**MCG President report 2022**

As usual, the garden has been a place of inspiration and joy for a lot of people through the year. It’s great to see so many of the regular hard workers keeping the MCG going, as well as a few new ones. A big welcome to all those who have joined during the year.

The past year has been challenging in many ways, mainly due to the frequent and high rainfall. The ground has become so wet that even small amounts of rain can make the MCG site inaccessible for weeks. Consequently, it has been difficult to keep up with basic maintenance, and some infrastructure projects have been delayed. The productiveness of the garden has also taken a hit. Parts of the fig crop was lost, some of the citrus trees look a bit sad, and the staple winter crops have also not been as productive as usual. And then the bower birds struck. Fortunately, the garlic crop seems to have fared quite well under Harley’s stewardship.

But these difficulties have in no way dampened enthusiasm. With spring and rising temperatures, we look forward to the ground firming so we can get on with maintenance and improvements, and of course growing things. Here are some of the recently completed and ongoing projects.

* More than half of the 65 odd two or three storey plots have been rebuilt or re-aligned and fitted with steel corners for reinforcement. This work will continue until all plots are in good shape.
* There are plans afoot to raise some of the one-plank communal growing plots to improve their productivity.
* Two water tanks will be hooked up to the container shed to provide an independent source of clean water. Guttering has already been fitted and the water tanks will be hooked up as soon as a base for them is prepared.
* A few large, corrugated steel water tank sections have been placed in the South-Western part of the garden and will progressively be filled with soil (not entirely from our delivered soil) and planted out.
* Three smaller corrugated steel raised growing plots have been placed in different places adjacent to the windbreak for a ginger growing trial.
* The road surface around the MCG entry gate at Murramarang road has had some temporary improvements while we wait for the ANU to re-grade that part of the road.
* In our quest for self-sufficiency and resilience, we have applied for a grant for a second electric mower. This will limit the need to regularly transport in equipment.

The regular ANU water testing has continued to show low or moderate levels of blue-green algae in the MCG water supply. Fortunately, there has not been much need for watering recently, but there will come a time when we need to begin watering again. With current levels of algae, we can use water judiciously by watering at ground level, but we should avoid spraying over produce. This advice could change at any time though should the test results change dramatically. I will continue to work closely with the ANU on the testing and will be advised of monthly results.

If you’re a new member and feel a bit bewildered about how the garden is managed, how decisions are made and how you can best contribute, we want to hear from you. One of the best ways to be introduced to the garden and many of its hard-working members is to come along to Saturday morning working bees. You may also like to read the document called ‘*The Aims, Policies and Practices of the MCG’*, which explains how things work and about expectations of members.

As a collective of volunteers, the MCG relies on the initiative of members so please don’t be shy coming forward with suggestions. But remember that there is no ‘they’—there is only us. There is no paid staff, so suggestions need to be accompanied by offers of help to implement them. If you have ideas or suggestions, please talk to one of the garden managers or a committee member. Minor matters can usually be acted on straight away. If suggestions are more substantial, the Management Committee may need to provide guidance and formal approval.

I haven’t been involved here at the MCG anywhere near as long as some people, but I’m becoming strangely attached to the place. I feel that we have achieved quite a lot in the past year, and I feel optimistic and enthusiastic about the future. We have a lot of very capable and hard-working members running the place, so it’s in good hands. I also feel that the MCG is becoming more self-sufficient and resilient through the acquisition of equipment and infrastructure, such as additional water storage and electric maintenance equipment, making it less necessary to bring in things from the outside. We are also trying to recycle as much of our waste as possible within the garden,

One of the key characteristics of our work here is that it’s never done. It’s not like building a house where one day you’re finished. I feel that our work oscillates between playing catch-up with mowing, weeding and planting, and then there are the occasional times when almost everything seems to be in order. It’s the promise of these moments that keeps us going so we are always working towards them. But let’s not beat ourselves up if we don’t always get there. As the Welsh poet Gwyn Thomas once wrote *‘the beauty is in the walking—we are betrayed by destinations*.’ And so it is with the MCG, the work is never quite done so we’ll be walking forever, so to speak. But we are richly rewarded along the way, not least because we often walk away with bags full of beautiful produce, but also because we get to spend time in a special place such as this.

Thanks for the support during the past year and happy gardening.

Klas Johansson