

From Bush Blocks to Bulk Bins

Earth First

Stephen Nugent

Regardless of whether you're into native bush regeneration, passive solar design, recycled building materials, climate change debate, vegie gardens or waste to art workshops, there is something for everyone in the Summer 2009 ECCO Environment Awards.

At its monthly meeting on Wednesday night, ECCO finalised the winners of the summer awards, and the range of entries again showcase the exciting variety of environmentally sustainable practice in and around Orange.

Summer Award Winners

Peter Kircher's regenerated bush block with its passive solar home is the winner of the ECCO Award for Environmental Sustainability. He started work on the 2.8 hectare block in 1980 when it was a grazed out paddock containing only a handful of remnant eucalypts and acacias.

It now hosts a wide range of native trees including grevilleas, banksias, wattles, cypress and casuarinas, as well as grass trees and enormous tree ferns. Brandy Creek flows through the block and is home to native fish, frogs, yabbies and turtles. The site also attracts a diverse range of bird species, including Sacred Kingfishers.

Peter's house is one of the earliest examples of modern passive solar design in the district. It is clever, quirky, cosy and comfortable all at the same time, and features extensive use of recycled materials.

Peter is happy to share what he has learned from the experience of re-establishing a largely native ecosystem amongst grazing land and orchards, demonstrating that they can exist side by side.

Another individual making a difference is Keith Curry. CWD readers will probably be familiar with Keith's Tuesday column in the paper where he often writes about climate change issues.

Keith is arguably the most prolific local media commentator on climate change and constantly finds fresh perspectives to share with his readers. His work is helping to maintain and increase awareness of climate change and the serious challenges it presents, as well as encouraging individuals and organisations to take action. Keith is a very worthy winner of the OCAN Award for Climate Action.

Other Nominees

With only two entries being awarded each quarter, not everyone can end up a winner. However, two other entries are very worthy of mention. The 'Waste to Art' program held over the summer holidays is one of Netwaste's innovative education strategies. Led by Sue Clarke, the workshops aimed to create awareness among school children of the importance of recycling waste, using creativity to turn discarded objects into works of art.

The Slow Summer Festival's Apple Bin Garden Competition also helped create environmental awareness amongst school children. Most of the primary schools around Orange hosted bins in which students grew potatoes and other produce. This proved to be a valuable learning experience for many and highlighted the benefits of local food production.

How to Enter the Autumn 2009 Awards

Community groups, schools or individuals who missed out on nominating for the Summer Awards need not worry. The ECCO and OCAN Awards are presented each quarter and entries open tomorrow for the Autumn 2009 Awards. They close on May 1st and need to be submitted on an entry form available from Book City, Mitre 10, Windyhill Nursery, Central Western Daily or Orange City Council.

Green Dates for the Calendar: Sunday 1 March (yes tomorrow) – Clean Up Australia Day Saturday 28 March – Earth Hour
