



Dunedin Vegetable Growers Club Newsletter
December 2021

Meetings: 1st Wednesday of the month, 7pm
Venue: Caversham Baptist Church,
 239 South Road, Caversham
 (Corner of Surrey St. and South Rd)
Membership: Helen Flockton (455 1816)
helen.flockton6@gmail.com
Club Email: dvgenz@gmail.com
Website: <http://dvgc.co.nz/>
Bank Account # 030905051590600
 (Please include your name as a reference)

Next Club Meeting: Wednesday, 1st December 2021

Q & A: David

Club Talk: Discussion on meeting under the traffic light system

Guest speaker: Robyn Bazsika – ‘Gifts from the Garden’

Garden visit: Summer picnic at the Botanic Garden band rotunda, Sunday 5th December
 1:00 pm



Competition for December:

Potato in a bucket – heaviest crop
 and heaviest single potato

Things to look forward to in December:

Picnic at the Botanic Gardens

Hello everyone,

This month's newsletter provides information about our summer picnic and our policy on meetings under the Covid traffic light system next year. There is a guide for sowing and planting in December, a report on the recent garden visit, an article on 'snail farming' and a recipe for elder flower cordial. A tribute to Lynne McCrone is included.

Sowing and Planting in December – by David

This is the time of year when you can save money by sowing seeds for your “winter greens”. If you grow seeds in planting modules, they can be a good size to put in position as you clear away the peas and broad beans. Having these brassicas follow the legumes gives them a chance to benefit from the nitrogen the legumes will have added to the soil.

Time to Sow: Asian vegetables, carrot, kale, kohlrabi, lettuce, peas, radish, silverbeet and turnip.

Last Chance to Sow: Beans (butter, French or runner), beetroot, broccoli, cabbage, capsicum, NZ spinach and swedes.

Time to Plant: Asian vegetables, broccoli, brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, celery, celeriac, leek and silverbeet.

Last Chance to Plant: Capsicum, courgette, cucumber, pumpkin-marrow-squash and tomatoes.

Too Late For: Seeds or plants of corn, potatoes, rhubarb or yams.

Summer picnic

We invite you to meet on 5th December in the Botanic Gardens at the Band Rotunda at 1 pm. Bring your own picnic food and drink, chairs or blankets. If in doubt about the weather please check you email just after 11 am to see if the event will go ahead or not.

Recipe for Elderflower cordial – by Ruth Bayne



Elders are in full flower now in late spring, and a small basket of flowers is plenty for making a batch of aromatic cordial. A glass of elderflower cordial topped up with soda water and chilled with some ice cubes is wonderfully refreshing in the summer heat and with each sip you smell the fragrance of the original flowers. For me the smell of elderflower cordial says SUMMER!

I used to make elderflower champagne each year, which is slightly alcoholic and potentially explosive in the same way as ginger beer, but swapped out to cordial when we had children and now the children are grown cordial remains my favourite.

I have been out foraging for elderflowers from the various small trees that I have allowed to grow in the wilder and neglected corners of our garden to make a batch of cordial. I find it best to carefully smell the flowers on each tree before choosing the tree you're going to pick from as the scent can differ from tree to tree. Most tree's flowers are wonderfully sweet smelling, but the odd tree's flowers have an unpleasant musky note, and I wouldn't use those for making cordial. Just use your nose to sniff and check first.



Elderflower cordial recipe

Ingredients:

2 litres boiling water

Elderflowers – 30 large heads or more

Zest and juice of 2 lemons

1 kg sugar

2 tsp citric acid

Method

Put the elderflowers and lemon zest in a large container. Pour boiling water over and steep, covered overnight. The next day drain the liquid off through muslin and put in a saucepan. Add sugar, citric acid and lemon juice. Bring to the simmer for a couple of minutes and bottle into sterilized bottles.

Elder trees grow beautifully in Dunedin and if you haven't got one in your backyard they are easy to find growing wild within and around the city, so you could pack a picnic on a nice day and forage for flowers at the same time. I enjoy growing Elder in our garden as they are easy care trees or bushes with a scraggy kind of charm and the most beautiful fragrance when flowering. Elder leaves break down to create a particularly dark and good looking leaf compost.

In the late summer those flowers that you haven't picked turn into heads of small dark berries which are enjoyed by birds. If you don't want dark purple bird poo everywhere get in

first and pick them yourself for cooking (don't eat them raw).

I make an elderberry jelly, using a standard jelly method, which sets well, and I think is delicious but is not liked by anyone else in my household as it has a kind of distinctive aftertaste.

I also make a spiced elderberry syrup for use in winter as “The Cure” for colds, flu’s, and general malaise. I swear by it as the elixir of life in the depths of winter.

Spiced Elderberry Syrup

Ingredients:

Elderberries, 30 or more, stripped from the stalks with a fork,

Sugar, equal quantities to Elderberry juice

Cinnamon stick, 10 cloves, grated couple of inches of ginger

Method:

Simmer the elderberries with the spices and ginger, strain through muslin. Add sugar and simmer for a couple of minutes. Bottle into sterilized bottles and keep for winter use.

You can use the syrup diluted with water to make a hot sweet ‘tea’, but my favourite way to take “The Cure” is to heat a small shot of the syrup and sip it slowly to soothe a sore throat, or frayed nerves, while sitting in front of a roaring fire on a cold winter’s evening.

Dried elderflower tea – by Sue

Pick freshly opened elderflower trusses and lay them on a baking tray to dry in the hot water cupboard or a sunny conservatory for a few days. Store the thoroughly dried flowers in glass jars or a paper bag in a dry place.

Dried elderflowers mixed with other dried herbs like lemon balm, lemon verbena or mint make an aromatic herb tea - can be sweetened with added dried stevia leaves or honey.

Tribute to Lynne McCrone - by Heather and read by Alan at the last meeting

“Lynne McCrone died on Saturday morning. Heather drafted these thoughts and with some minor additions and the approval of Margaret Scott and Carol I would like to read them to you.

Lynne McCrone was one of the early members of the Dunedin Vegetable Growers Club, attending her first meeting in August 2010 and soon joined the Committee. She took on the role of Treasurer, keeping true and accurate accounts for the club in her trusty notebook. Lynne was also responsible for organising the prize basket and acknowledgement cards for the monthly competitions and took a healthy competitive interest herself when her garden was thriving. Her name will live on as a winner of the clubs 'Grower of the Year' trophy. Lynne was a real gardener. Her breakfast bar was always covered in packets of seed, spray, fertilizer and depending on the time of the year Anlamb. Her north facing lounge doubled as

glasshouse and potting shed – potatoes chitting, cuttings being struck, secateurs and planting trowels and always a stack of gardening magazines to stimulate debate.

She established gardens in Twizel, Pinehill and lastly Broad Bay. This garden, overlooking the harbour was huge – not the size one creates with a spade but a large digger – Dean Turner on his digger.

Lynne was a very observant gardener, getting to know how to best take advantage of the microclimates managing to have new potatoes for her Birthday in September - quite an achievement here in Dunedin. To support her health she grew organically and followed moon planting. She also had a large orchard from which she probably consumed less than 10% of the fruit. The rest she generously shared with her sheep, possums, birds, family, neighbours and friends.

She was also always generous in sharing her knowledge and experience with fellow gardeners. Q&A will not be the same without her useful input.

Who could not forget the lesson she learnt the hard way of why it is not a good idea to put a comfrey leaf under your seed potatoes, and had to spend considerable effort digging out said comfrey plants from her garden thereafter.

With the club's recent move of location and the day the meetings are held, Lynne had not been able to attend all meetings due to other commitments, and I know she was missed in our number. She will be very fondly remembered and missed by all of us in the club with her death now. Thank you Lynne for your knowledge, your support, your friendship and especially your humour.

Covid has denied us the opportunity to farewell you in the traditional manner. But I am sure that in our own time and in our own space we will all find a way to say goodbye.

Lynne. Rest in peace.”



\$NAIL\$ - by Ray

Yes it's true and it's planned to happen here in NZ.

A couple of weeks ago on National Radio there was an intriguing item on snail farming. A woman living at Port Charles, Coromandel has the backing of MBI to investigate the commercial aspects of snail farming.

Their projections suggest that an acre of glasshouses would produce 1100kg of snail meat p.a at a current world price of \$NZ44,000/100kg. They would be used for food manufacturing as our ones are not as big and juicy and garlicky as the French snails.

Since then it has seemed slightly sinful to crush every vile little slimy garden destroying creature that I have come across. Maybe it is only a 20c one or maybe it could have been the ultimate stud snail, breeder of a superior line worth hundreds of \$s.

Then there is the matter of feral free range snails which ought to attract premium returns from international foodies.

Who would have thought that mere snails could lead to hours of pleasant dreams and time wasting day dreams.

A cautionary note is that at no time did the radio item suggest how much labour might be involved in achieving these results.

Visit to the Bazsika's garden – by Sue

A sizeable group of us were lucky to sneak in a visit to Jim and Robyn Bazsika's garden well before the rain arrived.

When they took over the property about six years ago, most of the bushes, small trees and bulbs the previous owners had planted were shifted to group them in more suitable places. Many more plants were added over the last years, most taken from cuttings and raised from seedlings. They all form a happy, colourful collection cottage garden style. There are numerous free standing or espaliered fruit trees of various sizes – apple, plum, apricot, pear, peach, cherry, feijoa etc. The latest in the orchard are planted on swales following the contour of the land. Underneath the fruit trees are clumps of beneficial herbs e.g. yarrow, sweet cicely, lemon balm, tansy, comfrey etc. In amongst them are gooseberry and red, black and white currant bushes. In the tunnel and glass houses long rows of tomato plants are ready to be strung up and produce plump meaty tomatoes for sauces.

The vegetable patch is divided into four areas, one for each season on a rotational basis. In the middle is a chicken coop with four small doors for the chickens to scratch over the emptied beds. At present, in one of the areas there are the chickens, in another potatoes and

pumpkin plants, the third has beds of garlic, onions, shallots, carrots etc and the fourth is full of brassicas of different sizes, with lettuces inbetween, beans, corn and zucchini plants. Robyn said they had a full Winter vegetable garden this year, which covered about 80% of their vegetable consumption. When the fruit trees mature and carry more fruit they should be well supplied with their own produce. Top that up with honey from the bee hives and walnuts from their tree and their situation is a homesteader's paradise. All that is missing is a hammock strung between some trees, but I have a suspicion it would not get much use...

Thank you Robyn and Jim, for the well guided garden tour!



DVGC meetings under the new traffic light system

Given the current Covid situation, associated health guidelines, and venue requirements, the committee has decided that in the new year our indoor club meetings will be restricted to vaccinated members only. Outdoor events such as the monthly garden visits will be open to all.

Kindred Day Autumn 2022 - update and return of donated raffle items – Helen Flockton

It had been the understanding of the Kindred day committee that we would be holding the Day. As you know, we have had an initial meeting and spoken to members at our last meeting. Unfortunately, when we talked to the convener, we found out that another group had asked to do it and been accepted!!!

We are all disappointed, as we had worked out a plan to work with covid rules. However, life goes on, and for now we have decided to have a break. Maybe DVGC will reapply in the future.

Many of you gave gifts for the raffles. The perishable items have been returned or given to food banks. It is the non-perishables that are filling Margaret Dodd's place and need to be returned or sold at a sales table at our meeting in March.

If you wish to retrieve our items, contact Margaret at 455 8627.

Next meeting

- Potato in the bucket competition

Bring your bucket, labelled with your name, to the December meeting to be weighed.

- Supper

Unfortunately, due to Covid we will be unable to hold a Xmas supper this year.

- Trading table

We welcome all contributions to the table, big or small. So please bring along your surplus cuttings, produce, seeds, seedlings, plants and gardening gadgets.

New members sought for the DVGC committee

Are you interested in helping to promote vegetable and fruit growing in Dunedin? Join our enthusiastic committee!