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Australia one of the worst bio-pirates

According to the Canada-based Rural Advancement Foundation International (RAFI), at least four Australian state governments, as well as other national public and private research institutes, are routinely pirating the indigenous knowledge of farming communities around the world.

RAFI accuses the Australian agencies of making "cowboy patent claims" on farmer-bred plant varieties from Brazil to India. RAFI's exec director, Pat Roy Mooney, says that several dozen plant "patent" claims listed by Canberra's Plant Breeder's Rights Office are "a clear rip-off of the genius of others. In most of these cases the Australians appear to have done nothing more than select and multiply somebody else's seed and then slap a PBR (plant patent) monopoly on them".

The controversy began in early December at a UN meeting in Rome when RAFI first received reports that two agencies, Agriculture Western Australia, and the Grains Research and Development Corp. (GRDC), had applied for intellectual property monopolies on two chickpea varieties originally from farmers in India and Iran. The varieties were sent by ICRISAT - the internationally funded research centre in Hyderabad, India. Following further investigation RAFI contacted ICRISAT and the centre moved speedily to force the Aussie agencies to drop their claims in January.

Neth Dano of the Manila based Southeast Asian Regional Institute for Community Education says: "The Australian agencies are acting like kleptomaniacs. Who gave them the right to pirate and patent the genius of farmers from Asia to Africa? Farmers do the work, but the Australian agencies get the royalties."

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*Letters and Name Change Debate, Gardening by the Moon,
The Life of Riley, Lolo's Page, Lots of Genetics Stories*



The
Koala TeaTM
Company

Echinacea Herbal Tea



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Certified Organic
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*Available at Woolworths
and leading healthfood stores*



There was a time, not very long ago, when there were lots of different kinds of stories to be found for inclusion in 'This and That', but these days they all have to do with genetics. I get sick of it myself sometimes, and that's just reading about it, not even eating the stuff (I hope), but the world suddenly seems to turn around chemicals, scientists and multinationals. I get inundated with email from all sorts of sources around the globe. I must be in the network. Sometimes, when I switch on the computer in the morning and check the email and find another ten or so environmentally relevant messages, all really valid and important, I despair. Is there nothing funny or nice to report? I guess not. Things look pretty grim. And this government becomes more of an embarrassment every day, just read that bio-piracy article. You know where to protest: John Anderson, Minister for Primary Industries, Parliament House, Canberra 2600.

I will try, for the benefit of newcomers and members who haven't read their mags, to give a short history of the OFA (Organic Federation of Australia). It started with a Canberra conference two years ago, organised by two disenfranchised ex NASAA directors who had made friends with government people and who probably thought they could head the organic industry from cozy offices in the Dept. of Primary Industries. When we were invited to attend the two day workshop, we were completely oblivious of its purpose, but all expenses were paid so we (Howard and I) went. It seemed like a good opportunity to get together with all the other organic people. It soon turned into the stupidest exercise I've ever encountered, with all sorts of adolescent questions and forming of little groups etc., the way these New Agers do things. Rather than uniting, the result was an immediate division of the industry, quite possibly the purpose of the organisers. Divide and conquer, right?

Next a Brisbane consultancy firm got the job of sending out questionnaires to organic industry members. Since almost the same questions had been put to the industry a few years prior to that, and quite a few OHGA members had objected to participating in it, OHGA didn't take part in this survey. Besides, it really was no different from that previous survey so as far as we were concerned a complete waste of time and tax payers money (\$35,000!). In the end a total of only 27% of the forms were returned, a sure sign that the majority of organic people thought the same. Anyway, this meagre response was seen by the perpetrators as a clear mandate from the organic industry in Australia to set up an umbrella body, which became the OFA.

Of course a real umbrella body, a real federation, would not be a bad thing. But the strange thing is that at OFA they won't recognise the certification organisations as the industry leaders. They won't recognise that OPAC - the Organic Produce Advisory Committee - made up of members of the certification bodies and some depts. of Ag and AQIS personnel, have done all the work in organics, as far as setting up organic standards for export and that the certification bodies are not only the leaders, but also the people who make sure that organic really is organic. And all that at our own expense, without reimbursement for all the time we put in reading all the stacks of government papers that are sent our way all the time, making submissions, and travelling to and staying in Canberra twice a year. The government has constantly refused all our requests for reimbursement for travel expenses. Not only that, we also have to pay AQIS a yearly fee for auditing of our certification work, and a yearly fee for "all the work they do for organics".

So, as far as the OFA goes, certification bodies are completely irrelevant, their organisation is for individuals only. To be a full member, you need to be certified. We've tried to point out that the word "Federation" means "an association of independent organisations coming together for a common goal". A group of individuals form a club or an association. In the meantime, their attitude is becoming clearer, since some people in their club have let slip the idea that the OFA could become the one certification body in Australia. Aha, hence only certified members, they'd have them on their register already.

And how does the government, to whom for some eight years we have been so cooperative, instructive and advisory, see it all? Well, for one, they're funding the OFA. They also take them on trips, to New Zealand for instance, where they're apparently advising the government there on the setting up organic standards! Also, when AQIS receives organic enquiries, they no longer pass them on to the relevant certification bodies, but refer them to the OFA. And that while we are paying AQIS for their "organic work"!!

You may now wonder what the certification bodies are doing about it. Are we laying down and playing dead? This is another interesting thing: you may remember that NASAA wanted to amalgamate with the BFA, and that a leadership change in the BFA stopped that process. Jan Denham, NASAA's chair person, is one of the leaders of the OFA, and NASAA are the only certification body to be in favour of the OFA. The BDRI (Demeter), the BFA and we at OHGA will not participate, unless the structure changes dramatically and the importance of the certification bodies is recognised. As one of my correspondents asked: Is the OFA NASAA's plot for world domination?? He said it, but I sincerely hope not!



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

Mag send-off volunteers needed

Your editor would be eternally grateful if we could assemble a magazine send off team of say, four people. I'm always working hard to get the issue off to the printers on time, who work equally hard to get the finished product off to the OHGA office as soon as possible. Now here is where a delay often happens.

We try to get all of the committee together for the monthly OHGA business meeting, where we then stick labels on envelopes, slip the mags in and sort them to postcode, ready for Doug to take them to the post office.

However, it's been happening too often lately that committee members have not been able to make it at send-off time and the mags have been sitting in boxes in the OHGA office, and you have been getting your issue much too late for my liking, and yours probably too.

If you are prepared to put in two hours tops every other month, give me a ring (291057).

Thank you!

OHGA Certified produce labels

We had a communication from Victoria regarding OHGA certified produce labels. OHGA has always had produce stickers for boxes available. If you need them, contact Doug in the office who'll be able to tell you how much they cost etc. They're rather big (150 x 210mm), but if there are enough people who want smaller ones, I'm sure we'll be able to print those with no problems. Just let us know what you want and need.

Membership renewal

**It's that time of the year again.
With your magazine you'll find a
membership renewal form.**

**Please return it a.s.a.p
with your cheque.**

**You need to be an up-to-date member
for your certification to be valid
and to keep receiving the magazine.**

Why put it off?

Send your renewal form in today.





OHGA's mail

Dear Mr Andrews,

Thank you for forwarding the OHGA membership and organic certification information as requested. It was interesting and useful, however, I have some questions which I hoped you could help me with.

With regard to the 'conversion' period, in a case where the parcel of land for which certification is sought has not had any activity other than some grazing for at least 10-15 years, is the conversion period necessarily 3 years, or can this period be shortened if soil tests are negative? Or is it that the growers are considered to be also 'in conversion' during the 3 years?

Best regards, Jelle Hilkemeijer, Jaspers Brush NSW.

This question crops up regularly. In year 1 the farm and farmer are 'under supervision', if all is well years 2 & 3 are 'in conversion to organic'. If, at the 4th year's inspection, the organic inspector sees that both the farm and the farmer are truly organic, Grade A status will be granted.

Being organic is not just about clean soils. It is a method of growing and soil improving which has to be learned. You would not expect a school kid to come away with an HSC after one year?

That said there are, as always, exceptions to the rule. A non-certified organic farmer, who has worked with her/his land for a number of years already, and who can demonstrate organic knowledge and experience and can show an obviously flourishing organic farm, will most probably not need to go through all of the 3 years in conversion period. The inspector will then recommend to the certification committee that Grade A be granted sooner.

Elle,

You asked in the May-June issue of The Herb Grower for comments on the OFA logo concept.

Before talk of the logo, we assume the OFA has a plan of specific projects and a budget for the next twelve months. When will this information be revealed to certified farmers? Obviously there will also be detail of how the budget will be financed. Assuming the above information will be forthcoming, answers to the following questions then need to be supplied:

Why cannot AQIS approved certifiers supply the use of a national logo as part of the certification and fee process already in existence. Each certifier can make a contribution to the development cost of the logo.

Who would actually commission the design of the logo? Who would develop the logo? What is the design criteria? Who would decide this? How much would it cost? When would it be completed? Who would approve the final design submission - single person or committee? What would be the cost to use the logo? What controls would there be to make sure any licensing fees are not prohibitive to many farmers? Or would the logo be a

'mushroom' project? Or is the logo almost an excuse for the OFA to try and obtain a funding source?

The way the OFA appears to be tackling their projects doesn't seem to indicate the application of very much marketing and commercial experience!

Best regards, Llyn and Geoff Simmonds.

All very good questions Geoff. I guess the only ones who can answer them are the OFA folk. Membership to the organisation is open to certified growers and for anyone who is interested, the OHGA office has some membership forms which were sent to us. Apply to Doug if you want one. By the way, the co-chairman of OFA, Scott Kinnear, is on line. His email address is: organic@netspace.net.au He'd be the man to ask.

Dear Elle,

Re: OFA Correspondence on the subject of a single marketing logo for all Australian Organic Produce.

I believe that the one logo concept is the right way to go. There is 'big' confusion out in the general population. The proliferation of different logo's on various products and various claims of "organic" on every conceivable product, right down to 100% chemical cosmetics with "organic" on the label.

People don't know what is going on. One logo, on all Australian Organic produce would immediately solve a lot of problems. Then, if that logo "must" be on any Australian Organics product/service that would claim to be organic, that would solve a lot of the other problems. I don't believe that the one logo need be the end of the various certification bodies. Indeed, I believe they will become more relevant as specialist/crop certification bodies. I do have reservations about the "rules" and "conditions" that you showed in "Organic Matters". All that would need to be resolved. But the one logo idea is good. Whether or not OFA even plays a role is irrelevant. I think it should be on any inter-certifiers communications priority list until it is up. With industry control. By the way, who are OFA. From whence do they come? Thomas Walsh, Maidstone, Vic.

PS - Robyn Neeson's letter, re Bordeaux Mixture. I was under the impression it's OK. How toxic is copper sulphate?

In answer to the questions: Bordeaux Mixture (a mix of copper sulphate and slaked lime) is used against mildew and other fungal diseases. Used very sparingly and only as a last resort it should be okay, but the copper will build up in the soil if used regularly. And copper is very toxic. Condyl's crystals (potassium permanganate) is a lot safer for soil and plants. Seaweed spray or chive tea, and crop rotation in particular, are other good ways to combat fungi.

Regarding the OFA, I've written about them from the beginning, two years ago now and keep giving updates. Read the mag Thomas!

Re the one logo: I also think it is quite essential, or at least some mark of distinction or seal of approval that we'd all share. But it won't stop the phonies as long as there is no domestic legislation and that will be a long time coming, as far as the relevant government bodies are concerned. That shampoo company wouldn't like it, you see, nor Watties or any other multinational and they apparently rule!



Members' reactions and suggestions re name change

Quite a few members have contributed to this debate, with several new names put forward.

First a few letters:

Dear Folks at OHGA,

Thanks for a great organisation, friendly, helpful, informative. We joined the ranks of herb growers three years ago. After giving the other certifying bodies the 'once over', we joined OHGA, because it is unique in Australia. Run by herb growers, for herb growers. Some of our less fortunate herb growing pals joined other certifying bodies (poor souls). Is their President a herb grower, with the industry at heart? Do they receive a top rate herb growing magazine, with a well informed herbie editor? If they have a problem/query, can they chat with helpful herb growing Doug at the office? NO!

So why would OHGA members even consider changing anything. Even the name. Let's keep it uniquely Organic Herb Growers of Australia and leave the others to all be the same.

Cheers, Margaret & Eric Sanders, Crabtree, Tasmania.

Dear Elle,

We received our issue of The Herb Grower today and read your article about a name change. We, as in Thomas & I, think it is a great idea, as here in Victoria most people think OHGA is only for herbs. We are trying to educate them and as we are doing the Yarra Valley Expo this weekend, we shall put the question to a few of the masses for their reaction. I'll let you know the feedback and Thomas is thinking on a name.

Julie Walsh, HerbPharm, Maidstone, Victoria.

Dear OHGA,

I do think a change of name is a good idea. Hopefully it will attract more members but also the name of the organisation should be a reflection of its membership. OHGA seems to be attracting a wide diversity of members, so it is a good idea to broaden the title.

Thank you for a great magazine. -Jan Elsol

Some suggestions for a new name for OHGA:

Organic Growers of Australia - OGA

Organic Farmers of Australia - OFA (*woops!*)

Organic Herbs and Small Crops Australia (OHSCA)

Group Organic Australia - GOA

Organic Herb and Food Traders of Australia - OHFTA

Australian Organics - AO

Organics Australia - OA

Australian Organic Farmers and Horticulturalists - AOFH

Herbaceous Organics Association - HOA

Organic Farmers and Traders of Australia - OFTA

Organic Products of Australia - OPA

Dear Herbgrower team,

Congratulations on an excellent story about Ray Martin's 'A Current Affair' programme on Echinacea screened on the Channel 9 network on Monday, March 30, 1998. I would like to add my feelings on the matter, as I believe I should comment also on the inadequate research and inappropriate testing methods used and the irresponsible manner in which the conclusions were

presented.

I majored in Journalism at University where I was taught to fully research and investigate matters thoroughly before attempting to write a story. I was taught that ALL sides of a story should be presented with ALL the facts, in an unbiased, fair manner to enable the viewers to reach their own well-informed conclusions.

On the basis of the information presented in the Echinacea story, it would be impossible to have a well-informed opinion and both the public and the companies involved have been mistreated and the public misled. As your magazine pointed out, the story would appear to be part of an ongoing smear campaign to discredit natural medicines, in particular the herb Echinacea. As the testing was conducted solely on the root component of the plant, products using the whole plant or another species were presented as sub-standard. (In fact, 'A Current Affair' has been misguided and quite the opposite is true.) These companies were then portrayed as duping the public and Channel 9 would not give them the 'right of reply'.

As you pointed out, the products were tested for the level of alkylamides, but A Current Affair claimed that the testing was for 'Echinacea'. None of these manufacturers who base their products on the clinically-proven whole plant research, or another Echinacea species, were given the opportunity to explain their methods and the reasoning behind the process and their approach. This leads to an incredibly unbalanced situation, where anyone can criticise a product, dazzle the lay-person with meaningless research and then not allow the injured party (the supposed villain) to defend themselves.

Both Greenridge Botanicals and Blackmores Ltd., two highly regarded Australian companies with unquestionable ethics, operating under licence from the Therapeutic Goods Administration, fell into this category. These companies produce products complying with the highest therapeutic standards and have a proven track record of supplying efficacious remedies that obtain results. Just ask their loyal, satisfied customers or a committed health supplement retailer. These companies operate on high moral and ethical grounds, pride themselves on the quality of their products and are committed to bringing the Australian consumer the absolute best in natural healthcare. In short, if there was a better way of doing it, they would be doing it that way.

The sensationalist manner in which this programme was presented raises serious questions about their reporting techniques, their ethics and certainly damages the credibility of 'A Current Affair'. I am now left wondering about all the other stories they present and their accuracy, morality and fairness. Does Ray Martin, the presenter, have editorial control? Is he being duped by his researchers and producers? Or is it a case of 'never let the truth get in the way of a good story'?

Yours sincerely,

Mary MacDonald,

Greenridge Botanicals employee but written from a purely personal perspective.



MAKING COMPOST

Compost is an essential ingredient in any organic garden or farm. The National Standard for Organic and Bio-Dynamic Produce says:

"Sufficient organic material should be returned to the soil to increase, or at least maintain, humus content. Conservation and recycling of nutrients is a major feature of any organic farming system. The use of mineral fertilisers should be regarded as a supplement to recycling, not as a replacement".

Compost or humus is made slowly and gradually in nature, from decomposing animal and vegetable matter. Depending on the conditions, this can take years. We try and speed up that process by building compost heaps in an ideal location and adding the right mix of ingredients, so that in about three months we have humus to add to our garden beds. It is an art that has to be learned by trial and error. There is more to it than throwing your kitchenwaste and weeds in a corner of the garden, and hoping they'll turn themselves into humus in a couple of months.

First of all, we have to consider who does the job. The labourers are tiny organisms, bacteria and worms, so the size of the materials that you add to your heap is important. If you give them a whole treebranch to go to work on, it'll take them a very long time to get through it, but if you can shred that branch, they'll do it in a couple of weeks. I would strongly suggest that you go out and price mulchers and, if you can afford it, buy one. If you can't, start saving for one now. Buying a mulcher is easily the best investment I've made for my herb farm.

Essential ingredients

There are four essentials for the composting process to function: **Oxygen, Water, Warmth and Food**. These qualities need to be balanced for the micro-organisms to do their job. Too much, or too little, of one of the four will stop the process. Too much water will result in not enough oxygen and warmth. Too much oxygen means not enough moisture. Your heap should also have **the right pH**, which means that you have to add **lime**. Without it the heap is acidic and preservation, not breakdown of the materials, will result.

Location

Position your heap where you can get to it easily and regularly. Partial shade in summer is a good idea, or if that's not possible, handy to a tap because you'll want to stop it from drying out and will need to wet it regularly. Full winter sun is good. Shelter it from winds, and start it on bare earth, in a well draining spot. I built a bamboo enclosure, which has worked really well for several years now and looks kind of rustic too. If you do build a surround for the heap, it has to be large enough to comfortably turn the compost, with enough room for a maturing heap, a heap which you use, and a starter heap. And also an entrance for yourself and your wheelbarrow, of course.

Materials

No doubt you will have heard of the 25:1 Carbon/Nitrogen ratio. This is indeed quite important. This ratio is essential for the micro organisms, which use carbon for growth and nitrogen for protein. Since it's they that are actually creating the compost, we have to give them what they want.

Carbon is found in: wood, sawdust, nutshells, straw and hay, twigs, newspaper, wool, cotton etc. These materials will make up the bulk of your heap.

Nitrogenous materials are: manures, soft green weeds, lawn clippings, pea/bean clippings, kitchen waste, blood and bone, comfrey leaves and urine. The nitrogen will provide the heat.

You should build your heap as quickly as possible, not over a couple of weeks with a barrow of weeds and a bucket of kitchen scraps now and again. That way there'll never be enough material for the heap to really work. If you want to do it properly you'll either have to set aside some days for cutting weeds, twigs, branches and shredding them if you have a mulcher (you could hire or borrow one perhaps?), or buy in nut husks, sawdust, hay, straw, manure etc. to build a heap to at least a meter high and a meter wide to start off with. In three days, at the most, your heap should be steaming. If the temperature doesn't get up in that time, you'll have to add more nitrogenous materials like comfrey leaves and manure, or tell the men in your family to pee on it.

Getting the temperature up is not only important for microbial activity but also to sterilise weed seeds and kill pests, and pathogens, like E-coli, in manures.

Lime is another essential ingredient; a sprinkling is required about every 20 cm. If your heap starts smelling sour, it means that you haven't added enough. A heap with the right pH smells like a rainforest, and finished compost has a lovely sweet smell.

Herbs for better compost

Either fresh or dried, the following herbs have the reputation of being either good for the composting process, or of adding trace elements and minerals to your compost. Don't mix them, but insert them into separate holes in your heap:

comfrey, yarrow, chamomile, stinging nettle, dandelion flowers, valerian, thistles, borage, oak bark.

Plants to avoid

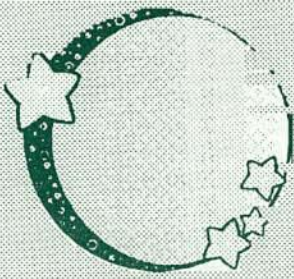
Although hardly ever mentioned by 'authorities' I have found, in my worm farm, that worms don't like any kind of citrus, or onion and garlic skins. Therefore I don't add these to my compost heap.

Herbs I avoid are any that can be made into sprays for caterpillars, or teas for worms, like wormwood, tansy and other artemisias. I may be wrong, but I reckon that earthworms won't like them either.

I hope that you'll really get stuck into composting. It's good fun and it feels great to give compost to your plants and watch them thrive. That's what organic growing is all about.

-Elle





GARDENING BY THE MOON

by
Elle Fikke-Rubin



JULY

17 Last Quarter.

18-22 Time for weeding and feeding.

If your area is not too frosty stonefruit trees like peaches, apricots and plums can be pruned before they start flowering; roses too should be pruned now and if you've been lazy earlier on, your perennial herbs like bush basil, oregano, thyme, rosemary and lavender may also need to be cut back. Don't cut as far as the woody stems as they may have trouble regenerating.

A good time to turn and add to your compost heap and to start a liquid manure with comfrey leaves, nettles or animal manures.

23 New Moon.

24-30 If not too cold, these are days for planting of leafy annuals like lettuces, cabbages, cresses, endive, silverbeet etc.

31 First Quarter.

AUGUST

1-7 A week to work with seedbearing and flowering annuals: marigolds, petunias, tagetes, peas, beans, and in warmer areas cucumbers, pumpkins, zucchinis, capsicum etc.

8 Full Moon.

9-14 Time for tubers, rootcrops and perennials: potatoes, rhubarb, asparagus, turnips, parsnips, carrots and beetroot can all be planted, but remember that rootcrops don't like a freshly manured soil. The soil also needs to be quite soft and friable to produce a good rootcrop (raised beds are best), and not too rich in nitrogen, so don't plant your carrots where you just had peas or beans growing. If you did, you'd end up with wonderful leaf growth and not enough root, which is what you grow them for. Root vegies need potash, calcium and phosphorus. If you do notice that your carrots or other root vegies become overly abundant in leaf, you will need to redress the balance by giving them potash in the form of woodash, seaweed, comfrey or bracken.

This is where crop rotation comes in.

Lawrence D. Hills, in his book 'Organic Gardening' (it really should be in every organic gardener's

library) recommends that you populate a bed in the following succession: potatoes - legumes - brassica's - roots - potatoes - legumes etc. etc. Each crop will have done something to the soil which is beneficial to the next one.

To deter underground pests it's also a good idea to interplant with some French or African marigolds (*Tagetes* spp).

Seeds of some perennial herbs can now also be started off, especially the ones that need some cold weather before germinating like echinacea, burdock and parsley.

Fruit trees and deciduous shrubs and ornamentals can now go in too.

15 Last Quarter.

16-22 Days for cultivation and odd jobs, like pruning shrubs that have finished flowering, mulching your strawberries, cutting back flowers and herbs, feeding up your beds with compost, blood and bone, metal dust, a layer of comfrey leaves or the like.

Take a pH test where your herbs or vegies are not performing the way you'd like and if it comes out below 6, you may need to add some lime or dolomite, although some vegies e.g. cucumbers, melons, potatoes, squashes, zucchini's, tomatoes and radishes like their soil on the acidic side.

Beetroot, broccoli, celery, cabbages, onions and silverbeet, on the other hand, like it sweet. It's worth reading up on if you're serious about growing your own food, as I think everyone with a bit of garden should be, in these days of gene-beans and chemicals.

22 New Moon.

23-29 If it's warmed up sufficiently, this is the time to plant or sow leafy annuals: lettuce, chard, oriental greens, cabbage, chicory, cresses, basil (if possible in your area) etc. All plants grown for their leaves need lots of nitrogen which is available in fresh horse and cow manures. I do not recommend using these manures fresh, but rather composted, or in a liquid manure form where they've been brewing in water for a week or so. Thinking back to crop rotation, the best way to provide the nitrogen



that your greens want is to sow them in a bed which has just been vacated by legumes, or which has had a leguminous green manure crop (vetches, clovers, alfalfa) dug into it.

30 First Quarter.

31 Time to again plant or sow seedbearing and flowering annuals.

SEPTEMBER

1-5 **It's spring!** All this week is for planting or sowing seedbearing and flowering annuals. In the flower department you could plant or sow calendula's, sunflowers, tagetes, lupins, poppies, nasturtiums, petunias, cosmos and other annuals. Annual seedbearing vegies are melons, cucumbers, zucchinis, squashes, tomatoes, pumpkins and lots more.

6 Full Moon.

7-12 Time to plant all sorts of perennials and rootcrops. Shrubs, trees, perennial flowers like carnations, begonias, salvias of which there are many to choose in all sorts of colours and they basically grow themselves, gerberas, kangaroo paw, daisies etc. etc.

And don't forget the perennial vegies like capsicums and chilies. Easy to grow, not too bothered by pests and beautiful to eat. Give them plenty of sun but not too much food. A top watering with epsom salts when they start

producing flowers will help these go on to become good fruit.

Hot chillies, dried and ground up, are not only an integral part in food from Mexico to Hungary, from Thailand to Oz and everywhere in between, but they also make a wonderful insect deterrent. As much as we like them, insects like ants, caterpillars and grubs hate chillies. Often it's enough to sprinkle some dry powder onto plants that are being pestered, or in ants nests. A spray can be made by blending fresh peppers with water and letting it sit overnight, then straining and diluting it by six parts.

13 Last Quarter.

HAVE FUN!

RICHTER'S HERB SEEDS

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The submission I sent to the US government on behalf of OHGA was one of thousands, and they worked! This good news came in on the Net.

USDA Bows to Pressure on Organic Standards

After receiving more than 200,000 comments from farmers, environmentalists, consumers and others, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced that it is backing down on its proposed national organic standards. The standards would have allowed farmers to use a wide range of toxic, synthetic substances, and left open the possibility of allowing use of genetically engineered organisms, sewage sludge and irradiation in organic production. Almost all comments submitted to USDA criticized the standards for being far too weak and for compromising the integrity of the organic label.

"If organic farmers and consumers reject our national standards, we have failed," said U.S. Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman. "Our task is to stimulate the growth of organic agriculture, ensure that consumers have confidence in the products that bear the organic label, and develop export markets for this growing industry." The agency announced that it will evaluate the comments submitted in response to its proposal and submit a revised proposal for public comment later this year. The revised proposal will prohibit use of genetically engineered products, irradiation or sewage sludge, according to Glickman.

Organic industry and advocacy groups, including the Organic Trade Association and the Organic Farming Research Foundation (OFRF), were pleased about the agency's announcement, but said that there is still work to be done. "We will continue lobbying the USDA, Congress and the White House for a federal label for organic that maintains the rigorous standards already established by the organic industry," said Katherine DiMatteo, head of the Organic Trade Association.

According to Bob Scowcroft, executive director of OFRF, Secretary Glickman's statement that USDA's job is to "stimulate the growth of organic agriculture," marks a significant change in the agency's attitude. "Hopefully, this reflects a long-lasting change of heart," said Scowcroft. "It means that now it's safe for mid-level researchers at USDA to express an interest in organic without risking their careers."

Since issuing its proposed standards in December, USDA has been flooded with critical comments from a broad range of consumers, activists and industry groups, including

mainstream agricultural organizations such as the California Farm Bureau, the Produce Marketing Association and various state Departments of Agriculture. The California Senate and Assembly issued a joint resolution stating that the rules, "would threaten the integrity of the organic process in our state." In addition, 32 U.S. Senators and 48 House members wrote a letter to Secretary Glickman urging him to rewrite the organic rules or face action that would block them in Congress.

International groups also submitted comments, including the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM), which stated in a press release the proposed standards were so bad that they could hurt "our movement everywhere."

Observers have remarked that USDA was stunned by the force and volume of negative comments. According to a spokesman for Secretary Glickman, "for anybody who thinks of organic farming as some fringe element... this has really proved them wrong." He stated that organic farming is "very mainstream, it's very national and it's very big."

Sources: Bob Scowcroft, personal communication, May 13, 1998;

The Boston Globe, May 9, 1998; Reuters, May 8, 1998; USDA Release No. 0205.98, May 8, 1998.

Contact: PANNA.



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One of the joys of my childhood was plant printing. Growing up in California, there was at least one school art project per year that included plant printing of one kind or another.

There are several different techniques to this age-old art. Now that I'm grown and share this art with my children, I have found a simple and somewhat tidy way of plant printing. I'd like to share with this technique with you.

Plant printing serves several purposes. The most obvious is that plant printing is art. The portrait of a plant, the reproduction of a plant is among the oldest forms of art.

The second and more cerebral reason for plant printing is for the study of plants. This technique of printing the leaves, branches, blossoms, and fruit of plants serves as a wonderful study tool. One can learn about new plants from others' printings. Or one can remember about plants they have seen from their own printings.

Printing plants also serves as a viable alternative to drawing plants as a tool in plant identification. For those of us who are not artistic in the drawing arts, this comes as a relief.

Tools for Plant Printing

First, you will need to gather a few items before you begin plant printing. Here's is a list.

- * Blank paper or typing paper
- * Well-inked stamp pads
- * Tweezers
- * Leaves

Note - Stamp pads now come in a wide variety of colors, so you have a choice far beyond black, blue and red.

To begin leaf printing, you will want to choose leaves that are easily identifiable, flat and fit on your stamp pad. Sage, strawberry leaves, lamb's ear, and geranium leaves are good to for your first few projects. Cut your leaves right before you intend to use them. Otherwise, you will need to press the leaves to preserve them for a project at a later date.

1. Find the underside to the leaf. It's the side with the most visible veins.
2. Place the underside on the inkpad.
3. Firmly but gently press the leaf onto the inkpad.
4. With the tweezers, lift the leaf to check that ink is on the leaf. Mainly, the ink should be applied to the veins and outline of the leaf. If the ink is solid on the leaf, some of the detail will be lost in the print.
5. Lay the leaf down on the paper.

6. Cover the leaf with another sheet of paper.
7. Press the leaf down firmly.
8. Remove cover sheet and leaf.
9. If there is too much ink, press leaf on a fresh sheet of paper.
10. Enjoy your plant print.

An option to the use of inkpads (which can be messy, especially when smaller children use them) is felt markers. Water-soluble markers can be used instead of inkpads.

1. Hold the leaf in your hand.
2. Colour the underside of the leaf with a marker.
3. Place the leaf on the paper.
4. Press the leaf onto the paper.
5. Lift the leaf.

For a multi-colour variation using colour markers: Colour various areas of the leaf with different colours.



To finish your plant printing, you may decide to display or produce many different projects with this technique. Some of the options include: creating stationary, greeting cards, mat & frame the plant print or create a book called "The Plants I've Known."

What grandparent wouldn't love a plant print from their grandchild?

Who wouldn't enjoy a keepsake book of plant prints from their vacation?

What gardener wouldn't appreciate enjoying their garden through the winter with a plant print book for every plant in their spring garden?

There are so many different ways to use this technique to document and enjoy nature and art together. Let your imagination lead you to create plant prints and share them with others.

- This came in by email from The Herb Network's

HERBE-ZINE #9

The author of this article is absolutely right. It's great fun. One essential ingredient was omitted, though: plastic gloves. After doing these yarrow leaves, I have very purple fingers and the ink won't wash off!

-Elle



A little kindness needed to make up with the cruel sea

AT the time of writing this, there has been a week of celebrating the ocean internationally. The sea has been on the radio, in the newspapers, dominating the box. Its the big wet bit that keeps a lot of us apart.

In this land's recent history, it was hated by the convicts for its capacity to provide a secure, one-way transport system away from Europe. No doubt too, the First Peoples were suitably unimpressed with the ocean's ability to dump a motley of white human flotsam on the shores of a relative Garden of Eden. Admittedly, that ocean took its cut by devouring a good number of humans and ships on the way. But the savings were never passed onto the indigenous onlookers.

After landfall, those First Fleeters scratched around in the local soil but remained virtually incapable of feeding themselves from it. So the 18th century tinnies were pushed into the harbour to catch fish while Governors despatched ships out over the ocean again to bring in more food.

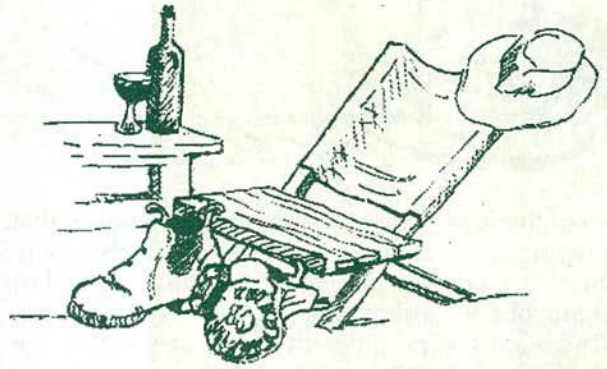
Nowadays, for we dirt tillers, the ocean does not factor much in our daily lives. We poke around in our soil profiles and cow poo completely oblivious to the average fisher's floating around with nets, beards and a crusting layer of salt. (Although some of us might recognise the salt bit!) All the same, those sailing types are not to be trusted. Look what they get up to as soon as their feet leave the flat stability of the land. They run drugs in ghostly yachts. They turn into pirates. They become surfies or beachcombers. They invent jet-skis and drive everyone nuts with the noise. They have no fixed address. They kill whales, snare dolphins and over-fish the ocean.

They are halfway towards ruining a massive and precious resource.

Perhaps the ocean should be taken off them until it is repaired and ready to rent out again.

But, hang on. What is this cry of disagreement I hear? Land-lubbers are we? Stay in one spot with our feet in clay. Gumboots shielding our most intelligent bits. Bushrangers and cattle duffers. Property developers who destroy fish breeding spots up every little creek. Tree fellers who let the waterways fill with eroded mud. Irrigators who discard their toxic chemicals into the most convenient drain which just happens to connect with the sea. Ocean outfall (a nice name for a sewerage pipe).

Humph! Maybe we both have a point. Maybe we need each other more than we think. We are interdependent. We have to contend with the odd snake and falling branch but ferrying a woolpack



THE LIFE OF RILEY

halfway around the world has all sorts of added dangers attached.

For a farmer, the water for rain must come from somewhere. Farmers reckon they supply the world with food but I wonder if the tonnage from the fishers is actually greater? Anyway, at the rate of disappearance of good farm land, the ocean might need to support us until agriculture can be re-thought. Unbeknown to most of us, the ocean has provided a balance for some of the land madness. Trees that are felled and burnt float away as carbon compounds. Some are taken up by new trees being planted -- but we don't do enough of that. The excess is being absorbed by various microscopic animals in the ocean. They act as a huge heat sink gobbling up carbon and saving farmers from an early dance with desolation. (Mind you, the minute increase in water temperature may eventually come back to bite when a shoreline appears at the farm gate!)

While listening to the ocean make its week-long case for recognition and respect, it seemed one solution would be to unite the farmers and fishers on the issue. We need an event to foster that union. Considering what "Titanic" did for Hollywood, we need Jeff Kennett to bring us an oceanic blockbuster. He could stage it for the opening of a new ca-sea-no at Phillip Island. Or it could be performed on Webb Dock where the farmers and dockers already have a happy, loving alliance. Think of the special effects! The many-headed Hydra gobbling up slow-moving gnomes. Sirens enticing farm boys away from their tractors. Tritons versus trolls. Neptune and nymphs. Jonah and the whale. Davey Jones' locker. A cameo performance by John Howard and The Whalers singing "Sorry" by The Easybeats. ("I'd like to see THAT!") Sailors dancing a hornpipe. Farmers doing a barndance. Shake-a-leg dance from First Peoples. All proceeds to the ocean. It looks like we might need it for awhile yet!

Kenrick Riley



PUZZLE CORNER



We received some puzzles that need solving from Lyn & Brian Bagnal in Tinonee NSW.

Problem 1:

Since recent rains our sage and spearmint have been viciously attacked by larvae of Cabbage Moth, some White Cabbage butterfly, and looper caterpillars. As "my books" quote sage as a deterrent to WCB, I am totally confused. Have tried chili spray and plain flour, and am now reduced to keeping a lonely vigil and carrying out individual executions.

Any bright ideas for solving this problem so I can catch up with the washing and other neglected shores.

Possible solution:

Caterpillars and loopers can usually be combatted with either diatomaceous earth (a gritty powder), or spraying the foliage (top and bottom) with the bacterial pesticide *Bacillus thuringiensis*.

Sage is not so much a deterrent as an attractant, luring the pest away from your more desirable crop. Your books have it wrong this time.

Problem 2:

We have a plethora of millipedes which, I understand, damage plants. Our soil doesn't appear to have a drainage problem and, to eliminate millipedes, "my books" advise reducing organic matter in the soil. As we have been working hard in the opposite direction, do you have another solution to this problem?

Possible solution:

First make sure that they're millipedes and not the very useful centipedes, who feed on a.o. caterpillars (!!). Millipedes are the guys who roll themselves up when detected (and stink when you crush them), centipedes just take off. Also millipedes have two pairs of legs growing in every segment.

Often growing african and french marigolds will get rid of them. Quassia chip tea poured on the soil often chases them away too.

What "your books" probably mean, Lyn, is that they feed on compost that's still a bit rough and undigested. But once they've chumped their way through your compost bits, they won't hesitate to start on your plant roots.

-Eile

If you have more solutions for Lyn, please send them in. The same goes for problems you may have.

Editor/OHGA Puzzle Corner,
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Name:
MENTHA PIPERATA

Other name:
Brandy mint

PEPPERMINT Growing Notes

Of all the mints, the peppermints (there are several varieties) are the most important. They were cultivated by the Egyptians, the Greeks and the Romans who used them in sauces, wines, as medicinals and as headgear (the Romans crowned themselves with the herbs). Peppermint was also mentioned in the 13th century Icelandic Pharmacopoeia, but only came into general use in Western European medicine in the middle of the 18th century.

Peppermint is now grown all over the world, mainly for its essential oil, which has stimulating, carminative, anti-spasmodic and stomachic qualities.

It allays nausea, colic, induces perspiration and, in combination with elder flowers, a tea from the plant will in most cases banish a cold or mild flu in a couple of days. Peppermint tea is also good to fortify the nerves and palpitations of the heart and, boiled in milk, the herb is good for abdominal pains and cramps. The oil is used to relieve rheumatic pains, neuralgia and toothache, and is inhaled for catarrh, bronchitis and chest complaints. Menthol crystals are used in the filters of menthol cigarettes.

Peppermint stems are square and can grow to up a meter in height. The plant is spreading; the leaves grow in short stalks, with finely toothed margins and smooth on top and bottom. Flowers grow in the axels of the upper leaves, in red-purple whirly spikes.

The two main varieties are the 'black' of which the stems and leaves have purplish-brown tinges, and the 'white' which has a green stem and more coarsely serrated leaves.

They're called 'peppermints' because of the menthol which is present in all parts of the plant, and which, at first, gives a hot and peppery sensation in the mouth, followed by a cold one.

The black variety is the most hardy.

Climate, soil type & position:

Peppermint will grow in a range of conditions but it grows best if it gets a proper winter. It needs the summer sun too, but doesn't mind some shade. It likes to cool off at night after a hot day, so southern areas and hills and mountains inland are good places to grow it.

It needs a good watering at least once a week, but dislikes waterlogged soils and good drainage is essential. Don't grow this mint on your river flats!

Peppermint needs a fertile soil, with a pH of 6.00-7.5, to really produce well. The rootsystem is quite shallow, so the plant depends on a fertile topsoil. For the same reason mulching is important if you're trying to grow peppermint in a warm area.

In cold winter areas peppermint will go dormant, which is a good time to dig it up and replant it

somewhere else, as cultivated mint often gets rust problems if left in the same area for too long. In other areas, like here in northern NSW, winter is the time when the herb really takes off, a sure sign that it's destined to grow in cooler climes.

Keeping your peppermint as weed free as possible is a must if you want a good crop, as weeds will compete too much for the same food, and the quality of your mint will be poor in a weedy patch.

Beware: once you've grown mint in an area, it's almost impossible to get rid of, even if you try, as just a bit of root will readily grow back.

Propagation:

From seed, which should be sown in early to late autumn in warm areas.

In cooler areas, seeds are sown in early spring. There are approx. 14,000 seeds in a gram.

By root division in autumn or early spring.

Spacing:

Plant in rows 1m. apart, close together. One acre will hold approx. 50,000 plants.

Pests & diseases:

All mints are infamous for rust, a fungus on the underside of the leaves, which releases millions of spores. It's an odd fungus, as it mainly thrives when it's dry! One way to prevent it, as far as possible, is

to grow peppermint in the same patch for two years tops. Potassium, as in Condyl's crystals, seems to help against the rust problem. Preparing your beds with potassium-rich rockdust may help too.

Flea beetles are one of the pests which love peppermint. When you start detecting small holes in the leaves, you'll know you have them. If you grow the crop for drying, they won't matter too much, but for the fresh harvest the plants will be useless. The best thing then is to run the mower over your mint plot, and to dry the leaves for your own use.

Parts used:

All aerial parts.

Harvesting:

Throughout the late spring, summer, until early autumn; in warmer climates during the winter too. Can be harvested up to five times a year.

Drying:

Peppermint wilts quickly, so get it into your drying set up a.s.a.p. after harvesting. Keep the temperature around 30°C.

Yield:

From 1500-2000 kg (dried) per acre per year, depending on how many harvests your climate allows.

Ref.: *A Modern Herbal*, by Mrs. M. Grieve.



My Friend in Need: the Wild Yarrow.

by Lolo Houbein

In the last year of World War II, the western part of Holland where I grew up was cut off from supplies as Allied Forces could not get past Arnhem to liberate the rest of the country. That period went down in history as the 'hunger winter'.

We lived in an upstairs apartment where Mum kept pots of cyclamen and Stars of Bethlehem - whatever happened to that gorgeous plant with its metre long beard full of white starry flowers? I dug with a stick for grassroots beneath the snow in the lane behind the house. They were crisp to eat and filled you up. In early March 1945 mother brought me to a depot from where trucks loaded with children departed for the rural north-east, where food was still available. I had just turned eleven.

We took two weeks to 'cross the lines' and reach a small village in the peat bogs of the province of Drente. Soon I went to school again. I loved the wide skies, the brown-green landscape, the barges in the canal. But I was desperately homesick. And communications across country had broken down.

Every day after school I walked to the house of my foster parents not along the road but over the peat bogs, amazed by the rich variety of plants. As spring advanced, flowers appeared: forget-me-nots, clivers, chamomile, cinquefoil. I didn't know any by name, but some of those little faces reminded me of the forests and fields of home. In summer one unfamiliar plant cheered my unhappy heart more than any. Flowers on stiff hairy stems stood in clumps of feathery grey-green leaves soft like bird feathers. Flat flower heads looked straight at the sky. I recognised a parasol shape made up of minute cyclamen pink flowers with tiny greyish hearts, a tapestry of tiny stitches. When the sun shone the plant's fragrance was strong and pungent like good medicine. Every day I looked for these plants, touching, smelling, burying my face in those sky-turned flowers.

In four months my foster family increased my weight from 30 kilos to 45. Peace arrived on 5th May 1945. Not until July was there enough food in the west and trucks to return all children home. During months of agonised waiting the pink flower clumps in the peat bogs absorbed my misery.

Thirteen years later the cold war caused migration to Australia. Here my first garden, on over grazed pasture, was a failure. But I learned by maintaining and sometimes restoring the gardens of many a rented house. Twenty-one years after arrival I was given my own space to make a new garden where none had been before and set to a labour of love.

A vegetable garden was laid out to ward off famine even in this land of plenty. Then I visited a herb nursery to find those little plants of the fields and meadows of Europe. There, amongst thousands of herbs in orderly rows, I recognised my dark pink peat bog flower sitting in a plastic pot! I picked it up, fingering bird feather leaves, releasing that familiar medicinal fragrance. 'Yarrow', said the label, and 'Achillea millefolium', a plant with a thousand leaves named after a Greek hero.

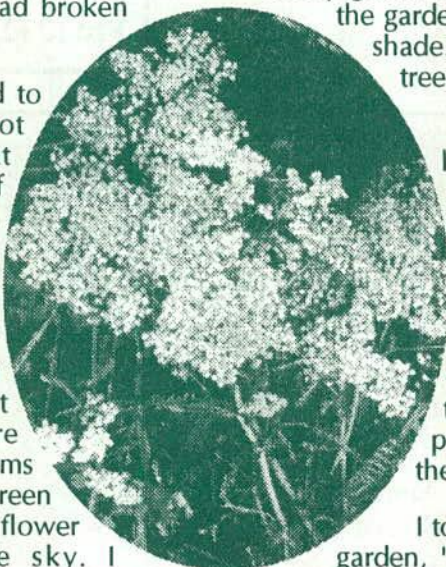
I shed tears of joy as I planted it in my rocky herb garden-to-be. My very first herb, symbolic of yet another new life just begun. Our first compost went to the yarrow plot. Out of that an apple seed germinated and grew into a wondrous giant, the likes of which cannot be bought for money. Every summer its boughs groaned with hundreds of large red apples, the first tree to provide shade for the weary gardener. The apple tree became king of the garden, yarrow flourishing in its partial shade. I learned that yarrow and apple trees are companion plants.

Fifteen years later, aging, we had to leave 'Middle Hill'. The new young owner loved the place enough to take a video of the garden, letting me talk about the plants. Stopping near the king I said: "Never cut down this apple tree. It is the guardian of this garden. If harm comes to it, the whole place will decline." He promised. With the tree respected, the yarrow would be safe.

I took rootling yarrows to the newest garden, 'Samy  Ling' [Garden Beyond the Imagination] to start the last phase of a life rich with the faces of flowers, the fragrance of lavender, roses and herbs, and the taste of yarrow tonic sipped in the shade of dark, cool foliage on a hot summer's day. As a medicine yarrow benefits in cases of cold, fever and dysentery and lifts fatigue.

If I ever, heaven forbid, need to move to a nursing home, I will bring my yarrow in a pot! And after that . . . let others push up daisies! I will rest under fragrant roots, looking straight up at the sky through dark pink flower eyes, ready for rebirth where the yarrow blooms!

Lolo



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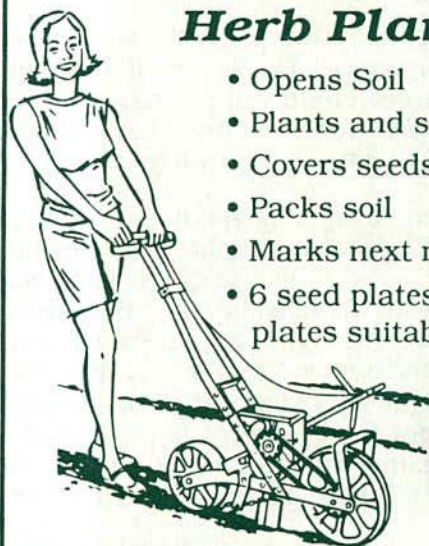


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ALSTONVILLE

A Border of Soft Waving Green

by Ruud Groen,

translated and adapted by Peter Vandewiel.

When John and Joanna visited us at our home in Canberra - quite some time ago by now - they surprised us with a healthy looking pot plant. "Gosh ! " my wife cried happily, "what sort is it?". "Just put it in your garden and you, ll find out" John said and the evening passed pleasantly in the best of moods.

"Isn't that lovely" we said to each other, cleaning up the glasses, such a beautiful pot plant.

It's a nice change from the usual compulsory bunch of flowers in florist-artistic gift paper with slightly over-length ribbons. Also as a departure from the always welcome bottle of Bordeaux of decent descent, the gorgeous pot plant seemed a reasonable choice.

For a while the newcomer shared the windowsill with a comfort loving azalea and a slowly wilting 'three is a crowd' begonia. It grew well. So well in fact, that our view became severely limited, if not blurred.

More and more police officers knocked on the door, curiously wanting to know at which florist we had acquired the lustrous window plant, and if it really was for our own use.

Of course it was for our own use! Did they think we'd take it around the whole neighborhood and have it sniffled by everyone?

"You should put it in the garden", a cheerful passerby advised us. "Everybody does that these days. You can't go anywhere or Cannabis Campina, as it is called, smiles at you in wide rows. It is such a grateful plant. Hardly needs any attention. And a good harvest I must say. Last year I collected an entire winter sport holiday complete with first class hotel and the whole kit and caboodle." The man spoke in riddles. But good advise is hard to come by, I thought, so I fetched my little plant spade and went to work. The more so because my hands are green as well, the happy pot plant willingly allowed itself to be multiplied. And soon I was looking down on a lush border of softly waving foliage.

"Red Canberrian?" asked a visitor who didn't want to be named.

"What do you mean ?"

"Ah! Waddouyoumin! The star of the Marrakesj! How did you get your hands on

that?"

"Someone just gave it to me".

"And it just grows in your garden? I bet you put your desk light on it at night? If you really want to do it right, you have to tap the electricity from somewhere else. Not from your own power point. They won't grow on that. No, you need green electricity. Isn't there a lamppost in front of your place?"

I have since found out that I'm not the only one. Wyong-song, Scone-cone, Taree-Taraa, Yass please, Black Mudgee, Wagga Wagga Wagga, it grows everywhere.

In the meantime it's almost winter and my dahlias still aren't flowering.

Strange really.



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Echinacea - The Next Generation

by Mary MacDonald

Without a doubt, Echinacea has become one of the most useful natural remedies of modern times. Used throughout the western world, Echinacea based products have effectively helped generally healthy people overcome and prevent what are known as 'Surface System Conditions'; acute conditions which 'come and go' and are not considered chronic. Typical examples are colds, influenza and the 'itises' (tonsillitis, laryngitis, bronchitis etc.)

And how does it do this?

Surface System Activators

There are three primary species of Echinacea which are used for medicinal purposes. They are Echinacea purpurea, Echinacea pallida and Echinacea angustifolia. All three species have a history of traditional usage and all have been subject to recent scientific scrutiny and research by reputable institutions around the globe (although the majority of recent research has been conducted on E. purpurea.)

Each species has its own unique chemical make-up. While the roots from all three were traditionally used by the North American Indians, more recently the tops of E. purpurea have been favoured in Europe, following promising results from extensive research.

In Christopher Hobbs' book, "Echinacea the Immune Herb" Botanica Press, Capitola C.A. USA, he lists on pages 46 through to 50, in excess of seventy active components contained in the herb which contribute to its immune stimulating and blood purifying properties. It can be seen that each plant has a role to play in

stimulating the surface immune system as a result of its own unique set of Surface System Activators (SSAs) or active constituent make-up.

Research Breakthrough

Research currently being carried out in a laboratory at Greenridge Botanicals in Toowoomba, Qld, has identified the key SSAs in the three species and demonstrated the usefulness in a combined formula containing extracts of the three species in providing what could be considered the 'full spectrum' of SSAs from all three. Such a combination provides the potential for true synergism where the effects of the combination are far superior to the sum of the individual active ingredients.

Tests using High Performance Liquid Chromatography (HPLC) equipment have identified and quantified the various actives important to the immune stimulating effects of Echinacea. Special extraction techniques have also been developed in this laboratory which ensure the SSAs are extracted in the desired quantities without detracting from the 'natural' relationship of all the active ingredients to one another. Such 'Triple' Echinacea products now herald the next generation and have the potential to provide benefits to users beyond any single extract product.

Is Bigger Better?

In recent times there has been an attempt to promote the concept of attributing the therapeutic effects of Echinacea to one single active or group of actives. This is the path down which pharmacy has travelled over the last 50-60 years. In the past pharmacy relied heavily on herbal extracts and simple preparations.

continued on page 23

Wave Goodbye to Winter Blues



Echinacea Triplex is a powerful new formula from Greenridge Botanicals that contains not one, but three different varieties of natural echinacea to provide a broad spectrum of active ingredients.

As well as helping reduce the severity and duration of acute symptoms of colds

and flu, Echinacea Triplex can also help relieve the symptoms of allergies, hay-fever, mucous congestion, tonsillitis and laryngitis, and may be used in conjunction with antibiotics.

Start taking a twice-daily dose of Echinacea Triplex now. And say goodbye to Winter blues.

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*Contains
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THIS AND THAT

* *Ken edit*

DISAPPOINTING BIOTECH CROPS

One of the selling points for many genetically engineered crops has been that farmers will need fewer inputs and therefore have higher returns per acre. However, two recently released studies indicate that this may not necessarily be the case.

Researchers at the University of Arkansas recently found that net income from land planted with Bt cotton was less than land planted with conventional cotton by an average of \$25 per acre in 1997, based on observations in three Arkansas counties. (Bt cotton is genetically engineered to produce its own pest-killing toxin. Currently, Monsanto dominates the engineered-cotton market). To carry out the study, researchers compared fields planted with Bt cotton to similar fields within the same farms that were planted with conventional cotton.

Previously, researchers had found that Bt cotton performed well in Arkansas in 1996, and economic studies from the Delta and Southeastern states showed a substantial increase in net income per acre planted with Bt cotton that year. However, at least in Arkansas, 1997 did not appear to be as profitable. In the University of Arkansas study, Bt cotton showed less profit per acre than non-Bt cotton in four of seven observations, and on the average yielded 24 pounds per acre less than non-Bt cotton.

According to the study, net income of Bt cotton was highly variable, ranging from \$168.18 per acre less than non-Bt cotton to \$127.33 per acre more. Causes of this variation and the overall lower profits of Bt cotton were attributed to technology fees added to the cost of genetically engineered seed, yield differences, costs of plant growth regulators and the need to harvest fields twice. According to one researcher, "The worst scenario for the Bollgard variety (Monsanto's Bt cotton) occurred in one of the Jefferson county fields, where the non-Bt outyielded the Bollgard by 168 pounds per acre resulting in a \$104.16 per-acre decrease in gross returns. In addition the Bollgard cotton required more plant growth regulator and had to be picked twice, while the non-Bt cotton was picked once."

A second study released by American Cyanamid, a U.S. multi-national agrochemical company and one of Monsanto's main competitors, found that farmers could experience yield losses up to \$43 per acre when planting Monsanto's Roundup Ready soybeans. Roundup Ready soybeans are genetically engineered to be resistant to the herbicide glyphosate (Monsanto's Roundup). The findings were based on a series of field trials conducted for American Cyanamid in 1997 by growers across U.S. soybean-growing regions. The difference in yield was found when growers planted Roundup Ready soybeans and applied Roundup Ultra herbicide once, rather than using a residual control

herbicide or planting "superior" varieties of soybeans.

Monsanto maintains that there is no loss of yield with Roundup Ready soybeans. The company claims that for the past couple of years, they have found a two bushel per acre average increase. However, Doug Dorsey, Monsanto's U.S. Roundup Ready soybean manager, conceded that some growers are seeing reduced yields on some of their Roundup Ready fields. He says that this is due to two major factors: farmers are often using Roundup Ready beans to clean up "especially weedy acreage," and "ideal" Roundup Ready soybean varieties are not yet available in all areas of the country.

While all farmers may not be profiting from use of genetically engineered plants, Monsanto's sales continue to increase. In 1997, Monsanto's agricultural product sales grew to over US\$3 billion, with sales of Roundup growing by more than 20%. Much of the increase in Roundup sales was in Latin America, the U.S., Australia and parts of Asia, and the company is anticipating further increases as a result of the introduction of other glyphosate-tolerant crops. In 1997, Roundup Ready soybeans were planted on nine million acres in the U.S., with 18 to 20 million acres to be planted in 1998. In Argentina, 3.5 million acres were due to be planted in 1997-98, compared with 250,000 acres the previous year.

Roundup Ready cotton was planted on approximately 800,000 acres in the U.S. last year, along with 60,000 acres of dual-trait cotton (cotton plants engineered to be resistant to glyphosate and also express the Bt gene). For 1997, Monsanto predicts that plantings of Roundup Ready cotton will rise to 7.5 million acres and dual-trait cotton to one million acres. Bollgard (Monsanto's Bt cotton) was planted on 2.4 million acres in the U.S. in 1997, which may increase to as much as 5.5 million acres this year.

Monsanto also has a new logo which it says reflects its new focus as a "life sciences" company: Monsanto - Food, Health, Hope.

Sources: *Cotton Grower*, April 1998. *American Cyanamid press release*, 3/24/98. *Seed & Crop Digest*, November 1997. *Agrow: World Crop Protection News*, January 30, 1998.

ORGANIC GROWER SEEKS BAN ON 'MUTANT' MAIZE.

Britain's leading organic grower is seeking a High Court Injunction to prevent his crops being contaminated by a company planting genetically engineered maize next to his fields in Devon.

Guy Watson has been warned by the Soil Association that he may lose his Organic status if cross-pollination occurs between the genetically engineered crops and his own. Mr Watson fears he may lose his business if the experimental maize



flowers.

Francis Blake from the Soil Association said "Sweetcorn is wind pollinated so, since we eat the seed, the chances are that it will be contaminated by genetically engineered material. This is not permitted in Organic vegetables so we would have to withdraw the right to use the label.

Mr Watson said that it was madness to embark on the experiments in planting the new maize with so little knowledge of the effects. "Genetic engineering is not like a faulty product. It cannot be recalled. It is likely that the antibiotic resistance being engineered into maize could be spread by pollen and in the soil by microorganisms like bacteria and fungi. So trials cannot be isolated. "Unless someone makes a stand now we are all going to be surrounded by people growing genetically engineered crops in a year or two."

Mr Watson owns Riverford, an 800 acre organic farm near Totnes, Devon. With 200 acres given over to more than 80 different vegetable crops, it claims to be the biggest Organic vegetable producer in the country in terms of turnover.

Much of the produce is sold through the farm's veggie box system to 2,000 customers who receive a weekly delivery of seasonal vegetables, salads and herbs. Most customers are within a 20 mile radius of the farm but some deliveries are made to as far away as London.

Thomas Jolliffe, spokesman for Adventa Holdings UK, which is about to plant the maize, said "environmental groups are scaremongering. He said "Minority interests have tried to stand in the way of economic progress since time in memorial. The one example that springs to mind are the luddites - who I am sure were taken terribly seriously not to long ago, but who are thought about with a certain amusement in the classroom."

Concern from residents and local environmental groups resulted in more than six hundred protestors entering a trials site last week in a peaceful demonstration.

Pete Riley of Friends of the Earth, campaigning against GMO's (genetically engineered organisms) said "This threat to the livelihood of an Organic farmer is yet another example of the dangers of planting genetic engineered crops. This could be the first case of many. The Government must call a halt now to the planting of these Frankenfoods, at least until a proper debate can take place about their impact on the environment."

The Devon site is one of 320 licensed in Britain to grow genetically modified crops.

- *The Guardian*, Thursday May 7, by Paul Brown and Geoffrey Gibbs.

For more info on Australian GMO's: Bob Phelps, Director Australian GeneEthics Network c/- ACF 340 Gore Street, Fitzroy, 3065 Australia Tel: (03) 9416.2222 Fax: (03) 9416.0767 email: acfgenet@peg.apc.org

LADYBUGS DON'T TAKE WELL TO GMO'S

Ladybirds have always been considered essential insects in an organic garden. They eat insects which are harmful to crops and flowers. According to a London Times article of 22-10-97 by Science Editor Nigel Hawkes, the lifespan of ladybugs was reduced to half when they ate aphids which had fed on genetically engineered potatoes in Scotland. They also laid fewer eggs. The potatoes were genetically altered to manufacture their own Bt (or bacillus thuringiensis), a cultured organism which is commonly used and is even permitted in organics. However, here the Bt is not washed off, or has an expiry date, as when it's applied by the farmer. The toxin here is carried within the potato for the rest of its life!

The effect on humans from eating these crops is of course not yet known. The companies which have pioneered these crops have successfully made the claim to government regulatory departments that these plants are essentially equivalent to ordinary spuds, so they won't have to be labelled.

Could we go the road of the ladybugs? Perhaps we should feed the authorities on these gene plants for a couple of years and find out?

BEET VANDALS

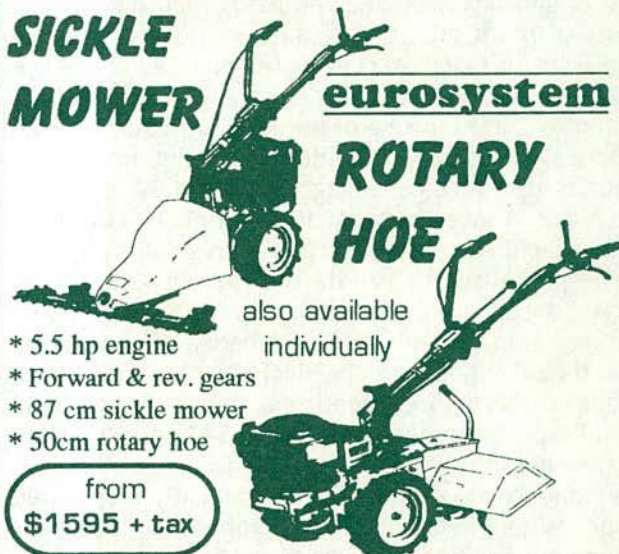
Irish police are searching for a "significant number of people" who dug up and destroyed the country's first genetically engineered crop. The vandalised field in County Carlow contained sugar beet engineered by Monsanto to carry a gene for resistance to its herbicide Roundup. A group calling itself Gaelic Earth Liberation

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front has claimed responsibility.
- *New Scientist* #2060 via Nimbin News

SUNFLOWERS TO THE RESCUE

Sunflowers could help to purify some of the world's most filthy and radioactive water by soaking up uranium from streams and other water sources around derelict nuclear sites.

A pilot plant in the US successfully decontaminated 200,000 litres of water, cutting uranium concentrations from an average of 200 micrograms/litre to below the federal safety limit of 20 mcg/l. The effluent was treated in tanks with six-week old sunflowers growing on floats of hydroponic growth medium. The floats allowed the roots of the flowers to reach deep into the contaminated water, where they created a biofilter.

The system was also tested at Chernobyl for use on other radioactive elements and tests showed that in ten days sunflowers soaked up 95% of the radioactive strontium and caesium in a pool near the defunct reactor.

- *New Scientist* #2111 via Nimbin News

GENE BEANS ARE EVERYWHERE!

The transnational Sanitarium company has bought Longa Life Vegetarian Products according to the weekly "Record" of the 7th Day Adventist Church which founded Sanitarium. A call to Longa Life's 1 800 number now reaches Sanitarium where you can get the same doublespeak about the goodness of gene beans. Both companies use US produced soy protein isolates extensively in their products, according to their labels.

BATTLE OVER PATENT RIGHTS FOR AMAZONIAN MEDICINAL PLANT

WASHINGTON, March 25, IPS -- The patent claims of a U.S. corporation on an Amazonian plant provides evidence that American patenting laws favor big business over the rights of indigenous people, say U.S. rights groups.

The conflict over patents began 12 years ago, when Loren Miller, director of the small California-based International Plant Medicine Corporation, took a sample of a medicinal plant cultivated by an indigenous community in Ecuador - without permission from anyone.

After he returned to California, Miller obtained a patent from the U.S. government, which gave him exclusive rights to sell and breed new varieties from the plant. U.S. patent law did not require Miller's company to do any breeding or improvement of the plant before the company obtained its monopoly in the United States.

"In order to claim a plant patent under U.S. law, you do not need to be the breeder or the cultivator of a plant in order to obtain intellectual property; what you do need is a pair of scissors, a passport and a backpack," says Edward Hammond, a U.S. researcher with the Canadian-based Rural Advancement Foundation International (RAFI).

The vine in question, Ayahuasca, or Yage, is a sacred plant to indigenous groups in the Amazon basin that has been cultivated throughout the rainforest since the pre-Colombian era for religious ceremonies and medicinal purposes.

At the time the patent was granted in 1986, the Ecuador-based Coordinating Body for Indigenous organisations in the Amazon Region (COICA) denounced it, but their protests proved futile. The body represents indigenous peoples of the eight Amazon countries -- Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, Suriname, and Venezuela.

COICA General Coordinator Antonio Jacanamijoy says that Miller "committed an offense against indigenous peoples in the patenting for his benefit of a sacred plant that he himself recognizes to have 'discovered' in the smallholding of an indigenous family.

"We would like to believe that, as the millennium is ending, so the time of paternalism, protection and colonial practices also is coming to an end, but it seems that we commit the sin of optimism," he said.


"Commercialising an ingredient of the religious ceremonies and of healing for our people is a real affront for the over four hundred cultures that populate the Amazon basin."


COICA subsequently adopted a major policy resolution, specifically warning indigenous groups that Miller and his company are engaged in exploitation and that it will not be responsible for any physical harm done to Miller if he went into indigenous territory.

- *Richters Herbletter*, April '98

OVERHARVESTING OF LICORICE BLAMED FOR DUST STORMS IN CHINA

China has blamed overharvesting of the licorice plant, a sand-dwelling species, for the devastating dust storms that have swept through the northern part of the country. China's licorice root has skyrocketed in value as other licorice-producing countries such as Russia and the United States have implemented export bans

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to protect their environments.
- *Richters Herbletter* May 1998

NATURAL PESTICIDE TURNS NASTY IN PEOPLE

LONDON 28/5/98 - A bacterium used as a natural pesticide on food and feed crops could cause serious infections in people, according to a report on Wednesday.

 *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) helps plants naturally resist agricultural pests, but *New Scientist* magazine said French doctors had discovered it could harm humans after a soldier wounded in Bosnia developed a serious infection from a sub-type of the bacterium.

Scientists at the World Health Organisation and the Pasteur Institute in Paris identified the harmful sample of the bacterium as H34. When Eric Hernandez, a microbiologist at a military hospital near Paris, injected the strain into mice with weakened immune systems he found the bacteria became dangerous when exposed to blood. "We think they destroy the walls of blood cells," Hernandez told the magazine.

Most farmers spray their crops with different strains of the bacteria but French scientists have identified another strain used in commercial farm sprays that is also dangerous. Ecogen Inc, the US company that markets the sprays, insists they are safe because the bacteria are not exposed to blood and not primed to infect wounds. "There's such a long history of safe use since the 1960s," Ecogen's research director Jim Baum told the magazine.

SWEET SURRENDER

Joanna Blythman in *The [London] Guardian* March 21 1998

Britain's sugar barons are refusing to accept any genetically-engineered sugar beet through their factory gates. The reason: they don't want a repeat of what happened in Holland last year, when a tiny amount of sugar from genetic-engineering trials was accidentally introduced into bags of Dutch sugar. Once discovered, there was a public outcry, and the whole batch, all 12,000 tonnes of it, had to be disposed of - at great expense.

"This paints a rather bleak future for genetically-modified sugar beet," says British Sugar's spokesman, Geoff Lancaster. "Public suspicion may sink this technology completely."

Not so long ago, the UK food industry was brimming with "Tomorrow's World" style enthusiasm about genetically-engineered foodstuffs, but a wave of cynicism has since swept through the ranks following the Monsanto biotech company's successful efforts to force genetically-engineered soya on to the market by refusing to segregate it at source from the conventional soya supply. So now we must accept that 60 per cent of all the processed food we eat contains genetically-engineered soya, and unlabelled too, if you please.

But might it be that Monsanto has pushed its luck too far? After all, British Sugar is now responding to pressure from food manufacturers and retailers to supply "clean" sugar that hasn't been contaminated" by genetic engineering. Like glistening, white sugar, it

seems that consumer thinking on gene foods is crystallising, and that the previously unthinkable is becoming a definite possibility - an outright ban.

In June, the Swiss will hold a national referendum on the issue, seeking a mandate to ban, among other things, genetically-engineered crops. Recent polls suggest that 58 per cent will vote in favour of a ban. And a 1998 Europe-wide survey published in the journal *Nature* has shown that the more the public knows about biotechnology, the more fears are aroused.

In the UK, the Soil Association (SA), which promotes organic food and farming, would like Britain to declare itself a genetic engineering-free zone. The Iceland retail chain has already banned genetically-engineered ingredients from its own-brand products, and SA has challenged the major supermarkets to eliminate foods containing genetically-engineered ingredients from their shelves by December 31, 1999. A response is awaited but, apart from Safeway, whose unquestioning commitment to gene foods becomes more outlandish by the day, the others seem to be increasingly wary of "gene smog".

Gene smog is the new name, used in Europe and America, for the genetic pollution that is slowly permeating our food chain. The tactics of Monsanto et al are to introduce genetic engineering by the back door. They hope that, by the time gene smog has reached critical levels, soya derivatives throughout the food chain, animals eating genetically-engineered feed, humans eating their meat, and so on, the commercial train of genetic engineering will have left the station and it will be too late to bring it back.

"The market mechanism could send that train back into the station if supermarkets listen to public opinion," says SA spokesman Patrick Holden. That's because many consumers just don't buy the "assurances" of supermarkets and government, hiding behind the edifice of "science" and the discredited guarantee of labelling. It is not comforting to think that those who should be protecting us are being pressured by megacorporations and crossing their fingers, hoping that nothing goes wrong.

SA is urging consumers to complain to supermarkets about the unpredictable nature of gene technology and the threat it poses to the environment and human health. Also, that if they want their customers to have faith in their brand image, they need to tell their suppliers of their intention to eliminate all foods with genetically-engineered ingredients from their shelves by the millennium.

EUROPE IS MOVING ON LABELING

On May 26, European Union (EU) farm ministers moved to require manufacturers to label foods containing genetically modified maize and soy.

Despite the approval, the labeling plans are still highly controversial. According to Greenpeace, the European consumer association BEUC and Greens in the European Parliament, a majority of gene-altered products, including such common items as soy oil, margarine and chocolate, will not be covered by the regulation because the genetic manipulation cannot



be traced. The ministers also decided to delete the Commission's original proposal that foodstuffs also be labeled if it was unclear whether the raw materials used had been genetically altered.

From Bob Phelps, Director Australian GeneEthics Network Tel: (03) 9416.2222 Fax: (03) 9416.0767 email: acfgenet@peg.apc.org

GENETIC CODE OF CONDUCT

Financial Times (London) May 23, 1998

Swiss people will vote on June 7 in a referendum asking whether they want to "protect life and the environment against genetic manipulation". It is the first time any country has had a chance to vote directly on this most contentious of modern scientific issues.

The vote could have a big impact. If a majority of voters and more than half of the 26 cantons into which the country is divided vote Yes, research projects using transgenic animals will be made illegal, the patenting of plants and animals forbidden and the deliberate release of genetically modified organisms prevented. That would be a lot more than just a gesture. Switzerland contains two of the world's most successful pharmaceutical companies, Roche and Novartis. Their new product pipeline depends heavily on genetic research into plants and animals. The vote has set alarm bells ringing in their Basle headquarters.

The debate has also split Switzerland's political establishment, with the socialists, the biggest party, supporting the ban, while Ruth Dreifuss and Moritz Leuenberger, two socialist ministers and most of the trade unions oppose it. It is dividing some of Basle's most powerful families. Florianne Koechlin, 50, who comes from the Geigy pharmaceutical empire, now part of Novartis, is one of the leading campaigners for a ban.

In some ways, Switzerland is a surprising battleground for a debate festering in many European countries. It has always been at the forefront of scientific progress. The country has produced a long line of world-class boffins, ranging from Albert Einstein to Friedrich Miescher, who discovered the existence of DNA. More than 20 Swiss scientists have won Nobel Prizes for research into natural sciences and in Science magazine's 1997 review of citations the Swiss were top in terms of research in areas such as immunology, neurobiology and microbiology.

According to Interpharma, the pharmaceutical industry's trade association, a ban would prevent 2,100 scientists at Swiss universities from continuing their research and could jeopardise 25,000 to 30,000 jobs.

So why are the Swiss threatening to destroy their most successful growth industry? And what arguments are they using in this first formal national debate on genetic engineering? For Ms Koechlin, the dangers of the unknown are too great. It is a high-risk technology that is "influencing our lives in an unbelievable way and it will be even more so in 10 years' time". She says 95 per cent of genetic research will be untouched if the referendum is passed, but she likens genetic engineering to "a jumbo jet with bicycle

brakes".

In the past, she helped win a moratorium on nuclear power and believes "the increasingly tight bonds between research and industry should concern us all".

Her arguments have struck a chord, especially among women and the German-speaking Swiss, who make up two-thirds of the population. Nevertheless, there may be other reasons why Switzerland, along with its German-speaking neighbours, is so suspicious about genetic engineering. Some observers link it to the traditional German romantic belief in unspoiled nature. Others cite darker fears that genetic tampering could eventually lead to a rerun of the racist eugenics experiments conducted by Adolf Hitler's doctors more than 50 years ago.

Switzerland is not alone in its concerns about genetic engineering. In Austria, Greenpeace activists have mounted "Genetic Hazard Patrols" to disrupt imports of genetically engineered soya oil. The French government is waiting until after a public debate next month to decide whether to approve imports of new strains of genetically modified maize.

However, Switzerland is the only country where the population has the right to vote on a highly complex and emotive issue.

News just in: From: nopatents@igc.org (Florianne Koechlin) Subject: Swiss referendum

We lost the vote: 66,7% No and 33,2% Yes. This is a disappointing result. But never before did we experience so much support and solidarity from persons all over the country. And never before was there such an intense and profound public discussion about genetic engineering - everywhere, in every Swiss village and family. Thus we'll continue to be active in these issues.

Cont'd from page 18 - Echinacea The Next Generation

Unfortunately, in an attempt to improve on nature, the concept of single active ingredients and synthesisation has led to medicines which are classified as poisons, often displaying the potential for undesirable side effects and risks for the patient even though they may have originally been derived from harmless herbs. This is clearly a case of man outsmarting himself. Herbalism is about using the herb in a way which does not attempt to alter the natural relationship of the actives and which recognises the herb for the benefits the combined actives provide while acting in synergy with all others. While there may be justification in selecting single actives from some herbs, in the case of Echinacea this cannot be justified as it is the combination of all actives which contribute to its many beneficial effects.

A Popular Herb

Echinacea has recently gained widespread acceptance by the greater community. Every man/woman and his or her dog/horse have been exposed to Echinacea. I say dog or horse as I am aware of people who have successfully used Echinacea on their pets. It is fast becoming an essential item in the medicine cupboard of mainstream society. According to the World Health Organisation, around eighty percent of the world's population have tried a natural remedy. The combination of the three medicinal Echinacea species will appeal to the 'serious Echinacea user'. The person who expects nothing but the best will find everything they seek in this new 'Triple' Echinacea formula.



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**"The 'Gift of Heaven'
from the High Country"**

cont'd from frontpage - Patent piracy

There are numerous instances where Australian and private institutes have laid claim to other people's work: pearl millet from Zambia, forages from Brazil, clovers from North Africa, Italy, Greece and Turkey, and patenting claims are underway on plants from Ethiopia, Tanzania, South Africa, Cuba, Mexico, Morocco, Poland and other countries from around the world. The practice seems to be for Australians to collect unpatented seeds in those countries, or to order them from organisations abroad and, once they have the seed here to apply for a plant patent. Most of these third world farmer-bred seeds were held in trust for the world community in international gene banks and are freely available to researchers. These collections are strictly off-limits to intellectual property claims.

There is global concern about the Australian piracy actions being addressed at the FAO (Food and Agriculture Organisation) Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture in Rome, held this month (8-12 June).

A press release on June 10 charges that Australia has distinguished itself at this United Nations meeting as the single government (150 governments attended to debate control and access to the world's genetic resources) that does not support the fundamental right of poor farmers to save seed from their harvest and exchange seeds with their farming

neighbours.

RAFI's Pat Mooney said that "the Australians' conduct in this meeting has been disgraceful, especially in light of their involvement in the plant pirating scandal earlier this year. Over the past two days the Australian government has consistently blocked constructive debate on the right of poor farmers to save seed".

Since the Australian plant patent scandal came to light, Australian agencies have been forced to withdraw five Plant Breeders' Rights claims on farmers' varieties that came from gene banks protected by the FAO Trust agreement. But the issue is far from being resolved, as scores of other suspect intellectual property claims are still being investigated. In reaction to the plant patent abuses of our government and private agencies, the chair of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research and the FAO took the unprecedented step of calling for a moratorium on intellectual property rights on all seeds held in trust through FAO.

"After Australia's abysmal record in recent months, we thought they'd be eager to show the international community that they want to take concrete steps to protect the right of farmers to save seed, and to prevent further abuses of intellectual property. But it's just the opposite", said Henk Hobbelink of Genetic Resources Action International (GRAIN), a group headquartered in Spain.

"They are the only government delegation that is not advocating the right of farmers to save, exchange and develop plant varieties", said RAFI's Edward Hamond.

Liz Hoskin, of the UK based GAIA Foundation said: "Incredibly, the seed industry is to the left of Australia on this issue. The International seed trade association, ASSINSEL, has openly declared that it is in favour of the right of poor farmers to save and exchange seed. Australia is out on a limb on this issue, and citizens of Australia should demand that their government be held accountable."

"The tragedy is that Australia's uncompromising position may derail progress on a multilateral system to insure access to and conservation of the world's seeds. What's at stake here is not only justice for farmers, it's conservation and use of genetic resources that are critical for world food security. If Australia persists in thwarting these negotiations, the food security of 1.4 billion people - poor farmers who depend on farm-saved seed - is at risk", said Pat Mooney.

Background on the piracy can be found on the net at: <http://www.rafi.ca/moratorium/>

The above information came to us via the invaluable Bob Phelps of GeneEtics.



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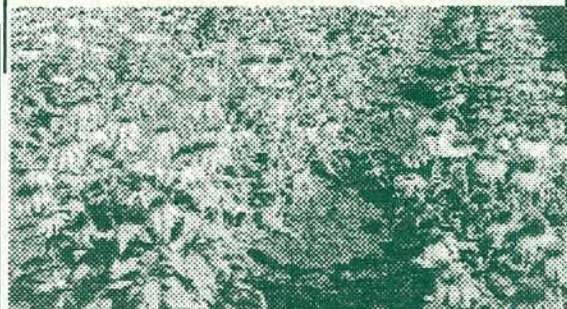
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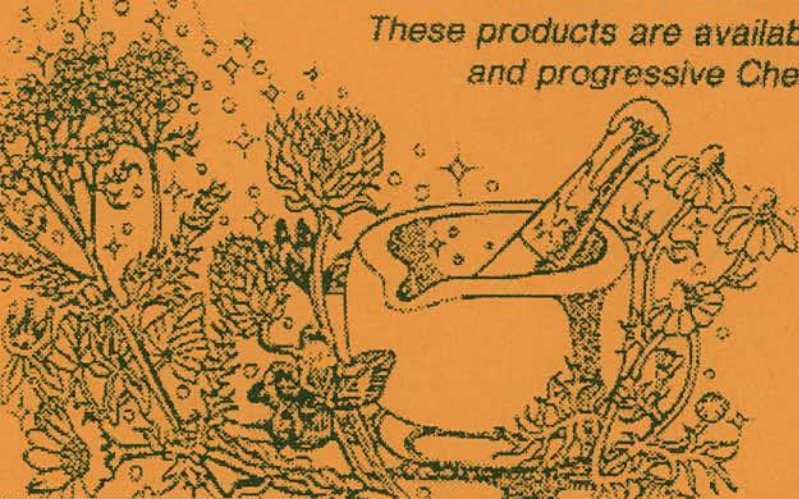
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