BRAIDWOOD GARDEN CLUB
NEWSLETTER MARCH 2021

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THURSDAY April 8
Braidwood Town Garden Visits

Meeting arrangements:

When: 10.30am on Thursday 8 April 2021 **What to bring:** Chair, Lunch & Name Tag.

Where to meet: 92 Monkittee Street, Braidwood (for those who enjoy a wander, you can park at Ryrie Park and walk to all the venues)

Cost: $15.00 a head (discounted cost to visit Wynlen House and morning tea).

The booking sheet is available at Bendigo Bank or you can book via direct transfer (BSB: 633 000 account number 118 346 444 – please put 'Braidwood Gardens' in the reference section).

Please book by Tuesday 6 April 2021

This month's visit will be to the gardens of some of Braidwood's historical properties and also a commercial operation in Braidwood town.

We start with a visit to Wynlen House Artisan Village Farm & Learning Centre (five minute-walk from Ryrie Park) run by Helen Lynch & Bronwyn Richards, where they will provide us with morning tea and give a short talk and open discussion with members, and an opportunity to taste fresh produce growing in the garden as they take members around their farm which includes market gardens and poultry grazing areas and ornamental plantings, hot house all on a micro urban farm scale.

Next, we retrace our steps to visit the 'Old Rectory' in Wilson street where we will walk through Tony Gilbert's quirky foliage garden with a lot of new under plantings of ferns, bromeliads and other cool climate plants that give a lush sub-tropical feel.

Then we go over the road to the Gabriele Borscz and Gordon Conroy's garden at 'The Doncaster' (next to Ryrie Park) to look through the grounds and have lunch. This is a predominately a green garden with extensive use of formal box hedging, crab-apple trees and stunning stonework. There also some lovely roses and a nice example of an Indian Bean tree.

Finally, we go down Wallace St to see Cheryl Hannah's delightful hidden garden behind the fYREGallery (less than ten-minute walk) which was designed to be an extension of the gallery and reflect the print shown by Sonia Delaunay. It is crammed full of interest, designed with beds and swales reflecting the colour pallet of the print, including a gorgeous avenue of crab-apple trees and a large statute called JESS. After visiting the garden members can visit the fYREGallery's latest exhibition featuring works by Australian photographers Olive Cotton and Max Dupain.

Report on the March Meeting at Palerang by Rose DeMartin

REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE AND NO-DIG GARDENING AND COMPOST MAKING

What a most apt time to have such an informative talk and walk with Peter Hazell from the Mulloon Institute. No sooner done than the rain comes down! Well, nearly... Scientists inform us that we are living in the best epoch in the Earth's history, the Holocene (or Anthropocene) period, nearly 12,000 years since the last Ice Age, meaning warmer temperatures, more vegetation, more food, more people. Noticeably since white man came to Australia, the landscape has changed with settlements of people, and introduced animals. Using 'tried' farming practices from the 'old country' has proved devastating in so many areas of the country, most especially on rivers, creeks and floodplains, those all-important fresh water sources.

Our talk was specifically about reparation of creek flows using a long series of 'leaky weirs', starting way up in the head of the Mulloon creek near Mt. Palerang, (we were at the lower section of the creek), as part of the Mulloon Institute Rehydration Initiative.

Without detail of what went on before, the result has been steep, eroded, rapid-running creeks with deep beds resulting in little underground floodplain water and salinity problems. One of the quickest (and in small areas, easiest) way to rectify this is to make a 'leaky weir' to slow down the movement of water across the landscape. Sites are chosen where there is a natural choke in the stream. Here, rocks, logs and other debris (hay bales, old fencing wire bundles) are placed in and across the creek raising the water level. On the upstream side reeds, rushes and sedges are planted, which act as filters and spreaders and slowing down the velocity of water. The water rises on the upside and percolates through and over the weir structure, spreading out. Below creek, the banks are planted with shrubs and trees which help pull the water through the floodplain landscape. During floods the water is slower and wider, putting down a new layer of organic matter (silt and debris), to become topsoil, much improving the fertility of the whole landscape. (Meaning a higher stock carrying capacity and a higher bank balance for farmers). The water flows underground and hydrates deeper levels instead of galloping away to the sea. On a broader spectrum, this also brings a much greater biodiversity of animals, birds, reptiles and insects all beneficial to a healthy landscape.

This natural sequence farming principle of creek and floodplain rehabilitation is not a new concept, but through demonstration and evidential work of the Mulloon Institute, is a verifiable, productive and profitable one.

With many thanks to Peter Hazell, the Mulloon Institute, Sue and Ulli Tuisk,"Palerang," for very generously sharing their time and expertise.

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No-Dig Gardening by John Tuckwell

Some call it easy gardening, some call it lazy gardening, but others call it clever gardening. Whatever you would like to call it, no-dig gardening is something you should consider particularly if you have difficulties digging or just don't like digging.

What is no-dig gardening? No-dig gardening is about working with the soil and not disturbing the organisms in the soil food web (worms, bacteria, fungi, protozoa, nematodes etc) and adding compost to allow soil life to work quietly to provide fertility and a balance of air and moisture to crops. Some of the key premises are that cultivation damages the soil web and soil organisms and that soil organisms feed on the compost which then make nutrients available to plants.

The origins of no-dig gardening are unclear and may be based on pre-industrial or nineteenth-century farming techniques, but some of the early pioneers in the 1940s were from the UK, with Esther Deans promoting the approach in Australia during the 1970s. There are many current exponents of this approach but perhaps the most interesting and well-known is Charles Dowding. Charles is a commercial organic market gardener in England and has conducted ongoing trials comparing dig and no-dig garden beds, as well as being a teacher and communicator of the no-dig approach.

The traditional approach to no-dig gardening, as espoused by Esther Deans and others, is to focus on the establishment of new raised beds through layers of materials placed on the ground. Start with 5mm of overlapped newspaper, cover with pads of lucerne hay, give this a light dusting of organic fertilizer like poultry manure, cover with 20cm of loose straw, give another light dusting of organic fertilizer, and finish with 7-10cm of compost on top. Regarding on-going maintenance, she emphasizes not to dig the garden and adding, when necessary, compost, cow manure, liquid manure, lucerne hay etc.

Charles Dowding uses a simpler approach to establish beds with overlapping cardboard (with any tape removed) to suppress weeds (more layers of cardboard if you have vigorous perennial weeds) and covers this with around 10cm of compost and aged manure. He also suggests that you use cardboard with wood chips on paths between and around beds to suppress weeds there with the paths also feeding the beds. Charles is not a fan of having physical sides to beds, arguing they encourage woodlice, slugs and snails. He prefers beds to be 1.2m wide at least and paths around 35cm wide.

He places considerable emphasis on ongoing maintenance by spreading 2-3cm of good compost annually on top of the beds ideally in late autumn / beginning of winter in keeping with the natural cycles of dying leaves and vegetation, but any time that suits is ok. Charles argues that because the compost feeds the soil organisms, which in turn feed the plants, there is no need for any supplementary fertilisers, even if you are getting two crops per year.

Charles sees a number of benefits from no-dig gardening and composting:

1) Fewer weeds. He argues that most weeds are a consequence of disturbed soil. Also, the weeds that are there are easier to remove when growing through compost. He is a strong advocate of removing weeds when they are young before they seed with a 'little and often' approach to weeding.

2) Higher productivity. His trials over 13 years suggest slightly higher yields (~10%) with the no-dig approach compared to conventional methods.

3) Improved soil structure. He highlights that with no-dig means the soil does not stick to your boots and you can walk on it thanks to its firm but open structure.

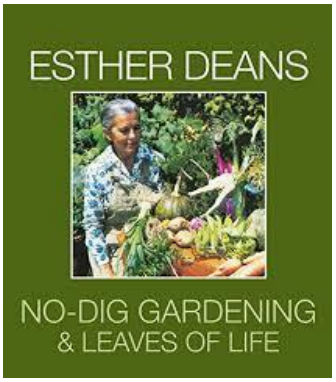
4) Speed. You can plant straight away into your beds, as long as your compost is mature.

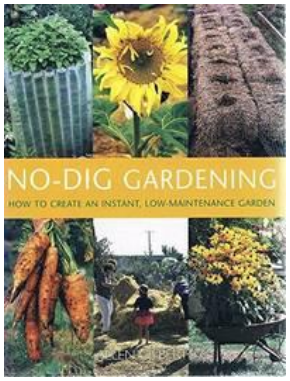
Charles also questions the need for rotations, unless you already have a disease issue, arguing that with healthy soils you do not get a build-up of soil borne diseases. Also, because the plants take what they need from the soil, and you are not adding fertilisers, there is no need for 'hungry' and 'depleted' beds as with the classic four bed rotation.

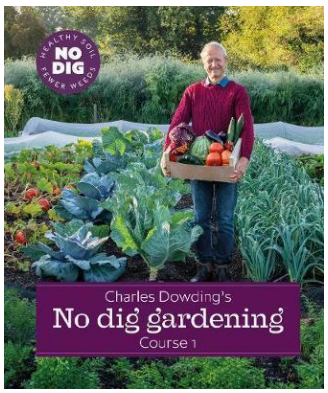
A key activity for a no-dig gardener is making compost and /or buying in aged compost or well-rotted manures (there is a separate article on making and buying compost).

Putting in a new no-dig bed

References:







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Making and Buying Compost by John Tuckwell

There seems to be a lot of mystic about making compost - about what you can add and what you cannot, about how much you need to add at a time.

I find it is not that complex, as long as you do not have too much of any one ingredient, particularly not too much grass, at once.

I would describe myself as a composting enthusiast, but not a composting expert. Personally, I do not consider weeding as a chore, but look upon it as a means for collecting material for composting. Similarly, mowing is about collecting material for composting.

I try to make hot compost, which ideally should be 60/65C. At this temperature it kills the weed seeds in the compost and also kills off the pathogens (the bad bugs) but not the desired biology. Once it gets hotter than this the good biology is also getting killed.

An important concept in making compost is getting the balance right between 'brown' and 'green' input materials. I vaguely use a 50:50 brown to green ratio, as recommended by Charles Dowding. A number of other 'experts' suggest more brown material, some as much as 75:25 brown to green ratio.

What is brown and what is green? Green materials are rich in nitrogen or protein. They are also the items that tend to heat up a compost heap because they help the microorganisms in the heap grow and multiply quickly.

Brown materials are carbon or carbohydrate-rich materials. The main job of brown material in a compost heap is to be food sources for the soil-dwelling organisms that will work with the microbes to break down the contents of your compost heap. Also, brown materials help to add bulk and help allow air to filter through the pile.

Brown materials for composting include dry or woody plant materials such as: Autumn leaves, pine needles, twigs, chipped tree branches/bark, straw or hay, sawdust, paper and cardboard.

Green materials are usually but not always green. They include: grass clippings, coffee grounds/tea bags, vegetable and fruit scraps, trimmings from perennial and annual plants, weeds, eggshells, animal manures (not dog or cat poo) and seaweed.

It is not always easy to achieve the desired ratio, especially when grass is going gangbusters in the spring. I deal with it in four ways by:

1. borrowing composting material from a half-made compost bin;
2. using sawdust or spoilt lucerne hay as additional 'brown' material;
3. using excess grass as a mulch over potatoes and around fruit trees; and
4. leaving the grass in a wheelbarrow and adding the grass over the coming days as other material becomes available.

Some suggest you need to have all the material available and make a cubic metre at a time. I do not follow this approach. My bins are typically a cubic metre (I have 5 this size and another at 1.5m3 for leaf mold), but I try to add alternating layers of brown and green materials as they become available. Try to avoid having layers too thick (over 5cm), especially fresh cut grass. It is difficult to know whether you have the balance between green and brown right with this approach, but by turning the bin you mix the materials better and I suspect (or hope) raises/lowers the temperature to the desired level from getting a more even distributed balance.

Charles Dowding (see article on no-dig gardening) turns his compost once to mix, aerate and create a more even compost in a shorter time. He argues that the gains are marginal from a second turn, so does not bother.

Preparation of the material is important. Charles recommends that you try to cut stems and woody material into 10cm or less lengths. Using your lawn mower to do this is a great way or use a chipper/shredder if you have one. I also water the compost when adding dry materials.

While Charles makes lots of his own compost he cannot make enough for his needs, so buys in compost and old manures. He has undertaken trials and recommends that you either use a good propriety compost (Landtasia for us), mushroom compost or well-rotted manures. He does not recommend using municipal 'green waste' compost, mainly because it is usually too young and the size of the particles too large.

Charles is of the view that age is a key factor of good compost that feeds the soil. He suggests buying in any compost or manure months before you want to use it to ensure it is aged (mature or ripe composts are sweet smelling and crumble

into smaller pieces and are dark brown or black in colour). If you cannot age bought compost, he suggests spreading finished homemade compost first with a mulch of bought compost on top of that.

WHAT'S ON

MAY Friday 7th 'A Braidwood Walk' in Association with ACT Tree Week.
"An Autumnal Amble Through the Town's Tree-Lined Streets". 9.30-11am.
Mary Appleby, the Biodiversity Project Officer, QPRC, will conduct a walk around the streets of Braidwood to learn about the many fine trees that contribute to the towns heritage status. Bookings essential. For reservations email braidwoodgardenclub@gmail.com A charge of $5 for non Braidwood Garden Club Members.

OCTOBER Saturday 30 & Sunday 31
Bathurst Spring Spectacular Live Music, Market Stalls & Displays
https://bathurstgardenclub.org.au/bathurst-spring-spectacular/

Roses by the Seaside' 2021 National Rose Championships and Conference.
https://gardenclubs.org.au/diary-dates/
Saturday 16th October 2021 from 12 pm – 5 pm
Sunday 17th October 2021 from 9.30 am – 4 pm
The Rose Society of NSW invites you to attend the Roses by the Seaside 2021 National Rose Championships, social activities and lectures series to be held in the Kiama Pavilion. Thousands of Roses will be on display by the best exhibitors in NSW and from other States. There will be amazing displays of heritage and modern roses as well as floral art. Rose plants will be on sale during the event. The lecture series will have the theme of an ecologically friendly way of managing your rose gardens and the impact of climate change. See website for further information. This event was postponed from October 2020.

The Program is available on the Rose Society of NSW website
http://www.nsw.rose.org.au/rose-society-events

My Open Gardens
There are many gardens open during the coming months so log on to the website to plan your visits.
https://www.myopengarden.com.au/openGarden.jsp

THE SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS BOTANICAL GARDENS NURSERY is now open every Tues, Thurs and Sat 9am to 3pm.
As all the plants for sale have been propagated from those growing in local gardens, we know that they will survive in your garden. The stock is an ever-evolving range and each week the volunteers tend to them under the watchful eye of professional horticulturists.
Feel free to browse and there is always a friendly face around to advise on the right kind of plant for that special corner in your garden.

Retford Park, Bowral, is open on the first weekend of each month.
In Spring there's a riot of colour with peonies, arum lilies, dogwood, clematis, rhododendrons, flowering cherries and tulips; and in Summer, the vast arboretum is the perfect shady place for a picnic.
Nurseries nearby

- The Potting Shed - Bowral - 0419 154 860
- Mittagong Garden Centre - Mittagong - (02) 4872 3900
- Wariapendi Farm Nursery - Colo Vale - (02) 4889 4327
- Welby Garden Centre - Welby - (02) 4872 1244

THE PLANT OF THE MONTH

By Kate Chinnick

Anenome X hybrida

- Old garden Japanese anenome
- Hardy clump forming perennial
- Reaches a height of 1.5m
- Stems of pink or white flowers
- Flowering in autumn
- Prefers a woodland setting in partial shade
- Leaves are bright green and hairy beneath
- Propagate from seed in winter or division in early winter
- Good cultivars – “Honorine Jobert”, “Hadspen Abundance”

What to do in the garden for April

- Trim evergreen shrubs so they recover before winter
- Choose trees for autumn colour
- Good time to plant or move Camellias, Rhodo's & Azaleas
- Look for Lilium, Hippeastrum & Sprekelia Bulbs
- Complete planting of spring bulbs
- Tidy leaves of Hellebores, Winter Iris & Aquilegias
- Sow Asian Greens, Broad Beans & Peas
- Plant all Brassicas (cover with fine netting against white butterflies, old lace curtains ideal!)
- Remove all old leaves from Strawberries (put in garbage)
- Remove 3 year old Strawberries & replace with new stock
- Repot herbs and pot plants with new potting mix
- Pick up any fallen fruit & dispose of if diseased