

Greening & Growing together

NEWSLETTER JUNE 2011

Good health a hot topic on the South Coast

A welcoming table of morning tea greeted the 25 keen South Coast gardeners arriving for a workshop and garden visit at the Popes Road Woonona complex in March.

Elizabeth Docking from Community Greening conducted a workshop 'Gardening for Good Health', providing an array of positive messages on why gardening as an activity is such a great choice. As well as being great exercise, gardening gives opportunities for creativity and self expression. Participants were told research has shown that gardening for just 30 minutes daily will help:

- Increase flexibility
- Strengthen joints
- Decrease blood pressure and cholesterol levels
- Lower your risk for diabetes
- Slow osteoporosis

So get to it, for your health's sake! After completing a 'What plant am I' competition, all participants were able to choose a plant or punnet of seedlings to take home, thanks to our sponsors Eden Gardens and Oasis Horticulture.

Creative Popes Road gardener June James was keen to lead the group through the gardens, showing off the autumn colour of cane begonias and tibouchinas, as well as the new season vegetable plantings. June was especially



• Christening the new table donated by Northcote pottery

keen to show off the new mosaic table that Elizabeth had just delivered, donated from our generous sponsors Northcote Pottery.

Special thanks to Alison Flint, Illawarra Forum's Community Garden Project Worker for co-ordinating the day and taking Elizabeth on a tour of some Housing NSW complexes in the local area to deliver more Northcote Pottery goodies, including water features and substantial garden troughs.

Competition Winner!

Thank you to everyone who entered our newsletter naming competition. As you can see we have adopted a new name for the newsletter and the winning entry came from the Wentworthville Community Garden. Thanks to Robyn Main for sending it in. All the entries deserve some recognition, so thanks also go to Ian Ferrie, Roslyn Laws, Brian Waldron, and Helen Morrison for all the great ideas. Wentworthville win a copy of the book 'From the Ground Up – a Complete Guide for NSW Gardeners, by Sandra, Linda and Graham Ross'.

Garden Gossip Winter 2011

Unit complexes in Miranda, San Souci, Paddington, Matraville and Balmain have received assistance in the past quarter from Community Greening for the first time. We have also been able to offer assistance to units in Lismore by organising help from their local Bunnings store. Community Greening continues to grow and our services are in higher demand than ever.

Popes Rd Woonona held another communal workshop for a number of gardens in the Wollongong area in March. This workshop was on 'Gardening for Good Health'. Read snippets of information from this workshop in this edition of our newsletter.

Youth Community Greening and community education ran a two day comprehensive school garden in-service for 160 teachers from all

over Sydney and regional areas in March. With a range of workshops to choose from, teachers were offered a smorgasbord of information and hands-on activities to get them inspired for their school gardens. Overall, this in-service was very popular and many teachers asked when the next one would be held so they could come again.

School holidays continue to be a busy time for Community Greening with activities in Shalvey, Telopea, Villawood, Bidwell, Toongabbie, and Macquarie Fields keeping over 200 children learning about Easter bunnies and carrots. These activities were helped along by our very own rabbit and clown who turned up to entertain the masses.

There was a buzz around the streets of Bateau Bay in May as teams of judges viewed gardens in their autumn glory, as part of the

KBT Community Nursery Garden competition.

Entries were judged across three categories.

The three winners were:

Front Garden: Anne Castle

Back Garden: David Petree

Balcony Garden: Arthur Good

Thirteen green-fingered entrants received lovely prizes, thanks to our sponsors Northcote Pottery. Congratulations Bateau Bay entrants, you should be proud of your creative gardens.



Teachers learn the art of propagation at the in-service.



We Won First Prize! Wentworthville Community Garden

The Wentworthville Community Garden members became aware in early February of a Community Gardens section in the Easter Show.

The criteria seemed simple: 'Box of produce comprising five different varieties of vegetables'.

The idea of entering the Easter Show was greeted with enthusiasm and we decided to give it a go. Our hesitation was not having any vegetables ready to show as most gardens were empty to recover from heavy summer crops!

It was a great opportunity to focus attention on a project following the redevelopment and renaming of the Garden in October 2010.

We entered the Show. We frantically planted seeds and seedlings, watered, looked



at what was already growing, discussed possible designs and experimented with keeping produce fresh and looking good after plucking it from the safety of the warm moist soil.

The final design emerged after contributions from all present; maybe a crib with baby vegetables, maybe a wheelbarrow at the centre of the display; maybe just a box to hold the specific produce, include pictures to show the sense of community and belonging.

The wheelbarrow with box and a representation of the garden

in one corner won. Construction started and ideas were developed to try to capture the sense of community and cooperation.

The 'Mates' seed packets showed pictures of members working together.

Many members were very proud of the produce they could offer.

The Wentworthville Community Garden exhibited a prize-winning display on our first attempt. Macquarie University Community Garden took out Second Prize with Willoughby Community Garden coming in third.

Gardening for Good Health

Gardening is a unique form of exercise that allows you to do something calming, creative and fun while you work various muscle groups and get a moderate level of cardiovascular exercise as well.

We certainly feel like we've put in a good day's work after gardening for hours on end. But is gardening really considered good exercise? For the most part, yes. According to the University of Virginia, gardening rates up there with other moderate to strenuous forms of exercise, like walking and bicycling. It all depends on what gardening task you are doing and for how long. Like any other form

of exercise, you have to be active for at least 30 minutes for there to be a benefit.

What Makes Gardening Good Exercise?

While enjoying yourself in the garden, you are also working all the major muscle groups: legs, buttocks, arms, shoulders, neck, back and abdomen. Gardening tasks that use these muscles build strength and burn calories.

Besides the exertion involved, gardening has other pluses that make it a good form of exercise and calorie burning. There can be a great deal of stretching involved with gardening, like reaching for weeds or tall branches, bending

to plant and extending a rake. Lifting bags of mulch, pushing wheelbarrows and shovelling all provide resistance training similar to weight lifting, which leads to healthier bones and joints. Yet while doing all this, there is minimal jarring and stress on the body, unlike aerobics or jogging.

More Benefits of Gardening

Research shows that gardening for just 30 minutes daily will help:

- Increase flexibility
- Strengthen joints
- Decrease blood pressure and cholesterol levels
- Lower your risk for diabetes
- Slow osteoporosis

Ever thought that gardening could change the way you feel? Ask any gardener why they enjoy gardening and they will say that it 'makes them feel good'. **Could you find the feel-good factor with gardening too?**

Researchers Dig up a New Way For Women to Prevent Osteoporosis

Want stronger bones? Pull some weeds! Gardening is the best method of exercise to increase bone density and prevent osteoporosis, according to a recent study from the University of Arkansas. The researchers studied different types of weight-bearing exercise done by women age 50 and over, including jogging, swimming, walking, aerobics, and gardening. Their results showed a higher bone density in women who did regular gardening over other traditional types of exercise. In fact, the only other activity tested yielding similar results was weight training. Gardening was also the most popular choice of exercise, with more than half the subjects reporting they worked in the garden weekly.

Dr. Lori Turner, assistant professor of health services and lead researcher on the project, admitted that they hadn't expected gardening to be significant. After taking a second look at the exercise generated by gardening,

such as pulling weeds, digging holes, and pushing a mower, Dr. Turner realized that these activities were excellent forms of weight-bearing motion. In addition to the physical benefits, working outdoors in the sunlight increases the production of vitamin D which, in turn, helps the body absorb calcium. Emotional well-being is also important to the equation.

'Being outdoors is therapeutic for some,' added Dr. Turner. 'The green color of plants and the sunshine help many people's emotional health. Since gardening is a behavior that many women enjoy, they are more likely to do it for longer periods of time.'

Benefits of Gardening as Therapy

According to Diane Relf, PhD, an associate professor in the horticultural therapy department at Virginia Tech University, there are many beneficial effects of working with plants and flowers, including:

- Feelings of accomplishment. Through garden therapy, people

find a way of taking action and doing something positive. The person takes the role of caregiver and this often leads to confidence and a renewed sense of purpose.

- Feelings of hope. The miracle of life can be seen through planting seeds and watching them grow.
- Stress reduction. Peacefulness, tranquility, calming and perspective are all things that people report as additional satisfying results.
- Social interaction. Garden activities can be designed for groups, providing opportunities for problem solving and communication.
- Pain relief. The concentration that gardening activities demand provides a useful distraction technique.
- Improved muscle tone, flexibility and cardiopulmonary capacity.
- Creativity and self expression
- Enhanced self-esteem and improved mood.
- Motor skill development.

Digging the Dirt on Community Gardeners

Your Name: Evan Harris

Community Garden:

Glenquarie Outreach
Permaculture Garden

How long have you been involved with the Community garden?

Three years now. I built it with the help of Macarthur Permaculture Group in 2008.

Who or what inspired you to become a gardener?

I was recovering from depression and post traumatic stress. I had lost my career in the Navy, my house, my wife and my father within 18 months, and then I moved to Glenquarie. It was here that I discovered my love for gardening and growing things. The first thing I ever grew was a tomato which was really big. The plant was a metre high and a metre wide and the tomatoes were huge. Every time I ate one of those tomatoes, I realised I loved gardening.

How regularly do you visit the community garden and what is your favourite gardening activity?

I visit everyday for 1 or 2 hours. Every Tuesday I study permaculture in the garden for 4 hours with 12 other students, as part of the outreach program with TAFE and

Glenquarie Anglican Church. My favourite activity is harvesting the produce or watering.

What is the best thing about working in a community garden?

The camaraderie of meeting different people from all over the world. We have about 7 language groups that meet here.

What is your favourite plant to grow and why?

I love chillies and peppers because they are great at keeping pests away.

What are your most memorable achievements in the community garden?

Winning an award in the 2010 Macquarie Fields Gardening Competition. We originally entered in the large organic garden section but were categorised as a service and agencies garden — and we won. We won a certificate and a \$70 voucher for Coles which we used for some tools and shelving for the garden.



• Evan Harris in his Glenquarie Outreach Permaculture Garden

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