



Murramarang Community Garden

Growing Food Together

Plan 2023

V 2.0

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1. Background

In 2021 the MCG Management Committee ratified a document called *'Way Ahead 2021-22'*, which set out a range of management, maintenance and infrastructure issues that required either decisions or actions. During 2021 and 2022, this document has provided guidance for discussions and decisions by the MCG Management Committee. Because of the broad scope of the *'Way Ahead 2021-22'* document, it also played an important role in the development of the document *'A member's guide to the aims, policies and practices of our community garden'*.

It is now time to move on to a plan for 2023, which is the subject of this document. But first a recap of the decisions and actions that flowed from the *'Way Ahead 2021-22'* document.

1.1 Decisions and actions resulting from the *'Way Ahead 2021-22'* document

The decisions and actions listed below are essentially a digest of what has resulted from the *'Way Ahead 2021-22'* document, which also exist in minutes from Management Committee and General Meetings from 2021 and 2021. All minutes, plans and important documents are posted on the MCG website.

1.1.1 Composting

- Water barrels for drowning problem weeds have been installed at three locations around the garden.
- Problem weeds can also be placed in a designated compost bay—the resulting compost should not be used on communal plots
- All other 'clean' compost, including waste from plots, cow dung and ANU kitchen waste, should be placed in the compost bin marked 'in use' (rotated as required).

1.1.2 Pest and weed control

Pests (mainly rats) and weed control inherently involve poisons that need to be carefully selected and handled. Therefore, the MCH Management Committee appoints specific member for these tasks.

1.1.3 Soil storage

Consideration has been given to the construction of a soil bay inside the MCG gates, although the recent wet conditions has made access difficult and has shown that soil is best kept where it can be accessed from solid ground. Until further notice, soil will be kept at the end of the carpark just outside the MCG fence. This arrangement has been confirmed with ANU.

1.1.4 Additional equipment

A range of new electric mowing and maintenance equipment have been acquired. The Management Committee resolved to keep the heavy-duty petrol lawn mower and line trimmer as back-up. The Committee also resolved to buy two new heavy duty and one lighter wheelbarrows. The lighter wheelbarrow is still to be sourced.

1.1.5 Restoration of rented plots

Grant funding was secured, and a method developed, for replacing/ realigning and reinforcing all rented plots. This work is currently two-thirds complete and will continue in 2023.

1.1.6 Site sheds

Rust in the doors of the site container has been treated.

The roof of the small shed in the South-Western corner has had rust treatment and new flashings fitted to address leaks.

Sheds have been re-organized so that:

- all motorized equipment is kept in the steel container
- Wheelbarrows and hand-tools are kept in the potting shed, along with cardboard, paper and hessian sacks for mulching
- Fertilizer and mulches (for communal plots), poisons and specialized equipment are kept in the small South-Western shed.

1.1.7 Hoses and nozzles

It has been decided not to provide trigger nozzles for all hoses because they tend to degrade when left outside over long periods and have a habit of disappearing. Members are encouraged to bring their own. Hoses are provided at all taps.

1.1.8 Fig enclosure

The netting on the fig cage has been renewed and the lower level fitted with chicken wire to prevent entry by bower birds and other pests.

1.1.9 Blueberry enclosure

Like the fig enclosure, the netting has been renewed. The blueberry plants have been raised to prevent waterlogging.

2. MCG plan for 2023

The items outlined in this section are partly ones that the Management Committee has recently made decisions about and where work will continue in 2023, and partly items that will be discussed by the Management Committee during 2023.

The purpose of this plan is to focus discussions within the Management Committee and to orientate members in general to what will be considered in 2023. Being formulated at the beginning of 2023, this plan is not likely to fully represent considerations by the Management Committee for the coming year—new issues, considerations and projects are likely to emerge.

2.1 Water tanks

The presence of blue-green algae in the MCG water supply has highlighted the value of having an independent water supply available. Therefore, two donated water tanks will be placed at the western end of the container shed and fed from its roof.

New guttering and down pipes were fitted in July 2022, with the rest of the connections planned for when the tanks are in place. The work to prepare the ground for the final placement of the tanks has been delayed due to the wet weather. As soon as the ground is firm enough, this work will be completed.

2.2 Raising the communal plots

For some time now, and especially during the recent wet weather, it has been apparent that productivity is better in growing plots that are raised more than one plank high. The Management Committee has decided that it is desirable to raise all one-plank communal plots so that they are all two planks high.

This work was budgeted and put into a grant application to Veolia Mulwaree Trust and the Australian Government. The grant application to Veolia was approved in November (\$5,000) and work will commence early 2023.

2.3 New corrugated steel communal plots

A donated large corrugated steel water tank has been cut into four round sections, each 400mm high. These round sections have been placed in the often water-logged south-western part of the garden. They have been filled with soil to provide additional communal growing spaces. They have been placed with sufficient space between them to allow access by the ride-on mower.

Due to their large capacity, the new growing plots were partly filled with the decomposed woodchips dug out from between the communal growing plots.

2.4 New pathways between communal plots

The pathways between the communal plots are covered with weed-mats and have periodically been topped up with woodchips. This woodchips decomposes over time and creates a soil layer, which tends to become weed-infested. Keeping the pathways weed-free require significant amounts of effort, which could be better spent on other activities.

The Management Committee has decided not to replace the woodchips, but rather cover the paths with road-base to prevent weed growth, improve accessibility and reduce maintenance.

2.5 Increased mowing capacity

The new electric garden equipment, including the ride-on mower and line trimmer, have proved their worth. Although, keeping the MCG site mowed has been a challenge during the last year, particularly during the long periods of wet weather.

The mowing challenge is also due to the scale of the MCG grassed areas. The existing ride-on mower is capable of mowing about half the MCG grounds on one charge. The gap has often been filled by members bringing additional equipment, the loading and unloading of which can be dangerous. The ground has often been so soft that using the loading ramp outside the south-western gate has been impossible.

In the interest of self-sufficiency and safety, the MCG Management Committee has decided to acquire an additional heavy-duty electric ride-on mower. A grant application to NSW Government was unsuccessful. Other grant opportunities will be sought.

2.6 Clarification of Garden Manager's role

The Garden Manager's role has changed over time, along with garden management and practices. In recent time, many individual members have taken on specific tasks and roles, and a separate project to formalize these arrangements is being considered by the Management Committee (see below).

The roles of Garden Managers are currently not documented, nor is there a shared understanding about what they should be. It is therefore timely for the Management Committee to consider the position and provide clarity.

2.7 More formal assignment of specific tasks to individual members

Apart from official MCG office bearers, there are many recurring tasks and areas of responsibilities carried out by specific members, such as managing compost rotations, windbreak maintenance, rat baiting etc. The assignment of individuals to these tasks have mainly been informal.

It is now proposed to be clearer about these arrangements by creating a register of tasks and functions of the MCG. It is envisaged that the creation of a register will involve the following steps:

1. Create a list of tasks and functions that either is, or could be, assigned to individuals or groups.
2. Assign individuals to these tasks/ functions to the extent specific members are already carrying them out.
3. Make the list available to all members as information of who does what and to highlight opportunities for members to contribute.

2.8 Management of problem compost

Problem compost is garden waste that contain roots or seeds that survive the composting process and become invasive if spread on growing plots. Therefore, such compost should not be mixed with 'clean compost', which is composted on rotation in the first four compost bays.

To date, problem compost has been placed in the weed-drowning drums and in designated compost bays (compost bays six and seven on the right side of the row of compost bays). While these practices will continue, it is proposed to also make more use of no-dig minimum effort permaculture principles—like the methods used when preparing the pumpkin patch just outside the inner northern gate. This involve piling up compostable material on the ground, covering them up for a time, then planting directly into the compost without further preparation. Using problem compost in this way ensures that nothing is wasted while minimising the spread of weeds.

2.9 Improving grassed areas

The MCG has significant grassed areas, with many parts being quite uneven. In particular, the central grassed area, between the two sections of rented plots, have several depressions that often pool with water after rain.

The Management Committee has decided to look for opportunities to fill these, and possible improve drainage. To begin with, some of the degraded woodchips, dug out

from between the communal plots, will be placed in the depressions. This may be followed by composting 'problem compost' according to the principles outlined above.