

Wally's Weekly News 27th DECEMBER 2008
Written by Wally Richards.

GARDENING INTO THE NEW YEAR

Well gardeners, the year is quickly drawing to an end and the gardens are bursting with produce and flowers, planted in the spring. It is a time that you are rewarded for your gardening efforts with produce and flowers to grace your home and table.

It is also the right time to plant up in any available space with vegetables and flowers for the winter.

If there is no space available yet, then start planting small lots in containers such as the polystyrene boxes that you can often obtain for free from supermarket fish departments. Plastic shops have reasonably priced kiddies paddling pools made of formed plastic which are also ideal to plant up both vegetables and flowers.

A good tip here is never use potting mixes or shrub and tub mixes; instead for outdoor containers go straight for the real stuff, this is; purchased bags of good quality compost. Far better results and a lot cheaper than the fancy, useless potting mixes for this type of planting.

Add additional animal manures if available otherwise use sheep manure pellets, include blood & bone, **Rok Solid** and some calcium in the form of **Rapid Lime** or dolomite.

Chook manure is my favourite and if there is a poultry farm anywhere in your part of the country you should be able to obtain a bag or two at a low price. Better still become more self sufficient and run a half dozen chooks of your own. You will always have a nice steady supply of manure from the chook house along with the best of eggs for your table. Chooks need lots of greens and they are a great way to recycle a range of weeds from your gardens along with all your kitchen scraps.

I was at the counter of a garden centre the other day while a chap was purchasing a big range of vegetable seedlings, he made the comment that he was a bit late in planting out and was wondering if he was wasting his time and money. No way; there is nothing that can't be planted out at this time and the only gardeners that need to be a bit wary, are those that live in early frost prone areas.

As summer crops are harvested then winter crops should go in after applying animal manures to the vacated area and fresh purchased compost etc.

I planted a dozen broad bean seeds a few weeks back and already they are in flower and starting to set beans. Actually I was after the nice fresh leaves for my Green Smoothies that I make each day and did not consider that I would have beans to boot, at the time of planting.

Put in a few more tomato plants either from seed, seedlings or rooted up cuttings of laterals.

These will fruit well into the autumn and even into winter in frost free areas.

More seed potatoes also should be planted now for harvesting and storing over winter. Note how much better the potatoes you grow, cook and taste compared to many of the ones you buy.

Brussel spouts, winter cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli and kale should also be planted as seed or seedlings now for winter harvests.

Sowings of summer salad crops should be done every few weeks for a continuous supply of nice fresh produce.

Concerns about your health? Growing your own food crops naturally will greatly assist in boosting your immune system, giving you great protection against various health complaints as well as assisting in the recovery from existing conditions.

Raw rather than cooked is the best and the simplest way to consume the maximum benefit from your food crops is to make Green Smoothies.

Ideally you need a very high speed blender for the best results, which are not cheap, but in the meantime a common cheaper blender will do to start with. Place a couple of cups of non chlorinated water into the blender and then go out and cut a few young fresh leaves of vegetables such as silverbeet, spinach, lettuce, carrot tops, broad beans, celery, brassicas and wheat grass. The foliage gathered is sufficient to make a smallish handful, place in the blender along with a whole ripe banana and whiz up at max speed for about 30 seconds. Common blenders will break down the foliage reasonably well but the result is likely to be a bit chunky when you drink it. A 3 horse power blender such as the one I purchased from Australia through the Internet for about \$800.00 really rips it all apart, releasing all the goodness from the foliage for your body to absorb. Green Smoothies are really tasty to drink because of the banana flavour and you can't get better goodness for your body. Mind you, the vegetables used need to be grown by yourself with all the minerals possible and these are obtained by using **Magic Botanic Liquid, Rok Solid and Ocean Solids**. (There are others but these 3 are my favourites.)

I live a very busy work life so don't have the spare time I would like to have, to actually do some real gardening, instead of the hit and miss way I have to currently go about it. One thing that I do make time for is to water all my food crops by hand each evening. I have filters on my outside taps to remove the chlorine (which is really bad for your gardens) and a watering wand for applying the moisture the plants need. While watering it gives me a chance to inspect the plants for diseases or pests as well as nip off any young weeds that might have sprouted up. I seldom have any disease problems because of all the natural goodness I have applied, but insect pests do set up home on some of the plants.

While doing this the other evening I thought of something I would like to share with you. You carry around with you the most deadliest, natural bug control known to man. It costs you nothing, is totally organic (hate that word) and readily available wherever you are. What is this amazing bug control you may ask; it is simply your thumb and forefinger. Using these two digits you can carefully wipe out hundreds of insect pests in an instant. Aphids on rose buds? Not a problem just run your thumb and finger up the stem and over the bud squashing the pests as you go.

If you can't reach some buds then a second answer lays in your other hand. Remove the water wand from the hose and place your thumb over the end of the hose to make a jet of water and blast the pests off the plants. Direct the jet under leaves as many insect pests feed in that area.

You blast the pests off your preferred plants and they either die as a result or have a hell of a time getting back up to the tender foliage where they prefer to feed.

You can get a bit wet till you get the knack of doing this with your thumb or you can swap your wand for a hose nozzle that adjusts between a jet to a sprinkler with a twist of the nozzle.

It is the simple, no cost things that make gardening a great adventure.

Well the New Year is fast approaching so I wish you all well for the coming year; times

might be tough a head, but if you have your own food crops you will be that much richer in both pocket and health, Happy New Year.

Problems ring me at 0800 466464 (Palmerston North 3570606)