

DUCK FLAT COMMUNITY GARDEN

HISTORY

A child of the burgeoning Community and Therapeutic Garden movement, the Duck Flat Community Garden at the rear of the Mount Barker Health Campus began with the simple but profound desire of health professionals wishing to work across disciplines.

A Physiotherapist, Chris Banks, suggested a garden.

Enthusiasm took root and the garden concept and space blossomed from 2001 to today but not without commitment, vision, persistence, creativity, sound environmental practice and belief.

The established purpose was to create a beautiful space for physical and passive activities and for the teaching about, demonstration of and growing of produce utilizing co-operative, collaborative, healthy, organic principles for the Health Campus community of 300 staff, 150 volunteers and well over 3000 clients as well as the broader community of Mount Barker and the region within which it resides.



Hundreds of people have contributed to and/or benefited from the garden since its first “C’ Day (Compost Day) in June 2001 including campus personnel and clients, local businesses, community groups and individuals.

It currently boasts abundant garden beds, benches, wheel accessible pathways, a hot house, a pizza oven and meeting place, dragon seats, a shade/potting igloo, native shelter belt, fruit trees, a comprehensive composting system and various art works.

Now it provides a space in reality and the imagination where the community can be involved in creating their own meanings and relationships, while sharing a cuppa, digging a hole, dreaming in the shade, or contemplating a loss, the garden welcomes everyone to a centre for and of health.

CURRENT AND FUTURE PROJECTS INCLUDE :-

- a) A life path: gathering memories, dreams and hopes of gardens from three generations from the Health Service client groups plus further flung groups in the region; to create a CD, a lip book and path with 'rooms' devoted to each generation; will link current garden to 'Activity Work Shed'
- b) 'Activity Work Shed' concept is being developed with regional RSL groups, local council, TAFE, Mt Barker High School and Health Service Personnel and clients, to develop a nerve centre of constructive activity where inter-generational skill sharing can produce new meaning and products to enhance participants lives.
- c) Sensory Walk to link the 'Shed' to the Highway by a meandering stroll half a kilometre long past and through plantings to stimulate and satisfy touch, taste, sight, smell and sound. Strategic partners will include Council, all schools and TAFE, campus personnel and clients, land care groups and artist organisations.
- d) 'Work for the dole' project will be co-ordinating with the bereavement group to develop a Memorial garden for reflection, respect and beauty, as well as paving, irrigation and planting skills for the participants.



- e) A Children's garden is also being planned with the kids and parents group of the Health Service to include a sandpit/drawing board, a weather protected Story Telling Space and areas for children to choose active or passive activities.
- f) A self – run cardiac rehabilitation group, initiated by participants at the Health Service, utilise the garden for exercise and will be applying for a 'keep active' grant to establish a 'Healthy Circulation Circuit' of gentle exercise apparatus within the garden.
- g) The Organic produce, harvested regularly by a mental health client, is sold through the Health Service to the community at very low prices. It is also used in the Day Care Centre's cooking classes and to teach other groups how to grow their own food thereby reducing food anxiety.
- h) Dementia Clients of the Day Care Centre regularly visit the garden for physical health and a reminisce and a project will be undertaken with them to create a memory garden where they feel 'at home.'
- i) A Garden Gala Exhibition to showcase exhibits of memories and dreams of Gardens for up to five hundred people. Tapestry, sculpture, produce, music, flowers, creaky gates and Easter Eggs are all grist to the mill of the exposé of the creativity within everyone of us.

As you can see from the above, the breadth and depth of projects is limited only by the imagination. The garden is indeed catering to and satisfying numerous primary health needs; to belong, to create, to dream, to build, to produce; in a clean, healthy, beautiful, bountiful environment.

The individual projects within the programme as a whole are and will demonstrate best practice in community development, OH&S&W, creative involvement and expression, environmental practice and primary health care within a wholistic model which could be used as a demonstration for communities and health campuses elsewhere in the state. Want more info contact Tess on 83931727