

No. 60
Spring 2023

Leaflet

Simply Living Community Garden Newsletter

The garden is located at Port Melbourne Uniting Church, 144 Bridge St Port Melbourne

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Diary Dates

Gardening

Working bee:

3rd Sat, 10-11am

Social gardening:

Mondays, 1-2 pm, term time

Playgroup:

Fridays 10.30, term time

Make & Mend

1st & 3rd Wed, 1-4 pm

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Garden update

Spring is in the air and the garden is green and thriving. The plum trees are flowering and bees are busy all over the garden.



The low garden bed was replaced with a wicking bed in April. It was planted out with radishes, lettuce, coriander and Asian greens and is already onto the third planting of radishes.

The winter/spring garden has lots of leafy greens (lettuce, silverbeet, warrigal greens), sugar snap peas and broccoli. The broad beans are flowering and will set pods when the weather gets warmer.

All our leafy plants are **cut and come again** so they keep growing and produce more for everyone. Take only the outer leaves and stems and leave at least five leaves so the plant can keep growing.



Compost

Worms and compost have been a focus for gardening activities with both playgroup and kindergarten. The worms and other critters are doing a great job and we have more lovely compost to put on our garden beds.

Thanks also to the shredded paper suppliers and compost turners!

Wildflower garden

The front garden has been blooming with a variety of wildflowers, like the *Wahlgbergias*, pictured below.



We are planning to fill in some gaps during our September working bee.

Fruit fly

After our experience with fruit fly last summer we have been monitoring the compost for fruit fly pupae. We found and removed a small number, which we disposed of by following the Department of Agriculture advice to freeze and then put into the landfill bin.

We will be monitoring all our fruiting plants as the weather warms up and will put fruit fly traps in the plum trees. These traps lure both male and female fruit flies but are not attractive to beneficial insects.

Plant biosecurity

This Spring we are participating in the Citrus Australia CitrusWatch program which monitors trees close to ports of entry for imported pests that could be devastating to Australian crops and gardens. A sticky trap will be in our lemon tree for two weeks and then will be sent off for analysis for Asian Citrus Psyllid.

Budstick samples will also be sent off to be tested for the plant pathogens that cause Citrus Variegated Chlorosis and Huanglongbing (also called "citrus greening").

Skill sharing opportunities

Whether it be gardening, sewing, jam making, re-purposing items or helping our environment—we love to share skills, learn new things and spend time with other people.

Come along to any of our regular activities to learn, share, enjoy.

Garden working bees/social gardening

10-11 am, 3rd Saturday of the month & 1-2 pm, Mondays (not school hols) Each month there is a special focus on a garden skill or seasonal job as well as routine garden maintenance.

Please wear suitable clothing, including enclosed shoes and sun protection. Bring your own water bottle and hand tools/bucket if you have them.

Family Gardening

Fridays 10.30 am, alongside Playgroup.
Gardening activities for pre-schoolers and their adults.

Make & Mend

1-4 pm, 1st & 3rd Wednesday of the month in the church hall. Drop in sewing, crafting, mending, jam making and more. Bring your own project or help make something for our community. Sewing machines are available for use and afternoon tea is provided. You are also welcome to just drop by for a chat.

Here is a set of "separation hearts" made at Make & Mend earlier this year for one of the Uniting Families programs which works with children who have separation anxiety.



Church news

Our new St Kilda South Port Uniting Church congregation was made official in February—made up of the previous St Kilda, South Melbourne and Port Melbourne congregations. While worship services are now at South Melbourne at 10 am Sunday, the community garden and related activities continue at the Port Melbourne church.

Our new web site is stkildasouthportunitingchurch.org.au

Feature plant—Japanese plum

The plum trees in our garden are varieties of Japanese plum, *Prunus salicina*. Although called Japanese plums they originated in China. They grow in moderate to sub-tropical climates.

Our trees are flowering now and the fruit will be ready to harvest in late December to mid January. These plums are all great to eat fresh but also make excellent jam. While some varieties can self-pollinate, most need to cross-pollinate with another variety. This is one of the reasons we have four different trees.



Bee at work in on of the plum trees

Plum Jam

Plum jam is one of the easiest jams to make as the fruit has good levels of pectin, which is needed for setting the jam. It is best to use slightly under-ripe fruit as this has more pectin and is also much easier to peel and chop.

Preparation:

Wash, peel and chop plums. Discard the peel and stones. Cook in a microwave safe casserole or bowl until soft then use a potato masher to mush the fruit. You can also cook in a pan on the stove-top but make sure you add some water and stir so that the fruit doesn't stick on the bottom.

Prepare your jars—sterilise by heating in oven or with water in the microwave. Sterilise metal lids by boiling in water for 5 minutes.

To make the jam:

Measure your fruit mush into a large saucepan or pot. Do not fill your pot more than halfway as you need to allow room for the boiling mixture to rise up. Heat over medium heat.

Measure one cup of sugar for each cup of fruit and stir into the fruit. Continue stirring over medium heat until the sugar has dissolved. Increase temperature to bring the mixture to the boil. Continue boiling, stirring occasionally to prevent sticking on the bottom (take care as the hot mixture can spit!).

After about 10 minutes, start testing for setting by dripping a small amount onto a cold saucer. When the mixture starts to gel after a minute on the saucer it is ready to put into jars.

Remove from the heat, skim off any froth that has formed on top and use a cup or jug to fill jars with hot jam. Take care as the jam and the filled jars will be VERY hot. If using metal lids put the lids on while the jam is still hot (they will then seal as the jam cools). When cold, label your jam, including date made.

Jam sealed in sterilised jars and kept in a cool dark place will keep for a few years, but you'll want to eat it before then!

We'll be making plum jam at Make & Mend in October, using fruit from our trees that we froze last summer.

Come and join in and take a jar home!



Picking from the garden

Everyone is welcome to pick from the garden for their personal use. The only things we ask are that you:

- pick only what you need for your family today,
- take care with the plants so that they can continue to grow and produce more for everyone. The only whole plants that may be taken are the root vegies, (radishes, carrots, beetroot), onions and cabbages.
- contribute to the garden in some way, such as: bringing shredded paper for composting, watering the garden, helping out at working bees, or making a donation (which could be cash, plants, manure, garden stakes, wire mesh, tools, etc.)