

COMMUNITY HARVEST



Newsletter of the Australian City Farms & Community Gardens Network – building local food cultures

WINTER 2005

Building COMMUNITY



Australian City
Farms & Community
Gardens Network

THE FACT that over 100 community gardeners registered for the 2005 Australian City Farms & Community Gardens conference provides evidence that community gardening and city farming - the terms are interchangeable - is now an established practice in Australia's urban areas.

The movement started a hesitant expansion in the early-1990s, with the establishment of Northey Street City Farm in

Brisbane and the Randwick, UNSW and Angel Street community gardens in Sydney. Melbourne and Adelaide already has a small number of community gardens.

The second half of the decade brought accelerating growth, with the appearance of the East Perth City Farm in Western Australia, the Kooragang City Farm in NSW's Hunter region and more gardens in the capital cities. During this period, community gardening was

introduced to government housing estates in NSW and Victoria, where the pioneering work of Cultivating Community continues thanks to Basil Natoli and Ben Neale.

Many gardeners prefer to do little more than garden in the company of friends and local residents. This, of course, is the primary value of community gardens.

Others have taken on a community development role by providing courses and workshops, cultural events and other community-building programmes.

The result is a diversity of community gardens suited to different interests.

Importantly, community gardening has become a part of the growing, local food movement which promoted the health, environmental and resource benefits of growing locally much of what we eat.

...Russ Grayson

Rob Joynter tills the compost-rich soil of the Eastern Suburbs Community Garden in Bondi Junction.



community harvest community culture

Editor's blurb

First, a big, big thanks to all those who contributed material to this edition of *Community Harvest*. Your thoughtfulness brings encouraging news to community gardeners and city farmers around the country.

This edition goes out as a PDF file. For the Australian City Farms & Community Gardens Network, an unincorporated organisation without income, this is a cheaper option than printing and posting. Please print out and distribute the magazine as you wish.

Developments for the better

The success of the Australian City Farms & Community Gardens Network relies on enthusiastic members:

- thanks to the persistence of local food systems and

Permaculture supremo, Morag Gamble, the Network now has its own website URL — www.communitygarden.org.au

- thanks to Cameron Little at UNSW Ecoliving Centre, the network has its own listserver through which we can talk to each other by email; ask Cameron to list your email: cameron.little@unsw.edu.au
- thanks to organic gardening educator and local government Sustainability Education Officer, Fiona Campbell, the network also has its own website (URL above).

Fiona and a colleague, humbly assisted by the editor, organised June's successful Randwick Council/ UNSW Ecoliving Centre World Environment Day event that attracted thousands to the garden.

Local foods catching on

The local food message is spreading. At Byron Bay in Northern NSW, Helena Norberg-Hodge, local food campaigner and author (*Ancient Futures*; 1991; Random Century, UK. *Bringing the Food Economy Home*; 2002; Zed Books, UK), who played an important role in starting the weekly Byron Farmers Market, has moved into the town and foresees it becoming an example of the 'new localism' that includes local economic development based on regional foods and goods, local community-based economic institutions and local culture. Community gardens and commercial, organic market gardens would fit well into this scenario and space for a community garden has been made available at the Island Quarry community space project.

In Sydney, May's Food Fairness Forum attracted people associated with community gardens and others from the professional community services sector with an interest in food issues, poverty alleviation and urban landuse.

Also encouraging was the Sydney community garden network get-together in the linear confines of the luxuriant Marrickville Community Garden and the South Australian community gardens gathering. Local gatherings encourage and empower participants.

...Russ Grayson, editor

BORN AGAIN...

Randwick Community Organic Garden, eastern Sydney

Created in 1993, the Randwick Community Organic Garden closed in April 2000 to makeway for the redevelopment of the site.

Now it is back. Randwick City Council is supporting the rebirth of the community garden on a new site. Both allotments and shared gardens will feature in the reborn garden. Membership is \$50 a year with fees for allotments yet to be decided.

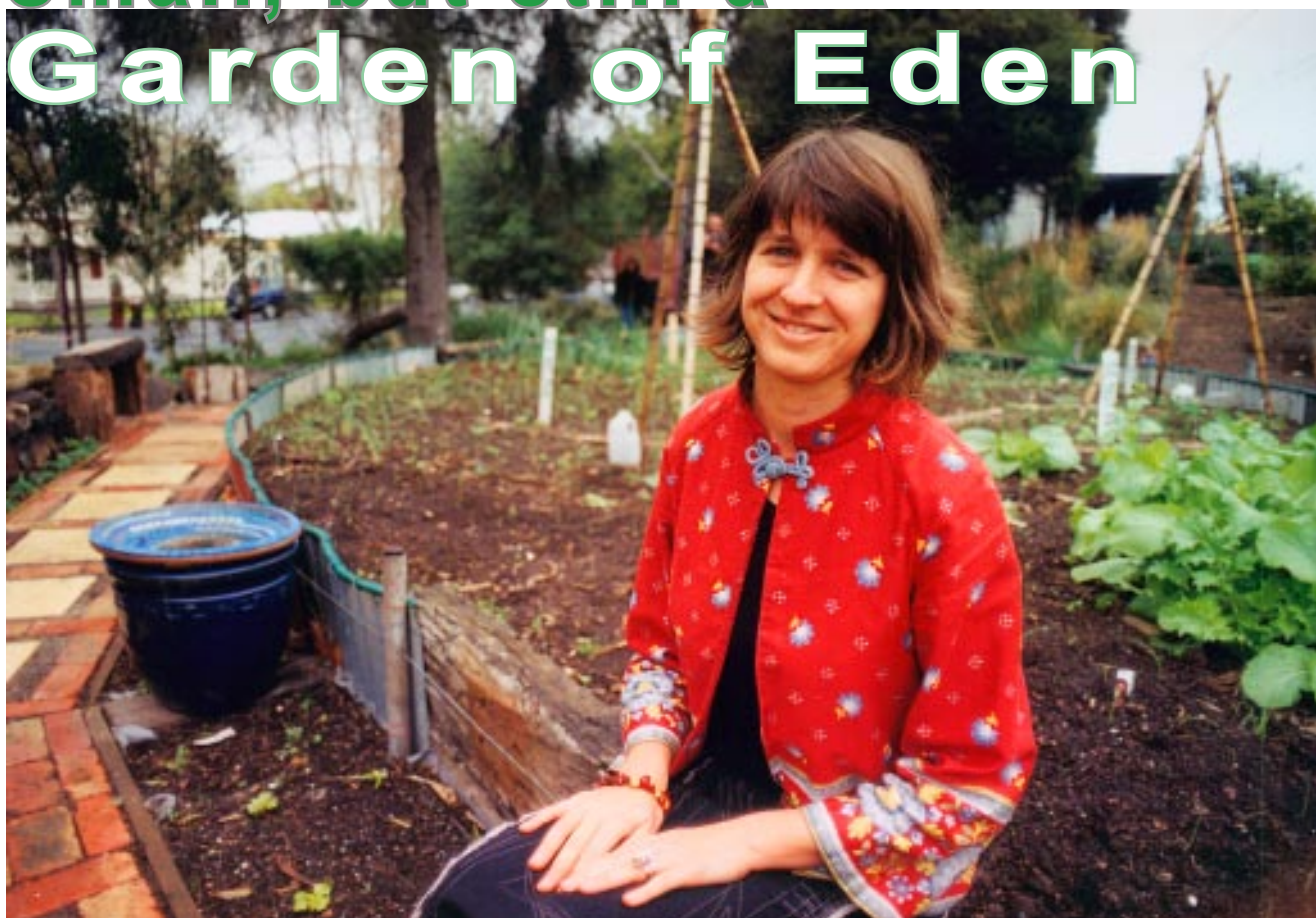
OPENING DAY: 31 July 2005. You are invited to participate in the initial tree planting.

Where: Paine Reserve, corner Rainbow Street and Botany Road, Randwick.

Information:

Emma Daniell. M: 0402 287 393 E: emmadan13@yahoo.com.au

Small, but still a Garden of Eden



A MADIS LECHTER has come a long way since The Bees Knees, the gardening business she operated at Blackheath, NSW. Swapping the coolness of the Blue Mountains for Melbourne's variable climate, she did a stint with Going Solar

before joining the Garden of Eden project in Albert Park as project coordinator. A woman with a mission to educate, Amadis also works in sustainability education and eco-city projects such as Green Streets.

Garden of Eden project coordinator... Amadis Letcher

The work of a visionary

"Dr Michael Dahan was a visionary" says Amadis. "He was inspired by Permaculture

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(left)... The mission of the Garden of Eden is clearly set out on a prominent entrance sign

(far left)... Detail in the garden... a mosaic pond of colourful tiles provides water for birds and adds an element of surprise among the vegetation



The GARDEN OF EDEN is an intensively cultivated, orderly and well-planned enterprise that has assumed a positive role in the wider Melbourne community through offering workshops and labour market training as well as demonstrating how organic food production has a place and a future in the city.

(a system of design for sustainable human settlement) and, in 2000, construction of the Albert Park Community Garden got underway. The old Albert Park railway station, at one time a waypoint on the ride from Spencer Street to St Kilda, has been converted into a multiple purpose community garden and training centre.

“A large portion of the station platform was removed to make way for the garden. The heritage railway building has been renovated to include a kitchen and dining area for communal feasting and a generous studio-style bathroom. Beautiful timber floors have been laid and recycled materials used in the open-plan, rustic kitchen. Michael roped in his three brothers to assist with the renovation of the site, two of whom, in 1995, were running the Garden of Eden Nursery and a landscaping business across the tram tracks.

“On the dole and actively pursuing Permaculture rather than dentistry, Michael was approached to set up a Work for the Dole (WFTD) program on site and in 2002 he established the Garden of Eden Foundation, a tax-exempt charitable that funds projects that support the Permaculture philosophy and the creation of urban food systems.

“Michael's vision for the site encompassed the Garden of Eden Nursery, Forbidden Fruits Café, the Garden of Eden Incorporated organization and the community garden.



Raised garden beds, a quiet garden for sitting and the old railway station building are all accessible from a wide, well-made path.

He foresaw a sustainable living education site where freshly harvested organic produce, alternative medicine, a bookshop, recycled timbers and associated businesses and services could co-exist to demonstrate ethical business practice, right livelihood and a

balance between nature and the city.

“Unfortunately Michael did not live to realise his vision but his legacy continues to unfold through the work of the dedicated people who support his dream for a sustainable future.”

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A curve of raised vegetable beds with the cobb oven and the small, quiet garden for reflection behind. The corrugated tunnel on the right is a cloche for starting seedlings early in Melbourne's cool climate.. The tramway, once the St Kilda rail line, can be seen in the upper right.





Cultivating Community's Ben Neale makes a grab at the Garden of Eden's cobb oven. The oven, examples of which are found in a number of community gardens, is used to prepare food.

Busy centre of sustainability

In cooperation with Mission Australia, the Garden has started its seventh Work for the Dole programme and participants will once again be exposed to experience perhaps more varied than at other training centre.

"The Work for the Dole team are on site two days per week and are responsible for maintaining the Community Garden", said Amadis. "They are also engaged in projects such as the propagation greenhouse, seed saving, drying herbs for teas and creating double glazing for the building with Winter Windows Kits.

The kitchen in the old railway station... fresh, locally-grown food is an important part of all community gardens and the Garden of Eden's rustic kitchen provides a communal space in which to prepare it.



When the greenhouse is ready, unusual heirloom vegetable seedlings will be available for sale at the nursery and this micro-business will support a long term volunteer at the garden. Many of the people who come to the garden have slipped through the net of day-to-day life and find that in the community garden their difference is accepted... it is not always without tensions, but things tend to reconcile themselves within a short time."

"Julia Morris, another coordinator, has been working extraordinary hours to establish the Garden of Eden Café in another of the railway buildings. The café will offer vegetarian tucker, some of which will come direct from the community garden. This continues the theme of the recycling of materials on-site including fresh produce, compost and waste from the nursery. You will be greeted by the smell of chai and roti channai and fresh vegetable dishes... the café will also provide a forum for guest speakers and a gallery space for artworks with an environmental bent."

'Railway Talks' is a catchy name for the Garden of Eden's monthly guest speaker programme. On these evenings the local community is invited to become involved in the site and to learn about environmental issues, organic gardening and sustainability.

"Morag Gamble of Seed International has discussed local

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food systems, David Holmgren (co-developer of Permaculture) has spoken on 'Can the suburbs be made sustainable?' and we have had Ted Pask on herbs. We have offered sustainable gardening workshops in conjunction with the City of Port Phillip for their Sustainable Living at Home programme.

The garden is also open for informal tours, by prior arrangement. Art workshops and yoga is offered."

A source of organic food

To walk through the Garden of Eden is to pass raised garden beds, mosaic artwork, rotting compost and the odd fruit tree. Volunteers may be busy in the Garden and the site is open for talks and courses to members of the local community.

The garden has been designed as a Permaculture demonstration site—there are no individual allotment beds. A Rotaloo composting toilet and rainflush system for the existing toilet are planned and, eventually, the Garden of Eden should be completely self-sufficient in water.

Like Northey Street City Farm in Brisbane, food is a focus at the Garden of Eden. Fresh produce is harvested each day and cooked into a vegetarian feast.

"In high summer we are blessed with an abundance of fresh basil, tomatoes, zucchinis, gourds and eggplants—a seasonal and self-sufficient diet," explained Amadis.

"On-site are both a Nectre Baker's oven, inside, and, outside, a cobb oven. Fresh bread and roasted vegetables are baked in either oven, especially in winter."

Reaching out

The Garden of Eden crew are extending their influence through the support of off-site projects. In conjunction with Melbourne's community garden catalyst, Cultivating Community, they have only recently completed the Braybrook Community Art and Garden Project in North-West Melbourne and have embarked on the re-creation of the community garden in the Flemington high-rise estate.

"For Braybrook Community Garden we cooperated with Maribyrnong City Council and key funding bodies such as Vic Health and the Department of Human Services.

"Another key project is the veteran's garden in the City of Darebin (North Melbourne.) In partnership with Cultivating Community we will work with the Department of Veteran's Affairs, Mission Australia and Reservoir RSL to modify the gardens of Veteran's to make them less maintenance and more user friendly.

"We are also looking forward to our next seed swap in April with a horde of avid multicultural gardeners from some of the housing estates" said Amadis.

What doesn't work?

"Like most non-profit

organisations, the Garden of Eden struggles to find consistent funding beyond that offered for individual projects. This acts as a brake on implementing improvements to the site.

"Juggling a variety of different roles and responsibilities can be taxing—there is always more to be done and limited time and resources to do it in.

"Our four, core staff need to take the initiative and we are working hard to foster a group of dedicated committee members who can direct and nurture the future directions of the organisation and developments on and off site".

Information: Garden of Eden: amadis@gardenofedenproject.net.au Albert Park, Melbourne.

Sydney lawns into lunch

Sydney author Jill Finnane (opposite page) has launched an inspiring book about home gardening.

Entitled *Lawns into Lunch*, Jill takes the reader on a tour of mainly small scale home gardens and shows how productive intensively managed gardens can be.

Illustrated with colour photographs and with sidebars containing recipes, *Lawns into Lunch* is a visual, culinary and intellectual treat.

Finnane J, 2005; *Lawns into Lunch*; New holland, Sydney. ISBN 1 74110 209 X

Cultivating Community... it's a CHOOK'S LIFE

...by Ben Neale

For years now we, like most community gardens, have struggled with composting and waste management schemes... the pile of unchopped corn stems... veggie scraps complete with flies swarming... and, in the case of one of our gardens, the compost being used to dump waste from local grocers.

Sound good? Well, try feeding your worms a box of oranges or whole cantaloupes! What you get is a pile of ooozzing mess with a foul-smelling liquid cascading over your paths.

We have tried many strategies — workshops and demos, all with translators for our multicultural gardens, painting signs and even the "Composting Chefs" who bring performance art and comedy into the mix. All of these have



had different degrees of success.

A chooky solution

Well, following on from our chook pilot scheme in Collingwood last year, we have constructed three more chook pens in the community gardens that Cultivating Community assists.

The process for all of them have been the same... informally target gardeners and sound them out about the idea. When there is enough interest have a meeting to decide the rules of

the group.

All run as co-ops with gardeners sharing responsibility for feeding, cleaning and of course collecting the eggs. The basic statements of the rules are the same with each garden deciding how many people can be involved, how much it costs how frequently your turn comes around as well as what happens if you can't do your tasks, and so on.

The enthusiasm in the groups has been a joy to watch, with one garden throwing a welcome party when the chooks arrived. The groups really reflected the gardens. Soon, people will be able to ask: how many eggs today? and understand the answer in many different languages

All of the pens are designed with a small door for green waste to be thrown in. We are hoping that this will be then processed in to eggs and then either returned straight to the garden or then composted. We really hope that this strategy will help our composting worries but if it doesn't at least people will be eating fresh eggs and learning to work together. together.

Ben Neale—Community Garden Program Coordinator, Cultivating Community, 03 9415 6580.

(Left)... *Lawns into Lunch* author, Jill Finnane, has a compact home garden complete with chooks. Jill has a long association with the Permaculture design system.



SPRING NEWS from the

Garden of Celebration, Western Sydney

Recently, 22 local kids and lots of helpers had a fabulous spring day in our community garden.

The kids planted seedlings — pumpkins, basil and squash that came from the Royal Botanic Gardens Community Greening partnership. They also planted some bush tucker from Nurragingy's Greening Australia Nursery and made tyre ponds of 'bog' bush tucker plants of the Cumberland Plain, such as Eleocharis ('Durawai' in Dharug), Nardoo and Water Ribbon.

Fran Dobbie from Essere ('To B) Ran some enthralling circles on how special each one of

them is, anger management and how to find their totem for empowerment.

They had a great water fight while watering seedlings with water cans, and shared a MYO (Make Your Own) salad sandwich picnic in the garden. Each child took home flowers seedlings, seeds, their own amethyst and a small card — 'Melt your anger Away' — and the memory of a fun day. The day was made possible with a grant from the NSW Department of Sport and Recreation of \$530.

Births, death and new life and the seasons have all been celebrated in our Community Gardens of Celebration.

Recently, we had our annual Spring Equinox Garden Blessing where we created and walked the labyrinth. The Labyrinth is a very ancient symbol, great for times of uncertainty, great for honouring the journey rather than the destination and the twists and turns life takes us on!

Friends of the garden, old and new were invited and we had a wonderfully invigorating time. The ritual was led by Alice Wheeler, long time devotee of the labyrinth. It was a great opportunity for the Arts in the Garden Group to show off their 'Tree if Life' mosaic mural they had been working for most of the year!

Western Sydney's... Earthcare Centre

The Hawkesbury Earthcare Centre is an environmental educational centre situated in the grounds of the University of Western Sydney, Hawkesbury Campus.

The Centre houses four groups: Henry Doubleday Research Association (HDRA), Dwelling Place, The Sydney Branch of The Alternative Technology Association (ATA) and Seasons Organic Food Coop.

On site are a passive solar building that uses a combination of environmental building techniques such as, mud brick, rammed earth, compressed block and timber frame on

a concrete slab for thermal mass. It was the first community building in NSW to receive the government rebate for a solar electricity power system in 2001.

There are extensive permaculture and organic gardens maintained by HDRA. We are currently developing a 'native section' on the site, which will also have native fish, bees and other fauna.

The centre has it's open day of the first Saturday of the month and every one is invited to come along, to see the centre, talk to people, get their hands dirty in the gardens, help out with our projects and events

also to get lots of great ideas about sustainability! We also have a gardening group every Tuesday at the centre.

Special events planed for the year so far are:

11 September – Solar House Day

16 September – Hawkesbury Community Expo

17 September – Hawkesbury Earthcare Centre Sustainability

community gardening in HONG KONG

Morag Gamble



Author, **Morag Gamble**, offers education in local food systems, accredited Permaculture training and environmental education through her business, SEED International (Sustainable Education and Ecological Design).

With partner, Evan Raymond, Morag recently spent a year travelling to research local food systems, sustainable food production and community-based initiatives.

Morag's next Permaculture Design Course:

- > September 17-October 1.
- > Hands-on Permaculture Workshop, a practical weekend program — May 28-29.

Information: SEED International
50 Crystal Waters, Kilcoy Lane,
Conondale, QLD 4552.
P: 07 5494 4833
info@permaculture.au.com
www.permaculture.au.com

Photo: Russ Grayson
www.pacific-edge.info

BETWEEN the towering apartments rising 40 stories from the pavement, a small band of local residents are doing what most thought impossible — creating a community garden in Hong Kong — the Castello Community Garden.

The initiators, Mr Tak Sang and his wife, Ada, live on the 29th floor in the Sha Tin neighbourhood. After completing a PDC at Crystal Waters in 2002, Sang and Ada decided to become weekend

farmers at O-Farm on the Hong Kong/Mainland China border. They had never gardened or farmed before — both are busy professionals who had grown up in urban Hong Kong — but they quickly learned under the guidance of the young O-farm manager, 'Monkey' (a PDC graduate from a course we led in Hong Kong, 2001).

For the entire week Sang and Ada look forward to their relaxing day in the countryside. O-Farm is over an hour from their home but they go every

weekend to tend their plots.

There is a shed there where they leave their tools and boots, so they can easily catch public transport. A favourite part of their day is when all the weekend farmers stop for tea. Then, the makeshift shed comes alive with animated conversation as they share stories, gardening tips, harvests and recipes.

Sometimes, Monkey organises a workshop about an aspect of organic/permaculture

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gardening. During the week, Monkey helps out by watering the plots and preparing the seedlings, using local non-hybrid seeds, for their next visit.

Sang and Ada return home revitalised after a day on the farm, laden with a basket full of fresh organic produce, flowers and herbs.

Their mealtimes have taken on a whole new meaning. In the beginning they would email me photos of their harvests and the delicious meals they'd prepared, arranged beautifully on painted plates. Their pride was evident and well-deserved for these newcomers to food-producing.

Longing for local garden space

While they love O-Farm and the countryside they still longed for a little space to garden locally, but accessing land in urban Hong Kong is extremely difficult. The towers and the land around them are owned by corporations which tightly control their use.

After many months of negotiations and petitioning, Sang and Ada managed to secure a small triangle of unused land — a forgotten niche between the carpark, road and the apartment complex.

For almost a year now they have worked with 20 other families, all from their apartment block, to transform the rubble into a productive edible oasis.

They still go to O-Farm on Sundays but now also spend all Saturday and many evenings in their garden below, where they grow their fresh greens and herbs.

Meeting the neighbours

One of the greatest things about this little garden, they both agree, is that for the first time they are getting to know their neighbours.

The activity in the garden has generated curiosity from the balconies above and people are coming down to investigate. It has become very popular — too popular for the little space they have — but the garden is as much about growing community as it is about growing food.

To make sure all those that are keen can get involved, and to help foster a culture of community cooperation, the gardeners have instigated a rotation system. After six months, gardeners must pass their plot to a new family and their name goes back on the waiting list. Current, past and future gardeners are always

welcome in the garden, to meet and chat or work in the common areas where there are fruit trees, herb gardens and composting systems.

Sang and Ada exude a particular glow when they talk about their gardening and say that it is positively the best thing in their life. So enthused by the benefits of local organic food and community gardening, and excited by the growing interest, they are now campaigning other building corporations.

The resounding success of Castello Community Garden is helping to open doors and soon they hope other little pockets of land will be released for more neighbourhood gardens.

In his role as Town Planner in a government agency, Sang is also working to instigate a community garden policy.

For more information about community gardens and community farms in Hong Kong, please contact Morag...

P: 07 5494 4833
info@permaculture.au.com

Read more about community gardening in the ABC's...

The Organic Gardener magazine



Australia's authoritative journal of organic living now includes community gardening.

Subscriptions: 02 8444 4490

...or from your newsagent.

LOCAL FOOD.....

.....South Pacific style

IN BRISBANE, the imaginative inhabitants of Northey Street City Farm have developed an innovative composting system.

The basic unit consists of a mesh cylinder, perhaps three metres in length by a metre and a half diameter, that hinges open to accept organic wastes. Add garden waste and water, roll the cylinders along as needed, keep moist and in a few weeks the gardeners have a batch compost ready for the nursery and garden beds.

Now, in what must be the first instance of international technology transfer for an Australian city farm, that simple but effective technology has been taken across the Coral Sea by two Northey Street's activists.

From waste to fertiliser

In Honiara, Solomon Islands, just three hours flying time from Northey Street City Farm, the central markets generate a huge amount of food residue every day. To Honiara Council, this is a waste problem.

Now, two Australian women, an enthusiastic group of Solomon Islanders attached to the Kastom Gaden Association (KGA; 'Kastom' means 'customary' and 'gaden' is Pijin for 'garden') and funding from the British High Commission is bringing together Honiara's market wastes with Northey Street's compost tumblers to turn garbage into fertiliser.

The resultant compost will be used on organic food gardens producing for the Solomon Island's first organic home delivery service. The compost will also supply a nursery, to be managed by the KGA's Fred Limia from Maliata Province, that is planned for the new project. Overseeing compost production will be another Malaitan, Freda Ruka, the project's Green Waste coordinator.

Tash Morgan, one of the Northey Street crew — who has environmental qualifications — oversaw the manufacture and installation of the compost rollers in 2004. The devices are

temporarily housed at a project adviser's home garden until the site is readied for them.

The site is owned by the National Olympic Committee which is building a new youth centre and sporting facilities and is close to Chinatown, a ramshackle district of galvanised iron and timber buildings and dusty streets along which are located the retail businesses of Honiara's Chinese community.

Landscaping for the development has been contracted to the KGA. The agency will turn the site into an educational landscape that

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...a Brisbane city farm exports its compost know-how



Emma Stone, an associate of Australia's TerraCircle development assistance team, is coordinating the local food project in the Solomon Islands

follows the course of an exercise track. Contractor, David Collaustin, another Malaitan, is constructing the track for the KGA.

Nicholas K Beia, a Solomon Islander descended from Gilbertese immigrants, and member of Honiara's Bahai community, is managing implementation of the landscaping. Recently returned from landscape training in Israel, Nicholas is overseeing the installation of educational components that together will result in a botanic garden of useful species.

"Here, near the street, we will plant a block of exotic fruit trees where the long grass now grows", Nicholas says.

"Further along the track we will plant indigenous fruit and timber trees. Food gardens will also be planted and at the top of the slope we are making a 'medicine wheel' garden. It is circular and divided into nine segments, one for each province of the Solomon Islands.

"A local, indigenous healers association has expressed interest in the medicinal garden and project managers hope they will become directly involved."

Preparing the soil

The area of the site for the tree planting has been cleared and has been planted to beans to improve soil quality and prevent the soil washing into the creek during heavy tropical downpours.



Northey Street City Farm's Tash Morton, who oversaw introduction of the compost tumblers

The flat land above is being prepared for the compost rollers and a row of curing bays in which the compost will be left to finish. It will be used in the gardens supplying the home delivery service and in the project's nursery.

Food local and fresh

There is more to the project than

the educational landscape, however. The KGA is part of the regional Melanesian Farmer First Network (MFFN) that has participating organisations at Tari in PNG's Southern Highland province, in Bougainville and Vanuatu.

Nancy Malu, the KGA worker from the distant Santa Cruz islands who is the project coordinator, will manage an

The Northey Street City Farm-designed compost tumblers



agricultural retail outlet where processed spices and other agricultural products produced by MFFN members, as well as the produce of members of the KGA's national seed saving and distribution organisation, the Solomon Islands Planting Material Network (PMN), will be sold. Part of a new building will be set aside as a cool room for the food box scheme.

"Fresh vegetables and fruit, grown in the compost produced in the rollers, will be distributed through a weekly food box scheme that will operate like a community supported agriculture (CSA) project", said Australian project adviser and associate of the TerraCircle development consultancy team, Emma Stone (www.terracircle.org.au), who trained with the Australia's Seed Savers Network (www.seedsavers.net) in Byron Bay,

Emma has a long association with the KGA, being earlier placed to improve the operation of the PMN and later returning under the Australian government's Youth Ambassador Scheme.

"The project has its origins in the 2002 PMN national conference", says Emma. "Farmers wanted assistance with marketing. We hope to provide this in the form of the home delivery service and the development of value-added products based on the processing of farmer's produce".

Most of the Solomon Islanders involved in the project have been through the KGA's farmer field school at the project's farm at Burns Creek, Honiara. The school attracts students from all over the archipelago who attend for a period of weeks or months to acquire skills in

low external input sustainable farming, seed saving and poultry keeping, most of which are potential income-earning activities."

The project takes the KGA into new territory. To date, the work has focused on improving rural food security and the associated area of nutritional health. This is its first urban project. For TerraCircle, the development consultancy, the Honiara project draws on urban experience gained in Australia as well as previous project work in the Solomons.

For Northey Street City Farm, the participation of Tash and the deployment of a home-developed technology takes them, probably for the first time for a community garden or city farm, into international development assistance.

A resource kit for South Australian community gardener



The Community Gardening in SA Resource Kit has everything you need to know about running a community garden... from designing and developing your garden, to maintaining and promoting it.

**The Community Gardening Resource Kit can be accessed online:
www.canh.asn.au/community_gardening.**

Printed copies from CAHN:

08 8371 4622 or info@canh.asn.au — \$5 + \$5 postage per copy

Produced as part of the 'Community Gardening in SA Project', which was funded by the government of South Australia through the Department of Health and the Department of Environment and Heritage (Office of Sustainability), and hosted by the Community and Neighbourhood Houses and Centres Association SA (CANH).

DESIGN ideas...



The MANDALA GARDEN is a popular form in community gardens. The shape, reminiscent of the Indian mandala used as a focus in meditation, offers gardeners an exercise in planning and building a simple geometric shape to give their garden variety.

In the centre is a herb spiral that can be used as an elevated feature in

a community garden built on flat land, however there are no figures to support the idea that herb spirals are more productive than other types of herb gardens.

Pathways are kept to minimal width, otherwise the proportion of path to garden will waste growing space. For easy access, plant taller vegetables such as corn and beans on trellises

towards the outer edges. Plant lower-growing species in front where they can be reached from the path.

The garden pictured was built at a community centre in Katoomba, NSW. On left is cohousing activist, Nigel Shepherd. The woman at centre rear is Supapon Raffan, associated with the Katoomba Community Garden and food gardens in local schools. Walking along the path is Sydney community gardens contact, now council sustainability educator, Fiona Campbell.



LEFT... Jean Peirra Chauvin built this yin-yang shaped Chinese vegetable garden at Randwick Community Organic Garden (now demolished; land for a new garden has been approved by Randwick Council).

The buckets at centre of each lobe contained water chestnut. An artistic woven edge held the raised garden together. Allotment gardens in background. A shared mandala garden served gardeners who could not attend regularly enough to hold allotments.

Photos: Russ Grayson.

ENTERPRISING ideas...



The CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) organic vegetable production beds at Gravel Hill Community Garden, Bendigo, Victoria.

Members of the public pay a subscription to the CSA farm

and receive a box off fresh, organically grown, in-season vegetables every week.

The rectangular garden beds are planted to clumps of vegetables for ease of harvest, an important consideration in small-scale commercial

growing. Deciduous fruit trees can be seen at the end of some beds. Annual flowers, part of the integrated pest management strategy, can also be planted in the small patches at the end of the beds.

The plastic tunnel in the background protects young vegetables from the extremes of Bendigo's winter.

LEFT... a Gravel Hill gardener inspects a crop of wheatgrass, grown at the community garden for sale to health food retailers in town.

Gravel Hill Community Garden, open to public participation, is a project of the Salvation Army and features ducks, chooks, guinea pigs and meat pigeons. Herbs and fruit trees are grown.

Photos: Russ Grayson.



Growing Community Connections on the border

Rebecca Chettleburgh with Bronwyn Bidstrup

OUR first group started back in February 2004. We discovered the community wanted a community garden but NOT a 'community garden'.

We put our thinking caps on. Some residents expressed their passion for learning but wanted to do it 'hands-on' in their own backyard. With the support of the National Environment Centre (NEC; Riverina Institute of TAFE), Parklands Albury/Wodonga and Albury City Council, the first Community Backyard Vege Garden group was underway. It started slowly but the momentum picked up and we now have seven groups running. Groups meet once a week and I am running five of them, all structured a little differently to each other and meeting in people's back yards or at a community-based setting.

Courses and poo collecting

The courses are run through NEC as a TAFE course. Participants enrol in their backyards and a statement of attainment is obtained after each semester. The course is totally hands-on — we focus on organic and Permaculture principles, no-dig gardens, worm farms, composting and recycling.

We go on 'poo' collecting missions as well as excursions to places such as the Harmony Herb Farm at Sandy Creek.

Communal compost, field trips

An example of a group is the self-named 'Happy Gardeners', a group of older koori women supported by Woomera Aboriginal Corporation workers and Aboriginal health workers in cooperation with Albury Community Health.

Participants are linking with past training employers for support and to identify local resources to add to the compost and gardens. This year, they are planning to go on field trips to nurseries and places of interest and having guest speakers. However, they are also great at sharing their own stories too.

Council support critical

A critical aspect in the success of this scheme has been the involvement and support of Albury City Council.

Bronwyn Bidstrup, from council's community development section, has been instrumental in building community links and networks and encouraging project development.

Other organisations involved in the planning and development of the project include Health Services in Albury and the Upper Hume region, Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care, Department of Housing, community centres, the Early Childhood Network, Sustainability in Schools Project and Woomera Aboriginal Corporation.

Interest has been sparked in a broad range of organisations throughout the region in looking at how they can incorporate community gardening into their communities. Models are being explored and we are searching for funding to enable these more diverse projects to get off the ground.

In my back yard

A really exciting partnership that is growing is with the IMBY house project and festival, held in March. This festival is run on a yearly basis and is growing stronger and stronger.

The IMBY house project is a sideline of the festival and is going to be a Permaculture learning centre where Mr and Mrs IMBY will live 'the permy lifestyle' and also where different groups and interested people can come and meet for workshops etc. It is envisaged that school groups, cooking classes, a nursery and more will stem from this project as well as members of our community groups becoming involved with the birth of this project and the use of the facility.

Happy Community Gardening to you all...

For more information, or if this sounds like something you are already doing and would be interested in sharing learnings, contact me, Rebecca Chettleburgh P: 0410 594282 E: rlchettleburgh@aol.com.

Local seed networks... a new role for community gardens

THE SEED SAVERS NETWORK, Australia's national, do-it-yourself food plant conservation organisation, makes it possible for community gardens to become Local Seed Networks (LSN).

Becoming an LSN is open to any group of three or more living in the same bioregion, registered with The Seed Savers' Network, who swap seeds and planting material with the purpose of conserving open-pollinated varieties of food plants.

The arrangement is well-suited to community gardeners who save their own locally-adapted seed, tubers, cuttings, rhizomes, bulbs etc, and distribute the material within the local region.

"LSNs, based at community gardens where seed can be stored and multiplied, promote the practice of seed saving and the importance of conserving diversity in our food crops. They can support other LSNs by sharing knowledge, skills, seeds and planting material", said Seed Savers Network director, Jude Fanton.

"They focus on the conservation of open pollinated vegetable seeds and other culinary plants. They are set up as non-profit organizations so that any revenue generated is directed back into the network rather than being distributed among members. We anticipate that LSN's will meet or hold events at least three times each year and keep in regular contact with the



Michel and Jude Fanton, Seed Savers' Network directors. Story & photo: Russ Grayson

Seed Savers' Network."

To start, the garden joins the Seed Savers' Network and, in return, receives a questionnaire. This enables Seed Savers to set up a web page for the community garden on the Seed Savers' Network website. The garden received three newsletters — which include a section for LSEs — a year, plus a small selection of seed. For \$18, postage included, a

comprehensive LSE manual can be purchased.

Annual course for LSEs: every October at Seed Savers, Byron Bay.

Information: Seed Savers Network, PO Box 975, Byron Bay, NSW 2481. P/F: 02 6685 6624 E: info@seedsavers.net www.seedsavers.net

Seed Savers Network annual conference 2005: 22-23 October, Byron Bay.

Peace Garden —

A project of Centenary Uniting Church in Parramatta

Our geographic location is such that we are surrounded by units and town houses populated by young families from a vast range of cultural and racial backgrounds. These families often have no access to a backyard and a garden.

We would love to see people from the community getting involved in our garden — this may be by growing some food or maybe just planting some plants and looking after a particular part of the garden. At present the garden and lawn area is enjoyed by 50 families who attend our playgroups ... Liz Martin

A place of dahlias, crepe myrtle, agapanthus, lilies, petunias, pine trees, palms reaching six or seven metres tall...., a place of quietness, of beauty.... a place for weddings, baptisms, meditation, renewal... a place for fun and running about for playgroup children... a place of gathering of people of different cultures and faiths... these are all phrases that describe Centenary Uniting's Peace Garden.

It all began in 1991 when Vic, a member of the church, took on the enormous task of transforming a vacant block of land from clay and patchy grass into a beautiful and tranquil garden. Over many years of long labour, and setbacks of theft and damage, the garden has become a significant part of what Centenary Uniting offers to the local community.

Every week about 50 families, from diverse cultural and racial backgrounds, enjoy spending time in the garden as part of their time at playgroup. Many of these families live in units and so have no access to a garden. It is not a community

garden in terms of growing food, though this could develop in the future. We see it as a community garden in terms of being a place of welcome for all people... where celebrations and fun take place... a place that fosters community life and harmony.

We hope to develop further the concept of 'the garden belonging to the community' by inviting people from the local community to be involved in the care of the garden through activities such as planting, pruning and weeding. It would be possible for a person or a family to take on responsibility for a particular section of the garden. It is also a great place to just come and relax in to enjoy a quiet moment or, for something a bit noisier, bring the kids and kick a ball around.

The Peace garden is located at 46 Sorrell St, Parramatta.

If you are interested in being involved in the Peace Garden, please contact:

Liz Martin — 02 9683 5023.

New garden in Nimbin

A 0.8ha block of land adjacent to Nimbin's St Mark's Anglican church has been turned into a community garden.

The project started three years ago and is managed by the Nimbin Aquarius Landcare Group, an entity set up under the national Landcare programme to access Landcare's public liability insurance. Although plans to establish a commercial market garden are still in formulation, produce from the community garden is sold to individuals visiting the site on Fridays and to shops and cafes in town. An application is before Nimbin's economic development officer for employment of a paid coordinator.

Likely to boost sales is the community garden's organic status — it is classified as 'provisional organic' and is in the process of becoming a full organic garden with the Organic Herb Growers Association.

Volunteers are welcome; like most community gardens, Nimbin's is a great place to learn about organic growing and the value of local food for local markets.

A two-page report on the gardens appeared in *The Nimbin Good Times*, the local newslaper.

The Watershed

a Sustainability Resource Centre

Sitting right on the watershed — the ridge from which water flows in different directions — the appropriately-named Watershed Sustainability Resource Centre is an innovation of two inner-urban Sydney councils.

The Watershed is crewed by a capable bunch of sustainability educators that provide support to local community gardeners, among other things.

Vanessa Johns reports...

The Watershed has been a part of the King Street, Newtown landscape since late-2002 when the NSW Stormwater Trust awarded Marrickville and the former South Sydney City councils a grant to set up a shopfront environmental education centre.

Now a central part of Marrickville and the City of Sydney Councils' sustainability strategies, The Watershed runs a range of projects including a shopfront advisory service, volunteer community educator training and support and the Urban Sustainability Workshop Series.

The Watershed's work is characterised by participative approaches to sustainability education which focus on practical, low-cost solutions.

We work with volunteers, small businesses, council staff, community groups and householders.

Food is perhaps the most accessible and positive sustainability 'issue' of all. The Watershed runs no-dig gardening workshops to assist local residents grow their own food, sells open-pollinated non-hybrid seeds and would like to support local community gardeners in whatever way is possible.

Introduction to Permaculture courses have been really popular as has our extensive reference library of food and gardening-related titles.

The Watershed welcomes visitors, and is open from 10am–4pm Tuesday to Saturday on King Street, Newtown.

Business supports local growers

From the roundabout it looks like just any other greengrocer, but look inside and you soon see that proprietors Ed Ahern and Kristina Brodie, have a commitment to supporting local growers and food processors. What does not come from local farmers is obtained from the Brisbane Markets, just two hours drive north. Both organic and conventionally-grown produce and food products are offered.

Green Garage serves as an alternative to Byron Bay's main source of fruit and vegetables, Woolworths, which holds a monopoly as Byron Bay's only supermarket. That will soon be challenged by another planned for Byron's northern outskirts. A little competition is healthy, however a growing number of people prefer to avoid supermarkets altogether, but this can necessitate a lot of commuting between shops - one of the reasons supermarkets are so popular is that they have everything under one roof.

Green Garage offers an alternative where food items can be found in one place and where the local product is prominent. The business processes its green waste through worm farming.

Green Garage: cnr Tennyson & Browning streets, Byron Bay.
P: 02 6680 8577.

YOUR STORY is valuable...

Share it with other community gardeners, city farmers and local food enthusiasts in the next edition of Community Harvest.

Send stories and ideas to:

Australian Community Gardens Network, PO Box 371, BYRON BAY, NSW 2481 or: info@pacific-edge.info

Post photos (originals will be returned) or scans on CD (at 300dpi) to above address.

FOOD COMMUNITIES - the food trail from garden to table

EATERS, growers, processors, community gardeners—we are all a part of a food community that brings us sustenance and health.

The 'food community' is a new concept that was introduced by Italy's Slow Foods movement in 2004 at the first Terra Madre conference which was attended by 4300 delegates from around the world.



The food community at work—Eastern Suburbs Community Garden, Bondi Junction, Sydney. Hand watering during the drought.

"On an international level, Terra Madre introduces a new protagonist in the field of food production—the 'food community'. Terra Madre is about rediscovering our connection to the Earth, understanding the distinctive features of food products, learning about original methods of cultivation and harvesting, exploring issues and resources. It is also an opportunity to share and appreciate unique experiences matured over time," said a Slow Foods spokesperson.

"Food community is a new phrase for an ancient concept. It encompasses the long chain of people involved in getting food to the consumer, from those who carefully select seeds and animal breeds to the farmers, distributors and merchants who ensure it arrives on our table. Quality food requires care and attention in each of these professions. The future of food and agriculture, and therefore of humanity itself, is in the hands of these people with diverse but interlinked experiences... seed savers, cooks, distributors, fishermen, food gatherers...".

Terra Madre addressed issues of concern to food communities, such as biodiversity, hunger, poverty, water, sustainability, traditional production methods, food education, organic agriculture, the role of women, the relationship between rural development and conflict prevention.

A concept of potential use

As community gardeners, we are an integral part of our local food community and using the concept and the term might be of use promoting the notion of

local/ regional foods and the role of community gardens and city farms in that.

On a small scale, the term might describe the community garden and its participants, but as a term inclusive of commercial growers, wholesalers and retailers, as well as community gardeners, 'food community' encourages the notion of the interlinking of the different stages of delivering food from grower to table and may be useful in our educational work. It raises issues of 'food miles' (an estimation of fuel, food freshness and resource consumption based on the transport distance of food from grower to eater), freshness, nutritional value and food quality.

"The concept of food quality must include such essential issues as taking care of environmental resources and ecosystems, recognizing the importance of agricultural workers and protecting consumer health", says Slow Foods.

Market day, Vaucluse House demonstration garden, Sydney.



Permaculture design - a place in community gardens?

PERMACULTURE—a design approach to developing ecologically and socially sustainable human habitation—has been with us since David Holmgren and Bill Mollison published *Permaculture One* back in 1978. Now, 27 years later, it has been restructured as vocational training.

Over that time, the design system has evolved. No longer is it focused mainly on the design of organic gardens; Permaculture is now, more than ever, concerned with building design, resource use and community development.

Many champion Permaculture as a cure-all for society's ills; were things that simple. It has played a continued role in the development of community gardening since the early 1990s but the design system is not without its critics.

The start of Permaculture's involvement in community gardening can be traced back to Nunuwading Community Garden in Melbourne—Australia's first. It was not an illustrious start.

"They laid this old carpet on the garden. It was an eyesore", was how a one-time gardener described the arrival of Permaculture enthusiasts in the garden's early years (old carpet is used to suppress weeds by depriving them of light).

More recent have been complaints about the 'messiness' of an established Permaculture community garden. "The garden is untidy. It is a good example for critics of Permaculture searching for evidence that Permaculture makes untidy, sloppy gardens", said a plaintiff who preferred to remain anonymous.

That's the bad news. It shows the potential for creating the wrong impression of Permaculture through ill-considered design and well-meaning but inexperienced Permaculture practitioners rushing in to help before gaining additional knowledge, an



example of hubris and arrogance over humility and consideration.

Elsewhere, people trained through the Permaculture Design Course (PDC) have supported the development of orderly, functional community gardens. The Randwick Community Organic Garden, started in May 1995 and now being rebuilt on a new site, was an example. It was designed as an assessment for a PDC and featured a shared, circular 'mandala' garden and individual allotments. In Brisbane, participation at the design stage encouraged by Permaculture teachers, Morag Gamble and Evan Raymond (SEED International - www.SEEDinternational.com.au), ensured that Northey Street City Farm got off to a promising start.

Using Permaculture

The first time community gardeners should seek Permaculture advice is at the design stage. Trained

Permaculture designers should bring a knowledge of site analysis that improves the chance that garden beds, compost and other components will be put in the right place according to sunlight, shade and wind patterns.

Hopefully, Permaculture designers will take a participatory approach and train gardeners in the techniques they will need to maintain their community garden.

The quality of Permaculture education

The quality of Permaculture education is critical to the design system's reputation, according to educators. Poor training breeds poor, incompetent practitioners. News about poor teachers spreads quickly

Selecting an appropriate course and checking out the credentials and reputation of the teacher are important to potential students.

Permaculture courses are offered by private providers although a number of TAFE colleges offer introductory and full design courses. The Introduction to Permaculture and the PDC are now supplemented by a number of nationally accredited courses for those with more-formal learning requirements. The approved training establishes competency standards for graduates, a higher degree of quality assurance for clients and national recognition of the qualification.

"Accredited Permaculture training provides a greater range of options to participate in training", says Robyn Francis, who has taught

continued next page...

Permaculture at Djanbung Gardens in Nimbin, northern NSW, since 1994. "Accredited Permaculture Training (APT) offers Certificate One and Two — suited to schools and people with the need for introductory-level training — a practically-oriented Certificate Three course suited also to senior school groups and a design and management-oriented Certificate Four for those seeking workplace training." Non-accredited Permaculture design courses may be recognised as prior learning for those enrolling in Certificate Four.

According to Janet Millington, a Permaculture teacher on Queensland's Sunshine Coast, "The PDC is a requirement for doing the accredited Certificate Four course and it can be done with a different teacher than the one facilitating the Certificate Four. That would provide more diverse input and develop a broader view in the student".

Robyn identifies three categories of students. "First, young people searching for solutions to their environmental concerns. Secondly, people over 30 years interested in career development, career change and new lifestyles. Then there are those enrolling for specific purposes, such as rural landowners or people interested in overseas development.

"I had a psychiatrist do the course because his wife was pregnant and he found that he'd become cynical about the world and about people. He enrolled for personal therapy, for positivism and to regain enthusiasm for life. I've had social and environmental activists who were burned out and depressed from negative protest (campaigning) enroll to regain a positive view of the world and the potential for proactive change", she said.

"A positive attitude and an awareness of the opportunities for change are what people take from the course".

Training at Northey Street

Dick Copeman offers accredited

Permaculture training at Brisbane's Northey Street City Farm.

"We have young people on Work for the Dole or who are volunteering at our city farm and older people wanting a lifestyle change or wanting to know how to manage their house block or acreage sustainably. About three quarters of the people doing our courses are women.

"Trainees leave the course with the experience of practical, hands-on training at the city farm based on a philosophy of sustainability and the feeling of being part of something positive and exciting", he says.

The Certificate Four course demands a commitment of time and practical effort, much as would an equivalent TAFE course. It is important that prospective Permaculture students work out their needs in doing a course — whether that is workplace training, skills to develop their home and garden, to work with communities or to gain a basic understanding of Permaculture.

The value of community gardens

The experience of Dick Copeman and the author (who used to offer PDC's with Fiona Campbell at Randwick Community Centre/ community garden) is that

community gardens are ideal places for training, providing the training focus covers the full sweep of Permaculture design to include the built, economic and social environments.

That nexus is now established and has been further firmed-up by the use of community gardens by Permaculture trainers Robyn Francis and Morag Gamble. The combination of community gardens and Permaculture education has helped establish the gardens as successful training venue.

Information:

Dick Copeman, Northey Street City Farm, Brisbane: dcopeman@powerup.com.au P: 0439 728 992, 16 Victoria Street, Windsor, Qld 4030 (city farm).

Morag Gamble (SEED - Sustainable Education and Environmental Design): info@permaculture.au.com P: 07 5494 4833, Lot 50 Crystal Waters, MS16 Maleny Queensland 4552.

Robyn Francis, Permaculture Education: robyn@permaculture.com.au p:02 6689 1755, PO Box 379, Nimbin, NSW 2480.

Southern Cross Permaculture Institute (East Gippsland,Victoria): scpi@tpg.com.au p: 03 5664 3301



Time for a **NEW LOCALISM**

says **HELENA NORBERG-HODGE**

CAMPAIGNERS are sometimes portrayed as perpetrating negative messages, but that which Helena Norberg-Hodge brings carries an optimism that a better future would flow from renewed economic and cultural activity at the local level – a new localism.

Now a resident of Byron Bay on NSW's subtropical North Coast, Helena is a slim 59-year old of Swedish/ German/ English extraction whose long, blonde hair enfolds a suntanned face.

When she stands up to address an audience, they listen. Her 30 years of campaigning, writing and activism on local economic issues has brought her an authority that demands attention.

She says that pessimism about the state of the world is misplaced if we take simple steps to rebuild local economies and local cultural and food systems.

Addressing an audience in the Byron Bay Community Centre recently, Helena apologised for having such a long and difficult name. Watching her effect on the audience was reminiscent of the early seminars of Bill Mollison, co-developer of the Permaculture design system. Helena, though, is no female Mollison. Her approach is softer and, unlike Bill, she does not confront an audience, relying instead on the force of fact and persuasion. Helena bases much of what she says on her experience in the Ladakh Project, on campaigns for local food systems in the UK and on the role of the International Society for Environment and Culture (ISEC), the organization she set up through which to carry out her work.

Finding solutions

Helena tells the audience what they already know... that modern life has changed... it is hurried... they have less time now... probably work longer hours and, perhaps, earn less money than before. There is little time



Food co-ops—economic and culinary localism

for family, community or personal development. This, she says, occurs " ...in proportion to proximity to the global economy—and that's not progress".

It is the increasing competitiveness of global business that brings these pressures into communities where it is individuals who most acutely feel them. To live calmer, less harried and hurried lives, Helena says we must seek first to understand the structures that make us unhappy and then understand what we can do about it on the personal and community level.

"See education as activism", she says. "Set up social and learning circles. Have groups of 10 to 15 people, who like each other's company, and discuss issues and do things together..."

One of roles of the learning circles might be to examine the ways in which governments subsidise food products from overseas or interstate, so they can be shipped thousands of kilometres to appear on the shelves of local stores at prices below that of local products and put local farmers and businesses out of business.

The new localism

"There is a lot we can do at the local level", Helena says. "We can start to rebuild local, live culture. We can start to localise".

Cultural and economic localisation flies in the face of global trends, but they are the keys to a renewed prosperity and to local security at a time of increasing oil prices and scarcity, Helena suggests.

"We can rebuild local community, encourage local creativity such as music... music without the 'stars'.

"The thing is to increase local economic activity, to become more economically literate. A part of this is rebuilding the local food economy. We need to build cooperation between producers and consumers... to look at what happens from seed to table, in marketing as well as the growing of food", she says.

Australia's expanding farmer's markets are an example of Helena's ideas about developing local economies. There were few just a decade ago, now there are many.

"I helped set up the Byron Farmer's Market", she says. "Ideally, farmer's markets should have equal representation of farmers and consumers to run them".

According to Helena, people receive confusing signals about building local food communities when 'green' industries such as organic farming strive to gain a foothold in the global food markets.

Farmer's markets, local food, local cuisine, local music, local culture - it starts to sound like a re-creation of the past. It is anything but. Helena's new localism is cosmopolitan, not parochial. It is global in outlook but local in action. And it may be the way to insulate our communities against the ravages of economic globalisation.

...Russ Grayson

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Community Harvest is the newsletter of the Australian City Farms & Community Gardens Network. Contributions are most welcome—send to info@pacific-edge.info

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Australian City Farms & Community Gardens Network: www.communitygarden.org.au

Community gardens directory:

Australian Community Foods
www.communityfoods.com.au

Farmer's markets:

www.farmersmarkets.org.au
www.ofa.org.au

Local Seed Networks:

Seed Savers Network:
www.seedsavers.net

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