



Five Villages Community Garden Association President's Report

June & July 2021



Hello fellow gardeners,

Not sure about everyone else but it seems a struggle to get motivated in the garden throughout winter. Most things in the garden grind to a halt and appear drab and uninspiring. Personally, I get through this period by planning and preparing garden projects for late winter and spring. I look at areas of my garden that need a lift or can be better utilised e.g., replace a lawn area with an edible garden or put in some bird/pollinator attracting native plants. Even if you do not get around to doing the work this year at least you have worked out some options to make your yard a better place in the future.

There's no need to avoid the garden in winter, it's time to look after your soil. When the soil temperature drops the amount of decomposition activity slows down, only slow rotting continues with fungal mycelium that developed in the warmer months. One of the best things you can do to keep this rotting happening over winter is to leave the soil undisturbed, that is don't cultivate it. Instead, get any sort of soft mulch, including raked up leaves, and place this on the bare soil beds. Better still put a good thick layer of compost under the mulch. This will protect the soil from cold air and heavy rain which can compact the soil. If you want to spoil your soil throw in some blood meal and rock phosphate, and plant it out with winter green manure crops. In spring you can dig all that mulch, compost, and goodness into the soil to turbo charge your spring harvest ahead of time.

We have received good feedback from participants of **the RFS fire resistant garden** working bee and now have a better understanding of what the community wants and expects from FVCG. We acknowledge that things are moving slowly but we have been spending time getting a few important formalities sorted out to ensure we comply with regulations and have the required governance in place. That way we will have full transparency and well documented processes to guide us as we develop.

We are conscious that many of you are keen to establish an area where the community can come together and grow fruit, vegetables, and herbs in shared allotments. This is very typical of what people understand a community garden to be. We share this understanding and hope to develop such sites in the future. However, for now the FVCG is in its formative stage and it is vital that we identify and pursue opportunities to participate in relevant garden related community projects that might not strictly include community shared spaces. We consider this to be important because it will firstly, raise awareness of the existence of FVCG and secondly, provide examples of the good work that can be achieved by FVCG; this will in turn, build trust, and attract other worthwhile projects and funding opportunities. This is one of the reasons we kicked off with the RFS fire resistant garden. It was a relevant worthwhile garden project and there was specific grant funding, courtesy of the Manyana



Five Villages Community Garden Association President's message June & July 2021



Matters Environmental Association bushfire recovery effort.

The next project we are working towards is the integration of a community garden within the playground and cycle track area at Yulunga Reserve. You have probably seen the fantastic playground recently completed through the good work of the Yulunga Reserve Committee and Shoalhaven Council. An opportunity has been identified by the Reserve Committee for improvements to be made to the landscaping which will improve safety for children (removal of hard hazards adjacent to the cycle track) and provide learning opportunities for children through interactive garden areas (with a focus on edible plants). Once again, we pursued this exciting project as it meets the criteria of relevant and good potential for funding. We fortuitously received advice only last night that an application for funding by way of a donation of \$1,500 from Shoalhaven Council has been approved. This donation was suggested and pursued by Councillor Kaye Gartner. Now that we have some funds available, we will soon reach out for help to make this project happen.

You would all be aware of the recent sad passing of our wonderful **RFS Captain Gary Barton**. It has been decided that the RFS garden, constructed back in April, will be dedicated as the 'Gary Barton Memorial Garden'. To accomplish this an event is being organised (subject to future Covid restrictions) to plant a few plum trees in the garden and mount a brass plate honouring Gary on one of the timber arbors. Further details will be posted as they come to hand.

Finally, the existing **FVCG Executive committee has several vacancies**, and we are keen to have these important positions filled. Key roles currently vacant are: (1) Membership & fundraising manager, and (2) Community outreach, promotions & events manager. If you would like to be part of the committee, please get in touch with Jimmy or myself.

That's it for this month, Dennis

