

Calendar will have you over the moon

Gardening Colin Campbell



EARLIER in the year, Nursery and Garden Industry Australia released the results of a survey carried out on the gardening habits of Australians.

Of those surveyed, 57 per cent indicated that they were growing their own vegetables, herbs and fruit trees; and 72 per cent indicated that they were intending to buy vegetable plants or seeds in the near future. Such is the increasing interest in this worthwhile task.

Among the long-term vegetable growers, there is a sizeable number who subscribe to the concept of planting by the moon and I have no doubt this number will increase as vegetable growers multiply.

As the number of moon-planting devotees grows, so probably will the number of sceptics increase, and I have already been criticised by some of these for promoting the concept of planting by the moon.

My father was the first person I knew who firmly believed in the practice and his thriving vegetable garden, which I religiously hoed each afternoon, bore testimony to its validity. His vegetable garden was the envy of the district.

More recently, one of our younger friends purchased a Moon Calendar and he is already claiming great success.

As an example of how it works, the first thing to establish is when the new moon occurs. Once this is established, the rotating dial on the moon calendar should be set to that date. This will then show that the next 11 days are ones of prolific



FRUITFUL: Vegetables planted by the moon phases.

growth for above-ground crops and it's the time when a great range of vegetable should be sown. As well as this, it's a good time to apply soluble fertilisers, as the upward movement of sap ensures that strong growth will result.

Cuttings taken at this time will usually be quite successful, as will the grafting and planting of fruit trees. Because the movement of moisture is generally in an upward direction, the planting of root crops should be avoided, as they will more often than not go to seed.

The early days of the full moon are suitable for sowing edible sprouts so that they germinate quickly and have a short growth spurt before eating, such as alfalfa and bean sprouts. The last two days of the full moon phase are the ones for

sowing all root crops and it is also the time to spray for weeds, pests and diseases.

During the last quarter, the movement of sap is at its lowest and this is when planting and sowing should be avoided. It is an ideal time for pruning, weeding and preparing the ground for the fertile period that will occur as it gets closer to the next new moon.

I am sure the practice would gain a greater following if gardeners realised how simple it is with one of the readily available, well-designed planting calendars. One that is sold by permaculture and organic gardening groups is the *Antipodian Moon Calendar*, which is published year by year.

The one that I find really easy to use is

What to do

- Hibiscus beetle is a troublesome pest of the Hawaiian hibiscus, causing unopened buds to fall on the ground. It is important that on a regular basis each of those buds and any spent flowers be picked up and placed in a plastic bag. The bag should be tightly tied and sent to the tip.

- Sweet corn has a high requirement for nitrogen so a trickle of sulphate of ammonia along each side of the row should be the order of the day.

- Clover and creeping oxalis can still be sprayed at this time of year. Use a lawn weedkiller and apply in accordance with the directions.

the Moon Calendar by J. Scott that has been for sale at recent garden shows, such as the Gardening Australia Expo and the Queensland Home Garden Expo, as it doesn't have to be updated each year. It simply has a revolving disc in the centre, and once set to the new moon, the rest is so easy to follow.

The Moon Calendar can be obtained from Green Harvest in Maleny or purchased direct from the people who developed it. Email J & R Scott at info@moongardeningcalendar.com or visit www.moongardeningcalendar.com

As this is my last column for the year, I would like to wish everyone a very safe and happy Christmas, followed by a green and prosperous New Year.