

## **ORGANIC GROWING NEWS**

LEVIN BRANCH of the NZ SOIL & HEALTH ASSOCIATION

Newsletter 246 – January 2008

### **Organic River Festival**

**19-20 January**

**Kimberley Reserve,  
Kimberley Road, Levin**

The biggest event for our branch every year is our stall at the Organic River Festival, to be held this coming weekend.

The festival is our main outlet for reaching the public with our message “Healthy Soil - Healthy Food - Healthy People”.

It is our annual opportunity to showcase organics, to inform and educate people, and to raise funds for the coming year’s activities.

We look forward to seeing you there.

More details below.

### **END-OF-YEAR SOCIAL**

Over 30 members enjoyed a beautiful Spring afternoon at Deirdre Kent and Malcolm Murchie’s 3.5 acre property “Ranui Orchard” in Te Horo. We were very pleased to see Deirdre herself, feeling much better after a health scare.

Fruit and nut trees abound on the property. Scores of trees have been planted over the last seventeen years, including 35 heritage apple trees, 18 figs, plums, pears, apricots, peach, almond, walnut, macadamia, hazel nut, chestnut, persimmon, cranberry, feijoa, guava, various citrus, currants, olives, avocados, cherry, grapes, tamarillo, kiwifruit and loquats. There is also a wonderful organic vegetable garden, an area of native bush, and a glasshouse and chookhouse.

The meeting was an informal affair. After a walk-and-talk highlighting some of the many trees, we repaired to the lawn or the dappled shade to partake of a typically generous pot luck afternoon tea.

Unfortunately, Deirdre and Malcolm are having to sell Ranui Orchard. For enquiries, see [ranuiorchard.blogspot.com](http://ranuiorchard.blogspot.com), or call Deirdre on 06-364-7779.

### **ORGANIC RIVER FESTIVAL**

Now in its 8th year, the Organic River Festival offers a weekend of organic food and wine, health and wellbeing, music and performers, speakers, workshops, movies, alternative technology, creative arts and activities for kids.

You can swim in the Ohau River or walk in the bush at the feet of the Tararuas. Take a free yoga or meditation class. Spend a day or a weekend with like-minded people, learning fresh ideas for healthier ways of thinking and living. Visit 150 stalls, including over 30 food stalls.

A selection of international, national and regional bands are on offer, with concerts on all three nights.

Campers can start arriving on Friday from 10am. Prices are \$85 per person (\$25 for 5-13yo), or \$170 for two adults and two kids. Book on [ecofest.co.nz](http://ecofest.co.nz)

Gates open to day trippers at 10am on both Saturday and Sunday. Daily entry is \$25 adults, \$15 seniors, \$5 for 5-13yo, or \$50 for two adults and two kids. Tickets include all activities for that day and night.

You might want to bring your togs, good walking shoes, a sun umbrella, sunscreen and hat, and a fold-up chair for the evening concert.

A free shuttle bus will run from the road carpark to the festival site.

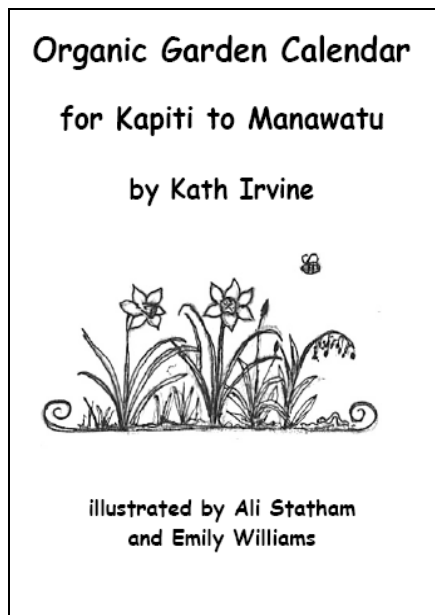
**Our stall** will feature our usual array of plants, produce, literature and organic gardening aids such as rock dust and Bt. Please bring all donated items to the festival site during set-up, or contact a committee member.

We will be setting up our stall from 4pm on the Friday. Please note that no vehicles will be allowed in or out after 9.30am on Saturday and Sunday.

Due to more stringent regulations, we will not be selling baked products this year. Instead, we will be offering fresh organic produce such as fruit, vegetables and herbs. Your donations would be most welcome.

We will also be running a raffle again this year. Kiwibackyards have very kindly donated another of their macrocarpa garden beds, and Farmlands have given us a selection of gardening items. Val Nicol has also donated a bokashi bucket system.

Thank you to all those who have volunteered to staff the stall. Your names have been given to the Festival organisers, and should be on a list at the information counter, in the marquee just inside the main entrance.



## THE “ORGANIC GARDEN CALENDAR”

Some years ago Johanna Oderkerk, a long-time member of the Levin branch, left us a bequest of \$1000 to be used for a worthwhile project. After much discussion and many suggestions at committee meetings and AGMs, we decided to commission a monthly organic garden calendar especially for our region.

Kath Irvine, a local organic gardener, spent twelve months interviewing other long-standing local growers. She asked what they were sowing, planting and harvesting, what pests and diseases they encountered, and what tricks and techniques they used at various times of the year.

The result is the “Organic Garden Calendar for Kapiti to Manawatu”, which will be available at our stall at the Organic River Festival.

As well as month-by-month information on what to grow, the Organic Garden Calendar has features on compost, EM, planting and pruning trees, pest control, extending winter crops, comfrey, mulch, herb harvesting, tomatoes, watering, storing your harvest and using up your crops.

The Organic Garden Calendar is 94 pages A5, spiral bound with cardboard covers and an additional plastic cover on the front. We will be selling them for \$15 at the Festival, or contact a committee member to order a copy.

We would like to thank NZ Community Post and the Oxford Tavern Levin Sports and Educational Trust for their generous grants towards this project.

## **FEBRUARY IN THE ORGANIC GARDEN**

from the "Organic Garden Calendar" by Kath Irvine

Harvest time is nearly at its peak. You will be starting to preserve your crops. It's great to get a head start, because come March you will be inundated with all the preserving that needs doing!

Are you happy with how your garden worked out this year? It's a good time to begin reflecting on what worked well and what didn't, and to prepare for any changes that need to be made this Autumn. Do you have your drainage all sorted out? . . . Do you have enough biodiversity? . . . Now's the time to create a smart solution for anything that's been a hassle . . .

Some colder-month greens, like spinach, can start to be sown now. Miner's lettuce and corn salad are two of my favourites! If you let these two self-seed, you won't have to go to the trouble of sowing them yourself. They are very vigorous self-seeders.

Keep up brassica sowings for Winter harvest, also silverbeet and spring onion. Sow parsley and coriander, and direct sow rocket and beetroot.

Green crops can be sown in any spaces you have between crops.

Plant out salad greens, leeks for Spring harvest, and tomatoes in the greenhouse for Winter harvest. Brassicas need to be going in now. If you leave them too late, the weather will be too cool and they won't grow fast enough. Instead of being ready for Winter eating, you will have to wait till Spring!

Keep an eye on tomatoes from now on for blight . . . Prepare beds for Winter crops. Dig in green manures; add compost, rock dust, worm castings, lime and dolomite. Go easy on the dolomite though. Too much can be detrimental, making calcium unavailable in the soil . . .

Keep up with codling moth lures . . . Mulch persimmon. These wonderful golden Winter fruits grow very well down our end of the island . . . Begin to plan for your Autumn fruit tree planting . . . Prune avocados now to expose fruits, before colder weather can damage the pruned branches . . .

Keep up liquid feeding . . . Make compost tea . . . Collect seeds . . . Plant strawberries for next year . . . Keep on top of your bird protection plan, especially as figs are about to fruit . . .

## **MOON PLANTING GUIDE – February 2008**

February starts with a last quarter moon, good for weeding and applying compost and mulch. The new moon is on the 7th, and moves into very fertile Pisces on the 9th and 10th, and fertile Taurus on the 13th. Sow green leafy crops like lettuce, spinach and silver beet on those days. Onion also does well at this time.

The 14th sees the first quarter moon. The 15th is good, and the 18th and 19th very good for sowing fruit and flower crops, such as broccoli and cauliflower.

The full moon on the 21st heralds a week for the root crops. 24th to 26th are good, and 28th-29th very good for sowing radish, beetroot, carrot and turnip.

The moon is ascending (getting progressively higher in the sky) from the 1st to the 4th, and from the 16th to the 29th. During an ascending moon, the earth breathes out and growth flows upwards. This is a good time for sowing seeds, and for plant growth.

During the descending moon from the 4th to the 16th, the earth breathes in and forces are directed below ground. A good time for composting, cultivation, firewood, pruning and harvesting root crops.

## News Briefs

- ⊗ Barbara and Tom Burstyn's film *How to Save the World* has won a prize at the world's biggest environmental film festival. *How to Save the World* is about the work in India of the NZ Biodynamic Association's former field advisor Peter Proctor, and won the 2007 prize for best non-broadcast film at the Jackson Hole Wildlife Film Festival.
- ⊗ A new organic college will be based at the Biological Husbandry Unit at Lincoln University from January 2008. The college will offer two levels of courses to students who are interested in practical, hands-on training for work on organic horticulture properties. No fees will be charged. Contact 03-325-3684, 0800-835-367, email [college@bhu.co.nz](mailto:college@bhu.co.nz) or see [www.bhu.co.nz](http://www.bhu.co.nz)
- ⊗ The UK Soil Association has responded to a report by the World Cancer Research Fund (WCRF) that recommended limiting red meat consumption to 500g per week and avoiding processed meat such as bacon, ham, salami, corned beef and some sausages. The Soil Association said "There is compelling evidence that red meat from organic and some other grass-fed animals is positively beneficial in protecting against the risk of cancer", and that anti-oxidants such as vitamin E and beta-carotene, also known to protect against cancer, will be higher in meat from grass-fed animals. The Soil Association said that none of this evidence has been reviewed by the WCRF in its report.  
- from the BioDynamic Farming and Gardening Association in NZ newsletter, November 2007

## UPCOMING MEETINGS

30 March – AGM and visit to Riverslea Retreat, 733 Otaki Gorge Road

27 April – visit to Debbie Laing's 16 acre lifestyle farm, 98 Derham Road, Te Horo

**The next committee meeting** will be held on **Monday 11 February** at 10am with Singa, **8 Kitchener Street, Te Horo Beach**. All members are welcome to attend.