

Project Inception Report: Transition Town Vincent Community Food Forest

Introduction

The idea of a Community Food Forest in the City of Vincent was raised in about 2018 by members of Transition Town Vincent (TTV) including Chris Cuttress. After being allocated an area of 680 square metres of land for the Food Forest in 2023, the first plantings were quick to go in the ground to take advantage of the winter rains. This is a summary of the Food Forest and what has been achieved to July 2023 and some logistics around planning and implementation.

Inception

The idea of a community food forest was raised in 2018 by members of the TTV as an adjunct to the community composting and worm farming operation. A Facebook page – Britannia Food Forest – Working Group was established for exchanging ideas and information. Originally it was to go next to the community composting / worm farm operation however the Council determined that that location was not appropriate and in early 2023 recommended an area of land about 50 metres away.



Figure 1 Community Food Forest Planting Day

Location

The location of the food forest is at an underutilised corner of grassed parkland in the suburb of Leederville overlooking the Floreat Athena playing fields. It is also located near to a number of other facilities which have been developed or utilised over time by the TTV with support from the Council and which provide useful synergies. These include:

- A community mulch pile which is regularly topped up by the Council.
- A community compost pile which is also occasionally topped up by the Council with compost derived from its FOGO program.
- A tools and things library from which various gardening tools e.g. spades, wheelbarrows can be sourced from.
- The Floreat Athena clubrooms which provide a useful venue for meetings and the TTV regular film nights.

There was a community composting operation and community worm farming enterprise occurring here but that has been taken over by the Council FOGO program.



Figure 2 Community Food Forest Location Plan

Site

The site is about 680 metres and is bordered to the west by a car park, to the north by Britannia Road reserve, to the east by a grassed slope overlooking Floreat Athena playing ground and to the south by more grassed, sloping area containing a large Moreton Bay fig tree.

Soil type is predominantly slightly alkaline light yellow sand with stunted couch grass. There are two existing olive trees and a eucalypt all about 1.5 metres high. The olive trees do not appear to be growing well as they are located on a slope. This means rainwater runs off and has little chance to infiltrate the soil.

Solar access to the site is good with no obstructions to the east or west. A 2 metre high hedge of Victorian tea tree is located on the north side while a the Moreton Bay fig tree is located on the south side. The site is not irrigated. The site is exposed to hot easterly winds which are very prevalent in summer.

Governance

The Transition Town Vincent (TTV) group is an incorporated group which is well supported by the City of Vincent. In addition to enabling projects such as the Food Forest they also make things easier

by administering the spending of funds provided by the Council. The lease of the land from the Council is also held by the TTV.

Council Support and Budget

In addition to providing the 680 square metre area of land, the Council provided \$2,000 for:

- Purchase of plants and
- A small (4,500 litre) rainwater tank.

A subsequent allocation of \$1,000 was made by the Council to purchase and trial the use of biochar in the project of which about \$500 was utilised.

The Council also provided in kind support by:

- Providing a truck and bob cat operator to do some minor works on the site including putting in a gravel path.
- Providing bags of compost from its Food Organics and Garden Organics (FOGO) scheme.
- Mulch from the adjacent community mulch pile.
- A water truck to fill the rainwater tank.
- Moving the tool shed and providing a concrete foundation.

The Food Forest is also located near the Tools and Things Library which is also strongly supported by the Council and another initiative of the TTV. The tools library provides convenient access to the tools e.g. shovels and wheelbarrows for the planting day and ongoing work.

Planning

The main planning and project management for the project has been undertaken by Chris Cuttress. Activities which were undertaken in the planning phase included:

- Site selection
- General layout
- Risk assessment
- Project plan including budget

Until the land was allocated by the Council there was not much to do but when the land was allocated in early 2023, things got going quickly. This was possible because of the groundwork done beforehand. Firstly, Chris called a meeting of interested community members (mainly members of the TTV). At the meeting Chris outlined the general range of activities which needed to be done and provided a mud map and general planting layout of the site prepared by a permaculturalist (figure 3). Chris also asked for interest from members on preferences of fruit trees to be planted. A list was sent around to which members contributed their preferences.

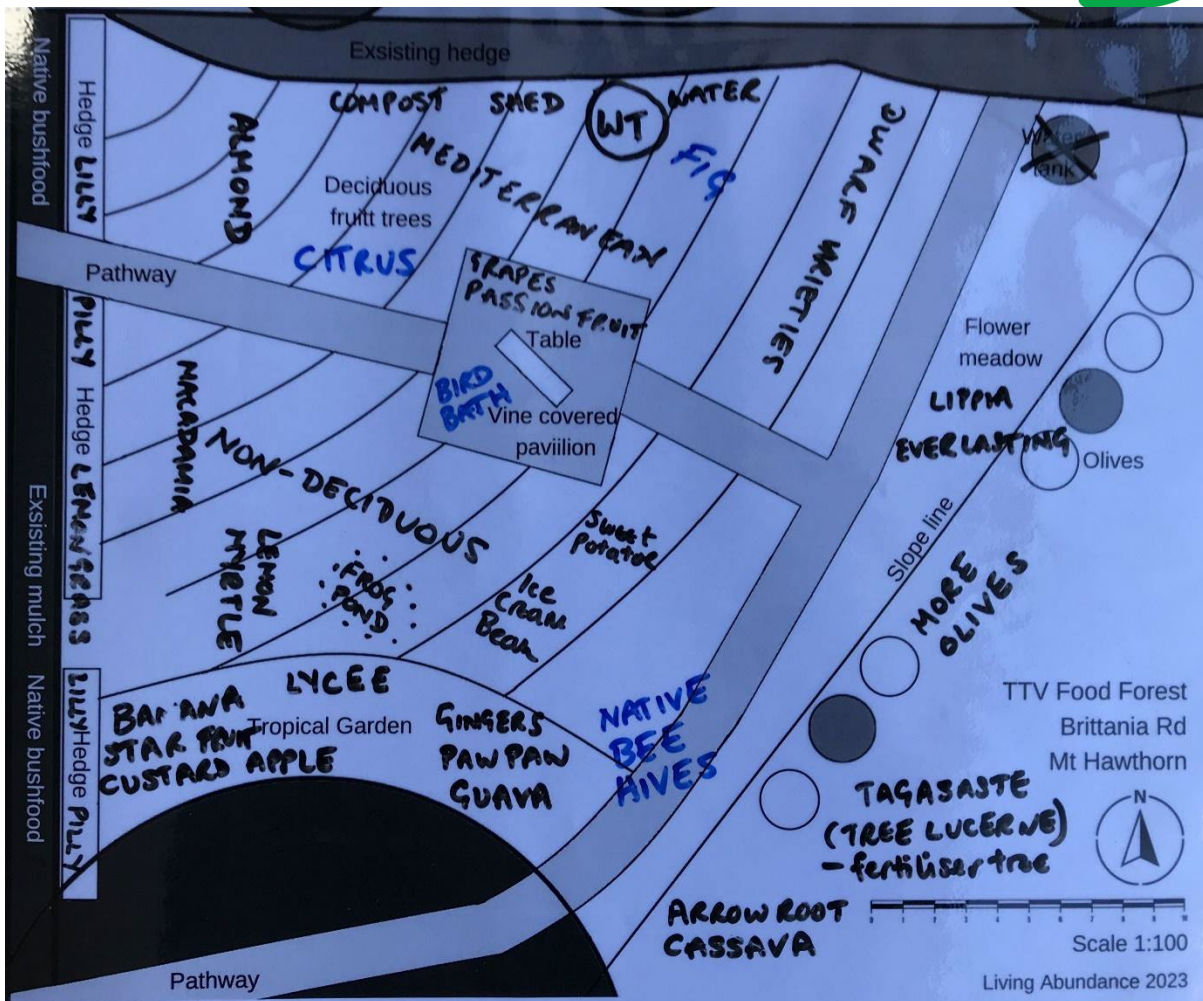


Figure 3 Community Food Forest Site Plan and Layout

There was some discussion about the use of ‘bush tucker’ plants and Noongar involvement. A member of the group was going to discuss this with the City of Vincent Aboriginal Reconciliation Advisory Committee.

Since the original application for land for the Food Forest was made to Council in 2018, members of the TTV have undertaken a number of related projects including:

- Development of a community composting and worm farming service (since replaced startup of the City of Vincent FOGO service).
- Development of a Tools and Things library.

Implementation

Water tank

A small 4,500 plastic water tank has been located on a slightly elevated area of the site to provide supplementary irrigation during plant establishment and in hotter months i.e. September/October to April/May. This was obtained with a discount from Bunnings. A Council water truck will be used to top up the tank as required. An hour was spent by members of the food forest group to level the site for the water tank prior to its delivery.

Planting day

The initial planting day for the Food Forest was on Sunday 18th June 2023. This involved a number of activities including:

- Digging holes for the plants and removing soil so it could be blended with a combination of compost and biochar before being returned to the hole with the plant. The ratio of soil:compost:biochar was about 3:1:1. Worm wiz was added to the biochar/compost which was mixed together in a wheelbarrow.
- Watering the plants. A lack of water flow from the tank meant that the optimal amount of water may not have been provided. Nonetheless there was heavy rain a few days later which ensured this was not likely to be an issue.
- Providing cardboard around each plant along with a thick layer of mulch on top.

The then Mayor for the City of Vincent, Emma Cole, came along and helped out for a while along with two other councillors, Cr Suzanne Worner and Cr Dan Loden. In total there were about 15 people involved including 3 children plus 3 dogs.

Next activities

Another planting day is planned for Sunday 23rd July. Additional plantings will be planned for different sections of the food forest. For example, the 'bush tucker' section. Additional activities which will need to be undertaken include:

- Regular watering of the plants starting September/October.
- Control of pests and diseases.
- Monitoring of plant growth and identification/resolution of issues.

Communication

A Facebook page has been created (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/561901026006714>) and there has been promotion of the food forest by the City of Vincent and an interview conducted with Chris Cuttress by 6PR. Chris has also set up Whatsapp groups to coordinate other activities around the food forest including watering and maintenance.

Report prepared by Ian Kininmonth July 2023

Attachment – Photo gallery

Photo gallery



Figure 1 TTV signing the lease for the food forest site with the City of Vincent



Figure 2 Celebrating the lease signing

Photo gallery 2



Figure 1 The first planting in June 2023



Figure 2 The first planters numbered 14 people including 4 children and 3 dogs

Photo gallery 3



Figure 5 The second planting in July 2023 was also well attended



Figure 6 Plants were given a mix of biochar, FOGO compost and worm liquid which was mixed with the soil

Photo gallery 4



Figure 7 Planting a fruit tree with biochar and FOGO compost



Figure 8 Infrastructure included a water tank and garden shed to store tools etc