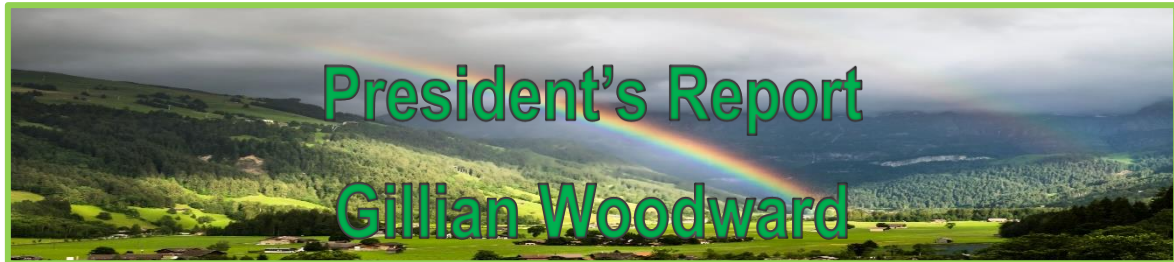


Uki Garden Club

Volume 22/02 March 2022 ugcnews@gmail.com P.O. Box 580 Murwillumbah 2484
<http://ukigarden.club/wp/>



Unfortunately, the heavens opened over the Tweed Valley two weeks ago. Our towns and villages certainly received too much flooding rain after our already extremely wet summer. It is devastating to see the damage and havoc that this 2022 flood event has caused.

Fortunately for many of us, our houses are situated on hill tops, ridges or higher grounds, but for others the losses have been enormous. Even if our homes have been safe, our road network, communications, water, sewerage and power systems, have all been adversely affected. It has been a truly testing time for so many. But as usual it has brought out the best in our community as well, with so many volunteers, both local and from outside, coming to our aid in the massive clean-up and restoration effort.

Schools, businesses, charities and community assets have all been badly affected. It is difficult to comprehend how long it will take to get everything back to normal again. After so much disruption from COVID during the last two years, the flood has brought with it new challenges for our towns and indeed for our own club. I realise that many of our own members will have been affected adversely, and that it would be good to get together again to offer support and encouragement. However, we just have to weigh up the safety issues, especially where access routes have been so badly damaged. It may mean that we have to travel more kilometres to our destinations. It may also mean we just have to cancel some of our planned gatherings. More on this later in the newsletter.

Torrents of water and debris flowing down slopes and flood water sitting in pools over several days, have resulted in layers of mud in both our homes and public gardens alike. No doubt many of you are making big clean-up efforts in your own backyards and on properties. Take care to cover your hands and other exposed body parts well, in order to avoid infection from contaminated soils/water. Use insecticides or some other means to repel mosquitos which are abundant after all the rain. If your veggie patch has been inundated with water, it is advisable to leave it fallow for a while – perhaps two months. Planting a crop of “greens” (e.g. mustard seed or legume/seeds) is a good way to restore soil health in the meantime. Avoid eating fruits (pumpkins or other ground vine veggies) that have been inundated.

Suggestions have been made, both on the local ABC gardening show, and by some UGC members, that perhaps we might be able to grow some plants from cuttings or seed, to donate to flood-affected gardeners. Once people have gone back into their homes over the next few months, they may start to think about replanting their gardens. If we can donate plants, this would be a small contribution that might brighten their landscape. I haven't worked out any details for distribution yet, but maybe you could consider growing some plants for this purpose, instead of for the usual swap table.

Keep safe and well during these trying times. Take one day at a time, try to stay positive and enjoy your gardening.

Best wishes

Gillian

Orchid grown by Merle Munsie,
photographed by her daughter
Janelle Katsakis.



Green Manure

As Gillian mentioned, growing green manures or cover crops is a great way to improve soil fertility and add organic matter to your soil – especially after the weather we have had. They can also be used as weed suppressants, and assist in the control of pest and diseases. So what are they, and where and when can you use them?



What is green manure?

Green manures or cover crops describe a range of temporary, fast growing leafy plants which are sown from seed generally in autumn or spring, grown through the next few weeks or months (depending on the season), and then, just before they begin to flower and set seed, they are slashed and turned in to the soil, or used as mulch for whatever's to be planted next.

Why is it grown?

You might consider growing a green manure crop in a new garden area to suppress weeds, improve drainage, reduce compaction, stabilise the area to limit erosion, and improve the soil before you put in permanent plantings. Green manure crops are often used in vegetable gardens, in beds, or parts of beds which are given a break from vegetable production for a season to improve the soil and set the bed up for the next crop.

Vegetable gardeners might have some space to spare after the summer harvest, and if you have a crop rotation system, you could think of incorporating a green manure crop into the rotation – check out our guide to crop rotation incorporating green manure crops here.

Benefits of Particular Plants

Different crops have different benefits, and can be grown in combination. Seed sellers will often sell both individual seed types and green manure mixes. Some examples:

Biofumigants, like marigolds (*Tagetes patula*) planted in spring, brassicas (*Brassica napus* and *Brassica campestris*) and mustard, planted in autumn help to control root knot nematodes and root rot fungal pathogens. These crops must be dug in to release beneficial gases as they decompose.

Legumes, like lucerne, clover, beans and peas, fix nitrogen and will make it available to whatever follows the green manure crop.

Weed smotherers include lablab bean, cowpea, lucerne and buckwheat.

Establishing your crop

It's usually as simple as choosing your seed mix, clearing the bed of weeds, broadcasting the seed and raking to cover, but check the seed packet to see whether your seeds have any special requirements. Most green manures will need moisture to germinate and while they're growing, so depending on rainfall, you might need to water the seeds in when you sow them, and to give them a hose as they grow.

Harvesting

For maximum benefit, harvest as your crop starts to flower – once the crop has fully flowered (and then set seed) the nitrogen content decreases, and, if the plant goes to seed, you'll likely see it pop up all over the place next season. You can either dig the crop in, or cut it and use it as mulch on the bed where it grew, or around the garden. If you decide to dig the crop into the soil, it will break down faster if you mow or chop it up a bit first. Allow 4 to 6 weeks after you dig the crop in before planting new seeds in the bed. If you need to plant seeds sooner, use your green manure crop as a surface mulch.

Obtaining seeds

Some garden centres supply mixes of different seeds or sell them individually. However, you can make your own selection quite cheaply by buying seeds of many individual species from bulk food stores which sell nuts, grains and pulses. These normally germinate well, but it might be wise to buy only a small quantity first and test their viability. This can be easily done by placing a few seeds on moist tissue paper in a small container and watching for root formation.

Costa's Tips and Tricks for Restoring a Flood Damaged Garden

As many begin the long, slow clean-up following flooding devastation, fixing up a muddy garden may be the last thing on their minds.

Key points:

- Costa says it's important to wash mud off leaves so plants can start photosynthesising again
- He advises wearing protective gear to avoid water-borne diseases
- And he warns not to eat any raw food that has been contaminated by floodwater



But for us gardening enthusiasts, it's our sanctuary and something that we will be looking to restore in the coming months.

If your garden has been absolutely pummelled in the floods and rain bombs, where do you even begin in trying to bring it back to life?

"Though there are obviously big-picture challenges, the garden does give us so much respite," Costa said.

"And a little bit of work out there, while you're doing the other stuff, can just mean that you're not looking at that and thinking, 'Oh God, I might get to that at some point'."

Waterlogging and contamination

Costa said there is some garden work required early to stop certain processes that may have begun already, with waterlogging a key risk.

"With waterlogging in the soil, what happens is that the water replaces the oxygen, and the pores of the soil basically get no oxygen, or the oxygen gets forced out." That affects root growth in the plants; plants in waterlogged soil start to show symptoms, and will start to wilt.

"Because of the disturbance under there, the imbalances often trigger many root diseases."

Costa said it was also important to consider contaminated water affecting food in the garden.

"It's generally full of all sorts of pretty nasty raw sewage and industrial run-off and oil and pollutants," he said. "So you don't want to be eating any of the food — leafy greens, any soft fruits like berries or melons, [really] anything that you eat raw, you just can't touch."

The state government reiterated guidelines on food safety in weather events online, stating that produce that has come into contact with floodwater should not be eaten.

Long-term effects

Costa said, for some plants, the flooding might have already triggered "the beginning of the end".

"Particularly if plants were older and maybe stressed, and if any diseases kick in and get hold ... you may see this play out over the next couple of months," he said.

"But in the very short term, it's really important to wash that silt [and] mud off the leaves where you can. This is so that plants could start photosynthesising again."

"You've just got to do the best you can and what you can't get rid of, you're going to have to dig it in and put lots of compost again into your garden to compensate for that very, very fine silt of mud that you've got there," he said.

Costa urged people to be careful when cleaning up their properties and to wear adequate personal protective gear including waterproof footwear, waterproof gloves, and other PPE to avoid the risk of infection and injury from floodwater.

"Make sure if you're doing anything out in the garden at this time, you have gloves on because you just don't want to get any little cuts and expose yourself to any of it, particularly if you're sponging things down and you've got water over your skin."

"You really do need to be careful when you're cleaning up your garden because, apart from the risk of general infection, there really is something you need to be aware of: a soil-borne bacterial disease called melioidosis ... it particularly emerges when we have floodwaters."

And from Jerry Coleby Williams...

Given the damage that waterlogged soil can so quickly cause plants, it's a good idea to undertake a bit of restoration work. Jerry recommends:

- ☺ Let the soil drain naturally first —this will take longer for clay soils
- ☺ A shortcut is to add lots of coarse organic material to the soil. Compost is always the best for this, but in a crisis the rules change and mulches such as pine-bark create an artificial pore structure which lets the air get back into the soil. It has one disadvantage though —it removes some nitrogen from the soils as it breaks down.
- ☺ Waterlogged soils can become acidic. To overcome this, add a handful of lime per square metre on the surface.
- ☺ Apply blood and bone or some poultry manure —about a handful per square metre will kick the soil back into life.

Once soil is back in good condition, it's time to think about what to grow. Jerry says that, "bamboos, gingers, cannas, swamp lilies (*Crinum*), sedges, taro, rainforest palms, banana and yams are all plants that can cope with both wet and dry conditions. If you live in a flood prone area, you'll need to grow these sorts of plants for success. And if you're determined to grow annuals and vegetables, you'll just have to live with the vagaries of nature."

If your garden has been flooded, plants are not the only things to worry about. Jerry says, "Put your safety first and wear a mosquito repellent before you go outside. Always make sure you empty water features, saucers and old buckets so you don't give mosquitoes a chance to breed. Also, wear gardening gloves because it's very easy to get cuts and scratches while cleaning up, and there are soil-borne diseases like tetanus that you can catch. If you do get scratches or abrasions, treat them very quickly with antiseptic."

Remediation of soil in gardens after flooding – Sue Holzknecht

Following on from Costa and Jerry's recommendations about what to do in your garden when the plants and particularly the soil have been inundated by floodwater, here are some suggestions about how to bring your garden back to health and remedy soil toxicity.

David Gourlay of *SoiLife*, Murwillumbah (www.soilife.com.au ; support@soilife.com.au ; (02) 66725309; Building 7 Unit1, 87-95 Quarry Road, Murwillumbah, NSW 2484) recommends, **first**, washing off as much of the mud as you can, removing damaged plants; put them in a plastic bag and into a bin. Do not compost this material as the mud and floodwater are toxic. **Second**, scrape off as much of the sticky mud deposited on the soil as you can, collect, and bury it. Wear a mask, gloves, boots, long-sleeved shirt and long pants. Disinfect all wounds, scratches and bites. Afterwards wash all clothes and tools well and have a shower.

The **third** and most important step is to spray the whole area with *SoiLife* Soil Builder and Microbe Feeder solution. Compost microbes are also available.



1. Work out the area you want to spray. It might be just your food garden or your whole garden area including lawn
2. Calculate the volume of product you will need and the concentration in water (see below). You will need to spray the area more than once, so calculate the total volume needed.
3. Buy the product, make up your spray solution in a large volume sprayer and spray the area.
4. Spray the area again as directed.

"We are offering your club members 20 litres of SoiLife Soil Microbes and Microfeeder Duo Pack, and heavily subsidised product for club members for March and April" says Janet King of SoiLife (0418984431 email janet@soilife.com.au) anytime.

APPLICATION RATES: Vegetable and Ornamental Gardens: Mix 250 ml of Soil Microbes with Microbe Feeder in 10 L water. Apply fortnightly for 2 months. Covers up to 25 sqm. **Native vegetation:** apply now, in 2 months, then every 4 months. Same rate of application and coverage. **Fruit trees:** apply now, again in 2 months, and in 6 months (ideal at flowering and fruit set time.) Same rate, covers up to 150sqm. **Lawns/Turf:** apply now, in 1 month, then every 3 months. Same rate, covers up to 150 sqm. **The main benefits of using these soil microbes are:**

- Safely process residues of chemical fertilisers and pesticides, and other toxins
- Reduce bad odours in composting materials
- Minimise soil acidity, salinity, mineral toxicity, compaction and erosion
- Build sustained soil fertility, promote nutrient-dense food and plants.
- Heighten plant immunity to pests and diseases
- Increase soil and plant moisture retention
- Increase crop yield and sustainability
- Minimise soil acidity, salinity, mineral toxicity, compaction and erosion
- Reduce toxic emissions such as N₂O, CO₂, CH₄

(Extracted and summarised from *SoiLife Brochure*, 2022, www.solife.com.au)



Five common veggie garden planning pitfalls

Growing your own food is so satisfying. But there are common mistakes that everybody makes at some point. If you just know what these pitfalls are, you can avoid disappointment at harvest time.

1. Starting Too Big

It's a good idea to always start with easy-to-grow crops that will give you a reliable harvest without too much fuss. There are a few standout veggies in this regard: beans, especially climbing or bush beans, potatoes, garlic and onions, salad leaves of all kinds, chard, and squash family plants, especially the ever-obliging zucchini. Your first year, start with 3 to 5 vegetables and perhaps 3 to 5 plants of each!

2. Overcrowding

It's human nature to want to grow more in the space we have so we have a tendency to cram in plants.

There's a good reason for that: many seed packets are absolutely loaded with seeds – more than you'll probably ever need in fact. Take broccoli for example – there are 500 seeds in a packet. Can you imagine growing all of those before their sow-by date! So no wonder it's tempting to raise more than we really need – we hate to see things go to waste.

What's more, if you cram them in, the seedlings may appear to be really strong and vital at first. But, as they grow and fill out, the problems begin. As each plant's root system starts to compete with its neighbours for water and nutrients, plants fail to mature properly, resulting in stressed-out plants and a less-than-satisfactory harvest.

Don't fall for this common mistake. It's better to be cruel to be kind. Only grow your plants at the recommended spacing shown on the seed packet. If you have poor soil, it's a good idea to leave a little extra space too. When you thin seedlings, only select or leave the very strongest seedlings and discard the rest. It feels counterintuitive, but you'll get bigger, better crops by doing this. And all those leftover seeds – store them till next year or share them with your friends.

3. Ignoring Nature

Gardens aren't detached from nature; they're very much part of the local ecosystem. That means pests like aphids and whitefly are part-and-parcel of growing your own food, so don't be disheartened when you spot them on your crops. Expect the occasional attack but fight back – using the power of nature!

A little forward planning can ensure Mother Nature's on your side. One way to achieve this is to mix in several different **companion planting flowers** to attract beneficial bugs such as hoverflies (pic at right), which will help keep pests in check by eating them. If pests strike early in your area be sure to include some early-flowering companions, and leave a few crop plants like onion, garlic and carrot in the ground over winter so they can flower in their second season. They'll provide a superb source of nectar to attract natural pest predators, while looking downright stunning in the process!



Many studies have shown that mixing up crop families helps confuse flying insect pests, but for some crops it's necessary to use further protective measures. For example, brassicas – that's plants in the cabbage family such as kale, cauliflower, rocket and, of course, cabbage – are a magnet for leaf-eating caterpillars, which can decimate plants in a few short days. To prevent this, grow these crops together in one area, then use netting or other protection to keep the butterflies responsible for those caterpillars off.

4. Planting Everything at the Same Time

The old phrase 'don't put all your eggs in one basket' is sound advice for gardeners too. Imagine all your newly transplanted pea seedlings being mown to the ground in a bird or slug-feeding frenzy – not nice!

Avoid this heartbreak by sowing seeds in smaller batches, say every two to three weeks during the growing season. As well as ensuring you'll have backup options if disaster strikes, this has the advantage of preventing gluts by spreading your harvest out over a longer period.

5. Neglecting Nutrition

Just like us, plants need nutrients to grow strong and healthy – they need something to both eat and drink. Planting vegetables and hoping for the best is unwise. Furthermore, soil quickly becomes impoverished the more you take in the form of harvests without giving something back.

The solution is to feed your soil, and by extension the plants grown in it, through regular additions of organic matter. This could be well-rotted manure or garden compost, for example. You don't need to dig it in – just laying an inch or two on top of the soil around plants will do the trick and it will help suppress weeds too. What this does is nourish the microbial life in your soil, which will help plant roots access all the nutrition they need. Applying organic matter like this also helps to improve your soil's structure, breaking down hard or sticky clay soils into a finer, crumblier consistency, while helping very free-draining sandy soils to hold onto valuable moisture a little longer.

Don't neglect plants in pots either. They rely on you for all their nutritional needs and, once the nutrients in the potting mix have been used up, will need feeding with an organic liquid feed such as a tomato or seaweed feed.

And a tip before you start adding things to the soil is to take a pH test then you can use the results to add what is needed and take the guess work out of it.

In conclusion, avoid these pitfalls and you'll have a veggie garden to be proud of.



Your 2022 - 2023 Committee

Your new Club committee held its first meeting together in the home of Jenny and David Kidd at North Tumbulgum and thought a picture to mark the occasion would be in order.

From left to right – Jenny Kidd, Couz'n Lynn O'Hara, Gillian Woodward, Karen Hanifen Jenny Clarke, Marie Luxford. Our trusty Treasurer Helen Lofts is missing from the picture.



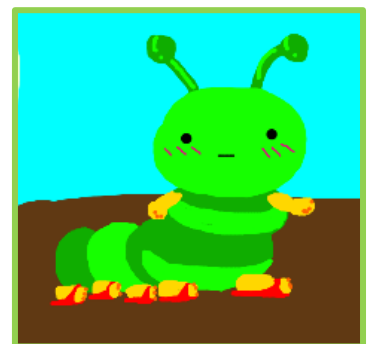


Thanks Miss Penny for supplying the laughs.

Nicknames for people you may know

- ☺ "Wicket keeper" - puts on gloves and stands back
- ☺ "Harvey Norman" - 3 years no interest
- ☺ "Sensor light" - only works if someone walks past
- ☺ "Blister" - appears when the hard work is done
- ☺ "Seaweed" - floats around all day and stinks
- ☺ "Lantern" - not very bright and has to be carried
- ☺ "Deck chair" - always folds under pressure
- ☺ "2-stroke" - hard to get started and always smokes
- ☺ "Bushranger" - holds everyone up
- ☺ "Pothole" – Always in the road, needs to be filled in
- ☺ "Jungle" – Thick and Dense
- ☺ "Wheelbarrow" – Only works when he's pushed
- ☺ "Goldfish" - Can't remember a f#@king thing
- ☺ "Fractions" – Does 2/5ths of f#@k all
- ☺ "Cyclone" – Slow moving depression
- ☺ "Treacle" – Slow moving and thick
- ☺ "Scarecrow" – Just stands around all day and watches
- ☺ "Minerals" - Silver in their hair, gold in their teeth and lead in their arse
- ☺ "Chainsaw" – Hard to start and stops for no reason
- ☺ "Noodles" – Thinks all jobs take two minutes
- ☺ "Perth" – Two hours behind everyone else

Imagine how much sound a centipede would make if it wore thongs.



Yes officer, I did see the
'speed limit' sign, I just didn't
see you.



Spinach slice ...Spanakopita – Penny Riley

Ingredients

- 1 bunch of spinach (kale and all spinach are good)
- 2 bunches flat-leaf parsley, stems trimmed, finely chopped
- 2 large yellow onions, finely chopped
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 4 eggs (or 6 if you can)
- 250g feta cheese, crumbled (and a bit of tasty cheese grated)
- 2 tsp dill - fresh or dried
- Freshly-ground black pepper
- 12 – 16 sheets of Filo pastry



Method

1. In a big bowl add chopped onions & spinach, crumbled feta, tasty grated cheese, dill, garlic and lots of black pepper.
2. Then using melted butter, brush the Filo pastry sheets individually (use 6 – 8) or, use olive oil spray and place in pan.
3. After at least 6 -8 sheets pat down the spinach filling.
4. Pour beaten eggs throughout mixture
5. Repeat Filo sheets for top, remember to brush melted butter or spray with olive oil spray each layer. Then I sometimes sprinkle with sesame seeds.
6. Pop in moderate oven (170 c) for about 45 minutes.

I find it freezes well.



The Many Benefits of Tea

After water, tea (*Camellia sinensis*) is the world's most popular beverage. Knowing its many benefits, this shouldn't come as a surprise! Here are just a few—for health and more!

The Benefits of Tea

You've no doubt seen references to the research suggesting that tea, especially unfermented (green) tea, may deliver many health benefits.

Researchers say that regular tea-drinking (2 to 3 cups per day) may help lower cholesterol, manage blood sugar, promote weight loss, protect against several forms of cancer, boost immunity, and reduce inflammation.

Applied topically, tea can relieve the discomfort of rashes, stings, and may help to reduce acne flareups.

Why Green Tea?

The “fermentation” (actually oxidation) processes that yield the many other forms of tea deepen and alter the flavours of the leaves, but they also remove some of the plant compounds (“phytocompounds”) that deliver tea's health benefits.

Which Tea? Which Form?

Once you begin delving into the subject of tea, it's easy to get confused. Will it be loose (thick or thin?), powdered, bagged, brewed or bottled? Chai, citrus, or jasmine? A green-tea extract? A tincture, a pill, a syrup, or a cool drink? Why not start by brewing some loose green tea leaves from a specialty or health-food store near you? If you live near an Asian market, you'll have a much larger choice. Buy small quantities and store them in airtight containers to maintain their flavour and potency.

By the way, if you want to maximize the health benefits of tea, drink it without milk. Proteins in the milk decrease the concentration of many of tea's beneficial phytocompounds.

Using Tea in Cooking

What about liberating tea from the beverage category and using the leaves themselves in cooking? Many books on the market delve into the science and art of cooking with tea. Try adding strong tea as an ingredient in meat or poultry marinades, soups, stocks, and gravies. Or try adding the re-constituted leaves themselves to omelettes, soups, or stir fries. Think of them as a leafy vegetable.



A Few Other Uses for Tea

☺ The astringent properties in tea called tannins make it a natural skin toner.

☺ Used as a final rinse, tea conditions and restores shine to hair.

☺ Dry tea leaves absorb odours just as well as baking soda. Leave a few bags in the fridge, or drop some into shoes, handbags, and cars.

☺ Strong tea left in cooking pots overnight will remove burned-on food and stains.

☺ Cool tea sponged onto skin offers relief from insect bites.





- ✿ Prune conifers before winter.
- ✿ Tidy up dead foliage and runners in the strawberry bed.
- ✿ Cut back and dispose of any plants that are affected by powdery mildew.
- ✿ Tidy up hanging baskets.
- ✿ Plant out winter veggies such as chard (silverbeet), Asian veggies, English spinach, lettuce, radish, turnips (including Daikon), parsnip, fennel, kohlrabi, kale, rocket, onions, leeks, cabbage, cauliflower and broccoli. Plant lots of French marigolds and nasturtiums between the veggies to deter pests and brighten up the veggie patch.
- ✿ Enjoy beautiful sasanqua camellias as they come into full bloom. Pick some in the early morning for a float bowl indoors.
- ✿ Now is the time to plant spring bulbs but you don't have to plant them in the soil in garden beds. If you are short of space it's better to grow them in a pot and remove them at the end of their season.



Growing garlic

Garlic is great for every part of human health. It needs two months of cold to encourage buds to emerge from the cloves, so start planning your garlic bed now. Obtain some organic bulbs from good health food shops. Never buy the cheap, white bleached stuff from supermarkets. Prepare soil by digging in some well-rotted manure or compost. Break bulbs into cloves. Plant each clove just below the soil surface with pointy end upwards, 15 cm apart. Water and cover with light mulch.

SOS – We Still Need Gardens for Meetings Please



We need garden hosts for the last Saturday in the month Garden Gatherings and second Tuesday of the month Food Group meetings.

So far the gaps are as follows:

Food Group

June – November – all months vacant

Garden Gatherings

June, August, September

If you can help by providing your garden or you know of a garden where we can meet or if you have ideas for speakers at these meetings please let the following people know:

Garden Gatherings: Jenny Clarke – 02 6677 9490 or via email to jimjen47@hotmail.com

Food Group Meetings: Marie Luxfo01 833 164 or via email to marieluxford@yahoo.com



April Food Group

Tuesday 9th April 9.30am
Garden of Nellmary McEwan
4 Eyles Avenue
Murwillumbah

For this meeting members are asked to bring the following:

- ☺ Name badge
- ☺ Your chair, hat & water
- ☺ Any gardening questions
- ☺ Swap Table items

That's all Folks for This Month...

Huge, huge, huge thanks to all the contributors to this newsletter.

As always, all of your contributions are welcome and we would love to hear what you've all been up to. Send your hints, tips, recipes, travel stories, bragging photos to us at ugcnews@gmail.com

And thanks as always to our printer – Sandra & Alan Guthrie at Poster Paradise, Murwillumbah.

Final Word



I had a recent trip to Sydney and took these snaps whilst out walking in the area we were staying in northern Sydney...

Sitting Ducks

