



# CREATING FOOD RESILIENT NEIGHBOURHOODS

*Community responses to crisis*

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COUNCILLOR FOR THE GABBA WARD

# Creating (Food) Resilient Neighbourhoods

In early 2020, as COVID was spreading and supermarket shelves emptied, we were inspired by the spontaneous upsurge of residents wanting to grow their own food locally.

Our office supported the proliferation of urban farms, community orchards, seedling hubs and edible verge gardens around Kurilpa, Bennung-Urrung, Cumbookie-bah, Woolloongabba, and Kulpurum on the inner-south side of so-called Brisbane.

These initiatives weren't just a response to the COVID crisis and climate change, but also a positive, prefigurative protest against the systemic imbalances and inequalities that undermine secure access to nutritious food.

Not only are we collectively growing and sharing food, but we're also creating more resilient, self-sustaining communities centered around principles of mutual aid and grassroots decentralised decision-making.

## First Nations Food Sovereignty

First Nations Peoples have been sustainably nurturing and farming this country for tens of thousands of years. Prior to invasion and the arrival of British ships, there was no food crisis on this continent.

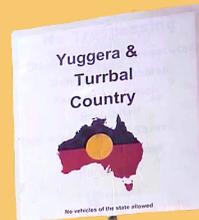
Food sovereignty, including control over food production and distribution systems, is a crucial element of resisting and counteracting colonial imperialism and racist exploitation.

While we can always do better, key organisers have spent time discussing these local urban farming proposals with Aboriginal custodians, and have been distributing some of the produce through First Nations community networks as a very small step towards paying the rent.

The Gabba Ward office works within a settler government on occupied lands of the Jagera, Yugara, Yugarapul, and Turrbal Peoples.

We pay our respects to the rightful custodians of these lands, and we acknowledge that many past wrongs and continuing injustices are yet to be rectified.

Sovereignty was never ceded. This always was and always will be Aboriginal land.



## Our Vision

Celebrate the principles of **food resilience, food justice & food sovereignty** to **empower people to grow their own food** and **reclaim public spaces**.

Create sustainable, **self-governing communities** so residents can **make decisions collectively** and **organise around common needs and goals**.

Foster **community cohesion** by providing opportunities for residents to **create meaningful relationships** with their neighbours and **build community through mutual aid**.

Establish more **examples of localised food production**, such as **household edible verge gardens**, to inspire others.

Create a **more sustainable city** and **greener streetscapes**.



# Food Resilience

As our world grows more complex and uncertain, overlapping crises including climate change, rapid urbanisation, pandemics and ongoing colonial capitalism increase the fragility of our food supply systems.

Recent food shortages at the outset of the COVID pandemic reminded all of us how precarious our food supply chains are. Major supermarkets only stock a few days' worth of food, and the lack of redundancy and flexibility means that if just one link in the chain falters, the whole system can fail.

It's not just overseas supply chains that are vulnerable to disruption. Even food sourced from northern or western Queensland can be impacted at short notice by drought, fires, floods, cyclones, pests, diseases, fuel shortages and power outages.

Food resilience means everyone has secure, stable access to enough nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life.

Resilience requires a more diverse, participatory food system, where communities can cope with shocks and uncertainty, and nutritious food is available through multiple channels.

With a really large network of verge gardens, backyard gardens, community gardens and urban farms, we could potentially grow a lot of food within the city core and make our communities less dependent upon for-profit commercial food production.

Artwork by Anna Carlsson



# Food Justice

Food is a basic human right, but many structural inequalities are embedded in mainstream food production systems. In a racial capitalist system, nutritious food is thrown out and wasted, while millions go hungry.

Ecosystems are destroyed to satisfy the unsustainable food preferences of a comparatively privileged minority.

# Creating Community

Creating resilient communities that are built around ideas of solidarity and commoning is at the centre of everything we do.

We want communities that are built on strong neighbour relationships where mutual aid replaces paternalistic charity and interdependence is recognised and cherished.

Resilient communities share resources and skills to ensure that no-one is left behind.

*Mutual aid projects are a form of political participation in which people take responsibility for caring for one another and changing political conditions, not just through symbolic acts or putting pressure on their representatives in government, but by actually building new social relations that are more survivable.*

- BigDoorBrigade.com

# Urban Farms

Three new urban farms have been established by an enthusiastic group of gardening activists, working collectively under the umbrella of *Growing Forward Meanjin*, with support from our office.

These farms were guerrilla gardening projects, planted without prior approvals. We provided support to the farms and helped shield them from removal by the Council and State Government.



*"The mere act of growing nutritious food and then giving it away for free is subversive."*

- Jonno Sri

# Growing Forward Meanjin/Brisbane

In times of crisis, radical community action is one of the most powerful forms of resistance and resilience.

*Growing Forward Meanjin* is a small group of local residents that have been exploring ways to respond to climate-induced disasters and pandemics by growing food and gathering basic resources to distribute to people in need as a form of resistance.

Get in touch via the *Growing Forward Meanjin (Brisbane)* Facebook page.

*"We want to challenge state ownership of land, it's not just about growing food."*

- Al, Growing Forward



*"The Garden is a symbol and a form of mutual aid, it's a symbol of resistance, and it's a symbol of hope."*

- Ruby, Growing Forward



**1** **Boundary St**  
southern riverside end  
(neglected State Government land)



**2** **Dutton Park hilltop**  
near the basketball court  
(Brisbane City Council parkland)



*porous terracotta pots are filled with water and buried along the beds, wicking moisture to the surrounding soil.*

**3** **Raymond Park**  
**(Refugee Solidarity Farm)**  
cnr Wellington Rd & Baines St  
(Brisbane City Council parkland)



# COMMUNAL FOOD PROJECTS IN THE GABBA WARD



**Community Garden**  
Cooperative gardening (pre-existing)



**Community Orchard**  
Fruit trees



**Urban Farm**  
Focused food production



**Seedling Hubs**  
Seedling exchange



**Food Verges**  
Residential verges

*Crowther St verge planting  
of 9 households verges*

*End of Boundary St  
Urban Farm Meanjin*

*Dutton Park Butterfly  
and Bush Tucker Wetland  
(Under the Eleanor Schonell  
bridge)*

*Refugee Solidarity  
Urban Farm  
and Orchard*

*Gabba Hill  
Community Garden*

*Dutton Park  
Urban Farm*

 We live and work on the unceded sovereign land of the Jagera, Yugarapul and Turrbal Peoples. Always was always will be Aboriginal land.



# Neighbourhood-Wide Food Verge Planting

After extensive lobbying the Brisbane City Council changed their policy to now encourage residents to plant out their verges and take care of this public space.

We sponsored three rounds of verge planting days where residents planted out their verges.

Fifty households across the Gabba ward planted out their verges with free fruit trees, understory perennial greens and herbs on two sunny Saturday mornings.

We partnered with Jane St Community Garden, who helped design and coordinate the project.

Our office supplied each household with a Verge Garden Starter Pack:

- 2 fruit trees.
- 8 perennial greens and herbs.
- 150 litres of mulch (approximately).
- 250 litres of high-grade organic soil.

## Crowther St Planting Day

In March 2020, eight different households on Crowther St planted over 120 seedlings along their verges, bringing together neighbours and creating community.

*"We're buying food from long distances away, so it's beautiful to start closing that gap and develop relationships with our food."*

*- Melissa, Jane Street Community Garden*



# Your Sustainable Food Verge Garden

Jane Street Garden Coordinator Melissa Smrecnik, gardening activist Morgyn Quin and the Gabba Ward staff created a template verge garden that can be easily adapted to any verge.

This simple versatile design has two focal fruit trees with four easy-growing perennial greens and herbs around each of the trees.

*"We want people to reclaim the public space, to take more control over the areas in front of their homes."*

*- Jonno Sri*

## SIX STEPS TO A SUSTAINABLE FOOD VERGE:

**1** Check with Dial Before You Dig: [www.1100.com.au](http://www.1100.com.au)



**2** Look at the instructional video at: [www.jonathansri.com/foodresilience](http://www.jonathansri.com/foodresilience)



**3** Get your plants, good soil, compost and mulch.



**4** Design your garden so that it doesn't impede the footpath or road.



**5** Remove the grass and old soil to depths of approximately 10cm for groundcovers and at least 25cms for fruit trees.



**6** Plant with lots of water and compost. Mulch thoroughly



# Seedling Hubs

The Gabba Ward office supported three community seedling hubs around the ward, where residents can swap locally-germinated seedlings, seeds and cuttings without having to go through big commercial plant suppliers.

Germinating and swapping heirloom plant varieties helps preserve genetic diversity and prevents the homogenisation and monopolisation of seed stock by big companies that patent seed species for profit.

## SEEDLING HUBS ARE SPACES FOR SHARING & CONNECTING

*"If you have abundance of something, it is good to share it."*

- Josie, Crowther St Seedling Hub



- ★ **Seedlings are free**, but everyone is encouraged to bring their excess to share with those around them!
- ★ **Label any plants** you bring along and please return pots and labels so we can minimise costs and keep putting plants out!



[WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/COMMUNITYSEEDLINGHUBS](https://www.facebook.com/COMMUNITYSEEDLINGHUBS)

Raymond Park planting day



Raymond Park citrus



Highgate Hill Park

## Community Orchards



We've also been supporting initiatives to create community orchards of fruit trees planted in parks and other public spaces.

### Highgate Hill Park

For almost ten years now, a small community orchard has been maintained in Highgate Hill Park by a handful of volunteers.

With our support, this has now been upgraded with another 25 fruit trees added along the park's edge and in sloping areas that aren't used for other forms of recreation.

### Raymond Park

The community planted 30 new dwarf fruit trees to complement the Refugee Solidarity Urban Farm.

### NEED TO BORROW TOOLS?

Check out the Brisbane Tool Library  
[WWW.BRISBANETOOLLIBRARY.ORG](http://WWW.BRISBANETOOLLIBRARY.ORG)

For contact details, head to:  
[WWW.JONATHANSRI.COM/FOODRESILIENCE](http://WWW.JONATHANSRI.COM/FOODRESILIENCE)



# Community Composting

## Sharewaste

Sharewaste connects people who wish to recycle their kitchen scraps with neighbours who are composting, worm farming or keep chickens.

There are already over twenty households in our Ward open for scraps. You can divert waste from landfill while getting to know the people around you!

[www.sharewaste.com](http://www.sharewaste.com)

## BCC Compost Rebate Program

Brisbane City Council is providing a rebate of \$70 for compost bin, bokashi or worm farm.

Make sure you register before buying to get the rebate.

Search 'Compost Rebate Program' at [www.brisbane.qld.gov.au](http://www.brisbane.qld.gov.au)

## Community Composting Hubs & Kitchen Caddies

Some community gardens are also collecting your kitchen waste for composting. In the Gabba Ward, Jane St Community Garden is participating in a BCC program.

If you register online you can also grab a little Kitchen Caddy for free from The Gabba Ward office.

The Urban Farms may also accept kitchen scraps. Please ask via their Facebook pages.

Search 'Community Composting Hubs' at [www.brisbane.qld.gov.au](http://www.brisbane.qld.gov.au)

## FURTHER READING

- ★ **Mutual Aid Toolbox**  
[www.bigdoorbrigade.com](http://www.bigdoorbrigade.com)
- ★ **Dark Emu by Bruce Pascoe**
- ★ **The 'Food Justice Resource Repository'**  
[www.communitycentredknowledge.org/food-justice/food-justice-resources/](http://www.communitycentredknowledge.org/food-justice/food-justice-resources/)
- ★ **Seeding Sovereignty (Food Sovereignty)**  
[www.instagram.com/seedingsovereignty](http://www.instagram.com/seedingsovereignty)



# OTHER LOCAL FOOD RESILIENT COMMUNITY PROJECTS

## Jane St Community Gardens

Established prior to 2003

103 Jane Street, West End

[/janestgarden](https://www.facebook.com/janestgarden)



## Paradise Street Community Garden

Established in the 1980s

29 Paradise Street, Highgate Hill

[/ParadiseStreetCommunityGarden](https://www.facebook.com/ParadiseStreetCommunityGarden)



## Gabba Hill Community Garden

Established in 2014

2 Fleurs Street, Woolloongabba

[/gabbahillcommunitygarden](https://www.facebook.com/gabbahillcommunitygarden)



## Dutton Park Butterfly & Bush Tucker Wetland

Established in 2020

TJ Doyle Memorial Park Drive oval, Dutton Park (under the Eleanor Schonell Bridge to UQ)

Search 'Dutton Park Butterfly & Bush Tucker Wetland'



## **GET INVOLVED!**

### **Growing Forward & Urban Farms**

[www.facebook.com/GrowingForwardKurilpa](http://www.facebook.com/GrowingForwardKurilpa)

### **Jane St Community Garden**

[www.facebook.com/janestgarden](http://www.facebook.com/janestgarden)

### **Seedling Hubs**

[www.facebook.com/communityseedlinghubs](http://www.facebook.com/communityseedlinghubs)

### **Everything else**

[www.jonathansri.com/foodresilience](http://www.jonathansri.com/foodresilience)  
(07) 3403 2165

*Thank you to everyone involved in these projects including Ruby, Al and the crew from Growing Forward, Mel, Rudi and Jane St Community Garden, and Gemma, Luke and Josie from the Seedling Hubs.*

*Thanks also to Chloe and Megan for the map design, Christine, Nathan, and many residents for their photographs and involvement in the project, and Megan for the wonderful zine design.*

*Last but not least, thank you to Misha and Gabriel for their project coordination.*

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