

Ballarat **PERMACULTURE** Guild



Annual Report 2023

Vision

Our vision is to have a resilient, creative, strongly-connected local community.

Purpose

We build personal and community capacity through sharing permaculture knowledge and sustainable lifestyle skills in our workshops, skill shares, community working bees and annual Permaculture Design Course. We connect people through diverse social activities, including farm & garden tours, public talks, book clubs and informal gatherings at local pubs & markets.

Contents

Contents	2
President's Report	3
Secretary's Report	4
Treasurer's Report	5
Education Report	7
Permablitz	8
BPG Website	10
Membership	10
The Hidden Orchard	11

This report covers the period from 15 November 2022 to 21 November 2023.
The Ballarat Permaculture Guild Incorporated (BPG) committee at the time of the report comprises:

President: James Hosking

Vice President: Fiona Williamson

Treasurer: Stephen Taylor

Secretary: Katharine Thorn (Rhea)

Ordinary Members: Ellen Burns, Barry Gibson, René de Jong, Steve Burns, Michael McKenna, Hoang Nguyen (resigning).

President's Report

Hello, and welcome to the 2023 AGM!

This has felt like a year of “rebuilding”, as we’re still impacted by the lasting effects of the pandemic and lockdowns, but we’ve held a lot more events than the last few years and are seeing both a return of old members plus an influx of new ones.

The PDC was held in the first half of the year, the first after a break in 2022 to enable the committee to regroup and refresh. A huge thanks to the organisers and committee members that helped with the running, with special mention to Ann Goeman and Steve Burns who had a bit more on their plate than anticipated. Overall the course went very well, with a particularly engaged group of students who also participated in other BPG events through the year.

The new PDC committee for 2024 is hard at work, with the course structure changing significantly following feedback to (hopefully) ease the commitment for full-time workers and parents in particular. The course is filling up, so if you know anybody who may be interested, please point them in the right direction!

One of the big challenges this year has been attendance at events – we’ve had huge ones (a few potlucks, some blitzes, Ron and Sonia’s garden tour, and a great book club but some that have been poorly attended or had to be cancelled, too. As a committee we’re still trying to work out the right balance so that we’re putting our energy into the right places, but it’s a tricky thing to work out! To aid in this we’ve recently recruited a volunteer social media coordinator, who will hopefully increase our engagement with events and other posts, but that’s only part of the puzzle.

With our upcoming “major project” hopefully on the very near horizon, we’ll be able to direct resources and activities there, as well as having more of a home base for us to gather. Stay tuned – and get involved if you are able!

James Hosking

Secretary's Report

This year the BPG AGM will mark one year of my role as secretary, I've learnt a lot in this role. Our committee meetings are once a month, held at the Uniting building on Dyte parade. In my role I put together the agenda, take minutes, check the mail and get the pleasure of working with and being supported by the BPG committee. We are always looking for new committee members!

I would like to thank everyone involved with BPG for continuing to build a wonderful community. I completed the PDC earlier this year and the knowledge I gained (and continue to) has changed the way I look at everything. I have been reflecting on how much incidental knowledge I've gained being on the committee, soaking up all the conversations, stories and knowledge share that goes on.

Katharine Thorn (Rhea)

Treasurer's Report

Financial Report 2023

Part A: Balance Sheet

Balance sheet for the year ended 30 June 2023

Current Assets

Notes	Account	30/06/2022 Balance	30/06/2023 Balance
	<i>Bank Accounts</i>		
1	ASPDC Account	\$12,392.44	\$17,896.21
	Membership Account	\$10,677.42	\$11,218.98
	New General Account	\$424.61	\$594.58
	The Hidden Orchard Account	\$921.36	\$3,933.14
	TOTAL Bank Accounts	\$24,415.83	\$33,642.91
	<i>Investment Accounts</i>		
	Term Deposit	\$40,932.23	\$41,379.79
	TOTAL Investment Accounts	\$40,932.23	\$41,379.79
	<i>Petty Cash</i>	\$353.70	353.70
	Total Current Assets	\$65,701.76	\$75,376.40

Non Current Assets

	Trailer	\$0.00	\$0.00
	Trailer Contents	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00
	Library Books	\$6,618.64	6936.64
	Books on hand for Sale	\$1,112.21	1112.21
	T-shirts on hand for sale	\$680.00	680.00
	QFF Traps for sale	\$184.00	0
	THO Assets	\$1,756.00	1756.00
	Lap Tops	0	\$3,631.00
	OVERALL TOTAL	\$11,350.85	15115.85

Note 1 There was a \$1000 transfer from the PDC account to the General account for operational expenses.

Part B: Income Statement

Income statement for the year ended 30 June 2023

INCOME

Notes:

1	Grant Income	\$3,900.00
	Interest Income	\$2.73
	Membership	\$2,426.21
	PDC fees	\$13,871.50
	Interest Income Term Deposit	\$447.56
	Compounding	
Sales	Tee Shirt	\$25.00
	TOTAL INCOME	\$20,673.00

Note 1 There was a Grant from the Ballarat Council of \$3900 for the purchase of 3 Lap tops.

EXPENDITURE

2023 Calenders	\$762.75
Advertising PDC	\$52.61
Annual Sub Library Fee	\$51.06
Book Holders	\$82.99
Insurance	\$769.00
CAV Lodgement	\$61.20
Christmas Meeting	\$255.15
Computer Purchases	\$3,631.00
Honorarium	\$400.00
Honorarium Life Membership	\$152.99
IT Services	\$654.50
Library Books	\$318.00
PDC Presenters Fees	\$5,489.09
PDC Printing	\$101.60
Post Office Box Renewal	\$181.00
Recording Device	\$100.48
Trailer Tyres	\$218.00
Trailer Registration	\$62.74
Total Expenditure	\$13,344.16
Surplus	\$7,328.84

Stephen Taylor

Education Report

The Permaculture Design Course (PDC) ran in the first half of this year, having not run in 2022. We were based at the Uniting building in Dyte parade, with some sessions run at Chestnut Farm when we needed space or the ability to be messy! New presenters and field trips were trialled, and the course was very successful. We are fortunate to have access to some great local presenters and homes and; farms to visit. The training room at Dyte Pde is such that we've limited our enrolments to 15 students, which encourages everyone to get to know each other much more than happens in a larger group. This years course group formed particularly strong bonds. The level of openness and sharing was great to see and really added to the experience for everyone.

Unfortunately, our level of other education activity was really down on previous years. This is a pity, because education is a key priority for BPG.

We are failing to regularly run our Introduction to Permaculture short course and our What is Permaculture? information sessions. We ran an Introduction to Permaculture one day course during 2023, but the three presenters who had shared delivery then all resigned (for different reasons – they all agreed the course went very well!)

Both the Introduction to Permaculture and What is Permaculture? are very easy to run since the format, schedule and course material are already developed. All we need is some dedicated people who will volunteer to deliver them a few times a year. What is Permaculture? is an evening session that runs for a couple of hours. The Intro course is a single day. It easily works for multiple presenters to take parts of the day.

If you'd like to be involved, please contact me to find out more! :)

Steve Burns



Permablitz Report

We had a successful year of Permablitz with one blitz on average per quarter. We ended 2022 after the AGM on a high note with a big blitz at Barry's Navigator homestead. While the weather was a bit awful (being the Spring that everything flooded!) we managed to take care of sheet mulching, natural fencing, chicken tractor creation, wiking bed creation and plant guilds as part of their attempt to introduce permaculture and regenerative farming techniques into their small farm.

In autumn, we started with a two-part blitz in Invermay at Chestnut Farm. We started with a focus on trees, mostly fruit and oaks planted as part of the farm's bushfire defence strategy. We refreshed a 2metre wide forest garden planting and garden around the Cubby as well as attended to a lot of vegetable gardens. The second part was the installation of an Anti-aviary over a row of five apple trees planted as a fire garden strip along the driveway.

In winter we returned to UnitingCare to focus on their fruit trees this time. A small group pruned fruit trees that hadn't been touched in years. It was a very substantial pile of branches that took a few trips to get rid of!! It allowed those who attended Ellen's pruning workshops to try out their new skills! we will return over summer with The Hidden Orchard to see if they bear fruit and consider how we can continue to improve the health of the trees and follow up with another pruning blitz next Spring.

We headed over in early Spring to Rocklyn to work on a small homestead that has been built to maximise sustainability and liveability. We construct a large flower bed with bricks, sheet mulched and spread compost and soil ready for the bulb planting (with a view to sales to help support the homestead). Several wiking beds were created near the house for herbs. But the big job for the day was the construction of a large polytunnel greenhouse. It was quite the barn raising! Everyone learnt a lot, along with the owners, about how to set it up and the fiddly work of coordinating many people to roll the plastic over and get it snugly attached to the frame. It is a large space and will provide fantastic growing opportunities for this family.

Barry and Jenny worked on a small blitz to install a community verge garden in Ballarat which is still coming to fruition but will be a valuable addition to the area. Verge gardens are still uncommon in Ballarat and Jenny has bravely taken on the Council permit system to get this space up and running.

And in October we ended the year with a book launch with one of the Milkwood founders at the Old Colonist Club. We had a large group attend to hear from our Hidden Orchard president, Ellen Burns, in conversation with Kirsten from Milkwood about her new book and why it was so important in the world now to be a permaculturalist!

Looking forward in 2024 to a heap of members coming forward with offers to host blitzes as their places so we can continue the skill sharing and learning for old and new members. Come speak to Barry or Fiona at the AGM about nominating a month and idea for your blitz! We should be kicking off in Term 1 when school goes back.

Fiona Williamson



Other Activities

Thank-you to Ann Goeman for organising Permies at the pub, this is a monthly favorite where members gather a local venue and socialise over dinner.

Thanks to James and René ran the Retrosuburbia book club, full of engaging discussions about applying the permaculture principles to everyday life.

Rhea Thorn

BPG Website

Ballarat Permaculture Guild's website blog continues to provide updates regarding the latest news from the Committee and interesting articles. Due to COVID and the lack of physical activity the number of updates has been limited. We would really appreciate some writers to contribute to the blog with interesting articles. Articles are also shared to Facebook to provide further reach and interest in the Guilds activities.

The website also allows members to access their member benefits as well as joining/renewing membership, with online payments via Stripe.

Barry Gibson

Membership

As of the 23 th October 2023 BPG had 107 memberships (household memberships are counted as 2 members), with many of those being couples or family memberships. People are able join, renew and pay online. Automated renewal notices are sent to members shortly before their membership expires.

All members will receive a free Permaculture 2023 calendar (valued at \$17.95).

Member benefits include:

- support our local permaculture group
- access our Intro to Permaculture, Permaculture Design and other courses at a reduced cost.
- take advantage of our arrangement with Milkwood whereby BPG members can have access to their courses and; the Milkwood book at a 25% discount.
- have access to our extensive Permaculture library
- may access significant discounts on certain items as and when available. (We recently ran an arrangement with Permaculture Principles Bookshop whereby members received 15% off books purchased)

Last year, the committee decided to introduce a life membership category to be awarded to a person, or people, based on a set of criteria developed for consideration of life membership. This year, two worthy members have been nominated and will receive their awards at the Annual General Meeting. They are Ann Goeman and Steve Burns. The committee extends its sincere gratitude for their past and continued involvement and the legacies they have left with the Ballarat Permaculture Guild and offers them our best wishes.

Barry Gibson

The Hidden Orchard

The Hidden Orchard (THO) harvests fruit from backyard or public land fruit trees and distributes the harvest one third to the homeowner, one third to the pickers and one third to charity. Founded in 2017, THO is a volunteer group auspiced by Ballarat Permaculture Guild.

Committee members: Ellen Burns (President), Karen Elford (Secretary), Renee Clapham (Treasurer), Marianne Hubbard (Volunteer Coordinator), Grace Zadow (Social Media Manager), Laura Hudson (General Member)

Non-committee admin team: Ruth Varenica (Inbox Manager), Will Sinclair (Data Management)

2023 stats (so far!):

Fruit harvested: 301.4kgs

Harvest Leaders: 12

Harvest volunteers: 369

Properties: 166

Recipients: 20

It has been a disappointing season this year, with many trees not developing fruit or fruit not ripening. We are attributing this to the crazy weather at the end of 2022, too much rain and a late summer severely impacting our harvest quantities. We are harvesting some citrus at the moment, but may not even hit half a tonne before the end of the year, when we have never harvested less than a tonne before!

It has been a brilliant year for our committee though, with the appointment of Renee, our new Treasurer, Marianne, our new volunteer coordinator, Grace, our new social media manager, and Laura. All of the new committee members have already settled and blossomed in their roles, joining Karen and Ellen to form an incredibly strong team. Will has stepped back from the committee due to his increased commitments in NSW, but has stayed on in his role as our Data Manager.

We have had several very successful events this year, including: an olive harvest and brining workshop, beginners pruning workshop and intermediate pruning workshop.

We thank Jean-Paul Trijsburg for volunteering his time as our pruning instructor and to Gillian and Richard, and St James Parish Primary School for hosting.

We were able to raise \$225 from the olive brining workshop (hosted by Ellen) and \$1100 through the pruning workshops.

We also held another Bunnings Sausage Sizzle fundraiser on Grand Final Day, through which we raised \$2040.50

Ellen has represented The Hidden Orchard in the Food Access Network and the Ballarat Local Food Coalition, formed this year.

She had meetings with Darebin Fruit Squad and FoodBank to discuss collaboration opportunities, and was given the StreetHarvest pilot program handbook by Dave (CEO of FoodBank) to use as a template for constructing our own master document. Ellen hopes to create a pack, available for download from the THO website, to help others in starting up their own groups.

This year has seen Ellen mentor two other groups, one in Warrnambool and one in Adelaide, and provide them support and guidance in setting up their own fruit rescue organisations.

We have been offered a donation of two garden sheds from the council, which we will be relocating to Uniting, Dyte Parade, to become a central storage location with 24/7 access. We thank Siobhan Dent for offering us the sheds and Remi and Ivan at Uniting for allowing us to install them there, and for their ongoing support in providing Uniting as a venue for our meetings and workshops.

The Hidden Orchard was awarded a Community Impact Grant for the sum of \$3,207.97 to purchase concrete pavers, shelving, locks and tree care equipment for the new sheds and our tree care and pruning squad, which is a new service that we are hoping to start offering. We are looking for more tree care and pruning volunteers to help with this, which will help our tree owners and greatly increase the quality of fruit that we are able to harvest.

Ellen also submitted an Expression of Interest for the City Partnerships Grant, totalling \$215,000.

This application is to fund the Community Orchard project that The Hidden Orchard and Ballarat Permaculture Guild have been working on for close to two years now. We are hoping to secure the lease from VicTrack soon and be able to start the project in 2024.

Ellen Burns (THO President)

