

How to Start a Vegetable Garden

And Master the Art of Year Round Harvest.

By Carol Raethel



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About the Author

Carol is a gardener from way back. She completed a certificate in horticulture in 1988, and has prolifically developed productive vegetable, herb and fruit gardens ever since. She grows heirloom (non hybrid) vegetables, and sells heirloom vegetable and herb seeds in New Zealand. She also has a Diploma in Herbal Medicine, and a Diploma in Occupational Therapy.

Carol began growing in an organic way ten years ago, as she realized that it is important to work in harmony with nature as much as possible.

Carol brings her wealth of knowledge and experience to you, so you can enjoy the rewards and benefits of a home vegetable garden.

Carol is a mother of one boy, Celtic, who also has a keen interest in gardening. Every spring they have to draw the boundaries, 'This is my garden, and this is yours!'

Over the years she has been gardening, Carol has mastered the art of growing vegetables for a fresh harvest all year round.

Carol believes that eating lots of fresh, organically grown produce is the way to stay healthy, as vegetables contain many vitamins, minerals, enzymes and nutrients that are needed by the human body.

Carol is very motivated to live in harmony with our planet, and cooperates with nature to create a healthy, living garden. She is keen to share her knowledge with as many people as she can, because she believes that home gardening is a very powerful way to answer the challenge that humanity is facing today - that of reducing our carbon footprint.

Carol also has a keen sense of the ridiculous, hence the fairy crown in her photo!

She hopes you enjoy the little jokes that pop up from time to time in this book.

About this book

This book has been written in response to the many requests I have had from my customers about how to start a vegetable garden. There is a huge movement of people returning to the soil all over the world, and this book is aimed towards helping people get a garden started.

This book answers many questions people have when they begin a vegetable garden and will help you avoid the mistakes that many beginner gardeners make.

This book provides a few really nice recipes for using the fresh vegetables you take from your garden, turning them into nutritious and tasty meals.

Also within is information about the many health benefits you get from your homegrown vegetables.

If you are starting a garden for the first time, it is a good idea to read through the early chapters of this book, and take time to plan your garden well. The time taken in planning is important to avoid the many pitfalls that new gardeners fall into, such as losing control of your garden to weeds, and growing far too many of one type of vegetable that all ripen up at once, wasting valuable garden space that could be used to grow other crops.

I wish you every success in your endeavours.

Carol Raethel

Young carrot plants, six weeks



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Introduction

Congratulations on purchasing this ebook. You have joined the 'growing' number of people around the world who are returning to the soil and growing their fruit and vegetables at home. You are about to embark on one of the most important and rewarding journeys of your life.

In my business of selling vegetable and herb seeds, my customers often tell me they are starting out with a vegetable garden for the first time, and they have a host of questions, such as...

"How do I start?" "How do I grow this type of vegetable?" "How do I know my soil is ok?" "How do I know when to pick my vegetables?" "How do I keep the weeds under control without spending hours in my garden?" "How can I store my vegetables?" and many, many more.

Within these pages, you will find very simple and practical answers to these questions, and questions you have not even thought about. We will look at how to get started, how to look after your garden the easy way, how to plan and plant your garden so you can add something fresh to the table all year round.

Why do potatoes make good detectives? Because they keep their eyes peeled!

Pumpkin Corner



Chapter One. Why have a Home Vegetable Garden?

A home vegetable garden brings many, many rewards and benefits. It is one of the best things you can do for your health and for the health of your family.

You will be able to add something fresh and full of natural goodness to your families diet on a daily basis. Vegetables that ripen on the plant are full of natural sugars and nutrients. The nutrients in vegetables begin to break down two hours after the vegetable is picked, and most nutrients are gone within two days. So by growing your own, and eating them fresh, you are greatly adding to your families diet, and consequently their health.

Growing your own vegetable garden saves you money. Ok, in the beginning when you are getting started, you may disagree with this statement because of the costs of buying tools etc, but it is true, a home garden does save you money, especially if you start your vegetable plants from seed.

Having a vegetable garden is one of the most important things you can do for the planet right now. We are all hearing about how we need to reduce our carbon footprint and how we need to live more sustain-ably, so this glorious planet is here for our children and future generations.

Modern methods of growing fruit and vegetables, and getting them to us is an unsustainable practice, and as more and more people grow their own produce, there will be less need for carbon emitting trucks on our roads. Can you imagine how big the footprint is in getting a fresh lettuce to your door today?

Without going into too much detail, consider, the footprint begins with the tractor that turns over the depleted soil in a paddock, then the machinery that spreads the chemical based fertilizer, the one that sows the seeds, watering machinery, the spraying machinery that sprays insecticides and so on and on until the lettuce is ready for harvest. Then the tractor that takes the crates of lettuces to the packing sheds, the truck that takes it to the markets, another that takes it to the supermarket, the fork hoist that unloads the truck and the electricity used by the cold store. And last, but not least, your petrol that brings the lettuce from the supermarket and takes it to your home. Way too much carbon emitted in this process.

(Nice music now please...)

Now imagine yourself stepping out of your back door, breathing in the fresh air, then taking the few steps involved in getting to your garden. Then you pick your lettuce, break off the old weathered leaves and add them to your compost. Then you take a few quiet and peaceful steps back to your kitchen and turn your lettuce into a living & nourishing salad. Notice there was no machinery involved here, you picked a fresh vegetable that still has all its sugars and vitamins, and you returned some of it to the soil, by way of the compost bin. You have grown a lettuce in a sustainable way and made no harmful carbon footprint. YAY!!!

Gardening is a very healthful form of exercise. If you involve your whole family in the care of the garden, they will have healthful exercise too, and time away from the TV or computer radiation.

When your family works with you in the home garden, there will be many moments in time when you have that feeling of togetherness in working for a common goal.

Our children need to learn the skills we have lost, for their future, and their children's future.

Most children love watching the miracle of life that begins from a seed they sowed, and they love watching it grow into a plant. The garden is a great opportunity for learning, and those science and nature lessons that arise, e.g. when a praying mantis catches a white butterfly, are so precious.

What vegetable can tie your tummy in knots? String Beans!!!!

Celtics Garden



Chapter Two Where do I put my Vegetable Garden?

It's important that your garden gets as much sunlight as possible. In the Southern hemisphere this means you want your garden to face North as much as possible, and in the Northern hemisphere, you want it to face South. In other words, try and locate your garden where it gets as much winter sun as possible. In winter the sun is low in the sky and you don't want your garden in the shade all winter long. Some plants (like lettuces) enjoy shade for some of the day, so don't be too concerned about shade from East or West facing walls or fences.

Take some time to grab a pen and paper and go outside and sketch out your section, taking note of walls that face North or South, depending on where on this marvelous planet you are. If you have a compass, you can find North easily, otherwise, spend a couple of days watching how the sun moves across the sky above you. If you are in the Southern Hemisphere, the sun will be low in the Northern sky during winter. If you are in the Northern Hemisphere, the sun will be low in the South sky during winter.

Observe how the shade from tall objects moves on the ground as well. Do you have any moss growing on the ground? This is a sign that very little sunlight reaches the ground in that area.

Do you have fences or walls that you can use to support plants like beans, tomatoes and peas? Fences are great for this.

Notice any areas that have lingering puddles after rain, as these are not ideal areas for your garden unless you have a garden in which the top is approx 20cm high above the ground. When you do this, the lingering water can be helpful over the summer to keep moisture in the ground. Otherwise puddle areas should be avoided as plants need to be able to breathe through their roots.

Sketch on your paper the areas that you think are a likely spots to start your vegetable garden. You may find that you have several areas that you could use, or it may be a great big patch in one place. Likely spots will be north facing in winter in the southern hemisphere, and south facing in the northern hemisphere.

Also, consider how you are going to get water to your garden, and where the outside tap is situated. My Garden is approx 20 meters away from my outside tap, and I have an irrigation system to take water to the garden. (More about watering later.) Just for now, it is enough to know your garden hose can reach your first garden area so you can water without having to go the expense of an irrigation system straight away, or have to carry loads of water in a watering can. Having said that, if your hose doesn't reach, it is not a great expense to buy a longer hose!

What if I don't have much room for a garden in my section?

If you don't have any areas of land that you can put to gardens, consider the idea of container gardening. Many people grow vegetables successfully in containers. This doesn't have to be an expensive exercise.

You can buy used polystyrene tubs from vegetable shops quite cheaply, that are nice and deep and ideal for container gardening. These tubs are great for growing because the polystyrene helps to keep the soil temperature warm overnight. You can use a good potting mix to fill your tub and can grow all sorts of vegetable varieties in them.

Watercress



This year, I grew Watercress in my tub, and as you can see in the picture, it was very successful. To provide drainage, just use a good knife to poke holes around the sides about 4cm from the bottom. This allows a bit of water to sit in the bottom so the soil/potting mix doesn't dry out completely. By the way, did you know Watercress has a wealth of vitamins and minerals and cleans your blood while it's nourishing you? It can grow in any soil, just so long as it remains pretty wet. (I will talk more about Watercress when we come to the chapters on vegetable types)

The next chapters are important for you to pay a bit of attention to, but you don't need to spend a lot of time on them. Just be aware and it can save you a great deal of heartache later.

Chapter Three What is your Soil Type?

Take a look at your soil.

I define soil in four basic types, Sandy, Standard, Volcanic and Peat.

If you don't know your soil type already, go outside and dig up a handful from where you would like your garden or gardens to be.

Sandy Soil (Light Soil)

Sandy soil is usually found in coastal locations. It has very fine particles, is light, holds lots of air between the particles and breaks easily in your hands. It usually drains quickly and warms rapidly in the sun, which is a good quality when you want to get early warmth to the roots of spring plants. Sandy soil doesn't have a lot of organic matter, so you will need to add compost or organic mulch and fertilizer to it, so it provides food for your plants.

I have sandy soil, and add compost and mulch every time I pull out worn out plants and add new plants and seeds. Organic mulch can be picked up very cheaply or for free from rubbish dumps and is a great way to increase the organic matter in soil.

Standard Soil

Standard soil has a mixture of particles of different sizes, and should have an abundance of earthworms. This is a perfect soil for growing and should only need a bit of fertilizer added to it in the beginning of the season, and a top up of lime and compost every year.

Volcanic Soil

Volcanic soil has large particles in it and is usually free draining. It will need to have organic matter and fertilizer added to it.

Peat Soil

Peat soil is wonderful for growing in, but will require building up above the ground to allow it to drain, otherwise it can become waterlogged. It is full of organic matter for your plants, and holds water and nutrients well. Peat soil is generally found in low-lying swampy land.

Chapter Four Building a Garden

Okay, now you have your sketch of your property and know where you want to begin your garden. So let's look at how to build your garden.

Your soil type may determine how you need to build your garden, as will your garden budget, so let's explore some options and you can decide what's best for you. There is likely to be some investment in money to get your garden going, but there are many low or no cost options you can use.

The In the Ground Garden

This option is good for those on a low budget, and your garden site has good soil and drainage.

Just measure off the area you want to dedicate to your first garden, and mark the corners with a brick or two, or if you want to be more accurate, tie string to stakes to keep your edges straight.

The work involved in preparing your garden is quite physical, and unless you are really fit and used to manual labour, I suggest you take small bites at a time, thus getting your body used to it. Measure and work on an area of approximately 2 square meters at a time, starting at the back and working your way forward.

If you have helpers, many hands make light work!

Use your spade and dig straight down around the edges of the patch you are working on, to make a straight edge. Then literally cut your ground into spade size cubes.

Clear the soil of weeds, working through one cube at a time, so you end up with clean, weed free soil to grow in.

If you are not a strong powerful man (like I'm not), or have an old back injury (like I do), work on a small area at a time. Cut the soil into cubes as outlined above with your spade. Get a sack or an old towel to kneel on, and use a hand fork to clear each cube of soil of weeds. It is more gentle on your back to work this way, and you can move about to get comfortable. It really doesn't take that long to clear a square meter of soil this way.

After your area is cleared, stir in a handful of your chosen fertilizer, e.g. blood and bone, and some compost. One 50-litre bag is sufficient for two square meters, unless your soil is peat, in which case you won't need compost. Leave the soil to rest for a couple of days before planting. This is a good time for you to take a rest too!

Buy some seeds and/or a small pot of seedlings and plant these in short rows about 30cm apart. Hoe the area you have cleared to keep the weeds out, then clear another patch of grass of weeds ready for your next patch.

The Raised Garden

A raised garden could be a large area that is raised by virtue of your soil being built up above the ground. This is perfect when you have inadequate drainage, or your soil is sandy like mine, and you want to import some good soil so you have a nice deep garden of really good soil.

The Raised Garden with Edging

This type of raised garden is necessary if your soil is way too sandy to grow in, or if you are plagued with creeping weeds like Kikuyu and couch grass.

The raised garden needs to be at least 10 inches (25cm) deep, and will need a strong structure around it to contain the soil. You can either buy expensive garden edging from garden centers, or use other materials so you keep the cost down.

Raised garden bed under construction



As you can see in the picture, I have used fence palings, which are held in place by posts on the corners, and by stakes driven into the ground for additional support.

Corrugated steel is good as an edging, but make sure you don't have sharp edges on the top. As you can see in the image, I have split a hope pipe lengthwise and placed it along the top of the steel.



Split hose for protection from sharp steel

Companies that supply steel roofing often have steel cover sheets that are no use to them after they have installed the roof. Contact one near you and ask if you can have some for your garden. They are about 4 meters long and 1 meter wide, and can be cut in half lengthwise. These have the advantage of the edges being bent over, so if you place these on the top, you won't need to worry about cutting yourself. I have used full sheets of corrugated steel, and the extra height provides some protection from wind.

Used tyres are a good garden edge, especially the wide ones used by heavy vehicles. You can collect these for free from tyre shops or garages, and the managers are only too happy for you to take them away. You can either just place them side by side around the outside of your garden area, or cut the sides off so you end up with a long rubber strip. Then all you need to do is attach them to wooden stakes in the ground and you have an edge.

There are heaps of things you can use for edging, like railway sleepers or strong plywood. Just ask around and you never know what other ideas you come up with.

Measure off the area you want for your raised garden. Clear the area of weeds. Now if you want to do this the green way, pull the weeds out by hand as outlined above for the 'in the ground garden'. If you don't mind using a bit of weed killer, I suggest you use one that breaks down quickly and leaves no residue in the ground, like Round Up.

Another method is to lay clear plastic on the ground for a couple of weeks. The sun heats the area under the plastic and 'cooks' the weeds.

It is a good idea to line the bottom and sides of your garden with weed cloth. This will encourage the creeping weeds to grow outside your garden where you can easily deal with them, rather than have them take over your patch. It also keeps your good soil in the garden as it prevents it disappearing into the sand or clay underneath. Weed cloth is inexpensive, and you can sometimes buy it on special from your supermarket.

You may need to buy in a load of soil to fill your raised garden, along with some compost to increase the organic matter. Some rubbish dumps have free organic mulch and you can go and collect it with a trailer. This is great to increase the organic matter in your garden, and when mixed with soil, it is an ideal growing medium. It will help to retain moisture and will provide lots of food for the worms.

What do you get if you divide the circumference of a pumpkin by its diameter?

Pumpkin Pi!!

Chapter Five Tools – The Secret to the Ten-Minute Gardener

Tools help the garden jobs like weeding go so much faster, and truly, 10 minutes a day is all you need to invest in the job of keeping weeds out of your vegetable garden, once you are in control. Of course, you won't be timing yourself and it is very easy to get lost in the garden because it is such a nice place to be.

A spade, hoe, trowel and hand fork are good tools to have. Go to a Bargain type store and buy yourself some cheap tools if you don't want to spend a lot of money. They last for a few years before they break, unless, like me, you try and use them for jobs they weren't designed for. (Blush, blush)

The Humble Spade

A spade is an essential tool for the garden. You will need it to dig compost and other goodies into your soil. Choose one with a good square edge, so it cuts into the soil easily.

The Hoe



The Hoe

A Torpedo Hoe, as shown in the picture, is a wonderful tool. It took me a few years to catch onto this wonderful time saving device. Which is why I am telling you to go and get one now. All you need to do with it, is push it gently just under the surface of the soil and slide it backwards and forwards. It pulls out those little baby weeds before they grow into big weeds. You can usually keep on top of the weeds between your vegetable rows by hoeing twice a week. If your garden is large, you can do half one day and the other half another day.

Allow 25 to 30cm between your rows of vegetables so you can get into the spaces easily with your hoe.

The Trowel

The trowel is a good tool for digging those little holes you need to plant your seedlings. It is also good for loosening the roots of the weeds that you can't reach with your hoe. Just be careful not to disturb the roots of your vegetable plants.

The Hand Fork

This is my favourite tool for loosening up those weeds with long roots, or for gentle weeding around my plants. It is also helpful for loosening the soil around your root crops, like carrot, beetroot and potatoes, enabling you to dig them up without damaging them.

Optional Tools**The Sack**

A sack is marvelous to kneel on when you want to get down low to work on those weeds growing close your plants, or when a patch in your garden has been neglected and become a bit weedy and you know you need to spend time working on the weeds.

Kneeling or sitting on the sack will save your back from constant stooping which places strain on your lower spine. It is especially good for women who don't have the muscular strength to use a large garden fork to do the job of forking out those weeds.

The Garden Fork

This is a great tool if you have the strength to wield one. It enables you to loosen weeds from the ground and lift them out, but as mentioned above, you need to be strong to use one.

Watering Can

This is another valuable tool. You can water your seeds gently, and use the watering can to apply liquid fertilizer to your garden.

New gardeners begin by trowel and error!!!!

Chapter Six How Plants Grow

Lets take a quick and slightly scientific look at how plants grow and their life cycle.

We will begin from the seed. To germinate (begin to grow into a plant), a seed needs darkness, moisture and warmth. The outer coating of the seed absorbs the water, and the little embryo (unborn plant) inside the seed recognizes it is time to begin to grow.

As long as the seed continues to receive moisture and warmth, the embryo will send down a little root first, and then it will send up a growth shoot, usually with two little leaves. These leaves turn green with a substance called chlorophyll that enables the leaves to absorb energy from the sun, and the plant can begin photosynthesis.

Photosynthesis is a word to describe the way a plant turns sunlight, carbon dioxide from the air, and water from the soil, into plant sugars, with which it can continue to grow.

Basically then, a plant needs sunlight, carbon dioxide and water to grow. To really thrive, a plant also needs nutrients from the soil as well. It can also absorb nutrients through its leaves, which is why liquid fertilizers work so well.

Once the plant reaches a certain size or stage in its growth, it will flower. When bees or insects pollinate a flower, it will form a seed case that contains its seeds for future reproduction. In the types of plants we are interested in, these seed cases are vegetables or fruit that we are able to eat when they are fully ripe.

In those fruits or vegetables, are ripe seeds that are able to grow into plants. And thus we return to the beginning again.

Chapter Seven Starting Plants from Seed is Easy

As buying seeds is a vast deal cheaper than buying seedlings (baby plants), it is the best way to get your plants started. Also, you know exactly what you are buying and you avoid the risk of buying seedlings that may carry diseases into your garden.

It is really easy to start plants from seed, as long as you pay attention to a few small details.

Some seeds will germinate happily in the ground. These are the large seeds like Pumpkins and Beans. Some are less robust and will need to be sown into a potting mix in seed raising trays. The chapter on growing individual plants has information for which vegetables are best to grow in trays or directly into the soil.

As a general rule, seeds need to be covered by soil or potting mix, and how deep you sow them depends on the seed. Very small seeds like celery seeds need only a light sprinkle of potting mix over the top, a layer no more than 1 – 2mm deep. Seeds like radishes need to be planted with at least 1cm of soil over the top.

When your seeds are sown directly into the ground, water them with the hose on a gentle misty spray, and completely wet the area. Be careful not to apply the water too fast or it may wash your seeds away. Keep the area moist, which might mean watering twice on a hot summers day.

If your seeds are sown in seed raising trays, place them in a warm place, and have a large tray under them to contain water. Gently moisten the potting mix, by sprinkling with your fingers or using a fine mist spray. This will wet the mix thoroughly. Then thoroughly wet the bottom tray underneath, about 5mm deep is good. Try to keep a small amount of water in the bottom tray all the time, but not too much. This will keep your seeds moist, but not too wet.

Seed raising trays



Sometimes I put my seed raising pots into an old roasting pan. If you can't borrow your own roasting tray for a couple of weeks, you can buy them cheaply from second hand stores, or ask around your friends if they have an old one they don't use. You can also buy plastic trays from bargain stores, as long as the edge of the tray is raised about 2cm (1 inch).

Seeds sown into the garden will need to be protected from slugs and snails.

Another way to get your seeds started, is to use an ice cream container with a lid. Fill the container to about 5cm deep with potting mix, and plant your seeds. Add enough water to make the mix moist but not saturated. Put the lid on the container and place it in your airing cupboard.

Check the seeds after a few days, and as soon as they germinate, you can transfer it to a sunny window, or sheltered spot, and keep the lid off. Keep the mix moist, and transplant your seedlings when they are about 5cm tall.

Hot Tip

Did you know, that if you place your seeds in an airtight glass jar in the freezer, they retain their quality for at least 10 years? Seeds lose their quality and ability to germinate by absorbing moisture from the air. When you sow your seeds, take out as many as you need from the packet and return the rest as quickly as possible to their jar in the freezer.

Chapter Eight Transplanting Seedlings to Your Garden

When your seedlings have reached a size that they have a good hold on life, usually 5 to 10cm tall, they can be transplanted into your garden.

To help them recover from the transplanting process as quickly as possible, follow these steps, and your plant will recover and begin growing again quickly.

The best time of day to transplant your seedlings is early in the evening, about an hour or so before it gets dark. This is because the heat will have gone out of the day, and your seedlings won't lose all their moisture from the heat of the sun.

If your seedlings are in seed raising trays or pots, surround the pots with water, to a level of about 2cm from the top of the tray or pot. Leave them in this water for about an hour. The seedlings will absorb the water through their roots, and will have plenty to spare while they are sending new roots into their new soil.

To plant your seedlings, dig a hole that is roughly twice the size of the root mass. Make sure the edges of the hole are rough. Smooth edges are a hard edge and the roots may remain in a cluster as they grow along the edge. Rough edges enable the roots to spread out and dig into the sides of the hole.

Use an ice block stick or a teaspoon, and gently dig it into the raising mix, levering it under the root mass of your seedling. Lift the seedling out of the mix gently, and provide support by grasping one of the first leaves of the plant, if they still have them. Never hold a plant by its stem, as it will damage it and you could transfer bacteria from your hands onto the plant. The first leaves of the plants usually drop off as the plant grows, and these are the perfect handles for you to grasp for transplanting. If these leaves are absent, grasp another one near the base of the plant.

Place your seedling in the hole, and gently scoop the soil into the hole around the plant. Gently press the soil with your hand so that it fits nice and snugly around the roots. It is a good idea to let the soil come a little way up the stem, so that the plant is well anchored. Water the soil very gently, trying to avoid putting water on the plant itself. Protect from slugs and snails.

If the weather is going to be hot the next day, water again in the morning so your seedling can make it through the day without becoming dehydrated.



Newly planted seedlings

Chapter Nine Organic gardening versus Chemicals

In this book I have focused on organic gardening. This is gardening naturally without using chemicals. To have a garden that is sustainable and healthy, it is important to try and keep chemicals out of your garden.

Chemical Insecticides kill not only the garden pests, but also the predators who eat these pests. You will be knocking out not only pests, but stopping the natural population growth of predators.

Insecticides are harmful to humans, and some are linked with certain cancers, particularly breast cancer.

Any insecticides you use can also kill the earthworms that are so important for healthy soil and plant growth. Worms aerate the soil and recycle compost into nutrients that your plants use.

Bees are also vulnerable to insecticides. Did you know, that in one region of China they have lost their bees entirely due to overusing insecticides? I saw a documentary on Sky TV a while back, about bees. They focused on a Pear orchard in China. The workers had to collect pollen from Pear flowers and transfer it by hand to other flowers for pollination. (Sorry I can't give you more information about this documentary. It was so interesting that I watched it without taking any notes)

As more and more people are returning to the soil, it is more important than ever that we do it responsibly, and look after our precious bees and beneficial insects.

Vegetables grown with organic fertilizers are known to be much better for us. Artificially promoting a plants growth with chemical fertilizers makes the plant focus more on increasing the size of the vegetables, and not on the nutritional value. Also the chemicals can stay in the vegetables and they enter our bodies when we eat them.

Plants grown organically also have greater resistance to disease as the plants are much stronger.

The choice is yours, but I suggest you try growing as naturally as you can.

In the chapters on Pests and Diseases, I have some natural suggestions for you to use.

*What do you call two young married spiders?
Newly webs!!!!*

Potatoes and Spring Onions



Chapter Ten

Fertilizers & Plant Food. What plants need to Survive and Thrive

For any vegetable to be healthy and grow the best crops, it is vital that there are nutrients available for it in the soil. All plants need food and vegetables need an abundant supply.

The most common foods that vegetables need are Nitrogen, Potassium and Phosphorous, trace elements and organic matter (anything that was once living).

Nitrogen is the element that enables leafy plants like lettuce and Silverbeet to have healthy, large robust leaves. Potassium and Phosphorous help plants to grow large healthy fruit, particularly tomatoes and capsicums. Plants also need other nutrients in small amounts, and these are called 'trace elements'. Trace elements can be found in good quality compost and seaweed.

Blood and Bone

A good basic plant food is blood and bone. This can be added to the soil just before planting your seeds or seedlings.

While Blood and bone comes from animals, it could be argued that it is not technically organic as it is made from the blood and bones of animals that may have been fed or treated with chemicals. Usually these chemicals lodge in the muscles and fat of these animals so it is arguable how much chemical residue is actually in the blood and bone. It is a matter of choice whether to use blood and bone or not, however I do as it is a cheap way of getting essential nutrients to the plants and is not made from chemicals. It is possible to buy liquid blood and bone that is organic.

I usually dig blood and bone into the soil before planting, along with some compost. A handful per square meter is enough, so you don't have to use much. You can buy blood and bone from most supermarkets, hardware stores and garden centers. The supermarkets are the cheapest. You may be able find organic blood and bone in gardening centers.

You can also buy liquid blood and bone and this is diluted with water and fed to the plants by either adding it to the soil around the plants or directly onto the leaves. It is excellent for applying weekly during spring and summer, which is the time you plants grow the most.

Dead animals

Yes, you read that right. Dead animals, dug deep into your garden soil are excellent fertilizers. So if your sweet adorable cat brings you a dead bird or mouse, just say 'thank you' and take it outside and bury it under at least 20cm

(10 inches) of soil. Animal bodies provide all the elements found in blood and bone and the organisms in your soil will break it down so the plants can take up the nutrients.

Now for the more adventurous fertilizers.....

Seaweed and Fish Fertilizer

If you are fortunate enough to live near a beach, or can take a trip to a beach after a storm, you can usually pick up heaps of seaweed. Any seaweed is good, and is usually full of all the goodies that plants need. Seaweed also has enzymes and other good stuff that help to break down compost in your soil so your plants can take up the nutrients more easily. Seaweed also contains trace elements for your plants.

Now, I am not suggesting you throw fresh seaweed and fish skeletons into your soil, as they need to be rotted down first. You can add them to your compost heap and add them to your garden after about three months, but the sharp bones of the fish can be a bit of a problem. I make a liquid fertilizer with them. I call it Fish and Seaweed Stew.

Fish and Seaweed Stew Recipe

To make this stew, you need seaweed and fish heads and skeletons. If you live near a beach, collect your own seaweed. If you are not a regular fisherperson yourself, ask your neighbours and friends who are, to give you their fish waste. They are usually very happy to give them to you as they are a smelly and difficult thing to throw away in the rubbish.

You also need a bucket with a lid. Place the fish and seaweed in the bucket and cover with water. Put as much fish and seaweed in the bucket as you can, leaving about 4 inches empty from the top. Have at least 5cm (2 inches) of water spare over the top of your solids. Cover with a lid and place somewhere where the smell won't be too offensive. Yes, I'm afraid the first few days will be very smelly as they begin to rot down, and this could be a problem with your neighbours. If you get on with your neighbours well, and they have a garden of their own, you can offer them some of your stew for their garden when it is finished rotting. Or maybe you could offer to share some vegetables with your non-gardening neighbours, if they are willing to put up with the smell for a while.

Leave the stew to rot down for at least two months.

As you use your fish and seaweed stew, keep topping up the water. Over time, more nutrients can be extracted from the seaweed and fish bones, so you will have a long supply of liquid fertilizer.

To use the stew, pour about ¼ cup of stew into your watering can, fill up with water, and apply it around the base of the plants or directly onto the foliage.

If you are growing root crops like potatoes and carrots, apply the liquid fertilizer to the ground around the plants. The nutrients will be absorbed into the soil and be used by the roots.

If you have plants that form the vegetables above ground, you can either apply your liquid fertilizer to the ground, or onto the leaves of the plant. Applying it to the leaves allows the plant to use the nutrients quickly.

Animal Manure

Farm animal manure is wonderful to dig into your garden. Horse, cattle and sheep manure is excellent for all vegetables.

It will need to be aged manure, (at least 3 months old) if you are going to grow in it straight away. You can collect the manure and put it aside to age in a large sack or a covered plastic bucket.

If you are topping up your garden in the winter to 'resting soil', you can put the manure directly on the ground, or dig it into the soil if you have dogs that like to roll in it. (like mine!!!!)

Chook poo is great for your garden also, but as it is high in nitrogen, you will want to use it in the parts of your garden where you grow leafy vegetables like lettuce and silverbeet. Again, chook manure needs to be aged first, or added to the soil in winter.

You can also make a Poo Stew with your manure. Half fill a bucket with the manure, and fill to almost full with water. Stir a bit with a stick, and put the lid on. Leave to stew for six weeks, and then you can add about ¼ cup to 4 liters of water, and apply around the plant roots with a watering can.

Comfrey leaves are full of minerals and nutrients for the garden, and can be laid like mulch around your plants. Worms will eventually convert it into a form your plants can use.

*What do you get if worms take over the world?
Global worming!!!!*

Chapter Eleven Soil Health

Here we come to a sniffing exercise. Dig up a bit of soil from your garden, crumble it in your hands and smell it. If it has a rich, sweetish kind of smell, you have a healthy soil ready for growing. If it smells kind of sour and unpleasant, then it has either been too wet and needs to be raised above the ground, or it may be very acidic, and need an application of lime to balance out the pH. (pH is the acid/alkaline balance of your soil). Don't get too hung up on pH, but it is worth sorting now, so you can grow healthy plants.

As a general rule, good healthy soil with a slightly alkaline pH is just right for most vegetables. If the ground has weeds in it now, a healthy soil will have weeds like Chickweed, Plantain, and whatever else is the dominant weed in your neighbourhood. Acidic, sour soil tends to grow Dandelions and yellow Mouse Ear Hawkweed that looks like Dandelion. You could add Lime at the rate of a handful per square meter to this soil to balance the pH. Stir it in well. You can buy Lime from a garden center or hardware store, and is handy to have on hand as it is a good idea to add a bit to the soil every winter.

Maintaining soil health

While they are growing, vegetables take up a lot of nutrients and organic matter from the soil. This needs to be replaced so that your next crop has enough goodies to grow on. Also, different plants use different nutrients to grow. Some need a lot of nitrogen to thrive, and some need little nitrogen and a lot of other nutrients.

It is not a good idea to grow the same type of vegetable in the same place as the previous crop because there may be soil borne diseases left behind which will transfer to your current crop.

I practice crop rotation, and many gardeners follow this system.

Crop Rotation

This is a process where we first grow leafy vegetables in nitrogen rich soil, followed by plants that grow vegetables above the ground, then root crops. Lastly, we sow lupin or another nitrogen fixing crop, like peas, and replenish the goodness as outlined above. Then after a period of rest, we can sow the leafy crops again.

It can look like this...

***Leaf crops**

I plant a row or two of lettuces and spring onions in the nitrogen rich patch. The lettuces and spring onions will use the excess nitrogen and grow lovely crisp and sweet leaves.

***Above the ground crops**

After the lettuces have been harvested, I plant tomato or capsicum seedlings between the rows of spring onions (these maturing later than lettuces). The tomatoes will thrive on the remaining goodness in the soil. When the tomatoes have finished, I pull them out.

***Root crops**

Next, I add a little compost and sow radishes or any other root crop in the ground. These crops will take up nutrients that have filtered down into the soil, and as there is not much nitrogen left in the soil, they will concentrate their growth in the roots, not their leaves, which is what we want to happen.

***Replenishing**

Then, I replenish the soil. First, I sow rows of lupin, which fixes nitrogen into the soil. When they are about 6 inches high, I get aged horse, chicken or cow manure and spread it over the Lupin. If I don't have access to animal manure, I use blood and bone or any organic fertilizer to the soil. I also add a small handful per square meter of lime and dig it all into the soil.

A liquid fertilizer made from seaweed is extremely beneficial for soil health, as it encourages little enzymes to help the worms break down the organic matter/compost in the soil. So I pour some over the soil at this stage. I use a four liter watering can to do this, and spread one watering can full over about six square meters.

Aside from hoeing regularly, I leave the soil for two weeks or so to let the worms do their thing, and then, I begin planting leafy crops again.

Sometimes we can't stick to this regime as different plants grow at different rates, and some last longer than others. It is worth keeping crop rotation in mind however, as it does contribute to the health of your soil.

A quick note here, peas are an excellent crop to replenish the nitrogen in your soil.

What do you say to your children when they drop peas from the dinner table?

Stop pea-ing on the floor!!!!

Chapter Twelve Watering Your Garden

Plants generally receive enough water during Spring and Autumn from the rain. Over Summer however, they will need watering daily in hot, dry weather.

It is best to water the soil around the plant rather than on the plant itself. This is because in the evening of hot days when there is no wind, water on the leaves of a plant can cause fungus infections to grow. However, if it is not practical for you to water the ground, water the garden either in the morning, or around 5 o'clock in the afternoon, so the water has time to dry off before night.

The amount of water you give your plants depends on your weather and climate. If your plants look wilted in the morning, they are not getting enough water. On average, each mature plant should receive a liter of water each day, but this depends on your plants. Pumpkins need a lot more, and spring onions need less.

There are several methods of getting water to your plants.

The Hose

When you water with a hose, set the nozzle to deliver a gentle shower.
(sounds poetic!)

Hose watering can be done by either holding the hose, or set it up on a stand so that you can walk away and do something else while your garden is being watered. If you leave the hose on a stand, move it every 10 minutes or so, to prevent over watering. (Tomatoes will split if they receive too much water)

Irrigation

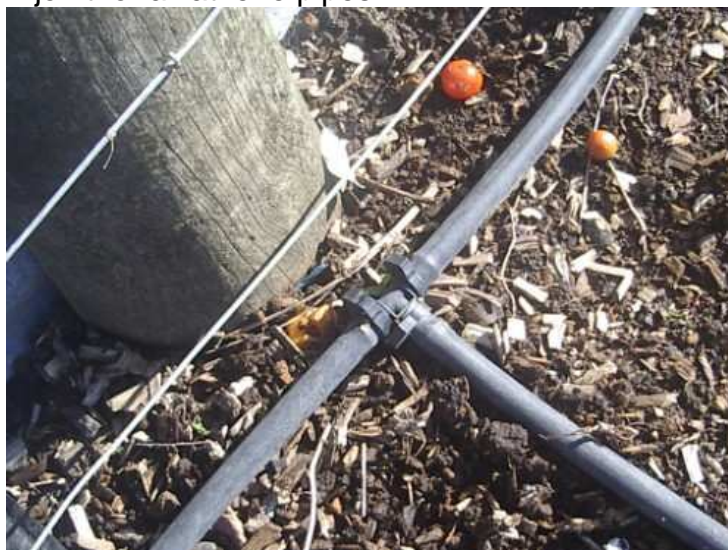
I have an irrigation system set up so that I can turn the tap on and go and do something else while the garden is being watered. This involves a hose or black alkathene pipe that takes the water to your garden, and then delivers the water to the plants. Run your irrigation framework around the plants and between the rows so that the water can reach all of the dirt. To make life simpler, I have used a divider at my outside tap so that I can have the water going to the garden or to the hosepipe.

Double adaptor for tap



Most garden centers and hardware stores carry the fittings for irrigation systems. The pipes are joined together with connectors and held firm with little ring clips. The connectors come in 'T' shapes and 'Elbows' so you direct your main water line where you need to transport water around your garden.

T joint for alkathene pipes



There are two main ways to deliver the water to your plants once you have the main water lines in place.

Spray nozzles with Upright Raisers

This method will deliver water slowly to a large area, as you can see in the picture. You can get nozzles that deliver water in a 90 degree radius, 180 degree and 360 degrees. I personally find that the 180 degree ones are best as they deliver a lot of water and are less prone to little spiders crawling in and blocking the nozzle as they do with my 360 degree ones.

Irrigation in Action



Drip Irrigation

This is done with a very small pipe called a 'micro-tube'. This will deliver drips to your plants and is a good way to water the plant and keep the leaves dry. To make the holes in the main water line, use a thin nail to make a hole, and then poke the micro-tube into the hole. It is a good way if you are growing single plants, but not practical for a row of small plants like radishes or spring onions. The tube is expensive to buy and not readily available at garden centers.

In all, I prefer the upright nozzle system.

*What kind of socks does a gardener wear?
Garden Hose!!!*

Chapter Thirteen

Getting Started. Start Small and Grow Your Garden

What are you going to grow first?

It is a good time now to make choices about what you are going to growing first. See the Seasonal Planting Guide in the following chapter to choose the vegetables you would like to grow. As you start growing, you are likely to want to grow more and more different vegetable varieties, but see if you can limit yourself to 3 or 4 varieties at first if you are starting out for the first time. There is time to add more when these are established, I promise!!!!

My suggestion for a first quick harvest is salad vegetables. Lettuce varieties such as the loose-leaf varieties are easy to grow and you can begin picking individual leaves for salads within 4 to 6 weeks of planting. Radishes are also very fast to grow and are a very healthy addition to salads. Spring Onions are good for planting straight away, and any herbs that you like to add to your salads like Coriander or Parsley.

Select your seeds from a reputable supplier. If you live in New Zealand you can buy good quality seeds from the author. Contact information is listed under resources at the end of this book.



Chapter Fifteen

The Secret of The Year Round Supply of Vegetables

This is the chapter that explains how you can have a year round supply of vegetables.

I plant my crops on a monthly basis, and for the sake of an easy way to know when to plant what, I follow the phases of the Moon.

Many growers have for centuries used the Moon to guide their planting and harvesting. Many people believe that plants sown during the right phase of the Moon produces better germination, a healthier plant, and a better harvest. This has not been proven scientifically, but gardeners who plant by the Moon swear by it. We certainly see a difference in tides and fishing when the Moon is waxing and waning, so there may be something in it. It may have more to do with the actual orbit of the Moon around Earth, which is reflected by waxing and waning.

Let's clarify waxing and waning of the Moon. Waxing is when the moon grows from a tiny crescent to a full moon. Then we have Full Moon. As the crescent gradually shrinks, we call it a Waning Moon. Of course the Moon is always orbiting us, and it is the portion of the moon with sunlight reflecting off it that we actually see.

The theory behind gardening by the Moon is this. As the moon is waxing, and there is more light reflected back to Earth every night, it draws the energy upwards in the plants. When the Moon is waning, the energy and moisture is being drawn into the roots. When the Moon is full, the moisture is in the part of the plant above ground, which is a good time to harvest roots for storage, as they have less moisture.

I adopted this system several years ago, and haven't done any experiments to prove this theory, however I find it very useful to follow these planting guidelines, because it ensures I can keep an ongoing supply of food to harvest from my garden.

Lunar Planting Cycles.

Waxing Moon

During the waxing phase, sow leafy and annual plants that grow above the ground, like lettuces, celery, silverbeet and spinach, tomatoes, sweetcorn and spring onions etc. Essentially, sow any annual plant from which you use the stalk, leaves or fruit.

Full Moon

During the full Moon, sow plants that store their energy in the roots. This will include carrots, onions, beetroot, potatoes, parsnips etc. This is also a good time for perennial plants as they require good strong healthy roots and need

to establish their roots firmly before focusing on the plant above the ground. Full Moon is the time to harvest medicinal root crops, and root crops for storage.

Waning Moon

During the waning phase of the Moon, the moisture of the root crops is being drawn down into the soil. This is said to be a good time for weeding, as the weed growth is slowing above the ground.

Most diaries have the cycles of the moon in the front section, and I write the phases of the Moon in the diary so I have a reminder to plant at the relevant time.

It is a good idea for you to purchase a cheap diary so you can write the phases of the Moon in it. Also, you can transfer information from the Seasonal Planting Guide, so that you have a reminder twice a month of what crops you can grow. So if there is a new moon on January 5th, sow lettuces, and if the full moon is on January 19th, sow carrots. Make observations in the diary, and note down your harvesting dates, so you can refer to it in the following year.

So to recap, to have a constant supply of vegetables, sow them twice a month, leafy vegetables in one part, and root crops in the other.

Anaheim Chillie



Chapter Sixteen Growing the Right Amount of Vegetables

Plan to grow a bit more than you need of each variety you choose, but not too many more or you are using valuable space that could have another vegetable variety in it. There is no point for example, growing 20 broccoli plants which all mature at the same time, and you eat them five days in a row and have to give the rest away because you are sick of broccoli and don't want to see another one again!

I have two people to feed from my garden and have worked out a bit of a system. Every month I grow 20 lettuce plants. Five of these are the heading types and the rest are loose-leaf varieties. This way I can pick loose leaves for baby salads and the heading varieties are left to mature. When I have exhausted the loose-leaf plants, then I harvest the plump heading varieties. You may think that is a lot of lettuces, but we have salads almost every day, and it suits our needs well. On the other hand, I sow heaps of onions in spring as they store well into winter.

So grab a pen and paper, and using the Seasonal Planting Guide, work out what you would like to grow, and how many you think your family can eat each month without becoming bored with the vegetable. Of course, some vegetables lend themselves to keeping, like beans and onions, so you can grow lots of them if you are going to freeze or store your excess.

For ease of planning, allow an average of 3 months for each batch of vegetables to mature. This is where the diary comes in useful again, so you can record how long it takes for particular varieties to mature at different times of the year.

Vegetable plants grow faster during late spring and summer, and slow down their growth in late autumn. Take this into account as well; you will need to plant more during autumn to plan for the slowed growth.

Celtic harvesting his broccoli shoots



Chapter Seventeen

How to grow Individual Vegetable Varieties

This chapter is dedicated to the details of how to grow certain varieties of vegetables. I have chosen the most common vegetable varieties for this book. If you would like to grow something not included here, refer to the Internet for information. Help is just a click away. I have given basic cooking and storage information for different varieties and delicious, mouthwatering recipes in the Recipe Section. I have also provided brief information about the nutritional value of each variety of vegetable.



Beans

Beans are great to have in the garden as they take up very little ground space, yet produce a lot of food for both summer and winter.

Climbing Beans

This includes Runner Beans, Purple Beans and all those different varieties of climbing beans.

Sow	Sow direct in the soil during Spring and Summer. Sow directly into a warm damp soil rather than cold and wet.
Sow Depth	3cm (1 inch)
Germination	It should take between 6 to 10 days until the first leaves appear.
Spacing	Allow 10cm (4 inches) between plants, and 50cm (20 inches) between rows
Maturity	8 – 12 weeks
Soil	Beans like a good soil, with plenty of organic matter (compost) and nutrients. They prefer full sun but will be fine in partial shade
Size	Climbing beans reach a height of about 2 meters or more.

Climbing Beans on a 3 bamboo stakes



Maintenance & Care

Climbing beans require something to climb up. (Sorry for pointing out the obvious!) The stems like to spiral up their supports. A teepee of bamboo stakes is quite good for support, and you can grow many beans from just three plants. Ensure the stakes are firmly pushed into the soil so the structure is stable in a strong wind.

If you are growing beans along a garden fence, you could attach a string at the bottom and the top for the bean to grow up, or attach some wire fencing like chicken wire to the fence for the beans to attach themselves to. Use your imagination, as long as your structure is strong, and is tall enough, it should work well.

Beans tend to attract the Green Vegetable Bug, (Stink Bug) and the Passion Vine Hopper.

Water the beans well during the summer months, preferably directly onto the soil.

Sow beans in a different location each year, or change the soil if growing against a permanent frame. This will prevent soil borne diseases infecting your next crop.

Harvest

Beans will begin production when they are approx 8 weeks old. Harvest every two days to promote more fruit production. You will get a bountiful harvest over a 2 – 3 week period.

Sow every four weeks during Spring and Summer if you want a continuous harvest.

Preparation and Cooking

String beans may need to have the strings removed prior to cooking. Running a vegetable peeler down the sides of the beans most easily does this. It will remove the stringy bits.

Beans can be boiled or steamed. To keep as much goodness as possible, drop them into boiling water and cook until desired tenderness. Strain and serve.

Goodness in Brief

Beans are low in calories and high in complex carbohydrates. They are very nutritious and have anti-oxidant properties that are at their highest when the beans are cooked until tender. Beans contain vitamin K, manganese, vitamin A, folate, iron and magnesium and antioxidants, including carotenoids and phytochemicals.

Storage

Freeze – To freeze beans, wash them well and cut into desired sized pieces. Have ready a pot of boiling water on the stove, and a large bowl of cold water, and a cooled plate in the freezer (big enough to spread a single layer of bean pieces.) When everything is ready drop the beans into the boiling water and cook until tender. This is called Blanching.

Strain quickly and put beans into the cold water to cool fast. Strain again and place the beans inside the strainer on a clean towel or serviette to absorb excess water. Now spread them in a single layer on the cooled plate and return to the freezer. When frozen, remove the beans to a storage bag or container and return to the freezer as quickly as possible. You will now have a source of pre-cooked beans. Reheat quickly for serving by dropping them into boiling water and boiling for 1 minute or so. Or, add them to prepared meals of your choice.



Purple beans

Dwarf Beans

Dwarf Beans can be grown without supports, but ensure they are protected from strong winds.

Sow	Spring and Summer, directly into the soil.
Sow	Depth. 3cm
Germination	6 to 10 days
Spacing	10cm apart and 50cm between rows
Maturity	8 to 10 weeks
Soil	A good soil with plenty of organic matter and nutrients. Full sun
Size	Dwarf beans usually reach a height of 45 to 60cm

Maintenance and Care

Same as for climbing beans, but will not require support.

Storage

As for climbing beans.

Beetroot

Beetroot is a valuable vegetable to grow over the Summer and Autumn months as it can be eaten fresh or bottled for use during the year.

Sow	Spring to Autumn, preferably direct into soil.
Sow Depth	1cm
Germination	10 to 14 days
Spacing	Allow 10cm (4inches) between plants and 30cm (12inches) between rows
Maturity	8 to 11 weeks from sowing
Soil	Grow in soil that is low in nitrogen so growth is concentrated into the root
Size	Beetroot plants grow to a height of approx 20cm, width 30cm

Beetroot - Crosbies



Maintenance and Care

Water daily in hot weather, preferably directly on the soil. Beetroot requires little care, just protect seedlings from slugs and snails

Harvest. Harvest when the root has reached approx 10cm wide or larger. Size varies a lot, but ensure you harvest before the plant begins to form little leaf sprouts from the main root. Either pull the plant up by grasping the stalks just above the ground and gently pulling, or dig the roots up, being careful not to pierce the root with your spade.

Preparation and Cooking

Wash the roots and cut off the stems, leaving about 2cm still attached to the root. Add to a pot of boiling water, return to boiling and simmer until tender. This may take 20 to 40mins depending on the size of your beetroot. Don't allow them to become too soft. Drop into cold water and allow to cool. Remove the skins by sliding your fingers under the skin. Then you are ready to use your beetroot.

Goodness in Brief

Beetroot is low in calories and high in complex carbohydrates. The vitamins and minerals in beetroot, along with the antioxidants and phytochemicals make this vegetable an excellent food choice - both the root and the green tops. Beetroot contains folate, manganese, vitamin C, potassium, iron, magnesium and thiamine. Beets are rich in anthocyanins, the pigment that makes the root red, and is responsible for the repair and protection of DNA in the body.

Storage

Bottling

Bottled Beetroot can be stored in glass jars for up to a year. Simply slice your beetroot while it is still warm and fill jars. Add 2tsp sugar, ½ tsp salt and 2

Tbsp vinegar, and enough water to fill jar to almost the very top. Place the lid on the jar, screwing it down tight. Sterilize by putting a tea towel in the bottom of a large, tall saucepan, add the jars, and fill the water to 1 inch below the top of the jars. Bring to the boil slowly, and simmer for 20 minutes. Allow to cool before removing jars. The lids should pop as they cool, then you know they are well sealed.

Broccoli

This is a valuable vegetable for the garden for those colder months, when you want to add something fresh to your meals.

Sow Late Spring to Late Autumn. Can be sown directly in the soil, or in seed raising trays for transplanting later.

Sow Depth 1cm

Germination 10 days

Spacing Allow 50cm between plants and 60cm between rows

Maturity. 10 to 12 weeks from transplanting, 14 weeks or so from sowing direct.

Soil Broccoli likes good soil with plenty of organic matter and nutrients. Prefers full sun.

Size. Healthy broccoli will grow to approx 50cm wide and 50cm high

Broccoli – De Cicco



Maintenance and Care

A weekly addition of liquid fertilizer is helpful to promote fast growth, as broccoli needs to be grown quickly. It is attractive to the white butterfly who lays her eggs on the underside of leaves. These can be brushed off gently. Protect from slugs and snails.

Harvest

Carefully cut out the central head when fully grown and before it begins to turn grey, which indicates the little flowers are beginning to open. Many varieties will then grow many side shoots, and these can be gently broken off where they join the stem. Eat the stalk! Children love to peel off the skin and crunch on the stalks.

Preparation and Cooking

Broccoli is best eaten fresh and raw to get the most vitamins and minerals. When cooking, boil or steam for 5 to 10 minutes and test with a fork. When it is just tender, it will still have many nutrients, overcooking tends to destroy the vitamins. Broccoli lends itself to stir fries and Chinese cooking.

Goodness in Brief

Broccoli is a cruciferous vegetable, and studies have shown it is helpful in fighting cancer of the lungs, breast and colon. Sulphur compounds stimulate the body to produce anti-cancer enzymes, which inhibit the growth and spread of tumours.

Raw Broccoli contains almost as much calcium as milk, lots of B vitamins, vitamin C, Iron, Folate, Sulphur, Zinc and Potassium.

Storage

Store Broccoli in the fridge for no more than 2 days. It does not lend itself well to freezing. It is best eaten fresh.

Broccoli can be pickled with other vegetables in a vegetable pickle.

Cabbage

Cabbage is great to grow for the warm and colder times of the year.

Sow. Late Spring to Late Autumn. Can be sown directly in the soil, or in seed raising trays for transplanting later.

Sow Depth. 1cm

Germination. 10 to 14 days

Spacing. Allow 45cm between plants, and 60cm between rows.

Maturity. 10 to 14 weeks from transplanting. Approx 16 weeks from sowing direct.

Soil. Does well in a soil rich with organic matter and nutrients. Prefer full sun.

Size. Varieties vary, but approx 40cm wide and 40cm high

Cabbage – Copenhagen Market



Maintenance and Care.

Protect from slugs and snails. Attractive to the white butterfly, who will lay little white eggs on the underside of the leaves. Just brush the eggs off the leaves when the plants are small. See chapter on Pest Control for more ideas.

Harvest. Ready to harvest when it forms a large head. Gently cut the stem low to the ground.

Preparation and Cooking

Cabbage is a versatile vegetable and can be shredded raw for coleslaws, lightly steamed and tossed in butter, or added to stir fries and noodle dishes and much, much more. See the yummy Coleslaw recipe in the recipe section.

Goodness in Brief

Cabbage contains lots of vitamin C, vitamin A & E, folate, potassium, thiamine and dietary fiber. Studies show that eating cabbage and other cruciferous vegetables up to 3 or 4 times a week can greatly reduce the risk of colon cancer, prostate cancer, and breast cancer. This is because of the phytochemicals in cabbage and other cruciferous vegetables.

Storage

Cabbage is best eaten fresh, but unless your family can consume a whole cabbage in one meal, it will need to be stored for a day or so. Keep in the fridge, but bear in mind the goodness will gradually disappear, so it is best to use it quickly. Cabbage can be pickled and sealed in jars. It can also be sliced and frozen, however it will be limp and sorry looking when thawed so it is really only any good for adding to soups and stews after freezing, and is great to add to soups when the cooler weather comes in Autumn.

Capsicums and Chillies (Including all Chilli and Pepper Varieties)

Capsicums are wonderful for the garden in the warm summer months. One plant produces several fruit and you can harvest over a two-month period. Sow. Spring, into seed trays for transplanting later when all danger of frosts has passed.

Sow Depth. 5mm

Germination. Capsicum and Pepper varieties can take from 6 to 14 days to germinate.

Spacing. This depends on the variety. Most Capsicums and Peppers need at least 50cm between plants. Tabasco Chillies and Large varieties like Roccoto Manzo require at least one meter as they grow into a large shrub.

Maturity. This will vary depending on the variety, however you can be harvesting after 10 to 16 weeks. Usually harvest can begin when the fruit ripens.

Soil. Capsicum and Pepper varieties require full sun and rich, deep, well drained soil with lots of organic matter. They require a good level of fertilizer for large fruit. Magnesium is also required for fruit formation, so add some Dolomite to the soil prior to planting. (Follow instructions on the pack)

Size. Most Capsicum and Pepper varieties reach 60cm tall on average.

Capsicum – Californian Wonder



Maintenance and Care.

It is a good idea to provide a little support to the plants, as they can become top heavy when the fruit grows. A short stake is ideal to provide this support. Just attach the central stem to the stake.

Harvest. Harvest your capsicums and Chillies when they ripen into their mature colours, e.g. red or yellow, as they will be when they are at their sweetest.

Cayenne Pepper**Preparation and Cooking.**

Capsicums can be added to salads, soups, casseroles & stir-fries. Their use is only limited by imagination. Chillies can be used fresh in salsas, salads (for the brave & experienced Chilli eaters!) and dried for future use. See the recipe section for delicious ways to use Chillies & capsicums.

Tabasco Chilli

Goodness in brief.

Chillies and Capsicums are high in vitamins A & C, K, some B complex vitamins, iron, calcium and phosphorous. Also, folate, niacin and thiamin. They also contain Capsaicin that is a phytonutrient that causes an increase of endorphins in the brain. Endorphins are the feel good hormone.

Storage

Chillies can be dried in the oven at 50 degrees Celsius with the fan circulating. The airing cupboard is another good place; just ensure they are not in contact with any clothes!!!

Capsicums and chillies can be chopped and frozen. They become soft when thawed, so they are good to add to soups, casseroles, sauces and salsas.

Carrots

Carrots are good to have growing continuously in the garden. They contribute greatly to the summer and winter diet.

Sow. Spring to Autumn, directly into the ground. I find it best to mark the rows with string between two sticks. This makes it easier to hoe around the new plants without accidentally uprooting them. Using a stick, lightly make a groove in the soil along your string line.

Carrots grown with string line to show exact location



Sow Depth.	1cm. Sprinkle the seeds lightly along the row, the cover over with soil.
Germination.	14 to 21 days.
Spacing.	Allow 30cm (12inches) between rows.
Maturity.	This will vary between varieties and the time of the year they are growing. On average between 70 to 90 days.
Soil.	Carrots like a deep, free draining soil, with a good fertilizer. For best root growth, choose soil with little nitrogen.

Size. How big is a piece of string?? Carrots can be anywhere between 10 to 30cm, depending on the variety and the personality of your soil. (Its true!)

Carrot - Berlicum



Maintenance and Care.

Hoe along the edge of the rows, being careful not to damage the new roots. Once the plants show about 10cm of leafy growth above ground, you can begin to thin them out. Gently pull up the smallest looking plants, being careful to leave a space of 2cm between the ones remaining. This allows them space to continue growing. Carefully cover the remaining roots with loose soil to ensure they continue to be healthy and keep growing. The plants you remove can be added to salads, or eaten whole. Kids love them in the school lunch box.

Harvest.

Carefully brush the soil away from the tops of your biggest carrots. If the root looks wide enough, then gently grasp the leaf stalks close to the root, and wriggle gently and pull up. If it doesn't come up easily, carefully dig into the soil next to your carrot and lever it up. You don't need to harvest your carrots all at once, they can be harvested over a period of up to 30 days.

Preparation and Cooking

Carrots can be enjoyed in many ways, raw or cooked. For children they can be cut up into carrot sticks to add to their lunchbox or as a sweet crunchy addition to their dinner. As a child, I always wondered why Mum spoilt the carrots by cooking them! Having said that, they are delicious cooked, alone or in soups, stews, casseroles and vegetable dishes. A grated carrot adds sweetness to a salad.

Goodness in brief

Carrots are loaded with antioxidants, including beta-carotene. The brighter the colour of the carrot, the higher the level of beta-carotene. Carrots are our most abundant food source of beta-carotene, which the body converts to vitamin A (one carrot can provide our daily needs), and contain vitamin K, vitamin C, folate, potassium, manganese, magnesium, vitamin B6 & thiamine.

Storage

Carrots can be stored in the refrigerator for up to two weeks. The anti-oxidant properties actually increase with storage of this time.

Carrots can be blanched and frozen. (As for Beans). They can be added straight from the freezer to soups etc.

Wild Carrot

This is one of the best vegetables you can have in your garden. It provides nutrition, healing and is a tonic for the body, especially during the winter months when fresh veggies are limited. The roots are long and spindly.

Sow.	Sow Spring to Autumn, directly in the soil.
Sow Depth.	1cm
Germination.	14 to 21 days
Spacing.	Plants can grow close together, allow 40cm between rows.
Maturity.	Depending on the season, approx 70 to 90 days
Soil.	Wild carrots grow best in a well-drained light soil, minimal and fertilizer is good, but not as much as you would give other vegetables. Keep nitrogen to a minimum, so the plant concentrates the goodness in the root.
Size.	Height of the plant above ground is 20 to 30cm. Root is approx 1cm wide and between 15 to 25cm long

Wild Carrot Root



Maintenance and Care

Wild carrot requires little maintenance, just water daily during hot dry weather.

Harvest

Wild carrot is ready for harvest when the foliage above ground is large & robust. Make sure your harvest before it sends up a flower stalk from the center. You will need to dig a spade into the soil next to your carrots and lever them up.

Preparation and Cooking

Wild carrot lends itself well to soups and stews. Allow it to cook for at least 30 minutes, to soften the fibrous root. You can also boil Wild Carrot roots for 20 minutes to extract the minerals and active content. Drink the liquid as a tonic and aid to healing.

Goodness in Brief

Wild Carrot is loaded! It has a long list of constituents, including vitamins A, C, B6, Thiamine, Folic acid, Magnesium, Potassium and Copper. There is a host of phytonutrients and phytochemicals including Coumarin, Alpha-linoleic acid, Chlorogenic acid and Arginine. The list is too numerous to put it all here. Coumarin and the phytochemicals give wild carrot powerful anti-cancer properties.

Storage

Wild Carrot root can be washed and frozen in a sealed container or bag in the freezer. It will keep in the refrigerator for a few days, as the root is still alive. You can also cut it into 2 – 4cm lengths and dry it in the oven at 50 degrees Celsius, until the root snaps when you bend it. Store dried root in an airtight glass jar. You will need to soak the dried roots in boiling water to begin re-hydrating, before you add them to soups etc.

Cauliflower

Cauliflower is fabulous for the cold months of the year when not much else is growing in your garden, and can be fun to eat.

Sow. Spring to late Autumn. Best sown in trays for transplanting later to garden.

Sow Depth. 1cm

Germination. 5 to 7 days.

Spacing. Allow 45cm between plants and 60cm between rows.

Maturity. Between 85 to 90 days.

Soil. Caulis need a free draining soil, rich in organic matter and well fertilized.

Size. Approx 60cm wide. 40cm tall.

Cauliflower - Snowball



Maintenance and Care.

During hot weather, the top of the curd may brown a bit, so pull off outer leaves and lay over the top for shade. Water daily in hot weather. Cauliflowers are prone to the white butterfly, so brush the eggs off your young plants, and pick off any caterpillars.

Harvest.

When you have a lovely white head nestled among the leaves, cut the plant with a knife just above the ground. Break off the outer leaves and add to your compost.

Preparation and Cooking

Cauliflower can be eaten raw or cooked. Starting on the outside, cut into 'florets' that easily fit on your hand. Like little trees. Steam or add to boiling water. Stop cooking when tender, but still a bit firm. Delicious served with a cheese sauce in the famous dish 'Cauliflower Cheese'.

Hot Tip!

Make vegetables fun for young children by calling cauliflower and broccoli Green Trees or White Trees.

Goodness in brief

Cauliflower contains vitamin C, K, B6, folate, magnesium and potassium. It contains anti-oxidants, which make it another valuable vegetable in the prevention of cancer. Sulphur compounds stimulate the body to produce anti-cancer enzymes, which inhibit the growth and spread of tumours.

Storage

Cauliflower can be stored in the refrigerator for up to two days. It can be added to vegetable pickles.

Celery

Celery is a great vegetable for the garden, as you can break off the outside stalks and have continuous harvest for several months.

Sow.	Spring to Summer. Can be sown in Autumn in mild climates. Sow in trays for transplanting when approx 3cm high.
Sow Depth.	Approx 3mm
Germination.	Between 14 to 21 days.
Spacing.	Allow 30cm between plants, 40cm between rows.
Maturity.	You can begin harvesting the outside stalks after approx 90 days.
Soil.	Celery likes a soil rich in nutrients. It grows naturally in damp soil, so a soil with lots of organic matter to retain moisture will be perfect.
Size.	50cm to 60cm high, 30cm wide.

Celery - Utah



Maintenance and Care

Celery requires little care. Just make sure the soil doesn't dry out during hot weather. Celery will continue to grow happily, as the season's turn, and the stalks get fuller and longer as they fully mature.

Harvest

Break off the outside stalks once they are of a desirable size. Using a gentle twisting motion, break off the stalk where it joins the base of the plant.

Preparation and Cooking

There is no limit to the uses of celery. It can be sliced and added to salads, cooked in soups, stir-fries and casseroles. You can fill the center of the stalk with cream cheese, peanut butter or avocado. For tender stalks in salads or cooking, cut the stalk in half lengthwise, and use a potato peeler to remove the stringy bits. Then you are left with the tender inner flesh, which is very sweet.

Goodness in brief

Celery is rich in vitamin C and potassium. Potassium is useful for relieving fluid retention, and has been used medicinally by Herbalists for this action.

Storage

Celery is best eaten fresh, as it keeps well in the garden. However, the stalks can be cut in half across the stalk, and stored inside a plastic bag in the refrigerator. You can slice celery for freezing. It will be soft once thawed, but is ideal to add to winter soups.

Cress

Cress comes in different varieties. These instructions are for Land Cress (Land variety of Watercress) & wrinkled varieties. Cress is such a valuable food in the garden as it is so rich in vitamins and minerals.

- Sow. For growing in the garden, Cress can be sown all year round. It can be sown direct into the soil, or in trays for transplanting.
- Sow Depth. 1cm
- Germination. 4 to 5 days.
- Spacing. Allow 10 to 15cm between plants.
- Maturity. Mature enough to begin harvest after 6 weeks.
- Soil. Cress will grow on any soil, but prefers a rich soil with plenty of fertilizer and moisture.
- Size. Varies depending on variety. Between 20 to 30cm wide, 15cm high

Land Cress



Maintenance and Care

Cress will stay sweet and tender as long as it is watered regularly during summer. Keep an eye out for the white butterfly caterpillars. Brush the eggs off the leaves, or use organic methods to control pests.

Harvest

Cress can be harvested over a period of 8 to 12 weeks. Cut the very outside leaves close to the base of the plant. If the plant has been in the garden for a while, these may be bitter, so discard these and cut the next row of outside leaves for using.

Preparation and Cooking

Cress can be eaten raw in salads & sandwiches and can be added to soups and stews.

Goodness in brief

Like many other vegetables in the cruciferous family, including kale, cabbage and broccoli, cress contains glycosides and mustard oil. These substances stimulate the metabolism and kidneys and strengthen the stomach and gallbladder, and is blood cleansing. Cress also contains calcium, iron, vitamins C and E (two antioxidant nutrients that help protect the cells from damage by free radicals) and A. The sprouted seeds contain all the goodies, plus beneficial enzymes.

Storage

Cress will keep in the fridge for a few days. Rinse the cress, shake off excess water and place in a sealed bag or container in the fridge. This method maintains the crispness of the leaves.

Cucumbers

Cucumbers are a delight in the vegetable garden, and one healthy plant will produce enough fruit to feed a family for several weeks over summer. Some varieties have greater disease resistance than others, particularly the round and oval varieties.

Sow. Late Spring, after all danger of frosts has gone. Sow indoors in trays until the plant has one healthy true leaf, then transplant to a warm sunny situation in the garden.

Sow Depth. 1 – 2cm.

Germination. 5 – 10 days.

Spacing. Cucumbers need a lot of room to sprawl out, so allow 1 meter between the cucumber and other plants. The long varieties need to grow on a frame so the fruit can hang down, however round or oval varieties like Apple and Port Albert, will grow okay on the ground, although it is best to support them if you can.

Maturity. 8 – 10 weeks

- Soil.** Cucumbers like a soil with good drainage, plenty of organic matter and nitrogen. They prefer full sun, so the leaves are able to dry after the morning dew.
- Size.** This is a difficult one, but lets just say it could reach 1 metre high on supports and 1 – 2 metres wide. The image below is of a Port Albert Cucumber, a very hardy variety.

Port Albert Cucumber



Maintenance and Care

You can cut out lateral vines on a young plant if you would like to control its growth up a support. Ensure the leaves stay dry to prevent mildew, so water the plant at the base of its roots. Laterals on the ground may grow roots; this will help to keep the plant healthy.

Harvest

Harvest your cucumbers when they have reached the full size and appearance of their variety. Cut the stalk where it joins the vine. It is best to leave the fruit to ripen on the vine so the fruit contains as many of the natural sugars and nutrients as possible.

Preparation and Cooking

Cucumbers are best eaten raw. They can be eaten with or without the skin, depending on personal preference. They are lovely in salads, or as a refreshing light addition to a cooked meal.

Goodness in brief

Cucumbers contain vitamin C, vitamin A, potassium, manganese, folate, dietary fibre, tryptophan and magnesium. The potassium helps with fluid retention, and tryptophan is known to have a soothing and calming effect, and stimulates the brain to produce serotonin, which is a 'happy' hormone.

Storage

Cucumbers can be stored in the fridge for up to two days. Immature cucumbers can be pickled as gherkins.

Garlic

Garlic is technically a herb, but is widely known and used as a vegetable. It has so many health giving properties and can be useful in warding off garden pests when planted near more vulnerable vegetable plants.

- Sow.** Garlic is best grown from little cloves. Separate the cloves from the main bulb. The best time to plant the cloves is mid winter. There is a saying that you plant on the shortest day, and harvest on the longest. This is true when you want to grow the mature bulbs that we see in the supermarkets. It can also be planted in Spring, however the cloves usually just increase in size, and don't mature into bulbs. It is ok to keep these in the ground for growing again next season. After harvesting my garlic bulbs, I often leave tiny little 'bulblets' in the ground, and these grow and mature into full bulbs after the next winter.
- Sow Depth.** Garlic cloves should be planted with the wide rough bit pointing down. Make your hole twice as deep as the length of your clove.
- Spacing.** Approx 10cm apart.
- Soil.** Garlic prefers a rich soil with lots of nutrients and organic matter.
- Size.** Garlic will vary in size depending on how much goodness is in the soil, climate and variety. From 30 – 60cm tall. 7 to 12cm wide

Maintenance and Care

Garlic requires little maintenance. Just water well in hot dry weather and gently weed around the bulb. Make sure the top of the growing bulb is well covered with soil.

Harvest

Harvest your garlic on the shortest day of the year, and/or when the tops of the leaves begin to brown and die back. Using a spade, gently dig near the plant and lever up. Lay the plant in the sun for a few days to cure, or in wet weather, lay on a dry surface in an airy place.

Preparation and Cooking

Garlic is so versatile; it can be added to many, many dishes.

Goodness in Brief

Garlic is known and valued for its cancer prevention properties, which are not destroyed by cooking. Garlic also helps to reduce bad cholesterol in the blood, and promotes development of healthy cholesterol. Studies show that Garlic eating 2 to 3 cloves a day reduces by 50% the risk of heart attacks. It helps regulate blood pressure, boosts the immune system, and its anti-bacterial properties can be used externally on wounds, or internally to fight infections. It contains vitamins B and C, calcium, potassium, phosphorous and proteins.

Storage

Plait your garlic together when the leaves are soft, and hang in an airy place, like onions. If you are too challenged with this method (it took me a lot of goes!) then let the garlic dry further, cut off the leafy tops, and keep in a place where they will get lots of ventilation.

Leek

Leeks are great to start growing mid to late summer for autumn and winter soups, although they can be grown all year. They have a long holding period in the ground, so they can be used, as you need them.

Sow. All Year. Can be sown direct into the soil or into trays for planting when the plant is approx 6cm tall.

Sow Depth. 1cm

Germination. 10 to 15 days

Spacing. At first, plant the seeds approx 2cm apart and allow 20cm between rows. Thin as you harvest.

Maturity. Leeks reach maturity at approx 21 weeks.

Soil. Leeks enjoy a rich soil with plenty of organic matter.

Size. Approx 60cm high

Leek Carentan Giant



Maintenance and Care

Leeks need regular watering over the hot dry months, and like a liquid fertilizer every two to three weeks for tender plump stems.

Harvest

Harvest every second plant as you use the leeks so the remaining plants have room to spread their roots as they grow. When you have gone up the row, harvest every second plant again. The remaining plants can be harvested, as

you need them. To harvest, gently grasp the base of the leek, and gently pull up. If this is difficult, use a trowel or spade to dig into the soil close to the plants and lever up.

Preparation and Cooking

Leeks can be sliced and diced and used in soups, stews and casseroles. You can use the lower white stem and up to and including the base of the leaves. Sometimes there a bits of dirt between the layers, just cut up your leek and rinse in a bowl of water, then strain off the excess water.

Goodness in Brief

Leeks, like onions, are a rich source of quercetin, a potent anti-oxidant. They can help lower the bad cholesterol in blood, (LDL) and raise the beneficial cholesterol (HDL), reducing risk of heart disease or strokes. They also contain vitamin C & E, and iron, potassium and folate.

Storage

Leeks are best kept in the ground until you need them, however if space is a problem, they can be harvested and stored. One way is to slice them and freeze. They will be soft when thawed, but ideal for soups and stews. You can also store leeks for a few weeks in a dark, cool place, like in a paper bag in the bottom of the pantry. To do this, keep the top 3cm of root on the plant, wash thoroughly and dry off excess moisture. Place them into a paper bag with the roots deep inside, and lay on their side. They should be in a single layer. Keep an eye on them, but don't forget to use them!

Lettuces

I think lettuces are the best plants for the vegetable garden. They are extremely beneficial to our health, are quick to grow and can be grown all year round.

Sow.	Sow all year. Some varieties don't like the hot summer sun, so check the packet for instructions as to when to sow. Lettuces come in all shapes and sizes, as you can see in the images.
Sow Depth.	1cm. Lettuces can be sown directly into the soil or in trays for transplanting when at least four leaves have appeared.
Germination.	5 to 10 days
Spacing.	25cm between plants. 25cm between rows for the heading varieties. Allow 15cm between plants for the loose-leaf varieties.
Maturity.	Depending on the variety, between 6 to 12 weeks.
Soil.	Lettuces need a good rich soil with plenty of organic matter and nitrogen for strong leafy growth.
Size.	Depending on the variety, between 30 to 40 cm wide and 20 to 30cm high

Maintenance and Care

You will need to protect your lettuces from slugs and snails. They are relatively frost resistant, however if you have heavy frosts or snow over winter, they would need a greenhouse or covered frame. They will need watering daily in the hot, dry weather.

Lettuce Rouge d'Hiver



Harvest

Loose-leaf varieties.

The outside leaves can be harvested when the leaves are approx 7cm long. Gently break off close to the base of the plant. If you have planted these 15cm apart, as the plants grow, you can remove and use every second plant. This allows the remaining ones to mature fully.

Some loose-leaf varieties lend themselves to baby leaf salads. Just harvest the outer leaves when the plants are small.

Heading Varieties.

These are the ones that form a head in the center. Allow these to mature and using a sharp knife, cut the base of the lettuce close to the ground. Gently break off the tough outer leaves, wash the lettuce and use.

Lettuce Great Lakes



Preparation and Cooking

Lettuces are most well known for their use in salads, however they are delicious finely sliced and added to light soups as well. I have some tasty ways for using lettuces in the recipe section.

Goodness in Brief

Lettuce leaves are about 90% water, and contain folate, iron, anti-oxidants, vitamin C, and beta-carotene.

Storage

Lettuces will keep in the fridge in a plastic bag for up to two days, however they are best kept in the garden until you use them.

Onions

Onions are one of the most beneficial vegetables to grow in your garden. They are not only highly nutritious and healing for us, they can help to repel insects from vulnerable vegetable plants. So it is a good idea to have a row of onions between rows of other vegetables.

* Bulbing Onions

- Sow. Most varieties are sown early Spring, however some do best sown in Autumn. Follow the directions on the packet.
- Sow Depth. 1cm. Bulbing onions are best sown in trays for transplanting when the plants are approx 5cm high.
- Germination. 5 to 10 days.
- Spacing. Allow 10 to 15cm between plants, 25cm between rows.
- Maturity. Depending on the variety, onions usually reach maturity mid to late summer.
- Soil. Onions like a good soil, rich in organic matter and nutrients.
- Size. Bulbs vary in size, can reach 12cm wide or more. Plant height can reach 50cm

Onion – Sweet Red



Maintenance and Care

Water daily in hot dry weather. Be careful when hoeing not to nick the side of the bulb. Carefully pull weeds by hands from around the bulb, replace any soil that's disturbed.

Harvest

Harvest onions when the tops of the leaves begin to brown. Harvest by gently grasping the base of the stalk and pull gently. If it doesn't lift easily, dig next to the bulb and lever up. Break off the dirt from the roots and lay them in the sun to 'cure' for a few days. Don't harvest onions in wet weather unless you are able to use them straight away.

Preparation and Cooking

Onions are a universal food. They can be added to just about every vegetable dish, casserole or soup. Raw onions are delicious in salads. Mild & Sweet onions can be cut into quarters and used like corn chips with a nice dip. See my recipe section for some delicious ways to add onions to your meals.

Storage

Onions can be plaited together, as in the illustration, and hung in a cool airy place to store. If you are storing them in a vegetable basket in your pantry, allow them to dry for a longer period, then cut off the leaves and trim the roots. Make sure they are dry before going into storage.

Some Onions keep for only a few weeks, and some for several months.

***Spring Onions**

There are many varieties of Spring Onions. Some grow, mature and eventually go to seed if they are not harvested. Some flower, then divide, and the little outer plants can be harvested. I grow a variety called 'Welsh Bunching Onion' and I have a corner where I keep a group of them. These flower and seed every year and supply me with all the seeds I need.

Sow.	Sow all year. Can be sown directly into the soil, or raised in trays for transplanting when the plant is approx 5cm high.
Sow Depth.	1cm
Germination.	10 to 14 days.
Spacing.	Spring Onions can be grown close together, so if you sow direct, just sprinkle them along your row.
Maturity.	10 to 20 weeks, depending on variety.
Soil.	Spring onions like a good soil, rich with organic matter, nutrients and nitrogen.
Size.	This varies according to variety, usually 1cm wide and 30cm high.

Welsh Bunching Onion



Maintenance and Care

Regular watering is required over summer. Spring onions respond well to watering with a liquid fertilizer every two weeks, this produces plump tender stalks.

Harvest

You can begin harvesting your spring onions once they reach a size you feel is right for you. It is a good idea to start at one end of your row, and gradually work up the row. Just grasp the onion close to the ground and gently pull. If it doesn't come up easily, use a trowel or hand fork to dig into the soil next to your onions and lever them up. Spring onions can stay in the ground for a long time before the stem toughens up, and this is the best way to store them.

Preparation and Cooking

Spring Onions are best known for the way they add a mild flavour to salads. However they are delicious added to stir fries, soups, casseroles and many Chinese cooking recipes.

Goodness in Brief. For all Onions.

Onions are a rich source of Quercetin, a potent anti-oxidant. Half an onion a day is said to lower the bad cholesterol in blood, (LDL) and raise the beneficial cholesterol (HDL), reducing risk of heart disease or strokes. Onions are anti-bacterial and antiviral, helping to fight off cold and flu viruses. They also emit 'mitogenic radiation', which is highly beneficial for us, and contributes to the disease preventative action.

Peas

Peas are really fun to grow, and if you have children, grow several plants for them to raid when 'you aren't looking'. If they are young, they may need help to pick them as the tender stems are easily damaged. They are full of goodness and a clever way to get vegetables into your child.

Sow. Spring to mid Summer, directly into the soil. Sow a few every three weeks if you want a continuous harvest.

Sow Depth. 2cm

Germination. 7 to 10 days.

Spacing. Allow 10cm between plants and approx 50cm between rows.

Maturity. 4 to 8 weeks, depending on the variety

Soil. Peas prefer a deep soil with plenty of organic matter and nutrients. Make sure it is well drained to prevent diseases developing around the roots and base of the plant.

Size. 60 to 120cm, depending on the variety.

Pea Petit



Maintenance and Care

Peas need support to grow up. Their tendrils will curl around anything they touch, so a wire mesh or trellis is perfect. They are susceptible to fungal disease if the plant gets wet too often, so water the soil around the plants, not the foliage. Weeding around the plant is often difficult, as the roots are easily disturbed and pea tendrils are often attached to weeds too. So go very carefully with this or cut off the top of the bigger weeds. Peas have a short growing season, so what I do is tolerate the weeds and remove them when the pea plants have finished.

It is a good idea to have several lengths of plastic trellises, so you can stake them in the ground and move them when your peas have finished. That way

you can move them around your garden as a nitrogen fixer as mentioned for crop rotation.

Harvest

Harvest your peas when they are nice and fat. Use scissors to cut the stem of the pod. We run the risk of transferring fungal diseases between plants with our hands, so the less we touch the plants the better.

Preparation and Cooking

The peas I grow never make it to the kitchen! They are grown solely for a healthy snack in the garden, and my son and I go out daily during Summer for a munch.

Peas can be eaten raw in salads, added to the school lunch box, or lightly cooked. Fresh peas only require 2 minutes cooking in boiling water or 3 minutes of steaming.

Goodness in Brief

Fresh peas are a great source of fibre, vitamin A, B6 & K, manganese, folate, potassium, thiamine and magnesium. Peas are one of the highest sources of vegetable protein.

Storage

Peas can be blanched and frozen, however, in truth; you will need a lot of plants to have enough to make it worthwhile. They are best eaten fresh.

Potatoes

Potatoes are rewarding to grow in the garden as nothing beats the flavour of a newly dug potato. They are easy to grow, and store well.

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| Sow. | Sow Spring and Summer. To grow a potato, it is best to start with a potato. Sometimes old potatoes in our cupboard begin sprouting, and these can be planted in the ground, or buy some seed potatoes. I keep the little potatoes from a previous crop and plant these. |
| Depth. | Potatoes need to be planted at least 15cm deep. It is a good idea to mound the dirt up above to provide the most soil for the plant to produce nice big crops, and this also helps prevent insect damage. |
| Spacing. | Allow 30cm between plants and 40cm between rows. |
| Maturity. | This depends on the variety and the season they are grown. Three months is the approximate time it takes to reach maturity. |
| Soil. | Grow potatoes in a well-drained soil, rich with organic matter and fertilizer. |
| Size. | Above ground, the plant reaches approx 30cm high and 30 to 40cm wide. |

Potato Corner



Maintenance and Care

Potatoes are susceptible to fungal diseases. Don't grow potatoes in the same place two years running, this will prevent diseases in the soil from previous crops affecting your current crop.

You can minimize the risk of blight by inserting copper wire into the ground around the plant, or using a commercial copper spray after wet humid weather. Water daily in hot, dry weather. Water on the ground around the plant rather than the foliage, however if you need to use the spray of a hose, water in the morning or very early in the evening to allow the foliage to dry off before night.

Harvest

Harvest new potatoes when the flowers are fully opened. These potatoes are delicious and tender, but don't store well. If you want to store them long term, then harvest the crop when the stalks and leaves have fully dried off.

To harvest, gently dig with a fork or spade, approx 20cm away from the main stem. Once you have a hole, it is easy to explore with your hands and gently excavate the potatoes. It is a fun thing for children to do and will keep them busy. Keep the smallest potatoes for planting again.

Preparation and Cooking

Potatoes are so versatile, and their uses are widely known. New potatoes are nice lightly cooked and served with butter.

Goodness in Brief.

Potatoes are high in complex carbohydrates and have protein and fibre. They contain vitamins B, C and iron and potassium.

Storage.

Store potatoes in a dark, cool and dry place, well ventilated.

Pumpkin

Pumpkins are fun to grow, however you will need a lot of room. Homegrown pumpkins have a far superior flavour to shop bought ones.

Sow. Spring, after danger of frosts has passed. Can be sown directly, or in trays for transplanting later.

Sow Depth. 3cm

Germination. 5 to 10 days.

Spacing. Allow room for the vine to sprawl. It can take up to 5 linear meters all up. Allow approx 60cm width. Pumpkin vines can be cut back and trained so you can control where they will grow.

Maturity. This varies between varieties, from 70 to 120 days.

Soil. Pumpkins need a really rich soil with plenty of organic matter and fertilizer. Prepare an area of about 50cm square and 50cm deep with compost and fertilizer mixed in with soil before planting your seeds or seedling. This will give it plenty of nutrients to get a good start.

Size. This depends on how big you allow your plants to grow.

Pumpkin - Butternut



Maintenance and Care

Pumpkin vines are fairly robust, but the immature fruit are susceptible to fungal disease. Therefore, water the plant around its base and try to keep the flowers and emerging fruit dry as much as possible. Allow each vine to grow no more than 4 pumpkins per plant.

Harvest

Harvest your pumpkins when the stalk attaching it to the plant has turned yellow.

Preparation and Cooking

Pumpkin can be used in many ways. It can be added to soups, stews, casseroles & vegetable dishes. It is delicious roasted and made into Pumpkin soup. There is a delicious soup in the recipe section.

Goodness in Brief

Pumpkins contain high amounts of vitamin E, beta-carotene and potassium. This makes it useful for helping with fluid retention. It is another vegetable with anti-oxidant properties.

Storage

Many Pumpkins can be stored for three months or longer in a cool and airy place. Cut Pumpkins can be kept in the fridge for a few days in a sealed container or plastic bag.

Radishes

Radishes are a fast growing vegetable. They have definite health benefits and can grow all year.

Sow. All year, directly in the soil.

Sow Depth. 1cm

Germination. 4 to 8 days.

Spacing. Ideally, radishes prefer spacing of 2cm between plants, however, I sprinkle the seeds along the row and they jostle happily as they grow! Allow 25cm between rows, so you can hoe between.

Maturity. Approx 4 weeks, varies depending on the season.

Soil. Well-drained soil, with organic matter and fertilizer.

Size. Varies depending on variety.

Radish – French Breakfast

Maintenance and Care

Radishes will grow sweet and plump as long as they get adequate water. Therefore water well on hot dry days. If growing radishes during the summer, they will benefit from shade for half of the day. The white butterfly likes to lay eggs on the leaves, therefore brush them off gently off your young plants. Also, protect emerging plants from slugs and snails.

Harvest

Begin harvesting radishes when they push up part of the root above the soil. They are tenderer when young. Gently grasp the base of the leaf stalks and gently pull up, they should lift easily.

Preparation and Cooking

Wash the roots and trim off the ends. Radishes can be sliced into salads, soups and stews. They can be sliced thinly for stir-fries. They are great for a lunch box snack, or healthy snack any time during the day.

Goodness in Brief

Radishes contain vitamin C, and have Sulphur compounds, which help protect the body against cancers, viruses and bacterial infections.

Storage

Radishes should be eaten fresh from the garden, to retain all their benefits. They can be stored in the fridge for up to two days if necessary. Wash them thoroughly, rinse and store in a sealed container or bag. You can slice and freeze radishes for freezing, for adding to soups and stews at any time.

Silverbeet

Silverbeet is another marvelous vegetable to have growing all year round. It grows for months, and the leaves can be harvested continually.

Sow. Spring to Autumn. Can be sown directly into the ground or seed trays.

Sow Depth. 1cm

Germination. 6 to 14 days

Spacing. 30 cm between plants, 40cm between rows

Maturity. Harvest can begin at 8 to 10 weeks

Soil. Silverbeet prefers well-drained soil, rich with organic matter and fertilizer.

Size. Up to 60cm high, 40cm wide.

Silverbeet – Fordhook Giant



Maintenance and Care

Silverbeet requires little care. Water daily in hot, dry weather, and pick the outside leaves regularly to encourage growth. Silverbeet grown during the winter will begin to flower in early Spring. This is in response to the increasing hours of daylight. It is frost resistant so will grow during the winter in mild climates.

Harvest

Carefully break away the outer stalks at the base of the plant. A gentle twisting motion away from the plant will enable the base of the stalk to peel away from the plant.

Preparation and Cooking

Silverbeet can be boiled or steamed. It requires only 5 minutes or so to cook. It can also be used raw in salads, especially the tender leaves off a young plant. It can also be added to vegetable juices.

Goodness in Brief

Silverbeet contains iron, folate, vitamin A, vitamin B6, Calcium, Potassium, thiamin and Zinc, and phytonutrients. It is high in fibre, which helps lower harmful cholesterol in the blood vessels. Silverbeet contains oxalic acid, which can inhibit the uptake of iron and calcium, however, when eaten with a food high in vitamin C, it can actually increase the uptake. Silverbeet delivers the most nutrients when eaten raw.

Storage

Silverbeet can be stored in the fridge for up to two days, sealed in a container or plastic bag. The best place to store it is live in the garden.

Spinach

Spinach is another great vegetable to have in the garden, and has a high nutritional content.

Sow. Spring and Autumn. Can be sown directly in the soil, or raised in trays for transplanting.

Sow Depth. 1cm

Germination. 7 to 14 days

Spacing. Allow 30cm between plants and 40cm between rows.

Maturity. 8 to 10 weeks.

Soil. Prefers a soil rich in organic matter, but low in nitrogen. Full sun.

Size. 30cm wide and 20cm high.

Spinach – Winter Giant



Maintenance and Care

Spinach requires little care. Water well in hot, dry weather.

Harvest

It is easiest to harvest the whole plant. Grasp the base of the plant and gently lift.

Preparation and Cooking

Spinach can be boiled or steamed and requires only 2 to 3 minutes cooking. It can be added raw to salads and vegetable juices. See the recipe section for some delicious ideas on using Spinach.

Goodness in Brief

Spinach contains iron, folate, vitamin A, vitamin B6, Calcium, Potassium, thiamin and Zinc, and phytonutrients. It is high in fibre, which helps lower harmful cholesterol in the blood vessels. Spinach contains oxalic acid, which can inhibit the uptake of iron and calcium, however, when eaten with a food high in vitamin C, it can actually increase the uptake. Spinach delivers the most nutrients when eaten raw.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 2 days in a sealed bag or container. It is best used fresh to get the most nutritional value.

Sweetcorn

Sweetcorn grown in the garden is by far superior in flavour than any you will buy. This is because the natural sugars in the corn begin to turn to starch after it is picked.

Sow. Spring, directly into the soil is best. Sweetcorn is wind pollinated, so sow in blocks rather than a single row.

Sow Depth. 3cm

Germination. 8 to 10 days

Spacing. Allow 40cm between plants and 60cm between rows.

Maturity. 11 to 16 weeks

Soil. Sweetcorn prefers a deep soil, rich in organic matter and fertilizer.

Size. 2 meters high and 60cm wide. Individual cobs vary according to variety.

Sweetcorn – Golden Bantam



Maintenance and Care

Protect young plants from wind; preferably grow them in a sheltered area. Young plants can be tied to stakes to keep them upright if you have a very windy situation. The plants require little care otherwise, other than watering in hot, dry weather.

Harvest

Harvest your corn when the tassels have turned dark brown and appear very shriveled. Grasp the cob and pull down to break it off the plant.

Preparation and Cooking

Peel the leaves off the cob, trim the stalk and drop the corn into boiling water. It takes only 5 minutes to fully cook fresh corn, although some people prefer it just heated through. Serve with butter or a prepared oil and herb mixture.

Goodness in Brief

Corn is rich in Vitamins A, B and C and fiber. It contains iron, magnesium, phosphorous and potassium.

Storage

Sweetcorn is best eaten fresh. Individual kernels can be scraped off the cob, blanched and frozen.

Tomatoes

Tomatoes are wonderful in the garden as they have a high yield for the space they take up. Useful in salads and many forms of cooking, they are well worth growing. They produce fruit over a period of 3 months.

- Sow. Spring to Summer in seed raising trays. Transplant to the garden after all danger of frosts has passed. Sow every month over Spring and Summer for a continual harvest.
- Sow Depth. 1cm
- Germination. 3 to 10 days.
- Spacing. Allow 40cm between plants and 60cm between rows.
Maturity. Tomatoes are ready to harvest on average at 60 to 70 days from sowing.
- Soil. Tomatoes prefer a deep, well-drained soil, rich in organic matter and fertilizer, but not too much nitrogen. They prefer full sun.
- Size. Depending on the variety, tomatoes can grow up to 2 meters tall.

Tomato – Russian Red



Maintenance and Care

Most tomato plants require supporting and staking is the most common method. Ensure your stake is firmly in the ground, as the plant can become top heavy when it is mature and loaded with tomatoes. Tie the main stem to the stake with a strong twine or an elasticized fabric. I find that old stockings

useful, cut across the leg, they make very useful ties. Sometimes I buy cheap stockings just for using as plant ties.

Tomato plant supported by a bamboo stake



Tomatoes have a main stem, called the leader, and side branches, called laterals.

Tomatoes can be trained to grow along a fence. Just allow two main leaders to grow and tie them every 15cm or so. Trim the lateral branches just after the flowering stalks.

Flowering lateral



To control the growth of your plant, and get the most fruit, allow the laterals to grow above 30cm from the ground. Snip the laterals after the first flowering stalk appears on the lateral. This can be done all the way up the plant as it grows. Tomatoes keep producing laterals so keep on top them, trimming away the extra ones you don't want. Make sure you use snips or scissors, not your fingers. This will minimize the risk of transferring bacteria from our hands to the plant. Tomato clippings make excellent pest insect repellent. Lay them as mulch around your cabbage seedlings.

Espaliered Tomato Plant on wire fence



Tomatoes benefit from a regular application of liquid fertilizer, as they are heavy feeders. Water daily in hot, dry weather. On average, each plant requires 1 litre of water daily. Where possible, water the plant on the ground at the base rather than spraying on the leaves. This will cut down the risk of blight. If you are using a hose to water, do it in the morning, or as soon as you come home from work in the evening, so that the water on the leaves has a chance to dry off before nightfall.

Tomatoes are very attractive to the green vegetable bug, so check them daily and remove the bugs. See the chapter on Pests for ideas on eliminating this pest.

Tomatoes are susceptible to blight, although some varieties are more resistant than others. Russian Red, a heirloom variety, has strong resistance to disease. To prevent blight or minimize the damage of blight, once the plant is 20cm high, poke a thin copper wire through the stem at approx 10cm above the ground. Copper is the mineral used for in fungicidal plant preparations. Also, once the plant is approx 60cm high, remove the leaves below approx 20cm from the ground. This allows the air to circulate around the base of the plant.

Harvest

Tomatoes should be left on the vine if possible to ripen. When they ripen in the sun they will have the most beneficial plant sugars and nutritional content. To pick tomatoes, gently grasp the fruit and gently twist to remove from the vine. They can also be cut off at the stalk with sharp cutters.

Preparation and Cooking

Tomatoes can be eaten raw in salads or as a snack. They can be cooked in soups, stews, casseroles, vegetable dishes, or fried, grilled and the list goes on. They are a very versatile vegetable.

Goodness in Brief

Tomatoes are higher in vitamin C and beneficial sugars when left on the vine to fully ripen. They are a good source of vitamin E, beta-carotene, magnesium, calcium and phosphorous. They contain the flavonoid Lycopene that is known to help prevent cancer, and is a powerful anti-oxidant. Cooked tomatoes deliver this in higher concentration.

Storage

Tomatoes can be kept in the fridge for up to two days, but are best harvested fresh to get the most goodness from them. Tomatoes can be frozen successfully for soups and casseroles.

Water Cress

This is an excellent vegetable to grow in containers close to your house, so you can pop outside and have frequent nibbles. Watercress is so loaded with goodness it should be a part of every body's diet. It is very easy to grow too.

Sow. Spring and Autumn, directly into the ground or in a growing tub.

Sow Depth. 5mm

Germination. 6 to 10 days

Spacing. 15cm between plants, 30cm between rows.

Maturity. You can begin cutting the tips after approx 30 days.

Soil. Watercress needs to have wet feet. Either grow in soil that has a high water table, or grow in large tubs with drainage holes about 5cm from the bottom to retain water in the lower part.

Watercress likes a good soil with plenty of organic matter and nutrients. Watercress also prefers the shade with little sunlight filtering through.

Size. Watercress plants can reach a size of 75cm wide.

Watercress in polystyrene tub



Maintenance and Care

Ensure the soil stays wet. If growing in a tub, ensure there is always water in the bottom part. Keep an eye out for the white cabbage butterfly, and rub the eggs off the leaves daily, or pick off the caterpillars.

Harvest

Harvest the tips of the plants; these are the tenderest parts. This will encourage the plant to produce side shoots and therefore more tips.

Preparation and Cooking

Watercress lends itself well to salads, sandwiches, soups and stews and the famous in New Zealand 'Boil Up'. A boil up is making a soup with bacon bones and watercress.

Goodness in Brief

Watercress is loaded with vitamins and minerals, including vitamins A, C, B, E, and calcium, iron and beneficial phytochemicals (plant chemicals that benefit our body). It is really good for people who are ill or recovering from an illness as it provides ready nutrients for the body to use for recovery. A little word of warning here, watercress has a laxative effect if you consume too much of it, so don't give to people with diarrhea. Good if someone needs a bit of help in that department though!!!

Zucchini (Courgettes)

Zucchini plants are great in the garden although they do take up a lot of room. They will produce a zucchini almost daily.

Sow. Spring, directly into the ground or in seed raising trays.

Sow Depth. 3cm

Germination. 5 to 10 days.

Spacing. Allow 1 meter between plants and rows.

Maturity. Varieties may differ, but harvest can begin at 55 days from sowing.

Soil. Zucchini are heavy feeders, so ensure the soil is rich in organic matter and fertilizer. They prefer full sun.

Size. One plant can reach 1 meter wide and up to 70cm tall. Some varieties creep along the ground, so allow plenty of room for this. Depending on how many Zucchini you want to grow, you may choose to remove the plant before it grows too big for your garden.

Zucchini – Coccozelle



Maintenance and Care

Zucchini benefit from a weekly application of liquid fertilizer; otherwise the plant requires little care. Water daily in hot, dry weather, and check the plant for pests.

Zucchini are susceptible to a powdery fungus, so insert a thin copper wire through the main stem, or into the soil close to the main stem. Copper is a great to prevent fungal diseases.

Harvest

Harvest your Zucchini when they are between 15 to 20cm long, depending on preference. If allowed to grow into a large marrow, they will drain the plant too much and you will get less fruit. To harvest, either cut with sharp snips, or gently break the zucchini off the plant at the stalk.

Preparation and Cooking

Zucchini can be slowly fried, added to soups, stews, and casseroles or used in vegetable dishes. They are a soft vegetable so require little cooking. Some people like them raw, sliced into salads or eaten as a lunchbox snack.

Goodness in Brief

Zucchini contains vitamin E, beta-carotene, and potassium, resulting in antioxidant properties and an aid for fluid retention.

Storage

Zucchini can be kept in the fridge for up to two days. They can also be chopped into small pieces and frozen for cooking in stews, curries or soups over the winter.



Chapter Eighteen Container Gardening for Limited Space.

Many of the vegetables listed previously can be grown successfully in containers. You don't need to spend a lot of money on containers. I use polystyrene tubs and pick these up from vegetable shops. They have the advantage of being deep enough to grow most vegetables, and the polystyrene is insulating which helps to retain the warmth of the sun. This enables you to get a longer season for your plants than growing in the ground, because the tub retains the sun's warmth in Spring and Autumn.

Unless you intend to weed your containers, I recommend you buy a good potting mix and use this to fill your container. Mix in a bit of organic fertilizer, and sow your seeds.

Depending on what you are growing, you may want to add some liquid fertilizer from time to time to give the plants a boost.

When your plant has matured, pull it out of the container, add a bit of compost, a tiny bit of lime and fertilizer and follow the principles of successive sowing mentioned in the chapter on Soil Health. Successive sowing is, leafy vegetables first, followed by plants bearing fruit above the ground, followed by root crops, followed by a crop that fix nitrogen in the soil.

You can grow a great deal in containers even in the smallest section. You have the advantage of being able to move your containers around depending on the season.

When you get started, begin with one or two, then add to your containers so the expense of buying containers and potting mix is spread out over a longer time.



Chapter Nineteen Garden Pests, the Gardeners Bane!

Anyone who has a garden has garden pests. These are insects or slugs and snails, who come along to munch on your vegetables and breed like rabbits to make more of them.

There are several natural options for preventing pests from causing a lot of damage to your plants.

Prevention

The saying goes that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, and in the garden this is true.

There are two main ways to prevent pests from coming into your garden and ravishing your plants. One way is to change the way your plants look, and the other is to change the way they smell.

Change the Way Your Plants Look

This is about using companion plants to confuse the way your plants appear so the flying pest doesn't recognize your plants are a food source.

We can do this by planting a short row of one crop, with another row of plants with a different appearance.

As an example, lets say we have a row of lettuces that is a meter long. Next to the lettuces we could have a short row of tomatoes. Next to the tomatoes we could have a row of spring onions, then another row of lettuces. So we have four rows of one meter each.

At the end of these short rows we could plant another three different types of vegetables, so that you end up with a patchwork of plants.

This type of planting lends itself very well to a year round harvest, as you are growing small amounts of crops often.

Patchwork Planting to confuse pests



Another way to disguise the appearance of your plants is to have some herbs in pots, which you can move around your garden to where they are needed the most. The benefit of using strong smelling herbs is so we can also change the way the plants smell. More on this in a bit.

The last way I will mention here to change the way your plants look is to use leaf and tip cuttings of herbs as mulch around your tender seedlings, but be careful they don't actually touch your seedlings. It is not uncommon for the white butterfly to lay her eggs on radish seedlings, but if there is a wall around them of leaf cuttings of tomatoes for example, the butterfly won't recognize your radishes as a food source.

Change the Way Your Plants Smell

This part is really fun. Many pests, like slugs and snails, find your precious vegetables by sniffing them out. There are several options you can use to change the smell of your tender wee plants.

*** Herbs in Pots**

If you have several strong smelling herbs in pots, you can move them around your garden to where you need them most. Having them in pots also means they don't take up too much of your limited growing space. Some useful herbs with strong aromas you can use include English Lavender, Coriander, Garlic, Lemongrass, Rosemary, Sacred Basil, Marjoram, Lemon Balm and Mint.

To get the most out of your herbal scent disguises, cut the tips of the herbs often, or rub the leaves in your hands to release the aroma. Garlic tips can be cut regularly and laid alongside your plants.

*** Herbal Mulch**

The herbs mentioned above are perfect for using as strong scented mulch around your tender plants. The aroma doesn't last long, so cut little bits often.

*** Tomato Leaf Mulch**

Another wonderful plant you can use as mulch, particularly for cabbage, broccoli and cauliflower plants is the tomato plant.

Have you ever seen a white butterfly lay her eggs on a tomato leaf? Probably not. Tomato leaves have a really strong odour and are not liked by the cabbage butterfly or the caterpillar. As tomato plants are inclined to produce lots of side shoots, you have an ongoing supply of strong scented leaves and shoots to lay around your tender seedlings.

*** Natural Insect Repellent Spray Recipe**

This recipe contains garlic, which is also useful to prevent fungal diseases and blight.

The following recipe will change the way your plants smell. This is particularly useful to use as a repellent to the nasty green vegetable bug, commonly known as the 'stink bug'. It will need to be applied at least every second day.

Be careful not to spray the flowers of your plants as you still want the bees to visit and they don't really like garlic!

Green Vegetable Bug



Recipe for Insect Repellent Spray

1 large handful tomato leaves

1 large handful of the leaves of any of the herbs mentioned previously under 'Herbs in Pots'. Choose only one or two, as you want a really strong odour of one sort or another.

4 cloves garlic

¼ cup dish wash liquid

Crush the garlic and add to a small saucepan. Add approx 1liter of boiling water. Turn the element on low so you keep the water hot, but not boiling, while you add the rest of the ingredients. Chop the tomato and herb leaves quite small so the scent can be quickly extracted from the leaves. Place the lid on the saucepan, turn off the heat and leave for 20 minutes.

Strain the liquid, allow to cool, and pour into a spray bottle. Any left over liquid can be frozen for another time. Add about ¼ cup dishwashing liquid, preferably an environmentally friendly one. Turn bottle upside down a few times to mix the dish wash liquid through.

Spray on your vulnerable plants, preferably after watering.

If you have essential oils of the above herbs, you can use 20 drops instead of, or as well as the herbs. Add while your liquid is still hot, but keep covered or the essence will disappear by evaporation.

Next, we will look at ways to get rid of pests...

The Cure

There are several ways to get rid of your garden pests naturally. I encourage you to try these before you resort to chemicals.

*** Make the Most of Your Army**

You already have an army in your garden killing and eating garden pests. Wasps, although they deliver a nasty sting and are not liked by humans, are a very valuable insect to encourage in the garden. I have a good relationship with wasps. I move about gently and slowly, giving them plenty of time to get out of my way. In fact, (and this is a great secret so don't tell anyone... which is why I'm whispering now) I talk to the wasps. I do, I warn them I am going to pick that lettuce leaf they are sitting on, and they'd better get out of the way. Humour aside, when they see my hand coming towards them they usually get out of the way.

I'll tell you an amazing story that really cemented my friendship with wasps. One day I was sitting on a stool in my garden, just enjoying looking at all my happy plants, when I saw a cabbage butterfly come in and start exploring my plants. All of a sudden I saw a wasp zoom in on the butterfly. It grabbed it in mid air, held onto it for a second, and then dropped the butterfly. The butterfly sank to the ground, very dead indeed. I picked it up and looked at it. The body was hollow. The wasp had sucked out its juices mid air. After that, my view about wasps had developed from dislike to gratitude.

To encourage wasps to your garden is not difficult, but there are plants you can use to attract them. Wasps really like flowers of the umbelliferae family. They visit to drink the nectar. Dill, Coriander, Parsley, Carrots, Fennel and Celery flowers all belong to this family. Again, you can have them in large pots and move them to where you are having a problem with pest insects.

Parsley flower for the wasps



Wasps are also about the only insect I know of who eat the green vegetable (stink) bug, and since these bugs love ripening tomatoes and beans, place your potted flowering umbelliferae plants near these vegetables.

The Praying Mantis is another wonderful part of your army. Transfer any that you find anywhere around your property to your vegetable garden. They are voracious eaters of pests, and I don't think you can have too many. If they run out of food, they will simply fly off to find some elsewhere.

Praying Mantis Mums drop their eggs in a sort of parcel that looks rectangular in shape and very neat. They do this towards the end of summer, and you can encourage them to build their nests in your garden by providing wooden supports or shelters around your garden edge. They prefer their nests to be sheltered from wind and rain.

Ladybugs eat aphids, and you can see in the picture, a group of ladybugs who came to eat the aphids that infested this sweetcorn plant. Ladybugs only eat aphids, and the aphids never made it off this plant to infect others.

The Cavalry



Spiders are valuable in the garden too, and there are many, many varieties that will come into your garden to snack on pests.

* Hand Removal

Another effective way to manage pests is to remove them by hand. Buy some of those cheap plastic gloves, and wander around your plants, picking off your

larger pests and squish them between your fingers. Drop the bodies beside your plants. This is a good method for managing the Green Vegetable Bug, as the odour released from death will warn others that your plants are dangerous.

*** Natural Insecticide.**

There is a time and place for using natural insecticides. It is better not to have to use one, because of the beneficial insects you may inadvertently kill, but when you have a serious problem that is not being handled by your army of predators, it is better to spray than lose your crops that you have spent so much time and effort to raise.

Spray in the evening when the pollinators have gone to bed. Bees come out in the morning with the sun, and are usually gone from your garden after the sun goes down. Watch them in your garden and take note of their daily routine.

When you spray your pests, try to spray the pests themselves, so you get a direct kill and have less risk of killing your predators.

Pyrethrum is the most well known insecticide. It acts on the nervous system of insects, gradually killing them. It is the flowers of pyrethrum that have the pyrethrins, that kill insects, and the newly opened flowers have the highest concentration. Have some growing in your garden. They make a good border plant for your garden.

Gather your pyrethrum flowers when they open, and spread them out in an airy place where they can dry. The airing cupboard is a great place to dry flowers and herbs. Just lay them out on a pottery or china plate, and leave them there as you gather your flowers each day. When you have a good handful of flowers, put them in a glass jar, pour enough boiling water over them until it just covers the flowers. Cover and leave to steep for 20 minutes. Strain the liquid and squeeze the flowers to extract as much of the pyrethrins as possible. Add about ¼ cup dish wash liquid, mix and cool. Spray on your pests in the evening.

Another natural insecticide is the rhubarb plant, the leaves in particular. You can use these in your natural spray the same way as pyrethrum. Have a Rhubarb plant in your garden, and you have a ready supply of leaves. It is user-friendlier than pyrethrum, which only flowers once or twice a year, and takes time to get enough flowers to make a spray.

Lets take a look at methods you can use to control slugs and snails.

***Wood Ash**

If you have a fireplace, collect the cold ashes and place a layer around the outside of your garden. Make sure they don't touch the soil you are growing in, and if your garden slopes, do not place uphill of your garden. This is because ashes are very acidic and will harm your plants if rain or watering

washes the ash into your garden. It is the acidity of the ash that kills the slugs and snails. This method is perfect to stop slugs and snails getting into your garden in the first place, as they will die as they glide over the ash.

If you want to use this method and don't have a fireplace, ask someone in your neighbourhood if you can have theirs cold ashes. Most people are happy to give it away as it is difficult to dispose of.

*Stale Beer

This method is an interesting way of dealing with slugs and snails. First, get a small pack of cheap beer. Make sure you explain to any beer drinkers in your household that it is YOUR beer not theirs! Open one bottle and leave it out for two days to age and get smelly and stale.

Then get a couple of saucers or small plates, and place these near your plants. Pour beer into the saucers. Snails and slugs like stale beer, and pretty soon you will have them gliding into it to have a good guzzle. What happens is they will get drunk and drown in the beer! Actually, they just drown.

Move the saucers out of the way when you water so you don't dilute the beer, and after a rain, add more beer.

Non Organic Methods of Slug and Snail Control

* Slug Pellets

You can buy slug pellets that are tastier to the slugs and snails than your wee seedlings. The common way to use them is to sprinkle them lightly around your seeds and seedlings, so the slugs will go for the bait instead of your plants. Unfortunately, the poison does leech into your soil, so this is not a great way to use slug pellets.

Another way that is more safe is the 'Snail Trap'. See the image below.



Use an empty margarine or butter container, or even an ice cream tub. Cut a doorway big enough for a huge snail to go through on the ends of the container. Holding it upright, cut down into the ends of the container to make a little flap, then cut off the flap. Turn the container upside down, and poke a hole in the middle of its base. Do the same with the lid. Fit the lid on your pot, find a stick that will poke down through the holes and into the soil, and you have a snail trap. It will look something like the one in the image. As you can see, the pot sits on its lid.

Put some slug bait inside the pot, and place it near your seedlings and plants that require protection. Poke a stick through the holes to keep it in place. This will provide a waterproof house for the snails to go into, and they will eat the bait and die. Empty the trap often to get rid of the bodies. You will need a few traps placed strategically around your garden.

There are many innovative methods for dealing with slugs and snails, and it is a good conversation opener at work or among your friends.

Sage



Chapter Twenty Plant Diseases

I am not going to go into diseases very much here, as it would take another book to tell you about them all. I will discuss the most common problems and that is fungal disease and Blight.

Blight appears as little yellow and black spots on the leaves of your plants, particularly tomatoes and potatoes.

Fungal diseases often appear as white powder on leaves, as does 'powdery mildew' or the leaves get curly and wrinkly. Also you may find that your emerging pumpkins and cucumbers turn yellow or brown and fall off.

Usually fungal diseases and blight occur when warm damp air sits around your plants, usually affecting the lower parts of the plants most. Prevention is the best thing to do.

Healthy plants are not as prone to diseases as unhealthy plants. Remove plants that are looking spindly, or have the appearance of really unhealthy leaves on most of the plant.

Use a seaweed liquid fertilizer on your soil and plants. Seaweed has many enzymes that promote healthy soil and consequently healthy plants.

Trim off foliage at the base of your plant when it has reached a size that it will not harm the plant, so the air can circulate around the plants base. This is especially important for tomatoes.

Avoid touching the plants with your hands, and especially do not touch a healthy plant with hands or tools that have been in contact with a diseased one. Wash your hands before harvesting your vegetables, and wash your clippers if you use these to cut the vegetables off your plants.

Copper Wire

Copper wire is an excellent way to prevent blight and fungal diseases, as copper is the element commonly used in commercial fungicides. You need the very fine wire that is used in electrical wiring. You can either contact an electrician who wires houses or ask him to collect the off cuts for you, or go and buy a short length of electrical wire from a hardware store. Strip off the plastic coating, revealing the narrow copper wires inside.

Poke the copper wire through the stem of tomatoes, capsicums, cucumbers and pumpkin plants, about 4 inches above the ground. The plant will absorb the copper slowly, increasing its defense against fungal disease.

Herbal Fungicides

Garlic, ti-tree, Elecampane and Burdock root are all powerful anti-fungal herbs. Use the leaves of Ti-tree, and the roots of the other herbs. You can use one alone or in combination with the others.

To extract the anti-fungal properties from the roots of Elecampane and Burdock, slice a fresh root into about 4mm slices and use fresh. You can use dried root as well. (to dry roots, slice them about 3mm thick and spread out on greaseproof paper on an oven tray, turn the oven onto fan bake at about 50 degrees Celsius, and dry over two days or so. Try to break one in half, it should either snap, or be too hard to bend)

To make the anti-fungal spray, heat about 500ml water in a stainless steel saucepan, and drop a good handful of the roots into the pot. Simmer for 20 minutes. Cool, strain, add ¼ cup dish wash detergent and use the liquid to spray onto your plants.

You can spray your plants on humid days, and when the sun comes out after a rain. Having said that, it is not something you need to get anxious about. I have often left my plants to fend for themselves in these conditions and they do quite well on their own. However, if you see blight appearing on the leaves of your plants, spray them before it spreads.

If you are using Garlic, use a garlic crusher to add about 6 large cloves of garlic to 500ml boiling water. If you prefer, slice through the whole garlic bulb into very thin slices. Turn off the heat and leave to steep for 20 minutes, then cool and strain.

If you are using Ti-tree leaves, strip them off the branches and drop a good handful into 500mls of boiling water. Turn off the heat and leave to steep for 20 minutes.

Freeze your excess anti-fungal mixture in cubes or blocks, so you have them for when you need them.

Recipes



Chapter Twenty-One Dips and Starters

Crunchy Vegetables and Yoghurt Dip

While this recipe is to serve the vegetables with a yoghurt dip, you can also use guacamole, sour cream, or any dip of your choice for a fun and healthy starter.

To serve 4 people

1 large stalk celery

1 medium mild onion

1 large carrot

¼ large cucumber

Other vegetables, e.g. cauliflower, broccoli, mushrooms

1-cup plain yoghurt

1 clove garlic

½ tsp cumin

pinch Cayenne pepper or a fresh

chillie

Make the dip an hour before you need it. Crush the garlic and mix into the yoghurt. Add the cumin and cayenne pepper and mix well. If you are using a fresh chillie, chop it finely and add instead of Cayenne. Cover and refrigerate for an hour.

Vegetables

Slice the celery into narrow sticks, peel and slice the carrot into sticks.

Peel and chop the onion into quarters, then break the layers apart.

Slice the cucumber into thick slices. Chop any other vegetables into dipping size pieces. Arrange on a serving platter with the dip, and serve.

Guacamole

1 ripe avocado

¼ to ½ c milk, or cream

1 small onion

2 cloves garlic crushed

Cayenne Pepper or fresh chillies according to preference

Mash the avocado with a fork, add garlic, milk or cream, cayenne pepper and mix together.

Finely chop the onion and stir into the mix.

Refrigerate for 10 minutes to set before serving.

Serve with tacos, nachos or as a dip with corn chips or dipping vegetables.

Pita bread with Avocado Spread

To serve 4 as a starter

1 avocado	1-clove garlic
1 pinch cayenne pepper or 1 fresh chillie	1 Tbsp fresh lemon juice
1 tsp sugar	1 small mild onion
3 large pita breads	3 Tbsp light cold-pressed oil
Finely grated Parmesan cheese.	1 medium tomato

Cut the pita bread apart so you have two large circles. Cut these again into six triangles. Brush lightly with oil and sprinkle with Parmesan cheese.

Bake slowly at approx 100 degrees, so the bread becomes crisp. Remove and cool.

Scoop out the avocado and mash with a fork.

Add crushed garlic, lemon juice, sugar and cayenne pepper or finely chopped chillie.

Peel and finely chop the onion, add and mix all together.

Finely chop the tomato and mix into the dip gently.

Spread the avocado mix onto the pita triangles and serve immediately.

Salsa

4 ripe tomatoes	1 onion
1 clove garlic, crushed	1 bunch coriander

Chillies – fresh or dried (according to taste) or dried chillie powder.

Peel the tomatoes. Do this by dropping them into boiling water for 30 seconds, and then plunge them into cool water. The skin should easily lift off. Chop the tomatoes, removing the hard green stalk and put into a food processor.

Crush the garlic and add. Chop the coriander roughly and add.

Slice fresh chillies and add.

Blend for a minute or so until the mixture is well chopped.

Pour into serving bowl.

Dice the onions and stir into the mix.

Refrigerate for 10 minutes before serving.

Serve with corn chips, or vegetable pieces for dipping.

Salsa



Chapter Twenty-Two Bread

Flat Bread

This is a great recipe for using alternative flour instead of the traditional white. It is an easy bread to make and you don't have to be great baker to make it. You can add soaked grains to the mix and invent your own preferred healthy style of flat bread. I recommend you try the recipe first to get the hang of it, then experiment to your hearts desire.

3 cups flour. You can use whole meal, white, ground cornmeal, rice flour, or other flour of choice.

2 tsp baking powder

1 pinch salt

2 tsp cold pressed oil -olive, rice bran, avocado or other.

1 c milk

Herbs and Seasonings

Mix the dry ingredients together. Add the oil and rub into the flour between your fingers, until the mixture looks like fine breadcrumbs. Add the milk and mix to a dough.

Divide the mix into approx 12 balls and roll out on a floured surface.

Heat a skillet or cast iron fry pan on medium heat. Add a little oil to prevent sticking.

Cook the bread on the skillet, turning after one side is golden brown. You may need to press them flat with a spatula to keep the cooking even. They need 1 to 2 minutes each side.

Stack the cooked bread on a plate, and cover with a clean tea towel to keep them warm and/or prevent them drying out.

Serve immediately.

Flat bread can be frozen when cool and is delicious toasted.

Variations.

You can add all sorts to make your flat bread more interesting. Try adding: -

A finely chopped onion

Crushed garlic

½c finely chopped herbs

Parmesan cheese

Onion or garlic salt

Spices, like ground cumin, tumeric,

curry

Whole grain spices soaked in water to soften first, like fennel, caraway, dill, fenugreek or whatever you like.

Serve with soup, stew, hummus, dips, or with melted butter. Flat bread is a versatile addition to any meal. Flat bread makes an ideal base for mini pizzas.

They can also be served as a nourishing lunch with toppings of your choice. You could include, Camembert cheese, sliced pickled onions, celery, olives, tomato, humus, guacamole, sliced onion, spring onions, sliced capsicum, sliced mild chillies, and alfalfa sprouts. Just let your imagination run wild.

Flat Bread with mix of white, wholemeal flour and ground cornmeal



Flat Bread with Camembert cheese, olives, capsicums, celery, tomato & pickles



Pita Bread

1½ tsp dried yeast
1 cup warm water
2 cups wholemeal flour

2 tsp sugar
1 Tbsp cold pressed oil
1 to 2 cups white flour

Mix the sugar, yeast and water together, and leave in a warm place until it is frothy on top.

Mix in the oil, and then add the wholemeal flour. Mix well. Add 1 to 2 cups of white flour, until you have dough that is firm enough to knead, not sticky or too dry.

Knead on a floured surface until the dough is smooth and pushes back when you poke it.

Place into a plastic bag that has been coated with oil, and leave in a warm place until it has risen to about 1½ times its original size.

While the dough is rising, place a cast iron saucepan in the oven on the lowest rack. This will help to hold heat in the oven. Place your baking sheet on a rack in the middle of the oven. A skillet is excellent to use because it will store heat.

Heat the oven to its highest temperature.

Add some flour to your table, break off a small handful of dough, lightly coat it with flour and roll out on a floured surface until it is a flat disk, about ½ cm thick.

When the oven is hot, place in the middle of the baking tray, shut the door and be prepared for some fun!

The dough will begin to form large bubbles, and then will rise to a ball shape. Allow to cook for about 1 minute after it has formed a ball. This should all take about 2 to 3 minutes.

Using a metal spatula, remove the pita from the oven and put onto a plate that is lined with a towel. Fold the towel over the top of the bread to keep in the moisture.

Repeat the above steps until all the dough is cooked. While one is cooking you should have time to roll out the next one.

You can serve the pita bread fresh, or allow to cool and freeze in plastic bags.

It is good idea to make two batches of pita bread, as they are delicious and likely to disappear quickly. It saves electricity to make more than one batch at a time.

Pita bread makes a nice companion to soups.

Pita Bread Toasted with Seasoning.

1 pita bread person Cold pressed oil
1 clove garlic/onion salt/parmesan cheese

Prick the pita bread with a knife to allow air between the layers.

Lightly brush with the oil, then spread crushed garlic, Parmesan cheese or onion salt over the top.

Heat under a grill on medium until the oil starts to bubble and the bread is cooked.

Slice into triangles, and serve with avocado spread, guacamole, or a spread of your choice.

Chapter Twenty-Three Soups

Capsicum Clear Light Soup

This is great as a luncheon soup, or a nourishing starter.

To serve 4.

6 medium size button mushrooms or 1 can button mushrooms	
1 red capsicum	1 cup mung bean sprouts
10 sprigs coriander	1 small carrot
2 small chillies (optional)	2 tsp light soy sauce
2 tsp sugar or 2 stevia leaves sliced thinly	
3 cups vegetable stock	
3 cups water	2 spinach leaves

Heat liquids in a large saucepan, including light soy sauce.

Cut capsicum and carrot into thin strips/julienne, of a size to fit on a soup spoon. Add to the liquids.

Slice chillies thinly and add at this stage if you are using them.

Cut coriander finely and add. Slice spinach into short thin strips and add.

Wash and cut the mung bean sprouts to approximately one third their length and add.

Add sugar or Stevia leaves.

Bring to the boil and simmer for approx 5 minutes until cooked through.

Serve on a bed of egg noodles or alone with a bread of your choice.

Capsicum Clear Light Soup



Curried Zucchini and Egg Noodle Soup

This is a great warming soup for Autumn and Winter, and is a meal in a bowl. You can use frozen zucchini in this recipe.

To serve 4

2 small or 1 medium zucchini

1 small onion
block)

2 cups vegetable stock

1 tsp ground cumin

½ tsp ground ginger

2 cups mung Bean Sprouts

Salt and Pepper to taste.

2 cloves garlic

1 packet egg noodles (1

2 – 3 cups water

2 tsp tumeric powder

1 tsp paprika

1 Tbsp cold pressed oil

Slice the onion into thin strips.

Heat the oil in a large saucepan on medium heat, add the onion and crushed garlic. Turn down the heat, cover and cook slowly. Stir to prevent burning.

Slice the zucchini into strips approx 2cm in length and under 1cm thick. Add to the saucepan and stir. If you are using frozen zucchini, add to the pan now. Add the spices and allow to heat through bringing out the aroma and setting the flavour.

Add stock and water. Bring to the boil and simmer for 10 minutes or so, until the zucchini is soft.

Wash and add the mung beans, add egg noodles, and simmer for a further 5 minutes.

Adjust seasonings and serve with your choice of bread.

Curried Zucchini and Egg Noodle Soup



Gazpachos

This is a super delicious cold soup for Summer. It is refreshing, crunchy and full of nutrients and vitamins. The soup needs marinating in the fridge for at least a day, and will keep well for 3 days. The recipe makes enough for four people to enjoy at least two meals.

750g fresh tomatoes	1 large onion
1 cup medium white wine	2 cups vegetable stock
½ cup fresh oregano leaves	1 small cucumber
1 tsp ground cumin	3 cups tomato juice
3 Tbsp lemon juice	2 Tbsp wine vinegar
½ tsp crushed garlic (approx)	1 tsp Salt
½ tsp ground black pepper	2 Tbsp cold pressed olive oil
1 Avocado (optional)	1 slice of watermelon (optional)

Heat the vegetable stock in a large saucepan. Add the oregano leaves. Chop half the tomatoes (375g) into quarters and add to the pot. Add wine. Bring to the boil, and then simmer for 20 minutes or so until the tomatoes are fully soft.

Add tomato juice to a large container with a lid. Make sure you can fit it in your fridge.

Peel the remaining tomatoes by dropping them into boiling water for 30 seconds. Drop into cold water to cool. The skin should lift off. Prick the skin to get started if they have not already split. Chop into small cubes (approx ½ to 1 cm square) Add to the tomato juice.

Peel the cucumber and onion, chop into fine cubes, and add to the container. Add the cumin, crushed garlic, lemon juice, wine vinegar, salt and pepper. Cut the avocado into small cubes and add.

Remove the seeds from the watermelon and chop into fine cubes and add. When your cooked tomatoes are ready, pour through a sieve into the mix. Use a spoon to press the tomatoes through the sieve, until you are left with only the skins and seeds. Scrape the spoon on the underside to remove all of the pulp.

Stir the soup and add the olive oil last.

Refrigerate for at least 24 hours to allow the flavours to marinate.

Serve chilled.

Pumpkin Soup

To serve 4

Approx 1½ kg pumpkin

1 large stalk celery

1 large onion

2 cloves garlic

3 cups vegetable stock

100ml cream or 150ml milk

1 large carrot

1 leek (optional)

1 Tbsp cold pressed oil or butter

1 tsp garam masala

2 cups additional water if required

Remove skin from the Pumpkin and chop into 2cm cubes.

Finely chop the onion, and add to a large saucepan with the oil. Cook slowly with the lid on until softened. Add crushed garlic and cook for a further minute.

While the onion is cooking, finely slice the carrot and leek.

Slice the celery lengthwise, and peel off the tough fibres with a vegetable peeler, and cut into cubes.

Add the stock to the pan, add all the vegetables and garam masala. Add extra water if necessary so the veges are just covered with liquids.

Bring to the boil and simmer for 20 minutes or so, until the vegetables are cooked and tender.

Blend in a food processor until smooth and return to the saucepan. Reheat gently.

Add cream or milk and mix in gently, allowing soup to reheat. Do not boil.

Serve with a bread of your choice.

Pumpkin Soup with Flat Bread



Thai Beef Soup (Serves 4)

This soup is a meal in a bowl, providing protein, carbohydrate and nutritious vegetables.

250g wiener snitzel or good steak	½ cup Soy Sauce or tamari
2 Tbsp Teriyaki sauce	4 large cloves Garlic crushed
1 large bunch Coriander	4 cups beef stock
2 cups water	
5 to 10 small Chillies (according to heat tolerance)	
3 Tbsp brown sugar (or 5 to 10 Stevia leaves)	
20 button mushrooms or 1 can of button mushrooms	
1 cup sweet corn kernels, fresh, frozen or tinned	
Six large Spring Onions	

Marinade

Slice the beef into spoon size strips, marinate in the garlic, chillies, brown sugar, soy and teriyaki sauce for a minimum of two hours. It is ok to prepare the meat the night before and leave in the refrigerator until the next day. If you are using stevia leaves, slice these thinly and add to the marinade.

To prepare the soup, heat the stock and water, and keep this heating while you do the following steps. You need the soup to keep as near boiling as possible.

Cut the button mushrooms into approx 1cm cubes. Add to the soup.

Add the marinated beef with the marinade.

Cut the Coriander finely and add.

Slice Spring Onions into ½ cm thick slices and add.

Add sweet corn kernels.

Allow the soup to simmer for 5 minutes. Taste. If it is too salty, add a little more brown sugar or sliced stevia. If it is too sweet, add a little more soy sauce, until you are satisfied it is 'just right'.

Serve with a bread of your choice.

Thai Mushroom and Coriander Soup

To serve 4.

¼ cup soy sauce	3 cups vegetable stock
3 cups water	3 cloves garlic
2 small chillies (optional)	1 bunch coriander
3 Tbsp brown sugar or 5 to 10 Stevia leaves	
10 medium button mushrooms or 1 can of button mushrooms	
6 large Spring Onions	1 medium size stalk celery
1 packet egg noodles (or 1 block)	

Heat liquids in a large saucepan, including soy sauce.

Crush the garlic and add to the liquids. Slice the chillies thinly and add.

Slice celery stalk lengthwise, and remove tough outer fibers with a vegetable peeler, and slice thinly. Add to the soup.

Cut the mushrooms into approx 1cm cubes and add. Slice spring onions thinly and add.

Chop coriander finely and add. Add sugar or thinly sliced Stevia.

Add egg noodles once the soup is boiling, and simmer for 5 minutes until noodles cooked through. Adjust flavour, if too salty, add a little more sweetener, or if too sweet, add a little more soy sauce.

Serve.

Thai Mushroom and Coriander Soup



Tomato Soup

serves 4

2 onions finely chopped

10 medium tomatoes

2 c vegetable stock

2 cloves Garlic

1 Tbsp cold pressed oil

3 Tbsp finely chopped herbs of your choice, like Parsley, Thyme, Oregano, Sage, Mint, Basil.

2 tsp Semolina (optional addition for extra nutrition and protein)

Pour oil into a large saucepan, add onion and garlic, cover and cook slowly for 10 minutes, stirring often to prevent burning.

While the onion is cooking, peel and chop the tomatoes. (To peel, drop them into boiling water for 30 seconds, remove and prick the skins. The skin should lift off easily.)

Add the tomatoes, stock and herbs to the pan. (Except for Parsley and Mint)

At this stage gently sprinkle the semolina over the soup and stir until boiling.

Simmer for 20 to 30 minutes, until the tomatoes are well pulped.

Add the Mint and Parsley and cook for a further 5 minutes.

Carefully ladle the soup into a blender and puree. If you don't have a blender, push the soup through a sieve with the back of spoon. Return to the stove and reheat.

Serve with bread or crackers of your choice.

Tomato Soup

Chapter Twenty-Four Salads

Avocado Salad with Lemon Dressing

This is a delicious recipe. Avocados provide a lot of vitamins, minerals and nutrients.

To serve 4

1 ripe avocado

Juice of 1 lemon

½ lettuce or several large loose leaves 1 Tomato

2 tsp sugar or 2 Stevia leaves finely chopped

Salad vegetables of your choice, e.g. Spring Onions, Cucumber, Radishes, Onions, Raw Mushrooms etc

Pinch Salt, Fresh ground Black Pepper

Prepare the Dressing first.

Add the freshly squeezed lemon juice to a jar with a tight fitting lid. Add the sugar or stevia, salt and pepper. Shake well and set aside for the flavours to blend.

Wash and dry the lettuce leaves. Add to a salad bowl.

Cut your other salad vegetables and layer on top of the lettuce.

Cut the avocado in half, remove the seed and slice the avocado into thin strips, being careful not to cut through the skin. Cut again, across your slices.

Using a large spoon, scoop out the avocado and add to the salad.

Using a large spoon, add the dressing to the salad, spooning it over the avocado pieces to prevent browning.

Serve immediately.

Bean Salad

A very nutritious salad, packed with protein to serve with other salad vegetables as a meal in itself, or as a side salad. Will keep in the fridge for several days, so it is worth making a big batch.

1 cup cooked chick peas

1 cup cooked beans e.g. red kidney beans, lima beans, soybeans, black-eyed beans

1 cup runner beans or purple beans, yellow beans. A mix of these is nice

1 sweet capsicum

1 medium onion

1 sprig Parsley and/or Coriander

2 Tbsp honey

1/2 cup wine vinegar

¼ cup cold pressed Rice Bran oil

2 Tbsp honey

1 tsp salt

½ tsp ground black pepper

2 Tbsp raw sugar, or 3 Stevia leaves

In a small saucepan, heat together the vinegar, oil, sugar or Stevia leaves, salt and honey. Bring to the boil and simmer uncovered for 15 minutes. Allow to cool a bit. Remove the Stevia leaves.

Put the cooked beans into a bowl that has a tight fitting lid.

Prepare your runner beans, peel off tough fibres if necessary, and slice into approx 1cm lengths. Drop into boiling water and cook until just tender. Strain and plunge into cold water to prevent further cooking. Add to the other beans. Finely chop the onion, capsicum and herbs and add to the beans.

Sprinkle the ground black pepper evenly over the veges. Mix all together gently.

Pour the dressing over the salad, fit the lid on the container and allow to cool. When cool, place in the fridge and allow to marinate all day or overnight. Tip upside down often to mix the dressing through the salad.

You can double the dressing quantities if you like a really wet bean salad.

Capsicum and Camembert Salad

This recipe is a divinely delicious symphony for the taste buds. It is ideal to prepare late summer when the capsicums and tomatoes are ripening nicely.

To Serve 2 for a meal or 4 as a side dish.

1 Red Capsicum	1 Yellow Capsicum
3 cloves Garlic	
1 mild sweet chillie. Optional, but a Hungarian Yellow Wax, or Anaheim is great for this recipe	
1 medium onion	2 medium tomatoes
1 Camembert cheese	1 Tbsp brown sugar
½ lettuce or equivalent of loose leaves	2 Tbsp cold pressed Olive oil
1 tsp lemon juice or white vinegar	10 to 20 Olives (optional)
1 tsp ground Paprika	

Prepare the Salad base first.

Break the lettuce leaves into small pieces and spread over serving plates. Cut the Camembert cheese into segments, then in half again and spread over the lettuce.

Slice capsicums across the fruit so you have rings about 5mm thick. Remove flesh and cut the rings into 3 or 4 so they are short lengths. Cut the mild chillie the same way. Mix the capsicums and chillies together. Spread half of the capsicums over the salad plates. Set aside the rest for cooking.

Skin the tomatoes by dropping them into boiling water for 30 seconds. Plunge into cold water straight away to cool. The skin should come away easily. Cut one tomato in half, and cut this half into cube-ish shapes and spread evenly over the salad plates.

Cut the rest of the tomatoes into same shapes, and set aside for cooking.

Cut the onion in half, then quarters. Dice one quarter very small, and sprinkle over the salads. With the remainder of the onion, slice across the quarters, so you have six pieces remaining. Separate the layers and put these with the capsicums for cooking.

If you are using Olives, slice these now and set aside for later.

Heat 1 Tbsp of Olive oil in a saucepan on medium heat, and remove from heat when hot. Crush the garlic and add to the oil for a light toasting. Add the tomatoes and return to the element. Stir to prevent burning and cook until the tomatoes begin to break up. Add vinegar and brown sugar, stir until dissolved and cook for a further 2 minutes, stirring to prevent burning. Remove from heat and put the pulp into a cup for later.

Clean the pot and return to the stove and turn your element to high. Add the remaining 1Tbsp oil to the pan, add the remaining capsicums and onions and sear them quickly. Keep them moving to prevent burning, but not too fast or you will lose too much heat. Keep cooking until they are lightly toasted and beginning to soften.

Spread the capsicum and onion over the salads, and using a large spoon, gently drizzle the tomato pulp over the top.

Spread the sliced Olives over the top and you are done.
Bon Appetite!!!!

Capsicum and Camembert Salad



Coleslaw

A yummy recipe for adding a sweet and sour bite to your meals.

½ small Cabbage	1 large stalk Celery
1 green or red Capsicum	1 medium Onion
3 Tbsp sugar or 3 large Stevia leaves	½ tsp salt
1 Tbsp honey	½ cup White Vinegar

Boil together the vinegar, sugar/stevia, honey, salt and salad oil. Cook uncovered for at least 15 minutes.

Shred the cabbage finely and add to a container with a tight fitting lid.

Finely chop the capsicum, onion and celery. Add to the cabbage.

When the dressing is ready, remove the stevia leaves and pour over the vegetables while still hot. Fit the lid on the container and allow to cool.

Refrigerate overnight and turn upside down often to mix the dressing through the vegetables.

Cucumber and Yoghurt Raita

This is a nice salad to add to stuffed pita pockets, or to add as a side dish to curries.

1 small cucumber or ½ large	1 cup yoghurt
½ tsp Cumin	1 large clove garlic crushed

Chop the cucumber into cubes, discarding the seedy bits if you prefer.

Put into a bowl with a tight fitting lid. Add the cumin and garlic and mix through the cucumber.

Add the yoghurt, adding a little extra if needed to coat the cucumber well.

Mix well, cover and refrigerate at least 1 hour before serving.

Parsley and Sunflower Seed Salad with Chicken

The high nutritional value of Parsley makes this a great salad for anyone recovering from an illness, or as a tonic when energy is low. The meat can be left out for a delicious vegetarian salad. Just skip the meat part.

To Serve 4

½ cup Sunflower seeds

4 tsp cold pressed oil

¼ tsp Paprika

Approx 200g Chicken breast

2 Tbsp Plum or red berry jam

2 Tomatoes

Other salad veges, e.g. Mild Onions, Spring Onions, Radishes, and Celery.

½ cup chopped Parsley leaves

½ tsp crushed Garlic

pinch Cayenne pepper

8 to 10 large lettuce leaves

2 Tbsp Sweet Chillie Sauce

1 Tbsp brown sugar

Prepare the Salad

Break lettuce leaves, slice tomatoes and add other salad vegetables to a serving bowl.

Heat the 2 tsp oil in a frying pan on low heat. Add the sunflower seeds and roast slowly, stirring often to prevent burning. When cooked, sprinkle brown sugar over them and allow to heat through. Remove from heat and sprinkle over the salad.

Sprinkle chopped parsley over the salad.

Heat jam and sweet chillie sauce with 2 Tbsp water. Keep warm.

Prepare the Meat

Slice the chicken into strips approx 1cm thick, cutting across the grain, and place in a bowl. Stir the garlic, paprika and cayenne pepper into the chicken.

Heat 2 tsp oil in the frying pan on medium high heat. Add chicken and cook quickly, stirring to prevent burning. Spread quickly over the salad.

Add the dressing and serve immediately.

Parsley and Sunflower Seed Salad, no meat



Thai Salad

This is a refreshing salad for the Summer, or as a side dish for any meal. The coriander provides a refreshing cleanser to the palette.

To Serve 4

½ lettuce or several large loose leaves	1 large tomato
1 large stalk Celery	½ cup Sunflower seeds
¼ cup Pumpkin seeds	1 medium mild onion
1 small bunch Coriander	8 Radishes
4 Button Mushrooms (optional)	1 Orange
1 Tbsp fish sauce	1 clove Garlic

4 leaves Mint
enjoy

Any other salad vegetables you

2 tsp sugar or two leaves Stevia (optional)

Make the dressing first.

Squeeze the orange to extract juice and pour into a jar with a tight fitting lid. Crush the garlic and add. Finely chop the coriander and mint and add to the dressing. Add fish sauce. If you like a bit of sweetening to the dressing, add the sugar or Stevia. Shake well and refrigerate for at least 15 minutes.

Salad Vegetables

Wash and dry lettuce, break into small pieces and add to a salad bowl.

Chop the tomato into small cubes and add.

Slice the radishes, mushrooms, celery and onion and add to the salad. Chop any other salad vegetables into the salad.

Seeds

Heat a cast iron or non-stick fry pan on medium low heat. Add the seeds and allow toasting, stirring often to prevent burning. Remove from heat and sprinkle over the salad.

Add the dressing just prior to serving and enjoy!



Tomato, Cucumber & Onion Salad

This recipe is made with Stevia the healthy sweetener. You can substitute 2 tsp sugar if you have no Stevia. It is an ideal dish to have on the side of a meal as a healthy and refreshing addition.

To Serve 4.

1 large Tomato	1 medium Onion, preferably mild
¼ Cucumber	Juice of 1 lemon
3 medium sized Stevia leaves or 3tsp sugar	
1 Chillie (optional)	
2 stalks Coriander	

Dressing

Slice Stevia leaves finely and add to lemon juice in a cup. If using sugar, add this now, and stir until sugar dissolved. Set aside for flavours to blend while preparing the salad.

Peel and slice cucumber. Cut tomato in half, and then slice thinly. Peel and slice onion thinly. Layer these in a container with a lid. If using a chillie, slice it very finely and add.

Pour dressing over the veges, cover and place in the fridge for a minimum of 15 minutes, preferably an hour for the flavours to blend. Turn a few times to ensure the dressing reaches all the veges.

Divide into small bowls and serve with your meal.

Tomato, Cucumber and Onion Salad



Chapter Twenty-Five - Vegetarian & Vegetables

Beans with Tomato and Basil

This is a wonderful recipe for those Summer days when beans are plentiful. Vary the quantities as to whether you are serving them as part of meal or as a whole meal in itself.

Approx 30 long beans
¼ cup basil leaves

3 tomatoes

Peel the tough fibres off the beans if necessary. Slice into 2 cm lengths. Peel the tomatoes by dropping into boiling water for 30 seconds. Prick the skin to get started if it hasn't split already. The skin should lift off easily. Chop tomatoes into approx 2cm cubes. Drop the beans into boiling water. Cover and simmer until tender, but still a little firm. Strain. Add tomatoes to the beans in the pan and allow to heat through gently. Chop the basil leaves finely and add to the pan. Stir through. Allow to heat until almost simmering, turn off the heat and serve.

Curried Lentils

This is a delicious curry that lends itself well to freezing, so it is worth making a large batch of it, and freezing what you don't use for another day. It is a great way to use frozen Zucchini for winter nourishment.

2 cups red lentils	1 medium onion
2 medium Zucchini or 1 cup frozen	2 cloves Garlic crushed
2 tsp curry powder	4 tsp ground Turmeric
1 tsp ground Cumin	2 tsp ground Paprika
1 tsp ground Coriander root	1 tsp ground Ginger
2 Tbsp cold pressed oil	3 cups Vegetable Stock
Additional water	
Chillies or Chillie Powder to suit your taste and preference	

Heat oil in a large saucepan on medium low heat. Dice onion and add to pan. Cook slowly with the lid on until they are soft. Measure the spices and put into a cup ready for use. Add crushed garlic to the pan and stir into the onions. Add spices and stir until for a minute or so, so they release their aroma. You may need to remove the pan from the heat while you do this, to prevent burning. Add 3 cups stock and bring to the boil. Add chillies or chillie powder according to your preference and heat tolerance. Slice zucchini lengthwise and chop into small pieces. Add to the pan and cook for 10 minutes or so, until they are soft. Add lentils, and adjust water level so it covers the lentils by about 1cm. Return to the boil, turn down the heat, cover and simmer gently. Stir regularly, and

keep a watch on the liquid level. You will need to add small quantities of water during the cooking process so there is enough liquid for the lentils to absorb, but not too much that the curry ends up too wet.

Cook for 20 minutes until the lentils are soft and tender. If the mix does end up too wet, just remove the lid and allow to simmer, stirring often, until the excess has evaporated off.

Serve with rice. A nice dish to have with this recipe is Yoghurt and Cucumber salad.

Lentil Burger Patties

These are a delicious alternative to using meat, and are relatively quick to prepare.

To serve 4

1 ½ cups brown lentil	1 egg
1 tsp Worcestershire sauce	1 finely chopped onion
1 small stalk celery finely chopped	
1 – 2 cups wholemeal breadcrumbs	
1 Tbsp dried mixed herbs or 2 Tbsp finely chopped fresh herbs, e.g. basil, thyme, oregano, parsley, mint.	
1 Tbsp tomato sauce	

Cook the lentils for approx 45 minutes until soft. Strain and mash roughly, leaving some intact. This partial mashing leaves you with a mix that will hold together well.

Add lentils to a large bowl. Add the finely chopped onion, celery, herbs, tomato sauce, Worcestershire sauce and the egg. Stir until they are all mixed. Add enough breadcrumbs to the mix so that you are able to form it into patties that hold together.

Put extra breadcrumbs on a plate and press the patties into the breadcrumbs. Heat a little oil in a cast iron or non-stick fry pan on medium, and add the patties. Cook until each side is golden brown.

Serve with a salad and sauce of your choice. They go really well with good old-fashioned tomato sauce.

Mushroom Golay

This is a recipe my son invented at 8 years, with a bit of help from a friend, and it is so delicious it warrants being here. Try it! It is a great starter or a side dish with a meal.

To serve 4

12 large flat mushrooms

1 Tomato

12 small slices of cheese to fit inside mushrooms

1 large sprig of Parsley finely chopped 1 small bottle of cream

Clean mushrooms and peel if it is your preference. Lay on a baking tray with the brown frills topside.

Cut the tomato in half and cut into slices to fit inside the mushrooms.

Add cheese slices.

Sprinkle Parsley over the cheese.

Put under the grill to cook slowly, until the cheese has melted and it has all heated through. Remove from heat.

Tip some of the cream into a dipping bowl.

Dip your mushrooms into the cream and enjoy!!

Potato Bake

This is a great way to serve potatoes in the winter months, as a vegetarian meal with salad, a side dish or as a high-energy lunch.

3 to 4 large potatoes

2 medium Onions

Approx 2 cups grated Tasty Cheese

1 to 2 cups milk

1 packet dry onion soup mix or 2 Tbsp powdered onion stock

Preheat oven to 190 degrees Celsius.

Slice potatoes approx 1/2cm thick. You can keep the skins on or not according to your preference.

Slice onions thinly

Put a layer of potatoes into a baking dish. Add a layer of onions, and a sprinkle of soup mix or stock, then a layer of grated cheese.

Keep adding layers, finishing with a layer of cheese on top.

Pour milk carefully down the side of the potatoes until near the top.

Bake for an hour or so, until all the milk has been absorbed, and the top is nice and toasty brown.

Remove from the oven and serve.

Silverbeet Pie

6 large eggs
2 medium Onions
½ cup milk
1 Tbsp cold pressed oil

4 large leaves Silverbeet
1 clove Garlic
2 cups grated tasty cheese
Salt & Pepper to taste

Heat oil in a small saucepan on a low heat. Dice onions and add to the pan. Cover and cook slowly until browned. Set aside.

Heat oven at 180 degrees Celsius

Remove stalks from silverbeet and slice leaves into ribbons. Drop these into boiling water in a pan and cook approx 3 minutes. Strain.

Grease a baking or casserole dish and add the silverbeet.

Break eggs into a bowl, add milk and beat lightly with a fork. Add the salt and pepper, and mix in. Add 1½ cups grated cheese and the browned onion and mix gently to evenly spread the ingredients.

Pour egg and cheese mix over the silverbeet.

Sprinkle remaining grated cheese over the top.

Bake in the oven for 20 to 30 minutes until fully cooked.

Serve with salad or cooked veges.

Silverbeet Pie



Spinach in Lemon Juice

This is a delicious way to eat Spinach, especially for children

1 large bunch Spinach	juice of 1 Lemon
2 tsp sugar	¼ tsp salt
2 tsp butter	small amount fresh ground black pepper

Wash and slice Spinach into strips

Heat butter in a medium sized saucepan, add lemon juice, sugar, salt and pepper.

Heat through and stir to dissolve sugar. Taste to check sweetness and add more sugar if desired.

Add spinach and cook, stirring frequently to ensure even cooking, until leaves soften.

Serve immediately

Stuffed Pita pockets

This is a wonderful to serve as a lunch on a hot summers day, or in the winter when you feel the need of fresh and live food. It is a whole meal in itself and is a good way to get two of the five recommended servings of vegetables.

To serve 1 person

1 large pita bread or two small	3 lettuce leaves
1 Spring Onion or 2 slices onion	1 medium tomato
Four slices cheese	1 sprig Parsley
4 Mint leaves	

Other salad veges of your choice, e.g. radishes, cucumber, celery, chillies etc.

Keep the lettuce leaves whole, but chop the other salad vegetables into small pieces.

Chop the herbs finely.

Cut the pita pocket in half, like a half moon. Slip the cheese inside and either microwave or heat under a grill until the cheese has melted.

As soon as you remove the pita pockets from heat, use a knife to open and put the lettuce leaves inside, with a fold in the bottom so the lettuce leaf helps to hold all the other ingredients.

Stuff the pockets with your other ingredients.

Serve

You can add all sorts to pita pockets, add use a variety of dressings, like Salsa, Cucumber Raita, honey and mustard. Use your imagination and make your own delicious creations.

Sweetcorn with Herb Oil

This is a nice alternative way to have sweetcorn.

Per Cob

1 Tbsp cold pressed Rice Bran or Olive oil

1 Tbsp chopped fresh herbs of your choice, e.g. Basil, Parsley, Mint, Thyme, Oregano

Heat the oil on low heat in a small saucepan, add herbs and heat for 1 minute, do not allow the oil to fry the herbs. Set aside for the flavour to continue to seep into the oil.

Peel and cook corncobs in boiling water for approx 5 minutes. Strain and place on serving plates.

Drizzle the oil over the cobs.

Add salt and pepper if desired.

Serve.

Vegetarian Burger Patties

These patties are a delicious alternative to beef, and the combination of legumes and grains are a good source of vegetable protein.

Serves 4

½ cup Chickpeas

1/3 Sunflower Seeds

½ c Rolled Oats

1 large sprig Parsley

2 eggs

2 Tbsp Chia seeds (optional)

1 Tbsp Tomato Sauce

½ cup Green Split Peas

¼ cup Sesame Seeds

Approx ½ cup Fine ground cornmeal

1 medium onion

½ cup water

1 Tbsp Worcestershire Sauce

2 Tbsp oil

Soak the Chickpeas in water overnight. In the morning, strain and add green split peas. Add more water and soak all day until evening.

Strain and put into a blender.

Lightly toast sesame seeds on medium low on a dry fry pan, being careful not to burn them. Tip them into a cup as soon as they are cooked.

Finely chop the Parsley and add to the blender with the rolled oats, water and sunflower seeds. Add the eggs and sauces.

Blend until the mix resembles course breadcrumbs. It should be a little wet and sloppy looking.

Tip the mix into a large bowl and add the chopped onion and toasted sesame seeds. Stir enough cornmeal into the mix until it is still slightly wet, but firm enough to shape into patties. They absorb water as they cook and hold together well.

Heat the oil in a cast iron fry pan on medium heat. Shape the burger mix into patties and place in the pan. Turn down the heat to medium low, cover with a lid or foil to retain moisture, and cook slowly for approx 5 minutes each side.

The patties are cooked when they are a light toasty brown on both sides.

Serve with tomato sauce, chillie sauce or any other sauce of your choice.

Zucchini with Garlic and Parmesan Cheese

This can be served as a meal with rice, noodles or pita bread, and salad, or as part of a main meal Adjust the quantities accordingly.

3 medium sized zucchinis	2 cloves garlic
2 Tbsp chopped Fresh Basil leaves (or 1tsp dried)	
1 large tomato or two medium	1 Tbsp Olive oil
1 Tbsp Parmesan cheese granules	Salt and Pepper to taste

Slice Zucchinis into ½ cm thick slices.

Peel the tomatoes by dropping into boiling water for 30 seconds, then lifting off the skin. Chop into approx 2cm cubes.

Heat oil in a saucepan on medium low heat. Add crushed garlic and stir. Add the Zucchini, tomatoes and basil. Cover and cook for about 10 minutes, until the Zucchini is tender but not breaking up.

Remove from heat and add Parmesan cheese, mix gently and serve.

Zucchini with Garlic and Parmesan Cheese



Chapter Twenty-Six Meat and Fish

Mexican Tacos Serves 4

You can turn this recipe into a vegetarian meal by using cooked red kidney beans instead of meat. Just add vegetable stock for additional flavour, or use pre-prepared tin of Chilli or Mexican Beans.

Meat Mix

250g beef, chicken or pork mince	1 onion
1/2c tomato paste	2 cloves garlic crush
1/2 tsp ground coriander	1/2 tsp cumin
1/2 tsp ground cinnamon	1/4 tsp salt
1 Tbsp oil	1/4c water

Chillie powder or chopped chillies according to personal taste

Heat the oil in a pan, add onion and mince and cook until browned. Add garlic, water, tomato paste and spices.

Simmer uncovered for 10 minutes or so, until the water has mostly evaporated off.

Salad and Extras

Lettuce leaves	Sliced tomato
Sliced onion or Spring Onions	Any other vegetable you'd like to add
Grated cheese	Guacamole (see dips and starters)
Fresh chillies as desired	Sour Cream if desired
Tomato Salsa if desired (see dips and starters)	

Heat the Taco shells as directed on the pack, then add the other ingredients and enjoy.

Mexican Tacos with Salad and Guacamole



Baked Fish with Mushrooms and Onion

To serve 2

300g to 500g fish fillets or whole fish	1 medium onion
12 mushrooms	approx 2 Tbsp butter
1 large sprig Parsley	

Heat oven to 160 degrees Celsius.

Place the fish in the bottom of a greased casserole dish or cast iron fry pan. Peel mushrooms and arrange on the fish. Thinly slice onion and spread over the fish.

Chop finely and sprinkle over the fish and veges.

Chop butter in small knobs and arrange evenly over the top.

Cover with a lid or foil.

Bake for 20 to 30 minutes until fish is cooked.

Serve with a salad or veges.

Salmon and Camembert Salad

This salad can be served as a meal in itself. Just adjust the quantities to suit.

To serve 4

1 pack of fresh smoked salmon slices	½ lettuce or several loose leaves
1 tomato	1 small onion
4 large Spring Onions	6 radishes
1 small mild red or yellow onion.	2 Tbsp sour cream
2 tsp honey	juice of 1 lemon
1 ripe Camembert cheese	

Make the dressing first.

Heat the honey until runny, add to the lemon juice and stir well. Add the sour cream and mix together.

Break the lettuce leaves into a salad bowl or shallow serving dish.

Slice the tomatoes, spring onions, radishes and mild onion. Spread over the lettuce.

Cut the Camembert cheese into small cubes and add to the salad.

Cut the salmon into small pieces and layer over the salad.

Add the dressing and serve immediately.

Shrimp Salad

This is a delicious recipe to use as a luncheon or dinner dish in the summer when salad vegetables are plentiful. The quantities of shrimps are approximate and can be adjusted according to your budget, and the salad is a guide, to be adjusted to your preferences.

To serve 4.

400g shrimps

3 Spring Onions

10 radishes

Seafood dressing

12 lettuce leaves

2 Tomatoes

4 sprigs Parsley

Wash and dry lettuce leaves, spread 2 on each plate as a base for the salad, and finely shred the remaining lettuce and spread over the leaves.

Cut one tomato into small chunks and spread over the lettuce.

Slice Spring onions and radishes and sprinkle over salad.

Wash and drain the shrimps, spread over salad.

Cut the other tomato and arrange on the side of the plate.

Set one sprig of Parsley aside and break the remaining three into mini sprigs, and arrange on the side of the plate.

Add a dollop of your favourite seafood dressing.

Finely chop remaining Parsley and sprinkle over seafood dressing.

Serve.

Shrimp Salad



Chapter Twenty-Seven Sauces and Dressings

Chillie Sauce

This can be made with any red chillies, and is a good way to use your harvest in the Autumn when they are abundant in the garden. Adjust the type and amount of chillies according to your heat tolerance.

12 medium Chillies, e.g. Serrano, Cayenne or other varieties

10 to 12 fiery red chillies, e.g. Tabasco

2 Onions

2 Apples

2 Tbsp Worcestershire sauce

12 large Tomatoes or 2 tins tomatoes

1 cup Brown Sugar

1 cup White Vinegar

4 cloves Garlic

Heat vinegar in a large saucepan.

Peel and chop tomatoes. Peel tomatoes by dropping into boiling water for 30 seconds. The skin should lift easily. You may need to prick it with a knife to get started. Add to the pan.

Peel and chop apples and onions and add to the pan.

Add brown sugar and Worcestershire sauce. Stir until sugar has dissolved.

Crush the garlic and add.

Finely slice the Chillies and add. You may need to wear gloves as the oil can stay on your fingers even after washing. If you don't have gloves, go carefully and keep your fingers out of sensitive places, like your eyes or nose! Believe me, it is not pleasant!

Bring the whole lot to a boil, cover and simmer for 1 hour.

Cool and add to blender. Puree until all is a fine pulp.

Bottle and store in the refrigerator.

Lemon Salad Dressing

Juice of 1 lemon

1 - 2 tsp sugar

Pinch of salt

Fresh ground black pepper

Mix all ingredients together, stirring until the sugar and salt has dissolved. Add enough sugar so that it is pleasing to your taste buds.

Sprinkle on the salad immediately before serving.

This dressing will keep in the refrigerator for approx 5 days.

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Resources

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