

EVENT

Three autumn gardens can be seen this weekend as part of Australia's Open Garden Scheme. In Hawthorn, 5A Fordholm Rd features lush green foliage and a lawn surrounded by banks of hellebores and cherry trees. In the Yarra Valley, Lonsdale Park at 40 Lonsdale Park Lane, Launching Place is a well-designed farm garden

with an emphasis on sustainability. And at Nine Mile Garden at 55-61 Mt Stanley Rd, Stanley near Beechworth, the woodland country garden features autumn bulbs, a formal vegetable and herb potager and two large hazelnut trees, which date from the 1860s.
* opengarden.org.au



The purple patch

New technology and old-fashioned values combine to sustain community spirit

WORDS VASILIS KANIDIADIS

TAKE a moment to think about where we are today and compare it to where we've come from. I'm not referring to location but rather the type of lifestyle we live and the technology that exists, which many of us now take for granted.

I remember the days when computer screens were black with only green writing and the only typing I did was on a typewriter with keys that would jam every time I typed too fast.

Unfortunately we can't turn back the evolution of technology, but we can turn back our habits and learn how to use today's technology better to improve our lives and our environment too.

This is exactly what Violet Town has done. With a population of only about 600, it sure knows how to hold a great market day. Each month visitor numbers grow and Violet Town now sees more than 5000 market-goers.

Just like many other farmers' markets, the Violet Town market is enjoying a resurgence as an increasing number of people are living a more basic and sustainable lifestyle.

On Violet Town market day, people enjoy social time in a relaxed environment with lots of good food and great live music.

With a huge variety of stalls, the market is a great place to try some really fresh produce and products made by people who have passion and pride in what they do.

After taking a look around the town, I noticed that everybody was switched on to practising a more sustainable lifestyle by using smart technology. I saw solar panels on almost every roof, moisture meters in garden beds and I also noticed a crazy idea for replacing the traditional house downpipe (see the picture, right).

They even have their very own



Violet Town in bloom
Vasili visits the market (top) and sees chainwire replacing conventional downpipes (above).

community wood-fired oven built by the Community Volunteers of Violet Town. And to help fire it up, the Shire planted a timber plantation just for all the wood ovens and fireplaces in town. Now, that's what I call caring for our native flora and fauna — not to mention the wonderful pizzas that everyone can enjoy.

We should learn to adapt to and embrace technology for the betterment of our lives and the environment.

So next time you hear about a community festival or market day, take the time to leave your mobile phone at home and take the family out for a wonderful and truly organic day.



ASK VASILIS

Q I found my vegetables have not turned out well this season. My pumpkins have flowered but there are no fruit. My cucumbers have grown but 70 per cent are yellow. My tomatoes (Roma) are not firm. Is this due to the excessive rain we've had this summer? My radishes have not turned out as well as usual either. Could you please throw some light on these problems for me?

Fiona

A Pumpkins sometimes need help to set fruit by picking a male flower (attached to a stem, not a fruit) then gently dabbing it on to the female flowers. These grow off the end of the fruit. This will help pollinate you pumpkin flowers and set fruit. It may be a bit late for this season, so keep it in mind for next spring. The constant change in temperature and rain levels has affected the quality of crop production. Heavy rainfalls followed by sudden hot spells can rob the soil of all its nutrients and cause the surface to harden. Better luck next season!

ENVIRO SOLDIERS

Hi everyone,
With a new season in town, a whole new range of seedlings should be planted. It's important that you don't leave tired old looking and probably diseased plants to rot away in the garden. Dig them out, throw them straight into the compost bin, turnover the soil and let it rest before you plant again. If you like growing your seedlings from seed, try growing them in paper cups made from rolled up newspaper or egg cartons filled with organic soil. This way you can plant the carton or newspaper straight into the garden which will turn into compost that the plant can feed off. When it comes to fertilising there's nothing better than organic matter, whether it's worm castings, compost or sheep manure. Using organic fertilisers is much better than using synthetic ones — not only for the plants, but for the environment too.



ORIANTHI'S TIPS

- 1 Don't use snail bait. Instead apply eggshells or coconut choir around your plants to protect them from being eaten by snails.
- 2 Less watering always helps the plant to establish better flavour.
- 3 Prune regularly to control pest and diseases on your plants rather than spraying them.

DID YOU KNOW?

- * Eating only fresh produce means you can't have tomatoes and cucumbers year around, but they do taste better than anything you buy.
- * You can make mini compost bins by digging small holes in the garden and filling them with kitchen scraps and greens.
- * Scratching the soil surface regularly using a rake or similar helps to provide better air circulation to the plant roots for healthy growth.

Write to me with your great organic ideas and tips. Send in your emails and pictures to info@vasilisgarden.com or post them to Orianthi Organics, c/o Kid's Korner, PO Box 2089 Greenvale Vic 3059

If you have some great ideas about good gardening that you would like to share with the Enviro Soldiers, send your letters to **Enviro Soldiers c/o Kids Korner PO Box 2089 Greenvale 3059** or email them to info@vasilisgarden.com The best tip sent in will win a copy of Vasili's *Garden Classics* DVD.

LAST WEEK'S WINNER: Congratulations to Paul de Fazio for his winning entry. He writes: *My grandfather uses clothes hangers to keep the netting off the seedlings which protects them from being eaten by the birds.*

NEXT TIME: Veggie Vanessa shares with you some great tips on growing vegies in your garden.

