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AUTUMN 2020

GROW to EAT

Grow your
own
Spices

AQUA CROP
Water
Chestnuts

Why you need to eat
Fermented
Foods

Visit a
Inner-city
rooftop farm

Go
Bananas

6 reasons to grow
COMFREY

Make your own
Apple cider
vinegar

A man wearing a grey t-shirt, khaki pants, and safety gear (goggles and ear protection) is operating a STIHL BC 230 cultivator in a vineyard. The cultivator is a small, walk-behind machine with a black frame, a white fuel tank, and two large rear wheels. It is turning over brown soil in the rows of a vineyard. In the background, there are rows of young grapevines supported by wooden stakes. The STIHL logo is visible in the top right corner.

STIHL

TAKE THE SWEAT OUT OF GROWING WITH THE STIHL BC 230

The new STIHL BC 230 cultivator has strong 250mm blades that effectively and quickly turn the soil and prepare it for planting. Affordable and easy to use, with folding handles to make it conveniently compact for storage and transport. The BC 230 acts like an extra hard-working pair of hands - just what you need.

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I maintain that edible gardening is the most exciting way to garden. Yes, roses are pretty and smell great, but that can't beat digging your trowel into dark, rich, earthy soil and unearthing golden turmeric tubers or your first potato crop. Likewise, is it possible to beat the satisfaction of flavouring a winter stew with herbs picked just outside your window, or sharing your crop of chilies with everyone who comes knocking at your door?

None of this is possible if you don't know how to treat your soil right, and to this end we remind you how to get started with compost.

While eating fresh produce is what we all strive for there's a powerful argument for eating food that's gone a bit *vrot*. OK, we're not talking about that rotten apple at the bottom of the veggie rawer, but rather foods that have intentionally been fermented. Kefir, kombucha, sauerkraut, apple cider vinegar and kimchi – these are all the darlings of the healthy eating crew. Read about why this is, and how to make some of your own.

We always try to stress that you don't need a big piece of land to grow your own food, and a great example of creative food gardening can be found above the streets of Durban, on a rooftop that is home to a farm. If you live in KZN, visit it yourself to be inspired.

Finally, we take note of a new hobby that has sprung up around the world – seed swapping. People are meeting up regularly and bringing seeds or plants to trade with others. While this is a new craze, it's actually how most of our parents and grandparents gardened – by sharing what they had with their friends and neighbours. We love this idea and hope that it grows from strength to strength. Why don't you give it a go, maybe replacing your wine club with a seed swap club?

My final words this month are simple ones: growing something is better than growing nothing, so even if you have a single pot at your disposal, make sure it doesn't lie empty. Plant it up and become part of the edible gardening community.

Keep growing and eating,

Stephen



Contents

- 2 What to grow this season
- 4 Autumn and winter checklist
- 12 A green heart in the city
- 16 From source to soul with Kim
- 23 Indoor winter greens
- 32 6 reasons to grow comfrey
- 35 Pest watch: powdery mildew
- 36 Six spices that you can grow
- 45 Easy overnight oats
- 46 Apple cider vinegar
- 50 Fermented foods
- 54 Nutrient dense foods
- 56 Getting started with compost
- 60 Lunar gardening guide
- 63 Tidbits
- 63 Subscribe
- 64 Just feed me retro-style
by Anna Celliers

Vegetables

- 20 Chinese cabbage
- 24 Water chestnuts

Fruit

- 42 Bananas

Herbs

- 28 Oregano
- 31 Pineapple sage

Projects

- 58 Seed swapping



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Thyme

What to GROW this season

Autumn & Winter



Beetroot

See page 50



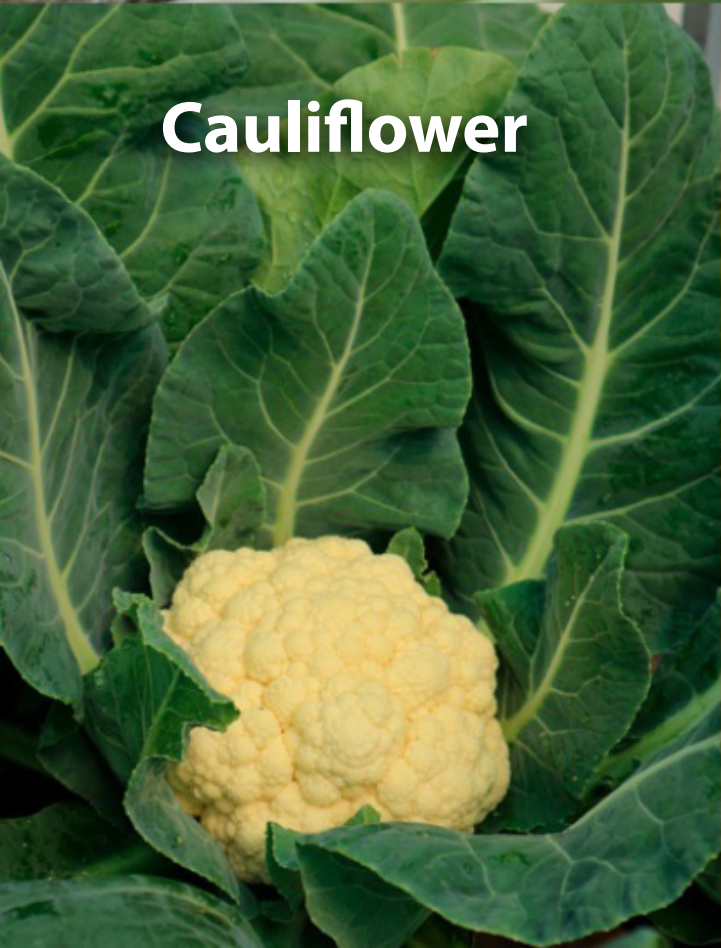
Spring Onions



Cabbage



Garlic



Cauliflower



Broccoli



Chinese
cabbage

See page 22



Kiwi



Herbs for bread



Water Chestnuts

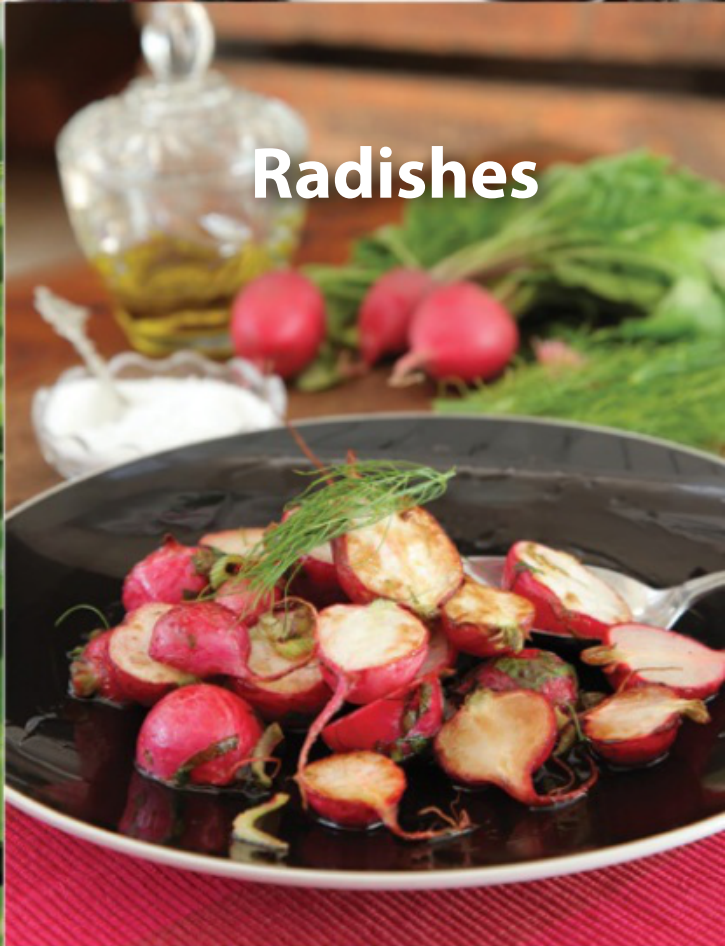
See page 26



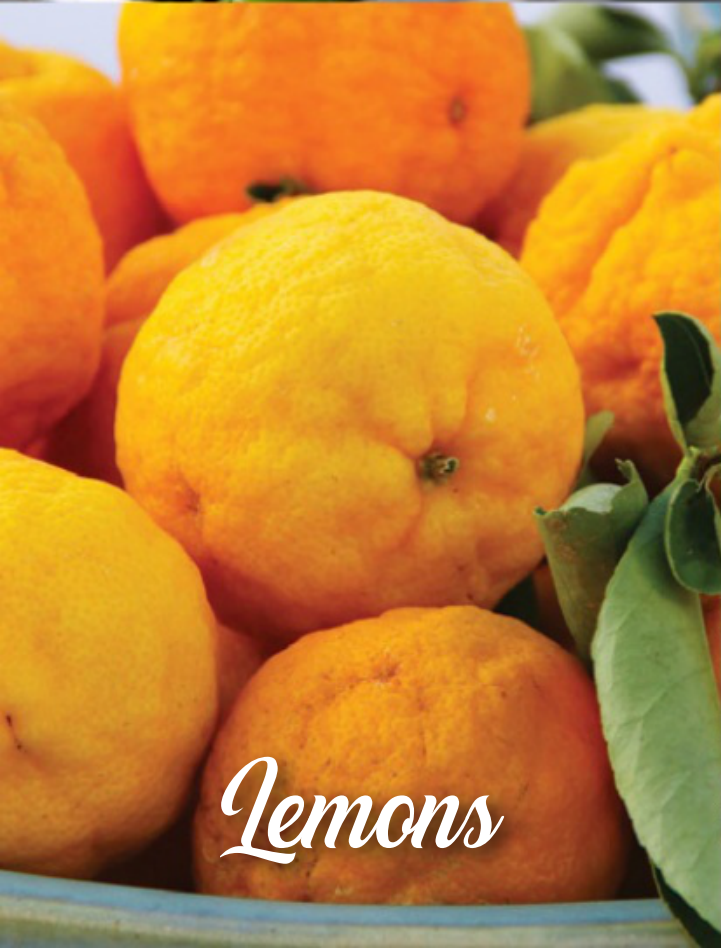
Celery



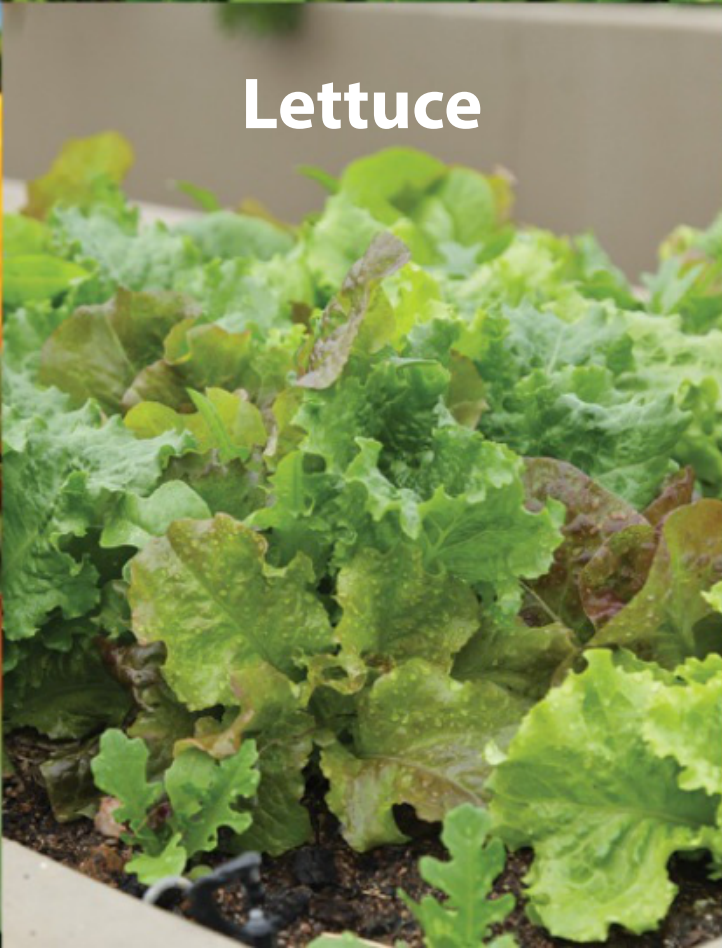
Mizuna



Radishes



Lemons



Lettuce



Oranges

AUTUMN AND WINTER (CHECKLIST

Here's the checklist of tasks in the food garden to take you through the cooler seasons.



Micro broccoli for health

Let's face it, there are very few people who actually like broccoli, but we do know how good it is for us. So rather than eat the whole plant, try eating the sprouts or microgreens and get the health benefits without the need to steam your way through the bigger version. In fact, the sprouted version has higher concentrations of good properties than the mature version. Like all cruciferous veggies, broccoli contains glucosinolates, and broccoli microgreens have more than most. Scientists are now studying the benefits of these compounds to prevent DNA damage that could lead to cancer and help prevent inflammation that can lead to neurodegenerative diseases. While the scientist are busy, we may as well start eating them on our sandwiches and in our salads.



Tuck them up

Protect your sensitive plants against frost with frost-protection fabric before the first frost hits. See the calendar for an idea of the dates. Also spread compost around the bases of frost-sensitive plants to give them an extra blanket and a nutritional boost.

Frost calendar

Winter veggies need at least 6 – 8 weeks of good growth before a major frost. Work back from the expected date of the first frost in your area to see when you can still plant to be comfortably within the frost-free period.

These are the likely dates when 50% of each region could experience frost.

● Northern Province:	19 June
● Mpumalanga Highveld:	29 May
● North West:	26 May
● Northern Cape:	26 May
● Gauteng:	24 May
● Free State:	16 May
● KwaZulu-Natal (not tropical):	2 June
● Eastern Cape:	26 May
● Western Cape:	9 June

Designed for the tough conditions of Africa



The STIHL 230 range is designed for challenging conditions and hard work. All models are economical to run and simple to maintain, sharing spares such as filters for convenience and limited downtime. When planting, you need the robust BC 230 cultivator, with strong, rotating 250mm blades to easily till prepared soil. This machine has been designed, like all STIHL products, to focus on operator wellbeing and practicality. The handle folds away for easy storage and transportation.
www.stihl.co.za



Try something new

Are you happy with the layout of your veggie garden? Research different options: raised beds offer better drainage, narrower beds or keyhole beds are easier to work, eco-circles are good for wise water use. Changing the design of a vegetable garden not only offers new options (vertical elements, mixed herb and flower planting) but also invigorates the soil. The digging of new beds aerates the soil, while additional compost adds nutrition and improves the texture.

5 Picking peppers

Sweet peppers are easy to grow, and they are expensive to buy in the store. They are often harvested while green, but you can leave them on the plant to ripen into yellow, orange and red peppers, and the longer they stay on the plant the sweeter they become. Remove the fruit using pruning shears, scissors or a sharp knife to avoid damaging their delicate branches. Store in a fridge for 7 – 10 days or wash, cut and freeze for future use. Roast them, stuff them, pickle them, or use them fresh in salsas and salads.



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Vita Veg 6:3:4 (16)

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FLOWERING & FRUITING

- Tomato, Brinjal, Chilli, Pumpkin, Butternut, Squash
- Plant with: Vita Grow 2:3:2 (16) @100g per m²
- Top Dress: Before Flowers develop with Vita Fruit & Flower 3:1:5 (16)

ROOTS & BULBS

- Potato, Carrot, Beetroot, Sweet Potato, Onion, Garlic
- Plant with: Vita Grow 2:3:2 (16) @100g per m²
- Top Dress with: Vita Green 5:1:5 (16) @100g per m²

LEAFY GREENS

- Spinach, Cabbage, Lettuce, Rocket, Kale, Herbs
- Plant with: Vita Veg 6:3:4 (16) @100g per m²
- Top Dress with: Vita Veg 6:3:4 (16) @100g per m²

SEEDS, PODS & LEGUMES

- Peas, Beans, Mielies, Broad beans
- Plant with: Vita grow 2:3:2 (16) @100g per m²
- Top Dress: before flowers develop with Vita Fruit & Flower 3:1:5 (18) @100g per m²

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healthy soil - healthy plants - healthy people



No herb garden?
Start one now

6

Of all the edibles, herbs are the easiest to grow and are always available. You don't have to worry about sowing seasons, pests or lack of water. They just like sun, some water now and then, and lots of picking. A herb garden can be as simple as five or six pots of your favourite herbs, or even one or two on your kitchen's windowsill.

Quick way to dry
lavender flowers

7

Cut the flowers before the buds open, and cut at the base of the flower stem.

Lay the flower stems on a large wooden chopping board and place it in the sun, indoors or outdoors. Don't use a metal tray, which gets too hot, or plastic, which may melt a bit. Let the lavender dry completely, which should take about a week. Check periodically to see when the stems are dry. When ready, the flowers should crumble easily from the stems.



Save by growing your own

The most cost-effective winter veggies to grow are Asian greens, lettuce, rocket and kale. Compare the cost of a packet of seed with a packet of harvested greens in the supermarket. For instance, one seed packet of lettuce (about R20) will provide five months' worth of the vegetable.

Edible leaves and pretty flowers

Rose-scented geranium is a fast-growing perennial with strongly rose-scented leaves bearing small mauve flowers in summer. Plants grow in full sun or semi-shade. Use the leaves in a strong infusion to flavour sauces, custards, jellies and ice lollies.



9

10



Foliar feed for extra vooma

While healthy soil is the backbone of any good garden, there may be a time, when a plant is under stress or lacking a certain compound, that a quick dose of nutrients is the answer, and that is where foliar feeds come in. By spraying the leaves of the plant with a suitable liquid plant fertiliser you can get the nutrients into the plant faster than you would be able to by conventional methods targeting the roots and stems. Foliar food is usually less concentrated than regular fertilisers and there are plenty of good options available, even ones you can make yourself out of kelp or comfrey. Mix with water as per the instructions and spray in the early morning when the air is cool. Remember to spray on the underside of leaves as well for the full benefits to boost your plants.

Clean up

Autumn is a great time of the year to clean up and add compost to beds for the next batch of plants. Remove spent plants and rake the area well to reduce the chance of pests and diseases. Plant a cover crop if you are not using the area for winter veg. If you have some free space, plant quick-growing greens like spinach, mustard, kale, lettuce and any of the Asian greens.

11



Organic Gardening



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ORGANIC INSECTICIDE >> ORGANICIDE PLUS

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ORGANICIDE PLUS: 19558;
Canola oil 250 g/l; Garlic extract 642 g/l;
Pyrethrins extract from flower of Chrysanthemum cinerariifolium 14 g/l; Piperonyl butoxide (synergist) 50 g/l (Hambull).
GO ORGANIC: 83839 / N-F1516;
N 0.91%; P 1474 mg/kg; K 2293 mg/kg; Ca 3.9 mg/kg; Mg 0.1%; Na 1719 mg/kg; Mn 0.01 mg/g; Fe 2.51 mg/kg; Cu 0.56 mg/kg; Zn 0.61 mg/kg; B 0.67 mg/kg.

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12



Manage kitchen waste

Kitchen scraps and peelings should never be thrown into the bin to go to landfills, but rather used to add to compost to break down and feed your garden. This is a good time of the year to start a new compost heap and reap the benefits of having free compost in 6 weeks' time. If composting is too much for your garden space, invest in a bokashi bin. The bokashi process will break down food waste, including cooked food, in your own kitchen.

TIP

If you have a long trip to the compost heap with your organic scraps, place them in biodegradable plastic bags and pop them in the freezer for the next time you plan a trip to the compost heap.

Make your own
compost heap

garden 



13



Peas for
light soil

If you have light soil that drains well, sow garden peas in the Western Cape, Lowveld and sub-tropical coast and warmer areas on the highveld. Peas need deep, fertile soil and love a warm wall that receives winter sun. As most are climbing varieties, train them up a trellis. Don't let the soil dry out, and fertilise once a week when the plants start flowering.

Try this

RAW seeds' **'Tom Thumb'** is a miniature bush pea that's good for growing in containers or tucked into small spaces in the garden. It grows 20cm high, doesn't need staking, and the pods can be harvested when very young or left to mature for shelling.

7 tips for growing peas successfully

- Keep the soil moist during germination.
- For climbing peas, put the supports in place at the time of sowing.
- Thin out the seedlings to a final spacing of 40cm between plants.
- Water with care. The soil should be moist but not too wet or allowed to dry out. Plants that dry out don't produce pods. Cold, wet soil encourages fungal and rotting diseases.
- Spread a light mulch around the plants to keep the soil moist.
- Support bushy plants by drawing the soil up around the stem.
- Feed weekly with a liquid fertiliser once the plant starts flowering.

14 Sheet mulching for new beds

Avoid the backbreaking work of starting a new garden from scratch and try sheet mulching. Rather than digging out existing plants, weeds, rocks and stones, tilling the soil, and digging in the organic matter, instead layer up materials that you would use to make compost on top of the soil and let the composting process do it for you.



Start by cutting any plants in the area, particularly lawn, to the ground.



Add a thick layer of compost on top of this, covering any plant material. Add any green clippings on top of the compost and then water well.



Cover this with a layer of newspaper (about 8 sheets thick) or cardboard to cover the entire area. Sprinkle with water to keep it in place.

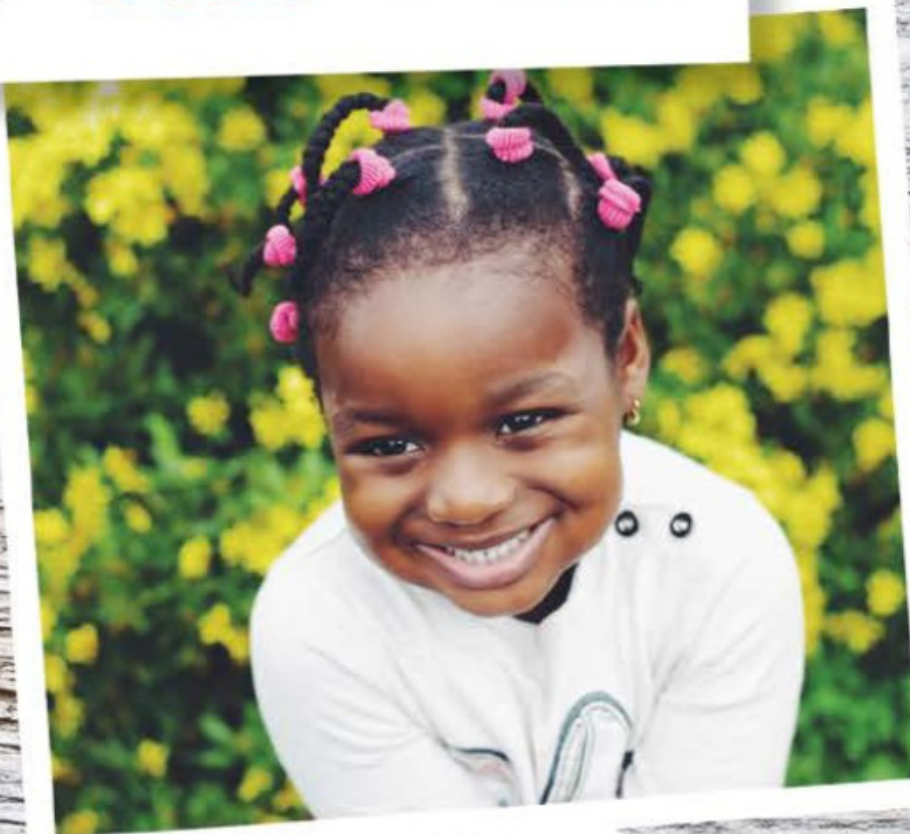


Top this with a thick layer of compost and then a layer of organic mulch like wood chips, sawdust or tree clippings.



You can now plant seedlings or larger plants into bed, and as they grow everything underneath breaks down and forms a moisture-retaining bed with good drainage. 🌱

Rake In The Fun!



Rake in the Fun at the only dedicated Garden Show in Gauteng! The third annual Autumn Garden Show takes place from 3 to 5 April 2020 at The Herb Farm in Midrand, and it is an event not to be missed!

Great gardens start in autumn, and with a variety of seeds and gardening goodies on sale your lush and colourful garden will soon be the envy of all.

Shop till you drop for plants (some unique and truly special), lots of herbs, crafts, garden décor and more, and take home top tips from gardening gurus and industry specialists at the free Atlantic Talks and Demos.

Relax on the MayFord Tipple Terrace with a botanical gin or refreshment and some posh nosh, and wander through the picturesque Herb Farm that boasts over 450 different herbs, a scented rose garden, monastic gardens and spiral labyrinth garden.

Bring the kids along to the Starke Ayres Kidz Zone for a day filled with fun planting demos, colouring in competitions and much more.

This family event is the perfect way to fall happily into autumn!


The Autumn
**GARDEN
SHOW**
JHB

The Autumn
**GARDEN
SHOW**
JHB



3-5 APRIL 2020

The Herb Farm, 264 Summit Road,
Bridle Park, Midrand, 1685

Gates open: 9am - 5pm daily (final gate entry at 4pm)

Box Office Tickets: R80 Adults, R65 Pensioners and Children U12 (Children
that fit under the Giant Daisy only R20)



Kidz Zone!

Talks & Demos

Tipple Terrace

Discounted online tickets available at www.webtickets.co.za

www.gardenshow.co.za

GARDEN INSPIRATION



A GREEN HEART IN THE CITY

This urban rooftop 'farm' should be an example to us all.

In the centre of Durban, amidst a cacophony of taxi hooting and the bustle of a seething throng of humanity is a green escape, a piece of ground that is productively farmed and produces fresh vegetables that are sold at markets and to local restaurants, with the excess donated to charities.

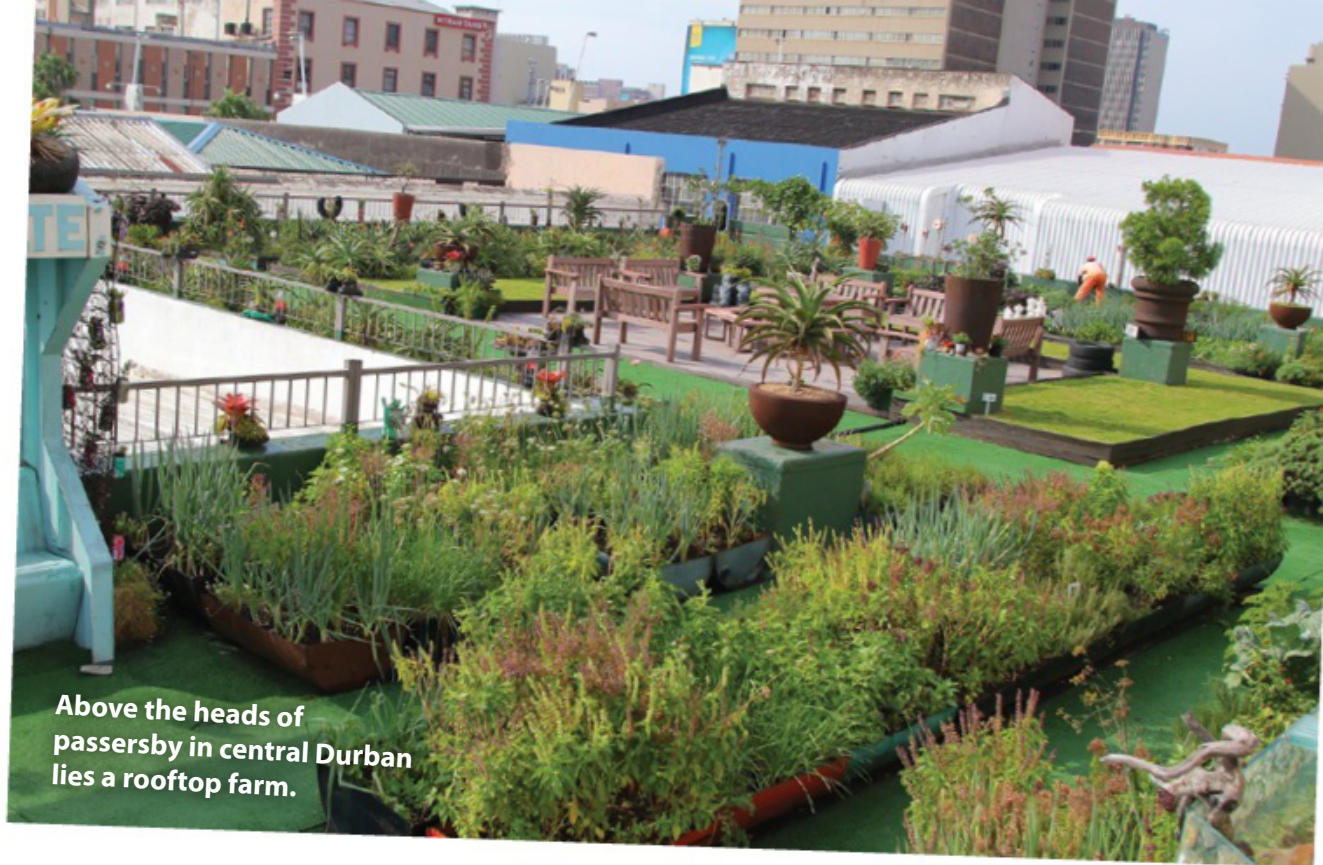
To find something like this in the midst of a cityscape is fairly unusual in itself, but things get even more interesting when you find out that all of this happens dozens of metres off the ground, on the rooftop of a normal-looking business building across the road from the International Convention Centre.

The building is home to the peculiarly named iTrump (Inner City Thekwini Regeneration and Urban Management Programme), an initiative that deals with urban regeneration, and their roof-top garden is certainly a beautiful example of walking the talk.

In fact, it's wrong to call the green space on the roof a roof-top garden, because it is more of a roof-top farm than anything. Covering 1300m², it is made up of indigenous



The rooftop garden was created across the road from the ICC in Durban.



Above the heads of passersby in central Durban lies a rooftop farm.



The garden makes use of a range of creative container solutions.



The 'farm' produces enough veggies to be sold at local markets.



We're fans of this concept...



The gardeners went vertical in a few different ways.



succulents, landscaped gardens, food landscaping, and vegetable and herb tunnels.

The garden is a wonderful example of how to artfully and functionally upcycle waste, for it is made of pallets, drums, handbags, buckets and old tyres, and plants have been given homes in everything from Coke cans to old shoes to fan grids and even an old traffic light. There's also a vertical garden that uses plastic bottles as containers.

The purpose of the garden is two-fold: to produce food and to create a relaxing green space to be enjoyed. To this end there are places to sit and relax in, a meeting space for groups, and even an oversized chess set for casual sessions of mental stimulation.

Then there are solar panels, rain-collection systems, worm farms, a green or living roof and even a recycling programme. It's phenomenal.



It's not just a veggie garden, but also a space for relaxation and meditation.



Produce obviously changes seasonally, but the containers and tunnels are almost always bursting with fresh goodness.



And since the garden was established in 2011 by Wendy Taylor and Sylvia Burger there has been a return of butterflies, birds and bees to the area. Birdbaths have also been installed to keep these visitors happy.

The garden has made use of aloes and other indigenous plants for aesthetic structure, but the bulk of the planting is edible. Strawberry plants overflow containers big and small, while half oil drums hold the bulk of the edibles, from onions to lettuce and spinach. Old tyres are home to rocket, and marigolds have been used as companion plants to keep nasty bugs away in an environmentally friendly way.

Simple raised gardens have been made from planks, many of them topped off with equally simple shade-cloth tunnels, under which tomatoes and leafy greens proliferate. In fact, everywhere you look you see a clever idea that you could use at home. We loved the very easy-to-make raised planters built from stacked bricks and a plastic seedling tray. They keep the trays off the ground, make them a more back-friendly height, and they look far neater than seedling trays lying on the ground. The bricks used were the ones with holes in them, which assists with ventilation and also gives friendly bugs a home.

If you would like to visit the garden for yourself, it is open, free of charge, to the public between 8am and 4pm. The address is 77 Monty Naicker Street, Durban. There is no bell though, so getting in can be tricky.

Contain yourself

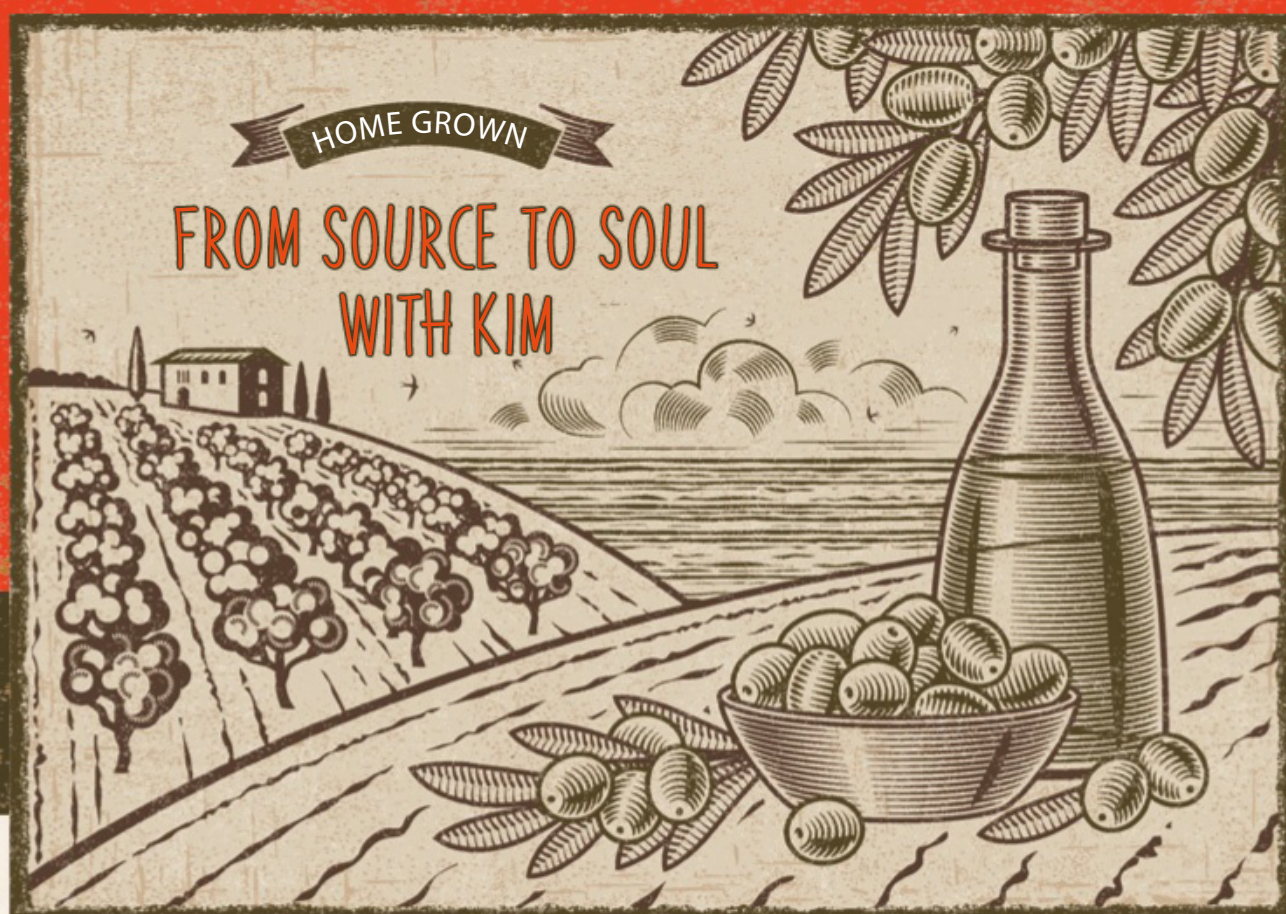
Container gardening is such a great idea for edible plants. It helps to keep them where you want them (we're looking at you, mint!), you can give each container the correct amount of water for its inhabitants, and you can make sure the plants grow in beautiful soil.

To make your own growing medium, we suggest you mix two bags of compost with two bags of potting soil and one block of palm peat.

As always, we recommend conditioning the soil with the EcoBuz soil products. Start with Humigro when you initially mix your soil, then add Startgro when you plant. Once everything is established, feed regularly with Multigro.



We love the way the gardeners merged the quirky elements into what is essentially a sensible, functional space.



Kim van Niekerk is a well-known foodie and gardener from Albertvale Farm outside Bedford. She is excited to share her story, her knowledge and even her recipes with us over a number of issues of *Grow to Eat*.



Glorious Autumn

Oh glorious autumn for everyone, especially after the summer heat and water shortages. The farm is sighing with relief at cooler temperatures, balmy calm evenings and the quieter, more contemplative birdsong as they start to plan their winter travels. Our plants at Albertvale Farm have certainly shown their tenacity through this very dry summer spell. It has really paid off to plant with diversity, water deeply, cover the soil with any form of mulch and have plant matter with strong immunity. When the stress arrives, the plants are stronger and have more resilience. But we have had losses and the season has certainly been a challenge.

Ian has been hard at work keeping our beautiful Merino sheep in peak condition to prepare them for mating in April. Again, it is essential for their nutrition levels to be optimal so as to conceive well and deliver healthy lambs in spring. The timing and care of all fauna and flora here is meticulously worked out over generations of experience and record keeping. It is official here... Autumn is our favourite season, but it is a busy one to prepare for a bounty of spring produce.

The soil temperatures are finally cooling down enough to contemplate selective seed sowing. I will be busy with perennial herb seeds such as thyme, origanum and parsley, dividing chives,

and making cuttings of the rosemary, lavender, tarragon, pineapple sage, sage and perennial rocket. This is the time for sowing artichoke seeds or taking side cuttings from original mother plants. The delicious crop of artichoke heads will begin in October and it is well worth nurturing your plants now. Autumn is a wonderful season for harvesting the sun-ripened vegetables that bring an earthy, hearty feel to your cooking. The butternuts are still producing, the tomatoes are sweeter than ever on the vines, the aubergines are dripping with fruit and the chillies and peppers are ready for winter preservation. I just love the early morning light when the dew is fresh and the air crisp. Time for picking is now and is done almost daily. Our trusty cat, Whisky, is always up for a game or two, hiding in the leaves or scampering up a tree nearby as she watches the baskets filling up with vegetables and herbs.

This is the time to gently cut back your herbs for drying for the winter. Don't take them too far back

to the wood yet as they need protection, but you can give your origanum, thyme and rosemary a good haircut. Lay the leaves on a tray and dry them in the shade. Collect dried and store for those hearty winter soups. I delight in seeing my bottles lined up and filled



with herbed salts, herb mixtures I have played with, and spice and herb delights to just toss into that rather bland vegetable mix. Reaping and harvesting are age-old activities that continue to delight and give immense satisfaction.

The tomato crop seems to have been good this year. Mixtures of cooked or baked tomato, smothered in garlic, oregano and thyme and tossed in olive oil are so easy to freeze and use later. Make your own tomato pesto by playing with oven-dried tomatoes to intensify the flavours and then using them in a normal pesto recipe. Keep the top covered with oil to preserve and it will keep in your fridge for ages. Don't forget to make your mint sauce before the colder winter temperatures force your mint underground. Leg of lamb or lamb kofte would not be the same without it. You can also stir it through cooked barley, couscous or something similar for that extra punch. Don't be afraid to

use handfuls of herbs when you are cooking up your pickings. The fresh herb is milder and yet far healthier and beneficial than bottled dried herbs.

Autumn is a time for flavour changes. The light summer salads give way to heartier, vegetable and grain-based warm salads. This is the season to introduce much more spice, layered flavours, and a bit of heat to our food. Use the last of the chillies to gently layer into your vegetable curries, add a hint to your flavoured yoghurts and make your chermoula or harissa a bit hotter. Here on the farm we

battle to grow many of the spices as we are a dry climate, but my latest pride and joy is a curry tree. The leaves are fragrant and tender and yet gentle to the pallet. When I was in India I saw them growing in the most arid of places and yet daily they were used in all the delectable dishes we ate. I just had to have one and I am loving it. Used at the end of the cooking process, torn and cut into a curry or vegetable soup it is a treat.

Stock up your pantry with organic GMO-free grains, beans and seeds that include quinoa, barley, lentils, buckwheat, chia, millet, polenta, chickpeas and all bean varieties. The herbs and spices combine extremely well with these food types and are a wonderful bulk for stews and soups. I have included a dhanian chutney recipe for a different heat.

A change in season is a great opportunity for a change of flavour, mindset, cooking methods and lifestyle choices. On the farm we watch with interest as the animals and plants prepare for the new elements of autumn. The birds' plumage changes in prep for winter, the horses' hair thickens, many flowering shrubs have their last flush of colour and our beloved earth breathes a sigh of relief as the tempo of the frenetic summer abates. We should learn to follow suit and tune into the new autumn rhythm.



Have some fun trying the recipe below and please contact me directly for additional information on other recipes, food choices, gardening tips, health related issues and lifestyle choices. I love to connect and share what I have learnt about food as our medicine and how to make it easy, quick and fun for the whole family.

BROWN RICE WITH MUSHROOMS, THYME AND PEPPERS

This is delicious, can be eaten hot or at room temperature, and is ideal for under a vegetable curry. Make it once and freeze some for later. You can ring the changes as you like.

2 onions, chopped finely
2 cloves garlic, crushed
2 green peppers, diced
1½ cups brown rice
3 tablespoons grape seed oil, coconut oil or olive oil
2 teaspoon each of turmeric, paprika, ground cumin, fennel seeds
1 tablespoon each of thyme and origanum (preferably fresh), or use whole sprigs
Salt to taste.
Chilli (optional – I use dried flakes for this.)
4 cups boiling water

Heat the oil gently in a frying pan, add onions, garlic and peppers, and cook until soft but not brown. Now add the raw rice and toss to coat each grain with oil. Allow to fry gently for approximately 5 minutes.

Add spices and allow to warm through until the aromas are released.

Leaving the pan on low heat, add the boiling water. It will splatter a bit. Place the lid on the pan and allow to simmer gently for approximately 30 – 40 minutes until the rice is cooked.

200g mushrooms sliced
6 courgettes diced

Gently cook these separately in another frying pan. Add salt to taste and some more herbs of choice. When cooked, remove from the heat and add a thumb of grated fresh ginger and a squeeze of lemon juice (optional).

Add this to the cooked rice and stir through. Adjust the seasoning to taste.

Serve warm as a whole meal by adding roasted peppers and toasted pumpkin seeds. Drizzle with olive oil. Use as a vegetable for that hearty autumn meal. 🍂

For anyone wishing to spend time with us at Albertvale Farm we have a new farmstay venue and we will be popping up cooking courses, creative and yoga stays, and gardening know-how days. Please follow us on Thriveinbedford on Facebook for more information or email me on gecko@eastcape.net or 082 775 5178.



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ASIAN INSPIRATION



GROWING CHINESE CABBAGE

One of the benefits of growing your own veggies is the variety of plants from all over the world you can combine in your own backyard. You can travel from continent to continent with each step through the veggies you choose to plant. Today we are travelling East by planting Chinese cabbage.

'Chinese cabbage' is used as a broad term for a few types of cabbage (including bok choy) but Chinese cabbage as we South Africans know it is a variety called Michihili Chinese cabbage. Its crinkled green leaves cover a white interior that can be used in soups or stews, or as a more vitamin-rich replacement for lettuce in salads. It is a quick grower ready for harvest in 2 – 3 months, making it perfect for the mildly impatient vegetable gardener.

TEXT MADISON MOULTON





Planting and care

With a regular schedule of seed planting from autumn through to winter, you can have a consistent supply of Chinese cabbage for those hearty winter soups and fresh spring salads. Rather than planting one giant batch of cabbage, plant a few seeds every 3 – 4 weeks.

Plant the seeds straight into the garden about 50cm apart in a full-sun position. If you have a spot in your garden where legumes – like peas or beans – were previously grown, plant the cabbage there as the soil will have a higher nitrogen content. In areas that experience winter rain, elevate the soil slightly before planting.

Keep the soil consistently moist, but not wet, and weed-free in the early stages of growth. Fertilise regularly along with your other veggies and watch out for pests like aphids and cabbage loopers. If you suspect pests are present use an organic control spray or cover the plant with a screen to deter bugs.

Your Chinese cabbage should be ready to harvest in about 8 weeks. You can harvest the whole head once it is full and solid or remove individual leaves as they are needed. They can store for up to a month or be left in the garden to flower and produce new seeds for next year's crop!



KIMCHI RECIPE

Fermented cabbage may not sound very appetising, but pair it with a few other veggies and spices and you have a delicious Korean staple. You can find kimchi on almost every table at every meal in Korea, eaten either by itself as a side or used to flavour other dishes. It requires a few ingredients not normally found in your typical supermarket, but the complex flavour profile is worth digging for those few things you can't find. This recipe is the perfect way to preserve your leftover cabbage and make it last for a few extra months in the fridge.



- Place the cabbage in a bowl, adding the salt and enough water to cover the cabbage. Leave to sit for 2 hours.
- Rinse with cold water and set aside to drain for 20 minutes.
- Mix together garlic, ginger and fish sauce/shrimp paste/water in a food processor. Stir in the gochugaru, the amount depending on your spice tolerance.
- Add the spice mixture, radishes, green onion and cabbage to a bowl, squeezing out the remaining water from the leaves as they go in.
- Mix thoroughly until all the vegetables are coated. Use gloves for this step to avoid burning or staining your fingers.
- Pack the mixture tightly into a jar, leaving a bit of space at the top. Let it stand at room temperature out of direct sunlight for 2 – 3 days. Leave it on a plate to catch any brine that seeps out the top.
- After it has fermented, transfer the jar to the fridge. You can start eating immediately, but it tastes best after about week or two.

You will need:

- 1 head of cabbage, cut into wedges
- ½ cup non-iodated salt (iodine can inhibit fermentation)
- 6 cloves garlic, grated
- 1 teaspoon fresh ginger, grated
- 2 tablespoons fish sauce/shrimp paste (replace with a few teaspoons of water for a vegan option)
- 2 – 4 tablespoons gochugaru (Korean red pepper flakes)
- 2 radishes, cut into matchsticks
- 1 bunch green onions, chopped



There's nothing nicer than fresh greens and herbs in winter, and there is no reason why you can't grow them on a sheltered balcony, patio or windowsill with lots of light.

North-facing windows are particularly good, especially if you have a broad windowsill that can hold pots of mature herbs. If the windowsill is too narrow, use a table or any other flat surface in front of a window.

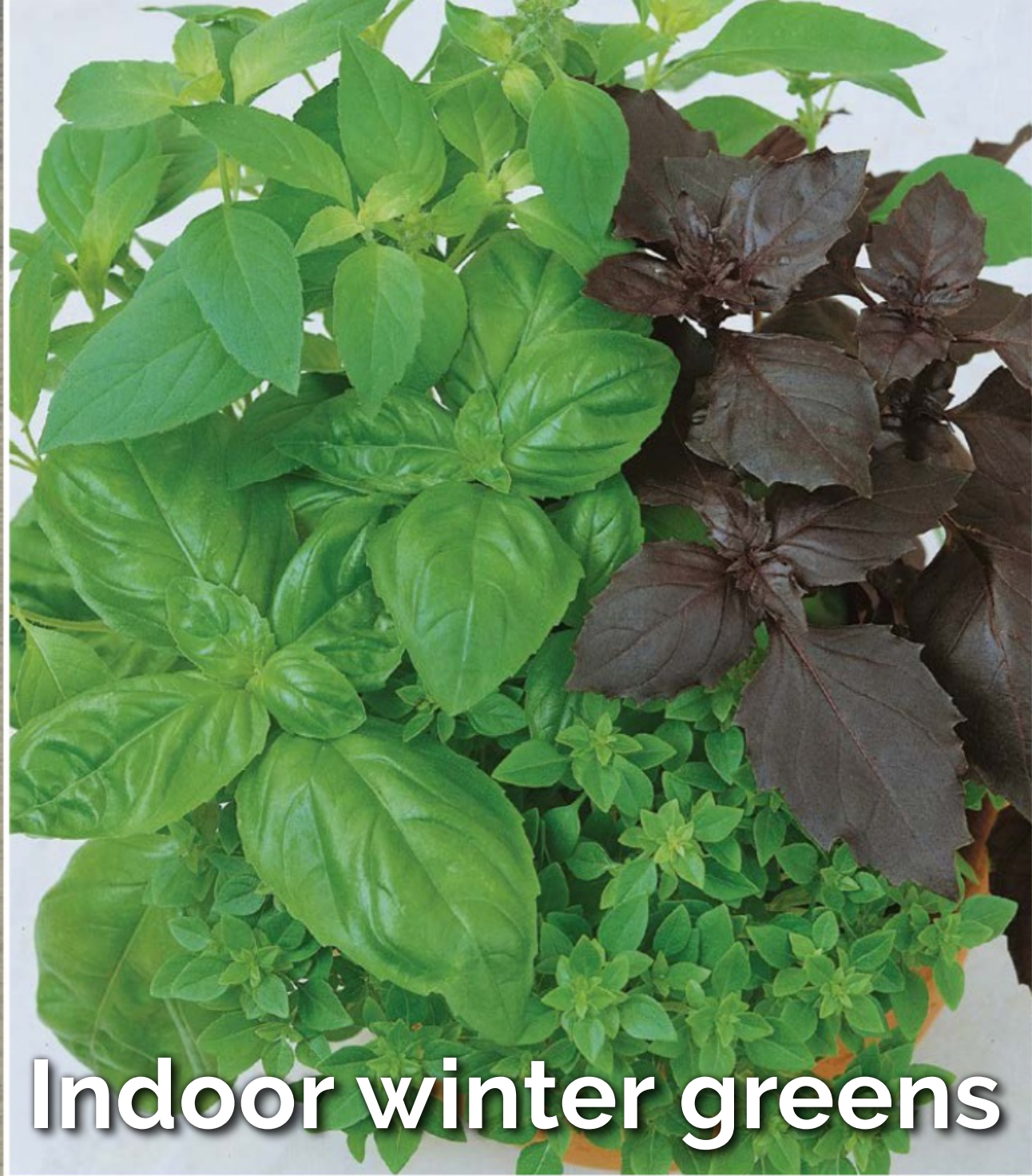
Winter-hardy herbs that can be grown from seed are parsley, thyme, sage and origanum. Sow them directly into 10cm pots. Herb seeds need a temperature of about 22° to 24°C to germinate and about five hours of bright light a day to grow well.

Besides herbs, try compact leafy vegetables like Asian greens (Chinese cabbage, mizuna, pak choi and tatsoi) as well as loose-leaf lettuce, Swiss chard, rocket and baby carrots. The same principle applies: lots of sun, regular watering and regular feeding.

For 'almost' instant greens there are some tangy microgreen mixes like **'Old Mexico'** or **'Rainbow Blend'** from RAW seed. Sow these thickly in a big seed tray and harvest when the first true leaf is developing. Use the leaves as garnishes or in sandwiches or salads for extra flavour. You can also let them grow on as mini leaves.

Tips for growing veggies in pots

- Pots must have drainage holes.
- Keep plants out of cold draughts but make sure they still have good air circulation.
- The potting mix should drain well. Don't use garden soil.
- Don't let pots stand in water. If there are saucers under the pots, empty them out once the plant has drained otherwise the roots could rot. Alternatively stand the pot on folded paper towel or an ordinary towel to absorb the water.
- Foliar feed with a liquid fertiliser at half strength once a week. This is especially important for Asian greens because they are heavy feeders. 🌱



Indoor winter greens



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WATER GROWING



WATER CHESTNUTS

*Here's something so exotic,
but so easy to grow*

It's fun to grow new things, so with this in mind we decided to grow water chestnuts (*Eleocharis dulcis*). Why? Because we heard that the boys from Aqua Flora, a water garden nursery in the North West, could supply them, and our motto is always, "Why not?" Aqua Flora duly couriered the plants down to us (which we found fascinating in itself!), although there were a few tricky moments when we went to the local PostNet to collect them and they had not yet arrived! We imagined them finally being unearthed a week later, a soggy and smelly mess that we would have to dispose of responsibly, but when they turned up they were fine. We planted them straight away in a concrete planter that Garth had made a few months earlier, and which we had set aside for this purpose.



Planting

Pieter from Aqua Flora suggested planting them in a rich mixture of half compost or potting soil and half garden topsoil. He told us to plant them 5cm deep and top them off with 5 – 10cm of water. The plants should always have water. In autumn the leaves will become yellow and die down and then the chestnuts can be harvested, along with the roots. Apparently you can get up to 50 chestnuts from one plant, but our harvest was about half of this.

Harvesting and prep

When the sedge grass had yellowed and died down (ours took about four months), we dug up the sludge and happily harvested the chestnuts. They have a dark brown glossy skin that needs to be peeled off. It works quite well to cut the top and bottom off and then peel off the skin with a small knife. Rinse in water and use in your dishes. They have a crunchy fresh taste that is much better than the usual canned varieties you can buy.

Aqua Flora SA Water Garden Nursery

083 451 9975, or find them on Facebook.



Water chestnuts are not nuts but a corm, and are an aquatic plant native to China. Unlike chestnuts that grow on a tree and are usually roasted, water chestnuts can be eaten raw or cooked with other ingredients.

WATER CHESTNUT *bacon bites*

Water chestnuts are great for stir-fries and salads, for making stuffing or for using in desserts like fruit salad and cakes, but paired with bacon and sugar they are little bites of heaven.

1 pack streaky bacon
16 or so fresh water chestnuts
1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
1 tablespoon brown sugar

Mix the sugar and the mustard together. Cut the bacon strips in half and spoon the mustard/sugar mix over each. Place a chestnut in the centre, roll it up and secure the little package with a cocktail stick. Place on a baking tray and set under the grill until the bacon is nice and crispy.

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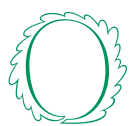
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KITCHEN HERBS



OREGANO



regano is a flavourful herb that is used extensively in Mediterranean cuisine, especially Italian and Greek food.

Why grow it?

It's a hardy perennial that can last many years in the garden. It can also be used as a pretty green groundcover in garden beds, between pavers and in rock gardens. Its culinary uses are many, but it goes particularly well with tomatoes and other vegetables, with eggs and meat dishes and it's a tasty herb for pizzas.

Where to grow it

In the garden, it needs a lot of sunshine to produce an intense flavor, but it will grow in partial shade. Indoors it needs adequate heat and sunshine.

How to grow it?

Oregano can be grown from sown seed, from cuttings, or divided from a healthy plant and planted in light, well-draining soil more on the sandy side with plenty of organic matter like compost added at the planting stage. After that it does not require much fertilising. Watering is key though. Only water when the soil is dry to the touch, and don't overwater. It is also a good





companion plant for most veggies and will attract aphids to it rather than your prized tomatoes or peppers.

Pinch out the flowers to prevent the plant from bolting and to keep it nice and bushy.

In very cold areas it may need some help with frost-protection fabric, but mostly it is pretty frost resistant.

Using

When you are ready to use your oregano, harvest the stems by cutting at ground level to produce a fuller plant. It's easy enough to strip the leaves off the stems for use in cooking. As it's a pretty robust herb, you can use it at the beginning of cooking as well as at the end for an extra boost of flavor, but use it sparingly as it does have a strong flavour that can overpower a dish.

Fresh leaves can be picked and stored in a plastic bag in the refrigerator or frozen. Mix finely chopped leaves with a little water in ice-cube trays. Store the frozen cubes in the freezer in plastic bags until you need them.

Drying oregano, interestingly, increases the potency of the herb and it dries well. Tie the stems together and hang them in a warm, airy place. Once the leaves are dry store them in an airtight container in a dark place.





CREAMY ZUCCHINI SOUP *with oregano and chilli*

A creamy zucchini soup with very little cream and lots of flavour from herbs and spices will go down very well on a wintery evening served with crispy bread or croutons.

1 onion, chopped
1 tablespoon butter
1kg zucchinis, cleaned and cut into slices
2 cloves garlic
Pinch of chilli flakes (or two if you prefer)
Handful oregano leaves
2 cups vegetable or chicken stock
1 cup milk
1 cup cream
Salt and pepper

Sauté the onions in a soup pot in a little butter until soft. Add all the other ingredients except the milk and cream, and season with salt and pepper. Simmer for 15 – 20 minutes until the zucchini is soft and then add the milk and cream and blitz in a blender until smooth. Serves 6.



Pineapple sage

As its name suggests, pineapple sage has a distinctive pineapple aroma, and it is also a pretty perennial in the garden with its tropical bright red flowers. These flowers brighten up the garden and are also edible, being used mainly combined with fruit in desserts and in summer cocktails. The leaves can be used to flavour things like chicken, pork and fish – those dishes that go well with the pineapple flavour.

Growing

Although it can be grown in colder climates it will need to be sheltered over winter. Originally from the warmer climates of Mexico and Guatemala, it prefers warmer weather. Plant in a sunny position in moist, fertile soil that drains well. Keep well-watered and fertilise regularly. Keep it in shape by pruning in spring or after flowering, making sure not to cut the old wood. Cut the stems back to the new growth, but don't remove more than the top third of each stem.

It grows well in large containers if watered well and will grow to about 1m high. In the garden it attracts birds and butterflies when flowering, and the blooms also make good cut flowers for the vase. 🌸

Pineapple sage is an excellent source of vitamin K, which is important for blood clotting in the human body.

SOIL HEALTH



6 REASONS TO GROW COMFREY

Comfrey has very special properties that will benefit many areas of health and garden maintenance. It's one of the most useful plants to have in the garden.

1

Compost accelerator

The most common use of comfrey is as a compost accelerator. Comfrey is high in nitrogen, so when added to brown leaves, which will be high in carbon, the comfrey will balance out the carbon-to-nitrogen levels and so speed up the composting process.

2

Free fertiliser

Comfrey is high in nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium – the three elements that make up most fertilisers – and contains many trace elements. It has a large and deep (up to 2m) root system that pulls nutrients from the subsoil into their leaves. When comfrey leaves decompose they turn into a liquid. When diluted with water this liquid makes an excellent foliar feed for the garden. (See the end of this article for the steps on how to make it.) You can also make leaf mould that can be used as a fertiliser or even a potting soil, but because comfrey decomposes into a liquid, you need to add other shredded leaves to the mix. The comfrey then acts as an accelerator.





3 Organic mulch

With its high nutritional value, chopped up comfrey leaves are effective around plants as a mulch. This mulch will also be a distraction for snails and slugs, who love them. In a windy area, allow the leaves to wilt for a few hours and then dig them into the top 2cm of the soil. Comfrey leaves are high in phosphorous, making them a great food for fruit-bearing plants like tomatoes and peppers.

4 Planting tool

Line the bottom of a planting hole or a container with comfrey leaves to act as a slow-release fertiliser. They will impart nutrition as they decompose.

5 Repairer

Comfrey is known to support bark regrowth after damage. A poultice of comfrey leaves wrapped around the damaged bark could be a life saver for a damaged tree.

6 Pollinator

The purple bell-shaped flowers of comfrey attract all kinds of pollinators, such as beneficial bees.

Note: In this article we have stuck to the benefits of comfrey in the garden and not mentioned any health benefits. Comfrey contains allantoin, which is why it has been used in the past for healing bones, burns, sprains, bruises, bites and inflammation (hence comfrey's common name of 'knitbone'). However, it is also highly toxic and contains pyrrolizidine alkaloids that have been known to cause liver damage. Please be very careful when using comfrey for human treatments and consult a doctor before use.

Growing tips

- Comfrey is a hardy perennial that is a prolific leaf producer and so can be harvested often.
- It grows in full sun or shaded areas and makes the perfect plant to grow next to the compost heap.
- Find an area with lots of space so that the large root system can grow.
- Plant in any soil with good drainage.
- They are extremely cold-hardy plants that will become dormant in winter and shoot again in spring.
- No feeding of comfrey is needed.



RECIPE

How to make comfrey liquid fertiliser



1. Drill a few holes in the bottom of a large container. Place this container in a bigger container to catch the liquid.
2. Pack the first container with as many leaves as you can fit in it, and weigh them down with a brick or rock.
3. Check regularly, but it should take 4 – 6 weeks for the leaves to break down into a dark nutritious liquid.



4. To use, dilute the liquid (1 part liquid to 15 parts water) to use as a foliar feed for established plants. Make a weaker solution for young plants so that it will not damage the roots.

Note: It is also possible to mix the leaves with water, but this does create a rather strong odour. You can always add a lid to the container to keep the odour reasonable. This mixture will decompose quicker. Because it will already be diluted you can mix it with 3 parts water to use on the garden.



PEST WATCH



Powdery mildew

Powdery mildew is easy to identify and is one of the oldest fungal diseases known to man. The infection will cause a white to grey powdery fungal growth on the leaves, stems and heads of plants. Interestingly, although the signs are similar on all types of plants, the disease is species specific, so an infection on your roses, for example, will not affect your grapes. The good news is that powdery mildew is rarely fatal for the plant, but can lead to leaves yellowing, curling and eventually turning brown and falling off the stems. Flower buds can also be affected, reducing the yields of vegetables and fruits.

The disease is more prevalent in high humidity and warm to moderate weather, on dry leaves and in low light – so at just about any time during the warmer seasons.

If you're growing plants prone to powdery mildew, like pumpkins, melons, squashes, cucumbers, peas, beans and tomatoes, here are a few things to consider:

- Look for disease-resistant varieties to plant.
- Provide enough space around plants for good air circulation.
- Place them in a position where they will get at least six hours of sun a day and minimal shade. The fungus does not like direct sunlight.
- New growth will be more susceptible, but the condition often starts on mature plants.
- Use a slow-release fertiliser and avoid over fertilisation.
- Powdery mildew can't grow on wet leaves.

The need for early detection is vital in controlling the problem. Commercial products on the market are often aimed at preventing the problem from occurring, or at least for treating upon early detection. Use a fungicide specific to powdery mildew and use it exactly as per the instructions.

If the problem gets out of hand, remove and destroy all the infected plants. Don't add them to the compost heap as the spores can be passed onto other plants by air movement. 🍷

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GROWING SPICES



SIX SPICES THAT YOU CAN GROW

Why does everyone have a herb garden but no one grows spices?

I'm sure that if we were to take a walk around your garden, we'd find at least a few herbs growing: parsley, basil, rosemary, thyme – something. But I'm also fairly certain that we would have to look further to find a single spice growing. Why is that? I suppose we tend to use fewer spices, or smaller quantities, when we cook than we do herbs, but it can be great fun (and very tasty!) to have a few spices on hand in your garden. Here are five spices that YOU can grow:

Mustard

Mustard is often grown as a leafy green, but if you leave the attractive and versatile plant to go to seed you can harvest the seeds and use them as a spice in your culinary creations. An added bonus is that pollinators love the flowers, so by letting the plants go to seed you're also feeding our buzzy friends.

Growing: The best mustard varieties to grow for their seeds are the yellow, brown or black mustards. As they grow easily from seed, this is the best way to do it. Sow them in well-draining soil supplemented with a fair bit of compost, and water twice a week. The greens are trendy at the moment and should be picked fairly young or even as sprouts or microgreens.

HERBS AND SPICES: WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

If we use the leaves of a plant it is considered a herb, while spices refer to the rest of it – roots, bark, seeds, berries.



Harvesting: Each pod should contain between 8 and 20 seeds, and you should harvest them when the pods begin to turn yellowy-brown. Don't leave them on the plant for too long or they will burst.

Using: Use the seeds in curries, pickles, salads dressings or even mayos. Alternatively, grind the seeds to use in 'mustard' (the sauce). The seeds don't actually have a hot tang on their own. It is only when water is added that the enzymes are activated and the heat develops.

Coriander

A useful herb in terms of its leaves, coriander (dhania or cilantro) is often used fresh as a garnish on Indian dishes and is also used in Chinese and Mexican cuisine. Used fresh, this is a love-it-or-hate-it herb (the office opinion is equally divided), with critics saying it tastes soapy. As with mustard, it is the seeds that are used as a spice, and they have a significantly different taste to the leaves.

Growing: Coriander grows easily and also goes to seed quickly. Sow seed directly in well-drained soil and in a sunny spot with some midday shade. Transplanting can lead to the plant bolting. Don't over-water, and use a deep container if you plant it in a pot, as the taproot is long.

Harvesting: The roots, stems and leaves can all be used fresh. In terms of spice, the green seeds are delicious if blended and used in curries. Otherwise harvest the dry seeds by cutting the dry flowerheads and hanging them upside down in a brown paper bag.

Using: Dry fry the dried seeds until the aroma is released and then add them to a curry sauce or paste. You can crush the dry-fried seeds or use them whole. Coriander is often used in conjunction with cumin. The seeds are also great in pickling.





Ginger

Delicious, versatile and a bit burny, ginger can be used in anything from curries to chocolate or tea, adding warmth and fragrance to whatever its included in. It's the rhizome or tuber that is used as a spice, and those in the know extol the numerous health benefits, from having anti-inflammatory properties to treating nausea, aiding digestion and even fighting the common cold. It contains high levels of antioxidants, which are beneficial for a variety of reasons, and can even help with muscle stiffness, osteoarthritis, lower heart disease risks, cholesterol and blood sugar levels. It really is an incredible food, but we'd eat it even if it wasn't because it is absolutely delicious.

Growing: A tropical plant, ginger grows to about 1m in height with fleshy stems and big, glossy leaves. To get the best out of it, grow ginger in deeply dug soil with lots of added compost. Ginger is a vigorous grower and feeder so needs a lot of feeding. Plant the rhizome in full sun and water heavily twice a week. Don't just plant a bit of ginger you buy at Checkers though. Look online or at your local nursery for organic, untreated ginger rhizomes – you're more likely to succeed.

Harvesting: Harvest the rhizomes in the middle of winter, around July. The leaves should have died down naturally, after which the tubers should be lifted with a fork. Keep some to use and return the remainder to the earth for next year. Allow the ginger to dry out in the sun for a couple of days and then store it. It can be grated and frozen, frozen whole (although frozen ginger is very hard!) or pickled, crystalised or stored in syrup. Also keep a little in the fridge to use soon after harvesting.

Using: The culinary uses of ginger are many and varied: stir-fries and curries should all have a little ginger in them, while 'ginger beer' are my two favourite words. Otherwise it can be used in cough syrup or hot toddies, or just sliced and steeped in water for a warming tea.

Note: There are some ginger varieties on the alien invasives list, but these are not edible.

Garlic

Garlic is a conundrum: you don't dare not use it in your cooking, but if you use a bit too much you're going to lose friends faster than an autumn tree loses its leaves in a gale. Why is it a spice? Because we generally use the bulb and not the leaves. While the supermarkets don't give us much option when it comes to a garlic selection, there are a number of interesting varieties that have subtle differences in flavour or appearance. Other than as a flavouring in just about every culinary genre, garlic has a multitude of uses. It is touted as a natural antibiotic, lowers cholesterol and lowers blood pressure.



OTHER SPICE OPTIONS FOR YOUR GARDEN

Fennel
Cayenne
Turmeric
Dill
Cumin
Anise





Growing: Don't just plant a clove from the supermarket – it might grow but the chances of a good-quality plant are slim. Buy them online from a company like www.livingseeds.co.za. Ideally you want loamy soil that verges on sandy so that it drains well, and that has been enriched by a generous helping of compost. The bulbs should be planted in autumn (march or April) about 10cm deep, pointed end up, and covered soil. Tamp the soil down firmly and water well – they shouldn't dry out while they're getting established as they need to make it through winter.

Harvesting: As with ginger, wait until the flower and leaves have withered away and then lift the bulbs with a fork. They can be dried and stored, where they will keep for up to a year. Garlic is a very rewarding plant to grow yourself, even if it's just so that you can hang the bulbs prominently in your kitchen as a conversation starter. "Yes, I grow my own garlic..."

Using: If we included every use of garlic this article would go on for pages. When cooking, make sure not to burn it or it will be bitter. Roasted it is sublime. In terms of medicinal uses, it does virtually everything from killing bacteria to boosting the immune system, treating parasite infestations and fungal infections.

Paprika

Oh, how we love paprika, especially smoked paprika. The earthy tones and subtle heat it adds to a dish can't be overstated, and the plant itself looks so beautiful in the garden, festooned with red peppers and thriving in the heat of summer. Don't be scared of the red chilies, as they are mild in heat and almost sweet.

Growing: Now is not the time to grow paprika, but to use it. Paprika, like all peppers, should be planted in early

spring after the last frosts have passed. Sow in trays and plant the seedlings out when they are about 10cm tall. Soil should be prepared by adding plenty of compost and dug over well. Full sun is a requirement, as is regular, deep watering.

Harvesting: The fruit lets you know it's ready to be picked by turning beautifully red. Simply pick them off the bush and use fresh or dried.

Using: The fruit can be dried and crushed into a powder with a little added salt, or it can be pickled in vinegar or used fresh. Another great way to store it (because you definitely won't be able to keep with the plant's production!) is to make an oil. Paprika contains a lot of vitamin C, making it beneficial in combatting colds through winter.





Tumeric

I once had a cup of tea from a tea parlour that was warm, earthy and delicious. The secret ingredient? Turmeric! The turmeric plant closely resembles that of ginger, right down to the rhizome that we use for cooking. It's only when you cut open the rhizome and see that characteristic bright yellow inside that you know for sure which it is. The plant sprouts a beautiful pink and white flower quite close to the ground.



Growing:

Propagation is via rhizomes, available from heirloom seed companies. The most important thing for turmeric is rich, moist soil that has had a lot of compost added to it. It enjoys semi-shade conditions and needs regular

watering, particularly when the shoots pop out of the ground in late summer after being dormant for winter. Mulch with compost and give a heavy watering at this time and again towards the end of summer. Turmeric comes from the humid tropics of India and so won't tolerate any frost at all.

Harvesting: Leave the plants to spread for at least a year, preferably two, before harvesting. Harvest the rhizomes at the end of autumn and before the dead of winter. As with ginger, keep some to use and return the remainder to the earth for next year. Dry the rhizomes in the sun for a couple of days and then grind it into a fine powder.

Using: Like ginger, turmeric has a wealth of uses, but is mostly known for giving curries their beautiful rich yellow colour, also adding to the aroma and depth of flavour. In India it is added to a multitude of dishes. Turmeric also combats the salmonella bacteria that causes food poisoning, while it is also an anti-inflammatory and stimulates the immune system. The strong colouring is used as a clothing dye, and some Buddhist monks still use it to colour their robes. Just remember that this pigment can also stain your teeth, skin or clothes, so brush your teeth after any food or drink strongly flavoured by turmeric and avoid getting too much on your hands.

BONUS SPICE:

Saffron

More expensive by weight than gold, saffron spice is actually the stigmas of the ***Crocus sativus*** or saffron crocus flower. It has to be harvested by hand, and you get only a minute harvest from each flower, hence its extortionate price tag, but it has a long list of culinary and medicinal uses.

But you can grow it at home and bulbs are available from specialist suppliers and online.

ALL of these spices can be grown at home, and the seeds or plants are readily available.

Wholegrain mustard

Wholegrain mustard turns a few common ingredients into something special, something that no table should be without, especially when there's gammon and bread lying around.

Ingredients

3 tablespoons brown mustard seeds
3 tablespoons yellow mustard seeds
⅓ cup white wine vinegar
⅓ cup dry white wine
¾ teaspoon salt
1 tablespoon diced onion
¼ teaspoon white pepper
A pinch of allspice

Pop all the dry ingredients (mustard seeds, salt, white pepper, all spice) into a mixing bowl and mix. Add the diced onion and mix. Add the vinegar and mix. Add the white wine and mix. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and refrigerate overnight. Add the mix to a blender and blend until it has reached the thickness and coarseness you like. Store in the fridge and use within a couple of weeks. 🍴



FRUIT FILE



GOING BANANAS

The unsuspecting fruit taking the top spot for the world's most popular is the banana. Well, actually it's the tomato with bananas second, but I am a proud member of the 'tomatoes are a vegetable' tribe so they don't count. They also strangely steal the top spot for the world's tallest herb, making banana 'tree' a misnomer (because the stem is fleshy, not woody). On top of all that, the fruit is technically classified as a berry! If you live in a tropical area, you can easily grow this weird and wonderful plant in your garden.

Uses

Bananas are grown, first and foremost, for their fruit. However, the plant itself has so many other uses. Banana trees grow extremely quickly and make a great windbreak or screen when planted in groups. The leaves are large and waterproof, perfect for a number of uses in cooking. Most commonly, banana leaves are used like foil to wrap fish or other meats, or to cook rice. This imparts a sweet flavour and protects the food from burning when

TEXT MADISON MOULTON



cooked over fire. The leaves have also been used to wrap fruits and vegetables in shops, and to make natural crockery, making them a great sustainable alternative to plastic.

Planting

Not all varieties of bananas are edible, so be sure to double check what you are buying at your local nursery. Choose a very sunny spot with high humidity that mimics the rainforest conditions bananas are found in. If you are planting a few banana plants, keep them about 4m apart as the leaves are large and take up a lot of space. Incorporate a good amount of compost into the soil before planting and add a layer of mulch afterwards.

Food and water

Banana plants are hungry. Due to their large leaf size, they need a lot of water and plenty of fertiliser to keep them healthy. Keep the soil evenly moist (but not wet) by watering well every few days in summer and a bit less often in winter. They need to be fertilised often too, every 4 – 6 weeks or so, keeping potassium in mind as the most important nutrient.

Harvesting

Within 9 months of planting you should have a mature cluster (called a hand) with plenty of individual bananas (called fingers). Keep an eye on the fruits and cover them in plastic bags once the ends turn upwards instead of downwards, to protect them from bugs, birds and hopefully monkeys. As the hand grows heavier it may become too heavy for the plant and you may have to prop it up. To harvest, pull individual fruits from the tree before they are ripe and leave them to ripen inside. Alternatively, they can be left to ripen on the tree and pulled once the ends are dry.



Bananas can also be grown in large containers and look great on a sunny patio. They even grow well indoors and fit perfectly with the popular tropical look, but they unfortunately won't produce any fruit.



RECIPES

3-INGREDIENT BANANA PANCAKES

Any Jack Johnson fan will dream of making banana pancakes and singing along to his tune on a Sunday morning. Luckily, they're even easier to make than regular pancakes! This banana pancake recipe (closer to crumpets in South African terms) makes 8 small pancakes and can be easily topped with any of the classic flavourings – chocolate chips, syrup, or fresh fruit – for a light, healthy breakfast.

You will need:

- 1 banana
- 2 eggs
- 1 tablespoon self-raising flour

Mash the banana and add any additional flavourings. Beat the eggs lightly and stir them into the banana (mix in a food processor for a more combined mixture). Whisk in the flour and mix until combined. Heat a pan over medium heat and add a little oil or butter. Drop about 2 tablespoons of batter into the pan and flip after the bottom starts to brown (about 1 minute). Serve with your favourite toppings.



HEALTHY BANANA AND CHOCOLATE ICE CREAM

Healthy and ice-cream don't always have to be antonyms. While this recipe may not completely replicate your favourite dessert, it's still delicious and a much healthier alternative to standard ice-cream.

You will need:

- 4 bananas, cut into pieces and frozen
- 4 tablespoons cocoa powder
- 2 tablespoons peanut butter
- ¼ cup milk (or coconut/almond milk for a vegan option)
- Dark chocolate chips (optional)

Place the bananas (already cut into pieces and frozen), cocoa powder, peanut butter and milk in a food processor and pulse. Scrape the sides of the food processor and continue mixing until the mixture is smooth. Add to an ice-cream container (stir in chocolate chips here if you have them) and freeze for 2 hours, or eat straight away!



QUICK AND EASY



EASY OVERNIGHT OATS

Most of us run out of time every morning while we try to get ready for the day. Something that I have started to do is make easy overnight oats for breakfast for my wife, son and I the night before.

Overnight oats is so incredibly easy, it's healthy, cheap and doesn't even use much electricity, and you can change things up by adding different toppings so that you never get bored of it.

How to cook it

Overnight oats is basically preparing oats without cooking them, using time instead of heat. Instead of putting oats and water in a pot and boiling it on the stove until the oats have absorbed water and are cooked, you soak the raw oats in milk for a few hours, preferably overnight. (If you don't like the idea of soaking the oats in milk, or if you are vegan, you can soak them in water or a plant

milk (almond, coconut, cashew or oat milk.)

When you wake up you're greeted with a creamy, delicious bowl of oats that's ready to eat.

In a bowl I soak $\frac{3}{4}$ cup oats and about 1 tablespoon of chia seeds in $\frac{3}{4}$ cup milk. The chia seeds also soften and swell in the milk, making the oats more pudding-like. That's the base, and from there you can get creative. A bit of plain yoghurt, a touch of cinnamon or vanilla extract and some honey all add depth of flavour as well as health benefits, and these can all be added at the same time as the oats and milk.

In the morning you can top it off with fresh or dried fruit, nuts (or nut butter) and other spices. Overnight oats can be eaten cold or warmed up before eating.

Health benefits of oats

- High in protein
- High in fibre
- Can help with weight loss by keeping you feeling full for longer
- Low GI
- High in antioxidants

Some great combos are:

- Strawberries and peanuts, along with some peanut butter and even strawberry jam.
- Strawberries, vanilla yoghurt and chocolate chips.
- Diced kiwi, diced pineapple, plain Greek yoghurt and coconut flakes.
- Blueberry yoghurt, plain Greek yoghurt, blueberries, lemon zest and honey.
- Apple, cinnamon, pecans and honey or syrup.
- Banana and cocoa, or banana and Nutella for something even more decadent. (Although it's hard to convince you're having a healthy breakfast when there's Nutella in it!)
- Almonds, coconut flakes, honey or syrup and choc chips. 🍪

TIP

Use raw rolled oats for the best consistency. Processed 'instant' oats don't work well.



FOR YOUR HEALTH



APPLE CIDER VINEGAR

Apple cider vinegar is reputed to have magical properties and be the cure for all ails. But is it really a magic elixir from the 'Fountain of Youth', a fighter of disease and killer of germs? There is the fact that apple cider vinegar contains all the health benefits of apples, concentrated into a liquid that is packed with essential amino acids and enzymes containing many vitamins and minerals. And if you consider that humans sometimes need tiny quantities of trace elements for good health and that a tiny deficiency can result in sickness, it stands to reason that something packed with many of these elements is good for you.

While scientific evidence suggests that 'an apple a day may not keep the doctor away', a tablespoon of apple cider vinegar may do the trick, and there doesn't seem to be any reason not to give it a try. Besides, prevention, they say, is better than a cure.

What is vinegar?

Vinegar is produced when an acidic alcoholic liquid like wine, beer or cider is exposed to air, changing the alcohol into acetic acid





and water. This acetous fermentation process is due to a small microorganism, vinegar bacillus, that occurs naturally in the air and gobbles up the alcohol and excretes acid.

The acetic acid gives vinegar its characteristic tart tang, also found in pickles and sourdough bread. Studies on the benefits of acetic acid have found that it reduces blood sugar levels, lowers blood pressure and reduces inflammation, making it ideal for the smooth running of a body. Beware of going overboard, however, as too much can make you sick, as with many things. A tablespoon a day in water or in your salad dressing is plenty for maintaining a healthy system.

Fighting germs

I use a combination of honey, hot water, fresh ginger and lemon juice or apple cider vinegar to sooth my kid's sore throats, and add the Hot Toddy whiskey part for the adults in the family. Itches and burns get a vinegar-moistened cloth to cool and relieve, and I swear by vinegar and bicarbonate of soda to squeaky-clean my kitchen. Vinegar is considered by many to aid digestion by attacking harmful bacteria in the gut, and a healthy gut is a healthy body. There are many other theories and uses for apple cider vinegar not mentioned here. Suffice it to say, it's good stuff and worth making your own.



Make your own

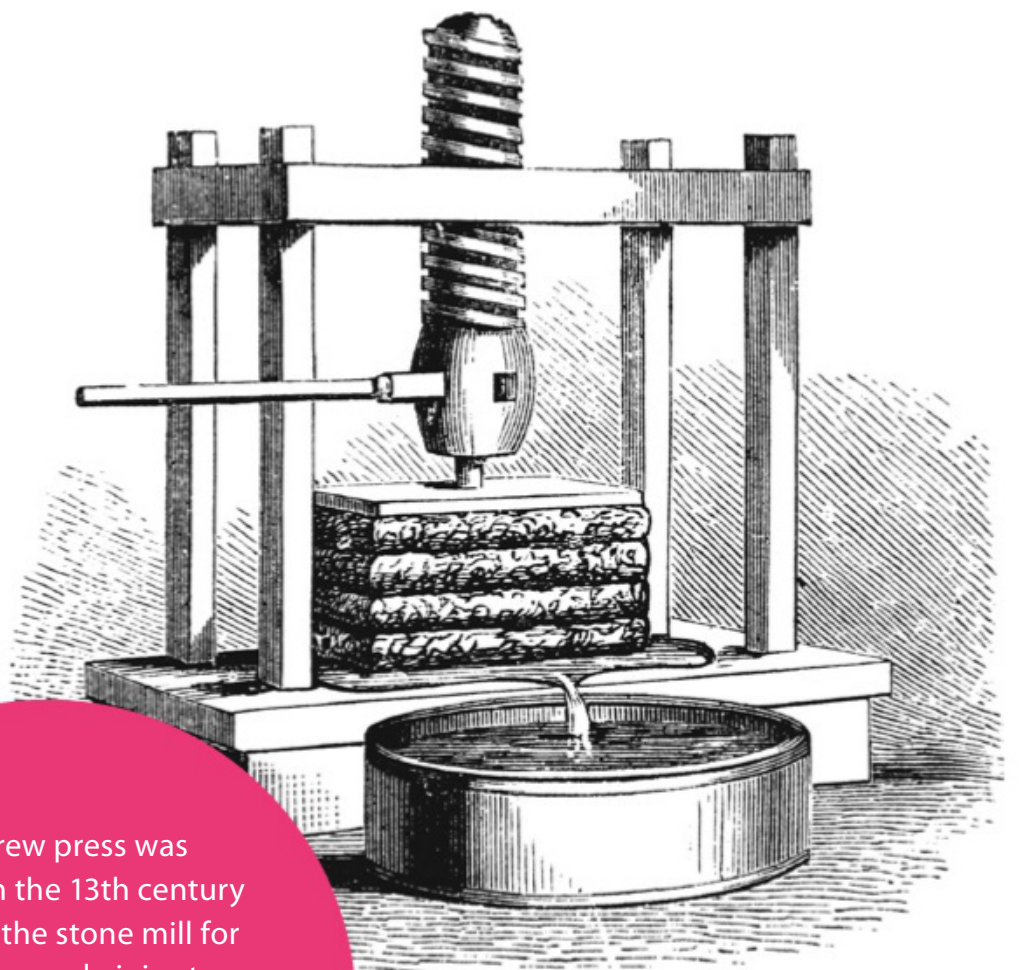
There are different ways of making vinegar. Speed it up by adding yeast or 'mother-of-vinegar' – the scum that forms on the top of cider when alcohol turns into vinegar – or go the long way around and start by making the cider and then letting the air turn it into vinegar.

The easiest way, if not the quickest, is to cut up apples and put them into clean sterilised jars. Fill to the top with cold water and cover with cheesecloth. Leave in a warm place for 4 – 6 months and then strain off the vinegar.

Note: Don't use commercially made apple juice for making vinegar – it usually contains preservatives, which will hamper the fermentation process.

Cooking with apple cider vinegar

Use apple cider vinegar instead of lemon juice when making salad dressings, marinades for a sweet/sour flavour, and for pickling.



The screw press was invented in the 13th century to replace the stone mill for extracting apple juice to make cider. Today we have commercial juicers, but you can still buy a cider press to make the experience more authentic.

RECIPE

For serving with lunch or dinner, this quick pickle is perfect for several veggies including radishes, carrots, onion slices, sliced beetroot, cucumber, beans, lemons, cabbage, peppers, asparagus, cauliflower, fennel and squashes.

½ cup apple cider vinegar

¼ cup honey

2 teaspoons coriander seeds

1 teaspoon black peppercorns

Place the coriander seeds and peppercorns in a saucepan and heat until they start releasing their aroma. Add the vinegar and honey and cook for 2 minutes. Cut the veggies into manageable pieces and pour the pickling liquid over them. Let this stand for at least 10 minutes, and drain before serving.

Please note that if you are on medication or have a specific illness, please consult your doctor before adding vinegar to your diet. 🥗



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FERMENTED FOODS



FERMENTED FOODS

It may not sound great, but fermented foods are so good for you and can even be tasty.

I spent a year teaching English in South Korea (as many otherwise unemployable English Honours graduates do!), and it was there that I first learnt of how tasty and beneficial fermented foods can be. In Korea, kimchi is the answer to just about every culinary question. What should I have in my omelette? Kimchi. What goes nicely with a braai? Kimchi. What kind of soup should we make? Kimchi. But it's also the answer to some health questions too: I'm low on energy. Have some kimchi. My stomach doesn't feel too good. Have some kimchi. I keep getting sick. Eat more kimchi. You get the idea.

Don't tell the Koreans, but kimchi's secret health powers are common to many fermented foods, of which yoghurt is the one most of us are most familiar with. Here are some of our favourite fermented foods and how they can help you.

A healthy gut is a healthy person

There are something like 100 trillion microbes in your stomach, doing things like helping to digest food, regulate your mood by producing good



Kimchi – Korea's culinary panacea.



Sauerkraut, a fermented cabbage dish many of us are familiar with.

neurotransmitters and boosting your immune system.

All of these fermented foods have similar benefits in that they all contain beneficial probiotics and antioxidants, and most of them are high in various nutrients. As such, they are good for stomach-related health problems such as diarrhoea or the opposite, bloating and Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS).

There is also evidence that a healthy digestive system leads to a healthy immune system and overall good health. Generally, these fermented foods will have probiotic, antimicrobial and anti-inflammatory functions and contain antioxidants, and can help you to lose weight and even create stronger bones.

Kefir

Originating in Eastern Europe and Southwest Asia, kefir gets its name from the Turkish word '*keyif*', which means 'feeling good', meaning that you feel good after eating it. Not unlike drinking yoghurt, kefir is a fermented drink usually made from cow's milk, although it can also be made from goat's milk, coconut milk or coconut water, amongst others. Just like sourdough bread, it is made using a starter or kefir 'grains', which are grain-like colonies of yeast, lactic acid and bacteria. These colonies work fast, turning milk into kefir in a day or so. The grains are then removed from the kefir and can be used again and again, indefinitely.

The kefir 'grains' are removed from the kefir and used again and again to create more of the fermented drink.



Kombucha is made using a SCOBY, which stands for Symbiotic Culture of Bacteria and Yeast.

Kombucha

A fermented black or green tea drink, kombucha is created by a colony of bacteria and yeast and is especially popular in Asia, although these days it is a global trend. You can find kombucha in various flavours in health shops and chemists, and even in some supermarkets. When shopping for it, read the ingredients carefully and opt for one that isn't too loaded with sugar or you'll be fooling yourself if you think you're doing something healthy.



Sauerkraut and wurst - quintessentially German fare.

Sauerkraut

You all know this one – sauerkraut is the archetypal German food (with sausages, I suppose), but you might not realise that it is fermented and a powerful probiotic. It is made from finely cut cabbage that is anaerobically fermented in a brine solution, sometimes flavoured with pepper and/or caraway seeds.

Miso

If you've watched even a few episodes of MasterChef Australia, miso will be on your radar (even if you don't know exactly what it is!). It is a Japanese seasoning made by fermenting soya beans with salt and a fungus called 'koji'. The resulting paste is used in soups or to flavour any number of savoury dishes, imparting them with a characteristic 'umami' flavour.



Miso is all the rage these days.



Other fermented foods include yoghurt, maas (*amasi*), tempeh, pickles like gherkins, vinegar, some cheeses, natto and fish sauce.

ZERO WASTE



SAVING SUMMER

As the weather starts to get cold, summer crops come to an end. Here are some tips to make the most of what is in the veggie garden by ripening, storing and preserving.

Waste not, want not

- Pick squashes when the stalks are dry, with a 5-10cm stem, to prevent the point where the stem attaches to the fruit from rotting. Store in a dark, cool cupboard.
- Dig up potatoes only when the plant has died down completely. Wipe soil off the potatoes (don't wash them), and store them in a hessian or paper bag in a dark cupboard to prevent them from going green.
- Beetroot and carrots can stay in the ground over winter if you don't need the space.

Ripening tips

- In areas where frost occurs at the end of May, remove small unripe fruit (tomatoes, brinjals, squashes etc.) so that the plant can put its energy into ripening the larger remaining fruit.
- To speed up the ripening of tomatoes, remove any leaves that shade fruit from the sun.
- If there is a danger of early frost, pull out tomatoes that still have fruit and hang them upside-down (roots and all) in a sheltered place out of the sun so that the fruit can ripen.
- Another way to ripen tomatoes is to put the green fruit on a tray, lightly cover it with brown paper, and put it in a dark room with a ripe banana, red tomato or ripe apple to speed up the ripening process.

How to freeze herbs

Herbs like basil, coriander, parsley and mint are tasteless when dried, which makes freezing them the best option. Lovage and tarragon freeze or dry equally well.

Rinse and finely chop the herbs and put them into ice-tray cavities, making sure to pack the herb in tightly. Slowly and gently pour in water, making sure you don't splash the herbs out of the tray. Place the trays in the freezer and allow the herbs to freeze solid. Empty the herb ice cubes out and store them in a labelled and dated plastic bag in the freezer.

To use, drop the frozen herb into the soup, stew or sauce during cooking.

Don't forget

Mulch beds that will be left empty over winter. Mulch protects micro soil organisms from the cold.

Other preserving ideas

- Make pesto from basil, rocket or coriander leaves (with parsley as an additional ingredient) and freeze the pesto in blocks for adding to tomato sauces and pasta dishes.
- Make herbal vinegar or flavoured oil for use in cooking or for dressing salads. The best herbs for oils are basil, rosemary, tarragon and lemon thyme. Herbal vinegars can be made from single herbs or a combination, like basil and lemon thyme; dill and mustard seed; rosemary and garlic, or lemon grass and bay leaf.



NUTRIENT DENSE FOODS

THE DENSER THE BETTER

Not all veggies are equal. Here are the ones that give you the most bang on your fork.

We all know that veggies are good for us and that leafy greens are a must in our diet. But which plant foods are actually the most nutritious? We did a bit of research and came across a wonderful study by the American Centre of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that defines Powerhouse Fruits and Vegetables (PFV) and ranks them according to nutrient density.

What is nutrient density? The study defined food density as the percent of daily values of qualifying nutrients per 100g. So if it is recommended that you have a lot of iron in your diet, nutrient density is how much iron, as a percentage of the required amount, is in 100g of the vegetable or fruit in question.

The study examined 47 fruits and vegetables from grapefruit to tomatoes and Chinese cabbage, analysed their nutrients and ranked them from 1 to 47. The 17 nutrients that were taken into account were potassium, fibre, protein, calcium, iron, thiamin, riboflavin, niacin, folate, zinc, and vitamins A, B6, B12, C, D, E, and K. These nutrients were selected because they have been identified as lowering chronic disease risk.

For a plant to be considered one of the Powerhouse Fruits and Vegetables it needed to score above 10/100.

As you'd expect, the best performing plant foods were the leafy greens, while fruit like blackberries and grapefruit, along with leeks and sweet potatoes, were at the bottom of the table. The star performer, though, surprised us at *Grow to Eat*. Of all the fruits and veggies tested, would you



TEXT STEPHEN SMITH



Item	Nutrient Density Score
Watercress	100.00
Chinese cabbage	91.99
Chard	89.27
Beet green	87.08
Spinach	86.43
Chicory	73.36
Leaf lettuce	70.73
Parsley	65.59
Romaine lettuce	63.48
Collard green	62.49
Turnip green	62.12
Mustard green	61.39
Endive	60.44
Chive	54.80
Kale	49.07
Dandelion green	46.34
Red pepper	41.26
Arugula	37.65
Broccoli	34.89
Pumpkin	33.82
Brussels sprout	32.23
Scallion	27.35
Kohlrabi	25.92
Cauliflower	25.13
Cabbage	24.51
Carrot	22.60
Tomato	20.37
Lemon	18.72
Iceberg lettuce	18.28
Strawberry	17.59
Radish	16.91
Winter squash (all varieties)	13.89
Orange	12.91
Lime	12.23
Grapefruit (pink and red)	11.64
Rutabaga	11.58
Turnip	11.43
Blackberry	11.39
Leek	10.69
Sweet potato	10.51
Grapefruit (white)	10.47

Credit: www.cdc.gov

believe that watercress came out on top with a nutrient density of 100. Next up, but a full 9% lower score, was Chinese cabbage, followed by chard, beetroot greens and spinach. The complete table can be seen of the left, for you to peruse yourself.

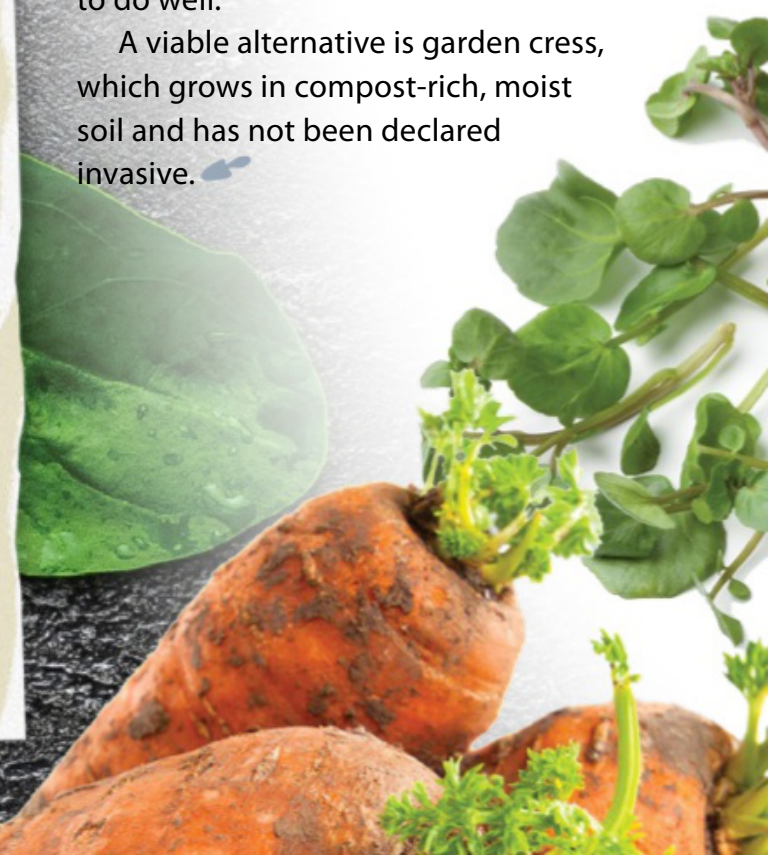
The table stops where it does because grapefruit was the last food tested that scored above 10, the requirement for a plant food to be classified as a powerhouse. Those that fell below this score were raspberry, tangerine, cranberry, garlic, onion and blueberry. This doesn't mean that these foods aren't healthy, only that they don't contain enough of the 17 nutrients used for the test.

Watercress

The surprise star of the show, watercress is sadly a category 2 invasive alien in South Africa, which means that you can't buy seeds or plant it without a permit. That means that your only option is to buy it from the shops. It makes a delicious soup or salad and is obviously full of nutrients.

An aquatic plant, it does best in clean running water and needs cool temperatures to do well.

A viable alternative is garden cress, which grows in compost-rich, moist soil and has not been declared invasive. 🐞





*Compost is invaluable
in the garden, and there's
no point in buying it!*

Getting started with compost

Compost – making it, storing it and getting rid of kitchen waste in it – is always an issue. A lot of people, especially those with smaller gardens, don't like a big, old-fashioned compost heap creating an eyesore in their gardening space.

With our penchant for all things corrugated, we decided to try out the neat corrugated iron compost bins available from RainQueen SA (www.rainqueensa.co.za), and they work a treat. They also look good in the garden, so you don't have to hide them around a corner.

Tips

- Air circulation is critical. Every week or so take a thick stick or a garden fork and poke holes in the compost heap.
- Don't let the compost dry out – keep it moist by lightly sprinkling the compost with water very now and again.
- The entire compost heap should be turned every month or so. If you're using containers like this, it's best to have two. Empty the compost from one onto the floor and then move the compost from the full one into the empty one. Then fill the now-empty container with the compost, but in reverse so that what was at the top is now at the bottom. It's a schlep, but it works!
- The compost is ready when it has turned dark brown and smells earthy. Even then, leave it for a month or two to break down further before using it.
- When adding any citrus to compost, first freeze it to break down the cells, then add to your compost.

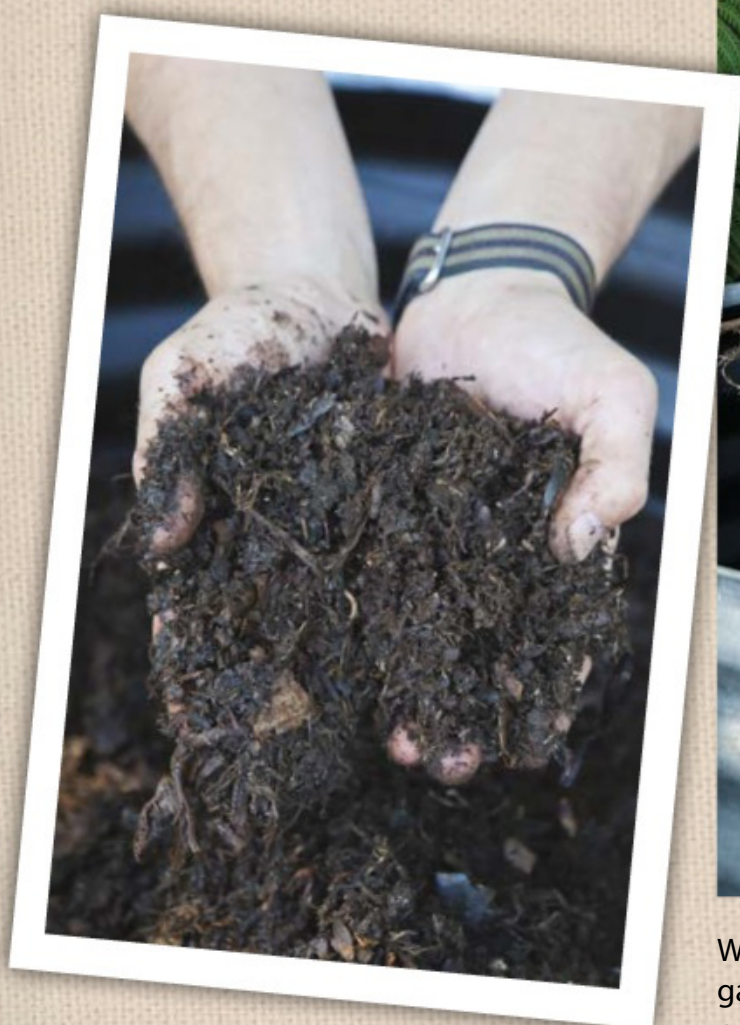
Put in:

- Grass clippings
- Old leaves
- Plant clippings
- Dead plant matter (but nothing diseased!)
- Annuals that have gone to seed
- Fruit and veggie peels
- Straw
- Tree bark
- Sawdust (but only from untreated wood)
- Newspapers, torn into small pieces
- Herb cuttings
- Cattle, pig, goat or chicken manure
- Droppings from bird cages
- Teabags and coffee grounds
- Crushed eggshells
- Wood ash (but not from briquettes)

Leave out:

- Plastic
- Diseased plants or plant matter
- Glossy paper
- Tin cans or glass
- Old clothing
- Leftover cooked food
- Weeds with seeds
- Charcoal or coal ash
- Dog and cat faeces

Good compost is like an onion – it has many layers.



1 We started with a 25cm layer of coarse garden waste including dry leaves, twigs and cuttings.



2 We added a 5cm layer of finer garden waste including grass cuttings and small leaves.



3 We also included borage and comfrey leaves because they break down quickly and even work as compost activators.



4 On top of the fine material went a layer of mature compost from another heap. We did this because it helps to speed up the composting process as it contains the microbes that do the breaking down of plant matter.



5 The fourth 'layer' is actually just a dose of organic compost activator to quickly break down the organic material to form rich humus. These are available at nurseries. We used the Makhro Home and Garden one, which needs to be diluted before application.

SEED SWAPS



GET SWAPPING!

Few things capture the true ethos of gardening more than seed swaps.

When I was young we didn't go to nurseries much, but my mom was always getting new plants for her garden. Like almost everyone at the time, she got most of her new plants by swapping cuttings, seeds and baby plants with friends or fellow members of her gardening club. But times have changed, and these days communities aren't as close, people are busier, and gardeners tend to buy their plants and seeds from garden centres.

I'm sitting at my desk writing this on Black Friday, and while I can appreciate that the economy and therefore most of us benefit from this explosion of capitalist fervour, the whole concept makes me feel very uncomfortable.

So, it was a wonderful to receive a letter that was the antithesis of Black Friday. Gordon Smith, a reader from the Garden Route, started a Seedswap Group about two years ago in the Plettenberg Bay/Knysna/Sedgefield area, which today has about 100 members who communicate on a WhatsApp group and meet about four times a year. No money changes hands, and people are encouraged to participate even if they have nothing to swap. A local business serves as a drop-off/collection point for members.





We love the idea of seed swap groups – who amongst us hasn't bought a packet of 'must-have' seeds, only to plant a few and then put the rest in a drawer until next year, when they are no longer viable? What a waste! And who amongst us hasn't at some stage had baby tomato or borage plants springing up all over the place that we would love to share, but don't know who to give them to?

Seed swaps are a global trend, replacing book clubs and wine clubs as great ways to meet up with friends or meet new people with similar interests. There are no concrete rules when it comes to the meets: some are just for seeds, others for plants, others for cuttings and succulent pups. Some have an entrance fee that goes to charity, but no money can change hands

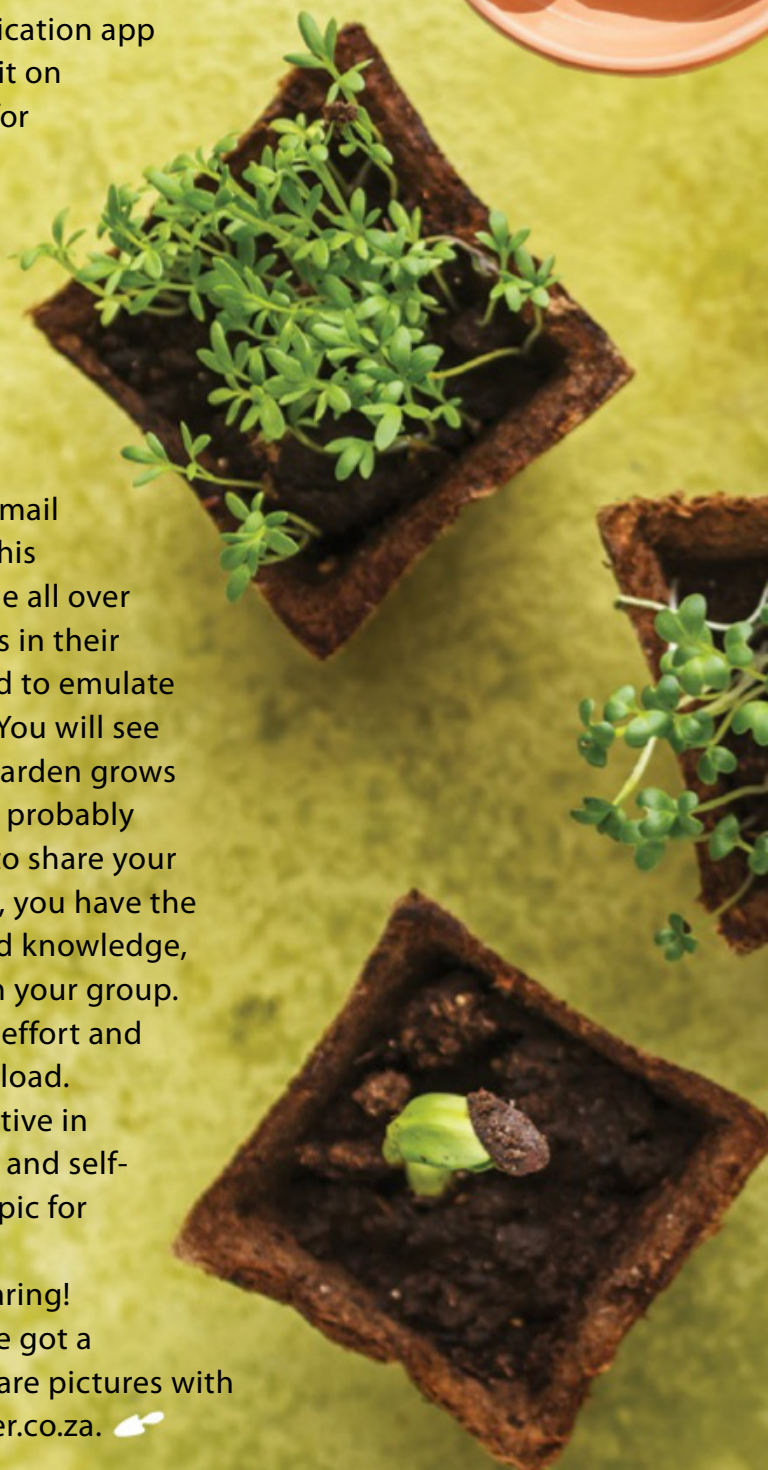
We recommend that you have a few things on hand if you do hold a meet: little brown envelopes for seeds to go in, basic garden tools, some plastic bags, plant tags and obviously snacks! It's also a great idea to get volunteers to talk about their plant interests or specialities, especially if they're experts or just incredibly keen.

at the actual meet. Some are for edible plants only, others for indigenous plants. Come up with your own rules but try to keep them as simple and inclusive as possible.

Local gardening identification app Candide South Africa (get it on your phone and try it out for yourself!) recently held a few plant swapping meets in the Cape Town area that were a great success, and we hope they will become a regular on the gardening calendar.

Gordon finished off his mail by saying, "My reason for this mail is to encourage people all over the country to form groups in their respective towns/cities and to emulate what we have down here. You will see that the diversity in your garden grows exponentially and you will probably make a lot of new friends to share your passion with. Furthermore, you have the added advantage of shared knowledge, assistance and advice from your group. It does not require a lot of effort and people can share the workload. We need to be more proactive in encouraging food security and self-sufficiency, but that is a topic for another day!"

So listen up and get sharing! Please let us know if you've got a similar club, and please share pictures with us at stephen@thegardener.co.za. 🐦



BEST DAYS TO PLANT BY THE MOON - MARCH & APRIL 2020



SOW LEAF HERBS & VEG: 27th & 28th & 31st



PLANT FLOWERING HERBS & VEG: 3rd & 4th



SOW HOT
LEAF HERBS
& VEG:
24th & 25th



PLANT
ROOT VEG:
10th to 13th
& 16th to 18th



REPOT HERBS: 21st to 23rd



PLANT HOT ROOT VEG: 14th & 15th



SOW / PLANT LEAF VEG & HERBS: 23rd & 24th / 28th & 29th



REPOT HERBS: 5th & 6th



TRANSPLANT
FRUIT TREES:
13th & 14th /
18th & 19th



SOW
FRUITING VEG
& FLOWERS:
7th & 8th



PLANT HOT ROOT: 11th & 12th



PLANT ROOT & REPOT: 9th & 10th

The dates above are best moon planting days. In selecting specific vegetable and fruit varieties to plant, consider your local region and climate.

BEST DAYS TO PLANT BY THE MOON - MAY & JUNE 2020



PLANT ROOT VEG: 6th & 7th



PLANT HOT ROOT VEG: 8th & 9th



PLANT
FLOWERING &
FRUITING VEG:
31st / 4th & 5th



1st Qtr:
30th

MAY

New:
22nd

Last Qtr:
14th

TRANSPLANT
FRUIT TREES:
10th & 11th



SOW / PLANT LEAF VEG & HERBS: 25th & 26th



SOW GRAINS & GRASSES: 22nd & 23rd



PLANT ROOT VEG: 6th to 8th / 11th & 12th



PLANT FLOWERING & FRUITING
VEG: 28th to 30th / 1st to 3rd

1st Qtr:
28th

JUNE

New:
21st

Last Qtr:
13th

PLANT HOT
ROOT:
14th & 15th



PLANT LEAF
VEG & HERBS:
21st & 22nd



SOW GRAINS & GRASSES: 19th & 20th

The dates above are best moon planting days. In selecting specific vegetable and fruit varieties to plant, consider your local region and climate.

BEST DAYS TO PLANT BY THE MOON - JULY & AUGUST 2020



PLANT HOT FRUITING VEG & FLOWERS: 29th to 31st / 2nd & 3rd



REPOT HERBS & HOUSE PLANTS / PLANT TREES: 7th & 8th



PLANT FRUITING VEG & FLOWERS: 28th & 29th



PLANT ROOT VEG: 5th to 7th



PLANT LEAF VEG & HERBS: 21st to 24th

SOW GRAINS & GRASSES: 12th & 13th

The dates above are best moon planting days. In selecting specific vegetable and fruit varieties to plant, consider your local region and climate.

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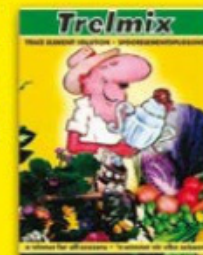
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JUST FEED ME RETRO-STYLE...

I am a natural carnivore, but I could probably try to become a vegetarian if retro salads come into vogue again, and I see that they are, albeit not how I remember them!

While clearing away my grandmother's and mother's old recipe booklets, compiled by ladies of the church or those who belonged to agricultural unions in the 50's and 60's, I was overcome with a great feeling of sadness, loss and hunger.

On those typed and copied pages with many footnotes and decorated in food splotches are recipes for side dishes. Yes, in those days vegetables and salads were sides and not mains – even chicken was sort of second place or a 'vegetable' when weighed up to a good, meaty roast!

For fancy entertaining, the *pièce de résistance* was the moulded salad. No kitchen belonging to a housewife worth her salt was without moulds of different shapes and forms. If money was no object, they would have been made of copper and would be hanging from sturdy hooks above the range or displayed artfully on a kitchen wall. If the budget was a little tighter, they would have been Tupperware moulds hiding away in a cupboard. (You only bought Tupperware at girl's parties in those days, and hid the cost from husbands!).

Vegetables that were often set in gelatine or jelly powder in a mould would include beetroot and cucumber, later to be turned out with great nervousness and festively on a salad plate and garnished with finely sliced 'Iceberg' lettuce and dots of parsley. Nobody ate the lettuce or the parsley, only the salad. To this day I still make a cucumber mould consisting of cucumber, greengage jelly, mayonnaise and grated onion for Christmas, as I regard it as the only salad-like dish (apart from potato salad) that goes well with gammon. I am normally the only one to eat it!

Fruit, mostly the canned version (since nobody ever used fresh fruit in recipes as it was eaten immediately off the plant or kept to be canned), was given the same moulded treatment, whisked up with gelatine or jelly and Ideal milk into a sweet blob-like concoction that you ate with custard. Different and creative versions became famous bazaar puddings that sold well enough to build a lot of church halls!

Everyday salad (if salad was even

thought of as a side to the normal supper of meat, rice, potatoes, pumpkin and green beans) was sliced, cooked beetroot that was boiled for hours and mixed with thick onion rings. This was doused with brown vinegar and a good helping of sugar. Ordinary garden-variety cucumbers were the alternative salad offering put on the weekly table – normally on 'fish-and-chips' night. Their tops and bottoms were sliced off and vigorously rubbed over the cut parts of the cucumber. This apparently drew the 'bitterness' out. They were then peeled and firmly scraped with a sharp fork to create a pattern before being sliced and doused with sugary vinegar. We occasionally got carrot salad mixed with pineapple and orange juice and sweetened with sugar (otherwise Grandpa, who hated sour stuff, wouldn't eat it!). Fresh carrot salad was a hassle, because of all the peeling and grating that had to be done to it.

When going on family picnics or camping trips, the cooks really went to town with their salad-making. It was as if they planned to invade another country and had to feed prisoners of war as well as the friendlies.

When we braaied, it was only meat, maize porridge, and onion and tomato relish – that's it! Well, at least until auntie Barbara (our English-speaking aunt) decided she would prefer a more sophisticated salad to be served. This she called her 'bread salad', and it consisted of old white bread cut into squares and fried in oil until crisp. Finely cut white and pink marshmallows were then added and the whole lot was moistened with mayonnaise mixed with condensed milk. She later introduced another salad containing bananas, onions and sweet mayonnaise too.

On 'meatless' nights there would be an announcement that only salad would be served for supper, but that was luckily also on bread baking day, so we could at least supplement our salad dinner with thick slices of bread plastered with butter and jam. The 'meatless' salad did, however,



By
Anna
Celliers

feature polony and macaroni as core ingredients!

When going on family picnics or camping trips, the cooks really went to town with their salad-making. It was as if they planned to invade another country and had to feed prisoners of war as well as the friendlies. In enamel bowls they made massive salads with a long shelf-life, like 'slaphakskeentjies' (cooked pickle onions in a sweet mustard sauce), copper penny carrot salad, corn salad with a tinge of curry, and the infamous three bean salad, all the beans for which came out of tins – the latter normally had an 'explosive' effect after a few days. If the ladies had enough time and a glut of runner beans, they would have canned said beans in a sort of curry sauce too, to serve as a cold salad. You should probably regard these salads as heritage stuff, since you can buy them all at supermarkets today!

While all this preparing for the long term was going on, the men were not idle. Somewhere in the deepest and darkest recesses of their garages would stand rows of glass jars filled with whatever fruit they grew, like plums, apricots and cherries, swimming in brandy, *witblits* or *mampoer* – the latter two being schnapps-like beverages.

An elderly neighbour once brought such an infusion, which are called 'boerejongens', to one of our neighbourhood New Year's parties, and it made everyone on the whole street hungover until the 3rd of January!

Aikona wena, when I read about avocado pear with a salty caramel sauce, or see a packet with mixed salad and herb leaves resembling weeds from my garden, or spaghetti made of butternut or zucchini, I long for a good old potato salad with finely grated onions, mashed egg (for protein!), and good old shop-bought mayonnaise mixed with condensed milk until the tartness has calmed down. And this is not a salad I will eat on the same day it has been made, as it must first mature a little... 🍷

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