

## **COMMUNITY GARDENS: A CHANCE TO GET INVOLVED**

### **EARTH FIRST**

**By Nick King**

The world is becoming increasingly urbanized. Most of us go to the supermarket to obtain our fresh fruit and vegetables. By doing so, we often forget where our food comes from, and we lose the ability to produce food for ourselves. Many urban residents are aware of this and are keen to re-establish their connection to the soil and the sense of co-operation, self sufficiency and sharing. The increasing popularity of community gardens is a response to this interest.

### **Why Community Gardens?**

Community gardens are formed in areas of public space which have been set aside for people to grow vegetables, herbs, fruit and flowers. They have the capacity to contribute to a viable and socially just food system, through encouraging everyone in the community to enjoy locally grown fresh produce.

### **Community engagement**

Working with others in a community garden fosters community engagement and a culture of generosity, trust, sharing and self help. It is also a convivial way of getting fresh air and exercise.

### **Education and self sufficiency**

Community gardens are great places to learn about gardening and to share local and traditional knowledge. Through participation in a community garden program, people can become aware of the resources available to them to supplement their diet within their own private space. Orange has its own community garden, the ELF centre at the Orange Showground, where such educational opportunities are also often available. This weekend, (Saturday only) the ELF hosts the Permaculture education day from 9am to 4pm, and everyone is welcome to attend.

We live in times where climate change is threatening food security. Fresh, nutritious food is likely to become more expensive and less available. Community gardens can provide a venue for both education and access to fresh food resources to allow our communities to be more self sufficient.

### **Use of open space**

In an urban environment public open space is essential for the physical, emotional and spiritual health of residents, and as such it should be regarded as precious. The establishment of more community gardens in open space areas of Orange is a way of productively using green space for the needs of the whole community. The satisfaction gained through the community engagement, education and self sufficiency provided by the community garden experience reinforces the need to retain such important public spaces.

### **A place for celebration**

Community gardens also provide a focal point for such activities as art projects, community events, celebrations and more. Such a celebration will be happening in Orange's very own community garden, where we are invited to take part in the "Bubbles and Berries" celebration, "where you can toast a long, lazy summer with a glass of bubbly and plump, juicy strawberries straight from our garden and get inspired by what we have grown in our organic garden beds".

**Where:** ELF Community Garden, Orange Showground, Leeds Parade, Orange.

**Time:** 5.30 pm, Wednesday February 11th

**Cost:** \$10.00 for adults \$25.00 per family

**Contact:** 02 63 61 0129

**Next Environmental Event:** The next environmental event is Clean up Australia Day on March the 1<sup>st</sup>. Get involved and make a difference.