

# Greening & Growing together

NEWSLETTER SPRING 2015

## Friendships grow from Gardens

When Gwen recently attended a Tomato Growing workshop with Elizabeth from Community Greening, she had no idea that a special surprise had been organised in her honour.

Friends from Lethbridge Park Community Garden had arranged a small party to celebrate Gwen's 75th birthday!

Keen gardener Savi had been cooking and decorating a birthday cake and delicious Sri Lankan delights for many hours the previous day. She had also been filling people in on the plan, including the team in the community kitchen who kept the party food secreted from Gwen.

The Lethbridge Park Community Garden is a small space with only three garden beds. It was built by Boystown in 2010, with many saying it would not work. However, over the last five years a variety of passionate helpers – like Gwen and Savi – have made this park a place for friendships and food to be grown and shared.

The surprise birthday event for Gwen was a fun and happy occasion, demonstrating the strong friendships that have evolved from Community Gardening.

If you have a story to share about your garden project, please submit details and a photograph to include in a future newsletter.



• Photo: Gwen with her birthday cake  
• made by Savi

**SAVE  
THE  
DATE**

## Annual Community Greening End-of-Year Event.

We have set the date for the annual Community Greening gathering for Tuesday 8 December 2015.

This year we have chosen the Australian Botanic Garden Mount Annan (Campbelltown area) as the venue, with a highlight being a visit to the Australian PlantBank. We will give you the opportunity to explore this exciting new conservation centre and we may even get the chance to see 'behind the scenes'.

Limited transport can be arranged from Campbelltown train station, so we would encourage you to start organising a community bus for the day to take your group around the large site. The Garden, itself, covers 416 hectares, so it is too large an area to cover on foot.

Numbers are strictly limited so we encourage you to register your interest via email or phone as soon as possible and to let us know if you are likely to have your own transport.

**RSVP by 1 November 2015**

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# Tomato Festival 2016 just got hotter!



• Costa Georgiadis, host of ABC's Gardening Australia, samples heirloom varieties at the 2015 Festival.

The award-winning Tomato Festival Sydney promises to be bigger, tastier and hotter in 2016 – and not just because we've introduced a chilli theme!

In 2016 we will be celebrating the 200th Birthday of the Royal Botanic Garden Sydney and we'll be partying in style. So show your love of the Garden by coming to our Festival of the 'love apple'.

To be held 20 - 21 February 2016 (10 am to 4 pm each day), the program is jam-packed with exciting, fun and delicious activities for all members of the family.

Central to the Festival will be our 'best-in-show' competitions based around tomatoes and chillies:

- Tomato Passata Sauce Challenge
- Tomato Relish/Chutney Challenge

- Best in Show Home-Grown Tomatoes
- Chilli Sauce Challenge.

There will be an eclectic program of free activities for the whole family, as well as some very special and exclusive ticketed events with experts and celebrities.

The Tomato Festival Village will again be the event epicentre and home to an expanded range of celebrated Australian producers, insightful cooking demonstrations, children's games and the ever-popular Relish 'pop-up' cafe and bar featuring mouth-watering and innovative tomato-inspired dishes.

Discover the best fresh local and heirloom produce for sale in addition to fine cheeses, olive oils, vinegars, condiments, herbs, plants and botanically-inspired gifts.

At 11.30 am each day we'll also call upon you to be the judge at our taste-testing event – where you'll help us in the quest to uncover the best, juiciest and most unusual tomatoes.

**Stay tuned for more program announcements.**

Other highlights include:

- A four-course tomato-themed luncheon set in the stunning Botanic Gardens Restaurant

**When:** Saturday 20 February and Sunday 21 February, 12 midday – 2 pm

**Cost:** \$69 per person

**Bookings essential:** email [events@botanicrestaurant.com.au](mailto:events@botanicrestaurant.com.au) or phone (02) 9241 2419.

- Talks & Guided Walks  
Join top growers, Royal Botanic Garden staff and industry experts on a range of free and ticketed talks and walks including the one hour free Volunteer guided walk 'From our Garden to the Table' (11 am and 2 pm on 20 and 21 February).

- Pizza Plants  
This hands-on pizza-making activity will let your kids take their taste buds on a delicious adventure to find pizza ingredients growing in the Garden. Suitable for children aged 6-12 years old.

**When:** Saturday 20 February and Sunday 21 February, 10.30 am – 12 midday and 1 – 2.30pm

**Cost:** \$18 per child (members' rate \$16.50 per child)

**Bookings:** [www.pizza-plants.eventbrite.com.au](http://www.pizza-plants.eventbrite.com.au)



In the lead up to the Festival, Growing Friends will have heirloom tomato and chilli seedlings (grown from Diggers seed) available for sale.

For more details visit the Garden's website [www.rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au).

# Top 6 Tips for Disease-free Tomatoes

Spring and summer are ideal months for growing tomatoes, however they are susceptible to diseases that can affect the plants and fruit. Most diseases are soil borne, so here are a few tips to ensure you grow disease-free tomatoes.

1. It is vital that you practise crop rotation as part of your disease control strategy. Leave garden beds for at least four years before growing any plants in the Solanaceae family (including tomatoes, chillies, eggplants, capsicum and potatoes) in the same area.
2. Maintain good drainage by growing your tomatoes in raised beds.
3. Keep air circulating around your plants by pruning or provide extra space between plants.
4. Disease can also be spread on tools, stakes, boots, clothing, gloves and hands, so be sure to sterilise equipment, wash clothes and clean your hands regularly when handling tomatoes to help reduce infection.
5. Control surrounding weeds which can be a common source of infection.
6. Avoid overhead watering which spreads spores. Plant disease-resistant varieties where possible, including Roma, Green Zebra and Jaune Flamme.

## Did you know:

Smokers can spread the Tomato Mosaic Virus onto plants with their fingers. Wash your hands after smoking or wear gloves if you like to grow tomatoes.

*Information source for Top Tips:  
Organic Gardener magazine  
October 2014*



# A Morning with Newpin Families

Newpin Fathers' Centre in Bidwill works with dads on the path to gaining restoration of their children. Elizabeth from Community Greening visits the Centre to work with the fathers and their children in the garden. The gardening session is often followed by a creative activity with a plant theme. This is a snapshot of what the group got up to in August:

## 10 am.

Elizabeth and Graeme prepare the garden for the families, weeding and spreading manure.

## 10:05 am.

Smiles, hugs and kisses all round as dads and their children meet up. They share morning tea prepared by the Newpin staff.

## 10:15am.

Everyone heads towards the huge backyard with some dads and children wandering into the garden to see what is going on there.

## 10:20 am.

Time to harvest snowpeas and cherry tomatoes planted earlier this year. Some make it to the bowl. A father and son use all their might to pull the leeks for Thom to make a tasty dish.

## 10:30 am.

Gloves on, trowels in hand. Time to plant a yellow cherry tomato plant and some snake beans.



• A selection of artwork created by dads and children.

## 10:40 am.

Kids are digging to China. Great fun! Graeme fills the large plastic box with water for the kids to water the garden.

## 10:45 am.

Sleeves are rolled up. Kids are into watering and playing. Lucky the sun is out so their clothes can dry off!

## 10:50 am.

Last of the cherry tomatoes have been eaten by the children. Yum, yum.

## 10:55 am.

Let's get crafty. Elizabeth displays the huge leaves she found when walking in the Northern Territory when on holidays. Leanne prepares the red, yellow, orange and black paint and some ear buds.

## 11 am.

They are into it! Dads and kids are creating colourful dot and swirl art, first with leaves and then on pebbles and bark found in the garden.



## 11:15 am.

There is more paint on their hands than on the leaves, but what the heck. They are being creative and having fun!

## 11:30 am.

Dads inspire their kids with the pieces they have created. Their artistic skills and Indigenous backgrounds are really shining now.

## Midday.

After all this activity everyone needs some food. Time to pack some painted rocks into the back of the pedal car and off to lunch.

What a great way to spend the morning outdoors with precious children and their Dads.

# Digging the dirt at Chester Hill

We 'dig the dirt' in this issue with Daniel Zu and Sai Yu Mon (Sai) – members of the Burmese community from Chester Hill Community Garden.

## Where were you born?

**Daniel:** Both of us are originally from Burma. Sai comes from Kachin State and I come from the Karen State.

## How long have you been living in the area?

**Sai:** I've been living in Berala for around five years.

**Daniel:** I've been in Australia for seven years, and I currently live in Fairfield.

## In your opinion, what is the best thing about the Chester Hill area?

**Daniel:** I like the area as rent is more affordable here – as well as food. There are lots of services available in the area, and good diversity in terms of culture.

**Sai:** I like Berala – it is generally a very peaceful suburb, although there have been some shootings in the area. Most of the Burmese community live in and around Berala. I really value the accessibility of public transport here, especially since I am on the pension. One disadvantage for late-comers to the area is that the price of rent is always going up. But Berala is still a cheap place to live.

## How long have you been involved with the garden?

**Daniel:** I've been involved with the community garden for five years.

**Sai:** And I have been involved for three years.

## What is the best part of being involved with the garden?

**Sai:** Being involved with the community and having the chance to be helpful to my community. We have a good fellowship among group members, and it is a great space for socialising.

**Daniel:** For me, it's meeting community members who come from different backgrounds. Breaking down community and social isolation. Being able to grow vegetables that we used to grow in our country. Being able to share what we have. Projects like these are important to people who have lived in the countryside.

## What's your favourite thing to grow in the garden?

**Sai:** I like to grow traditional plants – herbal roots and also shan coriander. Herbal root tastes like garlic. We chop it and fry it with minced meat. We use shan coriander for soup or with beef curry and fish. We also grow chillies and roselles\*.

\*Roselle is a species of Hibiscus. The leaves are used as a vegetable in Burmese cooking.



• Daniel (tall) and Sai 'digging the dirt' at Chester Hill Community Garden

## Do you have any gardening tips to share?

**Daniel:** We always use natural compost and animal manure - no chemicals.

As Burma is a tropical country, all our traditional vegetables and plants do well in summer – but you have to take extra care of them in winter.

## Can you share a recipe that you can make with something grown in the garden?

We use the leaves of the shan coriander and herbal roots to cook fish. You can use the same herbs to add to minced meat and fry it together.



Did you know that the Royal Botanic Garden Sydney and Community Greening are on Facebook? Go to the Royal Botanic Garden Sydney Facebook page.

**Community Greening** is a partnership program between the *Royal Botanic Gardens and Domain Trust* and *Housing New South Wales*. **Youth Community Greening** is made possible with generous financial assistance from the *Eden Foundation*.



Partnership



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