



How does your garden grow?

The importance of urban plant life on your wellbeing and that of the planet may surprise you.

Are you somewhat overwhelmed when you see climate change demonstrations that call on governments to solve the problem for us? Are you sure that they can?

You know that there is a serious problem with our climate changing. You care about the planet and you want it to be there intact, or even better, for future generations. But how is it going to happen? How can the problem be fixed?

Here is a thought. It is going to happen when a large number of individuals – millions in fact, each make their own small contribution. That surely would make a difference.

Many people in the CBD, residents, workers and visitors, try to do their bit by minimising the use of plastic bags, recycling waste, using worm farms, installing solar panels, saving water, using energy efficiently and other initiatives. This does not preclude governments and large organisations of all types being able to play their role. It has to be “all hands-on-deck” to battle climate change.

Coming back to our small world in the Melbourne CBD, we see that the City of Melbourne (CoM) is doing its best. In 2017 it ratified a climate change strategy to maintain and further green our city. The Greening our City – Strategic Action Plan 2017-2021 was published. It is a highly technical document discussing how to grow a rooftop garden or a green wall, containing great photos and real-life CBD examples to inspire. The CoM website also has a Growing Green Guide for roofs, walls and facades and well as species lists for various situations when plants are grown in pots.

You see, plants and trees are wonderful sinks for carbon dioxide (CO₂) the most prevalent greenhouse gas. Vegetation turns the nasty CO₂ gas into clean and vital oxygen (O₂) that we need to breathe.

Cultivating relationships between plants, people and places.

Maybe not so surprising, is the fact that plant life in general, has a positive effect on our feeling of wellbeing. Have you noticed small areas around the city that are well vegetated, engendering a sense of community – a sense of belonging? A laneway, a coffee area that’s green and of course parks attract people who enjoy being together among the trees and plants. It is well documented that greenery in a city, helps to mitigate undesirable hot spots and reduce pollution, but above all, people generally feel good about green places.

However, community space does not necessarily have to be outdoors. The same community spirit and feeling of wellbeing can be achieved indoors. Sherry Maddock, a resident of the city, has done just that.

She has created a beautiful community garden in a most unlikely, small indoor place at the rear of the heritage listed, Collins Street Baptist Church founded in 1845 and rebuilt in its present form in 1862.

Through her work investigating small scale plant propagation and the design of low light, but green indoor spaces, she is able to provide training, consultancy and workshops applying to both home and office situations. Her workshops show how to cultivate and maintain indoor plants for a healthier living and working environment.



Sherry has turned an initial experiment into a non-profit organisation call Planted Places (<http://plantedplaces.org>) with the aim of:

- Offering belonging and welcome for dislocated and isolated people such as asylum seekers, refugees and international students with limited resources;
- Operating a living laboratory that develops technical horticultural skills; and
- Using the indoor garden to demonstrate and educate how plants can thrive and help build neighbourhood engagement by making a place to share with others.

Sherry says that we do not often realise that the environment indoors is actually not that healthy. There is indoor air pollution from manufactured chemicals, fabrics that give off volatile organic compounds and from stale air and dust particles. Indoor plants help to alleviate such pollutants and remove allergens from the air.

How about your own little space?

Your apartment, your balcony, a small area that would be suitable for a garden in your building, maybe? Consider a green wall in your apartment or adding plants that hang from the ceiling.

But my balcony is too windy, you say. This is where you need to find out about wind tolerant plants that do not mind bending in a strong wind and that have leaves that can withstand stormy conditions.

You can make an important contribution to the planet's health and your own, by growing more plants. If you already have plants around your abode, consider adding some more!

Christmas at Residents 3000

Do not miss our final Forum 3000 event for 2019. Join us at the Kelvin Club on Thursday 5th December at 6:30pm. It will be time to socialise and reflect on our busy year. Talk to our new committee members about what you would like to see in our community events for 2020. Guests of members are welcome to attend.



MELBOURNE CBD COMMUNITY NETWORK

