

2014 International Year of Family Farming

Feeding the world; Caring for the Earth

Family Farm Snapshots

<http://familyfarms.enviroed4all.com.au>



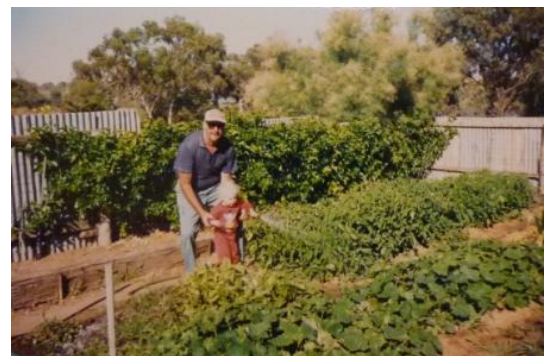
Town Food Garden, Jeparit

Our Family

When we retired from our farm on the Wimmera River, and moved to town to the home that had been my parents in Jeparit, my wife and I developed a **large garden with vegetables, fruit trees and flowers**, as we had also had on the farm. Now I am in my 80's and we still enjoy growing our own food and sharing it with our family.

My wife mainly works the flower beds, while I mainly do the vegetable patch and orchard. We also advise and help each other when needed. Since 1987, regardless of drought years or wet years, we have had this urban garden, **a very small farm for our family's needs**, in continuous production. That is only part of the story as it is a great pleasure to have had our children and grandchildren helping in our two gardens:

- for our children - the on-farm garden
- and for our grandchildren - this town garden (see photo above right) .



How many different types of foods can you see by their leaf shapes in this photo?

What is the child doing in the garden? Why might this be needed?

Our Farm

Our family farm now is not very big at all. In the photo right, the vegetable garden is hidden by the trees to the right of the house, while the orchard is behind the house and to the right of the shed. The flower beds mainly follow the house and fences.

We are very proud of our vegie garden as it produces a lot of food for us each year. The produce has often won prizes at our local Agricultural Show. The photo right shows how it looked in 1990, when it was a new and won the 'Best Garden' at our local Jeparit Show that year.

Match up this photo with the first one, and find the native tree which is now heavy with blossom outside the garden, and the Wimmera River.



The photo below this is the same garden in February this year, in a very hot summer:

- strawberries - two lines on the right,
- carrots - very green patch at the back
- pumpkins and cucumbers - on the left,
- passionfruit vine - on the fence
- fruit orchard - over the fence, mostly netted.



Our produce- 'Feeding the world' is 'Feeding ourselves'

This garden feeds **our immediate world – us and sometimes our children and grandchildren.**

There are **several beds**, each one with planted with a **different vegetable**. This year we have had:

- **Beans** (shrivelled in the extreme heat)
- **Carrots** (photo to the right)
- **Cucumber** (photo below right, next page)
- **Peas** were great before the heat started
- **Pumpkins** – Butternut and Queensland Blue- were 'cooked' on the vines in the extreme heat this summer (45C days)
- **Strawberries**
- **Tomatoes** flowered but didn't set, also possibly due to the extreme heat



In the **orchard**, there are several fruit trees which we planted. We currently have:

- **apples**
- **apricots**
- **lemons**
- **mandarins**
- **oranges**
- **passion fruit**
- **peaches**
- **pears**



We have to protect them from the birds with **nets**, so that we get the fruit to eat. As well as **fresh food** for us and our children's families each year, we **store, bottle, jam and freeze** some of our produce for use later in the year. In the past, we have grown many other vegetables, so that we have been **self-sufficient** for our fresh food.

Sustainability - 'Caring for the Earth'

Bees live nearby in a large Black Box on the banks of the Wimmera River, over our fence. When they get the nectar for their hive, they **pollinate our plants** for us. When my father lived here, he had ½ dozen beehives from which he collected the honey, then heated and strained it. We used the wax to seal the jars filled with jam made from the fruit in the orchard, and we ate the honey!! But today we buy honey.

We look after the **soil** we have here each year by:

- **Fertilising** the soil with cow and hen manure
- covering bare soil with **mulch** to reduce evaporation and add compost (*see photo to the right with mulch beside carrots*)
- **shifting** the position of the plots, so that some of the land is fallow each year.
- **rotating** our plots, never planting the same crop back two years in a row eg the peas put Nitrogen back into the soil, and we follow them with tomatoes in our rotation.
- Covering our fruit trees with **nets** (photo below) to keep the birds off, because:
 - We want to eat and preserve as much fruit as possible for **us to use!**



○ This fruit is **not** a natural food **for the native birds**

▪ **Parrots and Cockatoos** are medium-sized birds that can damage fruit easily, pecking at it, but not eating all of it and leaving it to rot. The nets keep them out.



▪ A colony each of **Blue Wrens** and of **Honeyeaters** live in the orchard. They are both small birds which can get through the holes in the nets. They tend to eat the fallen fruit, and do not ruin it for us. But sometimes they get caught inside the net and we have to release them.

Stumpy-tailed and Blue Tongue Lizards also visit our vegetable garden, especially in search of juicy strawberries. They are not a natural food for them and we want the strawberries for us, so we put netting around the strawberries to keep them off!

Rabbits have been a recent challenge in our garden. This year, their numbers are rising again. Control methods used on farms out of town – shooting and poisoning- are not practical for an urban garden. So we have to be on our watch for them visiting!

Photos by D. Livingston and family (1990), and J. Clark (2006, 2014). I give my permission to Jeanie Clark for this information from interviews to be used on the web under a cc licence. 12/3/2014

For more information about the IYFF go to:

<http://familyfarms.enviroed4all.com.au> for more in this series of snapshots

<http://www.fao.org/family-farming-2014/> <http://www.familyfarmingcampaign.net> for the official IYFF sites

<https://www.facebook.com/InternationalYearOfFamilyFarmingIYFF> for the facebook updates.