

Brisbane Seed Savers



Co-ordinator: Donna McCallum
Email: bneseedsaver@inet.net.au
Mobile: 0415 188 910
Brisbane Local Food (Forum): <http://brisbanelocalfood.ning.com>

Newsletter – Issue No: 001

Welcome to Brisbane Seed Savers!

By joining this group which is a *Local Seed Network (LSN)*, you have joined with others who are actively conserving our heritage open pollinated seeds.

Why Save Seed?

The seeds of many useful and top quality vegetables are rapidly disappearing from the public domain. These are often not sold in stores, but are passed on from one gardening friend to another.

We can help ourselves to become independent again by saving seeds and passing on knowledge about propagation and plant usage. By regaining control of our food, we strengthen our own security, the genetic integrity of our traditional crops and the potential to develop useful varieties that are adapted to the climate, the soil of the region and local pests.

To save good seeds you need only follow what the plan does naturally. But you do have to start with an **original and viable seed stock**.



Hybrid Varieties

Hybrids are not suitable for seed saving because they revert to their highly inbred parents, or are simply as sterile as a mule. Furthermore, hybrid plants are genetically uniform, which will succumb all at once when there is a disease or pest problem. In a small garden, differences among plants allow different reaction to pests. Uniformity is quite contrary to the requirements of the home gardener. They usually demand high inputs of fertiliser and pesticides and are often low in nutritional value.

The Seed Savers Handbook – Michel & Jude Fanton

Most of the information regarding seed saving in this edition has been sourced directly from this fantastic book. It is a very important reference book for anyone wanting to save seed (and in fact anyone wanting to grow from seed) and I can not recommend it highly enough.

If you are interested in purchasing a copy I will shortly have a supply available for \$15.00 each to members.



My Seed Collection

I have a variety of seeds that I have purchased from numerous sources which are blogged on both Brisbane Local Food & Home Growers Exchange. While I do not have unlimited supplies, I am more than happy to share these varieties with other members to further the aims of the group.

Please email me if you are interested, especially if you are currently growing varieties of seed that are from produce sourced from supermarkets.

Organic Control Tips – Powdery Mildew

With the warmer humid weather, the powdery mildew has come out in force in my garden. The below tips are from a number of sources and are the culmination of many books on organic gardening:

1. Encourage yellow ladybirds who are natural predators of this problem
2. Don't compost affected leaves
3. Never water the leaves and only water in the morning
4. Liberally spray $\frac{1}{4}$ milk $\frac{3}{4}$ water on both sides of the leaves (until it is actually running off) – does not harm ladybirds
5. Chamomile tea
6. Home made bi-carb remedy - 4 tsp bicarb soda or potassium bicarbonate), 50ml white oil, 4L water (haven't tried yet)
7. Baby wipes that have rubbing alcohol & moisteriser – wipe both sides of the leaves (haven't tried this one yet but am keen to try it).



Featured Vegetable – Tomato

While all the seed packets said that I had to wait until spring, I was able to plant established tomato plants in June/ July in Inala. They have grown to huge proportions (2m+) and we have been getting tomatoes since early September.

While we have had a few problems, the crop didn't seem to be affected too badly and now I know a lot more (I have read four books on organic gardening since then) my new seedlings should be even better.

Well drained soil in full sun (although I am going to try shade over the hotter months) is recommended they are heavy feeders so it is worth digging in some compost and manure. Nematodes can be a problem so it is recommended to rotate your tomato crop.

Most things I have read recommend 60 cm between plants if staked, in saying that I had four in a 2.4m row and will definitely go to at least three next time as they are VERY crowded which doesn't help air circulation and fungus growth.

Staking is definitely recommended, I have a permanent trellis which seems to work well. Most of the Heirloom varieties are 'indeterminate' rather than 'determinate' which means they will grow as high as you allow them to. They need to be watered regularly and can benefit from an application of calcium to avoid 'blossom end' rot.

I can recommend the Green Zebra, and I know that the Tommy Toe has won blind taste tests run by Diggers by a long shot.



Keep tuned for the next issue which will include a number of home made recipes for organic control. If you have any suggestions, articles, comments, advice, feedback or would like to see specific content featured please email me.

Donna McCallum