 **Landcare Broken Hill Inc**

***Greening the Hill Mk2***

ABC Radio interview No.51 – 13th May 2020

**Home Projects #4 – Re-use of things at home**

**Adopting a better perspective and mode of living**

**When Landcare’s Greening the Hill Mk2 initiative was launched just over twelve months ago, all our projects were focussed on the many opportunities by which we can individually and collectively become more sustainable in the way we live.** Landcare Broken Hill set out to encourage the Broken Hill community to think about ways by which each of us can adopt more sustainable modes of living.

Today I wish to talk about a number of inter-connected ***Greening the Hill Mk2*** concepts which underpin a number of our projects: such as Project #18 which is our “Sustainable Living & Housing Project”; Project #20 which is “Sharing knowledge about composting; and Project #33 - gardening with mulch. I’ve talked about aspects of these projects before.

What I’d like to focus on are finding alternative ways by which we can treat that which we would otherwise think of as waste – that is, to search for a reuse. And once the reuse has been exhausted, then treat it, not as waste, but as something for others to recycle.

**‘Cradle to grave’ becomes ‘cradle to cradle’ – the modern expectation for new products**

Nowadays there is increasing demand that when something is made, a product, it should meet the ‘‘cradle to grave’’ philosophy of product responsibility. That approach has now evolved into a ‘‘cradle to cradle’’ philosophy. Designers must now consider each stage of a product lifecycle, which ranges from the design and manufacturing stages to the end-of-life (EOL) stage, and includes reuse, recycling, and finally disposal (if it can’t be avoided). The design of products must not only satisfy functional specifications, but should also meet a host of societal expectations: like finding a reuse for component parts in the product once its original designed purpose comes to an end and then after the materials in the product have had a second life during the reuse stage, that the residue not becomes waste, but rather a resource, like a raw material, for some final conversion for further use.

So responsible modern car manufacturers are those who strive for the ‘cradle to cradle’ approach, designing to produce the perfect car but concurrently ensuring that the materials so used will be reusable when the car comes to the end of its useable life.

In some places, regulations require such a ‘cradle to cradle’ approach to manufacturing – such as in the EU and in some Scandinavian countries.

As an example, when I was recently talking about raised garden beds, I spoke of cutting an old water tank in half, or utilising of old bath or tub, giving them a re-use as garden beds. Earlier, I’ve talking about our soft plastic waste being channelled into the manufacture of park benches and railways sleepers. Today I’ll be focusing on what we can do in the home.

Another relevant term that is used is “**circular economy**” which basically means: an economic system aimed at eliminating waste via the continual use of resources. This is called a regenerative approach. It is in contrast to the traditional **linear economy**, which has a "take, make, dispose" model of production. The deterioration of our planet, such as is evident from the example of today’s massive global curse of plastic pollution, has shown that the old linear economic approach is unsustainable.

**Back to Home Projects #4 – reuse at home**

**My challenge for everyone today is for them to think about how they might reuse things, whatever they might be, that would otherwise be waste and thrown out**. I’m suggesting that, whilst everyone is at home during these times of social distancing, each member of a family comes up with some bright ways by which they can lessen the waste or rubbish they usually throw out. **Many benefits**: \* The less waste we throw out, the better it is for the environment. \* There will be less need for Council landfills. \* There will be less energy wasted in disposing of rubbish. \* You will probably save some money, as the useful purposes to which you are putting your ‘reborn’ product or thing, will mean you will not have to go out and buy something to perform the same function.

So let’s look at some ideas for the home gardener or around the home workshop – so as to stimulate listeners to think about clever ways to reduce waste by re-using something.

* Reuse paper – shred it and make compost. For many years I’ve been creating compost for our family garden out of wastepaper. In the Broken Hill region, many of us have too little green ‘waste’, like lawn cuttings, prunings and leaves, to produce reasonable quantities of compost for our garden beds – so we need to supplement it. An additional challenge is the heat, as organic material such as garden waste and paper will not break down to produce compost unless it is kept moist. But once you develop the skill, you will get the right balance: just enough moisture to cause the organic material, which includes paper, to break down.
  + Myth buster: newspapers can be good for making compost as **lead has not been used in newsprint for years**. The printing ink is usually an organic soy material. So you won’t suffer lead poisoning by putting newsprint in your compost.
  + Buy yourself a shredder. Paper by itself left as a wad of paper will take a lot more time to breakdown, but as paper shred, it can be blended perfectly with other organic material and so will readily produce compost. I was lucky enough to find an industrial size shredder at the Lifeline shop at the Council tip, but many stationers sell smaller ones. I’ve even seen a shredder for sale at the Post Office. Alternatively, our Broken Hill local paper, the Barrier Daily Truth, used to frequently advertise that they had bags of shredded paper to sell. Help the BDT out and buy their shredded paper!
* Most domestic or kitchen cardboard, such as cereal packets or biscuit boxes or shoe boxes, egg cartons etc, break down perfectly well if shredded, then placed in a compost bin and kept moist. It is always best to stir the shredded cardboard around to get a good mix with the other organic material in the compost bin.

* Plastic milk containers can be re-used for a multiplicity of useful purposes. (1) You can cut the top and bottoms off and use the remainder, the centre portion, as small guards around new seedlings. (2) You can make a pot plant tray out of the bases, leaving 2-3cm of the side walls, to capture and hold water. (3) You can cut the sides into strips about 12-14cm long and a couple of cm wide to make excellent seedling labels, as they can be easily written on using an indelible marker pen.
* Waxed cardboard milk drink containers can become good seedling pots themselves. Simply filling them with potting mix, puncturing them in a few lower positions, and then sowing seed can produce an organic planting container. When your seedling is large enough for planting out, simply plant the seedling still in the cardboard milk drink carton straight in the soil. As the plant grows, the cardboard carton disintegrates into the surrounding soil.
* Clear plastic food trays, that meat and some vegetables come packaged in at the supermarkets, make excellent miniature incubator seedling trays. Just get two identical sized trays, fill one with moist potting mix, sow your seed, and then place the second one on top, like a little clear dome, and hold the two together with a rubber band or two. Voila! You have a mini glass house.
* Wooden icecream sticks make perfect plant labels for putting in seedling trays.
* Paper bags, such as the standard brown paper sandwich bag, are excellent for capturing seed bursting from seed pods, gumnuts etc. Just place the gumnuts in a paper bag and place it in the sun or a warm place, the seed pots and gumnuts will burst and you’ve thereby collected the seed.
* When growing plants you often need an atomiser to give a gentle misty water spray on new seedlings or on a mushroom farm. Or it might be you need to use an organic pesticide like pyrethrum or a herbal spray to control aphids. As long as you thoroughly wash them out before re-use, many of the sprayers that contain laundry stain remover or glass cleaning fluid make perfect atomisers for the gardener. Conveniently, I’ve always found the product labels peel off easily.
* Old beer past its used-by date, makes perfect slug and snail control. Pour half the old beer into a recycled plastic tray and place it near where you’ve seen snail trails and then place the beer bottle, say a stubbie, on its side in another nearby location with the remaining beer left pooled in the bottle. Snails and slugs can’t resist it, and they won’t live to tell the tale!
* Food scraps – I’ve often mentioned the ways by which food scraps can be diverted into either compost bin or a worm farm. (Only very few things will still need to be thrown out, like meat scraps). We should never be throwing out compostable material as it can produce beautifully useful rich material to enrich your garden. To see the worms in a worm farm demolish vegetable waste is a wonder, producing in relatively little time a liquid fertiliser – worm tea (because it looks like tea) – that is as good or better than any plant food you might buy.

There could be hundreds of other clever, ingenious or just plain sensible ideas that listeners may suggest.

The message is that we should always take a moment to think how you might be able to reuse something that you might normally just throw out. Bit by bit, if we all work together having a go coming up with bright ideas, we will better protect the environment, improve our lifestyle and, highly likely, keep more cash in your pocket.

**Landcare Broken Hill’s public meetings have been cancelled for the foreseeable future due to COVID-19.**

**All Landcare Broken Hill’s on-the-ground projects have been deferred until further notice, although ‘backroom’ planning and preparation continues.**

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