

Everything grows better with TLC

## NEWSLETTER - DECEMBER 2013



### TLCG ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

A great roll up of 30 or so members at the AGM last Saturday.

The Presidents ponderings and Finance reports were circulated and discussed and then a very useful hour or so of members discussion took place.

We contemplated:

- working bees and how to make them more effective with allocated areas and volunteers on a monthly basis
- key projects for 2014
- our greenhouse
- berm rejuvenation
- some fencing
- a sound barrier for talks re the highway noise
- 2 monthly workshops
- our worm farms
- composting
- seedling sales
- water usage over the site and solar power.

Detail will come out in the minutes in due course.

Winnie is also looking into a “dropbox” where ideas for the garden can be added in on line.

And Tina is looking into some external visits we might make to other gardens and sites of interest next year.

Julie Antill was elected to the management committee.

A productive and interesting meeting.



*A very  
Merry Christmas  
and a wonderful  
New Year*



For recipe see Betty Crocker website

# RHUBARB

Rhubarb, is it a vegetable or a fruit? What you can be sure of is that it is great with apples in a pie or a crumble, is easy to grow and keeps growing for many years.

It has been used in China for at least 2000 years as a herbal medicine and arrived in Europe around 200 years ago. It is more suited to cold climates but varieties have been developed that suit our Sydney temperatures. It's too late to plant crowns at this time but good to plan ahead and make sure the ground is well prepared for planting crowns from May to early spring. It is possible to grow rhubarb from seed but it takes 3 years before you can harvest it so crowns are a much better option.

There are green and red varieties to choose from and, while they are both tasty, the red is said to be sweeter and has a longer harvest period, while the green-stemmed varieties die down completely in winter. The green varieties will not turn red over time so if you want red rhubarb you have to make sure it has red stalks on the crown when you buy it. Try to choose crowns which have at least two eyes or buds and avoid any that are shrivelled and dry.

Location is most important. Rhubarb plants have enormous leaves and in our powerful sunlight the plants can wilt dramatically during sunny weather. Plant in part shade, especially out of the afternoon sun and give it a good start with good enriched soil and plenty of manure. After it's planted go easy on the manure until the end of the first growing season, after that it's impossible to over feed rhubarb with manure, compost and fertilizer. Watering in Spring and Summer is very important but remember to really soak around the base as light overhead watering will encourage flowers which should be removed if they do appear.

It's best not to harvest during the first season or, if you can't resist, very lightly. When it is time to harvest it's important not to cut the stalks but pull them gently down towards the base, the same way you harvest silverbeet.



A couple of not gum nut, but rhubarb babies, and cuties at that !

Best not to cook rhubarb in aluminium saucepans as the oxalic acid in the stems dissolves the protective layer normally found on these saucepans, forming a poisonous compound called aluminium oxalate. Stems can be stored for up to five days in the fridge or frozen in small pieces. Before freezing, heat in boiling water for 1 minute, rinse under cold water and drain.

In Britain, rhubarb is grown commercially throughout the year, in fields during the summer and in winter is grown in sheds that were completely dark, forcing the stems to grow looking for light. This 'forcing' is also said to produce a more tender rhubarb. In the cooler parts of Australia some people cover their rhubarb plants with large pots for the same reason.

Remember, while the stalks of the rhubarb are delicious, the leaves are very poisonous. However, the leaves can be boiled up with soap and water to make an effective insecticide to control insects like caterpillars. There are lots of easy to make insecticide recipes on the web.

So, plan to leave a little space for a rhubarb plant next Autumn.

*By Janet Pollock*

*You may enjoy this clip about forcing rhubarb which was part of a television series.*  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kzq9TxL\\_OTs](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kzq9TxL_OTs)

*I have drawn on the wise words of Peter Cundall in the 'Weekly Times Now' for some of the above and, as he would say "That's your blooming lot".*

# RAINFALL



NOVEMBER: 238MM

Thanks to Janet and Ian Pollock for taking the rainfall readings at the garden!

## INCREASING THE FRAGRANCE OF THYME

Thyme becomes more fragrant:

- in mid to late summer when it is flowering
  - when grown in a hot climate
- when grown on poor soil without excess nitrogen
  - if not given too much water
    - if kept in a sunny spot
- if grown, according to folklore, with chamomile or parsley

# EVENTS

## December 7th

9:00 am – 12:00 noon

Working Bee

5pm till dark

TLC Garden 2013 Christmas BBQ

For Members, family and friends

## December 14th

9:00 am – 12:00 noon

Working Bee

## December 21st

9:00 am – 12:00 noon

Working Bee

## December 28th

9:00 am – 12:00 noon

Working Bee

**WE LOOK FORWARD TO YOUR ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT!**



## GREENHOUSE

After receiving the good news that we have received \$4,500 from the Councils Environmental Levy Grants, and \$1,000 from Turramurra Community Bank, coupled with around \$2,500 of our funds, we will be in a position to purchase our Greenhouse.

Quotes are being obtained relative to the site preparation and installation, which we will also need to fund.

## DID YOU KNOW?

Growing carrots in stony ground can result in twisted and distorted roots, while shallow, compacted soil tends to force carrots skyward, turning the exposed portion of the root green.

## DID YOU KNOW?

Coriander is rich in micronutrients and nutritional elements. It contains dietary fibre, vitamins and minerals like calcium, magnesium, sodium and potassium. Aside from being used in cooking, coriander leaves and seeds strengthen the stomach, reduce fever and lower cholesterol levels.



## THINGS WE LOVE TO EAT

### CARROT & CORIANDER SOUP

#### Ingredients:

- 1kg carrots
- 1 tbsp olive oil or 1 tbsp butter, or a mixture
- 1.2 litres water or meat or vegetable stock
- 4 tsp chopped fresh coriander
- freshly ground pepper
- sea salt
- 4 tsp sour cream to garnish

1. Peel the carrots and cut into chunks
2. In a large saucepan, heat the oil or butter, add the carrots and cook gently for a few minutes
3. Add the water or stock, bring to boil, cover, reduce the heat and simmer for 15 minutes
4. Using a blender or food processor, liquidise the carrots and cooking liquid with the coriander, reserving a few leaves for the garnish. season to taste and a whirl of sour cream

#### Variations

- Use the same method to make a fennel or beetroot soup
- Replace the coriander with other fresh herbs, such as dill, chives, lemon thyme or fennel





TLC Garden 2013 Christmas BBQ  
For Members, family and friends

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**Date:** Saturday 7 December 2013

**Time:** 5pm till dark

**Location:** TLC Garden

**Things to bring for yourself:**

- Meat for the BBQ
- Drinks
- Plates, cutlery, cups etc

**Food to bring to share:**

- Nibbles
- Bread
- Salads
- Dessert



**Please talk to Anna about:**

- What share-food you'd like to bring
- If you need a lift to or from the garden

[anna.chubb@gmail.com](mailto:anna.chubb@gmail.com) 0402 656 469



## RODNEY MASLOVSKY

I am Sydney born but most of my time growing up was between Sydney and Newcastle. I spent a few years in the early 1990's living in Turrumurra as a teenager attending St Leos (Wahroonga) and St Josephs (Hunters Hill).

I have been living on the north shore since 1999, and with my wife since 2001, we built our house in Turrumurra which was completed 2009, unfortunately our house is in a valley surrounded with bush so attempting to grow anything productive is impossible due to lack of sunlight, some herbs have been able to grow around the house but they grow very slowly and usually get attacked by the wildlife. Hence the Garden at TLC is so useful.

My father, father in law and brother in law are keen backyard gardeners, and

with many of the plants I grow the seeds are from them. They all concentrate on growing vegetables with many varieties sourced from central and eastern Europe, Prior to the war my grandparents were professional farmers in East Prussia concentrating mainly with livestock, but this land was lost due to border changes and the family was resettled in West Germany where the government allocated a small block of land (approx. 1200square meters). Half of this land was used by my grandfather to grow vegetables, fruits and berries as well as poultry and rabbits (bred especially for eating). I spent many Summers during the 1980's there as a kid watching him tend his garden. It was his commitment to organisation and planning of his garden that lead my grandparents to be almost fully self-sufficient well into their late 80's. For me this is my main inspiration to learn productive gardening.

With my small plot at TLC I tend to concentrate on yield so I will look at ensuring all the space is best utilised. But I need to be careful not to over crowd as this will affect yield as well,

My wife is a professional chef so all the produce is well used in the dishes she prepares, the taste difference when using fresh herbs and produce is always welcome.

I was lucky to be involved with the garden fairly early on, and it has been rewarding seeing the changes over the past three and half years.



## HERBAL INSECT REPELLENT

With summer here mosquitoes, sand-flies and midges can make their unwelcome presence felt.

To protect my skin I make up a very simple herbal mix, consisting of

I use, witchhazel as a base with a few drops of the essential oils of lemon myrtle oil and lavender oil.

This needs to be well shaken before use.

I find this to be very effective and it smells pleasant.



I apply it to my skin both before going outside, or after being bitten.

Witchhazel among other things is not expensive and is easy to use.

It is good to use on bruises as long as the skin is not broken. It has an astringent and anti-inflammatory action too.

Lavender is an excellent antiseptic and is soothing.

The lemon myrtle (an Australian Native Rainforest tree *Backhousia citriodora*) has anti-fungal, anti-microbial and antiseptic properties. It is strongly perfumed and blends pleasantly with the Lavender.

Take care not to get in the eyes.

I enjoy using this herbal remedy.

*Janet Fairlie-Cuninghame.*

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## THE WONDERS OF WORM WEE

Here is some useful information taken from a number of websites about the benefits of Worm Wee:

**WHAT IS WORM WEE?**

**A COMPLETE PLANT FOOD ON ITS OWN OR AS A SUPPLEMENT TO OTHER FERTILISERS.**

Worm Wee is a by-product of nature in liquid form. Worm Wee is rich in good nitrogen fixing bacteria plus readily available liquid minerals and trace elements for immediate uptake.

**WHAT MAKES WORM JUICE WORK?**

Worm Juice provides a wealth of nutrients and minerals (over 60 different elements

providing many of the requirements of your plants). It is the enzyme in the worm's digestive systems that allows all the nutrients and trace elements to become water soluble, therefore readily available for plant life.

**WHAT WORM WEE IS NOT!!!!**

Worm Wee is not a NPK fertiliser. Whilst it contains some Nitrogen, Phosphorous and Potassium its major strength lies in its biological activity and complex range of other nutrients and minerals. Plants need more than NPK to grow well and you should maintain your normal fertiliser program. Remember, the value of Worm Wee is in the millions of beneficial bacteria that start work in your soil and on your plants as soon as it is applied.

## WHY DOES A PRE-SOWING APPLICATION AND SOAKING SEEDS AND SEEDLINGS OF WORM WEE HELP?

Worm Wee stimulates the microbial activity in the soil, giving a healthy environment for the plants to be sown.

Bacteria and microbes help in the uptake of nutrients from the soil and atmosphere, free of charge. The increased microbial activity in the soil aids the release of "locked up" nitrogen and other nutrients, thus helping the development of vigorous roots. It is also very effective to soak seeds in worm wee for an hour or two before planting to promote germination. Also, washing seedling roots in a bucket of 1 part worm wee to 5 parts water will assist in the early growth stage and help prevent transplant shock.



## WHY DOES FOLIAR SPRAYING WITH WORM WEE HELP?

Worm Wee applied as a foliar spray encourages quick natural growth and significantly aids plant health. It encourages cell division and strengthens the natural defence mechanism against fungal disease. It stimulates flowering and fruit set and improves the uptake of high NPK fertilisers. If possible, avoid application during the middle of the day, especially in summer, as plants will not be able to

extract all of the nutrients effectively at this time. But remember to leave 2/3 weeks between spraying and harvesting.

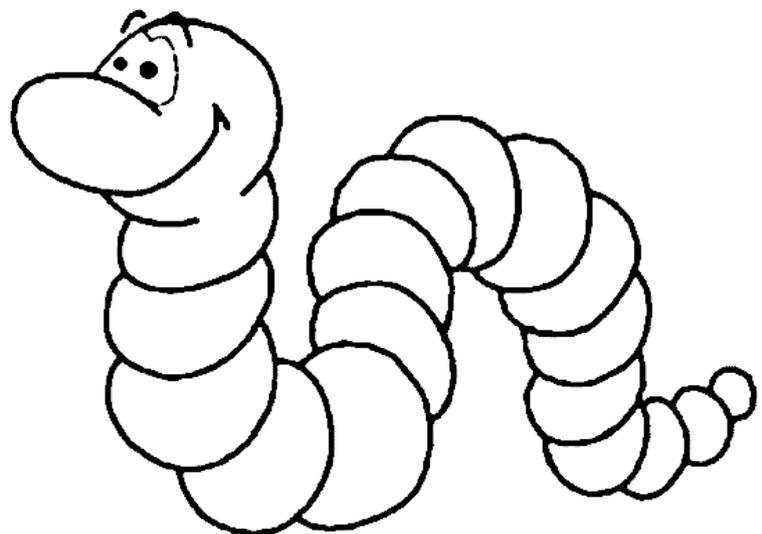
## HOW IS WORM WEE MIXED AND AT WHAT RATES?

**PLANT FOOD:** 1 part worm wee to 8 or 10 parts water. Apply around base of plant. Repeat in about 6 weeks and again in about 3 months for maximum effect.

**SOIL & FOLIAGE ACTIVATOR:** Stir 100 mls of Worm Wee into 5 ltrs of water and apply to plant foliage or around base of plant. Repeat in 6 weeks and again in about 3 months for maximum effect.

*Prepared by Janet and Ian Pollock  
TLC Garden  
May 2012*

And many thanks to Sebastian for the regular worm wee supplies



# PHOTO ALBUM



Preparing the site for the water tank.



The berm gets some serious attention.



And what a lovely dinner we had to finish the day off.

