

Surf Coast Shire

# Edible Landscapes Initiatives



**Edible Landscapes Committee**

May 2014

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## Introduction

*Edible Landscapes Initiatives* is a community-based group of projects that sees Surf Coast Shire Council working with various stakeholders to encourage local communities to plant, map and nurture heritage and indigenous fruit plants.

Council recognises the valuable role that edible landscapes can play in achieving positive environmental, social and economic outcomes for local communities. On a social level for example, edible landscapes bring people together and showcase the multiple benefits of growing and eating local, organic produce. Edible landscapes can also enhance an area's visual appeal by providing beautiful community spaces.

This document has been developed by Council's Environment Unit, in conjunction with the Edible Landscapes Committee, to support various initiatives for establishing and maintaining edible landscapes across Surf Coast Shire. It outlines a range of initiatives to foster and promote local food security in the Shire, to enhance local biodiversity values and to leave a legacy of edible landscapes for future generations.

*Edible Landscapes Initiatives* is an example of Council delivering on its Council Plan 2013 – 2017 commitment to develop initiatives with community groups to enhance food security internally and externally. Other related Council Plan strategies include exploring opportunities for carbon farming and supporting opportunities for carbon-capture agriculture methods. Other relevant Council strategies include Council's adopted Climate Change Strategy 2011 – 2016 (support and partner with community groups that actively contribute to sustainability and adaptation outcomes) and the Surf Coast Shire Health and Wellbeing Plan 2013 – 2017 (healthy and engaged communities).

*Edible Landscapes Initiatives* has been developed to support the strategic delivery of these Council commitments. Whilst *Edible Landscapes Initiatives* identifies specific projects, it is designed to be broad enough so that over time, Council can work with the community on new opportunities as they emerge.

Four key criteria have driven the selection of edible landscape projects:

- Connecting community
- Improving local food security
- Improving biodiversity
- Improving fertility and carbon in soils

Local government is increasingly playing a larger role in promoting and enhancing local food security. A Victorian Local Government Urban Agriculture Network has now been established involving various councils and a draft Urban and Regional Food Charter developed. Surf Coast Shire Council is a member of this network and the Geelong Food Alliance. Other councils involved in food security initiatives include the City of Yarra, City of Melbourne, City of Port Philip, Moreland City Council and Hepburn Shire Council. Leading interstate councils include Brisbane City Council and Byron Shire Council. The Federal and State governments also promote various food security initiatives.

*Edible Landscapes Initiatives* is a tangible example of Council delivering its Council Plan commitment to leadership in innovative environmental practices.



*Food security is a matter of concern for the whole community. The issues of accessibility, affordability and sustainability of our food supply presents important challenges for the future. Food security is already a concern in low socio-economic groups. But it is also becoming an issue at state, national and international levels. Local government authorities play an important role in developing relevant, integrated and long-lasting strategies and solutions for food security and food systems issues.*

**Vic Health: Victorian Government**

<http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/2013>



## General aim

*Edible Landscapes Initiatives* provides a broad and diverse range of projects to position Surf Coast Shire Council as a leader in edible landscapes and carbon farming practices in Australia while ensuring sustainable landscapes continue to be protected and enhanced for future generations.

## Key environmental outcomes

*Edible Landscape Initiatives* directly aligns with Council's environmental priorities as articulated in the *Council Plan 2013-2017* and the *Surf Coast Shire Climate Change Strategy 2011-2016*. In addition, as indicated in *Appendix I*, it meets several other key Council strategies and plans, including the *Surf Coast Shire Health and Wellbeing Plan 2013 - 2017* while also supporting a range of related initiatives currently underway.

It is envisaged the initiatives will help to achieve the following key environmental outcomes:

- reducing greenhouse gas emissions;
- improving biodiversity values;
- enhancing local food security; and
- engaging Surf Coast communities in preserving and enhancing the local environment.

## Key social and economic outcomes

*Edible Landscape Initiatives* also aligns with Council's community and development and growth priorities outlined in the *Council Plan 2013-2017*, and links with other key Council strategies and plans identified in *Appendix I*. As such, it will contribute to:

- improving community and individual health and wellbeing outcomes;
- providing opportunities for enhancing community connectedness;
- supporting various urban renewal, beautification and open space projects, and
- expanding economic outcomes.

Each initiative identifies a range of expected project-specific benefits.



## Edible landscape initiatives

The *Edible Landscapes Initiatives* currently comprises the following initiatives:

1. Connecting with Children
2. Preserving heritage edible landscapes
3. Original orchards
4. Community gardens
5. 'Love Local'
6. Community Commons
7. Urban farms
8. Carbon farming
9. On-farm composting

Each of these initiatives is described in more detail on the following pages.





## 1. Connecting with Children

Council believes that working with children and providing opportunities for them to learn new skills can not only be fun but instructive as well. The following edible landscape projects are designed to be simple, practical and educational and complement the current school curriculum.

### Heritage Orchards for Schools

Heritage Orchards for Schools builds on the great work local schools are already doing to promote healthy eating and growing food. It is a simple, low-cost initiative requiring minimal resources from Council and participating schools to achieve significant sustainability, community capacity building and partnership building outcomes.

The initiative involves partnering with local schools, the Diggers Club and Timehelp (a community volunteer program for over 55s and retired people) to plant and nurture heritage fruit trees. Participating schools receive a collection of 10 heritage fruit trees - hand selected by the Diggers Club for their hardiness, fruiting times, yields and flavours - along with \$250 towards irrigation and fertilisation costs. Timehelp volunteers share their knowledge and skills with teachers and students by helping them to plant and maintain each school's orchard.

Successfully piloted at Anglesea Primary School in 2013, the initiative has been progressively rolled out to another 10 schools in 2014, with plans underway to roll it out to all Surf Coast kindergartens from late 2014. It has received active support from key community groups (e.g. Green Mums, Surf Coast Energy Group and Transition Towns), from Council's Parks and Open Space Unit and from Surf Coast Shire councillors.

To date, this initiative has cost Council less than \$5,000 to implement, plus staff time. In addition to achieving the key environmental and social outcomes identified on page 2, project-specific benefits include:

- planting of multiple orchards;
- providing positive learning experiences for children;
- expanding opportunities for retirees to exercise, interact socially and share their knowledge with younger generations;
- increasing children's gardening skills and knowledge of food sources and healthy eating, and
- improving soil fertility.



### Insect hotels

Insect hotels aim to address declining insect and native bee populations by providing an opportunity to learn about biodiversity and the importance of these creatures to our future food security and the vital need to protect their habitat.

Council has recently started working towards introducing insect hotels into Surf Coast Shire by bringing together local Men's Sheds to build the hotels for placement in local schools, kindergartens and community gardens. The aim is to provide visual reminders about the important work that insects perform in our community while educating children and adults alike. More importantly, the hotels will offer our local insects beautiful homes (habitat) to live, work and play in.





## Preserving heritage edible landscapes

Surf Coast Shire has a proud history of fruit growing and farming, much of which has been or is at risk of being lost. This initiative aims to preserve, restore and build local heritage fruit orchards, initially by reinstating the original orchard at Winchelsea's historic Barwon Park Mansion and creating a new National Trust heritage orchard at the Community and Civic Precinct in Torquay.

The *Herefordshire Orchards Community Evaluation Project 2012* (a four year study of six orchards in Herefordshire, England) clearly identified the critical importance of local orchards for different groups of people. This two-year project assessed the triple bottom line value (environmental, social and economic) of six orchards in Herefordshire. The project brought together input from farmers, local natural species recorders and other experts, tourists visiting Herefordshire and local residents. It found:

*Local people had overwhelming positive responses to the presence of orchards in their area. Enjoying nature and visual attractiveness of orchards were the most important social values, followed by access for activities. Through the changing seasons, orchards provide a window on nature and a place for green exercise and, encouragingly, people recognise that these are valuable.*



### **Proposed project: Barwon Park Mansion Heritage Orchard**

The project will establish a heritage orchard behind Barwon Park Mansion, adjacent to the stables, that recalls the estate's history while educating visitors, through interpretative signage and other means, about food security then and now.

*"When wealthy pastoralist Thomas Austin built Barwon Park Mansion in 1871, the estate employed up to 200 outdoor and indoor staff at times. It was both a small town and a factory, self-sufficient in many foods. In the days before refrigerated storage, orchards were planted with apples, pears, plums, quince, figs, each with several varieties imported from England. Staff could preserve fruit as jams in jars, and as cider to be consumed in other seasons."*

**Roger Southern, Historical Advisor for the National Trust**

Volunteers will be involved in creating the heritage orchard, which will comprise 44 heritage cider trees and fencing. Based on the experiences of similar National Trust estates across Victoria that have heritage orchards (eg Werribee Mansion, Como House, Ripponlea), the project will potentially provide a tourist destination in its own right and income through restaurants buying its heritage fruits, which are traditionally hard to source. It will also add to the estate's beauty and overall tourism appeal.

### ***Proposed project: Community and Civic Precinct National Trust Heritage Orchard***

The planting of a heritage orchard on Council land at the Community and Civic Precinct in Torquay would help to beautify this currently barren and windy area, including by softening the view of the new Torquay Secondary College. Council has approached the National Trust requesting advice on appropriate plantings and assistance with developing a plan for the area. The intention is to create an edible landscape that contributes to the precinct's appeal as a destination for sporting activities, dog walking, community events and various other endeavours.

Both projects will also provide models for other heritage orchard projects across Surf Coast. The Anglesea Community Garden, for example, has already shown interest in planting and maintaining the Anglesea Historical Society Orchard while Council is also investigating other potential sites (eg roadsides, cemeteries, Council-owned facilities).

Project-specific benefits related to preserving heritage edible landscapes include:

- improving soil fertility
- enhancing local amenity and visual appeal
- supporting seasonal food diversity
- providing habitat for fauna
- expanding knowledge of food harvesting and preservation techniques along with general food education opportunities
- increasing tourism opportunities, and
- creating opportunities for community involvement.

## 2. Original orchards

Surf Coast Shire's original custodians, the Wadawurrung people, were highly skilled at managing and cultivating indigenous plants and animals for food. Historical records contain numerous accounts by early settlers commenting on the fine health of Aboriginal people and their ability to spend no more than a few hours a day sourcing food. William Buckley, who spent much time living at Breamlea, recorded an abundance of food in the northern part of Surf Coast Shire. Other authors wrote about Aboriginal women cultivating yam daisies in grasslands, such as those found around Winchelsea.

Today, bush food is exploding on the culinary scene with many well-known chefs and local restaurants keen to source locally-produced 'bush tucker'. The establishment of an 'original orchard' of bush foods would recognise and conserve the skill and knowledge of the Wadawurrung in food production while educating others. This would contribute to finding more sustainable food production methods that could also encourage niche businesses and the like.

Council has recently approached the Wadawurrung with initial discussions indicating support for establishing an 'original orchard' in Surf Coast Shire. Project-specific benefits could include:

- increasing people's knowledge and understanding of indigenous food sources and production techniques
- providing opportunities to partner with Wadawurrung people
- promoting education in relation to indigenous food, and
- protecting and enhancing indigenous food.



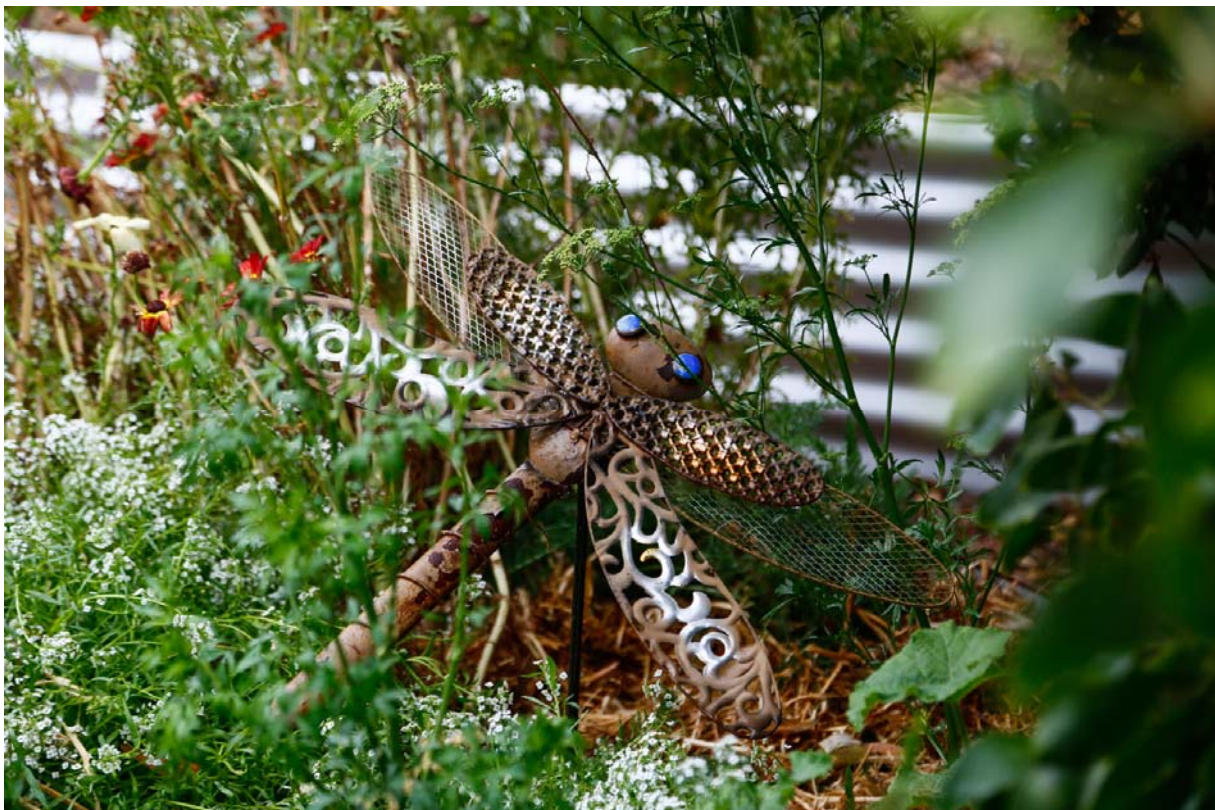
### 3. Community gardens

Surf Coast Shire boasts three active, dynamic community gardens that represent the cornerstone of Council's edible landscapes approach. Each garden is well resourced and water secure, accessible to people of all abilities and highly valued by local communities for their visual appeal, social and educational elements.

The gardens play a vital role in supporting Council's capacity to achieve its sustainability and community building objectives. Each runs various events and learning opportunities for local residents with topics including seasonal vegetable growing, soil improvement, composting, cooking and preserving. Pizza nights, star gazing, winter solstice celebrations and even a harvest festival are among the many events on offer.

Such activities help to build strong community ties while promoting local food growing and eating. Membership is open to anyone interested in joining up and non-members are also welcome at most activities and events.

Council recognises the invaluable role community gardens play in local communities and actively encourages groups interested in creating new community gardens in Surf Coast townships to access the various resources available as part of the *Edible Landscapes Initiatives*.



## 4. 'Love Local'

'Love Local' is being developed as a community-based project that encourages residents, businesses and restaurants to support local food producers by buying and using their produce.

The program focuses on fun, food and community connection by encouraging the development and promotion of local food hubs across Surf Coast Shire and the wider region. A booklet and website are being planned along with a charter to verify food outlets supporting local producers.

In addition, ideas are being developed around running a series of events celebrating local food. These currently include:

- Community-supported agriculture initiatives;
- farmers markets;
- long lunches featuring local food;
- gourmet movie nights;
- head-to-tail cooking classes;
- 100-mile dinners featuring produce sourced locally; and
- cook-offs between local chefs.



## 5. Community Commons

Community Commons involves growing fruit trees within appropriate public open space to take advantage of vital resources while simultaneously providing social, environmental and possible economic benefits. From a social perspective for example, growing fruit in communities where it is consumed provides residents with immediate access to healthy food and can improve food security in some communities. Additionally, people may gain a stronger sense of connection to the food they consume by knowing how it was grown and where it came from.

*The health and sustainability of the global food system (of which Australia is an integral participant) is under increasing threat (Roberts, 2008; Heinberg, 2005) largely due to the depletion of finite energy sources, together with massive population growth and economic pressures. This means that now, more than ever, is the time to rethink and update our design focus of the Australian landscape.*

**School of Architecture, Landscape Architecture and Urban Design Faculty of Professions,  
University of Adelaide**





### ***Proposed pilot project: Price Street Community Hub***

Torquay's Price Street Community Hub has been identified as an ideal site to pilot Surf Coast's first street food initiative. With the support and involvement of the Price St User groups, Council has prepared a landscape plan for the site, which aims to provide a beautiful community asset while achieving the key environmental, social and economic outcomes listed on page 2.

The plan incorporates the use of edible plants, water sensitive design, indigenous plant varieties, bush tucker foods, recycled materials, communal cooking and other sustainability features. Potential project-specific benefits, based on similar projects in other municipalities (eg *Darebin Green Streetscape Strategy 2012*), include:

- improving physical health and mental wellbeing;
- increasing property values;
- increasing tourism and business opportunities;
- managing and absorbing stormwater flows;
- providing shade and shelter/potential protection from wind and storm events;
- reducing anti-social behaviours including vandalism and graffiti; and
- shaping neighbourhood character.

## 6. Urban farms

Since World War 2, food production has largely disappeared from most town landscapes, significantly impacting on food transportation costs, environmental values and overall food security.

Urban farms aims to reintroduce sustainable food production practices by developing unused open spaces. The aim is to educate people, especially children, about where food comes from and the need to take care of the environment to ensure healthy food and healthy bodies.

*As a part of Seattle's 2010 Year of Urban Agriculture, the Seattle City Council passed an ordinance that allows community gardens, urban farms and farmers' markets in almost all zones, and allows people to sell food that is grown on the lots where they live. **Urban farm** is defined as a place where plants are grown for sale of the plants themselves or their products, and in which the plants or their products are sold at the lot where they are grown or off-site, or both, and in which no other items are sold.*

*Land Stewardship Project 2010*



Project-specific benefits include:

- improving soil fertility;
- providing seasonal diversity;
- creating more educational opportunities (eg growing and harvesting techniques); and
- enhancing community involvement.

## 7. Carbon farming

Carbon farming (or sequestration) involves capturing and storing carbon dioxide, or other forms of carbon, to help mitigate or defer global warming and address climate change impacts. Current carbon farming practices include:

- reforesting and re-vegetating denuded land areas with native vegetation
- modifying agricultural practices
- improving soil to achieve better carbon-holding capabilities
- adding bio-char to the soil
- using grasses and other cover crops as temporary cover between planting seasons, and
- restoring degraded land to slow carbon release while returning the land to agriculture or other use.

Surf Coast Shire Council recognises the potential environmental, social and economic outcomes that carbon farming offers, as articulated in its *Council Plan 2013-17* and *Climate Change Strategy 2011-16*. Both documents identify several key actions related to carbon farming, which potentially position Surf Coast at the forefront of carbon farming practices in Australia. Council is also working on the development of a sustainable hinterland strategy.

During 2013, Council started working to achieve its strategic objective of promoting good carbon practice by exploring viable carbon farming and carbon offset opportunities. This work will continue, including via the *Edible Landscapes Initiatives*, with the focus on helping local farmers to take advantage of the multiple opportunities carbon farming affords, including via state and federal government. Project-specific benefits include:

- improving soil health;
- reducing on-farm carbon footprints;
- establishing healthier crops, pastures, animals and produce; and
- potential economic benefits.



## 8. On-farm composting

Council is partnering with Camperdown Compost and several government agencies to trial on-farm composting in Surf Coast Shire.

*Humus is literally the lifeblood of this planet and we have used and abused this magical substance to the point that our future viability is at stake. When we build humus in the soil, we reclaim carbon from the atmosphere, we improve plant, soil and animal health, we manage precious water more effectively and we lift the vitality and resilience of every last one of us. We need to refer back to the ancient wisdom where the words “humus” and “human” mean ‘of and for the earth’ and we need to rediscover the humility to work with nature rather than striving for mastery.*

**Graeme Sait**

*Burying organic waste in landfill is a big problem and it's not just because of the resources we lose. When organic waste is dumped in landfill, it undergoes anaerobic decomposition (because of the lack of oxygen) and generates methane. When released into the atmosphere, methane is 20 times more potent a greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide.*

**Environment Victoria**

### ***Proposed project: On-farm composting trial***

Camperdown Compost, the Environment Protection Authority and Sustainability Victoria are trialling an on farm-composting method, which combines best practice soil science and biological waste



streams to produce compost in-situ on farms. The trial offers a managed process that supplies selected organic feed stocks directly to all types of farms.

The project currently includes 30 farms in the Surf Coast region. It is estimated that each farm will save 200 tonnes of waste going to landfill by providing 140 tonnes of high-grade compost for farming purposes. Council has been asked to support this project and potentially become a partner. This project has potential to be replicated around Australia.

***Project: On-farm composting trial at Barwon Park.***

Council recently partnered with Camperdown Compost and the National Trust to deliver an on-farm composting trial at Barwon Park in Winchelsea.

To date the project has seen 200 tonnes of organic waste diverted from landfill and made into 140 tonnes of compost for use on the estate's new heritage orchard and surrounding gardens. This is helping to improve soil quality, by adding valuable humus and other nutrient and make the soil more water-retentive. The project also offers an educative trial site for local farmers in the region to learn about on-farm composting.

Project-specific benefits include:

- reduced landfill;
- environmentally-sound and carefully-monitored and managed use of waste on farms;
- conversion of waste streams into beneficial farm nutrients;
- reduced on-farm carbon footprints; and
- improved soil health.

## Appendix 1

### Current food security, healthy eating and sustainability promotion activities in Surf Coast Shire

#### Current Council initiatives

- Health Promotion Officer within Council
- Sustainability Officer within Council
- Environmental Health (regulations and support)
- Municipal Public Health Plan highlights issue of food security
- Climate Change Strategy highlights issue of food security

#### Current community initiatives

- Surf Coast Energy Group
- Green Mums
- Transition Towns Anglesea and Torquay
- Community Gardens

### Links to Council Plans and Strategies

#### Council Plans and Strategies

The following strategies and priorities relate to edible landscape promotion in a local context:

#### Council Plan

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- We pursue innovative and sustainable practices that will preserve and enhance our natural environment for all, by being socially responsible and environmentally aware.
- Develop initiatives with other community groups to enhance food security internally and externally.
- Explore opportunities for carbon farming with the carbon offset scheme throughout the Shire.
- Support opportunities for carbon-capture agriculture methods.

#### Climate Change Strategy

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- Continue to implement programs to assist vulnerable people to adapt to climate change.
  - Support opportunities for carbon-capture agriculture methods.
  - Develop initiatives with other community groups to enhance food security internally and externally.
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### **Municipal Emergency Management Plan**

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- Implement environmental programs that provide opportunities for community participation, with the aim of giving people knowledge, skills and experiences of environmental issues. This approach will be adopted in preference to simply providing information about environmental issues.
- Facilitate a range of environmental education programs each year that provide opportunities for all ages and interests.
- Prepare and publicise an annual calendar of environmental events.

### **Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan**

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- Council Priority 1: Healthy, Resilient and Safe Communities
- Community Connection
- Implement environmental programs that provide opportunities for community participation, with the aim of giving people knowledge, skills and experiences of environmental issues. This approach will be adopted in preference to simply providing info.
- Continue to ensure Surf Coast Shire Council's Strategic Planning helps to improve health and wellbeing of Surf Coast Shire residents.

### **Positive Ageing Strategy**

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- Support the health promotion plan and key priorities of the G21 Planning for Healthy Communities 2006-2009.
- Ensure local and regional health promotion initiatives involve the residents of Surf Coast Shire.

### **Federal Government National Food Plan**

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- National Food Plan will look at issues such as food security, food quality, the affordability of food and the sustainability of food.
- The government intends that the National Food Plan will better integrate food policy by looking at the food supply chain, from paddock to plate, including examination of the opportunities and risks to the long term sustainability of food production.

This plan is currently being written.

## **State Government Victoria**

### **Food Security Investment Plan 2005**

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- Strategies to improve food security need to consider:
- Addressing the socio-cultural, built and natural environments and economic determinants of healthy eating.

## **Stakeholders**

- Federal Government
- State Government
- National Trust
- Heritage Victoria
- Sustainability Victoria
- Department of Planning and Community Development
- Landcare
- Timehelp (volunteer agency)
- Surf Coast Energy Group (SCEG)
- Green Mums
- Deakin University
- Gordon TAFE
- Surf Coast Tourism
- Wadawurrung
- Community Gardens
- Schools
- Community House Network
- Transition Towns
- Surf Coast Shire Council (including Transport Connections, Health Promotion, Sustainability, Community Development, Transition Towns)
- Businesses
- Restaurants
- Farmers
- Producers

## Resources

- Victorian Local Government Association (VLGA) 2011, *Food Security*, VLGA, accessed 20 January 2011  
[www.vlga.org.au/ProjectsCampaigns/Climate\\_Change/Food\\_Security4.aspx](http://www.vlga.org.au/ProjectsCampaigns/Climate_Change/Food_Security4.aspx)
- VicHealth 2011, *Food for All – Resources for Local Government*, VicHealth, accessed 20 January 2011 [www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/Publications/Healthy-Eating/Food-for-All/Food-For-All---Resources-for-Local-Governments.aspx](http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/Publications/Healthy-Eating/Food-for-All/Food-For-All---Resources-for-Local-Governments.aspx)
- [www.nutri-tech.com.au/products/education/dvd/graeme-sait-the-sait-sessions-p3.html](http://www.nutri-tech.com.au/products/education/dvd/graeme-sait-the-sait-sessions-p3.html) - Graem Sait
- Urban farming in Detroit <http://hantzfarmsdetroit.com/>
- Grow Sheffield <http://growsheffield.com/>
- Feral Fruit Melbourne <http://feralfruitmelbourne.wordpress.com/>
- School of Architecture, Landscape Architecture and Urban Design Faculty of Professions, The University of Adelaide
- City Fruit. <http://cityfruit.org/projects/harvests.htm>
- Fruits of the City.” The Minnesota Project. [www.mnproject.org/food- FruitsOfTheCity.html](http://www.mnproject.org/food-FruitsOfTheCity.html)
- “Best Tree Finder: Tree Wizard.” The Arbor Day Foundation:  
[www.arborday.org/shopping/trees/treewizard/Intro.cfm](http://www.arborday.org/shopping/trees/treewizard/Intro.cfm)
- Land Stewardship Project. 2010. “How U.S. Cities are Using Zoning to Support Urban Agriculture.” [www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdf/factsheets/21-Urban-Ag-Zoning.pdf](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdf/factsheets/21-Urban-Ag-Zoning.pdf)
- Wikipedia [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carbon\\_sequestration](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carbon_sequestration)