

THE COLLEGE GARDENER

By Thomas Green



Winter is well under way now, the trees are mostly bare, and the depression following semester one results presents a great opportunity to get into the garden! Now is the time to plant bare-root fruit and ornamental trees, and though living in college can restrict your options, a few well-placed trees are not impossible. There are plenty of green spaces around college buildings, and all you need are a few friends, some torches, a crow bar and a few bags of cow shit. It's best to get out there at 2am (when the ANU Security changeover occurs) and get digging. Last year some B&G green thumbs planted a whole grove of Witch Hazels (*Himemalis Virginiana*) – thirty-five trees in an hour – and this year they are looking fantastic. Don't let ANU By-Laws hold you back: we need more trees! As Paul Keating famously described the left: 'Balmian basket-weavers whose idea of economics is wider nature strips, more trees and eating your own shit.' For those of you who don't live in college: either leave it to your parents (they'll not appreciate you fiddling with their 'bush-capital', water-wise, social-democrat garden); or check with the landlord and keep plenty of open space for September bonfires.

If you don't feel like planting trees, you can still garden. Pot[ted] plants can suit almost any situation and they lend to living spaces that je ne sais quoi we all know. You'll need: a plant, and a pot. As for plants, there are quite a few to choose from, and the same goes for pots. Some advice for particular situations:

John XXIII College: any plants in this vicinity must be very tolerant of urea (we know John's boys have a habit of uncontrollable bladders in both public areas and beds). In fact, urea has long been used as an herbicide. Peas are very tolerant of urea, so perhaps consider Early Crop Massey or, if you have lattice in your room, try Climbing 'Telephone'.

Burgmann College: judging by the latest online pictures of the 'Burg Garden', there might not be any point persisting with plants. As of September last year, when the beds should have been bursting with life, there were lots of rocks. Nothing else. Perhaps Burgmann folk should admit defeat and each invest in miniature Zen sand-with-rake 'gardens' for their desktops. Most junk-stores have them for a few dollars. You guys are good at other things!

Burton & Garran Hall: I don't want to be critical, but three *Cannabis Indica* plants per room? The plants of the *Cannabis* genus are WEEDS (hence the name!) so there's no green-thumb kudos in keeping three alive under your bed. Try something new! Though it won't chemically alleviate the sadness of being a misunderstood nouveau-bohemian, grow something else! Break the trend!

You'll need to water the plant (even at John's) and give it some sunlight. Try to make these regular: at least at every Centrelink payment.

As we approach spring, one must consider pest-control in the garden. This always reignites the ages-old battle over chemicals in the garden. On one side we have the Herbal-Socialist-Organic-Carbon-Neutral camp. On the other side we have the I-Have-A-Spray-For-Everything camp. This debate also enlightens other areas of gardening thought.

The Herbal-Socialist-Organic-Carbon-Neutrals: these tie-died folks follow the example of their hippie parents (or selves) and know that chemicals upset the natural balance created by Mother Nature. To encourage other beings (they eschew the pejorative term 'pest') away from the plants of which one is custodian, one only needs an open heart and some essential oils. Rather than spraying the oils (which betrays a distinctly colonial mindset) one simply empowers the oils through clay burners placed throughout the garden. For precise placement of the burners, one must first review the garden's chakra. These gardeners use only organic fertilisers, such as cow or sheep manure, and often talk amongst themselves about the wonderful smell one can enjoy whilst applying these manures. They are the kind of people who espouse limited bathing and conditional toilet-flushing as solutions to Australia's lingering droughts.

The I-Have-A-Spray-For-Everythings: these precision-shaved and laserderm-ed citizens don't have any truck with emotional gardening. Gardens should be places of either aesthetic purity (they like formal as a style though they don't like it to seem 'fussy') or a good way to save on grocery bills: anything else is lefty-pinko rubbish. As Engineering and Commerce graduates, they invariably prefer paved or concreted areas (a good way to pick the houses of members of this group) and like their gardening to be low-maintenance, outcomes-oriented, user-friendly and customer-focused. Another way to pick a member of this group is, when in a garden store, to listen out for "What spray can I buy to fix this?", or "Can I use product X on this problem?". They have been accused of seeing gardening as a 'problem-solving' exercise, which is unfair. They simply want to know the quickest way to get the yard looking like all the other yards in the area. As for pest control, their Colourbond® shed is full of products for every possible problem. Returning to their fondness of formal-style gardens, one notes that they see it as a flexible organisational framework. Hence, they can create gardens such as: formal-Balinese, formal-Modern, formal-Entertaining, formal-Aspirational, formal-Relaxed-and-Comfortable, formal-Aussie-Values, formal-Water-Feature, formal-Post-9-11 and many, many more. The most important things to remember are that a garden is a product that one purchases, that it costs a fair whack, that one suffers it for the sake of the kids and the missus, and that there's no problem in it that can't be fixed with a spray.

Vitis Vinifera: The latest on the [ornamental] grape vine:

Following the recent publication in *The Earth Garden* of allegations that Chinese-grown Garlic is fertilized with human excrement, all hell has broken loose in Canberra. Whilst similar rumours have been swirling amongst middle-aged herbal socialists since the late 1980s, the recent publication was the first to present any evidence. With his usual aplomb, Senator Bill Heffernan was heard to say that "The fucking Chinks have always been shitting on their food; they did it in China, they do it in fucking Chinatown, and they fucking do it at the Jade Lamp in June. I don't care what Warren fucking Truss says about trade, Australians deserve shit-free food, and Australian garlic farmers deserve a fair fucking go. How would the Chinese like it if

I went and shitted all over fucking Australian wool before it got exported to China?" John Howard was much more circumspect, saying that he thought the science was still out on Garlic-Scat (as it has become known in Canberra), but roundly criticised Kevin Rudd for kowtowing to Chinese pressure and refusing to rule out a pre-emptive strike against any Chinese farms shown to be harbouring Garlic-Scatters. Kevin Rudd, for his part, said that the Chinese agricultural industry had thrown the rights of garlic consumers out the back door, and that the Chinese nation faced a fork in the road. Whilst accepting the notion, put forward by China's Ambassador Mr Zhang, that Garlic-Scatting might increase productivity, Kevin Rudd said that the general trend was still downwards. John Stanhope criticized calls for a boycott on Chinese Garlic as racist, adding "Give me an example of any racist action anywhere in the world that has ever successfully led to change."

That's it for this issue. Don't miss next issue – a special report about campus Christian groups and their anger over the notices in campus toilets claiming that 100% of garden bed fires are the result of cigarette butts. They contend that it is intolerant of their beliefs not to include the possibility that the fires are caused by divinely ignited burning bushes. See you in the garden!
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