

Murramarang Community Garden

MINUTES

MCG COMMITTEE

Saturday 7 July 2018

10 AM at garden

Chair: Ewen Sussman

1. Present: Jocelyn Sussman, Ewen Sussman, Harley Delves, Neil Brown, Judith Carroll, Mary Stanwix, Sybille Davidson, Don Davidson, Marg Hamon, Cathy Delves, Diana Knight, Peter White, Barbara White, Leonie Combes, Elizabeth Begg, Richard Lake.

2. Apologies: Doug Howarth, Marie O'Connell, John Tapsell, Kathy Kerr. Maggie Mance.

3. Business arising from Minutes of previous meeting:

- Car park and shade trees – after discussion it was agreed that Harley's suggestion that the car park be moved to the drier eastern boundary fence line, adjacent to the main gate be adopted, subject to approval by Steve (the ANU KCC Worm Farm irrigation system is close by). Planting of shade trees would be contingent upon Steve's approval of new car park site and also the shading effect on adjacent garden beds. Diana suggested that in warmer, drier weather gardeners could still use existing car parking area.

4. Reports:

Treasurers Report

Richard reported that our current bank balance is \$6,255.02, with just a few outstanding invoices to be paid. We have 52 paid up members.

5. General Business

1. *Future plans for the garden* – the consolidation of existing beds is a priority, especially in the communal area. Harley spoke of the reasons behind the increase in garlic planting this year. Increase in demand from restaurants is particularly strong and we did increase the number of bulbs we purchased this year. Everyone agreed that garlic is an excellent "cash crop" for MCG. In the future we will set aside a few beds to be available for new members, rather than planting garlic in every available bed – Marg suggested that we could plant crops in these beds that grow more quickly than garlic so that they can be handed over should a new member require a bed.

It was agreed that the priority for use of the sleepers recently purchased is to build up the existing beds in the communal area, rather than to build new beds. These beds are currently enclosed by old and rotting timbers or not at all. Barbara and Peter have laid weed mat on the paths between these beds, covered by a thick layer of mulch. Care should be taken when weeding – use a bucket or similar container for weeds rather than throwing them onto the mulched paths. Peter reminded Harley to let other gardeners know when he intends to build beds, rather than undertaking this work himself – there are others who are happy to help.

2. *Membership Drive:* Judith suggested that we could consider a membership drive

since our numbers have dropped from a peak of 71 in 2015 to 52 this year – More members mean “more hands on deck” at working bees, plus additional membership fees. In addition, many people new to the area may be unaware of MCG. Marg suggested that we should hold off until after the present crop of garlic is harvested before we embark on a membership drive as there are currently no beds available for new members. Diana spoke in favour of keeping just a few beds available for new members. Elizabeth recommended that we distribute pamphlets at the Murramarang Market, as we have done in the past, as a good way to attract new members.

3. Barbara posed the question; “Is MCG a community garden or a communal garden?”...the implication here is that if it is the latter then people might believe that produce is there for them to help themselves. We must stress the “community garden” aspect of the garden where we “grow food together”.

Neil noted that the idea of “allotments” where individuals tended their own plots (popular in Europe and the UK) can’t be confused with the philosophy of a “community garden”, where people work together and share produce.

4. Sybille noted that most of the big expenses we faced this year are now over (fig enclosure/upgrading of irrigation system) so that we can now look at other ways to improve our infrastructure, perhaps in addressing the “plight of the bees”. Don noted that we still need to erect an enclosure over the blueberries, similar to the fig enclosure, although Harley believes that netting over the existing frame may be sufficient for the present.

5. Cathy raised the matter of emails to members reminding them of the importance of attending Saturday working bees every now and then. She believes that this may appear “unfriendly” to members and could “drive them away”. Judith and Barbara noted that as some people don’t attend working bees anyway, they wouldn’t be driven away. Barbara, Peter and others pointed out that the few who do attend working bees regularly are feeling a bit “burnt out” and would appreciate occasional support from the wider membership. Elizabeth said that many, like her, who are not permanent residents, come as often as they can. The meeting agreed that the emails are not directed to these people, or to those who have other commitments on Saturday morning, such as RFS training and sporting commitments.

6. *Mary suggested that a “to do” list*, posted on the notice board near the front gate would be helpful for people who visit the garden during the week and are unsure of what needs to be done. This idea was enthusiastically agreed to. Barbara suggested that the large whiteboard in the recreation area is out of date and could be more effectively used – perhaps the notice board at the front gate could direct gardeners to the large whiteboard where more details concerning “tasks to be done” could be noted. Barbara volunteered to take over this task and to also keep a “planting diary” where the type and date of all plantings are noted. BRAVO!

8. *Vegetable planting* – Jocelyn, Harley and Sybille reported on the crops that have recently been planted – garlic (several varieties), broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, kumara, potato, parsnip, beetroot, peas and broad beans.

9. Date for 2018 AGM – 8 September

10. Bees – rejuvenation of hives?

Planting appropriate flowers to increase pollination has commenced. Col Keating (a local resident who supplied our hives and has harvested our honey in the past) has been ill and is currently away. Discussion ensued about whether we should apply for funding from Veolia Mulwaree Trust (VMT) to install the new “Flow House” beehive system. Elizabeth suggested that her son, who is building hives himself, may be able to visit our garden and suggest ways that we could rejuvenate our current hives rather than to install a completely new system. Pollinator Houses located around the garden site were also suggested as a way to increase pollination.

Sybille and Elizabeth suggested that another way to increase pollination is to plant suitable species such as melaleuca along the swampy northern boundary fence. Flowering can be maximised by pruning, thus avoiding the problem of overshading.

11. Discussion followed as to whether we should apply for funding from VMT for a new beehive system or for something else.

Don suggested that we apply for funding for an electric ride-on-mower. Whilst we are very fortunate that Doug uses his own mower to regularly mow the whole garden site, it may be prudent to purchase a mower and storage shed of our own so that others can assist him in this sometimes arduous task. An electric mower can be charged by our solar and battery system, alleviating the need to purchase mower fuel. The use of green energy is also a positive way for MCG to reflect the philosophy of the ANU KCC. It was suggested that we also purchase a lockable storage shed for the mower. An informal vote was taken – 14 for the mower, 1 for the beehive system.

Judith has registered MCG for the Veolia Mulwaree Trust grant and will commence the application immediately, since the due date is 24 August. She will rely on other committee members to help in obtaining quotes (2 for each item) and in preparing the budget.

We will still look at ways to improve pollination by our existing bees and may use our own funds to do so.

12. Judith raised the use of glyphosate as a herbicide at MCG, especially around veggie beds. She referred to the recent ban on its use by all European Union member countries, with France and Spain, both heavily reliant on agriculture as a key part of their economies, amongst the strongest supporters of the ban. Irrefutable evidence of the link between its use and the development of cancers, especially amongst agricultural workers, was the main reason behind the ban and because there are other “new generation” herbicides available.

It was agreed that either/or Jocelyn and Harley will speak with Steve about alternative herbicides.

Meeting closed at 11.45am.