

# GREEN PZ NEWSLETTER

December 2009/January 2010 | Issue 7



## Hi Friends of Green Pz (Pronounced peas!)

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

It is indeed the month of goodwill here at the community garden project. We have a lot to celebrate. Our first lettuces grown in the nursery and, planted out in the community garden were made available for distribution to the Foodbank in this last week. That is sooooo exciting. What a fabulous effort by our committee, volunteers and supporters and such an encouragement to see all the hard work and enthusiasm come to a successful result. We have been indeed fortunate to be so well supported again this month. Eastbay Bark Company gave us a huge helping hand with 10m<sup>3</sup> of compost for the garden and some potting mix for the nursery, which really got everything growing. The nursery at the back of KEA is starting to look like a real nursery now and we are indebted to Deans Garden Services and KEA for supporting this essential part of the project. We have had some budding young helpers growing seeds from Nga Ririki Early Learning Centre, and also the Kawerau Cubs and Keas planting several hundred beans for transplanting in the gardens. Many of the items that we asked for and needed have been donated, so a huge thanks to those that have given their time and resources.

In the garden, we have had some fabulous support from the Kawerau Conservation Corps and the Team from the House of Hope who make our volunteers feel very welcome. If anyone wants to get involved please make contact through KEA and come and check us out. We had a morning tea at the House of Hope on Friday 18 December for those curious about what's happening and seeing the actual gardens and helping out.

## HINTS FOR THE MONTH OF DECEMBER:

December and January are months of rapid growth in the garden. Keep the garden well watered to minimize stress and keep those newly transplanted seedlings actively growing. When young plants get stressed, they are prone to pests and diseases and bolting to seed. Even after the recent rain I found things had dried out quickly so try and check watering requirements at least every other day. Keep up the planting and sowing. I have had several people ask if it is too late to plant such things as tomatoes and corn now. Absolutely not! We enjoy a long



*Nga Ririki Early Learning Centre helping Tracy grow some seeds and do some potting at the Community Gardens nursery.*

gardening season so continue planting and sowing all your favourite crops.

### Sow:

Sow seeds directly into the soil: Beans, beetroot, carrots, mesculin mix, parsnip, peas, potatoes, swedes, turnips, radish, spinach, lettuce, silver beet, and sweet corn. Make successive sowings every two weeks.

Plant seedlings of lettuce, basil, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, celery, spinach, spring onions, tomato, kumara, onions, sweet corn, beetroot, pumpkin, squash, courgette, capsicum, eggplant, melons, cucumber and gherkin.

Plant any of the summer flowering annuals now too. Many of them are fabulous planted among the veges to attract the bees and other beneficial insects.

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### What to do:

Feed tomatoes weekly and pinch out laterals on a fine day. Try and keep lower foliage off the ground. If at all possible avoid overhead watering and water directly onto the soil around the root zone.

Side dress all plants that are looking a little bit pecky with additional fertilizer as they will be using lots of energy and nutrients for growing. Regular fertilising is a job that's often neglected but it can make an amazing difference to a plant's state of health and its growth rate particularly on our light volcanic soil. The gardens that look the best locally are usually those that have been fed regularly, as often as weekly. Liquid feeding with seaweed or comfrey tea will do wonders. Dilute to the colour of weak tea and apply with a watering can.

Garlic is usually lifted on the shortest day but can begin to be harvested earlier if mature. Leave the whole plants outside in the sun for a few fine days to dry and cure. If it looks like rain, put them under cover in an airy place.

Watch out for caterpillars, particularly on your brassicas. Summer is their favourite time of year. I noticed a great natural product in our supermarket this week that I tried last year and it seemed to be very effective. At the community garden we had some early problems with slugs and snails and now we are having some issues with bronze beetle. These can usually be spotted at night so if something is munching your veges and you can't find it during the day these could be the culprits. We are trying another natural product for this so have a chat with us if you need assistance.

Don't forget to put in more potatoes. I have been scouting about for last season's potatoes in the shops and in the bottom of friends and family members pantries with much fervour and anything that is developing an eye (sprout) is fair game since the new season potatoes aren't ideal for using as seed for growing a late crop. I have my old potatoes sprouting around all the windowsills ready to pop in the garden when a space comes up. You don't have to be too precious about planting them in rows. Just plant them in a gap with the eyes upwards and mound them up once the first leaves appear and you are on your way.

Resist the urge to cut your lawn short in the hot weather. For some reason this seems to be mainly an issue with the men in our lives and gardens. The short back and sides approach puts a lot of additional stress on the lawn and most often even very regular sprinkling can't keep up with the water requirements, which in turn create additional

nutrient requirements. These same men won't hear of fertilizing every week in case it increases the mowing, so the lawn quickly becomes stressed under this regime, and bare and thin patches develop which in turn become infested with fast growing broadleaf and Onehunga weed. These same men then have to then go out and spray the lawn to remove the prickles for the kids and grandkids; but will they listen when you ask them not to cut the lawn so short – no they just can't seem to help themselves..

Pinch out tips of basil when plants are about 20cm tall to bush out the plants.

Lettuce leaves and celery can be harvested gently from the outside of the plants to extend their production just take care not to pull on the plant roots.

Mesculin seed mix comes into its own now as it is ready for harvest in just a couple of weeks. Make a finely raked seed bed or put into a deep tray. A piece of shade cloth over the top for a few days will help germination if the weather is really hot. Remember that lettuce need some light to germinate. You can cut with scissors usually within 2 weeks. Leave a couple of centimetres of growth above the soil and you will be able to harvest subsequent crops.



*Sharon Heke from the House of Hope with Roger at the Community Gardens.*

#### Community Gardens

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## What's happening in my patch?

Well my best crop would have to be my Swift potatoes (ready in just 60 days). I thought they might have some dreaded virus when they started yellowing and going a bit dull, but it was just that they were ready to harvest. I couldn't believe my luck and we have been enjoying freshly dug new potatoes each evening. Following on from them has been the Jersey Bennies, not so many potatoes produced per seed, but equally delicious with lashings of butter and freshly ground sea salt.

My Trade Me addiction has been justified once again this month with the purchase of Jerusalem artichokes, and comfrey; both of which are perennials and therefore long term investments. I also bought a "Please shut the gate, free range chickens" sign. Mysteriously (or not so) it has just so happened to have disappeared. Funny that... Way too uncool I suspect for a particular image conscious, "the world revolves around me" teenager. Just as well I also bought a Himalayan Salt Lamp which generates calming, negative ions. This came in useful for mitigating the effects of the positively charged atmosphere created after crawling under every bed in the household looking for missing free-range chicken sign. Revenge is sweet however; it is still not too late to plant the whole front lawn in potatoes.

## Food Crop of the Month

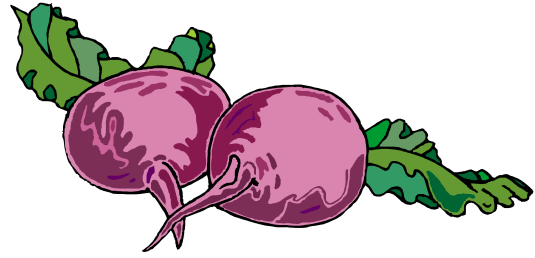
### Beetroot - (*Beta vulgaris*) Or Red Beet as our Roger calls it.

All beetroot, contrary to popular belief does not just come from Watties! Originally, beetroot was a seaside plant. It loves sandy, salty conditions. However, it is reasonably easy to grow anywhere with good drainage. I was wondering if a little watering with salt water once established might be a good idea??? Hummm...

Beetroot comes in two main types globe shaped (round) and cylindrical.

Generally the round beetroot have a shorter maturity time and are considered an earlier cropping vegetable.

Between two and six seedlings emerge from each of the 'seeds' (actually a corky seed case) that is planted. This means that beetroot always need hand thinning to 5-15cm apart, depending on variety. Radishes can be planted with the beetroot and mature before them. This means the beetroot can be thinned at the same time as the



radishes are being harvested. If slugs and snails trouble you, you can scatter seeds into seed trays. Transplant when the tops are 5-7cm high at about 10cm spacing.

If the leaves of your beetroot get black spots on them they are either too wet, too dry or do not have enough nutrients in the soil to keep actively growing. To grow sweet and juicy bottoms the tops must be growing well without check all the time.

A range of beets with different colored roots has become available. Don't forget also that the small immature tops are a lovely colorful addition to salads.

Companion plants include chives, garlic, shallots, alyssum and buckwheat.

## Chocolate Beetroot Cake

*Delicious, unique and quick to prepare*

### *Wet mix:*

400g beetroot - cooked and peeled  
Pinch of salt  
1 1/2 cups sugar  
1/2 cup oil  
1/2 cup milk  
1 tsp baking soda

### *Dry mix:*

1/2 cup cocoa  
1 1/2 cups flour  
1 1/2 tsp baking powder

1. Process the wet mix in a food processor.
2. Sift the dry ingredients together.
3. Add dry mix to the processor and process.
4. Pour mixture into greased tin and bake for 50 minutes at 150 degrees celsius.

Ice with chocolate icing or dust with icing sugar.

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### What's this moon calendar thing again??.....

Gardeners have been aware for a long time of the cyclic effects the moon has on the growth of plants. Recently this knowledge has been undergoing a type of renaissance as people delve through old records and find that many ideas and techniques, which had fallen into disuse, have a place in today's way of life. Basically the trick is to sow and plant when the moon is both waxing and in a fertile sign and cultivate, weed and eradicate pests and diseases when the moon is waning and in a barren sign. This means that there is an optimal time in each lunar month to perform each type of gardening activity, sowing, planting, harvesting, seed collection etc. By following the phases of the moon and its progression through the zodiac signs it is possible work in harmony with nature to achieve maximum enjoyment from the garden.

Quite frankly it's all new to me, but I have been trying these last few months to do my planting and sowing at least, by the moon calendar. All the other household and other jobs don't stop so sometimes it just doesn't fit the schedule but this is how it's supposed to go.

#### The basic activities in the various phases of the moon are: -

New moon brings in an upsurge of energy (don't you wish just sometimes) so we sow, plant, and transplant annuals, which produce above ground crops. We avoid harvesting as rot sets in more quickly and we mow and trim if growth is to be encouraged.

1st quarter - the sap is still rising so carry on with more or less the same activities as in the new moon.

Full moon sees a peak in electromagnetic energies - the sap begins to flow downwards towards the roots so it is a favourable time to plant anything for which good root growth is important. We also harvest at this time, as there is less chance of rot setting in.

4th quarter - is the barren time of the lunar cycle so it is an optimum time to weed and cultivate as well as harvesting. It is not a good time to sow and plant although transplanting can begin about 3 days before the new moon arrives.

In addition to all this the moon is always in one of the 12 zodiac signs and this adds to the formula as it is better to sow and plant when the moon is in a fertile zodiac sign, harvest in a fire or air sign etc.

Other very important considerations are climate, soil temperature, and season not to mention the fact that each set of rules has its set of exceptions.

### January Moon Calendar 2009

- 1<sup>st</sup>** Full moon cycle commences.  
Lunar Eclipse. Best sowing/pruning days from 19.15hrs on the 1<sup>st</sup> to 2.40hrs on the 2<sup>nd</sup>.  
No sowing before 7.15hrs on the 1<sup>st</sup>.
- 2 - 6<sup>th</sup>** Best harvest days from 2.40hrs on the 2<sup>nd</sup> until 17.00hrs on the 6<sup>th</sup>.
- 7-14<sup>th</sup>** Last quarter cycle commences.  
No sowing between 10.40 on the 7<sup>th</sup> and all day on the 14<sup>th</sup>.
- 11-13<sup>th</sup>** Best weeding days. All day, everyday until 17.00hrs on the 13<sup>th</sup>.
- 15<sup>th</sup>** New moon commences cycle. Solar eclipse.  
No sowing.
- 18-20<sup>th</sup>** Best sowing or planting days from 18.20hrs on the 18<sup>th</sup>, all day 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>.
- 23-24<sup>th</sup>** First quarter commences cycle.  
No sowing from 10.54hrs on the 23<sup>rd</sup> until 10.54hrs on the 24<sup>th</sup>.
- 24<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup>** Best sowing/pruning days from 18.20hrs on the 24<sup>th</sup>. All day 25<sup>th</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup>.
- 30<sup>th</sup>** Full moon phase commences cycle.  
No sowing.
- 30<sup>th</sup>, 31<sup>st</sup>** Best harvest days.
- 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> Feb** Best harvest days.
- 3-5<sup>th</sup>** Best sowing/pruning days.

Now is a good time to consider seed-saving if you have never done it before. Tomatoes are good to try with. Kay Baxter in her book Koanga Garden Guide says - Have a look around the tomatoes and choose your best plant, maybe the most disease resistant, heaviest cropper, best tasting; you choose. Pick a few tomatoes at the ripe eating stage and cut out the top and then squeeze the seeds onto a piece of newspaper" (I use a paper towel) and leave to thoroughly dry in the sun and then store in a dry airtight container. I save tomato seed from the second truss of fruit on my best plants, then again later in the season to see which plants have been the best taking disease resistance into account.

So now is the time to start carefully looking out for your best plants to collect seed from.

**Well all the best for the festive season and if we can be of any assistance, or you wish to know more about the Community Garden project please make contact through KEA. The newsletters are also available on the KEA website with additional local information.**