



Welcome to vegetableseeds.net.au

July 2015 Newsletter

In the late autumn we had to disappoint some people who wanted to buy vegetable seeds for sowing or seedlings for planting from our shop for their winter vegetable garden, saying that they would not grow very much over the winter time and that the next sowing/ planting slot is late winter/early spring for spring and summer vegetable gardens.

We have hundreds of thousands of seeds in stock. If I just wanted to make money out of the unsuspecting home gardener I would have sold these folk seeds and seedlings, but I want customers to have success.

I thought back in the summer how can I convince cool climate gardeners that the correct sowing and planting times for a successful Winter garden is summer? So I sowed and planted seedlings in January/ February at Inspirations Garden Centre in Exeter with the intention of photographing them now in June to show you some examples.



This proves what vegetable plants will look like now in June with shorter days and cold miserable weather.

Yes, a cloche or unheated green house may prove a bit more productive, but the only greenhouse guaranteeing winter success would be a heated one at 17 degrees all day and night probably with lighting to increase day length.

If I had sold small seedlings in May they would be weak and vulnerable to every pest and disease imaginable at this time of year, probably failing to thrive or going to seed in spring, defeating the object. Seeds would not germinate well. Look at previous Newsletters and our sowing schedule to see what to sow, plant and when, in a cool climate and keep a diary.

The above is mainly for regions like Tasmania, those of you in other warmer regions will of course be aware of your own growing conditions for your region and order seeds accordingly, and many of you order on the web to stock up seeds not necessarily for immediate sowing.

The following vegetables were sown in late January or early February.



Spring onions



Lettuce mix



English spinach; steadfast



Parsnip



Perennial cabbage



Carrot

Fungi

Good Fungi feed on non-living organic matter, like straw and chicken manure in mushroom compost or pine bark in potting mix. These are called saprophytic. An example is the field mushroom. Gardeners want good fungi. Fungi can be seen in plant pots or potting mix in autumn and winter, this is the process of decomposition a few may be harmful to plants but the majority are not because fertilisers and other added ingredients encourage good fungi and deter bad fungi; if unsure spray with a fungicide like mancozeb.



Bad fungi feed off living plants causing disease or death. They are parasitic, or phytopathogenic, to be more precise. They are a huge diverse group. For identification they are divided into classes. Each class has an order and are further divided into a genus; it's a bit like a filing system. 63 of the most important genera include Rusts, Damping Off and Late Blight. They sit in four main classes. There are many more. Each genus has a lifecycle. Many fungi have thousands of thin threads called mycelium to reproduce in plant tissues but many also reproduce by thousands of spores spread by water and in the air, some have fruiting bodies. In other words the home gardener has a real challenge with bad fungi.

Why is this important to the home gardener?

Imagine buying a few seeds or seedlings in late summer/ early autumn, digging a hole, watering a bit adding a small handful of potting mix and sowing or planting them without adding organic matter and feeding them properly. Disappointment arrives at the end of winter when small yellow weak plants hang on for dear life. Weeds, by their very nature, colonise and harbour fungal spores and mycelium and your plants will become hosts to them. Poor soil health also contributes to a high level of bad fungi. Imagine us eating all the wrong types of food that destroy our good gut bacteria. Over time we may become ill. With plants, although in a shorter time frame, by not giving them the right conditions to thrive and nutrients, they become ill. This brings me to a very obvious point... please wash all home grown produce thoroughly before eating.

A simple solution

Add well aerated bulky organic matter like your own garden compost which will have good fungi in it. Good fungi also break down blood and bone, kelp meal, canola seed meal and fish emulsion. If all these are added in substantial and correct amounts, and you remove all weeds, use healthy strong seeds or seedlings sown or planted at the correct times, and practise crop rotation you will reduce the risk of attack by parasitic fungi. Check crops regularly for infections and remove damaged or diseased plants

and debris regularly. Don't overwater but keep soils moist. Seed treated with a fungicide protects seedlings. It is not sinister. Encouraging good bacteria can also prevent bad fungal infections, see March newsletter.



Timing

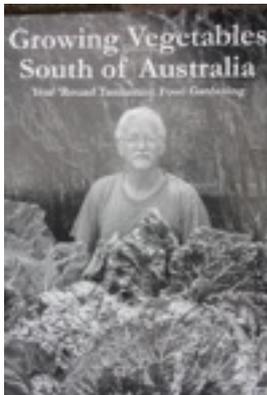
Some seeds sown or seedlings planted in cool climates too late in autumn, lettuces for example, don't have high light levels or warmth like spring or summer and the soils can be too wet. They grow slowly and are attacked by pathogenic fungi like root rots; you may have seen seedlings mysteriously dying at this time of year for this reason. It's best to wait until late winter and early spring when light levels are higher to sow or plant most crops.

Phytopathogenic fungi thrive in unhygienic conditions.

Do not sow seeds in used potting mix, in unclean containers on unclean benches. Use fresh seed raising mix, clean punnets, clean watering cans and clean benches. Spray containers and seed raising mix with mancozeb just to be sure.

Spraying

After many years of availability to home gardeners mancozeb, sulphur and copper fungicides are still the most effective. Follow directions on the label. There are lots of phytopathogenic fungi causing symptoms from minor leaf spots to serious life threatening rots on plants.



Final note: We now have the 2015 edition of Steve Solomon's Growing vegetables South of Australia.

This is one of the most informative and scientifically accurate 'grow your own vegetable' books I have read. It is written from the heart with years of practical experience.

Steve has completely revised the content with much more information than in previous editions.

See our web catalogue; \$25 free postage.

We also now have nutrient enriched biochar in stock.

This has high percentages of minerals and organic matter in the correct amounts readily available to plants. It is excellent for promoting good bacteria, fungi, and puts carbon in the soil.

Frank Strie has spent ten years working on the correct type of biochar for every region's soil and situation in horticulture and agriculture in Australia.



We sell a 2.5 lt for \$12 for the home gardener at our shop, if you are interested in purchasing this from us please let us know.

Have a look at biochar-journal.org and terratretadevelopments.com.au for more information on biochar.

Happy gardening wherever you may be.

