

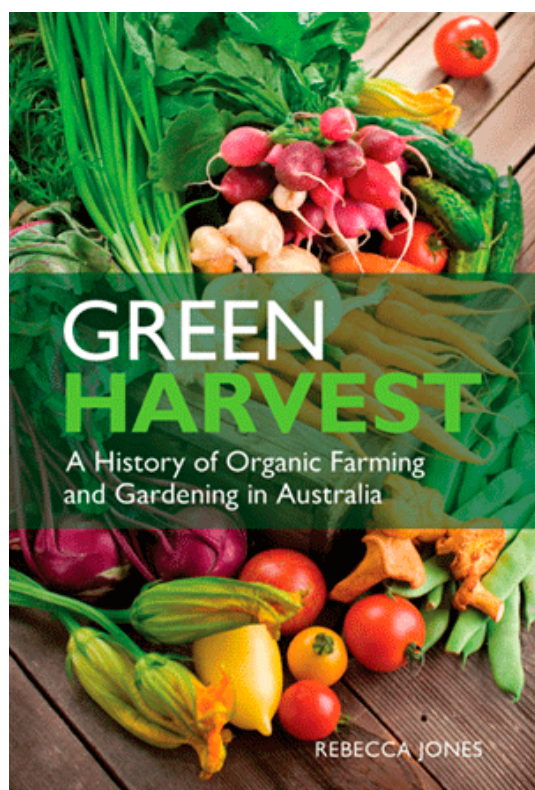
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Getting back to the roots

Kath Kovac

Does human health ultimately depend on the health of the soil? In *Green Harvest*, Rebecca Jones explores this concept by tracing the history of organic farming and gardening in Australia from the 1940s to the present day.



Green Harvest

Rebecca Jones

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Jones covers four main themes in her book, which has been exhaustively researched as the basis of her PhD thesis in Australian organic growing: soil, chemical free, ecological well-being, and back to the land. Through analysis of newsletters from organic farming and gardening societies that have come and gone throughout Australian history, and interviews with families of both past and present organic farmers and gardeners, Jones discusses how each of these themes formed the basis for the development of organic practices in Australian farming and gardening.

In 'Soil', Jones describes how Australian organic growers in the 1940s first extolled the virtues of humus-rich soil for the production of healthy food, and in turn, healthy people. 'Chemical free' traces the growing opposition, during the 1950s–70s, to synthetic agricultural chemicals on the basis of the harm they caused animals and humans. 'Ecological well-being' emerged as a third principle of organic growing during this time, broadening the focus from stock and

human health to encompass the ecosystem as a whole. 'Back to the Land' tells the story of how people moved from cities to rural blocks in the 1970s and 1980s, following their dreams of living self-sufficiently using organic principles. The final chapter explores the relevance of these four historical themes to organic practices in the 2000s.

For today's organic gardeners or those interested in changing to organic methods, the book may have benefited from a glossary, a less scholarly tone, and perhaps even a list of recommended practical books and websites on the 'how-tos' of organic gardening, to help us apply what we have learnt from history to our present-day attempts. However, for those wanting to understand the roots of organic growing in this country, Jones has provided a well researched and interesting argument to demonstrate that past principles of organic farming and gardening still resonate strongly with the organic practices of today.

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