

BLUE MOUNTAINS PERMACULTURE NETWORK

AUTUMN NEWSLETTER 2004

Hello

Welcome to the Autumn newsletter. Thank you again to the contributors, who make this newsletter possible and give us information and ideas. However there is a sense that what we send out on email goes out but does it go anywhere? Can I encourage you to give our contributors some feedback. Does everyone agree with everything that they write? Do you have views on what could be in the newsletter or even if the format is user friendly? We would all love (I think) some feedback, comment, disagreement or word of encouragement.

Pat
BMPN

WHAT'S ON?

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| Monday 22 March | Permaculture Design Course beginning
9.00 - 4.30 for 6-7 weeks
Enquiries Rowe Morrow 4782 3011 or
Email rowe@lisp.com.au |
| Monday 22 March | Community Meeting Blue Mountains Environment Festival
BM Council Chambers 4.00
Contact Jasmine Payget 4780 5739 email
jpayget@bmcc.nsw.gov.au |
| Saturday 27 March | Great Grose Gorse Walk
Popes Glen Blackheath 9.30 - 12.00 |
| Sunday 28 March | Great Grose Gorse Walk
Minnehaha Falls area 9.30 for the morning
Contact Vanessa Richardson 4787 3112 or email
vanessa.richardson@npws.nsw.gov.au |
| 3 - 9 April | 8 th National Permaculture Convergence at Eltham (NE
Melbourne).
Enquiries Permaculture Melbourne pcmelb@vicnet.net.au |
| Sunday 4 April | Annual General Meeting Permaculture International Ltd
Noosa QLD at Noosa Pc gathering |

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| Sunday 11 April | Wimmalee Neighbourhood Garden Group Gardening day
Enquiries Mark Lutherborrow on 0418 694 969 |
| Saturday 1 May | Blue Mountains Environment Festival
Springwood 9.00 - 1.00
Lawson, Mid Mountains Community Centre 1.00 - 8.00
Enquiries Anne Watts 0412 497 535 |
| Sunday 2 May | Blue Mountains Environment Festival
Blackheath Neate Park, GWH, 12.00 - 4.00 |
| Sunday 16 May | Mid Mountains Seed Savers - 2783 meeting
10.30 am Katoomba
Enquiries Fiona 4782 5072 |

Ecowood™ is here!
(but it's really up to you and me)

by John McNaul

A dilemma often faces gardeners and landscapers who need to choose suitable materials for outdoor projects such as decking, fencing, retaining walls or garden-bed edging. Using plantation grown softwood timber has the advantage of being a renewable resource that is easy to work with, readily available and reasonably cost effective. The treatment it receives ensures that it is resistant to rot and attack by termites, borers and other pests. In fact, treated pine is claimed to last for over fifty years!

The problem of CCA

However, the downside is that the treatment involves the use of toxic heavy metals and it is this point that has led to constant questions over the safety of the products and processes involved. The CCA (Copper Chromium Arsenate) treatment was first developed over 70 years ago, and treated pine has become a ubiquitous medium for exterior landscaping worldwide ever since. It is commonly found in children's playground equipment, edging for garden-beds, fencing, retaining walls etc. As a result of these concerns, and some studies which suggest links between CCA treated timber and adverse health effects, some Australian local authorities are now considering avoiding its use in children's play areas. Recently the USA EPA proposed a voluntary phase-out of CCA treatments as a precautionary measure, but shortly afterwards withdrew the proposal after industry representations.

Timber industry publications point out that firm evidence of adverse health effects arising from contact with treated pine simply does not exist, even after widespread use in the community over several generations. Studies of workers involved in the production of treated pine have also,

apparently, given CCA a 'clean bill of health'. While acknowledging that Arsenic and some forms of Chromium can cause cancers in humans, these industry sources point out that exhaustive testing of CCA treated timber by Australian and overseas authorities has not resulted in any links to ill-health being discovered.

However, there is a caveat. You need to follow manufacturers guidelines when using the timber. These guidelines include such recommendations as

- ❖ Avoid inhaling sawdust from sawn timber
- ❖ Don't allow sawdust to accumulate
- ❖ Protect skin and eyes when handling
- ❖ Do not burn CCA treated timber

While these types of precautions seem sensible, to the skeptical consumer (not to mention permaculturist) they do suggest that while not proven dangerous, CCA treated timber is not always completely safe either. Can we be sure that manufacturers guidelines are always being followed, particularly in the area of disposal? Are the adverse health effects or environmental impacts definitely non-existent in the case of CCA treated pine, or do we just have to wait until we have overwhelming proof of them (as in a multitude of other cases, from smoking to the nuclear industry). Also, the recent tragic accident in the Blue Mountains involving a truck carrying pesticides reminds us that the environmental impacts of materials can be felt at all points along the life cycle - not just in the use of the finished product.

And what are we to do while we are in this limbo? As indicated above, there are many advantages to using a treated pine product, but what about the precautionary principle?

Enter Ecowood™

Fortunately, with the development of Ecowood™ by KoppersArch (the original developer of the CCA treated pine process) we are released from this dilemma. According to product literature, Ecowood has the same decay and pest resistance properties as CCA treated pine, but the treatment is based on Copper and organic biocides - thus avoiding concerns about long term accumulation of heavy metals in the environment. We can avoid any argument about health effects of CCA treatment - imagined or otherwise - by simply not using CCA treated products in the first place. Apparently, there is no major technology retrofit required at the manufacturers - just a change of impregnation solution in the vats. And while there may be some cost issues in transition and adjustment of stocking etc, surely there should be nothing holding us back from widespread introduction of the new product?

So, why have we not heard more about Ecowood? Surely such a development should be trumpeted loud and clear in landscape suppliers' yards up and down the country? Perhaps the answer lies in a pragmatic view of the commercial position. To promote the benefits of Ecowood would be to confirm the problems of CCA treatment - which don't exist, right?. So the industry may be sitting tight waiting for the consumer to decide - that is 'You and Me'. The real risk facing the treated timber industry may be that any adverse publicity could lead to consumers avoiding using treated pine altogether and go to some other landscaping material such as steel or concrete (but that is another story...). So, perhaps the industry view is to focus on overall market share, and

not to make too much fuss about the issue until the consumer demands an alternative, which just happens to be available anyway.

'You and Me'

So, this is where 'You and Me' come in. Next time you speak to your local Landscape supply yard, ask them about Ecowood, and if they haven't heard of it before, ask them to get some promotional material on display (remember - you are right, you are the customer!).

One determined gardener in Hazelbrook was prepared to hold out until she got Ecowood for her garden project even though she had to wait longer and pay more (the price difference was approximately 10% compared with standard CCA products).. Together (along with me in my capacity as 'John the Gardener'), we have been able to persuade a timber wholesaler and one of their retailers to take a financial risk and order in a whole load of Ecowood products on the strength of this one request and in anticipation of growing consumer demand. It would be good if these trailblazing businesses could be vindicated and have their position supported by strong enquiries and sales to people who want to speed the transition from CCA products to alternative forms of treatment.

For more information

<http://www.tanalisedecowood.com>

local suppliers or Ecowood

Treated Pine People - 4732 3255

Aussie Logs - 4735 5085

So if you do need to use a new manufactured product in your garden project - spread the word about treated pine. Don't wait for the argument about CCA treatment to be won or lost - just order a safer alternative!

I don't want to lose sight of the ideal Permaculture garden which has minimal inputs and outputs other than sunshine, rain and natural predators! Or that there are many recycled materials around that can be used for garden constructions if they are necessary. However, it is also an ideal to have the principles and benefits of permaculture spread as widely across society as possible - even if everyone is not a committed permaculturist. Treated pine is a material which is widely used and improvements in its sustainability should be welcomed. If anyone has more information relating to impacts of CCA, other news about Ecowood, or wants to start a discussion about materials for garden construction I would be willing to participate.

John McNaull

mcrun@hermes.net.au

PONDS, PROBLEMS AND PEOPLE - dam difficult

by Rowe Morrow

I've taught people about dams and ponds for years so it was about time that I got one. Nearly two years ago I had worked out where it would go and contacted the `best' contractor to dig it for me.

The design was interesting because I linked up three overflow pipes from three rainwater tanks and put them underground where they ran - first into a small sunny pond and then through a riffle of stones to oxygenate the water and then into the dam. David Brakespeare helped me with the design.

The dam was just dug in the ground, not across a creek bed because I didn't want to interrupt environmental flows. Then the overflow spillway at one end fed the opposite direction to the creek and through a series of riffles and ponds before emptying into an artificial swamp for final cleaning before moving into the headwaters of Megalong Creek on its way to Sydney's drinking water.

The dozer driver arrived one week early when I was finishing an overseas report required that evening, and so I couldn't supervise him - as the PC books say. He used his initiative which I tried to discourage when I'd rush out in panic. It turned out he was deaf anyway from noisy machinery.

The gouged bare hole in the ground was terrifying. I got wood chips and straw and covered all the bare ground. The contractor who was part of the mountains sewerage tunnel brought me tons and tons of liquid bentonite. I reckoned I was very very lucky. It was free. It 2/3 filled the pond. I didn't add gypsum too soon because I wanted some bentonite to settle of its own accord.

I finally added gypsum and it and the bentonite immediately sank to the bottom in a potter's delight of thick creamy clay. Some stuck to the fairly steep walls and the wood ducks and black ducks immediately arrived. The played and pooped and pooped and played in it some more.

Then the water level started to go down. The drought hit. Severely. Less than 20% of our usual rainfall and so the tanks weren't full to run-over and supply the dam.

I got into my old shorts and t-shirt and waded into the black duck mire and cream porcelain quality clay. I took a bucket and chucked buckets of clay up on to the walls. It stayed until it rained when the dam filled only to drop again quickly.

I stared at it and realised that I couldn't put in cows and grass clippings. I didn't have cows or pigs and no grass clippings because of the drought. Then I considered dynamite but I am a bit inexperienced in using dynamite. The Permaculturally correct (PC) ways to seal dams just weren't possible for me and weren't going to work.

I couldn't see how I could cement the walls. I also learned that the local soil (a very porous gravel) would not make any sort of seal with the bentonite. When it rained very heavily, the clay melted like icecream, and ran straight back to the bottom of the dam again. I used to go and stare at it.

I invited the Dept of Lands and Water to come and see. They said it really was `a terrifically good design for land this size and environmentally faultless ' just the dam didn't hold water so the riffles and ponds and swamp didn't work either."

It sits right in front of my big glass door. It is just a few metres from my terrace where I have meals so it wasn't as if it was way down the back fence and I could forget it. It was always there.

So I bought dam liner - without the fungicide they put into swimming pool liners. Timing became all important. I needed to throw clay on the steep walls to cover the stones in the gravel. If it rained then the clay would be too sloppy and if it was too dry it would form cement like stalagmites and would hole the liner.

All things work for the best. Sometimes. I got into the stinking hole on three occasions and chucked buckets and buckets of clay again the walls and hoped it wouldn't rain. Some slid back but it was a dry February and by the time I did the last big chucking event the clay was just right to stick. I fell in it twice and had to be pulled out once. My biceps became admirable but next morning my legs would barely get me out of bed.

Then a water tank developed holes and needed mending from the inside.

So last Saturday morning some good, good neighbours, Jenny and Peter, and a visiting nephew, Michael, came early and together we placed old carpet and spare builders' plastic over the wet clay and then we stretched out more than 100 kg of pond liner 15 x 13 metres and covered the pool. It took an amazing amount of discussion because we'd never done it before and we knew that if it got to the bottom and stuck to the mud we'd never move it because of the suction. (Someone proposed the perfect murder would be to drop someone in the mud and cover them with plastic.) As usual what I thought would be a half hour job took two and a half hours.

It looked great and so big. We reckon we will have a pool party. We siphoned and pumped the water from the leaky tank into the dam on the new liner and 8,000 litres just about covered the bottom. But then within 24 hours it started to rain gently and it has been raining ever since.

I should be bubbly and delighted and overjoyed but I do feel anxious that I might not have got it quite right. Still tonight the water is still running into the dam. And the drinking water tank, well I'm waiting until its gets drier to get in and patch the inside.

Would I do it again? Well, yes but differently. I wish I had known that bentonite doesn't always gel with the parent soil. That gravel is nearly impossible to seal. That steep walls are very difficult to get anything to stick on to. That what started as a cheap way to have a large water source for garden, fire and drought turned out quite expensive.

If it does fill up and work it will make me feel so safe from fire, and look so beautiful and it will reflect the winter sun's rays into my living room and make it warmer and patterns on the ceiling.

Please contact me if you feel you need a `dam' counselor to talk things over about your dam.

A LOCAL FOOD NETWORK FOR THE BLUE MOUNTAINS AND BEYOND

from Richard Griffiths

As a contact person for the Community Gardens I received the following e-mail a couple of weeks ago. from David and Suzanne Alder at Hampton, it speaks for itself. It more or less says what I've been thinking about local food.

Richard Griffiths
mail@permanentculture.com

Forwarded (edited) message follows:

We were wondering if any of your members may be interested in developing a Local Food Network. . We would certainly be interested in learning more about your community garden. We are hoping to put together a sustainable living open day in October where members of the public can visit various projects displaying aspects of sustainable living. Would your group be interested in being involved in such a project.

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Local Food Network

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We are committed to growing and raising as much fresh food for our family as possible, but there are always gaps in our capacity or willingness to produce for ourselves, as well as gluts when we have plenty to give away, sell or exchange. We want to explore the idea of establishing a local food network to connect people who want to eat locally produced food but can't produce everything they need themselves. We hope this could connect a large group of producers and eaters who can meet one another's needs.

Members of the network could also indicate what they would be looking for in the future so that it will help give growers ideas about what to grow for the future.

The network might take the form of an internet site on which participants can register what they have to sell, or exchange, and what they want to buy or barter for. Individual arrangements would be made for the transaction.

Or it might take the form of a relatively central weekly farmer's market. The final form will be decided by the beginning group. The geographical area we think would work for us would extend roughly from the upper Mountains out to Bathurst perhaps, and north and south of that line to a similar extent. Too big and we will find it too difficult to exchange easily. But people outside that area are welcome to participate if they are willing to travel further themselves.

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If you think that this sort of network would be of interest to you, give us a ring or e-mail us as listed below. Don't feel that you can't participate because your garden is small or your gardening time limited. The more variety we have in a local food network, the better it will be able to meet all our needs.

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When we have received several expressions of interest, we will convene a meeting to see if we can get things started. We look forward to hearing from you,

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>David and Suzanne Alder

>>

Ph 6359 3175

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Email: bslr@bigpond.com

BLACKHEATH COMMUNITY GARDEN

by Suzanne Reaney

Green and *Organically* Growing

As Autumn takes hold we're tidying up summer crops and weeds, planting winter greens and harvesting pumpkins.

The purchase of a small rainwater tank which we've linked to our shed's run-off will give much needed water in dry spells while conserving our precious natural resource.

In coming months the public entryway at Prince George Street will be constructed at long last then we can concentrate on creating our Sensory Garden.

After much negotiating with BMCC we began at this site by fencing our allocated area in mid-May last year - our vision evolves.

For info contact Suzanne - 4787 5229

WIMMALEE NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE GARDEN GROUP

by Mark Lutherborrow

The group's first formal meeting at the new garden site at the rear of the Wimmalee Neighbourhood Centre was held on Friday 5 March.

The group intends to adopt an open design process so that all members can participate in the development of the gardens.

It was decided to commence our activities as a communal garden beginning directly at the rear of the Neighbourhood Centre.

We have agreed to meet on the second Sunday of each month at 10am. These group gardening days will also be the group's business meeting days and provide the opportunity for guest speakers to address the group on topics related to community gardening. It was unanimously agreed that these days have a celebratory element such as a garden party/picnic to end the day's activities.

If anyone is interested in joining us please contact Mark Lutherborrow on 0418 694 969 or come along and introduce yourself on our next garden day Sunday April 11.

MID MOUNTAINS SEED SAVERS - 2783

A tomato tasting was held on Saturday 6 March. Twelve heirloom varieties, one organically grown but shop bought and one supermarket bought tomato were tasted. Each tomato was given a number and participants asked to rank them for taste from 1 to 5, with 5 being the most delicious.

The two tomatoes which stood out as the most delicious were 'Wild Sweetie' and 'Rouge de Marmande'. The next grouping included the organically grown but shop bought tomato. Bottom place was gained by 'Yellow Goumet Filler' (a yellow tomato the size of a small yellow capsicum). This is a tomato designed for cooking and stuffing. There was no difference in the rankings between adult and children.

The first batch of seeds is ready for distribution. Enquiries phone Loree on 4759 2118.

PEST REPORT

by Sue Girard

For any of you who don't know my ultra ego besides being an entomologist, I also work as an illustrator. Over the last few months I have been painting, what are known as, Stored Product Pests for an identification chart that will be distributed to warehouses & food supply outlets, such as Uncle Ben's in Bathurst. This has been of particular interest to me because at the moment lots of vegies have gone to seed in my garden & it is the same beetles/weevils, mites & moths that could become a problem to my own precious seed bank.

In the garden situation, as seeds are developing the main culprit to seed loss are weevils, (for example the Rice weevil or the Granary weevil). As adults these are those little beetle like creature with extended heads & snout. As larvae they are small cream legless grubs that live internally in the plant tissue usually the centre of seed kernels. The adults feed at night, so scalloped holes around the edges of leaves may be the first sign that you have a problem. Garlic plants are said to repel weevils when grown nearby. Or if you are greatly concerned you can always do a little nocturnal hunting by torch light & squash them.

You need to be able to identify any damaged seed before choosing and cleaning your ripened seed. Holes may be obvious, if not you should place the seeds in a jar of water you will find that the empty & infertile seeds will float. This is an important step because apart from the fact that the time & effort involved in storing infertile seed is pointless, these weevil larvae can survive for up to 9 months inside a seed kernel. So potentially by keeping them you may be infesting the rest of your seeds, as adults emerge & start to reproduce.

Once you have dried your seed you need to store them in an airtight container, & you need to be aware of the presence of small grain moths & once again weevils & mites; the same ones that turn up every so often in flour or rice or cereals from the shop. I'm sure we have all seen the ones that mesh the infested product in webbing & secretions. The larvae/caterpillar stage of these moths that are a problem, (Indianmeal moth, Angoumois Grain moth to name just two) are also small & cream, but unlike beetle larvae, they actually have legs.

There are studies being carried out that indicate that fungi & moulds have similar chemical compositions to insect pheromones & therefore if the seed is in any way moist these pest may in fact be sexually attracted to your seed as much as by their need for food. This process is further complicated by the fact that because seeds are living embryos they actually breathe & this in itself gives off moisture. Bay leaves, garlic & black pepper are said to help repel these pests. Placing silica gel (the type that is in those little sachets in some pill bottles) or even rice or powdered milk in the container helps soak up any moisture.

Generally speaking these pests like warm conditions so if you put your seeds in the freezer for about 48 hours you will kill any of the pests. Scientists have been able to germinate seeds from Tundra Lupines that were found buried in glacial ice & estimated to be 10,000 years old. On the other hand don't be tempted to place seeds in the microwave if you hope to germinate them

later on, because heat over 32° C will kill them. This also means don't keep your seedbank on the north side of a tin shed.

If any of you are not familiar with collecting & keeping seeds may I recommend, Rosemary Morrow's *Family Seed Saving Booklet*. At only \$10 it is well worth the buy.

ENVIROMENTAL ACTIVISM - RESEARCH PROJECT

forwarded by Paul Payten

From: Sam LaRocca [<mailto:s.larocca@griffith.edu.au>]

Sent: Friday, 20 February 2004 4:31 PM

Subject: research input: mobilisation and environmental activism

Dear Friend,

Ever wondered what inspires people to work for social change? Or how the environment movement might mobilise more enthusiastic grassroots activists?

These questions are the focus of my current honours research project which seeks to identify the factors that inspire and sustain involvement in environmental activism, and also the barriers people may experience to becoming and staying actively engaged. To address the questions, I am collecting and analysing the experiences of environmental activists in becoming and staying involved in political action. I am keen to involve you in this project because I know that everyone has a unique and interesting story to tell - and each story I collect will help to enrich my understanding of the mobilisation process.

The link below will take you to a questionnaire which is an extremely important component of my research - it should only take 30 minutes to complete and I would greatly appreciate the time and effort you spend answering the questions.

Unfortunately, this project is unfunded and cannot provide any financial remuneration for your time, energy and valuable contribution. However, this project will feed into the environment movement in a number of ways, including:

- * A summary report of strategic recommendations will be distilled from the project to better inform and provide creative solutions to capacity building for grassroots environmental organisations seeking to engage and sustain activists; and

- * This project will offer key insights to the environmental advocacy project, which provides education and training and a web-based resource for environmental and social justice advocates [see <http://www.environmentaladvocacy.org>]. Please contact me for more details or to join our mailing list.

Please click on the link below to be taken to the questionnaire - it would be great if you could complete it at your earliest convenience, no later than the 30 April 2004.

<http://www.coastal.crc.org.au/surveys/mobilising.html>

Thanks in advance. And PLEASE pass this message onto your environmental activist networks. It is important for me to be able to connect with as many willing participants as possible.

In solidarity,

sam

Sam La Rocca

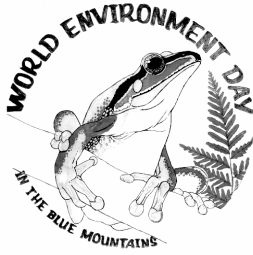
T +61.7.3875.4030 F +61.7.3875.7459

Faculty of Environmental Sciences

E sam@environmentaladvocacy.org

Griffith University, Nathan QLD 4111

Environmental Advocacy Workshop Series <http://www.environmentaladvocacy.org>



SATURDAY, 1 MAY
SUNDAY, 2 MAY

Blue Mountains Environment Festival
2004

NOTICE

THE FESTIVAL WILL BE IN THREE VILLAGES THIS YEAR
IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO PARTICIPATE ...
please contact me, Anne Watts, on 0412 497 535 OR
download a Stallholders Application Form from www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au

S P R I N G W O O D
SATURDAY, 1 MAY - FROM 9AM-1PM

LOCATION 1
SPRINGWOOD NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE/LIBRARY

LOCATION 2
SPRINGWOOD TOWN SQUARE

LOCATION 3
BLUE MOUNTAINS CITY COUNCIL - SPRINGWOOD DEPOT

L A W S O N
SATURDAY, 1 MAY - FROM 1PM-8PM

MID MOUNTAINS COMMUNITY CENTRE

BLACKHEATH

NEATE PARK, GREAT WESTERN HIGHWAY, BLACKHEATH

PERMACULTURE DESIGN COURSE

Beginning Monday 22 March 9.00 am to 4.30 pm

Running 6-7 weeks.

Contact Rowe Morrow 02.47.823.011 or email: rowe@lisp.com.au

Where: Rowe's place at: Lot 23 Explorer's Road, Katoomba 2780

Cost: \$400 for the 72 hour course (probably cheapest in Australia, some trading or discount allowed)

This is the internationally recognised Permaculture Design Certificate which will help you make good sustainable decisions, and, design your home and garden to be more economical, beautiful and comfortable. Many people have found a good living after completing this course.

ODDS & SODS

Do you know:

- Permaculture International memberships are due for renewal each year on 1 January. Membership forms available on www.permacultureinternational.org
- The Planet #8 February 2004 has an update on Accredited Permaculture Training (APT) and a Frequently Asked Questions page on APT.

WINTER NEWSLETTER

Contributions for the Winter Newsletter by Friday 9 July PLEASE.

To **unsubscribe** please reply with subject 'Unsubscribe'

Disclaimer; The Editor can not be held accountable for any content but has endeavoured to check all that she can.