

Merri Corner Community Garden - Plot holder Meeting Minutes

Venue: MCCG, cnr Donald and Harrison Streets, Brunswick East.
Sunday 6 May, 12.00pm

Present - Eleisha Mullane, Liz Ralph, Gavin Ashley, Pauline Ahola, Ingrid Josephine, Keiron Briggs, Sarah James, Adele Charlton, Greg Dalton, Michelle Callander, Jan Morgan.

Apologies – Lauren Keim, Amanda Cornwall, Anabel Nowlan, Jude Waters, Simone Howard, Sue Muir, Julie Stratford, Tessa Mahy, Kate Wood

1. Welcome and Introductions

2. Construction and grant update

Financial report was circulated and MCCG grant money won and spent to date was discussed.

Gavin explained upcoming new shelter building works, and asked for ideas for seating in the communal area adjacent to the Sensory Garden. Discussion of three ideas/combinations - bench seating around the perimeter/central seating with a large shade tree in the middle or both perimeter and central seating. Use of new pergola area next to the tank was discussed - most popular suggestion is for a propagating area and the Committee is happy to go ahead with this. Committee will form an action plan. Timeframe TBA.

Pauline showed samples of laser cut clean steel and rust-activated steel for entrance gates and explained the design process, production and finishing technique. The steel will be installed to create decorative gates leading to new shelter. Installation timeline is June/July pending review/repair of existing wooden gates and posts - some sagging and design issues need to be addressed by Kev who built the gates.

3. Communal space discussion

Liz and Eleisha led a discussion on the communal space, including what planting ideas plot holders had for winter vegetables. Simone Howard (apology) suggested peas, carrots, mangetout, cabbage, chinese cabbage and kale.

Sarah James (on the plot waiting list) will be caretaking some of the communal beds, helping with compost and is very keen to get involved - Sarah will be in touch with Amanda Cornwall to see where to get started in the beds.

Julie Stratford (apology) suggested that each communal section have a caretaker each - verges, raised beds, fruit trees, compost.

Update from Pauline about reclaimed timber posts that will be installed with wires attached to train the espalier fruit trees, this project will be lead by our fruit tree friend Don.

Update from Liz (on behalf of Annabel) about the plants on the Northern Verge.

Group discussion about the Eastern Verge planting ideas - perhaps an indigenous ground cover that is hardy and will withstand foot traffic from parked cars. Indigenous plants preferable to stop inadvertent spread of non-natives to the creek via drain. Proposed plants – dianella, vanilla lilies, and pig face. Donations of vanilla lilies and dianella are welcome.

For the moment the eastern verge grass will be whipper-snipped regularly and the clippings used in the compost bins. Two whipper-snipper volunteers needed to work in a buddy system - one to whipper-snip and the other to sweep clippings. Old pieces of carpet are also appreciated to lay over verge to kill off grass in time.

Group also discussed what to do with the woodpile section, possible uses suggested over the last few months were a communal community bed or a Kids' Corner with cat-proofed sand pit. Kids' Corner was the preferred suggestion. Committee to develop an action plan. Timeframe & budget TBA.

In the meantime, please refrain from discarding wood from pile until all construction jobs have been completed and future use reviewed.

4. Merri Corner Veg in Veg out

Liz shared news (on behalf of Amanda) about the Veg In Veg Out produce and ideas swap which is currently held on the second Sunday of the month at the garden. All welcome, plot holders, members of the garden, friends and interested local residents. Flyers handed out, plot holders encouraged to distribute them to friends, family, work colleagues, local favourite cafe's etc.

5. Financial report

Financial report circulated during Gav's construction & grant update. Brief explanation of what income we have had (grants, membership fees, plot holder leases), expenditure and current balance. MCCG is in a good financial position on the back of earlier fundraising.

MCCG Committee are considering changing the date for renewal of membership and plot leases so plots are vacated before spring starts rather than summer to allow for plot change over and new season plantings for new plot holders.

6. Communications

Ingrid led a discussion on MCCG committee communication with plot holders - including how to send a message to the plot holder list on Google Groups, and explanation of seasonal newsletters and information posted on the MCCG website, and how to contact MCCG committee via info@merricorner.org. Facebook is a great way used for all gardeners to communicate and to generate an online garden community, but please *all* correspondence or enquiries to the Committee should be by email to info@merricorner.org - this address is checked regularly.

A discussion was also had about more face-to-face discussion at the garden and the importance of creating a community of plot holders and committee members. Everyone encouraged to chat to your fellow plot holders about upcoming events

(e.g. Busy Bees, Veg In Veg Out, AGM and Plot holder meetings) compost maintenance and the cookbook project.

Discussion about the joint cookbook project with MCCG and East Brunswick New Jersey Community Garden, including call for recipes and taking photos of dishes when they are made at home. Adele offered assistance with the cookbook project, based on her experience as a food blogger.

7. Maintenance reminder

Liz talked about the importance of plot holders actively weeding and maintaining the site, ways to keep weeds down together:

- Weeding the path for 10 minutes with plot holders you don't know yet is a good icebreaker!
- Ask your fellow plot holders if you can lend a hand if their plot is looking weedy
- Plot holders who are temporarily unavailable to maintain their plot should get in touch with the committee - we can arrange help cleaning up plots and organising plot caretakers.

Any maintenance/repair issues noticed around the garden please notify MCCG committee as soon as possible on info@merricorner.org.au

The garden needs handy people! We have short-term jobs that need doing, but long term, maintenance is an issue and we need a small pool of people who could be our handy persons and who we could call on for ongoing maintenance jobs. Everyone was asked to think about their own networks and if they have an uncle/ mum/retired neighbour who is handy with tools and would be keen to help us out in this way. Committee also looking at other groups such as the Grey Army, Mens Shed, Rotary etc for possible support in this area.

8. Compost Discussion

Following on from compost workshop with Sarah James held prior to the meeting and Lauren's compost tips sent by email -

Compost needs to be turned regularly - weekly is best and all three bays need to be turned, not just the one that is open. A roster was proposed for plot holders to take turns each week. This roster is being prepared now for all plot holders. New signs with compost and worm bins FAQs are being written.

- No weeds in the compost bays, weeds in the weed tea please
- Chop your compost and fork it (turn it) when you can. It's your compost, don't be afraid to lend a hand!
- Clippers, spade and fork can live under cover of compost bays (rather than in shed) for easy access.

Meeting closed 1.15pm.