

Winter Wrap-Up: Three Raised Beds in Jerrabomberra

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gardening

vegetables

New section on the blog: Gardening. Two parts. This journal, where I keep track of how the garden is actually going, and a [planting and harvesting diary](#) that lists what vegetables to plant and when for Jerrabomberra conditions. The diary is the reference; the journal is the evidence.

The setup is modest: three corrugated raised beds on gravel against the back fence, each 1.6 m by 0.8 m. Numbered 1 to 3 from left to right. Jerrabomberra is effectively Canberra for gardening purposes: cool temperate, frost possible from April to late October, so the growing year is split sharply between frost-hardy and frost-tender crops.



How the winter crops went

Bed 1: broccoli. The clear winner of the season. Good heads, minimal pest trouble, and it carried the bed through the coldest months without complaint. Broccoli is now a permanent fixture in the winter rotation.

Bed 2: beans, leeks, wombok. Mixed results. The beans are still growing and should finish in the next few weeks. The leeks were a failure: they went in too close together, never bulked up, and I pulled them. Spacing was the mistake, not the variety; they will get another go with more room. The wombok did well and has already been harvested and cleared.

Bed 3: beetroot, carrots, lettuce. Beetroot: success, no complaints. Lettuce: success, the usual cut-and-come-again workhorse. Carrots: technically edible, visually a disaster. Every root came out forked, twisted, or split. The likely cause is too much nitrogen in the bed (see below), possibly compounded by lumpy soil. Lesson recorded.

Everything left is starting to bolt now that the days are warming up, which is the season telling me to wrap it up and get the beds ready for summer.

Fertilising: what and when

I have been feeding the beds on vibes. Time to write down an actual plan.

At planting time, every bed, every season: fork through a couple of centimetres of compost plus a handful of blood and bone (or pelletised poultry manure) per square metre. This is the base feed.

Brassicas (broccoli, cabbage, wombok, kale): the heavy feeders of the garden. Liquid feed with fish emulsion every two to three weeks once established, and a side dressing of blood and bone halfway through the grow.

Legumes (beans, peas, broad beans): they fix their own nitrogen, so they need very little. Too much nitrogen gives you lush leaves and no pods. Compost at planting and otherwise leave them alone.

Root crops (carrots, beetroot, parsnip): no fresh manure and no high-nitrogen feed. Excess nitrogen is the classic cause of forked, hairy, deformed roots, which matches Bed 3's carrot exhibit precisely. Compost plus a bit of potash is all they get.

Leafy greens (lettuce, spinach, silverbeet): little and often. A weak liquid feed every couple of weeks keeps them producing without going bitter or bolting early.

Seaweed extract: useful as a tonic and for trace elements, but it is not a complete fertiliser. It supplements the above; it does not replace it.

The timing rule: feed at planting, feed every two to four weeks during active growth, ease off as harvest approaches, and recharge the bed with compost between crops.

What is next

Frost risk runs until late October here, so the summer crops (tomatoes, zucchini, beans, corn) wait until then. Bed 2 clears first and gets the tomatoes. The full month-by-month plan is on the [Gardening page](#).

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