



Community Garden 3231 Newsletter May 2015

**Working Bees this month are on:
Saturday 2 May, 9.30 am
Sunday 24 May, 9.30 am**

We have WORMS! Two thousand of them. Thanks to Jo, they are settling happily into their new home ... see photos taken at the Working Bee on 4 April and read Jo's Worm Farm report. The next we need to do is feed them. Apparently they can eat up to 2 kg of food scraps a day, but the good news is they don't eat as much in winter.

Keep the date ...

Don't forget that Friday 22 May is the 5th birthday of Community Garden. The Mayor, Cr Margot Smith will unveil a plaque celebrating five years of 'Growing Food, Friendships and Community'. Invitations will be going out shortly to the many people who have contributed to the garden in one way or another and to councillors and Surf Coast Shire representatives. In true CG3231 style, we will have finger food, birthday cake and bubbly. Watch for your invitation in your inbox and a plant list from Otway Herbs.

A word from Gretel ...

After over a month away, it was great coming back to the garden. After the extraordinary green of the northern hemisphere spring, everything is looking subdued, but with garlic shoots peeping up, broadbeans thriving and lots more new growth, it feels like winter is over before it has started. In Morocco, I was inspired by the beautiful red poppy flowers, particularly among the bean crops. I must plant some!

I mentioned my involvement in the community garden to people in Germany – the response was "Why do you need a community garden when you have so much space?" In Europe, most people have allotments with their own little shed. Our garden is a different model with **community** far more important.

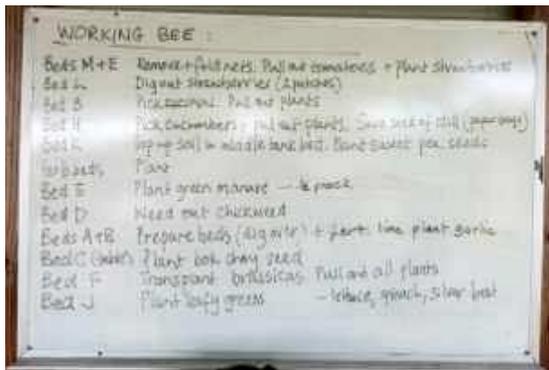
We finally have a licence agreement with the Shire until July 2016 (it's taken almost a year to finalise it). See you in the garden!

April working bees

Two working bees were held in April and a lot of work was done at both. With the change of seasons, we had to be ruthless to make way for the winter vegetables while the soil was still warm. Out came tomatoes, zucchini and cucumbers and in went broccoli, cauliflower, leafy greens, bok choy and garlic.

Working Bee Saturday 4 April

Editor: Apologies to some who appeared in photos last Newsletter. I was in a bit of a rush and shrank the photos a bit too much, making people look very odd.



A good crowd turned up on Easter Saturday to help at the working bee. A long list of jobs was written up on the white board and people got to work.

Conrad got to work on Bed M to prepare it for strawberry canes to be transplanted from Bed L. It was quite a job taking off the net, digging out the tomatoes and removing the A frame. Excellent work Conrad and thank you.

Debra and Ann weeded between the fast-growing purple broccoli and spinach plants, having first removed chickweed from the wonderfully healthy parsnips and carrots in Bed D.





Just look at how well the parsnips and carrots are growing in Bed D. This seed was planted very early and the plants have benefited from being lovingly watered during the dry weeks.

Thanks Kim for getting these started.



'K' is for Keith who has made and installed more permanent lettered signs for the community beds. K Bed is the one at the top corner of the garden with sweet peas and stocks growing in the middle and brassicas around the outside. The letters are matched to the plan of the garden on the noticeboard, to the left of the shed door, making it much easier to locate garden beds. Even the herb beds are now lettered, N, O and P.

Many thanks to Keith and his team for their willingness to take on any task we suggest. While the Garden Team deliberated about the style of the signs, there they were, all done and installed!



After some serious work was done, gardeners gathered for morning tea.



Yummy jam and scones, buttered hot cross buns and lemon cake (can't quite remember, sorry whomever brought it) ... all delicious.

Worm Farm

The worm farm has been under construction for a while and with its solid base, it certainly won't run away – thanks Graham R.

Jo Murray shares her considerable knowledge about worm farming.

A worm farm is an essential part of any organic garden for recycling food scraps into soil conditioner. We followed the method that Josh Byrne from Gardening Australia used when he established a worm farm in an old decommissioned fridge. The following notes are based on his story.

Setting up the worm farm

First, they were given a bedding of coir that they love, then a layer of aged sheep manure as an easy meal to get them started. The bedding was arranged at one end so the worms are concentrated in the one area. Once they've processed the material and produced sufficient castings, we'll start feeding up the other side. The worms will move across which means we can safely harvest the castings as a beautiful soil conditioner for the garden.

We placed the worms (2 boxes of 1000 worms each) onto the bedding material. Lots of shredded, moistened newspaper was put on top to keep them cool and moist, and then finally a layer of newspaper to keep the light out and the moisture in.

In order to maintain a constant temperature in the bath, Graham is now working on insulating the sides with straw and is also making a solid lid that will be hinged to allow easy access for feeding and gathering castings. Alistair found a piece of recycled timber at the tip that will be perfect for the lid and he has cut this to size.

Feeding worms

The worms seem happy in their new home and we now need to start feeding them. This will be one of our biggest challenges. We'll start with small amounts, but healthy, happy worms in a farm of this size can eat up to 2 kg of food per day, so we'll need to build up to that. Luckily, they won't eat as much over winter, so we'll have time to get this process working.

Worms eat most things that people like with the exception of onions and citrus. We'll also avoid dairy products and meat scraps that attract flies and rodents.

Worms have tiny mouths so the smaller we chop their food, the easier it is for them to digest, and the sooner we'll get lovely castings for the garden.

To start with, if you can bring along a small container of chopped up food scraps to the working bee on Saturday, the worms will be very appreciative. This could include fruit and vegetables, eggshells and coffee grounds. We can also include a small amount of leaves, weeds and grass clippings plus moist, shredded (unwaxed) paper.

Every so often we will give them a light dusting of lime. This should all work to keep the farm sweet and healthy.

Collecting and using worm juice

You will see a red bucket under the bath and this is to collect the worm juice. If you see this filling up, please tip the juice into a watering can, top up with water so it's the colour of weak tea and then feed on plants and soil.



Garden members gathered around the worm farm 'bath' under the gum tree to hear, watch and help install the worms in their new home.



Jo (right) explains the basics about how to get the worms started ... cool, moist soil, kept damp.

Adding the bedding material on top of the scoria.



Lots of moistened torn up newspaper was added and finally a thickish layer of newspaper.

Baby worms go in.

Working Bee, Sunday 19 April

Kim Neubecker

Possibly the smallest working bee yet but quality outstrips quantity and we got heaps done. Thanks to Daryl, Alistair, Unice, Mark, Barbara and Annette.

GARLIC

Four beds are now planted with garlic, as below;

Bed B Dynamite Purple

Bed A Garlic cream

Bed F Community Garden 3231 saved cloves.

Bed L Prinator

Also done ...

Bed G: Green manure

Bed H: Manured and mulched to increase height of soil (more needed)

Bed L: Strawberry end: Broadbeans

Bed P: Dill and Coriander seed

Bed N: Weeded.

Bed E: Green manure still developing

Chive bed (concrete trough): Moved chives to under roses and retained self sown ones below trough. Empty trough to be replanted with flowers (Kim)

Strawberry bed: taken out strawberry clumps and replaced with 1st year runners.

New shrubs were planted in the verge on Fraser Drive side of garden.

Weeding and tidying up of raspberries and herb/lemon bed.

And Mark made compost and got the pizza oven hot - see report below.

A good morning made even better with a cup of tea

Report on the pizza oven from Mark ...

You will be pleased to hear we had a successful firing of the pizza oven. Trick is to just burn light scrap wood until the oven heats enough to support burning the harder red wood. Took about 3 hours and a bit of blowing. I cooked a roast chicken and veg in the oven, the result was delicious.