

BEELEARONG COMMUNITY FARM

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



Farm news by Sara Breckenridge

The Sustainable Gateway Learning Community Networking group recently met at Beelarong. Students parents and teachers from five local schools toured the farm and talked about how we can all help each other in the pursuit of living sustainably.

It's always great to know what's happening in our local community. Further in the newsletter is an article written by Heath, one of the students who joined in the tour.

As many of you know I am involved in the Stephanie Alexander kitchen garden program at Bulimba State School and I am happy to report we have had some good harvests from this term!

With all the winter vegetables crops we have cooked up Japanese cabbage and carrot pancakes (called Okonomiyaki), made batches of Rosella Jam and eaten lots of salads – all of which the students loved. They have learnt new cooking techniques and are coming to terms with what composting is really all about – recycling! The gardens look better for the compost but the real winners are the school chooks; lunch box leftovers and weeds are their daily snack, and in return the school kitchen collects nearly a dozen eggs a day.

Back at our farm, the bamboo has been felled and we have dug out the roots. Bamboo is very welcome in a permaculture garden, it just needs to be the right type of bamboo planted in the right place. If you would like some bamboo to use in your garden at home, please help yourself from the pile at the gates.

The AGM is fast looming - spend the morning at the BOGI fair then come and join in the fun here. We will be firing up the BBQ and celebrating all things wonderful about Beelarong. Please also consider nominating yourself as a member for the 2014 committee, we love to welcome new energy and ideas for the farm.

Sara, President of Beelarong Community Farm.

GOLD Programs

GOLD (for people 50 +)
All Session run from 9.30 - 11.30am and cost \$4 unless otherwise advertised.

Thur 19 Sep - Ukulele - Have fun learning simple chords to get you started on this trendy musical instrument, in the tranquil surrounds of the community garden. Call Brisbane City Council on 3403 8470 to book.

Thur 10 Oct - Seed saving and plant propagation - Learn various propagating methods and how to save seeds for another cropping season. Call Beelarong Community Farm on 0401 168 657 to book.

Thur 24 Oct - No dig garden - In this hands-on workshop you will prepare a vegetable garden from scratch without any digging. Collect material for this lasagna style garden from within the farm. Call Beelarong Community Farm on 0401 168 657 to book.

Thur 31 Oct - Preserving fruit and/or vegetables - Depending on the season, you will make chutney, jam, relish or pickles. Walking tour of the farm included. Call 0401 168 657 to book.

Sat 16 Nov - Compost and worm farm - It's all about recycling! Learn which ingredients to use for a good compost and how to care for a bunch of worms. Walking tour of the farm included. Call 0401 168 657 to book.

GOLD'n'Kids (for people 50 + and their grandchildren)

Tue 24 Sep - Cob oven cooking - Take a tour of the farm to collect produce to use in your cooking. Identify herbs growing in the garden while your food is cooking in the cob oven, then return to consume the cooked product.

What to plant now

(by Judith Raue)

What to grow during spring
by Judith Raue

- radish
- rockmelon
- rosella
- spring onion
- tomato
- watermelon
- zucchini

In September and October

- beetroot
- carrot
- French beans
- kohlrabi
- silver beet

Snake beans can be put in
from November onwards.

From September to
November

- capsicum
- choko
- cucumber
- eggplant
- lettuce
- okra
- pumpkin
- squash
- sweet corn
- sweet potato



GOLD workshop over five weeks

Establish and grow your own
veggie patch - a new hands-on
workshop on Saturdays, starting
on Saturday 5 October through to
Saturday 2 November.

Want to be involved? Call Beelarong Community
Farm on 0401 168 657 to book.

- Session 1: Prepare a vegetable garden from scratch without any digging, collecting material to plant from within the farm.
- Session 2: Learn the companion planting principle to plan up your no-dig garden.
- Session 3: Learn about weed identification and eradication, includes a tour of the farm.
- Session 4: Compost your garden using kitchen waste. Prepare a compost heap from scratch or a starter kit for a worm farm.
- Session 5: Cob-oven cook up of produce.

Beelarong Farm Visit

A special report from guest contributor Heath Gaydon, who visited Beelarong recently as part of a visit from local schools. Turns out we're not the only ones who think Beelarong is great!

On Thursday the 29th of August the GLC schools were invited to visit Beelarong farm to learn about their great sustainability systems. We experienced an enjoyable afternoon tea made by Sara from SAKGP (Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program) who is a part of the Beelarong farm community. We also learnt about their efforts to create a sustainable farm with many compost bins and solar panels. During a walk around the grounds, we saw their native raspberries as well as coffee trees and we were able to taste the fruits on both of these plants.

The farm had great systems such as compost bins and solar panels to have an excellent sustainability system. The big compost bins were cylindrical in shape so you could easily mix the compost by rotating them. When the compost is ready it can give lots of nutrients to the plants it is placed around. Beelarong farm is not connected to the energy grid, meaning that they have to supply their own energy for the farm. They have supplied their energy in the most environmentally-friendly way possible: - they have used multiple solar panels to supply the energy for the lights and other electric devices.

We walked around the garden and had a taste of some fruiting native raspberries and the flesh of a coffee fruit. The gardens were very good and green producing many edible vegies everywhere on the plots, which are leased by the members of Beelarong farm. At the shed they were making spots to put wheelchairs so even disabled folk can attend to the afternoon teas and the gardens.

In summary, Beelarong farm is a very productive and sustainable farm. It also is a very good place to lease a plot (as I am planning to do) and also to learn from other people. I encourage many other people to visit and possibly join as well as it would be beneficial for everyone. *By Heath Gaydon.*

Farm news by Di Ferguson



Di - taken recently at the Chelsea Flower Show in London.

Congrats to Bulimba State School

In a recent School Garden Competition, our local Bulimba State School succeeded in gaining 2nd Prize. The brief was 'History of Brisbane' and their theme was 'Dreamtime'. The garden was planted out in edible plants and flowers. Well done to all involved

Growing number of volunteers

It's not just the plants that are growing. In recent months our volunteer numbers have grown with Wednesday's numbers sometimes up to 25 people! A reminder, that we would like you to record the time you spend in the garden doing volunteering work, along with your name etc. The work register folder is placed on a table on the Wednesday.

Weed tea

If you haven't kept up with mulching your garden and the weeds have taken over, why not make use of them and make a weed tea?

In a bucket collect some leafy weeds and cover with water and a mosquito proof fabric, such as flyscreen. It is best to have a container with a lid as it turns into a pungent mixture. The mixture breaks down over a period of a week or so and turns into a dark mixture.

Dilute the liquid with water in the ratio of approximately 1:5 which resembles weak tea. You can strain the mixture if you wish.

Use on leafy green vegies and herbs or activate a dry compost. The nitrogen present in the brew will feed the plants and the micro-organisms in the soil. Don't forget to always give the mixture a stir before using.

Gardens by the bay

If you are lucky enough to visit Singapore, don't miss the opportunity to visit this amazing garden complex. It covers an area of approximately 101 hectares of reclaimed land and was opened in June 2012. The aim is to raise the quality of life with areas of magnificent greenery and flora for locals and tourists to enjoy.

Two cooled conservatories, the Flower Dome and the Cloud Dome, are approximately 1 hectare each and use sustainable building technology to provide an all-weather space in the gardens. The Supertrees are tree-like constructions with heights of between 25 and 50 metres. These vertical garden constructions dominate the landscape and perform many tasks such as, shading, planting and environmental engines for the garden.



An elevated walkway between two of the larger tree structures provides a birds eye view of the surrounding area.

There are also two different, Horticultural themed gardens - 'Plants and People' and 'Plants and Planet' - which both aim to bring plant knowledge to the public. These gardens have been designed with the environment in mind.

Strange fruit fact

Strawberries are the only fruit whose seeds grow on the outside!

A note from our resident garden blogger By Jean Burke

Next time you are at the farm why not check out our very own Australian native garden which backs onto York Street. You will find some wooden labels to help you identify plants and trees.

Children particularly may find the Sandpaper Fig Tree interesting as it gets its name from the coarseness of the leaves. Rub a leaf against your skin, it's quite abrasive. Aborigines found many uses for the Sandpaper Fig including using the sandpaper-like leaves to polish wooden objects. Birds love this tree so it's a wonderful way to attract more birds to the garden.

Another interesting tree you'll find in the native garden is the Lemon Myrtle. The Lemon Myrtle, as you would expect, has a citrus fragrance and taste. The essential oil from this tree is used commercially in soap, massage oils and lotions. It also makes a refreshing tea. Infuse the Lemon Myrtle leaf into boiling water in your favourite tea cup. Allow to stand for 3-5 minutes depending on the preferred strength. Remove the Lemon Myrtle and enjoy.

You will see Warrigal Greens used as a ground-cover plant. It was one of the first native Australian vegetables to become popular with European settlers. Captain Cook was known to encourage his men to eat them to prevent scurvy.

Please note - caution should be taken with Warrigal Greens as the leaves contain toxic oxalates which can be harmful consumed in large quantities. It's important to blanch the leaves for three minutes and discard this water. Then rinse the leaves in cold water before using them in salads or for cooking. Why would you bother? Because it's our native spinach and it's packed with vitamins, it's packed with flavour and has none of the shrinkage of English spinach.

For sheer entertainment my favourite bush in the garden is Grevillea. I love to watch the birds performing acrobatics as they feed on the flowers.

Editors note: As of next edition, Jean will be the newsletters's new editor! Thank you Jean. We look forward to seeing your fantastic talents put in to action.



Snaps from the garden (and we'd love to see yours!)



The food forest

by Craig Arnett

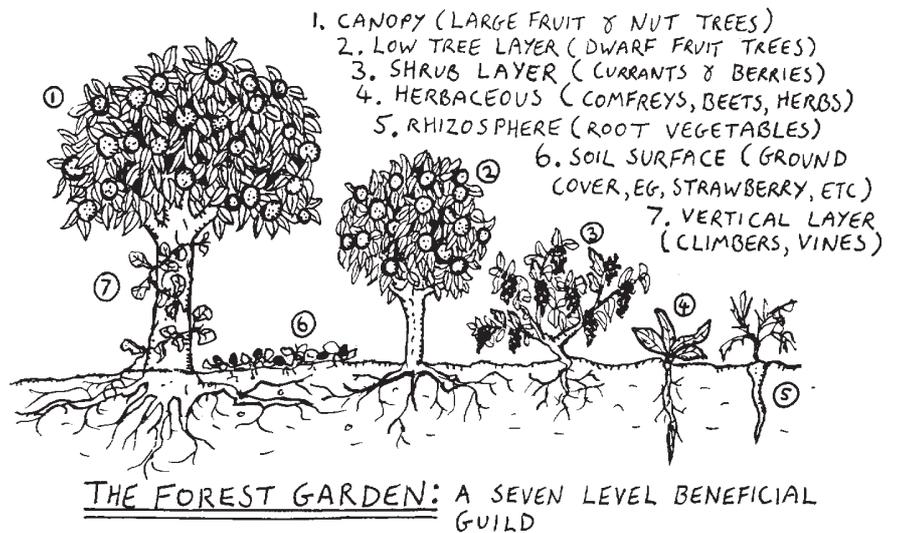
Several people have asked me to explain some of what a food forest is and why it always seems untidy with piles of rubbish and long grass. Well let me try to explain.

The idea of the food forest is to create the ecology of a forest using a variety of food plants and plants that support the food plants within that forest. Remember - we are creating a forest, not an orchard. An orchard is a monoculture and in contrast, we are trying to create a polyculture, something that is as far as possible self managing and perpetuating.

Now there are several important things we need to consider; firstly we are working from a three dimensional model, not just a flat two dimensional garden bed and secondly every plant needs to contribute more than one role. For example comfrey is a great miner of nutrients with its very deep roots, but secondly it also is a great place for spiders to overwinter and remain safe and we want our spiders to stay safe because they are the great hunters of the insect world and will eat the bad bugs that get into the fruit.

Just one more point of why a food forest is not an orchard, we plant lots of different food producing plants at every single layer of its area hence its three dimensions. Look at the picture below, we have this in parts of our food forest. Starting at the top are the sheoaks which provide nitrogen in the soil (just like peas and beans), have provided shade to the younger trees in the past, will provide support for vines in the very near future, and they will in time become fuel for the cob oven being one of the hottest burning woods of Australia's trees.

Then of course come the fruit trees of which there are nearly 40 tucked away in that little corner. We have several vines, a passionfruit and three choko (just planted) and soon to have bitter melon and African beans (a perennial bean).



Providing more nitrogen and high protein food for the soil are the pigeon peas which are dotted around. I have just planted a whole lot more to replace some that were inadvertently removed. I have just acquired some pigeon peas that are slightly different. In they go. We have some black nightshade berries (and a few blueberries very soon and John has an interesting sounding berry that can run happily along the fence behind where the jaboticaba hedge extended, its removal now revealing a happy lime and lemon.). Cherry tomatoes make up the major number of the vertical layer with a couple of cucurbits like butternut and couple of self seeded cucurbits questionable progeny, from Leona's garden. Soon there will be some oregano, marjoram and other low growing herbs to compliment the horizontal and soil surface layer.

The next layer layer is the subterranean layer comprising of two types of sweet potatoes and Queensland arrowroot which make most of their usable product under the ground.

There is one further layer not represented in this picture - the fungal layer which live on, and in, living and dead plants - chewing them up and creating food if not for us then for lots of other bugs and beasities that do good things like pollinate and attack the bad bugs. This mycchorizal zone as it is called is the interface between the soil and the plant. The fungi are fed by sugars specifically produced for that purpose by the plant, and the fungi draw nutrients to the plant through its system that can reach many hundreds of metres out. The largest organism in

the world is one of these fungi; it covers one square mile!

By allowing the grass to grow long and seemingly unkempt we are providing a habitat for the beneficial bugs to thrive, by having a good population of bugs we also attract birds, skinks and lizards thus increasing the biodiversity of the area. By utilising the 'chop and drop' method of weeding (which is self explanatory) nutrients gathered by the grass or weeds are returned in situ as it breaks down on the soil surface.

The piles of clippings and chips and bamboo will slowly break down too to provide nutrients and food to the microbes in the soil, in the meantime again providing habitat for a myriad of insects and lizards. Bamboo provides silica which is essential for cell wall strength; the sheoaks provide nitrogen for plant growth.

By removing the layers and the habitats we revert to an orchard that will require spraying and mowing, constant tidying and organising. It looks wild because it is wild, it is allowing nature to find a balance which it will if left in peace.

Permaculture is about, among other things, reducing inputs (energy) and increasing output for that reduced energy use.

Nature has got along just fine without lawnmowers, Roundup and weeding, I'm sure we can too.



We're looking for new committee members!

Why not give it a go?

A reminder - if you would like to contribute to bringing new ideas to the running of the farm consider putting yourself up for nomination to the committee. The next AGM is Sunday 13th October and members have the opportunity of sending in a nomination form the month prior. All members will receive more information nearer to the time.

Meanwhile you may wish to attend one of the committee meetings held monthly which will give you more of an insight into the workings of the committee. Management Committee Meetings are held on the first Sunday of each month between 3pm and 5pm at the farm. Members are welcome to attend – there is no need to book, just turn up! The next committee meeting is on Sunday 6 October.