

BLUE MOUNTAINS PERMACULTURE NETWORK

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NEWSLETTER SUMMER 06

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Hello

Welcome to the Summer Newsletter.

This edition looks at some local initiatives; holding a street party, addressing climate change and some Sydney Basin initiatives, the Sydney Food Fairness Alliance (SFFA) and new permaculture groups.

From time to time we will display advertisements for local sustainable businesses to promote the business and help defray the costs of the newsletter.

You are all invited to a gathering at my place, !A Kanimbla St. Blackheath on Saturday 9 December at 12.30 for a shared lunch to meet, reconnect and enjoy.

Best wishes for the festive season.

Pat
BMPN

WHAT'S ON?

Sunday 3 December

Mid-Mountain Seedsavers 2783 Meeting 6

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 to indicate numbers.

Saturday 9 December

Permaculture Gathering

Working bee participants, PDC students and everyone come together to meet, reconnect, open Pat's front area, and have lunch. 12.30
!A Kanimbla St. Blackheath 4787 9108

8pm 12th December

Global Warming Lithgow Workmens Club (Millenium Room)

The Al Gore slideshow presentation which inspired the movie "An Inconvenient Truth", presented by Lis Bastian. is to disseminate up to date information about Global Warming and to help communities and individuals develop solutions in the face of this planetary emergency.

December

Meetings of new regional Permaculture Groups across Sydney.

Details on new website www.permaculturesydneybasin.org.au

STREETS AHEAD

By Murray Wilson

Sunday, October 29th, wasn't just the start of daylight saving in Leura, it was also the day of the inaugural Rawson Parade street party. I live in Rawson Parade and I organised the street party. I organised the party to help get to know my neighbours and build on a wonderful sense of community already alive within pockets of the Parade. Rawson Parade is in North Leura - it's a long, wiggly road, with one end joining Mt Hay Road and the other ending near the bottom of Leura Mall. There are roughly 76 houses in the Parade, with some being weekenders.

My wife, Kathy Hale (who you may know through BMPN) and I have lived here for almost a year. When we moved in we held an open house for those living near to our place. We were impressed by the willingness of these 'strangers' in welcoming us. Within the year that we have lived here we have started or joined a number of Parade activities, including a morning walking group, a (tongue-in-cheek) wine appreciation society and landcare group. Some of those 'strangers' we first encountered a year ago are now friends; some almost like family. A street party seemed the next logical step in the evolution of 'community' within the parade.

The time line, from the first letterbox drop to holding the party, was four months. So how did this happen? Well, it was incredibly easy actually. This experience has shown me that people are really keen to get involved in their community. The planning and organising was:

- Come up with some ideas for the party
- Letterbox drop the street to create interest
- Host an ideas and planning supper with anyone who called us up on the phone
- Use this small group's ideas to develop, write and distribute a survey for the party (would you come? where would you like to have the party? which day? what time? would you like a theme? etc.)
- Have surveys returned to my letterbox
- Use survey responses to plan the party in detail
- Send out an invitation - again, a letterbox drop
- Hold a working bee to prepare the garden of the party house
- Prepare and distribute simple street decorating packs to volunteers (eg balloons and streamers)
- Organise people to judge a letterbox decorating competition
- Coordinate the delivery of bits and pieces to the party house (eg drums, BBQ)
- Help set up tables, etc. at the party house
- Help clean up (this was the most tiring part for sure !)

The party was held in a back garden half way along the parade. It was a very simple affair; with just a lot of talking and getting to know each other. We did have a fantastic and very energetic drumming workshop, conducted by a generous Parader; another presented the street with a cake, celebrating our 'long and winding road' (it was an amazing piece of art and tasted pretty good too); another volunteered their BBQ; and eight more decorated the street with balloons and streamers. As a bit of friendly fun, we also ran a letterbox decorating competition. In the end we had more than twenty entries, ranging from sticker art to Jackson Pollock inspired paint work.

The street party was a great success. We had around fifty people turn up, all of whom had fun. And this is just the beginning, a number of people have been inspired to consider having their own drinks, parties or some other form of get together at their place in the near future. The next step for the whole street may be to develop a community register. This will hold information on community groups people belong to, skills that people have that would benefit others in the street, etc.

Let me know if you would like some more information.

Murray Wilson, (halewilson@bigpond.com)

A short reflection on teaching permaculture in the mountains....and elsewhere....in 2006

by Rowe Morrow

The most recent courses I've been facilitating with local teachers; two in the Blue Mountains, a short course at Mt Annan and a PDC at Armidale show a big difference in participants this year in particular compared with earlier years.

*They have a lot more knowledge than people enrolling in earlier courses. We are able to cut out the exploratory sessions about climate change, ozone layer, water shortage and land degradation and get fairly quickly into water and energy conservation and land repair.

*The "new" generation of learners are web savvy and bring laptops and tune into more information which is more accurate than we had access to previously.

*I pick up a sense of urgency and commitment from them whereas earlier classes were more interested in exploring whether perhaps permaculture was "right" for them. I think, but cannot be sure that for a considerable part of the population there is a critical point where their knowledge garnered from films, videos, books, magazines, newspapers and news has moved them to a point where they are ready act on the precautionary principle.

Although the classes are quite small they are extremely committed.

*The learners are all very, very busy people and yet manage to fit a PDC into their lives.

In Viet Nam recently, I was told that the first PDC participants thought that I was mad or exaggerating when I told them that the climate was changing, and that one day they would buy water in plastic bottles. Now this and more has come true for them.

SFFA Launch, "Hidden Hunger in the Lucky Country"

By Jill Finnane

Tuesday 17th October, 2006.

"Hidden Hunger in the Lucky Country" was the theme addressed at the launch of the Sydney Food Fairness Alliance in NSW Parliament House on 17 October. It was prompted by the findings of a 2004 survey of low income households in South West Sydney that 21.9 per cent of households experienced food insecurity, 30 per cent of households with children were food insecure and 45 per cent of single parent households were food insecure (food insecurity might include episodes of food shortage or constantly feeling hunger).

The Sydney Food Fairness Alliance promotes community food security and sustainable food systems. Professor Julian Disney, Chair of Anti- Poverty week, affirmed the goals of the

Alliance when he stressed the importance of taking a 'bifocal' approach to addressing poverty. Professor Disney said that our community needs to focus on tackling the macro issues (like competition policy & tax when discussing food prices and availability in supermarkets), while searching for frontline experiences and action. Addressing himself to welfare and media sectors, he claimed they focus too much on quantifying the poverty line, and lack of income as a root cause of poverty. "Is this helpful?" he challenged.

Professor Disney claimed that there are many structural issues that need addressing. He pointed to the difficulties created by our tax system that has made investment in housing so profitable that there has been a huge escalation in the price of housing in urban areas. He believes that one way of tackling poverty is to develop medium sized cities (i.e. population of 0.5 - 1 million residents). "Our topography is well suited to medium sized cities and it would bring people closer to food sources and growers, helping to retain urban agricultural land."

Would there be the political will to explore these structural issues? Professor Disney thinks so. 'Australians do care about poverty.' He said.

Associate Professor Frances Parker from the UWS also explored this structural threat to food security by pointing out that 40% of Sydney's 2,000 market gardens are in the designated growth areas, raising the question, 'Why do we always choose the most productive land for development?' Professor Parker felt we should also ask, 'How many of the policy makers and planners have been out and met with Sydney's farmers?'

Professor Parker has met extensively with Sydney's farmers and her research on farming in the Sydney Basin shows that Sydney's agriculture is worth over \$1 billion annually, employs 12 000 people, has the largest number of horticulturalists in Australia and the largest number of non-English speaking horticulturalists. Sydney market gardeners currently produce 90% of Sydney's perishable vegetables 100% of the supply of Asian greens, 80% mushrooms, 70% fresh tomatoes and 91% spring onions and shallots.

She found that not only do they provide so much of Sydney's fresh food but the market gardens also provide a significant source of employment for migrants and as such are an important anti-poverty strategy. This has led her to ask, 'How do we frame Sydney farms? "Land Waiting to be Urbanised" or "Migrant Success Story"?'

She pointed out that if the development goes ahead the loss of this farming land will not only be turning Sydney's green belt into 'pollution-making, water-guzzling, commuter-making suburbs' it will mean that farms will move further out to where there is less water and poorer quality soils. Professor Parker made it clear, 'the future of agriculture and Sydney's food supply must be considered at the same time as urbanisation.'

We were left pondering many questions. What will happen to these farmers when the land they are leasing is sold? Will food grown under the poorer conditions further out cost more? Professor Parker reminded us that if we are to persuade the planners to preserve Sydney's

agriculture we still need to find where the houses can go...

Dignity and identity through food were highlighted by Aunty Beryl as she told her story leading to the setting up Yamma Dhinawan, a new café and training facility in Wilson St Redfern that aims to address some of the underlying causes of poor nutrition. Growing up in Walgett, her family lived off the land and survived difficult times by caring and sharing; her dad was a shearer and they traded lamb for vegetables from a neighbour's market garden.

These values of caring and sharing have been something she's tried to incorporate in her community work with hospitality and food. Yamma Dhinawan has been set up so that single mums who've never had a job or women who've been out of the workforce for a long time can come for training and work experience. So far, 20 women have signed up. Aunty Beryl can see the changes in the mum's confidence and self esteem as they learn how to cook and shop. She believes it is not enough to teach people how to cook and shop. 'Looking after the land is critical' she said. Now when Aunty Beryl returns to her family's home in Walgett, she finds the river is dry and polluted, 'The cotton growers provide lots of employment but there are no fish left. People are reliant on takeaway from the local shop and feel shamed about bush foods.' She said it makes her sad.

Russ Grayson explained that a key goal for the SFFA Alliance is to get food security on the public agenda. He described the progress the Alliance has made in the short time since its tentative beginnings in May 2005. The Alliance is now incorporated, has made a submission to the Metropolitan Strategy, has produced a series of discussion sheets, set up a list-serve and a website - all thanks to the hard work of the various 'teams'. The event was chaired by Joanna Savill and co-hosted by MLCs Penny Sharpe and Ian Cohen.

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www.erc.org.au

Think before you print

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COMMUNITY UPDATES

The Climate Change Project

Information from www.stoplaughing.com.au

From the 18th - 20th November Lis Bastian completed the Climate Change Project training session with Al Gore, organised by The Australian Conservation Foundation. As a result she is now available to give the slideshow presentation which Al Gore has given approximately 1500 times around the world.

The aim of this presentation, which inspired the movie "An Inconvenient Truth", is to disseminate up to date information about Global Warming and to help communities and individuals develop solutions in the face of this planetary emergency.

Lis's first presentation was to the man sitting next to her on the train as she travelled home from the training session!

Her next presentation will be:

8pm 12th December at the Lithgow Workmens Club (Millenium Room)

Sessions are also being planned for Blackheath, Orange, Parkes & Forbes & Gilgandra.

If you are interested in knowing more about the Climate Change Project presentations and/or would like to book one for your area:

email Lis: ebastian@stoplaughing.com.au

or ring 02 47877533 or 0407 437 553

Blackheath Community Garden

Slow progress - trying to conserve moisture is the main task at present.

We miss Bec, Marshall, Tilda and Huon who have gone to the US for Marsh's work. The Little Sprouts may be re-started by Vanessa.

New members welcome as always. Call BANC on 4787 7770 Mon-Fri, 9 - 5 and leave your name and tel number for Fiona or Suzanne.

Mid Mountains Seed Savers - 2783

Next meeting Sunday 3 December

Please contact Loret or John on 4759 2118 or email mcrun@hermes.net.au

Permaculture Working Bee

By Robyn Connors

It pays to have friends in high places, especially if you are referring to permaculture advocates! Last month this age old saying became a reality when five dedicated permaculture disciples travelled from the upper mountains to assist in a working bee at my home in Glenbrook.

In just under two hours, a grassed area in the back yard was sheet mulched. Two citrus trees were also settled into their new homes, complete with lashings of rich compost. With the help of four feathered friends, a small area of lawn (earmarked for a future vegetable garden) was also removed.

Although this enabled the visitors to tractor and enrich the earth with their wonderful by-product, their inquisitive nature almost resulted in accidental decapitation from spade wielding permies.



Of course I am referring to my neighbour's Isa brown chooks which have been holidaying in my backyard for the past three months. I highly recommend 'try before you buy' to anyone uncertain about committing themselves to keeping chooks. The benefits are numerous and it's also a great way to get to know your neighbours.

Since last month's working bee, the entire area has been sheet mulched with bush rock from the yard aesthetically placed around the borders. I am pleased to report that both the Lemonade and Washington Navel are thriving. New growth is abundant and despite the severe weather conditions, next season's fruit is flourishing. With less lawn to mow, we are now able to devote more time to establishing new vegetable gardens.



Thanks Pat, Peter, Celeste, Susan and Kathy, for your valuable time and hardwork. This incidentally was the catalyst needed to begin implementation of my permaculture design. As previously stated, It pays to have friends in high places!

Blue Mountains Sustainability Directory

I am inviting you to be listed in the Blue Mountains Sustainability Directory, currently under development as part of the new Blue Mountains based business, Bee Green. The business will incorporate retail, education and community development. An online shop will stock natural, sustainable home and lifestyle products, with a focus on health and wellbeing, sourcing locally owned, developed, and/or manufactured products wherever possible. A shopfront is planned for the near future. Regular workshops are being organised, and it is hoped more local people will make products for local trade as a result, as well as increasing the general awareness of health, wellbeing and sustainability in the mountains. Our opening flyer is attached for your information.

The Sustainability Directory will list businesses, networks, organisations and other service providers in the Blue Mountains region that operate with a focus on environmental, social and economic sustainability. We are asking participants to include their business or organisation name; contact person and location (if appropriate); a description of the services provided and how they work towards sustainability (up to 50 words); and contact details, including email and website for direct links if desired. It is hoped that the website can become a central source of information and links (portal) for promoting ethical, sustainable services locally. We will also be hosting a notice board and calendar of relevant upcoming events, workshops etc., please contact us to make an entry. A links page to other areas and larger organisations, associations and peak bodies will also be developed, please let us know of any you think important to include.

If you would like more information about the values and ethics we are using to make decisions on products we offer and services we provide, including assessing whether a participant is suitable for inclusion in the Sustainability Directory, see our website www.beegreen.com.au from mid-November. We are hoping to have the Directory live with the opening of the website. Please email or phone me on 47871579 or 0422107347 if you need more information or would like to discuss any aspect of the Directory or website, or would like us to provide you with flyers to distribute to your customers. From mid-November when the website is live our email contact will be info@beegreen.com.au.

Thanks,
Lynette Correy
Bee Green
02 4787 1579
0422107347
PO Box 69
BLACKHEATH NSW 2785



Bee Green

sustainable home and lifestyle ... naturally

On-Line Shop Opening November

Feel more confident than ever that the power to
save the planet rests with the individual consumer

— Denis Hayes, Earth Day Network

Blue Mountains based

Natural, sustainable shopping for health and
wellbeing

Workshops, information, newsletter and local
sustainability directory

Developing bioregional trade, employment
and sustainability

Promoting and supporting local business,
networks and projects



PRODUCTS INCLUDE:

- Organic cotton, hemp and bamboo fabric, clothing, linen, bedding, nappies, slings and other products.
- Quality handmade wooden toys, Steiner based play, life play, dolls and toy making kits.
- Natural and organic home and body care.
- Books, CDs, DVDs on many topics including children, permaculture, sustainable building, environment, sustainable living, crafting, home health and wellbeing.
- Natural art and crafting supplies including vegetable dyed wool, beeswax crayons, felt and dyes.
- Water filters, shopping bags, moshields and more.

**Our problem is not consumption,
but excess consumption.
Buy once, buy well.**

CONTACT US IF YOU HAVE:

- Products to trade locally or need assistance to develop or make products.
- Workshops to present or ideas for workshops.
- Products you would like us to stock.
- A local network, project or business to list on the Blue Mountains Sustainability Directory on the website and in newsletters.

Or if you would like us to email newsletters or post a catalogue:

Email: info@beegreen.com.au

Phone: 4787 1579 Mobile: 0422 107 347

Post: PO Box 71, MT VICTORIA, NSW 2786

Or through the website

www.beegreen.com.au

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ODDS & SODS

Sustainable Farming

from Jackie Janosi

I work for WWF International which is based in Switzerland and so I get to look our panda.org website quite often (daily in fact). Today I came across the following article that I thought would interest all of us who support sustainable farming. It states that many of the big food producers, including Australia, are very close to their limit with regards to sustainability. .

http://www.panda.org/about_wwf/what_we_do/freshwater/problems/index.cfm

from John McNaull

A CSIRO scientist expounds the benefits of biological farming.

<http://www.bml.csiro.au/susnetnl/netw61E.pdf>.

Actually a very interesting newsletter on sustainability from the CSIRO which you can subscribe to

AUTUMN NEWSLETTER

Contributions for the Autumn Newsletter by Friday 17 February PLEASE.

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