



Community Garden 3231

Newsletter

July 2015

Working bees this month are:

Saturday 4 July 9.30 am

Sunday 19 July 9.30 am

In this issue, read about ...

- CG3231's 4-bed rotational crop system (Jo)
- Salad greens, lemons and vegetables ready to pick!
- Why grow a green manure crop? (Kim)

From the Coordinator

The AGM was a great chance to reflect on the achievements of the last year and make plans for the next year. We can feel more confident about remaining at 2 Fraser Drive in the long term. Although the Structure Plan is yet to be adopted by Council, the draft recommends the site be developed for housing suitable for older persons, with the community garden incorporated on the site. CG3231 made a big impression on the planning team - thanks to the efforts of so many members who contributed to the submission and shared their passion for the garden during the team's visit.

Our birthday party was great fun and inspired thinking about solar panels and blinds to make evening events more comfortable. Bendigo Bank has generously donated \$500 which will fund the blinds and I am talking to Surf Coast Shire about helping fund a solar panel, battery and lights.

We also plan more events this year with speakers plus more parties. I know the Garden Team has been planning the next few years' crops and the Building Team is drawing up plans for the blinds. We also plan to trial midweek working bees - let us know if you think that is a good idea, particularly if you are unable to come on weekends.

We are having an informal membership drive. Do you know someone interested in gardening? Perhaps they are new to the community. Give them a brochure and invite them to a working bee to see what we do.

See you in the garden.

Gretel

Check out Barbara's fabulous sweet potato crop

Compare the size to the table tennis ball!

Thanks for the experiment, Barbara. We're impressed. The garden team is now keen to try them in a community bed. What do you think?

If you'd like to grow sweet potato in your own plot, ask Barbara, the expert, about when is the best time to plant and tips on how to yield such a good crop.



Garden advice - have a chat to a garden team member

The garden team is now available once a month, to give advice to individual plot holders about any problems they may be having with their vegetables. We have decided to make this the first working bee of the month starting on the 4 July.

Kim, garden team coordinator, will try to be at all the first working bees of the month and will look at individual plots, if requested. There will also be a general discussion at smoko about any relevant issues that have been raised.

The other team members Jo, Angela, Barbara and Gay will also be available to give advice if they are there on that day.

CG 3231's 4-BED ROTATION SYSTEM

This year, the gardening team has introduced a rotation system for plantings in the community beds. This means that we will be rotating crops so that no bed sees the same crop in successive seasons.

Our garden will benefit in many ways from this practice.

- Reducing the build-up of pests and diseases in the soil by removing their preferred host and therefore breaking the pest or disease's lifecycle.
- Managing soil pH and nutrient levels to help our vegetables get the most out of the soil. Use of composts, manures, lime and fertilisers at the right times will benefit successive crops.
- Building soil. Using organic matter, our own compost and growing green manure crops to add nitrogen to keep our soil healthy and working - good soil is the key to producing great crops.

Beds used for rotation

Seven round, tank beds (D, E, F, G, H, I, K) and one ground bed (L) are the basis for our crop rotation; two beds per vegetable group.

The four vegetable groups we are using are:

1	Peas, beans and other edible legumes followed by brassicas (broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, chinese broccoli, chinese cabbage, kale, kohlrabi, radish, swede, turmip)
2	Onions, carrots, parsnip, beetroot, celeriac, celery, fennel
3	Sweet corn, pumpkin, zucchini, squash, cucumber and other cucurbits (melons, watermelon)
4	Tomatoes, capsicum, eggplant, chilli and other solanums

This system is gradually being implemented as crops are cleared and beds are being replanted. Green manure crops are also being sown in between crop plantings to keep the soil healthy.

The other beds and herb areas

In addition to the eight rotational beds, we have five other beds plus three small round, tank beds and a few other herb areas:

- Two raised, timber beds (C & K) are for leafy greens – lettuce, rocket, mizuna, mustard greens etc. The aim is to sow successive crops, every couple of weeks, over summer as they tend to bolt to seed in the hotter months. Spinach, silverbeet, bok choy etc will be sown for autumn and winter.
- Three ground beds (A, B & N) are for potatoes, garlic, shallots, leeks, spring onions, onions and extra space for additional crops, which might not fit in the eight tank beds. Again, we will be rotating these, so a different crop is in each area each year.
- We are gradually consolidating the “soft” herbs (basil, thai basil, coriander, parsley, dill, tarragon etc) in two of the small, round tank beds. Mints, which are invasive, will be in the third tank.
- Hardier herbs (thyme, marjoram, rosemary, sage etc) are around pizza oven.

WHAT'S READY TO PICK?

Winter vegetables and salad greens

There are plenty of lettuce (red and green) and mizuna ready to pick in the garden. And the cauliflowers (purple and green) have produced well and been much enjoyed. There are still purple cabbage, spinach and a cauli or two left, so get in quickly!



Why grow green manure?



Some gardeners will have noticed that a couple of community beds are growing crops that look like, well, weeds. This is green manure – crops grown specifically to feed the soil and give it a rest from the heavy work of producing food.

The plants chosen are a mix of grasses and legumes. The grasses, for example barley, grow a lot of green mass whereas the legumes, for example peas, pull nitrogen out of the air and collect it around their roots.

Once the plants have grown big enough to have a lot of bulk, they are cut to the ground and dug into the soil.

The combination of rotting down leaves and stalks as well as nitrogen rich roots, improves the soil and encourages earthworms to breed.

After a few weeks when the green matter has turned into compost, a new crop of vegetables can be planted.

It is important to cut the green manure before it sets any seed. Flowering and setting seed uses up much of the nitrogen the plant has stored so some of the benefits of growing the crop in the first place are lost.

Green manure is an important element in crop rotation. As I have written before, it is important to grow a variety of plants over the seasons (not just tomatoes) to keep the soil healthy and disease potential low.

Kim Neubecker

REMINDER

Now is the time to order seed potatoes for planting out in spring.

We will also be planting potatoes in the Community beds so if you want to learn how, make sure to come along to the spring working bees.