Organic Backyard Standard, Version 22.03.17 by Lyttleton Stores

Welcome to the Lyttleton Backyard Growers! This is a group of local community members who have a passion for home grown produce and a love for gardening. The group is a way to network with others who share the same passions and a great way to share the knowledge of growing in the Blue Mountains, where a variety of growing conditions are presented throughout the Blue Mountains.

As a Lyttleton Backyard Grower, you have an amazing opportunity to trade your excess garden produce in the Pantree Store. This means sharing the lovely produce you grow at home, and receiving store credit in return for your labour of love.

The following document outlays the practises that are encouraged to grow in association with 'organic growing methods'. This is an important aspect of being a Backyard Grower as we don't want to sell produce that has been sprayed by nasty chemicals, or grown in soils containing unnecessary synthetic fertilizers. The idea of growing 'organically' is better not only for us humans, but also for the environment we garden in.

We hope the following points both reinforce your knowledge and provide you with a few things you might not know.

Fertilizers and soil health

The main reason for fertilization is to feed your plants with minerals they need so they grow strong and healthy. Plants require different amounts of elements you might know about, and also plenty you don't. They exist in the soil in various amounts and are bound to particles in the soil.

Soil contains an enormous workforce of bacteria, fungi and other insects that eat, dig and increase the availability of the elements for plants. So in fact, when you fertilize your garden you are feeding the soil, eg the workforce that you and your plants are dependent on for healthy growth.

When you feed the 'soil workforce' with synthetic fertilizers and other manufactured products, these contain the required elements in an already available form. This is not ideal for two reasons, the first is that the plants can directly access these elements (almost like 'plant junk food'). This will cause the plant to grow well, but only until the laws of physics mean water pushes the product through your soil until the plants can no longer reach it, and this is where the nutrients enter ground water supplies. The second reason that 'plant junk food' isn't great for use in the garden, is because the 'soil workforce' will become sick from the chemicals included in these products. The soil workforce is the most precious part of

any garden, so protecting them is the best way to ensure a happy and abundant garden.

This can be achieved by considering the 'soil workforce', before considering your own production needs and wants. The soil workforce is the oldest workforce on Earth and so they are resilient, diverse and masters of life on the land. You can harness their potential with just three easy steps:

- Compost!!
  Composting is the oldest practise for recycling nutrients in a food garden situation, where old vegetative material is taken at the end of its life cycle in one area and used at the start of another cycle. There are many methods of composting, which are discussed below in composting notes.

- Mulch!
  Mulching is like applying a sun protection for the soil. Leaving your soil exposed to nature's elements will greatly reduce the fertility and durability of your food garden area. There are lots of options when you are planning to mulch, and some will suit your specific situation better than others. This means considering your growing context, followed by a little trial and error is the best approach.

- Do No Harm!
  It is a common practise for humans to dig, rake and mechanically disturb soil in as many ways as possible these days. Though soil is an incredible ecosystem for the workforce living amongst it. This requires careful treatment of their habitat to ensure they thrive and therefore benefiting your plants!

Best practice: Composted animal manure, cover crops, worm castings & tea, compost tea, weed tea, composted plant material, kelp meal and other collected seaweeds, living mulch crops, mushroom compost

Allowed practice: rock minerals such as high-calcium ag-lime and dolomitic limestone, commercial seaweed tea, fish emulsion, grain meal, blood & bone

Prohibited practice: synthetic fertilizers, chemically produced minerals including quicklime & sugarlime, ash from burned manure, compost with black waste (sewage).

Composting notes:

There are many ways you can recycle nutrients from your kitchen and garden into forms that are available to the plant. You can keep compost worms in worm farms, old bathtubs and many other DIY methods. You can compost your kitchen scraps, garden cuttings and weeds by composting in a variety of ways. Composting is either seen as an activity that is too hard or a waste of time. Animal products must be from good source of healthy naturally raised animals.
Composted animal materials must be heated to 65C over approximately 14 days. Turning the pile every 2-3 days to add air to the pile aids the digestion of organic materials. After the 14 days there shouldn't be anything in the pile that is recognisable from its original state. Let the pile rest and turn occasionally over a further 10 weeks. Turning is only necessary for adding oxygen between the particles in your compost. This is to avoid the creation of an anaerobic environment, which will introduce pathogens to the compost. , including prior to making a tea. Composted plant materials must be heated to above 55C over three days turning at least 2 times.

Pest & Diseases control

It might come as a surprise to some people that we share our space with others that we're unfamiliar with. These others have the same instinctual need to survive as we do, and this means they're probably going to eat, drink and live somewhere. When you are keeping a food garden, it can be hard to see that the plants we're caring for have become food, drink or something else's home.

It's difficult to not reach for the first easy solution you find, these days that means grabbing a pesticide, fungicide or herbicide. These chemical solutions are not only a band-aid fix. They are costly, unnecessary, kill many beneficial insects and fungi (including bees) and can be harmful to your health.

As with anything in the natural world, if something is noticeable, it is generally indicative of an external and broader cause. this requires an assessment and understanding of lots of parts of the area you're working in. Pests and disease are usually a sign that there is something not quite right with your food garden. So when dealing with this type of issue, there are lots of approaches you can take.

Best practice: companion planting, egg shells, coffee grounds & copper tape for snails & slugs, plant derived repellents like neem, caraway oil, seed fennel, chilli, garlic, tea tree oil, eucalyptus oil, pure organic soap flakes, solar powered territorial diversions (fake white moths), sticky traps, most importantly is to have a healthy garden with healthy soil and a healthy diverse equilibrium of bugs.

Allowed practice: Biological and Microbial products, diatomaceous earth (algae), pyrethrum (Chrysanthemum), corn gluten, cassia plant bark and wood, equisetum (horsetail), ryania stems, cholecalciferol (vitamin D), pheromone traps, DiPel

Prohibited practice: synthetic insecticides, synthetic fungicides, synthetic miticides, synthetic parasiticides, synthetic herbicides, detergent based soaps, rotenone, synthetic wetting agents, Tobacco products, heavy metal pesticides, boric acid, snail

bait

Wildlife

Wildlife is the most invaluable addition to incorporate into your growing system. The benefits nature will provide you, when you use it respectfully, will outway any laborious technique you use in your garden. Keep in mind, you want to have a good time when gardening, not working yourself too hard. When you invite wildlife into your space, it will provide you with pollination, pest control, mulching services and adds to the overall aesthetic to your space. You're also doing the wildlife a favour by providing a safe haven from the spread of humans, which means less areas where wildlife are able to roam.

Best practice: adequate fencing/netting, kinetic deterrent like scarecrows, fake snakes, shiny things like tinsel or cd's hung in trees,

Allowed practice: trap and relocation for larger animals like possums, high frequency sound deterrent,

Prohibited practice: unlawful culling of wildlife

Weed control

Best practice: thermophilic composting (hot composting) of weeds, commercial straw from a certified organic source, dried grass clippings and leaves, living mulch/ ground cover plants e.g. roman chamomile, chickweed or miner's lettuce, natural fibre weed matting, chook-tractor, weeding/ mowing – utilise clippings into compost

Allowed practice: vegetable ink printed papers such as newspaper and flattened cardboard boxes, local straw from an organic/wild/neglected paddock, plastic weed matting

Prohibited practice: coloured ink, gloss or petrochemical wax paper/cardboard, carpet, chemical weed killers such as Round'Up,

Seed Raising

Best practise: raising your own seedlings from Australian, non-GMO, non-hybrid, open-pollinated seeds with no chemical treatment is encouraged. Using coco-peat over peat moss is also recommended as a more environmentally sustainable seed raising option. Making your own seed raising mix is best (this a good recipe: https://www.milkwood.net/2015/05/11/how-to-make-best-ever-seed-raising-mix/).

Allowed practise: Sourcing seedlings locally from markets, commercial seed raising mix, perlite (puffed volcanic rock). Substituting perlite with biochar is recommended as a more environmentally sustainable option.

Prohibited practice: Avoid chemically treated seedlings and seeds (from commercial hardware stores).

References: Allowed & Prohibited substances of CNG, 2015, Biodynamic Gardening by Monty Waldon, Gardening South of Australia by Steve Solomon,

Lyttleton Stores' Organic Backyard Grower Registration Form

Name:

Garden Address:

Business Name: (optional)

Australian Business Number: (optional)

Available seasonal produce:

Phone Number:

Email:

Would you be interested in giving one of us a garden tour? Y / N (optional)

We value gardens that are loved, even if a little wild at times, and worked in a safe and healthy organic practice. We don't mind what style of gardener you are: organic, biodynamic, traditional, permaculture or other – it is up to you. We do value transparency in terms of allowed and prohibited substances, so if there is anything on the above list that you would like to discuss please contact Manu and Cam via email at garden@lyttletonstores.com.au or by telephone on a Mondays, Thursdays or Fridays.

Tell us a bit about your gardening practice please:

Backyard Grower Registration Frequently Asked Questions

How long will the registration approval process take?
We will be in touch with you via phone and/or email to arrange a visit to your garden. Our garden coordinators Cam and/or Manu will come and visit your garden within a few weeks of your application according to your availability. We will then let you know via email if your registration has been approved.

Can I bring produce into the shop before the registration process is completed?
Unfortunately, we will only be able to accept produce once you are a registered backyard grower. We will send you appropriate information about harvesting and bringing produce in once your registration has been approved.

How can I find out more about growing food organically?
We have a bi-monthly food growers meet-up at Lyttleton Stores where you can meet other backyard growers, swap seeds and cuttings, and ask Cam and Manu any questions. There will be a guest speaker on different topics at each meet up. You can also follow our garden blog on www.lyttletonstores.com.au/blog where you will find loads of information on growing chemical-free food.

How will I be paid for my produce?
All organic backyard produce is swapped for store credit, which can be utilised in any part of Lyttleton Stores. If you wish to be a grower who is paid in money, you will need to provide an invoice have an ABN. If this is the case, please contact Jacinta Carmichael-Parissi to discuss becoming a supplier.

NOTE: We are not allowed to take backyard eggs, which is very sad, but we don't want to go against NSW regulations. We reserve the right to refuse poor quality produce, and may at times need to change the buying price – which will be up to you as to if you'd like to continue with the sale.