

Nature Strip Planter Box Program Newsletter

Issue 1



The Trial

Welcome to our first newsletter! We are so excited to bring you updates, tips and stories from our trial participants and share the growing journey.

All of our wonderful Planter Box Gardeners attended a workshop run by Craig Castree before they commenced planting. The feedback from the workshop has been overwhelmingly positive, with residents grateful for Craig's watering and growing advice.

Craig covered off things such as the importance of companion planting and how wicking beds work.

For more information see <https://ediblegarden.webs.com/>



A little bit about wicking beds

Wicking beds are like a great big self-watering pots made from timber crates repurposed to become a wicking bed. The boxes have a waterproof liner that allows the bottom half or more to be filled with stone to form a water reservoir. It can then be filled with soil and planted out.

Growing Tips

A question was received this month from one of happy gardeners which was kindly answered by Craig Castree.

Q. My Tomato leaves have holes so believe that caterpillar or pest on it. Do I need to use pesticide spray?

A. Tomatoes can be susceptible to a caterpillar so you could use a product called “Dipel” it is safe to use on food plants they should follow instruction on the packet. It can be purchased from Garden Feast Nursery or Bunnings.

Home grown stories

M N Ali – Tarneit



“I am very pleased with my homegrown vegies.”

Jenny C - Truganina



Jenny is growing onions, thai basil, lettuce, eggplants, capsicum, Lebanese cucumber, pumpkin and beans

Margaret – Tarneit



“I’ve got lettuce, cucumbers, spring onions, capsicums, tomatoes and basil. I’ve even planted marigolds and another plant with purple flowers to attract the bees”.

Fun in Point Cook



This month we have a planting story from Rishi in Point Cook.

“We are really enjoying growing veggies in the planter box. After the first week since planting the veggies, I haven't watered it. I can still feel the moisture in the soil under the mulch. Also, the rain in the past weeks must have helped the cause. As you can see in the picture, all plants are growing well. In the picture attached, you can see the comparison of the plant growth in 3 weeks since planting. Even my daughter is regularly following the growth of the plants in this planter box, even more than our veggie patch in the backyard.

Craig's instructions during the intro session was invaluable, and following those instructions seem to work well so far. We got our plants from the Garden Feast Nursery. I have also painted the planter box to match my front yard wall colour so that it blends in with the background.

I am looking forward to picking some lettuce and maybe even a strawberry in the coming weeks”.

Dee in Williams Landing shares her tips for planting from seeds



We grow our plants from seeds. We don't spend a fortune to grow good food.

Tips

- Materials: obtain plastic pots, seeds and seedlings cheaply.
- Time needed: 1-2 weeks to germinate. We don't see much new growth while plants are hardening off.
- Location: put them where they will receive early morning sunlight and be shaded as the sun's position changes late in the morning.
- Observation: watch the seedlings closely for signs of drying out.

Prepare to transplant

Our seedlings are hardening off.

Tips

- Watering wisely - for 3 weeks need to water all plants till the wicking effect takes place.
- Feeding Sugar Cane Mulch (Sweet Garden -Organic Sugar Cane Mulch) - to discourage weeds and conserve moisture.
- Providing fertiliser (Yates - Dynamic Lifter Organic Fertiliser) feed the soil with an appropriate amount of our favourite organic fertiliser.

What next?

Now, it's time to observe and monitor plants closely as they grow.

Recipe of the month

Many of our growers seem to be planting tomatoes and capsicum so we thought we would feature a recipe to highlight these 2 delicious savoury delights.

Tomato and capsicum soup



INGREDIENTS

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 brown onion, finely chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, crushed
- 1 medium red capsicum, finely chopped
- 1 (250g) sebago potato, peeled, chopped
- 4 (500g) tomatoes, chopped
- 2 tablespoons no-added-salt tomato paste
- 1L (4 cups) chicken style liquid stock

Method

- **Step 1**

Heat oil in a large saucepan over medium-high heat. Add onion, garlic and capsicum. Cook, stirring occasionally, for 4 to 5 minutes or until onion has softened. Add potato, tomato and tomato paste. Cook, stirring occasionally, for 5 minutes or until tomatoes have softened.

- **Step 2**

Add stock. Cover. Bring to the boil. Reduce heat to low. Simmer for 15 to 20 minutes, stirring occasionally, or until potato is tender.

- **Step 3**

Remove from heat. Cool for 5 minutes. Blend, in batches, until smooth. Return to pan over low heat. Cook for 3 to 4 minutes or until heated through. Season with salt and pepper. Serve with garlic bread