

bamboo

Vol. 19 No.1

bulletin



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Photo courtesy of the Environmental Bamboo Foundation

Front Cover:
New shoots of Bambusa arnhemica



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Reader Contributions

We would love to publish your bamboo experiences. If you would be interested in sharing your information on bamboo growing, managing, building or cooking, send text and attached photos to Mark McCarthy at: editor@bamboo.org.au



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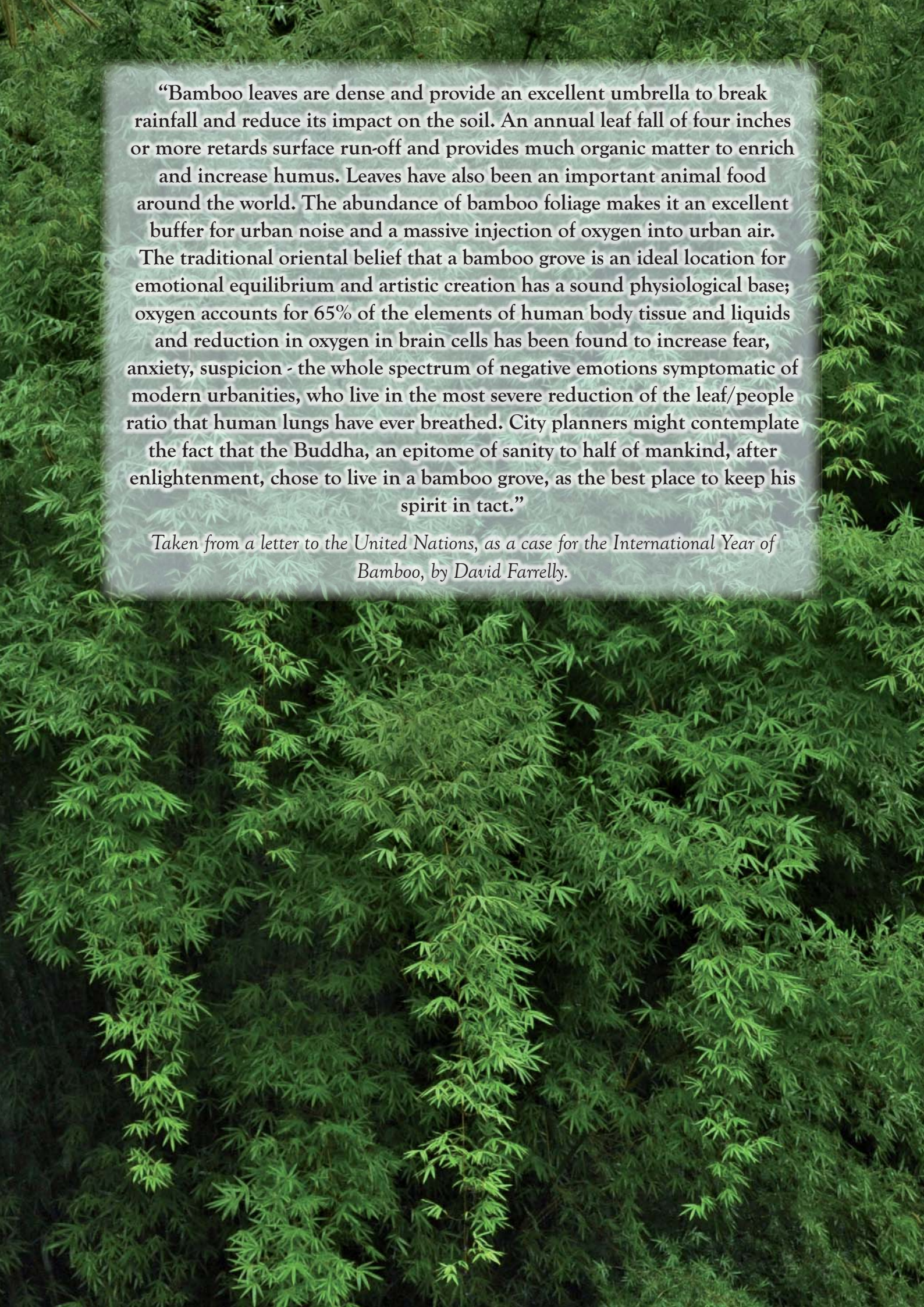
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“Bamboo leaves are dense and provide an excellent umbrella to break rainfall and reduce its impact on the soil. An annual leaf fall of four inches or more retards surface run-off and provides much organic matter to enrich and increase humus. Leaves have also been an important animal food around the world. The abundance of bamboo foliage makes it an excellent buffer for urban noise and a massive injection of oxygen into urban air. The traditional oriental belief that a bamboo grove is an ideal location for emotional equilibrium and artistic creation has a sound physiological base; oxygen accounts for 65% of the elements of human body tissue and liquids and reduction in oxygen in brain cells has been found to increase fear, anxiety, suspicion - the whole spectrum of negative emotions symptomatic of modern urbanities, who live in the most severe reduction of the leaf/people ratio that human lungs have ever breathed. City planners might contemplate the fact that the Buddha, an epitome of sanity to half of mankind, after enlightenment, chose to live in a bamboo grove, as the best place to keep his spirit in tact.”

Taken from a letter to the United Nations, as a case for the International Year of Bamboo, by David Farrelly.

From the Editor's Desk

In this issue we look at building to last with bamboo. A lot of bamboo structures are built to be temporary, but by using coatings and a roof to stop moisture degradation, they can last for many decades.

Mexican Weeping featured in this Issue, is one of my favourite bamboos, but I had a lot of difficulty growing it until I found out its special requirements and since then it has flourished.

The feature property is Wayde & Vicki Crow's Crowscraft Nursery. The permaculture principles they use influenced the way I planted my own bamboo, with an emphasis on organic fertiliser and a care-for-soil life.

Kate Marshall attended the planting of a bamboo-based waste water and solids management system at the *Woodfordia* site. In the future, the bamboo will be used on site for construction and sculptures.

This year's AGM will be held on 3rd September, see page 26 for details.

Mark McCarthy
Editor

Bambusa chungii



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BAMBOO PLANTING AT WOODFORDIA

An Interview with Arief Rabik by Kate Marshall

Kate Marshall attended the planting at Woodfordia as she is interested in becoming a bamboo grower. Kate is an international aid worker, formally working in the Philippines for the International Federation and Red Crescent Society as a communications and media specialist (Dec 2013 - March 2016). During this time she worked after cyclone Haiyan, one of the worst to hit the area.

In a three-way international partnership with Arief Rabik (from International Bamboo Foundation based in Indonesia), Nici Long (Principal of Cave Urban, an artistic collective in Sydney) and Woodfordia's Executive Director Bill Hauritz, a two-hectare experimental bamboo forest has been planted as an element of an Australian first water preservation facility on the Woodfordia festival site. The bamboo will grow from organic disinfected waste water, together with soils created from recycled food scraps from the Festival. The mature bamboo will eventually be used in the structures and sculptures at the Festival.



ARIEF RABIK, LIVING AND BREATHING BAMBOO

Bamboo advocate and director of the Environmental Bamboo Foundation, Arief Rabik, was literally born into a family of growers in Indonesia. He is the son of renowned designer and bamboo pioneer Linda Garland.

He jokes that after his delivery his mother paid her obstetrician with a bamboo sofa and chairs.

'I was immersed in bamboo from day one,' he says.

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Julianne Hartmann

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Arief Rabik



‘Growing up we went to bamboo plantations and workshops and I used to hang out in my parents’ workshop a lot,’ he says.

Linda Garland was especially honoured for her design and conservation work with the World Bamboo Pioneer Award earlier this year. Sadly, she passed away in January, but her legacy continues to inspire people around the world (See back page).

Arief’s presentation to the Woodford audience at Easter highlighted the fact that Indonesian tropical rainforests are the ‘third lung’ of the Earth after Congo and the Amazon.

But Indonesia is facing high levels of degradation as forests disappear and the remaining topsoils are stripped by intensive tropical downpours.



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‘These rainforests are among the world’s most fertile regions and are amazingly resilient. But because of deforestation, when the rain removes the topsoil it leaves areas we call deserts – for example, in Kalimantan,’ says Rabik.

‘We need durability in our thinking when it comes to tackling this issue. I believe we can learn from my traditional culture to restore landscapes and embrace SEE (social, economic, ecological) principles to support communities in their efforts to restore ecological sustainability and resilience.

Arief’s work is to carry on his mother’s work and spread the message about the versatility, sustainability and application of bamboo for conservation and livelihood projects.



Arief Rabik instructs a Woodfordia group about how to plant bamboo



Growers should have no doubt that bamboo is ‘the sustainable plant of the future’, says Arief, citing properties including water storage, carbon efficiency, strength-to-weight ratio and cost effectiveness as a sustainable timber.

Arief’s most used references books are by two pioneers of the industry, Oscar Hildago Lopez’s *Bamboo: the Gift of the Gods*, and the *Anatomy of Bamboo*, by German researcher and wood scientist Walter Liese (who spent some time at the CSIRO in the late 1950s).

‘The amount of wisdom and knowledge in their books and presentations is phenomenal,’ he says.

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Original plantings progressing well as the new ones are planted in swales.

Linda's vision was to take advantage of clumping bamboo's capacity for holding water for watershed rehabilitation and restoration. Bamboo also has a lot of potential to absorb CO₂ and contribute to locking up carbon through sequestration.



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A Woodfordia bamboo structure (CaveUrban Collective)

‘The international consensus is 50 tonnes per hectare per year for mature clumpers, but I think it’s capable of more, up to 100 tonnes,’ Arief says. This figure needs to be officially validated by carbon accounting authorities, but it is exciting nonetheless.

‘There’s a Chinese proverb that says ‘if you give one thing to bamboo it will give you back 10 things.

‘My message to Australian farmers would be, create a cooperative, reach out and work together with the young generation, as they are the glue, to get them going, to share knowledge, techniques and networks.

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Bamboo Plates



Hi, my name is Sharon, I am a 38 year old stay home mum and my passion behind *Emondo Kids* comes from wanting to make mealtimes a little easier for fussy eaters, but especially for mums and dads just like me while still looking after my child and our Planet.

I thought, what if I could have a plate that was fun enough to keep them distracted, strong enough to resist multiple tantrum throws and healthy enough for my child and for the planet?

Based on the Sunny Coast of Queensland, I design practical bamboo plates and training chopping boards for children, inspired by the beautiful Australian Wildlife.

All of our products are made of 100% bamboo and are eco-friendly, sustainable and biodegradable but also a lot of fun, with kids health and imagination in mind.



They can be the perfect gift and keepsake for your loved ones as they will last for a long time if cared for properly.

My products are currently being manufactured in China, due to the lack of an Australian bamboo manufacturer in this field, however I am a member of the Bamboo Society of Australia and I'm working very closely with them in the hope to realise my dream of producing my designs in Australia.

There is definitely a demand for these products in Australia as I have already secured several wholesaling collaborations around the country and the product is on high demand.



www.emondokids.com.au



By Mark McCarthy

Bambusa Balcooa

Large specimens are a familiar sight along the NSW coast. Standing out in the grazing paddocks of many farms. Untouched for decades, they sometimes contain metres of rotting culms in the centre. Native to NE India the plants introduced into Australia are reported to have come from South Africa where it has been growing since the 1600's.

Balcooa has been disappearing from nursery species lists as there are now many species that have better growth habits.

The wood is strong and over four years old develop some attractive dark markings. Care must be taken when harvesting as the leaning culms can jam a saw or spring away when cut through. The strong branches can stop the culms from being easily removed, often requiring the use of a four-wheel-drive or tractor to pull them out.

Storing the culms for one year is beneficial as they need to dry and any signs of borer will usually happen over the summer months. The borer can be treated by immersion in a Borax bath (*Solubor* is the easiest to use). To allow the culms to sink into the bath, drill 5mm holes through the bud to the internodes, either side of the node. The alignment of the buds on alternate sides of the culm will allow the liquid to enter one hole as the air escapes the other. Once in the bath, the treatment can enter the culms from the ends through the vascular system.





Left: Mature stand of Balcooa growing at Kalang NSW. The wide-angle lens does exaggerate the height a bit, but this is one of the tallest stands I have ever seen (notice person at left of base).

Above: Dead culms in the centre of clump. The best wood lies between this rotting timber and the newer growth on the outside. A technique called 'keyholing' requires cutting away a section of newer culms to access the wood aged between 4-7 years, which is ideal for construction as the starch levels have reduced with age.

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Above: Drilling into the internodes to allow culms to sink into treatment bath.

Left: A simple treatment bath using star pickets and sheet iron with a lining of black builders plastic and shade cloth to prevent sharp edges perforating plastic.

Opposite page: Balcooa culms curve skyward with heavy branching towards the top.

Poles harvested which are over four years old will require little or no treatment as starch levels have dropped considerably.

Low humidity levels during drying, can cause the culms to crack, so painting the ends will slow down rapid moisture loss.

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Left: Balcooa timber is strong and suitable for construction as in this garden seat built with Balcooa and repurposed materials.

Opposite page: If the structure is stable enough (this one has a hardwood frame) the culms can be placed on river stones to prevent contact with the earth.

Below: The lower sections of Balcooa have very thick walls and can be bolted together without crushing. With thinner, upper sections, bolting close to a node also helps.

Balcooa wood is susceptible to fungal attack, requiring it to be coated, especially the end grain. In this situation a decking treatment was used (Ultradeck). Even the old culms which had grey patches were revived by the honey-coloured coating. End grains were given extra coats and the exposed internodes at the top of each culm were filled with sand and cement and coated.

This also helps with the strength when bolting on the roof. If the structure is sturdy enough it can be sat on river stones to keep the bamboo away from the soil and moisture. Recoating with the decking treatment every four years will ensure a long life. ■



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A dense forest of tall, green bamboo stalks. The stalks are vertical, with visible nodes and some lighter-colored patches. The background is a soft-focus green, suggesting more foliage.

Feature Property

Vicki & Wayde Crow's

Crowcraft Bamboo

Leaving the Bulga Road, the gravel passes by grazing properties and up ahead the morning sun lifts above the tree covered hills. Rising up into the foothills, the road crosses a creek and into the coolness of the forest. It's here that Wayde and Vicki Crow have established an extensive bamboo plantation along a creek flat and up into the gullies and terraced slopes of their hilly block.

For the Love of bamboo

The most amazing plant, what can't be made or fixed with bamboo?

We moved to Marlee in 1982 and planted our first bamboos a year later. One of which turned out to be *Phy. bambusoids*, I had stumbled onto the fastest growing plant, growing as much as 1.2m in 24hrs. I was hooked and to this day I am still awestruck by bamboos capabilities.

Through misguided management, most of the topsoil which was the fertility of our property, is now sediment in the mouth of the Manning River. On hilly, marginal land like ours, the way to increase fertility is through old knowledge, proven concepts and most definitely NOT via big-dollar multi-national companies which have been leading us down the wrong path.

A better, cheaper way, within the laws of nature is to re-introduce to your soil microbial-life, which can cost so little via compost and compost teas, Biodynamic preparations or Biodynamic Farming Association inputs, feeding the microbes not the plant.

I think of weeds as fertilizer, bringing the green matter to the ground to compliment the dead matter, thus feeding the soil-life which in turn feeds the plants - how simple it really is. This thought makes the task all the more rewarding and by not involving poison, a clean and safe place to be.

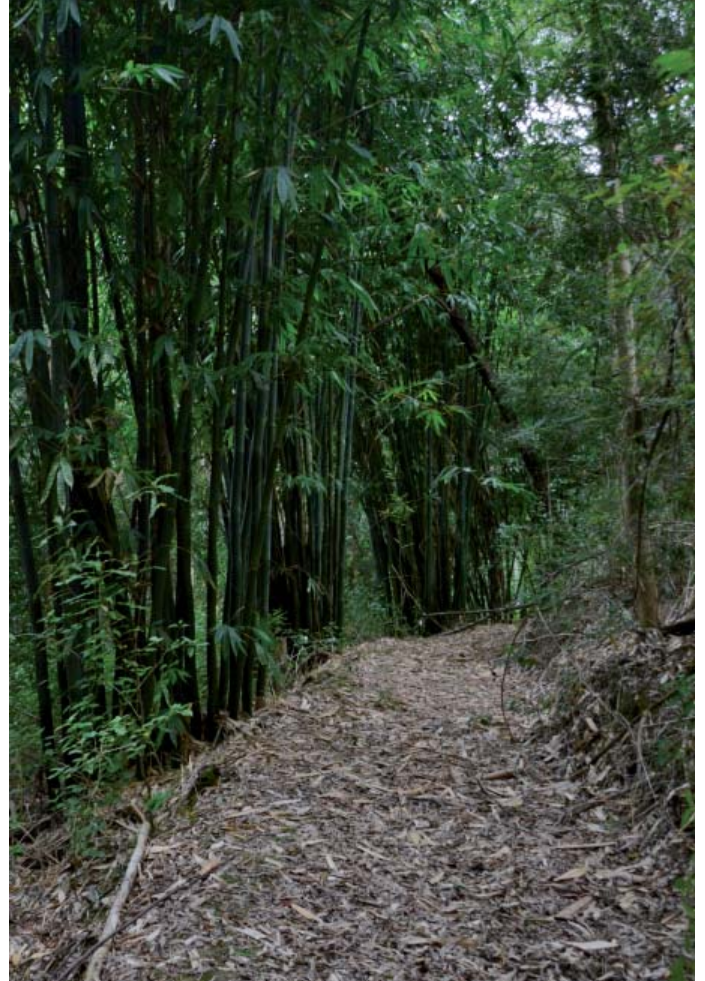


Right: The terraced hillside traps moisture and leaf fall to feed the plants growing along its edge.

*Below right: Colourful shoot of *Bambusa beecheyana* v. *pubescens*.*

*Opposite: *Chimonobambusa quadrangularis* - common name Square Bamboo, a naturally growing four-sided culm.*

Inset: Showing the horn-like spurs on the nodes.



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Australian soils, at the time Europeans arrived, were incredibly fertile, with high carbon with quotes of “soil so friable you can push your bare arm down into it. This carbon was sequestered mainly by perennial grasses, now science has proven that no carbon will be sequestered without soil-life - that explains why modern agriculture is constantly losing it. This leads to low nutrient-dense foods, which in turn weakens our (and animals’) immune systems, leaving us wide open to disease.

For more in depth information in this matter please Google Christine Jones, our World-renowned soil scientist, who has also enlightened me to the fact that 95% of the diversity of all life on this planet is found in healthy topsoil that has not been polluted with modern Agri (or Agro) practises.

Below: Shoots of Bambusa variegata.

Below right: Same culms a few months later.



It seems crazy that we are hindering the Earth’s systems of sequestering airborne carbon with poisons, meanwhile business-as-usual politics is holding back our free, clean energy future.

Now, back to a lighter note, we are sitting on the World’s best plant for sequestering carbon, not only in its structure but more importantly in the soil. A fibre source, through modern manufacturing, can be fashioned into all manner of things. Again, the plant to halt erosion and allow our environment to heal. The living plant has no volatile oils and is full of water, which along with other fire-retardant plants will help cool our surroundings.

Then there’s food - apparently No.4 in the World food crops - amazing!

Opposite: Vicki Crow’s bonsai bamboo, using the running species Pleioblastus viridistriatus (dwarf white-stripe bamboo) and small clumping multiplex species.





Another important concept is landform and placement, especially on sloping ground. The use of swales, terraces and contour banks or a combination of, to provide level access, collect mulch, prevent run-off and increase water retention which in itself increases fertility and aids in long-term maintenance.

Having the right plants after the earthworks is essential. Firstly, appropriate green manure and the more diverse the better, then bamboo ideally planted in the sweet spot on the lower bank, just below the level of the access path above. This gives an increase in soil depth with all the benefits from the swale above. More plants can be added, diversity is nature's key. Avoid combustibles.

We are blessed with a permanent creek with enough fall to run a hydraulic ram-pump which we now have two of and in good years gives us a free gravity feed water supply for home and nursery. Our water is heated by the sun and assisted by a wet-back wood heater which we can cook on. We have a PV Solar array which enables us to run an electric pump to assist when the creek flow is too low. We suffer the anti-incentive of 6c per kwh back to the grid. Regardless, we feel good about producing our

own clean power and try to utilise it as much as possible. It constantly disappoints me as I further learn how easy it is becoming to produce clean energy and conservative economics is telling us we need an integrated power grid with a blend of both clean and dirty energy. Let's face it, if your financial portfolio has any fossils in it, then you are supporting the problem. I am a grandfather of five glorious grandchildren and feel a heavy responsibility to safeguard a future for them and their children and so on, and the consequences of climate change hit me to the core.

One bamboo (*Bambusa textilis* var. *gracilis*) has proven itself as an extremely hardy, super-fast, tight form, low maintenance vertical screen plant and for this reason can be grown in every urban house yard. If grown Bio-friendly will lock up its share of CO² and I feel privileged to be involved in multiplying our best friend.

Sources and further reading:

Permaculture, BFA, Bio Dynamics Books, *The One-straw Revolution* by Masanobu Fukuoka, *Teaming With Microbes* by Jeff Lavenfels & Wayne Lewis.



A grove of Phyllostachys bambusoides growing on the creek flat. Inset: Wayne marks the new culms with a date and sells the poles when they are mature.



Flowering of *Melocanna baccifera*



Bamboo Society Life Member Barry O'Connell was surprised to find that his *baccifera* had flowered and set fruit.

This unusual bamboo forms a wide-spaced open clump. It has large leaves and the largest fruit of all bamboos.

"I have tried eating it. It doesn't have much taste and is very tough to chew. A bit like eating mature coconut meat, but tougher. Boiling it improves the flavour a little, but doesn't make it any easier to chew. I think the rats can have it." Barry said.

Tribal people use *baccifera* as medicine against low blood pressure. There are very few reports on the nutritional, chemical and medicinal aspects of *baccifera* fruits, possibly due to its infrequent once in 45-50 year occurrence.



References:

Bamboo World by Victor Cusack
www.nature.com/srep26135

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Moomba Birdman Rally 2017

What began as a “car load” of bamboo back in May last year supplied by James Mahoney was transformed into a flying machine by the “Design and tech” students at Parkes Christian school at Parkes, central NSW. This invention was for entry in the Moomba Birdman comp in Melbourne in early March 2017. For the full antics just Google “Moomba Birdman 2017.”

While this spectacle provides the peak attraction to Moomba visitors and attracting media coverage all over Australia, the strict rules provide enormous challenges to entrants, such as, wing span not over 8 metres, and total weight not above 40 KG to name the 2 critical to any distance flight. (the Gossamer Condor that flew the English



channel had a wing span of over 40 metres) Wing span we can do nothing about, but weight dictates how quickly gravity takes over and hence the distance flown. Therefore in a search of every material possible to lighten the construction the question of Bamboo arose. James Mahoney was an infinite source of knowledge in this matter and since he generously donated his bamboo the school could not go past the price offered.

Part of the education of both the teacher and the students was this fabulous product called bamboo. Easy to form , enormous strength to weight and perfect for the glider construction. Due to ignorance, inexperience



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and underestimating the strength and adaptability of Bamboo the centre section was made from PVC which in hind sight was a bad mistake. (heavy and weak)

However the end result was a glider that met all the rules and weighed just under 20 Kgs, half the allowable weight. Now we just had to get it 700 Km to Melbourne. Photos of the impending entry have to be submitted in advance to get qualification for entry and has to pass strict safety scrutiny as well. The organisers who have seen every conceivable construction over the years were apparently impressed by the photos to realise we has a good chance of winning our “hawk” section, so placed us second last to keep the crowd on their toes.

Despite a massive rigging failure (never trust the specs on nylon fishing line!!) which allowed the wings to bow, the school won the distance flown in our bamboo glider by over a metre longer than all the other competitors. It is only due to the extraordinary strength of the bamboo that saved a catastrophic total failure of the glider wing.

Next year’s entry is already on the drawing board and you will never guess, but it will feature even more bamboo



and hopefully weigh less again. The performance, strength to weight, and sheer delight to work with bamboo will make it impossible to go past in spite of all the “wonder” composites on the market today.

The school owes James an enormous vote of thanks for both his generosity and introducing the students to the wonders of Bamboo.








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Bamboo Society AGM

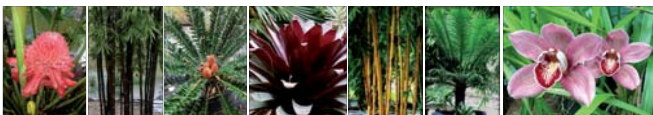
This year's Annual General Meeting will be held on the Sunday 2nd September at 1pm at Mark McCarthy's bamboo property at 543 Failford Road Failford where there are over 150 species growing amongst native forest species. From 10am there will be walks through the property describing the various bamboos.



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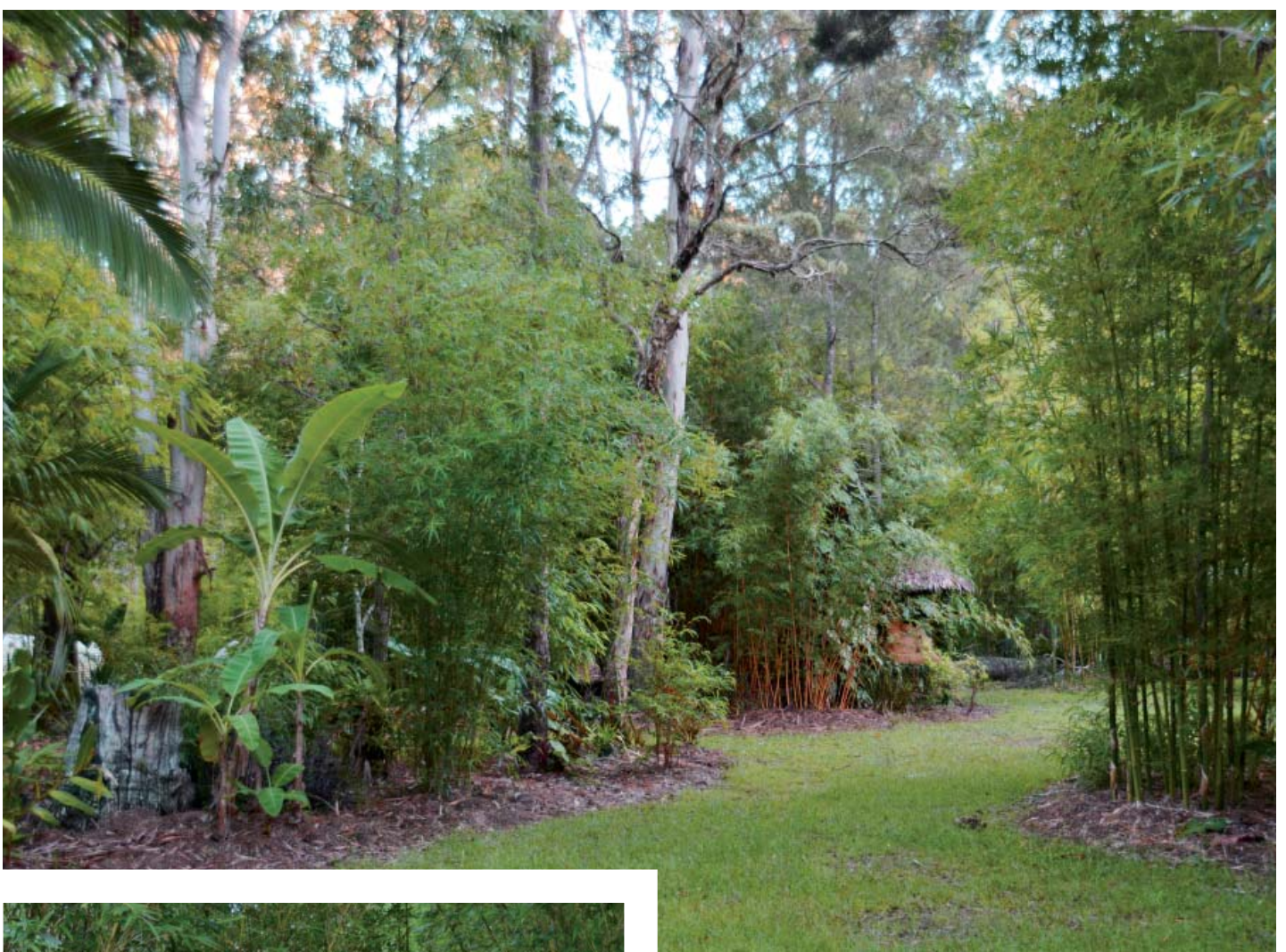
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Mexican Weeping Bamboos

Otatea acuminata acuminata & *Otatea acuminata aztecorum*





Origin: Mexico
Average Height: 5m for *acuminata*
 6m for *aztecorum*
Culm Diameter: 30mm
Minimum Temperature: 9m

Otateas grow in seasonally dry, tropical deciduous, or oak forests, often on limestone soils. The application of lime or dolomite is beneficial when growing in east coast Australia's typically acid soils.

A graceful, open-clumping ornamental with rhizome lengths up to half a metre. The culm sheaths are persistent on the lower part of the culm. The leaves are long and narrow, with *acuminata acuminata* being the finest.

This bamboo does not like wet feet. When planting in heavy clay, build a soil-bed on top of the clay with well-draining sandy loam and mulch well. Regular fertilizing and applications of lime will see this species thrive. ■

References:

Bamboo World by Victor Cusack

American Bamboos by Emmet J. Judziewicz, Lynn G. Clark, Ximena Londono & Margaret J. Stern.

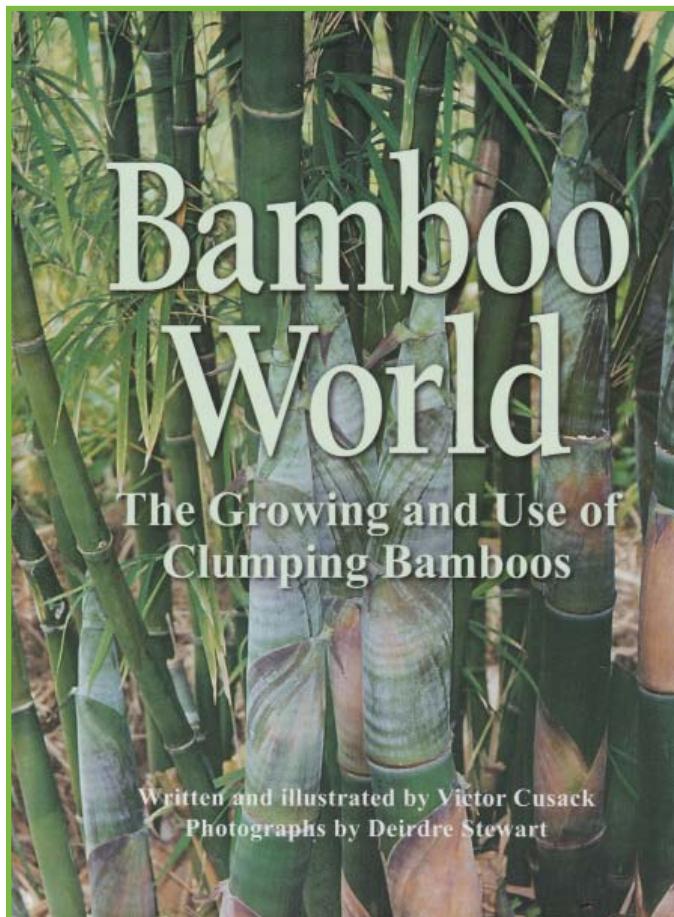
Above: acuminata aztecorum

Left: Young culm sheaths covered in dark velvet hair.

Opposit page: acuminata acuminata

What the...?

Many species of bamboo have variegated forms, some are incredibly striped. Bambusa oldhamii has only a green form, but sometimes it can develop a single stripe. The stripe starts and finishes just before the node and is relevant in width to the width of the culm.

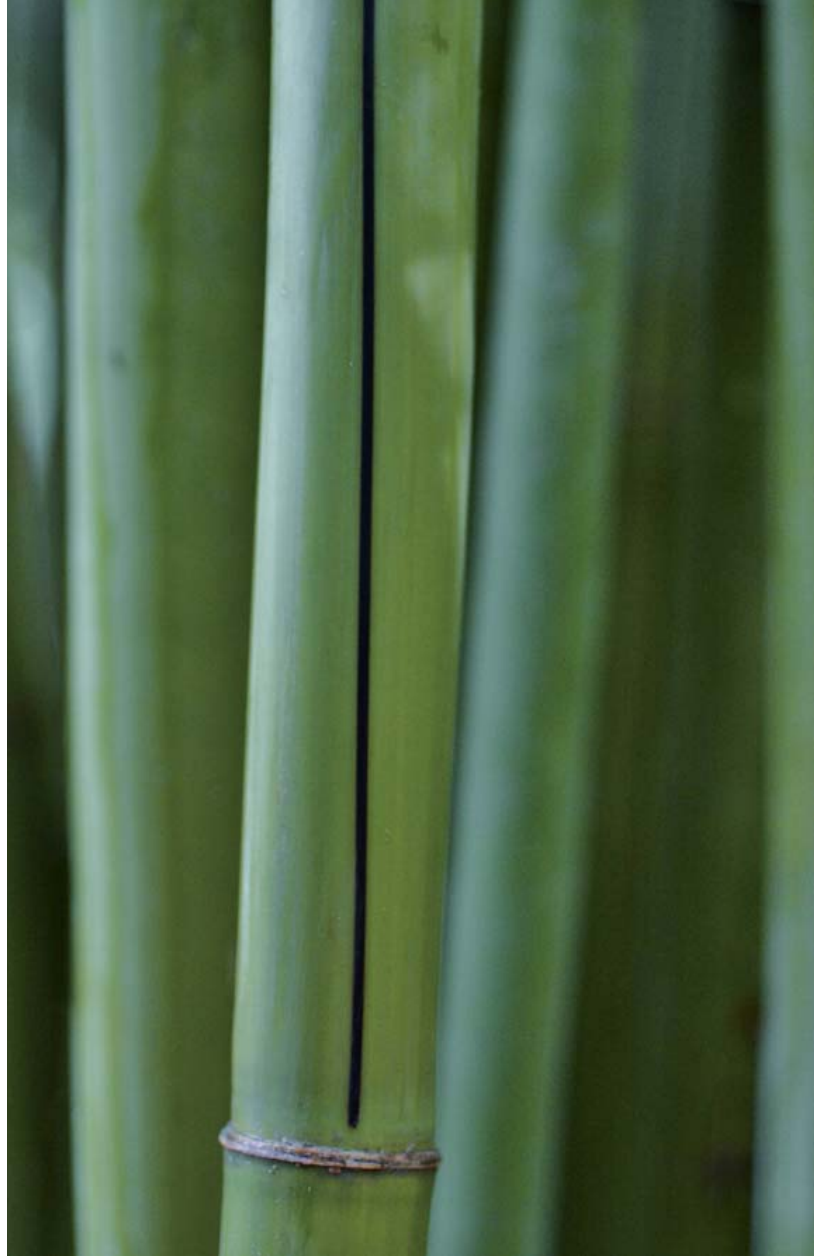


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*Stripes can be more commonly black, but occasionally a yellow one can occur. The black stripe above was found on a *Bambusa textilis gracilis* culm - keep an eye out for stripes on your oldhamii*

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Vale Linda Garland

Susanne Lucas, Executive Director of the World Bamboo Organization, met Linda in Japan in 1992 and they formed a lifelong friendship.

In her tribute, Susanne says:

Linda indeed showed the world what bamboo could do, and set the example of its realities. She inspired many, many people with her confidence and her abilities, her talents and her charm, and yes, she became known as the Queen of Bamboo. I'm not sure if she likes that moniker, Queen of Bamboo, but she has achieved a high rank of respect, no doubt. After the IV IBC, she realized many projects and achievements as her Environmental Bamboo Foundation became internationally recognized. Her research into preservation techniques brought advancements in the improved understanding of best management practices, and the IV IBC Proceedings were a compilation of the most recent developments in bamboo science and culture. Remember, this was well before the world-wide-web, and this kind of information was critical for bamboo to advance in modern-day applications.

Linda opened her door (and her heart) to students and designers, investigators and dreamers. Bali already held mystique to many, but now it had become a bamboo mecca, thanks to Linda. People came to meet her, to talk with her, to see what she was doing. Linda pioneered a new world of bamboo – one with tradition but with technological and design innovation – and she realized the vast environmental benefits, which are so now touted to mitigate climate change. Linda was simply a visionary. Linda was a World Bamboo Pioneer like no other, and we are so grateful. Thank you, Linda. May you always feel the bamboo breeze against your cheek, thanking you for crusading for its respect and its promise, as we will all remember your valuable contribution.

Linda Garland passed away on 3 January 2017.



Credit: Rio Hemli



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