

# THE VEGAN SELF-SUFFICIENCY NETWORK

## Autumn NEWSLETTER



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### T H A N K S   T O :

Addy and Ken Morais-Hennessy, Pete and Steph, Kathleen Jannaway, Pat and Munni Howden, William Beaumont, Ben Searle, Betty Lowther, Janet Clapton and Joanna Jackson.

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VSSN, c/o 115 Eastern Road, Portsmouth.

Welcome to you all.

We hope you have all had an enjoyable and positive summer and are now enjoying the fruits and harvests of your labours.

VSSN has been functioning for 5½ years now, during which time we have greatly enjoyed corresponding with and meeting many Network members. The commitment of many of you to the various aspects of practical vegan lifestyles has been extremely encouraging, be it to horticulture, agroforestry, ecology, recycling, simple living, education, co-operation, etc. We hope that we have managed to reflect positively on such activities in the pages of the past 26 Newsletters.

After much thought, discussion and heart-searching, it is with sincere regret that we have decided that we will no longer continue the production of the Newsletters and the administration of VSSN - this Newsletter will, therefore, be the last. Further information about this is given on page 2 along with details of refunding, etc.

We would like to send our heartfelt thanks to all VSSNers, past and present, for participating in the Network. Special thanks to those of you who have been personally supportive and encouraging, to those who have contributed in various ways to the Network or the Newsletters, and to those who have participated in the 'Vegan Volunteers' scheme and the Contact List and Skills Exchange.

Best wishes to you all for the future - may your lives be enriched with health, joy, love and light.

*Eaine + Alan*

THAT'S ALL, FOLKS!

After about a year of consideration we have finally decided, for various reasons, to terminate VSSN.

The Network has never really developed in the practical way that we had always hoped it would, with well-established and tangible support, encouragement and aid between members, and involvement by the membership in running VSSN and producing the Newsletters (although our sincere thanks do go to the few individuals who have contributed).

We feel unable to encourage growth of the Network as we do not have the extra time, or the assistance, required for any increase in the work of administration and Newsletter production. The time required to maintain VSSN in its present stasis has also partly contributed to the delay in progressing our own plans for land acquisition to practice and perhaps demonstrate vegan horticulture and lifestyle.

We hope that this news will not be too disappointing - we have learnt a lot from the past 5½ years of VSSN, and we hope that members' back-issues will prove useful sources of information to them as time goes on.

We should all look to the future now and begin to work positively and practically for the vegan world of our common ideal - we hope to see or hear from many of you again in the years to come: please get in touch if you think we may be of any help to you.

Take care of yourselves and each other - we wish you good luck in all you do!

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SUBSCRIPTION REFUNDS

VSSN funds are being reduced to zero by repayment of the unused part of all current subscriptions and the sharing of any surplus (derived from literature sales, etc.) between all current members proportionate to their length of membership. We hope that no-one will feel that they have made any financial loss due to the termination of VSSN. Obviously we have needed to retain a small working capital to cover postage costs, etc., over the next couple of months: on the close of VSSN's bank account at the end of October, anything remaining will be donated to the Movement for Compassionate Living (plus any money received for back-issues, etc., during September and October).

Each member's repayment, and explanatory details, will be enclosed with this Newsletter. Please remember to cash your cheque before the end of October.

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OTHER ORGANISATIONS

Members are recommended to consider subscribing to the following:

Movement for Compassionate Living, 47 Highlands Road, Leatherhead, Surrey. (See page 13 for further information and subscription details.)

Vegan Community Project, c/o Paul & Jenny Haith, Trevon, 3 & 4 Tyn y Weirglodd, Penygroes, Caernarfon, Gwynedd, Wales. (Send s.a.e. if interested in vegan community living).

Whose World (formerly Group on Lifestyles and Action on Development - G.L.A.D.), Karen and Jim, c/o Trinity Community, 119 East India Dock Road, Poplar, London. (Sample newsletter, 20p. Annual subscription, £3.00. Cheques payable to G.L.A.D.).

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CONTACTS

We hope that many of you have made good use of the VSSN Contacts List and Skills Exchange - if you haven't yet, perhaps now is a good time to get in touch with any others in your area: see your June '87 Contacts List.

The following members would like to be included on your Lists:

KARL GETHING, 44 MALVERN ROAD, ACOCKS GREEN, BIRMINGHAM, B27 6EH.  
Skills: Tree planting, tree felling and coppicing, hedgelaying, fencing (post and rail), footpath maintenance (path edging, erosion control, steps, etc.). Into hard work and getting dirty.

LILY ANNE LATHAM, 4 FARMER HOUSE, KEETONS ROAD, LONDON SE16 4BY. Tel: 01 231 3648.  
"A new hospice - 29 beds - is due to open in mid-Staffordshire in October for the

seriously ill on vegan/vegetarian lines.

Could I please seek help through the Network in preparing the garden and plants for the Hospice?

There would be accommodation and we could arrange for a gardener and equipment to be there for a couple of weeks or more to direct activities.

I'd also welcome help with my own small garden and allotment and would be able to put up one or two females.

In either case, you would need to phone or write first to arrange all details.

P.S. Is anyone interested in assisting in preparing a really meaningful ONE WORLD WEEK programme at St. James' Church, Piccadilly, October 19th - 24th 1987?"

CATHERINE MORROW & RUARC GAHAN, BLACKLION COTTAGE, BLACKLION, GREYSTONES, COUNTY WICKLOW, IRELAND. Tel: 01-875033.

Live on east coast, near Wicklow Hills. Untidy cottage, 3 uninvited cats, 1/2 acre weeds, orchard, garden. 99% vegan. 'Run' Irish Vegetarian Society with a couple of other people. Interests: Animal rights (fairly fanatical), music (mainly classical/baroque), growing (esp. trees/tree crops), writing, and a lot more.

Green and egalitarian, but believe human population should be drastically reduced worldwide.

Enjoy eating, drinking, arguing, and doing absolutely nothing - esp. in the sun.

Easy-going visitors\* welcome, esp. those thinking of living in Ireland: beautiful, uncrowded, slow, neutral, no nuclear power/arms, little industry, etc.

Looking for place in south west Ireland. Might start veg(etari)an group - aiming at future community. A thousand other plans.

\*Ring first - we may have moved/be away.

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RECOMMENDED READING

"I have just got hold of an American book (on bicycle trailers), 'THE CART BOOK' with plans and projects by William L. Sullivan. Publishers are Tab Books Inc., Blue Ridge Summit, PA 17214. I would recommend this book for the VSSN Recommended Reading List - it's very inspiring!"

BEN SEARLE, Bath.

"I have several books on identification of mushrooms, but the one I would recommend is 'THE PHOTOGRAPHIC GUIDE TO IDENTIFY COMMON AND IMPORTANT MUSHROOMS' by Roger Phillips, published by Guild Publishing, London. This is so useful because it states quite clearly if they are edible, edible but not worth it, or poisonous.

I got my copy through a book club, but it is presumably obtainable through book shops."

BETTY LOWTHER, Cambridge.

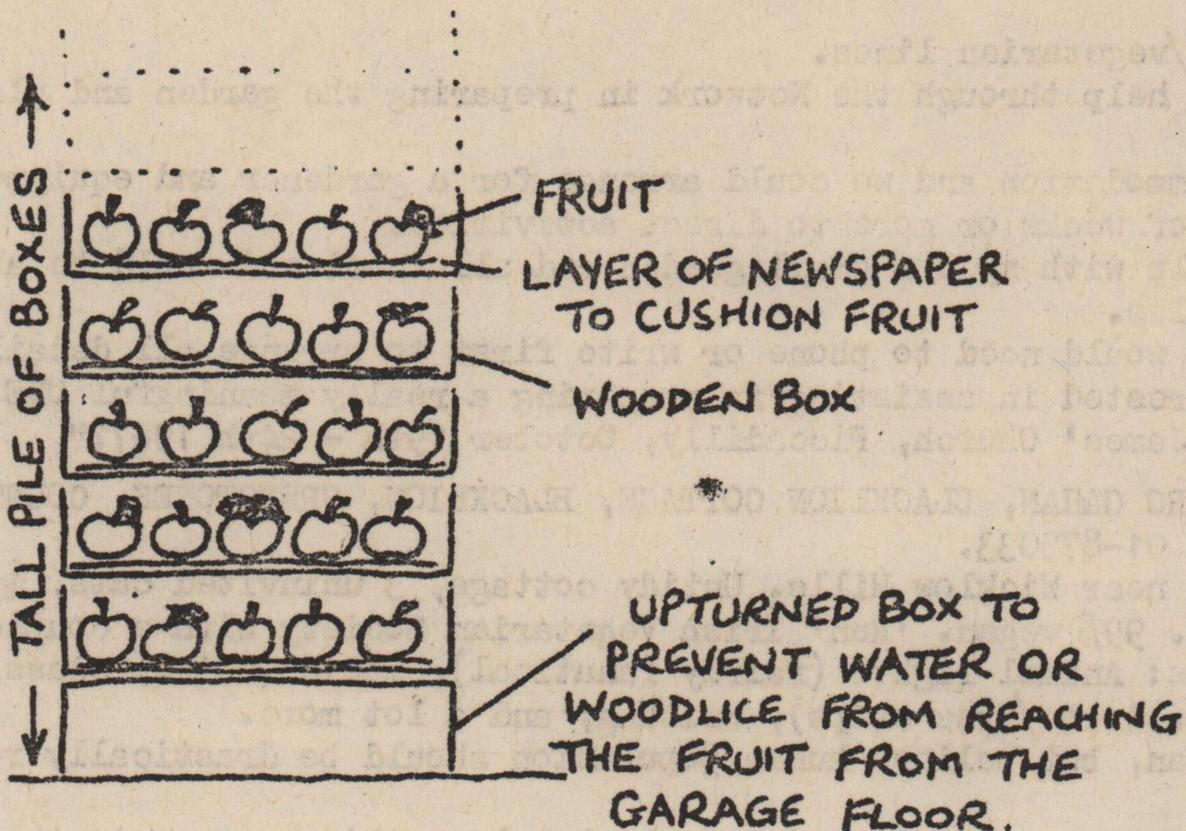
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o SELF - SUFFICIENCY o  
o IN FRUIT o  
o IN A TOWN o  
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Last August, Ken and I wrote out cards and posted them in people's letterboxes. They read something like: 'NO MORE ROTTEN FRUIT BENEATH YOUR TREES! WE CAN PICK YOUR APPLES, PEARS OR PLUMS FOR YOU IN RETURN FOR HALF THE CROP. IF INTERESTED, PLEASE CONTACT.....".

Many people in the London suburbs have fruit trees in their gardens but let the fruit fall to the ground and rot. This is a very sad waste, so we decided to do something about it and make a profit from it at the same time. We delivered to many, many houses and got very few replies, but the people that did reply had so much fruit that we managed to fill the garage and we still have some apples left now (summer '87)! We would arrange with the person to look at the trees, decide when they would be ripe for picking and make a date. We would turn up on the day armed with picking bags with shoulder straps so we could climb up the trees and pick, a ladder, and a stool for picking from beneath the tree. We would fill up plastic bags, leave the owner half and take half back with us. The owners were usually quite friendly and thankful to us.

Once back we would lay the apples in wooden boxes (often thrown away by green-grocers and from vegetable and fruit markets) and stack them one on top of the other as shown (overleaf).



The garage should preferably be cool, waterproof and mouse-proof - mice can do a lot of damage.

The apples should be looked over now and again to remove any that are going bad for immediate consumption. Always use windfalls, bruised apples and apples with any insect holes first. Also, some varieties keep longer than others.

Perhaps some of you might like to do the same. It saves money, helps prevent waste, and, if you get enough clients

and the right apple varieties, ensures you with a year round supply of organic (hopefully) fruit obtained in an ecological way and without the use of fossil fuels in transporting them (except a tiny bit of petrol).

Better still, of course, is to get your own land and plant your own trees!

ADDY MORAIS-HENNESSY, London.

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== "GOING UNDER!?" ==

Steph and I (Pete), for those who don't know us, met in New Zealand while both travelling the world. We both wanted to remain in NZ but were unable to get residency so returned to the UK(?) and settled in Hereford with the intention of small-holding or land sharing, but just as we were about to put the first feelers out for a community we had the opportunity to emigrate - and jumped at it.

A year and a half on we're sitting pretty in our own little, slightly converted tin hay-barn on seventy acres of Godzone. Our reasons for returning were many, obviously the cost of land being one. Also there's the undercrowding, great ranges of climate, and much untouched land. Of course, there's also the 50 million sheep! Where better to start a vegan farm.

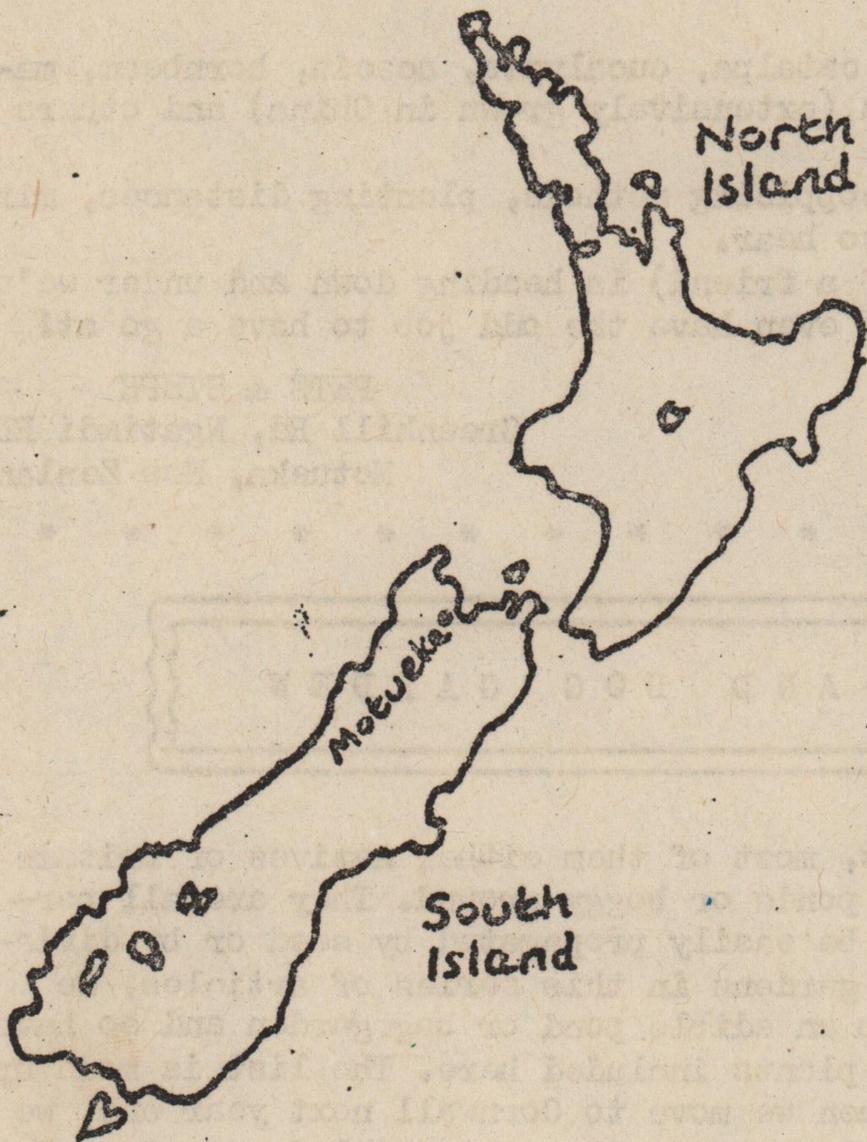
We live near the top of the south island, 20km from a 5,000+ population and 50km from a 30,000+ population. We're in an area famous for its apple, tobacco and kiwi-fruit growing - and therefore excessively sprayed. So we chose our land with care and are a good 5km from any of these types of operations. Our neighbours are sheep, cattle, goat and deer farmers, with the odd potato, corn or pea thrown in.

Though it is possible to find frost-free areas around here, we didn't have that as too high a priority, though we're hopeful that some spots here will only get 2 - 3° frost.

Basically we have a conical hill and flat skirt around it to look after. The top is over 300' above the bottom, which is under 200' above sea level. We're close to a river which will hopefully keep some of the cold air moving.

At present we intend market gardening (including herbs) about 5 acres and slowly establishing fruit and nut orchards on the easy to reach bits - we'll put coppice species on the less accessible areas and standard (full height) trees on the darn difficult bits. There's some native bush (forest) remnants which we will encourage and help revegetate.

Our main orchard species will be apples, pears, hazel and chestnuts, with smaller areas of stone fruit, figs, almonds, citrus, feijoas, and even smaller areas of other types. We're hoping to create a sheltered and well frost-drained area near the



top of the hill where we'll try avocados and other frost tender species.

All of this sounds a bit over the top to us as, while seeking to make a living off this place, if we carry on with plans as above we'll have work for 10 or more people in not very long at all. It's a funny balance we're trying - commercial yet sane. We don't know if we will be the only people to live here.

It is of course going to take several years to get much of this underway and in the meantime in order to stop the hill reverting to gorse (a national disaster over here) we've chosen to lease the grazing. It will also reduce the fire hazard which long grass and dry summers add to.

Having been here now for 6 months it still overwhelms us. Our first month saw us plant 1,000 mixed trees for initial shelter, privacy and our first coppice block, and then go straight into a drought. Most of the trees are still with us, and those that didn't make it are unlikely to get a second chance. We're still learning which varieties and species to use first and which need a nurse tree.

Our second phase was  $\frac{1}{3}$ -acre in raised beds which have kept us fed and brought our first income by selling (with other organic growers) at a stall on the Saturday morning fleamarket.

We're now trying to plan next year's plantings of trees, orchard and veg and have begun the slow task of planting 25kg of garlic.

In amongst all these growing ideas we have to remind ourselves that a house needs to be built. So far we're planning to use a post-and-beam construction (as much from trees on the farm as possible) with adobe (mud-brick) infill up to window level and then windows and timber cladding. While it is allowable to build totally with adobe, the regulations due to earthquakes make it quite a complex process so we hope to avoid this by only using them in the first metre. The bricks will be made from earth at the home site and will take several weeks out of our summer.

A 'delight' we have here is the opossum. They absolutely love trees and can do a lot of damage to young trees and fruit or nut crops. We don't know how well we'll cope but at present frequent walks around the plantings with Guava (our dog) seems to keep them and the hares and rabbits at bay. Our major losses have been to neighbours' sheep/goats/cattle getting thru' fences.

Over here there's a group called NZ Tree Crops Association which has done a tremendous amount of good work identifying good commercial or home quality nut/fruit trees and then making them available. Did you know that grafted trees produce fruit much sooner than seedlings? We'd expect our first nuts in 3 years and a reasonably heavy crop in 7. But things do grow quickly here. However, I never realised there was so much information available about hazels and chestnuts. The quality of a known grafted tree makes me wonder why we relied on wild ones before.

Another source of good information has been 'Permaculture 1 + 2' (Bill Mollison) and while I realise that much that's mentioned is for warmer climates, the ideas on designing and land use are useful anywhere.

We'll be growing a lot of trees from seed as a way of reducing costs and have started by getting 1,500 chestnuts off a tree on the farm into the ground. Some of these we will then graft from our own tree (which has very good quality nuts) and others will go in a coppice. This autumn we collected over 120kg of chestnuts off the tree and are very pleased to have such a resource at hand.

We don't know how well a large scale coppice will work here. Traditionally posts etc. have come from coppiced chestnuts, catalpa or robinia (in Italy) whereas here

they use treated pine. We're aiming to sell the posts to vineyards and other growers who may prefer not to have chemically treated timbers as part of their supporting structures. The other use is of course for crafts, either to use ourselves or to find others interested in using it.

So far we've planted oaks, ash, alder, catalpa, eucalypts, acacia, hornbeam, maples and sycamores and will add paulownias (extensively grown in China) and others as we go on.

If anyone knows of good references to coppicing methods, planting distances, mixed species, etc., I'd be very interested to hear.

And of course if anyone (even friend of a friend) is heading down and under we've got space for a tent or two - and we might even have the odd job to have a go at!

PETE & STEPH  
Greenhill Rd, Ngatimdi RDI,  
Motueka, New Zealand.

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## THE EDIBLE POND AND BOG GARDEN

The following list contains many plants, most of them either natives of Britain or naturalized here, that can be grown in ponds or boggy ground. They are all perennials and, unless stated otherwise, can be easily propagated by seed or by division in spring or autumn. Unlike the other gardens in this series of articles, we have not yet had the opportunity to set up an edible pond or bog garden and so have little practical knowledge of many of the plants included here. The list is made up of some of the plants we intend to grow when we move to Cornwall next year and, we hope you will agree, they show that there is a tremendous potential for food production from ponds and boggy areas.

Many gardens already have ponds in them and, indeed, will probably contain several of the plants mentioned below. In other gardens ponds can be very easily set up (as long as you don't mind a bit of digging) by using plastic pond liners, pre-formed glass-fibre ponds, or concrete. Even a very small pond has great potential for food production and any pond adds significantly to the ability of a garden to support a wide range of wildlife. It is not intended to go into details of making ponds and establishing a water garden in this article - some books are suggested below for your further guidance. However, most of the plants listed here are of very easy cultivation, indeed, with some of them the problem will be more one of trying to contain them as they are very vigorous, and you should find that your pond, once established, will require very little attention.

Just a couple of points that may be worth mentioning are: (1) Ensure that your pond has at least one shallow side to enable creatures, especially amphibians, to get in and out easily, and (2) ensure that it has several different levels (with at least one area more than 2ft deep) to enable you to grow a variety of plants and to make sure that even in severe weather some of the water at the bottom of the pool is not frozen.

If your garden already contains an area of very wet soil that you've never been able to do much with then hopefully this article will give you some ideas. It is fairly easy to create an area of boggy soil and perhaps the simplest methods are: (1) If you have an old garden pond that keeps leaking then just fill it up with earth and use it as a bog garden. (2) Excavate an area of soil to about 1½ft, line it with plastic, puncture it in a few places and then replace the soil. (3) Fill in the shallow edges of your pond with earth.

Almost all the plants listed below should be obtainable from the wild (but only collect the seeds, not the plant) or from any good water garden centre - see end of this article for some suggested suppliers.

Acorus calamus: SWEET FLAG. A native of Europe, naturalized in Britain, growing on the shallow edges of ponds and in most soils. The rhizomes, harvested in autumn or spring, are edible and can be used as a substitute for ginger, cinnamon or nutmeg - in the past the rhizomes were candied and used as a sweetmeat. The inner portion of young stems can be eaten raw and young leaves can be eaten cooked. Other virtues of

this plant include its mature leaves, which are insect repellent, the lower stem and rhizome, which can be dried and used to scent clothes cupboards, etc., and an edible oil which can be extracted from the rhizome.

Aponogeton distachyos: CAPE PONDWEED. Native of South Africa, this plant is often grown in ornamental ponds and is occasionally found naturalized in Britain. It does best in water from 6" to 2ft deep and prefers a rich soil. The tubers are edible, as are the flowering spikes which can be used as a spinach substitute.

Beckmannia eruciformis: Native of Europe and Asia, this grass grows in wet meadows, swamps, marshes and very shallow water. The seed is edible, ground and used as a flour.

Butomus umbellatus: FLOWERING RUSH. Native of Britain, it grows in moist soil or water up to 1ft deep. The tubers, which contain over 50% starch, are edible when cooked. The seed is also edible.

Chrysosplenium alternifolium and C. oppositifolium: GOLDEN SAXIFRAGES. Natives of Britain, they grow in wet meadows, swamps, etc., and prefer a shady position. The leaves are edible raw or cooked.

Cornus canadensis: CREEPING DOGWOOD. Native of North America, this is a low-growing creeping plant. It does well on the drier edges of the bog garden, but it strongly dislikes chalky soils. The fruit is edible - it is said to have a pleasant though not very strong flavour.

Cyperus longus: GALINGALE. Native of Britain, it grows in ditches and marshy soils. The root is edible and it can be used as a spice.

Glyceria fluitans: FLOAT GRASS. Native of Britain, it grows in shallow pond margins. The seed is sweet and is used in puddings or as a gruel.

Gunnera tinctoria: Native of Chile, this plant looks like an overgrown rhubarb and, in sheltered positions and moist soils, the stem can be 5ft tall and the leaf a yard or more across. Although they don't look tremendously appetising, the leaf stalks are said to be edible. Probably best when young.

Nuphar lutea: YELLOW WATER LILY. Native of Britain, it grows in water between 1ft and 2ft deep, preferring a sunny position. The roots are edible either raw or cooked, the leaf stalks may also be eaten, and a drink can be made from the flowers. Two allied species from N. America, Nuphar advena and Nuphar polysepala, are often grown in ornamental ponds and they can be used in similar ways. In addition the seeds are edible, being ground up and used as thickeners in soups, etc. This would suggest that the seeds of Nuphar lutea could also be used in this way, but we have not found any references to this.

Nymphaea alba: WHITE WATER LILY. Native of Britain, it grows in the deeper parts of the pond - about 4ft should suit it well. It prefers a sunny position and a rich soil. Rootstocks that are several years old may be eaten - they contain about 40% starch. Roasted seeds may be used as a coffee substitute. A related species from N. America, Nymphaea odorata, can also be found in ornamental ponds. Its young leaves and flower buds can be eaten cooked and young flowers can be eaten raw.

Oxycoccus palustris (also known as Vaccinium palustre): SMALL CRANBERRY. Native of Britain, this is a prostrate shrub that grows on acid, boggy soils and strongly dislikes chalky soils. Propagation is by seed or by layering the stems in spring. The fruit is edible and is held by some to be the most delicious of our native wild fruits. A tea can be made from the dried leaves, a red dye is obtained from the fruits, and the juice of the fruit is a very effective cleaner for your family silver. A closely related shrub, Oxycoccus macrocarpus, is native of N. America where it is widely cultivated for its fruit. It too can be grown in the bog garden.

Peltandra alba and P. virginica: WHITE ARROW ARUM and GREEN ARROW ARUM. Natives of N. America, they grow in shallow water near the pond edges. Their rhizomes are edible but they must be well cooked.

Phragmites communis: COMMON REED. Native of Britain, growing in shallow waters and wet soils, this member of the grass family can grow up to 12ft tall so it's not really one for the smaller garden, particularly as it is very invasive. However, it more than makes up for its antisocial tendencies with its quite impressive list of uses. The roots, which contain 5% sugar, are edible and can be dried, ground coarsely and

used as a porridge. The young shoots can be eaten raw or cooked and the seed is also edible. If the stem is wounded it exudes a sugary substance which hardens upon exposure to the air. This can be eaten raw or roasted - indeed, the dried and ground inner stem can be moistened and then roasted to make a marshmallow substitute. Other virtues of this plant include the stems for thatching, basket making, etc., and a light green dye that can be obtained from the stems.

Pontederia cordata: Native of N. America and occasionally naturalised in Britain, it grows in pond margins and marshy soils, though it is happiest in water about 6" to 1ft deep. The seeds can be eaten raw or ground up and used as a flour substitute. Young leafstalks can be eaten raw or cooked.

Rorippa nasturtium-aquaticum: WATERCRESS. Native of Britain, this is the familiar salad plant for sale in greengrocers, etc. It prefers growing in very shallow water (about 2" deep) but can also be found in marshy soils. It should be propagated by seed or by cuttings which will root easily and quickly in a container of water at any time of the growing season. As well as its leaves being edible, its seeds may be used as a mustard substitute.

Sagittaria sagittifolia: ARROW HEAD. Native of Britain, it grows in water up to 1½ft deep. Its tuber can be cooked and eaten and is much cultivated in China for this purpose.

Samolus valerandi: BROOKWEED. Native of Britain, it grows in wet soil and shallow water. The young leaves can be eaten raw or cooked.

Scirpus lacustris: BULRUSH. Native of Britain, it grows in bogs or shallow pond margins. The roots are edible and can be eaten raw or dried, ground and used as a flour. The young shoots in spring are also edible. The leaves can be used in weaving for making mats, chair seats, etc.

Sparganium erectum: BUR-REED. Native of Britain, it grows in marshes, ditches and shallow edges of ponds, requiring a rich soil if it is to do well. The tuber is edible.

Trapa natans: WATER CHESTNUT. Native of Asia and the Mediterranean, this plant is hardy in all but the coldest parts of Britain and it grows in water up to 2ft deep. Its seed, which is about 50% starch, can be eaten raw, cooked, or dried and ground into flour. It is often cultivated for its seed in Asia. Propagation is by seed only.

Typha angustifolia and T. latifolia: SMALL REED MACE and REED MACE. Natives of Britain, growing in pond margins, these plants are an absolute must for any self-respecting vegan 'self-sufficientist'. Make sure that you've got the room for them though because they are very invasive (especially T. latifolia) and will soon overrun most of your other plants if you don't keep an eye on them. Their catalogue of uses is most impressive and just why they are not used commercially is beyond me. Their rhizome is edible raw, cooked, or dried and ground into flour. Young shoots can be eaten raw or used as an asparagus substitute. The base of more mature stems can be eaten raw or cooked (but remove the outer covering). The seeds are edible and, when roasted, are said to have a pleasant, nutty flavour. An edible oil can be extracted from the seed. The pollen, which is a good source of protein, can be added to flour, and the young flowering spikes can be cooked and eaten. As if all that was not enough, the leaves can be used in weaving to make hats, mats, etc., the hairs on the fruits can be used as a stuffing material for pillows, etc., the stems are used in paper making and the dried flowers make a good insulating material. It's quite wonderful, isn't it!

Zizania latifolia: Native of E. Asia, this plant is much grown in Britain on the shallow margins of lakes. It is often cultivated as a food plant in Asia, it has edible rhizomes, young shoots and stem bases. The seed is also edible but, unfortunately, although it is perfectly hardy in Britain it does not flower here, spreading instead by vegetative means. A close relative of this plant, Zizania aquatica, is the wild rice plant whose horrendously expensive seeds can be seen for sale in health food shops. The plant is an annual, native of N. America, and, although it should be perfectly hardy here, we know of no source of viable seed in this country (seed in the shops has been heat-treated and does not germinate). If you can get hold of some viable seed then (apart from letting us have some) you could give it a try in the shallow pond margins. It dislikes stagnant water and does best in a very slow-moving current.

Suggested Suppliers:

Honeysome Aquatic Nursery, The Row, Sutton, nr. Ely, Cambridgeshire, CB6 2PF.  
J. M. Smith, Highcroft, Moorend, Wembworthy, Devon, EX18 7SG.  
Orchards Cottage Garden Centre, Scalby, Brough, Gilberdyke, Humberside, HU15 2UJ.  
(Each of the above supply bog garden and pond plants.)

Chiltern Seeds, Bortree Stile, Ulverston, Cumbria, LA12 7PE. (Suppliers of seeds for several of the plants mentioned above.)

Further Reading:

THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO WATER PLANTS. Helmut Mühlberg.  
WATER GARDENING. Philip Swindells.  
STURTEVANT'S EDIBLE PLANTS OF THE WORLD. Edited by U. P. Hedrick.  
FOOD FOR FREE. Richard Mabey.

KEN MORAIS-- HENNESSY, London.

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*NATURAL HAIR CARE*

There are many expensive and highly processed hair 'care' products on the market. It is, however, quite easy and inexpensive to make shampoos, rinses and other hair preparations at home.

One important point to remember is that a person's hair will reflect their general state of health, so a good balanced diet and plenty of exercise are important.

A healthy scalp is the key to healthy hair. At the base of each hair is a follicle, where the hair develops. Next to each follicle oil is secreted which helps to lubricate and condition the hair. Obviously it is important to ensure that the scalp is kept clean so the oil can flow freely. Good circulation in the scalp is vital for healthy hair growth. The scalp should be massaged thoroughly with the fingertips. This will also help to shed dead skin cells.

Brushing can help to promote healthy hair as it not only distributes the natural oils through the hair but also helps to improve circulation in the scalp and releases tension (particularly if another person brushes your hair for you). A few drops of pure oil of lavender or rosemary brushed thoroughly into the hair daily can leave it shiny and sweet smelling.

There are no hard and fast rules about frequency of hair washing -- the ideal is to achieve the correct requirements of your own particular hair type. Obviously those working and living in a polluted environment will find their hair becomes dirty very quickly. However you may decide to treat your hair, here are a few ideas to help ensure your hair is your crowning glory.

The following recipe for a natural herbal shampoo will not give the usual soapy liquid with which you are probably familiar -- nevertheless, it will still be effective. The recipe uses soapwort root which is a gentle cleanser and will not sting the eyes.

- |                             |                            |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 25g/1oz dried soapwort root | 3 sprigs sage tops         |
| 625ml/1¼pt boiling water    | 8 sprigs lemon balm tops   |
| 6 sprigs rosemary tops      | 3 sprigs southernwood tops |

Crush the dried root with a rolling pin, put into a jug, pour on the boiling water and leave to steep for 12 hours. Put the root and soaking water into an



**SOAPWORT**

enamel saucepan and boil for 15 minutes. Wash the herbs and chop them into short lengths. Put them into a bowl and pour on the boiled soapwort and water. Leave until cool, then strain the liquid and use all of it to wash your hair.

Certain herbs are effective for particular problems. White dead nettle is recommended for greasy hair and will gradually reduce greasiness if used over a period of time.

1 large handful of white dead nettle  
25g/1oz dried soapwort root  
 $\frac{1}{2}$ litre/1pt water

Prepare the soapwort solution as in the previous recipe. Add the dead nettle to the saucepan and simmer for 20 minutes. Allow to cool, strain and use the solution to wash the hair.

Other herbs are recommended for helping to combat greasy hair, such as peppermint, spearmint, nettle, sage, raspberry leaf and strawberry leaf. These could be incorporated in a recipe similar to that above.

Vinegar is recommended as a cure for dandruff which can be caused by insufficient rinsing of soapy shampoos. Vinegar cuts through the greasiness of the soap and leaves the hair shining. Vinegar can simply be added to the rinsing water or incorporated into a herbal rinse such as the following.

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup mint leaves  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  cup cider vinegar  
1 cup water

Boil the ingredients together for 5 minutes in a covered pan. Cool and apply to the scalp after shampooing. Rinse afterwards with clean water.

Stinging nettles are also reputed to cure dandruff and can also be made into a herbal rinse. Cover a bunch of nettles with water, bring to the boil and simmer for 15 minutes. Strain and cool. Use the infusion as a final rinse on the hair. A little of this mixture can be kept (for a few days only) and brushed into the hair every other day to give a healthy shine. The juice of nettles is also believed to help hair growth.

For more severe scalp conditions, such as psoriasis, it is advisable to contact a medical herbalist for treatment as such conditions can cause hair loss if left untreated.

As a general tonic for the hair the following rinse can be prepared. Cover a bunch of rosemary with water, bring to the boil and simmer for 15 minutes. Cool and strain. This infusion will keep for up to a week in a refrigerator or other cool place. It can be used as a rinse or, again, a small amount can be brushed into the hair daily to give a healthy shine and pleasant fragrance.

An infusion of costmary has traditionally been used to rinse hair because of its pleasant, balsam-like scent.

Certain herbs help to bring out the colour in blond hair - camomile is particularly noted for this and is used in many commercially prepared shampoos for this reason. Marigold petals and sweet flag also enhance blond hair. Similarly, rosemary, nettle and sage are beneficial to darker hair. All these herbs can be incorporated into simple shampoo recipes.

Most of the herbs mentioned here are easily obtained and quite simple to grow. Hollington Nurseries, Woolton Hill, Newbury, Berkshire, RG15 9XT provide a very comprehensive range of herb plants by mail order if you are unable to buy what you need locally.

Dried soapwort root is usually available from 'Culpeper the Herbalists' shops.

#### Bibliography:

THE HOLISTIC HEALTH HANDBOOK - compiled by Berkeley Holistic Health Centre. And/Or Press, 1978.

ALL GOOD THINGS AROUND US - Pamela Michaels. Ernest Benn, 1980.

(Elaine)

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#### BUILD YOUR OWN SUNFLOWER SEED SHELLING MACHINE

We were excited to read in the latest HDRA Newsletter (Autumn '87) of plans for d.i.y. mills for decorticating sunflower seeds. The HDRA considered that 'they should be within the reach of a skilled amateur with access to some machine tools'. There are two types - a bar mill and a disc mill. Plans are £1.96 for each model (i.e. £3.92 for the two) from: T.D.R.I., College House, Wrights Lane, London W8 5SJ.

(The following item from Pat Howden mentions some crops and methods which are not suited to temperate climates - home to most VSSN readers. Most of Pat's ideas are applicable, however, and we hope of interest to all - wherever you live!)

" TREE - MEND - US & GROUTESQUE "

o r

" LAZILY PLANT AN EDIBLE LANDSCAPE "

**DON'T BOTHER:** Buying seeds, making compost (too labour intensive), digging whole beds (unless you want to avoid aerobics class or jogging), planting inedible shrubs, herbaceous borders, non-food flowers or grasses, planting highly specialised bug and disease-prone vegies (cabbage, lettuce), plants that need boring attention like staking (i.e. favour little tomatoes), weeding much (mulch) or watering (also because of mulch) except in a drought.

Also no need to plant more than 6 seeds a week or 1 food tree a fortnight. You will have a gorgeous 26 tree orchard after one year!

Anything more is too ambitious and discouraging for the laid back gardener. If anything more harmful than soap spray or a weekly visit armed with a paint brush bugscraper must be applied then the plants get no second chance on our tiny plot. Switch species.

**SEEDS = PIPS, 57 VARIETIES:** The following seeds + many more are available from supermarkets - for FREE - in the fruit and vegies you buy. Pumpkin, peanuts (green tops delicious), rotten tiny tomatoes (beats bugs), water and other melons, potato, sweet potato (chuck a shovel of soil on the runners, same with strawberries), pawpaw, custard and other apples, cucumber, avocado. Plant grape and passion fruit (white and dark) between trees on vacant lots, fences, up walls, over tanks. Figs, mango, guava. Likewise: market beans, soy, peas can all grow up fruit trees, sugarcane (squeeze in a vice), verandas and sweetcorn. Shallots are self-replicating onions. You should see our crops of pineapple tops, ginger. There's lots of wild berries, fruits and herbs you can transplant on walkies. Bird seed, fennel, sunflower +++ give free fodder for the rest of your life.

**TOPS = GREENS:** Leaves of beans, peas, sweet potatoes, pumpkins, comfrey, herbs, young dandy-lions, radish and weeds (we weed the edible weeds) all provide delicious, nutritious by-product greens. Who needs to grow greens?

**TEAS + COFFEES:** Cutting and drying in the sun many leaves = tea, including lemon-grass, elderberry, strawberry, raspberry, mints and herbs. Coffees can be baked from grains and roots, including dandelion - all better for you than coffee, and cheap.

**TRENCHING:** Cuttings are easily borrowed and trenched in a bit of fertilised soil or in a pot of dirt standing in water. Typical are mulberries (and other berries), tamarillos, small tomatoes, rosemary, mint, herbs and bananas (shoots).

**CHEWING GUM:** Tooth picks help cool you in 100+ temps. Teapot leaves are also good gum.

**SELF-SUFFICIENCY IN A FLAT:** Though you could cope in that space (many do), turning a small flat space into an edible 3-dimensional garden is quite effortless, as we hinted above. We first made sure we bought a plot with water (swamp hole), good soil, nearby forest (= firewood + ashes + leafmould) and ocean (= seaweed). Then we planted food trees all round the border one foot in from the fenceline - may as well share the neighbours' good soil. The street grass and gutter is replaced with still more fruit trees. Passionfruit and beans grow up neighbouring trees on vacant lots or in the road. Norway grows street apples - Athens sports public urban oranges! Consider climbing spaces (as above), hanging baskets, trellises, porch pots, interior plants and underhouse gardens, bush areas for climbers. Schools, parks and city spaces are good crop prospects. In hot climates many plants prefer shady spots and close spacing. Trees in windy positions also thrive locked closely together.

I predict that in a few years properties not thus organised will be relatively valueless in attracting rich customers.

**A BIT BLOOMIN' MULCH:** Mulch is an essential for feeding, watering, protection and worm encouragement. Mulch is what you put round plants away from the stalk, including: kitchen scraps, rotted leaves, old compost, cotton/natural fibre clothes/bags/carpets, seaweed (wash, dig in), grass cuttings, paper, wood ash (little), worms, dilute urine (1:5). If you weed, simply leave them on top - they are good aerators and nutrient pumps from deep down.

As kids, we buried the rubbish and food scraps and couldn't eat all the tomatoes from 2 sq.metres. Lots of vegies spring up from such dug-ins.

**WATER WAY TO GO:** When you plant pips and food seeds, don't bother watering - wait till it rains as the seed can wait. Washing water is OK in an emergency. Mulch virtually neutralises the need for non-rain water.

**SEEDENTARY NO DIG:** Just as few doctoring books can agree on all treatments, so garden authors disagree. Munni squeezes some rotten tomato pulp on the ground, kicks some dirt over them and walks away. Result, toms in a few weeks! I guess that almost summarizes our method as neither of us are too keen on gardening, yet realise it almost as a duty - a bit like the oldies felt re going to war and save the country.

When the plants appear we mulch round about. When they are big we visit them weekly to scrape off nasties (especially aphids if soapy water didn't work). Leastways, visits are cheaper and better for you than sprays which could cost more than the whole crop.

**PERENNIULTIMATELY:** We haven't exhausted the possibilities of food varieties. Does anyone know the whereabouts of the Peruvian cow tree which gives delicious milk? - no kidding. We suggest always planting PERENNIAL FOOD species - even less work each year and acting as a deep nutrient pump. Perennials are more reliable. Confucius said always live like you are poor because one day you may be. Saint Paul said something similar. It's easier to climb up the ladder of survival than down. There's something very spiritual re being able to barter your home-grown, non-irradiated, non-polluted produce for stuff you don't grow; for being able to give as gifts to dear friends and neighbours.

As some wag wagged about gardens: what goes down must come up - so don't get caught with your plants down!

If you're still a doubting Thomas, why not write and/or visit soon - weekends best. Thanks for an s.a.e.

Blessings as always, PAT & MUNNI.

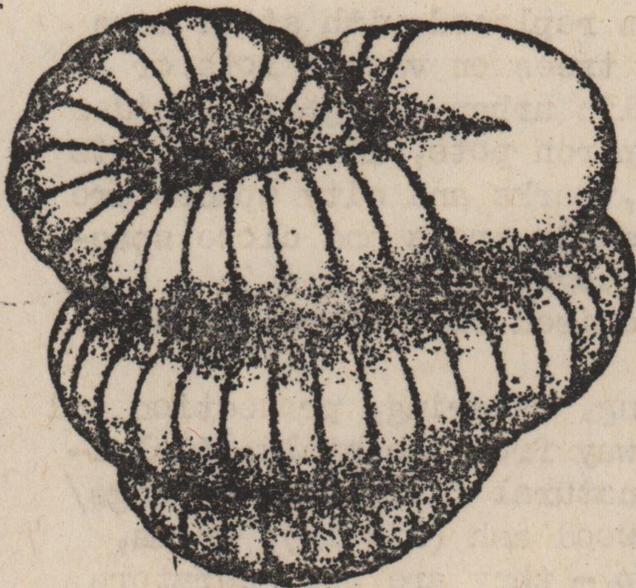
BYTE (centre for Back Yard TECh), Dr. Patrick f. Howden, Con St., Macleay Island, Q4165, AUSTRALIA.

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When asked by his local poetry class to consider an animal as the subject of a poem, keen gardener, cyclist and poet William Beaumont - a member of VSSN since its early days - produced the following thoughts on the earthworm, thereby helping educate as well as amuse his associates!

#### THE EARTHWORM

The choice is wide, dogs, tigers, sheep and camels,  
Birds, fishes, insects, snakes and many mammals,  
In jungle, field and houses, farms and zoos,  
Strange then that I should such a subject choose,  
A creature nigh forgot, on which to write,  
An unseen, unsung, wriggling trogladite.  
But ere you speak in denigrating terms,  
Of Mother Nature's myriad earthworms,  
Note first, 'tis they fertility maintain,  
And thus all other forms of life sustain.  
What other animal, toothless, could chew,  
Hard rock, dead bones, all passed their bodies through,  
Digested, so it would appear, with ease,  
To feed again, Man, animals and trees.  
What other animal its offspring bears,  
Alone? All other creatures breed in pairs,  
For worms had male and female, one each end,  
Before Man thought of this new sex-change trend.  
All other forms of life, if halved, would die,  
What's more, the female's ne'er been known to cry,  
Bi-sected, as with sharpened spade you dig,  
'The other end's a male chauvinist pig!'  
Instead, with neither insult, jeer or chaff,  
Each quietly starts to grow its other half.  
So spare a cheer for Genus Lumbricoids,  
(Such Latin names my pen more oft avoids).  
So next time you choose gardening as your task,  
Lean on the spade a little while and ask,  
'Has all this come from my own cultivation,  
Who's really at the root of all creation?'



## THE MOVEMENT FOR COMPASSIONATE LIVING - THE VEGAN WAY

Compassionate living is about making connections between the way we live and the way others suffer -

between our overflowing waste bins and the empty feeding bowls of the world's poor -

between the 'morning pinta' and the veal calf sucking at the bars of its crate -

between 'consumerism', industrial development and the making of a world unfit for our children to live in -

between animals suffering in vivisection laboratories and diseases arising from the ways we choose to live -

between the religions we preach and fail to practise and lack of peace in ourselves and the world.

Compassionate living requires commitment to work for change in ourselves and our life-styles.

**UNSUSTAINABLE LIFE-STYLES:** World population is increasing rapidly (a new India every seven years!). At the same time the life support systems of the planet are being endangered by ruthless forest clearance, by agriculture based on excessive mechanisation and on artificial chemicals, and on polluting, resource-wasting industrialisation. As deserts spread and soil erosion and poisoning increases, "close to one third of the world's arable land will be destroyed in the next twenty years".

**A POSITIVE ALTERNATIVE:** Fully aware vegan life-styles are the most economical in terms of world resources. Even over-populated Britain could be self-sufficient in food, energy and other essentials if livestock farming were phased out and some of the land thus saved was given over to trees. Tree products can meet nearly all human needs, including, with the use of modern technology, gas, electricity and liquid fuel. Moreover, forests of mixed species, managed on a sustainable yield basis, are environmentally beneficial - they reduce air-pollution, aid the water cycle, check erosion and maintain water tables. Soil fertility can be restored and maintained with plant compost, green manuring techniques and treated human waste.

**HEALTH:** It has now been demonstrated, and officially recognised, that the balanced vegan diet is healthy at all ages - in some ways healthier. Release from dependence on the slaughter house can inspire faith in the possibility of a fully compassionate world.

**CHANGE:** Predatory living is destroying the planet: only fundamental change in human motivation and life-styles can save it. The Movement for Compassionate Living is forming a network of people who are committed to working nonviolently for a compassionate world - by seeking and promoting an alternative way of life that is possible for all the world's people and sustainable within the resources of the planet -

by avoiding as far as possible all products of human and animal exploitation and environmentally damaging practices -

by minimising dependence on multi-national companies and unnecessary imports and encouraging locally grown foods free of harmful chemicals -

by exposing wrong, but accepting people in humble awareness of everyone's inadequacies and in the faith that everyone has the power to respond to the creative Spirit at work in the world.

KATHLEEN JANNAWAY.

### Publications:

"SUSTAINING & SUSTAINABLE" - the case for simple vegan living, with nutritional information, menus and recipes. 75p inc. p&p.

"WHOLE NEW WAYS" - imaginative recipes using only ingredients that could be grown in the UK. 75p inc. p&p.

"FOOD FOR EVERYONE" - educational display of facts, pictures, charts on importance of plants in solving the world food problem. £1.00 inc. p&p.

"NEW LEAVES" - quarterly journal with articles to inspire, inform and give practical help - £3.00 yearly or what you can afford.

Cheques/P.O.'s made out to the Movement for Compassionate Living, and sent to:  
47, HIGHLANDS ROAD, LEATHERHEAD, SURREY, KT22 8NQ. Answers to queries plus leaflets in return for two stamps.

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PLEASE NOTE THAT IDEAS AND OPINIONS EXPRESSED BY VSSN MEMBERS AND CONTAINED IN THE NEWSLETTERS ARE PRESENTED AS INDIVIDUAL VIEWPOINTS ONLY AND MAY NOT NECESSARILY BE SHARED BY OTHER VSSN MEMBERS OR BY THE NEWSLETTER COMPILERS - THANKS!  
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MEMBERS' ADVERTISEMENTS

"I'm a bit worried about bringing Jack (now 6 months old) up vegan - I have a lot of opposition - it's OK to be vegetarian but not vegan. I'd love to have advice and help from other vegan parents please..."

MICHELLE ROCKE

The Caravan, Old Station, Station Road, Coalbrookdale, Shropshire, TF8 7DR.

\* \* \*

"Male, 30 (very young 30!), would very much like to keep in touch with any positive vegan females out there. Do not hesitate to drop me a line wherever you are. Chow!"

DEEFU NAGRANI, 4 Watergate, Brecon, Powys, Wales, LD3 9AN.

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BACK-ISSUES OF THE VSSN NEWSLETTER:

- No.14 (Growing Food Without A Garden/Wheat, Rye, Barley & Oats).
- No.15 (Gardening With Children/Self-Sufficient Contraception/Misc. Reports).
- No.16 (Edible Fungi/The Deer & Squirrel Problem/Feeding The World).
- No.17 (Wholesome Food/The Onion Family/Green Manuring).
- No.18 (Why Vegan Self-Sufficiency/Recycling/Summer-Sown Salad Crops).
- No.20 (Energy Saving/Leaves & Leafmould/Field Beans/Misc. Reports).
- No.21 (Members' Reports/Edible Flowers/The Marrow Family).
- No.22 (Members' Projects/Herbal Teas/Mulches & Mulching).
- No.23 (Fruit Leather/Plant Fibres/Edible Bamboos).
- No.24 (Activists' Weekend Report/The Edible Lawn/Vegan Community Project/Misc.).
- No.25 (Alternative Lighting: Plant Oils & Waxes/Maple Syrup/The Edible Flower Garden/The Backstrap Loom, Part One/Misc. Items).
- No.26 (Edible Shrubs/Lettuces, Chicories & Endives/The Backstrap Loom, Part Two/Members' Letters).

BACK-ISSUE No.14, 30p. No's 15 - 18 & 20 - 26, 35p each. SORRY, No's 1 - 13 & 19 are unavailable.

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INFORMATION SHEETS:

Growing Nuts, 5p. Growing Unusual Fruits, 15p. Home Production of Linen, 10p.  
Natural Tooth Care, 5p. Seaweed & Its Use in Gardening, 10p. Slugs & Snails, 5p.  
Soap & Soapmaking, 5p. Growing Sunflower Greens, 5p.

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A CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS POSTAGE COSTS WOULD BE APPRECIATED WITH ORDERS FOR BACK-ISSUES & INFORMATION SHEETS...Thanks! Cheques/P.O's sent before the end of October '87 made payable to VSSN please; after October '87 made payable to A. & E. Garrett; after December '87 please write first to check availability. Thanks!

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" G R O W I N G T R E E S & S H R U B S F R O M S E E D "

Enclosed with this Newsletter (for current members) is a free copy of "Growing Trees & Shrubs from Seed" as a kind of 'parting gift'. We hope that it will prove useful to you all.

Many thanks to Ken Morais-Hennessy for his time and effort in researching and writing this booklet (and many other literary contributions to VSSN), to Janet Clapton for her illustrations, and to both Janet Clapton and Joanna Jackson for their much-appreciated help with putting the booklets together.

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"...WITHOUT WORDS, IN FRIENDSHIP, ALL THOUGHTS, ALL DESIRES, ALL EXPECTATIONS ARE BORN AND SHARED, WITH JOY THAT IS UNACCLAIMED." (Kahlil Gibran, 'The Prophet'.)  
Thankyou to all friends and supporters of VSSN - love to you all: keep in touch!