



ISSN 1325-0302

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DUNG. WW-2

January/February 1996

\$2.50

HERB GROWER

Published bi-monthly by the ORGANIC HERB GROWERS OF AUSTRALIA INC.

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DEMOCRATS SENATOR RICHARD JONES TAKES ON ISSUE OF ORGANICS

On Thursday 23 November Democrats Senator Richard Jones posed the following Question without Notice in the NSW Legislative Assembly: "When will the Minister for Health support the introduction of legislation for Organic and Bio-dynamic food in NSW?"

Everyone, especially the senator representing the Minister, the Hon. Andrew Refshauge (who is an MP and sits in the Lower House), was looking non-plussed and puzzled. You could see them thinking: "What's Jones on about now?" However, once such a question is asked in parliament, it has to be followed up.

At the latest OPAC meeting, the representative of the National Food Association admitted, when pressed, that the NFA will never cooperate to legislate organics. He said we'd have to try other avenues, such as 'false claims in advertising' laws. We think pushing through legislation from State to State is the way to go.

Senator Richard Jones is helping us in NSW. Why don't you all find yourselves a Democrats, Green or other reasonably sane politician in your state and contact her/him. Request that they help legislate organics in their government. If you're stuck, we can give you all the necessary details.

ALSO INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Change of Constitution, Gardening by the Moon, Paddock on Top, Observations, Puzzle Corner, Letters, Organics, Book Review, Lots of Interesting Stories, and much more



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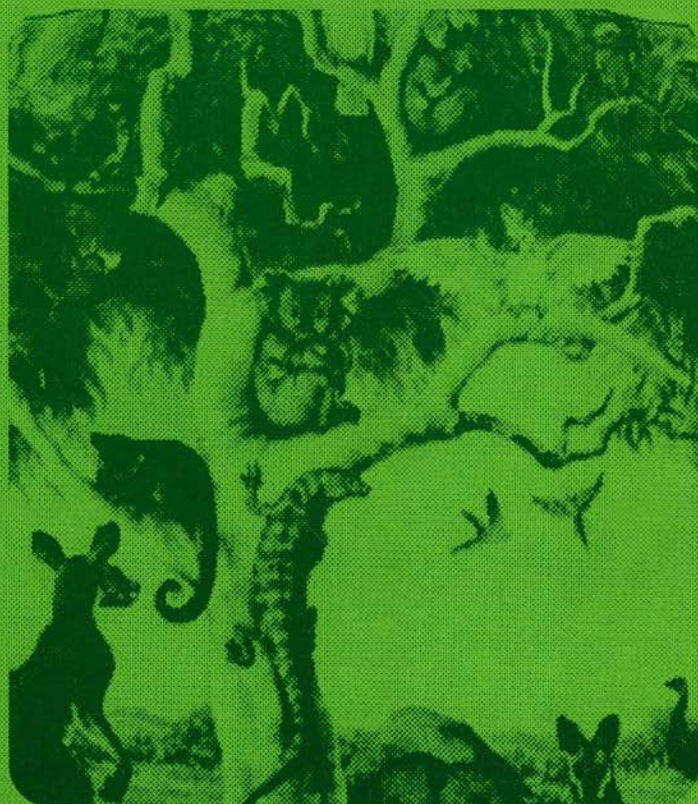
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It's been a busy spring for us. I told you about a year ago how the Lismore City Council wants to take our best piece of land to put their road through. Since the initial meeting we hadn't heard from them, but after letting the land lie fallow for a year (I wasn't going to knock myself out and keep planting if they were going to take it soon) we decided to cultivate it again. So I dug and weeded for a few weeks, and we got in a rotovator, put in irrigation and then we spent over a week planting it with a trial crop of Sculcap (*Scutellaria laterifolia*) for Blackmores. Of course, as soon as we finished planting, who would be on the phone but the Lismore City Council, saying that they are ready to negotiate for it!! AARGH!!! We told them that they will now have to wait for the crop to mature and to be harvested. The latest is that they are threatening to resume the land! Over my dead body!

The exec committee have agreed that we need to be on the Internet. So OHTGA is to buy a modem, which I will have to learn to operate, if I can find the time for it. Are there any members in the area who know all about the fabled information super highway, and who want to give me a bit of a lesson in this new enterprise? It won't be until February, when we will acquire the equipment. Before then Howard, Freya and I will be on a different highway, to India. Give me a ring at the beginning of February if you can be of assistance.

In October I met with some Greenpeace warriors, who gave me an eyewitness account of the actions by the french in the Pacific and on Moruroa and Tahiti (french colony). Horrific stories of torture and imprisonment by the desperado french legionnaires (yes, they still exist!) who run the atoll. Al Baker was one of the two activists who managed to get onto the atoll before the first bomb went off, and who was sitting in a prison right there when it was exploded. And Michelle Sheather spent weeks on the ocean coordinating the actions of the 35 yacht Peace Flotilla at the 12 mile exclusion zone. Saskia Kounvenberg, in the meantime, worked for several months for a human rights organisation in Papeete, the capital of Tahiti, from where she reported whatever was going on for European radio networks. My heroes, all of them!! Please don't forget what the french are still doing and keep boycotting french products. And, if you can afford it, support Greenpeace by buying their products, becoming a member and donating some money. It's vital that they can continue their brave actions, for the future of our planet and all of us. While you're at it, if you're so minded, you may want to become a member of The National Greens, or at least vote for them in the upcoming election. I'm glad I don't have to go through the trauma of being a candidate for them again like last time, but they'll be no. 1 on my voting form, both in the lower and upper house.

In November, while on business in Sydney, and in Canberra for the OPAC meeting, we went to visit both Parliament Houses. In Sydney we had lunch with Democrats Senator Richard Jones and sat in the visitor's galleries of the Legislative Council and the Lower House. It was a bit of a zoo in the Lower House and I must say that we were quite shocked at the ridiculous and childish goings-on by our elected and well-paid parliamentarians, who seem to be wasting a lot of time slagging each other off and spouting nonsense. Things were better in the Upper House, possibly because there are quite a few women senators and because they're not just out to score points off each other.

In Canberra we attended the respective question times of the Parliament and the Senate, where we found everyone in full-on election mode, posing stupid questions about who is going to be taxing us more after the election. It was a shame that Paul Keating was elsewhere. We had hoped to see him in action. I don't know about you, but in my opinion the next election is another crucial one for the environment. So let's vote accordingly. And remember, a no.1 vote for a small party like The Greens, is not a wasted vote. It will flow on to your next choice. Who knows, maybe we can elect some real environmentalists this time around.



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Absolute copy deadline (for ads, letters, articles etc)
for the March/April issue is January 20th.



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The HERB GROWER is the
official bi-monthly publication of
The Organic Herb Growers of Australia Inc.

ISSN 1325 - 0302

The OHGA membership year starts in
September of each year.
For membership fees, see the form at the
back of the magazine.

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This issue of HERB GROWER is printed
by PRINT SPOT, Murwillumbah.

REWARD OFFERED

At the October committee meeting it was decided that we have enough income from advertisements to be able to offer a modest fee of \$25, as an incentive, to authors of original articles that appear in the HERB GROWER, starting with the next issue.

I know there are members who have solid knowledge to share, but who just haven't found the time to contribute to our magazine. I hope that now you will feel that it is worth your while to give us a few of your valuable hours.

There are a few conditions:

The article must be original, that means not published before; it should be at least 500 words long; it should not be a hidden advertisement for your goods and/or services (though these articles may still be printed if we see a benefit to the members, but they won't be paid for), and it's up to the editor if your article will be accepted for publication, or in which form it will be published. In other words, it may be cut or slightly altered, but we'll try and contact you before we do that.

Articles will not be returned,
so make a copy if you need one.
They should be typed, if at all possible;
if not, they should at least be legible.
So give it your best hand.

Elle



ON MARCH 15, 1997
only a bit more than
a year off, it'll be 10
years since OHGA
was incorporated
under the name of

The Northern Rivers Herb Growers Association.

We're sure you'll all agree that this needs a celebration, perhaps in the form of a Herb Festival. If you have ideas for the party, and/or you would like to be on the organising committee, drop us a line or call one of the committee members. It'll take at least a year to organise it properly, so let's go to it!





OHGA's mail

Dear OHGA,

First, congratulations on the AGM. It was good to see so much enthusiasm and meet friendly people with the same aims.

Next some thoughts on the organic labelling issue. If, as I suspect, we will be unable to get the legislators to do the right thing, I believe it is of primary importance to start educating the public about what organic means and why they should buy it. Any money spent doing this will be well invested in creating a market for our products in the longer term.

Some ideas for throwing around:
Organic associations like ours could contribute money annually to an education budget, with representatives from these organisations deciding how it will be spent - on newspaper ads in major cities, flyers in supermarkets etc.

Popular magazines like Woman's Weekly etc. may be interested in doing a feature on the organic philosophy - health is always a popular issue. Ditto for current affairs programs on TV.
People need to know how good our products are for them, compared to the other stuff!

Now to the internet. It's a great idea to use the Net to get articles for the magazine. How about a service for OHGA members to make enquiries on the Net about particular issues in growing, harvesting, processing, marketing etc? Members could pay for this time on the Net plus some charge for the operator to make the enquiry.

My next concern is how to get at all the knowledge and experience of the OHGA members. One way to do this would be a Feedback page in the magazine along the lines of the section in Grass Roots magazine for offering advice, seeking help, sharing "don't do this" experiences etc.

Congratulations on a great magazine.
Regards, Bob Vaughan, Lot 17 Crystal Vale,
Tyalgum 2484

Dear Howard,

Enclosed is my subscription renewal. We also went to the Herb and Spices seminar (*see July issue*). Your concerns about the herb industry being taken over by the big packers whose only concerns are the cheapness of their inputs seem to be well founded. However, I'm not surprised as this is the processors' view of Australian farming across the board. The message that all herbs should cost 14c per kilo and be grown by third world peasants was not new.

The most surprising thing about the conference was the fear expressed by quite a number of participants about organic farming. One presenter made a big deal about not being odd, and then saying that organics pay. Really, this has been the experience overseas for a number of years. The other annoying view was that organic farmers were zealots who would control the world. Some chance.

Considering that the conference attracted a number of farmers who were there looking for a way to stabilise their incomes in difficult times, you would have thought that they would have at least listened and asked sensible questions re the cost of conversion as well as sought information on alternative uses for herbs within their existing business.

This experience was repeated with farmers attending a Grasslands Society field trip. We visited a lovely bio-dynamic certified farm with loads of good ideas re the use of wind breaks and pastures and minimising costs of chemicals etc. The response from many participants was extraordinary. They assumed that this guy was trying a conversion. When these farmers were confronted with the notion that chemicals in foods were fast running out of favour and that soon such chemicals could form non tariff barriers to trade, these same farmers agreed that this was right. Perhaps they don't think it will be in their life time.

Kate Short, author of Quick Poisons, Slow Poison, has been in Canberra to warn the Federal Government on the dangers to its Clean Green campaign posed by agriculture chemicals. Although she got good press coverage in Canberra I wondered if the bureaucrats are taking her view seriously. There seems to be a naive view around that if you stop using chemicals today you'll be OK tomorrow and the time to act is when our trading partners start closing the doors. I hope that one day the organic industry can run a conference to explain to the farming community just how pervasive all these chemicals are and how long the clean up process will take.

Thank you for a marvellous magazine.
Anne Burhop, Campbell ACT 2612

Dear OHGA,

The cost of organic certification does force or motivate me into a real commercial scale. It is something like a flat rate tax. One can emphasize that this is a major financial commitment to organic farming.

Farming, living in the 1990's and running a camping ground is fun when it pays, and a lot of work. Macadamias I have been growing for 22 years and now I am beginning to diversify into herbs & fruit, and Rural Organic Tourism/ Ecotourism.
Best wishes,
David McIlrath, Maca's Camping Ground,
Mullumbimby NSW.



Hello Howard and Elle,

Just a note to introduce ourselves as new members and to say how impressed we were with your organisation. We attended the course Howard held at Bega, and soaked up every piece of info given out. We're still in the process of absorbing and relating this info to our own ideas and climactic region.

We had been chasing you guys since late last year, when we were first looking around for a product to plant on our small holding.

We admire your commitment to organics and the lifestyle of intensive herb farming. It is exactly what we're looking for in regards to a business we can commit ourselves to philosophically and work it into an attitude and lifestyle.

We envy your alternative network up North, which is so much stronger and if some of it could be accessed by "us southern cousins" then it would be a good thing for this area. We're surrounded by dairying, sheep and logging mentality and it can overwhelm one if you think a bit differently. We would be proud to participate in something that could prove there are other ways of making a living off the land, that can add to the eco-system rather than raping it.

We have 50 acres of dry sclerophyll forest with a wonderful water course coming from Coolangubra Forest through our property; this supplies gravity fed water to our home and gardens. We survive quite well during drought time and enjoy capturing the water for our property before it flows on out to sea. Bega's water, by the way, was just voted No.1 in Australia, which reinforced our idea that we have some of the best water in the world, seeing that the Northern hemisphere is collapsing.

We live and garden on 3/4 acres, the rest we look after for mother Nature, as it runs up the side of a mountain. We want to farm one hectare with water chestnuts on our lower terraces, as it is very wet, and herbs on our higher and drier terraces. We have been watching and working with the eco-system here for 14 years and only feel now we know enough to have a "real good go at it" (being organic producers).

We have a lot of youth unemployment in this area. We have three sons, 18-25, and have adopted most of their mates. I can feel a challenge coming on as I contemplate organising them to lease land (10 acres) perhaps, and putting in a tea or medicinal crop. They've all grown up hearing and living organically and could transpose their inherent skills into solid skills, that could employ them in a rural area, but I can see I would have to know a lot more before I attempted that challenge. All your info is very stimulating for this area and we look forward to the future unfolding.

We're yet to attend a co-op meeting in Bega that will be later this week. No doubt the ideas will be flying around and you'll hear the feedback.

Thanks for your inspiration,
Pat and Sue Cole, Wyndham, NSW 2550.

Are there any OHGA members in the area who would like to contact these lovely enthusiastic people?

CHANGE OF CONSTITUTION

We experienced a very unique occurrence at our last AGM. For the first time, we actually conducted an election for officers. Usually we have to plead with members, and do some arm-bending, to get people to agree to give up some of their free time and become a member of the committee. But here was a turn of events. We actually had more people wishing to be on the committee than places available. So in the best tradition of democracy, we held an election.

At the first management meeting the new committee decided that we would propose a motion to our members to expand the executive committee.

Currently our constitution provides for an executive committee of 7 members: 4 office bearers: president, vice president, treasurer, and secretary, with 3 ordinary members.

It is now proposed to increase the ordinary members to 5. That would bring our executive committee to nine members. At the same time, we are required to change our quorum from the current level of 3 to 5.

To do this we require a special resolution of the membership of the association. This special resolution (which appears on the enclosed form) must be passed by a majority which comprises not less than three quarters of the total membership.

That basically means that if you agree with the decision to enlarge our executive committee, then you MUST RETURN the form; otherwise, if we do not receive back your voting form, we can not legally change the structure of our committee.

We have tried to make this as simple as possible for you. Enclosed you will find the voting form and a special reply paid number so that you don't have to put any postage on the envelope.

This decision is yours to make.

Howard Rubin, President



THE GLOBE ARTICHOKE

Cynara Scolimus, N.O. Compositae

The Globe Artichoke is one of the oldest cultivated vegetables, grown by the Greeks and the Romans in the heyday of their power, and served as a delicacy at noblemen's feasts.

It probably originates in North Africa, as it was known to be enjoyed by the Egyptians as long ago as 600 BC.

It was introduced into England and the rest of Europe in the early sixteenth century, both as a vegetable and ornamental plant in monastery gardens. The plant is a perennial and has a tuberous root, but it is the large flower buds that form the edible portion. The expanded flower has much resemblance to a large thistle; the corollas are of a rich blue colour.

The young and tender flower heads are harvested from the second year on, and are either boiled or steamed and sometimes fried, as are the smaller buds which develop on side shoots. The individual scales are pulled off and the fleshy bottom parts eaten, after being dipped in butter, mayonnaise or aioli. Then the heart, under some inedible pith, remains. This part can be pickled or fried. The tender central leaf stalks can also be eaten blanched.



Cultivation

Globe artichokes are either grown from seed sown in spring in a deep, rich and moist soil with a pH of at least 6.5, or by planting suckers. They are large plants, so space them 1 meter apart. They need quite a bit of water and are very fond of liquid seaweed manure. They have very large roots which they send down to a great depth. The bed should be well mulched.

In warmer climes the plants will happily overwinter and thrive, but if you are in an area with winter frosts they will need to be protected. This can be done by cutting down the stems and larger leaves, without touching the smaller central leaves, and heaping the soil against the plants and loose mulch over them. As soon as the frosts have passed, they should be uncovered and liberally manured. After five years the plants are usually worn out, so if you become fond of eating this vegetable, you need to start a new bed after three years.

Description

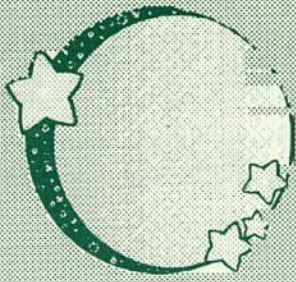
The flower stems grow erect and attain a height of 1-2 meters. They're each terminated by a large globular head of oval spiny scales of a purplish-green colour. These envelop a mass of flowers in the centre. These flowerheads, in an immature state, contain the parts that are edible. The leaves are large, green on top and of a silver colour on the reverse. The plant has a thistle-like appearance.

Other uses

In Europe a tea of the leaves, or the water in which the buds have been boiled, has been used for digestive problems, to lower cholesterol, as a liver, kidney and gall stimulant, for skin problems and as a diuretic and blood cleanser. The tea also makes a good hair rinse in cases of dandruff. The flowers are said to possess the property of coagulating milk. To benefit from the vitamin A and B, the manganese, iron and phosphorus content it is advisable to prepare the plant as fresh as possible.

Ref.: *A Modern Herbal* - Mrs. M. Grieve
In Praise of Wild Herbs - Ludo Chardenon
Jeanne Rose's Herbal Body Book - Jeanne Rose
Herbology Magazine, March '95
Illustration by Z. Krejcová from *A Guide in Colour to Plants* - B. Hlava, F. Pospisil and F. Stary





GARDENING BY THE MOON

by
Elle Fikke-Rubin



JANUARY

14 Last Quarter, take the day off.

15-19 Days for general gardening work. Feeding plants, picking off pests, staking tomatoes, all that stuff.

20 New Moon.

21-26 Time to plant or sow leafy annuals. Basil, especially bush basil, which is not an annual, but we'll include it here anyway. When in the winter your sweet basil is finished, you'll still have plenty of bush basil which is just as lovely, if not more so. Borage, coriander, lettuces, silverbeet, cresses etc should also go in.

27 First Quarter.

28-31 Flower planting days, and seed bearing annuals too, such as tomatoes, zucchini's, capsicums, squashes, cucumbers, eggplants, beans and others suitable to your area.

FEBRUARY

1-4 Days to plant or sow seedbearing annuals and flowers. Spring seems like a long way off, but now is the time to sow flower seeds for a good spring display, such as pansies, violas, poppies, primulas and others you fancy. Beans, tomatoes, zucchini's, capsicums, squashes and other seedbearers should also be sown or planted now.

5 Full Moon.

6-11 Time to work with rootcrops and perennials. Take cuttings from your evergreen bushes, such as azalea, hibiscus and native bushes; divide clumps of irises, kangaroo paws, hot pokers etc; for perennial herbs like oregano, thyme, marjoram, valerian, echinacea and others it's also a good time to be divided. For taking heel cuttings from lavender and rosemary these are the perfect days. Then you can plant or sow beetroot, artichokes, onions,

radishes, all perennial herbs, bushes and trees. Plenty to do and only six days to do it in!

12 Last Quarter.

13-18 Time to feed up your garden, especially if you're now getting a lot of rainfall. And to weed, weed, weed....

Pruning of perennials like geraniums and pelargoniums, and annuals like petunias, can now also be done and will ensure a bushier growth.

19 New Moon.

20-25 Leafy annual days and the planting or sowing of dill, coriander, basil, lettuces, spinach, chervil, those beautiful giant mustard greens, rocket and parsley is the job to be done.

26 First Quarter.

27-29 First of all, let me wish all leap year babies a Happy Birthday on the 29th! In your honour it's flower planting days. Still time to sow for spring flowering. Also seedbearing annuals such as cauliflowers, beans, zucchini's and squashes should now go in.

MARCH

1-4 More days to plant or sow seedbearing annuals and flowers.

5 Full Moon.

6-12 Root crop and perennial time. Plant spring flowering bulbs like daffodils, freesias, blue bells, grape hyacinths, anemones etc. And snowbells, tulips and hyacinths, for you who are fortunate enough to live in an area where you can grow them. For me, as a Dutchwoman, spring will always be associated with these flowers.

It's also still time to divide your perennial herbs and rootcrops, and to take cuttings from bushes. Strawberries should also be split up and replanted. They like to grow with lettuce,



borage, beans and in particular with pyrethrum. Carrots, onions, radishes, swedes, turnips, parsnips, rhubarb, beetroot and other rootcrops can be planted or sown. Most herbs can also be planted now.

Have you ever grown chicory? It's of course a first degree cousin to the dandelion, and it comes in quite a few delicious and all of them healthy, shapes. They will all grow well in winter.

There's the witloof variety, delicious baked, rolled in a slice of ham, or cheese for the vegetarians.

And there's my favourite, endive. This is the main ingredient in one of the Dutch staple winter dishes, which consists of mashed potatoes and a freshly chopped head of endive, stamped together with some butter and milk or soymilk, and vinegar.

The red-hearted variety of chicory looks very pretty in salads and, when picked young, is not too bitter. The bitterness is what makes all chicories so healthy. They strengthen the heart, cleanse the blood and are good for people with liver and gall problems.

If you find your chicory plants too bitter to your taste, you can sweeten them by blanching. This is done by depriving the plants of light, and is done while they're in the ground.

The sides of the bed are worked up and a sheet put over the plants, or you can do it by tying a string or rubberband around the plants, so that their hearts turns white. In European countries with cold winters, blanching is done by digging up the plants in autumn, cutting off the leaves and leaving the roots exposed to the air for a few weeks. Then they're planted in boxes which are covered, and stood in a warm place where the new leaves grow white and long.

Mrs. Grieve tells us that the root,

1 oz. of it to a pint of boiling water, has been found effective in jaundice and other liver complaints, and a decoction of the fresh plant is recommended for gravel. But taken too often it can harm the eyes.

Chicory root, sliced, dried, roasted and ground, is of course also a great substitute or additive to coffee.

13 Last Quarter.

HAVE FUN!

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THE USE OF **MAGNETS** IN AGRICULTURE

by Julie Waters

In a recent article in the HERB GROWER I was surprised to read that some growers were having very low rates of seed germination.

As a natural health practitioner, I have mostly used the Negative pole of the magnet as part of my treatment programme (including vegetable testing, nutrition, homoeopathy, herbal medicine, magnet therapy and acupuncture). This is because I usually encounter problems associated with acute or chronic illness involving viruses, bacteria, yeast overgrowth etc. (Which are treated with the negative pole.)

In contrast the Positive pole promotes tissue growth (and growth of bacteria and viruses). So it is no surprise that experiments conducted in the 1970's by Albert Roy Davis in America found that the positive pole was most effective in promoting seed germination and development.

Davis based his research on the observations of Russian scientists, Drs Krylow and Tarahanouas in the 1960s. They noted that seeds placed in the ground with the tip turned towards the earth's south pole germinated long before the others.

The Russians then arranged the buds of wheat, maize and pea seeds so they faced either the north or south magnetic poles of the earth and again found that plants with the tips facing the south pole of the earth germinated earlier.

I have not yet had the opportunity of duplicating Davis' findings, but would welcome feedback from members of the Herb Growers Association.

The following are the results of Davis' research:

(1) Vegetable seeds

These were placed over the positive pole of the magnet from 6 to 200 hours and then planted. This resulted in an improved growth, hardier plants and increased yield of vegetables

which were tastier as well.

The negative pole produced thin tall plants with poor vegetables (both were compared to the control group of similar untreated seeds.)

In laboratory analysis Davis found that proteins, sugars and oils in the vegetables were higher in plants treated with the positive pole than in the untreated group.

In contrast, the seeds and the vegetables they produced, treated with the negative pole of the magnet were lower in vital life bio-chemicals (proteins, sugars and oils) than the control (untreated) group.

(2) Earthworms

In hundreds of tests, it was found when baby worms were exposed to positive magnetic fields they grew larger and stronger than untreated control worms. Because earthworms are 90% protein on average, it was found the positive magnetic field showed a marked increase in protein in common earthworms.

(3) Magnetic Water

Water can be polarised to produce positive energy by standing a container of water on the positive pole of a 3000 gauss magnet for a few minutes.

Davis found that when this water is applied to the roots of the plants it encourages the growth activity of plants. Based on his research I would recommend the use of positive magnetic fields to promote seed germination and the use of positive magnetic water intermittently applied to the roots of plants to stimulate growth and development.

However, I would recommend the use of negative polarised water applied to roots and leaves and stems etc. of any plants affected by fungus, bacteria or viruses... to impede the progress of disease.

SO WHAT IS MAGNETISM?

1 gauss is one unit power of magnetism as measured by a magnetometer. The strength of the earth's magnetic field is ½ of 1 gauss.

HOW TO FIND THE MAGNETS POSITIVE POLE:

Suspend a bar magnet from a string tied at its centre.

Remove your watch and metal belt buckle to prevent interference with the movement of the magnet.

Now use a compass to determine the direction of the earth's magnetic pole.



Now let the magnetic bar, suspended by the string at its centre, rotate until one side faces the earth's magnetic north pole. This is the North seeking positive pole of the magnet, coloured red by convention. Davis called this the South pole but English research convention has named this the North pole - so, because of this confusion in nomenclature it is easier to refer to positive (red) and negative (green) poles of the magnet.

WHAT DO THE POLES DO?

The positive, red pole has strengthening, stimulating qualities. It gives energy and promotes tissue growth. It energises weak organs, improves blood circulation, balances the endocrine system and improves vitality.

However by acting as a stimulant it will also promote bacterial growth and increase pain of chronic ailments, because it increases tissue activity and decreases oxygen in cells.

The negative green pole relieves and controls the pain of chronic ailments, improves athletic performance, increases tissue alkalinity and promotes tissue repair.

This pole is sedating, calming and promotes restful sleep.

The negative green pole retards bacterial, viral and cancerous growth, decongests areas of

blocked energy and stimulates the lymphatics to remove toxins.

Recently the negative green pole has been found to promote negative ions in the body and so protect against the increasing positive electromagnetic radiations affecting us, (from computers, electric blankets, household mains power boxes, microwaves, VDU's, high voltage power lines, hand held phones etc.) Protection can be obtained by drinking negatively polarised water.

I can supply 15cm (6") x 5cm (2") 3000gauss ferro strontium magnets for placing under seed trays and water jugs to produce polarised water or to treat yourself. Magnets are \$50 and \$6 postage. Write to Julie Waters, Waters Health Clinic, 4/936 Military Rd, Mosman 2088.

The best reference book for human use is "*The Book of Magnetic Healing*" by Noel Norris 1995 available from PO Box 145, Bentleigh, Victoria Australia 3240.

Information on plant studies is briefly noted in "*The Magnetic Effect*" by Albert Roy Davis and Walter Crowther, and

"*Magnetism and its Effect on the Living System*" by the same authors, published by Acres USA.

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"EXPERT " ATTACKS ORGANIC FARMING

According to an article in *The Weekly Times* of Oct 30, sent in by OHGA member Kim Fletcher of Focus on Herbs, and an article in the *Herald Sun* of October 25, sent to us by Patrick and Sue Cole of Wyndham, a US food expert has attacked the organic farming movement as harmful to the environment!!

Hudson Institute's global food studies director Dennis Avery, said in Canberra last week that high-yield farming using pesticides and herbicides was far less damaging to wildlife and soil than traditional and organic methods.

Avery was here in Australia as the guest of Cropcare, Australia's largest supplier of herbicides, insecticides and fungicides, so his pronouncements should come as no surprise to us! He came out with some outrageous claims, which could make us laugh if it wasn't such a serious matter.

Avery said, for instance, that chemicals are the only means of averting world famine and soil erosion. That organic farming, by producing lower

yields and requiring more land, threatens to wipe out massive volumes of wildlife habitat, and that, by his estimate, chemically supported high-yield farming is already saving roughly 10 million square miles of wildlife habitat from being ploughed down for food production.

That the risk of chemicals to people and wildlife had not been documented, and yet research funds continued to be spent on low-yield organic farming.

That chemicals had been blamed for health problems, although some of the most virulent cancer agents occurred naturally, and that fungicides and pesticides helped fend off the toxin attacks.

Australian Conservation Foundation agriculture spokesman Jason Alexandra said that Avery's theory overlooked the argument that organic farmers were continually aiming to increase their efficiency. He said that models of organic farming had also proven, in some instances, that chemicals could be reduced without jeopardising yields.

ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGE IS HURTING THE NATION'S HEALTH, SAYS THE AMA

The health of Australians is suffering due to a growing battery of assaults on the nation's water, air, soil and food supply, speakers told an Australian Medical Association (AMA) conference in Canberra yesterday.

The AMA conference broke new ground in its conclusion that safeguarding the nation's physical wellbeing depends as much on environmental as it does on health policies. "It is now recognised that human health and a healthy environment are closely intertwined", the AMA's president Dr David Weedon said.

Australia is witnessing increased levels of chronic ill health - such as the upsurge in asthma, rising osteoporosis rates, falling sperm counts and more genital abnormalities in men, he said.

"Australians fear for their lives and their children's lives because they live in places with chemical emissions, all kinds of air and water pollution, soil and site contamination," PLAN International's director, Ms Trish Caswell, said.

Other speakers listed air pollution, toxic algae and chlorine in the water supply, pesticides in the home and food chain, industrial contamination, lead in children, city waste, ozone depletion and the risk of diseases spreading under greenhouse conditions.

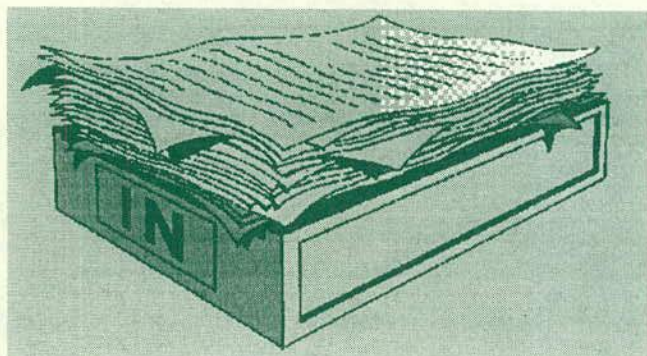
Dr Kate Short of the National Toxics Network said it was likely far more ill health was due to hazardous chemicals in our environment than the medical sector was willing to recognise. "There is a lack of information about the volumes of chemicals being used in Australia.

"The general population's exposure to mixtures of hazardous chemicals is a major public health issue and must be addressed", she said.

The chairman of the National Registration Authority for chemicals, Professor Ben Selinger, announced the NRA had already launched a search for ill-effects from farm and veterinary chemicals and wanted doctors to help. A hundred cases are under investigation.

The Weekend Australian, 21-10-1995





The *OPAC and AQIS* Story

by Elle Fikke-Rubin

You will remember that there was a question about OPAC/AQIS in the green renewal form that we wanted you to respond to.

At least 80% of the membership, however, stated that they didn't know enough to give an opinion and asked for further info.

The in-tray in the title picture is a good representation of the amount of paperwork both these bureaucratic bodies have generated over the years and which is cluttering up our files, but I'll try to keep it short. Here is the story in a nutshell.

Some years ago two things happened synchronistically. The European governments announced they were to involve themselves in the importation of organic food and food products, wanting governmental organic certification controls, which in effect was meant as a trade barrier; and Hassels and Ass. did their first survey to assess the potential for organic agriculture in Australia. This was, like the second one last year, paid for by the Rural Industry Research Development Corporation (RIRDC), a government body.

As a response to this, and increasing worldwide demand for organically grown produce, John Kerin, the then Minister for Primary Industries and Energy, formed **The Organic Produce Advisory Committee (OPAC)** in February 1990. The terms of reference include the development of a national standard for organic and bio-dynamic produce and the provision of policy advice on organic farming matters to the Minister and his department. The first National Standard for Organic and Bio-Dynamic Produce was released by Simon Crean on 10 February 1992.

OPAC comprises representatives from the **Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS)**, who act as chair and secretary, (and who as the governmental body to do with imports and exports, have to audit and "certify"

the certification bodies), State Dept's of Ag, the Australian Consumers Association, National Farmers' Federation, National Food Authority, and the Organic Industry. For several years, only NASAA, BFA and the Biodynamic Research Institute were the certification bodies invited to take part in the process, but after constant objections and lobbying by OHGA president Howard Rubin, OHGA was invited to take part, with observer status only. Some years later OHGA was allotted one seat, while NASAA, BFA and the Bio-Dynamic Research Institute, on the grounds that they had done all the work, each had three seats. (We at OHGA had our own very stringent standards in place before 1992.) At the last meeting, on November 27, we finally got our rightful 3 seats on OPAC. As Howard has argued for over a year, OHGA has to pay the same AQIS fees as the other bodies, and should therefore be entitled to the same level of representation.

Then came the auditing process by AQIS officers of the various certification bodies to ascertain that they were up to scratch, that they maintained adequate records, that their individual organic standards were stringent enough to conform to the (ever changing and evolving) national standard and so on. Several at random selected farms were also to be visited.

Of course OHGA came out with flying colours and became a fully AQIS accredited certification body and member of OPAC, and OHGA certified producers can now export their goods all over the world under the OHGA scheme.

We were informed at the November meeting that a second AQIS review is to take place at the OHGA office in December.

AQIS want to be paid for this process; a yearly bill of about \$26,000 (the exact amount has actually never been agreed upon as far as I

continued on page 23



THIS AND THAT

GENETICS SPEED UP FLOWERING

Scientists have identified genetic switches that make plants flower, a step that should speed up plant breeding and might someday enable farmers to make their crops mature at will.

The finding should also allow breeding of trees, and may let farmers raise crops that could not be grown in their region before, scientists said.

"We have virtually complete control over the initiation of flowering", said Martin Yanofsky of the University of California at San Diego, an author of one of two related reports in the journal *Nature*.

The implications go beyond what most people think of as flowers, because cereals and other important food crops have flowers, too. Each kernel of corn comes from a tiny flower, for example. A tomato comes from a flower and a head of broccoli is made up of thousands of tiny flowers. Trees also have tiny flowers.

(Duh! -Elle.)

Northern Star, 13-10-95

WORLD'S OLDEST MUSHROOMS

Scientists said yesterday they had found two 90 million-year-old mushrooms - the oldest mushrooms ever found.

The tiny, gilled fungi are very similar to some types living today, which indicates that mushrooms found their optimum form very early on. In a letter to the science journal *Nature*, researchers said the mushrooms were found in a piece of amber in New Jersey dating from the Cretaceous period 90 million years ago when dinosaurs stalked the planet.

Northern Star, 13-10-95

NEEM TREES ARE GOOD FOR YOU

Jason Chandler is a Tibetan-born homoeopath and swears by the amazing medicinal properties of the Neem tree. He has set up a neem plantation and nursery near Kyogle, with facilities to manufacture the products of the trees. His years in a Tibetan monastery and later studies in India and England proved to be vital in his pursuit of this remarkable plant. In fact, when he became a homoeopath, he helped to establish its use as a remedy in this field. Last

year Jason successfully used Neem oil to keep buffalo fly off cattle.

He has seen the tree grow successfully all round the world from freezing Tibet to the blazing deserts of Saudi Arabia.

Scientists from more than 40 countries know the benefits of Neem, both as a medicine and a pesticide.

From a pest control point of view, such as a flea treatment for cats and dogs, Jason says that Neem not only stops the pests from feeding but it makes the male infertile. Nevertheless, it is non-toxic to mammals. He added that Indian farmers regularly planted the trees to keep pests off their crops.

Neem will produce seeds two and a half years after planting, but a pesticide brew can be made from the leaves straightaway.

The fourth World Conference on Neem will be held at Gatton, Qld, next year.

Nimbin News, Oct/Nov 95.

DID YOU KNOW THAT...

244 grs of ripe tomatoes, 263 grs of raw cauliflower or 140 grs of raw potato each contain 1 microgram of nicotine, which is equivalent to what a passive smoker would absorb after spending three hours in a room containing minimal tobacco smoke?

Trading places: Clemenger Report, April 95.

WILL DUNG BEETLES FIND DOG POO TO THEIR TASTE?

Warringah Shire, in north Sydney, has set dung beetles to work on the piles of dog faeces dropped in the municipality every day. The council has employed 30,000 of the 7mm-long beetles to clean up the 13,000 dogs-worth of poo and is closely monitoring the results of the scheme. Brisbane City Council's officials said that if successful, it could follow its southern counterpart's lead and release the beetles in the Sunshine State's capital.

Northern Star, 4-11-1995

ORGANIC INSECTICIDE RELEASED

A new organic domestic insecticide is about to be released on the Australian market.

Organocide is the result of years of research by inventor Sergio Lever of Green 2000 P/L. It is



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Greenweek, August 26, 1995

YES, RAINFORESTS ARE GOOD FOR US!

Scientists working in Brazil have found the first proof that undisturbed tropical rainforests soak up huge amounts of the carbon dioxide produced by people burning fuels. The measurements, published in the journal *Science*, show the south-west portion of the Amazon rainforest absorbs one tonne of carbon dioxide per hectare of rainforest every year.

"Virgin forest sequesters carbon from the atmosphere," wrote Mr John Grace of the University of Edinburg, who led a team of ecologists from Britain, Australia and Brazil. "The whole of tropical South America may act as a carbon sink."

Extend the team's measurements globally and the world's remaining tracts of tropical rainforest could be absorbing a billion tonnes of carbon dioxide every year - fully one-sixth of the amount produced annually by people burning fuels, said Mr Pieter Tans of the national Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Today the carbon dioxide content of the atmosphere is 30% higher than at the turn of the century, caused by burning fuels and cutting down and burning forests. Scientists are convinced that this will cause a global temperature increase, with changes in climate, rainfall and sea level.

The oceans are the world's largest absorbers of excess carbon dioxide and Mr Tans discovered last northern summer that newly growing forests in the northern hemisphere also act as large carbon sinks as plants "breathe" carbon dioxide, using the gas to switch on the photosynthesis that lets them grow and multiply. So as the atmospheric carbon dioxide has increased, young and mature forests have responded vigorously to the gas as a sort of fertiliser.

The Weekend Australian 4-11-1995

COLOURED COTTON IN THE FIELD

Normally, before being coloured, cotton is bleached with chemicals and then dyed with whatever colours are required.

An Arizonan farmer and former entomologist, Sally Fox, has eliminated the bleaching and dyeing by growing naturally coloured cottons in yellow, green, brown and red. By crossbreeding with longer stapled white varieties and improving the fibre qualities she has managed to breed coloured varieties suitable for machine spinning.

In 1993 she produced about 2,000 tonnes of naturally grown organic cotton on about 4,000ha, which she sells to a large number of European manufacturers. The fibre sells for about three times as much as white cotton, but the manufacturers save this through not using bleaches or dyes.

The Organic Farmer, spring 1995

GENETIC ENGINEERING WATCHDOG

Tighter controls over genetic engineering, with penalties for breaches, are being planned by the Federal Government to police controversial scientific experiments. The watchdog would replace the existing Genetic Manipulation Advisory Committee which advises researchers whether a genetically modified organism is safe to release, but which does not have any power to enforce its rulings. The new proposed authority would be given enforcement powers.

A senior federal official said: "The intended legislation would cover as broad an area as possible and would include companies and State instrumentalities. There are penalty clauses in the draft legislation."

However, the federal Government has yet to win State support for its plan, which requires legislative backing from all States and Territories. It is understood that Western Australia is the only State objecting to the uniform national legislation, which is being drafted by the federal Dept of Industry, Science and Technology. A spokeswoman for the W.A. Premier's Dept said that the State Government wanted to introduce its own legislation, rather than hand control to the Commonwealth. "We agree the legislation is needed. We're only being difficult in terms that we don't want to introduce it their way", she said.

A spokesman for the Australian Conservation Foundation and the GenEthics Network, Mr. Jason Alexandra, said the voluntary GMAC system was inadequate. "We're looking for a much more rigorous and legislative control over the release, either experimental or commercial, of genetically engineered organisms", he said.

The Weekend Australian, November 11, 1995



HERBS THAT PERMACULTURE

by Barb Knudsen

Permaculture is something that may sound baffling to the "larger than backyard" herb grower.

"Permaculture sounds great but it doesn't have large scale application" seems to be the comment I often hear from my students. "Indeed it does" is usually my reply.

Overall design that is going to create greater water retention, maximise or minimise solar impact to suit species requirements, and the added moisture retention that windbreaks create, are a few benefits which good design can bring to any system.

Permaculture is a design which minimizes input, labour or resources, hence reducing capital outlay.

As an example: *swales* are water retaining cuts or terraces dug along contours of slopes to slow rain water from sheeting down hillsides. If earthworks or endless hours on a maddock aren't for you, a living swale can be planted on contour using a species such as lemongrass. **Lemongrass** forms a thick barrier which slows nutrient run off and can act as a weed barrier as well.

Rather than having large areas devoted strictly to one species, Permaculture aims to integrate species together, so that they can benefit each other wherever possible (without making harvesting too much of a nightmare).

We look to natural ecosystems and the way they function without human input, and we try to imitate them.

Comfrey makes a good border planting in more accessible places. Comfrey also acts as a good living mulch for trees as its deep taproot draws nutrients from the subsoil. These nutrients are returned to the soil locally when the bottom leaves die and mulch back into the soil. The comfrey cools the soil and reduces evaporation just as straw or hay mulch would.

Try to use biological resources such as living comfrey as mulch to grow your own patch of **lucerne** (a perennial, also having medicinal value) to be slashed as you need it.

Why would you want to spend \$14/bale for

lucerne when you can grow your own? Dedicate a patch of outer garden and sow the seeds - available at local agricultural stores or as sprouting alfalfa seeds.

Canna edulis (Arrowroot) is a good weed barrier plant which can also be eaten like a potato (or a flour is also made from the root). The stalk and the leaves of the Arrowroot can be cut and used nearby to mulch plants, or to add to a sheet mulch garden.

Lemon Tea Tree, Lemon Myrtle, and Aniseed Myrtle are bush tucker trees which have culinary value and could be integrated into a system as windbreaks or as a habitat for predatory insects.

The most common way to integrate herbs into any system is through companion planting. There are also aromatic herbs that repel insects, and herbs that can be used to make organic (botanical) pesticides. A lot of these design aspects are not necessarily unique (e.g. companion planting), but it's the way it's applied.... the synthesis of these in the whole.

Herbs have been under-utilised in most permaculture systems. They are planted as culinaries near the back door and maybe throughout the veggie patch. With a bit of creativity, we can start looking at the multiple functions of many herbs and applying them throughout our systems.

A quick brainstorm: plant **wormwood** near dog's area or chook pen for self de-worming; plant a small plot of **comfrey** and cover with a low cage (2" above ground) near the chook pen so chooks can forage on the high nutrient leaves but not destroy the roots; **borage** throughout the garden as an edible flower, bee attractant and medicinal; **chicory** throughout the garden to act as a dynamic accumulator (like comfrey) which has a deep taproot and mines the subsoil for precious minerals.

Many are the ways that herbs permaculture!

Barb Knudsen is a teacher of herb production and permaculture courses in Maleny Qld..





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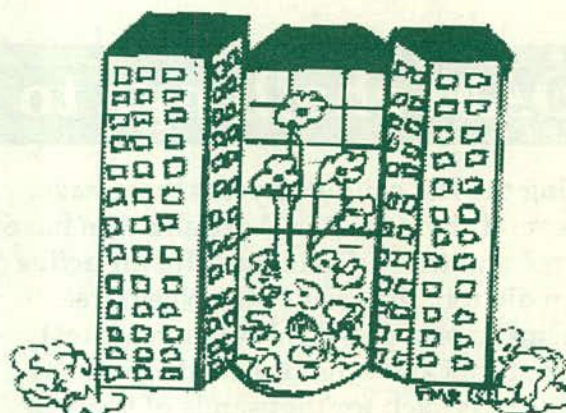
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Trying to psychoanalyse the life of a herb farmer

HAVE you ever really considered how well suited you are to the complex world of herb farming? Well, before you head for the counsellor's couch, this quiz may provide you with an insight. Circle your answer to each question, add up your "a", "b" and "c" totals, and check your score at the end.



PADDOCK ON TOP

BY KENRICK RILEY

1. What do you do when it starts to rain?

- (a) Run out and dance in the mud then plan a thanksgiving trip to Mt Warning.
- (b) Put the feet up on the verandah rail and seriously address the new home brew.
- (c) Develop a complaints list in case the media want a "breaking-the-drought" response.

2. How much rain is enough?

- (a) When the Ark lifts off its moorings and you buy birdseed for the dove.
- (b) When the dams are full but the roads are still just navigable in the Rover.
- (c) When your front paddock shows up in your neighbour's back yard.

3. What is meant by the word "organic"?

- (a) "You know, like wow, nature cosmic far out food environment man tree - ommm."
- (b) A bloody lot of hard work.
- (c) Not spraying pesticides on Sunday.

4. How does a farmer judge crop quality?

- (a) By how many people it will entertain.
- (b) By how many people it will invigorate.
- (c) Size is everything.

5. Why do farmers make compost?

- (a) To give their hemp seeds a head start.
- (b) To save a fortune in fertiliser fees.
- (c) What's compost?

6. Why do farmers plant trees?

- (a) So there are lots of large things to hug.
- (b) To have a break from herb farming.
- (c) For future chainsaw practice..

7. Why do farmers need to be observant?

- (a) To know when the earth rhythms are in total synchronisation with the cicadas.
- (b) To interpret what plants and animals are saying about the soil underneath.
- (c) To read the label on the herbicide bottle before hand-mixing it into the pesticide.

8. How do farmers market their produce?

- (a) By taking it to the pub.
- (b) By presentation, education and e-mail.
- (c) By closing their eyes and praying.

9. Why do farmers have neighbours?

- (a) To make up numbers for full-moon rituals.
- (b) To be guinea pigs for the new home brew.
- (c) To borrow things and break them.

10. Why would a farmer use a computer?

- (a) To calculate when the planets will line up.
- (b) To occasionally replace the boat anchor.
- (c) To print out spreadsheets for the bank.

11. Why would a farmer use a helicopter?

- (a) To keep an eye on the police.
- (b) To help locate a couple of lost hoes.
- (c) To pinch cedars out of the forest.

12. Why do farmers fix up dairy sheds?

- (a) To make room for a first commune.
- (b) To give Woofers their own lounge.
- (c) To charge exorbitant rent prices.

13. What does a farmer do for recreation?

- (a) Plant herb spirals around teepees.
- (b) Anything but pick herbs.
- (c) Wash the spray rig.

ANALYSIS:

If you scored more than eight (a)s, you may wish to consider starting a religious cult on your farm. If you scored more than eight (c)s, it would be wise to send your CV to a chemical company. If you scored more than eight (b)s, then just hang in there. One day, Australia will produce the best herbs in the world and you will be a part of it.



IFOAM challenge to patent on Neem Tree

During the last couple of years there have been several companies in Australia who have extracted and trialled azidarachtin, the active ingredient in the seed of the Neem tree.

It seems to be a powerful weapon against insects, fungi and other organisms and has been used as such for thousands of years in India where the tree originates. It could be one of the most effective remedies for organic farmers, yet governmental departments have refused to support the use of neem.

Not only that, they have actually made it illegal for use, since they won't allow it to be registered as a legal input in agriculture.

Their excuse is that there are insufficient toxicological data. I wonder how soon they'll change their tune when a large chemical company wants to import it. -Elle

IFOAM (International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements) is helping to spearhead a Legal Opposition against the granting of a European patent for a fungicide derived from the Neem tree.

The European Patent Office (EPO) gave the monopoly property right to the US multinational corporation, W R Grace, and the United States of America (as represented by the Secretary of Agriculture) for a method of controlling fungi on plants with an oil extracted from coarsely ground seeds of the neem tree.

Symbolic

It is the first time that a patent on a genetic resource originating in the South has been challenged in principle, and the case is intended to symbolise the many hundreds of such patents by which a massive transfer of biological and intellectual wealth from the Third World is being effected.

Cultural Heritage

The Neem tree is a tropical evergreen indigenous to the Indian subcontinent, where people have used it for millennia in agriculture, human and veterinary medicine, toiletries and cosmetics. It is also venerated in the culture, religions, and literature of the region. Today it can be found in Central and South America, Africa and other tropical climates. Its scientific name, *Azadirachta indica*, is derived from the Persian (*Azad Darakth*), which means "the free tree". For centuries it has indeed been freely available.

Patents

In the last few years the US Patent and Trademark

Office has been allowing companies and institutes to carve up the neem tree, granting them exclusive ownership through more than 50 patents to neem-based products, ranging from toothpaste and contraceptives to pesticides. The EPO is following close behind, having granted at least four neem patents thus far. These patents will result in major financial gains for their "owners", but the communities which first understood the neem's uses and developed them will not be compensated at all.

Biological pesticide

IFOAM is particularly concerned about the neem patents because neem is a biological pesticide on which organic farmers in many parts of the world depend. A member of IFOAM's World Board of Directors, Ranjith de Silva of Sri Lanka, has been involved for years in research on uses of the neem in organic agriculture and is assisting with the case.

Opposition to patenting

Among the various neem patents, the fungicide was chosen for the opposition because it brings together so many of the key players in this global struggle for control over biological resources: the emerging biotechnology industry in the form of a giant multinational chemical and seed company, aided and abetted by the US government, claiming ownership of a Third World genetic resource in Europe.

The Legal Opposition asks for the patent to be revoked on the grounds that the neem fungicide fails the traditional criteria for patentability, that is:

- 1) It lacks novelty (because it has been used in this way for generations), and
- 2) It lacks inventiveness. Numerous articles from both scientific and traditional literature demonstrate that the fungicidal properties of neem were known long before the patent was filed.

Contrary to morality

The opponents further claim that the neem patent violates Article 53(a) of the European Patent Convention, which prohibits patents to be granted for inventions that are "contrary to morality". They charge that the neem patent should fall on morality grounds because it constitutes biological theft and direct piracy of traditional knowledge. Indeed, the European patent system is not capable of recognising as inventive the community innovation process, which actually resulted in the various uses of the neem today. It is only when these uses are finally described in the terms of Western Technology that an invention is deemed to have taken place.

cont'd on page 23





OBSERVATIONS

by Magda Verbeek

Hello everyone, and a Happy New Year!
It feels strange to be saying that say the end of November when I write this, however my observations of late are relevant to any season and unfortunately touch on the issue of blatantly wrong chemical use.

You know how dry the northern rivers area has been, and so it was that herb production on my farm had dropped off by more than half. So I picked up my old seasonal job in a stonefruit orchard. After the joys of organic farming it was like going to another planet, the scary bit is that it was the same planet!

The 10 acres of peaches and nectarines had been fully hail-netted, which also kept birds out. I couldn't help but notice that there were a lot of dead magpies and rosellas on the net. Apparently the neighbour in his 'wisdom' and to 'protect' his persimmon crop, had poisoned his custard apples. What a pathetic sight to have to deal with everyday ...!

Underneath the netting, row after straight row of peaches and nectarines flowed up and down the hillside. The task at hand was simple but arduous: pick fruit, pack fruit, get paid, go home, return and repeat until all the fruit was stripped from the trees. Within minutes on my first day I noticed the lack of insects. There were some grubs in the fruit and I did see one spider, but in 10 ACRES?!?! In my one acre I can't move without disturbing some form of insect. So within this monoculture, and without any life other than the pickers, the job proceeded...

Then the papaya fruit fly scare hit Australia. One morning I arrived at 6 am as usual, only to find that the farm manager had been spraying *LEBACID* pesticide since 4:30 am. I was repulsed to find out that they expected us to pick within hours of it being sprayed. I slipped into the chemical shed and read on the label: "*WITHOLDING PERIOD 7 DAYS TILL HARVEST*". Raising the issue with the farm manager brought the comment: "she'll be right, it'll be dry by now". So not only were we going to pick the fruit within hours of application,

it was going to be on the market in another two days. People were going to be eating the fruit within the specified seven days!

Needless to say, all the pickers covered up totally and wore plastic gloves which was a horribly hot and sweaty way to pick fruit. YUK!! *Lebacid* is specific for fruit fly and like I said before, I hadn't seen any insects at all, and I know what fruit fly looks like. Talk about *SILENT SPRING*.

Of course I often mentioned integrated pest management and varieties of plants that would do well under the trees as green mulch, instead of Roundup. Water off a duck's back to the farm manager, who insisted that "You wouldn't get any fruit off the trees if you didn't use chemicals!" What a joke! We were discarding one third of the fruit down in the orchard, about one third was getting packed Grade A, and in the end the 2nd grade fruit was being dumped anyway. By the end of the season the smell of rotting fruit couldn't be ignored.

Another incident happened when the bird poisoning neighbour noticed some discarded fruit near his boundary. He complained to our boss who instructed his farm manager to put a strong solution of *Lebacid* on the fruit, because "if the Dept of Ag boys came to do a test and found it hadn't been treated against fruit fly, they'd be in trouble." The manager joked at 'smoko' saying "I made it strong alright, it was so milky I almost passed out, ha ha ha." Hilarious isn't it!! That day I went home feeling sick at the pathetic ignorance of it all.

I'm truly sorry to have witnessed the above, and do not presume that all orchardists act in this manner. In fact, the strategy against fruit fly control more often includes bait traps and male sterilisation, as well as pesticides. Bait traps attract fruit fly from 5 km and are very effective. Small farms, like to one I worked on, give the whole industry an even worse reputation than it already has. I can't tell you how wonderful it was to be in my own garden again, even though it isn't so brilliant at the moment. It will be fantastically productive again, and will have a full bank of pests, and predators to help me out.

Three cheers for organic certification, and for those who work hard to make it relevant to the general public.

Boo! to the system which allows pesticide contaminated food into the market.



USING GREEN MANURE PLANTS TO IMPROVE SOIL FERTILITY

by Neville Donovan



One of the easiest ways of improving soil fertility is by the use of plant vegetation. Perennials and annuals from ground covers to trees and shrubs, all can be used to help create a system that is regenerative to the soil.

Green manures, in the form of legume and grass species are the best, providing bulk vegetation in a short period of time. Benefits to look forward to are improvement of the soil, organic matter build-up, increased worm population and fertility. Green manures also provide living and cut mulch for use as animal fodder or in compost.

With the use of seeds and plants, fertility can be improved over a large area, perhaps more easily than by using compost and animal manures.

Suitable situations for use are in pasture, vegie gardens and orchards.

There are three ways to sow seed:

- 1) **in cultivated soil**, prepared to seed bed stage or finely raked;
- 2) **oversowing**, where seed is broadcast over low growing or sparse vegetation and allowed to germinate without any soil disturbance. The seed is protected from drying out.
- 3) the method that works best here is **sheet mulch sowing**. An example of this method is existing vegie garden crops which have just finished and into which new seed is sown, after which the crop is slashed over the seed. Benefits are instant cover for seed, moisture retention, mulch which breaks down and feeds the new crop, and the old crop is cleaned up. This method brings excellent results.

You then have the option of slashing the vegetation and leaving it on the ground, or turning it back into the soil to break down.

With green manures one becomes less dependant on animal manures, composts (which can be hard work at times) or bagged fertilisers. The use of organic fertilisers on green

manures and vegetation is recommended where there is poor soil fertility initially. This will help get the whole system moving in the direction of a more sustainable and healthy situation.

Inoculation of legume seed needs to be carried out where the species chosen has not been grown before. This will ensure that the rhizobia are present in the soil for proper nodulation of leguminous plant roots, thus providing nitrogen fixation to the soil and healthy productive growth. There are many species of rhizobia and the correct one must be used for the right plant species.

LEGUMES

Clover Red or white flowering varieties; low
cont'd on page 27

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OPAC/AQIS cont'd from page 13

know) to be divided between the, by now, five certification bodies. These bodies are NASAA, BFA, the Biodynamic Research Institute, the Organic Vignerons and OHGA. Several other groups have applied to become national certification bodies, but have been unsuccessful so far.

Older members will remember the survey we conducted to find out what the feeling was about raising the AQIS fee, which would cost OHGA about \$6000 annually. It brought out unanimous support for raising the membership fee across the board, rather than just having the certified members paying for it all. It was a wonderful show of solidarity and enabled OHGA to keep the certification costs affordable for the growers.

Similarly, in the recent membership form questionnaire, 99% of you agreed (that's practically unanimous isn't it?) that we should remain in the AQIS accreditation scheme, even though most of you say that either at the moment you have no use for it, or that you don't know enough about it. I hope that now you do!

LATEST OPAC MEETING, NOV. 27 IN CANBERRA

I attended this OPAC meeting in Canberra with Howard and was really happy to see the certification bodies in agreement on almost every front.

It was also very clear to me that the two AQIS officers that chaired and secretaried the meeting knew nothing about organics, and indeed did not care about organics either. They were just doing an AQIS job which they're paid to do.

You will remember that AQIS, on behalf of the organic industry, applied to the National Food Authority for the organic and bio-dynamic standard to be accepted and enforced nationally, and that it had to be withdrawn because there was absolutely no support from the NFA. When Howard asked the NFA man, during the meeting, if there was ever any chance of the NFA acknowledging the certification bodies as the official endorsers of organics in Australia, he admitted that there wasn't. He said we would have to try different avenues to make certification compulsory for organic status.

The two Dept of Ag people, Michael Burlace of NSW Ag and the Qld Ag head Peter White, were very much into organics, with Michael playing a major part in wording the organic standard so that it can be upheld in court. With these Ag people in support there's hope for Australian organics yet!!

Whose invention?

The patent holders failed in an effort to challenge the admissibility of the opposition. They have been given four months to defend their "invention", following which the Opponents will have the right to respond. The entire procedure could take up to a year. If an Oral Hearing is granted, the opponents plan to hand over thousands of signatures of Indian citizens asking for the Neem patent to be revoked.

Grass roots campaign

The patent challenge was initiated as a contribution to the Neem Campaign, which was launched two years ago by farmers in India who feared that their genetic resources and traditional knowledge were coming increasingly under foreign control through the legal mechanism of patents. They liken the extension of patent protection to life itself as a modern form of "enclosure of the commons", but in this case it is not public land which is being privatised, it is public knowledge.

Legal challenge

For IFOAM, the legal challenge is an opportunity to demonstrate our growing conviction that organic agriculture, if it is to succeed in the long run, must be just as firmly rooted in social justice as it is in production standards. It is not in the interest of organic agriculture worldwide, for biological resources in the Third World or anywhere else to become the private intellectual property of a few powerful corporations and scientists.

Social justice

IFOAM's Mission Statement declares that the Federation is committed to self-sufficiency and fair trade for organic producers. What could be more basic to upholding these principles than the right of free access to indigenous seeds, plants and knowledge?

International support

IFOAM is joined in filing the neem patent challenge by IFOAM worker Vandana Shiva and her Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Natural Resource Policy in New Delhi, India, and by The Greens in the European Parliament. Supporting organisations include the Third World Network, the Karnataka Farmers Movements, the Edmonds Institute (USA), the Rural Advancement Fund International, Cultural Survival Canada, the No Patents on Life Campaign (European Coordination), the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (USA), The Culture Conservancy, the Washington Biotechnology Action Council, and the Rio Grande Bioregions Project.

For more information contact:

Linda Bullard, c/o IFOAM, Ph/fax +32 -2-284 2026.

Reproduced from the NASAA Bulletin November 1995



CERTIFIED ORGANIC

by Tony Ullman

As I have mentioned in previous articles, I have read a few books on bio-dynamic theory but I felt that I had only a limited knowledge of the practical side of the subject. In an attempt to rectify this situation, I recently attended a field day run by the Bio-Dynamic Farming and Gardening Association of Australia Inc. at Terania Creek near Lismore. A very worthwhile and interesting time I had too, even if the temperature was in the very high 30's. One thing I also found, which I had been seeking for a while, is some literature covering the hands-on aspects of BD.

Bio-dynamics is concerned with the vitalisation of the soil by stimulating the life forces through the use of homoeopathic-type preparations. Homoeopathy is a subject that I am quite comfortable with, since I looked into it a while ago when investigating different types of natural medicine. To produce a homoeopathic remedy, a very small amount of the ingredient which contains the required energy is first diluted in water past the point of detection. The remedy must then be energised in some manner; in the case of bio-dynamics the method used is stirring. The mixture is stirred in one direction until a vortex is formed at the centre of the liquid. The direction of stirring is then reversed, thereby destroying the original vortex and forming a new one in the opposite direction. This process is continued for one hour, and the preparation must then be applied, usually by spraying, within the following hour.

There are nine bio-dynamic preparation, numbered 500 to 508.

- 500 - applied to the soil to increase fertility
- 501 - applied to the foliage to stimulate assimilation of heat and warmth
- 502-507 - added to compost heaps
- 508 - an anti-fungal remedy

Both stirring and the application of preps are very simple, but both must be done correctly if there is to be any benefit. I discussed the matter of instruction with Terry Foreman, who is the training officer for the BDFGAA, and he has agreed to organise a

special field day for OGHA in the future. However, with Christmas and the new year just around the corner, it's obviously not going to be in the very near future. Needless to say, we'll keep you informed when it will take place.

Bio-dynamic and homoeopathic preparations do not add the required ingredient chemically, they add the ingredient's energy. In addition, a bio-dynamic preparation will be most effective if it is applied at a time which is astrologically beneficial. I would refer you to Elle's regular article *Gardening by the Moon* for some insights into how astrology effects plant energies.

Bio-dynamics, homoeopathy and astrology are all practices where you are required to work with intangible energies, which for some people is not easy to come to terms with. However, as I discovered while I was learning to program computers, it 's quite feasible to work with something even if you can not imagine what it might look like.

FLAME WEEDING

how is it done?

The idea of flame weeding is not to cremate or blacken the weed, but to just "super-heat" it, so that the moisture in the leaves boils. This will rupture the cells of the plant and causes it to die from the outside, back to the root system. In most instances, to actually incinerate the plant would cause it to re-shoot from the root system almost immediately due to shock.

In European gardens, flamers are used for pre-emergent weed control in seed beds, to weed between rows in vegetable and ornamental plantings, to clear weeds from flagstone and brick paths, from fencelines, drains and ditches. Prior to planting seeds or transplanting seedlings into garden beds, European gardeners cultivate and level beds, then irrigate to encourage weed seeds to germinate. As soon as a green "fuzz" appears on the soil surface, they pass the flamer over the soil to kill the germinated weeds, as well as any weed seeds lying on or near the soil surface. Seeds or transplants are planted following the flaming.

Flame weeding is most effective on young annual and perennial weeds no taller than one to two inches, because at that point the fragile root system is killed along with the top growth. Mature stands of perennial weeds also succumb to flaming, but only after a number of treatments. Repeated flaming eventually starves the roots and kills the weed.

Acknowledgement: selected information was sourced from an article in an American publication, written by Sheila Daar.



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FIELD DAY REPORT

On Sunday December 3, a warm and sunny day, the committee and other members crammed into a minibus, hired for the occasion by OHGA. The objective was to visit the farm of new committee member Ted Forbes, who lives near Fernvale in south east Queensland.

Ted has a lovely and very productive organic vegetable and herb farm, from which he supplies his retail greengrocer shop in the south of Brisbane. He is a very fortunate man, in that not only does his property border on a creek but also on the Brisbane River, from which he can pump all the water he needs for his farm. He also has the help of Wwoofers, two Swedish girls who, in addition to helping out on the farm, bake a very nice apfelstrudel!

A handful of other OHGA members attended the field day, a bit disappointing as the committee made the 4 hour trip in the expectation that there would surely be other OHGA members in the region who wanted to take the opportunity to meet with us. There was another crowd though: members of the local herb group who call themselves Herb Growers of South East Queensland. They number about 25, and after some initial shyness, and us not understanding who they were, there was some interaction with a question and answer session.

A very good spread, with barbecue and salads galore, and unforgettably delicious freshly picked and cooked corn from Ted's farm, was laid on for lunch. We thank Ted and Thelma and the South-East Qld Herb Growers for their hospitality.

-Elle

FIFTH INTERNATIONAL HERB CONFERENCE

to be held
over the weekend of 8-9-10 November 1996
at the Victoria and Albert Hotel, Mt. Victoria,
in the Blue Mountains of NSW, in springtime.

The conference is organised by
The Blue Mountains and Nepean Herb Group Inc.
with the theme of:

'HERBS - PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE'

Speakers arranged so far include:

Dorothy Hall, Herbalist, Writer, Educator
Dennis Stewart, Medical Herbalist, Educator
Mary Moody, Presenter of 'Gardening
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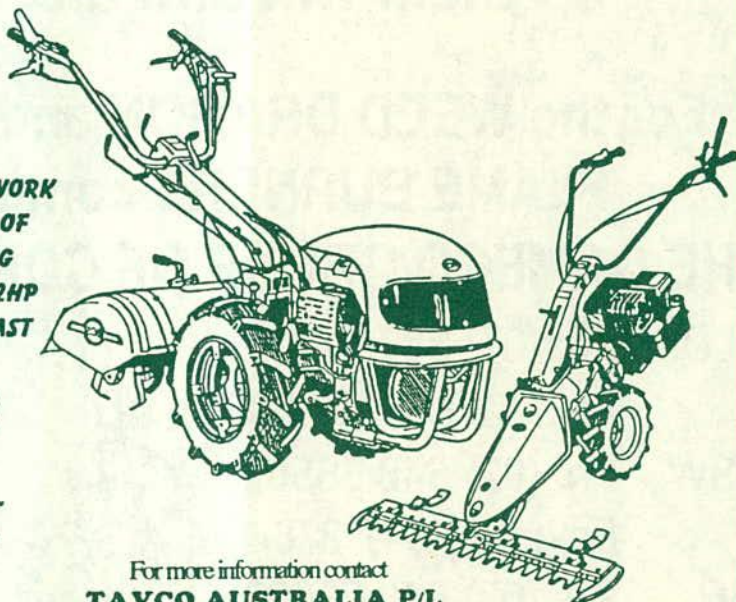
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Green manures, continued from page 22

growing perennials to 60 cm. Sow in autumn to spring. Oversown in existing vegetation or prepared seed bed. Suitable for orchards and pasture. A bee attractant. nitrogen fixing permanent ground cover. Self sows.

Lucerne Hardy perennial legume to 120 cm, attractive mauve flowers. Sow summer to autumn in prepared seed beds only, in moist conditions. Suitable for interplanting, vegie gardens, orchards and pasture. A bee attractant. Nitrogen fixer. Can be cut up to 4 times a season for mulch or fodder. Brings minerals up from lower soil profiles.

Lupins Annual legume to 90 cm. Best sown in prepared seed beds, autumn to winter. Excellent bulk green manure for vegie gardens. Slash down before flowering.

Maku Lotus Perennial legume to 90 cm, with yellow flowers. Excellent oversown in orchards and pasture. Provides nitrogen fixation, fodder and mulch. Sow autumn to spring.

Vetch Vigorous annual legume to 120 cm. Attractive purple flowers. Ideal for oversowing in orchards and pasture. Germinates easily, will smother and climb on other plants. Bee attractant, nitrogen fixing, living mulch. Sow autumn to winter. Self sows.

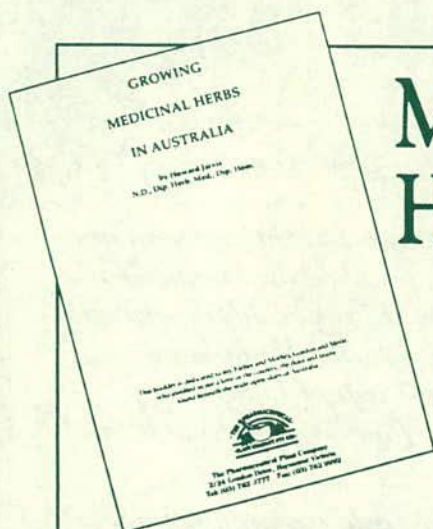
GRASSES

Barley Hardy annual grain to 150 cm. Oversow in existing vegetation or prepared seed bed. Sown autumn to winter. Tolerates poor soil. Slash before heading.

Rye Corn Annual grain to 150 cm. Preferably sow with legumes. Can be oversown in orchards, vegie gardens or prepared seed beds. Sow autumn to winter. Grows well on low fertility soils. Slash before heading.

Oats Annual grain to 150 cm. Oversow in pasture, orchards, vegie gardens or prepared beds. Sow autumn to winter. Use as a green manure with other legumes. Slash before heading.

continued on page 29



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PUZZLE CORNER

This is the start of our feedback page, suggested by Bob Vaughan (see 'letters')

and others in the past.

We named it the Puzzle Corner.

Any tips, questions, and answers to them, should be sent to:

OHGA Puzzle Corner,

P O Box 6171, South Lismore 2480,

or phoned/faxed to the editor on

066 - 291057.



Bob Vaughan of Tyalgum, NSW, writes:

* Don't convert an old chookpen into a shade house! For every hour I spend in the shade house, I pull 2 or 3 ticks off me. Any ideas on how to get rid of the ticks?

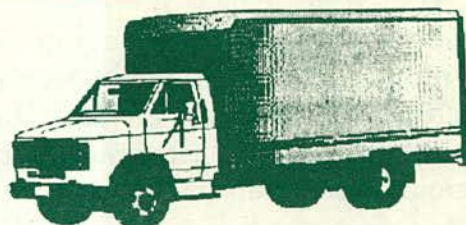
* Also any advice on sun hardening scullcap and vervain seedlings for planting out would be appreciated.



Elle would like to know if anyone has ever found an organic way to get rid of Morning glory.

Ever since the neighbours took down the fence it had been living on, it has steadily invaded the garden.

Failing a cure, would you want to volunteer to join a (hopefully) large working bee to get shot of it once and for all on a Sunday when it's not so hot anymore? Lunch and drinks would be on us, of course.



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6 rose or lemon-scented geranium
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2 cups natural yoghurt
1/4 cup of honey
geranium flowers for decoration

Heat milk, add geranium leaves;
leave for 1/2 hour and remove leaves.
Add yoghurt and honey; pour into
freezing tray. Before serving, leave
in fridge for 30 min
to soften.

Garnish with geranium flowers.

Geranium
Icecream

Green manures, continued from page 27

Many other plants can be used for the purpose of green manures. Whatever the chosen variety, it will need to be sown thick so that there will be ample plant material to incorporate back into the earth or to be used for mulch. This can be established on a large farm scale or on a suburban block. Sandy or clay soils can be improved this way. It could be ready for use in as little as 6-8 weeks.

From: NATURAL GROWING, the journal of the Henry Doubleday Research Association of Australia Inc. ; Autumn 1995

Book Review

ORGANIC AGRICULTURE

Getting Started

by David G. Madge

Published by AGMEDIA, P O Box 258,
East Melbourne 3002.

Ph: 1800 800 75 fax: (03) 9651 7009
68 pages, \$14.95

David Madge graduated with a degree in agricultural science from the University of Adelaide in 1982 and has been working with the Victorian Department of Agriculture since 1983.

He has a strong personal interest in permaculture and sustainable organic agriculture and has followed these 'philosophies' in his own home garden activities since 1974. He has also been involved in the development of organic farming standards and farm inspections.

Since 1989 one of David's roles has been that of regional organic agriculture coordinator.

He is currently working in the field of integrated pest management in citrus and grapevines.

David starts his book by giving definitions of 'organics' and 'sustainability' and what these terms involve in practice.

He goes into soil management, crop nutrition, crop rotation, pest and weed management, composting, green manure and cover crops, mulching and cultivation, management of livestock and the advantages and usefulness of certain animals on the farm. He mentions windbreaks, irrigation and machinery, and how to plan a farm conversion.

Organic certification takes up 10 pages in the book; what it involves, its considerations and benefits and where to find the certifying organisations.

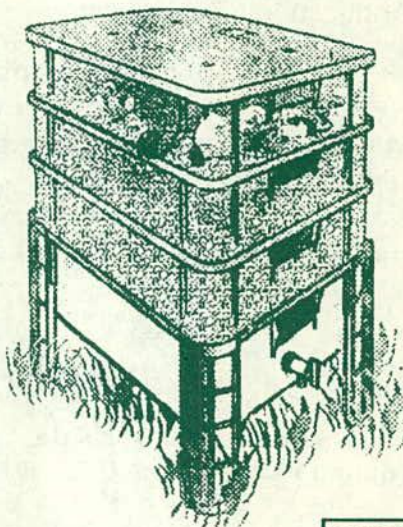
He ends the book with a very handy appendix listing useful publications.

This book is, as the title implies, for those who know next to nothing about organics and who want to get started on a farm conversion. David does not go into too much detail on anything, but gives enough information to start an interested novice off on the road to organics.

- Elle

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| <input type="checkbox"/> | Overseas membership | \$ 65 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Application for certification | \$ 10 |

total \$ _____

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