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# HERB GROWER

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

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## ORGANIC APPLICATION 'RUN INTO THE SAND'

These were the words of Digby Gascogne, the Chairman of AQIS in a tele-conference on June 9 between AQIS and the principals of the organic certification groups. He was, of course, talking about the application re the labelling of organic foods, which AQIS submitted to the NFA in December 1993.

As there has been overwhelming opposition to the NFA proposal that all products can be called organic, provided they're labelled with the name and address of the grower, the NFA informed us that their legal advice from the Attorney General is that it is not permissible for the NFA to delegate to a third party (AQIS) any element of decision making involving a food standard.

Alex Podolinsky's advice was to withdraw the proposal under protest. Rod May said that NASAA's opinion is that we should stick to our guns and let the NFA refuse the proposal and then create an uproar.

The outcome of the tele-conference was that a tactical withdrawal under strong protest to Bob Collins, the Minister for Primary Industries, would be the best course of action for now, and a new legally acceptable submission should be made in due course.

There was general concern that because of the lack of domestic standards, which is inconsistent with overseas practices, the export of Australian organic food products may be threatened and that Australian organics might become the laughing stock of the organic industry worldwide.

**Thank you NFA!!!**

## ALSO INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

*Paddock on Top, Gardening by the Moon, Conference Report, BD Prep Prices, Organics, Interesting Stories, Book Review, Letters and much more .....*



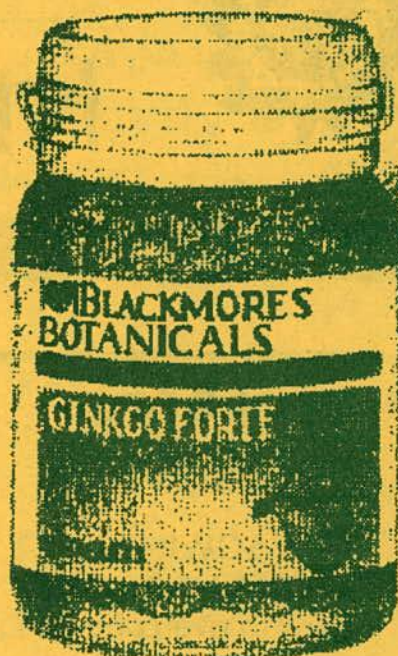
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How exciting, our first HERB GROWER in print. It saves me about five days solid at the photocopier! OTGIA also bought a scanner to help get the mag neater and to enable me to get some more illustrations in. Now that we don't have to skimp on the expensive photocopy ink anymore, I can do much more in the lay-out area. It's fun and I'm learning as I go. Even more exciting is that we'll be going for a colour cover soon. We'll need your help in coming up with some pictures for it. See page 11 for the OTGIA photo competition. On the page previous to it we have some timely hints on how to take good photo's.

The colour cover will be sponsored by advertisers on the inside and the back. We have pledges from three of them, so in the New Year, all going well, we'll have our new format. Then, after we've got the hang of the whole thing, we can start distributing it to newsagents.

Howard and I went to the (in)famous Nimbin Mardi Grass at the end of April and attended the world premiere of The Hemp Revolution, an excellent docu-film, made by a very dedicated man who spent three years and all of his money to make it. The event was also attended by Harry Woods, our Page Labor MP. It was good to see that Harry was willing to stick his neck out for such a good cause. The fashion parade that followed the movie presentation was amazing. Such soft flowing fabrics, all made from hemp. On the Sunday the fun really started with the village full of floats, some of them really good. We met quite a few OTGIA members there and knowing that we have a sizeable group of members in and around Nimbin, we should definitely have an OTGIA float for next year's event. Would any of our Nimbin and environs members volunteer to organise it? I'll do my bit. Let me know soon, so we can put it on our agenda and get a group together.

For Mother's Day Freya gave me Richard Neville's book "Huppy Hippy Shake". Every night when I finally get around to reading, I am transported back to London in the 60's and early 70's. It's fascinating to read about all the trials and tribulations the "OZ" crew had to go through to get their magazine out. One thing they never had to worry about though, was how to fill their pages. They got articles handed to them from all over the world. Those were the days of solidarity. How I miss them! Now it seems like it is every man for himself. Our energetic counterculture was perhaps too successful and before we knew it, it was taken over by business and turned into an industry. I guess that's why I love un-ambitious Nimbin.

We have the same problem in our organics movement. Started by pioneers, 60's idealists and farmers who never used chemicals anyway, it is in grave danger of becoming commercialised. And I don't mean that growers should not be able to make money with their organic produce. I mean that organics is being hijacked by big business and unethical people. It's being hijacked by government and other agencies who have never had their hands in the soil. Organisations that may have started with ethical principles are now in it for the money and are cheating and bickering and bad mouthing each other behind their backs. I wonder if it's worth it, remaining part of 'the officially recognised' scene? I am pretty fed up with it all, I can tell you. It has cost us (by that I really mean Howard) an enormous amount of time and OTGIA money. Personally I don't give a hoot whether I'm accepted or not, as long as I know I'm doing the right thing. And in Australia organics is still not recognised. It's only for Europe and US that we need government recognition. Do any of you export organic goods there? It may be a good idea if you tell us your feelings on this OPAC/ACQIS stuff. Should we stay in it or not bother? You could use the membership renewal form to let us know. Please, all, send your renewal in soon. I'm off on my yearly pilgrimage to Holland in August (My Dad turns 80!) and must have the next issue done before I leave.

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Absolute copy deadline (for ads, letters, articles etc) for the Sept/Oct issue is July 20.







*I'm sure many of you will remember Russell Quinn, who was OHGA's first certification officer. We received a letter from him the other day from Tasmania, telling us of his adventures. We reprint it here for you/*

G'day all,

It's only taken 8 months to get around to this letter, the thought has been there often. How are you all? Carlene just sent me the photo and article of Doug Andrews in the echinacea patch. Looks great. I bet they are pleased. Did I read it right that 20 tonnes is 20,000 kilos?, meaning twice what was expected was harvested? Good on you guys! Is it still the same hard core growers involved on the OHGA committee? I get the occasional whimsical thought that it would be good to be back at the Billen growing herbs, more often recently. I think I will be back on the North Coast before too long.

To briefly fill you in on some of the high lights of my travels: swapped the bike for a Mitsubishi 4-wheel drive van. Took the back seats out and built in bed, cooker and cup boards. Put a push bike on the back. It's been a very comfortable way of travelling around. Not into bush bashing but the 4x4 comes in handy when finding a campsite just off the beaten track.

Had a fantastic experience snorkelling on the Great Barrier Reef. First time snorkelling so swallowed a fair bit of sea water before it was worked out. Would love to see the reef again for longer, next time would not leave from Cairns, as this area is totally swamped with tourists (incl. me).

Before Cairns I somehow found myself working on a non organic mixed crop farm just south of Tully for a month. Sixty hour weeks, mostly tractor driving or planting pineapples. Not a good experience but gave me travelling money for months ahead. North of Cairns I spent a most enjoyable week at Cape Tribulation. A very beautiful spot. It now has a sealed road leading there which has meant a huge increase in visitors. Talking to a National Parks employee there, it appears there is some concern about the impact. Plus real estate development in the rainforest itself is also of some concern.

By this stage I had enough of the populated east coast and headed west. Drove across to the Gulf of Carpentaria, down to Mt. Isa (yuk), then across to three ways on the Stuart highway. Almost tossed a coin for north to Darwin or south to Alice Springs. Chose Alice as it was heading in the right direction for Melbourne and my brother's place. I enjoyed a couple of weeks mooching in and around Alice Springs. Some very scenic gorges, ranges and vast landscapes around Alice, also a fair number of tourists and flies. In 1955 there were 300 people living in Alice. now there are 30,000. There are plenty of jobs too.

Heading south I was really sick of aimlessly wandering about on my own. I nearly decided not to take the 500 km detour to see and experience Uluru. Pleased I did though. It's a magic place. There is a cultural centre run by the local custodians. It's recommended that anyone visiting

the Rock visit this centre to get an understanding of its spiritual significance. I didn't climb Uluru as the locals prefer that you don't. Once again those tourists! 300,000 of us visit there every year.

Heading south again and the alternator developed a horrible noise. It was about 200 km to the next garage with a mechanic. The noise got louder. I pulled into the workshop and the engine died. Phew! The mechanic had a reconditioned one up from Port Augusta (800 km) overnight. Pretty lucky really, considering the remoteness. Didn't spend very much time in South Australia. Took the scenic coastal route to Victoria.

It was a bit weird meeting my brother again after 14 years. Took a week or so for us to get to know each other. He and his family have a 5acre bush block at Daylesford on the great Dividing Range. We went up there a few times and put up a pole frame structure. They have since made mud bricks and infilled some of the walls. I was calling it stage one of their house, as they are stuck in the mortgage rut in Melbourne and can't see an escape for quite a while. I say go when you want to.

From Melbourne I took the ferry to Devonport, pleased to say it was a smooth crossing. I have been known to get seasick.

I have been in Tasmania for two months now and have seen a fair bit of it. Enjoyed the walking in the alpine areas. When I first arrived there had been fresh snow falls. A large part of the agricultural land is very dry and degraded except for some areas in the north-west and south-east. 20% Of the state is either National Park or World Heritage. This has been possible because a lot of the area was too harsh and inaccessible to be exploited by early pioneers. The environment movement is pushing for more areas to be classified. The work that some of these people put into this seems tireless. I have been staying with people here and further north who have been involved in environmental activism for over 20 years. The woman I am staying with is coordinating a campaign to drain Lake Peddar which was flooded in the early 70's for hydro. Only a fraction of this water is now used to generate power and the restoration of the once beautiful centre piece of the South West Wilderness is seen as a huge positive step towards healing the damage to the earth.

I have been helping out at the Wilderness Society, painting banners, photo copying, phoning etc for rallies and a blockade to end the wood-chipping of the forests. We set up a highly organised blockade in the southern forests this week in a coupe which Paul Keating said he would use all the government's powers to stop it from being logged. Well, the redneck forest industry-run state government has ignored this. So our one-day blockade was to show through the media the uncaring nature of this government. We had to walk 5 km into the site at 3 am to set up by 7 am when the workers arrived. The workers didn't arrive, but three media crews did, so the objective was achieved. The contrast of total clear fell - then burn destruction on one side of the road, and 400 yr old trees on the other, made quite an impact.

I read in a Big Scrub newsletter of the successful action in the Whian Whian forest. It's heartening to have successes. Not sure what I'm up to at the moment. There is a lot going on around





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here, so the choices are endless. Hobart is quite a good size for a capital city, very scenic. I am sitting out on a deck up in the rainforested side of Mt Wellington, 7 km from the centre of Hobart, which great ocean views. It's quite often misty or raining and it snowed three weeks ago.

I hope this finds everyone well and happy and I would love to hear from you.

Love,  
Russell, P O Box 1046, Sandy Bay, TAS 7005

Dear Howard,

We are extremely interested in growing medicinal herbs and organic horticulture is our preference. At present we are establishing protea shrubs for cut flowers.

Would you please let us know of growers of organic herbs in our vicinity, with whom we can be in touch? Regards, Ian and Ruth Southan, Morton Park, Foxgrove Rd, Canyonleigh 2577

*Are there any members in those parts who would like to get together with Ian and Ruth? Mutual support is where it's at with us organic growers. It's easy to feel isolated in a world full of chemicals.*

Dear OHGA,

First of all thank you to Howard's inspired involvement in the conference at Tocal last week, which in turn inspires us to join up.

A couple of questions however:

1) What is the difference between ordinary and corporate membership?

2) Is the use of Roundup permissible in the preparation of beds? There appears to be a difference of opinion in the literature generally.

Thank you and regards,  
Richard and Rosemary Jones, Wellington Point, Q.

*1) Corporate membership is for businesses, or for anyone who has a herbal business and who can afford to pay a little more than a small grower. Our fees are really based on an honour system, which works quite well, considering that only a very small percentage of members consider themselves too poor to pay the full membership. We know of a few people who opt for a concession membership, whilst running a business, but on the whole OHGA members are an honest and generous group, for which we thank you all.*

*2) The use of Roundup is never permitted under the OHGA certification scheme. We know that some other certification bodies think it's alright, but we at OHGA grow without chemicals. We make a commitment to nature to do the right thing. We try to be truly organic, without cheating. Not always easy though!*

Dear OHGA,

Being a total novice to the art of herb growing there are a few things I need to discover and am hoping you can help. Could you please advise as to what are the best publications/books to read re the commercial production of herbs. Particular interest in what in what grows best in which region, cultivation and harvesting, soil etc. requirements. Which herbs are in most demand for differing applications e.g. fresh, dry, medicinal etc.? (Could all this be in one book??)

Judging by the addresses of producers and advertisers I have seen published, I am in the wrong area of the country. Therefore being remote from most other interested persons most of my knowledge will have to be gained by studious application to the written word.

I enjoy reading the magazines. Q - is there any room in it for a beginners corner?

Keep up the good work. Regards,  
Jeff & Noelle Davies, Mount Gambier.

*It's difficult to find a good book on herb growing in Australia, but there are a few out, I think.. As far as the marketing goes, as always it's best to scout out your local area to start off with.. Make contact with restaurants and greengrocers.*

*Continued on page 9*





# SOWING EXTRA FINE SEEDS

To begin with, I shall explain my definition of seed at this end of the scale.

Small seed is sown approximately 5mm deep; fine seed 3mm maximum; extra fine seed is too small to be sown in a furrow.

Fine seed and extra fine seed have a reputation for being difficult, which is unfortunate, as the problems relate to their needs rather than any inherent 'stoppiness' in the seed itself. Indeed, these seeds are more reliable than others if the right conditions are met.

## SOWING THE SEEDS

The first hurdle is sowing the seeds. Extra fine seed is sown on the surface of the soil and is best laid out in straight lines, as if a furrow was used. This helps you to recognise your seedlings amongst the weeds. If you're using a sterile propagation mix, the seed can be scattered over the whole surface. If sowing directly into the garden, or only sowing a small quantity, it helps to mix the seed evenly into a fine sand or finely sieved peat moss. This will ease the third hassle (see below). Firm the seed into the soil surface with a flat block of wood. This is important. The seed needs to be in contact with damp soil, and results will be poor if seed is surrounded by airy space.

## WATERING THE SEEDS

Watering is the next consideration of extra fine seed. Firstly, the seed is in that area of soil which dries out the quickest. Dehydration is a major cause of death in any seedling. Secondly, heavy overhead watering will not only wash about the seed, but may cause it to float and once again to be surrounded by air, rather than dampness. Seed trays/punnets/pots are best watered by capillary action, i.e. the pot is submerged to half its depth in another

container of water, until the soil surface is wet. The pot must then be allowed to drain to avoid fungus associated with wet soils. In early days, this watering/draining may be necessary twice a day. A hessian or shade cloth cover can reduce this, but must be suspended over the pot. Lifting such a screen off pots after germination can remove young seedlings from the soil faster than wax takes the hair off a lady's legs.

Capillary action is obviously not feasible when seed is sown directly into the soil. Watering must then be by the finest possible spray, and as often as is needed to prevent the soil surface, and therefore the seed, from drying out.

## FUNGAL PROBLEMS

Our third, and final, problem arises after the seed has germinated. Extra fine seed results in extra fine seedlings, which are soft and sappy and therefore susceptible to a host of fungal diseases, notably 'damping off'. These diseases prefer shaded, humid conditions so it is **vitaly important** that watering be reduced and the seedlings be thinned to a minimum of 2cm between each plant, to provide airflow. Once these fungi gain a foothold, there is very little you can do to organically control them. People who spread their seed as mentioned above, will find they have to cull less of their stock.

That's it! Overcome the third trial and within four weeks (Nature willing and depending on species) the young'uns will be ready for potting on, or planting out - again with shade protection suitable for their age.

You will find extra fine seed in the flower, herb and native sections of the seed bank. It is a constant source of wonder for me that the largest eucalypts I've seen, have grown from extra fine seed.

*First published in Natural Growing #102, the journal of the Henry Doubleday Research Association of Aust. Inc.*

## OVERCOMING FUNGAL PROBLEMS

It is certainly true that the most difficult phase in seed raising is that first month after the seeds have sprouted. However, there are two remedies to combat fungal and damping off diseases which are very suitable for seedlings.

*They are chamomile tea and horsetail tea.*

As horsetail is not easy to get these days, due



by  
ANDY  
WARD





to the Dept of Ag's attitude which always favours cows and sheep over nature (hence the droughts), chamomile is probably your best bet. I have never had any damping off problems since I got the idea to do the first watering of my seedtrays with chamomile tea.

Just brew yourself a nice strong tea, let it cool off, strain and drench your seedraising mix with it, before even putting the seed in. As chamomile contains valuable minerals, you may want to repeat this treatment, but more sparingly with a fine mist, once the seedlings are up and at it.

- Elle



"Chives", illustration by Win Ng

### *Flower Power Recipe*

#### *Dandelion and chives Salad*

- 1 bunch young dandelion leaves*
- 1/2 cup unopened dandelion buds*
- 1 chopped onion*
- 1 tblsp. chopped chives*
- 1 tblsp olive or nut oil*
- apple cider vinegar*

*Wash and dry all flowers and herbs. Tear leaves and put in a salad bowl. Heat oil and saute onion until tender. Toss with the leaves. Saute flower buds, until buds open, and add to salad bowl, along with the rest of the ingredients.*

## **SYDNEY'S FIRST ORGANIC FOOD MARKET OPENED**

**Sydney has an organic food market. The first one was held on June 18, to be followed every Sunday at the Parkway Hotel, Frenchs Forest Rd, Frenchs Forest.**

Elizabeth Taylor, the liaison officer, says there is loads of space, power, hard standing and overnight accommodation at the Parkway Hotel (\$65 a night or \$75 for three beds). All the market now needs is organic traders, farmers, growers and cooks.

Ms Taylor says that this market can only succeed if all organic people put their best efforts into it. She says that the market will put the organic industry on the map, and that it is designed to show the media and the public what organic food is really about.

She would like to discuss the possibility of sending food on consignment to the market, as she appreciates that many organic growers live too far away to be able to attend the market.

Apart from organic food, there are new age and alternative therapies, arts and crafts, refreshments, antiques, bric-a-brac, flowers, plants, garden pots etc. on offer.

The market is modeled on England's first Organic Food Market in London's old disused wholesale fruit & veg market - Spitalfields, which opened in April 1992. That market was an instant success story. It makes organic food easily available to millions of people in London, to restaurants and to the media - and they love it!

New Yorkers have had their organic market for 17 years already. Paris has one, as has Amsterdam.

Sydney's organic market is certainly well placed in the strategic position of the affluent family oriented North Shore on one of the major road systems. (Corner of Wakehurst Parkway & Waringah Rd.)

I'm sure that all OHGA members, even if we can't all participate, wish the market every success. If you have surplus produce you want to sell, and you take a pitch on the market or talk to Ms Taylor about consigning, do let us know how you get on.

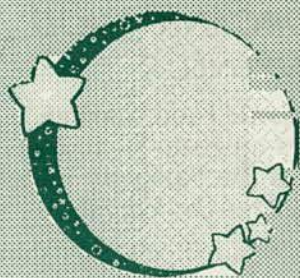
A pitch on the market costs \$25 per Sunday or \$80 for four Sundays.

Ms Taylor can be reached on ph. 02 - 918 2828, or by fax on 02 - 896 0335.

Should you want to book a room in the Parkway Hotel, that can be done on 02 - 451 3699, or by fax on 02 - 975 1718.







# GARDENING BY THE MOON

by Elle Fikke-Rubin



## JULY

20 Last Quarter.

21-27 Days to plan for a green manure crop before spring planting. Lupins, vetches, clovers, rye or oats can all be sown this time of year, and these are good days to buy in the seed.

If you have flowers like pansies, violas or poppies growing, you may want to mulch them to encourage surface root growth.

Also a good time to start a new compost heap. My very best heap used to be composed of bales of straw or hay at the sides, but now my favourite one is built European style: I have Howard dig a good-sized hole in the ground, about 1.5 x 1.5 mtrs and 1mtr deep (can't get him to make it any deeper) and this way I have good compost a lot quicker. Worms can get at it from all sides and it doesn't dry out like the others tend to, unless you work at keeping it moist.

28 New Moon, day off.

29-31 Leafy annual days. That means that the green manures can be sown now. Also coriander (soak the seeds overnight and peel or sandpaper the outer skin off for faster germination), dill, chervil and, for an early basil crop perhaps you could start those seeds off in a sheltered spot or indoors. Of course lettuces, silverbeet, cresses and other green annuals can be planted out too.

## AUGUST

1-3 Still more days to work with green leafy annuals.

4 First Quarter

5-10 Time to put in seedbearing annuals, such as coriander and dill again, peas, tomatoes, zucchini's and other fruiters, and flowers and herbs, e.g. calendulas, tagetes, petunias, borage (or star flower as it's been renamed by a herbal remedy manufacturer), carraway, or alyssum.

I'm sure you're all aware of the benefits of calendulas as a salad and potherb, its use in ointments and in baby baths. You can also use the flowers in a wonderfully delicate body powder, which is made thus: pick and dry the flowers and mix them with dried chamomile flowers, 50/50. Pulverise them and add rice flour. This powder can be used for soft baby skin and for the bodies of tired gardeners alike.

11 Full Moon.

12-17 Time to plant, sow or divide perennials and rootcrops. Fruit trees should be planted now in not too big holes, and with not too much compost and fertiliser. Foliar feeding is easier on the tender root system. We have a couple of advertisers who sell seaweed sprays for that purpose. Give them a ring. *(We should support them like they support OHGA, don't you agree?)*

Established fruit trees will be happy with a good application of blood and bone, metal dust and/or a fertiliser like Organic Life.

You can now sow or plant most herbs too, and bushes and perennial flowers, such as carnations, pinks, phlox, echinacea, feverfew, pyrethrum and other chrysanthemums like shasta daisies. Strawberries can be split up, geraniums cut back and propagated, and lots of bushes can be pruned. A busy week!

18 Last Quarter and the day off again.

19-25 This is the time for cleaning, fertilising, mulching, or for taking the week off before spring planting starts.

26 New Moon.

27-31 Once again days to plant or sow leafy annuals. Parsley, basil, dill, coriander, chervil, aniseed, rocket, lettuces, cresses, the Japanese greens etc. etc.

## SEPTEMBER

1 One more day to plant the above and other green annuals.

2 First Quarter.

3-8 Days to work with seedbearing annuals and flowers. Calendulas, tagetes, nasturtiums, cornflowers and other flowers you fancy; peas and beans and tomatoes, and in warmer climes you can add cucumbers, squashes, melons, okra, sweet corn, peppers and more.

9 Full Moon.

10-16 Rootcrops and perennials are the plants to work with these days. Bushes, trees, most herbs and root vegies such as beetroot, onions, garlic, radishes, parsnips, salsify and carrots.

Don't forget to dig the soil to a good depth for these rootcrops, or you'll end up with strangely formed carrots, for instance. Also rootcrops don't like fresh fertiliser. They grow best in soils that were manured or fertilised quite a while ago. They do all like slightly alkaline soil, so





add some dolomite, or work in some worm castings, when planting or sowing them.

Planting potatoes in car tyres in all the rage these days. It is quite simple. You plant a seed potato in the soil and put a car tyre around it. When the potato sprouts, you put a second tyre on it and some compost on the potato plant. You can go higher and higher with both tyres and compost. The idea is that you will get potatoes all the way up on the plant.

It sounds like a fun idea, and definitely handy if you have a lot of spare tyres lying about, but I like the following method of growing spuds better: place good seed potatoes on the ground, about 25cm apart, and cover them with a 20cm layer of hay or straw. Water really well and regularly. When the shoots appear, add some more mulch material, and some compost.

Plant some french or african marigolds around the patch to deter underground pests like the potato eelworm.

**HAVE FUN!**



*continued from page 5*

Ask them what fresh herbs they want, and start there. Sometimes a healthfood shop will sell bulk dried herbs and buy a kilo dried off you. You could dry the herbs in a low oven. For a beginner that shouldn't be too difficult to produce. To get into the medicinal market isn't easy, unless you have a large growing area and a professional dryer to dry your herbs. And nowadays, fortunately, organic certification is required.

We could easily start a questions and answer column for beginners in our HERB GROWER. Just ask away and if at all possible, someone will come up with an answer for you. Are there any members in Jeff and Noelle's area who want to make contact with them?

Howard,

Just to say thank you for your informative presentation at the recent Maitland conference. We hope to be up and running at our Torrumbarry, Vic property by September. Wendy & Kel Lucas.

Dear Ms Fikke-Rubin,

Congratulations on your superb publication. I always look forward to receiving it. It contains practical and highly informative information. As an Editor, I look forward to meeting with you one day so we may discuss technical matters.

Best wishes, Raymond Khoury, National Herbalists Association.

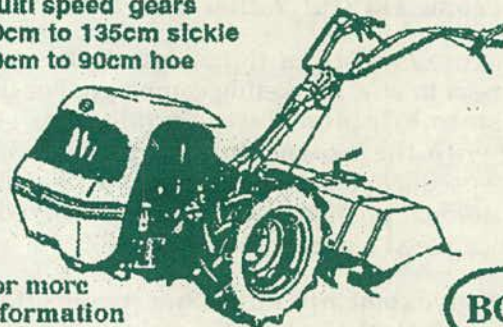
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# TAKING PERFECT PICTURES OF YOUR PLANTS

**How often do you look at your herbs, think how beautiful they look and run to get your camera.**

**If they ever look half as good on your photo as they do in your garden, you know you've been lucky. Most of us find that our eagerly awaited prints are a real disappointment.**

**Here Kurt Reynolds and Lisa Osborne, two professionals, give us some hints on how to become skillful, rather than lucky.**

If a picture is worth a thousands words, it's a definite asset to any marketing campaign. For those who wish to brighten flyers, catalogs or shop signage with their own photographs, we have industry-specific tips from an expert. Kurt Reynolds is a professional photographer who has worked for an American seed company for 21 years.

**Can you give some tips on picture composition?**

The problem that most people have when composing a shot is that they do not get close enough to the subject. There is a tendency for your eye to zoom in on a detail, while your camera records the whole scene.

Consider leaving the edges of the subject out of your photographs occasionally. A close-up of a plant's pollen-covered anthers produces a dramatic shot which is a little out of the ordinary. You might also include a path in your composition which heads off into the distance, creating the illusion that it goes on forever.

**What is the Rule of Thirds"?**

The "Rule of Thirds" gives suggestions for picture composition. It says that if you take a rectangle and use two horizontal and two vertical lines to divide it into nine equal pieces, the points at which the lines intersect are good places to position your subject. This rule also recommends making landscape scenes either  $\frac{1}{3}$  land and  $\frac{2}{3}$  sky or vice versa, rather than  $\frac{1}{2}$  land and  $\frac{1}{2}$  sky. While I am not advocating following this rule, it does make you think about the elements of your photograph.

**What points do you consider when setting up a photo shoot?**

You should work with natural light as much as possible. However, avoid having the sun directly behind you because the lighting will be flat and uninteresting.

Other plants provide a good backdrop for your chosen blooms. Consider using foliage, planters or wet gravel - something which will not steal the colour show. As a general rule, avoid fabric backgrounds. A natural look is more believable. Also a less recognisable backdrop may allow you to use the photograph for something else.

**What does the ASA of a film mean? How does it differ from a film's ISO?**

ASA and ISO are the same and describe a film's speed. The higher the ASA number, the faster the film. A 400 ASA film is four times faster than a 100 ASA film, which in turn is four times faster than a 25 ASA one.

**When should you use 100 ASA through 400 ASA film?**

The slower the film you use, the better your colour saturation is going to be in most cases and the finer the grain. I would use a 400 ASA film only if I had a small on-camera flash which needed a little help. I usually use 100 ASA or lower.

**What are the merits of slide vs. print film?**

When viewing a slide, you are looking at film which was actually in the camera, so no subjective decisions about colours have been made during processing. This image should be pretty close to real life. However, with a print, someone has to set the colours for the film pack. Often print colour will not be as close to the original as slide film.

Print film is much more forgiving than slide film. With slide film, there is no exposure latitude; you have to be within half a stop of the correct stop for the shot. In contrast, print film will still produce a pleasing image if you are within a couple of stops of the ideal setting. On the flip side ... on a very overcast, flat day, slide film will look better, producing more contrast and more life.

**In what circumstances should we use a large/small aperture?**

The aperture of the camera lens controls the intensity of the light hitting the film. Shutter speed controls the duration of the exposure. For close-up work, you want to use the smallest aperture possible - this will provide the greatest depth of a field. Aperture settings are measured in f-stops. A larger f-stop indicates a smaller aperture and produces a greater depth of field. For example, you will see more depth of field in a photograph taken at f16 than at f8.

**When would you recommend that we buy a tripod?**

You should always use a tripod, especially if it's windy. I use a tripod all the time, so I can use a sufficiently slow shutter speed and the smallest aperture possible. I often have an exposure of one second or longer. A tripod also helps to eliminate composition problems because it forces you to stop and look through the camera lens. It makes you scrutinise the scene more than if you were just snapping away.

*Reprinted from The Herbal Connection #4/4*







## PHOTOGRAPHIC FRONTPAGE COMPETITION

Now that we've had instructions on how to photograph our herbs, we should put these to the test, don't you think?

By happy coincidence, our magazine will soon have a colour front cover, badly in need of some good herb pictures.

Who better to take them than our herb loving OHGA members?

We hope that very soon in the new OHGA year we will have colour on the outside, to be financed by colour backpage and inside cover advertisements.

Hopefully our first covers will be pictures taken by you. That's why we're having the photo competition.

There are three categories in the competition:

- \* herbs in the ground;
- \* herbal arrangement;
- \* herbs and people.

You can enter one or all of the categories, as many times as you like, but we won't be able to return the photo's to you, so it's best to be selective in the ones you send. Please put your name, address and phone nr. on the back of each entry. Try to keep in mind that your pictures are destined for our Herb Grower front cover, so they should be interesting.

### PRIZES

A real competition should have real prizes.

**The first prize for every category is one year's free membership to OHGA**

and, of course, your picture will be published on the front cover, as will the photo's of the runners-up, with full credits.

Please send in your pictures, with your membership renewal **no later than August 15**. The prize-winners will have their membership money returned to them. The winners will be announced at the next AGM, and published in the following issue of HERB GROWER.

The photo's will be judged by Greg Furney, OHGA member and graphic artist, and by myself and the rest of the committee.

Should be fun!

- Elle

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# Sewage sludge and organic farms



NSW Agriculture

by Michael Burlace, Organic Farming Officer, NSW Agriculture, Locked Mail Bag 21, Orange 2800

## About sludge:

Sludge is what is left after the water has been removed from treated sewage. Those who produce sludges want to do something useful with them. Some farmers want the nutrients. Recycling is a good idea. But recycling sludge on farms which grow food for the city which produces the sludge is not always a good idea.

## About organics:

Consumers and organic farmers generally understand organics to mean *farming in a more sustainable way without using artificial chemicals such as synthetic pesticides and artificial fertilisers.*

Most farmers farm conventionally, using artificial chemical fertilisers and pesticides as they consider appropriate. But on organic farms, no artificial chemicals are used. None is used to prepare the soil, grow the crop, grow pasture on which animals feed, nor to store or market produce.

## Can organic farmers use sewage sludge?

Yes, with restrictions. These restrictions mean that for the moment the answer is often "NO".

## What are the restrictions?

1. Every batch of sludge must be tested for heavy metals and other chemicals which could cause problems.
2. Sludge must be composted.
3. The certifier must get results of soil tests taken after sludge application.
4. Sludge may be restricted to certain crops, such as trees for timber.

## Why test every batch?

Every batch of sludge is potentially different. So to be sure that the batch being used is acceptable, the certifier has each batch tested for anything which could cause problems.

*Note:* Sludge from some country towns with little industry may be less variable and less polluted with undesirable substances.

## Why must sludge be composted?

This is the requirement of the National Standard for Organic and Bio-dynamic Produce. Good composting will ensure that nutrients are not too available. This will allow nutrients in the sludge to feed the soil organisms rather than feed the plant directly. It will also reduce the risk of nutrient runoff.

Good composting will reduce the number of

disease-causing organisms. These are also called pathogens.

Ask whether your certifier accepts sludge as an input to your compost.

## Why test the soil after application?

The certifier will want to minimise any problems in soil and water, particularly ones which would take a long time to repair or remove. So the certifier will check the soil after some applications. If there are problems, application will be stopped or the farmer will lose certification.

Monitoring will taper off if no problems are found.

It also makes sense to test soil **before** application. This makes it easier to track the cause of any problems discovered later. For example, residues found later could have been in the soil before sludge was applied or could have come from the sludge.

## Isn't sewage a natural product?

Human sewage is a natural product. But our city sewers carry more than human manure and urine. Industrial waste, household cleaners, car oil, pesticides and other products are dumped or find their way into the sewer from industry or stormwater runoff.

So sludge is not always appropriate for an organic farm. Sometimes the sludge may be so contaminated that it can't be used on any farm. For example, on some sewer lines, there are high levels of heavy metals.

## How do I make good compost?

Your certifier can tell you what methods are available. Composting where the heap stays at 55°C or more for at least three days will be needed to kill significant pathogens.

## What are the certifiers' attitudes to sludge?

The BDRI, the Bio-Dynamic Research Institute, does not allow the use of sewage sludge on land used for food production. The BDRI may allow sludge which passed all the tests listed earlier to be used for timber production or on parkland.

Organic cotton land is not acceptable for sludge application because cotton is rotated with food crops such as pastures and grains.

Any use of sludge would be allowed only after discussion with the BDRI. It would also only be allowed where there would be no movement of chemical residues or excess nutrients onto food-

**The question of SLUDGE has come up quite a few times in member enquiries over the years. This is what the Organic Farming Officer of NSW Ag Dept and the various certifying organisations have to say about it.**





growing land.

The BFA, the Biological farmers of Australia, does not allow the use of sewage sludge on land used for food production. The BFA may allow sludge which passed all the tests listed earlier to be used for timber production.

Organic cotton land is not acceptable for sludge application because cotton is rotated with food crops such as pastures and grains.

Any use of sludge would be allowed only after discussion with the BFA. It would also only be allowed where there would be no movement of chemical residues or excess nutrients onto food-growing land.

NAASA, the National Association for Sustainable Agriculture, Australia, classes sewage sludge as a "restricted" input. This means NASAA farmers must get permission before using sludge.

It can only be applied to green manures or forestry and not in intensive horticulture. Sludge may be used once per paddock. Each batch must be tested before use and the soil tested after use.

The OHGA, The Organic Herb Growers of Australia, does not allow sewage sludge use.

The OVAA, The Organic Vignerons Association of Australia, does not allow sewage sludge use.

## NEW PRICING FOR BD PREPARATIONS

*From the March 95 Issue of News Leaf, the journal of the Bio-Dynamic Farming and Gardening Association in Australia Inc.*

Our National Field Advisor, Terry Forman, is also our National Preparations Coordinator, and as such has been assisting many local groups in becoming self-sufficient with BD preparations. These are now being produced for our Association in and around Bellingen, Armidale, Mudgee, Lismore and Tasmania. Part of the rationale behind this is that these groups will then be able to supply the BDFGAA with their surplus (on an exchange or cash basis).

As Prep. Coord., Terry ensures that there is a sufficient supply of Bio-Dynamically grown herbs, cow horns and other animal organs and materials necessary for prep making. He carefully supervises the storage, packaging and dispatch of preps for members, to guarantee their continuing high quality, and instructs purchasers on the correct storage and application of the preps after they are received.

Although Terry fulfills these duties on a voluntary basis (i.e. he is unpaid for his time), every other facet of this integral function of the Association has been subjected to increased costs. Consequently, at its February meeting, the council decided that from April 1, 1995 the following price structure would apply to preps supplied by the association to its members:

### 500 & 501:

\$2.00/ acre + P&P for \$50 p.a. members

\$0.80/acre + P&P for \$100 p.a. members

### 502-507 (compost preps):

large sets \$12.00 each + P&P

or small sets \$ 8.50 each + P&P

In the interest of getting more people involved in prep-making, the council's policy is to encourage users of large quantities of 500 (usually \$100 p.a. members) to become self-sufficient after using the discounted preps for three years. Except in the case of affiliated local groups, 500 & 501 supplied after that time will not be discounted, and the annual membership fee will revert to \$50. Self-sufficiency in 500 is of particular importance to farmers seeking BD certification with the BFA.

This Association will do everything in its power to provide the cow horns and knowhow to assist members in becoming self-sufficient in 500.

The council is hopeful that where there is new horn burial and retrieval activity, it will act as a focus for a local BD group.

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# THIS AND THAT

## LADYBIRDS SAVE ISLANDS' FOOD SUPPLY

Micronesia, an island group in the Pacific Ocean, has atoll soils which are very low in nutrients, so few vegetables, apart from breadfruit, can be grown. This makes up nearly 70% of the islanders' diet.

During WWII, from India, the archipelago was invaded by mealybugs, also known as fluted scale, island-hopping their way even to remote atolls. By the late 80s they were devastating crops, killing trees and sometimes wiping out the whole food supply, as no natural predators existed on the islands. Many islanders suffered from malnutrition because of the severe crop losses and lack of money to buy imported food.

Enter *Rodolia limbata*, the Northern Territory ladybird. Dr. Don Sands of the CSIRO Division of Entomology, with the backing of the Australian Centre for Agricultural Research, set out to find something to check the menace. He knew the fluted scale as a minor pest of ornamental and *Carpenteria* palms grown in the Northern territory, and that *Rodolia* was effective at controlling it. And the ladybird was also adapted to tropical conditions, important, as previous attempts at biocontrol in Micronesia had failed because the predator insects could not survive the climate.

It took a year to establish that the ladybird would only go for the fluted scale and not harm any of the islands' native insects. Once this was confirmed, the ladybirds were flown in, released, and they began to make short work of the breadfruit mealybugs. In just one year they have knocked out the scale insects and the breadfruit yields are expected to recover over the next year or two.

The program has cost Australia about \$500,000, spread over four years. Not a lot to save a food crop, and the islanders from dying of malnutrition.

## HEMP, HEMP, HOORAY!

In grass-roots America, the buzz is that products made from hemp, marijuana's funky first cousin, are dope - er, we mean hip.

"There's more of a market than can be satisfied right now", says Mari Kane, editor of *Hemp World* magazine.

Made using imported hemp fibres or sterilised seeds (it's illegal to grow the stuff in the US), hemp-chic items include all sorts of clothing (even undies), cosmetics, paper, building supplies and food products like hemp beer, hemp (not ice) cream and even hemp (not ham-) burgers.

"People think it has to do with drugs," says Richard Rose, 38, founder of a California company called Sharon's Finest, which offers a low-fat, "barely legal" cheese alternative called HempRella. "It's as much about drugs as poppy-seed bagels are about opium or Coca-Cola is about cocaine. Hemp is rope, not dope. It's the temperate-climate strain of cannabis that is high in fibre and low in THC."

In other words, don't bother smoking this cheese, brother.

- Chuck Dean in *Rolling Stone*, May 1995

## UK HERBALISTS WIN AGAINST THREAT TO HERBAL MEDICINES

(E mail letter from an English herbalist)

Thanks to everyone who has helped us to stop the UK Dept of Health from implementing a European directive in such a way as to make herbal medicines impossible to obtain.

The campaign has had little time and yet MP's and the Dept of Health have said that they received more mail on this issue than many others.

Tom Sackville, Parliamentary Secretary for Health, issued a press release in November 94, which said that:

"The Government has safeguarded the position of herbal medicines. I am pleased to confirm that herbal products currently exempt from licensing under Section 12 of the UK Medicines Act will continue to enjoy this exemption under new legislation ... Government legal experts have scrutinised the legal position ... the Directive requires herbal medicines to be licensed if they are "industrially produced" ... The Government believes that those herbal medicines currently exempt under UK law are made according to a number of traditional processes ... they can be exempted from the new legislation."

Subject to barristers' opinion on the actual wording this will maintain the law as it currently stands for herbal medicine and for aromatherapy.

The campaign has been incredibly successful in the short period of only 2 months. The support for herbal medicines has been massive.

One benefit for practitioners has been the strong emergence of the Herbal Practitioners Alliance (HPA), bringing together a number of organisations. The HPA will now work towards full recognition and regulation for practitioners of herbal medicine.

- *Australian Journal of Medical Herbalism* Feb. 95

## SUCCESSFUL HERBAL CANCER REMEDY BANNED IN AUSTRALIA

Some decades ago, a Canadian nurse, Rene Caisse, obtained from an Indian tribe a herbal remedy against cancer. The four main components in the formula are common herbs: burdock root, sheep sorrel, turkey rhubarb root and slippery elm bark. They are all either quite easy to grow, or in the case of sheep sorrel probably grows as a weed in your garden, and obtainable in dried form from a good healthfood store. Rene Caisse started administering this herbal mix to cancer patients, with remarkably good results. Now people world wide take the remedy, named **ESSIAC**, and credit it with being responsible for their recovery from cancer. There are also Australian success stories.

A WA firm, Essiacton Pty Ltd, distributes it to shops and practitioners in Australia.

Enter our friends the Therapeutics Goods Administration!! They have banned the advertising, importing and supplying of Essiac, on the grounds that it is classified as a therapeutic good, but not registered as such. They have also forbidden to manufacture Essiac for human consumption.





The TGA's work is, of course, always done under pressure from the pharmaceutical multinationals and the Australian Medical Association, who see any sort of herbal medicine as a threat to their lucrative chemical business.

This is a direct imposition on us, Australian citizens, whose freedom of choice and right to the treatment that we prefer, is being undermined yet again.

I read in the February/March issue of *Nexus* that there are also moves afoot to restrict access and/or reduce the potency of vitamins, minerals and herbs.

If you are as mad as me about all this interference, write to the Federal Health Minister Carmen Lawrence, Parliament House, Canberra, expressing your concern about their "Big Brother" tactics and demanding your freedom of choice in healthcare.

### **FRENCH COMMISSION VOTES TO DECRIMINALISE MARIJUANA**

The French newspaper *Le Monde* reported on Feb. 4 that the commission which was appointed by the Minister for Social Affairs, Simone Veil, to study a 1970 drugs law, has made some remarkable observations and recommendations.

The commission was asked whether the distinction between hard and soft drugs should be upheld. The commission judged that "one can simply state that drugs are more or less dangerous", with cannabis being classified among the least dangerous. By 9 out of 17, a majority voted in favour of the decriminalisation of the use and possession of small amounts of quantities. There are 4 to 5 million estimated marijuana consumers in France.

The commission members which voted in favour of decriminalisation proposed:

- \* prohibiting the consumption of marijuana under 16 years of age;
- \* prohibiting the consumption in public places;
- \* strengthening the laws against driving whilst intoxicated by the use of cannabis;
- \* creating misdemeanor laws dealing with cannabis intoxicated individuals;
- \* strictly banning the use of marijuana by public safety professionals, such as flight controllers, airline pilots etc.

The nine members of the commission that favour changing the laws went on to say: "If there is no deterioration in the situation over the next two years, we could envisage true, regulated commerce under strict control of the State," according to *Le Monde*.

- Nimbin News, April/May 1995

### **DOCTORS URGE CHECKS ON HERB MIX INGREDIENTS**

This was a headline in the *Northern Star* of Saturday May 6. The article read:

The Australian Medical Association has warned consumers to beware of herbal preparations which do not list their ingredients, because many may contain toxic chemicals and drugs.

AMA Qld spokesman Dr David Molloy said recent laboratory analysis of a herbal mixture being used for fertility treatment revealed it possessed high levels of steroid hormones. The level may (an

interesting word 'may', it could mean it 'may not' just the same - E.) equal those in the oral contraceptive pill, yet the mixture was being used as a fertility drug and in early pregnancy. (It's absolutely impossible for plants to contain human hormones!! - Elle)

Doctors were concerned about the insufficient labelling of ingredients in herbal medicines. "We fear that toxic chemicals and drugs like antibiotics, arsenic and lead are sometimes used in common herbal remedies", Dr. Molloy said. He also said that these toxic substances had been found to have abnormal effects and some herbs have been found to cause liver and kidney problems.

I guess doctors would know all about chemicals and toxic medicines, since thousands of people in their care die each year of poisoning by prescription drugs.

I agree that any sort of medicine should be labelled with the ingredients and also that herbal medicine is potent stuff and should be used wisely, but I wonder if the good doctor is a bit confused about herbal and homoeopathic medicine. Lead and arsenic are very effectively and safely used in homoeopathy. -Elle

### **BLACK TEA FULL OF ANTI-OXIDANTS**

Lately we've read a lot about the benefits of green tea as an anti-oxidant. New studies show that black tea has the same health benefits. Green tea has more of one type of anti-oxidant, called catechins, than black tea. This helps prevent cancer and protects arteries from clogging. But black tea has a variety of other types of anti-oxidants that are just as powerful. The research was done by Robert Nicolosi, professor of clinical sciences and tea researcher at the University of Massachusetts. The research also shows that there is evidence that anti-oxidants in black tea may be stronger than vitamin E, and that black tea may prevent formation of, and help break up dangerous blood clots.

*The Herbal Connection #4/4*

### **LIFE BELONGS TO GOD**

In the US, Catholics, Protestants, Jews and Muslims have formed a coalition to lobby the government and stop the patenting of genetically engineered lifeforms. They say they're not against the research per se, but that companies should not be able to own life. They maintain that all life belongs to God. This is one view of the often conservative and right wing religious groups that I'm sure most of us can agree with.

### **GENETIC ENGINEERING TRYING TO STEAL ORGANICS' NAME**

The first and most immediate threat of Genetic Engineering (GE) is where the biotech industry influences government to amend organic standards to include transgenics as additives in organic foods. If this happens, organics would lose its distinctiveness and down the track would undoubtedly be subsumed into industrial agriculture as another genetically engineered niche product.

Already in Europe, industry allies in the European Commission are attempting to merge organics with GE. The matter is currently being contested in the High Court of Europe by the European Parliament. Another reaction was by the International Federation of Organic Agricultural Movements





(IFOAM) which outrightly rejected genetic engineering.

This takeover attempt all relates to image. Organics has a gold-mine image of clean, green, healthy produce and lifestyle; it also represents a viable competitor getting stronger every day. Conversely, the image of GE is very tarnished. It has a huge public relations problem. Valid market survey data from Europe and America and other events show consumers are very averse to designer foods.

The appropriate response is for every consumer, eco-agricultural group and farmer to reject genetic engineering as being incompatible to organics, as have IFOAM and Australian organic groups.

Second, the organics, permaculture and bio-dynamic movements together need to take the lead and actively challenge the propaganda and plans of the biotechnology industry. A strong network is needed between all groups concerned about GE; the organics movement needs to make linkages with the broader environmental and consumer movements. Key representatives need to define common ground and then adopt a working group approach, just like the GE industry, which has been highly successful in the policy terrain.

*Extracts from an article by Richard Hindmarsh in Permaculture International Journal, #55.*

#### LANDMARK CASE

The European Court of Justice has begun hearing the arguments of the European Parliament in its legal action against the European Commission concerning genetic engineering and organic agriculture.

The International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) is supporting the demand that organic agriculture be kept free of genetic engineering.

The Parliament claims the Commission has de facto amended the EU Regulation on "organic production of agricultural products and indications referring thereto" when it added the category of genetically modified microorganisms to the "positive list" of items which are allowed to be used in the production of food labelled as organic.

The court ruling is not expected for some months.

- Acres Australia #2/6

#### OTHER BODIES SEEKING AQIS ACCREDITATION

The Tasmanian Organic-Dynamic Producers Co-op (TOP) has applied for AQIS accreditation. Alan Blankett, a foundation member of the co-op said that members must be certified. He said: "We have our own certification system in place and all members, irrespective of membership of any other approved certifying organisation, must be certified by TOP".

Meanwhile Hassel & Co, the business

that conducted the recent organic survey, are applying for accreditation as an organic certification body. Sandy Fritz, one of the originators of NASAA, has acted as their consultant during the process.

NASAA and BFA have reached agreement on certifying reciprocity on a case by case basis.

NASAA has also had formal talks on this sort of arrangement with the New Zealand Biological Producers and Consumers Council, the principle organic certification body across the Tasman.

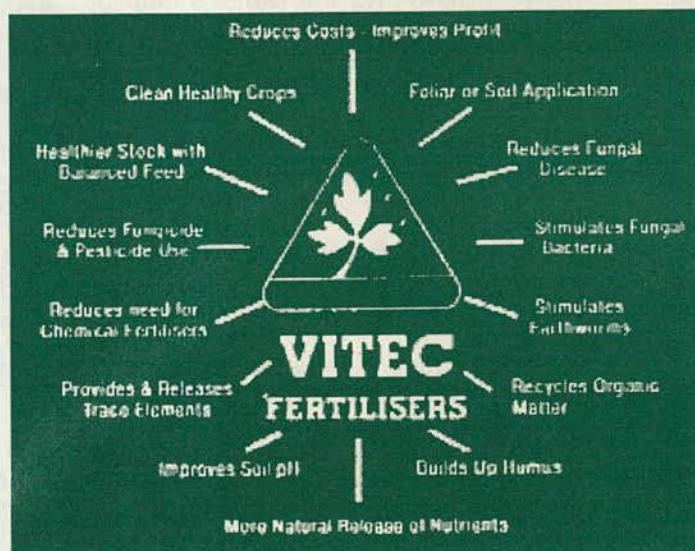
-All via ACRES AUSTRALIA #2/6

*To think that we have approached NASAA executives several times on the same matter and have never even been considered worthy of any discussion!!*

-Elle

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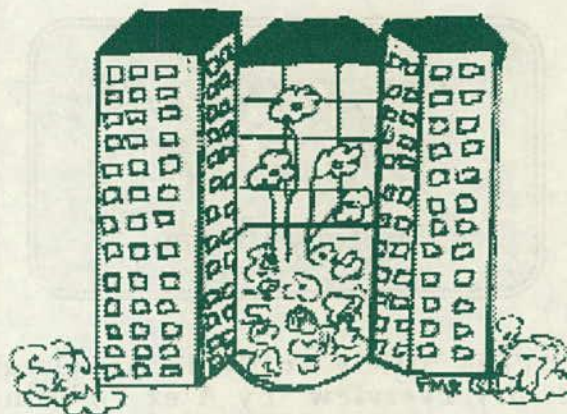
## *Big horses are soft on soil but don't play tag with one*

I BELIEVE it was Alex Podolinsky who gave the best example of the soil compacting problems of a tractor. He asked people to visualise their soft flower bed after a heavy tractor wheel had run over it. His point was that, for thousands of years, the heaviest weight ever placed on our farming soils was the hoof of a draught horse. (*Nowadays, some farmers cram a few hundred horses into a machine the size of a barn - and wonder why they have a hard pan.*) The heavy horse era had past when I started jackerooing. Even the stockhorse was being replaced by noisy, unreliable motorbikes. But I had a fascination with the big, feather-footed beasts from photographs I had seen of teams delving boredrains or hitched up to wagonloads of wool.

Recently, I saw the real thing during the annual Heavy Horse Field Days at Gatton. Clydesdales, Shires, Percherons, Friesians - you name it, they were there. Gentle giants of things dragging sleds, hauling wagons, driving chaff cutters, towing mowers and pulling ploughs.

One of the highlights was watching the blacksmith's competition. Five teams of people - a blacksmith, a farrier and a forge tender - had one hour to make a horse-shoe, flatten a hoof and fit the shoe to the horse. I was agog when all the blacksmiths were handed was a piece of flat, half-inch iron bar. It wasn't even bent in a u-shape! There followed a fascinating sport where bars were thrown into the coke forge, dragged out red-hot, belted furiously with huge hammers and thrown back into the forge to reheat before repeating the process. While this was taking place, the farrier had picked up a horse's hoof the size of a large dinner plate and was rasping it flat. Amid all the clanging of anvils and roaring of forges, the giant recipients of these new shoes were standing quietly with a slightly bemused look on their faces. From the horse's viewpoint, the whole event must have looked slightly farcical - humans scurrying around, sweating, rushing to the horse to see if the shoe would fit, then running back to the anvil for more pounding and shaping. Finally the new shoe was nailed on, the winners named and the draught horses led back to a serene stable to contemplate the endless mysteries of the human race.

Heavy horses really must have the patience of Job to have worked alongside farmers for a few thousand years. And apart from their brute power, it must have been their inquisitive personality and the playful twinkle in their eye which attracted the human to them in the first place. That attraction



## **PADDOCK ON TOP**

**BY KENRICK RILEY**

has tempted me to try my hand at ploughing a small paddock with a horse. The low compaction is attractive. And walking behind a plough is a great lesson in soil science, being able to feel and smell the health of the soil - something not possible from high up in an air-conditioned cabin. The slow ploughing speed should be better for soil structure and a horse does not need roll bars fitted for safety. They are also non-polluting and don't need a separate garage or expensive spare parts.

There are a few drawbacks of course. One does not have to walk around the farm on a cold morning to "catch" a tractor. The horse's gearbox still does not come with an adequate reverse. And a tractor is not in the habit of suddenly taking off over rows of crops cutting a swathe with a laden sled. On the other hand, a draught horse's broad back is the ideal platform for my partners to begin their riding lessons on. A horse ride is still one of the most comfortable and relaxing methods of checking the boundary fences and waters. And if I consider taking up polocrosse again in the veteran's class for Bangalow, I should be reasonably assured of a smooth passage to the goalposts on an animal as big as my opponent's horse float. A pony won't argue with a clumper!

Having a couple of big horses around the farm will also provide some manure for the vegie garden and control some of our rampant pasture. Another advantage is that horses don't wallow in dams and they don't walk in single file making cow-pads which turn into gully erosion. And they may double as nice pets. Unlike dogs, they don't bark, they don't eat tinned food and they don't need to be tied up on the chain. They don't hunt the native fauna that cats seem to relish. And the owners can go away for a week without arranging a pet motel. But remember, they are big. As, followers of Footrot Flats will know, never play tag with a frolicking Clydesdale!





## **CERTIFIED ORGANIC**

**by Tony Ullman**

The article entitled "An Organic Industry Pverview" by Alex Podolinski printed in the last HERB GROWER, raised some points of interest.

I am sure many growers share Mr. Podolinsky's concerns over the rising level of bureaucracy within the organic industry.

We at OHGA are very aware of the ludicrous situation which which we are faced. Anyone without any prior knowledge or training may purchase an unlimited quantity of lethal chemicals and spray them all over their crops and into the environment with virtually no regulations whatsoever. But those who cultivate crops by the encouragement of natural processes instead of using poisons are required to pay for the privilege.

Surely a more sensible arrangement would be to exempt the organic grower, who can not possibly be polluting the environment, from the red tape and expense and put that burden of bureaucratic control onto those who are using chemicals despite the ever increasing mountain of evidence as to where this is leading the environment. It would be interesting if all chemicals used during cultivation and harvest were required to be listed on food product packaging.

OHGA, as most of you know, is a grower based organisation and our certification system was put in place to assist our members in promoting their produce, even though a number have their properties certified as a moral statement rather than for financial gain.

As far as OHGA is concerned, our total bureaucracy consists of yours truly and a certification sub committee, and we believe that we make every effort to keep everything as simple and straight forward as possible within the guidelines of the National Standards.

I do not for a moment claim to possess a detailed knowledge of Bio-dynamics. My research into the subject is at present restricted to Rudolf Steiner's original lectures (given in 1924), plus the two volumes of introductory lectures by Mr. Podolinsky. My intention is to grasp some of the philosophy behind the system, not to gain any expertise in its practice.

What I did learn, however, is that Bio-dynamics deals with levels of subtlety and understanding, which far exceeds that required for organic cultivation as defined by OPAC. I can well understand why it takes several years to become a registered Bio-dynamic grower, as this can only happen when a grower can successfully demonstrate the application of Mr. Steiner's system on his or her property.

Organics is an ongoing learning process for us all, maybe even more so for a Bio-dynamic farmer. I feel that we should view our national certification system as an evolving process also. This is only the starting point and almost definitely will not be the end result. The certification system does ensure that a set of basic guidelines have been followed, thereby providing an assurance to the consumer that the produce they are buying with an organic label is not loaded with poisons, and has been grown with, at the very least, a minimal impact on the environment. This assurance is in essence the primary aim of the National Standards, according to the documentation, and I feel that we achieve it reasonably well, even if we do have some red tape to contend with.

Anyone wanting or waiting to be  
certified in W.A. won't have to wait  
much longer.

We now have an inspector there who  
will do the farm visits.

Please contact Tony on 066 - 216397 to  
get it under way.

### **The KOALA TEA COMPANY Pty Ltd**

has won the NRE Excellence in  
Business awards 1995 in the category  
of New Business.

The company wants to thank  
all those associated with it.  
So a big heartfelt thank you to our  
suppliers of herbs, our production  
staff and the public who are  
supporting us. We hope you keep  
enjoying our teas!

*Howard, Elle and Freya Rubin.*





# REPORT ON THE HERB CONFERENCES

by Howard Rubin

I recently attended two very interesting and quite diverse conferences.

The first was organised by the National Herbalists Association of Australia, and held at a simply beautiful venue in Collaroy, North Sydney, while the other was organised by the Department of Agriculture and held at the Agricultural College Tocal, in Paterson NSW.

The Herbalists International Conference, brought together a unique collection of international speakers who spoke to an estimated group of 500 participants on herbal therapeutics. I was the only speaker who spoke on the actual growing of the herbs.

I was most impressed with the conference organisation, the expert handling of just about every aspect of it, and the depth of information contributed by the speakers. In attendance, to name just a few were:

Amanda McQuade Crawford (USA) who spoke about herbalism and HIV/AIDS, Hein Zeylstra (Holland) cancer, Dr Hans Reuter (Germany) on hypericum, Dr Ajay Saluja (India) herbs for fertility, Edward Alstat (USA) on lomatium and cornsilk, Dr Lyall Williams (UK) on candida albicans.

The Aussies were well represented by a group of excellent speakers including Dorothy Hall, Dennis Stewart, Michael Schubert, Assunta Hunter, Kerry Bone, Cliff Ellyett, and Raymond Khoury.

The topics which I choose for my speech was not about how to use the herbs, but why these herbs are good for us.

All too often herbalists are concerned only with the phytotherapeutic principles of herbalism. Today's modern herbalists have lost sight of the real teacher of herbalism, Mother Nature herself.

By growing, and examining and empirically testing the herbs, we can come to a much better appreciation of our art.

Herbalists and herb growers must both realise that one group cannot exist without the other.

Organic growing produces healthy soil, healthy soil produces good plants, good plants produce the finest quality herbal medicine. The chain must be maintained.

So why do plants produce active ingredients? Part of the answer has to lie in the reason why the plant produces an alkaloid. Alkaloids are basically poisons, produced by plants as a natural defence mechanism. We as people have mobility. We can flee

from predators, while plants are fixed to the earth by their roots. Their only form of defence is to produce a deterrent, which in most cases is an alkaloid poison. Warning signs in the form of red berries or leaves say: eat me and suffer the consequences!

These alkaloids have been used by mankind to cure or relieve many of our ailments.

These were some of the points that I touched upon in my speech.

The most interesting session was a late night quiz, to identify, from slides, the very herbs that the herbalists have been prescribing. It is perhaps needless to tell you the result, but most of them should be sent out into the fields to really study their craft.

Comparing this conference to the Department of Agriculture conference is not a real fair comparison.

This one was organised with the best of intentions, however it fell well short of the mark.

The major flaw was that the organisers did not do their homework, and were not really in a position to organise a herbal gathering. As we all know, the Department of Agriculture has very little understanding of the herb growing industry, and even less of organics.

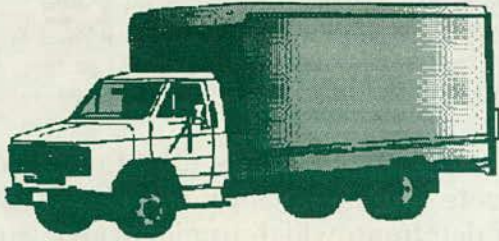
The choice of speakers was a shotgun approach to try to bring together as many different elements as possible. Unfortunately, it did not work. There were too many participants who came for real information and who were fed ambiguous talk. Very little real info was passed on. We even heard from RIRDC not knowing the existence of our industry body! The real players in our industry weren't even invited, or if they were, declined to attend. Essential oils, who already have their annual conference, had half of the presentations. I originally thought we were to bring the Department of Agriculture up to speed on our industry. I had no idea that there were to be public participants.

Here I waved the organics flag and saw once again that the Dept. of Ag. has absolutely no understanding of organics. Of course I heavily promoted OHGA and took lots of membership folders for distribution.

Many of the participants have since become new members and we welcome you all to our family. Lets hear from you, our letters to the editor column is just waiting for your comments.







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## HERB AND GARDEN COTTAGE TOUR OF AMERICA

A 16 day fully escorted tour of Washington DC, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts and San Francisco.

Discover the delights of herbs in America with Barbara Wickes, past president of the Queensland Herb Society and well known cottage garden enthusiast. Susanna Reppert from 'The Rosemary House', Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, will be leading the tour from Washington. Founding owner Bertha Reppert will be joining part of the tour, giving workshops and presenting videos.

Bertha has been in the herbal business for over 25 years and through her seminars and publication of many books has been a significant contributor to the American herbal scene. Daughter Nancy will be supplying many of the meals from her wonderful herbal restaurant "Sweet Remembrances".

26 August - 11 September 1995

Cost: \$4995

For further info, contact Barbara Wickes on  
07 - 378 2075.



### BOOK REVIEW

#### THE GOOD GIFT GUIDE

Creative Gift Giving For All Occasions

by Alison Pearl

Simon & Schuster, 152 pages, \$16.95

This little gem of a book has absolutely nothing to do with herb growing. The only connection it may have is that Alison, the author, is a certified OHGA member of some five years and a personal friend. And as we are all regularly faced with the dilemma of buying presents, I thought why not do a review for the HERB GROWER.

I have known Alison for almost as long as I've lived in Oz, which is over eight years.

She is a person who lives for shopping. She will drive for hours to go to a worthy sale. When she spots a bargain she will leave no stone unturned to make it hers, not usually for herself mind, there is always someone in need of a present in Alison's life.

She has shopped in all corners of the world, in kasbahs and souks, in shopping malls and craft markets. Alison knows everything there is to know about buying presents. That's why I was not surprised when she announced a year or so ago that she was commissioned to write a gift guide.

You will find the book full of great tips. One I particularly like is to create 'a good gift treasure chest'. Her advice here is to designate a cupboard or box for little things that may be appropriate as future gifts. A great idea, as I'm always spotting lovely little items that are of absolutely no use to me and that I therefore can't justify buying. Now I can!

A 'good gift file' is another really good idea. Alison suggests creating your own gift encyclopaedia, filled with ads, photo's and catalogues, as well as your own revelations, which won't go astray when filed away in the 'encyclopaedia' rather than in your head.

The book contains chapters with headers such as: Inevitable Events (Christmas, Valentine's Day, Mothers and Fathers Day and the like), Unpredictable Occasions (Times of Sorrow, Happy Days, Divorce etc.), Passionate Pursuits (Gifts for the Great Indoors, and, Gifts for the Great Outdoors) and many others.

There is no doubt about it, this lady knows about giving gifts. If you want to avoid stress the next time you have to think up a present, then this is the book for you. And if you have a rellie or friend who appears at your festive days with really off presents, this book will make an excellent one for them!

- Elle



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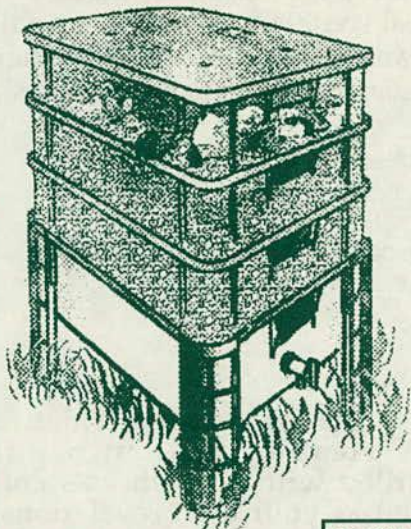
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**PHARMACOLOGISTS acknowledge  
value of GINSENG**

Some of the ancient claims for the herb ginseng may be valid. American researchers are examining ginseng and finding it has chemicals that indeed have strong biological activity.

Dr Tony Lee, professor of pharmacology at Southern Illinois School of Medicine, says that ginsenosides, compounds in panax ginseng, are antioxidants. That means, among other things, that they help protect cells from overall damage that can bring on disease and aging.

He has found that the ginseng chemicals specifically trigger release of chemicals that help relax muscle cells. That means, he says, ginseng might help dilate blood vessels, perhaps lowering blood pressure and improving blood circulation.

Moreover, Dr Lee says ginseng compounds stimulate nerve cells that affect the penile artery. Thus, he thinks this stimulation might help a man maintain an erection. This gives some credibility to the age-old claim that ginseng is an aphrodisiac, although it is still not proven, he says. *(that should not be too difficult to do! -Elle)*

- via The Herbal Connection #4/4

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## 1995/1996 RENEWAL OF OHGA MEMBERSHIP DUE

The OHGA membership year comes to an end at the 31st of August.

That means that it's time for us all to renew. Already?, I can hear you say. For the many new members who have joined, and most of them paid for a whole year only recently (but got all the back issues of the year), this must be very puzzling.

Let me try to explain. When OHGA was officially started, it was September 1987. So the OHGA year has always run from September 1 to August 31. Successive committees have tried to change that, but it proved to be just too difficult. Only the other day it was once more brought up in committee, but again it was put into the too hard basket, so we decided to put it down to tradition!

The year has certainly gone by very quickly and it's been quite a busy and eventful one, with lots of issues to keep us occupied, what with AQIS, the survey, getting the HERB GROWER computerised etc. In the five years that I have been editor, our magazine has grown from 3 single pages, stapled together, to what we have today. It's good to see that it's appreciated and that you participate more and more, especially with letters. Are there any

members out there who have other things to contribute? Cartoons, articles, newsy bits (I'd love a gossip column!), illustrations etc.? Any input would be very welcome.

On the reverse side of your renewal form you will find a bit of space for comments on our mag. Please use it. I will take your comments to heart and try to fulfill your wishes.

Another issue we'd like your opinion on is the OPAC / AQIS question. What do you think? If domestic organic standards don't happen, is it worth staying in it? Would the money we have to pay AQIS be better spent, perhaps, on promotion? Would you remain part of OHGA if we were no longer government accredited? Please, take a few minutes to think about it and let us know.

**Your membership renewal should be in before August 15.**

This is in time for our treasurer to get you all on disk and print up the address labels for the September/October issue of HERB GROWER.

The best thing for you to do is to send the form below and your cheque off immediately, before you forget and miss out.

P.S. The committee decided a separate renewal would be better, so you'll have two forms. Perhaps one can be used by a friend?

- Elle



### ORGANIC HERB GROWERS OF AUSTRALIA Inc.

P O Box 6171, South Lismore 2480 Phone/fax 066 - 291057

PLEASE FIND ENCLOSED MY CHEQUE (payable to OHGA) FOR  
MY OHGA MEMBERSHIP FOR 1995/1996

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

P.code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_

Please tick appropriate box:

- |                          |                                |          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|----------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | JOINING FEE (new members only) | \$ 10.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | AUSTRALIAN MEMBERSHIP          | \$ 40.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | CONCESSION MEMBERSHIP          | \$ 30.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | BUSINESS MEMBERSHIP            | \$ 50.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | OVERSEAS MEMBERSHIP            | \$ 65.00 |

Please see other side and use it, if you want .....





# **toxic alert!**

**Do you live near a polluting factory,  
mine or other activity?**

**Do you work for a company which illegally  
dumps toxic waste?**

**Do you work for a government who has tried  
to protect a corporate polluter?**

## **HELP GREENPEACE PROTECT THE PLANET!**

**Blow the whistle on a corporate polluter.  
All reports are taken in the strictest  
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### **Things to look out for:**

**Illegal Storage Areas:** There are between 10,000 to 20,000 tonnes of the very toxic substance polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) in Australia, yet the government only knows where less than 1000 tonnes is located. If you know of PCB storage, report it to Greenpeace.

**Toxic Dumping:** Sometimes companies find it cheaper to dump toxic waste in the bush rather than dispose of it properly. If you know of such dumpings, report it to Greenpeace.

**Illegal Discharge:** Some companies release wastes into the environment on weekends and late at night to avoid detection by government agencies. If you work for one of these companies and are sick of them polluting the planet, report it to Greenpeace.

**Toxic Trade:** Some companies find it too expensive to dispose of their waste in Australia and so export it overseas, often to developing countries for disposal in not very environmentally friendly ways.

**Dead Animals:** Often the first sign of a pollution problem is dead or sick animals, fish or birds. If you live near an industrial facility or mine, and you regularly or repeatedly find these symptoms in your local area, report them to Greenpeace.

**Documents:** If you work for a government department or company and come across documentation of environmental pollution, pass it on to Greenpeace.

**Greenpeace will collate all the information received and pressure government departments to do their jobs.**

**Send any information to:  
Greenpeace Melbourne Office,  
24-26 Johnstone Street,  
Fitzroy 3065.  
Fax: 03 - 415 1233**

**Please use this side to tell us your opinion about, wishes for and possibly contributions (i.e. stories, illustrations, cartoons or other) you can make to our HERB GROWER.**

**What do you think of OPAC / AQIS?**

**Do you feel the AQIS accreditation is of use to you personally?**

**Do you think we should remain a part of it?      YES / NO**







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- \* We also stock environmentally safe insect sprays for the house, garden and pets.
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# O.H.G.A. & HERB GROWER

**YES! I would like to become a member of OHGA and receive the HERB GROWER.**

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\_\_\_\_\_ P.code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Fax \_\_\_\_\_

Please find enclosed payment for:

- |                              |  |           |
|------------------------------|--|-----------|
| <input type="checkbox"/>     | Joining fee ( <i>once only payable</i> ) | \$ 10     |
| <input type="checkbox"/>     | Australian membership                    | \$ 40     |
| <input type="checkbox"/>     | Concession membership                    | \$ 30     |
| <input type="checkbox"/>     | Business membership                      | \$ 50     |
| <input type="checkbox"/>     | Overseas membership                      | \$ 65     |
| <br><input type="checkbox"/> | <br>Application for certification        | <br>\$ 10 |

total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Please note: OHGA membership expires on 31 August of each year.**  
**Your membership will start on September 1.**

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## HERB GROWER ADVERTISING RATES

from January 1995

Full Page	½ Page	¼ Page
<i>casual</i>		
\$75	\$55	\$35
<i>regular (3 or more consecutive issues)</i>		
\$60	\$45	\$25

### Backpage:

Casual B/W	\$100	Colour	n/a
Regular B/W	\$ 80	Colour	\$175

## CLASSIFIEDS

Classified ads of up to 4 lines are free to members of OHGA.

Others pay \$2.50 per line payable when placing the ad.

(There are a maximum of 40 letters, incl. spaces, on one line.)

**COPY FOR ALL ADS MUST BE IN AT THE 1st OF THE MONTH PRIOR TO PUBLICATION.**



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He will ask you to send him a dried sample for evaluation.





herb & flower

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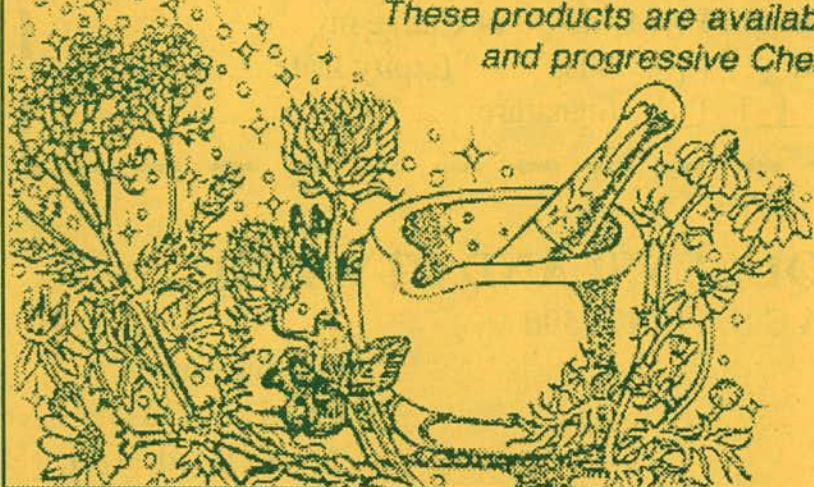
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Sonic Bloom Queensland Pty. Ltd. or charge my

[ ] Bankcard      [ ] Mastercard      [ ] Visa      Expiry Date: .....

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## Graeme Sait:

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