



2019 Annual Garden Report

The Community Garden has had another great year. J9's spectacular Community Garden Gate and the new brick paving now lead people into a local wonderland. The new office, kitchen and toilet building combined with the beauty of the mandala garden (thanks Jana!), the quirky shapes and colours of the pizza station and majesty of the hill behind provide members, visitors and community groups with a wonderful venue that's bound to attract growing interest over the years ahead. Walking around the Garden's soft chip mulch paths and looking from side to side provides many thrills for the keen and casual gardener.

It is a time to celebrate how far the Garden has come in just eight years with the vital support of Jimmy and all his ALEC staff. Every year has seen significant new infrastructure developments and growth in community interest. Our soils have been similarly developed through the continued provision of animal manures, compost and mulch. Our community beds thrive, and the fruit trees are growing well. The mulberry trees have been wonderfully rewarding this year. Just ask!

Notwithstanding all our successes, ALEC and the Garden Committee have concluded that we've reached a tipping point. Why?

Firstly, we've more than achieved the objectives of our original masterplan.

Secondly, we now have considerably more infrastructure and significant additional costs, primarily water bills, to manage for safety and efficiency.

Thirdly, we always have new members to orientate and inexperienced gardeners who need initial advice and ongoing support.

Fourthly, we want to open the Garden up to more visitors, school children and community groups.

Fifthly, we want to see the Garden modelling best gardening practice (water efficient, healthy, productive and little waste) as far as is reasonably possible.

So there's no going back to being simply a collection of garden plots, no matter how prolific. We can no longer rely entirely on volunteers to maintain, let alone expand our patch. We need to look forward another eight years and to look outwards to how the Garden can contribute to expanding town and community interest and engagement in nature and the joys of gardening and healthy eating.

In the coming months we'll undertake a collaborative strategic planning exercise to reflect on where we're at and to confirm our new path. We have optimistically approached the Town Council to provide the Garden with some ongoing financial support to enable the employment of a part-time Garden Manager. Our committee believes that we have an outstanding facility that can be a base for wider networking and potentially action elsewhere by other community groups.

Warm thanks and congratulations go to our 45 individual plot holders who have made a great contribution to the variety, friendliness and productivity of the Garden and its financial management. Contributions at working bees have been greatly appreciated – the more the merrier! Recently, Committee members have been looking more closely at the health and safety of all the plots. We hope by positive encouragement and good advice to make individual plots and the Garden as a whole more disease and pest free, more productive and less wasteful. We hope too that the size of donations to Food for Alice will grow.

This year's water bill was over \$11,000. Having eight timer controlled dripline irrigation systems spread through the Garden has more or less guaranteed timely water delivery to all plots and trees but reliability has come at quite a cost. The Committee hopes to gain project funding next year to improve the system with one centralised Smart Water Controller donated by NT Power Water operating multiple solenoids and watering systems around the Garden.

The continual success of the Garden has always rested on the creativity, broad shoulders and green thumbs of the volunteers of our Garden Committee. They have managed the finances, raised funds, organised and supported wonderful community events (Last Friday of Month social get togethers, Breakfast FunRun, EcoFair Garden Workshop, Music&Pizza Night) and encouraged other volunteers to contribute their time, expertise and energy to keep things healthy and humming. This year's committee has carried the tradition onwards. All the members can be proud of their contribution often including their family members!

Your Garden Committee wins First Prize! Get to know them or better still join in!

ASCG COMMITTEE

GOVERNANCE POD: Bruce Simmons (Convenor), Kim Mackay (Deputy Convenor), Wendy Mann (Secretary/Treasurer)

PLOT MEMBERSHIP POD REP: Hannah Maljcov (resigned Sept), Emily Bird (Sept onwards)

COMMUNICATION/MEDIA POD REP: Adele Millard, Emily Bird

FUNDRAISING/EVENTS POD REP: John Bermingham, Emily Bird, Alice Goddard

MAINTENANCE & INFRASTRUCTURE POD REP: Allan O'Keefe, Kim Mackay

HEALTHY GARDEN POD REP: Bruce Simmons

GENERAL MEMBERS: Alex Read (ALEC rep), Toby Speare, Alice Goddard, Bronwyn Field, Mark Field (resigned October), Kit Meander(resigned September)

It is difficult to single out individuals. Everyone has taken on their POD tasks willingly and enthusiastically and they've been committed to the team. Allan and his company Comwin did a great job constructing and fitting out the new building. Hannah and Birdy have taken on the demanding Plots Rep role with gusto. Wendy is an ever reliable Sec/Treasurer. Adele has kept up the social media and Birdy has contributed some great short videos. John initiated two highly successful fun and fundraising events. Kim has lived up to his garden guru tag. He can both do and teach ever so well. Our general members Toby, Bronwyn, Mark, Alex and Alice have been active contributors. Back at ALEC, Carmel, Peachy, Alex and Alex and recently Jasmine and Amy have all backed us to the hilt. A number of enthusiastic regulars have made our working bees highly productive. ABC's Geoff Miers has been an enthusiastic supporter and ready advisor.

It is most rewarding to be a part of a green success story - growing local, eating whole organic foods and enjoying the sensory, physical and emotional rewards of communing with nature and like-minded people. Roll on!

Bruce