

NORTHEY STREET CITY FARM



2014 ANNUAL MAGAZINE

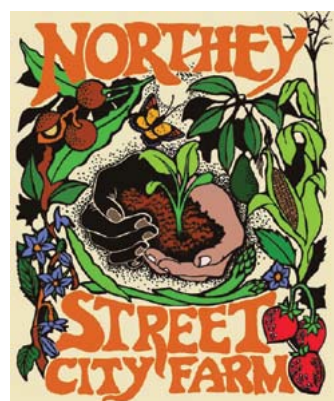
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NSCF Supporters

We thank the following for their support of our program this year:

- Our members
- Brisbane City Council Active Parks Program
- Gambling Community Benefit Fund
- Epic Employment Service Inc.
- Help Industries
- Bunnings Hardware



NSCF's Vision

We aim to create a working model of a cooperative, community based, urban Permaculture farm which demonstrates, promotes, educates, celebrates and advocates for environmental and economic sustainability in a healthy, diverse and supportive community.

NSCF'S MISSION

We are a dynamic, creative and diverse city farm based on mutuality, innovation and environmental sustainability

*Permaculture
in the heart of Brisbane...
a place for learning about
living sustainably
in the city*



The year that was... Farm closure

The first half of 2014 was great – the Farm had never looked better. The Community Gardens network gathering started the year with interesting discussion. We celebrated our Twentieth Anniversary on 5 April with a Garden Dinner with some of the people who have helped to create the Farm as it is today. The infographic on the back page shows some of our activities in the last financial year.

By June, we were making increasing sales from our market garden and we were planning for the Winter Solstice Festival to feature a lantern parade through the site. Then, the day before the festival, Brisbane City Council fenced off the site as one of their officers had seen some building waste on site and the soil would need to be tested for contamination. The Festival was moved into the Carpark and went ahead in a reduced but fun form.

Then we waited for the results of the tests to come in. Almost 1100 people signed the petition asking the council to re-open the Farm as quickly as possible. Supporters decorated the fences with bunting and messages of support. Two months after the closure we finally received the results. The main findings of the soil testing were that a number of areas of the site are contaminated by asbestos as fibro, and some areas of the site have higher than recommended levels of lead present in the soil.

Council asked us to prepare a management plan that ensures that contact by people and food plants with the contaminants is prevented. The plan includes:-

- all gardens to be in raised beds lined by semi-permeable landscape cloth and filled with clean soil
- all walkways and bare soil to be covered with grass, paving, deco, mulch, etc.
- no access to the soil by chickens- alternative deep litter bedding systems will be required
- all farm produce to be washed before eating and young children to be supervised to ensure they don't eat dirt or unwashed vegetables.

Following the Permaculture Principle to "creatively use and respond to change", we are using the opportunity to create a demonstration of different types of raised garden beds in the Kitchen Garden. As well as the conventional corrugated metal and timber beds, we have reused bath tubs and pallets and are even looking at an old fridge. We are also planning a revamp of the Backyard Garden to showcase small space and container gardening techniques. The permanent summer chicken run will be moved close to the office and demonstrate a deep litter system. Altogether this area should be reborn as a great resource for our workshops and schools visits.

Thanks to the excellent efforts of our volunteers, the first of the new raised beds in the kitchen garden have been completed. Wicking beds made from old bathtubs have been filled with clean soil and planted with herbs and leafy greens. The bathtubs were mounted on wooden frames by the Reclink Work Skills team under the supervision of Steve Hutchinson and then overflow pipes and water reservoir were installed by Trevor and Ian from the Rust Busters volunteer crew. Council delivered clean soil, cow manure and sand and volunteers mixed the three ingredients and fill the tubs. The old soil from the large existing raised beds was removed by an energetic crew on Saturday mornings and they were re-filled with clean soil by other energetic weekday volunteers.

One of the major tasks has been upgrading our paths and open areas with new decomposed granite capping and mulching all the orchards and garden beds on the northern side of the Farm. The Children's Area has a new sandpit and path, as well as a heavily mulched shady play area. We'll be building some raised beds beside the path for the playgroups to use to grow vegetables.

The next area to be rebuilt will be the Allotments, and we expect that the Farm will be completely open by the middle of next year. There is lots of hard work ahead and we encourage everyone to join one of our working bees.

***With the amazing efforts from our volunteers and supporters
the Farm is resilient and will be renewed and revived.***



Twenty Years

and still going strong...

April 2014 marked the twentieth anniversary of Northey Street City Farm.

We celebrated by inviting many of the people who had helped to create and build the Farm to a Garden Dinner. It was a great opportunity to share memories and catch up with old friends. Morag Gamble and Dick Copeman both spoke about the initial ideas around setting up the Farm, and the early days on the site. A display of photos of the Farm brought home how much had been achieved and how many different groups had been involved. Some of these photos are on pages 10-11.



What do members want the Farm to be doing in the future?

Ronni Martin

We have grown and developed over the past twenty years, despite floods, fire, and managing soil contamination in the past few years. Each time the Farm community has rallied and rebuilt. We are presently reassessing our use of the site to adapt to the requirements for managing soil contamination. Coincidentally we are due to develop a new 5-year strategic plan to guide our activities.

The first stage in developing a new 5-year plan was a survey to find out what our members want us to be doing in future. A link to the survey was sent to our 245 current members and 49 people responded to the survey.

Some people praised the way we operate now and suggested we consolidate and strengthen our existing activities, rather than make major changes. However, many concrete suggestions were made for improvements to each team's operations. Other suggestions were for improvements to the organisational processes or for new activities. These will be explored in the Scheming and Dreaming workshop in January 2015 and in the detailed planning that follows it.

One consistent theme in the responses was the need for NSCF to reach out more often. We should do more advocacy for change to a sustainable system in the wider society. And we should build links with other organisations like community gardens and environment action groups.

Another theme was the role NSCF has in providing a sense of community for its visitors, volunteers and staff. For example one respondent saw the Farm's contribution as to "Provide community and stability in time of isolation and change".

Some respondents felt that we needed to be more explicit about our Permaculture focus. Three respondents suggested we add a Permaculture reference or reference to Permaculture ethics to our Mission Statement. This was reinforced in responses to other questions e.g. 'Adhering more to Permaculture principles and Permaculture extension work.' And 'walking the talk more'; 'embedding permaculture principles'.

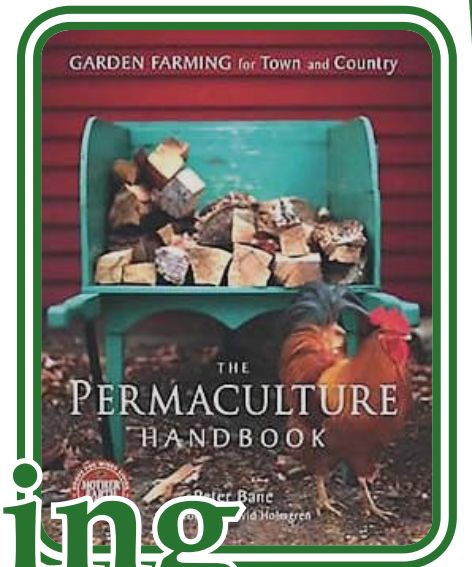
There will be more opportunities for input as the process continues, so if you have ideas for what we should be doing in future, please contact Ronni Martin.

Garden Farming

- Permaculture in the Suburbs

A review by Dick Copeman of: Bane, P. (2012) The Permaculture Handbook: Garden Farming for Town and Country. New Society Publishers, Canada, (with a foreword by David Holmgren).

Dick Copeman



As the long term sustainability of industrial agriculture becomes less and less assured, the post WW2 sprawl of suburbs over fertile farm land surrounding cities in North America (and Australia) has inadvertently created opportunities for the emergence of 'garden farms' in the suburbs.

Peter Bane, former editor of the US based Permaculture Activist magazine, moved with his partner from the rural mountains of North Carolina to a quarter hectare block in the suburbs of a small town in Indiana in 2006. They applied permaculture principles and practices to transform their property into an urban 'garden farm'. In The Permaculture Handbook, Bane proposes that this pattern for a 'democratic yeomanry' will increasingly provide a new way of producing food sustainably and creating ethical livelihoods where people live. He draws on David Holmgren's permaculture principles and ethics and bases the book on the inevitability of energy descent and the opportunities and constraints that will accompany it.

Backyard gardening can be more than just an enjoyable hobby. According to Bane, if bio-intensive, regenerative farming methods are used, just one-seventh of a hectare (1400 sq.m.) is sufficient to provide food for a complete diet for one person. Not that individual 'self-sufficiency' should be the goal. The pattern of suburban garden farming that Bane proposes is one of a mosaic of small enterprises utilizing backyards as well as vacant, abandoned and common land, sharing produce with neighbours and selling the surplus at roadside stalls and local markets.

Small, intensive garden farms are labour intensive, but the demands for labour can be managed by careful design and seasonal planning, 'no-dig' soil management and the use of perennial plants. Extra labour can come from family members, especially the young and the retired, as well as from interns, WWOOF'ers and share farming partners. Farming has always been a group activity, and in this time when most people have lost their connection to the land and have little experience of practical work on the land, the culture of garden farming has to be centred on hands-on doing and learning with others.

Bane emphasises the importance of meeting over food in facilitating the coming together to "capture energy in the form of voluntary or traded labour". Good food and a healthy diet begin with healthy soil, and rely on working with the seasonal garden cycles.

Farming has always been a group activity, and ... the culture of garden farming has to be centred on hands-on doing and learning with others.

Good soil requires plenty of organic matter and a healthy soil life. Bane states that the most effective way to introduce organic matter directly into the deeper layers of soil is to grow roots in it by cultivating plants and that the goal for the next century must be to raise carbon levels in the soil as we lower them in the atmosphere.

Bane is a practising permaculture designer, with a good eye for functional design outcomes. His exposition of how to utilise and modify micro-climate in permaculture design is the clearest I have read. He also creates a lively 'pattern language' of elements within garden

farming and the linkages between them. Patch gardens, catch crops, zones of accumulation, communal labour, public-private gradient, shifting enterprise and even communal bathing are just a few of the terms in Bane's comprehensive and thought provoking pattern language.

He is also an experienced permaculture teacher, with a knack for clear, simple messages that all permaculture teachers strive to convey. Two that appealed to me were a diagram with weeds as the first level of ecological succession and a succinct treatment of pests and diseases within a chapter entitled Living with Wildlife.

This book is not just a treatise on the principles and theory of Permaculture. It also contains many practical descriptions of a range of useful techniques, including:

- how to estimate the height of trees and structures by measuring with the body, using the principles of triangulation
- how to use swales, terraces, pits, water bars, check dams and gabions for managing and harvesting water,
- how keyline ploughing works
- how to store and propagate seeds
- how to plant a tree
- keeping smaller animals, including quail, guinea pigs and rabbits, and even
- how to minimize water use for dishwashing

It also includes informative and well-illustrated case studies from throughout North America, including one of the author's own property.

Some sections of the book, such as those on structures and food preservation, are oriented to cool temperate zones with cold winters when not much grows, and where preserving summer surpluses for consumption in winter is more important than in subtropical and tropical climatic zones, where food can be grown all year round.

However, this book has relevance far beyond its North American origin. For example, it highlights the contrast between tropical areas, where most of the mineral fertility in the ecosystem is stored within the plants themselves and only 20% is stored in the soil, with temperate areas, where 95% of nutrients are stored in the soil. It also mentions that biochar can serve the same role in tropical soils as humus does in temperate regions.

Bane's 450 page magnum opus is a worthy successor to Bill Mollison's Permaculture Designers' Manual, and just as encyclopaedic. Delightful to dip into, every page contains a permaculture 'gem'. It is a highly recommended resource for all permaculture teachers, practitioners and students.

And finally, if you want a clear description of the way forward for us all in the face of the looming threats of climate change, energy descent, economic disruption and degraded natural systems, just read the last two pages of this inspiring book.

The Permaculture Handbook: Garden Farming for Town and Country is available for loan from the Farm Library.



Education in 2014

Kristy Walters

*"One of the kids
this year said it was
the best pizza she's
ever tasted!"*

A team of Northey Street crew set up a Plant a Seed workshop during the Queensland Week at South Bank Piazza. Over 100 kids and parents came through, decorated their pots with Earth Arts, learning about free art supplies from the art, and then planted a seed to take home. We brought out the Eency Wincy song though we didn't have any performers on the day.

Early in the year we had a number of school groups come visit the Farm and participate in our Cob Oven Pizzas activity. We've had after-school groups and Year 9 Blokes Who Cook groups make their own pizza dough, select seasonal herbs and other goodies from the gardens to put on their pizzas and then get to eat them. One of the kids this year said it was the best pizza she's ever tasted!

We offered a few new workshops this year: Lantern Making for our Winter Solstice Festival, Natural Plant Dying led by our multi-skilled Enterprise Manager Linda Parmenter with students making beautiful designs, and Software for Permaculture with Tim Auld. Look out for more of these workshops next year.



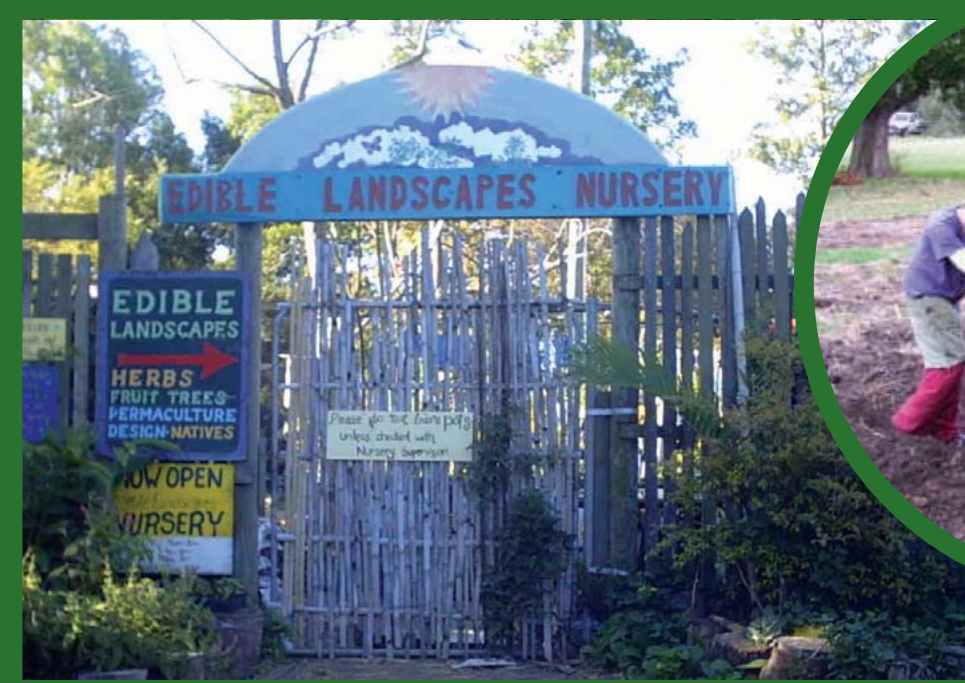
Workshops



VOLUNTEERS



20 Years





Celebrations and Activities

SEQ Community Garden Gathering

In February this year Northey Street restarted the tradition of community gardens getting together to share ideas and connect with each other. We hosted about 40 people from community gardens as far south as Jimboomba COMMUNITY Garden and north to Mango Hill Community Farm.



Start-up and established Community Gardeners shared their experiences and ways of doing in areas including recruiting members, making compost, working with local governments and fundraising. This will become an annual event, at a different community garden each year.

Next year's gathering will be hosted by Graceville Community Garden, keep an ear out for the date.



Food 4 Thought Conference

Kristy Walters

In March two of the Northey Street crew headed to Tasmania for the Australian City Farms and Community Gardens Conference.

We (Scott the Site Manager and Work for the Dole Co-ordinator and I) ventured south to learn from the experience of over 150 community gardeners from all over Australia. The overall theme for the event was "exploring meaningful livelihoods in urban agriculture" and they certainly delivered on that.

The first day we spent visiting the amazing community gardens around Hobart from school gardens complete with pizza ovens built from 200L steel drums and amazing kitchen garden programs to community gardens with polycarbonate greenhouses and espaliered stone (!) fruit trees and on to an innovative collaboration between a school and a community-supported-agriculture initiative that co-ordinates what produce farms will grow to feed around 40 families.

Some highlights were the inspirational talk by Harry and Bonnie Wykman from Black Earth Workers' Collective about bio-intensive gardening, and a complete opposite theory espoused by Steve Solomon of spacing out plants to grow bigger, faster. We learnt of the amazing effort from the Australian City Farms and Community Gardens Network to map all the community gardens in Australia – check it out on the website – www.communitygarden.org.au

Scott and I gave a presentation about how our Work for Dole program works and answered as many questions as we could from smaller community gardens wishing to set up something similar. There are at least four folks going through our program at Northey Street that have gotten jobs through references from us. Great to know we're making a real difference in people's lives.

Another unique idea from the conference was their crowd farming campaign, yep you read that right, the organisers co-ordinated an enormous amount of home grown produce from urban vegie patches and market gardens to feed the hungry mouths at the conference. And it was all the more delicious for the local support.

All up it was an amazing opportunity to connect with other progressive people working on urban agriculture towards building a resilient food system in Australia. We made some special friends, including this hairy fellow! (See photo right).



Big plans for the Edible Landscape Nursery

Linda Parmenter

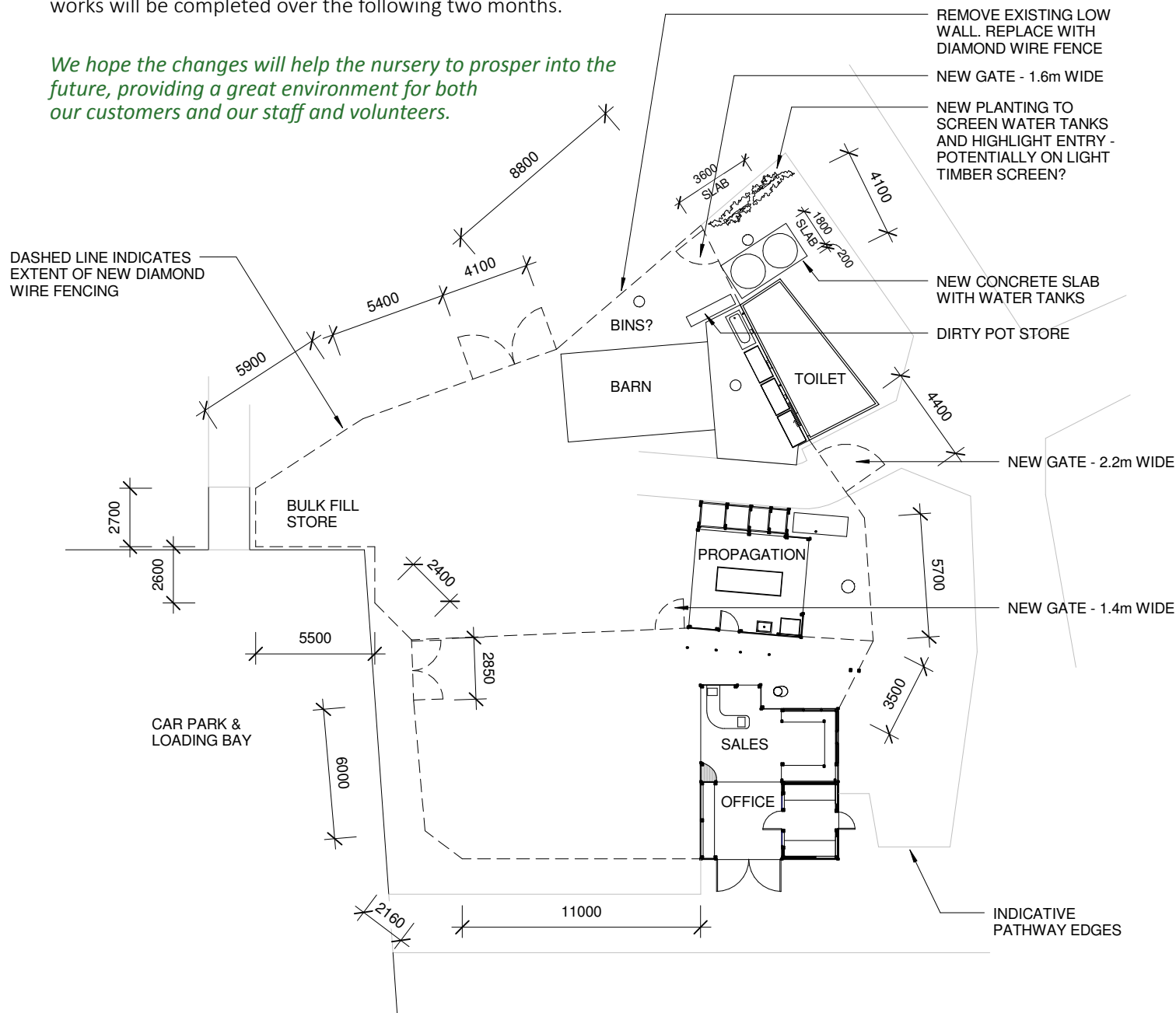
The Edible Landscapes Nursery is a much-loved part of Northey Street City Farm with its great range of both common and hard to find edible plants, and its knowledgeable and helpful staff and volunteers. But there's no doubt the nursery has seen better days, with much of the infrastructure deteriorating with time and with the help of a flood or two!

This year we had big plans to completely refurbish the nursery, but these plans were delayed because of other priorities at the farm. We are pleased to say that we are now ready to proceed at full pace, and visitors to the farm can already see the results with a new propagation shed and pot wash area nearly completed.

A new shade-house and benches will arrive before Christmas, and in the New Year there will be work on a new sales and display area for customers next to the existing sales area which will be converted to a small office. Plans also include better irrigation and drainage, and wide pathways that are wheelchair accessible. The overall retail space will be increased as a result of the refurbishment, and there will be a new entrance for customers from the front of the car park area. New, more visible signage will complete the picture.

The nursery will be closed for two weeks in early January 2015 to build the new sales structure, and the remaining works will be completed over the following two months.

We hope the changes will help the nursery to prosper into the future, providing a great environment for both our customers and our staff and volunteers.



ORGANIC BAKED BEANS

500g of organic bean mix: beans, lentils, and chick peas

800g of organic tin tomatoes

2 x onions

Fresh herbs to taste: including thyme, basil, and parsley

2 x lemons (rind only)

Method

Sautee the onion with olive oil until till translucent.

Add the tinned tomatoes

Add the beans and an equal quantity of water- you can use the tin the beans came in to measure.

Add the fresh herbs and the grated lemon rinds.

Cook for one hour on a slow heat.

Remove from the heat and transfer the beans to a baking tray.

Place in oven for 1 hour at 140 degrees C.



The beans are now ready to serve, enjoy!

Chai Cafe

Organic Farmers Market

Sundays from 6 to 10.30am

- Fruits, vegetables, herbs and spices
- Dairy, baked goods and meats
- Raw foods, juices, chai, coffee
- Sausage sizzle & other breakfast options
- Sustainable gifts, and much more



Also open are:

The Chai Cafe, Edible Landscapes Nursery and family friendly activities

EDUCATION

Learn about living sustainably in the city

Permaculture Design Course

The classic Permaculture qualification with ethics, principles and practice.

- 2-week intensive in April
- One day/week Feb-May, April-July or Aug-Nov

Experience urban Permaculture with our on-site nursery, market garden, Sunday Farmers Markets, and significant hands-on practical experience with internship opportunities on site.

School activities, group tours & Sustainable Living Workshops

For more information, dates and bookings,
Phone (07) 3857 8775 or visit www.nscf.org.au



Edible Landscapes Nursery



Edible Landscapes Nursery stocks a wide range of seasonal organic seedlings, herbs, permaculture plants, aquatic plants, non-hybrid seeds, advanced bush tucker and backyard fruit trees, and water saving devices. Try our special worm juice fertiliser products, organic compost and potting mixes.

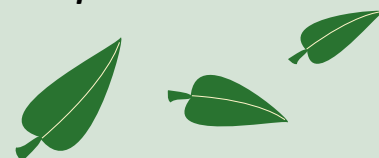
Edible Landscapes Nursery is run on organic and permaculture principles. All of our seedlings and plants are grown from open pollinated seeds from organic sources. Our seed raising mix is also organic.

All requirements and advice for your organic edible garden.

OPENING HOURS

Tuesday & Thursday to Saturday: 9am to 3pm

Sunday: 6am to 12pm



Earth Arts

Come along with your kids and have a fun day out with nature, playing in the earth and learning how to shape it to make art and musical instruments. Earth Arts activities are a wonderful opportunity for you and your children to engage with the natural elements, have fun, and meet other members of the community.

Held every Tuesday, Friday and Sunday from 9am, and **absolutely free!**

Come along!



Share Cookbook

*Simply the best, most heartfelt, interesting and useful cookbook you may ever own.
Written completely from the heart with sharing in mind!*

Most recipes are accompanied by full-colour images. Included in Share is information about some of the key ingredients and Permaculture plants, stories about the Farm and the people that are part of our vibrant community.

The book is 96 full-colour A5 pages, spiral-bound for ease of use on your kitchen bench. It is printed locally on environmentally responsible paper stock using environmentally sensitive printing methods. Share is spectacular enough to be right at home on your coffee table, if it ever leaves your kitchen!

Share cookbook is available for sale at Edible Landscapes Nursery at Northey Street City Farm or through our website on www.nscf.org.au.

Cost \$15 a copy or \$10 if you purchase 10 or more.



Show your support with

Northey Street City Farm

Organic white cotton T-shirts **\$15** gear

Organic Cotton Canvas shopping bags **\$15**

Available from the Northey Street City Farm Market Stall and Edible Landscapes Nursery

FARMING

Drip irrigation installed
in kitchen garden
School Garden revamped
Market garden beds rebuilt
Bamboo harvested

\$15,369 sales at market stall
45 allotments in use
25 cu.m compost produced

992
Plant, Grow, Cook
participants

SITE

Hay shed completed
Tool Shed refurbished
Electrical audit completed
Cob Oven shelter built
Wicker beds built from pallets
Phone system upgraded

EDIBLE LANDSCAPES NURSERY

1365 Punnetts of seedlings
and
6390 herbs sold

CHAI CAFE

5741 cups homemade chai
drunk
1196 buckwheat pancakes
eaten
1350 cups of coffee
served

ORGANIC FARMERS MARKET

52 Markets held
55 stallholders each week
816Kg organic sausages sold
at the Sausage Sizzle

EVENTS

Spring Equinox
Members High Tea

Volunteers Brunch

Community Gardens
Network Gathering

20th Anniversary Dinner

Winter Solstice Festival

EDUCATION

77 PDC students
465 Sustainable Living Workshop
participants
623 School visitors

150 Earth Arts sessions

Ran workshops at
Woodford Folk festival
& tree planting festival

FINANCE

12 Part-time staff
(6.55FTE)
409 payslips
generated
696 invoices paid

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

10,920 volunteer hours
contributed
181 new volunteers
registered
15 Interns
364 Farm Tour
participants

10,391 Facebook
friends

4695 E News
Subscribers

247 Members