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HERB GROWER

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FIRST ECHINACEA HARVEST COMING IN

Five farms on the North Coast are preparing for their first Echinacea harvest this month.

The plants have reached their maturity after 16 months.

The estimated yield will be about 20,000 kilos of fresh plant material.

All of the crop has been pre-sold by Herb Farms Australia and will be processed by Blackmores.

The entire crop is certified grade A organic.

A replacement crop has already been planted, which will produce double the quantity next year.



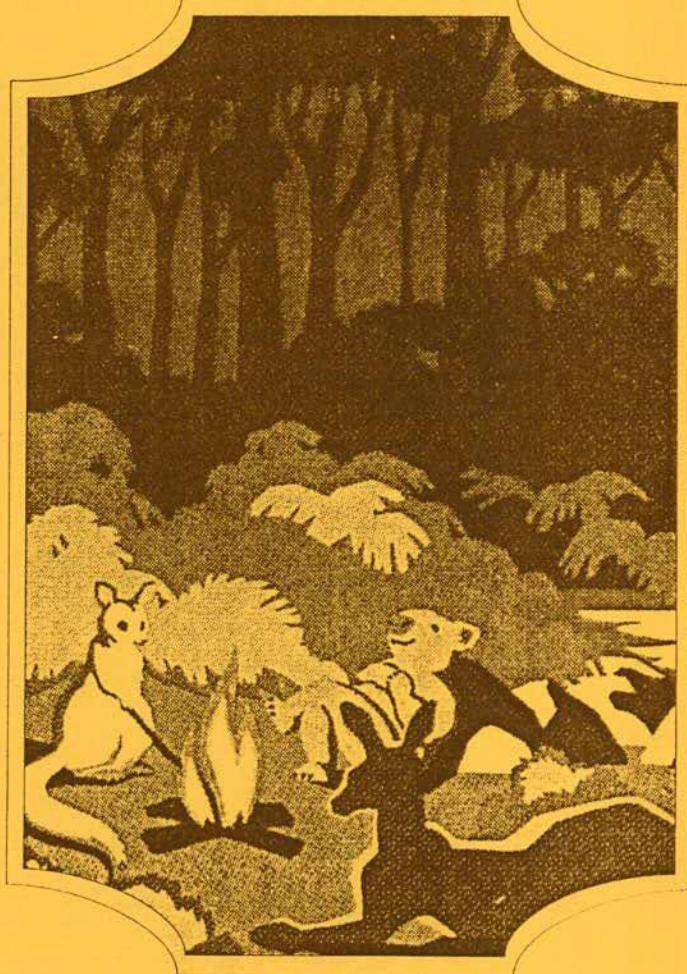
ALSO INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Paddock on Top, Gardening by the Moon, Market report, Organic News, Observations, Important Letters, Interesting stories, Book Reviews and much more.....

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EDITORIAL

Here I am, at our new Apple Mac, wondering what's what or how I did what I did, when something looks good, but I can't duplicate it! Technology's caught up with this old herb grower! You will have to bear with me, while I muddle through it all, but I am confident that in a couple of issues I'll have gotten the hang of it and our HERB GROWER will look really professional. (Help!)

You'll find a sizable letter column in this issue, due to the fact that we've reprinted Ruth Lovisolo's fax. This has to do with our National Organic Standards, to be set by the NFA, who are intending to practically let everyone call themselves organic, as long as they put their name and address on their product. Of course OTGIA, along with all others in the organic industry, protested vehemently. It's just not on. All sorts of charlatans will be free to keep on cheating, by law! It would also mean that importers into Australia would not have to abide by the stringent rules set to us, Australian organic producers, who want to export! And, may I add, for which we have to pay dearly to AQIS. Maybe I'm just a suspicious soul, but I strongly suspect pressure by the multinational food companies there. Judging by what the NFA wrote Ruth, it almost looks as if they are taking pity on the small grower who might not be able to afford certification. That's a bit hard to believe. Anyway, Howard got straight onto it with the good news that OTGIA does not charge any levies and that our fees are way below any other organisation's and affordable to all growers.

Isn't the cattle industry in trouble! I do feel sorry for them, but who in their right mind would feed spent cotton to their cows. They must know that cotton is one of the heaviest sprayed crops around. There was a scheme around to collect lawn clippings and send those to the cattle farmers, but that was hastily abandoned when the export markets detected the poisons. Just goes to show how much rubbish people put even on their lawn, and sit on it and let their babies crawl on it! All in all it should be a boost for organics. At the recent open day at Magda's we had one of these cattle farmers, grilling us all about organics. It means that they are beginning to think. Good! There was a good turn out again and Magda and Alister's garden looked great.

Finally, I would like to urge everyone to make sure they're on the electoral roll for the March NSW elections. If you've recently moved, you have to re-enroll. This election is quite important for us greenies. The environment needs your vote. I don't know if the other side is much better, but with some Green or Democrat senators elected, at least the forests will be better off. And it's really important who holds the balance of power in parliament too. So put a green vote first, then the bigger party of your choice. Fingers crossed!



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Dear Tony,

Thank you for your prompt reply for my request for certification. I am very impressed by the efficiency of your organisation. It is indeed true that I can not afford to pay your fare from Lismore, however I would happily join in with others. I did understand that there were a number of other potential seekers of certification as a result of Howard's seminar at Queanbeyan. Let's hope they move along soon.

Sincerely, Robin Sevenoaks,
Berridale.

If any of you, who live in the area, want to be certified, please contact Tony on 066-216397 so he can get his trip down there sorted out.

Dear Editor,

I would like to have the enclosed article on the cultivation of the plant Arnica Montana L. published in your journal. This article is written by a friend, who is looking for an opportunity to establish a plantation of this plant in any geographic latitude which satisfies the basic conditions of temperature not being higher than 40 degrees Celsius and rain fall not exceeding 700 mm per year. My friend lives in Poland. Thank you for the opportunity to publish this article.

Respectfully, Jerzy Nikodem, Fort Worth,
Texas

If anyone wants the further address of the Polish gent, please get in touch with me. - Arnica will be our Herb of the Month, and a worthy one it is. It should grow in some places in the south. - You may not understand much of what's written in the article, but the offer at the end of it is very genuine. See how you go...- Elle

Dear OPAC members,

I met with the National Food Authority on Friday 24 November, to discuss the progress of the application for labelling of organic foods on the domestic market.

The Authority has received a large number of responses to its interim findings. All of these apparently support the intent of the original application by AQIS.

A number of interested groups, incl. Peter Knott, Member for Berry, have met with Dr Andrew Theophanus, minister assisting the Minister for Human Services and Health. Representations were also made to the Hon Jeanette McHugh, Minister for Consumer Affairs, and Senator Cheryl Kernot, Leader of the Australian Democrats. Dr Theophanus subsequently informed the NFA that he wants a uniform government position on this matter.

At the meeting we discussed a range of issues including the reasons for not using State/Territory agricultural law, the expected role of health surveillance officers, industry self regulation through sanctions, the intensive nature of certification schemes, the relationship between certification and labelling and handling of imported organic foods, particularly from New Zealand.

I felt comfortable with the Authority Officers' understanding of the issues. However, they are very aware that the State/Territory health portfolios are generally not supportive of any controls which might isolate producers at the lower end of the market.

The Authority informed me that they will need to do a lot more work in the area of fair trading and equity of the State/Territories are to be persuaded from the position they currently hold. In this regard, I undertook to gain from the organic certifying organisations information on how each organisation deals with the "small" grower, ie the subsistence/low incomers/hobby farmers, and what arrangements the organisations have in place for this group. For example, is there a threshold on levys, sliding scale on fees based on farm income, special small grower programs/groups which meet, the status of the (Former?) Organic Small Growers of Australia - have they amalgamated with one of the larger bodies, and/or any other comments which may make the Authorities' task easier.

Finally, it was suggested at the meeting with the Authority that lobbying of the State and Territory Health Ministers would probably be an effective tool at this stage. The State/Territory health Ministers have the majority of votes on the National Food Council. You will recall that this action was agreed to by members of OPAC at the 4th meeting held in February 1994, to be taken up nearer to the time the National Food Council meets to consider this matter.

In terms of timing, the NFA has requested an extension of one month to present its findings to the Council. That will now occur around the end of January 95. In the meantime, AQIS will contact officials in the State/Territory health departments who are responsible for advising the respective Ministers.

I would be grateful if you would consider taking up the action outlined above and for any information in relation to the equity issue as soon as possible.

Ruth Lovisolo, Principal Executive Officer, Food Policy Branch.

AUSTRALIAN HERB NETWORK



Attempts are being made at establishing an Australian herb network. Ray Boatman, of the Herb Society of Victoria Inc, hopes to have the network implemented within two years.

Ray has been inspired by the New Zealand Herb Federation, which has been in existence for nine years, and which consists of over forty herb groups. At the recent WA Herb Conference (OHGA was not invited) he investigated the possibility of instigating a Herb Federation in Australia. Delegates to this conference agreed that there are many obstacles to the formation of a network: communication being the main one, caused by groups working in isolation, satisfied with their own social activities, and apathetic as far as association with other groups is concerned.

Ray says that two of the very visible benefits of the recent conference illustrate this point well. The coming together of delegates from many parts of Australia, nine clubs altogether, resulted in much fruitful discussion on "what we do in our clubs, the herbs we grow, the crafts we workshop, the speakers we have at meetings, etc." The second benefit was the reports of club activities. Ray says there are about 24 herb groups in Australia and that only

a very small number of representatives of some of these groups meet to discuss coordinate research, share ideas etc. and he feels that our herbal knowledge is stagnating and well behind New Zealand, America and England. He feels that the only way to remedy this situation is by creating a viable networking system.

The basic idea for achieving this networking was discussed and approved at the Conference Federation session. It was felt that at this stage no formal committee was necessary and that Clubs and Societies involved in the system should not be over-committed in terms of time and finance. Ray says that he intends to write an initial letter to each Australian herb group outlining some of the activities they felt would be useful if carried out on an Australia-wide basis. An annual newsletter is planned, with the first issue to go out in March or April 1995. The 1996 Conference is planned for the Blue Mountains, NSW.

Ray's vision is as follows: The most important feature of the network will be communication between clubs. Each of the contributing clubs and societies should appoint a correspondent, preferably a member of Committee. A circular list of all clubs will be given to each correspondent, who will write similar letters to the two clubs listed immediately after his/her club. As clubs receive letters, they should print them in their magazine or newsletter, so members can be kept in contact with other clubs. If the scheme works, every club in Australia should have contact with every other club at least twice a year. Ray says that for interaction to be meaningful, the reports should concern themselves with * the swapping of ideas concerning herb festivals, workshops, displays etc. * reporting on collections of one particular genus of plant (five clubs are involved with *Salvia* collections) * tracking rare or unusual herbs * seed collection and exchange * the result of companion planting experiments.



The OHGA committee would like feedback from the members. Do you think a herb network will be useful to us? Do you think it will help you personally? Let us know, please. Drop us a line, fax or ring any of the committee members.

- Elle

Alanna Moore made us aware that she is the original writer of the article 'Urine in the Garden' which appeared in the last issue of the HERB GROWER. Sorry Alanna!

LIQUID FERTILIZER

by David Heaton

LIQUID FERTILIZER is a great asset for the organic gardener; not only is it a very good plant booster and foliage spray, it can also be a form of pest control.

The equipment you will require to make liquid fertilizer, is a container (metal or plastic) of around 45 ltrs (10 gallons) capacity, preferably with a lid to keep the flies and mozzies out. You will also require a watering can, a small bucket and a sieve to strain the brew into the watering can (sieving to prevent clogging of the watering can's nozzle).

ANIMAL AND BIRD MANURE

Animal manure is high in nitrogen, while bird manure is high in potassium. Suspend a hessian bag (teabag) into the drum so that it is covered with fresh water, give the tea bag a jiggle every couple of days, and the brew will be ready for use in a fortnight.

COMFREY

Comfrey has nitrogen, calcium, potash and phosphorus, greater than any animal manures, and is also a good foliage spray.

The average garden will require around seven plants for a continual supply of leaves all year around. Give the comfrey plants a hair cut, fill the drum half full of comfrey leaves, then top up the drum with fresh water. Replace the lid and the brew will be ready within a fortnight.

Give a good stir every couple of days and when ready for use, strain it into a watering can.

COMPOST

Use the tea bag method. For best results only good fresh compost should be used.

KITCHEN SCRAPS

Let the scraps decompose, in a bucket with a lid, for a couple of days; then use the tea bag method.

SEAWEED OR SEAGRASS

This is low in nitrogen, but high in trace elements such as potassium, and also makes a good foliage spray.

Fill the drum half full of fresh seaweed and then top up with fresh water. Replace the lid and the brew will be ready within a fortnight. Give a good stir every couple of days and when ready for use, strain it into a watering can.

USING YOUR BREWS

A good fertilizer for young plants is 25% brew and 75% water - a weak tea colour. Older plants use 50/50 - this is a strong brew, so be careful not to burn the plants.

Before applying liquid fertilizer, give your plants a good watering; this will help the plants to absorb the nutrients from the liquid fertilizer and prevent the risk of burning the plant roots.

Most plants like liquid fertilizer, especially tomatoes, lettuce, the brassica family (all sorts of cabbages) and the cucurbits (cucumbers, pumpkins, melons etc). Plants that like a little liquid fertilizer when they are beginning to produce their crop are peas and beans. Onions will benefit only after they are starting to bulb. Not before or they will not store well.

Plants that dislike liquid fertilizer, or for that matter any kind of fertilizer, are root crops (carrots, potatoes, turnips etc). If they get fertilized, they will be all tops and no bottoms, or fort out with very hairy legs.

A good basic rule to remember is that crops above the ground (leaf and fruit crops) like liquid fertilizer, compost and manures; plants that grow below the ground (root crops) dislike liquid fertilizer, compost and manures.

It is a good idea to plant a root crop after a leafy or fruit crop.

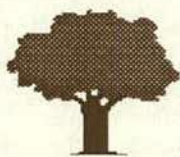
If you don't have the sources, or you

don't have the time, there are organic foliage sprays you can buy off the shelf.

In my garden the main source of fertilizer is comfrey. It is a foliage spray and an insect deterrent all at once, and also a compost activator. The leaves will break down the compost heap in half the usual time of two or three months.

Or you can just chop up the leaves and place that around the garden. You can also try digging a trench of 150 mm wide, 150 mm deep, and as long as you like; then half fill the trench with chopped up comfrey, replace the soil and sow your seeds on top. As the leaves decompose, they will feed your plants the nutrients they require.

This article first appeared in the Brisbane Organic Growers' Newsletter, nov.94



NATIVE NITROGEN FIXERS

by
Sylvia Douglas

CLIMBERS AND GROUND COVERS

* *Kennedia rubicunda* - Running Postman

Very robust, adaptable to most soils. Large red pea flowers make a striking display in spring

* *Glycine clandestina* - Twining Glycine
Pale pink to mauve flowers through spring and early summer. This slender trailing plant is happy on well drained soils.

* *Swainsonia galegifolia* - Smooth Darling Pea

In mid spring, striking dark pink to mauve flowers sit above the grey green foliage of this trailing, one metre high plant. Best suited to well drained, sheltered sites.

* *Hardenbergia violaceae* - Purple Twining Pea

Quick growing and very adaptable with a

burst of violet pea flowers in early spring. Small birds love its dense twining habit.

WATTLES

* *Acacia falcata* - Sickie Leaf Wattle

Attractive blue-grey foliage; small pale yellow flowers in early winter. A quick growing tall open shrub well suited to shale and better sandstone soils.

* *Acacia Longifolia* - Sydney Golden Wattle

Brilliant yellow flower spikes late winter to mid spring. Very adaptable, quick and easy to grow.

* *Acacia suaveolens* - Sweet Scented Wattle

Pale yellow flower spikes during autumn and winter against a background of blue grey foliage, followed by large attractive seed pods. Quick narrow shrub for sandy soils.

* *Acacia terminalis* - Sunshine Wattle
Cheery winter flowers of pale yellow to gold; dark green foliage with red stems. Needs protection from harsh sun and a well drained soil.

* *Acacia floribunda* - Sally Wattle
Small tree with attractive pendulous foliage and abundant pale yellow flower spikes. Naturally occurs on forested slopes and along creek banks.

GERMINATION AND PRE-TREATMENT

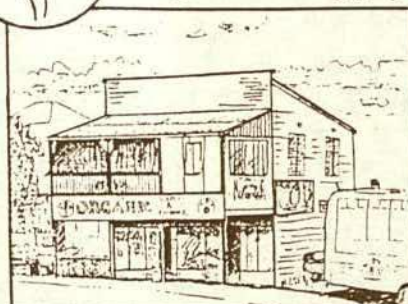
Cover with hot water and soak for at least twelve hours before sowing in seed raising mix.

Seeds of all the above shrubs, trees, ground covers and climbers are available from the Permaculture Hills to Hawkesbury group.



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- SEEDS -

Have the multinationals already sown our future?

THE GLOBAL SEEDS CONSPIRACY

Total control of the world's seeds is now in the hands of an elite cartel of multinational corporations. Governments all over the world are in on the game and are enacting Plant Breeders' Rights legislation to enforce the seed monopolies, with jail terms and huge fines for breaching patents or not paying royalties.

Global biodiversity is under grave threat as genetically-engineered seeds - tolerant to herbicides, 'designer-gened' and primed for profits - replace heritage seeds.

The world seeds market will be worth US\$28 billion by the year 2000, yet only a handful of major players - mainly petro-agri-chemical multinationals - will reap the rewards. Multinationals have acquired 1,000 seed and plant-breeding companies since 1970. The world's largest seed company, Pioneer Hi-Bred International, holds 40% of the US market in hybrid corn seed, around 50% of the markets in Spain, Austria and Italy, 90% in Hungary and Egypt, and they have the lion's share of the market in Brazil, Thailand, the Ukraine and a large number of developing countries.

ICI (Imperial Chemical Industries) is the largest chemical conglomerate in the U.K. and is now one of the world's biggest seed-suppliers. They achieved this in just five years: with the assistance of fellow UK giant British Petroleum, ICI swallowed up 11 of the largest seed companies from 1985-1990.

French seeds giant Groupe Limagrain competes for European seed domination with ICI, Ciba-Geigy, Shell, Rhone Poulenc, Bayer, Hoechst and

Pioneer Hi-Bred International. *(All really confidence inspiring names aren't they. ?)*

In Australia we also have a number of companies doing battle with each other: DeKalb Shand, Pioneer Hi-Bred, Cargill, AgSeed, Yates, New World Seeds and Seedco.

Intense lobbying by the seeds cartel at the Uruguay Round of negotiations of GATT paid off: countries under the International Convention for the Protection of New Varieties (UPOV) are enacting Plant Breeders' Rights Bills (PBR) and launching them on unsuspecting communities around the world.

Academics and civil libertarians have condemned the bills and the awarding of process patent rights that offer the multinationals absolute control over not only initial seed varieties but any derived plants, plus all transgenic and hybrid varieties they can produce.

The patent laws will demand royalties from growers, while the seed companies have all the ultimate power over mankind: control over what we eat, when we eat, or if we eat at all. Even more frightening is the awesome capability that transgenics give to these corporations-state alliances: seeds are being genetically engineered to be resistant to chemicals, rotting, bacteria and to drought, fire or flood.

Australian ecoscientist Richard Hindmarsh believes biotechnology and plant breeders' rights in the hands of a corporate-state monopoly is the recipe for a 'Brave New World' of genetic manipulation. He says that the so-called 'Green Revolution' of the late 1960's/70's was a ploy not only to make the Third World reliant on agrichemicals and hybridised seed, but to 'steal' as many plant varieties as

possible for their patented seed banks.

The Rockefeller Foundation, which provided US\$90 million to fund research into molecular biology, the basis of genetic engineering, from the 1930's to 1959, also collected the seeds of 95% of the Earth's major cereal crops, wheat, barley and corn, in the years leading up to the GATT treaty and Plant Breeders' Rights bills.

So while the world's seeds are stored in frozen gene banks, the natural varieties in the Third World countries can be slowly 'phased out', leaving the farmers reliant on expensive, hybridised seed that can't regrow viable seeds, require large amounts of chemicals and ultimately sends the small farmers broke. DNA Incorporated at work!

In England, at least 1,500 vegetable varieties disappeared from the market within a few years of the National List being established. Already farmers are before the courts for defying patent right be growing or replanting seeds not on the National List of approved species!

The forcing of hybridised, high yield crops on developing countries by the big corporations has had disastrous results for the hardier local plant types. In Turkey the sugar crop has been destroyed as local varieties were wiped out by an introduced hybrid unsuited to the conditions; Indian rice crops were decimated when the cartels sold farmers hybrid short stem rice that grew poorly, poisoned the irrigation channels and the fish that bred in them, was useless for thatching and craft, and could not be regrown from seed!

A million Indian farmers last year took to the streets to the awarding of a US patent for the active genes of the neem tree, used for centuries as a freely available herbal remedy. Indeed, farmers in many countries across Europe as well as in Japan, South Korea and the USA, staged mass protests against the provisions of the GATT treaty, and protests are also being made over the plant breeders' rights issue.

Australia, as one of the world's major primary producers, has been at the forefront in the development of genetically-engineered seeds. Last year the government funded biotechnology to the tune of A\$120 million - A\$30 million of which went to the CSIRO which has been concentrating on

seed genetics and transgenics for at least 20 years.

Here, as well as overseas, scientists are still debating the safety of releasing genetically-engineered organisms; bioscientist in the main claim they are safe, while ecologists and ecoscientist claim they are a greater risk than the exotic species, such as cane toads, etc, that have already caused so much ecological damage in Australia.

Recently, the CSIRO entered into a joint venture with Groupe Limagrain to produce transgenic plants to yield hybrid seed resistant to disease and viruses, for the lucrative Chinese market. Last year Coco-Cola-Amatil, the multinational food consortium, funded CSIRO field trials into virus-resistant transgenic potato plants.

In the next issue we will continue this article Scary stuff, but better to know about it than to be blissfully ignorant. This is a condensed version of the article in NEXUS 2/21.



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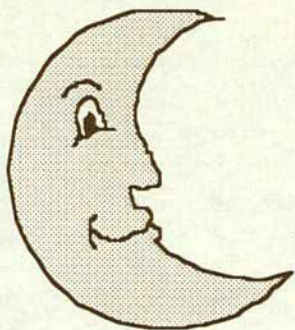
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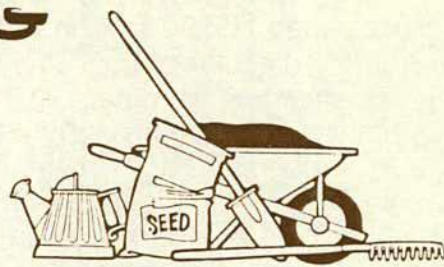
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GARDENING by the MOON



by Elle Fikke-Rubin

JANUARY

17 Full Moon and the day off.

18-23 Days to work with perennials and root crops. You may want to split up some of your herbs by taking root or heel cuttings. Not in rainy weather of course. Cutting back your summer flowers or planting new perennial ones is another job suitable to be undertaken now.

Most herbs can be planted out, and also vegies such as carrots, onions, parsnips and other root crops.

24 Last Quarter, time out.

25-31 Not much to be done during these days. You could feed up the plants that need it; check for bugs and spray with an appropriate organic spray. If you've got summer weeds coming up, these can be hoed or cut out, but they must be replaced with mulch. It's silly to expose bare soil to the hot sun, much better to leave the weeds, but make sure you cut off any flowers or seed heads on them.

FEBRUARY

1-6 Particularly from Wednesday through to Friday it's a good time to plant or sow leafy annuals.

Parsley, basil, borage (this herb has a record GLA content, the active ingredient that makes evening primrose such a popular remedy), sage and coriander are some of the herbs that you can work with. Cabbages, cresses, lettuces, celery and spinach are some of the other greens. Remember, grow strong mints such as pennyroyal or eau de cologne mint with the cabbages, and in pots rather than in the ground, or they'll take over. Grow some wormwood plants, so that at the first sign of caterpillars you can spray them with a strong worm-wood tea. Pour a

liter of boiling water on a cupful of the herb; let it cool off, strain and add a bit of eucalyptus soap, so it'll stick to the plants. Guaranteed to work.

7-8 First Quarter, another day off. Isn't it nice that the Moon always gives us at least one day a week off?

9-14 Especially the weekend (alas) is perfect for planting or sowing seed bearing annuals and flowers. Time to think of spring already and the flowers you would want to come up then. Violas, pansies and primulas, for instance, should be planted now.

Herbwise, you could sow pyrethrum, salad burnet and feverfew, while as far as vegies go, there is a whole range that can go in: beans and peas, cauliflower, corn, cucumber, zucchini, melons (in suitable districts) and all the other fruiting ones.

15-16 Full Moon, relax!

17-21 Days to work with root crops and perennials, such as most herbs, perennial flowers, bushes and trees. A good time to propagate any or all.

Australian natives, propagated now, will do particularly well.

22-28 The days between the Last Quarter (22) and New Moon are no good for planting anything. Great, though, for pruning any plant, bush or tree that has finished flowering or is otherwise in need.

Geraniums and pelargoniums, gardenias, hydrangeas and fuchsias can also all be pruned now.

MARCH

1 Once again a day off - courtesy of the New Moon.

2-7 Leafy annual time again.

One of your last chances to plant out basil

for a good winter crop. Don't delay. Other herbs to go in are parsley, dill, coriander, anise, caraway and other annuals. Lettuces, cabbages, silver beet, spinach, cresses and endive can also be planted.

8-9 First Quarter and these days off.

10-16 Days to work with seed bearing and

flowering annuals, such as cucumbers, capsicums, tomatoes, peas and beans, coriander, dill and yarrow. Even though some herbs, like yarrow and sage, are technically perennials, in our climate they're are better off being treated as annuals.

HAVE FUN!

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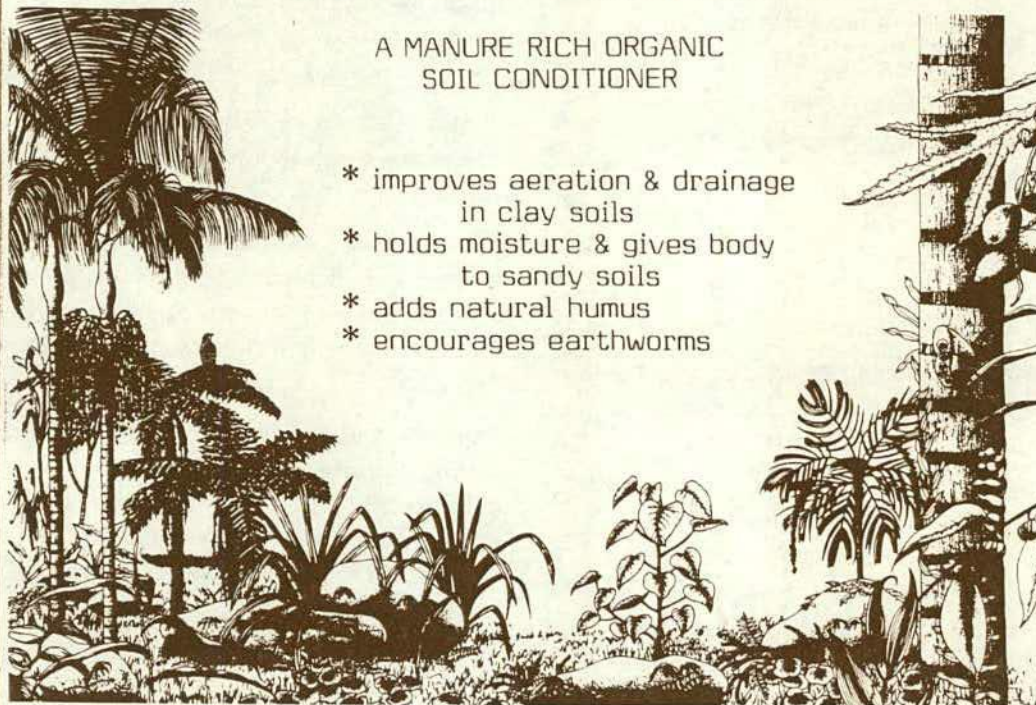
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Drugs? No thanks, we don't really need them

Farmer: Well, that's a bit about how we run this place. Thank you for coming. Does anyone have any questions?

Visitor: "Yeah. What do you do about the African scallion beetle larvae?"

Nothing! What is it?

"Don't you know? How about the blind green nematode? Or the greater hairy perambulating caterpillar? They are real trouble."

I don't think there are any here.

"I reckon I saw a couple in that far row. What do you spray them with?"

Well . . . I don't normally. I'll probably just sit back and see what they do for awhile.

"Can you spray them with garlic or something?"

Maybe. But I don't use sprays much.

"So how do you control your bugs?"

Which bugs?

"You've got bugs here. I've seen them! There's a couple on that bush there. Are you going to let them breed up and destroy the whole paddock?"

Nah, they won't do that. Besides, I'm fairly patient. Those things sort themselves out.

"How? Do you whack in a heap of companion plants overnight, or put out pheromone baits or something?"

Nope. I just keep an eye on what's happening.

"Eh? Watching a bug won't get rid of it."

You never know! If I observe my crops closely, I just might see that bug become something else's breakfast.

"That sounds a bit hit and miss to me. You are leaving a lot to chance."

Possibly . . . but things tend to fall into a good balance here if they are left to their own devices.

"You could risk losing a whole crop!"

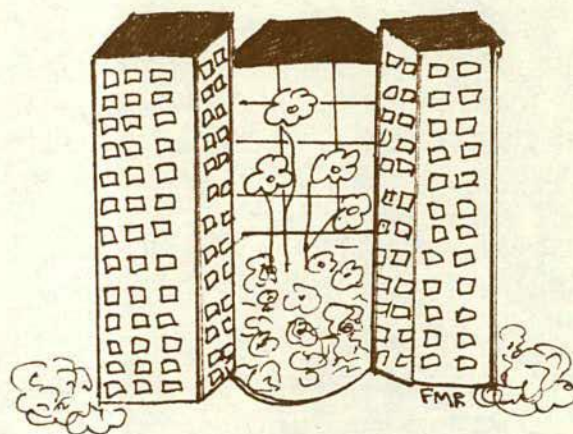
Not really. If the crop is healthy, the most I might lose is 5-10%. I can live with that.

"But if you sprayed, you may lose only 3%. You need to understand more about margins."

Yeah, well . . . it would cost me 15% of the value of the crop to buy toxics just to poison myself and my family and stuff up the farm and the rest of the valley. I'd rather put that money and effort into improving my soil.

"What do you mean?"

The soil? It is that dark brown stuff underneath the plants . . .



PADDOCK ON TOP

By KENRICK RILEY

"OK, so what type of fertiliser do you put on it?"

Actually, I haven't used any for ages. I don't really need to.

"I suppose you could use your chooks?"

That would keep them busy! No, generally, I just rotate with a green manure crop and put on a fair bit of compost when I am planting.

"What about during the growing cycle?"

Well . . . if my soil is in good nick I don't need to fertilise. In fact, if the soil is right I don't need to worry about much at all really.

"Well, what about weeds?"

I don't let them worry me much either. I reckon too many farmers go broke just buying chemicals to spray their weeds.

"So what cheap form of spray do you use?"

Water! Got a dam full of it! Seriously though, not many weeds grow here anyway.

"How come?"

Well, the poor old weed is normally a sign that the soil is degraded in some way - poor fertility, bad structure or something wrong with the pH. Not many weeds will grow in a healthy soil.

"How do you keep them under control if they do?"

I usually yell at them! Or sing - that'll scare them! But mulch will control most of them. I occasionally pull a few out for the compost heap when I need the exercise. And there is always the hoe if I am feeling a little aggressive.

"Yeah, but my problem is I have this \$65,000 spray rig and I need something to put in it."

Have you thought about BD500?

"Huh?"

Just kidding. Could I show you how I make my compost?

Observations

by Magda Verbeek

Looking through past issues of the HERB GROWER, wondering what to write for this issue, I came across the last March/April issue whereby I was bemoaning the lack of rain and how hot it was.... Well, what a struggle it's been this year with very little useful rain and a bugger spring! Let's have full summer, and throw in strong drying winds for good measure!!

Unfortunately we're back to stress conditions in the garden and everyone I've spoken to has an insect problem. My main concern are flea beetles and Rutherglen bugs. This year they are really taking the cream of my basil harvest. The following is what I can find out about these fiends. If anybody has a solution to flea beetle attack, let us know... PLEASE.

Flea beetles are so named because they can jump just like fleas; they are metallic black, blue or brown, are usually about 3 mm long, but some varieties are closer to 5 mm. They feed off a wide variety of plants, including basil, lemonbalm, eggplant, potatoes, rhubarb, tomatoes etc etc, and many vegetables have their own species of flea beetle. Several generations are hatched each year, with adult beetles laying their eggs on the soil. When the larvae emerge, they feed on roots; as adults they eat leaves and stems. In my experience they are easy to catch, especially in the cool of the morning, when leaves are wet with dew. Flea beetles prefer dry hot conditions and reach pest proportions rapidly. They are often seen mating. Apparently a white sticky board attracts and traps them, but this would have to be hung at the level of the crop.

*Since writing the above, we have had 6" of rain and feel that maybe everything will be alright after all. Still plenty of flea beetles, but at least now the plants may grow faster than they are attacked.

**Rebecca Scott of the CSIRO is

conducting a national experiment in an effort to record where the dung beetles are.

Dung beetles play a critical role in decreasing the incidence of flies by taking dung underground. Many hectares of farmland in Australia have become useless for grazing, because livestock do not eat grass around dung pats.

The experiment asks for interested people to collect dung beetles and send them to the CSIRO, who will make up statistics about where the dung beetles are, what species live in what areas and which area needs dung beetles. So, if you have an hour to spare, please ring Rebecca on 06-2766639, who will then send you a dung beetle collection kit.

Please participate.



ORGANIC BIKING

by Tony Ullman

It is a fine morning and I have a 400 kilometre ride in front of me. I have finally sorted out the last of the teething problems with the BMW, which is running like a Swiss watch, so I have some time to reflect on why I choose a motorcycle to do this job.

I haven't chosen a motorcycle because it's more comfortable, in fact just the opposite is true. Not because it's cheaper, it costs more than a car, twice as much to put a bike on the road in this state than in WA. So much for encouraging the public to decrease the amount of pollution they produce.

A bike is cheaper to run than a 4WD, however, and that is the only alternative that I can see in order to reach some of the properties I have visited this year.

One of the considerations when assessing a property is the nature of the surrounding countryside and I am sure I have a far better impression of it, having ridden there rather than driven.

continued on page 23

THIS AND THAT

GREAT ORGANIC SEED HARVEST

What is claimed to be the largest organic seed harvest in modern times is now in progress.

Under the guidance of the US-based seed company Seeds of Change, the harvest is happening in most ecosystems of the USA, as well as those from Mexico to Costa Rica.

Howard-Yana of Seeds of Change says his company, in conjunction with its sister catalogue, Deep Diversity, will offer more than 2000 varieties of organically grown seed for the 1995 season.

"On farms ranging in size from 1 acre to 1500 acres, an unprecedented number of growers are dedicating themselves to the cultivation and preservation of seed without the use of chemicals," Mr Shapiro said.

Permaculture International Journal #53.



CALL TO ORGANIC FARMERS

I am researching an article on organic farming, with particular reference to the economic viability of large area farming using organic methods. I would be grateful if any farmers, engaged in large-scale organics, could contact me directly, particularly any who have changed from chemical methods to organic methods and are in a position to give a 'before and after' viewpoint.

Information I am seeking would include:

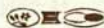
- * Reasons for changing
- * Chemicals previously used
- * Any health problems farmers or their families may have experienced which they link with chemical use
- * Pest and weed control

methods/strategies now used

- * Comparative effectiveness of same
- * Types of machinery used
- * Farm productivity and profit before and after using organic methods
- * Other perceived benefits/problems.

Can you help? Your confidentiality will be respected.

*Please write to: Mary Horsfall,
Night Owl Publishers, P O Box
242, Euroa 3666.*



FRAGRANT ASSISTANCE

In an experiment at the University of Cincinnati, volunteers performed stressful computer tasks while wearing oxygen masks connected to a tank of plain air or scented air (lily of the valley or peppermint).

The volunteers who received either scent made about 25% fewer errors than those breathing plain air. Women seem to be especially sensitive to the effects of fragrance.

In other studies, workers exposed to pleasant fragrances performed better at a wide variety of tasks, including proof reading, decoding and clerical work.

The research also showed that fragrance nearly doubled the likelihood that a worker would volunteer to help a co-worker or stay additional time without pay.

New Woman (USA), July 1994



CARROTS TO THE RESCUE

A novel idea for treating contaminated soil has been patented.

It involves planting carrots in soils contaminated

with DDT. Since the carrots absorb a significant concentration of the poison, the incineration process that follows, considerably reduces the weight of materials that have to be handled: 2 tonnes of dried carrots, instead of 4000 tonnes of contaminated soil.

*Australian Toxic Network News,
July 94.*



RSL POLITICS

At the recent annual delegates meeting of the Victorian RSL, the following motion was carried: 'That the RSL draw attention to the difficulties posed for Australian industry by the pseudo-scientific nonsense propagated by anti-scientific forces such as GREENPEACE, 'a radical environment organisation that has the capacity to help bring Australia to its knees.'

Greenpeace Magazine, 4/8



ARCTIC SAGGING

Roads and buildings in Alaska are likely to cave in on themselves if the world continues to warm.

Scientists have discovered that virtually all of the permafrost south of the Yukon River to the Gulf of Alaska has warmed.

The permafrost has begun to thaw in some areas; in others it will start to thaw if temperatures rise by 1 degree. When that happens, whatever is built on it collapses.

Greenpeace Magazine 4/8

A GREEN ANTARCTIC

British Antarctic Survey scientists (the people who discovered the hole in the ozone layer) have reported that the white continent is turning green

because of an 'explosion' in the Antarctic's two flowering plant populations. New grass species are also sprouting in soil exposed by retreating glaciers.

Dr Ron Lewis Smith said: "This is a sign of regional warming which is part of what is happening to the climate generally." *Greenpeace magazine* 4/8



HEMP FOR COTTON

The Chemical Coalition's NSW Upper House candidate Bob Cummings, claims legislation should be passed to allow cotton farmers to replace their crops with industrial hemp plantations. Bob Cummings said that several European countries had made it legal to grow industrial hemp, which did not need chemical spraying, is fast growing and has a multitude of uses from clothing to paper making and building materials. Cane and cotton growers from

from Mackay to Dubbo want to replace their crops with hemp and believe in a national strategy to gradually phase out heavy agricultural chemicals, Bob said.

The Northern Star
3-12-94



HEMP AS MEDICINE

All national newspapers carried excited stories about a law passed in the ACT Legislative Assembly in November: that doctors will be able to authorize patients to use marijuana for physical and psychological illnesses. They will, however, need to maintain research notes on their patients.

Marijuana is believed to ease pain, relieve nausea and increase appetite, effects which might help people suffering from serious diseases.

Patients will be allowed to use or possess up to 25 grs and grow five marijuana plants on private

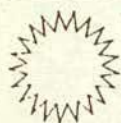
property. Possession of those quantities had already been decriminalised in the ACT.



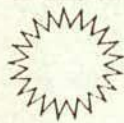
ORGANIC FOODS BETTER
The US Journal of Applied Nutrition reports that organic wheat, corn, apples, pears and potatoes are higher in beneficial and lower in toxic minerals than conventional crops.

Bob L Smith in 'Doctors' Data' writes that the organic crops were 63% higher in calcium, 59% in iron, 91% in phosphorus, 125% in potassium, 138% in magnesium, 70% in boron, 73% in iodine, 60% in zinc and 68% in molybdenum, while being 40% lower in aluminium, 29% lower in lead and 25% down in mercury on conventionally grown crops.

The comparison is based on fresh weights of produce and the analyses were carried out over a period of 2 years. *Acres Australia* 2/4



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Herb of the Month

ARNICA MONTANA L.

An opportunity not to be
wasted

MOUNTAIN ARNICA (*Arnica Montana* L) from the Asteraceae family, is a perennial plant growing so far exclusively in a natural environment. It occurs rudimentarily in mountain regions of central Europe and in France, as well as on the Balkan, in the Pyrenees and south Scandinavia.

Arnica m. grows to 60 cm in height. On its stem there are settled oppositely 1-3 pairs of ovate, lanceolate, obovate or oblanceolate leaves. Flowers are arranged most often in three golden-orange capitulum, about 8 cm in diameter. One of them is terminal and the others develop from the buds at the upper leaves. Marginal, female flowers are furnished with ligule, while central monoecious flowers are tubular. All flowers are provided with grey pappus and fruit is cypsela.

The flowers of *Arnica montana* are used as raw material in pharmacology because they contain such substances as ether oils (0,2-0,3%), flavonoids (0,4-0,6%), carotenoids, polycetylenes, phenolic acids, cumarins proanthocyanidins (1%) mono- and triterpens and lactons of sesquiterpens (0,4-0,9%). The drugs consisting of the substances typical of *Arnica montana* are specifically recommended to elderly people.

In 1947 from the flowers of *Arnica montana* there were isolated lactons of sesquiterpens belonging to the group of

guaiacols, mainly helenalins - and its derivatives. This explains its wide pharmacological spectrum of use. This plant is considered to be the most valuable raw material used nowadays in therapeutics. Lactons of sesquiterpens, lilophilic substances, cause that this plant is used as an antiseptic and antirheumatic drug. These substances are also active blockers of sulphhydryl groups (-SH) which demonstrate ability to inhibit selectively some enzymes. In very low concentrations they stabilise cell membranes. Such lactons as helenalins, acetate of helenalins and its dihydroderivative isolated from the flowers of *Arnica montana* show antibacterial activity specially against the gram positive bacteria. Helenalin acetate in the concentration of 10-100 microgr/ml displays also antimycotic activity on different pathogenic to man fungi.

Tests carried out with animals proved that application of helenalins in certain doses decreases the cholesterol and triglycerids content by 40% and 24%, respectively. Testing, in different model systems, the influence of helenalin and its dihydroderivatives on man's heart, positive inotropic action and negative chronotropic actions were stated. It was found that heart action can also be affected by proanthocyanidins which intensifies and increases blood-flow in coronary arteries and improves their elasticity. As a result of broad interdisciplinary investigations, two biologically active substances were isolated from polysaccharide fraction of arnica. One of them has an acid character and



allows the macrophags to release the tumour necrosis factor; the second one, which has a neutral character reveals in vivo phagocytic properties.

It should be stressed, however, that the pharmaceuticals based on arnica used in too high doses or too long can have a negative influence on the organism. It is advised to use this medicine according to a doctor's prescription and to by the pre-

parations produced by renowned pharmaceutical firms.

According to Prof.'s Muszynski, Ozarowski, Jaroniecki agree that the medicines produced from *Arnica montana* are the only natural remedy which effectively remove disturbances in brain blood-flow in elderly people. Positive results were obtained in during the treatment of a weakening of heart muscles on background of sclerosis and in states of thrombosis.

In Europe *Arnica montana* is an endangered species and is therefore protected. Only few pharmaceutical companies are allowed to collect this plants from its natural environment. This is the reason for a permanent lack of raw material, necessary for production on a bigger scale.

The results of numerous publications prove that up to now no research institution has been able to work out the method of cultivating this plant. My experiments based on complex studies in the physiology, ecology, mycology and study of the soil, allowed me to resolve the plant cultivation. It appeared that mycorrhiza is the decisive factor. I identified the proper species and strain of endotrophic fungus.

So in my work, two problems were solved: 1) the technology of production cycle and the way of propagation, and 2) methods of cultivation of fungus which live in symbiosis with *Arnica montana*. Basic data about the results of my experiments were published in the periodic "Wiadomosci zielarskie".

It is clear that here still exist many problems with cultivation of this plant and many studies have to be done in the field of pharmacognosy. Nevertheless, the result of the experiments allow me to make the offer to establish a plantation of this plant in any geographic latitude which satisfies basic conditions (temp. not higher than 40 degrees C. and rainfall not bigger than 700 mm per year.

I can also render the technology of fungus production - necessary to develop a field cultivation of this plant and the seeds from my cultivation.

I have omitted the problems connected with related plant *Arnica chamissonis*, which is well known and very

easy in cultivation. The reports of specialists in pharmacognosy proved that this plant can be used only outside in the treatment of wounds and ulcers.

*Edmund BULA mgr inz.
Wroclaw, ul.Saperow 28/1*

What Mrs Grieve has to say:

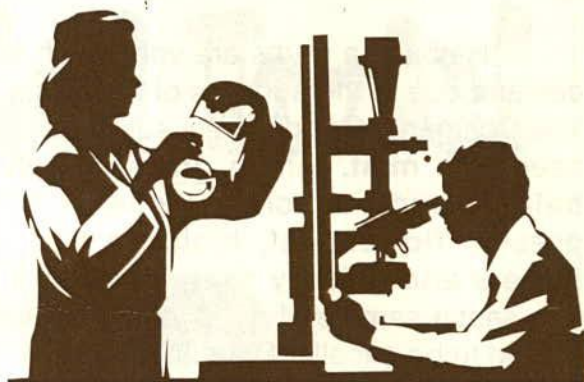
Description: The leaves form a flat rosette, from the centre of which rises a flower stalk, 1 to 2 feet high, bearing orange-yellow flowers. The rhizome is dark brown, cylindrical, usually curved, and bears brittle wiry rootlets under the surface.

Cultivation: *Arnica* thrives in a mixture of loam, peat, and sand. It may be propagated by root division or from seed. Divide in spring.

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FEED YOUR PLANTS SEAWEED

*Arthur Riley's
lifelong mission*

One of OHGA's longstanding supporters through advertising is Arthur Riley, an 85 year old gentleman who has been an advocate of organic growing for over 40 years.

He started in the fifties, the days when organics were distinctly unfashionable. As a banana grower, he read of the success of New Zealand farmers with seaweed spray, and decided to try it on his banana plantation at Coffs Harbour, to the scorn and ridicule of the other farmers. Impressed by the results of the spray, he decided to spread the news and started visiting farms.

Arthur believes that, with the very narrow strip of fertile soil along the east coast of Australia, and with frequent droughts, to maintain a reasonable food supply we need to conserve and improve those soils. But it is very common to have soils which are not fertile, Arthur says, so we have to give plants what they need through foliar feeding.

The seaweed spray which he uses and sells, was developed in Britain after WW2, when farmers stopped collecting seaweed from the beaches.

Arthur says that he suspects that in the British seaweed there is a magnetic

effect involved due to its proximity to the North Pole. The colder water also concentrates the nutrients, he says, and his Chase Organics blends contain higher concentrations of cytokinins, a growth promoting hormone, than others.

The seaweed collection happens only once every three years, according to Arthur, so it is a sustainable process.



Arthur Riley

Arthur says that he is very happy with the recent interest in organic growing.

The University of New England is doing research into foliar feeding, with Arthur's seaweed amongst others, and he says that the findings are very good.

Arthur's message to farmers in Australia is to forget all the brainwashing and misinformation they have received for most of this century, and to go back to working with Nature.

The Chase Organics seaweed extracts, SM3 and SM6, are organically certified by The Soil Association of England, which is of course an enormous plus for us organic growers.

Arthur promises that his seaweed extracts are a good measure for diseases and fungi and the notorious 'crown rot' of herbs such as parsley and echinacea, and phytophthora in avocados. Just pour some on the ground around the plant, he says. For frequently harvested plants, such as herbs, the seaweed extract will ensure speedy regrowth. Arthur also mentions that the aroma of herbs and flowers will be much enhanced by using the extract.

Admittedly the extract is not cheap at \$205 for 15 liters, but if you figure it out, this comes to just \$28.60 per acre per year. Arthur has offered to sell in bulk to OHGA, in which case the price would come down to about \$10 a litre. The catch is that we have to buy a container of 210 ltr. I will bring this up at the next OHGA committee meeting and hope that all you growing members will order at least one litre. I know I will!

Ref.: ACRES AUSTRALIA, 2/3

SM3 and SM6 are purely organic products and as such, the chemical analysis may vary a little, but it will contain no less than :

Nitrogen	0.25%
Potassium	0.50%
Calcium	100 mg/ltr
Iron	100 mg/ltr
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Zinc	20 mg/ltr
Phosphorus	.25%
Sodium	.50%
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Plus other trace elements .

*To cultivate a garden and grow flowers from the sod
is to walk hand in hand with Nature
and be very close to God.*

Helen Steiner Rice

It is claimed that 90% of the total weight and mass of plants is manufactured from what is taken in through the leaves.

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Research shows that foliar feeding is from 8 to 20 times more effective than ground-applications or fertilizers.

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The well known results from SM6 spray that mixes with all other sprays, are earlier flowering and over a longer period, brighter colours and stronger scent; herbs have slightly larger leaves with more pungent aroma.

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151 Edinburgh St, Coffs Harbour 2450
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LANTANA GETS THE BITE

THE AUSTRALIAN QUARANTINE AND INSPECTION SERVICE (AQIS) has approved quarantine release of two more biological control agents against the weed lantana: *Pyramidobela* sp., a moth whose larvae cause leaf folding, and *Caridotis pygmaea* Buzzii, a leaf-feeding beetle.

Both insects were imported into quarantine at the Alan Fletcher Research Station of the Queensland Dept of Lands. They were tested for host specificity under quarantine and evaluated by state agriculture and conservation authorities, before being approved for release by AQIS and the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Lantana, in its various forms, has been in Australia for many years, and several species have become serious weeds. In 1843, common lantana (*Lantana camara*) was recorded being grown by Captain John Macarthur at Camden Park, south of Sydney, and by the late 1850s, it was recorded as being 'a most troublesome weed' by Queensland's Brisbane River.

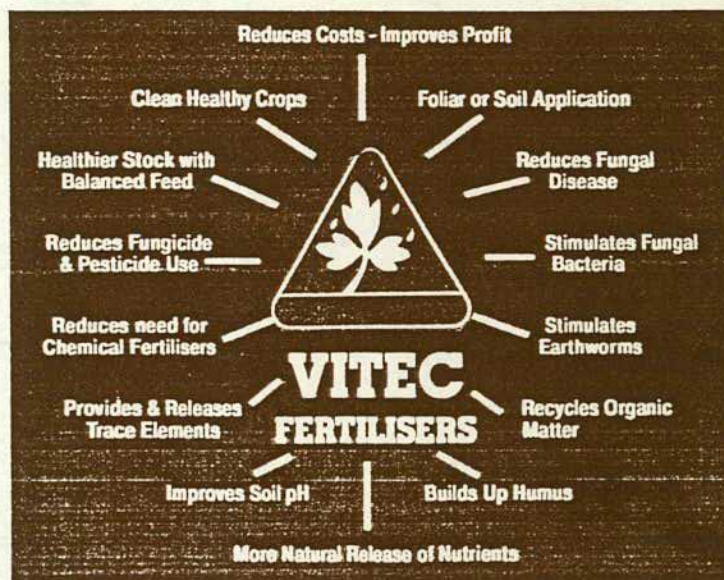
Common lantana has now overrun valuable eastern Australian dairy and beef pastures and invaded forests and national parks. The annual cost of clearing infestations, in Queensland alone, is \$7 million, probably the same in NSW. Another lantana, *Lantana montevidensis*, or creeping lantana, is particularly severe in the Monto district -Queensland, where 10,000 hectares of beef and dairying land have been affected.

The larvae of the small beetle *Charridotis pygmaea* feed on the upper surface of lantana leaves, causing skeletonising, while the adults cause even more damage, often leading to tearing the death of the leaves. Of interest to the macabre-minded is the brittle triangular cover which the larvae construct over themselves, possibly as a protective device while feeding. This is supported by a bifid apparatus on its rear, to which excreta and old skins are attached.

Source: Warwick Wright, AQIS via Just Organics.

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B.F.A.
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There is also a strong sense of kinship between bike riders, excluding those on Harley Davidsons, who refuse to acknowledge anything else on two wheels as a motorcycle. From a nod of the head, as you pass each other at a relative speed of 200k/hr, to the fact that, should your bike break down, I guarantee the first bike rider that comes past will stop to see if you need assistance.

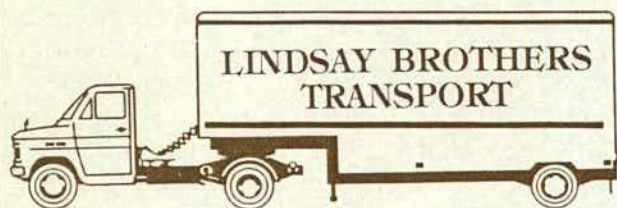
There is a saying, which I used to hear from the more serious riders I have known: "The first hundred miles is the worst". It's true that after about that distance the mind assumes a more meditative state, bike and rider merge into one unit and as with any meditation, you may transcend the method of your practice.

I have to be truthful, however. It's

the adrenalin when, half way around a bend, you find that you should be travelling at about half your present speed, and the only thing to do is to let your instinctive reactions take over, trust in the Tao and let the force be with you. I know the bike is capable of performing far in excess of my riding capability, so the only thing I need to do is to get out of my own way, metaphorically speaking.

My 'words of wisdom' for anyone wishing to take up this finest of means of transport: "In order to stay alive, it is of paramount importance that at all times you assume every other driver on the road is actively trying to kill you!"

For enquiries on certification (and motorbike) matters, please contact Tony on 066-216397.



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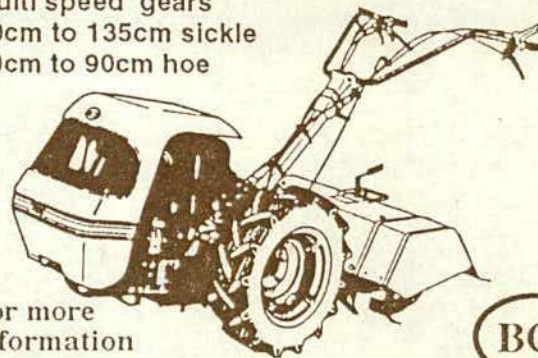
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BOOKS

TROPICAL & WARM CLIMATE GARDENING

by JOHN MASON

96 pages, Bay Books, rrp \$12.95

When I received a review copy of this book, I thought at first it would not be of much interest to herb growers, but looking through it, I realise that it really is a very good handbook on making a great garden, starting with tips on how to draw a detailed plan of your envisioned garden, paths, outdoor living areas, gazebos, to what to plant, where and when. Practical things like making compost, how much, and how to water, how to build walls and to lay a concrete path, step by step, etc. are all included.

It is clear that the author is an accomplished garden designer. His chart of Problems and Remedies in Warm Climates is very helpful and common sense and it's good to see that he encourages natural controls for pests and companion planting. I was a bit disappointed to see that he mentioned Roundup and other chemicals for weed control, but then this is a book for all gardeners, not only for us greenies who like doing it the hard way.

There are some lovely photos of plants in the book, just the ones I needed to identify some Aussie bushes I had planted!

DIVINING EARTH SPIRIT

by Alanna Moore

41 pages, available from the author,
P O Box 1263, Lismore 2480

Price: \$15 plus \$3 p&p

This is an interesting book for all ye dowsers and geomancers. It neatly brings together myths, traditions, religions, feng shui, permaculture, earth acupuncture and much more. The author does not go into too much detail on the many subjects she touches on, but it's certainly enough to wet your appetite and make you want to know more.

Part 1 deals with Geomancy of Gaia, with an Earth Spirit overview, planetary crystal grid and the Feng Shui. Part 2, entitled 'Are you under Geopathic Stress' gives you possible solutions if you have not been feeling well, seemingly without reason. Part 3, Earth Energy Dowsing, shows you the relevant techniques, and Part 4, Earth Healing, gives advice on what to do to improve and heal, not only your own piece of soil, but the land in general and sacred sites in particular. The book ends with Part 5, Geomantic Gardening: the powers of trees, dowsing to test your soil and 'stone age' gardening, are some of the topics.

Alanna Moore writes in the preface that this book is a distillation of the ideas and research of Earth mystery researchers and dowsers from around the world, with an Australian perspective. It's certainly interesting.

Divining Earth Spirit

by Alanna Moore

This new book describes the ancient geomantic ethos which holds that the Earth is sacred, conscious and pulsing with vital forces. It presents the ideas and research of Earth mystery researchers and dowsers from around the world, with an Australian perspective. A practical manual, it is suitable for all land carers and concerned planetary citizens.

The author spent several years compiling and publishing **Dowsing News** and **Earth Spirit Quarterly** magazines and has been conducting Earth energy dowsing workshops around Australia since 1982. She helped found the NSW and WA dowsing societies ten years ago; is a geomantic consultant and permaculture teacher also.

Contents include an historical overview, geopathic stress (disease-producing noxious Earth rays), Earth energy dowsing, sacred site awareness, feng shui applications, Earth energy harmonising techniques and geomantic gardening (plant energies, soil testing, psycho-spiritual methods, agricultural coils, Towers of Power, Earth-spirited permaculture design etc). A networking section lists relevant publications and organisations.

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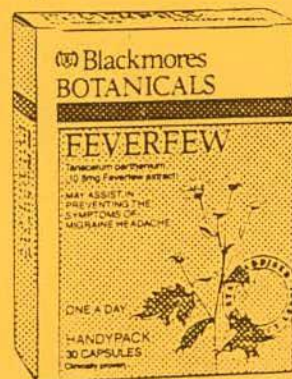
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