

# bamboo

Vol. 20 No.1

bulletin



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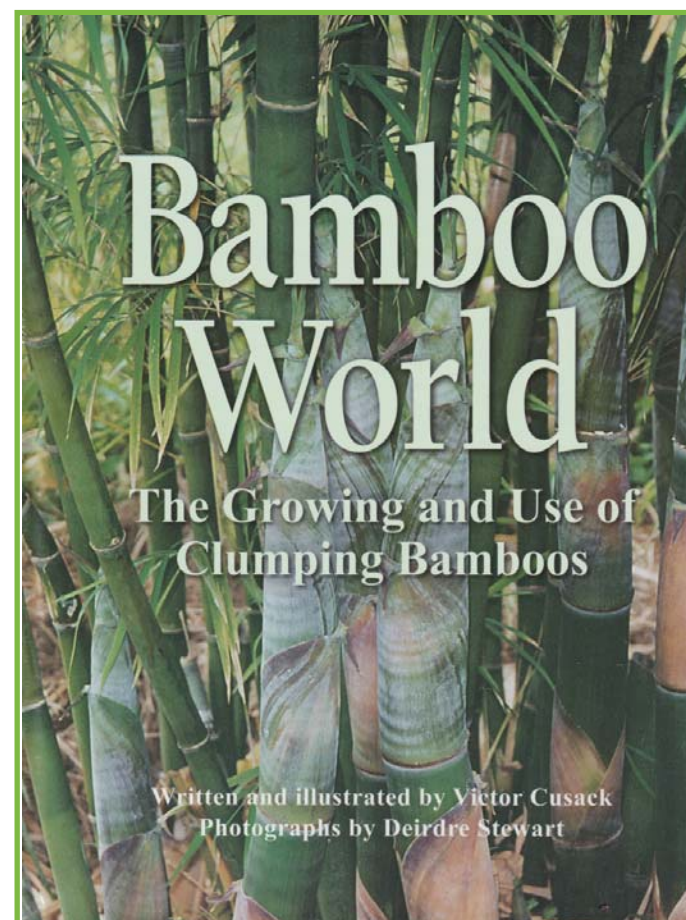




▲ *Pleioblastus fortunei*.

Front Cover Photo: *Pleioblastus viridistriatus*.

Both are ground-cover bamboos, suitable for pots. They need to be repotted every couple of years as the rhisomes quickly fill the pot. Cutting the old leaves back in winter will allow fresh growth in spring to show.



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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](mailto:editor@bamboo.org.au)

Front Cover Photo:  
*Pleioblastus viridistriatus*.



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# From the Editor's Desk

In this issue we look at the work of two bamboo designers, *Munir Vahanvati* and *Jaye Irving*, who both recently attended a conference in China. *The International Bamboo and Rattan Organisation (INBAR)* together with the *State Forestry Administration of China* held the *Global Bamboo and Rattan Congress (BARC2018)* in June. Ministers, Government officials, scientists, conservationists, educators and business leaders came together to discuss the sustainable development of bamboo and rattan to achieve its full potential. Their report from the Congress will appear in the next issue.

We start off with *Kate Marshall's* story from the Philipines, where she meets a retired priest who has traveled around Indonesia, collecting many species of bamboo for the local villagers to plant on the degraded hillsides to stop landslips which have blocked roads after cyclones have hit the island.

In the past there have been problems with the performance of micropropagated bamboo. In the last few years it has been reintroduced with similar problems, but here we look at an interesting addition.

*New culm of a young B. membranacea (Fineleaf).* ▶

◀ *Gigantochloa pseudoarundinacea.*



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# Become a 'Boo Friend' in the Philippines

By Kate Marshall



▲ Retired priest Victor Labao rallying the local villagers for a planting day on a degraded hillside.



If you're looking for a change of pace and a change of scene, why not visit the Philippines? More specifically, fly to the island of Cebu and take the meandering Transcentral Highway from booming Cebu City on the coast up through some spectacular scenery to the mountain municipality of Balamban.

A short (and bumpy) drive from the nearest town will take you to Kabilin Nature Farm and Bamboo Centre, where you will meet the owner, Father Victor Labao. Victor is a retired priest turned bamboo grower who over many years transformed a degraded block of land into a thriving business and bamboo livelihood centre for local farmers. I spent a few days there when I worked for Red Cross and that's where I learned to love bamboo. You know you're one of the gang when Victor calls you a 'Boo friend'.



▲ The whole village came out to help plant the bamboo to prevent landslips on the steep slopes.

▶ The villagers are taught to propagate bamboo from existing stands in the area.



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Planting bamboo in the bare soil above the huts on the steep slopes to stabilise and prevent landslip.

Villagers young and old contributed to the planting.

Victor's enthusiasm for all things bamboo is infectious, and you get the feeling he's on a mission to ensure his fellow Filipinos share his love for this truly wondrous plant. As he says: 'Bamboo is of tremendous economic and ecological importance in the world today.'

He even recounts the tale of when some caves on a remote part of the farm were used by villagers as a hiding place from the Japanese during the Second World War.

In 2013, Victor joined a group of people on a 1,000 km journey through four provinces in Indonesia. This adventure was made into a video called Bamboo Trekking and is used as a teaching aid for aspiring farmers.

Nowadays, though, Victor and his staff organise training sessions for local farmers who are interested in boosting their income through bamboo-growing, as it is used for so many different purposes such as building, furniture-making and house decoration.

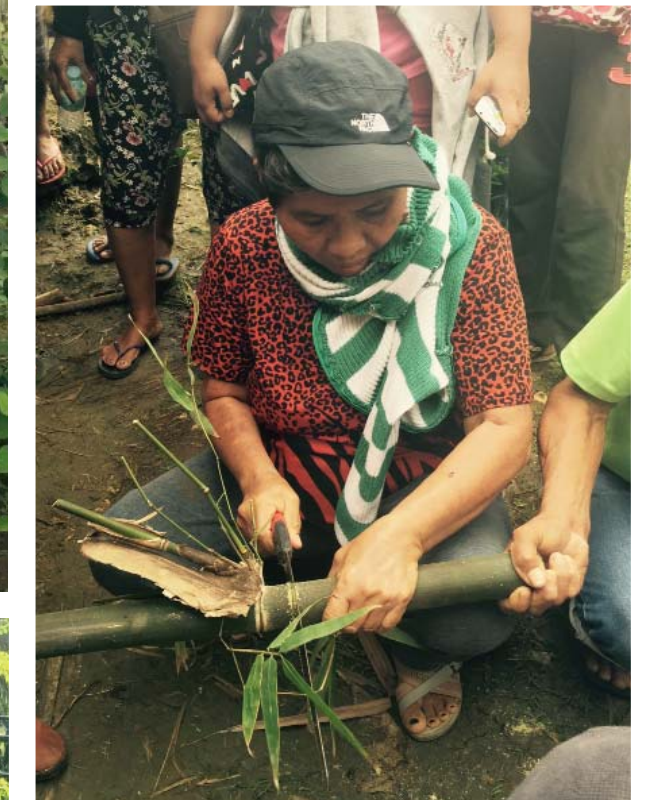
Last September 23 on World Bamboo Day, Victor and his team of volunteers took part in a massed effort to plant bamboo along parts of the Transcentral Highway, which cuts through landslide-prone areas in a country which experiences more than its fair share of natural disasters.



The label on this bamboo reads "Shiroshima B. Clumper" but it appears to be Hibanobambusa tranquillans 'shiroshima' - a running bamboo from Japan thought to be a natural hybrid between Sasa veitchii and Phyllostachys nigra 'Henon'. - Ed.

Reference: Bamboo For Gardens Ted Jordan Meredith, Timber Press.

Trimming fresh cuttings for the irrigated propagation beds.



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'These areas are right at the heart of the Central Cebu Protected Landscape in general and in the Kotkot-Lusaran Watershed in particular. Bamboo is a very important resource in protecting and rehabilitating not only our land and water resources but also in allowing biodiversity in these areas to recover,' Victor says.

Victor's plan to increase bamboo planting is twofold: to persuade local organisations to recruit volunteer planters and to find farmers and sponsors to donate propagules for volunteers to plant.

*A demonstration on an old culm, of a technique used for planting fresh cuttings, saw cuts are made on the internode of a 2-node cutting and a small section chiselled out (right).*



*The internode is filled with water and sealed with cling-wrap or tape. The fresh cuttings are then placed in the ground (right).*

'As well as lots of volunteers to join us, we need many sponsors to help us acquire as many bamboo propagules as possible that can be planted in these areas, not only on this day but also for the rest of the year.

'The island of Cebu needs to have a lot of bamboo planted considering our big issues of soil degradation, erosion and landslides, and watershed destruction, especially where there has been mindless development.'

Last year, World Bamboo Day in Cebu drew a wide variety of participants from local farming cooperatives, local government officials, quarry permit holders, businesspeople, academics members of the business community, police and military officers, academics and church groups.

'Our target is to plant between 2,000 and 5,000 bamboo propagules to start a province-wide bamboo planting project. We are determined to plant so much more from then on. 10-20,000 is our target for the year.





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'Together we hope we can raise more consciousness among our communities and institutions about bamboo as a very important ecological and economic resource for Cebuanos (inhabitants of Cebu),' he says.

Propagation material was taken from mature stands including *Gigantochloa atrovioleacea* and *Dendrocalamus asper* cv. 'Hitam' (right).



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# Gigantachloa levis

Origin: Philippines and Sabah  
 Average Height: 18m  
 Culm Diameter: 160mm  
 Minimum Temperature: 0c

This superior, straight-culmed bamboo develops orange tinted shoots, covered in brown hairs. The lower nodes are branchless and carry an overall cover of brown hairs on the basal internodes, becoming almost hairless and smooth, light green higher up. The culm wood is used for general construction and furniture and the edible shoots are sweet.

The white rings on the node are very obvious on stands grown in the shade of a forest, compared to those grown in full sun.

Orange-tinted, hair covered new shoots.





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# Micropropagation

By Mark McCarthy

*In micropropagation, cells from various parts of the plant are cultured in a specialised medium. Nutrients and hormones are manipulated so that the test-tube grown cultures differentiate into roots and shoots, ultimately forming a complete plant that can be planted in soil, but this is not a perfect science.*

There have been problems with tissue culture bamboos in the past and they continue with these new introductions. Plant material for *B. oldhamii* was introduced from an Indonesian form used for shoot production and is smaller than the form we have in Australia. Initial complaints were based on expectations that it would grow to the

same height as the Australian form, it is now realised that a smaller version of *B. oldhamii* has its uses and is now becoming popular.

Other problems with tissue cultured bamboo are more serious, with reports that *D. asper* 'Hitam' has only

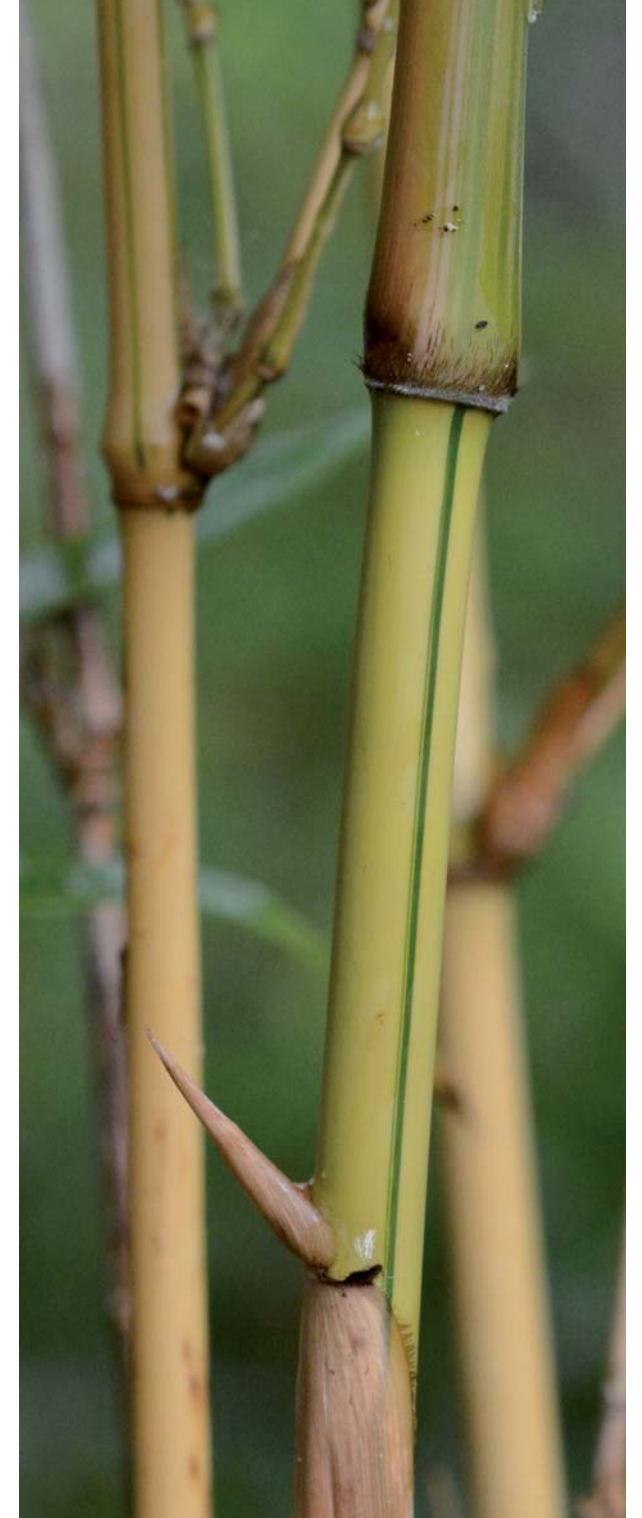
grown black culms for a few years before reverting back to green culms. The *B. multiplex* 'Alphonse Karr' grows only green culms where they should be yellow.

An interesting addition were plants labelled "*B. eutuldoides viridistriata*" which looked very different to the 'China Gold' we have in Australia. I had been admiring a bamboo on overseas websites called 'Asian Lemon Bamboo' it goes under the scientific name *B. eutuldoides viridistriata*, but the leaves are too big to be *eutuldoides*. It has pale yellow culms with green stripes like 'China Gold', but does not seem to have the cold tolerance and is not growing well in Victoria. It may turn out to be a tropical species. ■




▲ The leaves of Asian Lemon bamboo are bigger than those of China Gold.

▲ Tissue cultured *Dendrocalamus asper* growing out in a covered nursery.



▲ The culm sheath blades on *Bambusa* generally are held close to the culm, but on the Asian Lemon they are not.



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# Bamboo Designer Profile

Jaye Irving

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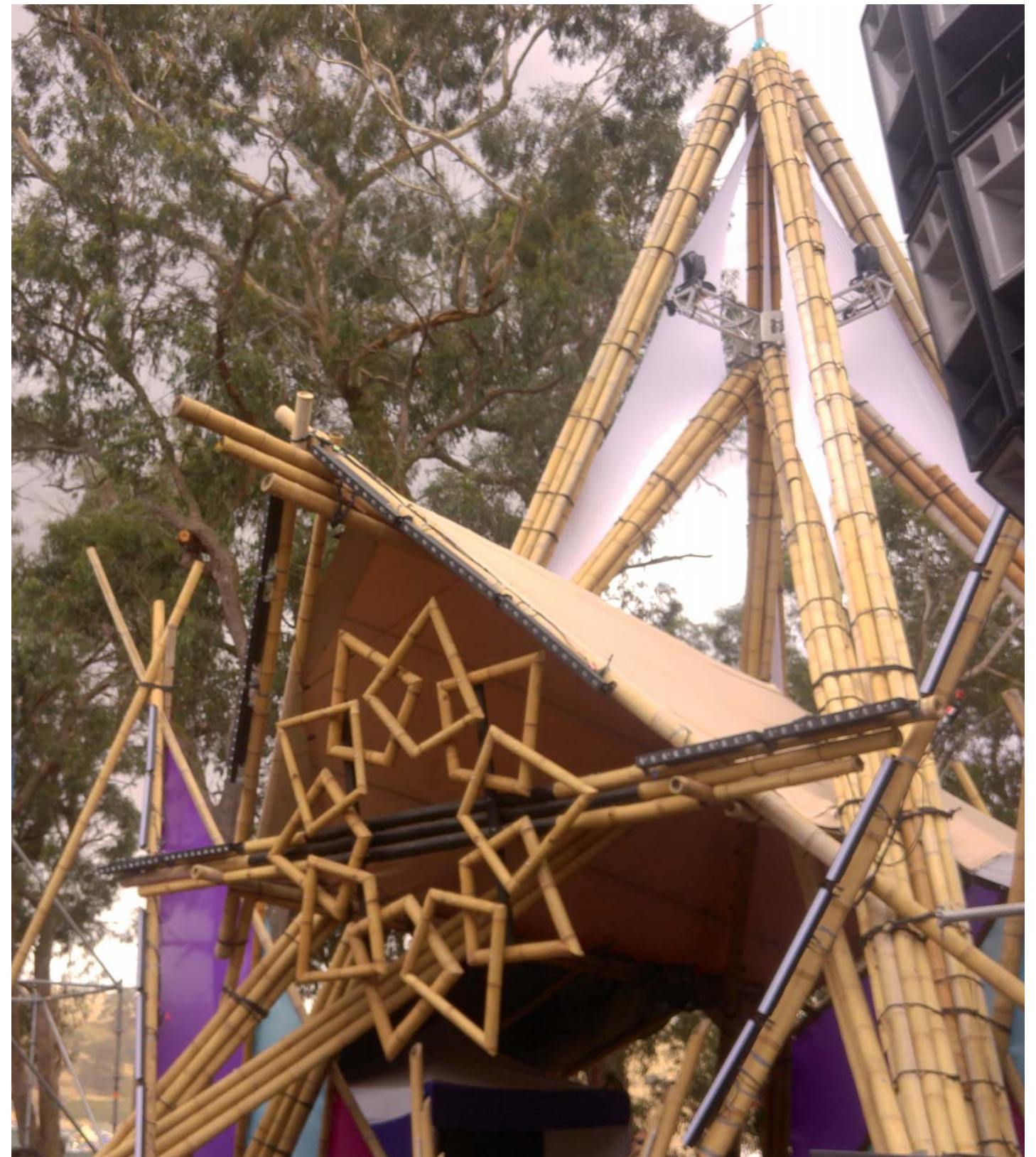
Lives : Northern Rivers NSW  
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Multi-award winning designer Jaye Irving has been flying the green banner of sustainability for nearly 20 years exploring the relationship between the natural and built environment. As an Architect, Builder, Permaculturist and Artist, his interest in natural materials has led him on a global search for grassroots green design, fortifying his skills in integrated food systems, ecological sewage design and a gambit of natural building practices including Bamboo, Hemp, Earth and Straw. At the core of these skills taught by simple craftsmen from around the world is their relationship with the environment.

An 18-year love affair with Bamboo has led him full circle and left Jaye a skilled and sought-after creator of all things bamboo. As a co-founder of the BOOCrew, Jaye has enjoyed the creative process and construction of over 50 bamboo structures world-wide evolving innovative and creative techniques. By observing bamboo's inherent properties of strength and flexibility, we can see many solutions and clues on how to face the 21st century challenges. When not globetrotting, Jaye spends his time in Northern rivers designing sustainable systems, building and sharing bamboo skills with community.



*Below and opposite: Jaye's designs for music festival structures.*



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## Pop-up Park - St. Alban's Bus Transfer Station

Bamboo: Treated Chinese Moso Bamboo (*Phyllostachys heterocycle*)  
Treatment Type: Borax

Braving the cool windy winter of Victoria, Barefoot Design has been working on the streets creating people-based structures in the suburban streets of St. Alban's. A recent commission has found Sustainable Architect and Bamboo Builder Jaye Irving working with Melbourne City Council to help bring life back to the streets. With the recent opening of a new bus transfer station, the Sunshine Council has decided to redevelop the old bus lanes in the bustling centre as a temporary place-making project that will be interactive, flexible and that will benefit the whole community. Barefoot Design was commissioned to design and build the Pop-up park within a 7-day timeframe in the centre of the Vietnamese-flavoured streets.

The structure was designed around the existing electrical substation to create a sense of space with a splash of colour and a shady spot to sit in the summer sun. The largest hurdle was locating bamboo in Victoria. After some research a local supplier of imported *Chinese Moso* with a Borax treatment was found able to supply over 200 poles. By creating a series of articulated scissor trusses,

we were able to anchor a strong flexible structure on which to attach the overhead sails. After the installation an exterior treatment of Turpentine and Linseed oil has been applied to create a temporary

The unpredictability of Melbourne weather had us battling rain, hail and strong winds with a few sunny days for good measure. With the help of some trusty bamboo cohorts aka James, Cesar and Sam, we constructed a beautiful structure in days and finished it off with a dash of colour to brighten up the drabness of Melbourne winter. The construction will be in place for the next 18 months as the city works on large scale redevelopment for the area.

*Moso* is the most important bamboo species in China, where it covers about 3 million ha. It is the main species for bamboo timber and bamboo shoot production and plays a very important role for the ecological environment. "Mao Zhu" is the Chinese name of *Moso* bamboo, meaning "hairy bamboo". Its Latin name is *Phyllostachys heterocycla* var. *pubescens* or *Ph. edulis*.







## Growing Bamboo on the Mid North Coast NSW

*On the Mid North Coast of New South Wales, the area around Kempsey is a concentration of bamboo growers. With nurseries dating back to the early 1990's, many tropical species were introduced to this temperate climate which has a variety of soil types and microclimates.*



The winters can be cold and dry with frequent frosts. Properties protected from the harsh conditions were able to grow more tropical species. Most of the rain comes from east coast low-pressure systems in Autumn. Thunderstorms in early summer will promote shoots, but without follow-up rain, may not grow as tall.

Early shooting species do better, late shooting species or species that have slower culm development, due to the cooler environment, may never reach full height.

Tropical species like *Gigantochloa* rarely reach their full potential at lower latitudes than the Mid North Coast NSW.

The fertility of the soil can make a difference to the ability of a bamboo to handle fluctuating conditions. Those grown in mineral rich soils will handle extremes of their natural temperature tolerance.

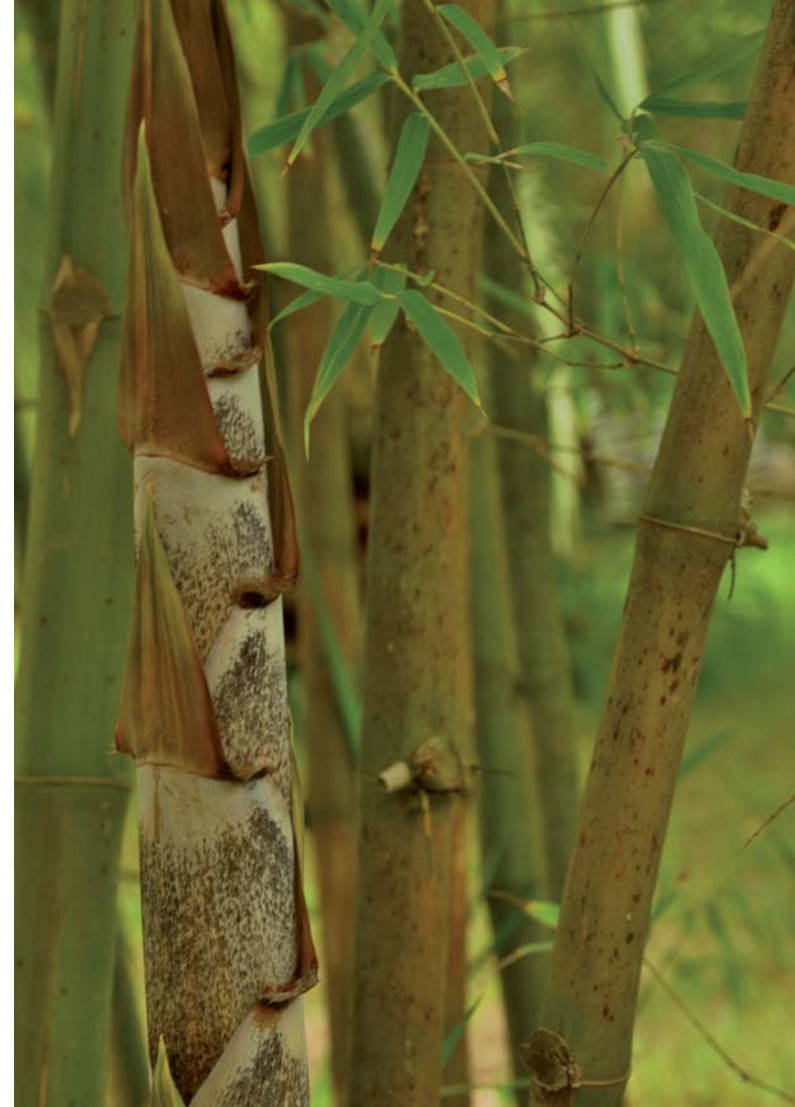


◀  
*The large, dark shoots of *Dendrocalamus giganteus*.*

▶  
*A stand of *Dendrocalamus giganteus*. The dark markings on the mature culms are caused by the sun.*







◀  
*Opposit page: A small form of B. membranacea. There are many forms of this bamboo, after a flowering in the early 1990's. Growing in heavy clay, this one remains small, only reaching 4m. Membranacea is a lowlands bamboo requiring a moist soil and frost-free environment to look its best.*

◀  
*A typical membranacea shoot.*








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Temperate running species such as *Moso*, do well on creek flats with permanent water, as rainfall in spring is infrequent during shooting season. ■

◀ Rising up from the creek flat the rhisomes have traveled under the road and continued up the hillside.



◀ The permanent water supply and rich volcanic soil have produced large culms exceeding typical heights. One culm cut down measured 29m.

▶ Centimetres of leaf mulch protecting the root system enable this grove to advance.





# Bamboo Designer Profile

## Munir Vahanvati

*Giant Grass Designer & Architect*

### Giant Grass

Giant Grass is a Melbourne based design + build studio working at the intersection of art, design and construction. We believe that good design should be accessible to everyone and can make a difference.

We not only design... we also like to get hands-on building it ourselves. Although we specialise in designing with bamboo, we work with materials that are fit for purpose. Our projects range from buildings, playscape, pop-up spaces, interiors to ephemeral structures. Everything we do is focussed on creating communities & inspiring spaces.

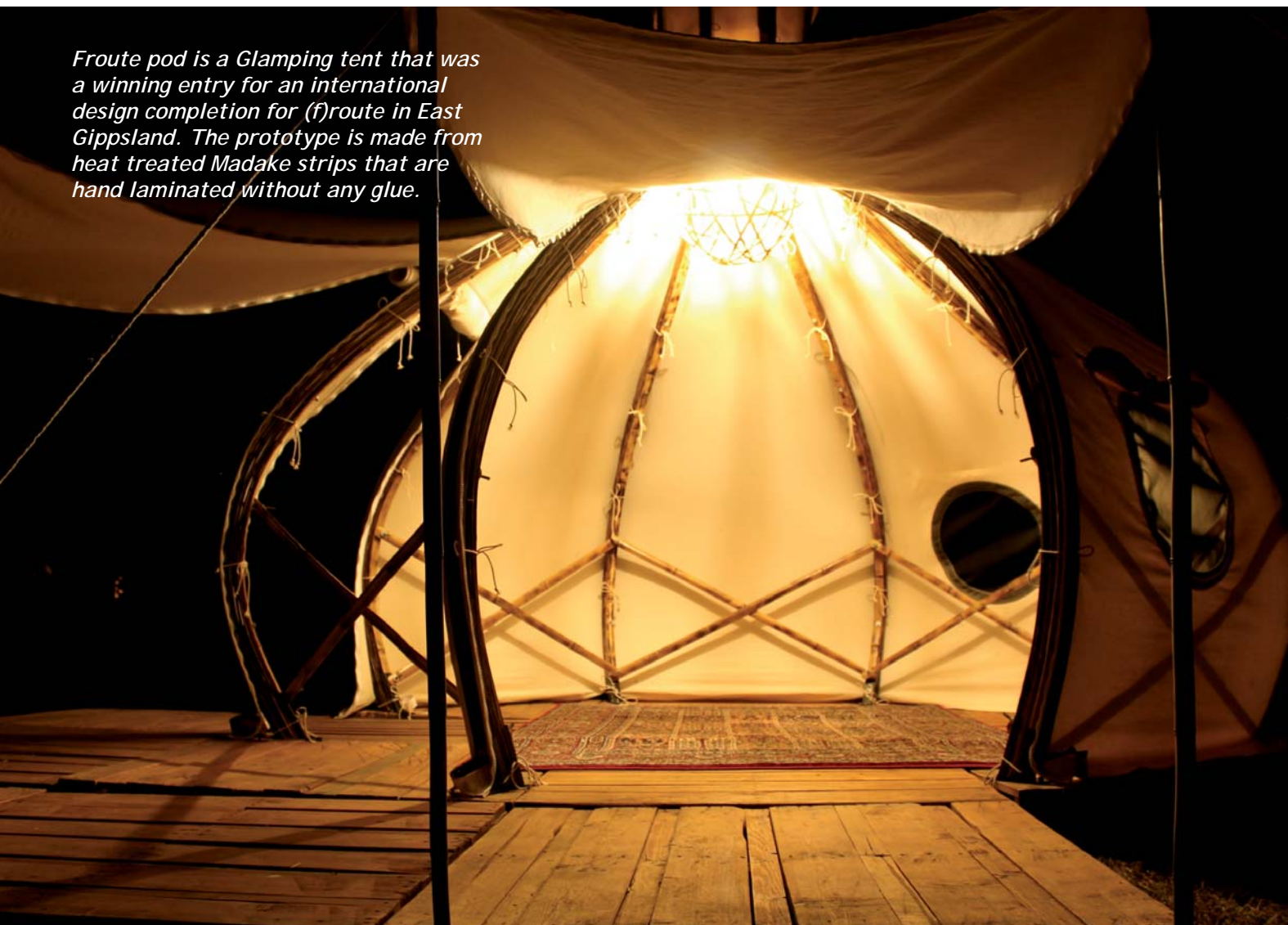
We regularly run hands-on construction workshops to share our experience.

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◀ Munir and his wife Mittul inside the Froute pod.



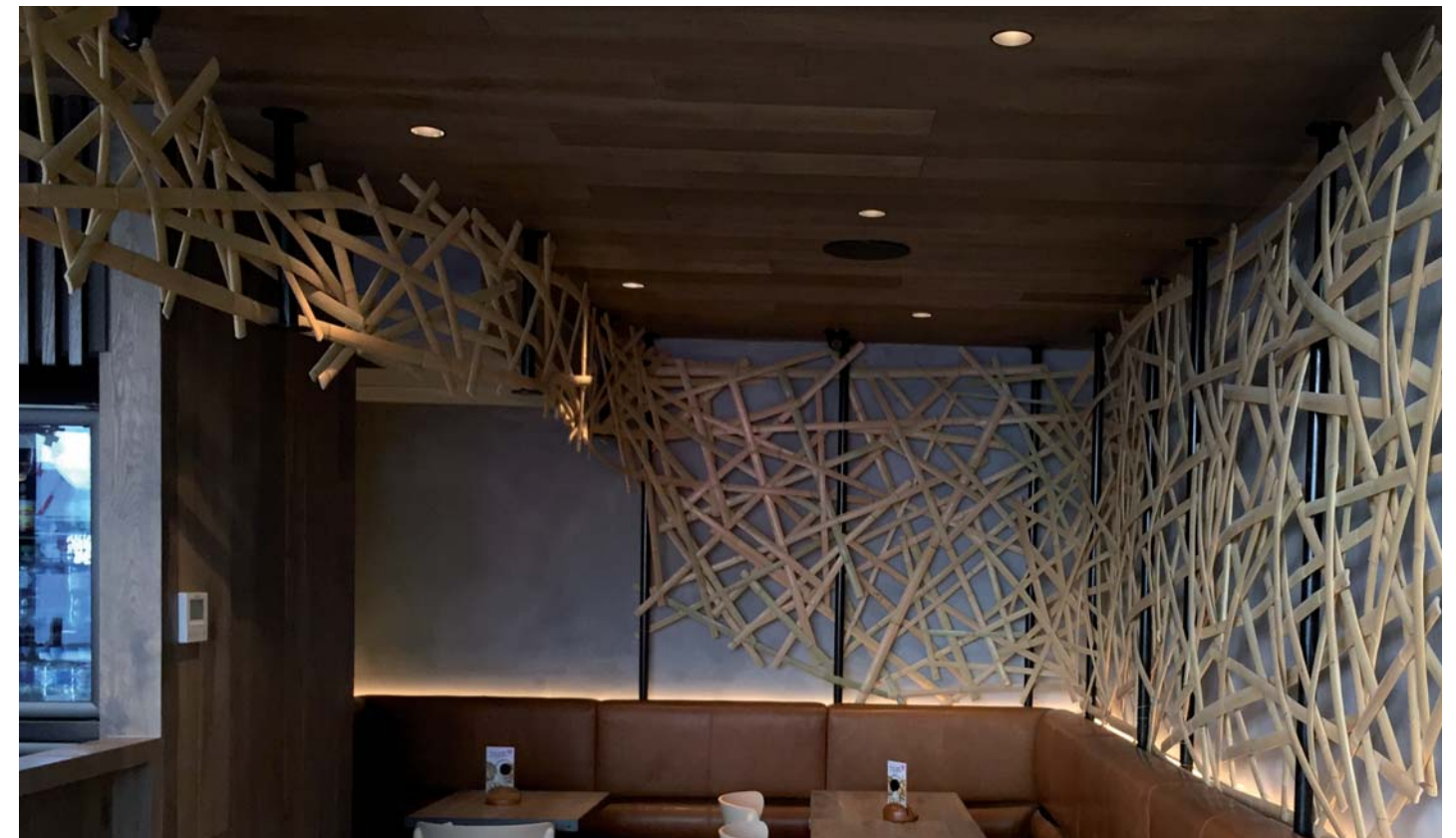
*Froute pod is a Glamping tent that was a winning entry for an international design completion for (f)route in East Gippsland. The prototype is made from heat treated Madake strips that are hand laminated without any glue.*



### ▲ Trawalla sculpture

*This eggs shaped sculpture is built from pahang cane for a private residence in Toorak, Victoria.*

▼ *This woven interior is made from woven locally sourced moso strips for Nandos in the heart of Melbourne opposite red square.*







*This small shade structure was built as part of a 2 day construction workshop for a community garden Peppertree Place in Coburg, Victoria. The structure is made from locally sourced Balcooa along with some imported bamboo stakes and tanking cane that were available in the garden.*



### **Bamboo Duck Dome**

*The duck dome is a ferrocement structure made as part of a 2 day construction workshop at Permaculture Sydney Institute at St. Albans, NSW. It uses a combination of Oldhamii bamboo strips and galvanised steel mesh plastered with a thin coat of cement plaster.*







# Gigantachloa luteostriata

*Origin:* South Kalamantan  
*Average Height:* 5m  
*Culm Diameter:* 30mm  
*Minimum Temperature:* -2c

One of the smaller species of gigantochloa, a tight-clumping ornamental, it will grow in full sun, but looks its best when grown in shady locations. The culms have thin stripes on the basal internodes. New leaves are striped and turn to green as they age. Shoots can be white to pink with green striping.





# Bamboo Digeridoos



In the duty-free area of Mascot Airport in Sydney, there are bamboo digeridoos for sale. The bamboo is sourced from NSW, replacing those previously made of pine, which had to be turned and drilled. The bamboo still needs to be turned to remove waxes and silicone so they can be painted by traditional artists from the Biripi people.

They are only 500mm in length - to fit overhead luggage compartments - which could limit their sound quality, but they are beautifully painted and ideal as a tourist memento.

Another step forward for Australian grown bamboo, even if a small one.



▲ Jim Mahoney found this while on a trip overseas.

## BAMBOOS WHOLESALE

Jason Bebendorf

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Red Cloud Bamboo

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Back Cover Photo:

An avenue of *Bambusa textilis* with *B. textilis gracilis* in the centre and *G. luteostriata* centre right.



