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HERB GROWER

PUBLISHED BY THE ORGANIC HERBS GROWERS OF AUSTRALIA Inc.

JULY-AUGUST 92

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P.O. BOX 209,
NIMBIN, 2480
PH: (066) 89 1184

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PLUS: MARKET REPORT, ORGANICS,
GROWING HINTS, NEWSBRIEFS AND
MUCH MORE...



EDITORIAL

YESTERDAY our federal MP faxed us the Commonwealth of Australia Gazette No GN 25, 24 June 1992; it's the one we've all been waiting for and it certainly puts our minds at ease. Comfrey stays ok for external use and most homeopathic preparations seem to escape scheduling. There are still many on the list which are marked: deferred pending further information.

The report's concluding paragraph runs like this: "The committee is of the opinion that when drugs and poisons which appear in the SUSDP from Schedule 1 to 7 are present in preparations which contain no measurable amount of drug or poison those preparations are not scheduled."

This, of course, means that extracts and tinctures will probably be affected by their legislation, since their scientists and druggists are able to measure the plant material. Did you know, by the way, that the word 'drug' comes from the Dutch word 'droog' meaning 'dry', referring to dried herbs. Of course chemical companies have turned it into something completely different and are doing their utmost to get rid of dried herbs and herbal medicines, in favour of their chemical drugs. Since they are the ones funding government department and university research in the 'user pays' system, they'll be the ones getting all the legal breaks. The same goes for agricultural chemicals. Although, fortunately, some of the nastier ones are being phased out and hopefully not being replaced with the same poison under a different name, many chemicals are still recommended by government departments.

Then again, there's NEEM, of which we all had, and still have, such high hopes. A local company, which is pioneering the research and development of the azadirachtin extract from the neem seed kernels, is forced to do this with private money. All the government grants that have been applied for have been knocked back.

Another grant that has been refused, is one that Howard applied for. He has been invited to the First World Congress on Medicinal and Aromatic Plants in Maastricht, Holland. The conference starts on July 19, runs for a week and is sponsored by such world organisations as WHO, UNESCO and the FAO. Howard was invited to deliver a paper on Australian herbs and the Australian herb industry. Just how high-powered this conference is and what a great opportunity this would be, is reflected in the fee for the week, which is close to \$1000. Needless to say, we won't be able to pay for this ourselves, so Howard will, unfortunately, not be able to attend. When he enquired why the grant was refused, the government person involved couldn't even give a reason. When asked which applicants did receive the grant, Howard learned that all lucky recipients, with one exception, in his category of Herb, Spices and Teas, were in fact government related, such as universities and the DPI. This, while the grant body calls itself: the Rural Industry Research and Development Corporation. It looks like they like to keep their money in-house and just shuffle it around the government departments and use it to fund government salaries. A little while ago OHGA applied for a grant for research into ways to combat the greenhouse effect, for which applications were invited. We wanted to do research into herbs which would reduce flatulence in cows. That may sound funny, and I'm sure the bureaucrats had a good laugh, but it's been established that cows contribute greatly to the greenhouse effect, as you probably know. The U.S. Government is actually funding such research over there. Needless to say we didn't get the grant. Guess who did? You guessed right, universities and other government institutions, such as local councils. Jobs for the boys is alive and well!

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The cover photo comes from Tim Low's wonderful book "Bush Medicine". We have begged Tim to come down to Lismore and give us a talk in the near future. He's thinking about it. Please, Tim!

ORGANIC HERB GROWERS OF AUSTRALIA INC.

P.O.BOX 6171, LISMORE, N.S.W. 2480

| | | | | | |
|----------------|------------------|------------|-----------|------------------|------------|
| PRESIDENT | Howard Rubin | 066-291057 | ORGANICS | Russell Quinn | 066-337056 |
| VICE-PRESIDENT | Andrew Tsikleas | 066-291006 | COMMITTEE | Dave Carey | 066-282031 |
| SECRETARY | Carlene Marthick | 066-337056 | EDITOR | Elle Fikke-Rubin | |
| TREASURER | Diana Hopwood | 066-284282 | | phone & fax | 066-291057 |

The HERB GROWER is the official journal of the Organic Herb Growers of Australia Inc.
Membership is \$15 for the year. New members pay a \$5 joining fee.

Dear Elle,

I really enjoy receiving the newsletter. Although I'm not an active grower, I'm very interested in the Association. Unfortunately I live too far to get down to the meetings, but I think the field days are a great idea. I love the planting by the moon calendar and am working with that now. Keep it up.

Mike Barfield, Upper Eden, NSW

Dear Elle,

NIMBIN & RAINBOW NEWS

The first I knew of the field day on our farm last year, was when I read about it in the Herb Grower. I had a rush trip to the UK and couldn't be there. Still, I believe all the "herbies" enjoyed their day at our place with my daughter Sue.

Our large scale organic vegie growing, with generous additions of herbs and flowers as companions, probably gave many members their first experience of the real importance of herbs in organic growing. As well as working in their varying roles as predator habitat, decoy plant, bee attractant, plant protector and flavour enhancer, herbs are great plants to have around. Who could not respond to the wonderful aroma of thyme or resist brushing against basil as you pass by, just to experience the delightful smells. The girls here all talk to the herbs as they would to people and commiserate if the herbs look a little down; then promise to provide help and attention as needed. The development of the sense of smell in humans is little understood and only vaguely researched. A friend of mine did his doctorate on the subject and he gave me a brief glimpse of the enormous importance of smell. However, you and I are very aware of the pleasure our herb gardens give us and others. At the moment the nursery is supplying vegetable, herb, flower and tree seedlings and we are enjoying our spare time in the herb patch as winter approaches.

Mavis Grayson, Killarney, Qld.
(see Mavis' ad in the Herb Grower, offering seedlings for sale)

Dear Herb Grower,

I would love to hear from members of your organisation who have successfully established trees without using chemicals. I'd like to incorporate their ideas and suggestions in future editions of the Agnote "Tree planting without artificial chemicals" for the Trees on Farms program.

Sue Wakefield, Advisory Officer,
NSW Agriculture, POBox 1386,
Bathurst NSW 2795.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Anyone wanting a personal reply,
please enclose a SAE.

Dear Herb Grower,

Please find enclosed cheque for a year's membership. My daughter Evelyn grows herbs in Swan Hill and showed me your magazine. I sometimes attend meetings of the Goulburn Valley Herb Club and I am interested in growing herbs and hope to do something about it in the near future.

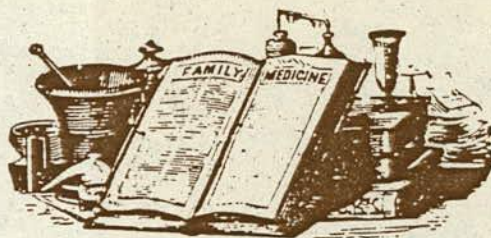
Sincerely, Daphne Rooms, Kialla West, Vic.

No doubt you will have noticed there's something different about this issue. Not only is it bigger, but it's been done on the Association's OWN PHOTOCOPIER!

In order to make it pay, we can offer you really good rates for YOUR photocopy needs. The machine is located at the editor's home, tel.291057. At the moment there's only one colour and that's this one. Hope you like it. It'll make your text stand out from all the rest!

GROWING MEDICINALS

by HOWARD RUBIN



I am often asked my opinion concerning the growing of medicinal herbs, considering that Australia is a major importer. I have been reluctant to unconditionally support the venture, but if there are enough growers who are willing to share the risk and are prepared to become professional at this venture, then I and the Association, will do everything to foster this activity.

Medicinal herbs differ from culinary herbs in that they are to be used as therapeutic goods and therefore used for the prevention, diagnosis or treatment of diseases and other bodily conditions. Unless exempt, Australian manufacturers of therapeutic goods must be licensed and comply with principles of good manufacturing practice (GMP). All therapeutic goods must be properly labelled with claims made for the goods, and backed up with proven documentation concerning its efficacy and toxicology.

To grow and wholesale medicinal herbs, one does not need to be licensed...yet. The person who manufactures the retail product must bear the burden of licensing. The exception to this is a qualified herbalist, who in the course of consultation with client, may prescribe herbs to that client and dispense herbs to that client without licensing. But as soon as a retail product is made, then licensing comes into force. And this license, known as the TGA is expensive. Current costs are in the \$3000. region assuming the premises meets all the necessary GMP standards.

The major manufacturers in Australia are currently importing the bulk of their requirements. Many that I have spoken with are keen to use Australian organically grown herbs, but the risk element is just as great if not greater for them, as for the grower. All the major manufacturers have long time relationships with importers and overseas suppliers. It is this reliability that they have built up over the years, that you are asking them to forgo. If you cannot guarantee the continuity of supply, necessary for a large concern, you should not expect them to

support you. That would be unfair on your part. If they are manufacturing a run of a particular tablet on the first Monday of every month, and the factory floor is all ready for that production, they must be assured that the herb will be there, on time, as ordered. So the first concern is reliability of supply. Quality is the easiest requirement to convince a potential buyer. Imported herbs are of dubious quality, already being 6-12 months old, sprayed and fumigated, some irradiated. Australian organically grown herbs are better and fresher. That's a simple fact! And lastly, you will have to compete on price. Most medicinal herbs are landed at an average of \$10-15 dollars per kilo dry weight. Unless the herb is becoming scarce, there are no shortages. It is possible to convince Australian manufacturers to use Australian herbs, and even to pay a price premium because the quality is far superior to the imported ones; but it will difficult to ask for three or four times the imported price. Remember, you will most probably be paid on dry weight, which is usually one sixth of fresh weight.

The next option is to sell your produce to a smaller manufacturer, not one of the major companies. Several of these companies are already buying select quantities from our growers. What you need to bear in mind here, is that most medicinal herbs, not all, just most, are sold in their dried form. You will need to have proper drying equipment and the knowledge how to process the herbs. It is not as simple as you may think. You can of course just concentrate on the fresh varieties. The smaller manufacturers use smaller quantities than the larger companies, but their ordering ability is also more erratic. Most will not enter into forward contracts with growers, and so the risk is all yours.

Another option available to growers is to work closely with a qualified herbalist, and grow those herbs which the practitioner requires. A bit of education will be necessary for the practitioners, because most I have spoken with, are not familiar with the use of fresh herbs. or even dried

herbs, but work using extracts and tinctures. This scenario would be the easiest for the small scale grower. As an association we canvassed the herbalists in this region, only to find that none of them accepted our offer.

The growing of medicinal herbs differs greatly from the growing of culinary herbs destined for the fresh wholesale markets. Most of the herbs are grown up to the flower stage, and harvested once or twice per year. Some are grown into the flower stage and some to seed. Most need to be dried using dehydration to a moisture level of 10% max. This requires specialized equipment. Some of the manufacturers will require exact specifications, and this will require specialized milling and sieving.

The important considerations to bear in mind, are that you must be professional in your approach. Each herb must be grown from seed or rootstock that is verifiable from correct species. The plant must be evaluated as true to species. Proper laboratory testing and documentation must be undertaken. To this end, the OHGA will assist all growers who wish to grow medicinals with a "Certificate of Compliance/Authenticity". This will enable the grower to successfully sell their produce. This certificate will be completed by an independent laboratory who will verify the active ingredient, the oil content, the ash, ash residue, bacteria levels (E-coli, salmonella), foreign matter, and that the herb is true to species.

To become a reliable supplier of herbs takes time. The sample that you hand pick, hand clean is not going to be the same as the one that you broad acre. Be honest with your supplier and tell them that it is a hand picked sample. You may not be able to reproduce that quality on a larger scale. All samples must be batched, numbered and verified with an analysis. This is for your own protection, as well. Try if at all possible to enter into a forward contract with your supplier. But remember there is as much risk for them as you. (What if you have a crop failure.) Don't commit unless you can deliver. The worse thing you can do for an industry starting off is to be unreliable. No one will trust you (or other herb growers) in the future. And you will have to prove yourself twice as hard, as doing it right the first time. So get it right the first time!

This brings me back to my opening.

I have pursued the fresh culinary industry because it is a low capital input system, which can be successfully done on a small scale acreage. The expertise required is simple. Most of you will be able to grow the herbs. Most of the herbs will be of good quality, some will be excellent. There is a ready marketplace with a positive cash flow. Here is the training ground. When, and if, the fresh culinary marketplace reaches a saturation point (which is a long way away) then we should consider dried culinary herbs or value-added products. Or how about that promotion campaign we shelved? and become a bit more aggressive in our promotion and marketing of organic herbs. But for those of you who wish to pursue the medicinal herbs, the association, which is a HERB GROWERS association, will offer as much assistance as you require.

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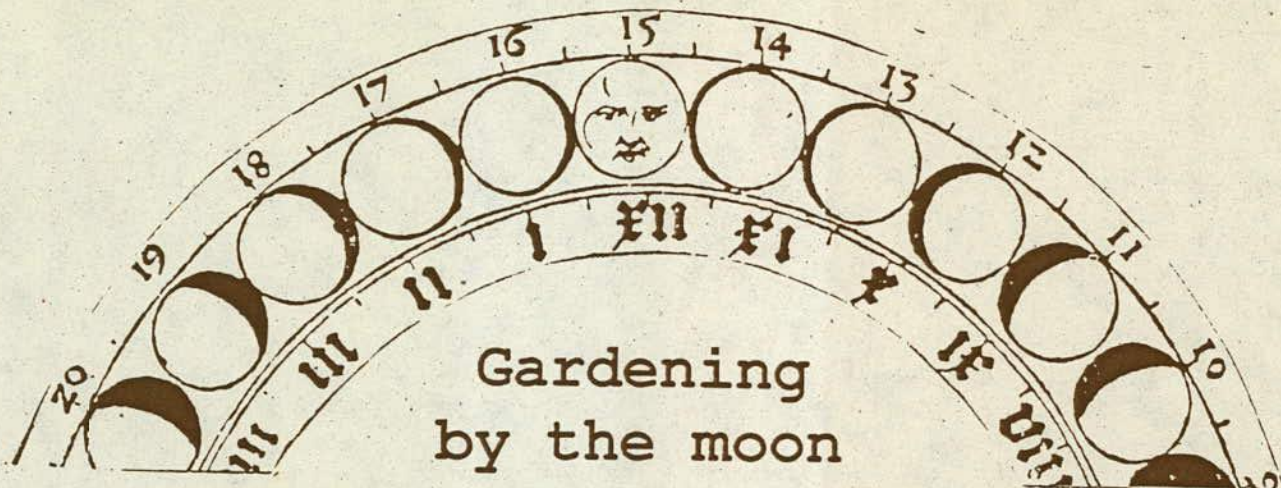
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JULY

By Elle Fikke-Rubin

15 Enjoy your garden today, without doing any work in it.

16-22 The whole period, but the weekend in particular, is good to sow and plant root crops and perennials. In most areas you'll be able to plant onions and garlic, in warmer districts parsnips, carrots, beet-root, spring onions, salsify and potatoes can go in too. Also rhubarb and asparagus crowns, particularly in cooler places. A good time too, to split out herbs such as comfrey, chives, burnet and valerian root. And even mushrooms can be started off from the prepared compost. Deciduous fruit and flowering trees should be planted out during this period too. Quite a busy time.

23-26 Take a break, not much to be done.

26-31 Good days for pruning roses, stone fruit trees and grapes, raspberries and other berry bushes. Stone fruits like peaches could benefit from a Bordeaux spray. This can be store bought or home made. The mix is 90 g. copper sulphate with 4.5 lt. hot water. Stir well and leave overnight. The next day add a mix of 125 g. lime with another 4.5 l. cold water, then combine the two mixes while stirring all the while. This is a fungus killer, which is better used as a preventative against leaf curl, than when the trees actually suffer from it. Don't use too often, as it can also kill useful fungi in the soil.

AUGUST

1 Take this Saturday off.

2-4 Days to plant leafy annuals, such as cresses, lettuces, cabbage, silverbeet, basil, parsley and other annual or biennial herbs, depending on the district that you live in.

5 First Moon quarter, no work to do.

6-10 Most seed and fruit bearing plants can go in these days. Sow or plant beans, peas, globe artichokes, dill, coriander and

in cooler districts broad beans.

12-13 Full Moon in Aquarius is better for socializing than gardening.

14-20 Fri-Sun in particular are good days to plant or sow rootcrops and perennials. Work with the same ones as last month, and add horseradish to the list.

These are also the last optimum days to plant out roses. Don't forget to surround them with garlic and chives, to keep aphids and greenfly away.

21-22 Two days off.

23-29 A good time to do the last bit of winter pruning of deciduous fruit trees, roses and bushes and trees that have finished their winter flowering. Make sure that your secateurs or pruning shears are immaculately clean and very sharp. Don't prune in wet weather, and always cut at an angle, so that, if it should rain, the water runs off and not in the cuts. Geraniums and other wildly trailing plants can also be cut or pinched back, to make them nice and bushy.

This is also a good time to feed up all your fruit trees and bushes and beds of herbs. Get a nice load of blue metal dust, fill up the wheel barrow and spread it around. I know it's heavy work, but you'll save yourself and your plants a lot of work and problems later. Blue metal dust is full of minerals, which will be released slowly over the growing year. Then spread compost about or any one of the slow release fertilizers and blood and bone. Top all this off with a good mulching of hay or straw, and you and your garden will be set for spring and summer.

30-31 Two more days to sow green leafy annuals.

SEPTEMBER

1-3 Again, these are good days to put in your green leafy annuals. It helps them

enormously if you've dug in well rotted cow or horse manure, which contains more nitrogen than anything else, which is exactly what greens need. It'll stop them from bolting to seed too. Green leafy plants do need regular watering. By now you should be able to sow basil, borage, dill, coriander and chervil, wherever you live, in addition to lettuce, parsley, Chinese and Japanese greens, silverbeet and cabbages.

4 Another day off.

5-11 Plant and sow seed and fruit bearing annuals and flowers. Try a sunflower patch, a magnificent sight always and good seeds too, if you get them before the birds. Grow some edible flowers such as calendulas and pansies for salads, dianthus and carnations for drinks. Now, too, is the time for cucumbers, pumpkins, capsicums, beans, zucchini's, okra, squashes and corn, tomatoes and cape gooseberries. A lot to be done.

12 Full Moon, you really deserve this day off. Happy spring gardening.



WHO Assembly Calls for Strengthened Support of Traditional Medicine Program



In consideration of the WHO Director-General's report on traditional and modern health care at the thirteenth plenary meeting of the Forty-Fourth World Health Assembly, new goals were recognized for the advancement of WHO's Traditional Medicine Program. It was recognized that a substantial increase in national and international funding is needed to catalyze the role of traditional medicine in health care. Member states were urged to intensify activities leading to cooperation and integration of safe and effective traditional remedies in modern health care. This is especially important in helping to reduce drug costs in developing countries. Member states were also urged to introduce measures for the regulation and control of acupuncture methods.

The Assembly requested the Director-General to continue to recognize the importance of the Traditional Medicine Program and to mobilize increased financial and technical support. In cases where natural products may lead to new drug discovery, WHO programs are mandated to ensure that scientifically proven traditional remedies are fully utilized. The Director-General was also requested to seek appropriate partnerships with governmental bodies to help implement the resolution.

(from the Herbalgram no. 26)



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by RUSSELL QUINN

How polluted are the manures and manure based products we import onto our farms and gardens? This question has no easy answer, but the following info may help you decide in what form you wish to apply these materials in the future.

To start with, there are many chemicals used in "conventional" animal husbandry, which is the major source of manure. They include fungicides, antibacterials, drenches, hormones, antibiotics, organophosphates and other pharmaceuticals. Their presence and frequency of use varies from farm to farm. This, combined with complicated testing procedures, makes accurate analysis for residues very difficult. Except for a general organochlorine and organophosphate test, it is also very expensive. Quite often simply asking the supplier will give you a fair indication of what the material may contain. Of course it depends on the willingness and honesty of this supplier to tell you, as I discovered when I researched this article.

As manure based fertilizers are widely used in agriculture and not necessarily only by organic farmers, it is big business. Fertilizers such as Dynamic Lifter and Organic Life 4.3.2, vary in the source of their ingredients, manufacturing processes and claims about the lack of harmful residues. To get a larger picture than the advertising brochures, I wrote to the companies concerned. Sadly they did not feel the need to respond. This attitude immediately makes you suspicious. What have they got to hide? Or could it be a competitive secrecy? Indeed the CSIRO's division of Coal Research, who have conducted commissioned research into Dynamic Lifter, would not part with their findings either, as their policy is one of client confidentiality.

The Dept. of Ag. are running trials with these products, although that is more to establish their value as fertilizer than as a clean organic substance. They do appear to be biased towards one particular brand name. OHGA has tested both D.L. and O.L.4.3.2 for 30 organochlorines and organophosphates and they came up clean. One test alone, though, does not cover variables which can occur in the future through bad management or, as in a case researched by the Dept. of Ag.,

where Dieldrin was found in chicken meat. This was traced to the sawdust used as litter. It came from imported wood, which had been treated for woodborer.

Are these substances harmful to the soil or the plants? Without involved testing, of which I couldn't find any examples, this is also difficult to answer. One must use initiative and common sense, which is a big part of organic farming.

E.g. If a chemical, designed to drench animals for worms, comes into contact with the soil, what will that do to the earthworms which have been carefully encouraged to flourish? Fortunately drenches are relatively shortlived in the environment, so when put through a properly structured compost pile, it should be enough to deplete the residual effects, before it reaches the soil. Antibiotics, hormones, and other pharmaceuticals may have a longer life and their effects are even more unknown.

As I have stated before in this space, be wary of manufactured products claiming to be "Organic". Labeling requirements for agricultural products are a lot less strict than for food-stuffs. To be "Organic" the ingredients must be of an organic origin, which is very broad indeed and can cover almost anything. Another consideration is the industry itself. Are animal welfare issues dealt with? Is the product produced in an efficient, non-polluting factory? What sort of waste and by-products are produced? Is it made by an ethical company and what other activities is the company involved in?

The convenience of bagged or bottled fertilizers can't be disputed, but to really minimize the risk of all of the above, home made compost made with ingredients from a known source, is the ideal.

If you don't have livestock and want to be self-sufficient in compost, then earth worms would have to be the answer. The Dept. of Ag. has an Agnote on worm farming. Starter stock is available in most areas. It can be a successful way of dealing with kitchen scraps for a high-rise dweller and for a serious herb farmer alike.

Go on, get some wrigglers started!

Janet and Stuart Taylor from Sth Grafton way, found they ran out of fridge space for their herb harvest. As luck had it, a mortician went out of business and his assets were sold off.

Now their herbs find a temporary resting-place in a four body morgue fridge, before going on to their final destination.

Don't wait for your next migraine. Take a leaf from Blackmores.



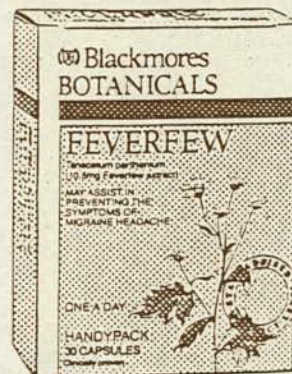
Migraine sufferers who recently took part in a U.K. clinical study showed reduced symptoms while taking daily capsules of freeze-dried Feverfew.

The leaves of the Feverfew plant are rich in sesquiterpene lactones, a substance thought responsible for the anti-migraine action.

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It is not difficult when sitting five flights up here, imagining the balcony evolving into a worm farm, for the thoughts to wander. To land. Herb farm land to be precise.

Where? How much? What price? Can we buy "subject to soil test"?

"...then there was the one about the bunch of US companies who decided to throw a little more weight behind their commitment to Australian farmers - and put lead into their fertilizer..."

Goodness me. What is the half life of lead? What does it do to you? As a kid I learnt that if a pig didn't die outright, the bullet would kill it later. I'll admit I didn't know petrol had lead in it until they began to take it out. But I do know that the wealthier Romans introduced lead piping to bring in their drinking water. That, coupled with their guzzling red wine from it, was sufficient to send a suitable number of senators mad and bring on the downfall of an empire.

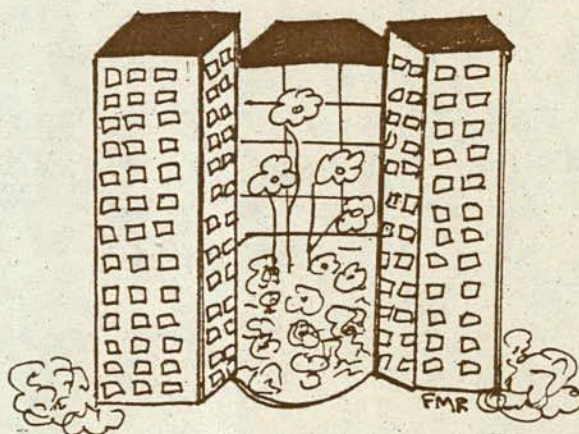
Good grief. What if that were to happen here? What if lead were to be fed into the Australian food chain? What if it were found in the Parliament House canteen? Would it mean war?

Why didn't ASIO know about this?

Up until now my criteria for suitable farm land has included some grazing pasture country not so "bombed" with superphosphate fertiliser to be riddled with cadmium - another toxic heavy metal. Perhaps an extra soil test for lead residue may now be in order? Could I sue for my soil sampling?

While I wait with bated breath for a public apology from George Bush, I can ponder just how important it is to find good, clean land to start our herb farm on. No residues, no erosion, preferably no nutgrass. Add some remnant vegetation, some open country, a nice aspect - and the choices begin to narrow. What about the surroundings? The local environment? Who does what next door? Upstream?

On a recent land hunt into the Northern Rivers, we visited a nice farm complete with a running creek and resident platypi (I believe that is the correct plural). It was rather romantic thinking about having rare fauna virtually in the backyard. But it was a downstream farm and the thought of guaranteeing the future for those animals might begin to weigh heavily.. What development is planned upstream? I just don't know how effective it would be to walk onto an upstream farm and ask the owners if they could alter their work practices just for the sake of me and my furry mates. Soon perhaps. But now quite yet. Therefore another land option



PADDOCK ON TOP

by Kenrick Riley

is to buy right at the very headwaters of a creek. At least no one else's rubbish will flow through your fauna pool. Bit steep and scrubby up there? I could probably handle clearing just enough timber to grow the herbs. The slope could be terraced in time. An eco-system re-established. The problem is you begin to compromise on access. Howard Rubin once said to me: "Don't set yourself up so far away that you have to drive hours to deliver your herbs".

"Well," I scoffed, extending my drawl, "that won't worry me will it. I come from the bush mate. I'm used to driving long distances over awful roads - and loving it." Later, of course, the other factor did eventually sink in - that the fuel costs of driving a couple of boxes of herbs a hundred km, may exceed the proceeds.

Hmmm. Dreams and economics differ.

Downstream it might have to be. After all, the better farm land is usually on the more level ground. Which makes you realise just how much farmers downstream rely on their upstream colleagues. You really do need them on side. I suppose that's why Landcare is moving into Total Catchment Management. Take the trees of the hills and the flats turn to salt.

Which reminds me of a point which was made very briefly on a recent ABC talk-back program. The caller suggested that our community and political boundaries would be better defined by catchments rather than arbitrary lines drawn on a map. (What an interesting thought. Perhaps that's where the original tribal/political representation system stemmed from. "Hello. I'm Nurk, the Member for the Valley of Bloggs.")

Unfortunately the suggestion was a bit over the top for the "serious program" presenters, who gently moved onto the next

Paddock on top cont'd...

caller. Another revolutionary thought lost to the shortwave ether.

But, back to the land. Of course, the dream farm will be one of an entire valley of organic farmers. Imagine a whole heap of herb farmers in the one area? Imagine the food at a party – at any number of parties actually, if my recent experience is any guide.

The Northern Rivers jaunt coincided with a party thrown by a herbie. And for the first time in my life, I was in a rowdy crowd where everyone farmed herbs. Well. Heaven on a stick. We stood around and talked about growing herbs, and markets, and land, and where the best land was, and why it wasn't in Queensland etc etc.


I happened to mention my eerie attraction to that massive geological formation, the Mount Warning shield volcano – where the rising sun first touches Australia. Good soil I assume. Centrally located. "Nah," they all said, "you should look at country around where we are." In fact everyone reckoned that their part of their particular valley was better than every other valley – or part thereof.

The cynics might say they were merely looking to attract more growers so the transport costs could be shared. The economists would give that the nod too. But it's not such a silly idea. It would be a start to organising that ideal valley I like to dream about.

And driving home from parties would be so easy that you could afford to go to more of them.

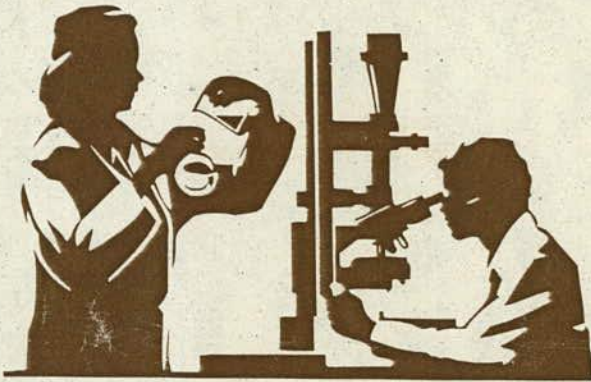
OUR BORAGE PLANTS UNDER THREAT FROM INTRODUCED MOTHS

In two issues of THE HERB AGE, the magazine of The Herb Society of Victoria Inc., concern has been expressed about the destruction of members' Borage plants. The Victorian State Government has released a species of moth, whose caterpillars live and burrow into the leaves of Boraginae species, to which Borage and Comfrey belong. This insect was let loose in Echuca and in the Seaford area by Ms. Kirner for the purpose of controlling the spread of Salvation Jane or Patterson's Curse. Of course the moth and its larvae do not distinguish between the various members of the Boraginae family, to which also fourteen Western Australian natives and eleven Victorian and South Australian natives belong. The loss of whole species is certainly a possibility, which would be a disaster ecologically. There are rumours about that the Victorian Government is

MEDI  **HERB**

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contemplating also releasing a root eating insect to control Salvation Jane, so between the two, destruction of all members of the Borage family and possibly the Primrose family is threatened.

Already one member of this herb society has found the leaf miner *Dialectica scalarrella*, the released insect, on her borage plant and had to destroy her crop. Gardens all over Victoria are said to be affected, and damage has been found on comfrey, forget-me-nots, alkanet, heliotrope and honeywort. I think we should join the Victorian Herb Society members in protesting and write to Mrs. Kirner, the Dept. of Ag. and their Minister for Conservation and Lands. Info from Jill Bryant, the Herb Society of Victoria Inc., P.O.Box 396, Camberwell, Vic 3124. It can happen in your State too!

HERB OF THE MONTH



CORIANDER

Coriandrum sativum

Coriander is a herb growers delight because every part of the plant is usable. The large green leaf can be sold as a cooking herb, the flower is a delicate garnish, and the seed is used both for cooking and medicines. Even the root is used in asian cookery ground up with garlic and ginger. If the seed is allowed to dry on the plant, it will eventually drop off and self seed the next crop.

On the North Coast, now is the still the best time to cultivate. Coriander prefers the cooler climates to produce the larger green leaf. As soon as the temperature increases the plant bolts and goes to flower. At that stage, it can no longer be sold for cooking purposes. Cutting down the flower does not help, as many growers will attest to the fact of 5cm plants in flower.

SOIL TYPE: ORDINARY, grows anywhere
SOIL TEMP: 20°
POSITION: FULL SUN IN WINTER
SHADE IN SUMMER

pH: 5 to 8
PROPAGATION: SEED, very easy
ANNUAL

PLANTING: SHALLOW DRILLS
1cm apart, 15cm deep
or scatter seed and thin

COMPANION: SAGE
PARTS USED: LEAF & SEED

PESTS: NONE

DISEASE: NONE

ESSENTIAL OIL: 1%

YIELDS: 10,000 KG FRESH LEAF PER ACRE
1,000 KG DRIED LEAF PER ACRE
750 KG SEED PER ACRE

BUNCH SIZE: 50 TO 80 grams in winter

MEDICINAL ACTION: STIMULANT, AROMATIC,
CARMINATIVE



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THE THIRD AUSTRALIAN INTERNATIONAL HERB CONFERENCE

BRISBANE BOYS COLLEGE, KENSINGTON TERRACE, TOOWONG
25-28 September, 1992

This conference will be held from Friday 25th till Monday 28th September at the Brisbane Boys' College. The College is set in beautiful tranquil grounds and is situated a five minute walk from a shopping centre, bus and train, and a ten minute drive from the City. Accommodation will be dormitory style with separate areas for women and men.

The main speaker will be Gilian Painter from New Zealand, who has written several books and has a wide knowledge of herbs.

Other speakers will be Tim Low, Isabell Shipard, Di Waters, Jeffrey Hodges, Ruth Rivers and Ross McKinnon, all local stars on the herb firmament. There will be workshops, displays of herbs and herbal products with many for

sale.

After the conference there is the opportunity to take part in a 3 day tour to Bundaberg, which leaves Brizzie on the Wednesday morning.

The workshops cover a wide variety of topics, such as herbal cosmetics, cooking with herbs, distilling and extraction and aromatherapy.

The registration fee includes accommodation for 3 nights, all meals, venue and incidentals, and comes to \$166 pp. A one day fee is around \$35, incl. tea and lunch.

The workshops are not included but cost another \$15 per session.

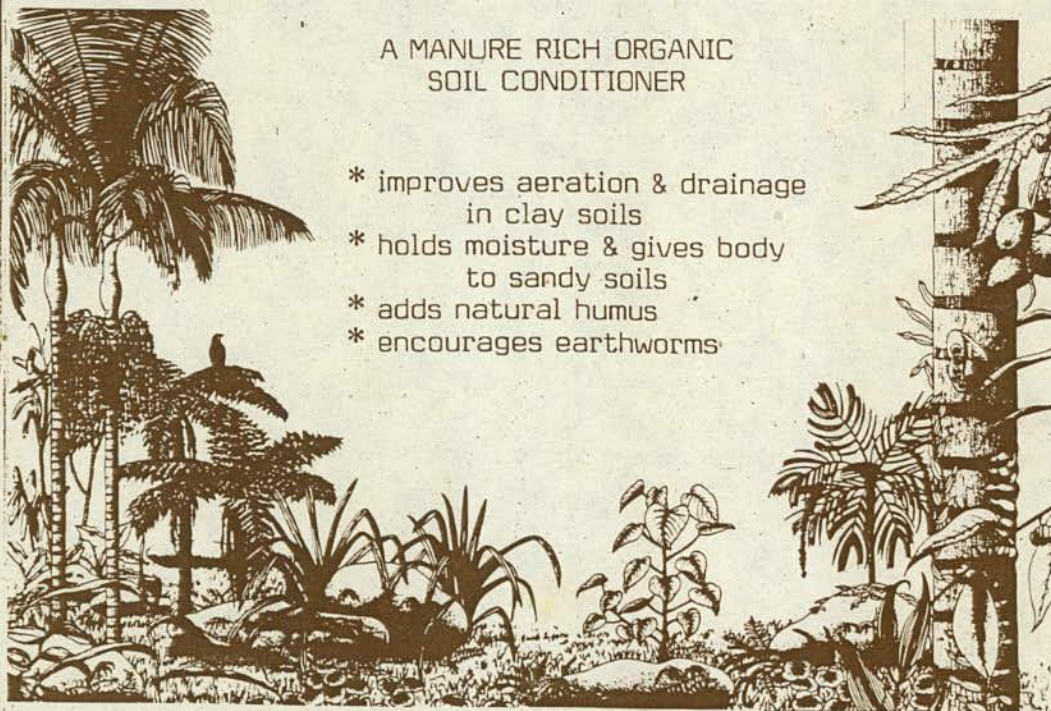
A registration form is available from BARBARA WICKES, 26 Rupicola Pl., Chapel Hill 4069; Phone 07-3782075.

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GO + GROW

GROWING HINTS

by Dave Carey

IDEAS ON HARVESTING AND PACKING

Here are some of the ways we make harvesting and packing herbs easier and economical.

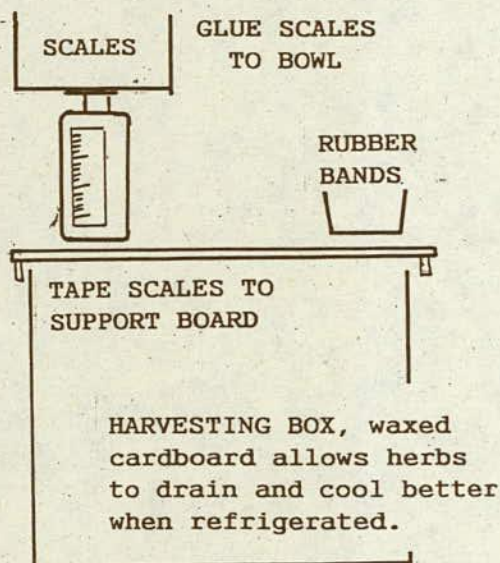
* Choose a good pair of cutters. Felco secateurs, for around \$40 are excellent, if you're not prone to losing them. Elle sells a handy pair for around \$7, which will also last a long time.

* Buy size 12 rubber bands in 500 gr. packs from local office suppliers for around \$3.

* Ask your styro-box supplier for factory seconds. BGF usually has them available for \$1.75 each.

* Useful cheap plastic **SALTER SLIMMER SCALES**, which weigh up to 250 gr. are available at K.Mart for under \$10.

* When harvesting, I find the following set-up makes bunching and weighing easier.



* When we start cutting, we take 10 rubber bands at a time and place them on the two small fingers on the hand opposite the cutting hand.

* To keep check on the number of bunches cut, mark the harvesting box for every ten.

* For a guide to bunch weights, refer to the table printed in the various issues of **HERB GROWER**.

* Wash the bunches well in cold water and allow them to drain.

* Refrigerate herbs at least one hour before packing. Avoid leafy herbs e.g. Basil from becoming too cold.

* When packing the herbs into styro boxes, it

may be necessary to "swoosh" each bunch if not sufficiently drained. Bunches packed in head-to-tail layers will pack tighter.

* If a box contains more than one variety, pack herbs in separate piles, not layers.

* Average number of bunches per box:

50 grs. - 60-90

80 grs. - 40-60

100 grs. - 30-45

The range of these varies according to the herb variety.

* Average harvesting time for good quality herbs we find, is about one hour a box.

* Mark boxes with number and herb variety and use a label to identify yourself.

* **BOTTOM LINE: GO FOR QUALITY!** See Quality Initiatives in last issue.

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German MDs Required to Pass Herb Exam

The German Journal Zeitschrift für Phytotherapie, Volume 3, 1991, has a timely five-page article, "The importance of Phytotherapie in Medical Schools" by Heinz Schilcher. The article discusses the history and importance of plant-based medicines and notes that graduating medical students in Germany will be required to pass a section on herbal medicine by 1993. The English abstract reads as follows:

"To avoid controversial discussion concerning the rank of phytotherapie in medical sciences, the aspects of this 'special review of therapy' should be discussed on an interdisciplinary level. This, in particular, applies to the attention paid to phytotherapy in the European legislation. Due to numerous clinical and/or experimental studies on the efficacy of herbal drugs, phytotherapy increasingly gains scientific significance. For the future, phytotherapy will experience revaluation on a university level due to the 7th decree on the

amendment of the rules for approbation of physicians. From 1993 on, phytotherapy will also be included in the second part of the medical examination. The attitude of the physicians in the Federal Republic of Germany to prescribe phytopharmaceuticals, differs to a large extent from that of physicians in other members of the European community. The drug monographs of the Commission E (interdisciplinary expert commission at the Federal Health Office in Berlin) should be accepted by the European Community".

From the HERBALGRAM, no.26.

Soon the UNE-NR here in Lismore will start a university course in Naturopathy, the first university in Australia to offer this study-course. University sources report that the medico's in the area and further afield are not happy and have protested this official recognition of Naturopathy as a science.

herb & flower

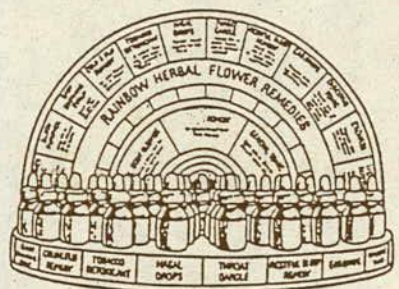
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KOORI HERBALISM

THE Aboriginal pharmacopia does not exist as a textbook, but rather as a living testament to the Koori people's preservation of their traditions. Traditionally they were hunters and gatherers and not cultivators of the soil. Their herbal treatments were dependent upon their location. Whatever medicines were needed, were usually found locally, in the form of native plants, barks or animals.

Because of this moving situation, they needed to be well versed in the different variations of the plants from one location to another. Quite often, they would not use the same plant in different locations. They were aware that the plant's chemistry would differ from region to region. Their knowledge was passed down from generation to generation by word of mouth. As a people, they were excellent botanists and did not generally make errors in identification and preparation. However, when this knowledge is translated into English, we have a situation where the languages and the true meanings are not easy to understand. Quite often the same word will be applied to mean two different types of herbs. Although most of the men still possess the ability to identify the plants, it is the women who possess the true ability to heal with them.

Prior to white settlement the Koori people were very healthy and did not require much medical attention. Usually their complaints were based upon their living situation, and they suffered from toothache, cuts and bites, fever and indigestion. They then resorted to plants, found where they were.

After white colonisation, they became subject to new infectious diseases and their immune systems could not cope. They became dependent upon western medicines. The arrival of the white man, though, brought one major benefit to their herbalism. That was the introduction of the "billy can". It allowed them to make boiling water extracts and increased the availability of the essential oils.

Most of the treatments were based upon cold water infusions, crushings and poultices. Their medicines used the essential oils and tannin-rich barks of the plants. This was a very gentle medicine

and they seldom used the toxic alkaloids in some of the plants. There was no standardization of preparations nor any codex, which said that this plant was good for that complaint. The entire system revolved around their location and the seasons....a true oneness with nature.

KOORI WALKABOUT

Russell has been able to organize a real treat for us. On SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 13, 10.30 two Aboriginal guides will take us on a bushwalk in the BROADWATER NATIONAL PARK. The walk will last for about three hours and during this time we will be able to learn about bush tucker and medicinal plants.

There is one snag: the walk is limited to thirty people, therefore booking before August 15 is essential. With your booking, include \$5 p.p., so we can reimburse the guides for their time and effort. For small children the walk will be too strenuous and, of course, dogs should be left at home. Bring a picnic lunch, although we might try bush tucker!

If you need more info, ring Russell on 066-337056.

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GREEN MATTERS GREEN MATTERS GREEN MATTERS

INTERNATIONAL

Germany's Greens have been in the doldrums for a few years, but are bouncing back. Recent opinion polls give them 7% public support, enough to win 20 seats or more in the Bundestag.

The two French ecology parties have won 14% of the vote in the last provincial elections. Unfortunately the British Greens did very poorly in their national elections.

In Italy the Greens won 3% of the vote in that country's crisis elections, winning seats in both the upper and lower houses of parliament.

Alaska and California have the first officially registered Green Parties in the USA.

Japan uses 20 million sets of throwaway chopsticks a day.

In Malaysia the authorities have closed the Sarawak office of Friends of the Earth in Marudi. The national headquarters in Penang have also been raided and files removed.

IN her 1992 Commonwealth Day Address Queen Elizabeth warned that time is running out to save the environment and urged young people to make themselves aware of the critical issues. One of the things she said was that everybody has a responsibility to "take serious steps to make certain that we cause no further destruction, nor permanently degrade the very natural resource on which we depend."

LISMORE Greens have dealt with several issues in the past year, one of which was the Iron Gates development, which is seriously eroding the Evans River bank. The development is seriously damaging the established tourist and fishing industries.

Good old Roundup is back in the local news. It's spray-time for the Lismore Council and protest-time for the Greens and other concerned citizens. A Tiny Tots playground in Heritage Park

has been sprayed and the tots were left playing without any warning; also a commercial organic herb growing project in East Lismore has been set back by Roundup spraying council men. A border of lemon grass and other herbs have been killed. OHGA will be donating one of Russell's superb 'NO SPRAYING' signs.

The Lismore Greens have protested and called on the council to review their herbicide program. They have requested that council provide details of the costings of the spraying program and asked them to investigate alternatives, such as slashing and mowing. The council replied that they are unable to extract the costings for the spraying from their overall program expenses. No wonder that this council is in such a mess financially, if this is the kind of bookkeeping they have going.

FIND OUT ABOUT The GREENS

WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT

FOR INFO ON MEMBERSHIP RING:

- * NSW LISMORE 066-222618
- SYDNEY 02-5607837
- * W.A. PERTH 09-2214550
- * QLD BRISBANE 07-8462409
- * TAS HOBART 022-241920

or ask your local Green Group or
Environment Centre.

THE FUTURE IS IN YOUR HANDS

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MARKET REPORT

The previous two months have seen erratic trading. The unusual warm weather patterns have left many southern growers still with marketable crops. Some of the bigger growers are now using glasshouses to insure their market share.

Market prices have been lower this year than all previous years. Perhaps it is the result of the recession, or just more produce available; but whatever the cause growers are seeing lower returns this year.

Basil, parsley, coriander, mint and tarragon continue to have the highest demand, and we are already experiencing shortfalls. Dill is the biggest surprise with almost no sales. Mesclun mix has been slow to sell this year; there is simply too much about due to all the media hype. The mediterranean herbs continue to maintain their stability. Unfortunately, everyone's rosemary and sage has been knocked about by the weather.

The prognosis is for a long wet winter with high demands and little produce. If you want to sell, now is the best time for the highest prices!



HERB FARMS AUSTRALIA

PRICES RECORDED
during the previous month
for a OHGA bunch size

| | |
|--------------|---------|
| BASIL | .50-.90 |
| PURPLE BASIL | .90-\$2 |
| CHIVES | .50-.90 |
| CORIANDER | .80-.90 |
| CHERVIL | .80 |
| DILL | .60 |
| LEMON GRASS | .50-.80 |
| LEMON THYME | .50-.90 |
| MARJORAM | .50-.80 |
| MINT | .50-.80 |
| OREGANO | .50-.80 |
| ROCKET | .60-.80 |
| ROSEMARY | .60-.80 |
| SAGE | .80 |
| SORREL | .50-.80 |
| TARRAGON | .30-\$1 |
| THYME | .50-.90 |
| VIET MINT | .50-.80 |



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Call Elle on 066-291057 or send SAE for seedlist.

WANTED fresh Echinacea purpurea.
Call Amare Pearl: 066-845570..

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GREEN PAGES- the User Friendly Guide to Healthy Living.

\$1.95 plus \$1.00 p.& p.

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O.H.G.A. Standards for Organic Certification.

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South Lismore 2480.

For info on future commercial organic herb growing courses, phone Howard Rubin on 066-291057. Workshops in your area can also be arranged.

Next 3-day course scheduled for July 20-21-22.

NEXT MEETING

SUNDAY AUGUST 2, 10am

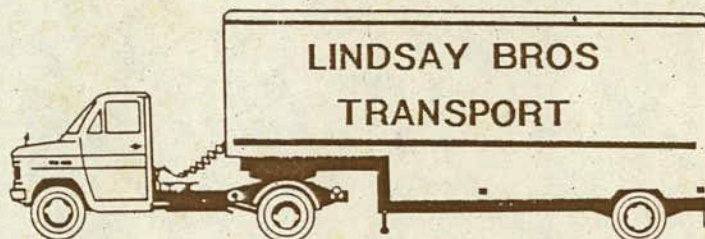
at the property of Doug and Robyn Andrews, Whian Whian Rd,
Whian Whian. See map below and follow the signs.

EVERYONE WELCOME.

MESSAGE FROM SECRETARY

It's time to start thinking about renewing your membership. We're lucky to be able to keep the fee at \$15, when all else in life goes up in cost. That's partly due to our wonderful advertisers, whom, we hope, you will support as they do the Association.

After this issue of Herb Grower, you will receive one more on your current membership. It would be appreciated if you send in the \$15 a.s.a.p. Thanks!



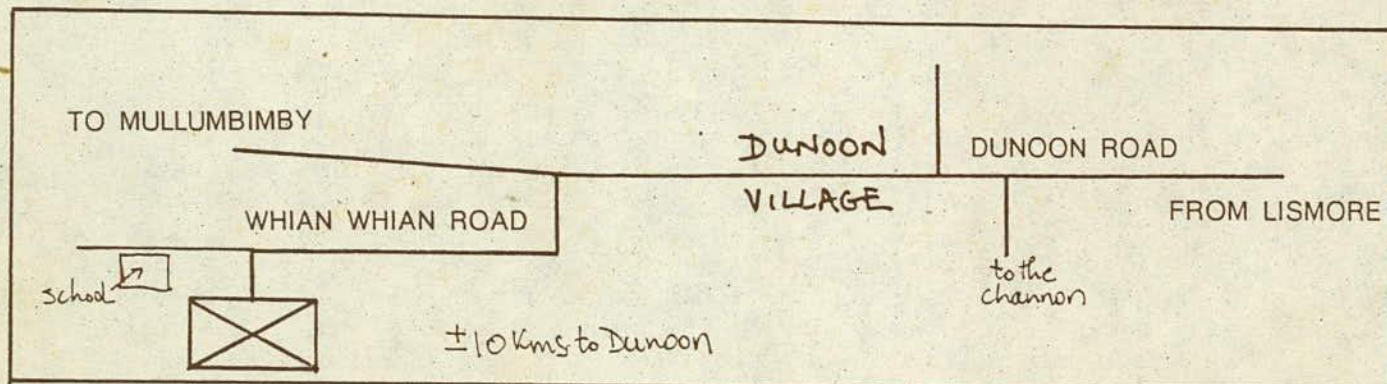
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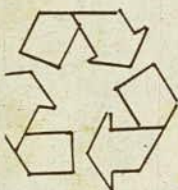


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A MEMBER'S PROFILE

22 Years ago, the Schmid family migrated from Switzerland to Australia. Maria completed her nursing training in Bowral NSW in 1977 and moved to Sydney. Some years later she had become thoroughly disillusioned with orthodox medicine and city life and moved back to live with her parents in Mittagong.

In 1989 she qualified as a homeopath and practised this newly acquired skill until she, with the rest of the Schmid family, moved to beautiful Lindendale in 1990. Until then she had never felt the urge to try her hand at gardening of any sort, but suddenly she felt an unexpected satisfaction after digging about in

red earth all day. There was plenty of that, for the Schmid family were faced with 5 acres of lantana and other weeds. Later she even started growing some herbs here and there. Then, in October 1991, she attended Elle and Howard's herb growing course and, with her parents' help, she has since converted half an acre of kikuyu into herb beds. Maria says: "I find herb growing a very relaxing and joyful experience and can highly recommend it!".