 **Landcare Broken Hill Inc**

***Greening the Hill Mk2***

ABC Radio interview No.43 – 18 March 2020

**Keeping going**

Amidst all the doom and gloom of the COVID-19 pandemic, I am bringing some good news.

As we all progressively withdraw to our homes, adopting a wise isolation approach to living, we have all now been handed an opportunity to do those things we rarely have time to do.

As a woodworker, frustrated year after year by having insufficient time to get back to my woodworking bench, I have for years joked that I needed to break a leg before I would find myself back beside my woodworking bench creating things. Well, I have to say it, but this pandemic COVID-19 might do the trick and I might find myself in my tool shed more often.

**The same now applies to everyone of us, who will inevitably be spending more time at home over the coming weeks and, probably, months. Conceivably, it might be the rest of 2020. At first thought, forced isolation might be frustrating, with hundreds more hours now based at home. But I see it as an opportunity. Let me explain.**

Over the last 11 months I’ve been encouraging people in Broken Hill to think about changing the way they manage their own patch, their back and front outside areas and their naturestrips out the front of their properties. Well now you’ve got the time to do it.

Being at home on your own block, you’re likely to be more isolated from the rest of your community. Given that everyone else should also be wisely keeping themselves more isolated too, you’re likely to have far less visitors – less neighbours dropping by and less friends calling in. **So you may have more time in your life**. Doing things on your block, like creating a new garden, or a new veggie patch, or tending to a few new trees you might plant, or creating some garden structures – are all activities capable of being carried out without other people around. If you’ve got family at home, of course involve them, however to defeat COVID-19, it’s probably best to keep the activity a family affair.

**It is also good to be outdoors – in the open air. Physical activity is good for you**. Put a hat on, some sunscreen, some fly repellent – and get out there. Also being in the open air will healthier as it will dissipate your own germs. You might have a sniffle, a cold, so doing some activity should be good for you and for all those in your family.

**Do some garden planning – make a plan**

I suggest that now is the time to go outside and measure your back and front garden and then on a big piece of paper, start drawing up a block plan. On your plan, draw in all the features: the shed, the garage, the footpath, the clothesline etc. Once you’ve got the basic structures measured out and placed as near enough to scale on your plan, then draw in the location of the various plants you’ve got and, if you’ve got flower beds or vegetable beds, draw them in. Don’t worry if you don’t know the plant names, just use words to describe the plant.

Then look ahead and think what you would like in an ideal world in your garden. Start planning by thinking about some of the things I’ve been talking about in previous interviews. Like local hardy native plants being better for our Broken Hill environment.

Think where you might locate a water tank, or a compost bin, or a worm farm. Where you might place a bee house or an insect house, or perhaps a bird bath.

You might like to redesign your garden: put in more garden beds, especially a veggie bed.

**Do some research or ask some questions?**

We all may end up with a lot more time at home to read or do some internet research on the home computer. Before you keep yourself apart for many days, it’s a good idea to go to the library or one of the second-hand bookshops or the charity shops, like Lifeline or the Salvos, and pick up some gardening books. Or books on landscaping.

You could email in your gardening questions to Landcare Broken Hill and have one of our expert members give you helpful advice. Or you could email the ABC’s Gardening Australia team who have a question & answer service.

**Start creating**

Now get out in the garden and start digging. Start preparing you garden beds. Follow you plan you’ve drawn up. As soon as you get into your healthy outdoor activity, all the depressing thoughts about COVID-19 should slip away.

Depending what plants you’ve put in your design, visit Broken Hill’s nurseries and buy some stock to plant out. Or join one of the online gardening clubs, like the Diggers Club, a club that specialises in organic plants and heirloom species, and order online what you want.

**Vegetable gardening is a must**

Not wishing to be alarmist, but there is a good chance that COVID-19 might be with us for 6 months or perhaps the rest of 2020. Without wanting to be pessimistic, I really think it would be wise to adopt a wartime mentality and work to becoming more self-sufficient. We should all think about growing some food in our back yards.

Got the space, put in a veggie garden. With your library books or your bought second-hand gardening books, plan out your vegetable garden. Or go online and do some research.

For those who live in a flat, or in rented accommodation, you can still grow your own veggies and herbs. Just get some large pots or buy or build a window box. A kitchen window with a window box full of herbs and pickable vegetables within reach, is practicable, manageable, healthy and it looks good.

**More time for grey water bucketing**

Some of you staying around home more often, will now have more time to set up a grey water retention system for garden use – with a diverter, a water tank and hoses attached to the outlets for garden watering. Less ambitious, most of you will have more time to carry out buckets of grey water to your naturestrip or the trees and shrubs in your garden.

**Other things to do**

\*Build a bee house or an insect house \*Construct a bird bath

\*Set up a composting area, with a compost bin, mulch pile and worm farm

\*Experiment with your creative side, design an outdoor sculptural feature for your garden

**Stay in contact via social media – help strengthen our sustainability campaign**

Finally, while spending more time at home, there is no need to cut yourself off from the world. With the benefit of modern communications like computers and smart phones, you can remain in contact. You can interact with Landcare Broken Hill, become a member and lead some Facebook chats. We’ve got campaigns to plan, like our **Community Tree Care project**. We need volunteers to strategize.

**The public meeting programme of Landcare Broken Hill is under review as a consequence of the Corona Virus - COVID-19 – it will probably be suspended – our decision will be announced next week.**

**FACEBOOK:** [**www.facebook.com/LandcareBrokenHill/**](http://www.facebook.com/LandcareBrokenHill/)

**WEBPAGE:** [**www.LandcareBrokenHill.com**](http://www.LandcareBrokenHill.com)

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