

# The Micro Gardener

## Organic gardening tips for an abundant harvest | The Micro Gardener Newsletter

Hi and welcome! In this Newsletter, I'm sharing:

- 🌿 In my Garden (tips on pruning fruit trees)
- 🌿 Garden Tasks – What to do Now in July
- 🌿 Over the Fence ... in Barry and Elisha's Garden
- 🌿 What to Plant Now
- 🌿 9 Parsley Tips
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So tuck in! If you missed the tips in my last newsletter, [CLICK HERE](#). Download Adobe Acrobat Reader free [here](#).

### In my Garden ...

**Fruit Tree Pruning Time** – When is the **best time to give your fruit trees a 'haircut?'** When they are dormant (sleeping!) or have finished bearing their crop. **It's winter here and this** is when I shape, remove dead wood, and just give them a tidy up. Pruning helps improve access to branches that bear fruit. I keep my trees at a height that I can reach easily. Try to remove branches that start to rub on other branches and cause damage. This increases air circulation in the centre of the tree. You can also remove thorns on lower branches and any damaged leaves (e.g. citrus leaf miner) or stems (gall wasp). Tip prune at an angle. This helps your plant heal over and minimizes the chances of pests or diseases taking hold at the entrance of the cut surface.



**There's** another benefit to pruning *dormant* trees and shrubs (like roses). You avoid the flush of aphids on new tip growth. Aphids are sap sucking pest insects. They often turn up when the new leaves appear, because nitrogen is concentrated in this part of the plant. Too much nitrogen in your fertilisers can attract these pest insects. A slow release plant food can help avoid this problem too. N-P-K fertilisers often supply too much nitrogen to the plant at once.

Prior to spring, I also sow seasonal flowers like [nasturtiums](#). They attract beneficial predator insects like ladybirds, who take up residence, ready to feed on aphids. This lady is having an aphid feast!

Aim to increase lateral growth (horizontal branches) on your fruit trees. This encourages more fruit development. **I've pruned two mulberries back to a height I can reach**, so I can easily harvest the delicious berries. Who wants to drag a ladder around just for a handful of berries? I prune them back after every crop, so I can get 3-4 harvests/year. A little bit of effort for a delicious reward. **Mulberries can get very straggly and unruly if you don't train them! They can also grow** into huge trees that feed the birds, *not* you. The thin branches strike well as cuttings too. An easy way to grow your fruit trees for free! I ate my first berries from one mulberry tree in my garden last year. It was only a year old, and I grew it from a cutting after pruning another tree the year before. **From a 'baby' to a 'mother' tree in just a year. That's 'fast food'!**

I also remove any flowers from fruit trees that are too young to bear. I want their root system to establish in the first year. A fruit tree needs to grow a healthy canopy of branches and leaves that can bear the weight of fruit first.

I hope these tips encourage you to give some care to your fruit trees and enjoy the bountiful rewards.

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“Nutrition starts with the soil - **we're losing vitamins from the ground up.**”

– Elizabeth Murphy, Author ‘[Building Soil](#)’

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## Garden Tasks – What to do Now

In the southern hemisphere, during cooler weather, **it's a good time to:**

- ⊗ Raise seeds indoors as [microgreens](#) or sow direct if weather is suitable.
- ⊗ Plant bare-rooted fruit trees. [Available online](#) and at nurseries.
- ⊗ Prune back deciduous fruit trees, berries, vines, perennial bushes and herbs. This is the time for shaping and making space for spring growth. **Don't delay.**
- ⊗ Divide perennials like [garlic chives](#) and [lemon grass](#) **if you haven't already.**
- ⊗ Manage weeds – pull by hand after rain and mow to reduce vigour until you can get them under control. Solarise them under black plastic and destroy seed heads.
- ⊗ Feed up strawberries with [compost](#), [rock minerals](#) and [seaweed](#) to produce blooms and fruit.
- ⊗ Maintain garden structures. Replace wooden or [bamboo stakes](#) if they are rotted. Make vertical trellises and frames.
- ⊗ Feed your garden. Make compost, feed [worm farms](#), add [mulch](#), and [make potting/seed raising mix](#).
- ⊗ Protect frost-sensitive plants. **Don't cut off frost-damaged plant parts.** Wait until the last frosts are over to provide protection for the rest of the plant. Treat with liquid [seaweed](#).
- ⊗ Plan pest management strategies. Get your fruit fly controls ready and other pest remedies for spring growth.



In the northern hemisphere, in warm weather, **it's a good time to:**

- ⊗ Water deeply as required in your location. Pots need more moisture as they dry out faster. Follow these [Water-wise tips](#).
- ⊗ Sow seeds for [cool-season crops](#) directly into the garden. See my [Seed Starting Guide](#) for tips.
- ⊗ Succession plant [seedlings](#) regularly for a continuous harvest.
- ⊗ Stake and tie up climbing plants to maximize space and minimize pest and disease problems.
- ⊗ Group container gardens in hot weather to create shade or cover with shade cloth.
- ⊗ Top up mulch if it is an organic material and starting to break down.
- ⊗ Recycle nutrients from dead annuals, prunings and grass clippings into your compost.
- ⊗ Remove dead flowers (dead heading) to encourage more blooms and save seeds.
- ⊗ Liquid feed flowering and fruiting plants.
- ⊗ Bag up and bin any diseased or pest-infected leaves and plant material. This breaks the cycle.
- ⊗ Keep protecting fruit from birds with [exclusion netting](#) or [individual bags](#).
- ⊗ Manage weeds to reduce competition for nutrients and water. Use [mulch](#), [cover crops](#), ground covers and [weed mat](#).
- ⊗ Feed your soil [organic slow release plant food](#) and water in well.
- ⊗ Harvest, dry and freeze herbs for use during the year.
- ⊗ Preserve fruit and vegetables to extend your harvest.
- ⊗ Repair/repaint any garden structures, trellises, sheds, fences and garden furniture **while it's warm and dry.**

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## Over the Fence ... in Barry & Elisha's Garden

**This is Barry Davis' garden.** He lives in the US and has been teaching his granddaughter Elisha, how to grow food and plant in containers since she was a toddler. They are regular readers of my newsletter and shared some photos of their projects.

**Barry says:** “I would just like to let you know that you have been a great inspiration to me and my 8 year old granddaughter who has been living with us along with her mother since birth. I started interesting her in gardening at the age of two and she has been hooked ever since. She loves looking at your information and so often says *“We can do that pa!”*”



Elisha says: *“I like gardening because I like to see the plants poke through the ground and when they are big enough I can eat them if they are carrots or pick them if they are flowers. I like to show others what I have planted. I love watering the plants too. It is fun.”*

We have a powerful opportunity to share the joy of gardening with others. It not only benefits our health and wellbeing, but creates a life-long love of nature, good food and having fun outdoors. Elisha is obviously a budding young urban farmer, and an inspiration to us all. A great way to learn maths and English skills too! Congratulations and thanks to both of you.



Simple polystyrene container gardens like these are an easy, cheap option to start with. They are well insulated and come in various sizes and depths. See my [DIY Instant Vegetable Garden](#) tutorial to make your own.

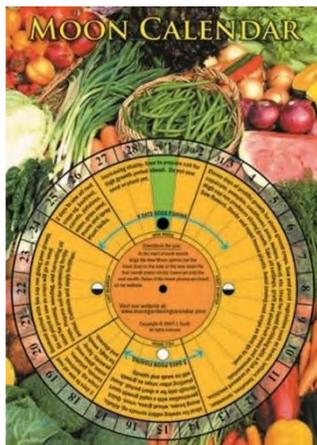
I love helping people learn to grow good health. [CLICK HERE](#) to find out how I can help you in *your* garden.

If you've got a story or photos you'd like to share in a future newsletter, please [email me](#).

## What to Plant Now

During the current moon phase, it's an ideal time for sowing above ground crops [suitable for your climate](#). I'm planting tomatoes, leafy greens and herbs. I maximize planting each month during this part of the moon cycle (new moon heading towards a full moon). I encourage you to do the same. Learn more with my tips and resources in [What to Plant and When](#).

I have also been using this sustainable, perpetual [Moon Calendar](#) for 6 ½ years and just follow the moon cycle each month. It helps you understand optimum planting times; when to sow seeds and seedlings for above and below ground crops; the best times to propagate; fertilise; and even fish! I love working with **nature's rhythms** and I'm always in awe of the difference this simple tool makes.



Sow [seeds](#) now in [seed raisers](#) or some [microgreens](#). They will swell and germinate faster due to the gravitational pull of moisture in the soil. Moonlight is increasing at night during this phase until we reach the full moon. Take cuttings now to increase your chances of success. They are more likely to root well at this time.

The gravitational pull of the moon is pulling soil moisture and water in plants (sap) UP in this phase. Use this to your advantage by liquid fertilising now.

If your soil is *dry*, your plants **can't take up** the soil nutrients. **If you haven't had rain or watered** lately, test your soil. Water only if your soil needs it. Your plants will then gain access to the **'food pantry' in your soil**.

This Moon Calendar works all over the world. [CLICK HERE](#) to buy your own. [LEARN MORE](#) about the benefits of moon gardening and why I'm so passionate about this wonderful way of *working with nature*.

## 9 Parsley Tips

1. Parsley easily grows from [seed](#). Save your own from parsley plants that have gone to flower and seed.
2. Italian flat leaf parsley has a stronger flavour and aroma and holds its shape better when cooked than curly leaf variety.
3. A half cup of parsley contains over 50% of your daily Vitamin C requirements. Enjoy fresh, cooked or as [herb tea](#).
4. Parsley **isn't fussy where it grows**. A full sun position or partial shade is fine. Parsley hates wet feet or super dry soil.
5. Sow seeds as [microgreens](#) for a quick harvest of nutrient-dense greens, rich in digestive enzymes. Harvest with scissors.
6. Parsley grows new leaves from the centre of the plant outwards. Pick sprigs from around the outside only.
7. Pick off all the bushy parsley tops from the stem. Freeze in a large plastic bag. When parsley is frozen, **it's very brittle**. **Scrunch the bag and you'll have instant ready-to-use 'chopped' parsley.**
8. Add towards the end of cooking to retain full flavour, colour and nutrient value.
9. Use up parsley stems as a celery substitute; make herb salt; freeze for vegetable stock; feed to chooks or add to compost.



**Why Small Plants are Better:** When buying a *new* plant, do you usually go for a mature one in a large pot? Unless you need an established look for your garden and have a reasonable budget, **there are advantages to buying small plants:**

- Younger plants **recover** more quickly after transplanting than older ones. Due to their small root systems, they suffer less stress from moving house!
  - Plants in tube stock or small pots are **cheaper**, so you can buy *more* plants.
  - Although young plants are smaller in size, they will quickly catch up in growth to older ones. Especially if you plant and feed them at the [optimum time of the month](#).
- You don't run the risk of larger plants being **root bound** due to sitting at the nursery for a long time.

## Tips for Using Lemons ...

Lemons are high in Vitamins C (antioxidants), A & B. They are so wonderful for health. **I've found sipping diluted lemon juice in warm water with a little raw honey is a soothing tonic** for sore throats and it helps build a strong immune system. Lemon juice has an alkalizing effect on the digestive system. Their anti-inflammatory properties have been found to help many with arthritis-related conditions.



- ⊗ Selecting a ripe lemon: A thin-skinned lemon is ideal. Lemon varieties with thicker peels have less pulp and are likely to be less juicy. Select lemons that feel heavy for their size. They should be bright yellow not green. Greenish lemons will be more acidic **because they haven't** fully ripened. Avoid old fruit that are wrinkled, have soft or hard patches or a dull colour on the skin.
- ⊗ Stop fruit turning brown: Rub lemon juice onto the cut surface of fruits like apple or avocado to stop them oxidizing and going brown. Or make a quick dressing with lemon juice, olive oil, your favourite mustard and honey. Drizzle over your fruit or salads.
- ⊗ Preserving: I freeze my fresh lemon juice in ice cube trays. Then store in the freezer for easy-to-use portions all year round (long after citrus season ends). I pop the cubes into herb tea, juice, drinks, water (great for alkalizing the body) and recipes. Add a sprig of mint in the ice cubes if you like.

- ⊗ Harvesting: Want your home grown lemons to store longer? When removing from the tree, keep a small length of stem attached to the fruit. Wash and dry well to remove any fungal spores on the skin and keep them refrigerated.
- ⊗ Recipe: Make your own sour cream by adding 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice to 2 cups plain yoghurt. Easy!

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***“The first wealth is health.”*** – Ralph Waldo Emerson

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#### 4 Ways to Fix a Scaly Problem ...

Scale are tiny sap sucking insects. These pests are common in most gardens, particularly in summer. They may be tiny, but these hungry insects can seriously **damage infected plants. They're often hard to spot because they don't move.** If you **don't know what you're looking at, it's easy to miss them!** Scale just stick in one spot for their entire lives. They sometimes even **look as if they're** part of their host plant. Not a bad survival technique for these lazy little suckers! However, their sloth-like exercise habits make them an easy target for hungry ladybirds and their kids.



Scale come in many shapes, colours and sizes but are mostly white, brown and black. They have a shell-like protective coating (like a miniature turtle). They are also good friends with ants. Why? Because ants are smart! These intelligent insects can tell you a LOT about your garden if you know what to look for. You just need to play detective and follow the trail of clues!



Ants always make ‘friends’ with insects that offer them something in return for their ‘security services.’ Ants are like ‘armed guards,’ protecting and taking care of scale. (They do the same with aphids). **They are also smart ‘farmers’, harvesting a sweet honeydew liquid** that these insects share with them. This free food is fair payment for services rendered!

The problem is that if you **don't** get rid of the scale, they will continue to damage your tree or plant. If you see ants running along the stems or **branches, it's a clue they are** there for some kind of reward. **Ants don't use up all that energy for nothing! Don't worry** - there are many ways to remove and prevent a scale problem.

These are 4 pest management strategies you can try:

1. If you just have a few scale, use an old toothbrush to brush them off the affected stems.
2. Use a high-pressure jet of water from your hose. Give them a blast every morning for three consecutive days.
3. **If the water doesn't remove them all, apply an [eco horticultural oil](#)** to smother the scale and suffocate them.
4. Encourage [ladybirds](#) to take up residence in your garden. They attack a wide variety of scale insects.

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#### Missed an Article?

There are a wealth of [tips & techniques](#), [DIY projects](#), [container gardening](#) and [inspiring ideas](#) in my [online library](#).

Here are a few suggestions:

- [Imitate Nature for Higher Yields & Less Pests](#)
- [Coping with Caterpillars Part 1 – Diagnose and Identify Problems](#)
- [Coping with Caterpillars Part 2 – 13 Sneaky Organic Pest Management Strategies](#)
- [6 Ways to Revitalise and Re-use Old Potting Mix + Pot Audit Checklist](#)
- [Top Tips for Wet Weather Gardening](#)

## Join our Online Community ...

If you haven't already, I invite you to join over 6,650+ others in our weekly conversations on [The Micro Gardener Facebook page](#).

We share our virtual gardens and tips with each other + it's a great way for us all to connect personally.

We share a little more about what we're growing, learning, challenges, and more inspiring ideas. Every week I add new tips, tutorials and photos.

I also post lots of goodies for you on [Pinterest](#), [Twitter](#) and [Hometalk](#) ... great places for sharing ideas and inspiration in your home and garden. Let's connect!



Wow! You managed to get to the end, so thanks for reading! Until next month, I encourage you to embrace dirty fingernails, muddy boots and the joys of growing your own.

I look forward to sharing more ways to grow good health soon.

Happy gardening,

Anne Gibson

The Micro Gardener

P.S. I really value your opinion. I'd love to hear your feedback anytime. What *problem* do you most need help with? Which topics do you want to learn more about? How can I serve you better? [EMAIL ME!](#)



'Making it easy to grow good health'



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