

BLUE MOUNTAINS PERMACULTURE NETWORK

WINTER NEWSLETTER 2004

Hello

Thank you again to all the contributors to this newsletter, again we have an interesting range of news and information. Richard Griffiths, a most regular contributor, has moved to Brooklyn and I'm sure the permaculture folk in the mountains will miss him as I will. He always provided an interesting and informative contribution, sometimes two. Thank you Richard and we wish you well in your new endeavours.

Pat
BMPN

WHAT'S ON?

- | | |
|--|--|
| Sunday 8 August | Winmalee Neighbourhood Garden 10.00 - 1.00
Enquiries Mark Lutherborrow 0418 694969 |
| Sunday 15 August | Mid Mountains Seed Savers -2783 meeting
11 Hughes Ave Lawson 10.00
Enquiries Loret 4759 2118 |
| Tuesdays or
2 nd Saturday of month | Blue Mountains Wildplant Rescue
Enquiries Lynn Godfree 4782 6833 |
| Sunday 12 September
2 nd Sunday of month | Winmalee Neighbourhood Garden Spring launch
10.00 - 1.00 |
| 5 - 9 September | 19 th World Energy Conference, Sydney
"DELIVERING SUSTAINABILITY - opportunities for the
Energy Industry"
www.tourhosts.com.au/energy2004 |
| 12 September | Solar House Day
http://www.anzses.org |

BLUE MOUNTAINS WILDPLANT RESCUE SERVICE (BMWRS)

by Lynn Godfree

The traditional lands of the Gundungurra and Darug people have been altered by the impact of humans for more than 100, 000 years, but more violently in the last 250 years. However, this special landscape is still considered to be a rare example of some integrity, with regard to flora, fauna and geological processes.

The vegetation of the Blue Mountains is extraordinarily diverse. Communities of rainforests, tall open forests, woodlands, swamps and heaths support 1,200 species of vascular plants, and at least 20 species are endemic to the Mountains. Non vascular plants are also represented and a third of NSW moss species occur in the Blue Mountains.

Threats to this diversity are obvious and ongoing - weeds, residential sprawl, fire regimes, extractive industries, erosion, effluent, climate change, drought and feral animals are some. Whilst we understand some of the effects of these threats, we remain ignorant, or in denial, of the long-term effects upon hydrology, fauna habitat and plant communities.

Residential/urban sprawl is responsible for a large portion of threats to the landscape and its processes, and although Blue Mountains City Council has designed a fairly prescriptive 'Bushland Management Order', which will offer some protection (if complied with) large dwellings, swimming pools, fire mitigation orders and neglectful building practices are still contributing to a significant loss of remnant bush in our localities. This does not only affect 'city living', but the loss of remnant and bush buffer zones has untold impact.

Volunteers with BMWRS have been 'rescuing' plants, seeds and seed-bank soil from sites to be cleared for development since 1994. Over the years, 100's of people have been involved, and their activities have created an organisation that has an essential role in preserving plant diversity and local provenance, raising community awareness and education, and providing opportunities for the propagation and sale of local plant species.

The job of 'beating the bulldozer' and performing a 'wildplant rescue' is not altogether pleasant. The volunteer rescuer looks around the lovely bush block and observes the diverse harmony, perfection and delightful 'disorder' of the setting. They might then look further afield to the landscaped blocks of the neighbouring properties; where lawns, rhodo's, pansies and victorian statuettes form an orderly 'cool climate' 'garden escape', and despair is a not uncommon feeling...and then there's the digging. The plant should not have to be, and, more than likely, does not wish to be translocated. It may be enjoying the company of its companions or the perfect amount of moisture. It is in its element. But it will be flattened unless 'rescued'.

Rescuing plants, seeds and cuttings is a creative response to the destruction but it is not quite good enough. We must also be part of a process of increased awareness of the

necessity to preserve the remaining bushland. . We must become informed, make plans and then act, to challenge wanton clearing of bushland.

A Wildplant rescue 'operation' might involve digging, wondering, eating cake, discovering plants that you have never seen, translocating a wee plant into a pot that will be cared for in the nursery and then sold to a good home, making friends, learning something about the area, and having conversations about how to become more informed and how to promote connection to land; it's also a back breaking healthy activity. .

Join us on Tuesdays, or the 2nd Saturday of the month. Call Lynn Godfree at **Blue Mountains Wildplant Rescue on 47826833**

Tablelands Sustainable Food Group

by Brian Coates

At last our wishes have been realised-----a food growers group for the western Blue Mountains!!

Early in May a group of food producers got together at Susan and David Alders' property at Hampton with the intention of forming a farmers' produce group. Members are from Katoomba, Oberon, Lithgow and as far as Bilpin and Mt Irvine.

It is only early days but we have established the following objectives:

1. To get together on a monthly basis and swap ideas about what works for us as growers.
2. To source surplus produce.
3. To barter and exchange.
4. To integrate with other groups such as seed savers and other organic growers.
5. We wish to aim for self sufficiency.
6. Eventually get together a growers produce market.

Any new members contact Brian or Wayne.-----6352 5274

Where's Richard?

Hello,

We have moved to Brooklyn, after I started a job in strategic planning for Bankstown Council (The Hawkesbury River being not much closer to Sydney but lots closer to family in Newcastle). It's a fairly steep learning curve and enjoyable. I've been heavily involved in starting up the BASIX system which is an on-line process for ensuring that all new houses use 40% less water and create 25% fewer greenhouse emissions than the average.

BASIX is due to hit the Blue Mountains in October.

Visit <http://www.basix.nsw.gov.au> Also, drop in and say hello next time you're heading up the coast. Call us on 9985 8661

Richard Griffiths

e-mail: mail@permanentculture.com

Afghanistan, the environment and the impact of war.

by Rowe Morrow

I lived in Kabul for two months and during this time I was able to visit the Panjir Valley still held by the mujahadeen, one of the few safe rural places outside Kabul.. The Panjir Valley was five hours drive from Kabul on bad roads. During this time the War Lords were coming closer, only 50km from Kabul, mining the roads, holding-up vehicles and killing people. Germans, Danes and Afghani NGO staff were killed. The Kabul people were sad about the Germans because Germany had not wanted the USA to invade and bomb their country.

Before the Russians invaded in 1975 and for many hundreds of years before that, the Panjir Valley farmers had stabilised a sustainable cultivated ecosystem of grapes, mulberries, goats, and corn which supported their communities of families. They lived in solid mudbrick houses; boys and girls attended school; women didn't have to wear birkas and everyone worked in the fields. The main water supply was snow melt from the mountains and it flowed through centuries old small canals along the contours and was evenly delivered to all the farmers' tiny fields. This fed the mulberries, the olives, the grapes and the figs in the dry hot summers.

Then the Russians invaded. Men went to war and were killed or just never heard of again. Bombs were dropped on and around the villages. During the Russian occupation factions and loyalties were split so creating a later civil war. And then, when the Taliban succeeded the Russians, women were considered 'bad' if they left the house and girls were stopped from going to school. But a generation of men, 20-40 years old was now missing.

The Russians bombed the villages, burnt the crops and blew up agricultural infrastructure
*centuries old irrigation systems
*small dams
*ancient groves of mediterranean fruit trees.

Then the Taliban did the same.

(I had thought, perhaps naively, that military 'scorched earth' strategies were abandoned after the Napoleonic wars when the French invaded Russia. Actually this is what I saw that the USA did in Viet Nam with Agent Orange although their reason was to be able to see the movement of soldiers)

In Afghanistan with its extreme cold and very low rainfall, once these old systems are destroyed, desertification begins. In fact the systems were developed as peoples' response to living in marginal desert conditions. Their cultivation was balanced, dependable and vulnerable. Now in the Panjir Valley crop livelihoods had been destroyed except for some mulberries. The soils had gone, washed away to bare smooth grey rock as the snows melted and flowed down the steep mountain sides.

Rehabilitating that land today is almost impossible and the people are starving, always on the edge of famine. The innocent, the women and children are suffering. The USA still bombs parts of Afghanistan every day. Australians assist them. I saw it.

People who were never wealthy yet were independent and sustainable are severely impoverished. They have lost the foods previously dried and kept for the long bitter winters. They then drift to Kabul where technically they are called the 'internally displaced'. They live in plastic tent camps on the edge of Kabul and receive no assistance from the UNHCR because they are not 'refugees'. People once honest and honourable farmers, wander through Kabul as garbage pickers and, in turn, are preyed on by other unscrupulous people.

30 years ago all Afghanistan was a sustainable, developing country with no real problems, no burden on the world and liberal Islam practices like Turkey. It has been brought to severe environmental and human degradation only by war. The old agricultural culture tolerated droughts yet now the country falls into drought several times a summer. It has not been industrialisation, nor chemical overuse, which degraded the country only wars.

It is so hard for Afghans to know why this happened to them.

Afghanistan has the largest number of refugees in the world outside their country. There are about 5 million at the moment. Most of them are in Iran and Pakistan. If USA invades Iran now, those people can not be accommodated back into Afghanistan. There is not enough food and housing for those who are there.

Apart from causing yet another country to drop into poverty, as it did in Cambodia and Viet Nam, the USA has released depleted uranium; its long term effects are not known but some symptoms of radiation toxicity are showing up.

Children and women in the Panjir Valley

In the Panjir Valley I was struck by the absence of men. As I walked around the valley with a group of children following me, I realised that I had seen no men. There were a few very old men and some boy children, but no young men. Fathers, brothers and farmers were missing.

In Southeast Asia a generation of men died under the Khmer Rouge but the women were sometimes literate and skilled farmers, and in a hot wet climate were able to take up the plough to grow rice.

Under the rigid Islam of the Taliban women were not permitted to go outside their homes. So here they were, trying to grow food which they didn't have the skills for, and bringing up fatherless children, 95% of women were totally illiterate and there was no medical service, and so I found this community of women trying to survive.

I was appalled, despite my experiences of post-trauma, post-war Albania, Cambodia and Vietnam, to see these triple, quadruply handicapped women trying to recover alone from war trauma in a devastated landscape. The women had no skills, or muscle, or food, or literacy. When a society is dependent to a high degree on men's skills and then when the men die, the women are not able to take over. That's devastating and families spiral into deeper poverty.

War carries so many more consequences than we ever see. Recovering the earth and recovering the people are unnecessary costs.

Rosemary Morrow, January 2004

BLACKHEATH COMMUNITY GARDEN

by Suzanne Reaney

Green and Organically Growing

Drought, winds, winter, waiting for promised community work helpers through (Lithgow) Employment Service (which was supposed to happen in Autumn at latest!) to work on our public entryway, and life. Most of our small membership is involved in other things as well as home and family and community gardening.

So we really would welcome more members.

Contact Suzanne 4787 5229

WINMALEE NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE GARDEN GROUP

by Mark Lutherborrow

The Winmalee Neighbourhood Garden is gearing up for a big Spring launch! Our committed group of volunteers has managed to secure much needed funding and is looking at purchasing a shed to enable safe storage of tools and supplies at the garden site behind the Winmalee Neighbourhood Centre. We are also planning an action packed day on Sunday 8th August when we will be constructing a series of raised "no dig" garden beds. It is anticipated that these beds will be ready to be planted out at our Spring launch on Sunday 12th September.

Our enthusiastic volunteers have already established a herb garden with a central water feature, planted a mixture of fruit and nut trees, and planted approximately 40 native trees as screening for neighbouring residential properties at the site. All these plants have been nurtured during the unforgiving dry weather we have been experiencing of late

and seem to be surviving (just). We are also currently raising vegetable seedlings at our homes to enable early planting in the new no dig garden beds.

We have been very fortunate to be helped by numerous local businesses and also by Blue Mountains City Council. All our benefactors will be highlighted on the garden's web site which is currently under construction. The group comes together in the garden on the second Sunday of the month from 10am till 1pm as well as the occasional planning meeting and of course individuals visit the garden at other times to assist with watering or deliver mulches/manures or just to enjoy what we have created so far.

Any enquiries would be most welcome. Mark Lutherborrow 0418694969

MID MOUNTAINS SEED SAVERS - 2783

Loret Runagall spoke at a meeting of the Wentworth Falls Garden Club on "Permaculture in the back garden and the importance of seed saving". Seeds specific to the mountains area were distributed. The talk was very well received.

New members are welcome to attend if you are interested in joining the group, or just want to check-in and have a cuppa with us. We are active gardeners practicing seedsaving and networking with others in a local region to develop a local seedbank. We are affiliated with Seedsavers Network in Byron Bay as one of their Local Seed Networks. Please feel free to let others know if you think they would be interested. If you do intend to come along, please give us a call so that we know how many to expect!

Just come to the next meeting on Sunday 15 August at 10.00 and have a cup of tea. Enquiries phone Loret on 4759 2118.

PONDS, an UPDATE

by Rowe Morrow

About the Dam. It really hasn't rained significantly any more - since about April. We have received less than our average by about 1/4 and so what came in barely matched the evaporation. However ducks came in. there's a pair of wood ducks who arrive about 8.30 each morning and swim around in circles, then mate, quickly and elegantly and then swim in some more circles and then sleep on the warm edge the sun hits. I've made a good life for someone.

I really do want it to flow over and see how all the brush barriers work. It'll take about 10 cm to do that I reckon. You'll only get another update after big rain.

PEST REPORT

by Sue Girard

I was recently asked about the effects of climate change upon insects here in the Blue Mountains. I knew of course that the changes predicted would benefit some insects and harm others, but I soon realised that before I could answer the question I really needed to do a little investigating. So between a few Internet sites, the latest newsletter from the Entomological Society & information gleaned from anyone who would talk to me, I feel I can share a little of what I discovered...

A 2°C increase in temperature, above our current level, is expected in the Blue Mountains by 2030, increasing to a 6°C increase by 2070. (CSIRO 2001) It is also anticipated that a variation of only 2°C will create a 20% variation in rainfall, in particular decreased winter rainfall & increased spring rainfall.

Chris Thomas, the Professor of Conservation Biology at the University of Leeds, states we can expect that 15-35% of all species will be pushed to extinction by 2050.

This will occur not so much because of changes in temperature & climate conditions, but as a result of habitat loss. Just one example, of our 800 eucalypts in Australia, most thrive only within a very small temperature range. Of these, 25% tolerate a variation of only 1°C, whilst 28% will tolerate differences of up to 3°C and a further 20% will tolerate a difference of as much as 6°C. Eight two species of eucalypts are found only in the Blue Mountains.

Even if some of these eucalypts can accommodate the climate change, it can be assumed that increased stress will affect the size of the leaves and an increase in phenols & tannins etc. In short the leaves will become tougher & less digestible to the animals that depend on them for food. It will also affect the amount of leaf litter falling to our already poor soils, and this will cause a lowering in the nitrogen content, thereby adding more stress to these plants.

It is interesting to note that a 3°C shift in temperature is the equivalent of 300- 400 km in latitude or 500m in altitude (Hughes 2001). It is probable that weeds will be able to make this move, but bigger species are sadly never as adaptable.

In a recent publication in the scientific journal *Nature*, researchers predict that 'all but three of Australia's 400 species of butterflies' may become extinct by this 2050. In Europe 22- 35 non-migratory butterfly species have shifted northward by 35-240km in the last 100 years (Hughes 2000). It is already documented that the Bathurst Copper Butterfly is under threat- because of its small population, and its already restricted environmental & habitat requirement. Some sources also comment upon the likelihood of the Ulysses Butterfly becoming endangered.

Increases in carbon dioxide will favour the spread of many fungal diseases such as *Phytophthora cinnamoni* that is responsible for 'dieback' in many of our local Proteaceae and *Gravillea*.

Our own plants foods will similarly be affected particularly with increases of carbon dioxide. Whilst carbon dioxide is necessary for photosynthesis, there is a limit to the amount each plant can convert to food. As conditions change I see very good reasons to save our own local open pollinated varieties of fruit & vegetable seed, rather than depending on big Corporation hybrid seed grown under entirely different conditions. Not only will they be better adapted to our climate change but we also know that stressed and diseased plants are more subject to attack by insect pests.

In the Upper Blue Mountains we have, in the past, noticed a definite break in some pest populations over the winter. For example 10 years ago the Azalea lace wing only had a couple of successive generations within a year before it had to hibernate over the colder months. Today we are seeing up to many more generations even in the upper mountains, during a given season, because conditions are now more favourable to this pest.

Similarly the fruit-fly is able to 'overwinter' as maggots in fruit, more readily than they used to in the Mountains. They have been noted as early as August. Loquats are a known carrier for this pest, and the Department of Agriculture require the fruit to be picked, not left on the tree. Fruit fly are also able to pupate in compost that is not hot enough.

Gardeners in the Mountains seem to be aware of the changes already, talking about more cabbage moths & more aphids. Little has been documented. Let me know if you have noticed any obvious changes, I will have to be more observant myself.

I may seem to have concentrated on plants more than insects in this article, but it is important to realise that;

"for every plant that is pushed to extinction on average 15 animal species which depend on that plant are likely to be affected (not withstanding global warming,) at present we have 301 endangered species of vascular plants in Australia we [can] expect 4515 species of threatened animals mainly invertebrates" (CSIRO study)

This estimate however does not include the loss of insects such as lice & ticks etc that depend on the threatened vertebrates in this study.

Ref. "The Challenges" *Time Life*, Aug 26 2002, No 34

FEEDBACK

I would actually like to thank Richard Lee for his thought provoking article in the summer edition of the newsletter in relation to weeds. What a breakthrough in my thinking to hear about protection of the bush for natural values, promotion of abundance and diversity in the permaculture garden, and the recognition of the 'ecotone' boundary in between. What common sense and insight into our ('western') human predicament as consumers, gardeners, residents and bush regenerators and protectors. I really enjoyed the moment of realisation that there is an alternative view to the apparent extremes of anthropocentrism and conservation.

John McNaull

About the Newsletter. Well, Sue's knowledge and writing about pests is delightful. I enjoy it always and it makes me more observant. John McNaull's supplied me with the necessary clout I had been wanting to say stop using CCA treated timbers. Also the process is so bad for the environment. I really like these knowledgeable articles. Rowe Morrow's article was a bit light weight but what else would you expect of her.

The timetable and activities are great to have in one go and move all to the diary in one go. I was interested in the Winmalee Gardens. Isn't it great about another local garden? And the Tomato Tasting was innovative and sounded delicious.

Warmly Ro

ODDS & SODS

Do you know:

- Film Australia's Australian Biography Series profiles some of the most extraordinary Australians of our time. Did you miss this interview with Bill Mollison?

REPEAT SCREENING on
Sunday 29th August, 2004
at 7.00 pm on SBS

- **5 day courses in sustainable development at ANU:**

SRES 8049 ECO-INNOVATION and SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

5 day intensive course: September 22-26th, Forestry Building, ANU. This course builds on the concept of converting development from a problem into a solution by systems that improve human and environmental health and productivity.

SRES 8001 GREENING THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

5 day intensive course: November 24-28, Forestry Building, ANU This course explores how to reverse environmental impacts by design solutions that provide eco-ecosystem services and replace fossil with solar resources.

It is possible to receive university credit for these courses. Fee is \$1,350 for 5 days. For details: janis.birkeland@anu.edu.au, or phone: 02 6125 2224

- **The permaculture-oceania@lists.cat.org.au mailing list!**

MISSION: To promote earthcare, peoplecare, and surplus share, to facilitate communication primarily between people involved in ecologically sustainable development in the Oceania-southern Asia region of Australia/ New Zealand/ South Pacific/ South Asia.

PURPOSE: the permaculture-oceania list has been established to facilitate discussion of ideas and issues; to seek and provide advice, assistance and solutions; to notify events and courses; to review new publications, products and ideas; for creative problem solving, decision-making, constructive criticism and solution development; for the transmission of other information on the themes of permaculture design, community development and ecologically sustainable development.

To send a message to the permaculture-oceania discussion group, address your e-mail to: permaculture-oceania@lists.cat.org.au

Attachments are not to be forwarded out through this list. All information must be contained in the body of the text.

SPRING 2004 NEWSLETTER

Contributions for the Spring Newsletter by Friday 24 September PLEASE.

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