

# Remote Indigenous Gardens



Anthea Fawcett, Remote Indigenous Gardens Network director in the midst of a fresh food garden in Broome last week

By Kim Courtenay

FRESH food gardens can and should be part of all remote communities according to Anthea Fawcett, the Director of the Remote Indigenous Gardens (RIG) Network.

Ms Fawcett said with many chronic diseases on remote communities diet related, growing fresh food can "close the gap" between the health of indigenous and non-indigenous Australians.

"Food gardens should be essential infrastructure on remote communities and new housing projects should include provision for people to grow food," she said.

With a background in sustainability and sustainable design Ms Fawcett said the aim of the RIG Network is to promote information sharing, networking and research initiatives that build more resilient remote communities through local food production.

"Better nutrition and healthy and active lifestyles combined with strategies to improve emotional and mental wellbeing are critical to improved health on remote communities.

"Local food production offers improved self esteem,

life skills and employment opportunities. It requires long term capacity building, training, government support and appropriate cultural strategies.

"Having affordable and accessible fresh food should be a basic human right. There is a need for leadership and collaboration to support and encourage people to participate in food garden projects so that they own them," she said.

Ms Fawcett hosted a workshop in Fitzroy Crossing last week promoting the development of fresh food gardens on surrounding communities. She said the workshop received a positive response with people travelling from outlying communities to network and attend a range of presentations on growing fruit, vegetables and bush tucker.

For those with gardens already on the go now is a golden time for fresh veggies. Winter greens such as peas, beans, broccoli, silver beet, pak choy and a wide range of herbs and salad greens are at their best at the moment.

Staples such as sweet corn, sweet potato, tomatoes, bananas and paw paws are also producing

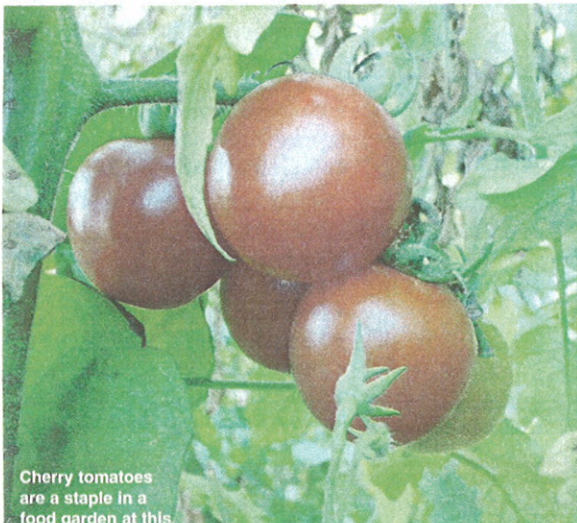
well and can easily keep the fruit and vegetable trays in the bottom of the fridge stocked.

But there are also some great taste sensations to be had from a mixed herb garden and by growing some lesser known leafy greens.

Rocket has become hugely popular in recent years as a spicy additive to salads while the Japanese green vegetable mizuna, with its jagged-edged leaves and sweet earthy flavour is quickly gaining notoriety among home 'master chefs'.

But perhaps the most amazing taste sensation to come from local gardens in a long time has been from the giant red mustard. When eaten raw its deep purple leaves taste exactly like wasabi paste making it quite entertaining to watch peoples' faces when they try it for the first time.

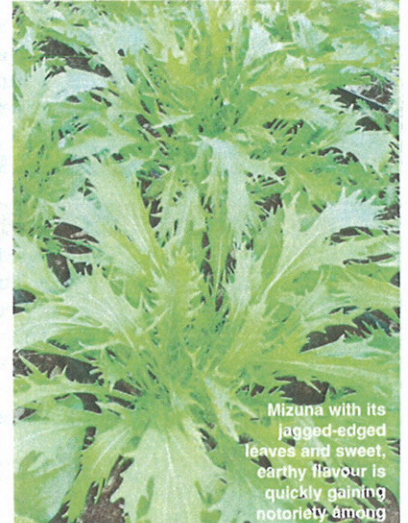
It has great potential for use as a finger food - wrapped around pieces of smoked salmon or raw tuna. It can also add zest to salads and coleslaws and create a pesto guaranteed to clear the nasal passages. It grows readily from seed and all parts of the plant are edible.



Cherry tomatoes are a staple in a food garden at this



One of the most amazing taste sensations to come from local gardens in recent times has been from the giant



Mizuna with its jagged-edged leaves and sweet, earthy flavour is quickly gaining notoriety among