

Compost in May

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Compost in May activities culminated in lots of fun and frivolity at the Compost Party held in West Leederville.

Demonstrations included compost, wicking beds, instant raised garden beds and worm farms. The MRC display also attracted lots of interest.

Peg and the Eco Fairies were busy with activities all afternoon and the Famous Sharron stopped by to entertain the attendees and cut the compost cake.

Thanks to the ECs who came along and to everyone involved, particularly Naomi, Jess, Sam, her daughter and friend and our hero George who delighted guests by singing the Compost Song!



Perth Garden Festival



EC Ted is pictured left at the Perth Garden Festival in early May convincing a patron of the virtues of raised garden beds! There was lots of interest from people getting ideas on how to do creative things with old 'stuff', compost, worm farms, making vertical gardens (pictured right), wicking beds and more.

Thanks to ECs Mitchell, Babu, Ted, Pam, Tamara, Erica, Bec and Sam for helping out over the four-day festival.



Reduce
Reuse
Recycle



Make waste work

For further information please contact
Peg Davies on 0422 941 492
Email: pdavies@mrc.wa.gov.au

ECs In Action

Long-time EC and avid participant Dora writes about her success with a raised garden bed and plans for her future venture.

Not that long ago I had a housemate that owned a dog, and you could never trust where he would decide to “go” which made growing organic veggies a bit like playing Russian roulette (just not quite so violent). So the logical thing to do was to put in a raised garden bed. I thought I could purchase a purpose-built one but they were so low that it would not have saved the veggies from the dog’s activities. I also have a housemate with a back problem and he asked for it to be on the higher side to make it easier for him. Shortly after this I developed some health problems and needed to have surgery so I had to tidy my yard and build the garden bed before I was rendered incapable with recovery.

So, I looked at what needed to be removed from my yard and incorporated the problems I encountered into a solution:

I had some fibreglass sheeting that was too holey to use for rain protection and the front yard needed a whole lot of dirt removed. Mm mm.....!!

The rest of the back yard had been refurbished by found or second-hand objects so I decided to stick to my principles of recycling to make my garden bed.

Off I went to Tamala Park and found some bedheads and footers – one from a double and the other from a single bed. I already had some old cans of spray paint so I decided to jazz up the fibreglass sheeting to make me feel festive.

Then, with help from Spud my housemate, we constructed a raised garden bed using the bedheads, footers and the jazzed up fibreglass sheeting. A few stakes, some screws, tie wire and cable ties and it was built. Then I just had to fill it with the unwanted dirt from the front yard and ... problem solved! (It would have been impossible and unnecessary to fill the whole bed all with compost). So, while I was recuperating from surgery it was easy to water, harvest and plant the dog-free produce.

I only have doggy visitors now but I am so glad that I have that raised bed because they can now roam the yard and I know where the safest veggies are.

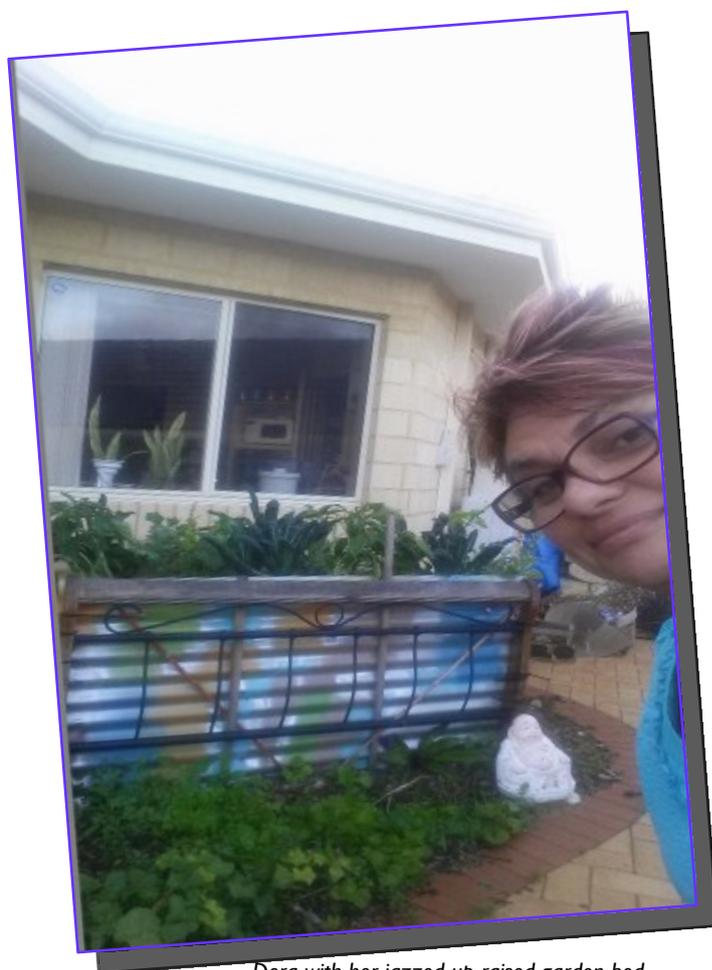
In the photo you can make out some greenery on the ground and that is all my self-seeded lettuce, coriander, parsley and rocket.

I have some sweet potato growing there too and that can cope with dogs. The kale in the bed has been going strong for over 6 months, getting harvested every day for juice and salads.

But you have got to love the volunteers of capsicum and other veggies coming from the compost too. But I did have to say “No” to the avocado trees that came up.

My New Venture:

I am opening up my “Studio at the Clarkson Retreat” (my home) for creative pursuits. I have contacted the Northern Coast Women’s Shed and am offering any Earth carers that would like to be involved to start some “Craft Time”. I thought we could start with Mosaics on weekends in July and am open to any ideas that anyone would like to participate in. Think the sort of stuff that Peg has shown us but we can’t/don’t keep up. The intention is for free or cost neutral fun time where people can pursue new or old ventures but don’t have to do it alone. Please contact me on 0402 482 770 if you are interested.



Dora with her jazzed up raised garden bed

New EC Graduates

We snapped a group photo of the March EC attendees on their graduation night. Speakers at the ceremony included Gunter Hoppe, MRC Director of Corporate Services, EC Sam Culbertson who spoke about her recent visit to Christmas Island and the challenges the island faces with correctly disposing of its waste. Yew Li also spoke of her journey after becoming an EC and the project she undertook as an Advanced EC.



Our graduates gave us some feedback on the course: Takako said; *"I just wanted to thank you again for running the Earth Carer Course. It has been a real eye opener and has certainly changed how I spend my daily life."*

Takako has implemented an organic waste collection system at her work.

Raghav let us know that he now has a working compost bin at home and his family is supporting the new system. He has bought a few clothes from Salvo's and has circulated the compost bin information within the Indian community.

*Let us know what activities/ projects, either large or small, that **YOU** have undertaken. We would love to hear from you!*

EC Journey

EC Leonie writes about her journey to become an Earth Carer and some of the activities she has been involved in.

"When I first started working as a gardener at a convent in Doubleview there was a 3 cubic metre front lift bin onsite that was filled every 3 weeks with gardening material and general household rubbish that wouldn't fit in the council bin.

After 3 years I had replaced the large bin with a mulcher and had built a composting bay. I also had the nuns sorting their glass, metal and paper into bins that I then took to Balcatta Recycling facility.

While working at the convent I completed a Certificate in Permaculture Design Course with Ross Mars. As part of the course one of our site visits was to a house in West Leederville owned by a lady called Peg. I remember thinking "who is this lady with the red hair and her out-there ideas on waste?" Then a couple of months later I saw an advertisement in the local paper for the Earth Carers course. When I arrived for our first session there was Peg and I thought "Aahh, now I get it!"

Peg is one of the reasons why I have embraced sustainability and reduction of waste in my work and home life.

Whenever I think "It's too hard, just chuck it in the bin" I hear Peg's voice reminding me about the big picture and how we all need to do our bit. I worked for 14 months at the Town of Cambridge during their 120L waste bin roll out. One aspect of the job was to educate people on alternatives to putting waste in the bin and not making it an 'SEP' (Somebody Else's Problem).

Something as simple as putting food scraps in a worm farm or composting the leaves and lawn clippings to put back into the garden helped people realise that if it goes to landfill it is lost. The fact that they have spent money on fertiliser and water to grow something that they then throw away when it can go back on the garden and improve the soil to reduce the amount of water and fertiliser they have to apply in the future is simple and makes sense.

With the 120L bin roll out there were a lot of bins that were no longer required. A company was purchasing them to chip and turn into seats and bollards however a lot of them were still fit for purpose. Because of this I came up with the wicking bin (shown at the Cambridge Garage Sale Trail) where people could place orders for them and log onto the Cambridge website to download the instructions sheet.

http://www.cambridge.wa.gov.au/Neighbourhood/SustainableLiving/Waste/How_to_make_a_wicking_bed.

I also cut up the bins for dog poo bins using earth worms and composting bins. Being a creative person is what inspires me to keep striving to find new ways to use items that people tend to think of as waste.



Leonie with a wicking bin

Simple Sauerkraut

Fermented foods are gaining popularity - and rightly so. Laden with probiotics, beneficial enzymes and vitamins they are great for our digestion and health. They are also easy to make and extremely frugal. You don't need fancy ingredients to make sauerkraut so why not try this recipe?:

Method:

- * Thoroughly clean your hands and equipment. Rinse well, especially if your detergent is antibacterial as it will kill the good bugs you want to encourage (primarily lactobacilli).
- * Shred cabbage and weigh. Save a nice big outer leaf. You'll use this later.
- * Sprinkle salt over shredded cabbage. Use a good quality unrefined salt such as sea salt or rock salt. The salt inhibits the growth of bad bacteria until the lactobacilli increase and produce sufficient lactic acid to preserve the cabbage. Add 1 - 2 tablespoons of salt for every kg of cabbage. You can also add additional flavours (e.g. caraway seeds, oregano, garlic, ginger or chilli) or vegetables (e.g. grated carrots or sliced radish). Whey can be added to speed up fermentation. The whey inoculates the cabbage with additional lactobacilli. You can safely decrease the amount of salt used if you add whey. Whey can be obtained by straining good quality yoghurt through muslin). The leftover strained yoghurt makes a delicious cheese (lane) spread. Add around 1 tablespoon of whey per kg of cabbage.
- * Massage the salted cabbage with your hands for up to ten minutes to release juices.
- * Pack the cabbage and juices into a jar or fermenting crock. Press down firmly with your hands until the juices entirely submerge the cabbage. The outer leaf you set aside earlier can be pressed on top and used to hold the shredded cabbage below the surface.
- * Exclude oxygen. Lacto-fermentation is an anaerobic process and the presence of oxygen during fermentation will spoil the sauerkraut. An air-lock or fermentation crock will provide the right environment. You can also use a bottle filled with water (or any other clean weight) to weigh down the cabbage and keep it submerged. If using an open jar, cover with a fine cloth to keep out insects.
- * Wait. Keep your jar at room temperature. Start tasting after 4 days. You can leave the sauerkraut at room temperature for anywhere from 4 days to 4 weeks.
- * Once you are happy with the degree of fermentation, move your sauerkraut into the fridge where it will keep for many months.
- * Having a jar of sauerkraut in the fridge means a simple healthy meal can be made in minutes. A generous scoop of sauerkraut, a couple of boiled eggs and a handful of carrot sticks and you are done. Simple, frugal healthy food.

Source: Originally published in the Newcastle Herald Monday 4th May 2015



Re-Bag It - Matilda Sewing Produce Bags



*'Some of you may remember Amy Cooke and her massive sewing effort to make produce bags from second-hand café/net curtains. Her sister **Matilda** has now taken over the enterprise and has created a website for your perusal. This helps in our 'quest' to reduce single use plastic bags by finding an alternative to the thin produce bags for veggies, nuts, etc.*

It is a great enterprise and the bags make wonderful presents!!

See <http://rebagit.weebly.com> for more information.

Matilda with her overlocker

Start Recycling Your Oral Care Waste Products

Old toothpaste tubes and toothbrushes etc. - where can they go???

If you are in a community group or school community you may be interested in the following: Terracycle oral care recycling programs. There are two programs: Bright Smile, Bright Futures and Oral Care Brigade. These programs run concurrently. One program earns points per item recycled and the other is about the school collecting the most waste by 1st November winning \$1000. The school could even become a community collection point.

Source: <http://www.terracycle.com.au/en-au/>



Snips N Snaps



Milk in Glass Bottles

Thanks to EC Vanessa for this top tip: Sunnysdale Dairy sell milk in glass bottles and the bottles can be returned to their factory and outlet in East Vic Park for re-use.

<http://www.sunnysdaledairy.com.au/>

Recycling of "Soft and Noisy" Plastic

Many other items not recycled through the yellow lidded recycle bin can be processed by other means if WE do the sorting/separating. An example of this is if we take all our 'soft and noisy' plastic to Coles Supermarkets they send it off to be recycled into outdoor furniture.



French to Slice Food Waste

In May France's National Assembly voted on a new zero-waste policy that will require all supermarket chains to convert leftover food into animal feed, energy, or compost, or donate it to charity. Ultimately the government hopes to slice food waste in half by the year 2025. Until now many supermarkets have been dumping their food into bins and "bleaching" it so that nobody else can take it. Now grocery stores will be expected to sign contracts with various charities in order to give that food new life.

Source: www.goodnewsnetwork.org

Is the Useful Book ... Useful?

We are thinking of reworking the format of how the book's information is presented and would love to get your feedback.

Email Irenie on: itasselli@mrc.wa.gov.au

EC VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Come and join us at the following events:

Plastic Free July

Learn how to make your own veggie produce bags, yoghurt, bread wraps, cleaning products and more. Get tips on living with less disposable plastic not just for July but all the time.

- * **Saturday 27th June, 2-4pm**
Gum Blossom Community Centre, Tapping Way, Quinns Rocks
- * **Saturday 11th July, 2-4pm**
Holyrood Pavilion, cnr Holyrood/Cambridge St, West Leederville

Council Events:

City of Stirling:

- * **Friday 10th July - movie night**
See <http://transitiontownstirling.weebly.com/> for more information.

City of Vincent :

- * **Wednesday 15 July, 6.30pm**
Mount Hawthorn Lesser Hall, 197 Scarborough beach Road - talk, display, meal and Wall E movie

Town of Victoria Park :

- * A variety of talks and activities throughout June and July.
See: <https://www.facebook.com/VicParkTransition/> for the program of events.

Other Dates for your Diary:

- * **Tree Planting At Tamala Park**
Wednesday 22nd July, 9-1pm
Tamala Park, Mindarie

Advanced Earth Carers Course

(for those who have been ECS for a year or more)

Wednesday 22nd July, Wednesday 29th July, Wednesday 5 August, Wednesday 12th August, Graduation ceremony -Wednesday 18th November.

If you would like to attend or help out at these events, or for further information please contact Peg - see contact details below.

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