

**A Proposal by the Monash Environment Group**

**Monash Permaculture Garden (MPG) Project**



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**“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens  
can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has.”**

*Margaret Mead*

Permaculture proposal established by the Monash Environment Group,  
especially that of Matt Bowden and Kristy Henderson in 2004.

Revised by Nils Wiebkin and Tess Toumbourou in 2007.

## **1. Introduction**

The aim of this proposal is to secure an area of land at Monash University, Clayton, for a community permaculture garden. This proposal will outline the benefits that a permaculture community garden will have on the Monash Clayton campus and address possible difficulties. It was initiated by MSA Monash Environment Group (MEG) in 2004, and continues with the group of 2007 (as is the transient nature of student groups). MEG is a strong and vibrant group committed to an awareness of our environment and places importance on sustainable living. The Monash Permaculture Group consists of MEG members.

## **2. Permaculture**

The Monash Environment Group seeks to initiate and manage a garden based on permaculture principles. As an environmental group we are constantly looking at ways to make and inform others of different and more environmentally friendly ways of living sustainably. Permaculture principles are based on an ethic that seeks to promote and increase sustainability among communities.

For a more detailed explanation of permaculture please refer to *Attachment 1a*.

## **3. Precedent**

In early 2002 a permaculture garden in the botany experimental area was operating. Michael Galvin set up this garden and while it was well situated to grow vegetables there are a number of factors as to why it is neither currently operational nor an ideal location for continuing a garden.

- The garden was not set up to run as a community garden without a framework to be maintained by a committed group of people, and as such it has been neglected since Michael left Monash Clayton.
- The location of the current garden is not readily accessible nor observable to the student majority which has meant that it has had limited exposure and existed in relative obscurity.
- The distance to available food waste sources for compost was too far to be practicable.

## **4. The Objectives of the Permaculture Garden Project and MPG**

The objectives of the Permaculture Garden Project are:

- To grow vegetables using sustainable, organic practices along the lines of permaculture principles and to be used by Monash Wholefoods restaurant.
- To empower students to produce their own food, and to create a self-sufficiency model.

- To cultivate an environment of experiential learning where students are able to be actively involved in organic gardening using permaculture techniques. More broadly, we hope that members of the Monash community are able to learn about companion planting, soil analysis, composting and non-chemical based weed control and how to grow food in areas of drought, an issue of deep and growing concern in Australia.
- To raise general awareness about the issues surrounding current conventional food production and consumer practices. These issues include the use of chemical fertilisation and pest control, wasteful irrigation practices, the disposal of compostable material into landfill and the unnecessarily high wastage of potable water.
- To provide an alternative example of how public space can be used. As a long- term goal, a permaculture garden will demonstrate to the community that most areas, however big or small, can be used to grow food and plants if grown working with the natural environment and elements rather than against them.
- To develop and grow a strong sense of community within Monash Clayton, with students and community members working together for a common goal. This project also encourages students of a diversity of backgrounds to work together on a project, and with non-English speaking members of the community who are often isolated by other activist projects
- To create a vibrant installation art area to showcase student sculptural works from Monash University students (such as that of the Caulfield Creative Arts Faculty).
- To create a beautiful meeting place sensitive to the existing functional spaces around.

## **5. Benefits of the Permaculture Garden**

The benefits of a permaculture community garden to Monash University are:

- The growth of nutritious and organic food that will be available for use by the Monash community.
- The garden will help recycle food waste on campus by developing a composting system within the garden or within existing refuse areas managed by groundskeepers.
- Provide a resource for students and staff interested in plant biology and organic gardens to carry out research.
- Exist as a case-study for the biogeography school.
- Educate the Monash community about organic food and growing techniques.
- Provide the Monash University community with a relaxing green space for people to visit and enjoy.
- Involve the broader community into organic gardening by advertising the project to businesses and schools outside of the Monash University campus.
- By using permaculture techniques the site will have improved bio diversity, soil structure and stability, whilst also being aesthetically pleasing.
- The garden will contribute to developing Monash University's reputation as being green and showcase a very real and conspicuous example.

## **6. How will the garden run**

To ensure the long-term success of and involvement in the Permaculture Garden Project, the Permaculture Group will;

- Choose plant species suitable to the University life cycle. The garden will predominantly have annual garden beds that will lay dormant / fallow over the Christmas break period. These beds will remain open for winter, spring and autumn vegetables.
- Run as non-profit venture. Volunteers will be responsible for the weeding, planting and harvesting and the general up keep of the garden.
- Organise fundraising events, such as vegetarian barbeques to offset some of the smaller expenses of the garden like seeds and tools.
- Prepare grant and funding application, which will offset larger expenses.
- Once permission is given by Monash University for the site, funding will be sought from the Monash community, philanthropy groups, Monash City Council, government grants and other suitable bodies.
- Communication between Monash academic staff and the Permaculture Garden Project will be actively encouraged, developing a resource for interested faculties and departments.
- Food waste from Wholefoods Restaurant will be collected and composted in a worm farm. Wholefoods operates as a vegetarian and vegan entity, the refuse being free of meat products (which might have attracted rodents).
- Fortnightly meetings of permaculture volunteers will be held to make decisions about the maintenance and development of the garden. The group will meet collectively with members of; Wholefoods Collective, the Environmental and Social Justice Collective and any interested staff and students, in order to remain accountable and engage all relevant and affected stakeholders.
- Regular reports will be made available to support bodies on the progress of the project, with total transparency and accountability.
- Volunteers will be recruited through permaculture garden awareness events, which will include permaculture information forums, short courses and guest speakers.
- We will also work to develop links between other already established Permaculture Gardens and organisations, sharing information, feedback and resources. These include the Garden of Eden, Permaculture Melbourne, CERES and the Cross Campus Environment Network Permaculture sub-group.
- Maintain a strong web presence, issuing links to other similar bodies

## **7. Addressing the barriers**

### **Barrier 1 : The transient nature of the student population**

The transient nature of student population could provide a barrier to the running of the permaculture garden. This will be addressed by:

- Planting indigenous drought-tolerant species, especially over summer months if there is less student participation. These require less maintenance.
- Mulching heavily to prevent weeds.
- Having a position description to ensure that volunteer roles are clear and that work required is achieved.
- Working closely with Wholefoods Collective, who have a functioning and effective volunteer base, to ensure the day-to-day garden needs are met.
- Worst case scenario, the garden can be incorporated into regular Monash Grounds maintenance.

### **Barrier 2. Limitations of Water**

- Supply of water from any of the existing taps located near the selected (subject to water restriction policies). Permanent irrigation, however, is to be set up by the Permaculture Group.
- Provisions to be made for the siting of a small rainwater tank.
- Drought tolerant plants reduce the amount of water needed.

### **Barrier 3. Working with Grounds Staff**

Prior to establishing the garden, we will consult specialists and Grounds staff to have feedback and their involvement. As is our aim, it will be a collaborative and inclusive project involving all aspects of the Monash community. All ideas will be welcomed and incorporated where possible.

#### **In order to do this we will:**

- Invite Grounds staff to our meetings
- Having an email list for all concerned
- Informal Grounds updates

### **8. Occupational Health and Safety Requirements**

- A short training sheet outlining vis a vis safety concerns of possible scenarios relating to garden situation will be made available to all constituents. OHS requirements will be in line with Monash OHSE Department recommendations. A meeting will be arranged with an OHSE consultant to establish OHSE requirements.
- Similarly, the Short Course Permaculture Workshop will detail relevant OHS issues and preventative tactics.

### **9. Storage**

- Preferably, tools and other equipment will be stored in the small, lockable storage area 10 metres from the site.
- In the case this is not feasible, Wholefoods balcony could be used as an alternative.

## **10. Request for Monash University Assistance**

In order to ensure the establishment of the Permaculture Garden Project, we request the following of the Monash University Administration the following;

- A site for the garden (item 10).
- Access (by request) to any existing tool sheds or other materials that would be beneficial to the project such as forks, spades or picks.
- Donation of any unused fencing and hose materials (in collaboration with Groundskeepers).

### **Addressing other potential costs**

#### **Fencing**

- Existing fencing will suffice to passively direct pedestrian traffic. Existing 'goat-track' will be reinforced as a path through the garden bed.

#### **Seating**

- Provided by Monash Student Experience Network, in line with existing seating outside the IT building (installed this year 2007)

#### **Maintenance**

- Ongoing maintenance provided by student volunteers (Wholefoods + Monash Permaculture Group), overseen by Grounds Staff.

#### **Tools (lending from Grounds)**

- To be negotiated with grounds and kept in the storage, detailed previously

## **11. Ongoing issues of the Permaculture Garden**

In order to ensure the ongoing success of the permaculture garden, the following issues need attention.

- The success and rotation of compost.
- Active participation of volunteers. All volunteers will be trained and coordination of volunteers will be through the Wholefoods collective.
- Pest problems – managed through companion planting and the use of natural pesticides.
- Successful growth areas and less successful areas, such as sunny verses shaded areas.

- Water access and grey water facilities.
- New ideas for the development of the garden – maintenance of interest through events.
- Funding and availability of desired resources – selling crops to Wholefoods to recoup ongoing costs.
- Limited high visibility land – plot limited to areas of low traffic, and sensitive to other existing uses.

All of these will be discussed in the fortnightly meetings of the Monash Permaculture Group and reported in the group minutes.

## 12. Other Permaculture Gardens

Although this proposal is designed to establish a permaculture garden at Monash University, it is not the first of its kind. Both Flinders University in Adelaide and the University of New South Wales in Sydney, have both established Permaculture gardens on campus, which have been primarily set up and maintained successfully by students.

In Melbourne there are also working permaculture and community gardens. CERES (Centre for Education and Research in Environmental Strategies) in Brunswick, The Garden of Eden in South Melbourne, and Veg Out in St Kilda are three examples of gardens that the surrounding communities and councils have relished. **The pictures** (*Attachment 2*) were taken from the St Kilda garden and the Garden of Eden as successful examples of the both the social, environmental and aesthetic benefits of community permaculture gardens.

MPG has already established links with the workers from the Garden of Eden and CERES and been given support and encouragement for the project. We hope to strengthen these relationships as with other organizations like Permaculture Melbourne.

## 13. Timeline

Proposal finalised and letters of recommendations collated

May

- Proposal submitted
- Contact Grounds and Maintenance staff and request feedback and meeting time on the proposal
- If the proposal is accepted and a site is granted:
  - Conduct site and soil analysis
  - Begin designing phase of garden in consultation with experienced permaculture groups
  - Determine budget for the project
  - Submit grant application to Monash City Council for funds

June

- Begin work on the site
- Manual preparation of site for laying of garden beds
- Establish composting area
- Purchase and plant fruit trees
- Plant spring vegetables

September

- Evaluate progress of projects so far

#### **14. Requested Areas for the Garden**

The following is a list of our criteria for the garden space:

- Visible to student population
- Conducive to student volunteers on campus ie. visiting and working in the garden.
- Easily accessible for compost and food waste drop off
- North facing site for maximum sunlight
- Nutrient rich soil free from contamination
- Water Access
- Conducive to growing fruit trees and possible revegetation

#### **See attached map of likely sites and contextual analysis**

##### **Preferred site 1**

Lawn space opposite the Lemon Scented Lawns, outside the Language and Learning Centre, building 10 and between building 20.

This space is most suitable because it is:

- highly visible and accessible to many,
- utilised by students to sit on (the garden will centre around a meeting sitting area),
- under-utilised as a grassed lawn,
- in close vicinity to Wholefoods restaurant, and the campus centre – useful for composting foodscraps, and for trans-planting the seedlings from the Wholefoods balcony,
- sunny for around 6 hours a day – a prerequisite for growing healthy vegetables.

##### **Preferred sites**

As marked the map attached.

QuickTime™ and a  
TIFF (LZW) decompressor  
are needed to see this picture.

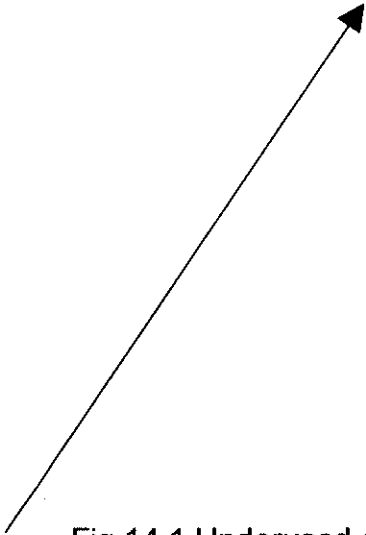


Fig 14.1 Underused grassy area ideal for garden bed. Site includes favourable aspects listed above.

## **15. Permaculture Garden Collective Volunteer Positions Descriptions**

In recognition of the fact that volunteers will be the lifeblood of the Permaculture Garden, volunteer position descriptions have been outlined, as it is important for volunteers to know that they fulfil a real and vital purpose in social change and their work is recognised. Some motivations for volunteers are: satisfaction, interaction, developing friendships and exploring self, making change and contributing to something greater than oneself.

The Permaculture Garden needs to utilise volunteers effectively, as student time is a precious balance between study, work and other activities. To keep volunteers motivated and achieving goals set, the Permaculture Collective needs to ensure that the following is clearly in place:

1. Clearly identified set of essential and varied tasks for volunteers.
2. A well defined job description for these tasks, with details as to where to source support and resources.
3. A system to match volunteers needs and skills with each task.
4. Skills training (grant writing workshops, consensus training, organising etc).

Job descriptions require:

- A summary of the Permaculture Collective, its objectives and major activities as part of the Environment and Social Justice Collective and the Environment and Social Justice department. How each of these support each other and that the Environment and Social Justice Officers are responsible to the Permaculture Collective.
- A description of the purpose and duties / activities of the volunteer position / projects.
- Duration: time each week/ month.
- Work place location (Environment Office, or Student Activist Space).
- Skills useful to position.

### **Monash Community Permaculture Garden Project**

#### **Objectives:**

- To grow vegetables using sustainable, organic principles
- To develop and grow a strong sense of community within Monash Clayton, with students and community members working together for a common goal. This project also encourages students of a diversity of backgrounds to work together on a project, and with non-English speaking

members of the community who are often isolated by other activist projects

- To be able to distribute amongst the Monash community (bbqs, free food dinners)
- To demonstrate that growing your own food is affordable and easy to do
- To cultivate an environment of experiential learning where students are able to be actively involved in organic gardening using permaculture techniques.
- To raise general awareness about the issues surrounding conventional food production
- To provide a sustainable example of how public space can be utilised

### **Co-Coordinators (3 people)**

#### **Support base:**

Environment Collective, the Environment and Social Justice Department.

#### **Collective responsible:**

Environment Collective

#### **Specific activities:**

- Liase and negotiate with Monash University for space allocation, for access to water, tools and garden material, and with Buildings and Grounds for access to gardening tools
- Liase with Environment Collective to update on goings on
- Act as a central point of reference for the Permaculture Collective
- Assist in the sourcing of equipment
- Liase with volunteers, both students and community members
- Potentially source training for permaculture volunteers
- Grow and develop the project into whatever the Permaculture Collective and the community envision
- Establish a composting facility at the site for use by staff and students

#### **Time commitment:**

One day a week initially, then 2 to 4 hours a week between May and November.

**Benefits:**

Learn useful skills that can be applied to any aspect of life; negotiation and consensus-based organising,

**Permaculture Advisors (2 people)**

**Support base:**

Environment Collective, the Environment and Social Justice Department, other permaculture sources (CERES, etc).

**Collective responsible:**

Environment Collective

**Specific activities:**

- Design a permaculture garden suitable for the space allocated.

**Time commitment:**

2 to 4 days in total.

**Volunteer Coordinator (1 person)**

**Support base:**

Environment Collective, the Environment and Social Justice Department.

**Collective responsible:**

Environment Collective

**Specific activities:**

- Liase with coordinators and permaculture advisors
- Promote the permaculture garden and source volunteers – especially focusing on student residency, international students and non-English speaking members of the
- Ensure volunteers are retained, supported and trained in whatever is required

**Time commitment:**

Half day a week

**Pragmatics (Marketing, Promotion, Fundraising) Coordinators (2 people)**

**Support base:**

Environment Collective, the Environment and Social Justice Department.

**Collective responsible:**

Environment Collective

**Specific activities:**

- Sourcing grants for the permaculture garden (Monash Local Council, Arts Council, MSC, charity groups)
- Promote the garden to the community through Monash newsletters, letters to papers, informing students and staff

**Time commitment:**

One day a week initially, then 2 to 4 hours a week between May and November.

## **Attachment 1a**

### **What is Permaculture?**

The word itself is a contraction of both permanent agriculture and permanent culture. (Since cultures cannot survive for long without a sustainable agricultural base and land use ethics).

The concept was first developed by bio-geographer Bill Mollison and landscape designer David Holmgren in Tasmania, 1974. They first put their ideas into print in the book '*Permaculture One*' in 1978 and have developed them further in many subsequent books.

Mollison and Holmgren drew upon traditional agricultural practices, as well as ecological science to form a practical system of design for human settlements.

The integrated (or systems) approach of Permaculture is aimed at the design of human settlements in which the basic needs of people can be met simply and effectively – needs such as fresh, nutritious food, clean water, energy efficient shelter, the opportunity for community, cooperation and conviviality.

The foundation of permaculture is the design of agriculturally productive landscapes, which have diversity, stability and resilience of natural ecosystems. This is achieved by practicing polyculture, therefore mimicking natural diversity, soil protection, improvement and companion planting.

The fundamental principal of companion planting is that each and every plant is required to perform a number of functions. For example, legumes are able to fix nitrogen in the soil. The legume would be a good companion for species that has a high nitrogen dependency. This gives the legume the dual function of fertilising another species and producing food. Physical functions such as protecting the garden against wind can also be fulfilled by food producing species.

The synthesis of design and ecology forms a complex web of symbiotic relationships between diverse species, minimising reliance upon human effort which maximising productivity. Diversity means that artificial fertilisers, pesticides, herbicides, fungicides become unnecessary. Recycled materials are used and resources are conserved

Today, permaculture is practiced throughout the world in both the affluent and less developed countries. As an evolving system of design, permaculture remains open to new ideas and continues to explore new areas of application.

Comprehensive permaculture information can be found at the Permaculture International homepage:

<http://www.nor.com.au/environment/perma/>

## Attachment 2. Proposal Letter



MSA Environment and Social Justice Department

Clayton Campus, Level 1

Ph: 9095 4195

May, 2007

Re: Permaculture garden space allotment request

Dear Johan de Bree,

We write to you on behalf of the Monash Student Association Environment Collective, a collective of twenty student groups who organise activities and environmental campaigns together towards the goal of environmental and social sustainability. Students from the Monash Environment Group, a club based at Monash University, developed the proposal for the permaculture garden, and seek to maintain it through student and community volunteer groups.

We write in application for a space allocation for a permaculture community garden at Monash University, Clayton. This proposal outlines the benefits that a permaculture community garden will have on the Monash Clayton campus.

It is appropriate in this current climate of environmental concern, when climate change poses the greatest global threat to all people, that environmental solutions are instigated by the community. All people ultimately are responsible for creating sustainable change. A community permaculture garden is a positive solution to unsustainable practices, and will contribute to creating awareness about food waste, recycling, sustainable living, organic growing principles and foster and strengthen the Monash University student presence and student relationship with the outside community.

Please consider the Environment Collective application for a Community Permaculture Garden, your support will be warmly appreciated.

Kind regards,

The Monash Environment Collective

*Students concerned about the environment*

Attachment 3 – Volunteer commitment declaration

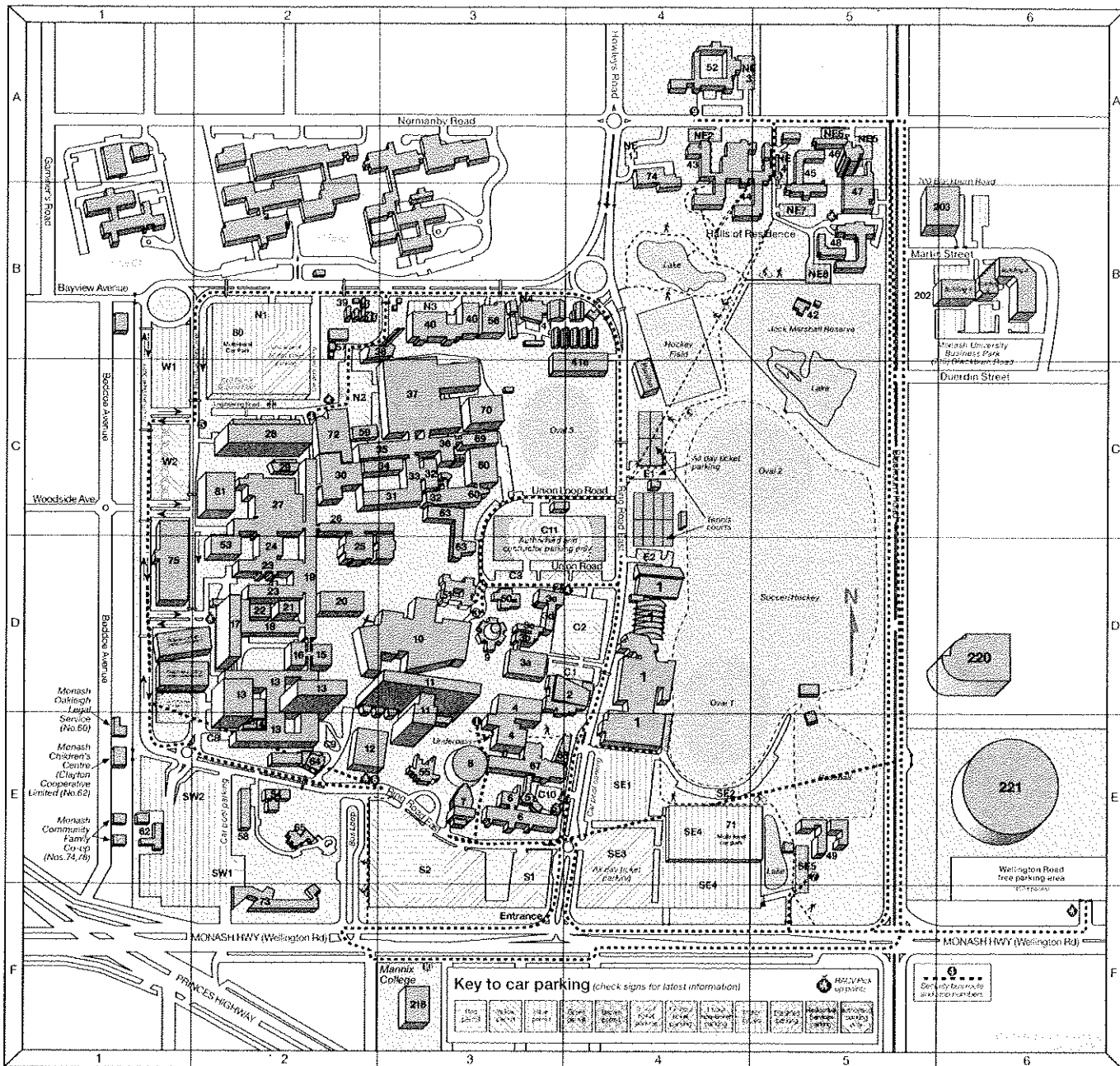


Monash Permaculture Vegie Garden

I, the undersigned, commit myself to contributing \_\_\_ hours of my time a week  
- during semester / out of semester - to ensuring the permaculture garden  
remains a vibrant and sustainable space on campus.



# Monash University Clayton campus



## Building index

- 1 Sports and Recreation D4
- 2 St Robert Blackwood Concert Hall D4
- 3a Administration Building 3a D3
- 3b Administration Building 3b D3
- 3c Administration Building 3c D3
- 3d Administration Building 3d D3
- 3e Administration Building 3e D3
- 4 Sir Louis Matheson Library E3
- 5 Krongold Centre E3
- 6 Education E3
- 7 Alexander Theatre E3
- 8 Rotunda E3
- 9 Religious Centre D3
- 10 Campus Centre D3
- 11 Humanities D3
- 12 Law including Law Library E2
- 13 Medicine D2
- 14 Teaching Facilities Support Unit E2
- 15 Centre for Medical and Health Sciences Education D2
- 16 Biochemistry Teaching Laboratories D2
- 17 Biology D2

- 18 Senior Zoology D2
- 19 Central Science Block D2
- 20 First Year Chemistry D2
- 21 Zoology Lecture Theatres D2
- 22 First Year Biology D2
- 23 Senior Chemistry D2
- 24 Western Science Lecture Theatres D2
- 25 Eastern Science Lecture Theatres D2
- 26 Physics and Computer Science D3
- 27 Senior Physics D3
- 28 Mathematics and Information Technology Services C2
- 29 Northern Science Lecture Theatres C2
- 30 Hargrave Andrew Library and Cafeteria and Facilities and Conference Office C2
- 31 Engineering Building 31 C3
- 32 Engineering Lecture Theatres C3
- 33 Engineering Building 33 C3
- 34 Engineering Building 34 C3
- 35 Engineering Building 35 C3
- 36 Engineering Building 36 C3
- 36A Engineering Building 36A C3

- 37 Engineering Building 37 C3
- 38 Boiler House B2
- 39 Botany Experimental Area B2
- 40 Facilities and Services B3
- 41 Animal Services C3
- 41a Animal Services 41a C4
- 42 Zoology Environmental Laboratories B5
- 43 Richardson Hall A4
- 44 Roberts Hall B4
- 45 Farrer Hall A5
- 46 Howitt Hall A5
- 47 Central Building (Catering) B5
- 48 Deakin Hall B5
- 49 South East Flats E5
- 50 Monash University Club D3
- 51 Monash Short Courses Centre D3
- 52 Normanby House A4
- 53 Microbiology D2
- 54 Japanese Study Centre E2
- 55 Gallery Building E3
- 58 Central Store, Transport and Mail Services B3
- 57 Grounds Building B2
- 58 Yarrawonga Building E2

- 59 Australian Pulp and Paper Building C2
- 60 Engineering Building 60 C3
- 61 Parking and Security E3
- 62 High Voltage Switchroom E1
- 63 Faculty of Information Technology C3
- 64 Faculty of Medicine Offices E2
- 65 Monash House (Marketing and Student Recruitment) E2
- 67 Information Services Building E3
- 68 Performing Arts Precinct E3
- 69 Engineering Building 69 C3
- 70 Accident Research Centre C3
- 71 Multi-level carpark E1
- 72 Engineering Building 72 C2
- 73 Monash College Building F2
- 74 Monash Science Centre A4
- 75 Monash Biotechnology D1
- 80 Multi-level carpark - North Ring Road B2
- 81 Monash Centre for Electron Microscopy C2
- 202 Monash University Business Park - 710 Blackburn Road B6
- 203 700 Blackburn Road B6
- 218 Mannix College F3

- 220
  - 221
  - Wellington Road free parking area
  - 229 18 Tebra Building D6
  - 221 Synchrotron E6
- ## Lecture theatre index
- 63 Central One C3
  - 32 Engineering E1, E5 C3
  - 60 Engineering/Examination Halls E11-E14 C3
  - 12 Law School L1-L5 & G20 E2
  - 13D Medicine M1 D2
  - 13A Medicine M2, M3 D2
  - 11 Menzies - Humanities H1-H10 D3
  - 8 Rotunda R1-R7 E3
  - 25 Science S1-S4 D2
  - 24 Science S5-S6 D2
  - 21 Science S7-S8 D2
  - 26 Science S9-S12 D2
  - 29 Science S13-S15 C2
  - 25 Science S11-4, S17 D2
  - 54 South One E2
  - 72 St Alexander Stewart Theatre E7 C2