



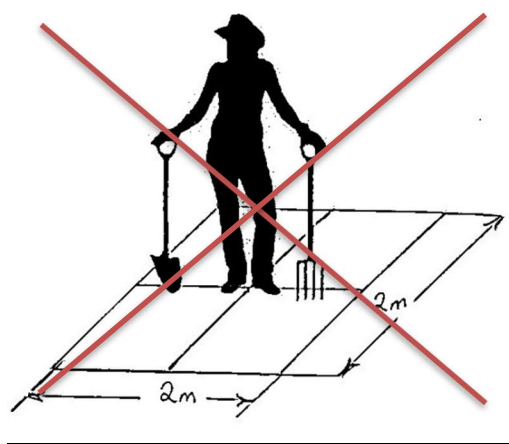
Volume 3 Issue 2, February 2022

February Birthday Celebrations

Ray B
Mikayla C

Wishing a very happy birthday to Ray and Mikayla.

No More Social Distancing



Do the two:

1. **Wash your hands.**
2. **If sick stay home.**

We have done it! Well done to all members. Restrictions have been lifted and we have all survived the pandemic. The lessons learnt from this pandemic have been that if you are feeling unwell, just stay at home and together we can beat the common cold and Covid-19.

Weeding of paths - HIGH IMPORTANCE

Some of the pathways are in desperate need of weeding. Remember it's your responsibility to keep the pathways clear of weeds on the right-hand side of your garden bed.

Rain, Rain, Rain



According to the Australian Bureau of Meteorology last year's rainfall (2021) in Newcastle was 1118.0 mm. This is great for the garden, but the unfortunate downside is that the rain leaches nutrients from the soil.

During these times of consistent rainfall, it is important to keep the nutrients up in garden beds. Compost should be lightly dug into the soil and a liquid fertiliser used on a fortnightly basis.

Honey for sale



We still have plenty of honey for sale. The new batches of honey have two different types: Clover honey which is light and blue gum honey which is dark. The price hasn't changed and is still \$8:00 per jar for members and \$10:00 for non-members.

Vegetable of the month



Eggplant
Solanum melongena

This berry (by botanical definition) is a member of the Solanum family and is related to the tomato, chilli pepper, and the humble potato. This unique family are the nightshade family of plants and were originally domesticated from the wild nightshade species probably thorn or bitter apple varieties in Southern Asia.

Eggplant, if looked after, will keep fruiting for 5-6 months.

If you are planning to grow the eggplants from seed, the best time to start is the last two weeks of autumn.

Start by ensuring the soil is of good quality mixed with compost and chicken manure. The seedling should be grown indoors as baby eggplant will die if in contact with cold weather or frost. Once the seedling is established the seedling should be transferred to a pot as this allows the young plant to be moved easily and it also allows the root system to develop as the plant is living in a controlled environment. At this stage you can choose to leave the plant in the bag or transfer to a raised veggie garden bed.

The garden bed soil preparation should start when the seeds are first planted. Don't forget that soil is a living organism, and just like us humans, needs minerals, vitamins, and proteins to grow and survive.

Things to remember when growing from seed.

- Sow the seeds in a seed growing trays when the air temperature is above 24 °C or place the trays indoors at night and in the sun during the day.
- If the day temperature is around 20 °C place the seed trays in a Styrofoam box with glass over the top or in a clear plastic bag to encourage germination.
- The methods above help eliminate insects such as leaf hoppers and aphids from eating the new plants.

Soil Preparation

The soil should be weed free and during the turning over of the soil add plenty of chicken manure, a good quality compost as well as a measure of urea, potassium, phosphorus and allow to rest until ready to plant.

Fertilising

As stated, above this is a very important stage if the plant is to be grown in a raised bed as the soil should be prepared a good 6 weeks prior to planting the seedlings

- The soil pH should be for best results between 6.0 to 6.8 using agricultural lime or dolomite at least 4 weeks prior to planting.
- Eggplants nutritional requirements are basically the same as tomatoes.
- Ensure nitrogen, potassium, phosphorous are measured in the mid-range. Commercial growers use superphosphate 4-6 weeks prior to planting to ensure quick growth.

Diseases and Pests

The bigger problem when growing eggplant is dealing with the pests as it is not likely diseases will be a problem. To keep the bugs away use an organic pesticide as this will protect the plant from aphids and leaf hoppers.

Vitamins

Thiamine B1

Riboflavin B2

Niacin B3

Vitamin B6

Folate B9

Vitamin C

Vitamin E

Vitamin K

Minerals

Calcium

Iron

Magnesium

Manganese

Phosphorus

Potassium

Sodium

Zinc

Recipes of the Month

Fatma Barut Eggplant Salad

You can, of course, make the common Baba Ghanoush dip and it is delicious. This one is a bit different, for those who like to try something new. If you don't have pomegranate arils, it's still delicious.



Ingredients

2 large eggplants (about 1kg in total)

1/3 cup (80ml) extra virgin olive oil

1/2 cup dill, finely chopped, plus extra sprigs to serve

1/2 cup flat-leaf parsley leaves, finely chopped, plus extra small leaves to serve

2 spring onions, finely chopped

Natural yoghurt & pomegranate arils & warmed flatbread, to serve

Directions

Cook eggplant on an open flame, turning regularly using tongs, for 10-12 minutes until skin blackens and flesh is tender. Set aside to cool briefly, then halve and scoop out flesh, discarding the skin and stems. Place on a chopping board and finely chop. Scrape into a bowl and season well. Add oil, dill, parsley, and spring onion and stir to combine.

Spoon eggplant mixture into a serving bowl, drizzle with yoghurt and scatter with pomegranate arils and extra herbs. Serve with warm flatbread.

Greek Veggie Bake



Ingredients

160ml (1/3 cup) extra virgin olive oil
1 (about 380g) eggplant, halved lengthways, thickly sliced
1 brown onion, cut into wedges
1 red capsicum, deseeded, thickly sliced
3 garlic cloves, sliced
2 small (about 350g) potatoes, thickly sliced
2 zucchinis, trimmed, sliced
160ml (2/3 cup) water
1 tbsp dried oregano leaves
250g baby Roma truss tomatoes (or any tomatoes, chopped into wedges)
200g feta, coarsely broken
Chopped parsley leaves, to serve

Directions

Preheat the oven to 160C/140C fan forced.

Heat 2 tbs of oil in a large frying pan over medium heat. Cook the eggplant, in 3-4 batches, adding more oil if necessary, for 5 minutes or until golden. Use a slotted spoon to transfer the eggplant to a large roasting dish.

Add 1 tbs of the remaining oil to the pan. Add onion, capsicum and garlic and cook, stirring often, for 10 minutes or until soft. Transfer to the roasting dish. Add potato, zucchini, water, and remaining oil. Sprinkle with the oregano and season. Toss to combine. Top with the tomatoes.

Roast for 1 hour or until the vegetables are golden and tender. Top with the feta. Scatter with parsley and serve.

Notes

Delicious with any grilled or roasted meats, or just on its own with crusty bread.

Don't be afraid to use lashings of the extra virgin olive oil – it's the secret to this Greek dish!