



# VARAZEA VIVA

## NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2011

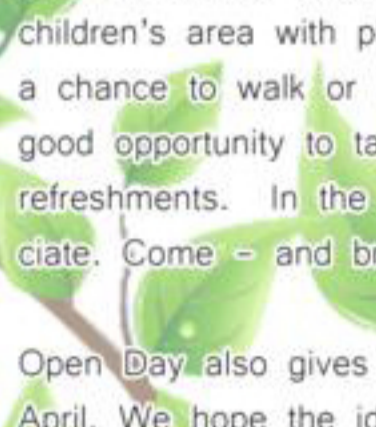


### What's up at the Varzea

Here is our usual update and thoughts from the Varzea for this latest newsletter.

A lot of stuff going has been going on this early spring. It is party-time every night at the pond for the hundreds of frogs. The ducks are getting frisky, and the veggie garden is all planted out, and much-expanded by opening up areas recently cleared and fertilized by our chickens. Food supply is increasing daily.

All the winter's tree plantings – about 160 – are looking good and well-mulched – now irrigation is being set up to give them a strong start for the first year, – minimum expense, maximum effect. The hope is, for those planted on the hillside, they should be able to look after themselves through the long dry summer after 2 or 3 years. To serve for that time we have put in place a system where next to each tree is a cylinder of limestone brita from surface to just below the present root depth, so that each can be watered by hose, delivering the water to the depth where downward root growth is encouraged.

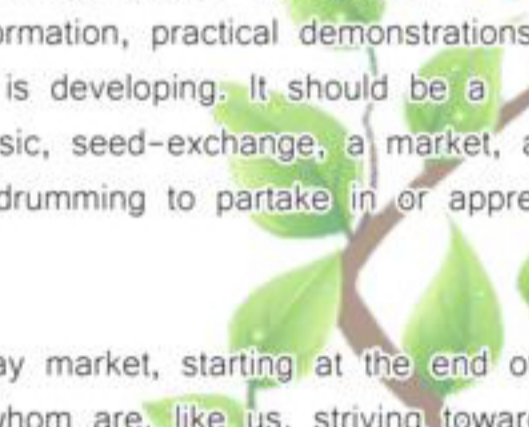


In between times, we have just hosted our regular March PDC. Again a great group of people, of many different nationalities, sharing a lot of fun and inspiring ideas. Check out the photos.

We now have two female pigs, with a male ready to come shortly to do his job, and they are busy preparing ground for spring crops, while organizing our meat supply at the same time. Geese will be our next animal addition, later this month, and with a bit of luck they will be garden carnivores, not herbivores, and won't terrorise our little ones!

It is good to notice this year that the authorities and local people in the area are paying attention to the risk of fire this coming summer, it now being 8 years since the disastrous fire of 2003. We have been cutting an ever-widening circle around the homestead, while simultaneously liberating many more medronho bushes and cork-oak trees from the dense mato.

Our bread-oven area – we are still searching for a good name for it – now has a permanent roof and it is a fine space for holding our Music Night on the first Saturday of every month. We are changing the original emphasis on African Drumming to be more open to all instruments – so be free to come any month, 7pm start, either to play, relax, listen, socialize, or all of these.



Now we are all focussing on our coming Open Day, on Saturday, 16th April. There will be lots of activities, a children's area with plenty of fun things, as well as organized children's activities, information, practical demonstrations, a chance to walk or be shown around what we are doing here and how the Varzea is developing. It should be a good opportunity to talk to like-minded people and share ideas, and there will be music, seed-exchange, a market, and refreshments. In the evening there will be food and drink available, with music and drumming to partake in or appreciate. Come – and bring lots of friends too!

Open Day also gives our opportunity to announce the launching of our weekly Tuesday market, starting at the end of April. We hope the idea will bring together our local community of people, many of whom are, like us, striving towards becoming self-sufficient – if not on their own then through a system of exchange with others around them. There will be available seasonal organic fruit and veg, as well as locally handmade crafts, preserves, soaps etc. – anything that people have produced themselves. There will also be a seed-exchange, and demonstrations and workshops in various activities. The format will evolve over time, and we can't say how quickly it will become established, but like any good idea it will surely grow and flourish.



**We are going to examine the Permaculture ethics and principles – to serve as an introduction to those who are new to Permaculture, and as a reminder to other people already familiar with them.**

So – What are the Permaculture ethics? They are the broad moral values upon which the principles of permaculture are based, as defined by its' originator, Bill Mollison. Totally linked with each other, they are –

- Care of The Earth
- Care of People
- Fair Share/Consumption and population limits.

#### Care of the Earth

Number 1 priority – without giving our planet the respect it deserves and hasn't always had, it quite simply can't sustain our current expectations and abuse of it.

The Earth is a living organism and should be respectfully treated as such.

Mother Earth was second to none to the Native Americans and many other tribal societies. These people caused no environmental destruction, they never had to be educated in how to respect the planet, or had to consider the potentially dire consequences of their lifestyle. They existed in all climates and all locations, taking only the natural resources they needed, using them with respect and without waste, living sustainably and WITH nature. Not against it, not mocking it. Only since the development of our 'advanced' industrialized civilization have capitalism, greed, consumerism and overpopulation diminished peoples' respect for the very earth that supports them.

Our natural resources have been exploited on such a grand scale, which is producing such disastrous consequences, that now we have NO OPTION but to consider all our activities and their effect on the planet.

#### Care of People.

Have respect for ALL living things. This respect should be earned, not assumed or demanded. Above all, have respect for yourself –positive people generate positive energy.

Communication breakdown is another negative side-effect of our times. Children are often not allowed freedom to explore outdoors and frequently spend long hours alone on computers and game consoles, communicating with others through internet messaging. The media dictates what these developing adults should be wearing, thinking, eating, reading, even smelling like! Moving on into adulthood, many people move away from their families, work long hours to pay ridiculous bills and meet other financial obligations, relying on child minders to rear their young... From where does the sense of 'community' and caring for others, develop? Where is the encouragement to be individual and develop self-reliance?... To be responsible for your actions?...

CONTINUED



There is strength in community action, every person can offer their services and be proud to be playing their part. Focus can be shifted to non-material wellbeing and prosperity, to ensuring people are truly happy and empowered, satisfied and content.

People need to adjust and many need the direction and helping hand to face change. A few ways of encouraging this change could be –

If your financial commitments can be reduced, you can reduce your working hours. If you spent 3 or 4 hours a week tending a vegetable garden, that could mean 3 or 4 hours less having to be in a workplace earning the money for your weeks' vegetables.

Living in homes that are comfortable but simple, ideally constructed from natural materials. Live with less electrical gadgets, (which emit radiation and can have ill-health effects), fewer chemical finishes and paints (which leach toxins for many years in some cases), natural colours to relax with, a garden to spend time outdoors...

Creating employment that is satisfying and working towards an ecologically sound product/service. Making workplaces pleasant atmospheres to be in.

Change is never easy but must happen. It is, after all, a constant, which will be beneficial if it is made in the right direction. Every obstacle presents an opportunity to learn – and we have to – for the sake of ourselves and future generations.

#### Fair Share

Surplus causes pollution – pollution presents a challenge. Pollution itself is a by-product of our society, not occurring naturally. It is a result of over-production, of excess and greed. It is too much noise, chemical waste, over population, drought, famine, visual pollution .....In nature, there is no pollution, no waste. Everything is used.

- How can we prevent this pollution?....
- By limiting our consumption and distributing our surplus.
- By taking only what we need.
- By preparing for hardship in times of abundance.
- And before rushing to provide yourself with a manufactured resource/service – see what the natural alternative is!

If we don't follow these common-sense solutions, what do we get instead?...

Obesity, Famine, Overfarmed land, Deforestation – to name just a few effects.

There should be no waste products – as there should be no waste of human resources – everyone has something to offer and in supplying this service, develops self-reliance and self-respect. This in turn leads to respect for the earth and for other people.



#### Eco-cleaning.

Despite the fact that I've been buying and using eco-cleaning products for the past 13 years, as I write this today, I find it hard to believe that it took me until a couple of years ago, when I moved to the countryside (and faced the reality that my waste water really does end up on our beautiful planet and not in some magical tank in 'nowhere land') to finally stop my tri-monthly splurges around the bathroom with Bleach...urgh!!! know- I'm an idiot but I don't think I'm the only one out there!!!

Anyway – Vinegar functions brilliantly as my new eco-bleach. A quick splash around the toilet and sinks for a regular 'keeping on-top-of-it' clean and for those weeks/months when I'm not in super mum/tender woman mode and need to have a thorough decontamination operation, armed with vinegar, tea tree, fresh thyme and water, I have a bit of a super scrub and 'Bob's your uncle' – that fresh, zingy feel to the house you really love!!

My mop bucket usually has a good splash of vinegar with a couple of drops of essential oil &/or a bit of eco-washing up liquid. Oh and vinegar applied with wire wool to our damp, black outside walls worked a treat.

Okay, too much talk of housework, before depression sets in fully, I'm going to move on to recipes.

Question: What's the only bean native to Europe?

Answer: The beautiful broad bean. (Also known as fava beans)  
Broad beans are frost hardy, easy to grow and make an excellent 'green manure'. The beautiful broad bean has been despised and ignored in my household until last year when the varzea produced a bumper crop and, thank the Lord, I discovered some more information and good recipes for them.

- They can be eaten whole, in pods when the beans are pea sized.
- The flavour will change as they grow, becoming milder and creamier, eventually becoming starchy when the pods turn from dark to pale green.
- When the stalks are sweetly flowering you can pinch out the tops for salads, light steaming or stir fry.
- Once the pods are picked it is a good idea to cut the stems at soil level so that the nitrogen nodules, fixed onto the roots will remain in the soil to be used by the next crop. (Applies to all peas and beans)
- Steeping beans in salted, boiling water for 5 minutes and removing thick skins can be a very good idea!

#### Some excellent partners for fava/broad beans

- Pork (especially gammon and bacon)
- Dill
- Mint
- Salty cheeses (ricotta, goats, feta)
- Cream
- Coriander and radish
- Cumin, garlic, onion,
- Chilli, cinnamon & tomato.

## Recipes

#### Simple and delicious Broad Bean Pate

- 2kgs broad beans in pods
- Olive oil to required consistency about 6-8 tbs
- Juice of lemon and half a lime
- 2 handfuls of Mint or Dill

Pod beans and lightly boil for 7-10 minutes  
Blitz all ingredients with whizzy thing, adding oil till required consistency.

#### Broad Beans in Creamy Sorrel Sauce

- Make a béchamel sauce
- Lightly steam the beans
- Add them to the sauce with lots of chopped sorrel
- Salt and pepper, optional

The following Risotto has very simple preparation and is ideal if you feel like half an hour's meditative stirring at the stove.

- 1.5 litres Vegetable stock (as needed)
- 500grms Arborio rice
- 250mls dry white wine
- A few handfuls of spring onions
- Garlic 2/3 cloves, optional
- 3 pounds fresh broad beans (skinned if desired/needed)
- Grated parmesan
- Flat-leaved parsley
- Lemon zest
- Black pepper



Get your stock simmering so that you can add ladlefuls to the rice as you go along. Heat oil in large non-stick pan, add spring onions and garlic and cook for one minute till fragrant. DO NOT BROWN.

Add the rice, stir for another minute until the grains have separated. Stir in the wine, it should bubble but not too quickly, you want the flavour to enter the rice before it evaporates. When wine has almost evaporated, stir in the first couple of ladlefuls of stock, enough to just cover rice. Simmer and stir until just about absorbed then add more stock. Continue this process for about 15 minutes.

Add broad beans and stock and continue for another ten minutes until the rice is cooked al dente. Add a little stock with the parmesan, parsley, lemon zest, salt n pepper. (You could substitute a pound of asparagus for a pound of the beans, steam over the beans for 5 mins and add at the end too.)

Stir and serve.

That's your lot. Your feedback is welcomed!!!

# VARZEA VIVA OPEN DAY PERMACULTURE

ACTIVITIES FOR ADULTS AND CHILDREN INCLUDING PLAY AREA  
ATIVIDADES PARA ADULTOS E CRIANÇAS, INCLUINDO ÁREA DE LAZER

## INFORMATION

INFORMAÇÃO

## DEMONSTRATIONS

DEMONSTRAÇÕES

## MARKET

LOCALLY PRODUCED GOODS AND CRAFT

MERCADO

PRODUTOS LOCAIS E ARTESANATO

## FOOD AND DRINK AVAILABLE

BEBIDAS E COMIDA DISPONÍVEIS

APRIL 16<sup>TH</sup>

FROM 11AM

16 DE ABRIL

A PARTIR DAS 11 HORAS

VARZEA DA GONÇALA

ALJEZUR

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