

BEELARONG COMMUNITY FARM

To encourage, educate, share and nurture interest in sustainable living by creating a vibrant community farm within an urban environment.



WINTER NEWSLETTER JUNE 2017



Settling in nicely: the new hens at Beelarong are pictures of health.

We've gone so clucky

THERE are six newcomers at Beelarong who are getting loads of attention. They scratch in the dirt and have already established a pecking order. Kids passing through the farm are fascinated and want to know their names.

We are talking, of course, about the six healthy chooks that arrived on May 18 and

have settled in quickly with help from poultry master Anthony Saber.

So far, they don't have names and Anthony has an idea to have a competition where members pay for the right to name the chicken of their choice.

What we can tell you is that Anthony picked up six specimens from Heritage Hens. Two are Isa Browns, two are

White Leghorns and the black pair are Australorps, a breed noted for its most prolific egg laying.

So, when will we be making omelettes from Beelarong eggs? Anthony says the hens are around three months old and should start laying in six to eight weeks.

He also says that he is very fond of his new

WE OPEN WEDNESDAYS

9am - 12 noon. Join volunteers who work together in the community garden every Wednesday and share the harvest at the end of the morning. We break for morning tea at 10am.

The shed is now open on Saturdays 8am - 11am.

OUR PEOPLE

President : Geoff Cook; Vice-President: James Blyth; Treasurer: Linda Rylands; Secretary: David Costello; Committee: Lorraine Holden, James Taylor

TASKS

Education, farm phone: Jean Burke; Community Garden, worm farms, fruit fly traps: Jocelyn Abrahams; Tractor: John O'Donnell; Herb Spiral: Susan Weedon-Flick; Plumbing: Bob McConachie; Website-Facebook: Celine Friche; Solar panels: James Taylor; Morning tea: Pat McGrath, Jean Burke, Helen Paynter; Food Forest: Kevin Melican; Newsletters, rat baiting: David Costello; Composting: Heather O'Donnell, James Blyth; Jam making, boundary garden and vertical strawberry garden: Dorothea Schafer; Seeds: Marion Forrest ; Allotments: Kath Dunning; Mowing and trimming: Chris Courtney; Geoff Cook, Barry Muller; Passionfruit: Leona Olling; Citrus: Lorraine Holden; Chooks: Anthony Saber

Let's face it, we are clucky

feathered friends and one of the brown chooks is tame enough to be picked up.

“They are real characters,” he says. “The white ones are the most intelligent. I never realised how much I would enjoy being here with them.”

Anthony (*pictured, right*) has been coming to the farm in the mornings and evenings to let the chickens in and out of the coop made from recycled materials by ace handyman John O'Donnell.

Other Beelarong members have been asked to join a roster to ensure the poultry crew stays safe at night and does not get gobbled by stray dogs or foxes

In the longer term, Anthony has been working on an automatic door powered by a solar panel to open and shut the coop. There is already a watering system where the hens nudge a nipple to get a drink. So far, they have been tucking into grain mash and, after a slow start, have started to eat greens offered to them.



Anthony Saber shares a moment with one of his chooks

Warmer days make pesky fruit flies buzz

More proof that our climate is warming can be found at Beelarong where fruit flies are now active in the cooler months.

Jocelyn Abrahams reports that traps at the farm yielded 46 flies on May 17 and 35 on May 31. That is way down on the 125 in

early April and the 1000-plus in January but, as Jocelyn says, the count for May is usually zero

Temperatures for May were often 2C to 3C above average. It is hoped lower temperatures in early June will banish the pests. There are five traps

(*pictured left*) hanging in trees around the farm. These are primed with attractant which uses female pheromones to lure male flies. The flies are most active in hot humid conditions.

During winter, they survive in hard brown pupae in the soil.





Before and after: the Enactus students helped to tidy up the citrus orchard and lay a new pathway

Enactus students dig deep

There was a mountain of work to do and the willing workers at Beelalong needed a helping hand.

It was their good fortune that the enterprising students from the Enactus Group at Griffith University turned up on May 13 to help put the cleaners through some rundown areas of the farm.

For this we can thank Dr Jeanne McConachie, whose husband Bob is the go-to plumber when there is a leaking pipe under the Windy Loo.

Jeanne is the founding manager of the Griffith University Honours College which runs Enactus as a scheme to get high achieving students involved in volunteering for community projects. Because of the McConachie family's association with Beelalong, Enactus students have joined in a number of working bees at the farm. Students who put in the hard yards win points towards being included in overseas community aid projects in countries like Cambodia, Laos and the Philippines. On May 13, they helped clean up some surrendered allotments and replaced the brick garden edgings with stonework.

That was the easy bit. The willing helpers then cleaned out the garden shed, removing flooring and other debris. They also found time to mulch branches and other waste and removed rubbish from around the farm. Beelalong regulars, including James Taylor, Celine Friche, Geoff Cook, Kath Dunning, Chris Courtney, Jean Burke, Lorraine and Richard Holden, Bob McConachie and John O'Donnell, were on hand to help and supervise the students. As a parting gesture the students donated three citrus seedlings, worth \$77, to the farm. Now that was a really nice surprise.



Now that looks better: the hayshed received a much-needed facelift at the working bee

All the fun of the local fair



Ready for the big parade: the Beelarong crew in high spirits at last year's Morningside Festival

By Jean Burke

Once again Beelarong Community Farm will have a presence at the Morningside Festival on Sunday 30th July.

This year we are taking four sites. Preparations are already well under way in the plant nursery where Dianne and Bernice are propagating plants for sale at the fair. Dianne is also busy producing her beautiful cards, featuring scenes from Beelarong, and around the local area. The rosella bushes are

particularly abundant at the farm this season and Dorothea is keeping busy making delicious organic rosella jam which will be available at the Beelarong stall. We will also have a selection of marmalades, pickles, and a variety of other jams.

The craft table will keep the children entertained. "Costa" the scarecrow will make an appearance again. The kids had great fun last year having their photo taken with him. So bring your phone/camera along. Lisa

will be running farm tours over at Beelarong starting at 12:30 and 1:30pm. So pop over and see what changes we have made to the farm. There are lots of jobs available if you are keen. We will be packing vehicles from 7am then over to the festival site to set up.

We need volunteers for a couple of hours in shifts throughout the day.

It's all great fun. If you want to join us just give Jean a ring. Mobile 0412 699 082.



Fresh produce: there was plenty on offer at the Beelarong stall which raised more than \$1000 last year

Hard work pays off in spades

By Beelarong President Geoff Cook

My first few visits to Beelarong I remember, were days of digging, mulching, weeding, composting and fertilising. Then came the task of selecting what to plant in this 8 square metres of dirt I had poured sweat and money into to make something grow. I was so proud walking into home with the first bag of my produce.

It took one meal and it was gone, so back to the plot to nurture more to grow. And so the cycle goes on. It's no different in the big picture of things. I look at we all on a Wednesday, and other times and see us all doing the same thing, and getting pleasure from it.

Sure there are days when it doesn't go right, or someone does something to irk one, but we carry on and get enjoyment from our community. The ladies who run the morning teas, deserve a big thank-you for their preparation and cleaning up. You are appreciated. The ladies who run the workshops are flat out and doing a great job, often having to run more than one session to cope with demand.

This is all income to our community. So a big thank-you to you all. There have been changes in the past few months, some good, some regrettable, just as with my first attempts at growing things, but we continue on and grow bigger and better. I thank you all for welcoming me



Geoff Cook at work clearing rubbish with the Beelarong tractor.

and the committee into your community. We have won a few battles recently. Grant wise we have new solar panels coming, a fridge for the shed that will work all year round, new community growing space, chooks, a mulching area, and no plots left for rent as of today.

There are two fund raising initiatives in the pipeline, one a sausage day at Bunnings, and another involving the local girl guides, that will add more than

50% of our income for further improvements. As always these projects need volunteers to make them work for all of us. There are grants applied for to fix the toilet for the next 20 years and stay off grid.

So as my first experience with growing produce, we all go back to the plot and continue to educate and nurture interest in sustainable living by creating a vibrant community farm within an urban environment.

Workshops for young and old



Sweet success: the jam making workshop was a great success with 18 people turning up.

By Jean Burke

At Beelalong we welcome visitors regularly to our workshops. We have a long history of being involved with Brisbane City Council's Growing Older and Living Dangerously (GOLD) program which provides free or low-cost activities for residents 50 years and over.

This year we have already hosted Cooking with Cucumbers, with

Bernice and Jean demonstrating just how versatile this vegetable can be; Cooking in a Cob Oven where we made Lemon Butter and cooked scones in the wood fired oven, both were enjoyed at morning tea.

At a Cooking Jam workshop held recently we hosted a group of 18 folk - a very busy morning. On the creative side, Dianne and Bernice ran a Recycled Hanging Planter work-



Now that's scary: happy kids making creepy bugs.

Workshops for young and old



The looks on the faces of these children show they were engrossed in this craft workshop

shop, adding plants, and macrame ropes to complete the job.

During the recent school holidays Dianne and Bernice held a number of workshops as part of the Council's GOLD'n'Kids program for seniors and children (aged four years and over).

All these workshops kept tiny fingers busy - Bugz'n'Kids had the children hunting insects before they made their own colourful bugs using imagination and a medley of craft items sourced by Dianne; Sprouty Heads was great fun as the kids painted pots and egg cartons, and planted a selection of seeds to take home. At the final workshop the kids made their own

Bugz'n'Kids had children hunting insects before they made their own colourful bugs

Terrarium by planting a tiny garden in a jar, and learned to care for it at home.

More recently we have started running workshops outside of the GOLD program so that they are available to all ages.

Leona has already run two chutney workshops, Tomato Chut-

ney which is a popular favourite and (by special demand) Mango and Chilli chutney.

We are also branching into weekend workshops at the farm making it accessible to folk who are in the workforce from Monday to Friday.

Jean ran the first one recently on a Saturday afternoon - Making Sauerkraut - where folk made their own batches and learned about the intricacies of fermenting.

We have some exciting workshops planned for the second half of 2017. So please join us. A new calendar of workshops will be released shortly.



Old friends ... Marion Forrest and Marj Dixon are Beelalong pioneers who helped shape the farm.

Marj so happy to be back

By David Costello

Petite senior Marj Dixon just loves poking around the gardens at Beelalong, doing some weeding, watering and harvesting. The US-born former teacher says it takes her back to the happy days of her childhood, when she spent hours roaming around her grandparents' hobby farm in Massachusetts.

“They had 40 acres, with meadows, a pine forest with a babbling brook and a little lake where you could skate in the winter,” she says.

“I would pick grapes, blueberries, huckleberries, apples and pears and stay out in the wild for hours.” My grandfather

blazed a path through the forest so I could just lose myself in nature. ”

You can find Marj at Beelalong on Saturdays, helping her old friend Marion Forrest.

“I just love it here,” she says.

I live at Bowen Hills
and the possums and
brush turkeys just eat
everything that I try
to grow

“I am working with friends who let you be yourself. I prefer to work with other people

because I really believe in teamwork.”

This is Marj's second stint as a Beelalong regular. In the late 90s she was a committee member and helped oversee the building of the meeting shed, the cob oven and the Windy Loo. She was drawn to the farm after meeting Marion at a Reworking Tomorrow event in Brisbane featuring renowned futurist author Robert Theobald (1929-99). Both women have strong views on sustainability and social justice and Marj came to Beelalong to see what Marion was up to.

“The place was empty then” she says. “Just open fields and

Marj so happy to be back

some sweet potatoes planted to break up the clay soil.

As a committee member, Marj helped apply for the grants that make the farm what it is today.

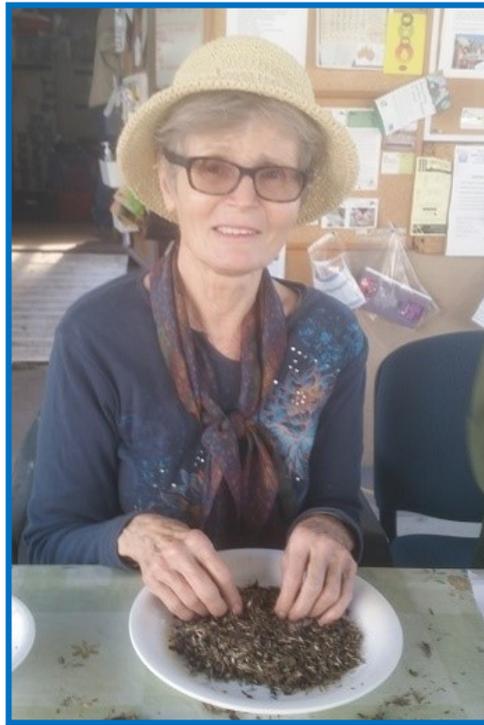
She had to step back from being a regular when her elderly parents were involved in a car crash in Washington.

Then she was busy helping daughter Felicia Druce raise her children at Geebung.

In the past year, Marj was ready to come back. Marion sent her a copy of the Beelarong newsletter and Marj turned up at the Neighbour Day event in March.

“I was looking to do some gardening too,” she says.

“I live at Bowen Hills and the



Marj Dixon sorts some seeds.

possums and brush turkeys eat everything I try to grow.”

Anyone who chats to Marj will find she has lived a long and

eventful life. She has taught in Massachusetts, Florida, Seattle and moved to Australia in December 1969.

While teaching at Goodna in the early 70s, she was struck down by a blood clot in her brain at the tender age of 29.

“I lost control of the muscles on my right side,” she says.

“The floor and the ceiling were spinning and I was in hospital for six weeks. I was immobile. They had to teach me how to walk again.”

But we don't want to give too much away. Sit down with Marj on a Saturday morning over a few cups of tea and you might get the full story.

Goodbye spiky vetiver grass, hello new gardens aplenty



Lorraine and Kevin with a new bed.

There are more wide open spaces at Beelarong now thanks to workers who removed thick clumps of vetiver grass from the area behind the hayshed. This means an extra 300 sq m of land that will soon be a new section of raised garden beds. Committee member Lorraine Holden says there are plans to lease these beds to a younger age group who could come to Beelarong on

Sundays. Already there are some new beds which utilise hardwood apple crates. Lorraine and her husband Richard, helped by Geoff Cook and Kevin Melican, recently picked up the crates from Underwood and filled them with drainage rubble and soil. The vetiver was planted to recycle waste water from the Windy Loo. With a dry composting toilet planned, it was no longer needed.

School's in at Beelarong



The Grade 9 girls from San Sisto College liked what they saw at Beelarong when they visited on June 2 and had plenty of good questions to ask.

They wanted to know how the farm engaged with the community; did it use solar power; what organic sprays were allowed; and how water usage was managed. The visit was organised by geography teacher

Gabe Lang (*pictured above at far-right*) who is teaching the girls about sustainable farming practices and alternative means of ensuring food security, namely urban farming.

She was keen to provide the students with a first hand experience of these methods. David Costello and Kevin Melican conducted the farm tour and explained the workings of the

Food Forest, the Community Garden and the Herb Spiral. The girls were intrigued to see green coffee beans, compost worms and native bees.

The visit wound up with a tasting of Dorothea Schafer's wonderful rosella jam. Ms Lang said the excursion had been a great experience and she would like to bring more student groups to Beelarong soon.



The crispy way to enjoy kale in winter

Kale is terribly good for you and easy to grow but it is a chewy vegetable that is hard to love. You can change that by making kale crisps. Celine Friche loves this and has provided a very simple recipe that appeared in the newsletter a few years back. Just remove the kale leaves from the stems and tear

into bite size pieces then wash and dry thoroughly. Place the kale in a bowl and toss with some extra virgin olive oil and sea salt. Spread the kale out on a flat tray lined with baking paper and bake 10 to 15 minutes at 180C. You can add some curry powder, yeast flakes and garlic powder for extra flavor.

It's all systems grow at CVG

By David Costello

After months of repair and rejuvenation, the Community Vegetable Garden is taking off in spectacular style.

Snow peas are climbing rapidly up the trellis, the cherry tomatoes and zucchinis are bearing produce and there is a weekly harvest of salad leaves. Co-ordinator Jocelyn Abrahams says the garden needed some remedial work before it could explode into life.

“The soil has quite a good texture but it lacked nutrients,” she said. “So we built it up with green manure crops over the summer.” That meant sowing millet and cowpeas which were pulled out, laid down and carefully covered with mulch. The green manure mix for winter includes oats as well as woolly pod vetch.

Jocelyn is a vastly experienced gardener



Jocelyn Abrahams, Lorraine Holden, Kath Dunning and Kathryn Beacham at work.

who ran a certified organic mini-farm at her suburban home.

She brings a lot of know-how to Beelarong. This includes the use of PVC piping cut into short lengths to protect seedlings and the planting of decoy crops to attract cabbage moths away from the brassicas in the main community gardens.

In recent weeks, a plot has been sown with Upland Cress, a useful plant which produces chemical compounds which kill the caterpillars from some moth

species. Another pest control measure being trialled involves plastic butterflies made by resident artist Di Lloyd. It is hoped that these ward off the Cabbage White butterfly and avoid a “brassica massacre” this year.

A quick tour around the CVG finds that a wide variety of plants are thriving.

As well as snow peas, there are sugar snap peas which are really starting to take off.

There are sebago, desiree and nicola potatoes, cabbages and cau-

liflowers, plus multiple planting of beetroot, shallots, lettuce, mizuna and rosellas. Jocelyn spends plenty of time at Beelarong where she also looks after worm farms and fruit fly traps.

She has a team of regular helpers, for weeding and watering and planting duties, including Kath Dunning, Lorraine Holden, Sonja Meltzlar, Kathryn Beacham, Patricia Adams and David Costello. Spring plantings are already being planned. Expect to see cucumbers, eggplants and more zucchinis and watermelons.