

DAVID STEPHEN'S

with monthly guide by
PETER CUNDALL

ORGANIC GROWING CALENDAR

J U L Y

FRESH FREEZER CABBAGE

If you can't grow cabbage all year round, why not freeze it for out-of-season feasts of coleslaw. This recipe is quick, easy and highly successful.

1. Trim and wash heads; quarter and core; cut the remainder into chunky pieces.
 2. Plunge into boiling water for three minutes.
 3. Cool immediately in ice water.
 4. Place in freezer bag, drawing air from bags before sealing. Freeze at once.
- Reheat long enough to warm through when serving.

SAVE THE POTATO

It is in our interest to keep potato varieties true to type so that they don't disappear through 'degeneration' due to our ignorance. For example, the Brownell variety is typically brown with rough skin and pink buds (eyes) evenly distributed. It tends to be oval in shape. A degenerate version of this variety (allowed to occur through poor selection procedures) is a misshapen smooth skin tuber, with colour tending to red and a reduced number of buds. The danger bells should be ringing when tubers with no buds at all are being produced. At this stage we say that the variety has "run out" or is "lost". This is how some hybrids will meet their demise.

SOIL EROSION

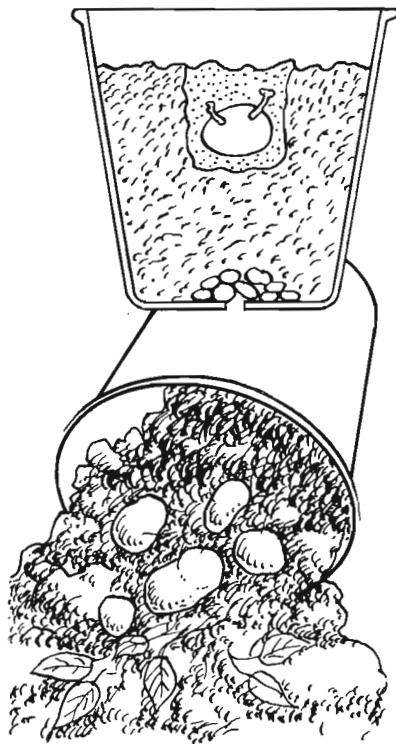
For every tonne of wheat produced, the hidden cost can be between three and sixteen tonnes of topsoil lost forever. In Western Australia we are losing our soil at the rate of an area the size of Rottneest Island every month from salinity alone. Support farmers who care for the land. Buy 'organically-grown' or 'biodynamically-grown' grains from your local wholefood store.

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Plant sets of potato onions, shallots and garlic. Sow long keeping onion seed or in cold, wet districts bring on seedlings under cover for planting out later. Early peas can be planted in frost-free areas. Cold, wet conditions retard growth during this month but green manure can be dug in and badly-drained parts of the garden dealt with. Cover developing cauliflower curds with broken outer leaves to prevent frost browning. Pull out the roots of all brassicas after cutting to avoid diseases such as clubroot. Sow seed under glass, or on a windowsill, for spring seedlings, especially of brassicas. Rough dig vacant beds and lime if needed. Clear all plant debris and compost it. Plant lettuce seedlings on ridges and in cool districts cover them with plastic-bag 'cloches'.

POTATO CROP IN A BUCKET

- Plant a potato in a large bucket and with any luck you should get a bucketful in about four months.
- Do it in the autumn or winter. Spring sowings will need frequent watering which is time consuming.
- Any large container will do but it must have drainage holes in the bottom, or low down on the sides.
- Choose a potato with three plumb buds (eyes).
- When the whole plant dies, tip the bucket over to see how many potatoes you have produced.



A MULTI-GRAFT APPLE TREE

Mr. Dawson Burns, an orchardist of Avro-Park, Devonport, Tasmania, stripped a large Red Delicious tree in 1980 and started grafting other varieties onto it. By 1989 he had reached 230, surely a world record! Grafting wood has been sent from all over the world, including one from U.S.S.R. His commercial orchard has been a tourist attraction for coach tours since 1985. His multi-graft tree is now so big, and bearing so many fruits, that it requires a map to find your way around it. The first apples mature in January and the last one is eaten in August.

FAST FOOD FERTILISING

The use of liquid fertiliser for houseplants and container-grown crops is taken for granted these days, but for row crops and perennials organic gardening purists avoid them, preferring instead solid fertilizers such as rock dusts and manures.

Many of our modern cultivars have been bred to respond to high analysis soluble fertilizers. To equal the remarkable yields of the chemicalised crops, we may need to apply a liquid fertiliser - when solid foods are in short supply - to stimulate big yields and rapid growth to justify the space being used. Broccoli, Brussels sprouts, kale, celery and lettuce are crops that are likely to get some fast food in my garden.

Liquid foods purchased off the shelf (e.g. seaweed extract) or home-made in a drum of water can be used very economically as a foliar spray around the vegetable/fruit garden. Nutrients are absorbed through the leaves, within one hour.

TOXIC COCKTAIL THREAT

According to 'The Green Lifestyle Handbook', in a western city of 1.5 million residents, 50 tonnes of toilet bowl cleaner and 200 tonnes of liquid household cleaners make their way into the sewage stream each month! How much ends up in drinking water is a moot point. What to do with proprietary household cleaners? Use them up then stock up with 'green' alternatives: baking soda, borax, salt, lemon juice, vegetable oil, soda water and vinegar. Children may be particularly vulnerable to chemical fumes. They inhale more air per kilogram of body weight than adults. Also, pollutants are generally heavier than air and collect closer to the floor so small children breathe greater concentrations than do grown-ups.

IMPROVED NEWSPAPER MULCHING

By leaving stacks of folded newspaper outside to age in a dark, shaded environment, they become more functional as summer mulching material. An otherwise useless narrow strip between fence and shed wall, exposed to rain and snow, is ideal for dumping newspapers and folded cardboard cartons in piles 30-50cm high. Pre-wetted newspapers can be ready in 4-6 months, otherwise expect to wait 8-12 months for the decomposers to penetrate right through. When used during summer, daily editions up to 50 pages thick can be placed around tomatoes etc. and stay in place without anchorage. Camouflage them if desired with leaves, grass clippings, weeds, bark etc. Overhead irrigation travels right this porous papier mache. What is left at summer's end can be raked up and added to the compost bin.