



Roxy Gallery

143 Summerland Way Kyogle
Phone 6632-3518

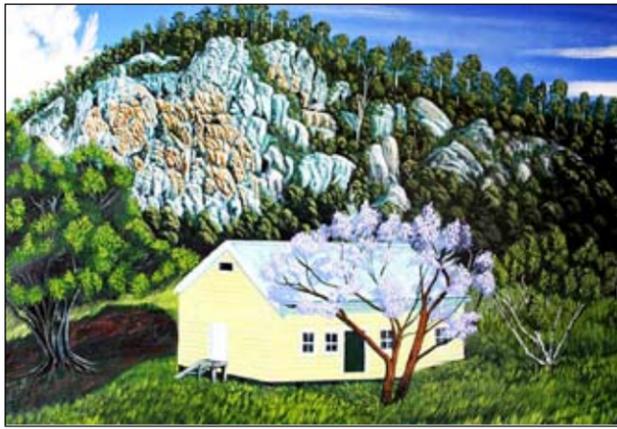
Opening Hours

Tues - Fri: 10am to 4pm
Saturday: 9.30am to noon

- Promoting local and regional arts;
- Providing emerging artists with opportunities to display and market their artworks in a professional exhibition space;
- Fostering cultural experiences for community and visitors to the area.

Email: roxygallery@kyogle.nsw.gov.au Web: www.kyogle.nsw.gov.au

From little things...



'Blue Knob Hall & Lillian Rock Circa 2000' by Ian FitzSimons

Blue Knob Hall Gallery & Café is celebrating its 10th birthday with an exhibition titled 'From little things...'

Mayor Jenny Dowell opened the exhibition to celebrate the milestone, and Trio Continentale donated their time to play for the opening night crowd, helping to make this a very special event for all.

The members and artists of the Roxy Gallery, Kyogle contributed to this show to celebrate with us in our annual combined exhibition.

On opening night there was also an unveiling of the Paradigm Project that Rene Bolten is facilitating for the Gallery, to celebrate community and all its richness. An old image of

the hall circa 2004 was cut into 100 small images and replicated by members, artists and friends of the Gallery on to 100 small canvasses.

It has become a visual expression of diversity, creativity and how so many small contributions can create a whole. It is a fitting piece for this celebration, and will continue to be added to until the end of the exhibition.

Blue Knob Hall Gallery continues to be loved and used by the community with another generation transforming it into a hub for artists, a café, The Blue Knob Farmers Market, all supported by the community surrounding Blue Knob,



The Paradigm Project

Nimbin and much further afield.

The exhibition will run until Sunday 30th November.

Artists and Friends Lunch

The next lunch will be held on Thursday 27th November at 12.30pm. Cost is \$15

per person and includes set vegetarian mains with a choice of desserts. We hope you can come along. Please contact the Gallery on 6689-7449 if you're planning to be there.

Food Lovers Sunday is going really well, see story p.28.

GO POTTY AT NIMBIN ARTISTS GALLERY

by Gina Horsfield

What do visitors say about the Nimbin Artists Gallery?

Scanning a few pages of the visitors book, there is a sea of complimentary, but mostly dull comments; however, the following stood out: "Loved it - eye opening", "Mesmerising", "Most original for a while", "Love the potty teapots!", "Pure inspiration", "Discovery art - brilliant", "Teapots potter - fantastic", "Beautiful and trippy", "Unique view of gifted people", and "We love it, so COOL".

Currently there's a feature display of the 'potty teapots' and other works by 'No-Mad Pottter' Francisco - a collection of unique, beautiful, quirky and functional artworks.

The teapot collection is delightful, individual sculptures with the dual purpose of being gorgeous and useful. With such vast range of styles you'll surely find it difficult to pick a favourite - I can't decide between the one that conjures up thoughts of a magical place of Elves or of a mystical Oriental palace... I wonder which one you'll choose?

Continuing this functional theme, there are beautiful, traditionally-woven baskets, handcrafted birdbaths and mosaic mirrors... so many fine pieces for the home or garden... and lots, lots more.



Whether you're looking for a special gift, something for yourself, or just a bit of inspiration to brighten your day, we have artistic creations in a multitude of mediums, from paintings, sculptures, prints and cards to exquisitely felted and knitted pieces, other textile works, glassware and jewellery.

So, not just at the time of the big



Autumn and Spring Art Exhibitions, but all year round, you can savour the creative, artistic talent of our local region at the Nimbin Artists Gallery. With new art being hung or otherwise displayed approximately every six weeks, there is always something fresh to enjoy.

We look forward to seeing you soon!

The exhibition runs until 20th November. It will be followed by two more showings in the month:

- 21st - 27th November: Lucas Wright Solo Exhibition. Opening night Friday 21st, 6pm.
- 28th November - 15th December: Life Through The Lens, Members Exhibition. Opening night Friday 28th November, 6pm.

See: www.serpentinearts.org for more details.

SERPENTINE GALLERY ART PRIZE '14

Walking in Tall Grass

The upcoming show at the Serpentine Gallery, *Walking in Tall Grass* is a special member's exhibition in celebration of the Gallery's 8th birthday.

A \$500 art prize is being offered for the best entry, and will be judged by Brett Adlington, Lismore Regional Gallery, and Corinne Batt-Rawden, founder of Serpentine Arts Gallery, who will announce the winner at the opening celebration night on 7th November at 6pm.

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Gasfield-free rally

• continued from Page 1

The Premier was caught dumbstruck last week when he touched down in Ballina. Within five minutes of arriving in country he was met by a polite, charming but assertive group of locals and farmers, welcomed to the gasfield-free region and offered a basket of gasfield-free primary produce.

Big mistake for the Premier to touch down in country without a decent policy on gasfields – his whole media day was taken over by the issue the LNP cannot hide from.

This brings us to the second part of the purpose of the rally, given that this community has asserted its ongoing right to remain gasfield-free, the government needs to do the right thing and cancel all the exploration licenses. An act of contrition owed to us by governments who tried to sell our land from under us. And why not cancel the licenses? They are worthless now anyway. Arrow and Dart left the region long ago and Metgasco hovers in limbo with a business model that is terminally broken.

The rally was a great success with people from all walks of life, indigenous people, farmers, townspeople, everyone in fact united together for our common future. This unity we have built in the Northern Rivers over this issue is hopefully the start of a re-invigorated local democracy, where we throw off the shackles of corporate government and start to make our demands for our collective future.

We have an election coming in March next year and it's time to really put some energy into achieving a clean sweep of the people whose job it is to represent us in parliament. The National Party has utterly failed us over gasfields, and deserves to be tossed out, but it won't be easy.

The existing voting system favours incumbents, so we all need to spread the word for the coming state election... for a gasfield-free Northern Rivers: Enrol! Vote!

Number every square and put the Nationals last!

Watch video of the rally at: <https://vimeo.com/110635419>



We're not drowning, we're fighting! Pacific warriors fight Newcastle coal ships



by Alan Roberts

It was iconic. "Warriors, arm your canoes," cried the chief and with that, the Pacific Islanders whose islands have sunk, launched their canoes and headed straight for one source of their rising sea levels – the Rhine, a rusting hulk of a coal ship attempting to leave Newcastle harbour.

To our amazement, the 150,000 tonne Rhine stopped dead, a first for a canoe blockade, whilst the water police vs canoes battle raged around it. The cops smashed the warriors' outrigger canoes and turned them upside down, tipped canoeists in the water, stole canoes, stole paddles, dumped people on Stockton Island and shamelessly bullshitted enough naïve canoeists into thinking it to be a grain ship and standing aside until the tugs again got the ship underway.

The Pacific Warriors' infectious singing and war dances empowered the rest of us to flout the \$5000 fine for breaking the 100m shipping exclusion zone, freshly marked by a new set of yellow buoys, and confront the fossil monsters. It was a fight for survival palpably conveyed in body language, war cries and action. If the Pacific Islands drown, the whole beautiful, loving culture can't exist – a big loss for the planet.

For the second loaded coal ship, the water police smothered our launching beach like seals waiting for penguins, then herded our canoes, including the now repaired Islander canoes, with jet skis into a corral made by their Darth Vader boats. We launched,

we thought, outside their range, but were relentlessly pushed until the corral seemed like peace. All of us sat with the paddles-vertical sign of protest.

Then suddenly there was a most exhilarating mass breakout, with canoes skipping towards the coal ship and cops spraying water everywhere but unable to manage the 160-odd canoes. Our canoe was targeted by two cop jet skis trying to push us up against a Darth Vader boat with two grappling hooks that we kept disengaging from our canoe straps, until eventually we kicked off with legs and paddles from the Darth Vader boat and escaped between the jet skis.

"Just letting you know it's an offence to enter the water," said the terrestrial cops as we launched for the third coal ship, an empty one coming into the mouth of the Hunter. In the heat of the ensuing battle, the PA on shore said the ship had turned and was heading back to sea. It was so unbelievable that I couldn't stop turning to look at the huge ship side-on to the shipping channel to make sure it was really going.

Two coal ships out of the 12 scheduled escaped with difficulty but an unforgettably new dimension was brought to the anti fossil carbon campaign – a combination of fighting with every fibre of your being together with song, dance, fun, inclusiveness and forgiveness. Thank you Pacific Islanders!

Great videos of the Newcastle blockade (including drone) and the occupiers of ANZ, Whitehaven, Minerals Councils etc are coming – see: <http://vimeo.com/109360466>



Forestry enquiry begins

by Dailan Pugh,
NEFA spokesperson

The NSW Upper House Inquiry into the EPA's regulation of forestry practices in Royal Camp State Forest near Casino has begun hearings in Lismore.

The inquiry is as a result of the North East Forest Alliance's concerns about the EPA's handling of NEFA's complaints of logging breaches by the Forestry Corporation in Royal Camp State Forest (16 kilometers south-west of Casino) in August 2012.

The Inquiry refused to allow NEFA to attend the site inspection to show them specific breaches we complained about and present a balanced view. They are off to a bad start by just relying upon the EPA to show them the issues on the ground. This does not bode well for a balanced and informed inquiry.

In August 2012, NEFA called for an immediate halt to logging in Royal Camp State Forest when they found a Koala High Use Area being logged and four others proposed for logging, along with numerous other breaches.

Logging was stopped in the area assessed by NEFA, though resumed a couple of days later in another part of the forest. The EPA allowed logging to continue for another month, resulting in at least two more Koala High Use Areas being logged because the Forestry Corporation still refused to meet their legal obligations to



Koala food trees being destroyed by the Forestry Corporation at Royal Camp in 2012

a little bit too long," and refused to change their methods to avoid further breaches.

Part of the problem was that the EPA had not bothered to investigate over half of our complaints, including failing to raise them with the Forestry Corporation. Eight of these were initially claimed by the EPA to be unsubstantiated, going so far as to claim they were not able to find breaches we had taken them to. The EPA later admitted they had misrepresented the evidence and agreed that we were right.

When the Forestry Corporation attempted to resume logging in another part of Royal Camp a year ago, based on a plan that said there were no koalas, NEFA got in ahead of them and found extensive Koala use and two more Koala High Use Areas.

The evidence is now overwhelming that Royal Camp State Forest encompasses a regionally significant resident breeding population of Koalas that should be fully protected as core Koala habitat. These Koalas are part of a population that extends outside Royal Camp across private land to take in Carwong State Forest.

We are asking the Inquiry to recognise that Royal Camp State Forest is too important for Koalas to be left under the Forestry Corporation's mismanagement and ineffective supervision by the EPA. It deserves to be protected as a Koala reserve.

look for Koala scats.

It took the EPA a year to report their findings, which included issuing the Forestry Corporation three Penalty Notices, totalling a paltry \$900, for not doing the required Koala searches and logging one of the Koala High Use Areas. They also issued an Official Caution for another 7 licence breaches.

The Forestry Corporation considered the fines inconsequential, claiming "They're like staying in a parking lot for

Plant of the month

Silky oak *Grevillea robusta*

by Richard Burer

This month's column reaches you from the Indian Himalayas, where our November plant of the month, the ever-graceful silky oak, is most comfortable.

It was introduced into this valley around 30 years ago to help stabilise degraded farmland, providing erosion control, street landscaping and I guess, timber and firewood.

This particular valley was cleared by the British in the 1900's and then replanted with slash pine, which is very unpopular with villagers, and a recognised environmental problem.

A friend here, Bhopal Singh (pictured) tells me the story of planting silky oak as street-side trees in the 1980's. He described his efforts to water and protect the trees from livestock.

He values this tree for its summer shade, deep roots for holding the steep mountain ridges, and the abundant bright orange flowers. He calls the tree "full honey" and relishes the bird action when the flower is on, which here is around early January.



He says the local monkeys go wild for the nectar, and sit in the tree licking the flowers like ice creams.

A little bit of Nimbin in a little part of India.



Koala Kolumn



by Lorraine Vass

It's a busy time of year for koalas and for those of us caught on the koala conservation roller coaster. What a ride that is – soaring the ups, hanging on through the downs. No matter how tired, you just can't ever jump off.

The past month started with Byron Council's gob-smacking decision to seek legal advice on a number of aspects of the draft Byron Coast Koala Plan of Management, which it had approved to be put on public exhibition earlier in the year.

Having served on the Project Reference Group for three years with officers of what's now the Department of Planning and Environment, and experiencing their close scrutiny of the drafted Plan's compliance with State Environment Planning Policy No. 44 – Koala Habitat Protection (SEPP 44), the obvious question to ask is, why delay approving the Plan at this eleventh hour? Might there be a connection with the West Byron Bay Urban rezoning application under assessment by the State Government? The voting pattern certainly suggests there is.

Around the same time reports were being received that the ill-considered Rural Fires Amendment (Vegetation Clearing) Act 2014 and 10/50 Vegetation Clearing Code of Practice which the Government had rammed through for introduction on 1st August, were enabling removal of koala food trees. Ostensibly to enable landholders to better protect themselves against bushfire, the Code had already caused outrage in Sydney because of trees being taken out to restore harbour views. Perhaps fortunately for the koalas, there had also been a belated backlash from local government, which pushed the Government into agreeing to a review of the Code. Submissions can be lodged at: 10.50@rfs.nsw.gov.au by 14th November.

But there's been good news as well. Tweed Shire Council's nomination of the Tweed-Brunswick Coast population of the Koala for listing as an Endangered Population for



Donna, beating the heat koala style

the purposes of the Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995 (TSC Act) is being supported by the NSW Scientific Committee. Preparation of the nomination was recommended by the Tweed Coast Koala Advisory Group in early 2012 when the Tweed Coast Koala Habitat Study revealed that the koala population had declined by approximately 50% over the past decade. Koala numbers are now so low that mortalities due to fire, car hits, domestic dog attack and disease are not sustainable.

The Scientific Committee took its time, requesting more information on four points in April 2013. It is only supporting that part of the population east of the Pacific Highway in Tweed Shire. It has not included the population to the west of the Highway that is north of the Tweed River, nor the population in Byron Shire north of the Brunswick River. These omissions are somewhat perplexing and feedback will be sought. The preliminary determination is on public exhibition until 30th January 2015 and can be accessed at: www.environment.nsw.gov.au/committee/preliminarydeterminationsbydate.htm The only other koala populations of which I'm aware to have been declared endangered under the TSC Act are at Pittwater and Hawks Nest/Tea Gardens.

The preliminary determination is very timely. The draft Tweed Coast Comprehensive Koala Plan of Management which will provide the framework for addressing the koalas' dire situation has been on exhibition since 21st October. As is the case with Byron's plan, Tweed's draft is based on the available science, detailed field assessment and extensive consultation with a broad range of stakeholders. Its key actions include a habitat restoration program, planning and development provisions and strategies to reduce road, and dog mortalities and the impacts of wildfire. Advisory Group members and Council officers will host information stalls through the exhibition period, the next one in Kingscliff on Saturday 22nd November.

Copies of the draft Plan are available at Council offices at Murwillumbah and Tweed Heads and online at: www.tweed.nse.gov.au/onexhibition and: www.yoursaytweed.com.au/koalaplant2014 The deadline for submissions is COB Tuesday 2nd December 2014.

The other good news has to do with the vaccine against chlamydia in koalas. Microbiologists Professor Peter Timms and Dr Adam Polkinghorne, now at the University of the Sunshine Coast, have gone public on the success of their field trial in the Moreton Bay region north of Brisbane. Sixty koalas were included in the trial, 30 animals receiving the vaccine and 30 remaining unvaccinated as a control group. The vaccinated animals all showed good immune responses to the vaccine and decreased chlamydia infection levels compared with the unvaccinated controls. All 60 animals have been fitted with radio collars so they can be monitored for a further 12 months. Our Northern Rivers field trial now includes seven animals.

Finally, don't forget the 2014 Koala Count coming up from 7th to 17th November. The Northern Rivers were the real champions of last year's Count, accounting for the majority of the 800 registrations and 1,300 records received. For more information go to: www.koalacount.org.au

Until next time, happy koala spotting.
To report a koala in trouble, or to register a sighting, please ring Friends of the Koala's 24/7 Rescue Hotline: 6622-1233.
To report environmental incidents, including removal of koala habitat, ring the 24/7 Office of Environment and Heritage Enviro Line: 131-555.

For information about koalas, their food trees and how you can assist koala conservation, visit: www.friendsofthekoala.org or phone 6622-1233.
Follow us on Facebook.

The bells, the bells!

by Triny Roe

Yellow Bells, *Tecoma stans*, is another, 'but it's so pretty', ornamental shrub originating from Central America. Growing up to eight metres high when conditions are ideal, clusters of vibrant yellow trumpet shaped flowers, in spring and summer, dangle from the ends of its branches. The national flower of the Bahamas, its gaudy floral show and hardy nature has made it popular with gardeners around the world. If the flowers are picked as they fade, more are produced, ensuring a continuous display.

Unfortunately yellow bells was not content to remain meekly confined to the garden.

It's a tough plant. Drought tolerant, it grows well in stony, sandy and poor soil. Though hailing from tropical realms, it can survive freezing winter conditions, becoming deciduous and dying back in the cooler climes.

Demonstrated serious invasive nature in South Africa, Brazil, Argentina and several Pacific islands has earned *T. stans* a well deserved place on the Global Invasive Species Database. Listed as a Class 3 Noxious

in Northern NSW, this plant is one to watch out for. It has the potential to readily spread much further afield. Landowners are required to keep their properties clear of this weed.

Its light-winged seeds are not contained by fences. The long green pods turn brown as they ripen, split and release the papery seeds which blow every which way with the wind. They can travel large distances via wind and water and are still viable after four years. New plants can pop up anywhere, anytime. It is commonly seen on roadsides, creek banks and disturbed areas. It can also appear in remnant bushland. Removal at an early stage will save a lot of effort.

With a propensity to form thick stands, *T. stans* has a record of displacing native vegetation. Developing a deep tap-root, this robust shrub is persistent, re-growing readily from root fragments. Garden waste dumping has also contributed to its distribution.

In its native Mexico it is an important traditional medicine. The leaves, bark and roots of this plant were used to treat intestinal worms, diabetes, venereal diseases, urinary conditions and as a general tonic. *T. stans* is a member of the *bignoniaceae*



Yellow bells and seed pod

family, a group of plants often used in folk medicine. These plants contain active pharmacological compounds such as resins, tannins, alkaloids and flavonoids, among others.

Reputable sources claim Mexicans also brewed beer from the roots and collected honey made from the fragrant nectar. This contradicts popular information available on the internet which asserts honey produced from *T. stans* flowers is poisonous. It has also been used as fodder for cattle and goats, and the long stems were fashioned into hunting bows. The timber is also employed for fuel and construction.

Identification of juveniles can be tricky, as the compound pinnate leaf structure resembles that of other seedlings such as white cedar and elderflower.

Another common name is yellow elder. There are generally three to seven leaflets, sometimes up to 13, in opposite pairs with one on the end. The leaflets have sharp-toothed margins, a pointy tip and are mostly hairless. The upper side is darker green than the underside.

Mechanical removal is best when plants are still small. Goats could be grazed on large thickets. Follow-up is important to ensure complete eradication.

As with all weeds, early detection, identification and management will minimise the workload. When purchasing rural blocks, if your botanical knowledge is limited, consider a vegetation survey to determine what plants are present and any major weeds you will have to deal with. Happy weeding.

Inward journey of gardening farms

by Geoff Dawe

The suggestion that agriculture of the future is made up of a myriad of small, family gardening farms concentrating on supplying mainly themselves can be seen as the operation of selfishness or narcissism for how would the city people be fed?

Professor Clive Hamilton, at the September gardening festival in Mullumbimby for example, mentioned that one of the outgrowths of the political agitation of the 1960's and early 70's was an individualism that had much in common with the individualism of the right-wing side of politics.

It is important that we get this notion of individualism sorted, for the confusion has seen a largely unsuccessful reaction to it in socialism and communism, and because of that, capitalism has pathologised into amoral corporations with enough power for national governments to become pimps for corporations' products.

Parents know they need to concentrate on themselves in terms of their health because if they are sick or dead, they cannot be of service to their offspring. Similarly, in the desert areas of Australia when conditions had become so grim that an Aboriginal clan had to be reduced in size, it was not selfishness that kept

the old people alive at the expense of the new-borns, but the practicalities of the survival of the clan that was dependent on the accumulated knowledge and wisdom of the older people.

Just as parents, and Aboriginal elders in harsh conditions, needed to concentrate on the survival of themselves foremost to best supply their family or clan, so gardening farms supplying first themselves, then their neighbours, can be seen as primarily supplying their society. With such a system operating world-wide for example, no-one can starve, especially since nutrients with produce are not generally exported to cities, but instead city people are generally imported to gardening farms.

Because tribal pre-literate peoples generally avoided hierarchical social structures, individual tribal members were generally not beholden to anyone. They were therefore willing to produce their own character; their own personality, rather than the character that was thought might be more approved of by those in a position of power in a hierarchical society.

The ability to be one's own personality caused Frederick Engels, compatriot of Karl Marx, to comment in his book *Origin of the Family*, that despite enormous differences in North American Indian



cultures "... there did seem to be an underlying sense of self-respect and an ability to draw great satisfaction from work and personal relations."

It is self-respect coming from freedom to individuate or be one's own person that enables satisfaction in social relations. Sociability is not divorced from individualism. Socialism made the mistake of thinking the human need to individuate could be just obligated out of existence.

Meanwhile, capitalism made the mistake of deciding that because humans were tentative with their humanness and inclined to regress to their pre-human stage of hierarchical structures, competitiveness and greed, the economic system should legitimise the regression. In other words, capitalism was engaged in encouraging humanity's lowest common denominator rather than its

highest.

The divide between the political right and left needs to be brought to balance. That is, the individuation or personalising of each person is as important as the need to offer one's talents and abilities in service to the society. Individuation is the attempt to know oneself. Shakespeare's Polonius acknowledged its importance with: "This above all, to thine own self be true." How can one be true to oneself unless one has examined the self through individuation to know what it is?

Arguably, the most use anyone can become to a society is as a buddha, and that is enabled by turning inward and focusing on the self. Similarly, a movement toward gardening farms can be seen as agriculture turning inward to focus on itself to more effectively supply the society.

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Generation X or Generation eXtinct?

In 2011, somebody published an image of a polar bear, trapped on a portion of sea ice in the north Atlantic. This lone and confused animal, without a single other of its kind in the landscape, seemed to have no evolutionary idea of how to deal with an unprecedented event of such magnitude. It was the lowest ever recorded summer sea ice in the far Arctic that year and although polar bears can swim – that’s not the point – it was troubling evidence that this marine mammal was bearing the brunt of climate change while many heads of nations still had their heads in the sand. The first ever drownings of polar bears were recorded, attributed to longer crossings and turbulent seas. A female polar bear reportedly swam nonstop for nine days before reaching an ice floe, losing 22 percent of her bodyweight, and her cub.

The image of that polar bear encapsulates the defining narrative of our times.



Permaculture Principles
with Anastasia Guise

Generation X heard Al Gore’s stirring global warming lectures as they stood at the cusp of their adulthood, and many of them were never to lead ordinary or indulgent lives again. Suddenly they became the generation in question, the children on whose shoulders ecological collapse could be made or unmade. You might have well called them Generation Extinct, for they, and their children, are to define themselves with the great task ahead of them. Rightly or wrongly so, the belief of

Generation Extinct is: We are the ones destined to either fail or triumph. The fate of the survival of all species on planet earth depends on us, on what we do or don’t do during our lifetimes.

We are in, what James Howard Kunstler calls “The Long Emergency” – an unprecedented time-period of cascading change, trauma and deprivation – and an escalating environmental and resource crisis. While reactions to emergency are all disparate, the human body usually has a sympathetic nervous system response (fight or flight response). When an emergency lasts over decades – as it has for twenty years already – a state of chronic emergency becomes the new normal. As a society, we might bury our heads in the sand, or like a stressed flower, bolt to seed by breeding and dying young. We might consume compulsively, like a child who knows his cake is about to be taken away from him.

But as the changes in human behaviour and consciousness required to repair multiple and overwhelming environmental crises are tragically slow in coming, it is also a time of enormous unacknowledged environmental grief. We mourn not only what was, but what could have been. The daily diminishment of species, cultures, habitats, every passionate and viable solution unrealised, every loving relationship discarded, every sacrificed earthly indulgence. From the latin “gravis”, meaning heavy, our grief holds us down to the Earth as assuredly as gravity itself.

An ecopsychological approach acknowledges five main stages of environmental grief. Not unlike the grief we experience at the loss of a loved one, or similar traumatic experience, we may move – as individuals, and as humanity – through stages of denial, anger, bargaining, grief and acceptance. Directly following the initial presentation of



an internationally-ratified body of knowledge on anthropocentric-induced global warming, much of the public ignored it, and for fifteen years until the present, politicians and others have denied either its very existence or key aspects of it. Sadly, this is the period of most paralysis, but it is the predictable first stage of grief. Following denial, we have begun bargaining, with carbon credits, offsets, and economic incentives to reduce emissions. Many of us too are angry, roaring, incensed, full of fury, and as the stagnation grows the anger escalates.

At every level, action is possible, but it is in acceptance that we find the

most clear-headed, efficient and effective action. In this way, grief is actually a form of deep activism. As the psychotherapist and author Francis Weller writes, grief is the voice of our soul, calling us back to our most painful and profound learning. As permaculturalists, we work as much out of grief as we do out of love, anger, and hope. As you turn your compost, or confront the mining trucks, do not be afraid to wet the world with your tears.

On a visit to Africa, Weller remarked to a village woman that she seemed full of joy.

“Yes,” she responded, “That’s because I cry a lot.”

www.communitypermaculture.com.au

Backyarders table

by Dolph Cooke

Spring has finally sprung, and you will soon have an abundance of produce in your gardens. Have you thought in advance about what you will do with the surplus? Fermenting is a great option, and so is preserving.

What better time than now to rediscover the incredible Blueknob Farmers Market Backyarders table.

You will find it smack in the middle of the market, right under what was the original entry door to the Hall, announced by a set of hand-painted single-letter placards.

Arriving about six months after the founding of the Market, under the able management of Marie Cameron, the Backyarders Table allows all the participants in the market to become sellers.

Let it be remembered that the primary goal is to feed the people. While the amount of food money that stays in the local economy is a source of considerable pride, no-one is getting rich here.

As there is a varied and unreliable supply, we tend to price more reasonably, with the understanding that we can make no guarantees.

Eric Smith (pictured) now runs the Backyarders Table, and has this advice for sellers: “Drop your produce off early to reach the most buyers. I can make you signs, or you can get creative with your own.

“Simple, reasonable prices allow me to spread my time about selling a large variety of goods during a frantic few hours. A quick list with amounts also helps with paperwork for me, and for you.

“If you have an unusual item, best to check with me in advance, there are some rules that are set more by local health authorities, etc. I do not sell prepared food, both due to food handling rules and out of respect for the Gallery Café.”

For buyers, Eric says: “As I represent a number of sellers, policies about price (like bulk discounts), or availability of more of anything is as varied as our local population. Ask the question, understanding that the answer could be anything from an enthusiastic ‘yes’ to a respectful ‘no’.

“Do ask questions, though. If I don’t know, I will try to get an answer for you.”

To contact Eric Smith, Backyarder, email: upsidedownliving@hotmail.com or



Let Eric sell your spring produce

Ergonomics and Bowen Therapy

Life is a bit like the waxing and waning of the moon; some days is diamonds, some days is stones and I’ve been busy the last couple of months polishing some big rocks back to diamond brilliance.

I must admit the glow is a tad different. Sorta deeper, softer and hopefully long lasting, because it took me ages to find the correct grinding wheel that would do the job. Mind you, along the way I had some lovely others offer me their form of grinding wheel and they all helped in bringing back to the surface my favourite way to feel. Bright and optimistic.

Once again I was reminded that we are never really alone and help is always available if we don’t stay locked into what we think is the only way to be. In fact if one were to briefly cogitate on the history of this planet, one might come to the realisation that inflexible beliefs about what is right and what is wrong can actually kill ya.

Reminds me of the story of Isaac. A good man of the Jewish faith, it came to pass that Isaac was forced to stand on his roof, due to the worst flood that northern NSW had ever experienced. The water was rising rapidly, but sure enough, along came the brave beings of the SES in their rubber ducky. “Come on Isaac,” they called, “we’ll save you.” But Isaac knew they were not of his faith and he called back. “Go away. God will save me.” So regretfully, they left.

Soon after, the Helicopter Rescue arrived above Isaac’s head. “Climb up the ladder Isaac, we’ll save you,” they called down. But Isaac looked up at the chopper and he knew the people flying it were not of his faith, so he called back. “Go away, God will save me.” After Isaac had drowned and gone to heaven, he cried to God. “I am a good and faithful man! Why did



by Tonia Haynes
Dip Bowen Therapy, Cert Remedial
Massage, Advanced Pranik Healer

you not save me?” God replied, “Well Isaac, I did send you the rubber ducky and then I sent you the helicopter.”

Here endeth the lesson. So, on to the ergonomics of living, or biotechnology as they call it in the good old USA.

I read a report about a man who had recurring, severe back pain. He visited many doctors and therapists to no avail until he visited a chiropractor who said, “Take your wallet out of your back pocket and get yourself a man bag. The fellow did so and his back pain went away.

Wallets, (particularly if they are full of dosh) when sat upon, throw the spine to one side. Eventually the muscles and vertebrae give in to the misaligned posture and back and neck pain is the result.

A friend who uses his armchair an awful lot has a shoulder problem that would not improve, no matter what therapy was applied. He recently bought a new armchair and his shoulder is much better.

Last Christmas I was given a very expensive pillow and at the time of purchase the shop

assistant fitted a pillow of the correct height to my neck. I’d actually been suffering a neck problem for some months and thought it stemmed from my work as a body therapist, but within a month of sleeping every night on my new pillow, the neck problem completely disappeared.

Any furniture that is employed for long periods such as beds, chairs, pillows, lounges and even car seats, can throw the body into painful disarray if they are not fully supporting one’s body correctly.

Lap-top computers are a huge money-spinner for body therapists. All that hunching over in chairs with the head dropped down for hours at a time is a fantastical way to give oneself headaches, back, shoulder, arm and hand pain.

The physical body works as one unit, so if one has a leg that is even two mils shorter than the other, back problems will arise. Usually this is caused by a muscular imbalance stemming from other parts of the body, but occasionally the difference in leg length stems from the actual length of the leg or a slight variation in knee shape. In this case, I recommend a visit to a podiatrist. It is better to live with the inconvenience of a support in one’s shoe than suffer a lifetime of back pain.

I am in clinic in Nimbin on Wednesdays and Saturdays. A mixture of Bowen Therapy, remedial massage and spinal realignment may well be the answer to your back, neck, shoulder or limb problems and between us we will be able to ascertain if your problem is exacerbated by your furniture, laptop, car or a difference in leg length.

Love Light and Laughter.

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Natural law

by Helene Collard

November spirals off with 'The Day of the Dead'. This is an important day to remember and honour our ancestors and spirit-helpers (angels, saints etc). Let this day remind you that these souls are here to comfort, support and guide us through life. So light a candle, dust off a photo, bring in some flowers and call out to the souls of your deceased loved ones and helpers, and if possible, tend to their grave.

The first nine days of November 'burn'. That is, they hold an intense, fiery energy, to help us shed, purify and accelerate healing. The snake spirit works together with the 'fire' to support our transmutation and healing. To transmute means to 'change in form, nature or substance' and this is exactly what occurs when we heal - we change on some level to express more of our divine self. Usually healing comes from a deep realisation, that creates a profound new understanding, which in turn garners a new perspective. From these 'new eyes', we can't help but express ourselves differently, because we are seeing something another way than before. During the 'burn' expect to experience expansive and helpful

connections, both with yourself and others. So trust and act upon your gut feelings to do something and/or be somewhere, it may just be the ticket to your growth and evolution.

Mid-November is time to gaze lovingly and respectfully at your reflection. Acknowledge your beauty, your scars, your strengths and weaknesses. Do not wallow in your weak spots, but rather own them and commit to change. For many who have been avoiding their health, this means making an appointment to get information, referral and treatment. For others who have isolated social contact, this will mean initiating a social outing or joining an interest group. And some will read books to gain insight and direction on their 'Achilles heel'. This is a time of truth - can you look yourself in the eye and embrace the truth? This can be confronting, however this facilitates the realisation, understanding and perspective that are the keys to healing and growing.

What I write here, is an intuitive interpretation of the healing work we are invited to undertake each month. The original goal for humanity is to exist in a harmonious and respectful relationship with all life. From this comes



*"I am self-sovereign, as are you.
I acknowledge the ancestors, mine and yours, past and present.
You are all my relations. All is One."*

cooperation and community: 'people-power'. We are already seeing snippets of this around the world. My articles aim to help us be more of this oneness. The more we heal our own wounds, the stronger a place we hold for the whole.

Helene Collard has a Bachelor of Trauma & Healing (SCU). Through workshops and presentations she supports human services organisations and employees, in the area of secondary trauma and self-care. Helene is also a Reiki Master-Teacher and the founder of a Reiki Healing Circle in Lismore.

Food glorious food

If my parents were still alive, they would not believe my present diet. In fact they wouldn't have a clue what to make of it... I hardly know what the hell it is myself.

At home as a kid it was pretty much meat, meat, meat... and the odd veg thrown in for good measure. Veg being overcooked potatoes, pumpkin, parsnip, swede (yuk), cooked carrot (yuk), cabbage, cauliflower, brussel sprouts, spinach or silver-beet, peas or beans, an onion or two and that's about it. I was always in serious shit for not being able to eat limp, watery crap that had had the bejaysus boiled out of it while mum and dad knocked off several long-necks of VB every night after the old man came home from work at the local police station.

Meat would be steak, chops, cutlets, sausages (snags) or rissoles... some occasional dead baby calf (veal), the roasted back end (rump) of a dead cow, a leg that had been ripped off a dead sheep, various bits of cured, smoked or just plain dead pig, dead roast chook, the odd Xmas dead turkey and of course dead fish on Fridays. A dead rabbit or two might turn up now and then and my pet duck Sally appeared extremely dead on the table one time the old man was away doing relief work and Mum had nothing else to feed the fam with. Freaked me out for yonks!

There was also offal. Animal guts. Sheep liver (lamb's fry), kidneys, brains, hearts, tongues, feet, tripe



Mookxamitosis
by Brendan (Mookx) Hanley

(steamed stomach lining) and the enigmatic sweetbreads, which were always kept as a mystery to us, but which in the long run turned out to be, in the words of Brit comedian Tony Hancock, a right load of ballocks.

Salads were rare and usually a weekend lunchtime affair. They would consist of a couple of pieces of white lettuce, a slice of plastic cheddar cheese, canned beetroot, a slice of orange and half a hard boiled egg.

There was always "pudding". Jellies, custards, flummery, blancmange, bread and butter pudding, sago or rice custards, golden dumplings, stewed fruit, lemon meringue pie, cakes, trifles... anything that could up your sugar content by a couple of quantum leaps. No meal was complete without it!

When the 50s got rolling and American food started to hit the scene via the new medium of TV, the home-made puddings were replaced with packets of "instant" formulae with names like "Mello" and "Mellah". "Deb"

mashed potato came in a convenient box and all you did was add water, heat and serve. TV dinners and pre-packaged crap began to fill the new "supermarkets" that were rapidly replacing all the trusty old groceries and corner stores. Brand name breads and pies pushed local bakers to the wall... the whole scene was a terminal downhill headlong rush when, thank God, along came the wonderful Wogs!

The mid 50s saw a massive influx of Italian and Greek migrants, imported to fill up the GM and Ford auto factories... and our quiet, culture-starved suburbs took on a new look, feel and smell. I met my first garlic in the form of an Italian friend's spaghetti bolognese and never looked back. Greeks next door would spit-rotate a sheep or whatever in the back yard and invite us over the fence to come and join them. You could smell it a block away. Barbues took on a whole new meaning. The "New Australians" brought souvlaki, crema, pizza, minestrone, olive oil, cheeses that weren't Kraft cheddar... fine wine, crispy, crusty bread, wine and espresso coffee.

Then along came the Lebs and this time it was kebabs, felafel, tabouli, tahini, baba ghanoush, pocket bread and coffee you could stand your spoon up in.

God, those were the days. No wonder we all got premature middle age spread.

The final assault has been the fast food crap factories. They invent standardised

"meals" that look and taste the same anywhere in the world, any time, anyhow. They mince down whole battery-raised, hormonised animals, feathers, guts, beaks, bums, feet and all... then bleach them white... adding colours, chemical "flavours" and preservatives to make the final product. If you have half a brain (or taste bud) you won't have anything to do with any of that shit. If you do... prepare to get sick! Instead you can do what I do and confuse your ancestors' spirits with a diet of blended super green drinks, quinoa, chia seeds, hemp oil and seeds, protein powders, gluten free grains, roasted dandelion-root coffee and herbal teas, sprouted wheat-grass, mung beans and alfalfa sprouts... oh... and anything you can grow in your garden. Buy a bullet and get into blender bliss!

Of course there's always tofu and tempeh... although my friend Mandy Nolan reckons that the definition of an optimist is someone who eats tofu for the second time.

Crossword Solution

From Page 26



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Birth and Beyond

by Kirrah Holborn,
'Traditional Wisdom'

The anatomy of opening

For some women (and their partners) knowing the 'mechanics' of birth helps them relax a bit more because they understand the process and have an appreciation for what their bodies and babies need to do in labour.

During pregnancy, the pelvic area and hips already start to open and make more room. Pregnant women have extra flexibility due to 'relaxin' hormone in their blood stream. This looseness can come at a price, with back/hip/pelvic pain being quite common as the body prepares to open.

During the later weeks of pregnancy or in early labour, the cervix begins to soften and efface (thin out). This is a crucial first step in the labour process. Cervical dilation is considered 'complete' at around 10cm. An easy guide is to look at the size of your palm and visualise your cervix opening to a similar size.

Some positions and movements help more than others during labour. Every woman is different, so as a doula I encourage her to find what position feels the best. Upright positions (like standing, walking, kneeling and squatting) allows gravity to work with you. It also helps pressure from the

baby's head apply to the cervix and this helps increase dilation.

If the baby is not in an ideal position, movement can help correct this. Things like belly dance, circling hips, putting one leg up on a stool and/or walking up and down stairs can be very helpful.

For the baby to be born, it actually makes a 'corkscrew' kind of action. Its head engages and rotates and then the shoulders follow. I like how 'spinning babies' says "Mums job is to dilate but baby's job is to rotate".

I am running a mini-workshop soon where you can better understand your pelvic shape and discover positions that help you open the most. This will help you feel more prepared for birth. I will also demonstrate the movements the baby makes when it is being born. This helps you have a visual of the birthing process.

Optimal Fetal Positioning

From around 32 weeks of pregnancy and on, it is a good idea to pay particular attention to the way you position your body to encourage the baby to move into a good position for labour (this is called Optimal Fetal Positioning).

Labour is usually shorter and easier when a baby is head down and with their head towards the front of your pelvis. This anterior position makes it easier for him/her to navigate the birth passage and also minimizes the need for interventions.

Midwife Jean Sutton advises women to keep in upright, forward leaning positions with their hips



higher than their knees whenever possible. This will help encourage your baby into an optimum position for birth and help avoid your baby settling into a posterior position (your baby's back against yours).

So, if you need to travel in the car, prop yourself up with firm pillows. Don't slouch back into a soft couch. Try to keep your belly forward so gravity can help encourage the baby into an anterior position. You can also try sitting backwards in a chair (leaning over the back rest) or scrubbing the floor on all fours!

Emotionally opening

Take some time out to ask yourself 'how can I be more open in this moment?' You may be surprised at what answers come forward! Ask yourself several times a day and especially when a situation comes up where you feel pressured or stressed.

Creating art is another way to 'switch off your thinking mind' and go that bit deeper. What images come to mind when you think of opening-your body... your mind... your heart? Allow your creativity to flow and pick up some pastels or watercolours and take some time to paint and draw what 'expansion' and

'opening' looks like to you.

For some women, looking at their art during labour really helps them to sink deeper and remember what they need to do. It may give strength if doubt creeps in as it can be very encouraging. You may also like to write an affirmation like "I am open to the energy of birth".

Birth preparation workshop

Would you like some practical guidance on opening for birth? I am running a mini antenatal workshop 'Open for Birth' on Saturday 15th November in Lismore from 2-4pm.

We will cover massage and acupressure for birth, releasing tension in your hips during pregnancy, positions that help your pelvis to make room for your baby and emotional preparation for birth. It is being held at 'Nurture', upstairs 115 Keen Street, Lismore. It costs only \$20 each or \$35/couple.

After the workshop you will feel confident in your ability to open, feel excited to birth your baby and feel more relaxed and balanced!

Bookings are essential. Phone Kirrah 0429-308-851 or visit: www.traditionalwisdom.com.au

Nimbin Hospital Info

Child immunisation clinic

For 0-5 year olds. Held second Tuesday of every month. Next Clinic: 11th November. For appointments phone 6620-7687 (Lismore Community Health)

Early childhood nurse

Every Tuesday. Phone 6620-7687 to make an appointment (through Lismore Community Centre).

Women's Health Nursing Service

Every 3rd Thursday of the month. Next clinic: 20th November. For appointments phone 6688-1401.

Nimbin Community Nurses

Monday to Friday, 8am to 4.30pm. For assessments, wound care, referrals, advocacy. Provision of Palliative Care in the home. Provide and co-ordinate Aged Care Packages.

Free health checks

In front of the Neighbourhood Centre, every second Friday, run by a Nurse Practitioner and an RN. Risk assessments, including general health assessment, random Cholesterol and random blood sugar tests. All welcome.

Free Respiratory Clinic

With Specialist Respiratory Nurse and a Nurse Practitioner. Second Thursday of the month. Next Clinic: 13th November. For appointment phone 6688-1401.

Free Diabetic Clinic

Every 3rd Thursday of the month. Next clinic: 20th November. Appointment phone Leanne Boothe 6630-0488.

Nimbin NSP opening hours

Will be open on Mondays and Thursdays, 9.30am - 12pm. Arrangements can be made to see a Health Nurse through NSP.

Nimbin Hospital Auxiliary

Meetings are held on the second Friday of each month in the hospital conference room at 10am. Next meeting: 14th November.



Psoriasis relief is here

Psoriasis is a hereditary condition, in other words, you may have been born with the potential to develop this disease, which may lie dormant for many years until it is triggered off. Roughly 4% of the population trigger this disease, yet 27% carry the gene.

There are well-known primary triggers that can activate the condition, for example injury to the skin (Koebner Phenomenon), systemic infections and emotional stress. However, when psoriasis is activated initially, it may continue for a lifetime. This is where secondary factors can play an inhibitive role, or may exacerbate the condition.

The Good Skin Clinic's significant success with this disease is to a large degree contributed to by the work of Dr Michael Tirant, who holds a doctorate in Bio Chemistry from Monash University and is a medical research scientist. His research identified many variables which aggravate the condition. Some of these are diet, chemical, hormonal and lifestyle.

Dr Tirant went on to develop an astoundingly effective range of topical and oral medications to be combined with his treatment protocols that focus on combating the triggers for this

condition. His protocols have been so successful (90%) that a number of dermatologists in Austria, Germany, Hungary, Czech Republic and Russia are currently using them, and a number of clinical trials in over 11 countries have confirmed the excellent results being achieved in Australia.

Barry Donnelly BHSoc CM ND WHM N. has trained with Dr Tirant in Melbourne and offers this remarkable service to the sufferers of skin disease here locally, at three clinic locations on the Gold Coast and the Northern Rivers.

He said, "To all frustrated psoriasis sufferers, many of whom have been told, 'Learn to live with this disease, because nothing can be done for it', do not give up hope."

"There is NO quick fix or cure, but I know we have the treatment protocols that will help you clear up your skin."

Other skin conditions that are also successfully treated at the Good Skin Clinic include eczema, acne, rosacea, dermatitis, ichthyosis, psoriatic arthritis and nail / fungal infections.

For further information, phone 1300-956-566, email: barry@feelinggr8.net.au or visit the website: www.northernrivers.goodskincare.com.au

Skin Disease: Now Let's Make It Clear

While the rest of the world is still searching for the answer to serious diseases like psoriasis and many others, Good Skin Clinic has been completely changing the lives of those who have been given no hope.

“These photos are of my 8 year old daughter. She has had psoriasis for 4 years and it has been worsening to the stage that you see in these photos... She is now able to go swimming without getting sneered at by other children OR their parents, and there are no more nasty comments at school. She is much happier in herself and much more confident. Thank you so much to Barry Donnelly and the team at Psoriasis and Skin Clinic. regards Karina”



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NORTHERN RIVERS & THE GOLD COAST

The man who lived in an earthenware pot

I was looking for a tube of toothpaste the other day and I found 11 of them. I also found 14 toothbrushes. I realized, with a start, that I have become like my father. My brother tells me he hoards stuff as well. Certainly my mother hoarded. Our accumulation of useful stuff is an intergenerational product of knowing scarcity. My mother grew up in the very uncertain times of Russian/Estonian upheaval and my father was born into poverty in Sydney, and then, of course, there were the wars.

Collecting on the scale I live with is not a pathological problem (I can and do give my things away), but some levels of hoarding is a serious problem. At the extreme end is a very nasty condition called Diogenes Syndrome, often associated with the elderly, but not always. Diogenes Syndrome is characterized by extreme self neglect, anxiety, social withdrawal, apathy, living in squalor, and collecting random stuff in a disorganized manner. It's also noted in people who refuse help, preferring to suffer than accept assistance.

Diogenes of Sinope was a Greek philosopher, circa 412BC, and one of the founders of cynic philosophy. He made a principle of living a life of poverty, begging for his living and sleeping in a large earthenware pot. He had rejected his father's profession of minting coins and a lifestyle of wealth, seeking the simple and, as he thought, a life closer to nature.

Cynicism is a school of



by Dr Elizabeth McCardell

ancient Greek philosophy based on the idea that the purpose of life is to live as nature intends it. Happiness could be gained through rigorous training and rejecting desires for wealth, sex and power. They advocated abnegation of accumulation of possessions, and preached this principle around Greece. Certain branches of early and later Christianity adopted this idea, and some of us know practitioners of this today. It's ironic, then that the extreme syndrome of hoarding should be named after Diogenes. I suppose, though, in the extreme rejection of collecting things, as much as the extreme desire to collect there is a similar energy at work. Fear of destitution and rejoicing in it has a strangely similar compulsion to it.

Those with Diogenes Syndrome are described as aggressive, stubborn, suspicious of others; having unpredictable mood swings, emotional instability and a skewed perception of reality. Linked to frontal lobe brain impairment, this syndrome is an extreme one, but collecting things is usually quite normal. For sure, there are the crazy

cat ladies with 50 felines and the tea pot and coin collectors with massive barns to house their collections, but many of us gather things around us that give us pleasure. When such preoccupations tip over into chaos, then mere collecting becomes a problem of hoarding.

Television shows that make a drama out of hoarders and their mountains of stuff help and hinder hoarders. Piles of years of newspapers, cardboard, polystyrene boxes, children's toys, shopping never unpacked and 70 pairs of underpants and socks and so on littering houses that the occupant and visitors have to crawl through might make good viewing, but how the television therapist deals with it may not be useful for others.

The mountains of junk are removed, but what then? The cry of, "You're throwing away my entire life," isn't adequately heard. Unless the underlying psychological issues are addressed, the problem won't go away with the truckloads of bits and pieces. As a researcher into hoarding put it, "It's not a clutter problem; it's a perception/thinking problem," and it doesn't have a single cause. Contributing facts or stressors have been identified, including the following: being raised in a chaotic home or one with a confusing family context, or moving frequently (lots of stuff acts as a sort of anchor), cognitive processing issues that affect decision making and problem solving, attention-deficit disorder, anxiety and/or depression, feelings of excessive guilt

about waste (Diogenes felt this), intergenerational and genetic history (because hoarding runs in families), and may be associated with dementia, schizophrenia, and OCD, but not exclusively.

Despite some common misconceptions regarding hoarding as an obsessive compulsive disorder, it is now thought that the anxiety associated with this isn't the driving force. Some hoarders may experience distress and anxiety because of the death of a loved one, or the loss of important things in their life, or perfectionist thinking, and hoarding calms their minds, but for others something else is at work. Hoarding may produce a sense of identity and continuity with the past, a dynamic that is understandable. Other factors may also be at work, but we can only know those when we talk with specific people. People are not all the same.

The life of a hoarder becomes increasingly difficult, but it is a condition of being that can be effectively treated with counselling and other healing modalities. At least with television shows highlighting the issue of excessive collecting people are now more willing to talk about their own problems in this regard and seek the help they need.

An equilibrium and a good life may be found between the abundance of stuff and an earthenware pot. Home doesn't need to be a storehouse in order to offer stability and comfort.

dr_mccardell@yahoo.com

Spleen

by Brigid Beckett

This month is the fourth lunar month, early summer before



the summer solstice. This time has important and fascinating associations, according to Chinese cosmology.

This classical cosmology is used in Chinese medicine. During this time the spiritual/emotional connections to Daoism, Buddhism and Confucianism integrated in this worldview were less emphasised. However many teachers right up to the present still place value on these teachings.

"As above so below" describes this cosmology, where the 12 astrological signs, the 12 lunar months of the year and the 12 organ systems within us resonate. Careful observations of nature further divided each month into groups of 3 days where natural phenomena were seen. In the fourth lunar month this included earthworms emerging, mole crickets crooning, snake gourds growing, sow thistle in seed. While these may not have significance in our region, the benefit of being highly in tune with the natural world still applies.

The organ associated with the month is the spleen, which is the digestive energy that transforms the food we eat to usable qi, supplying our day to day energy.

The spleen is an Earth sign. It benefits from contact with the Earth, for

example bare feet on earth rather than shoes on concrete. Classically it was symbolised by a low-lying field that has been planted, productive but prone to water-logging and damp.

Associated positive qualities of the spleen are integrity and trustworthiness. The negative attitude linked to the spleen is blame. Cosmological and mythological connections include Earth Mother and snakes.

There is an association with Nuwa Earth Goddess, half woman half snake, who fashioned humans from clay.

The snake has many associations in medicine and specifically to the spleen. Their ability to slough old skin being reborn with a new one is linked to longevity. Also to the sloughing of the uterine lining in menstruation, which the spleen has a major role in assisting.

Snakes, like the spleen organ, like warmth and dryness. Although they can live in damp holes, their preference is to sunbake, and the spleen energy sometimes compels us to do the same.

The snakes have the ability to swallow prey whole, the spleen is associated with swallowing. For example, people who can't swallow pills often have a spleen dysfunction.

Snakes have the ability to expand with a large meal then quickly return to normal size. This is linked to the spleen assisting a healthy pregnancy and return to good health afterwards. It is also important in preventing miscarriage.

The main functions of the spleen in Chinese medicine are:

1. With the stomach it provides the digestion, the "transformation and

transportation" of food, influencing metabolism and providing and storing qi, also giving the sense of taste.

2. The spleen governs flesh. Weak extremities are usually due to spleen weakness, as are slow healing wounds and ulcers. The spleen keeps blood in the vessels. A weak spleen leads to easy bruising, menstrual problems and some auto-immune disorders.

3. A healthy spleen provides blood to the heart and supports the heart, indicating involvement in cardiovascular disease as well as the spiritual/emotional component of heart function.

4. A healthy spleen is needed for concentration. Overthinking weakens the spleen. Many students by this time of year would benefit from spleen tonification.

Spleen dysfunction is often seen in the lips, with dryness, cracks or sores. In terms of diet, the principle of nurturing the spleen is to avoid cold foods and damp forming foods. This includes too much sweet food including over consumption of fruit and fruit juice and excessive amounts of raw food. Simple well cooked food is beneficial. Chinese cosmology considers earth coloured foods such as pumpkins to be good. Also small amounts of sow thistle or dandelion in salads.

This month is a good time to address any spleen associated problems. Enjoy the heat, avoid damp, take a rest from study and avoid excess sugar and raw foods to enjoy the many benefits of a healthy spleen.

Contact Brigid on 0431-702-560.

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