

Grow Well . Eat Well . Be Well



The HIVE Newsletter | Winter 2022



Hello everyone!

Welcome to the Winter Newsletter from SMRC's The Hive garden program. Winter is well and truly here but that hasn't stopped the intrepid gardeners at the Hive. It's amazing how quickly you warm up when you're gardening and it's great to rug-up and get outside for some fresh air and to socialize with other people who share a love of food and plants.

*Lou & Elly
The HIVE*

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"Every gardener know that under the cloak of winter lies a miracle." – Barbara Winkler



CHANGING SEASONS



It's always a challenge to know the right time to pull out plants like tomatoes, capsicum, zucchini and eggplant. These are the stars of summer and autumn providing us with masses of delicious produce.

As winter sets in and the cold weather starts, it's time to put these plants out of their misery and replace them with more cold tolerant selections such as garlic, onions, broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, spinach, radish, and leafy greens. Of course, we prepared our soil first by adding compost, manure and potash.

I love the cycles that occur in the garden, and this is always highlighted with the change of seasons. The plants that we removed were mostly chopped up to become compost for next season. The best plants were selected to collect seed which we then process to replant next year. Our amazing gourds are a great example of this. Seed saving and processing is a perfect activity for rainy days as we can do it in the Parks Victoria Visitors Centre which is warm and cosy.




SEASONAL EATING

The Visitor's Centre has also been a great place for us to do some culturally inspired cooking and sharing food. Nisha did a demonstration on making homemade roti which we ate with curried pumpkin that was picked in April and garnished with freshly picked coriander. Elly demonstrated how to make a simple and delicious pasta dish with garlic and fresh sage. Our Chinese clients showed us how to make dumplings from scratch and La made a delicious Cambodian stir fry, all using fresh cabbage and herbs from the garden.



Our cooking demonstrations have been a hit with other visitors to Braeside Park. The local walking group, who also use the Visitor's Centre took a keen interest in the dumpling making demo. Food is always such a great way to bring diverse cultures together.

Seasonal eating is a great way to stay healthy and to enjoy what the garden has to offer no matter what the weather is like. Even if you're not growing your own food, you can take advantage of the lower prices associated with eating fruit and vegetables that are cheap and abundant at certain times of the year. Why buy expensive zucchini that has been shipped from Queensland when you can enjoy locally grown, fresh and cheap broccoli and cauliflower. Some plants, such as lettuce and silverbeet can be grown all year. Just keep cutting the outside leaves of silverbeet to add to soups or use instead of spinach. It's a great source of iron, vitamins K, A, C and calcium. Likewise, lettuce can be continually harvested in wintertime by picking a few leaves from each plant. Mix the leaves with other winter loving varieties such as tatsoi, kale, mustard greens and leafy herbs to make a beautiful healthy winter salad.





WINTER WORK



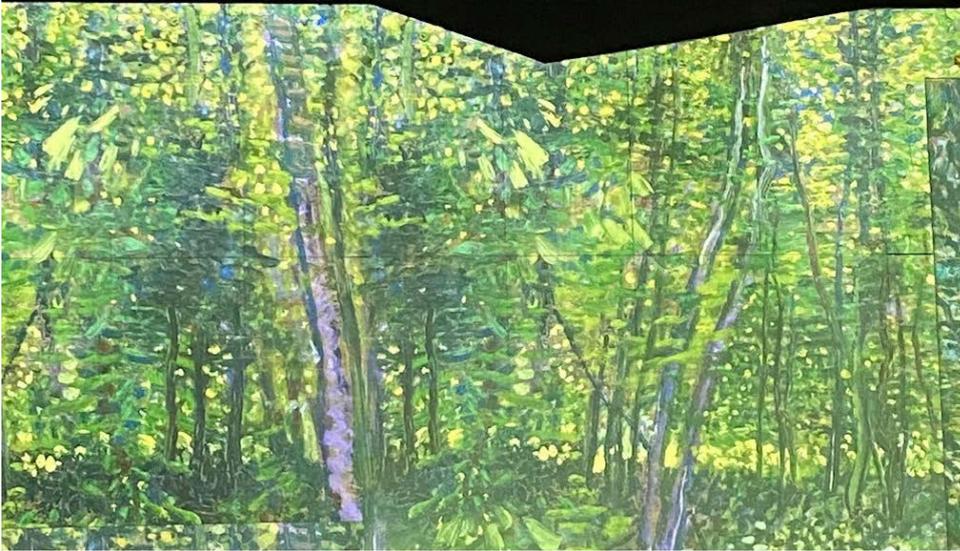
Winter is a great time to get creative in the garden. The Men's Shed gave us some panels of trellis which we have painted and stacked up ready to create some screens. Elly bought in some tiles to mosaic stepping stones to use at the Hive. We've even got some terracotta pots ready to paint and plant with flowers. The compost bays have had a bit of renovation, thanks to Brain from Men's Shed, and we've now got the compost working better than ever.

The rain is great for the garden but not so good for working outdoors. We have made the most of our bus to take clients out to visit local garden centers. We are lucky to have Garden World close to us. The displays are truly beautiful ranging from cactus and succulents to stunning crystals and orchids. We are planning to visit more gardens in the future and are looking forward to going to Cranbourne and Melbourne Botanical Gardens.





But for one's health as you say, it is very necessary to work in the garden and see the flowers growing.





CHALLENGES



There is always something to challenge you in the garden and rather than give up at the first sight of insect damage and yellowing leaves, we have been coming up with organic and innovative ways to deal with pests and disease. We have diagnosed some nutrient deficiencies in our citrus trees and used organic methods to remedy them. Epsom salts added to water help the plants deal with magnesium deficiency in the same way that us human benefit from an Epsom salt or Radox bath.

Gall wasps, which are the bane of citrus growers have hopefully been reduced by shaving the gall swellings with a vegetable peeler to expose and kill the larvae inside. If the larvae can be exterminated then they won't live to become the wasps that fly off in Spring and infect other trees. Fingers crossed that this works.

By far our biggest challenge this season have been rats and mice. Apparently they love broccoli and cauliflower. Their other favourite thing is to hang out in our hothouse and dig up the seeds that we plant. We have become very creative with netting to try to keep them off our precious plants. Thankfully they don't seem interested in garlic, onions or some of our leafy greens. They even left the autumn fruiting raspberries alone allowing us to harvest them before we pruned the canes to the ground ready for them to regrow in spring.





LOOKING AHEAD

It's hard to imagine as we shiver through winter, but it's nearly time to start sowing seeds for spring planting. We'll probably start sowing seeds after the new moon in late July or August. We had a fabulous tomato harvest last season and Lou selected the best of the best to keep for seed. We're lucky to have the hothouse to start our seedlings early enough to ensure that we have good sized plants ready to transplant into the garden in October or November. As usual, we'll have lots of extras to give away to clients or other lovers of non-hybrid, heritage vegetables.



As the days get longer and the weather hopefully brightens up a bit, we are hoping that more people will come and join us at the Hive. The last couple of years have obviously been a big challenge but it's been wonderful to have so many of our loyal clients return to share the love of gardening, socializing and fresh healthy food.



RECIPES

Sage Brown Butter Sauce

Sage is a flavoursome herb we grow at the garden which we have in abundance as it doesn't seem to be used by many of our clients. Therefore I decided to share a recipe from my husband's Italian aunt and demonstrate for our clients how simple and delicious it can be. Direct from our garden to the our plate! Hope you enjoy.

Ingredients:

4 ounces (8 tablespoons) unsalted butter
1 clove garlic, crushed and chopped
1/4 cup coarsely chopped fresh sage leaves
1/8 teaspoon ground black pepper
Salt, to taste

Melt the butter in a medium saucepan set over low-medium heat. When the butter begins to get just slightly bubbly, add the chopped garlic clove. Stir the garlic in the butter for 1 minute. Add the chopped sage to the garlic butter and continue stirring and cooking the mixture for 2 to 4 additional minutes, until the butter has turned very light brown and has a rich, nutty aroma.

Season the sage butter sauce with ground black pepper and salt. Serve and enjoy!



Tips:

Brown butter sauce is extremely easy to burn. Make sure to constantly stir the butter once the solids start to form. Although it's tempting, be sure not to step away from the pan, even for a moment. Once the butter starts to smell caramelized and nutty, take the pan off the heat and transfer the butter to a separate bowl. This will ensure that it doesn't burn due to residual heat.

When buying fresh sage, keep in mind that the leaves should be aromatic and have no soft spots or dry edges.

To store fresh sage, simply wrap the sage leaves in paper towels and put them in a plastic bag in the refrigerator. Make sure to use the leaves within four to five days. Fresh leaves that are covered in olive oil can be stored for much longer in the refrigerator, about three weeks.

If you're looking to cultivate your own sage at home, note that it is drought tolerant and does not like sitting in wet soil. The leaves will get mildew on them if they are allowed to sit damp, so water infrequently.



Joining the Hive If you would like to join us at the Hive, we are located in Braeside Park, Monday to Friday 10 – 2 p.m. **For details call (03) 9767 1900 or 0407 050 878.**

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Why did the banana go to the doctor?
Because he wasn't peeling well....!!

Why was the tomato blushing?
Because it saw the salad dressing....!!

What do you call a conversation between two artichokes?
A heart to heart!!