

ECOVILLAGE RESIDENTS' BULLETIN

Nov 2025



Hello Ecovillagers!

We are thrilled to be back in your inbox with a very BIG Residents' Bulletin for you, full of news and updates. Sorry it's been so long, we've been rather busy!

Kambarang brought with it an abundance of wildflowers, a still chilly but refreshing ocean and more rain than expected... lucky us! With over 1200mm so far this year, we've enjoyed one of the wettest winters in decades.

As we shift from Kambarang into Birak we are aware all the flowers are still on the Peppermint trees (Wannang) which means we must still have some rain to come - happily.

So, make a cup of tea and settle in for some really important articles regarding the Ecovillage Commons, Avocados, FOGO lowdown, weed control and connecting with your community. The Residents' Bulletin is the only official mass communication channel that we have with our Ecovillage residents, and it is filled with information and important updates for you. Don't forget that copies of previous Bulletins are stored in the **Residents' Library** as well.

Best regards,

Mike and Michelle



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Ecovillage resident Megan Smythe joins the team

by Michelle Sheridan



Megan moved into the Ecovillage as one of the first few residents in February 2021 to Cluster 2B.

"At the time I was the most northerly house amongst the wildlife of birds and critters. It's so nice to now have a bustling community growing around us, residents walking the cluster paths, stopping for a chat and invitations for catchups."

Prior to commencing with the Ecovillage office team, Megan was working in the wine industry here in the Margaret River Region and you will still find her pouring wine at a local cellar door when she's got the time. Her fluffy white dog Toby is a very welcome presence in the Ecovillage office, though he hasn't mastered the photocopier yet!

Megan Smythe

Megan grew up in Roleystone, so her love of the bush started early and her love of travel has seen her walk the Camino de Santiago from St Jean Pied de Port in France to Santiago de Compostela in Spain. 42 days of hiking, eating, exploring, making new friends - sounds amazing.

If you haven't met Megan already, drop by the Friday morning tea and say hi, otherwise you'll see her out on the Wadandi track riding her bike and getting out in this sunshine!

Welcome Megan, your calm, warm energy is so appreciated in the office and we're glad you're here.

Which reminds us... Contacting the Office

Our Ecovillage Office is open from **9am - 5pm from Tuesday - Friday.**

If you are a resident and have a general enquiry - please email info@ecovillage.net.au.

If there's something you'd like to chat about, call us on **9757 6688**, or make an appointment to come in to speak to us in person.

If you are wanting to enquire about a property for sale, or are thinking about selling your property, or obtaining an appraisal, please contact info@villagehomesrealty.com.au. If you have general enquiries about anything non-sales related then email us on info@ecovillage.net.au.

If you have changed your email address, please let us know, if you are chatting to a neighbour and they haven't received this latest newsletter, please let them know to contact the office with their new details. Also - remember to add us to your contacts and check your junk mail in case communications from us have ended up languishing there!

On Fridays, we hold a morning tea for residents to come together, catch-up, meet your neighbours and check out the residents' library. Come along!

STOP THE PRESS!!

I am very excited to confirm that we have started trialling a wonderful new organic product that looks like being a game changer for WEV!

Yes, it's organic, and yes, it actually kills kike!

It's not cheap, but it's also not expensive when we consider the alternatives. A good friend of mine who's a soil scientist has been researching and trialling organic methods to kill kikuyu and couch for many years and was very excited to tell me recently that he's finally got a real solution. He's been doing trials for over a year, on a whole range of situations, including working with a very successful Bio-dynamic orchardist and veggie grower who's loving the product.

As you'd expect, I was already running over to his place to see the results at his home orchard in Margaret River whilst he's telling me about it on the phone. I bought his last 1L bottle and we sprayed a decent size patch of kikuyu the next day. It's diluted at between 5-10ml/Litre of water. We started our trial at 5ml (1:200), as I've been told it's better to spray at 5ml and then follow up with another 1:200 spray in around 10 days time. I've already ordered another 20L of the product as I'm confident it's going to work well after seeing my friend's home trials. This will initially be used in the avo orchard and around the dam edges. I will also be giving a 1L bottle (enough to do 5000m2 twice) to clusters 3A & 3B who have had more than their fair share of kikuyu!

I'll reach out to deliver it as soon as it arrives.



KIKUYU 3 DAYS AFTER SPRAYING

A backpack sprayer is sufficient for using at a cluster level. I will be setting up our large spray unit on our gator for use around the dams and avo orchard.

Once we have further proof of results I'll be able to inform you all how to purchase it directly.

More about the product

It's only available in limited supply at this point and is going to be called HERBALISER. It's a Certified Organic fertiliser made from over 50 plant extracts - no chemicals, no synthetics, just concentrated plant material. It's certified by Southern Cross Certified (SXC) which guarantees it meets strict organic standards. The product contains really high levels of natural nutrients and plant proteins (over 19% protein), which is why it needs to be diluted before use - just like any concentrated organic fertiliser. When we apply it to the soil at the right dilution, it feeds beneficial soil bacteria and promotes healthy plant growth.

The thing is, because it's so concentrated with natural nutrients and proteins, if it gets on plant leaves in strong concentrations, it can burn the tissue - similar to how dumping too much fish emulsion directly on leaves will burn them. It's just the natural effect of high nutrient concentration, not chemicals.

It is therefore important to spray over the whole leaf area of the weeds you want to knock out. It will also kill plants if you cover their foliage, but small amounts from spray drift isn't an issue.

Believe it or not, if sprayed carefully, to contact all of the kikuyu foliage above ground (only) it actually kills the rhizomes. Areas sprayed months ago in my friend's home orchard haven't regrown!

AI explanation below after we asked it how high protein materials damage leave surfaces:

Osmotic/Salt Burn: The primary mechanism is osmotic stress, not thermal burning. High-protein liquids (like animal urine, liquid fertilizers, or protein hydrolysates) contain:

- **High solute concentrations** - Proteins break down into amino acids and ammonium compounds
- **Elevated salt content** - Creates a hypertonic solution on the leaf surface

When this concentrated solution contacts leaf tissue:

- **Water flows OUT of plant cells** toward the higher solute concentration outside (reverse osmosis)
- **Cells become plasmolyzed** - the cell membrane pulls away from the cell wall
- **Cellular dehydration** leads to tissue death, appearing as brown, crispy "burned" patches

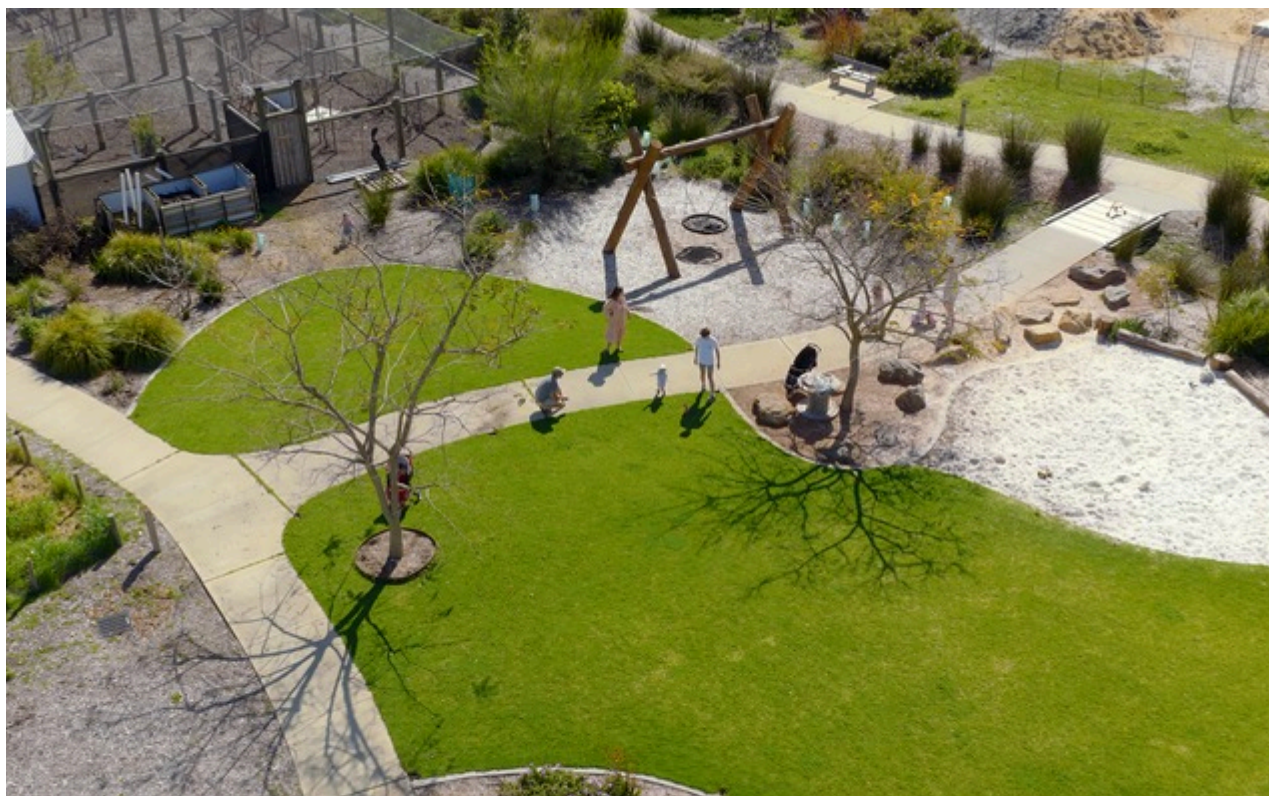
Chemical Damage: Additionally:

- **Ammonia toxicity** - Protein decomposition releases ammonia/ammonium, which at high concentrations is directly toxic to plant cells
- **pH disruption** - High protein materials often create alkaline conditions that damage the waxy cuticle and cell membranes
- **Direct protein coagulation** - In extreme cases, the proteins themselves can coat and suffocate stomata

Practical Examples

- **Dog urine spots** on lawns (high in urea and proteins)
- **Over-application of fish emulsion** or blood meal teas
- **Foliar feeding accidents** with concentrated amino acid solutions

The damage typically appears within hours to days as yellowing that progresses to brown, necrotic tissue - visually identical to fertilizer burn or salt damage.





Avocado Orchard

by Mike Hulme

Some of this article is re-produced from our last Database Newsletter (we have thousands of people following us from all around the world), but there's some additional info for our residents only.

Our community avocado orchard is powering along!

I'm so impressed with the effort that some clusters/households are making, and their trees are starting to respond to the love. This will become more apparent as time goes by.

I had to include a photo of six trees that are managed by two neighbours from 2B, Tim & Sandy and Rochelle & Buki. This is the ideal scenario, mulched from top to bottom and in between - great job!

Avo trees absolutely love eucalyptus mulch, the biology between the carbon and the soil, the temperature moderation, and the lack of competition from weeds that mulching provides. I can also see that this is all free tip mulch as well, which is just such a great use of a local recycled material.

I've noticed quite a few trees that have been mulched with seaweed. Be careful with this as avo's really hate sodium chloride (sea salt), and the browning off of the tips of leaves (photo below) is the first sign of excess sodium chloride, which is evident on all trees that I have seen with seaweed mulch. It's such a pity as seaweed is full of so many beneficial trace elements! It's not as bad if it is washed and soaked in rain water, but never apply directly without doing this first. Even still, I'd avoid using raw or liquid seaweed on your avos, including Seasol.

The best is a thin layer of manure (my favourites are goat, cow or composted/pelletised poultry). I prefer goat and cow, as being multi-stomach animals with amazing biological digestion of their foods, their poo is also full of beneficial bacteria, and higher in NPK and trace elements than most other manures. Believe it or not, of the two, goat has higher NPK and trace elements. It's also easy to apply, but not so easy to come by!

It's important to apply a thin layer of manure under your mulch to supply some of the nitrogen (N) required to break down the carbon in the mulch.

I'm getting much better at the handover of avo orchard rows to each cluster, particularly since handing over to Stage 3 & 4 clusters.

We start off with a two hour talk and questions in our office, followed by an hour in the orchard. I've also prepared a two page summary of management practices. This will continue to improve and updated info sheets will be emailed to each cluster. There's only Stage 5 to go now, which we'll be doing in December.

I have recently completed a review of our Recycled Waste Water Management Plan with the Department of Health (DoH), including the preparation of a long document relating to water quality and management processes. My draft document has recently been approved by DoH and sets the standard of management we have to follow.

It's been a good process for me to go through, and is necessitating a range of changes to the overall management of the avocado orchard before we start irrigating with treated waste water this year, as we are hoping to no longer require any irrigation from our dams now that we have sufficient recycled waste water for the orchard.

The main change is that from now on ECL will manage all of the irrigation, and all repairs can only be undertaken by our trained contractor, Nathan Stone, or myself. In time we will train up one volunteer who's appointed from each cluster.

In early December we will supply a lock box with blue flags and flagging to enable residents to flag any damaged/leaking pipe and Nathan will do irrigation repairs each week/fortnight. A notice of such, including a copy of my latest avocado orchard management notes provided at cluster handovers and some additional WHS protocols will be sent to each Strata Council in December.

However, until then, please ensure you avoid getting any irrigated water on your skin and especially in your eyes. A large bottle of fresh water will be supplied next to the lock box, for washing any wounds or eyes if you do have any accidents. The treated waste water is chlorinated, but it's essential that we all take our management of irrigated recycled waste water seriously. It's an incredible resource and so important to our overall sustainability, so mismanagement cannot be tolerated.

Having said this, we're all part of an amazing community of intelligent people, so we're confident this will be managed well by each cluster and household.

This season's avos are ready to start picking now, but please avoid eating any fallen fruit. Please place any fallen fruit you see under your tree mulch – worms love them! This is standard practice in commercial orchards, but essential when using recycled waste water.

From now on residents are only allowed in their cluster's specified rows, and please don't take any fruit from any trees other than your own. All rows have been handed over to clusters now, other than a few from which Sustainable Settlements pays for the maintenance until we hand over to future stratas, so I'm sure you can appreciate that we'd like to keep this fruit due to the costs of managing them. We didn't get a single avocado last year due to a handful of people helping themselves. Hard to believe, but true! Tolerated to date, but not any longer.

Having said this, there is a bumper crop for each cluster this year! The fruit are large enough to shelf ripen now, with November through to April being the best time to pick.

You can leave fruit on the tree to provide fruit almost all year round, however, if you do this you won't get as big a crop next season. Therefore, as each home has been given three trees, I recommend leaving fruit on one tree each year, so you can get some avos between April to October, and harvest all of the fruit on your other two trees between November to March. Then rotate the 'out of season providing tree' each year. The more you harvest between November to January, the more fruit your trees will bear next season.

Please remember no vehicles in the orchard until it's dry enough not to leave any rut marks from your wheels. Likely not until early December. Vehicles can only enter the orchard via the south eastern gate off Gilgie Way (the gate nearest the creek), and you can only drive into your own rows. Access via the north eastern gate can be provided through arrangement with Nathan.

It's time to start mowing your rows, and please ensure your rows are mowed by no later than the end of November. Please ensure the drip irrigation is kept above mulch and please remove it when whipper snipping, to ensure it's not damaged.

Stormwater & Tank Overflows

by Mike Hulme

Just a quick reminder that all residential lots in Stages 4 & 5 have 150mm PVC pipes with threaded caps on them provided for their rainwater tank overflows. These have been installed at considerable expense so you can connect your rain water tank over flows into them. They then transport the water to your internal or roadside swales, which eventually make their way to the dams. I have seen quite a few tank overflows that aren't connected into their stormwater discharge pipe. Please ensure you arrange to connect before next winter, and if you haven't installed your tank yet, please inform the installer that they are required to connect to your discharge pipe, regardless of how far from the tank it is. The LDP (local development plan) associated with your lot identifies the location of the discharge pipe.

Ecovillage Commons Ltd (ECL) UPDATE

by Mike Hulme

I'm excited to announce that we're almost ready to hand the ECL land to the community, as I know there are many people that have been dying to be handed the reins to the dams and conservation areas.

There's a range of things to complete to enable this to occur, including the following:

Incorporation of the last two strata's in Stage 5, being 5C & 5D, and the transfer of the land from the developer to ECL. The former is underway and expected to complete this month and the latter is expected by year's end, but unfortunately out of our control as it's in the hands of bureaucracy! We lodged the transfer nearly a year ago, but then got advice that they disagreed with our \$1 transfer value. We believe the value is already included in your lots/stratas which you have already paid stamp duty on, where as they have valued the ECL land at \$3M and want ECL to pay \$150k stamp duty on this. As such we lodged a request for reconsideration (from our lawyers). Whilst we're confident they will agree, we just don't know how long this process will take. We have requested that it's dealt with urgently, and expected confirmation by now. If they don't respond in our favour, we will have to explore our avenues to fight this as it would be totally inappropriate.

Once completed, we can formally finalise the transfer.

So, how does such transfer happen and what's included:

The transfer of ownership in ECL land will include all of the common land, which includes the dams, conservation land, future education precinct and waste water treatment zone.



Ecovillage Commons Ltd (ECL) update Cont'd...

by Mike Hulme

The Committee

In the first instance, as outlined in various documents, we will pick the first management committee, which I'd like to do next month (December). If you would like to join the first management committee we would like to hear from you via email. Please send your expression of interest to info@ecovillage.net.au, and include your full name, lot details, reason you'd like to join and a summary of the experience and skills you would bring to the committee.

The ECL committee will include one representative from each of the following owners:

A groupie lot owner, a cottage lot owner, a family lot owner, an Ag lot owner, a short stay lot owner, a commercial lot owner, plus up to two representatives from the developer.

Half of the appointed committee members will stay on the committee for a period of two years and the other half for 1 year. In one year's time, the first half to be replaced will be through a process known as deliberative democracy, i.e. names of each of the owner/s of each of the representative lot types will be pulled out of a hat at an annual ECL event (party). If your name is pulled out and you don't want to join because you have too much on, another will be pulled out of the hat. This process honours the fact that everyone has something valuable to offer/contribute.

If you would like to join the first management committee we would like to hear from you.

Please send your expression of interest to be a part of the first management committee to info@ecovillage.net.au

Include your full name, lot details, reason you'd like to join and a summary of the experience and skills you would bring to the committee.

Sub Committees

One of the first jobs of the Management Committee will be to seek expressions of interest in the various sub-committees. In the first instance this will include subcommittees for the following: Conservation Land, Dams & Irrigation, Waste Water Recycling & Avo orchard, Ecovillage Newsletter, and possibly Events (if there's interest at this early stage – e.g. markets, annual parties, Sustainable House Day, etc). The first, and future, ECL Committee may of course add other sub-committees.

We are so excited to get to this stage, and to bring more involvement from our incredibly multi talented community! And, as I'm sure you can all appreciate, Michelle and I are both totally exhausted after our marathon run over the last 15yrs to create WEV, so we are really looking forward to help from the first committee to put really good systems and processes in place.

Ecovillage Commons Ltd Budget

We have prepared a detailed ECL budget to ensure we have enough funds coming in to manage, maintain, and depreciate the huge amount of land and infrastructure that's being handed over to our community. This budget will be tabled at the first official management committee meeting.

I have to say that I massively underestimated the huge load on Michelle and I to bring the Ecovillage out of the ground, which was massively increased/burdened by Covid and all of the associated stuff like building stimulus grants, inflation, interest rate increases, and very limited availability of contractors (professional and trade)! We also know that all of this has impacted all of you as well, including the additional time we have had to give people to build their homes due to the huge building inflation that all of us in Stages 1-3 that weren't fortunate enough to lock in a builder (who could also cope with the inflation & added stresses) before the inflation really took off.



As such, I don't think it's currently realistic to burden our community with additional ground work associated with maintaining ECL's land, which as you're aware we initially expected would be done by volunteer groups. We have currently been contracting one of our residents, Nathan Stone, three days a week to do this work for us. I would like to give a huge shout out to Nathan as I don't know what I would have done without him over the past 12mths. He has been incredibly helpful, diligent and professional in every job he does for us.

We are of the opinion that ECL should employ someone like Nathan three days a week to manage the maintenance of our common land. This will be one of the first decisions of the ECL Board. To cover the costs of such a position, plus all of the other maintenance and depreciation associated with the ECL land and infrastructure, we will need to increase our annual ECL membership fees from \$100 to \$300 per lot from July 1 next year. Once all lots are sold, this will add around \$84,000pa to ECL's budget which will cover the annual salary of a part time groundsperson, plus some additional funds for other expenses.

Revenue from annual water charges to ag lots, clusters and POS, plus annual membership fees at \$100/lot equates to income of \$89,000p.a., so we'll nearly double this by adding only \$200 to annual membership fees for each lot, which is very little for the huge benefits associated with owning all of our common land, dams and infrastructure. Whilst our dam water charges of \$0.50/KL are very low (WaterCorp closer to \$4/KL when using the volumes that our clusters and ag lots consume), we believe it was fairer to add the extra charge per lot as there will be many lots that don't have the benefit of water but still have all the benefits of enjoying the common land.

ECL offers all in our community an opportunity to get involved in some really exciting future projects, for the benefit of our community and our environment, so I'm hoping to get interest from people that have both the time and skills to ensure we put some solid governance and management structures in place for the future. Michelle and I have deliberately avoided doing this groundwork for ECL to enable our community to have more ownership of the common.

Many residents, including myself, have been getting very excited about the potential of the dams for some years. With interest in water quality, swimming (both recreation and fitness), aquaculture, bird life and ecology.

I was approached earlier in the year by Karen Major and Boyd Wykes with the idea of building a refuge island in our Conservation (central) dam. I was very pleased to hear their enthusiasm as it's something we had always wanted to do. Ideally in each of the three dams, but starting in the central dam is the right place to start due to the huge amount of birds we get frequenting, and living on, this dam. This is in part due to the fact that it's been there for twenty years longer than the other two dams which we built seven years ago, but mainly due to the native water weed (*Potamogeton tricarlinatus* - floating pond weed) growing in abundance in this dam, which the water birds love!

Unfortunately I had to dampen their enthusiasm by saying it's not possible until we hand over the commons land, due to insurance. However, with the handover being imminent we are very excited about this becoming a reality. We are planning a workshop in the new year, which Karen and Boyd will manage. We're confident that this will be a wonderful community building experience and with Boyd's incredible knowledge of all of our local birds, it will no doubt also be a huge success. I'm personally really looking forward to this, and being a member of a working group without being the initiator and manager.

The other exciting news I have is that with the potential of our new organic kikuyu killer, we intend to start spraying all of the kikuyu around the dams (carefully so we don't add nutrients). This will start at the western end of the central dam and then move to the southern dam. The great thing about this product is that the kikuyu basically dies and then self mulches the ground below. Once we're confident the kike is dead, we intend to start planting these areas in autumn.

If you're interested in getting involved with improving the health of our dams, and additional interests like aquaculture, you might be interested in joining the Dam subcommittee. Give this some thought whilst you await an invitation from our future ECL management committee.

Plant your free native tree courtesy of Treebate

You will have seen the exciting news that WA State government is offering a rebate for one native tree purchased to encourage Western Australians to plant native trees on their properties. (This is in addition to a second program established by DWER to replace trees lost to Polyphagous shot-hole borer.)

To receive the rebate you must:

- Choose a native tree with a canopy that reaches at least three metres in height when mature.
- Have a photo of the plant label showing the scientific or common name to upload in your claim.
- Get a tax invoice as proof of purchase. You will need a valid tax invoice to claim your rebate.

It will be important to plan the correct sized tree, for a space to suit it, noting the minimum height of the tree, and ensuring we don't shade solar panels or neighbouring fruit trees. Jarrah, Marri and similar sized trees are not suitable backyard trees in the Ecovillage. They will potentially disrupt pathways, stormwater and wastewater infrastructure and rob veggie patches of nutrients. Our street tree choices were strictly managed by the Shire, so please do not plant other species than what is already approved on your verge.

But don't worry, there are lots of smaller native options that the birds and critters will love to visit.

For a shorter, not-too-tall flowering gum in the WA south-west, you could choose:

- A grafted dwarf variety of *Corymbia ficifolia*, such as 'Summer Red' or 'Dwarf Orange', which typically grow to 3-8 meters.
- *Corymbia forrestiana* (Fuchsia Gum), a naturally smaller mallee or small tree that grows to 3-8 meters and has a narrow, upright habit
- *Eucalyptus caesia*, the Silver Princess, a lovely weeping tree with stunning flowers and silver leaves
- *Eucalyptus erythrocorys*, the Illyarrie, another beautiful mallee
- Banksias are an excellent addition to the garden, being a great food source for black cockatoos and many other of our local birds (*Banksia grandis* is our favourite!)
- *Hakea laurina*, the Pincushion Hakea (3-6 m) is a stunning tree that Western Rosellas and Red-capped parrots seem to really enjoy.
- Many bottlebrush and paperbark trees are from the eastern states, so make sure you check before you buy—planting local trees helps promote local birds.

Happy Planting!

[Apply for Treebate HERE](#)



Getting Involved with Local Projects

EQUIP yourself via community connectedness

We went along to the launch of the EQUIP project at the HEART in August and were so heartened to come to understand a little more about what the project is about, and what will happen for Witchcliffe residents over the next four years of this significant project.

Led by the University of New England, Equip seeks to address the toll that extreme weather events like floods, bushfire and drought can take on individuals and their towns.

Being for all residents of the postcode 6286 (Forest Grove, Redgate, Boranup and Witchcliffe), the EQUIP research team (from both the University of New England and Curtin University), have selected nine communities across Australia to participate. The three WA sites being Narrogin, Denmark and Witchcliffe!

Funded by national medical research funding, EQUIP is designed to help communities

- develop skills to cope and work together in a crisis
- boost their mental wellbeing and fitness
- increase feelings of readiness and enhance preparedness
- create lasting solutions tailored to their population and location

If you're interested to get involved, or learn more about the project, get in touch with Sarah Hewer or Jodie Passmore at equipwitchcliffe@gmail.com or go along to upcoming event - Witchcliffe Fire Station Community Open Day or catch them at the Witchcliffe Farmers Markets in December.

<https://www.une.edu.au/about-une/faculty-of-medicine-and-health/school-of-psychology/research/psychosocial-health-and-wellbeing-focussing-on-rural-communities/equip>

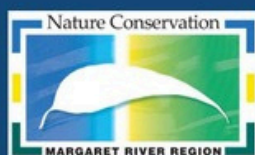
Would you like to be apart of..
FRIENDS OF REDGATE

A new community-led group with an environmental focus – dedicated to caring for Country and this special stretch of coastline for future generations.

Join us for **hands-on activities** like planting, weeding, beach clean-ups, cultural workshops and citizen science – or help organise behind the scenes.

We're gathering a crew of locals – whether you'd like to **volunteer at events** or help shape the group as a **founding member**, we'd love to hear from you!

Chloe Deakin, Caring for Coast Program Officer, NCMRR
chloe.deakin@natureconservation.org.au



Nature lovers, hikers, surfers and everyone who enjoys the coast is invited to roll up their sleeves for hands-on conservation care for Redgate Beach.

Volunteers will attend working bees to assist with a variety of land care activities including brushing and planting, laying coir logs to prevent erosion, narrowing and restoring footpaths, and consistent care of Redgate Beach.

All are welcome, and no prior experience is needed. If you are interested in joining the 'Friends of Redgate Beach' then please get in touch with Chloe Deakin chloe.deakin@natureconservation.org.au

Rabbitos

You may have noticed a slight reduction in rabbit numbers with the beginning of the Rabbit Control program in the agricultural lots, ECL and Developer lands.

The Rabbitos are working towards a co-ordinated RHDV1-5 release on December 15th (weather dependant).

This will include all clusters, agricultural lots, ECL and Developer lands and will be an annual release. All clusters have been invited to a bulk purchase and to have at least 2 people per cluster registered to handle the virus.

Information has been sent to each clusters Rabbit Control Representative as well as to your council. We hope each cluster will have enough people involved to assist with warren mapping and pre-baiting activities in your community gardens.

This combined effort will benefit our productive gardens, protect our built assets and reduce stress on our native flora and fauna, working towards biodiversity protection.

If you want more information, please contact your strata council as they will have more extensive information about what's happening and all actions required by individual lot owners within your cluster for collective impact.

FOGO is a no go - Let's make some compost instead !

By Michelle Sheridan

Sadly, all FOGO (Food Organics, Garden Organics) waste currently being put into green FOGO bins in our region is not being composted, but is instead being sent straight to landfill. This is due to ongoing rubbish contamination in FOGO bins being picked up in the 12 Shires using the Bunbury Harvey Regional Council composting facility—including Augusta Margaret River Shire: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-04-22/ratepayers-angry-fogo-organics-waste-south-west-wa/105188062>.

While this is a shame for our region, it does provide us all with an excellent opportunity to expand our food and green waste management, or get started if we have been relying on the FOGO bins.

FOGO waste is an incredible resource in any permaculture system, and you can use it to create some amazing yields that will save you money, protect our waterways, avoid landfill and hopefully give you great satisfaction! With a little know how and some simple infrastructure, you can turn your household scraps and gardening waste into beautiful compost or worm castings to grow your veggies—thereby saving on the cost of manure and organic fertilisers, and avoiding these high nitrogen inputs which create algae in our swales and dams (more on that in this article.)

Food waste

The first step is to reduce our food waste at the source: Australian households waste approximately 312 kg of food per person on average, at a cost of \$1,500-\$2,500 per year (according to Foodbank Australia). I'm sure that's likely to be less in the Ecovillage—but wouldn't it be interesting to do an audit? If you could pay attention to your scraps for a week and weigh your kitchen FOGO bucket—then times by 52 and divide by the number of people in your household—what would you get? How does your household compare to the national average—could you do better? I know I could!

Fogo is a no go... Cont'd.

by Michelle Sheridan

Some things we can all do:

1. Buy thoughtfully: make up a weekly menu before going shopping;
2. Check pantry and fridge before you shop to avoid impulse buys and double-ups;
3. Repurpose leftovers or share them with neighbours;
4. Make scrap vinegar, pickles, quick jams, sauerkraut, kimchi, juices, smoothies, dinner for your neighbour, etc.

Residents Jan & Logs Hansen with their Aerobin



The bonus is that you will be saving money too! If you need ideas to help you use up surplus food, Alex Elliot-Howery and Jaimee Edwards from Cornersmith have two excellent cookbooks with loads of inspiration: “Use It All” and “The Food Savers A-Z.”

Compost and worms

And now what do you do with what is genuine waste—the table scraps, the funky leftovers, those skanky bananas and brown avocados!

The Ecovillage Commons library has some easy-to-follow books on composting and worm farming—come along to the Friday morning tea and library catch up hosted each Friday by Village Homes Realty in the Community Centre and grab a book to borrow to get you started. Making compost is not hard, but you need to know the basics so you end up with usable compost and castings. If you learn by watching, there are loads of composting “how-to” videos on YouTube (just don’t fall down any rabbit holes!) or you may find by putting a call out to your friends, neighbours or the Permaculture group for help, someone will give you some tips.

The AMR Shire is holding a Worm Farming Workshop on the 6th December - [details here](#).

If you are worried about providing a smorgasbord for rats and mice in your new compost heap or worm farm, you should be! An open pile of cold layered compost or open bottomed compost bins (e.g., the common “dalek” shaped bins) are a quick way to encourage rodents to your house and garden, so please make sure you factor rodent proofing into your composting plans. Gardening Australia aired [this segment](#) recently with lots of tips and ideas. Remember, the best way to encourage snakes into our community gardens is to provide them with fast food options. I once opened the lid of a dalek style compost bin to find a huge dugite coiled on top! Lucky for me, it was slow and happy and full of mice—but we quickly made a mouse proof screen for the bottom of the bin.

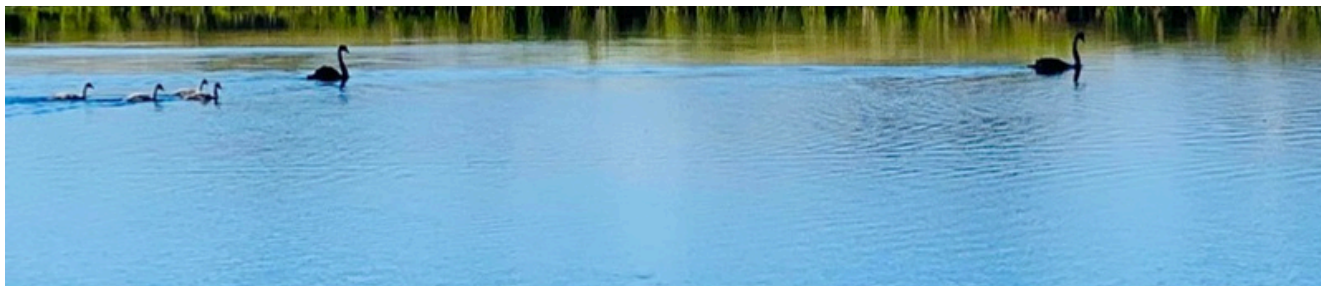
There are also some great ready-made rodent proof composting systems available: Aerobin (available from Bunnings) make great sealed systems, and most proprietary layered worm farms are rodent proof if used correctly.

As an added bonus, Augusta Margaret River Shire is currently offering small rebates for compost bins and worm farms, see their [website here](#).

FOGO is a no go Cont'd...

You will note that the Shire is also giving a rebate for Bokashi bins—this is what we use at the Community Centre sales office as we don't produce enough FOGO waste to feed a hot compost. Please note this is a different kind of system—more of a ferment than a compost. You need to purchase inoculated Bokashi flakes to sprinkle over each addition and once fermented, it needs to be buried or added to a compost bin. It doesn't create ready to use compost, but it does create a fermented goop which rodents don't find palatable in an open heap—so it could be a handy addition for someone who already has an open heap compost or dalek style bin system up and running but are struggling with rodent control.

If you are on a smaller lot or have a smaller household, maybe consider going halves in a compost system with a neighbour? Or try the Bokashi basket, and tee up a neighbour with a compost bin that you can contribute to.



Summer is almost upon us...! A reminder about Dam use.

Ecovillage residents, and future residents who have settled on their lots, have exclusive permission to swim in the northern 'Stingray Dam', provided our house rules are followed.

This is really important as the Ecovillage Commons land is still the responsibility of the developer. So if we want to maintain access, we have to minimise any risks. This dam is not open to the general public. You can bring along a visiting family member or two, but they must always be accompanied by you and it is your responsibility to ensure that they follow these rules also.

The pedestrian gate at the end of Mannitj Place is currently unlocked, for ease of access. We hope to be able to keep it like this, so do ask everyone for their support in doing the right thing. Please ensure the gate is closed behind you at all times as there is often stock in this paddock.

Vehicles can be driven to and parked in the adjacent gravel cul-de-sac area. If parking is at a premium, please park safely and legally elsewhere and walk. Don't park on adjacent private lots or the gravel path. Preferably walk :)

Please enter the dam from the 10m wide "beach" on the southern edge, so we don't damage any of the reeds that have been planted around the dam edges, and are acting as vital habitat for many of our loved residential waterbirds.

Snakes may be present in this area, particularly near the wetland area of the drainage basin, and extreme caution must be taken. Please exercise common sense when swimming in and playing around the dam. In particular, please ensure children are supervised by an adult at all times. No motorised boats are allowed, but kayaks, SUPs, etc., are fine. Leave the area as you found it and ensure all rubbish is taken with you. Please keep your well-behaved dogs on leads unless they are swimming in the dam with you, and make sure they don't chase the Waterbirds or annoy other swimmers.

Please make sure to secure any of the canoes after using them – drag them up towards the shore and place the paddles under them to prevent them from flying away.

Access to the central and southern dams is strictly prohibited. The southern dam will be open for recreation for Ecovillage residents after the handover of ECL and the new committee confirms access to our residents is now allowed. If you see anyone that isn't an Ecovillage resident, please inform them that the our dams and conservation land are for the use of Ecovillage residents only. If you have any questions or concerns, please email us on info@ecovillage.net.au.

Topsoil Dumping on ECL land

by Mike Hulme

It's been awesome to be able to take delivery of top soil that's removed from lots by your contractors when doing the earthworks associated with preparing for your house pads. The vast majority of this has been dumped over the last few years below the central dam, in order to build this area up for a future amphitheater zone that could be used for events and off-lead dog exercise, etc. This has saved everyone the cost of removing the valuable top soil from site with their contractors, at our expense to then spread it out periodically, which we've done three times now.

Unfortunately, a couple of people have dumped large rocks in this zone, which is obviously not permitted, as it comes at some expense to remove.

Please ensure that you instruct your builder or earth works contractors to only dump clean topsoil in this zone. If you have rock we can take it to another area, as we may be able to use it in the future, and other lot owners may want to select some for landscaping, but I need to be contacted beforehand to confirm this. If we receive anymore large rocks or rubbish we will have to invoice the lot owner for the cost of removing it, and either close this cost saving option off for future residents, or start charging for a managed service.

Having said this, it's great to see this area transforming from a very wet area with no topsoil to a very usable space for our community. Once we've filled the next section of this zone our plan is to add Kikuyu runners/seed to cover at the appropriate time of year (autumn).



Rental Match-Making

By Michelle Sheridan

We are often contacted by people who have visited the Ecovillage, heard about it, read about it, or are keen to travel here from afar - all wanting to find a rental here. They may be building already, keen to trial the lifestyle before they commit to moving here, or simply seeking to move to Witchcliffe from close by. We do keep a record of these enquiries, or share their stories on the Witchcliffe Ecovillage Community Facebook group.

Similarly, residents often let us know if they are considering renting their home for a period, and we are happy to receive these updates and connect people where we can.

While Village Homes Realty isn't taking rental management on at the moment, we can recommend real estate agents who currently manage rentals in the Ecovillage, and understand the ethos, principles and strata by-laws that contribute to the fabric of our community. So get in touch if you are seeking, or offering a rental - please provide as much info as you can, and we can see if we can help.

If you do have a rental, please make sure you follow the requirements of the bylaws. Let your strata council know that you have tenants, and make sure the tenants understand and abide by the bylaws, any cluster house rules, busy bee arrangements, dogs on leads and no cat rules, etc. Try and make it as seamless as possible for your tenants and your cluster neighbours to enjoy life in the Ecovillage together. If your tenants are not attending busy bees on your behalf, make sure you continue to contribute to the care and maintenance of the Common Property in a way that is agreeable to your cluster.

Local Heroes

By Mike Hulme

Congratulations to two (very) local businesses that received awards at the 2025 Margaret River Region Business Awards. We are extremely proud of their achievements!

Leading with Innovation and Environmental Excellence Award – Homes By Nature. The team pictured below at the awards night. Cam, Henry and the team have built many a sustainable house in most clusters of the Ecovillage including Henry and Jo's own home in 1A.

"At Homes By Nature, we build homes using sustainable materials such as timber frames and traditional cladding or Hempcrete, with Hempcrete being our preferred building method."



We are really thrilled to have witnessed the growth of HbN who are almost 100% focused on building homes in the Ecovillage. You have come a long way from our initial meeting in Perth in 2019 and the huge decision to move down to Witchy to become one of our most prized builders. Whilst growing the company and employing Ecovillage residents and locals from our region, and providing wonderful opportunities for training and apprenticeships, you have also brought highly sustainable building materials and practices to the Ecovillage. As a young business you not only managed to navigate the dreadful Covid stimulus grants and associated inflation, but were then one of the first (if not the first builder in the Ecovillage) after Covid to offer future residents the opportunity and security to lock in a fixed price contract, and completion within 12mths.

So many of your clients have told me how happy they have been with you and we want you all to know how proud we are of you all! Also, a special congratulations to Cam & Whitley on the birth of their beautiful son, Casey James, in August (the best month to be born)!

And... another winner!

Micro Business of the year was awarded to Little Hand Dumplings.

A very big congratulations also to Yan and Eddie. We are all looking forward to seeing the Little Hand Dumpling van become a regular fixture on their Commercial block in the Ecovillage, expecting to be serving us delicious dumplings from February 2026. Until then for your dumpling fix, keep an eye on their [facebook page](#) for locations around the region.

Made by hand with fresh, local ingredients and Margaret River love.

"My happy childhood was spent in Hong Kong, where my chef parents taught me the art of making Dim Sum Dumplings by hand. These days, my husband Edison and I are excited to share the joy of dumpling preparation with our own little kiddos.

How lucky we are to be living in such a magic part of the world as Margaret River, Western Australia. Since our arrival in 2014, our family has been welcomed with open arms and received nothing but support from the amazing locals. Now it's time for us to share my family's special dumplings with the community we have grown to love so much." - Yan (wife, mother, dumpling chef)



Witchcliffe Ecovillage Community Facebook Group : Invites

By Megan Smythe

It is so nice to see such lovely posts in the group recently celebrating wildlife, community events and fun activities—it must be Spring at last!

We have some housekeeping to share about invites to the FB group. All invites to the Witchcliffe Ecovillage Community Group need to come from the group Admins.

If you are a regular member of the group and you invite someone directly, FB doesn't ask the new member the required group questions, and they don't get asked to agree to the group rules and advise us their address.

If we see those new members sitting in the inbox for approval, without questions answered, we generally don't approve them, as they haven't told us where they live or agreed to the rules. We want to keep this group authentically just Ecovillage residents and owners, and keep it a safe space, with no scammers, advertising or bots. So, we would appreciate it if you would let people know to follow the steps below to get invited to the group, rather than invite them yourself.

To join the facebook group:

1. Find our WEV admin profile – 'Ecovillage Witchcliffe' and 'Add friend'
2. Once your request has been accepted you will be sent an invite to the Witchcliffe Ecovillage Community page.
 - Complete the questions and agree to the group rules, otherwise we can't approve the membership.
 - If you don't see the membership questions, please let us know so we can troubleshoot.

If you don't follow all the steps above, what should be a simple process turns into a bit of a palaver, so we thank you for doing your best to tick all the boxes.



Low nutrient and waterwise gardening

By Michelle Sheridan

As we come into the prime growing season for veggies in your EUA's, now is the time to remind you that over application of nutrient rich manures and fertilisers on our gardens in spring and summer leads to nutrification and growth of algae in our stormwater swales in winter, and will eventually turn our dams green and unswimmable. The reeds and native plants in our swales can strip some nutrients, but they don't cope with heavy applications across many gardens. Gardening practices that seemed to not make an impact when we were just a few households in each cluster are magnified now that all of the clusters are filling up, so it is time to review how you are growing your food.

Over application of nitrogen also leads to "pumped up," unhealthy foliage which is a magnet for insects and not good for human health. Please use only small accounts of manures and natural fertilizers, use compost and worm castings instead, and use the cover cropping and soil amendment techniques that Mark Tupman taught us in all of our Friday sessions at the demo garden and in our Patch from Scratch workshops. Spread the word in your gardening groups and cluster busy bees—this is really important for the health of our waterways.

A reminder also that gardening and irrigation in EUA's and community gardens must be based on waterwise principles. We see that the majority of households and clusters are achieving this, so well done to you all!

If you are just starting out, make sure you

- install drip irrigation, not sprinklers,
- limit hand watering to new seedlings and transplants,
- mulch, mulch mulch,
- build your soil organically,
- add organic soil amendments if required.

If you are on your Cluster's irrigation committee, make sure you are not overwatering your community garden. If you're not sure, use a hand held water meter and run some checks, and set your irrigation controllers accordingly. Each cluster only receives a set allocation each year which can't be exceeded. By next year, all 11 clusters plus the Ag lots plus the Public Open Space will be using ECL water, so we will be at full capacity. We have an overall water budget that must be adhered to if we want to continue swimming in the dam in summertime.

We have also recently noticed a number of households using ECL water on their private gardens—bringing hoses and even connecting irrigation into their yards from their EUA water point. This needs to be discontinued immediately. The ECL does not have a water licence to allow it to disperse water to private lots. This has been very clear in all of our communications, and the rules for owners using ECL water are set out in each cluster's bylaws. Households using ECL water on their lots are risking the ECL's very rare and privileged arrangement to provide non-potable water without a costly licence. These strict rules are required by the Dept of Health, Dept of Water and local government, and non compliance places the ECL at risk of legal consequences. It is only a few owners that are breaking the rules, so please do the right thing for the benefit of all.

Thanks everyone, and happy gardening!

Thanks for reading everyone, have a wonderful weekend!