

WINTER 2005

A quarterly newsletter for,
and about, the people with
their hands in the soil

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SOIL FOR LIFE

Build the soil, grow the plants, feed the people, heal the planet.

NEWSLETTER No. 6

THE WINTER RAINS HAVE COME AT LAST

But be wary of wasting a single drop. Read on...

What blissful relief after the long, hot and windy months of the summer drought. Vegetable gardens have sprung to life and food gardeners are busy preparing for a good winter and spring harvest.

The rain might be falling and our dams are more than half full, but the drought is not over and we're constantly reminded of the necessity to use water with great care. In the Cape Argus (Tuesday, 21st June 2005) Valli Moosa (former Environmental Affairs and Tourism minister, and now president of the highly influential World Conservation Union – IUCN) stated at the recent Western Cape Sustainable Development Conference that *global climate change is the number one, number two and number three environmental problem facing humankind today*. There is scientific proof that it is already happening in South Africa. Our environment minister, Marthinus van Schalkwyk, said that *the first province that will really experience the effects of climate change will be the Western Cape and that rainfall would decline quite dramatically in the next ten to fifteen years*.

With this in mind, apart from not wasting the water that comes out of your taps, become a 'water harvester' and use some of the ideas in this newsletter to trap rain water for your garden.

The soft, fresh green leaves of the winter crops have also given a new lease on life to all the butterflies, moths, snails, grasshoppers and the invisible spores of the microbes. Just as you think your garden bounty is looking so promising, you wake up to the fact that the cabbage moth has the same thought as she delicately deposits her eggs on the underside of your prize plants. Overnight the little blighters hatch out and grow at the most alarming pace, devouring your crop. Ghostly skeletons are all that remain.

The wet conditions, interspersed with warm sunny days, are just the right conditions for the outbreak of bacterial and fungal diseases at the beginning (and end) of winter. So be aware. Start brewing your magic lotions and potions right now, so that next crop round, you're prepared. There are lots of ideas for inexpensive sprays to control bacterial and fungal attacks on your plants. And, more important, the ingredients you use are not poisonous.

Apologies to all our members for there being no Autumn newsletter. With a few more hands in the garden soil, there may be more time to sit in front of the computer and keep in touch.

Have many wonderful, warm, Winter meals with some of the stomach-warming soup recipes. Tuck up tight, bolt down the window latches and plan your Spring and Summer gardens while the nights are long.

Happy food gardening.

Pat

PLANT YOUR GARDEN FOR A WINTER AND SPRING HARVEST

This planting guide is for areas in the Western Cape.

What Seeds to Sow: July

Winter rainfall areas:

Beetroot, cabbage, carrot, lettuce, parsley, peas, radish, tomato, turnips

Summer rainfall areas:

Peas, Swiss chard spinach

What seeds to sow: August

Winter rainfall areas:

Beetroot, brinjal, cabbage, carrot, chillies, green pepper, kohlrabi, leaf mustard, leek, lettuce, Lucerne, marrows, mealies, parsley, pumpkin, radish, Swiss chard spinach, squash, sweetcorn, tomatoes, turnip

Summer rainfall areas:

Beetroot, cabbage, carrot, kohlrabi, leek, leaf mustard, lettuce, Lucerne, peas, radish, Swiss chard spinach, tomato, turnip

What seeds to sow: September

Winter rainfall areas:

Bush and climbing beans, beetroot, brinjal, cabbage, carrot, chillies, cucumber, green pepper, kohlrabi, leaf mustard, leek, lettuce, lucerne, marrows, mealies, New Zealand spinach, parsley, pumpkin, Swiss chard spinach, squash, sweetcorn, tomatoes, turnip.

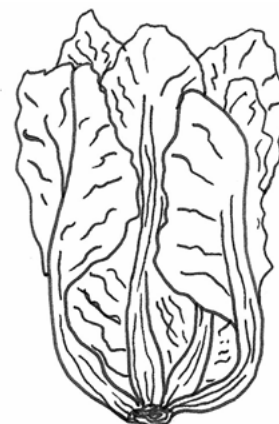
Summer rainfall areas:

Bush and climbing beans, beetroot, brinjal, cabbage, carrot, chillies, cucumber, green pepper, kohlrabi, leaf mustard, leek, lettuce, lucerne, marrows, mealies, New Zealand spinach, parsley, pumpkin, Swiss chard spinach, squash, sweetcorn, tomatoes, turnip.

How to grow...

CHINESE CABBAGE

A better choice than ordinary cabbage for your 'garden of health and vitality'. It contains six times more iron, nearly ten times more Vitamin A, three times more Vitamin B1, twice as much Vitamin B2, and much more Vitamin C. It matures in eight weeks and it is a cut-'n-come-again crop. You can harvest a few leaves from each plant as the inside continues to grow.



This is an excellent vegetable to grow in the cool autumn and winter months. The leaves are delicious raw in salads or you can add them to soups and stews. Try stir-frying them in a little oil for three minutes and eat them with rice like the Chinese do.

It thrives in trenched beds because they are well dug and have a lot of organic matter in them. Otherwise dig in some well-rotted manure or compost and a little agricultural lime or finely ground egg shells. Always remember that leafy vegetables are 'greedy feeders' and should preferably be grown where a legume (peas or beans) were growing previously. Legumes add nitrogen to the soil and this is needed for good green leaf growth.

Plant the tiny seeds in shallow drills from February to July and thin the plants out when they are four weeks old and have four true leaves. The remaining plants need to be about 25cm apart. The thinnings may be transplanted into other beds, or added to soups, stews or salads.

Mulch the plants to conserve moisture and warmth, and to keep down weeds. To make sure that they grow vigorously give them an extra helping of compost or well-rotted manure. Regular watering is essential for successful growth; make sure that you don't let the plants dry out too much, or keep them too wet – and try to water the soil, and not the leaves.

Harvesting starts about eight weeks after sowing the seed; a few individual leaves may be picked from each plant as they grow – cut-'n-come-again – or the plants can be left to form heads. Don't plant all your seed at once because plants sown at the same time tend to mature at the same rate. Do two or three plantings – three weeks apart – to ensure that you have a continual supply of fresh leaves through Winter and into Spring. When your plants start to bolt (send up flower heads) as the weather warms up, select the strongest plants and allow them to go to seed. By saving some seed from this year's crop you will not have to spend any of your hard earned money on a packet of seed next year. The seed is good for at least three years.

The good news - Chinese cabbage heads may be stored normally for up to 40 days; for several months in straw and sand. So, if you're careful, you will have a long season of eating

As a matter of interest – according to research done in Japan - Chinese cabbage grown the natural way (without artificial fertilisers and poisonous sprays) has a higher Vitamin C content, a higher nutritional value and stores for longer.

NEWS AND INSPIRATION

SOIL FOR LIFE HAS MOVED

By now you are probably aware that we have moved our offices and garden to a new site behind the stables at the Waldorf School, and we have spent the better



part of this year sorting ourselves out. Old Mutual very generously sponsored the move and we are very grateful to them. We look forward to sharing our vision with them and you as it gradually unfolds from the plan-on-paper into a magnificent and bountiful demonstration garden and Resource Centre. Come and visit us, and add your ideas to our plan.

We said a very sad farewell to Sandy Lewis at the beginning of May; she has joined Peninsula School Feeding Association as a fieldworker and will continue to keep an eye on the four gardens that we started together. We wish her well in her new position, but trust that she will one day realise where her real passion lies.

Caro Sabbagha, Miriam Khatib and Fabian Harms have joined us this year and we have already benefited enormously from their expertise. Caro has thrown herself into training and fieldwork, much of her time being spent on the food gardening programme for Ikamva Labantu. We are proud to be able to partner this dynamic organisation and to develop their vision of self-sustaining Educare centres, Seniors Clubs, Foster homes, home-based care facilities and Early Childhood Development centres. We are looking forward to training groups within Ikamva in medicinal and culinary herbs.

Miriam attended one of our training courses a few years back and has been busy promoting our methods in the communities in which she does voluntary work. She is now working for us as a part-time field assistant; her enthusiasm and sense of commitment are invaluable.

Fabian's job description is quite an eye-opener. Not only is he responsible for bringing in the funds to enable us to continue our work in the communities, but he fixes our vehicles, mends leaks, tackles the plumbing, feeds the cats, installs drip irrigation systems, moves bricks, and digs trenches. We want him to take part in our training programmes, do the fieldwork, set up our website, lay out the newsletter and much, much more.

If you haven't met these three fine people yet, you will do so in the near future. We look forward to a long and productive time with them.

Grow for your soup pot

Lucerne cream soup

This soup has a bright green colour if you don't overcook it. If you don't have lucerne, it is just as good with spinach, New Zealand spinach, turnip tops, beetroot leaves, nettles or a mixture of all of these.

1 large onion, or a generous bunch of spring onions (greens and all)
1 tablespoon butter
½ teaspoon nutmeg
2 large potatoes – scrubbed and cubed, but not peeled
3 cups vegetable stock
1 large bunch **young** lucerne – finely chopped
1 cup milk
salt and pepper

Chop the onion finely and add to the melted butter in a medium-sized pot. Add the nutmeg and cook gently for 5 minutes without browning. Add cubed potatoes and stock and bring to the boil. Simmer for 15 minutes, or until the potatoes are tender. Add the chopped lucerne (or spinach, turnip or beetroot leaves) and simmer for 3 minutes longer. Mash the soup with a potato masher and whisk in the milk. Reheat gently, adjust the seasoning to taste. .

LUCERNE

is also known as *alfafa*. It grows very easily, does not need much water and is full of protein, vitamins and minerals. Plant the seeds in a separate bed in your garden and when the plants are about 10 cms high, cut off the leaves just above ground level and eat them raw – chopped up on your food. Cook them with spinach, beetroot leaves, turnip leaves or cabbage. When you have a plentiful supply of lucerne, dry some of it by tying it in loose bunches in a dry and airy place. When completely dry, crush and store in an airtight container. Sprinkle on your food.

MORE RECIPES

The vegetable stock pot



Grate coarsely 1 large carrot, 1 large onion and 2 or 3 stalks of celery with the leaves. Crush and add 1 teaspoon of finely chopped garlic and ½ teaspoon chopped chilli, 1 teaspoon pepper and freshly chopped herbs from your garden. Simmer the mixture in a large pot with 6 cups of water for 45 minutes. Leave to cool before straining the stock through a piece of cloth; squeeze out as much liquid as possible. Add 1 teaspoon each of salt and brown sugar. Keep it in the fridge until used or deep freeze. Use this stock in place of stock cubes and powder which are expensive to buy.

Interesting additions to the stock pot

Turnip leaves have six times more Vitamin C than the roots; they also contain nearly 24 times more vitamin A than cabbage, and are rich in calcium, iron, thiamine and other B vitamins. Don't dare throw them away in future!

New Zealand spinach is a delicious, and highly nutritious vegetable; it is rich in iron (much more than in Swiss chard spinach) and vitamins A and C. It produces for much longer than many other plants, and it grows so easily.

Masizame Women's Group

This group of ladies, organised and motivated by Edith Mwezo, have two vegetable gardens in Driftsands. On the one site there are two old containers that were being used by local children for undesirable activities. Edith and her team came up with the idea of turning one into a children's library and the other into a soup kitchen. Over the period of a year, their dream has come true; both the library and the kitchen are open and in use. The children have something worthwhile to do after school, and the locals can pop in for a chat, a cup of nutritious soup and a vetkoek. Their special thanks go to the three Dietetic students – Ashleigh, Bronwyn and Jean – who helped with the initial training for the kitchen, and even spent time painting and fixing the container. The project will be officially launched in early September.

One of their biggest problems is raising R1 200 to pay for an advertisement to appear in the newspaper to ensure that they may use the land for the next five years or so. To cover this cost they are growing seedlings for Soil for Life, making jam and lemon cordial for sale in the community, selling vegetables from their gardens and letting out a piece of the land for a cell phone shop. Good luck to these hardworking souls.

Sinethemba Women's Group and the Sinako Garden Project

in Gugulethu have joined hands and are working towards running Garden and Nursery Co-operative. Their vegetable gardens are coming on well; the nursery has been built and the training in seedling and plant production starts shortly. Well done to Nomvuso Lurwenga for having the vision and the will power to carry it through, in spite of all the problems that there have been along the way. We can't wait to see the outcome.

Thando Community Centre

in Touws River has done it again. They have been invited to Uganda where two members of the Thando team are going to teach fifteen different groups how to grow vegetables the Soil for Life way. Armed with posters, pictures, training manuals and lots of enthusiasm they set off on 30th June for a few weeks. We wish them lots of luck and look forward to learning some new things from them on their return.

Biophile magazine have given us a page on their website. Many, many thanks to Anthea Torr and Steve Venter. Setting it up is our next challenge. Watch out for news of its launch.

VACCINATIONS: GENOCIDE IN A BOTTLE

BIOPHILE

for the love of our earth, and all who live on her

Contrails... or Chemtrails? • Forbidden Cures • Genetically Modified Food in SA
Unconventional Power • Debt, Dependency & Dicky Economics • 10 Things You Can Do

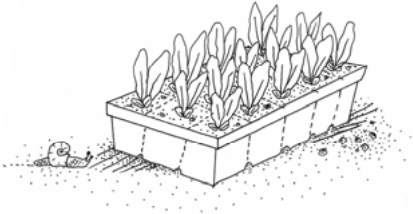


FEEDING THE WORLD:
SLOWLY, ETHICALLY, SUSTAINABLY

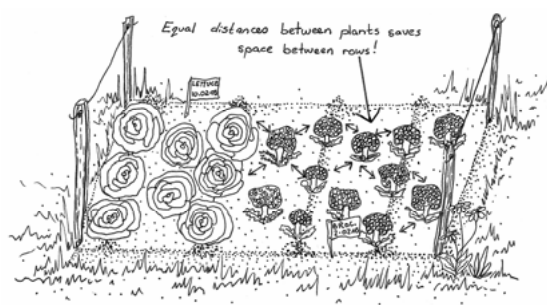
TIPS FOR MORE SUCCESSFUL (AND CHEAPER) GARDENING

Make the best use of your garden space – no matter how small it is – to produce lots of high quality vegetables all year round by following some simple guidelines:

- **Start your crops off in seed trays** or beds and transplant them into the garden when they are about 10cm high. This means that the plants spend less time in the ground; you do not have to wait for one harvest before you sow the next. Therefore, you can grow more crops each season. It also means that frost-sensitive crops can be started off in a protected spot long before conditions are



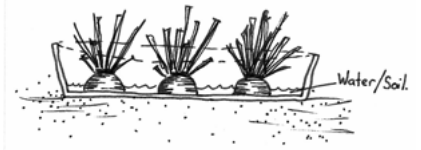
- right for them outside; it gives them a head start.
- **Practise succession planting** – crop after crop. Rather than planting all your seeds at one time and then having a glut of vegetables that will never be used, or nothing to harvest at all, space the plantings at intervals of three to four weeks. While some of the crops are ready to eat, others will be coming along in different stages of growth.
- **Plant cut-'n-come-again crops** like spinach, beans, peas, Chinese cabbage, Chou Mellier Kale and parsley. One sowing may give you a year or more of harvesting, with no gluts or shortages.
- **Pick the food from your garden** when it is young and tender. Not only is it healthier for you, but it will increase the productivity of your plants. Whenever possible, eat it raw (cooked only by the sun – will save on your electricity bills).
- **Companion planting** helps to get the most out of your garden by planting different vegetables together so that they can make the best use of available sun, nutrients and space. So, either plant fast-growing plants in between slow-growing ones, or take a look at the shape of the plants. Large, bushy plants like tomatoes can provide protection from scorching sun for low-growing, shade-loving plants like lettuce and spinach. It also means that you use **all** the space in the beds to maximum advantage.
- **Staggered spacing** – with seedlings being planted out at equal distances from each other – is the best spacing pattern particularly



for large plants like cabbages, tomatoes and broad beans. This simply means that every plant is the same distance from its neighbours in all direction and no space is lost by the gap between the rows.

Don't waste...

One man's waste is your wealth (and health); grow your own baby greens.



Turnips, beetroots, radishes and carrots are usually grown for their roots, but their leaves (especially the young ones) are delicious.

Next time you buy any of these vegetables, cut away the crown, about 1 cm from the top. Eat the roots, cooked or raw, and save the crowns.

Put the crowns in a shallow tray with water (or plant them in composted soil) with the tops showing and place in a sunny spot. Water, and within a week the first new growth will start to show. Pick the leaves when they are still small, about 10cm long, and use them in salads or sautéed like spinach. They look great in a salad and they're delicious to eat. Carrot tops have the same texture and taste like a cross between coriander and parsley. They make an unusual addition to your food.

And while we're looking at growing veggies in a rather unusual way, try growing sunflowers and lentils in discarded polystyrene trays on a sunny windowsill.

Half fill the trays with compost or soil, sow the seeds and cover them over. Water them lightly and make sure that the soil remains damp. The seeds will germinate and produce young green shoots ready to eat in a week to ten days (longer when the weather is cold). Snip near the surface with a pair of scissors when they are ready to harvest. The lentils will re-grow two or three times. Enjoy.

RECIPES

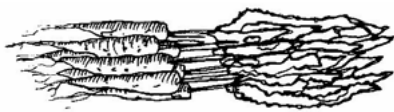
for the Home Gardener



There's nothing to beat a bowl of piping hot soup made from the delicious, fresh veggies from your garden.

Carrot Soup

Rich in Vitamin A.



- 1 cup butter
- 8 cups thinly sliced carrots (no need to peel them if they come out of your own garden)
- 1 cup chopped onion or spring onions
- 6 cups vegetable stock (try making your own following the instructions given in this newsletter)
- 1 cup milk
- Salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- A pinch of nutmeg or mace
- Fresh parsley, finely chopped

Melt butter in a heavy saucepan and sauté carrots over low heat for 5 minutes. Add onion and sauté for 3 minutes more. Stir in stock and milk and simmer for 35 - 40 minutes. Add seasonings and push through a fine sieve. Return to the saucepan and reheat slowly before serving.

Sprinkle chopped parsley over each serving.

Tip:

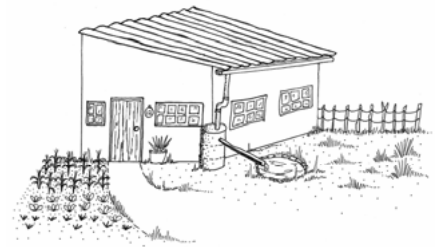
Onions take a long time to reach maturity in the garden. Why not try growing spring onions instead. They grow and multiply very quickly, they have a good flavour and you can use the whole plant in your cooking.

WAYS TO BE WATER-WISE

Become a 'water harvester'; catch and store rainwater.

Water is one of our most precious natural resources and most people in the Western Cape (and elsewhere in Southern Africa) cannot get enough of it. An excellent way of using the rain that falls is to harvest it off your roof. Even a small roof can collect a lot of water during light rain.

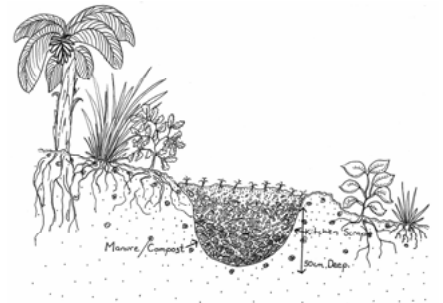
Many houses do not have gutters, but it is easy to fit them. The rain water is then channeled into clean drums, large buckets, old baths or any kind of home-made tank. It is best to cover the storage container to reduce water loss through evaporation. To prevent mosquitoes from breeding in the water, add a **few drops** of cooking oil which will suffocate them and will not damage your plants. The oil will also help to prevent the water from evaporating.



Another idea for catching rain water is to bend a piece of iron sheeting into a 'V' shape and place it on wooden poles so that it is supported at a slant. Keep it from blowing away in strong winds by securing it with wire. A drum placed at lower edge will catch the water.

Planting pits are another simple way of harvesting water.

These work well on a short slope. Dig a pit about 50 cm deep and 30 to 40 cm wide and fill it with a little manure and garden and kitchen waste. The pits collect run-off water and any soil that is carried by the water. You can also channel grey water from the bathroom or kitchen into the pit. Surround the hole with plants – small ones close and bigger ones further away.



Make a small depression around a newly-planted tree. It will catch rain-water and act as a reservoir!

A small depression around newly-planted trees also serves to hold water and to catch run-off moisture.

BUG WATCH

Controlling pests and diseases the natural way.

Diseased plants look different to those that have been damaged by pests such as aphids, beetles and caterpillars. Sicknesses in plants are caused largely by bacteria, viruses and fungi and also by harsh conditions (extreme temperatures, nutrient deficiencies, over- or under-watering and so on)

As with human illness, **prevention is better than cure.**

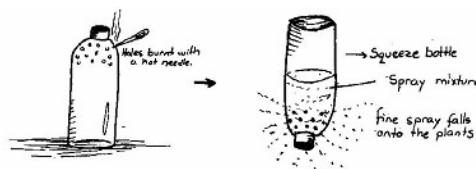


To prevent disease outbreaks in your garden:

- Build healthy soil which is rich in organic matter and soil life and grow healthy plants which resist attack. **To improve the soil dig less, mulch more and compost always.**
- Mulch, mulch and mulch some more. Mulch minimises the spread of disease through soil splash when irrigating or during rainfalls.
- Grow a variety of crops in your beds, and interplant with herbs and pest-repelling flowers like nasturtiums, marigolds and petunias.
- Surface watering (including drip irrigation) doesn't wet the leaves. Water before 10.00 am so that the leaves are not wet overnight.
- Use plants that are resistant to the fungal diseases that are common in your area.
- Because fungal and bacterial spores germinate best in warm, wet conditions, try to reduce the times when plant leaves are wet. Plant in sunny sites with gentle wind.
- Pruning keep plants open, allowing air and sun to quickly dry branches and leaves following rain or morning dew.
- Crop rotation helps to starve out the disease-causing organisms in the soil.
- Practise good garden hygiene. Diseased plants should be burnt, or put in the rubbish bin. Do not put it in the compost heap. Use the ashes as a fertiliser. Ash is high in potassium which promotes good root growth, and flower and fruit formation.

In the event of an outbreak, try one or more of the following remedies...

- Onion spray is a fungicide, an insecticide and an insect repellent. Chop one medium-sized onion into small pieces (use the skin and green leaves as well if you have them) and soak in 1 litre of water in a closed container for between 4 to 7 days. Strain the mixture through an old stocking and spray onto the affected plants.
- Garlic has the same effect as onion. Crush 1 garlic bulb and add 1 litre of warm water. Shake well, strain, mix in a little liquid soap and use immediately.
- Vigorously stir 1 heaped tablespoon of **wood** ash into 1 litre of water. Leave overnight, strain to remove solids, mix with 1 cup sour milk and add 3 litres of water. Spray.



More RECIPES

Parsley Soup

Parsley is rich in minerals and vitamins and is a must in your home garden.

- 1 cup chopped onions or spring onions
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 2 medium potatoes, scrubbed but not peeled
- 4 cups vegetable stock
- 3 cups tightly packed chopped fresh parsley and some tender stems
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce *or* ½ tablespoon Marmite
- ½ tablespoon fresh lemon juice
- Salt and white pepper to taste
- Garnish with finely chopped fresh parsley and paprika

In a medium-size saucepan sauté onions in butter until transparent and lightly golden. Slice potatoes and add to onions with stock. Cover, bring to boil, and cook over medium heat for 5 minutes. Add parsley, bring to a second boil, and cook until potatoes and parsley is soft. Push through a fine sieve, or mash with a potato masher, and add soy sauce (or Marmite), lemon juice, and seasonings. Reheat without boiling and adjust seasoning with soy, lemon juice, salt, and white pepper.

Onion Toast

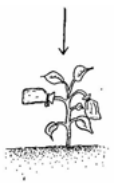
Tasty with soup, or as a light snack.

- 1 large onion, finely chopped
- 3 tablespoons mayonnaise
- Salt and pepper
- 8 slices whole-wheat brown bread, toasted and cut in half

Add mayonnaise and salt and pepper to the chopped onion. Mix together. Spread mixture on slices of toast and place under the grill until bubbly and brown. Serve hot.



Save money...



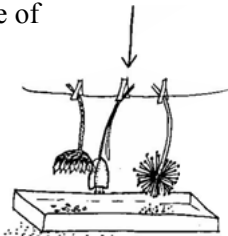
...collect your own seed.

With birthdays always around the corner, and Christmas looming on the horizon, what could be better than a gift of seed collected from your own garden.

Allow one or two of the healthiest plants of each kind to go to seed. When you can see that the seeds are ripe, cut the seed-bearing stems very gently and hang them upside down in a **paper** (not plastic) bag. Tie the bag with a piece of string and hang up in a cool, dry and airy place.

Each kind of seed must go into a separate bag on which you must write the name of the plant and the date of picking.

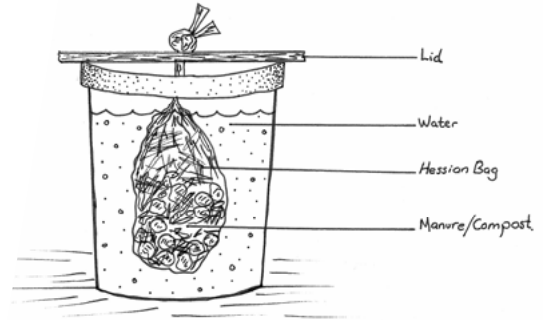
Start seed-saving now. It's another way to save money.



MORE spray recipes for your garden

- Spray with a mixture of 2 tablespoons baking soda (bicarbonate of soda) with 1 tablespoon of grated green bar soap (Sunlight). Dilute with 2 litres of water. Spray only once, or leave a gap of several months before repeating. Do not spray in hot weather. Avoid spraying the leaves and flowers.

- Well-rotted compost makes an excellent foliar feed and a method of controlling fungal attacks. Add $\frac{1}{2}$ bucket of compost to about 20 litres of water and leave to soak for a minimum of three days and up to several weeks. The longer the mixture stands, the more effective it becomes. Spray the plants (especially when they are young), and the soil once a week.



- Add $\frac{1}{4}$ bucket manure (cow, horse, donkey, chicken) to 10 litres of water. Stir the mixture everyday for about two weeks. Dilute the mixture 3 to 5 times (until it is the colour of weak tea) and spray in the same way as for compost. Apart from being good for controlling bacterial, fungal and viral diseases, manure tea is good for controlling aphids, bugs, birds, caterpillars, cutworm, grasshoppers, mites, thrips. It is also a good fertiliser.
- Another simple and effective spray: 1 part of milk diluted with 9 parts of water sprayed onto affected plants every 10 days.
- 4 teaspoons of grated bar soap (Sunlight) or 2 teaspoons of liquid soap dissolved in 1 litre of hot water makes a good spray that can be used for controlling aphids and bacteria and fungi. Soap added to other sprays helps the spray to stick to the plant.

HEALTH MATTERS

With the cold, wet winters in many parts of the Western Cape, Vitamins C and A are the ones to protect you from colds and flu. Many of the vegetables planted in your garden at this time of the year are rich in these important vitamins.

Vegetable	Part eaten	Vitamin C per 100g of an edible portion	Vitamin A per 100g of an edible portion
Turnip	roots	35 mg	-
	leaves	139 mg	4 560 mg
Swiss Chard spinach	leaves	100 mg	600 mg
CM Kale	leaves	110 mg	900 mg
Radish	roots	25 mg	900 mg
	leaves	81 mg	2 410 mg
Cauliflower	leaves	80 mg	850 mg
Chinese cabbage	leaves	66 mg	2 160 mg
Ordinary cabbage	leaves	44 mg	150 mg

These vegetables also contain lots of iron, calcium, phosphorus, a selection of B vitamins and protein.

- Leaves are a very important source of nutrients. Learn to love eating them. Pick them young and enjoy them. Never throw them away.