 **Landcare Broken Hill Inc**

***Greening the Hill Mk.2***

Empowering the individual

2 weeks have now passed since our project launch. The project continues to build momentum.

Frequent responses from some in the community is “What can we do?” “I’m concerned about the environment, I’m concerned about our worsening climate, but I’m powerless”. “What difference can I make?”

Landcare Broken Hill’s consultations reveal that a lot of people want to do something, but they’re concerned. Frequently people say “We need water, but water is too expensive in Broken Hill”. “I’d like to grow more plants, but I can’t keep them alive over the scorching summers”.

Landcare Broken Hill is determined to assist people to “green” their own patch of Broken Hill. If we provide guidance as to how to do it, we effectively create a City-wide partnership with everyone who is prepared to try. There places all round the world, in environments that are just as hot and just as dry, that have shown just how effective adopting the right approach can be – Israel is a case in point, and is far from being unique nowadays.

First, water is expensive, we accept that. But water is expensive everywhere, not so much in Sydney, but a lot more expensive in Melbourne. However people can be shown clever ways to make the water they have go further. Grey water is the term used for water that you’ve used once, but which can be used again, without wasting it by letting it go down the drain to the sewers. Diverting into the garden to give a thirsty tree a drink. I wonder how many people in Broken Hill catch and reuse their water?

Michael Mobbs, the guy who wrote “The Sustainable House” book has agreed to be a partner for Greening the Hill. He was in the vanguard showing how you can reuse just about everything. He took his house went off grid from all services and reused everything productively. Receiving no inputs like water or power, and releasing no waste, but adopting practices to keep all waste water to create a sustainable garden. Not for everyone yet, but achievable in part by everyone now.

Landcare Broken Hill will be suggesting Essential Water re-promote its 2006 Water Manual, an initiative in partnership with the Council and an Environmental Trust. Understanding how to get the most out of the water you receive and use is essential in an arid zone. As I’ve said previously, catching rain water is essential. We need to find the means by which every household can have a water tank and be shown how to safely use the water caught in it.

Secondly, our soils here are terrible at keeping moisture in the ground. With our evaporative rate being ten times the City’s average annual rainfall, we must adopt every measure to keep moisture in the ground. The soil needs to be helped. We need to ensure that there is cover and “body” in the soil to stop the sun drying the soil and wind blowing it away.

There are many tips that can empower the individual to be effective.

* Everytime someone sends tree branches or garden waste to the Council Tip, they are truly wasting it and adding to a landfill problem and potentially contributing to more methane gas being created. In Melbourne, professional arborists, (well at least the good ones), do not simply chip or shred after a job in your garden, they offer to leave the chippings with the homeowner so it can be usefully spread in your garden. Recently, in Broken Hill I’ve seen a number of chipping machines in action outside properties and I’ve wondered how many of the owners, let alone the garden maintenance guys, have given a thought that it is good stuff they’re removing. We should all be looking for ways to change our culture – we should not waste useful material, but think first how I might use it.
* The message is: you need to keep surface material over soil to retain moisture and prevent dust. Growing material is best, like ground cover plants, selected because they’re hardy. Building up surface cover with mulch is also essential. Once the soil is properly protected and then prepared, you’ll have a better chance of growing something in it.
* Waste paper can be converted to mulch and compost. Shredded paper can be blended with soil and unwanted plant material. I believe that a paper shredder is as important as a compost bin. Every back yard should have a bin and every house should have a shredder. And working with the reuse of grey water in the bin, mixing the paper with the sandy soil, you can create material which you can dig into your soil to protect your gardens

There are many more tips that I’m sure the best gardeners of Broken Hill already know. Landcare Broken Hill welcomes suggestions from everyone. Let us see if ***Greening the Hill Mk.2*** can empower everyone to look after their own patch in the best way for them, their community and our fragile over-heated and too-dry environment.

**PUBLIC MEETING TO DISCUSS *GREENING THE HILL MK.2* at the Centre for Community at 200 Beryl Street at 7.00pm Thursday 30 May**

Want to express interest? Do you have some tried and tested suggestions? Would you like to join Landcare Broken Hill - go to

**LandcareBrokenHill@gmail.com**