



**Meetings:** 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of the month, 7pm  
**Venue:** Dunedin Lawn Bowl Stadium,  
 38 Tahuna Rd, Lawyers Head, Dunedin  
**Membership:** Helen Flockton (455 1816)  
[helen.flockton6@gmail.com](mailto:helen.flockton6@gmail.com)  
**Club Email:** [dvgcnz@gmail.com](mailto:dvgcnz@gmail.com)  
**Website:** <http://dvgc.co.nz/>  
**Bank Account #** 030905051590600  
 (Please include your name as a reference)

**Next Club Meeting:** Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> September 2023 – **note new venue, see above address.**

**Q & A:** David

**Club Talk:** Greta Doo - 'Four seasons in a day - gardening on an exposed site'

**Guest speaker:** Connal McLean – 'Bumble Bee Behaviour and Bee Conservation'

**Garden visits:** Don Pearson, Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> September, 1 30pm, Glenleith

**September competition:**

Any brassica

**August competition winner:**

Ruth Bayne for Witloof



**Things to look forward to in September:**

Garden visit

Pick up chitted potato for our competition

Hello Everyone,

Here we have a list of garden tasks for September, a report on our latest garden visit and information on a root vegetable popular in Tudor times called Skirret. Also, a recipe that uses Yakon. Get some tips about seed sowing and potato growing.

**Garden tasks for September** – by David

**Time to plant:** Asian vegetables, Broad beans, Broccoli, Cabbage, Cauliflower, Leaf lettuce, Onions, silverbeet, & Yams.

**Time to sow:** Globe artichokes, Asian vegetables, Asparagus, Beetroot, broad beans, (this is the last month), Brussels Sprouts, Cabbage, Carrot, Cauliflower, Celery and Celeriac, Courgettes, Leaf lettuce, Onion, Parsnip, Peas, Potatoes, Pumpkin-Marrow-Squash, Radish, Rhubarb, Salsify, Shallots, Silverbeet, Tomatoes & Turnip.

**Sow after mid-month** (perhaps earlier if warm conditions) French, Runner and Butter beans, Capsicum, Corn, Cucumber, Fennel and Spinach.

**Too late to plant:** Asparagus plants and Garlic bulbs.

**Last chance to plant:** Jerusalem artichokes and Shallots.

**Too early yet for:** (but bring these dates forward if we experience warmer temperatures)

Kohlrabi seeds and Tomato plants – the Star Guide suggests 1<sup>st</sup> October and NZ spinach after mid October.

Cucumber, Courgette and Pumpkin-Marrow-Squash plants - mid October.

Capsicum plants – 1<sup>st</sup> November.

Brussels Sprouts plants – mid November.

Green Sprouting broccoli plants – December.

**Seed starting tips:** Start solanum seeds (tomato, pepper, eggplant) about six weeks before you want to transplant. Sow tomatoes first, then pepper and eggplant. Once these are growing in a sunny window start the hardiest cucurbits, first the zucchini and squash and after you put the tomatoes outside try cucumbers and melons. Cucurbits take less than two weeks from sowing to transplant in garden. So, to plant in mid October sow seeds at the start of October.

**Introduction to seed sowing** by Charles Dowding

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tYYKH7bxCYg>

**Getting maximum yield from potatoes:** From “The complete know and grow vegetables” Bleasdale et al 1991

- Best planting spacing is 20 – 30 stems per m<sup>2</sup> or 2 – 3 stems per ft<sup>2</sup>
- For main crops this means 2-3 eyes per ft<sup>2</sup> but for Earlies that may be frosted this means 3-4 eyes per ft<sup>2</sup>
- Try to avoid rubbing sprouts off the seed as they have used up some of its energy.
- The number of sprouts is proportional to the surface area of the seed potato so to get the most stems/\$ for mains buy small seeds – store cool until early Spring.
- For Earlies that may need extra energy to recover from frosts buy larger seed potatoes early (March or April) and control the number of sprouts by keeping them warm (18° C) until you see the eyes developing at the rose-end starting to grow – then store at around 7°C until near planting time when you warm them up to develop them a bit before planting. Development of the sprout at the rose-end of the potato inhibits development of sprouts elsewhere.
- Since early varieties have shorter lives, they yield less.
- When potatoes flower it signals that tuber growth is beginning. When blooming stops no more tubers or top growth occurs and energy goes into the tubers until the plant dies when the tuber skins toughen in preparation for winter.
- Potatoes need phosphates (in bone meal, chicken manure, compost) but it is difficult to know how much but studies show that foliar phosphorus (compost tea) increases total tuber numbers if applied just before tuber initiation – so try foliar phosphates just before and during flowering.

**Something to aspire to!!**

Steve Solomon in his book “Gardening when it counts” suggests that a good yield would be 25x the weight of seed planted (He means main crop - and potato in the bucket contestants should note point 6 above):

**Potato in a bucket competition in December** - We invite you to pick up a chitted potato at our September meeting to grow in a bucket until December, when we can find out who grew the most and biggest.

## Report on our visit to Mick and Sue McKenzie's Terra Cotta Plant nursery

Mick and Sue McKenzie's plant stall is a regular feature at the Dunedin Farmers Market. They run their perennial plant nursery on the northwest facing slope of their garden in Caversham, where numerous trays with planter pots cover any bare ground. Besides this space, they are lucky to be able to make use of additional bits of connecting land that belongs to neighbours and NZ rail, as the train line into the Caversham tunnel runs at the bottom of their property.

Fruit trees and bushes thrive in these sheltered sun traps: tamarillo, kiwi berry, black passionfruit, feijoa (needs lots of water to fruit well), sanguine peaches, citrus, apple and berries. Albion strawberry plants, renowned for their size and flavour, are well suited to the summer's heat on the bank. Mick and Sue grow most of their own vegetables too. Already the first batch of early 'Jersey Bennes' is in the ground. Mick planted these 10cm deep, then mounded up the soil on top to keep them warm (he does stagger early sowings, followed by 'Heather'). Healthy looking broad bean seedlings fill large beds.

It all comes down to the soil, he declares. The compost bins produce a great mix made from vegetable plant matter, horse manure, spent potting mix, pea straw and seaweed.

Their three different kinds of tunnel houses and several glass houses are ideal for growing the seedlings and many warmth loving plants like tomatoes, cucumbers and even a large clump of lemon grass and a pomegranate.

Sue propagates bulb plants from seed collected in Autumn. These can take five years to be ready to plant out and taken to the market. Cuttings of most other plants, including natives, are taken at different times of the year, moistened, dipped in rooting hormone and stuck in already wet potting mix or directly in the soil. Regular watering and the shade of trees protect the young plants from drying out.

We thank Sue and Mick, for sharing their interesting garden, their experiences and knowledge with us.



## Perennial Plants – by Sue

**SKIRRET** (*Sium sisarum*) is a native of China. No one is sure when it made its way to Europe, but they know it was there during Roman times and a favourite of Emperor Tiberius. The Romans introduced it to England during colonisation. Skirret reached the height of its popularity in Tudor England. It was eaten raw in salads, boiled or baked.

Skirret is related to carrots. Like carrots, it is the roots which are consumed rather than the foliage. The plants have many skinny white roots, 150 - 200mm long and about the width of a pencil, instead of one long thick root like carrots. Its flavour is between a carrot and a parsnip. And like carrots, it has a sweet flavour which grows sweeter if left in the ground after the frost.

Skirret is a perennial that is hardy in zones in 3 through 8, although most people grow it as an annual, harvesting the roots in early winter. If the roots are left in the soil until spring, they become woody and hairy. The plants reach 1-2 m in height and 0.3 – 0.6 m in diameter.



Chervis.  
Réd. au vingtième; les racines au huitième.

The flowers are tiny and white and grow in umbels on 0.6 m stems. Bees and other beneficial insects find them irresistible. If you don't want to eat the roots, plant it to attract pollinators to your vegetable garden. To stop the plant spreading prolifically, cut the flowers off before they set seed.

How to Grow Skirret – Skirret is not difficult to grow. It's not fussy about soil although it does like loose sandy loam, damp soil. Its native habitat is stream banks. In fact, one of its common names is "water parsnip". You have to be careful to keep your plants well-watered. If they get too dry, the roots become fibrous and unpleasant to eat. Skirret likes full sun but doesn't mind a little shade. Space your plants 18 inches/450 mm apart.

How to Grow Skirret from Divisions - You can start new plants from divisions. When you harvest the roots, separate some of them and replant them whole about 2 inches/50 mm deep. They will grow into new plants, just like horseradish, but it does not spread aggressively. This also works if you just have a piece of one of the roots. Plant the piece and it too will grow into a new plant. The pieces should be planted 2 inches/50 mm deep just like the whole roots.

How to Grow Skirret from Seed – If you are growing from seed, you can direct sow the seeds in your garden, after your last frost when the soil has warmed to 7°C to 21°C. The seeds will not germinate in cold soil. Sow your seeds approximately ½ inch/13 mm deep. Germination

should occur within 30 days. A long germination period is normal for perennial plants. Thin the seedlings to 18 inches/450 mm apart.

You can also start your seeds indoors 8 weeks before your last frost. Plant them ½ inches deep in containers filled with moist soil. I always water my soil before planting seeds because I have found that if I water afterwards, both the soil and the seeds wash out of the container. Place your containers in a sunny window and keep the soil moist. Germination should occur in 30 days. You can plant your seedlings in your garden after all danger of frost has passed when the soil has warmed to 7°C to 21°C. Space them 18 inches/450 mm apart.

How to Harvest Skirret - When the foliage dies in the fall, it's time to harvest your roots. Carefully dig up your plants with a garden fork and brush the soil from the roots. They will keep better if you don't wash them until you are ready to eat them.

How to Store Skirret - Store the roots as you would carrots; either wrapped in plastic and kept cold in the refrigerator or unwrapped in damp sand in a root cellar. The roots will last 2 to 3 weeks in the refrigerator, 4-6 months in a root cellar. Do not store them near fruit because they give off ethylene gas which will hasten the ripening process and cause the fruit to rot. Store the roots whole. If they break or are damaged, use them right away. Damaged roots quickly rot.

## **From Garden to Table**

### Yacon citrus salad

#### Ingredients:

- 2 yacon, peeled, sliced into matchstick strips
- 1 lemon, juiced
- 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
- 1 cup baby kale leaves
- 3 mandarins, segmented (may substitute with 1 or 2 oranges )
- 3 tablespoons chopped fresh mint
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh fennel fronds
- ¼ cup roasted pumpkin seeds
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- ¼ teaspoon cumin
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper

#### Instructions:

Place sliced yacon in a medium salad bowl.

Immediately drizzle with lemon juice and olive oil and toss together to prevent from browning.

Add kale, oranges, mint, fennel fronds, pumpkin seeds, garlic, cumin, black pepper and sea salt (optional). Toss together well.

Chill until serving time.

**Library Books**

Because we have no storage at the new venue, we have downsized our library. The less popular library books will be available for members at the meeting. Please give a koha if you would like any of these.

**Carry-on Suitcase required**

Can anyone please donate a carry-on suitcase, they no longer need, for our library books. Please see David at the meeting or reply to this email. [dvgcnx@gmail.com](mailto:dvgcnx@gmail.com)

**Trading Table**

A big thanks for the plants, seedlings, seeds, tubers and garden materials etc. that you bring along for the trading table.

**Supper**

Volunteers this month: Raewyn Humphries, Colette Blockley, Liz Rose