

# BLUE MOUNTAINS PERMACULTURE NETWORK

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Hello

Welcome to the Autumn Newsletter.

A small number gathered for the Permaculture Picnic at Clairvaux Gundugurra Tribal Council Land in December where we ate well, walked about the land and enjoyed each other's company. (see picture)

In November Wayne Levy, Brian Coates and myself attended a COW and CALF course (a requirement to teach accredited APT modules) at Djanbung Gardens at Nimbin. We gained an understanding of the accredited course, what we needed to do to teach accredited modules and how we could increase our knowledge and qualifications in Permaculture. Robyn Francis is looking at delivering Certificate 3 and 4 modules in Sydney which could go towards gaining of those qualifications.

We spent 4 days experiencing and learning about Creative Teaching strategies with Robyn Clayfield - a most gifted teacher. (see picture)

Sue Girard has a request for information n sightings of foxes and feral cats for a survey - see p. 7

All the best

Pat  
BMPN

## WHAT'S ON?

- Friday 3 March                      **Permaculture Design Certificate** with Rowe Morrow.  
The course will run on Fridays and Saturdays for 6 weeks.  
Enquiries Pat on 4787 9108
- Saturday 25th March              **EARTH, SPIRIT, ACTION COUNCIL OF ALL BEINGS**  
Sunday 26th March              Deep Ecology Workshop  
At the World Heritage Institute, Katoomba,
- Sunday 16 April                    **The Great Tomato Festival**  
Reminder about the inaugural Festival of Tomatoes, with picnic and  
competitions, to be held here at Brynmawr Phone 6359 3175
- Sunday 7 May 2006                **Mid-Mountain Seedsavers 2783 Meeting**  
Bullaburra Progress Association Hall, crn Noble St and Gr Western  
Highway, Bullaburra 10.00 - 12.00 Bring a plate to share  
Contact 4759 2118 or [mcrun@hermes.net.au](mailto:mcrun@hermes.net.au) to indicate numbers.
- Friday Jun 9th -                    **National Greenbuild & Eco Show Exhibition & Conference,**  
Sunday 11th June                an environmentally focused trade and consumer event.  
Rosehill Gardens Exhibition Centre

## DRY STONE WALLS

by Pete Sharman

There was a time when I couldn't stand to look at another rock. In fact, I think I've always had a love-hate relationship with rocks. Maybe it stems from my childhood, when our yard was a series of terraces constructed from rock found on site and brought in from who knows where. As a kid I hated them. Every time I stacked my bike or kicked a footy I managed to dislodge a rock. Putting it back was never easy and I was awaiting the day when the whole wall would collapse. Coming up with a believable tale for Dad was not going to be easy.

As a consequence I decided that when I grew up I would never waste time on such folly. Fast forward 30 years and guess what? Having built our house in the mountains I now had a yard full of excavated rock...around 20 tonnes of it!

I couldn't waste this rock - lovely ironstone with beautiful colours and swirl, and mostly flat. Around the same time I found a great little book on the art of dry-stone walling. My hate had turned to love!

I laid my first rock about two years ago, after setting up string lines. When the string lines were cut for the tenth time (after dropping rocks on them) I abandoned that idea and laid the rest by eye. I initially took great care to make sure each rock interlocked perfectly with the next, but realising this would mean the Great Wall of Suburbia would take me ten years to complete, I became less fussy.

There were times when I thought the great pile of rocks would never materialise into a wall, but as each month went by, the wall grew higher and longer, and the pile smaller.

I got to the place where rocks would infiltrate my dreams. I also found my eyes would instinctively find the right piece of rock to fill that particular space. I had rocks in my head!

The walls have now been complete for a year or so, and what have I gained? Great satisfaction from using the rock which has been on site forever. The major beneficiaries, however, have been the wall inhabitants - frogs, lizards, spiders, ants and crickets. I've even watched a young copperhead hunting lizards in and around the walls.

So if anyone is in the position of needing to terrace their land, may I suggest using the local rock. It may give you callouses, but it will also give you a wildlife haven, great drainage, a natural look and immense personal satisfaction. I think I really like rocks after all.

## **A NEW YEAR WISH FOR A NEW WORLD- mad musings from a different perspective, by Kevin Girard.**

### **Introduction.**

We now live in an Australian society heavily biased towards European and North American style culture. Everything is convenient and at our fingertips. We rely heavily on using fossil fuels as well as using more water than we should and we really do little to recycle or minimize the use of these extremely useful, rare and non renewable resources. Our descendants will of course pay the full price.

Unfortunately a few of the really valuable lessons and the European source have not been heeded. In particular I mean the thousand year old forest [flora, fauna and products] management ethic. Foresters in Europe were the custodians of the system- not the abusers. It is a system that works in harmony with all parties' needs but in such a way that has developed and kept in step with the development of European society.

As a nation we grow highly inappropriate crops like rice, sugar cane and cotton which use much more water than really available. These same crops depend upon the inordinate use of a huge

amount of costly and planet threatening pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers and fossil fuels to help in production, transportation, milling, storage and marketing.

Some of these crops cannot compete in so called free world markets to produce fair and equitable incomes as North American and European based governments subsidise the production of locally protected produce.

### **Potted past history [European perspective in Europe]**

Trade has advanced & developed because of many years usage. Some of this has been for thousands of years. In many of these countries advanced forestry and silviculture techniques have been well developed and understood and accepted by users of timber products including building and manufacturing industries, over hundreds of years. These have also been accepted as forest conservation realities by the general public, consumers and green groups. Europe has a history of softwood buildings remaining functional with conservation for hundreds of years, in some cases for nearly a thousand years.

### **Australia is different**

Yes it is. Europe does not have the same pressures on timber degradation by termites to as we do, but they do have moisture, wood decay, fungi and other organisms that consume timber.

### **Some of the not so obvious problems**

It is wonderful to think of nature and the important nutrient cycles; take the case of timber when it is naturally degrading by means of biological agents such as wood decay fungi, termites and borers. The down side unfortunately is that if we do not lock away the carbon contained within a house or structure we liberate a lot of green house producing gas.

There is no justification for the use of steel frames on environmental criteria. Consider the following critical data:

- a tonne of timber frame takes 450 kW hours and a tonne of steel costs 10,000 kW hours.
- A timber house frame locks up 7 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>, whereas an average steel frame emits 11 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>.

"Treated Timber- 21<sup>st</sup> Century Building Material". - Doug Howick Published in *The Pest Manager* magazine, October/November 2005]

Timber is renewable and many alternate materials are not. If we do not enhance timber by using preservatives [but much safer ones like borax derivatives] we do not lock up large amounts of green house producing gases. The utilization of preservation materials and techniques has to be viewed as timber and resource conservation.

We build about 144,000 new homes a year. Eighty five percent of these are built using low durable softwood frames on concrete slabs, the most at risk style. Eighty five percent of these are built in high risk areas [Australian Bureau of Statistics]. About 650,000 houses are affected by termites to some degree or other each year. It is estimated that this risk factor is one in

three for most structures. We spend a couple of hundred million dollars [A\$] to repair the damage caused by termites each year and we also spend a couple of hundred million dollars a year [A\$] to treat the termites [Institute of Architects and commonly quoted estimates in Pest Management Industry] ["The increasing obligations imposed on the Pest Management Industry" - This paper was presented by Chris Shaw at the International Pest Management Conference in June 1988 and was based on IBIS Business Information].

These estimates are for Australia alone. The situation in North America is probably fifteen times higher as that market place is about fifteen times bigger.

### **Some of the obvious problems**

- The planet is warming rapidly. Weather patterns are changing.
- We are consuming huge amounts of non renewable energy using systems that only harness a small fraction of the energy produced.
- Country centres are closing down because there is a lack of rural employment and opportunity.
- The cost of infrastructure is going to cripple this country in the future along with the threat of an aging society.
- We import huge amounts of fuel and oil and enrich cartels and receive no tangible benefit.
- What is going to happen to all the holes in the earth because of our mining?
- Australian farmers have fed this country well when a large number of farms were truly family businesses looking after land [many hands and custodial eyes].
- The original traditional owners were not paid due in respect for their understanding of how to truly work with Mother Nature. We can learn a lot from thousands of years collective site knowledge.
- The local traditional owners used fire as an important management tool. So should we now as a community. But with a twist.

### **Some ideas**

We should be working more in harmony with nature and utilize the wonderful invention of the diesel engine to its fullest benefit. We should be growing green fuel crops rather than sugarcane. Fats and oils which are part of our national waste problem should be recycled and turned into fuels.

Eucalypt timbers grown in plantations need to be developed for niche markets on land that is bought where jobs are needed and land is under utilized. This needs to be supported by a joint government and private sector initiative and marketed as "Ozzie wood".

Plantations of hardwood species like Blackwood *Acacia melanoxylon*, which could be a source of secondary income, and of environmentally benefit, should easily gain acceptance.

These cash crop corridors, if managed properly, would assist Australia greatly as places of wildlife refuges supporting biodiversity, be sources of high value premium furniture timbers, provide windbreaks to lessen the effects of topsoil loss, hold slopes together and decrease erosion.

Increasing such plantations need to be linked by a national plan to "green and wean Australia". By this I mean create regional energy production hubs where plantations and mills are created but the mills produce fuel for plants which produce electricity, fuel for vehicles via pyrolysis. This could incorporate growing crops for fuel rather than relying upon importation of fossil fuels with the associated damage to the environment.

When I see stacks of timber at rubbish tips I see waste. It is being handled better but the energy loss is great & so too the amount of carbon being unlocked. Local tips and dumps as well as water recycling plants should be incorporated into these centres. Toilets in towns should be dry compost type so that water use/loss is minimized. This could utilize every part of the forest crop with associated crops and would be renewable, sustainable, and good for the environment, solve power supply issues, create jobs in rural Australia and reduce our costly imports and payment to the international oil cartels whilst greatly increasing our competitiveness because of cheaper fuel and electrical energy. This plan could be adopted/adapted in every part of the globe.

### What's been happening?

Permaculture Picnic in December



Brian and Wayne as part of a demonstration on how to make compost at Djambung Gardens.

## COMMUNITY UPDATES

### Mid Mountains Seed Savers - 2783

Next meeting Sunday 7 May

Please contact Loret or John on 4759 2118 or email [mcrun@hermes.net.au](mailto:mcrun@hermes.net.au)

### REQUEST re Survey of the Red Fox and Feral Cats from Sue Girard

The TAFE diploma class of uh 2006 for Conservation and Land Management are doing a research project into the question of how the Red Fox, and the Feral cat [as a recognised 'threatening process' under the Threatened Species Act (1995)] are impacting upon locally endangered and vulnerable species and in particular the Eastern Pygmy Possum and the Blue Mountains Water skink.

The specific area to be surveyed in a large transect is in Wentworth Falls.

It would be appreciated if PC people in the whole of the 'mountains' and especially the Wentworth Falls area could tell us if, when and in what circumstance they see foxes. Even if road-kill.

Of course if you can identify any 'threatened species' it would be a bonus- but I know from experience that would be a hard ask!

We will be trapping and doing scat examinations so this is the real thing. We are hoping to put a report before the Blue Mountains Council for more ongoing research, because we live in a World Heritage Region and while other Councils in Sydney, with probably less potential damage, are pro active whilst we have no Management program in place. National Parks and Wildlife Service do, as does the adjoining Sydney Water Catchment and Rural Land Protection Board, to name but a few... The BMCC dissects all this area but has no active policy for feral fox and cat control and we feel this is an area that needs research and if necessary to be addressed.

Without sounding too political can we have your input? Even if you think there is no problem.

However don't annoy Pat email me on [pest.asides@bigpond.com.au](mailto:pest.asides@bigpond.com.au)

Any bit of information and hearsay would be appreciated

With Thanks

Sue

## SEASONAL PLANTING

### Autumn an Edge Season

by Wayne Levy

As I wasn't anticipating being too active in my garden this autumn we have focused on a few building activities. Meanwhile the show goes on none the less as autumn waits for no man and here are my suggestions for getting on top of things this autumn.

I've managed to cultivate some hummus this year within two large compost heaps and a couple of rotating drums, lucky to have a refuge to place spent fruit as well. This nutritiously delicious soil will end up placed around some existing greens planted in early summer to give them a last kick on. Some of the fruit trees, such as the fig tree, will also get a feed from these nutritious heaps.

We refurbished the chook pen to house the ladies during the cold months. Regular removal of the manure and regular cleaning of implements ensure the bush rats don't take over.

Brian has been transforming our back quarter acres area of bush to a bushland garden which is becoming inviting with all exotics and rubbish removed. This Autumn will see some grasses and more species of colonisers planted. This area will be where we design and build a small retreat hut to languish amongst the bush. Planning for this is in the dream stage.

Seedlings which I've now started to tray up will be ready to plant in autumn, which will require more trellises and extra well mulched garden beds.

Last year we reorganized some extra privacy screens and wind breaks during Autumn and now as the leaves begin to drop we will see the effectiveness of these living screens. Autumn is also the time of year when I start to thin, prune and sculpture the garden to enhance and let more sunlight in to strategic places.

Autumn is not clear cut, it is edge season as far as I am concerned so as in Permaculture Principles value the edges and maximize your work load at this valuable time.

## INSECT REPORT

### Pollinators – Native Bees

by Sue Girard

While recently doing fauna surveys with ecological consultants Judy and Peter Smith, I was encouraged to try to identify not just the vertebrates but the spiders and insects as well. So I now hone my skills as I am working in the garden. This summer I've been engaged by the pollinators that seemingly came out in force after the rains. There are some little brown and

black beetles massing all over the flowering coriander, the hover flies are spending time 'buzz pollinating' the tomatoes, and European honey bees are visiting the zucchini and pumpkin - just to name a few.

I have been especially interested in native bees, of which there are about 200 species around Sydney alone. My fascination in native bees goes back to memories of the large blue-banded bees that would jostle around our window-sills on Sydney's North Shore. But most native bees are tiny and fairly uninteresting to the naked eye. And because they are not well recognised most do not even have common names.

As you might expect the interaction between native flowers and native bees is often very important. As always, evolutionary pressures have created diverse relationships. Among the bees, about 60% of species have long tongues that can delve deeply into tubular flowers as well as shallow flowers, and most bees have specialised hairy legs and thorax that pick up pollen. Also more than half of the bee species are generalists and will visit flowers randomly, whilst other bees are specialists. Among the plants, grevilleas are adapted to depositing pollen on a bee's back, while the various pea flowers have an affinity with resin-bees and leaf-cutters, whereby they deposit pollen between a bee's hind legs.

A lesser known fact is that about a third of native bee species are not hairy at all and swallow pollen to be regurgitated back at the nest. Although this is fairly ineffective they are still capable of transferring small amounts of pollen from one flower to the next.

According to Anne Dollin and Michael Batley et al in their book *Native Bees of the Sydney Region* (2000) the ten best plants for attracting native bees are (in alphabetical order) *Abelia grandiflora*, *Angophora* species, *Baekkea* species, *Brachyscome* species, *Buddleja davidii*, *Eucalyptus* species, *Grevillea* hybrids, *Hardenbergia violacea*, *Lavandula* species, *Leptospermum* species and *Westringia* species. These are obviously not all provenanced plants for the Blue Mountains, and *Buddleja davidii* is a declared weed here, but if you are trying to add to your garden's diversity the others are easy enough to obtain and plant.

As well as a reliable source of food, native bees also need suitable habitat. Different species live in burrows in the ground, in holes in dead timber, in dead pithy stems or, like my blue-banded bees, in soft old mortar or mud bricks. Loss of habitat with land clearing and urban development affects native bees as much as it does other birds and animals. Reed bees (*Exoneura* sp) unfortunately favour the dead pithy stems of Lantana within which to nest, and are often disturbed during bush regeneration.

Some bee enthusiasts have taken to putting out artificial nest sites in a similar way to those recommended by National Parks and Wildlife for birds and possums. Drilled holes in a block of old hardwood 4-9 mm wide and 80mm deep, can make a suitable home for resin-bees (*Chalicodoma* sp), while a bundle of bamboo canes 20 cm long and suspended horizontally from a shrub branch would be suitable for leaf-cutting bees (*Megachile* sp).

In the Sydney region most native bees are solitary, ie they don't live in colonies. For this reason they are not farmed for honey as is the introduced honeybee (*Apis mellifera*). The exception to the rule is the stingless bee (*Trigona carbonaria*) which has a complex social life with a queen, drones and thousands of workers, and can be kept in hives similar to conventional hives. Aboriginal people prize the tangy honey and call the nests in trees 'sugarbag'.

Because I am very allergic to bee stings I had always thought that native bees would be the way to add another dimension to my sustainability. But I now know that it is incorrect to say that native bees do not sting. On the whole they are non-aggressive. However if trodden on or handled, not only can they sting but they can sting repeatedly. Oh goodie! Fortunately for me Katoomba is too cold for the species, and so I would need to live closer to the coast to give them a trial ...

## COURSES/WORKSHOPS

### Permaculture Design Certificate in Upper Mountains

This course starts Friday 3 March

Enquiries Rowe or Pat on 4787 9108 or [bmpermac@iinet.net.au](mailto:bmpermac@iinet.net.au)

### GREENHOME WORKSHOPS

A series of FREE GreenHome workshops will be held at the

Castle Grand Community Centre, 7-9 Castle Street, Castle Hill

from 6:30 to 9:00pm, refreshments provided:

Thursday 16 March	Waste Avoidance, Recycling & Composting
Thursday 13 April	Energy Saving at Home
Thursday 11 May	Food, Vegie Gardens & Native Gardens (I'm providing free vegie seeds & native plants)
Thursday 8 June	Transport and Healthy Lifestyles
Thursday 6 July	Household Chemicals & Green Shopping

RSVP to Australian Conservation Foundation 1800 223 669 or [membership@acfonline.org.au](mailto:membership@acfonline.org.au)

# EARTH, SPRIRIT, ACTION COUNCIL OF ALL BEINGS *Experiencing Deep Ecology*

A 2-day workshop  
Katoomba, March 25<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup>, 2006

**When?** Saturday 25th & Sunday 26th March 9.30am-4pm

**Where?** At the World Heritage Institute, Katoomba, Blue Mountains NSW

**What?** A Deep Ecology workshop with Ruth Rosenhek: international environmental and social justice activist, educator, co-director of the Rainforest Information Centre, Lismore.

**How much?** Cost for the 2 day workshop: \$125 waged \$100 part or low waged, \$75 unwaged. This includes morning/afternoon teas & lunch, with a portion of funds donated to conservation projects in India. *Work exchange available upon inquiry.*

*This is a community initiated and organised event.  
For information and bookings: (02) 4782 6703  
Or email [jadeyjellybean@hotmail.com](mailto:jadeyjellybean@hotmail.com)*

## Deep Ecology workshop description

The spiritual blight of separation -- from each other and the Earth -- plagues modern humanity and is the underlying root of the ecological crisis of our times; the culturally-conditioned, competitive, isolated self is the engine of the 6th extinction spasm currently unfolding around us. Arne Naess, Emeritus Professor of Philosophy of Oslo University who coined the term "deep ecology", said that "ecological ideas are not enough"; we need "ecological identity, ecological self". Naess says that this is to be brought about through community therapies, "healing our relations to a widest community, that of all living beings". In this workshop, we participate in a series of rituals, creative exercises, despairwork and meditations to we acknowledge our interconnectedness with air, water and soil as we invite the spontaneous healing of psyche and dissolve the illusion of our disconnection from the living Earth.

BIO: Ruth Rosenhek is an international environmental and social justice activist, educator and director of the Rainforest Information Centre in Lismore. Ruth organizes and campaigns on behalf of forest protection, land rights and global justice. Ruth facilitates experiential deep ecology workshops, teaches on spiritual engagement and is an active member of the Dharma Gaia Trust <http://www.rainforestinfo.org.au/deep-eco/rosenhek.htm>

## The Great Tomato Festival

Reminder about the inaugural Festival of Tomatoes, with picnic and competitions, to be held here at Brynmawr on Sunday April 16, 2006.

Classes will include

- Best tasting cherry type tomato
- Best-tasting slicing tomato
- Best homemade tomato sauce
- Best homemade chutney
- Most peculiar looking tomato
- Largest tomato
- The tomato that flies the farthest
- The heaviest tomato
- The ugliest tomato
- Best-dressed tomato
- The best picnic

Everyone will be involved in the judging, and there will be a seed saving demonstration to help us make the most of our harvest.

There will also be a talk on the slow food movement.

Come and join us for a great day and a cut-throat comp!

For details (nearer the time perhaps!), phone 63593175

## ODDS & SODS

### News and events

Media Release 5th Dec 2005

#### **\$1.2 million in natural resource grants across NSW.**

Local communities, industry, environmental groups and regional bodies are eligible to apply for \$1.2 million in grants for natural resource management projects, Natural Resources Minister Ian Macdonald said.

The funding is available under the *Forging Partnerships* program, a joint initiative between the NSW Government and the Natural Resources Advisory Council (NRAC).

"*Forging Partnerships* will encourage the development of a co-operative approach between various groups towards the shared responsibility of managing natural resources such as water, native vegetation and soil," Mr Macdonald said.

"We will be looking for proposals that demonstrate cooperation between stakeholders and provide innovative models for improving natural resource management."

Projects may include development of joint partnerships, educational activities and forums, hands-on learning experiences and capacity building in natural resource management. Proposals of up to \$60,000 will be considered.

Convenor of NRAC and Member for Canterbury, Linda Burney, said the program aimed to find practical solutions to natural resource management issues.

"The aim of the program is to improve communication and education on these issues, while encouraging community involvement in natural resource management," she said.

"For example, funding could go towards a school which has developed a working partnership with a habitat protection group to study the benefits of wetlands for wildlife such as migrating birds."

NRAC provides stakeholder advice to the State Government on natural resources management in NSW and represents a wide cross section of community, industry, environment and government organisations.

There will be two rounds of funding. Applications for the first round of funding closes on 27 January 2006, and for the **second round on 20 March 2006**. Further information and application forms can be obtained from the website, [www.nrac.nsw.gov.au](http://www.nrac.nsw.gov.au) <<http://www.nrac.nsw.gov.au/>> or the Secretariat, phone 02 9228 6533.

Media Contact: Lisa Miller 9228 3344 or 0410 663 723

- **Lunch Packaging**

Info from the NSW Waste Educators email list re.

Try the following webpages:

<http://www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/rubbishfreelunch/resources.htm>

<http://www.gould.edu.au/wastewise/learning/tasks/ruthernglenPS.htm>

<http://www.gould.edu.au/wastewise/kids/quiz02.htm>

[http://www.mesa.edu.au/aaee\\_conf/Armstrong-Malcolm-Sharpley.PDF](http://www.mesa.edu.au/aaee_conf/Armstrong-Malcolm-Sharpley.PDF)

Ecorecycle Victoria also has some fantastic resources for School waste education.

[www.ecorecycle.vic.gov.au](http://www.ecorecycle.vic.gov.au)

## **Bring What You'll Eat; Eat What You Bring!**

### **Yes**

Re-useable containers in various sizes - great for buying bulk yoghurts, dried fruit etc

- Zip lock bags - wash up after each use for the next day. Great for individual small serves of crackers, chips etc
- Drink bottle / thermos for winter
- Wet face cloth (in a zip lock bag) or cloth napkin - great for sticky hands and faces
- Silverware
- 

#### **No**

- Single serve yoghurt, fruit purees etc
- Cling wrap, aluminium foil, throw away bags
- Poppers, juice pops etc
- Paper serviettes
- Plastic cutlery
- 

## **WINTER NEWSLETTER**

**Contributions for the Autumn Newsletter by Friday 19 May PLEASE.**

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

Disclaimer: The Editor cannot be held accountable for any content but has endeavoured to check all she can.

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