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# fleurieu forager

NEWSLETTER OF THE WILLUNGA FARMERS MARKET

Issue 20, SPRING 2008

## That's a lot of tomatoes ...growing food for pleasure



Nothing symbolises summer more than the unsurpassed taste and flavour of a homegrown tomato. Growing them is Australia's national summer hobby with ABARE (Aust. Bureau of Agricultural and Resource

Economics) estimating that last year's crop from Aussie backyards amounted to a staggering 70,000 tonnes! Bearing no resemblance at all to their "imitation" supermarket counterparts, homegrown tomatoes capture the essence of what's gone wrong – and can go so right – with our food supply.

Seasonal, variety, local, organic, fresh, healthy – whatever adjectives you use to describe them – people grow backyard vegies for one main reason – they taste better!

Around the world the movement back to growing your own and shopping at local markets for fresh seasonal vegetables is gathering pace. Everyone is doing it – chefs, schools, suburban householders, community gardens, restaurants, councils. In California, Victory gardens (as in WW2) are being dug again – the whole front of the San Francisco county chambers are now a huge vegie patch; the Tuileries Gardens in the heart of Paris have a vegie garden in them; the waiting list for allotments in the UK is 300,000 people! And people in the developing world have never stopped – always understanding that without a secure food supply there is only hunger.

Seed companies and heritage and heirloom vegie mail order companies are reporting booming business – Yates sold 10 million carrot seeds last year. TV gardeners like the ABC's Peter Cundall have become national treasures as the message they have been telling for 20 + years has been heard by more and more people. And as he always says – "It's quite simple, really!"

Take tomatoes – firstly, how can anyone resist the romance and lure of the names of the rediscovered heritage and heirloom varieties – Brandywine, Amish Paste, Green Zebra, Black Russian, Jaune Flamme, Wapsipinicon Peach, Tigerella and that old favourite Grosse Lisse – eight names among thousands. A punnet or two of seedlings, some garden stakes, a very moderate amount of water, mulch and a bit of organic compost, three months of glorious growing conditions and the result is a crop of delicious fruit that will, as the Italians say, turn bread into a feast!

Inside this issue of the Forager you'll find some great resources and info for turning your thumbs green and getting your garden on the way... try it... growing just a bit of your own food... a pot or two of herbs, a row of beans, a trellis of tomatoes – and reconnect yourself with not only the joy and physical health benefits of gardening but the pleasures of the table, sharing real food with family and friends – and thus rediscovering our history and culture.



*ahhh...the backyard veggie patch. Try it for the flavor and nutrition, but mostly for the sheer pleasure!*



Articles, letters to the editor, advertising and sponsorship enquiries should be directed to Fleurieu Forager, PO Box 652, Willunga 5172 or wfm@internode.on.net  
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Newsletter of the Willunga Farmers Market, proudly sponsored by Hardys Tintara, McLaren Vale

WILLUNGA FARMERS MARKET fresh, healthy, local produce every Saturday 8-12.30, Willunga Town Square

# Every kitchen needs a garden



Winter, Spring, Summer, Autumn – Jen Harvey and Di Bickford always have a range of healthy, vibrant, in-season seedlings to plant out, and fresh organic greens ready to eat. Get your green thumb growing!

**G**ardening and green thumbs are in Diana Bickford's blood. Her mother created beautiful gardens wherever they lived, the last being around the house on Diana's property at Hunt Rd, McLaren Vale. Inspired by this gardening heritage, a love of growing plants, a never-ending fascination for seeds as they spring to life, and above all a passion for self-sufficiency and sustainability, an idea began to germinate.

Early in 2003 Diana decided to develop her property into an organic farm specialising in vegetable seedlings. **Bickleigh Vale Farm** was born. And with a ready-to-hand outlet like Willunga's Farmers Market full of potential gardening

enthusiasts, success seemed assured.

Starting from small beginnings selling salad packs and kitchen starter packs the business has grown with the market. Jen joined Diana in the business taking over the role of main seed sower. With TLC galore Jen sows a batch of seeds every week – the size and variety of the batch depending on the season and customer-driven demand. After a couple of weeks on the "hot-bed" these seedlings are transplanted to punnets, soon to appear at WFM, ready to plant.

Organic certification was an obvious step for Bickleigh Vale – both to create a niche market for their seedlings and because of their

passion for the health and wellbeing of our community. Diana has run many kitchen gardening courses over the years at the CancerCare centre in Fullarton; worked with the Open Gardens scheme to bring world-famous US farmer Eliot Coleman to McLaren Vale for growing workshops; and spends hours every weekend encouraging people to have a go at growing some of their own food.

At WFM Bickleigh Vale's stall has become the gardening hub of the market – the wonderful array of familiar and exotic heirloom, open-pollinated and uncommon varieties of vegetable and herb seedlings tempt even the most reluctant gardener. And spring is just around the corner!



Bickleigh Vale Farm makes it easy to get growing with their ready-to-plant Kitchen Garden Packs.

*Days are lengthening  
The sun is getting warmer  
Birds are busy  
Buds are swelling  
The garden is calling...*

**I**n early spring sow your peas and broad beans.

Leave French beans until your bottom feels warm on the ground. Carrots can go in as the soil warms up and beetroot is fairly tolerant of early conditions. There is still time for broccoli and spring cabbages – mini types are great space savers and fast to grow. Salad greens are a must – so productive and delicious – lettuce, rocket, baby spinach, endive, mustard, chicory. Asian veg are fast too – stir fry is so delicious with freshly picked bok choy and mizuna.

By mid-September the ground should be warm enough to start on the summer classics – anyone can grow a zucchini (maybe not eat

all the results!), tomatoes are essential, cucumbers, pumpkins, eggplants, capsicums...the list goes on.

A little or a lot – it doesn't matter – once you've eaten produce from your own garden you'll be hooked. Vegie gardening is fun, economical, environmentally sound, good for your health, and best of all you get to eat the results!



## From the Manager



**S**pring will be a celebration. After a seemingly long, cold and thankfully wet winter we are looking forward to the growing

season and the great produce our farmers will be bringing to their stalls. The season also marks our first full year in Willunga Town Square, which has been a huge success. We have received so many positive comments about the move and how it has given the market a real identity. From humble, passionate beginnings, to a truly successful and sustainable event Willunga Farmers Market is now a well recognised venue. People relate to the market in many ways but what they all agree on is that it is a wonderful experience, a fantastic place to shop and a reliable outlet for the farmers and producers to trade.

On a personal note I will be quietly celebrating my first year as the Market Manager. It has been a very rewarding experience for me and I have certainly learnt a great deal about the region and the dedication of those who live and work here. I incorporate that enthusiasm with a strong sense of responsibility to keep the market a success for all, whilst taking on the challenge of growth and expansion.

An important aspect for me over this last year has been the strong identity the Market has as a true farmers market. I targeted marketing campaigns to develop that further in order to attract new stallholders. That in turn meant a meaningful application could be made to Council to be granted an extension on our permits, aiming to increase the size of the Market. The management committee is very grateful for the help and support from the City of Onkaparinga and we look forward to what we hope will be a successful application.

As always, it is the input and feedback from market members and shoppers that helps shape the growth of this market. Feel free to contact me in the market office with any comments you may have, or email them to [wfm@internode.com](mailto:wfm@internode.com)

*Best wishes,  
Graham Boyd,  
Market Manager*

# What a lot of rot!



Operating for over 16 years now, SA Composters is a vegetation composting business in Lonsdale. The business grew out of a keen interest in organic growing and the concept that the food we eat needs to be grown in good quality topsoil. Early influences from Peter Bennett's famous "Organic Gardening" book, the SA Soil Association and visits to UK, USA and NZ composting operations has shaped SA Composters into what it is today.

Each year Matt and his staff at SA Composters turn thousands of cubic metres of green yard trimmings

down into a fine grade soil improver and a range of mulches and organic growing media. Organic certification with NASAA gives guidelines to ensure the products are suitable for growing quality food.

The compost process relies on turning and blending old vegetation with new. Some of the aged material is over a year old and helps convert the finished product into a dark humus soil improver. Over the years the product range has expanded to provide effective materials for raised beds, revegetation projects, landscaping and vineyard improvement.

Other products they believe to be useful for building topsoil are added to their growing media and include volcanic rock dust, manures and seaweed kelp. These wonderful

additions to any garden are retailed from the shop/office on site at Lonsdale and can also be delivered. Three tipper trucks and a ute are used to distribute products all over South Australia.

SA Composters have had great success with promoting their compost and mulches at Willunga Farmers Market. Matt and Cathy met David Suzuki at the grand

opening and his talk reinforced the importance of well grown, locally produced and in-season food. Since then, by regularly promoting at WFM, the southern percentage of SA Composters' deliveries has increased dramatically. Matt's hope is that this is helping many growers and customers improve their topsoil and in doing so the productivity and health of the region.



Stage One: Assembling the ingredients – piles of vegetation are pulled into heaps to start the process.



Stage Two: A few months on – beautiful, friable compost – still hot from the pile! Almost edible!

## It is easy to be green...



**Tranquillity at its best** – If you've heard the saying 'practice makes perfect' you are welcome to take a step in the direction of Steve and Lorraine Thompson's pride and joy, their nursery **Hillside Herbs**. Here life and work blend in an amazing twist of green growth, education, pure relaxation, and a whole hillside of magnificent gardening combining quality herbs, cottage perennials and sun loving water tolerant succulents.

The business was launched by somewhat of an accident at an Earth Fair, where Steve and Lorraine took a table full of herbs to sell in the late 70s. Lorraine recalls "We sold out after only half a day, and so we ended up growing some more!" The business quickly developed towards servicing the wholesale nursery trade. All the time, with the help of family and small children the business has grown in leaps and bounds.

Lorraine and Steve started working together at the Anzac Highway Garden Centre. At around the same time Steve took a place in one of the first Horticulture Courses offered in Aldgate. The Thompsons and their business are now firmly settled on Sand Road, McLaren Vale, enjoying life on top of a magnificent hill with gorgeous garden and view.

Steve and Lorraine work together

on three areas of their current business. This includes Hillside Herbs (retail nursery), weekly attendance at the Willunga and Adelaide Showground farmers markets, and the wider wholesale network. Lorraine says "We decided we wanted to keep a nursery going in such tough times, we really enjoy looking after the locals, and we wanted to stay here."



Lorraine Thompson and daughter Eve at their weekly WFM stall

### Clever water recycling system

Lorraine says "Four years ago the water table dropped, and we lost our bore water, we were forced to solely use mains water." This adversity has actually created an opportunity for the enterprise. "The benefit to the environment was that we decided we wanted to catch most of it back," Steve adds. As a result recycled water is caught in gravel beds, and filtered into two new tanks, which

are gravity fed. The innovative practice of reducing water use is driven by a simple recycling system. The first grade water is used on the seedlings, and the second grade waters the rest of the garden. The water is filtered through about two inches of gravel underneath the seedling trays in the nursery. The water is channelled into storage tanks for reuse by the surrounding garden. This system has resulted in the Thompsons recycling more than 50 percent of their water!

**Teaching their craft** – The calendar keeps them occupied, "everything grows slowly in winter, and then so fast over summer, it is a big race to prepare everything for spring." When supplying their plants, Lorraine says "We encourage our customer to learn new ways of gardening and of course information about organic gardening". Be sure to ask about the contact chilli spray for getting rid of pesky insects in your garden,

"even a steaming spray gun will kill weeds!" Lorraine mentions.

**Family first** – The secret Lorraine says, "is to have a low maintenance garden, so you have enough time to do what you love – and that is to be able to garden to feed our family" It is important to control what goes on the garden – "what you put on your vegetables ends up in your mouth."

Daughter Eve and partner Leon, and daughter Melanie are all able to help in the family business and the grandchildren are starting to learn the ropes by helping to propagate.

As the Thompsons move into their fourth decade in the nursery industry their experience is enviable. Imagine after watching millions of seeds grow, they can both still give gardening the "thumbs up". Next time you see them at their market stall make sure you take notice of an obvious green finger on each of Steve and Lorraine's hands!



Hillside Herbs also grow many beautiful succulents. "Water tolerant, and low maintenance gardening is the way forward" Lorraine shares her passion.



# From little things...

Every once in a while it's good to stop, step back and have a look at how things are going. Willunga Farmers Market has been in our new site at the Town Square for nearly a year now and we have settled in very well. Putting a few figures together we came up with some amazing stats. From our first market on 23rd Feb 2002 and up until 30th June 2008 we've had:

- > 304 markets
- > 500,000 visitors who have spent at least \$15 million dollars (\$30/person)
- > The flow-on effect to the region is estimated to be at least \$50 million
- > WFM Inc's own turnover has been in total around \$500,000 over that time

**TODAY Willunga Farmers Market has:**

- > 1100 members
- > 1.5 FTE staff plus volunteers
- > On average 55 stalls/week representing all types and sizes of businesses from micro to medium sized

(Poppy to Paris Creek!)

- > A minimum of 1500 customers in the winter and up to 5000 customers on holidays and some summer days/week so an average of around 2000/weekly market.

We received a total of \$10,000 in government seed funding in our first year of operations – \$4000 from the City of Onkaparinga for the initial concept/incorporation phase then \$6000 from the Federal Government under its "Working Towns" program. WFM has been entirely self-funded since then with two main income streams – stall fees and market memberships, supporting what is one of the best examples of a grassroots community organisation anywhere in Australia.

Our office too, is on the move, relocating to shared office space along with ReGreen The Range and Country Arts SA, in the Hub – the old Willunga Council chambers right next door to the Town Square. Our grateful thanks once again to the

City of Onkaparinga for approving our tender for use of this valuable community resource.

None of this happens by itself and it's also time to acknowledge the enormous contribution by all those volunteer members who have worked tirelessly on the Management Committee and its various sub-committees over the years. In particular we wish to acknowledge the great leadership shown by retiring Chair Diana Bickford and her committee of the last two years whose job it was to move the market. Thanks team! A colossal effort!



February 2002 – Dr David Suzuki officially opens the Willunga Farmers Market in the Hotel Alma car park with a packed market crowd braving a hot 35 degrees to be part of it all. From little things big things do grow!



Ray Seidel and retiring Chair of the Willunga Farmers Market, Di Bickford

## WFM's AGM

Our AGM was held on Wednesday 27th August at Waverly Homestead, Willunga Golf Course. Attendance from members was excellent adding to the celebration of another fantastic year at WFM. As well as the usual annual reports, long term committee members Jill Stone, Brett Harris, Denise Riches, Richard Jasek were thanked for their contribution to the Management Committee. A special thank you speech was made to retiring Chair Diana Bickford for her leadership of the committee especially over the very busy period of the last year when the market was moved to its new site. Thank you again Diana!

Incoming committee members are Peter Bishop, Jude McBain, Kirstin Holata, Deb Tucker, and Bronwyn Busbridge who will join the continuing five members Sylvia Hart, Vicki Osland, Mike Lewis, Andrew Boag and Ray Seidel.

## Pasta with Broad Beans

**A delicious spring pasta dish!**

500g orrechiette pasta  
1kg fresh new season's broadbeans, shelled  
2 strips pancetta or bacon  
2 cloves garlic

Blanch broad beans for two minutes in boiling salted water. Drain.

Add pasta to a pot of boiling salted water. Cook to al dente. Drain.

Meanwhile cook pancetta, garlic and chilli in 2 tblspns oil for a couple of minutes. Add broad beans, stir then turn off heat.

Dried chilli flakes  
Olive oil  
Pecorino/ Romano cheese

Add broad bean mixture to pasta, add a little more oil and bring all together.

Add pecorino to taste. Serve piping hot with a large salad of fresh green salad leaves and herbs, plus a big loaf of crusty bread. Bon appetito!!!

## Diary Date

The Wilmark Awards Night for 2008 will be held on Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> November at 'Our Place' – the new Happy Foods function venue on Willunga Hill.

Further information, tickets and voting forms will be available in October at the Market Info stall.

Contact WFM office on 8556 4297.



**Slow Food®**  
Fleurieu Peninsula

**Slow Food Fleurieu Peninsula at Willunga Farmers Market**

**Join us to celebrate Fleurieu Peninsula's Spring harvest.**

During Fiesta! Slow Food Fleurieu Peninsula invites you to share the stories of our region in a self-guided Slow Tour of Willunga Farmers Market. Meet us at the Fiesta! Slow Food stall (look for the snail) on any Saturday in October and pick up your guide.

Learn more about what we grow, our farmers, their produce, skills, forgotten foods, heirloom vegetables and the local flavours of the Fleurieu.

Take time to give thanks to the local growers and makers that set up their stalls week after week, every Saturday, rain, hail or shine so that we can enjoy the pleasures of seasonal eating.

**Some Slow activities to enjoy in Spring:**

- > Buy some locally grown vegetables
- > Visit a farm and pick your own
- > Plant a herb garden
- > Shop at a Farmers Market
- > Take the Slow Tour of Willunga Farmers Market any Saturday in October
- > Dine at a local restaurant and order a regional dish
- > Taste a local new season's extra virgin olive oil
- > Go to a Fiesta! Slow event

For more Slow Food events during Fiesta! visit [www.fleurieufiesta.com.au](http://www.fleurieufiesta.com.au) Information on Slow Food visit [www.slowfood.com](http://www.slowfood.com)

Membership: If you would like to know more about joining Fleurieu Peninsula Slow Food contact [tori@producers.net.au](mailto:tori@producers.net.au)

*Becoming a Slow Food Member not only supports the movement but also acknowledges the social and environmental importance of the association's projects and initiatives: the promotion of biodiversity, and activities to create stronger links between producers and consumers all around the world.*

