

# BLUE MOUNTAINS PERMACULTURE NETWORK

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Hello

Welcome to the Summer Newsletter.

We had our information stall at the Sustainability Fair on 17 September at the Hawkesbury Earthcare Centre. Rowe, Sue Girard, John McNaull and I answered questions about Permaculture, talked about courses and caught up with old friends and made new contacts. We sold some of our booklet *Echoes Articles from the Newsletter 2002 - 2005*. We agreed it was a most successful day.

In November I attended a talk by David Holmgren at the Permaculture North monthly meeting. Again it was entertaining, thought provoking and for BMpermies contentious re David's view on 'weeds'.

In this issue we have 3 articles on suburban sprawl and food; Rowe's response to the film *End of Suburbia*, a report on a new network tackling the issue of food in cities and a report of research done by Associate Professor Frances Parker at the University of Western Sydney.

Our booklet *Echoes Articles from the Newsletter 2002-2005* is available for the cost of \$4 (to cover printing). The nine articles reflect a range of aspects of permaculture. For copies contact me on 0408 514338 or [bimpermac@iinet.net.au](mailto:bimpermac@iinet.net.au)

Best wishes for the festive season.

Pat  
BMPN

## WHAT'S ON?

- 1st Saturday of month  
3rd Friday of month  
**Katoomba Community Garden** 10 00- 2.00  
9.00 - 2.00  
Contact Derek Pracy 0405 249528
- Saturday 17 December  
**Permaculture Picnic**  
Clairvaux - GUNDUGURRA TRIBAL COUNCIL LAND  
From: Noon to 4.00 pm
- Sunday 15 January 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.
- Sunday 16 April  
**The Great Tomato Festival**  
Reminder about the inaugural Festival of Tomatoes, with picnic and competitions, to be held here at Brynmawr
- 9 - 11 December  
**Peats Ridge Festival 2005**  
3 Day Sustainable Arts and Music Festival  
Glenworth Valley, Peats Ridge. 1hr North of Sydney  
World Music, Blues Roots & Dub, Contemporary Music, Chilled Beats  
Six stages of Music, Beautiful Riverside Camping, Swimming, Children's Festival, Eco-living Village and Sustainable Markets  
[www.peatsridgefestival.com.au](http://www.peatsridgefestival.com.au)  
02 9209 4614

*Calling all Permaculturists, family, friends and interested others, You are invited to.....*

### *A Permaculture Picnic*



*At:*

*Saturday December 17, 2005*

*Bring lunch and drinks to share and anything you want to sell e.g. plants, food, animals, books etc.*

*Bring pens and paper to do a fast appraisal of Clairvaux towards developing a management plan for the land - 7 acres.*



*Meet old friends and make new ones.*

- *We hope to have a discussion on whether there is a need for regular meetings, visits or talks about permaculture and how this can happen.*
- *We want to know when and how we should run new permaculture design courses in the Mountains.*

*Hope to see you there for one hour or three, greenly,  
Ro morrow*

## THE BLOSSOMING OF SUBURBIA

By Rowe Morrow

"I could do a lot with this place". Phi Van Ha, on his first sight of Sydney suburbs, on coming from Ha Noi to learn about permaculture.

I was lucky enough to see the video "End of Suburbia" at a meeting of our local conservation society here in the Blue Mountains, about 100 km west of Sydney, Australia. I was shocked and reminded, as we all were, of how close we live to an enormous change in our lives and how we live. I was also lucky enough to hear our native son, David Holmgren speak on the same topic.

In Australia we are also experiencing rainfall decline. Perth, Western Australia has had a 20% decrease in its average annual rainfall over 20 years. This is not drought. Sydney's Warragamba Dam has fallen below 40% and the government is unwisely talking about a desalination plant, not self-reliance through water storage and recycling for each suburban family.

The main sense I had on seeing the video, was that this could be the start of real 'life' for our Aussie suburbs. Let me explain a little.

### **Geography and climate**

Australia is the driest inhabited continent. Most of its citizens live closely attached to the narrow coastal fringe. On the east coast the rain-bearing winds are stopped by the Great Diving Range - medium hills which run south to north. Behind that stretch open natural forest and grasslands which gradually merge into desert.

### **History and culture**

At first, the settlers lived along the coastal fringe where the soils are relatively fertile for the European type crops we grow to feed our population of 20 million or so. There is also a reasonable rainfall in this area. Certainly enough to collect and store in tanks for household use and gardening and with recycled greywater, easily meet all our needs.

However the first settlers went west to grow the same crops, and farm sheep and cattle as they had done in England where ten days without rain is considered a drought. In every dry season which occurred naturally and sometimes lasted for years, they cried "drought, drought" and the government gave them subsidies. They sucked at the rivers with pumps and at the groundwater. They tried irrigation and poured waste, surplus fertilisers and insecticides into the rivers until they were polluted - being rivers which naturally carried low nutrient loads. They dammed rivers which need to flush out regularly with floods.

This is a familiar story for many of you.

(How would our story be different if we had been settled by the Spanish, or Greeks, or Chinese? It didn't have to be the way it was. Afghans adapted easily in the 1840s when they came.)

### **How Aussie people lived**

People, once they had transport, moved out of the city centres and into the surrounding lands which were fertile and well-watered. They lived there on the semi-sacred Aussie dream of a quarter acre block. They planted lawn, mowed it, fed it, mowed it, fed it and developed their own "lawn mower

seasons" being more intense near Christmas. They planted shrubs and dug swimming pools and filled them with chlorine water. They had town water delivered and used it prolifically. They housed their cars in a special bedroom beside the house. They grew none of their foods at all. They drove miles to nearby overseas owned supermarkets and returned feeling irritable and out-of-pocket.

### **How Vietnamese people lived**

And on another continent on an east coast in another hemisphere, the Vietnamese were farming intensively. They also had a quarter acre of land per family. They planted fruit trees, vegetables, medicinal herbs, some firewood and had a pig and some chickens. They dug fishponds to supply a rich array of aquatic foods. They recycled all their organic matter through composting or ponds. They collected their rainwater. They grew so much they supplied most of their own food and other needs and carried surplus to the local market on their bicycles. The cities sent big trucks once a week to buy from the local markets or individuals. The community was strong and cohesive and self-reliant when floods came - or droughts or other catastrophes like invasion and wars.

### **What's possible for Australian suburbs?**

Australian suburbs, superbly placed as they are, in semicircles around cities and supplied by fast trains could easily be transformed into tens of thousands of farmlets to supply the cities. They have good communications and could have efficient public transport. Instead of spending hours in traffic jams on highways which everyone deplors they could work at home and sell and swap produce at local markets. The suburbs would easily become highly sustainable villages. The climate is mild. The choice of plant species is enormous because we draw on plants from every continent. The housing is there and there is surplus land which is it fertile and well-watered.

Our suburbs are relatively unpolluted. In a crisis the potential for self-reliance is much better than in high rise buildings. There is enough land for water tanks to hold sufficient water for a family during the longest known drought. Most families have some tools, a bicycle, good communication systems and, medical and school services. People would have to walk and cycle more. Waste would go down and composting increase. Self-reliance would improve. In the suburbs there are also many good models of permaculture sustainability; of almost every energy system; of water management; of sustainable housing, and homegrown food.

Farm land, now marginal for imported northern hemisphere crops, and badly abused, could be returned to natural ecosystems which they would function to retain soils, clean water and support an astonishing biodiversity.

Living in an apartment in Australian city residents do not have easy access to land; in a power failure they cannot often open the windows or use the lifts. Walking up six flights of stairs is reasonable, 20 flights is not. They cannot be self-reliant in water supply.

It would take very little to switch over suburbs to growing the food needed by the people in the cities. Australian cities cannot be easily transformed to become sustainable in the event of oil or water crisis. The suburbs, once known affectionately as neighbourhoods could be.

The permaculture principle of diversity important functions would be served by a multitude of centres instead of a few major hubs which destroyed, then everything dependent on them e.g. food, water,

energy, and skills goes too. The added risks of terrorism and epidemics make it sensible to have many small, strong, stand-alone centres.

Thanks to my Vietnamese friend, Phi Van Ha, who opened my eyes to our potential.

## FOOD FAIRNESS ALLIANCE TO CAMPAIGN ON ISSUES

by Russ Grayson

A NEW GROUP to advocate on food issues has been launched in Sydney. The Food Fairness Alliance was formed at a meeting of 30 health workers, nutritionists, community garden advocates and permaculturists in Granville, in the city's western suburbs, on 22 September.

The Alliance's first task is to make a submission to the state government on the Metropolitan Strategy, open to public comment for the next two weeks. The submission will highlight the need to conserve urban fringe agricultural land to ensure a source of local, affordable food for Sydney. A working group has been formed to carry out the work.

The group is remarkable for the number of professionals involved. These include people from Penrith Council, a Catholic institute, University of Western Sydney, the Franciscans, Wollongong City Council (who sent their sustainability educator), Parramatta Council, Burnside (which works with youth and families) as well as a number of nutritionists and health workers from different service providers in the region. Well-known permaculturist and author, Jill Finnane, represented the Edmund Rice Centre, a social justice advocacy; Lynne Saville from Hawkerbury Food Programme; Pat Rayner represented Blue Mountains Permaculture and Fiona Campbell (who facilitated the event) and I the Australian City Farms & Community Gardens Network.

Potential roles for the Alliance were discussed including advocacy, education and lobbying for affordable food and to influence the Metropolitan Strategy. Making a submission on the strategy was chosen as a first initiative because it was the most effective action that could be taken at the present time. Teams have been formed around education, advocacy and other areas.

The formation of the Food Fairness Alliance comes at just the right time. New state premier Iemma, ALP, unilaterally scrapped the western Sydney green plan, a planning instrument that would have preserved metropolitan fringe land from urban development. Not long before the premier's potentially damaging move, Ian Cohen MLC (The Greens) had set up the Sydney Farming Network to work on retaining valuable agricultural land in the Sydney Basin. The Network is promoting the idea of a 'Sydney Local Food' logo (to be launched in the near future) to identify food grown in the region and as a means of assisting citizens to choose local food and sustaining the livelihoods of urban fringe farmers.

## Suburban sprawl puts the squeeze on Sydney's fruit and vegie growers From UWS Website 13/10/2005

Sydney's urban sprawl threatens our rural agriculture workers and could put an end to our city's bountiful, locally-grown fresh food supply, warns a University of Western Sydney expert.

Associate Professor Frances Parker from the UWS Social Justice Social Change Research Centre has spent years researching agriculture in the Sydney basin, and is a leading advocate for Sydney's fringe farmers.

"Agriculture injects a massive \$1 billion into the NSW economy. Most of us are unaware that at the heart of this billion-dollar industry are small, family-run farms in south-west and north-west Sydney, producing the majority of our city's supply of fresh leafy greens and other vegetables, poultry, strawberries, cherry tomatoes and flowers.

"A sustainable city needs to feed itself, and in a burgeoning city like Sydney, it's a marvel that fresh produce is still able to be grown within 50 kilometres of our front doors. This is now under threat, with the areas marked for urban development some of the most productive agricultural land in Australia."

Associate Professor Parker fears carving up land pockets in areas like Bringelly and Riverstone to make way for houses could ultimately push urban farmers out of the city - taking much of our locally-grown fresh food with them.

"Nearly 100 per cent of our leafy Asian vegetables like bok choy, choy sum and Chinese cabbage come from the Sydney basin; as do 80 per cent of our fresh mushrooms, 90 per cent of spring onions and shallots, and most of our Lebanese cucumbers, cherry tomatoes and strawberries," she says.

"The region is responsible for almost 100 per cent of NSW's cut flower production and cultivated turf, and produces almost half of the State's eggs, chicken, duck and turkey meat.

"Many planners and developers argue these farmers are sitting on a goldmine, just waiting for the land to be subdivided so they can retire comfortably on the profits as part of their 'superannuation'.

"While some farmers want to sell their land, many do not. Unfortunately we only hear from the landowners who want to sell up. The reality is a significant portion of the farmers in the Bringelly area lease their farms from land owners. Once that land is sold from under them, they walk away with nothing, except the very real prospect of becoming permanently displaced."

Which begs the question - where can these farmers go?

"Some farmers are making the move to Queensland; others who are contemplating relocating over the Divide know that water is scarce and the price of fuel is increasing, which makes sticking closer to the coast a necessity," she says.

"Even if farmers are able to stay in Sydney, relocating to another farm is not easy. They are blocked by council restrictions, sky-rocketing rates and land prices, and risk complaints from neighbours in

encroaching housing estates, who object loudly to farming smells and noise.

"Importantly, they may not get enough from the sale of their land to re-establish elsewhere, particularly those with a high capital investment, such as hydroponics and greenhouses. We need to investigate methods to recompense farmers who are relying on the sale of their land as superannuation. We need to ensure farmers get a fair price for their produce so that subdividing their land is not their only option."

Associate Professor Parker says many of these farmers are second and third-generation with 'farming in their blood', and have told her the prospect of selling up is 'heartbreaking'.

"Many of the farmers in the Bringelly area are relatively young, in their 40s, and are from culturally diverse backgrounds. They have years of work ahead of them. If they are forced to give up farming, they often lose their sense of purpose. Some farmers who were displaced from Kellyville have gone on to jobs like driving trucks, but to them it's not the same as farming."

"These innovative farmers have introduced many of the exotic Asian vegetables we have all come to enjoy in recent years. Once farming goes from the Sydney basin these locally-grown fruits and vegetables are gone for good," she says.

"This will be devastating for the industry and Sydney consumers. We need to accommodate our growing population, but it shouldn't be at the expense of our city's locally-grown fresh food supply, or farmers' livelihoods.

"These farmers want to know they'll be considered in Sydney's future metropolitan development, and they can get on with what they're good at, and that's farming."

## COMMUNITY UPDATES

### Slow Food Blue Mountains

by Nerida Burton

Slow Food is entering an exciting phase. We are expanding our membership and have some events planned for December and for next year.

In December we are holding a Slow Festive Lunch at a member's property. It is on the 17th December and is a pot-luck dinner. Each person is asked to bring a dish or ideally two, savoury and sweet...their favorite recipes. We are compiling a Slow Food Cook Book and the recipes may be included in this. If you are interested, ring Nerida on 4782 9386 or Anne on 4782 7376.

Next year we have Saturday evening picnics in Carrington Square during January, "Chestnuts in the Mist" in late March / April then a strong participation in Winter Magic.

We have dreams about making Katoomba the first Slow City in Australia...that is, a city that is a pleasure to live in, that focuses on the local and regional, that considers pedestrians before cars and seeks to include all the community in a rich and varied cultural life. The NSW president of Slow Food visited last week and was very impressed with our city and gave us lots of helpful ideas to advance our cause.

The Fruit Tree Register is growing slowly and we have some more willing pickers, so if anyone has a fruit tree that they would like to share with others, just let us know on the above numbers or at the Food Coop.

For further information contact Anne on 4782 7376 or Nerida on 4782 9386

### Mid Mountains Seed Savers - 2783

Next meeting Sunday 15 January

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

## COMMUNITY PERMACULTURE OPPORTUNITY IN BATHURST

by Jade Herriman

I recently attended a workshop held in Bathurst at the Mercy and Justice Centre. This large heritage building and grounds were previously used as a convent but are now used by the Sisters of Mercy as a venue for many social justice programs, and as a conference and workshop venue. Sister Pat Linnane of the Mercy and Justice Centre in Bathurst won the 2002 Regional and Rural Justice Award for her work with marginalised members of the community, including refugees, people with mental illness, young people, prisoners and their families.

There are gardens on the site but not currently any composting facilities or permaculture garden beds. It struck me when I visited for the day that it could be a great place to set up a compost (for food waste generated from day workshops, conferences and community groups attending the centre) and perhaps a vegie patch or herb garden to demonstrate the principles of permaculture to those who visit. I have spoken with Sr Pat and she is very keen to 'green' up their site, but doesn't have the specific expertise or time to do it herself.

I'm just putting the idea out there in case anyone lives near Bathurst, has the necessary skills and finds themselves excited by the possibility of dreaming up and then implementing something creative for a community space. This is a group with a lot of projects on the go, and a lot of volunteers that come and go - my gut feeling is that even something small and useful will be appreciated, if it is thoughtfully implemented to meet the needs of the site.

For example, you could be interested to:

- \* Set up a composting system for the site, or
- \* Use the centre as a venue to run a community workshop on some aspect of permaculture
- \* Contact the centre with information about local workshops or resources that might help them reduce their ecological footprint
- \* Other???

Any initiative would need to be self-funded and not rely on a time commitment from their staff as the centre runs on a modest budget and the staff are already committed to many programs.

If you are interested please think through your ideas and contact Pat Rayner so a coordinated approach can be put to Sr Pat. In the interest of planning programs for 2006, Sr Pat asks that people please contact her with any suggestions by early January.

## IS AN EDIBLE SUSTAINABLE ECOSYSTEM POSSIBLE? - A short study of an 18 year old garden in the Blue Mountains - by Rowe Morrow

In 1987 I moved to Blackheath. I also did my PDC that year. I had a small garden behind a 1920-something brick and tile house, which filled most of the block on a south-facing slope and the heath side of Blackheath which has severe winds. I drew up my permaculture plans carefully and I chose plants for the following characteristics:

- \*perennial
- \*annual self-seeding
- \*not too tall because of the need to maximise sunshine
- \*highly productive\*
- \*fruit and vegetables and kitchen herbs
- \*hardiness

The palette of plants I could choose from originated in cool temperate and cool Mediterranean climates.

The list looked like this:

<b>Vegetables</b>	<b>Fruit</b>	<b>Herbs</b>
Silverbeet	Raspberries	Comfrey
English spinach	Strawberries	Chives
Rainbow chard	Apples (espaliered)	Garlic chives
Celery	Currants (3 colours)	Thyme
Potatoes	Peach	Tansy
Cress	Pear	Tarragon
Lettuce	Kiwifruit	Rocket: summer& winter
Broad beans	Rhubarb	Rosemary
7-year bean	Strawberry guava	Sages

Artichokes - Jerusalem and Globe	Persimmon	Parsley
Onions, garlic and leeks	Italian grape	Lemon verbena
Cabbage family		Bronze fennel
Chickory	English gooseberry	Mints
Hazelnut		

Some summers - depending on weather and care - I could grow tomatoes, carrots and corn but never eggplant, and once, zucchini. I didn't then have a glasshouse which I now regard as essential. Lemongrass and curry plant simply collapsed after days of 10°C summer temperatures. They couldn't bear to think of lasting a winter. Rob Allsop, who lived next door, and is a far better vegie gardener, grew carrots and more sensitive vegies which need nurturing though their early days. Pumpkins never ripened for me before winter arrived with a savage frost. However, Rob grew some Jap pumpkins. All the citrus died over winter with savage frosts. I tried the hardiest but there were many other sad deaths along the way.

### **What did I supply for my own use?**

In summer the salads were fine. But it was in winter when I made herbal salads that this garden was really terrific. I didn't have a lot of what the shops were supplying from warmer climates but the herbal salad really seemed a superb winter nutritive meal. A good mix of leaves was thoroughly satisfying.

The vegies were a bit boring but there were always greens and they were self-seeding. I became hooked on my Heritage variety of raspberries which fruited from November to May and I could always get a handful for breakfast. The guava was heavily fruiting and delicious and not in shops and the birds didn't recognise it. Parsley was totally reliable and each year of its two-year-life I had new seedlings. Rhubarb was a good stand-by. I could always eat. I'd grub a spud or two and throw in green leaves of something and I had good reliable Barneveld chooks for eggs.

Then I went away from here for nine years to acreage at Katoomba about ten kilometres down the road. I was attempting the sustainable permaculture life. The climate there was different - milder and I grew more as the windbreaks matured and I had a glass-house. That's another story. Then I returned to Blackheath.

### **Had I designed a sustainable edible garden ecosystem?**

In the years I was away a number of people rented the house. None had studied permaculture but some played a little in the garden. So an experiment was carried out - would it turn into a sustainable edible ecosystem?

When I returned it looked horrific. A dense, dark and shadowed garden completely overgrown and it took six months to put it back into shape. It was dominated by comfrey, spuds and Jerusalem artichoke on the ground, (the underground mafia) and Lyn and I ate and gave away copious quantities of these while liberating seedlings and small plants such as strawberries. The raspberries and blackberry in the canopy layer took a lot of deep digging and building of muscle. . The raspberries were anarchic.

We learned there is something of high survival value in plants with strong underground root systems compared with those surviving by throwing seeds.

### **Was it a sustainable edible ecosystem?**

**Yes.** All the fruits were there except the blueberries which probably died of thirst in the 2001/2 drought years. The trees like apples and the pear had grown huge and the grape was out of control. The currants, English gooseberry and strawberries were discovered under rampant blackberries (which had invaded from next door).

Of the vegetables, celery, lettuce and beans had all expired but the others had left small numbers of well-adapted seedlings. I think snails had a lot to do with their demise as they were there in battalions each with their 300+ teeth.

Of the herbs, garlic chives and rocket had moved on to a herb heaven. The onion family was in dense clumps and didn't develop.

In general most vegies and herbs had moved from where I placed them to where they preferred to live - in and along paths and the stonewalls.

**No** THE HARD PART. The best survivors were the: blackberries (from next door), the raspberries which belonged to an underground movements and worst of all - the comfrey. While I was away the residents here had used a spade and dug into clumps of comfrey cutting the roots. The ground was pretty well wall-to-wall comfrey. Lyn Godfey and I dug roots and eased them. Every time we pulled them out of the ground some broke off and sent up a new plant. Comfrey, together with jasmine and wisteria (from my gardening past) belong in that group of plants which should only be planted in pots and NEVER in the ground. Or when you leave a place, take it with you. It has taken months and months to liberate valuable plants and to eradicate the rest.

My answer for comfrey disposal was, and still is, to put it in water in an old wheelie bin (and the snails go in there too) and let it rot. It shows no sign of doing this and so I suspect that hot sun and dryness will be quicker and more effective than the water treatment.

**OVER ALL:** What would I do again? Much the same with greater care with raspberries and comfrey - in pots probably. I'd buy dwarf fruit stock and teach any new residents how to care for the escapologists in the garden.

Another issue was currawongs. The garden was completely over-run by them. They had sought the fruit and come to rely on it. By removing at least three-quarters of the berries, and pruning the remaining fruit trees lower, they have gone elsewhere.

**FINALLY,** a sustainable garden ecosystem in this particular climate would really be one of environmental weed species but well managed. So to have this garden it would need to be enclosed by a strong natural filter of plants, which did not permit their escape.

The need for the human element in such a garden is indisputable. In a World Heritage National Park it seems irresponsible to use such plants without accepting responsibility for their management and control.

This goes to show how every climate is different. Has anyone else tried for the sustainable garden ecosystem, and how did it work for you?

## VISIT FROM VIRGINIA SOLOMON

BY Pat Rayner

Virginia Solomon, organizer of APC8 and member of Permaculture Melbourne visited the Blue Mountains at the end of September.

Virginia with her husband Steven and son Guy undertook a whirlwind tour of Permaculture centres from Cairns to the South Coast of New South Wales. Virginia wanted to meet 'permies', as well as to get an idea of and record permaculture activities along the east coast.

Virginia, Steven and Guy spent 2 half days in the mountains after visiting the Ecoliving Centre and Permaculture North in Sydney. While here they visited 5 quite different permaculture gardens.



Steven and Virginia with Leanne Huxley (right) in Leanne's bush garden.

## Resources available from Sydney Water to help with saving water around the home Information supplied by Jade Herriman

### **Residential Retrofit Program:**

The Sydney Water retrofit program offers householders the opportunity to have a qualified plumber visit their home to provide a water efficiency 'tune-up'. Participation in the program includes the installation of a

new 3A-rated showerhead and tap flow regulators, a toilet cistern flush arrestor and the repair of minor leaks. The service has a retail value of over \$150 and is provided for just \$22, with an additional charge of \$38.50 for any additional showerheads (after the first) to be installed. The retrofit program is offered free of charge to low-income households holding a Pensioner Concession Card, a Health Care Card or a Veteran's Affairs Gold Card. More information on this program can be found at the following link to the Sydney Water Website: <http://www.sydneywater.com.au/SavingWater/RetrofitProgram/>

### **Do-It-Yourself (DIY) water saving kits:**

The DIY water saving kit programs offers all residential customers in Sydney, Illawarra and Blue Mountains the opportunity to receive a free DIY water saving kit. The DIY kit is quick and easy to install. The kit enables each household to save approximately 16,000 litres of water each year. The DIY kits are packaged with illustrated instructions and are simple to install, requiring only basic tools and skills. The kit contains 2 flow regulators (9 litres / minute) for showers, 2 flow regulating aerators (6 litres / minute) for bathroom basin taps and 1 flow regulating aerator (9 litres / minute) for kitchen taps.

To receive a free kit customers simply call 1800 354 105 to register their interest. Eligible customers will be mailed an application form that provides instructions on where customers can collect their kit. From November 05 customers will be able to exchange their completed, signed application form for their free kit from one of the 257 participating Australia Post Shops.

### **Rainwater Tank Rebate Program:**

In October 2002, Sydney water launched it's Rainwater Tank Rebate program. The rainwater tank rebate program aims to encourage an increase in tank installations in Sydney Water's area of operations by offering a rebate incentive. The rebate also aims to encourage tank purchasers to install larger- size tanks and connect the tank to either their toilets or washing machines. The rebate is structured as listed below:

- \* Tank Capacity of 2,000-3,999 litres = \$150 rebate
- \* Tank Capacity of 4,000-6,999 litres = \$400 rebate
- \* Tank Capacity of 7,000 litres and above = \$500 rebate
- \* When rainwater tank is connected by a plumber to supply toilet and/or washing machine = Additional \$150 for all tank capacities

For more information on any of the above call Sydney Water on 13 20 92 or check out the website: <http://www.sydneywater.com.au/SavingWater/>

## **PEST REPORT**

### **Visit to the Solomon Islands**

**by Sue Girard**

Once I announced that Kevin, Jessi and I were going to the Solomon Islands in September, lots of people I knew had been there. Everyone said that Kastom Gaden in Horiana, was the Seedsaving Place to go...

This is a Non-Government Organisation (NGO) providing 'training and assistance in community food security and sustainable livelihood at the grass root level.' They don't call it permaculture they say their techniques are LEISA- Low External Input Sustainable Agriculture, but from my point of view it sure sounds the same to me.

The idea behind LEISA is-

- Produce as many farming inputs locally as is practical to reduce imports and save money
- Encourage local innovations in the development of agriculture solutions such as tools, crop breeding, planting patterns
- Use local markets as a source of inputs which cannot be produced on site
- Make use of traditional species and encourage diversity
- Use non-hybrid crops so seed can be collected, stored and used for planting the next crop on site
- Make use of integrated pest management and produce pesticides, such as biological sprays from local, plant based sources
- Use technologies appropriate to the scale of farm and to the skills available to maintain them
- Save money by making best use of local resources and increasing farmer and regional self-reliance.

Jessi and I were given a personal tour of the 'Gaden' where we saw lush tropical diversity- all for seed saving, with lots of plants I had never been so up close and personal with before!

I was taken to the annual 'Women in Agriculture Fair' by a research officer for the Department of Agriculture, and asked to give a talk on the day. Without any notice I'm not sure that I was inspiring, but what I saw was very inspiring. I bought heaps and tried to spread my money around all of the island's crafts and produce. As in other areas of the world it is hard to be sustainable after a war or in this case coup d'etat .

I was also given a tour of a fabulous organic farm run by one of the newly elected members of Parliament Phil B. He had never heard of Permaculture but was pleased to know he was living within such worthy principles.

Only 1/2 the population has employment and 41.5% of that population is under 20 years of age. Many of the unemployed on the outer islands do not want to leave their families for the 'big smoke'. So lots of funding goes to the 'Young farmer's Projects' and the 'Sustainable Livelihood for Isolated Areas' and 'Village Agriculture Livelihoods' et al...

On the whole I was impressed- even one of the top hotels on the island of Guadalcanal had minimal lighting (that at least kept us cooler) and water saving devices in the showers and toilets.

We have been invited back next year, in the meantime maybe we can devise a few methods that might be of assistance.

## COURSES/WORKSHOPS

### Permaculture Design Certificate in Upper Mountains

This course has been deferred until 2006.

Enquiries Rowe or Pat on 4751 4338 or [bmpermac@iinet.net.au](mailto:bmpermac@iinet.net.au)

### Deep Ecology Workshop

Anyone interested in co-facilitating/ organising / participating in a Deep Ecology Workshop in the Mountains first half of 2006?

Want to get together in January to discuss possibilities?

Please email Jade on [jadeyjellybean@hotmail.com](mailto:jadeyjellybean@hotmail.com)

### Earth Building

By David Alder

Have you thought of using stabilised earth as pavers, making a earth walled chicken house to keep them warm or building a free form earth wall in the garden. We had hoped to run an earth building workshop at the Hartley Big Backyard but unfortunately we got wiped out by rain. We are currently planning to do it in February. The exact date is yet to be decided.

The object of the workshop is to build a barbecue, using as many different methods as possible, for use by the community. It is proposed that there will be strawbale, mudbrick and rammed earth construction in the barbecue. Obviously no ordinary structure. The strawbale section will form a bench seat, the rammed earth section a table and the mudbricks the BBQ itself. The workshop will be free.

We are also willing to offer free lessons and experience in earth building in exchange for some labour ie a few hours of instruction for an hours labour on our house (rammed earth and car tyres) at Hampton.

If you are interested in either of these please contact us.

David and Suzanne Alder

Brynmawr Sustainable Living Resources Inc

Ph 63593175

Email [bslr@bigpond.com](mailto:bslr@bigpond.com)

## 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

- **Sustainable Gardening Australia**

SGA is a not for profit association committed to achieving real, continually improving and easily understood environmental solutions for gardeners. It provides advice on gardening practices and clearly identifies low environmental impact products. The website has a lovely 'online tour of sustainable gardens' to get inspiration and practical tips from real live gardens around Australia. You can even feature your own garden on the site. If you would like your garden to be featured email [mary@sgaonline.org.au](mailto:mary@sgaonline.org.au) <mailto:mary@sgaonline.org.au> (please don't send photos until they contact you).

[www.sgaonline.org.au](http://www.sgaonline.org.au) <http://www.sgaonline.org.au>

Information supplied by Jade Herriman

- **Climate Change Action**

A brand new Climate Change Action forum has just been formed. Located here:  
<http://au.groups.yahoo.com/group/ClimateChangeAction/>  
Unmoderated, open to all.

If you are concerned about climate change and would like to be active in addressing this huge global problem please join and share our resources.

Information supplied by Anne Goddard on Permaculture-Oceania list

- **NEW REPORT: The Costs and Benefits of a Proposed Mandatory Invasive Species Labelling Scheme**

In September 2005 World Wildlife Fund (WWF) in conjunction with The University of New England Centre put out a Discussion paper on the role that mandatory labelling of weeds and pest animals could play in reducing their environmental and economic impacts. This report is concise and informative - weighing up the environmental, legal and behavioural issues involved with such a scheme. The report concludes that point of sale labelling for traded invasive plants and fish could be a least cost strategy for reducing impacts of invasive species.

The report is available from WWF - Andreas Glanzig, Senior Policy Adviser, Email:  
[aglanzig@wwf.org.au](mailto:aglanzig@wwf.org.au).

If you support the conclusions of the report, you may wish to contact Andrew to find out how best to support such a scheme.

- **DVD on Genetically Engineered (GE) Food**

The Columban Office for Justice Peace and the Integrity of Creation(JPIC) will make a professionally produced DVD on Genetically Engineered (GE) Food. It is to be released early 2006 and Dynan Production (02 9380 8844) will do the work.

Since the Columbans want to cooperate with other groups as allies in this project, you are invited to contact me with suggestions on our production of this DVD. Please inform your network that Columban Mission is producing a DVD on GE Food.

The DVD will focus on trans-genetic food. Possible issues to address include:

- Negative impact of GE food on human health
- Negative impact of GE crops on bio-diversity
- Monopoly control of the world's staple food seeds through patenting
- Exposing the invalidity of arguments that GE will Feed the World
- Exposing the presumption that GE crops will ultimately use less chemicals ☐
- Independent science is threatened by international agri-chemical companies ☐

- Traditional farmers and nations food security is threatened ☐
- Public Relation (PR) push for de-regulation under the guise of free enterprise

The content of the DVD will draw from:

- A Columban and allies convened Conference 9-10 Dec. 2005 in the Philippines
- Safe Food: Your Human Right☐ searice@searice.org.ph ☐
- Arguments that GE Food is a ethical-spiritual and social justice issue ☐
- Reflections on mission involvement with food issues in developing countries
- Interviews with farmers, consumers and activists overseas and in Australia.
- Reference to international agencies such as the WTO and Agreements

Hoped Outcomes from the DVD include:

- Education of public on the issue leading to advocacy
- Help clarify the church's position about a serious moral issue
- Lobby for detailed labelling of GE
- Public invest to research alternatives to GE to protect health and environment
- Lobby for a Moratorium on GE foods at the 2006 Review of Gene Regulator

Columban contact: Charles Rue

0408 466 820 charlesdrue@netscape.net

Columban Office Australia for Justice Peace and the Integrity of Creation  
(JPICoz)

## **AUTUMN NEWSLETTER**

**Contributions for the Autumn Newsletter by Friday 17 February PLEASE.**

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