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September:

It's Spring! The long wait is over. Spring is that enchanting time of regeneration and rebirth in the gardening year. Daylight hours gradually increase and the weather becomes warmer. As the month advances there is plenty to sow in order to have your vegetable garden producing an abundance of crops, and, looking fantastic in the process.

The varieties of vegetables available to grow in this season are diverse so take advantage and start sowing those seeds and planting those seedlings now. Try not to cultivate the entire vegetable garden in one go, rather, stagger the plantings in 2 week intervals (known as succession planting) this will ensure that you have a flow on effect with harvesting your crops. The last thing you need is all the eggplant to be ready at one time and then a pause in production while the 2nd crop grows.

The excitement of all your options may get the better of you but please slow down, work safely and take the time to prepare the garden beds properly. The above ground growth is simply a reflection of what's going on underground. What you do in soil preparation now will reflect in the plants health in approximately 2 – 6 weeks. Every seed/seedling you plant will require you to maintain and nurture it, so don't take on too much and end up resenting the time the need to spend in the vegetable garden. Remember the old saying "you are what you eat" so consider using certified organic fertiliser rather than chemical ones.

Spring is the time when soil temperature rises and the water and sap flow becomes active in both soil and plants. This will motivate photosynthesis, which is one of the main functions of leaves. This is the time when all the insects and animals start to breed again and come back into action after their hibernation or down time of winter. All microbial activity in the soil starts to function again.

With the weather becoming warmer, brassica's will be very vulnerable to caterpillar attack. Be vigilant in regards to prevention and control measures. By making sure the pest populations are minimal you will be protecting your investment (time, energy and monetary) that you've already created in establishing the crops.



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The Spring Equinox.

Definition of **equinox**

noun

- the time or date (twice each year) at which the sun crosses the celestial equator, when day and night are of equal length (about 22 September and 20 March).
- another term for [equinoctial point](#).

Origin:

late Middle English: from Old French *equinoxe* or Latin *aequinoctium*, from *aequi-* 'equal' + *nox, noct-* 'night'

(Oxford Dictionary)

The Sun is crossing the Equator (an imaginary line around the middle of the Earth) and it is an equal distance from the North Pole and the South Pole.

The calendar Spring is defined as beginning on the 1st of September each year.

Usually the equinox will fall on the 21st September.

The time and date can vary year to year slightly.

For example:

Spring Equinox (AEST)

2012 September 23, 00:49 am

2013 September 23, 6:44 am

2014 September 23, 12:29 pm

www.museumvictoria.com.au 2013

The days will now start to get longer.





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September.

Vegetable planting options:

Asian greens, asparagus crowns, beans, beetroot , cape gooseberry ,capsicum, carrot, celeriac, celery, ceylon spinach, coriander, cucumber, eggplant, horseradish, kale, lettuce, luffa, melons, okra, pumpkin, radicchio, radish, rosella, rhubarb, salsify, silverbeet, squash, spinach- mountain and perpetual, spring onion, shallots, strawberry, sunflowers, swedes, sweet corn, sweet potato, tomato, turnip, zucchini.

Available for harvest:

Asian green, asparagus crowns, beans, beetroot, broccoli, cabbage, cape gooseberry ,carrot, cauliflower, celeriac, celery, chicory, coriander, cucumber, endive, garlic, horseradish, kale, kohlrabi , lettuce, miners lettuce, onion, orach, parsnip, peas/snow peas, perilla, potato, radicchio, radish, rosella, rhubarb, salsify, silverbeet, sunflowers, spinach- mountain, perpetual and winter varieties, spring onion, shallots, strawberry , sunflowers, swedes, tomato, turnip, zucchini.



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Maintenance tasks include:

- Prune any shrubs and trees that have finished their flowering in winter. Be sure to fertilise and mulch them after their haircuts.
- Selectively thinning plants in motivation for balanced flowering in summer. This will open up tracks for pollinators to get through the garden more easily as well.
- Fertilise citrus now. This will encourage all round balanced growth – roots, stems and flowers. This will also reduce insect damage in the coming months. E.g. leaf miner and motivate sweeter fruit at time of harvest.
- Watch for root stock suckers on grafted fruit trees. Remove any shoots that start to grow from below the graft. If left to grow they will overtake the “desired” grafted tree and eventually kill it.
- Citrus will usually flower/fruit at the start summer and winter, hence the need for fertiliser to be applied at the start of Spring and Autumn.

- Mulch everything. Mulch is a doona to keep the earth cooler in summer and warmer in winter while being a consistent source of food for soil biology, e.g. worms, microbes, composting insects. By keeping the soil cooler in summer you will be encouraging earthworms to stay in the top layers of soil and continue to provide your vegetable garden with their benefits.

- Give the worm farm an end of month feed of “Unprocessed Bran” to help with digestion.
- Aerate the worm farm.



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Rockmelon/Cantaloupes - *Cucumis melo canteloupensis*.

Family: Curcubitaceae.

Origins: India and Africa.

Growing conditions:

- They require full sun in a well drained soil with a pH of 6.5.
- Planting beds should be prepared with composts and other organic matter to increase microbial activity and provide a rich soil in which to grow in.
- It is advisable to grow the rockmelon on a raised mound rather than flat on the ground. The raised mound should be approximately 1 metre in radius and 40cm in height. Think of a plateau shape rather than a pyramid shaped bed. This will increase the airflow around the emerging seedlings, increase drainage and reduce fungal problems.

How to grow:

- Directly sow 3-4 seeds approximately 5cm deep into the planting mound.
- When the seedlings emerge and have produced their first set of leaves, choose the healthiest 1 or 2 plants of each mound and remove the weaker seedlings. Don't rip them out unceremoniously, simply cut them off below ground level. By doing this you will cause minimal disturbance to the 1 or 2 successful seedlings
- Always avoid overhead watering of the leaves; otherwise you may get powdery mildew and other fungal diseases. This will also encourage the plant to set fruit prematurely.
- Irrigation is essential before and after planting the seeds. Drip irrigation is the most beneficial for healthy plant growth as it reduces the risk of pest and disease. It also doesn't interrupt pollinating insects which are active in the morning.



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When to harvest:

- Fruits will mature at approximately 12-14 weeks depending on the variety.
- When you see a rockmelon starting to form, slide a flat piece of untreated wood or Styrofoam underneath the fruit to avoid the fruit having contact with wet soil and rotting.
- It's time to harvest a rockmelon when it starts to develop a musk, fragrant aroma.
- On ripening, the stem of the rockmelon will become dry. The end of the fruit will become soft and will pull away easily from the stem.
- Don't allow the fruit to over ripen on the vine, this can be identified by softening of the whole fruit.
- Rockmelons can be harvested just before ripening.

How to harvest:

- Cut the stem of watermelons cleanly with scissors or a knife.

Common problems:

- Common pests include: caterpillars, aphids, cucumber beetle, squash vine borer, mice and possum.
- Common disease include: powdery mildew and fusarium wilt.



Oleander butterfly / Australian Common Crow Butterfly – *Euploea core*.

A common visitor to orchards and vegetable gardens.



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Coriander Baked Fish.

I've only been telling you about the amazing vegetable recipes that I love, but, some of you may be into aquaponics? If that's the case then you'll adore this easy, flavoursome recipe that is great for large dinner parties.

INGREDIENTS:

1 x white fish – something that absorbs flavours really well. Just ask your local fishing expert, there's always a self proclaimed one nearby!

A small amount of lemon zest and lots of lemon juice.

A squeeze of lime juice

A few slithers of red capsicum

1 x mushroom, sliced.

2 x cherry tomatoes, halved.

OPTIONAL: a little fresh chopped chilli or a sprinkle of ground paprika.

Lots and lots of fresh coriander, roughly chopped.

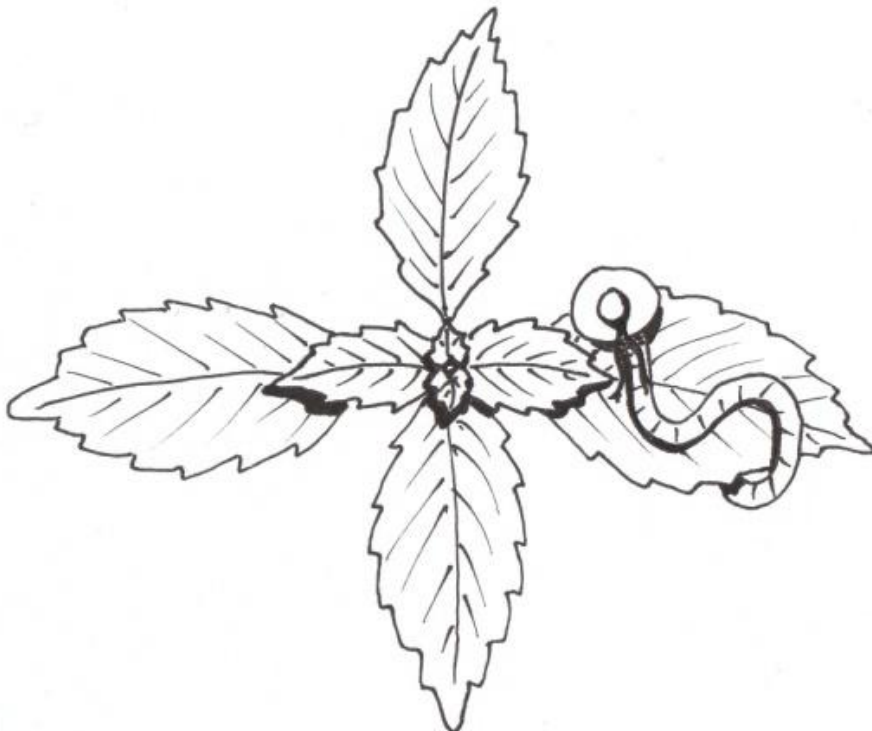
METHOD:

1. Pre heat the oven to 180 degrees Celsius.
2. Tear off a large piece of aluminium foil.
3. Place the fish in the centre of the aluminium foil.
4. Sprinkle lemon zest over the fish and give a good squeeze of the lemon for lots of juice.
5. Now a splash of lime juice.



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6. Arrange the red capsicum, mushrooms and tomatoes on the fish in a pretty pattern.
7. Sprinkle with chilli if you like a little bite.
8. Pile on the fresh coriander.
9. Wrap the fish loosely but make sure that no steam can escape.
10. Bake for approximately 15 – 20minutes, or until the fish has just turned white, not translucent.
11. Serve with all its juices and a freshly made garden salad.





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Fresh Basil and Ricotta Pasta.

INGREDIENTS:

2 x tsp of olive oil.

3 x cloves of garlic, crushed.

1 x leek or onion, finely chopped.

2 x spring onions, finely chopped.

250g x ricotta.

½ cup of fresh basil, roughly chopped.

12 x cherry/grape tomatoes, halved.

500g of organic penne pasta. – You can also use gluten free as it does not change the flavour at all.

METHOD:

1. Cook the pasta in a large saucepan until al dente. Keep 1 cup of the pasta water for later use.
2. Heat the oil in a fry pan and cook the garlic, leek and spring onion until they are soft.
3. Remove from the heat, let slightly cool and then add the ricotta, basil and stir until smooth.
4. Add a little of the “pasta water” that you have saved to the ricotta mix, just to thin it out a little.
5. Add the tomatoes and pasta and return to heat.
6. Lightly fold mixture to heat through. Do not over-cook.
7. Season with freshly ground pepper and a few more basil leaves.
8. Serve with fresh, crusty bread or a leafy garden salad.



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September Planting Notes and Observations.

What grew well?

What didn't grow well?

Pest and disease problems?

What is an option to try something differently next year?

General notes.
