

GARDEN NOTES KAMBAH COMMUNITY GARDEN



HISTORY AND WHO WE ARE – OUR COMMUNITY

The Kambah Community Garden is one of 12 gardens operated under the voluntary management of the Canberra Organic Growers Society. This garden was initially opened in September 2001 under the leadership of Heather Pearce. By February 2002 all the plots were leased and local members wishing to join had their names on a waiting list. Over the years, members have come and gone. Some due to interstate work transfers, or illness, or ageing, or purchasing a home with a garden-sized back yard.

The land on which this garden is located is supplied by the ACT Government by way of a formal 'license' to the Canberra Organic Growers Society. The purpose is specifically to grow produce for personal and family use. Accordingly, no commercial enterprise can be undertaken at the garden.

The garden is committed to sustainable organic gardening practices. We consider ourselves to be a 'community' within the community and accordingly produce is shared particularly by way of our herb garden and 'sharing garden'.

The garden currently has 28 individual plots ranging in size from 12 m² to 40 m². Currently every garden plot is leased to a total of 25 individuals or families including a number of wonderful keen children. Our members grow flowers or vegetables according to their personal choice including, at times, interesting produce from their country of origin. Currently we have members aged from 2 to 72 (plus a few!).

This garden is run by a Convener and a small voluntary committee, elected annually, who see to the administrative matters that arise. As part of a world-wide interest in healthy foods and sustainable living, the aim of this garden is to actively promote organic gardening principles to our garden members and the local community. We achieve this by sharing our knowledge with new members and local folk who simply walk past and stop to chat with our gardeners. We welcome new members and interested prospective gardeners, especially those who are new to Australia, and enjoy the pleasure of exchanging ideas and expertise, as well as produce, with each other.

Artificial fertilizers, chemical pest control and fungicides are not permitted but the concept of keeping the garden in healthy balance is encouraged by the use of organic fertilizers, green manures, mulches, companion planting and rotational planting.

During the 18 years that this garden has been operating, we have held several open days, have held occasional plant stalls with any profits being donated to various charities. We have donated plants to other community gardens in under-privileged areas, and welcomed disability groups and encouraged them to learn about growing food. We have sponsored asylum seekers to teach them about local gardening techniques via a program in cooperation with Red Cross and Companion house. Our excess produce has been donated to Communities at Work and also Companion House.

The garden encounters typical seasonal challenges including drought, the ever-rising Summer temperatures, local water restrictions, an influx of a specific weed or pest, and occasional vandalism, however, the spirits of our gardeners are never broken, instead, they rise to the challenge and produce amazingly successful crops regardless of the pitfalls. It is a pleasure to be in a garden paradise at 7:00 a.m. in the morning chatting to like-minded gardening friends while enjoying watching the early sun's rays make patterns on the water spraying from a hose.

We hope that our visitors today will take home an acceptance of who we are as a gardening group and a basic understanding and appreciation of organic gardening principles and practices and how pure foods can benefit their health and well-being.

FEATURES

A lot of our produce is grown from seeds sourced from companies such as Diggers Club, Eden Seeds, and similar suppliers of quality seeds, however, the local Bunnings store must also profit well through the sale of their organic based products and their seedlings to us. Seeds are often saved by our members and shared for the next season's gardening. Our herb garden is run by a few volunteers who happily weed, fertilize and water and mulch these plants for the benefit of all our gardeners. We enjoy growing some more unusual vegetables and herbs such as Jerusalem artichokes, unusual shaped members of the pumpkin family, aniseed, sorrel, and other tasty and healthy bounty. Our common areas such as grassed pathways and plot and garden perimeter edges are kept mown and tidied via a roster of garden members.

GARDEN OWNERS

The current Convener is Shirley Bolton. For additional information on joining the garden, organic gardening questions, or any other queries, there is a wealth of information on the COGS website: <http://www.cogs.asn.au/> or you may contact Shirley on 0417 774647.