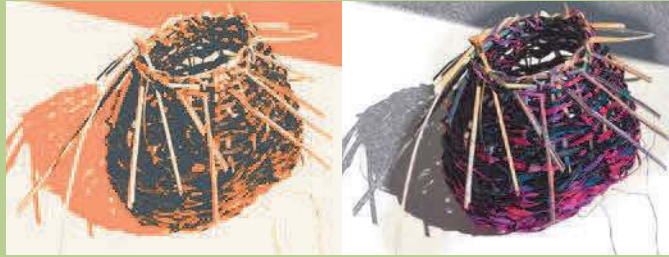


Growing Green Angels

Brahma Kumaris Australia Environment Wing Newsletter



August 2016



World Environment Day Fitzroy Centre, Melbourne raised awareness with a focus on World Environment Day (June 5) in the shop window. This included a poster of *10 Ways to Change the World* and a literature display supporting the message of the poster. Inside the shop, the tree had leaf blessings made of recycled cardboard for visitors to take and enjoy. See images right and above right.

BK VEGAN INITIATIVES: by Robin Ramsay

In recent years, especially following the 2015 United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) Report, it has become increasingly evident that the dairy industry, integrated as it is into the meat industry, has become one of the major contributors to planetary degradation and climate change. The cruelty of the industry has also been well established, and there are serious questions about dairy's effect on health. A number of people around the world, certainly including BK's, are choosing a vegan diet, and at the core of the Brahma Kumaris Environment Initiative is an admirable intent which says: 'The BKEI is about awakening greater environmental awareness within our own organisation, as well as collaborating and learning from others through dialogue partnerships, UN conferences and local initiatives'. With this in mind BKEI members and associates have recently established dairy free BK Centres in Belgium, England, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Scotland, South Africa and Switzerland. BK's generally find that the move to a dairy free diet is easy and refreshing, with nut and seed milks simple and cheap to make, and vegan yogurt, 'butter', cheese, and non-dairy milks as well as vegan sausages (!) readily available at supermarkets. Delicious vegan recipes are easy to find online.

Readers who want to be better informed about changing to a plant based diet might like to read 'The Dairy Cow' from Voiceless (Patron Sir Michael Kirby) at <https://www.voiceless.org.au/the-issues/dairy-cows>

Visit the Facebook page **Brahma Kumaris Go Vegan**, administered by Tamasin Ramsay and Robin Ramsay, Environment Wing members. It has lots of information, recipes, experiences and discussion.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/767390910071415/856028721207633/>

Diary Dates

August 20: Business, Sustainability & Spirituality 3:00-5:00pm

Q & A panel discussion with Julian Crawford, Carole Young and Charlie Hogg facilitated by Peter Damo at InnerSpace, 181 First Ave, Five Dock Sydney. Online booking essential:

bookings.innerspacesyd@au.brahmakumaris.org

September 23-25: The Meditative Gardener Retreat Contact Blue Mountains Retreat Centre for details.

BK Environmental Commitment

The Brahma Kumaris Environmental Policy aims to encourage all of us throughout the organization to feel we are guardians of the earth's resources. Living with simplicity, buying compassionately, using economically, learning continuously, sharing generously.

Editor of Growing Green Angels: Catherine Elliott M:0401954455 E:bapsuman@me.com

Environment Coordinator Brahma Kumaris Australia: Jessica Yuille E:environment@au.brahmakumaris.org

The Brahma Kumaris Environmental Initiative have a Website: <http://environment.brahmakumaris.org>



National Tree Day by Linda Cooper

Saturday, August 6, Gold Coast centre participated in *National Tree Day*, an initiative of Planet Ark and Toyota. This is the 2nd year we have registered our participation as a community group under the heading of *Garden Maintenance*. A small group of BK's and some of our regular students helped out with: continued creation of the *Pathway to Happiness* – which involved levelling out the ground, cleaning the second hand pavers and laying pavers. Mulch was added, involving raking back the bark, laying newspaper and covering with new mulch. Mostly all our helpers are older women and yet it's amazing what we get done. We had a memorable fun morning – all enjoyed being part of it. Find out more about *National Tree Day* which is a great initiative now in it's 21st year.

<http://treeday.planetark.org/>

Focus on George Harris, Gold Coast

Having visited India many times, George has been drawn to serve those in the villages. He has financially supported many projects, particularly in times of drought and flood. His commitment to



projects has also inspired others to give generously. George has established many vegetable gardens, and the editor asked him some questions.

First BK gardening project:

“The weed infested lawn at Indraprasth (Sydney). I asked for volunteers to help with weeding the lawn. No response,

but when I said we were only weeding one square metre a day, I soon had several helpers. We converted a big task into a small task, into a big result.”

Funniest Event: “Rosie Bhen, the Tamil Nadu zone in charge gave permission for me to establish a garden at the retreat centre, as there was unlimited bore water and plenty of unused ground. The villagers tilled and weeded the soil, loads of goat manure was applied and we planted up a small area of tomatoes and cucumber with seeds from Australia. I was there “hands on” for 10 weeks and

we produced loads of ‘cues’. So I left knowing they would now carry on with the production. Wrong! On my return 6 months later I went as quickly as possible to the garden, expecting veggies everywhere, but all I could see of the veggie patch was grass about 500 mms high. The brothers had reasoned growing veggies was too much work, so they grew grass and bought two cows, for milk. Well ... ‘there’s benefit in everything’.”

Involvement with the Wilton garden: “When Wilton was purchased, Didi [Nirmala] invited me to take on the role of the first BK gardener, so yes, even though I had already had plans to relocate back to Qld, the opportunity was too great to miss. The first veg produced was silver beet over on the hill.”

Current Efforts: “Fast forward to now, I’m involved with the Mermaid Waters Multi Culture Gardening Group, an extension of the Chinese Social and Gardening Group, Mudgeeraba. I was invited to set up their veggie garden beds with Asian greens. Surprise, surprise, now I’m linked to the Broadbeach Primary school. Further to being introduced to so many different Asian green veg, I have just started an Asian green section with Phil in Brisbane.

So yes Catherine, we can all make a difference even just planting a few seeds/ideas and giving the love and care they need.”

Image below of the Chinese greens at the Brisbane Centre.



Spiritual Awareness for a Sustainable World by Jessica Yuille

A retreat for environmental and sustainability professionals was held at the Blue Mountains retreat centre. Golo Gilz, solar adviser to the BK’s in India, came as the special guest. He impressed everyone with the solar thermal power plant being installed in India which will produce 1MW of power! The retreat was a mix of short presentations, small group discussions while sitting in the beautiful Stone Cottage, as well as meditation. The afternoon was spent silently in nature, reflecting meditation, and creating from nature. Catherine Elliott provided the artistic support, and Haydn Washington, well known environmentalist inspired everyone with his “wonder” for nature and poetry. *Images from the retreat above.*

The Meditative Gardener by Jessica Yuille

A retreat which combined meditation and a working bee in the beautiful Stone Cottage garden at the Blue Mountains Retreat Centre. Held at the end of autumn there were lots of leaves to rake, plants to prune and weeds to pull. The magpies and kookaburras kept a close eye out for worms, this one finding Jessica’s head a good vantage point!

Participants enjoyed 20 minutes of talk and meditation before each gardening session. It was so successful there will be another one each season, the next being 23-25th September.

Sister Luciana from Brazil prepared a list of tips to guide BK Centres to be more sustainable. Some of these are listed below:

WATER: Clean vessels with paper before washing.
Use the washing machine with full load.

ENERGY: Use oven in its total capacity.
Use natural light (open the curtains).

Install solar panels for hot water and photovoltaic energy.

EARTH: Give preference to natural materials: they feel better, are healthier and less polluting.
Avoid disposable materials, especially those made of plastic and foam.

Use eco friendly cleaning products and cosmetics (good for the

earth, the water and for your skin).

Plant your own salads and condiments and sprout your seeds.
Give preference for fruits and vegetables that are organic and produced close to you.

Separate the waste for possible recycling.

AIR: Use essential oil or natural incense and not polluting incenses.

Become vegan

Plant trees for photosynthesis.

Editors Addition: Consider sustainable alternates to the use of disposable plastics in the transporting and serving of food, and avoiding the use of bottled water. Perhaps develop a travel kit of containers to avoid the use of disposable plastic.



Destroying rainforest for economic gain is like burning a Renaissance painting to cook a meal.

E.O. Wilson (biologist, naturalist, and author, born 10 Jun 1929)