

Railway Park Organic Community Garden

Open 16 – 17 April 2016



Henderson Rd, Queanbeyan

The garden has 20 beds for rent (small plots at around 9 sq metres and large plots at around 24 sq metres), and three raised beds designed for people with limited mobility including people using wheelchairs. There are also beds for growing common produce including herbs and vegetables, berries, as well as flowers, and several fruit trees - apricot, fig, plum, blueberry, feijoa and lemon.

We try to source recycled materials where possible. You will see that old railway sleepers on the original site have been reused to make the common beds along the boundary fences. Sometimes old metal pegs used for the sleepers still turn up on the site.

This combination of common and private plots enables people to grow for themselves as well as to grow produce collectively, sharing the effort of watering and weeding, as well as sharing the harvest. We have a central composting system that includes open bays as well as closed bins. Some gardeners also compost on their plots.

Couch grass and wind-blow weeds are perennial problems that require a lot of our attention.

Getting started

Railway Park Organic Community Garden started as a concept in the design for a new park on the old railway goods yard in Queanbeyan. The idea was brought to life by the energy and enthusiasm of a few neighbourhood residents and the generous support of the Canberra Organic Growers Society (COGS) and Queanbeyan City Council.

After 12 months of preparation, including countless working bees, the garden was opened in 2002. For about a decade it was part of the COGS network of gardens, the nearest neighbouring garden being at Oaks Estate across the railway line.

Gardening was challenging in the early years with an open site exposed to hot weather and frosts and fogs. There were also the usual difficulties with security that most community gardens face from time to time as well as the turnover of members and conveners, which is a particular challenge in a neighbourhood with a high proportion of short-term residents.

Expanding the garden

The garden entered a second stage of development in 2010 when a group of Queanbeyan City residents successfully applied for a grant under the NSW Environment Trust's *Sustaining our Towns* project, securing a \$10,000 grant to reinvigorate the community garden under local management.

The Queanbeyan Sustainability Group (QSG), incorporated in September 2011, signed a five-year lease with the city council in 2012 to continue using the site as a community garden.

The grant funded materials to build a pergola, which provides shade, storage and a meeting place as well as roof space to collect rainwater. Group members built the pergola, led by local builder George Whish, of Ariston Building Services, who worked many weekends for free, joined by his sons and daughter.

We also purchased a 4,000 litre rainwater tank and had a second one donated, by SupaTank Canberra. Since 2012, we have paid for metered water.

As part of the garden expansion, Queanbeyan City Council funded new perimeter fencing for an extension that provided space for the pergola and water tanks, as well as new garden beds. The council has since provided two more grants, which were used to upgrade facilities and build more garden beds to meet growing demand. As well, council has donated compost and mulch on several occasions.

COGS donated \$1000 cash when the sustainability group took over managing the garden, providing a contingent reserve.

These various donations, along with careful financial management, have enabled fees for participating gardeners to be kept low, so that the garden can offer a place to people of all means, in particular people living on low incomes.

Learn more

Queanbeyan Sustainability Group Inc <https://qbysustainabilitygroup.wordpress.com/>

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Many benefits of community gardening

The community garden provides many social and environmental benefits to our neighbourhood. Many people who garden at Railway Park live in small units or townhouses, with little or no outdoor space suitable for growing food. The garden provides a place for them to grow food for themselves and an opportunity to mix with neighbours they might not meet in the ordinary course of their lives.

For people on low incomes, producing some of their own food helps stretch their budget further while growing fresh seasonal food close to home, virtually eliminating 'food miles.'

Gardeners also work together to host open days in autumn and spring, and to participate in other events such as the Queanbeyan River Festival.

		
Visit other gardens open in Queanbeyan this weekend		
	Entry fee	Hours of opening
Kathleen: 21 Downey Street, Karabah	\$8 adult	10am – 4pm
Art Studio Garden: 48 Brereton Street	\$8 adult	10am – 4pm
Queanbeyan Sensory Garden in Ray Morton Park off Waniassa Street or Trinculo Place	Free	12 – 4pm
And our last garden for the season - open 30 April – 1 May		
Carol's Hillside Oasis: 109 O'Connor Circuit Calwell ACT	\$8 adult	10am – 4pm