



Ecovillage Garden Diary 2023

By Mark Tupman, WEV Horticulture Manager

The Garden Diary will keep residents up to date with what we're doing in the residential food gardens and sharing some nitty, gritty information and advice on a range of related matters. These brief diary-style notes will be updated after each Friday Garden Group get-together to which all residents are welcome. In addition, if you would like to join the WhatsApp communication group, please email Mark on mark@ecovillage.net.au and he will add you.

DJERAN – APRIL / MAY

The heavier rain events we've been getting between sunny patches over the last few weeks indicate that we are now in the **Djeran season**.

Our ideal window for sowing those in-between crops that like it not too hot, not too cold, such as peas, spinach, beetroot, broccoli etc is pretty much over.

This is however, still a good time to get in those real winter root veg like turnips, swedes, onion, garlic etc. and if nothing else, sow a cool season cover crop.

If we want to grow anything over winter, we really need to get the beds prepared and planted as soon as possible because from here on in, it just gets wetter and colder. We need the plants we grow to have well established root systems in place when the harsher weather hits, to hold our soil in place and feed the biology.

With the wet weather we will see increasing numbers of snails and slugs and visits from wood ducks that love sprouts and seedlings so get things in now and protect them while they get going.

Things to do in the next few weeks include:

- Prepare your last beds for planting
- Apply minerals that your soil is short of (dolomite, gypsum, rock phosphate, lime, basalt dust, ash)
- Sow onions in trays
- Transplant seedlings of broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, celery, leeks and spring onions
- Direct seed turnips, swedes, garlic, carrots, parsnip, lettuce and rocket in beds
- Sow a cover crop in any vacant beds
- Feed seedlings with compost, fish hydrolysate and seaweed.
- Protect your plantings with exclusion mesh, nets or shade cloth
- Gather materials and make compost for spring

Relevant docs in the [Residents' Handbook](#):

- Garden Calendar
- Annual Edible Planting Calendar
- Potting mix recipe
- Cover Cropping in the South West
- The art of making fine compost
- Compost Extract and Slurrys
- Pest and Disease Management Measures

12/05/2023

What we did

- Constructed a Johnson Su Bioreactor (to make compost) with weldmesh, a pallet, weedmat and some PVC pipes.

Observed

- NA

Learnt

- How to construct a Johnson Su Bioreactor (see attached instructions).
- Some compost making details (the art of making fine compost)



04/05/2023

What we did

- Thinned out the last brassica seedlings
- Allocated the last celery and spring onion seedlings for planting out in gardens
- Liquid fed seedlings with fish and seaweed
- Did a walkaround of participants gardens

Observed

- Lots of pasture ryegrass and other weeds like capeweed germinating from the existing seedbank in the soil
- Wood ducks and rabbits are selectively eating the legumes, sunflowers and flaxseed out of the cover crops they can access
- The days are getting shorter and colder, no need to water or fertilise anymore this season!

Learn't

- Weeds are inevitable, especially in newly prepared beds. The appearance of weeds is not necessarily a problem unless they are competing with nearby crops or setting seed. One way of reducing a weed seedbank is to let them germinate then terminate them with a flameweeder or weedmat before planting
- Some people are building up their beds quite high. Some things to consider are that it takes extra work to build beds higher, you end up using sub soil and gravel/clay to build your beds which is less ideal than topsoil, you end up losing bed space on the elevated sides and they are more prone to erosion. Using the topsoil from your paths to build up your beds to around half a foot is not a bad way to go
- Use exclusion mesh or shade cloth to keep out wildlife while seeds are germinating!

28/04/2023

What we did

- Planted red, white and brown onions in trays
- Transplanted celery, leeks and spring onion seedlings in garden beds
- Applied various treatments to a new garden area to trial their effectiveness. These included compost extract, mycorrhizae fungi inoculant, bio-stimulants and trace minerals
- Lots of households have been starting new garden patches with the onset of autumn

Observed

- Lots of rain the past week
- Wood ducks coming in and eating sprouting cover crop seeds (Birds - Parrots, Wood Ducks etc...)

Learnt

- How and when to plant onion by seed
- How to start a patch from scratch (workshop)
- How to sow a cover crop (Cover Cropping in the South West)
- Coating seed with compost extract (Compost Extract and Slurrys)





21/04/2023

What we did

- Made more potting mix (Potting Mix Recipe)
- Separated and sorted garlic stock for planting
- Transplanted celery seedlings into bigger pots
- Planted last round of broccoli, cauliflower and cauliflower

Observed

- Weed germination everywhere, triggered by the rainfall.
- Rats eating planted peas (Pest and Disease Management Measures)
- Cone shaped snails coming out with the wet conditions (Pest and Disease Management Measures)

Learnt

- How to plant garlic – pick the best big, disease free cloves and plant pointy side up, just below the soil surface
- That you need to undertake good pre-planting weed control when planting slow growing, non-competitive crops like carrots, parsnip, onions, garlic etc...
- Now is still a good time to plant root vegetables like onions, garlic, carrot, turnip, swedes, radish...



14/04/2023

What we did

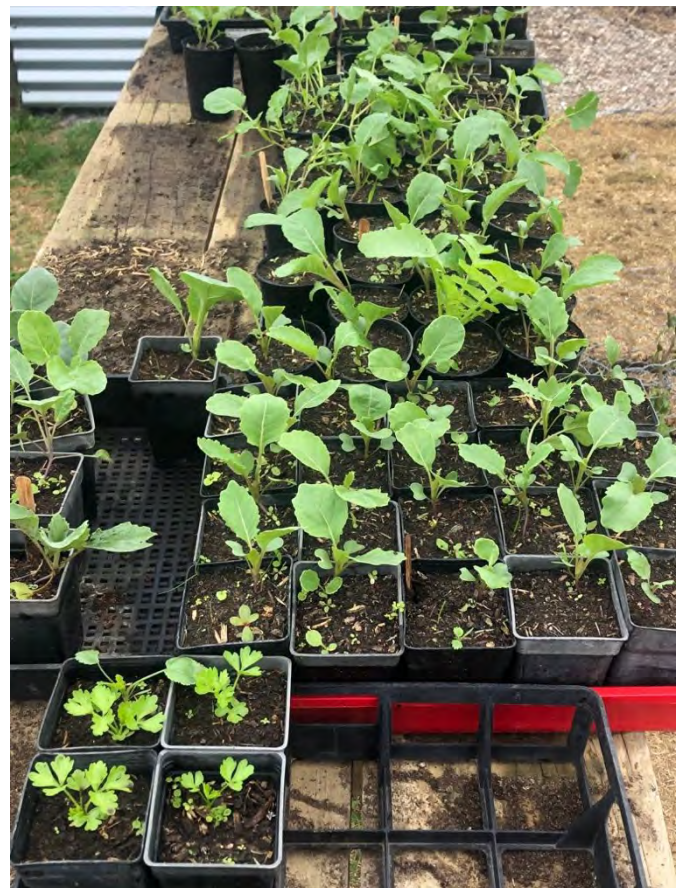
- Weeded, sorted and transplanted seedlings – broccoli, cauliflower, brussel sprouts, cabbage, leeks, celery, spring onions.
- Transplanted with compost and watered in with some fish hydrolysate and liquid seaweed

Observed

- Season breaking rainfall event
- Cooler conditions

Learnt

- The window for planting autumn crops is closing as the weather gets wetter and colder
- April is around where Djeran season begins, when we start to experience regular rainfall



07/04/2023

What we did

- Cleaning up summer crops and preparing beds for seeding and transplanting

Observed

- Aphids on some brassicas, parasitised by beneficial wasps ☺
- Blossom End Rot on some tomatoes caused by a Calcium deficiency

Learnt

- Treatments for Aphids (Resi Handbook: Pest and Disease Control Measures)
- What vegetables you plant at this time of year (Annual Edible Planting Calender)
- What sort of onions to plant at this time of year – Short Day Onions which start to bulb when the daylight hours in spring go over 10 hours

Aphids

- *Encourage/Introduce predators such as wasps and provide them with suitable habitat.*
- *Remove aphid habitat and host plants growing in the vicinity.*
- *Improve crop nutrition, enabling plants to manufacture complete proteins that sap sucking insects find indigestible.*
- *Spray fortnightly or as needed with oil/soap/pyrethrum based sprays.*
- *Plant crops that aren't susceptible to attack.*
- *Plant out well established, healthy seedlings.*

