



AUTUMN NEWSLETTER

President's Report

WOW! What a great start to autumn and Open Gardens Canberra. Now that we are all venturing back out into the garden as the weather cools down, cleaning up and possibly counting the losses from the heat. I've probably lost one or two but will keep watering and live in hope.

I've heard nothing but rave reviews from our first three open gardens for the autumn season. Thanks so much to the garden owners, all the volunteers and Open Gardens Canberra committee that made the Open Gardens at Dickson, Hawker and the Community Garden at Charnwood such a success. We can never have too many volunteers so if you would like to be part of a great team please email info@opengardenscanberra.org.au

We have a couple of major highlights to bring to our members' attention in this newsletter. The first is that our new website is available to view at www.opengardenscanberra.org.au Amongst the changes, you will also notice our new logo on the website (as well as on this newsletter). A couple of features to note with the website – you **now need to enter your details** to receive future quarterly newsletters. Also, you can register attendance at future open gardens directly onto your phone from the 'Events' page. We hope you like the changes made and welcome any feedback on the website to: publicity@opengardenscanberra.org.au We hope to have our Facebook and twitter accounts activated shortly too but please be patient because this is a work in progress.

Our second initiative is the inaugural Open Gardens Canberra scholarship for a horticulture student attending the Canberra Institute of Technology. Applications will be advertised shortly on both our and the CIT's website but please bring to the attention of any CIT horticulture students you may know.

The Open Gardens Canberra committee are excited to be offering as much value to your membership as possible. Our first members' only event includes a visit to Warrigal Queanbeyan, one of Queanbeyan's most interesting, historic landscaped gardens. See below for further details to book your attendance.

Finally, Canberra has a strong sense of horticultural pride, be it in our bushlands, parks or own gardens, I invite anyone with a passion for gardens to join Open Gardens Canberra.

Kind Regards

Trevor Fuller
President, Open Gardens Canberra Inc.
0412 437 418

Open Gardens Canberra - New Website

We have updated our website – www.opengardenscanberra.org.au and hope you like it. We have also adopted a new logo which will appear on all new material, banners, etc.

One of the features is that you will be able to subscribe to the newsletter and we warmly encourage you to do this as the newsletter will be emailed only to those who have subscribed. Future newsletters will be quarterly commencing with our winter edition on 1 June.

Autumn Open Gardens

Our autumn season is underway with the following events during March and April:

18-19 March – 10.00 am to 4.00 pm

- Ysadora – 7 Cochrane Crescent, Theodore

25-26 March – see details in article in this newsletter.

- Member-only event – Open Gardens Walk at Warrigal, Queanbeyan - see below for details

29-30 April – 10.00 am to 4.00 pm

- The Children's Garden – 50 Lindrum Crescent, Holt; and
- Woowoolahra – 6 London Bridge Road, Burra

The Open Gardens of 29-30 April will conclude the autumn season of Canberra Open Gardens.

We have a number of wonderful gardens opening in spring. Details will be in our winter and spring newsletters; on the Open Gardens Canberra website by late May/early June; and will be advertised in Canberra media publications and radio programs.

Our member only event: Open Gardens Walk at Warrigal Queanbeyan - Karawee Gardens - Saturday 25 and Sunday 26 March 2017

Open Gardens Canberra Inc is delighted to announce guided walks, led by committee member Tom Baker, of Warrigal Queanbeyan (Kawaree Gardens) at 18 George Street, Queanbeyan on both Saturday 25 and Sunday 26 March. Walks will be conducted each day from 10,30am and will take about 90 minutes. Light refreshments will be available. Entry by gold coin donation with proceeds going to the Warrigal Queanbeyan Residents Group.

This is a rare and unique opportunity to see one of Queanbeyan's most interesting and historic landscaped gardens situated on a five acre site containing an aged care hostel (the lodge) and the retirement village. The complex was developed between 1988 and 1991 by John Fyshwick and sold to the current owners, Warrigal, in 1994. It will also be the final time the garden will be open for public access.

There are a variety of garden styles with extensive lawns and mature trees. An active tree management plan is in place. There are also extensive internal gardens in the Lodge. The listed manse, 'Kawaree' Cottage, is now the Community Centre. It was constructed for Edward Morgan on land from the Garryowen Estate, called Convolvulus Farm in about 1886. In 1891 it became the Wesleyan Church Parsonage and was then purchased by the Colman Family in 1922.

Warrigal, the current owners of the entire estate, have development approval to replace the aged care hostel section of the site with a larger high care facility and new landscaping. This will be the last opportunity to see the older gardens in this section.

Please note: this is a **member's only event** due to insurance and logistical issues and given the need to limit numbers to 20 for each walk. For both walks, you will need to register your attendance by calling Tom Baker on 0415 839017 or emailing: info@opengardenscanberra.org.au. Please meet in the large, off-road carpark which is accessed from George Street by the laneway next to the bowling greens. Go to the gate with balloons.

Announcement – Scholarship with Canberra Institute of Technology

Open Gardens Canberra is pleased to be partnering with the Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT) to provide a \$2,000 scholarship to assist a CIT horticultural student with tuition fees, books and equipment in their second and third year. Applications for first year horticultural students will open mid-2017 and the successful applicant will be announced in late 2017. The recipient of the scholarship will be encouraged to participate in Open Gardens Canberra activities.

Open Gardens Canberra – Autumn Season 2018

Open Gardens Canberra is an organisation set up in 2015 to sponsor and promote open gardens for the public to enjoy. The Committee actively seeks interested garden owners to open their gardens in Autumn 2018.

Selecting gardens is not a 'one size fits all' activity. We aim to select a wide variety of gardens – some with broad appeal and some which appeal to particular audiences (e.g. families, older people) or specialised interests (e.g. productive gardens, native gardens, cottage gardens). Selected gardens will vary in size from small courtyard gardens to large country ones. Gardens are selected using a set of criteria which include their design, style, plant material, sustainability, historical interest or apt handling of a difficult site.

If you might be interested in opening your garden, please contact Deirdre on 0417 937513 or Tom on 0415 839017. We'll talk you through what is involved in opening your garden, and arrange a time to visit. If your garden is selected, an Open Gardens Canberra committee member will guide you throughout the process.

Open Gardens Canberra Annual General Meeting (AGM)

Our AGM will be held in coming months and we are currently planning for this along with a celebration to mark two years of successful operation of Open Gardens

Canberra. The AGM is your opportunity to learn more about future plans; ask questions of the existing committee; influence the direction of Open Gardens Canberra; and seek nomination to the committee if you would like to become a committee member. All positions will be up for nomination. Details about the AGM will be advised on our new website and in the winter newsletter.

Membership

You can join Open Gardens Canberra at any of the open garden events during the autumn season and have free entry to all open gardens. As a bonus, if your application is received after 1 April 2017, your membership will extend through to 31 August 2018. This does not apply to renewals. You can also download a membership form from the website and post back to the committee (address on the membership form).

Tom's Tips - Composting

Composting is the process of speeding up the natural process of decomposition of organic material (food, grass, leaves, manure, twigs, bones, cat litter, sawdust, paper etc) into humus. The organic humus contains varying nutrients that can be slowly released for uptake by plants. The humus also improves the infiltration and retention of water, and also improves the physical and chemical properties of soils for growing plants.

Micro-organisms, including fungi, bacteria and many small soil animals do the work, whilst consuming water and oxygen (air). You should aim to create well-rotted, dark compost which is earthy to smell. Some compost can be low in nutrients, so if you want a very productive garden, you may need to add compost regularly, or add manures or other fertilizers in moderation.

The simpler methods include shallowly burying the organic material directly in the soil where it is required or where appropriate, spreading on the surface as mulch. You can of course simply feed your 'waste' scraps to poultry or other animals.

There are other more formalised methods which give more control on the decay process and accelerate decomposition. All methods require constant moisture and good drainage. These include:

1. *Heaping ('Berkeley')*. Mix materials in heap (or pit) one to two cubic metres in size. Mix the different types of organic material. Larger heaps means more heat and more moisture content.
2. *Composting bins, boxes (plastic, brick, timber etc)*. These are also good for 'tidying up' gardens and using your space efficiently, especially for small gardens. Bins must have small gaps to allow air and water to enter and to allow good drainage.
3. *Worm Farms*: Worm farms are perhaps the best way to obtain high quality compost in terms of nutrients and soil organisms. Kitchen rinsing's and food scraps can be added daily.

However, worm farms must drain well, cannot dry out, and not get very hot, so leave in semi shaded area. The advantage of worm farms is the excellent worm

castings and the nutrient-rich leachate that can be used to water plants. A simpler model is a foam worm box which can be moved around the garden, which also improves soil underneath.

An average sized garden can incorporate all these methods!

From Sally, our Volunteers Coordinator - 'Happy Chook Salad Bar'– also known as 'Clucker Tucker'

We all love our backyard chooks, their wondrous eggs, their fertilising work and their curious and busy lives. But have your chooks destroyed the paradise patch you provided for them? My three handsome Black Australorps (Rise, Ann, Shine) have dug and scratched their extensive yard until it's bare (except for the persistent couch grass). I frequently give them greens such as silver beet and weeds as I remove them, but they desire and demand more green pick than I can guarantee them.

Open Gardens Canberra members, Jennie and Chris Curtis of 'Fresh Landscape Design' at Bywong, have designed an easy method to ensure a constant supply of green pick to backyard chooks. As part of a test run, they gave me two metal mesh frames under which I sewed their seed mix. Jenny and Chris work with local business to provide the frames and the seed mix. I initially covered the frames with a fine mesh and watered regularly until the plants emerged above the frame. Once I removed the protective mesh, the chooks discovered the fresh green pick within minutes and now happily walk about on the frames, gobbling green feed and poking their heads through the mesh as far as they can in the hope of more. I have since bought two more frames and will probably get another two.

More information, including an installation video, is available on:

<https://www.freshlandscape.com.au/happy-chook>

Member Contributions

We welcome contributions from members on garden-related activities, tips and recipes as well as feedback. For these matters and all enquiries, please email: info@opengardenscanberra.org.au

A final note - thank you to our distributors

We wish to express our appreciation for the support we receive from a number of Canberra nurseries and organisations who display at their shopfronts the flyers advertising our open gardens. We are very grateful for this assistance.

Thanks go to the following institutions - the National Arboretum Canberra; the Australian National Botanic Gardens Visitor's Centre; and the Canberra and Region Visitor's Centre. We also thank the following nurseries: the Garden Centre in Dickson, Greengold Garden Centre, Heritage Nursery in Yarralumla; and Parkwood in Belconnen; and the following nurseries in Pialligo: Cool Climate Natives, Living Simply, Rodney's, Stonehenge and Willow Park.