

GREENS~LEAVES

Dunedin Vegetable Growers Club Newsletter; issued monthly, Vol:7.3 March 2014

Next Club meeting ; 7pm, Monday 10th March

Venue is the St Clair Women's Club, 47 Albert St, St Clair.

Invited Speaker ; Trevor Nixon on Tomatoes and Cucurbits

President: Margaret Scott (489 2030) msscott@xtra.co.nz

Membership: Heather Wilson (4764607) heatherandmike@clear.net.nz

Secretary Carol Henderson (454 4625) hendersonic@xtra.co.nz Website ; <http://www.dvgc.co.nz/>

March-ing On!!

This beginning of this year has gone faster than usual and we seem to have reached the end of summer before we're ready! The season has not been a bad one though and this was well demonstrated by the turn out of lovely vegetables at the recent Horticultural Society Show. Congratulations to all competitors from the Club, especially first-timers Claire Hewson and Daviena Brown, who were awarded prizes. Commiserations to those who did not win a place but there is always the next show to try again! Our Club display drew quite a bit of attention with a large variety of produce (much of it from Margaret Scott's garden) on show and information to take away. It would have been even better if more people had come along for the excellent talk on Fungi by Bart Acres as all who heard it were amazed :) We hope to have him give this talk to us sometime soon.

February meeting;

Apologies for the circumstances conspiring against us hearing what was being said during the February meeting. I have been told that there is no way of stopping the chimney-type air vent from vibrating in the wind but Dennis has other ideas we will have to wait and see!

The complete absence of the microphone has yet to be investigated but I will make every effort to make sure it is available for the March meeting....Trevor Nixon tends not to need one though!

David let us know that we still have time to plant lettuce and silverbeet plants but it is still a little early for broad beans and peas to be sown for overwintering. Onions can be sown from March 17th to provide next years crop and that red onions do well after potatoes :)

Kathy Graham gave us a very entertaining talk on the meaning of the word "Umbelliferae", the plants it describes as having flowers arranged in an umbrella shape and an interactive quiz to make sure we were paying attention...congratulations to all carrot winners :)

Supper was again very good and a big thankyou goes out to all bakers and helpers on the night. Our list of supper helpers is being worked through so don't worry If you haven't been called on yet! Nick Holmes talk on keeping chickens was excellent and I have written out here what I managed to take notes on ;

Nick Holmes is 27 years old and currently renting land at Taieri Mouth which used to be worked by Bill McConnachie. Nick is concentrating on bio-intensive growing, self-reliance and community resilience with the aim to demonstrate, teach and encourage others to be able to do the same. He is saving seed from unusual vegetables such as the red-seeded broad bean, keeping bees and propagating heritage fruit varieties while living "off the grid".... using wood for cooking and heating. Chickens are a big part of the system and is breeding a strong heritage line of birds to help create more nutritious eggs and meat for the future. Sadly a lot of the heritage chicken breeds have been bred for appearance rather than nutrition over many chicken generations. The modern Hyline type of breeds are no good for meat as they expend all of their energy producing eggs and the fertile eggs come from overseas which makes bird 'flu a risk to our biosecurity .

Basic needs for chickens are ;

Shelter - day and night with an outdoor shelter for bad weather days

Dust bath – keeps feathers clean...and they enjoy it!

Grit – needed for digestion, such as oyster shell grit.

Water – 250mls per bird per day, maybe more on hot days

Company – since they are naturally social, a minimum of three or four is good.

Shade – as their natural habitat is the forest floor

Protection from predators – mainly dogs and stoats

Nests – for egg laying they like an isolated shady spot

Food – this is the biggest cost but can be provided by greens , seeds and insects if they can be sourced in large enough volumes. Maggot farms can be made with road kill and tiger worms can be farmed for this purpose. Taste Nature has Organic chicken food available since the commercial wheat growers use Roundup to spray the wheat before harvest

Fresh air - ventilation essential in overnight accommodation.

We get in return ; Eggs, meat, feathers (good for compost) and a lot of digging, weeding and fertilising !

Nick advised us to get the area for keeping our chickens completely set up and secure before we get them and I totally agree with him as there is a lot of stress involved when your chickens are constantly escaping !!!

Subscriptions for 2014 due now !

Payments made after March 31st will cost more ; \$15 for Internet newsletter and \$20 for the Printed version.

Bank Account details...For those who would like to pay their subs via internet banking the Club bank account number is; **Westpac 030905 0515906 00**

Please remember to **add your name** when paying via internet as otherwise we cannot send out your newsletter :)

Gardening by the moon Mar/April 2014

5th to 13th— sow and plant all above ground crops, don't prune. Don't sow root crops

14th to 19th – Cultivate only

20th and 21st – Sow root crops

22nd to 26th – weed, cultivate, prune and harvest

27th and 28th – Sow root crops

29th to April 2nd – Dig and

cultivate....don't sow or plant

April 3rd to 12th - sow and plant above ground crops

13th to 17th – cultivate only

18th and 19th – sow root crops

20th to 24th – barren period

25th and 26th – sow root crops

27th to 30th – Dig and cultivate

Open Gardens; produce and plant

It is very generous of our local gardening community, Club members or not, to open up their gardens for us to see and learn from. I'm sure we all enjoy the experience of being visiting guests and behave accordingly.

Recently it has been observed that requests have been made of our hosts for produce or plants which have been freely given as this is the nature of most gardeners but can hardly be refused given the circumstances....we would hate to offend our hosts!!

One suggestion has been to have a small version of our sales/swap table (or car boot!) at the open gardens for people to sell, share or swap their excess produce or plants in between Club meetings. I know that sometimes my seedlings are either too big, too small or too many for the regular meetings and I would be glad to bring some along. Others may have a glut of something they have grown and could either sell or swap it as they wished. Please let me or any of the committee know if there are any objections to this idea so that we can take them into consideration.

Our open garden at Shemansky's on the peninsula was very well timed as we managed to see all around their lovely garden just before the rain set in. We then retired to the gallery for tea and delicious scones surrounded by Cathy's beautiful art work. Their garden is full of flowers as well as vegetables but I decided to include this photo of the "Ronde de Nice" courgette which has done so well in their garden ...the sprinkler in the background gives some scale to the size....mine are only a quarter of that so far....



March 10th meeting ;

AGM – Carol will read the Minutes of the 2013 AGM,

Lynne will read out the Financial Statement

Margaret will give her final President's Report.

Nominations for the required committee members will then be announced.

Sales/Trading table – Dennis will let us know what is available on the sales table.

Planting now/Q&A – David Neill

Invited Speaker - Trevor Nixon on Tomatoes and Cucurbits

Open Garden – Jennifer Evans has kindly agreed to open her garden to us on Sunday 23rd March at 2pm at 37 Dunrobin St. in Waverley.

A very good idea was submitted to the suggestion box at the February meeting.....a regular book review of any new or especially good gardening books! If any (or all !) of you would like to write one of these reviews I would be very happy to accept them any time and save them up for publication.

**Happy gardening :)
Carol Henderson
Newsletter Editor**