
HERB GROWER

PUBLISHED BY THE ORGANIC HERB GROWERS OF AUSTRALIA INC.

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PLUS: MARKET REPORT, NEWS BRIEFS,
SURVEY RESULT AND MORE.....



OUR HERB GROWER is more widely read than I imagined. Remember that in the last issue I wrote a brief item, on the Green Matters page, about the Lismore Greens class action against the Iron Gate developers. Apparently my report that the developers had withdrawn from the court case was a secret, a sort of lawyer to lawyer thing, that we were not supposed to know about. Two days after our magazine appeared, an irate lawyer rang the Lismore Greens to say that, following the leak in the Herb Grower, the developers decided to accept the court challenge after all. Fine, said the Greens, who really did want to expose the atrocious plans of wetland destruction, in order to build an access road from Evans Head to the subdivision. The following day the Greens' lawyers came through with the message that \$5000 for pre-trial costs were required, if the class action was persisted in! Anyway, to make a long story short, the Land and Environment Court has refused to grant a development consent for a compensatory wetland. To date two Aboriginal middens, protected mangroves, littoral rainforest and animal habitats have been destroyed. The developers, who've been trying for their subdivision for 18 years already, are not giving up of course and are no doubt working on their next development application. After all, trees and animals pay no rent. I guess a lot of people still don't understand that when we destroy nature, we destroy ourselves. After all, Mother Earth can do very nicely without us, probably better, but we can not do without Mother Earth.

As you may have heard, the German Greens' founder, Petra Kelly, was found shot dead last month. In 1983 she took the party into the German Parliament, but contrary to the general reporting, the German Greens were not the first Greens in the world to gain seats in a national parliament. That honour fell to my old mate Roel van Duyn, who in the 1970's became a parliamentarian in Holland for his "Gnome" party. The Gnomes were not only Green, but also possessed a great sense of humour, something that is sadly lacking in the average Green party member in other countries. Often the goings-on in this world are like black jokes. It's generally healthier to laugh than to cry and optimism gets you a lot further than pessimism ever does. At least you have a good time, while you're trying to change the world!

Our local paper, "the Northern Star", reported an American National Cancer Institute study. They published their study in the Scandinavian Journal of Work, Environment and Health and in it they reveal that farmers the world over have high risks of developing several forms of deadly cancer, possibly due to exposure to pesticides. They found that farmers have increased rates of Hodgkin's disease, multiple myeloma, leukaemia, melanoma and cancers of the lip, stomach and prostate. Mr. Aaron Blair, the principal author of the study, says that melanoma and lip cancers are probably due to farmers' exposure to ultraviolet radiation, but suspects that pesticides interfere with the body's immune system, allowing tumours to grow. He is particularly concerned that cancers are now also on the rise in the rest of the population. (After all, pesticides don't stop on the farm, do they?)

Finally, on a more cheery note, North-American scientists are joining with Asian money to produce a relatively simple and inexpensive kit that employs micro-organisms to clean and refertilise contaminated soil. There are sure plenty of places to clean up, all over the world!

You will notice that the 'Green Matters' page has fallen victim to the many herbal matters in this issue. That's why I give you some green matters in my Editorial. I can't let the Herb Grower go out without them!

Elle

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LETTERS to the EDITOR et al.

*If you'd like a personal
reply from the editor or
other committee members,
please enclose an SAE.*

Dear Diana,

Enclosed is a cheque for
renewal of my membership.

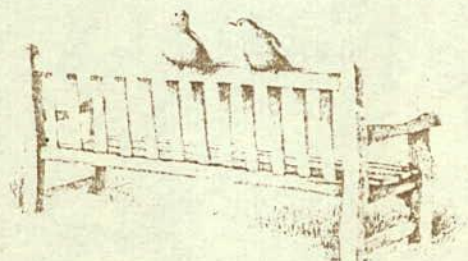
Please give my regards to
the Committee for work well done. I
have not met them all, but have been
greatly helped by Russell and Carlene,
Howard and Elle.

At last, so far, the water
pipes are unfrozen each morning, but
it's still very dry soil-wise.
The burdock is pushing through,
rosemary is planted out and the boysen-
berries are in leaf. The chill factor
should have suited them anyway.

Tuberoses are breaking
through already and I can vouch that
they do very well in a rich compost
bed. I sent a trial shipment to Adelaide.
which received great praise, although
price-wise to the grower it's no great
profit. That lies with agents and florists
in all states. I slowly learn to navigate
the financial oceans.

Yours truly,

Fred Allott, Glen Innes, NSW



Dear OHGA,

I am looking for SARSAPARILLA, spec. Smilax
Aristolochioefolia or Smilax Ornata or Smilax
Medica. All three are the same plant. There are
many Sarsaparillas, but I'm only interested in
Smilax Aristolochioefolia. Sarsaparilla is quite
rare in Australia, so I am writing to seedsmen,
Societyies and herbalists here and abroad to try
to obtain cuttings/seeds for cultivation.

I collect herbs for flavourings and longevity
purposes. Sarsaparilla is an excellent blood
purifier. Some other plants that prove just as
elusive and difficult to obtain and which I am
looking for are: Turnera Aphrodisiaca
(Damiana), Panax Quinquifolium (Ginseng),
Hydrastis Canadensis (Goldenseal) and Yellow
Gentiana Lutea (Gentian).

Andy Martensen, GPO Box 209, Adelaide,
S.A.5000

(Is there anyone who can sell Andy any of the
above?)

Dear Elle,

Maybe you can help me.

Even with all my books, I'd like a chart or
something, so I can have all the herb-info in
one place. I would pay extra money for a chart
that has all of the culinary herbs, also what soil
they like, weather, fertilizers etc.

So instead of having to go through all the
books, I'd have it all together. It would give me
more time in the garden, as we have a business
to run as well. If you know of such a chart,
please tell me.

Lynne Cronan, Ballina

(Our exec member Dave Carey has just the
thing for you, Lynne. Give him a ring. Elle)

HERBAL CHRISTMAS GIFTS

ON THE WHOLE we, herb growers, are sensible and creative people who, even if we should have the money, would not dream of participating in the commercial madness that Christmas has become. And we don't have to either, with gardens or pots full of herbs, just waiting to be used. On this page you will find some basic ideas that you can expand on yourself.

You may have to buy some of the ingredients at your local health food store or pharmacy.

HERBED HONEYS

Pour the quantity of honey required in a saucepan and heat until it becomes liquid. Add the washed and dried fresh herbs or flowers of your choice and simmer very gently for 10 minutes. Leave for 24 hrs. in a warm place. The next day heat the honey and flowers once more and pour the liquid through a sieve in small jars. Stick on a pretty gift tag or label.

Some suitable herbs or flowers: roses, lavender, thyme, carnations, rosemary. Use one cupful of herbs to 500 grs. honey.



HERBED VINEGARS

A good herbed vinegar takes about three weeks to make.

Pick the herbs of your choice and wilt them a few hours. You'll need about two cupfuls to a liter of vinegar. Try to find an organic vinegar; white wine vinegar will show your herbs off best.

Fill a container with the vinegar

and the herbs and set them in a cool place for about three weeks. After that time, sieve the herbs out and bottle the vinegar.

Now it's time to select some really good looking herbs and flowers to float in your vinegar bottle. Don't put any garlic in your end-product. It has been shown to cause botulism if the bottle is kept too long.

Some suitable herbs are: basil, oregano, thyme & garlic for a Mediterranean flavour. Mint, lemonpeel & parsley for a fresh flavour. Purple basil will give a white wine vinegar a beautiful pink tint. We all know about dill vinegar, but tarragon, bay, chives, hot chillies or nasturtiums will all work well.

The same sort of herbs and flowers can be used to make the following product:

HERBED OILS

Herb-flavoured oils are the perfect partners to fine vinegars in home-made salad dressings.

You can use olive or safflower oil, or an oil which has a nutty and distinctly Australian taste: macademia oil.

But whichever oil you use, you must make sure to add at least 10% oil with a high Vit E content, such as apricot kernel or wheatgerm oil. This is necessary to keep the end product from going rancid.

The basic procedure is the same as that for the vinegar. You could go heavy on the basil, garlic chives and other mediterranean herbs if you use olive oil as your base. A nutty oil will taste great if it's made with either rocket, for a hot taste, or lemongrass or other lemony herbs to add a nice fresh tang.

CANDLES

A Xmas without candles is not the real thing. With so many candles on the market you might think it's a waste of time and effort to make them yourself, but you should do it at least once. It's good fun.

Candles can be made out of beeswax, tallow, paraffin or a mix of the three.

You'll need a vessel to melt the medium you're using. This will be very hard to get clean again, so if you're going to do a one off, you may as well use a tin can, set in a saucepan with water, like a double boiler.

You'll need molds, unless you're going to dip the candles. These molds can be as simple as a paper cup, a paper towel roll or the bottom half of a plastic bottle. Or you can pour the candle in a nice cup or even a flower pot, which you've sealed on the bottom.

Lastly the wick, which you can either make by twisting cotton string, or you can use cotton shoelaces or cotton cord.

We start off by making the wick. A fat candle needs a fatter wick than a thin candle, so use your common sense here.

Soak the wick in turpentine for about half an hour, then dry it in the sun before using.

Now melt your medium, whether it's pure beeswax, paraffin wax, lard or a mixture. At this point you can add any essential oil of your choice: rose, citronella, cinnamon, lavender, lemon, sandalwood etc. so that as the candle burns it gives off the fragrance.

If you want to give the candle a colour too, you can crush coloured chalks into the molten mass. Another option is to melt down leftovers of coloured candles, take the wick-bits out and mold them into little blocks or strips. Place these in your mold, and pour the mix around them.

Your wick needs to be firmly attached in the centre of the bottom of the mold. If you use a paper cup it's easy: make a little hole in the bottom and pull the wick through. Or use a thin wire in place of the wick when pouring. Later, when it's cooled off, you can pull the wire out, replace it

with the wick and pour just a little more hot wax on to hold the wick firmly in place.

Dipping candles goes like the name suggests. Usually at least two are made at one time, with the long wick being held in the middle or attached to a frame or coat hanger and both ends dipped in the wax. You'll need a container that's deep enough to dip your wicks in. The dipping needs to be done quickly, so that the previous layer does not melt again. You can make beautiful multi-coloured candles this way, which will be thin on the top and gradually get fatter on the bottom, as another colour is added.

Finally, herbs and flowers can be applied to the sides of the candles as decoration. This is best done when the candles are still a bit soft. Press, let's say, a sprig of rosemary to the side, and paint over it with a thin layer of the molten wax. You can also carve figures into the candles, of course.

POTPOURRI'S

Potpourri's can be made in a variety of ways.

You can use fragrant herbs, leaves and flowers, dry them in a low oven and let them mature, with orrisroot as a fixative, for six weeks. If their perfume is not strong enough, or you want one dominant note, you can add a few drops of the essential oil(s) of your choice. You will need about one tablespoon of orrisroot to four cups of dried herbs.

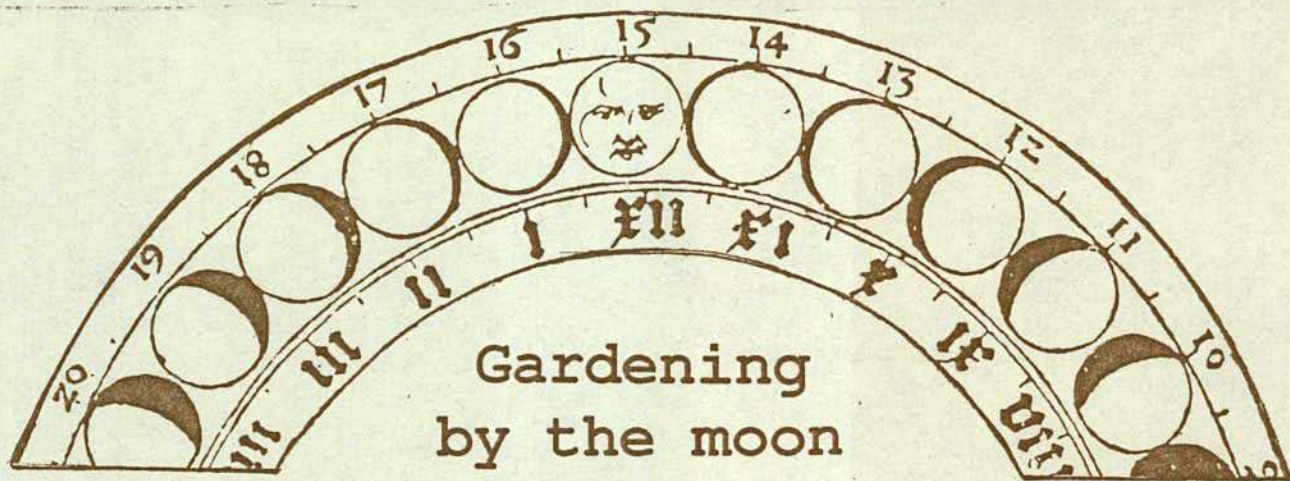
Another way to make a potpourri is to rely entirely on essential oils for the fragrance, and to use ornamentals for the bulk, e.g. gumnuts, wood shavings, goodlooking leaves etc. The maturing process is much the same, but you'll need more oil. Mix all the ingredients in a strong paper bag or cardboard box, add the orrisroot and at least a teaspoon of essential oil, shake well and, again, let it sit for about six weeks.

Nice combinations: roses, mint, cloves, cinnamon, allspice.

Lavender, lemon peel, peppermint, sweet basil, rosemary.

Roses, lavender, lemon verbena, cinnamon, Roses, carnations, coriander, cloves.

cont'd on page 14



By Elle Fikke-Rubin

NOVEMBER

14-15 The best days this month to plant rootcrops and perennials. Most of the herbs fall into this category and if you're not growing them yet, now is the time to sow or plant them. They make excellent companions for your veggie crops and fruit trees, fill the air with wonderful fragrances and provide a healthy addition to your meal, drinks or bath.

Dahlia tubers can still be planted out. Don't divide the tubers until their shoots have appeared. To hasten the process, you can put them in some slightly damp peatmoss. Dahlias are more than very beautiful flowers. After the proper treatment, the tubers will yield Diabetic Sugar, which used to be prescribed for diabetic and consumptive patients. Even now, in Holland, scientists have developed an edible bulb, the base stock of which is the dahlia. After flowering, the corms can be dug up and eaten, either raw or cooked.

16-21 Days to go pest-hunting, armed with garlic, rhubarb, tansy, bracken or pyrethrum sprays. Also good days to do liquid manuring with compost water or comfrey manure.

22-23 The perfect time to take root cuttings, since around these days of the month, just before New Moon, the earth energy is underground. Your cuttings will be full of life and should shoot up very quickly.

24-25 New Moon, two days off.

26-30 Days to plant or sow leafy annuals. Celery, lettuce, cabbage, parsley, dill, silverbeet and the like. Some of these might need some protection against the sun and pests, which can easily be provided by building a tunnel over them with some sturdy wire hoops and shade cloth.

DECEMBER

1 Another leafy annual day.

2 Take the day off from gardening work.

3-8 This is the time to plant or sow seed- and fruit-bearing annuals, such as corn, beans, capsicums, cucumbers, melons, pumpkins, okra and zucchini's. Flowers, too, can be planted. Time, then, to start a sunflower patch, which will look beautiful in your paddock or garden. Apart from its beauty, a sunflower also provides us with seeds, leaves for fodder, stems for paper-making while the pith of the stalk, which is the lightest natural substance known, can be used to make moxa, owing to the nitre it contains.

9-10 Full Moon and an eclipse to boot! No time for work.

11-12 Time to plant rootcrops and perennials.

13-23 During this whole period there are no really good days, moonwise, to do any planting.

It is a good time, though, to start thinking of preparations for Christmas and New Year's Eve parties. I am contemplating the drinks department now. For those of you who grow herbs, I have some lovely liqueur recipes. To make Drambuie, steep 3 tblsp. of aniseed in a pint of Scotch. Leave for 2 weeks, sieve and add half a cup of honey.

For a great Lemon balm liqueur. crush a large handful of lemon balm leaves in a pint of brandy, let it steep for a couple of days and sieve. Add half a cup of honey. A delicious Mint liqueur is made by adding 3 tblsp. crushed mint and a few orange peels to a pint of brandy. Leave for two weeks, strain and add half a cup of honey. A cheap bottle of plonk can also be made more easy on stomach and head, by adding

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a tblsp. of lemonbalm or chamomile a week or so before it's drunk.

I do expect some invitations around this time, of course!

24 New Moon, no time for work.

25-31 Although you may not feel like it, the universe says that these days are really good for planting and sowing green leafy annuals. Wednesday and Thursday, in particular, are fertile days. So, for workaholics, this is a good time for parsley, lettuces, silverbeet and other greens. For all others, have a great Christmas holiday!

JANUARY

1 I wish you all a great 1993.

Fortunately we can all sleep in, without any gardening work today.


2-4 The first plantings of the year are seed- and fruit-bearing annuals and flowers. Beans, melons, pumpkins, okra, broccoli, cauli's and sweet corn as well as seeds of polyanthus, prinula's, columbines, foxgloves and other spring flowers can go in now.

5-6 Two days off.

7 Another day to plant flowers and fruiting annuals.

8-12 No planting to be done, but good days to take some tip cuttings of plants and bushes.

HAVE FUN!



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by **RUSSELL QUINN**

AT LONG LAST the Health Authorities have seen some sense and have caught up with many other countries in banning the use of Chlordane and Heptachlor.

These dangerous chemicals have, for years, been in constant use in Australian homes as treatments against termites, while scientific data on their toxicity to animals and the whole environment existed and even though non-chemical methods were available.

Environmental groups, such as Greenpeace, have all the facts to support them and have been lobbying the government for some time now in order to have these chemicals banned. Unfortunately in the case of DDT and Dieldrin widespread contamination has already taken place. The fact that these two chemicals remained in use for so long, raises the question whether the processes, by which toxic pesticides are evaluated for clearance and registration, are adequate.

Laboratory animal poisoning tests are used to find the amount that does not make animals obviously ill. (NOAEL = No Observable Adverse Effect Level.) A human dose is assumed to be safe at 1% of animal NOAEL. The Maximum Residue Level (MRL) for food is then set from 1% NOAEL and from "good agricultural practice". This testing is usually carried out by the company seeking registration or a research body, commissioned by them.

In reality MRL's are usually political, not scientific decisions. For example, one toxic chemical widely used, currently has an MRL of 5.0 mg/kg in Australia, 2.0 in the US, 0.1 in Germany and 0.05 in Holland. This discrepancy explains why the OHGA have set the MRL for certification at 5% of the National Health and Medical Research Council's MRL.

A lot of the research done on the effects of chemicals in the environment is carried out by universities. As universities become commercialized, they risk becoming compromised by the economic

research dollar and the large companies, who pay the bills.

The future use of synthetic pesticides should not be an issue with organic growers, however fertilization substances probably are. The NSW Dept. of Ag. have an Agfact, titled "Organic Fertilizers - an Introduction" No. AC20, price \$1.75.

This pamphlet is a helpful guide for those, who have difficulty in determining which organic fertilizer is appropriate for them, or what may be considered acceptable within OHGA standards.

The following information is, in part, extracted from this Agfact.

A fertilizer, which contains any synthetic additives is unsuitable, even though the product may claim to be "organic-based", "organically enhanced" etc.

Unfortunately for the consumer, quality of fertilizer is not usually recognisable by sight. When buying fertilizers, it is important to check the label for the percentages of their active constituents, NPK, and of calcium, sulphur and trace element, where present.

In general, synthetic fertilizers are cheaper than organic fertilizers, in the terms of nutrients supplied.

cont'd on page 19

GROWING NATURALLY WITH TERRA FIRMA FERTILIZERS



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I HAVE just returned from two weeks working in Western Queensland.

The distances there are so great, that the ability to fly would be a real boon.

Somewhere on the track from Boulia to Birdsville, I saw two broilgas alongside a small, half-dry water hole and I remembered my father once showing me how to rhythmically beat the car door with a hand to make them dance.

Well, I tried it. And it sort of worked. These tall, elegant, dusty pink desert stalkers actually stopped in their tracks, turned to face each other, then leapt into the air and flapped their wings in what could only be described as a primitive but eerie form of bush ballet. Mind you, being non-paying customers we were not treated to a lengthy performance. But for one who never sees broilgas, seeing one dance at all is a major event.

Birdsville takes its name from the plethora of birdlife on the nearby Coolibah-strewn lagoon which fills when the Diamantina floods from the upstream rains. Away from the water hole, there is just bare, flat country covered in red pebbles and the occasional sand dune. Not a tree to be seen. There isn't any rain either. (It raises the old question - do the trees attract clouds; or does the rain make the trees grow?)

Either way, birds are rare except around the lagoons and roadside water holes.

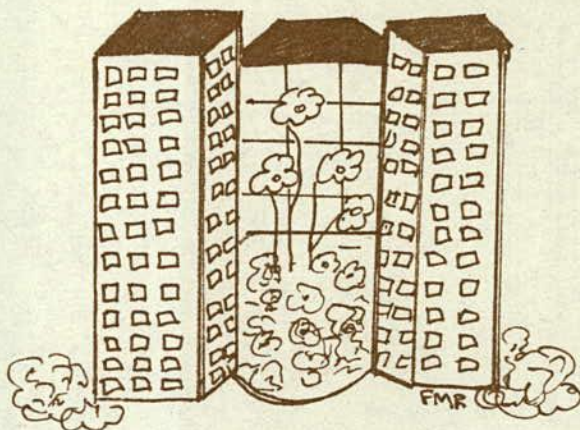
And here at home.

When I arrived back, our balcony was covered with a film of pure nitrogenous fertilizer. Pigeon poo. A product so rich that countries actually fight wars over it.

When we left the house to move into this apartment, we said goodbye to a friendly magpie family. I bribed them down with bread and sunflower seeds just as they were teaching their raucous baby to fly. Unfortunately, apart from witnessing one calamitous skirmish with a wattle tree, I didn't get to see any junior aerobatics.

But up here, things are different.

Soon after we arrived at this elevated paddock, a rather large, almost cumbersome-looking, grey pigeon flapped onto the balcony verandah and gave me a haughty once-over. He didn't look all that



PADDOCK ON TOP

by Kenrick Riley

bright. He stumbled into and kicked over the saucer of seed. Ditto the water bowl. Blind as a bat. "Rats with wings" Woody Allen described them.

However, this pigeon knew good food when he fell in it and decided he should set up shop on the shelf opposite the balcony.

Then the fun began.

After a week of squaffing himself, the Grey Ghost suddenly had company. A pair of strange pigeons flew in for their first nosh-up at the new restaurant. The Ghost set about chasing away the male in the hope the female could be tempted with a four-course grain breakfast and filtered water.

However, in his usual stumbling manner, GG managed to chase away both birds - a feat he repeated for some days until one of the visitors looked beyond his puffed-up harrumphing and saw the potential in his saucer.

This Mrs Pigeon also proved to be less flighty. There was a wordly air about her as if she might have grown up in the congested City Mall. Two humans in a glass box would not pose any threats to this one. GG still maintained his boundary vigil but he also began scratching around in a pot of soil - probably where the comfrey had once been.

Next thing Mrs Pigeon drops in from the shelf, inspects the work and promptly sits down. And stays. For days on end. No food or water. Keeping an eye on us just in case, but still not budging an inch. When she finally arose, there it was.

An egg!

After congratulating her, I started

having instant visions of installing a bird bath. Larger food saucers. A patch over one eye and a pigeon on the shoulder? Carrier pigeons? A fauna reserve? I was dreaming thus one afternoon while the parents "changed the guard" when I noticed the egg had doubled. Not so much in size. But in number. I wondered if the Grey Goast had stolen it?

Some time later, both eggs disappeared. In their place were two long, narrow toenails each sticking out of an old tennis ball which had lost its fur. They looked like toads with beaks.

But they were alive and healthy, I congratulated myself. And it would allow me to learn some bird habits from the comfort of my chair. It is not exactly scintillating viewing but at least now I know how to regurgitate food for babies. And it was just as the bug-eyed duo were beginning wing flapping exercises that I took off for a fortnight.

When I returned, there were two small, black birds taking training flights along the balcony floor. Hence the floor covering.

"Flying fertiliser spreaders."

At about the same time, one helpful person mentioned bird lice. Another muttered something about pigeons always coming back to where they were born. "Feathered salmon?"

I imagined having to wash the balcony daily.

So there were some rapid changes. No longer would I interfere with nature. The pipeline to the granary was shut off. I felt the Grey Ghost and Mrs P should be allowed a natural lifestyle - take their young off and teach them how to catch insects, where to find water and how to protect themselves from predators.

In fact, I even helped nature along somewhat by buying a water pistol.

When the gliding twins ventured out of the garden pots onto the floor, I encouraged them to take a practice flight up to the rail and take a look at the big world over the edge. It worked. One day they were both gone. The parents still drop in occasionally, just to make sure the grain store hasn't sprung a leak. But the twins? Off on the quest of life probably. Perhaps they overheard me say there was a small town out west with their name on it. Some fertiliser might not go astray out there.

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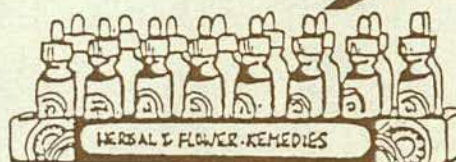
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THE Sept/Oct trading period has been a frustrating period with several varieties in strong demand and out of season, while others in season were out of demand. Nevertheless, we did manage to place most herbs available, with some minor exceptions. Unusual varieties are still too risky for the depressed markets with most wholesalers preferring to concentrate on the everyday common varieties. But this should not deter growers from keeping a good stock of the unusual on hand. This industry is fickle, like the chefs, and sooner or later an order will come through.

The drought on the north coast has seen a short supply, while ideal conditions down south have brought "local" produce onto the market floor earlier than normal. Without rain, regrowth is being hampered.

Prices recorded were all average with few exceptions. The only notable was tarragon which was said to be trading at \$4 per bunch on one week. To truly make a windfall, one needs to have out of season availability. For this you will need a hot house in winter and a shade house in summer.

The future prognosis for the next two months appears to be that the markets will be jammed up with local produce, forcing prices down. Peak periods will occur prior to Christmas; that is if the national economy allows for a good Christmas feed. Some out of the ordinary herbs are slowly picking up in demand. There is a resurgence in the Japanese greens.

Our major focus will be the export markets for the next couple of months, to offset the gluts domestically. There is always a brief transition period, with poor sales, so growers need to be patient.

If we don't have any rain on the north coast, we may be forced to have an extended Christmas holiday. I know I can use one. To all our growers and customers, here's wishing you a Happy Herbal Christmas.



HERB FARMS AUSTRALIA



PRICES RECORDED IN THE PREVIOUS MONTH for an OHGA bunch

BASIL	80 c
CHIVES	50-80
CHERVIL	80
CORIANDER	80
LEMONGRASS	60-80
LEMON THYME	60-80
MARJORAM	60-80
MINT	60-80
OREGANO	60-80
ROSEMARY	60-80
ROCKET	50-60
SORREL	60
TARRAGON	80-2.00
THYME	60-90
PARSLEY	80

North Coast fruit grower invents mulch harvester

Blisters and an aching back were the driving force for Palmvale fruit grower Mr Peter Heineck to develop his Nu Mulch harvester.

Mr Heineck has 1500 mango, lychee, mandarin and Rowlinia trees on his 35 acre property east of Murwillumbah, which he farms with his wife Barbara.

The Heinecks are great believers in the use of compost and mulch to boost soil health and tree productivity.

But getting the material for mulch and composting was a real problem, Mr Heineck said.

In the beginning Mr Heineck kept the orchard 'too' tidy and had difficulty finding enough material to use as mulch.

"Mulch or hay was hard to get cheaply and we ended up bringing in more weed problems."

Out of necessity he developed his mulch harvester to collect the

material and carry it to where he wanted it.

Basically it was a vacuum cleaner, Mr Heineck said.

"It sucks up the cut material into a cage mounted on top of the round slasher," he said.

"The bin holds 3.2 cubic metres of cut material."

The cage sides open to spread the material around the fruit trees, or the whole cage can be tilted and the load dumped in a pile ready for composting.

The cage can also be removed so the cut material can be blown straight under the trees.

The unit connects directly to the three-point linkages on a tractor and can be made to order for various slasher widths and tractor sizes.

Mr Heineck has won two inventor awards for developing the harvester.

for more info contact
P.H. & B.J. HEINECK
"Jacaranda Hill"

Lot 1, Palmvale Rd., PALMVALE 2484
Phone: 066 - 777387



GOLDENSEAL

HYDRASTIS CANADENSIS

(Linn.)

Golden Seal, a native North American plant, has been receiving herb grower interest of late. Plants have recently been imported into Australia, and released from quarantine where they have been propagated for root stock. For years, this herb has been the exclusive domain of the USA, which has tightly controlled stocks and kept the prices high.

The whole plant is not usually seen in this country, with only the dried rhizome being imported. For many years, the powdered root was the chief form administered, but the fluid extract is now more popular.

The plant is important to modern medicine because it produces two alkaloids, *berberine* (4%) which gives it its yellow colour, and *hydrastine* (2-4%) which is a valuable remedy for digestive disorders, catarrhal states of the mucous membranes, and inflammations of the gastric, colon, and rectum.

Golden Seal is a native to the hardwood forests of Eastern North America. Most of the commercial supplies come from the Ohio valley. The roots and underground rhizomes are perennial, while the tops die at the end of each season. Golden Seal requires a cool shady environment. It will tolerate a variety of soils although a heavy clay or light sandy soil should be avoided. Ideal soils are loams with high organic matter. Golden Seal is tolerant up to 35% light intensity, preferring short periods of exposure to direct sunlight. It will grow in the shade of many different varieties of trees, but is best underneath deep rooted trees, as the shallow rooted trees will be too competitive for soil moisture and nutrients.

Golden Seal can be propagated from seed, rootlet cuttings or rhizome divisions. Harvest is usually accomplished from 3-5 years after planting. Two or more hairy erect stems arise in late spring from buds that overwinter on perennial rootstock. Stems vary from 25cm to 35cm tall with two leaves on each. Flowering follows and produces a single terminal with small greenish white sepals, which fall away quickly. The fruit soon appears, and looks like a raspberry, although it is not edible. The underground rhizome is bright yellow when first harvested and is the primary commercial part of the plant.

The current recognized method of cultivation is to create an artificial shade system, employing an overhead shade cloth or slat system. Seed must never be allowed to dry out and is therefore considered an unreliable source. If propagating by rhizome divisions, plant in permanent bed in fall, using divisions of ± 1 cm preferably with a bud on each section. Also rootlets can be removed from the rhizome in mid-summer, cut into 4cm sections and layered under 2cm of soil or mulch. Many of these will form a bud and can be replanted in early fall into permanent beds. Golden Seal spreads by means of root layering, therefore space rootstock 20cm X 20cm or further apart.

The roots should be carefully dug in the fall after dying of the tops, washed free of all soil, and air dried. Roots dry best at 40°C. Care should be taken to preserve as many of the fibrous roots as possible. Roots will lose $\pm 70\%$ of their weight in drying. Yields are ± 900 kgs per acre dry weight.

The selection of the site is of utmost importance. Good drainage is the primary concern. Poorly drained soil will lead to root rot and crop failures. gentle slopes with good drainage is the preferred position. A green manure crop, usually alfalfa, is planted two years prior, with a fallow period prior to planting. A shade system must be constructed above the permanent beds. Weed control is essential for the first two years.

This is a long term project and not one for the novice. The rewards are consistent with the amount of work. Current prices are \$90 per kg dried weight. Demand is not that heavy. There are many more native Australian herbs which should be considered.



AFTER SHAVE LOTION

You need appr. 5 tablsps.
rosepetals, 4 tablsps. sage lvs., 2 tablsps.
rosemary leaves, 1 cup apple cider
vinegar, and 3/4 cup of rosewater.

Place the herbs in a glass jar
and pour the heated vinegar over them.
Cap the jar and shake it once a day for
10 days. Then strain the vinegar out, by
putting some cheesecloth or panty hose
over the jar. Now pour the rosewater
over the herb dregs. Shake well, then
strain the rosewater out and add to the
vinegar in a nice little bottle.

All of the above are just a few basic
ideas for Xmas prezzies. I'm sure you'll
be able to think of lots more.

The books I've used for research are:

KITCHEN COSMETICS by Jeanne Rose
POTPOURRIS and other fragrant delights
by Jaqueline Heriteau
PRESENTS FROM YOUR GARDEN by
Ninette Dutton

Elle

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laminated \$ 15.00

* **MEDICINAL HERBS,**

coloured \$ 7.50

* **COMPANION PLANTING GUIDE** \$ 5.00

* **SOW WHEN GUIDE** \$ 5.00

* **HERBS - information**

chart \$ 3.00

* **HERB DECODER** \$ 7.50

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Maxi Crop
Seasol
Fish Emulsion
Trace Elements
Work Clothes
Soil pH kits
Full soil & plant tissue
analysis kits
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SOUTH LISMORE**

BORAGE...

a potential industry or poisonous plant?

BORAGE has been recently found to contain one of the highest known sources of Gamma Linolenic Acid. GLA is one of the essential fatty acids needed by the human body for maintenance of cell functions. GLA is also a building block of prostaglandin E1, a hormone-like substance that has been clinically indicated to regulate cholesterol levels, dilute blood vessels, reduce inflammation and perform other important functions.

The oil is contained in the seeds of the plant, yielding 20-27% GLA, higher than the more commonly marketed source of Evening Primrose Oil, which contains 8% GLA.

A niche in production/processing is currently being developed by a group of Canadian growers.

Although Borage is traditionally a European crop, being eaten fresh in mediterranean salads, it appears that Canada intends to capture a major share of the world market with 800 acres under cultivation in the cool prairies of Saskatchewan. The University of Saskatchewan Crop Development Centre is currently sorting out the agronomic problems. The most difficult problem being that the seeds usually fall to the ground prior to harvest, thus making it extremely difficult to collect. After harvest, the leaves and stems nearly disintegrate leaving almost no stubble.

Several major pharmaceutical and food companies, including Nestle SA of Switzerland are developing a variety of GLA enriched supplements for infants and people with health problems. GLA is important in the diets of infants for development of brain tissue.

Borage is extremely easy to grow and thrives here on the north coast of NSW. It can be grown in quite ordinary soil, from seeds planted in early spring. The plants need to be thinned out to ± 30 cm distance apart. The plant grows to a height of 1-2 meters and produces delicate blue star-like flowers. The leaves are rough and

have prickly hairs. The fresh leaves have a cucumber taste.

In Eastern Europe the flowers are preserved and candied. Because the seed is dropped, the plants self generate and continual production in the same spot is common. The leaves contain nitrate of potash and emit a spark with a slight explosive sound when burnt.

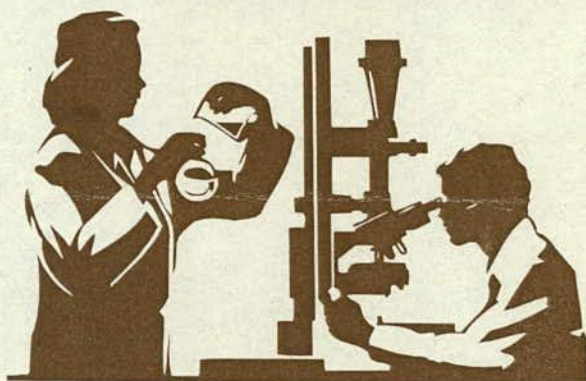
Under the Australian National Health & Medical Research Council, the plant is scheduled as appendix C, which makes it a prohibited substance for sale, supply and use as a therapeutic good.

However, the fixed oil derived from the seeds is permitted, as well as consuming the plant as a foodstuff. Borage, being a member of the boraginaceae family, contains levels of pyrrolizidine alkaloids, like its cousin Comfrey. PA's are harmful to the human liver. However, the NHMRC has confirmed that not one case of borage poisoning has ever been recorded! Their opinion and ruling is based upon scientific findings, the World Health Organisation guidelines to PA's, and the absence of any positive informations. In other words, ban it unless proven otherwise. The fact that it appears in every herbal since Pliny and Dioscorides, and is described as a valuable plant makes no difference to our bureaucrats.

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For further information
including a full list and current
prices please contact:

Mr Peter Purbrick,
Raw Materials Manager,
MediHerb Pty Ltd,
P.O. Box 713, Warwick, Qld, 4370.
Tel (076) 61 4900.

LABELING YOUR PRODUCTS

by Howard Rubin

I often roam the stalls of our country markets, and regularly check out new products in our local health food stores. I find it quite disappointing to see so many good products and ideas often have such poor labeling. This article should serve as a guideline only, while each manufacturer (that's what you are, if you package up a product) should consult with the appropriate authorities to obtain specific approvals.

My assumption is that as herb growers, you are manufacturing a herbal related value added product. Any product, be it a herbal vinegar, a herbal oil, herbal jelly, herbal massage balm, herbal sachet, or dried herbs in bag, requires a proper label. I have specifically avoided therapeutic goods as they require specialized labeling and licensing.

All foodstuffs come under the Pure Foods Act of 1908 and require that all packages are labeled as to:

1. name of food
2. ingredients and measurements
3. name and address of manufacturer
4. country of origin

This label must appear on the main display panel of the product. It must be readily visible and legible, and firmly fixed onto the product, not just attached by cord.

Under the Fair Trading Act of 1987, it is now required that packaged foods with a durable life of two years or less, be stamped with a "use by" or "packed" date. There are some exceptions to this rule and a phone call to your nearest Business Consumer Affairs office will usually give the answer.

The Weights and Measures Act of 1915 applies to all packaged goods sold in NSW. All packages containing pre-packed goods unless specifically exempt, must be marked with a statement of the true measurement. This statement must be on the main display panel, be clear, conspicuous, readily seen, easily read, and in the same direction as the brand name, when the article is exposed for sale. The characters used in measurement must be clear, printed or stamped (not handwritten); be at least 2mm from the limits of the package and separated by at least 2mm in all directions from other

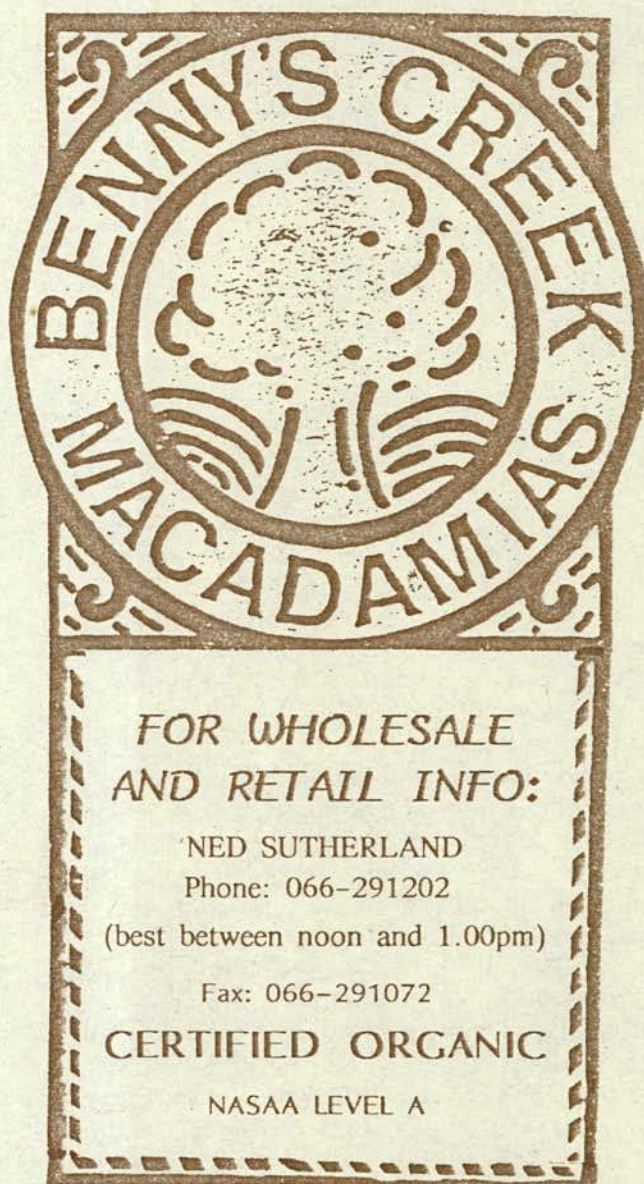
graphics; and be in a colour distinct from the background.

The name and address of the manufacturer must be an address in a state, a P.O. box number is not acceptable.

If the goods are imported but are being packaged in Australia, the country of origin of the goods must appear.

The ingredients should be expressed in clear simple English, using common names, and be expressed in descending order of quantity used in manufacture. Exact proportions are not necessary. "Secret ingredients" require a special permit.

For further informations consult your nearest Business & Consumer Affairs office in your capital city.



FARMARAMA SUCCESS

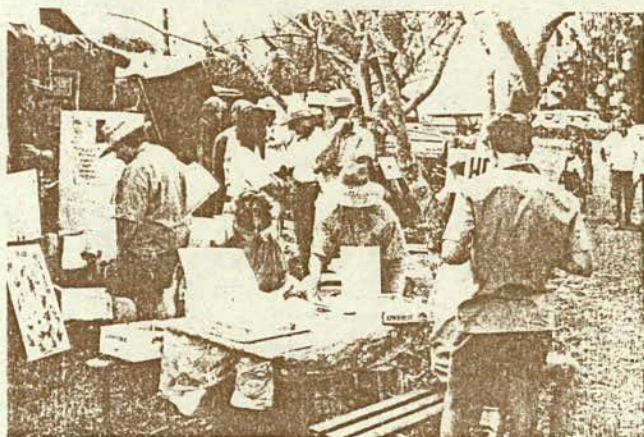
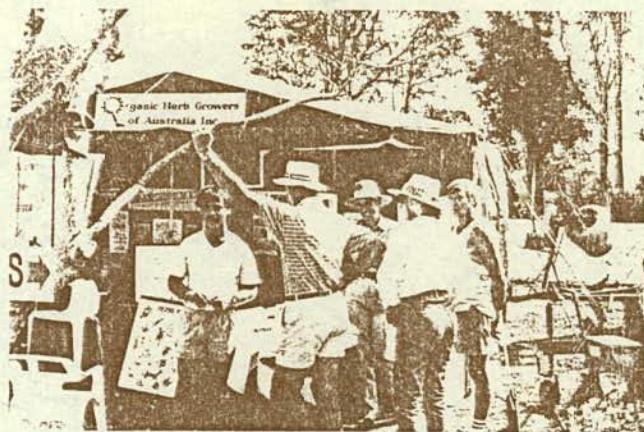
OUR display at the Wollongbar agricultural show in September must have been one of the busiest there during the three days of the show.

Apart from the ideal location in the shady nursery lane, this was entirely due to the efforts of Dave and his team, who worked hard and imaginatively on the OHGA display tent.

Our thanks go to Dave, Jenny, Alister and Graham, who put it all together; also to Di and John, Andrew, Russell and Howard, who gave of their time to (wo)man the display and who talked to the hundreds who were interested in herbs in general and OHGA in particular.

And, of course, we welcome the new members, who signed up during and after the show.

*The top picture shows V.P. Andrew and treasurer Diana talk to some visitors.
Elle and Di sign up a new member (bottom)*

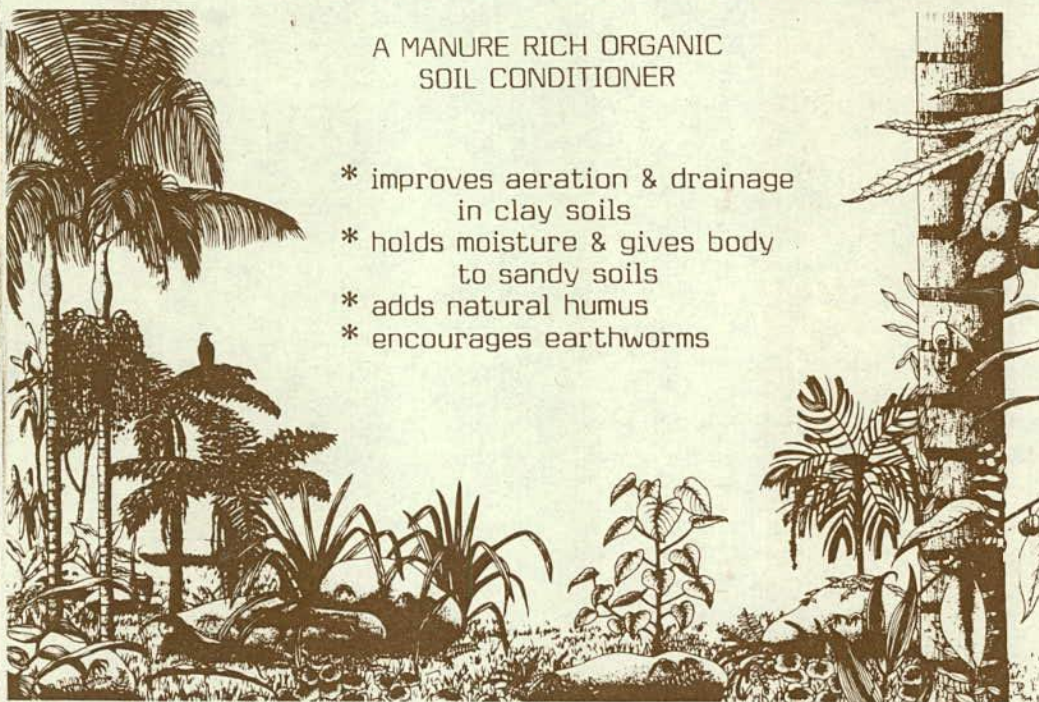


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GO GROW

POST HARVEST HANDLING

for the hot summer months

As the hot summer season quickly approaches, extra care must be taken to master the art of post-harvest handling.

The first rule is to harvest only healthy robust plants. The stronger the plant, the more natural resistance it will have against bacterial and fungal infections.

The second rule is to avoid bruising when harvesting. Keep your secateurs sharp. Avoid any harsh placements of the herbs in your harvesting box. Bruising is the first cause of deterioration, allowing bacteria to enter the plant. While in the field harvesting, keep your box in a cool shady spot; if this is not possible, a strip of shade cloth placed over the box will help.

Temperature control is the most important aspect of post harvest management. Once the plant is harvested, it still continues to breathe, and expels ethylene gas while it decomposes. The higher the temperature, the quicker the plant breathes; the quicker it breathes, the more heat it produces, increasing the temperature; thus setting in a cycle which quickens till the plant collapses and decomposes. Respiration rates double and even triple for every 10°C rise in temperature. Therefore, the next rule is to harvest only in the cool early morning hours.

Rapid removal of field heat is essential! Never keep cut herbs out in the field for longer than half an hour. Bring them indoors, and plunge them into cold water, but do not allow them to sit for any length of time in the water. Most essential oils are water soluble.

Drain and refrigerate.

It is important that air can circulate evenly through the herbs. Therefore, do not pack them too tight in the refrigerator.

Care must be taken to ensure that chilling occurs at the correct temperature. It is possible to damage herbs with temperatures lower than 0°C/32°F. The optimum cooling temperature for most varieties is 2°C. Lower than 2°C and basil will begin to discolour.

Most leafy herbs are particularly susceptible to water loss resulting in weight loss and wilting. Therefore the humidity must be kept up high at a 90% relative humidity. To maintain this level of humidity, chill the herbs while they are still wet; and for any prolonged storage (overnight) spray the herbs with a fine nozzle mist.

Ethylene is produced in varying amounts by virtually all herbs. This gas is produced by the ripening process. Herbs are extremely sensitive to ethylene build up, particularly when packed and shipped. Responses to ethylene concentrations varies between herbs, with sage and rosemary showing little sensitivity; oregano, basil, thyme showing slight; while mint, parsley, and marjoram have the highest sensitivity. Typical of high sensitivity is leaf loss, colour loss, blackening of leaves. Therefore, when packaging your herbs, allow extra space in the box for the herbs to breathe. Even if it means less bunches per box. Which is worse, paying for an extra box or losing a complete consignment? If they are crammed into one box, there won't be any room left for respiration and the plants will heat up even quicker. As well, try wherever possible, to pack only one variety per box. Some varieties are not compatible.

Timing is all important.

Harvest early, chill minimum 2 hours, pack in shade and deliver to depot without stopping. If you must stop, keep your vehicle in the shade. At the depot make sure the boxes go straight into the cool room. If the herbs should heat up while in their packing shippers, or during transport, it will be even more difficult to cool them down. Remember summer means export, and the herbs have a longer journey to make. Think ahead, plan carefully, and success will be assured.

Howard Rubin

Certified organic cont'd.

Even a term such as "blood and bone" is subject to misuse. Many abattoir wastes such as meat meal, are more profitably used for stockfeed than as an ingredient of blood and bone. Other materials, such as processed sludge, chicken manure, rock phosphate and even urea, have been used to replace part of the more expensive ingredients, such as meat meal.

Organic fertilizers are derived from animal or vegetable sources. Under the NSW Fertilizers Act, a fertilizer may be described as "organic", if at least 65% of it's NPK is in the form of organic compounds. The OHGA standards require this level to be 100% for use on certified farms.

Although levels of the major nutrients in organic materials are generally low compared to chemical fertilizers, such materials contribute more than just nutrients. They return organic matter, which has a great deal of influence on the biological life of the soil. They encourage development and provide food for earthworms and micro-organisms, such as bacteria and fungi, which break down organic matter to humus and release nutrients in a form which is available to plants.

NPK is not the only consideration for feeding your soil and plants. Organic matter from crop residues and green manures are also important soil improvers.

There is a growing interest in certification from members in more distant areas. It is becoming difficult to service these growers and still keep the fee at a reasonable level. Members in other areas, interested in part-time work as certification officers for OHGA, are encouraged to apply in writing, with all details relevant to the task, such as qualifications and most of all: experience. Write to:

Certification OHGA
P.O.BOX 6171, Sth. Lismore,
NSW 2480.

A training/information seminar for suitable applicants will be held in the Lismore area.

KOORI WALK UPDATE

The planned guided walk, identifying native medicinal and edible plants, looks like being cancelled. It was initially postponed due to the illness of the key guide. Unfortunately this illness has persisted.

Enquiries to locate another, experienced guide, either in this area or elsewhere, have not been successful. If anyone has knowledge of a suitable person(s) to conduct a similar walk, they can contact Russell Quinn on 337056, to work out the details. If this does not happen, all money paid will be refunded. We wish Raymond a speedy recovery.

1992/1993 COMMITTEE

AS you can see from the roll-call on page 3, there is just one new face in the committee line-up for the year.

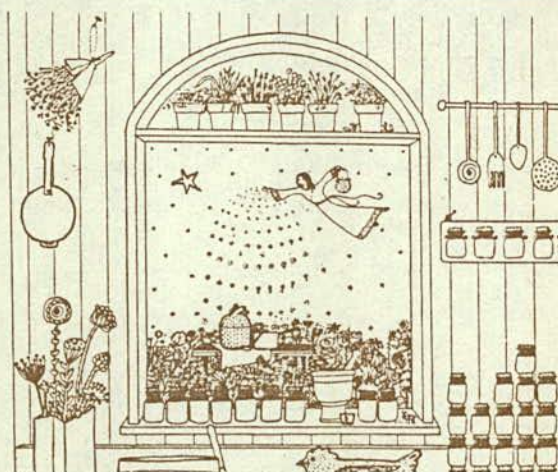
Reluctantly, we had to say goodbye to Carlene, who felt that new blood was needed for the important role of secretary. We thank her for all the work she has done over the years, and hope that she will continue to enrich the Association with her ideas.

Our new secretary is Scott Douglas. He has been a member of OHGA for about a year and a half now. He is 44 years old and born in Sydney. He is a farmer of twelve years experience and has also worked as an irrigation contractor. He was one of the founders of the Bio-dynamic Foundation in Sydney and secretary to the Bio-dynamic Gardeners Association.

We're lucky to have such an experienced addition to our executive committee.

Welcome aboard, Scott!

**THE OHGA
COMMITTEE
MEMBERS
WISH ALL
READERS**



**A GREAT
CHRISTMAS
AND
A WONDERFUL
1993**

THIS AND THAT.....

THE US MAGAZINE "THE AVANT GARDENER" reports in their July 92 issue, that researchers have found that silicon is extremely important to plants.

It's been found to protect plants against diseases, environmental stresses and toxicity from excesses of certain minerals.

Fertilizer with sodium silicate or potassium silicate (100 parts per million) controls powdery mildew on some crops and brown spot and blast disease on rice.

A researcher at the Ohio Ag Research Center feels this protection could be extended to roses, begonias and other flowers. Improved growth and yields, with applications of silicon, have also been noted.

THE MONELL CHEMICAL SENSES CENTER IN PHILADELPHIA, USA, did an interesting study.

In tests on 8 nursing mothers, garlic capsules were given, just before feeding, to four of the women, with the other four receiving placebos. Adult sniffers confirmed that the milk of the mothers, who ingested the garlic capsules, did assume a strong odor. The babies confirmed, on their part, that garlicky milk tastes better than plain breast milk by remaining attached to the nipple longer, sucking more often and drinking more milk.

A REPORT FROM THE USA tells us about the use of essential oils in healing radiation burns from cancer treatments.

A blend of lavender and chamomile in aloe vera, avocado oil and wheat germ, was applied 6-8 times daily, in the form of compresses and gentle massage. After six days of this treatment, blisters were gone and most of the dead tissue had sloughed off.

At that stage neroli oil was added to help combat dryness and stimulate cell growth. Sixteen days after this treatment started there was little visible evidence of a burn.

Opinions expressed by contributors to OHGA publications are not necessarily those of the editor, executive officers or the committee. Whilst every effort is made to publish accurate information, the Association accepts no responsibility for statements made or opinions expressed.

TO PRESERVE foliage for use in arrangements or potpourri's, try standing the stems or leaves in a mixture of one part glycerin and two parts water.

Absorption usually takes about two to three weeks.

Try leaves from gums, peach and plum trees, blueberries, roses, geraniums, irises, ivy, canna or any other that take your fancy.

Use only perfect specimens and wash the foliage to remove dirt.

Some leaves will change colour as the solution is absorbed. Allow the stems to remain in the solution until the colour is uniform to the edge of the leaf. This indicates that the absorption is complete.

Good air circulation and warm weather will speed up absorption.

Wipe the leaves occasionally with a cloth dampened with the same solution. This will help prevent drying, before the glycerin reaches the edge of the leaves.

Leaves may wilt if left in the solution too long. If this occurs, wipe them off and hang upside down to dry.

Leaves preserved by glycerin should be stored in boxes, to protect them from damage and dirt, until use. Before storage, wipe the leaves carefully with a soft cloth to remove excess moisture.

Check the boxes frequently during the first few weeks to be sure there is no leakage from the leaves, which might cause mold. (from The Virginia Gardener Newsletter)

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF AROMATHERAPY has good news for owners and neighbours of dogs that are excessive barkers.

The magazine informs us in its Spring 92 issue of the existence of a specially designed, battery operated, aerosol device which, when attached to a dog's collar, releases a jet of citronella-oil under its nose, every time the dog barks.

All strange smells demand a dog's attention and distract it from the barking. Soon, the magazine assures us, the dog will establish the link between the appearance of the jet of perfume and its barking and chooses to be quiet.

(What if the dog loves the smell? Ed.)

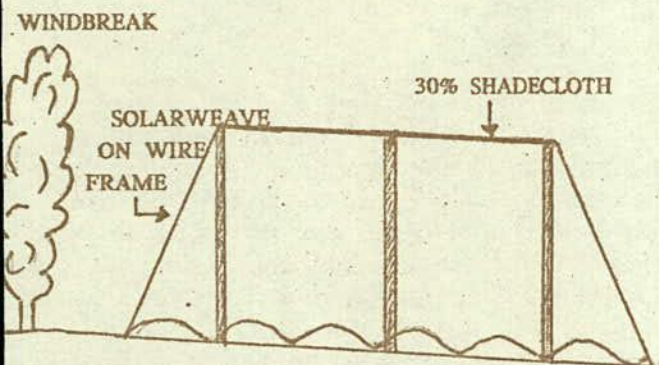
GROWER HINTS

by Dave Carey

- HOW DO I GET THE HIGHEST PRICES FOR MY HERBS?
- SIMPLE! GROW THEM WHEN NO ONE ELSE CAN.

During winter, even around the North Coast of NSW, we have difficulty keeping up supplies of sweet basil, purple basil, tarragon and onion chives. This is due to the slow regrowth in colder weather. What's most frustrating is, that prices quoted during this time often are double the regular prices.

Growing basil in a hot-house has been our latest project over the past six months. This is our set-up:



RAISED BEDS, COMPOSTED,
MULCHED WITH DRIP TAPE
IRRIGATION.

We built the hot house on a slight slope, facing east. All the walls of the hot house are covered in with SOLARWEAVE, which keeps out wind and rain.

The roof is covered with 30% knitted shade cloth. One end of the hot house has clear plastic over the shade cloth.

Sweet basil seedlings were planted in May (April would have been better). Some basil was planted outside the hot house at the same time.

We compared the temperature outside and inside, using max/min thermometers. A sample of some of the readings are shown in the graph.

On the whole the hot house was about four degrees cooler during the day and four degrees warmer during the night.

	OUTSIDE	INSIDE (SHADECLOTH ONLY)	INSIDE (PLASTIC)
DAY - MAX	31	28	32
NIGHT-MIN	4	9	12

BASIL GROWTH AFTER 12 WEEKS:

OUTSIDE:	150 MM
UNDER SHADE CLOTH:	300 MM
UNDER PLASTIC:	450 MM

We found we could re-harvest every two weeks, using the irrigation.

Once the colder weather passed, we removed the plastic from the roof, leaving just the shadecloth. Under these conditions the plants are protected from the wind but do receive any rain that may fall. They're also not suffering from the high summer temperatures which induce early flowering.

The drip-tape irrigation and air circulation through the shadecloth, may also help reduce any fungus type diseases, common to hot-houses.

For next winter I'm working towards hot-houses for tarragon and chives. With tarragon fetching up to \$4 a bunch in the winter, why not!



Kimberley Pools

Landscaping & Irrigation

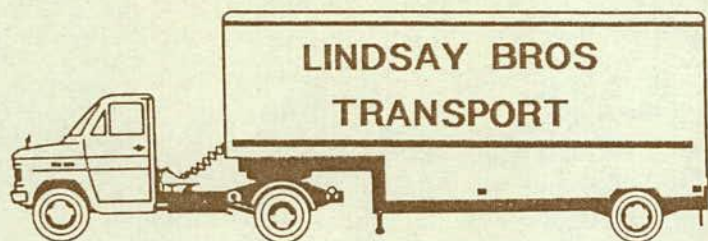
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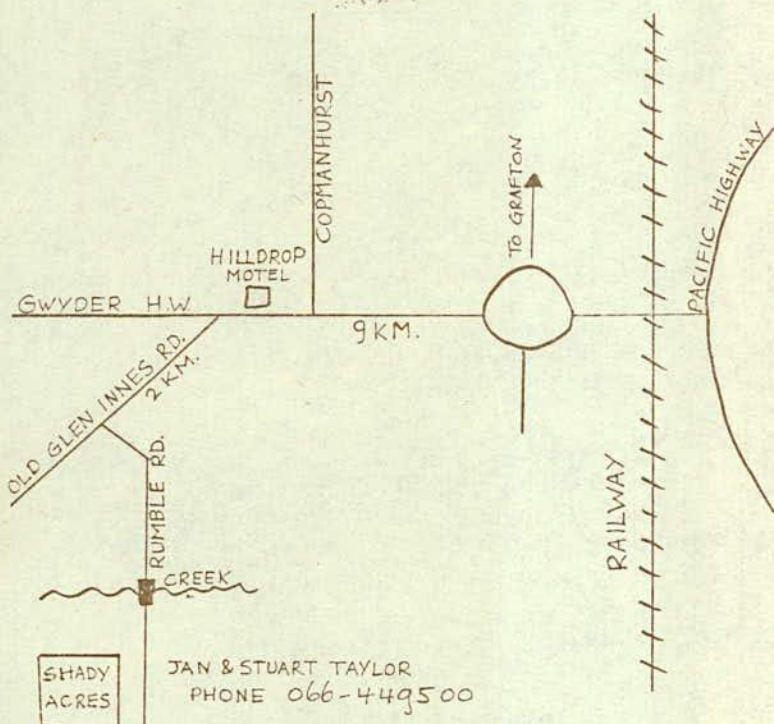
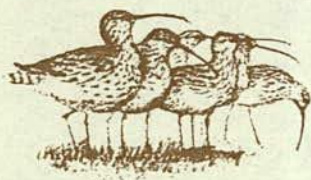
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SURVEY OUTCOME

A nice amount of members filled out the back of the subscription renewal and I was glad to see that all those who did, were happy with the current format of our HERB GROWER.

Some of the suggestions for future articles are:

- * processing culinaries, drying and packaging.
- * soil conditioning and info on signs and symptoms of mineral deficiencies.
- * practical aspects of certification and marketing.
- * herbal care for dogs, cats and cattle.
- * pest and fungal control.
- * herbal cosmetics.
- * recipes using herbs.
- * list of culinaries and when, how and where to plant them.
- * the number of herbs that go to market, which ones and where.
- * sources of dried herbs and materials for potpourris etc.

Thanks you for all that and I'll do my very best to fit all of these subjects in during the coming year.

If there's anybody out there who happens to be an authority on any of these subjects, please don't hesitate to contribute your expertise, even if you don't consider yourself to be a writer. You can just send me a rough article and I can polish it up for you. In particular I'd like some herbal recipes. Being a lousy cook myself, I can never quite get the enthousiasm up to scout them out.

Elle

NEXT MEETING

SUNDAY DEC. 6

at Jan & Stuart
Taylor

who live in South Grafton. (see map).

The meeting will start at 10.30 am.

SEE YOU ALL THERE!



CLASSIFIEDS

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For info on future commercial organic herb
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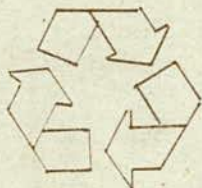
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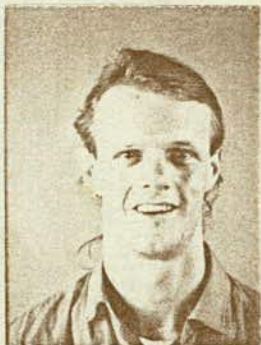
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MEMBER'S PROFILE



PAUL KRISTIANSEN is an ecogonomist, who's working at UNE Armidale. He's currently working on a research project for which he roams through the country, and tests native bushes on different sites for active ingredients. He also investigates methods of clonal propagation, particularly from cuttings, of *Bursaria Spinosa* (Blackthorn). The type of wood (ie. soft, semi-hard and hard-wood) best suited to striking, is being tested in the greenhouse. After that, plantation establishment possibilities will be on his agenda.

If any members are interested in medicinal plant production, especially of native species, he's keen to hear from them. Also, with his easy access to various sources of info, such as big libraries and professional journals, he'll be pleased to help anyone with queries or info requests. If you want to know about Chamomile growing in Budapest- Hungary, or how they grow Kangaroo Apple in Darjeeling-India, Paul's the man to ask. He can be contacted c/o Dept. of Agronomy & Soil Science, UNE Armidale 2351.