

# PREPARING FOR THE WET

What to do in the garden now.

What to plant now

# Mulch, Mulch, Mulch

- This is the best thing you can do right now
- 1. stops weeds especially if paper is laid first
- 2. stops erosion in heavy rain
- 3. keeps roots cool in hot weather
- 4. provides food for earthworms
- 5 stops nutrients being washed out of soil
- 6. protects the microbes in the soil

# Suitable mulches

- Mulch hay
- Sugar cane mulch
- Trimmings from plants put through a shredder
- Lawn clippings are good – if left to dry out prior to using and mixed with leaves to stop packing down.
- Up to 150mm deep is fine.

# Pruning and composting

- Now is a good time to prune back ornamentals and to clean up the vegie. patch.
- If you have access to a shredder – make compost with the trimmings instead of taking them to the tip. If no shredder, cut into pieces no more than 100mm. Let some dry out and then build a compost heap with the green and brown – just add molasses, manure or blood and bone. Moisten as you build and cover top to protect from heavy rain.

# Green manuring

- By growing a green crop and then slashing or digging in the plants just as they are about to flower will add nutrients and organic matter to the soil. If slashing you get a second crop.
- Plants in the Mustard family are excellent green manure plants as the gases given off when the plants decompose kills nematodes .

# Seeds suitable for green manure

- Cow pea, Buckwheat, Japanese millet, Lab lab, Mung beans, Mustard , Soybeans, Snake Beans, Sorghum, Crotalaria, Pigeon pea.
- Bird seed has a lot of different seeds which could be used as a green manure crop – cut or dig in before seeds set.

Taro makes an attractive addition to  
the garden



# Plants, cuttings or tubers to plant now

- Aerial Potato, Casava, Coco Yam, Taro, Arrowroot, Ginger, Galangal, Turmeric, Yam
- Green leaf spinach type veg. –Brazilian spinach, Ceylon spinach, Egyptian spinach, Okinawa Purple and Green, Kang Kong, Abikia, Surinam spinach, Sweet Leaf, Lebanese Cress, Moringa and Sweet Potato



# Seeds or seedlings to plant now

- All melons, pumpkins, cucumbers, and serpent gourd, a good substitute for zucchini.
- Amaranth, asian greens, asparagus, basil, beans, beetroot, capsicum, chilli, carrots, chives, choko, eggplant, looseleaf lettuce, mustard greens, okra, radish, rosella, sweet corn,
- It's a bit late for tomatoes, as they won't set fruit in the hot humid weather, but if you still have some bushes, encourage them to keep producing.

# Growing herbs in the tropics

- I have had herbs in large pots for years now. Rosemary is the only one I move under cover to escape the heavy rain.
- The thyme, lemon thyme, mint, viet mint, 5 spice, marjoram, chives, garlic chives, basil, shallots are out in the open. Although when planting the parsley I left it in the pot and buried the pot about half way into the ground. This stoped the base from rotting and it survived the wet season.

# Herbs at the back door



# Potting mix for herbs in the tropics

- To keep herbs through the wet the potting mix must be very free draining. I think the large pots also help as the roots can burrow down to escape the heat.
- Any good potting mixes can be used but add about 30% coarse sand to provide drainage.
- I feed my herbs with worm castings/juice, compost and/or organic liquid fertilizer.