



# Five Villages Community Garden President's Message Summer 2024



Hello gardeners,

A fair bit has happened since the official opening back in September, so I thought I'd provide a summer update.

## **Membership**

You'd be staggered to hear that we now have 144 members made up of 24 individual and 56 family memberships. While most of our members join for the physical activity of gardening, we know that some join just to show support, while others join to grow their community network, and yet others join to learn. Whatever your reason for joining, you are all equal members and your contribution is greatly appreciated! If you have not had the opportunity to visit the garden (your garden) please consider coming to one of our open days: Every Tuesday and Saturday 9AM to 11AM.

## **Yulunga project update**

We turned the first sod for the Yulunga Garden in August 2022, and now in February 2023 we will wrap up the project! The last task, which will consume our remaining grant funding, will be installation of a retractable sunshade. This will provide much needed sun protection in our congregation area adjacent to the shed. Satisfyingly, after this expenditure we'll have ended the project right on budget!

## **Things we have grown**

In our limited space we've managed to produce quite an abundance of food this summer without using any pesticides and only minimal fertiliser. This is mainly due to our wonderfully rich soil, fantastic aspect, and plenty of rain. In no particular order members have enjoyed a constant stream of Basil, Parsley, salad greens, parsnip, kale, radish, silver beet, beetroot, eggplant, tomatoes, shallots, chilli and cucumbers. This week we harvested the potato crop which will be distributed on Saturday. We are still patiently awaiting arrival of our first capsicum and celery harvest. The most common request for future planting is coriander, so we'll get some seeds going in readiness for the cooler months.

Things that were a bit disappointing were Bok choy (kept getting eaten) and garlic (too much rain we think). Out on the mound our tea plants (*Camellia sinensis*) are developing slower than expected but they are gradually acclimatising and thankfully the kangaroos have left them alone. This is a longer-term project, so we're keeping our hopes up. The few sunflowers that flowered were quite spectacular, especially the dwarf ones. However, we had hoped to gather lots of sunflower seeds from the spent flowers so we could mass plant next year but unfortunately it turns out the dwarf sunflowers are sterile, but at least we have plenty of seed from the taller variety for next year.



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## Imperfect vegetables

While most of the herbs and vegetables we have produced looks absolutely perfect we also have our share of imperfect produce. In the commercial world it has been well documented that tonnes of fresh produce ends up in waste simply because it's deemed a 'non-standard shape' or has a minor cosmetic blemish. The reason why some of the produce at our garden is imperfect is because it's organic. The reason why we'd like you all to pick and consume imperfect food is because we don't want to waste it. If you are a bit put off by blemishes and odd shapes try and see through it, it tastes the same and has the same nutritional value. It's pretty easy to trim or peel off blemishes, and if you are making pesto or tabouli, do a few holes matter anyway? We want to remain organic and we don't want to waste, so have a go at some of the imperfect things that are on offer.

## First social for the year

It's not all about gardening; we had our first social get together last Thursday evening. Despite the light drizzle we had a great turn out with many members bringing along nibbles featuring our local grown tomatoes and eggplant. This was a good opportunity for members to get acquainted and compare gardening successes and failures. Unfortunately, we had so much fun we forgot to take photos; except this one (do not try this at home, this is not real). If you couldn't make it don't worry, we're planning on hosting similar meet ups every season.



## Sausage sizzle

Effective fundraising is key to FVCG being able to keep membership fees as low as possible. We were delighted to have been asked for a third time to run the sausage sizzle at the Manyana Markets earlier this month. The funds raised (\$2,600 profit from the three markets to date) go directly towards garden maintenance and restocking so it is vital for our continued growth.

Thank you to all the members that have stepped up and volunteered for each sausage sizzle. Your continued support with the market stall will ensure that we do a good job and continue to be asked back.

Until next time happy gardening!

**Dennis**

President





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