Microlife
- Organibor
- Katex Organic Super Growth
- Molasses



They are available for sale at our meetings, or please contact Chris on 0412 992 191 for collection from his address in East Bundaberg.

Executive and Committee 2024

President – Marlene Kent-Fuller
 Vice President – Maureen Schmitt
 Treasurer – Kay de Gunst
 Secretary – Karyn Ennor
 Committee Members – Pam Biden, Lenzie Duffy, Jo-Anne Callaghan, DeeDee Sorenson, Deltry Dickie
 Herbal Teas – Tony Wolfe - 4159 9559 or 0479 173 169
 Library – Joy Millett
 Supper – Pam Biden
 Workshops and Field Trips – Linda Cameron
 BOGI Shop – Chris Jensen - 0412 992 191
 BOGI Shop Support – Bruce McKay
 Newsletter Editor– Deltry Dickie – 0414 992 553
 Assistant Editor – Joan Smart
 Note Taker – Lara Hawker
 Facebook Co-ordinator – Cathy Critchlow
 Web page: Trevor Galletly and Peter van Beek

Deadline for May 2024 Newsletter

Friday 10th May 2024

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 successes 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 Phone Deltry 0414 992 553

Please send through articles at any time, if they miss one newsletter, they will make the next.



Our Objectives

- *To promote the understanding of the health and environmental benefits of organic gardening and food production.*
- *To encourage members to grow some of their own herbs, vegetables, fruit and flowers using organic principles.*
- *To help preserve traditional, non-patented and seed heirloom varieties.*
- *To provide fellowship and enjoyment in growing and eating organic food.*
- *To encourage active participation by members in supportive and fun social activities in pursuit of the above objectives.*

Treasurers Report March 2024

Opening Balance 1 st March	\$ 6712.02
Income	\$ 573.70
Expenditure	\$ 55.60
Closing Balance March	\$ <u>7230.12</u>
Visa Account	\$ <u>239.16</u>
Income	\$ 0.00
Expenditure	\$ 173.00
Balance	\$ <u>66.16</u>

This Month's Supper Roster Tuesday 30th April

Lyn McIlwain, Angela Samways, Alan Blyth,
 Jay Spence, Daniel Critchlow, Susan Jackson
 Joy Millett, Tony Wolfe, Jo Callaghan,
 Jeanette Cox, Marlene Kent-Fuller

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.