



AUSTRALIAN PERMACULTURE

GROW • BUILD • EAT • THRIVE • NURTURE • DESIGN



BIOCHAR - NATURE KIDS - FAIR FOOD - ABORIGINAL PLANTS
GREYWATER GARDENS - DOUBLE DIG - BUILD A COOL ROOM - HARVEST COOKING



CONTENTS

- 6. PERMACULTURE AROUND THE WORLD**
by Morag Gamble
- 8. PIP PICKS**
- 10. NOTICEBOARD**
- 12. PERMACULTURE PLANT: NEW ZEALAND FLAX**
by Hayley Burgess
- 13. RARE BREEDS: AUSTRALIAN SETTLER GEESE**
by Tabitha Bilaniwskyj-Zarins
- 14. EAT YOUR WEEDS: BLACK NIGHTSHADE**
by Patrick Jones
- 15. SAVE YOUR SEEDS: CUCUMBER**
by Steve and Kerryn Martin
- 86. KIDS' PATCH**
- 89. COURSE PROVIDERS/ DIRECTORY**
- 95. REAL ESTATE**
- 96. FILM & BOOK REVIEWS**

FEATURE:

- 16. FAIR FOOD: TIME FOR A CHANGE** by Nick Rose
- 21. PUTTING THE 'CULTURE' BACK INTO AGRICULTURE**
by Robert Pekin with Emma-Kate Rose
- 22. FOOD THAT CONNECTS** by Tammi Jonas
- 26. TEN WAYS TO CREATE A FAIRER FOOD SYSTEM**
by Kate Raymond, Jennifer Richards
and Sharon Lee
- 28. FOLK CREATING A FAIR FOOD FUTURE**
by Robyn Rosenfeldt
- 34. RETROSUBURBIA: A DOWNSHIFTER'S GUIDE
TO A RESILIENT FUTURE** by David Holmgren
- 36. FROM DEGRADED LAND TO ABUNDANCE:
BETHEL BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
CENTRE, LESOTHO** by Frances Howe



GROW:

- 38. BIOCHAR** by Albert Bates
- 42. PROFILE: BORJA VALLS – MARKET GARDENER**
by Robyn Rosenfeldt
- 44. DOUBLE-DIGGING A GARDEN BED THE
BIOINTENSIVE WAY** by Kirsten Bradley



BUILD:

- 46. JOSH'S HOUSE**
by Ross Mars and Maria McConkey
- 50. PROFILE: ROB SCOTT - 'TINY HOUSE' BUILDER** by Adam Hickman
- 52. BUILD YOUR OWN COOLROOM**
by Gina and Peter Silis

EAT:

- 54. ABORIGINAL TRADITIONAL FOODS AND AN ALTERNATIVE AUSTRALIAN HISTORY**
by Bruce Pascoe
- 58. PROFILE: SU DENNETT** by Ian Lillington
- 60. COOKING FROM THE HARVEST** by Jodie Lane



THRIVE:

- 62. URBAN FOOD STREET** by Kay Kerr
- 66. PROFILE: CARA EDWARDS - URBAN FARMER**
by Maria McConkey
- 68. BIOREGIONS: OUR SPIRIT OF PLACE**
by John Champagne and Ian Lillington

NURTURE:

- 70. NATURE KIDS: EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE LIVING**
by Morag Gamble
- 76. CONNECTING WITH NATURE FOR A POSITIVE WORLD**
by Robin Clayfield



DESIGN:

- 78. DESIGNING AN URBAN SANCTUARY**
by Ben Buggy
- 80. PROFILE: TAJ SCICLUNA**
by Ben Buggy
- 82. SIMPLE GREYWATER GARDEN DESIGN**
by Dan Deighton



Clockwise from top: Old Mill Road BioFarm in Moruya focus on growing for their local community; Vince Fitipaldi, CERES farmer down at Joe's Garden on the Merri Creek in Coburg; Produce and preserves from Autumn Farm; Michael Plane and Joyce Wilkie, Fair Food pioneers from Allsun Farm; and homegrown garlic.





INTEGRATE RATHER
THAN SEGREGATE

FAIR FOOD - TIME FOR A CHANGE

Words by Nick Rose

Many people speak of our current era as the time of the Great Turning, or the Great Transition. We are at a point in our journey as humanity where, as the philosopher Thomas Berry puts it, we must move from a 'period of human devastation of the Earth to a period when humans would be present to the planet in a mutually beneficial manner'. The ways in which we produce, distribute and consume food lie at the heart of this transition. Many of us in Australia's emerging food movement speak of this as a transition to a 'Fair Food' system.

WHAT IS FAIR FOOD?

Fair Food is food produced, distributed and consumed in ways that are ecologically sustainable, ethically sound and socially just. Fair Food is the Australian interpretation of the international concept of food sovereignty, which was launched in the mid-1990s by leaders of the global family farmers' movement, La Via Campesina (or the farmers' way).

Food sovereignty means a democratic and participatory food system at global, national and regional levels. In which farmers and communities determine collectively the purpose and design of their food systems for their own benefit, rather than the key decisions being taken by, and for the benefit of, the largest multinational agribusiness and retail corporations.

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Food sovereignty is a theory and a practice in which increasingly personal and intimate relationships are formed around food. A classic example is farmers' markets, where you can buy 'food with a face' directly from the person who grew or raised the food (in the case of true producers' markets).

Even more direct is buying from the farmer, at the farm gate or farm shop. Community-supported agriculture is another expression of a connected food system, where the farmer (or

group of farmers) sells shares or subscriptions in a growing season, or animal or herd, to a group of nearby residents.

OUR FOOD SYSTEM IS BROKEN

We urgently need to embrace the transition to a Fair Food system because the globalised, corporate-controlled food system is not merely broken, it's killing us and ruining our possibilities for a decent and liveable future. Some of the more destructive impacts of this system are hunger and malnutrition, negative effects on our health and wellbeing, exploitation, soil erosion and degradation, biodiversity loss and climate change.

A DISCONNECTED SYSTEM

How did we get to this point where, collectively, we appear to be the authors of our own demise? For me the key word is 'disconnection'.

Disconnection takes many different forms in different times and places. The issues outlined above, and many related problems, are the result of a global and national food system that suffers from an excessive concentration of economic and political power, in the hands of a few huge corporations across key sectors.

In Australia we're all familiar with the supermarket duopoly and its increase in the grocery market share from thirty-five per cent in the mid-1970s to around seventy to eighty per cent today. This increase has coincided with an exodus of our farmers from the land. Many argue that this is no coincidence.

More generally, the broken, dysfunctional and destructive food system is itself a symptom of our culture, which values money above all else. When short-term gain is prioritised as

FOLK CREATING A FAIR FOOD FUTURE

Interviews by Robyn Rosenfeldt



Kirsten Bradley

FIONA WEIR WALMSLEY – BUENA VISTA FARM

Describe your farm and what you do there.

Buena Vista Farm is a small family farm growing food (primarily pastured meat chickens, and a market garden with laying hens, bees, ducks, pigs and cattle), making delicious fermented foods, and teaching homesteading skills, in particular 'from-scratch' cooking (e.g. sourdough and sauerkraut).

We're on eighteen acres of what was dairy farm that's been in my family since the 1850s; I grew up here. Our plan was to grow coffee, and maybe put in a café, but we got excited about Joel Salatin's ideas for stacked agriculture, self-sufficient (or inter-sufficient) and economically viable small farming.

It's a tiny space to make an agricultural living, but with additional enterprises it's possible. Our best investment was a commercial kitchen. We spend a fair bit of time running around after our three small children, but we love living and working here.

What brought you back from the city to the family farm?

We loved our city life, but began to suspect our food and its provenance, and started thinking about how to participate in the food system rather than just despair about it. We were lucky that my parents made part of the farm available. We wanted to live on the farm and grow clean food for our family, and were up for the challenge of building a business to work in together. We also wanted our children to grow up in the country, in a small community. We sold our house, bought our twenty meat chickens and three pigs, and lived off savings for a couple of years! The learning curve has been very steep, but a lot of fun.

What motivates you?

It's exciting to do something new here, and my parents are nearby and closely involved. Dad is the technical advisor and he's helped in innumerable ways. I've always felt connected to this farm, and I'm excited about it becoming a hub for local food production. We've got two full-time market gardeners who live on the farm, and draw an income from the productive and beautiful garden. We love supporting that and teaching. Running workshops and sending people home with sourdough starter and inspiration is incredibly motivating.

What do you see as your contribution to a Fair Food future?

We were surprised that there wasn't a local farmer's market, and we got one going with like-minded friends. It's a weekly, mid-week afternoon market. We're proud because it's changed the way people shop locally – they can do most grocery shopping there, and money goes back to local famers – and it encourages small producers.

How would you describe a Fair Food future?

One where everyone respects resources, and our food economy is based on nutrition not money! I wonder how nutritious food getting processed into unrecognisable junk became normal. We need to make big changes to regulations, to encourage small scale food production. The networking in Australia between these producers – sharing stories and learnings – is exciting. A Fair Food future is being built right now by people determined to change the food system, effective laws will follow.

For more information visit: buonavistafarm.com.au



James Samuel

PETE RUSSELL – OOOOBY

Describe yourself and what you do

I'm a worried optimist. I'm worried by the way that humanity's fundamental survival mechanism – our food system – has been coopted for commercial ends, and what that means for future generations. I'm optimistic that enough of us are worrying about this and that, together, we'll figure out how to reclaim our food system and restore its original purpose – to nourish all of humanity. I work with our team to find the next step towards realising a food future to alleviate my worries.

Describe Oooby and how you created it

Oooby (Out of Our Own BackYards) is an online marketplace for local food. We rebuild local food economies, because we believe that changing the way we produce and distribute food is fundamental to solving the world's most pressing social and ecological problems.

We created Oooby by trial and error; we experimented with a few different models before arriving at it. The philosophy behind Oooby is that food is a fundamental human right, so it should be more like air and water: accessible to everyone in a convenient, affordable and fair way.

What motivated you to start Oooby and what motivates you to keep going?

I believe we need to take more action to solve our big collective challenges, especially our current food system. As a father of five it's hard to not think about what we'll be leaving behind for future generations. I want them to have easy access to fresh natural food. I worry when I look at the way industrial and globalised systems have reduced food to a shadow of its former self.

It's important to create local food systems for many reasons including: viable margins for small scale growers, local employment, ecological regeneration, personal health, community resilience, social interaction, reduction of waste and packaging, fairness, freshness and flavour.

How are you contributing to a Fair Food future?

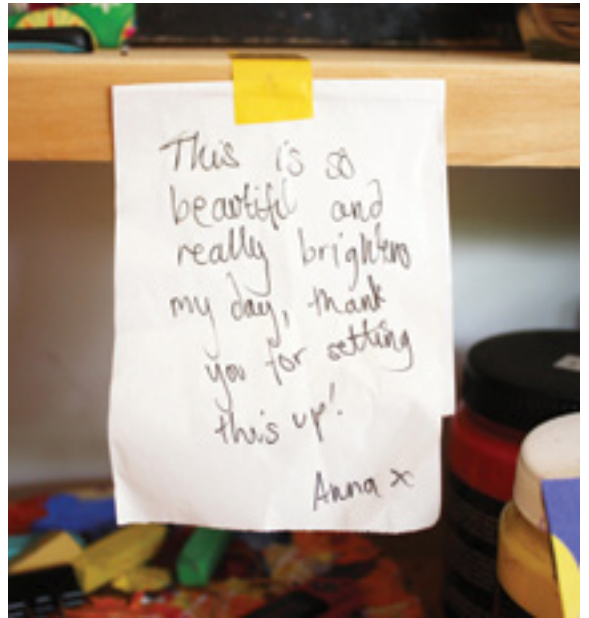
Oooby's role is to provide a low-cost sales and distribution system, which reduces traditional supply chain costs by up to thirty per cent. Growers are paid a minimum of fifty cents in the retail dollar, and everyone else in the supply chain can be paid fairly without the customer paying too much.

We've seen direct positive change in the areas where we've started the Oooby system: for example, in Auckland growers have been able to continue their smallholdings when – prior to supplying to Oooby – they were faced with the grim prospect of closing their farms. Bill and Marilyn tell their story in the video on our website. We've also donated more than \$25 000 worth of fresh produce to food banks, and we've employed more than fifty people, paying above award rates.

What do you see as a fair food future?

One where food distribution is no longer dominated by corporate interests with a 'profit first' mentality, but controlled and coordinated by the crowd. Where food production is no longer dominated by massive monocultures, but crowd-sourced – where everyone has an opportunity to contribute to our food supply through low cost and localised micro-farming grid systems.

For more information see: ooooby.org/auckland



Clockwise from top left: Cara Edwards; Thank you note; Winter seedlings coming soon; Tomato chutney; Roadside stall.





CARA EDWARDS – URBAN FARMER

Interview by Maria McConkey Photos by Cara Edwards

Cara Edwards rents a flat in the heart of Hobart and, despite not owning land or having much space, she has become an urban farmer, using her own small backyard and other pockets of land she has borrowed from friends. She sells her produce from a bookcase converted into a roadside stall, on the footpath outside her inner-city flat. I spoke to Cara about her life there.

Why here?

When my partner Fin and I met, a few years ago, we were both facing the age-old problems of finding ethical work, rising property prices and securing a loan. Last year we leased a tiny flat in the inner-city suburbs of Hobart, Tasmania, and started on our plan to grow a whole lot of food, make a little money and live a productive, home-based lifestyle.

The flat has a small, east-facing communal space, and an even smaller north-facing courtyard. Our landlord and friend Mike had the brilliant foresight to plant productive trees, and we were fortunate to inherit a smorgasbord of cool-climate fruits. Although – as renters – our gardening endeavours are constrained, we've: dug up every centimetre of lawn; covered the concrete with pots; installed removable worm farms along the south-facing fence, and a freestanding hothouse that we borrowed from a friend; grown pumpkins up teepees; strung tomatoes from the clothesline; and completely filled the tiny little area.

And what next?

The garden was delightful and wallaby free (a perk of city living) but temporary, and we still didn't have enough space to grow all of our vegetables for the spring and summer. So we decided to expand. With the help of friends we have established a network of spaces. From our Sandy Bay flat we grow our salad greens, herbs and annuals, and have a spattering of established fruit trees. We also keep our chickens and seedlings here, as they need constant care.

At our friend Polly's place we keep hardier crops such as artichokes, garlic and potatoes, and some annuals; we visit there every few days to water, but can also rely on her to give them a drink if need be. Our friend's paddock in Cygnet is home to our 150 asparagus plants, cider orchard, a whole heap of garlic and potatoes.

To complement our endeavours, I was inspired by Shannon Hayes' book *Radical Homemakers: Reclaiming Domesticity from a Consumer Culture* (Finch Publishing 2011) to create a home-

based lifestyle, and taught myself skills, to save and make money. My main cash flow is through freelance graphic design, an old university degree I half finished before the lure of growing food dragged me away; it took some googling to freshen up my knowledge, but technology is a great tool for self-teaching. I also sell composting worms, write a little, weed and manage Mike's Airbnb in exchange for subsidised rent. Staying at home allows me to water the garden, bake a loaf of bread in the morning, forage for food (mostly from our neighbours' trees), mend our work pants, ensure we have enough to eat, bottle the summer fruits and fix all that is broken.

Midway through spring we were starting to produce a lot of good food, and our hothouse was pumping with grafting experiments, cuttings and plants we had collected in our travels. I thought it would be fun to start a little roadside shop with an honesty box, the sort of thing you see down country lanes but, of course, we plonked ours on the street, in the suburbs. We bolted a toolbox to an old bookcase and put it out with some herbs and leafy greens, and a bunch of milk bottles filled with worm juice. Later additions to the inventory include: seedlings, cut flowers, packets of saved seed, chutney and various fruits and vegetables.

How did it go?

We made \$8 on the first day, and I was ecstatic: if we could make \$8 every day it would cover the cost of our internet! But as summer set in the reputation of our little shop grew, and sometimes I'd open the toolbox to find \$40 and a note of thanks; sometimes I'd find only 50c. I'd paint cute signs, chat to our neighbours, leave growing tips for passers-by and hear some brilliant stories. More recently, proceeds have allowed us to pay our electricity bill for the winter and the car registration for a whole year, and buy weekly home supplies.

Our lifestyle is a tad chaotic, and always a work in progress. It's not for everyone, but it does allow us to engage in an ethos that's fun and rewarding, but may seem off limits to renters.