

CHICKEN HEAVEN

When you visit Berrima Ridge Farm, the first thing you see is chickens in the paddocks. That seems reasonable...unless you've been to a chicken farm before.

Anne and Warryn Stuckey have been keeping chooks at Berrima Ridge for five years. They started with soil almost devoid of minerals and a magnesium/calcium ratio that set the soil like concrete.

Soil may be an unexpected consideration when talking about eggs, but for the Stuckeys, repairing the soil and producing high quality eggs have been dual aims since the beginning.

We view the soil as the most important component besides having chickens to lay the eggs Anne explains. We produce a top quality egg that is locally produced/sold but not at the expense of the welfare of chickens or the health of the soil. We restrict our numbers to what our soil and pasture will sustain.

Under the Stuckeys' stewardship, the soil has been transformed. Where there was one lonely worm found in the soil in the

early days, the veg garden is now heavily populated. The pH level has shifted from acidic at 5.4 to a more neutral 6.2.

The girls are treated with striking kindness. Anne attributes their happiness to good soil, sunshine, clean water, high protein pellets and regular rotation on pasture. The hens are free to roam wherever, even if that includes the rose garden she adds ruefully.

And that kindness continues even when the chooks are no longer financially viable. When we foster out our older girls, I monitor the character of the purchaser and how they treat the hens. Here is a woman who loves her chooks.

Anyone who has bought their eggs and read the accompanying note will have a fond image of Isobel, CEO of Production and her fellow layers antics and opinions.

An important factor is the chickens' housing. Mobile housing allows the immediate surrounds to rest as well as breaking the parasite breeding cycle and restricting the amount of nitrogen released into the soil.

Kathy Biddlecombe

The chicken houses have mesh floors so the manure falls to the ground, where it is left to soften before being transferred to the olive grove or veg garden.

The chickens rely on natural light to trigger laying, rather than artificial extended daylight to maximise production.

Livestock wellbeing isn't just about the producers. It is just as much about consumers and what they demand in the market.

Anne is passionate about exposing the real cost of cheap food. Food is now produced at the expense of our soil and animals' wellbeing. The consumer needs to understand that the soil is like a body - you can only beat it so much.

Of course, changing a societal norm means educating children, another of Anne's passions. Children need to get back to the soil and understand where their food comes from and how animals are treated in the process. Life is not in a packet.

Hear, hear.



*The key to happy chickens...
freedom and sunshine*

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TRANSITION DIARY

Date	Location	Event
Friday 7 November 7pm	Robertson CTC	Australia Pumping Empty & TSW presentation
Saturday 8 November 2pm	Uniting Centre, Bowral	Stand against Warming placard making
Saturday 8 November 7pm	Berrima Courthouse	Australia Pumping Empty & TSW presentation
Saturday 15 November 10:30am	Meet at Corbett Gardens, Bowral	Stand against Warming
Saturday 15 November 7pm	Bundanoon Memorial Hall	Australia Pumping Empty & TSW presentation
Friday 28 November 7:30pm	Mittagong Playhouse	Dr Phillip Laird: <i>Improving freight and passenger rail services on the main south line.</i>
Saturday 29 November 10am	12 McGuinness Dve, Mount Murray	Tour of Dr David Tranter's 25yo passive solar house. David Tranter 4885 1394

TRANSITION SHIRE NEWS

NOVEMBER IN THE FOOD GARDEN Jill Cockram



Check stone fruit trees for leaf curl now

Spring busyness continues with planting of beans, beetroot, brassicas, capsicum, carrots, celery, cucumber, eggplant, leeks, lettuce, onion, parsnip, peas, pumpkin, radish, swede, sweetcorn, tomato, turnip, zucchini, basil, coriander, parsley and all perennial herbs (thyme, fennel etc).

Check stone fruit trees for leaf curl. Remove any diseased leaves by hand and put in plastic bag in bin to avoid re-infection. Feed and water well to allow the tree to develop new leaves.

Run your chickens under your apple and pear trees to eat the codling moth grubs while they're pupating. This will reduce their numbers during the first of three

breeding cycles in the growing season from November till March.

Fertilise your fruit trees at the dripline with manures, compost, blood and bone etc. Rakings from the chicken strawyard are perfect as they both feed and mulch. If you only have manures, just cover the layer with some straw or hay and water in well.

Asparagus will be reaching its peak picking phase. Once the spears become spindly, stop picking and leave them to go to fern and die back. This provides the food store in the roots for next season's crop.

Berry plants should be mulched and watered well

as they are currently producing flowers for the summer crop of berries.

With the risk of frost almost over, you can plant most summer salad annuals. Use a seaweed/kelp spray to water-in seeds or transplanted seedlings. It's a great plant tonic.

A large area of carrots will serve you well throughout the season. After sowing, cover the seed drills with moist hessian or shade cloth. This will prevent the seeds drying out while they are germinating. Water every day and after about 2 weeks the seeds will be up and on their way. They will still need regular watering until their roots are well established.

Do you know of a group practising Transition principles in the Southern Highlands?
Do you have a Transition-friendly event that you would like to have listed in TSN?
Would you like to subscribe to this newsletter?
Email kathy_biddlecombe@acenet.com.au

HERBS AMONG THE VEG

Laura Wilson

The inclusion of both culinary and medicinal herbs in your garden is delightful and beneficial. All culinary herbs have medicinal properties so the addition into every meal can only be good.

Sage is antiseptic and calming to the digestive tract and can provide a distinctive flavour to salads and stir fries while having a beneficial effect on digestion. It makes a useful tea for menopause where hot flushes are prevalent and a very strong infusion of the leaves combined with rosemary, thyme and garlic . all from your garden - can be used as an insecticide for your vegetables.

Rosemary is a brain tonic, an antioxidant for the liver and a circulatory stimulant; thyme is a great relaxing expectorant for tight coughs and nasty chest infections as well as being antiseptic for the lungs and digestive tract too.

These herbs and others can also be used as companion plants in order to deter insects from eating your veggies before you get to them. Rosemary and sage are best planted amongst cabbages and beans to repel cabbage flies and bean parasites, and they both help carrots to grow.

You may be surprised to learn that the dandelion that crops up in your garden is much more than a garden weed and pest. It is a rich source of vitamin C and minerals as well as a liver and bladder tonic . try chopping it up in your salads.

So Hippocrates was certainly spot on when he claimed that %our food is our medicine+ . not that any of us ever doubted it for a minute!!

Laura Wilson is a trained herbalist. The Herbal Tradition 4861 7139.



Dandelions...not to be overlooked

TRANSITION SHIRE NEWS

TRANSITION COURSES



Are you interested in forming a transition initiative in your town or village? Do you just want to know more about the model and how you can be involved?

There is a strong possibility that representatives from the Transition Network in the UK will be running courses in the Wingecarribee Shire in

February 2009.

We are planning two courses: four days of train the trainer and a two day general course.

Their trip to Australia will be brief and transition initiatives are popping up all over the country. That means that people from across NSW will be attending.

It also means that you should get in quickly to register your interest.

To keep costs down for everyone, we will be looking for locals to help out with catering and billeting visitors.

For more information on how you can participate, contact Sandra Menteith at menteith@bigpond.net.au.

INTERESTING TIMES

May you live in interesting times? taunts a Chinese curse. We certainly seem to have more than our share of interesting challenges to face.

Climate change? Peak oil? Global economic chaos? The issues just keep coming and each one can feel like more than we can manage.

Finding ways to completely understand and respond to each requires a lot of research and focus.

There is something that you can do to address all of them. You can live more simply.

- Plant some seeds in your garden and reduce the fertilizer, water and food miles that would otherwise be associated with your food.
- Pull up your paving or lawn (or some of it) and convert it into food gardens. Nothing to mow and the joy of harvesting is yours.
- Withdraw from the shopping to feel good mindset and save enormous amounts of money. You will also be responsible for less pollution and resource use.
- Plan your car journeys to be more efficient, save money and reduce pollution, while sparing your car some wear and tear and increasing the time between service visits.
- Get yourself out of debt- this won't necessarily do much for climate change or peak oil, but it will increase your resilience to economic uncertainty.
- Make sure that your home is well insulated. Less heating means reduced fossil fuel use and lower energy cost.
- Save time and fuel by getting a job close to home.
- Get broadband access to increase the amount of time you can work from home.
- Learn old skills that don't require fossil fuels.
- Learn how to preserve your home grown (or even bought) bounty.
- Keep chickens to reduce the demand for battery hens (and the associated pollution etc), save some money and get some great companions.

Kathy Biddlecombe

- Buy clothes from second hand outlets. Reduce the impact of importing new clothes as well as the land fill that unwanted clothes may end up in. And, of course, save bundles of money.
- Look to the local community for entertainment. Why go to Sydney or Canberra when there is great theatre and live entertainment here? It will almost certainly be cheaper and you spend less time in your car.
- Eat simply. Over processed food does the planet no favours and isn't good for your health either. All the better if you eat from your own garden.
- Reduce your media consumption. Cancel magazine subscriptions (and get a refund for the unused portion) and resist the urge to buy them for a lazy day. Read them at the library instead.

Life is getting more complicated, but you can ease your stress a little if you take some action to increase your resilience to big problems.

Withdraw from the shopping to feel good mindset and save enormous amounts of money.



Save your pennies and the planet

TRANSITION SHIRE NEWS

TO THE FUTURE: NEWS FROM 2009

Dr WuHoo

The Community Car Pool is gaining in popularity, now that car registration includes a sustainability levy

This year's Philanthropy Awards celebrated the efforts of the WCF's Sustainability committee raising \$1million this year.

We are overwhelmed by the generosity of 6 local financial and business organizations who gave significant gifts to enhance the many small contributions we receive each year+ said Francine Bartlett chair of the advisory committee.

The generosity of Bux, Eastpac, Hardware at Home, Trican, Wingecarribee Transport Cooperative, plus two anonymous private donors enabled us to employ 2 project workers, to strengthen the partnership with Council and CANWin to implement the next stages of the Wingecarribee Sustainability Plan and to give \$500,000 worth of grants to support local people to implement their bright ideas.+

The account began in 2006 to support local initiatives that contributed to making Wingecarribee more sus-

tainable. It was not an easy journey as the tax laws of the day were extremely restrictive and, at that time, little was being done locally to address the problems of climate change and peak oil.

The Awards venue sported a very interesting display representing many of the initiatives that have benefited from the WCF's Sustainability Grant Scheme.

Moss Vale Community Garden received a grant for full time mentoring of troubled young people. It is amazing to walk around the hall and see just how creative local people and groups have been in doing their bit to prevent catastrophic climate change+ said manager Jill Cochran. There is an incredible range of things people have achieved with their grants.+

Family Support helped people on low incomes to reduce energy consumption and access the very minimal subsidies for retrofitting with

solar panels, water tanks and solar hot water.

There are a series of community gardens on Railway land in some towns and villages.

CANWin and Transition Shire Wingecarribee have held re-skilling workshops for residents.

The Community Car Pool is gaining in popularity, now that car registration includes a sustainability levy and emission standards are being enforced.

Citizen juries are held regularly with Council to consider important local issues from all sides and make recommendations for action.

Anyone wishing to make a tax deductible donation to the WCF's Sustainability Account can contact francineb@ozemail.com.au or ring 4872 2440. The Advisory Committee is seeking applications for membership.

TRANSITION IN ACTION



Transition Shire & Chevalier College pavement art project



Five things you can do for Transition...

- Buy good quality tools that will last
- Avoid 'disposable' items, including toys
- Plan your meals to reduce food waste
- Install an efficient wood heater and find a local sustainable wood source
- Forward this newsletter to a friend

Join the TSW forum!
http://groups.yahoo.com/group/T_S_W/