

# nature & health

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AUSTRALIA'S ORIGINAL & BEST NATURAL HEALTH MAGAZINE

**GREAT**  
MOTHER'S DAY  
GIFT IDEAS!  
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## ANTI-AGEING MIRACLES

- Boost energy
- Fight wrinkles
- Burn fat
- Stop cancer

### SPECIAL REPORT

The surprising secret  
for healthy bones

(P.S. No, it's NOT calcium)

### HEAL YOURSELF

Crystals to balance  
mind and body

5 secrets of really  
happy people

SUPERCHARGE YOUR

### SEX LIFE

Try our energising plan

LET YOURSELF

## SHINE!

How to be an inspiration to others

plus

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CONCEPTION  
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## detox your backyard.

Growing your own food is so satisfying; plus, the sense of regaining control over environmental health reduces anxiety. **Jane Carstens** reports.

The White House has one, so does Buckingham Palace, and Prince Charles has always had one. There's no doubt about it, the organic garden is taking the world by storm. While the average Aussie backyard has been subjected to artificial fertilisers, sprays and inappropriate planting over the past 50 years, a diet of compost, mulch and natural pest sprays can restore the ecosystem relatively quickly, making your yard a safe haven for children, pets, birds, worms, and beneficial bugs.

### Save your soil

According to Jerry Coleby-Williams, the ABC's Gardening Australia presenter, over 50 per cent of common gardening problems can be solved by developing compost-rich, well-nourished soil, and then growing the right plants in the right spots. Organic matter, minerals, soil conditioners - such as gypsum on heavy clay soil or garden lime to sweeten acidic soil - and mulch will all rebuild your soil. Think of it as detoxing from the ground up: when the soil is healthy, everything else comes naturally.

"Healthy soil is brimming with life," says Coleby-Williams. "It's far more than just soil particles, moisture and minerals - it's a living matrix containing vast quantities of living organisms. A single teaspoonful can contain up to 20,000 different micro-organisms and up to two kilometres of microscopic fungal threads. The wonderful thing is that most of these are beneficial and they actively prevent soil diseases."

### Make it with mulch

Any successful gardener will sing the praises of mulch. Composted mulch (see "Take the challenge!") made from a mixture of woody and soft materials is far preferable to plastic sheeting or synthetic weed mats, which might suppress weeds, but don't encourage strong root growth, or inorganic mulches like pebbles or gravel, which don't create healthy soil.

Mulching protects soil, suppresses and reduces weeds, reduces erosion, increases soil biodiversity, encourages beneficial micro-organisms, and keeps soil cooler in summer and warmer in winter. It creates a habitat for insect predators, such as ground beetles and spiders; worms also like mulch and their burrowing aerates the soil, assisting with water penetration.

## Organic fertilisers

Plants need food and, just like humans, the 'garbage in, garbage out' rule applies. Artificial fertilisers damage soil by reducing its water-holding capacity, drainage and air circulation, all of which adversely affect plants. Nitrate-based fertilisers increase the soil's acidity and lock up essential minerals, while releasing harmful elements to the plant. Choose naturally occurring organic alternatives instead, such as manure, worm castings or peat, or manufactured ones, like bonemeal and seaweed extract.

Composting strengthens the soil and allows it to hold more water, filter more pollution, reduce erosion and run off, and ultimately improve water quality.

## Greener pesticides

Good gardening practice keeps pests at bay without resorting to synthetic chemicals, which only end up in waterways and landfill. These toxic chemicals wipe out useful insects as well as bad ones, which further disrupts the ecological balance. Repopulate your yard with an army of beneficial bugs by putting in insect-attracting plants, like lucerne, fennel, buckwheat, rue, white clover, yarrow, cosmos, Sweet Alice, dill, tansy, Queen Anne's lace, Chinese mustard, parsley and daisies. These all increase pollen and nectar resources required by those bugs that are the natural enemies of undesirable insect pests. Having a diverse range of insect-attracting plants increases the population of helpful insects to a sustainable level, even when some plants are removed or die off.

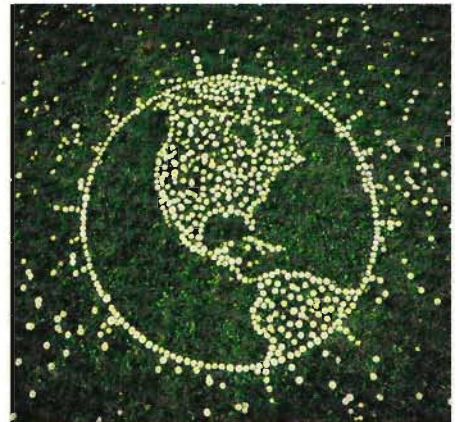
## Get growing

According to Mat Pember from The Little Veggie Patch Company, the best way to detox your back yard (and your life) is to trade a thirsty lawn for a vegetable patch. Growing your own vegetables and herbs has so many benefits: the food can be eaten almost immediately, meaning it loses fewer nutrients; food miles are non-existent, and anything you don't want can be composted, avoiding landfills. The Little Veggie Patch installs and maintains organic sustainable vegetable gardens, with over 90 per cent of their business coming from domestic backyards. And before you say you don't have room, they recently installed one on the tiny balcony of Melbourne's iconic restaurant, the Stokehouse; plus, they provide sturdy, space-efficient planter boxes.



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## TAKE THE CHALLENGE!



Every Australian sends about one tonne of rubbish to landfill every year, and about half of this is made up of food and garden waste. Composting is easy and, unlike the old-fashioned and often smelly 'heap and turn' compost piles, modern systems make the process less labour-intensive and cleaner, either by creating air pockets in their make-up, or by utilising a rotary design that makes turning hassle-free. Anything that rots can be composted; here are the do's and don'ts.

### Do's

- Used paper napkins, towels or tissues
- Pet hair or fur
- Popcorn (no butter or oil on it)
- Soy products, e.g. tofu
- Out-of-date dried herbs
- Olive pips
- Sweets past their use-by date
- Lint from the washing machine and drier
- Flat beer
- Old rope and string
- Old cotton and wool clothes
- Dead insects
- Leftover jelly

### Don'ts

- Cat, dog and human poo (including soiled nappies)
- Fatty food waste
- Cooked vegetables if cooked or dressed with oil or fat
- Dairy products
- Diseased plants
- Perennial weeds
- Metal, glass or plastic
- Coal or charcoal ash

## THE POO PROBLEM

There are about six million companion dogs and cats in Australia, and much of their poo ends up in landfills. A more sustainable option is to install Tumbleweed's dual purpose worm farm (around \$60.00; 1300 137 356), which is specifically designed to turn pet poo into liquid and solid fertiliser that can be safely used on the garden.

## NEED MORE INFO?

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