

Clean Up Australia Day

Four Uki members participated in this nationwide annual event, helping to clean up the village and roads leading out of it. Although overall the amount of rubbish collected was down on last year, the pile was bigger as several dead cars were hauled out of the riverbank at Sweetnam Park. Good job done Barry, Julia, Penny and Jim.

Congrats to Ida and Helen

The untiring efforts of two members to make life in Uki better for all who live here have finally been rewarded after many years service. Helen Fleming was awarded Uki Citizen of the Year and Ida Daly was awarded Volunteer of the Year at Uki's Australia Day Awards ceremony. Well done Helen and Ida.

Did you know?

Staghorn fern spores have been found in the atmosphere 30km from the earth's surface.
Kevin Munsie.

Titbits from the food group

A big crowd turned up at Kevin and Merle Munsie's on 8 March for the food group meeting. Anyone who has been to the Munsie's garden will know they grow an impressive range of veggies, many of them extra large. The theme for March was pumpkins and a lively discussion ensued about the best varieties and how to grow them. Here are some hints from the meeting.

- Anita and Maris Morton have solved the problem of possums eating their pumpkins by enclosing each ripening pumpkin in its own little bag of shade cloth. Simply staple the edges of the cloth together around the fruit to keep the possums out.
- Anita advised that when growing berries the only way to protect them completely is by installing them in their own fruit cage. However Merle added that caterpillars may be a problem as birds can't get into the cage and clean them up. Pollination may also be a problem because although bees can get in, they may not be able to get out. To solve this problem, commercial growers use a vibration machine to pollinate.
- Kevin advised to prune mangoes by taking the center of the tree out and letting the light in.
- Diana Erikson advised to pick mangoes when the first flush comes (before the fruits start exuding a smell) and leave them to ripen under shelter from possums (e.g. under the verandah in gentle heat). Unripe mangoes have pointy ends – when the ends round off they're ready for picking. Maris suggested washing the sticky sap (particularly prevalent with Bowen mangoes) off with soapy water so it doesn't spoil the skin.
- Dot Francis brought in samples of self-sown pumpkins as well as a beautifully constructed bird's nest in case members could identify which bird it was built by. Some suggested the thornbill, Anita said the Simpson and Day bird book has some information about nests in the back.
- Rosemary Gillson recommended 'Jarradale' as a good keeping pumpkin.
- Gloria Sandercock brought a sample of citrus stem that had a parasitic plant growing on it. Although some people thought it might be mistletoe or dodder, others

thought it might not be and recommended Gloria visit Jim Ashton at the NSW Ag department for identification.

- Helen Fleming brought along a range of butternuts and squashes.
- Don Edwards brought more home grown and steamed chestnuts for morning tea. Maris reported she'd had success germinating one of the chestnuts Don gave her last year. They are delicious roasted, boiled, glacéed or cooked in syrup. In cold climates they're a Christmas favourite mixed with Brussels sprouts and bacon.
- Lara Tyacke brought in a prize 'Atlantic Giant' pumpkin grown by her 14-year-old son. It really was a beauty.
- Barry Longland asked when the best time was to pick pumpkins and how to store them. Storing depends on variety. When the stems are withered they're mature. When storing don't let the pumpkins touch each other, otherwise they rot. Store them somewhere cool. Harden them off for a day or so after picking to let the skins toughen. 'Queensland Blue' pumpkins will store for years. Jap pumpkins should be eaten as soon as they're ripe.
- Gloria Sandercock recommends using a molasses spray to keep pests at bay. Mix two heaped tablespoons of molasses in a one litre sprayer and use early in the morning. It's also effective on nematodes if sprayed on the ground. As a foliar spray on azaleas it's effective on lace bug and moths.

Did you know?

The name Uki derives from the Bandjalung Yugambah dialect word 'yukai' – a bandicoot. Source: J.A. Gresty, *The Numinbah Valley*, p. 62, 1947.

April jobfile

April is a lovely month for getting out and about in the garden. Unfortunately we didn't have the autumn rains that we so desperately needed, so our gardens are looking dry again. There are lots of jobs to do this month.

- If you're keen on the cottage garden look, don't forget that veggies can be grown in amongst flowers, e.g. parsley makes a wonderful edging to a flower bed; the foliage of carrots looks attractive among flowering plants and makes a great filler in flower arrangements; lettuces with coloured leaves such as brown mignonette and red oak leaf liven up a flower bed or container.
- Calendulas are among the best annuals to grow, as they flower for months in late winter and spring. Plant seedlings now in well dug and compost-enriched soil. Calendula petals can be used in salads. The whole plant has medicinal properties.
- Continue to remove dead flowers from roses to prolong their blooming period. Many varieties produce a superb autumn flush, especially if they are watered deeply at the roots (keep the foliage dry to prevent fungal infections).
- If you want some decorative plants around the verandah, pot up some hanging baskets. Now that the weather is cooler they won't need watering as much as in summer so are easier to look after. Plants to consider are pansies, violas, lobelias, ivy geraniums, alyssum and nodding violet.
- If you didn't get around to planting sweet peas on the traditional St Patrick's Day, don't worry – it's not too late. Simply dig some well rotted compost or manure into your

selected site (in full sun) and add some lime or dolomite. Install a wigwam or trellis for the sweet peas to grow up and water well. Meanwhile, chit your sweet pea seeds between layers of damp kitchen towel. When they have germinated plant them out in the prepared bed and water well. They may need to be encouraged to reach up to the trellis initially, so place a twig close by for them to scramble up on. Dwarf varieties of sweet pea are good in containers.

- Asian veggies grow fantastically quickly at this time of the year. Try Chinese broccoli, Japanese turnips, snow peas, pak choy and wong bok for a vitamin-packed taste sensation.
- It's well worth having a rosemary bush in the garden for those lamb roasts. They need well-drained soil and plenty of sun to thrive. Prostrate varieties look great cascading over low walls. A rinse made by infusing a handful of rosemary leaves in a litre of boiling water is good for making hair shiny and healthy.

The next meeting of the Food Group will be on Friday April 15 at Regenes Farm, Mycocum. Club member David Stratton works at this wonderful permaculture and recycling farm and has kindly offered to show us around the place. Cost is \$5 per person and car pooling is to be arranged. There is a minimum of 12 and a maximum of 30 people for the tour – please book with Julia Hancock on 0266 79 5414 by 1 April.

Did you know?

Anzac Day is considered to be the best day of the year for killing camphors.
Roy Pryke.