

# A Snapshot of Local Food Growing and Sharing Initiatives



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**Prepared by:**

Environment and Sustainable Living Department

Contact: Andrea Lomdahl [andrea.lomdahl@boroondara.vic.gov.au](mailto:andrea.lomdahl@boroondara.vic.gov.au)

Photo on cover: Gardeners at the Camcare community garden, Camberwell



**Happy gardeners with produce grown at Ashburton Community Garden**

## 1. Introduction

This booklet aims to share a little about the fantastic range of food growing and sharing options and initiatives underway across Boroondara. It is designed to help residents make contact with initiatives of interest, as well as inform community conversations about options for the future

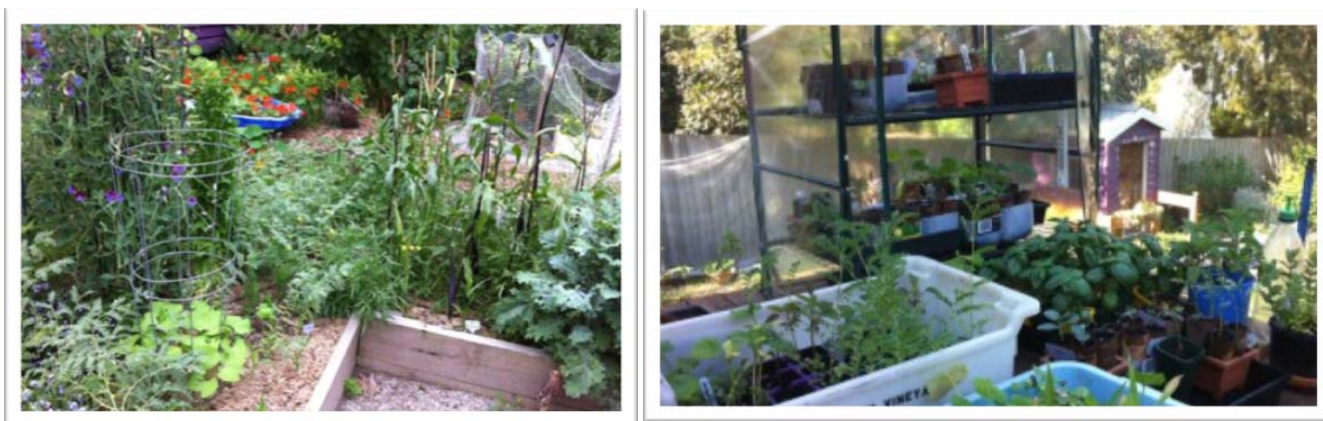
**This snapshot is not an exhaustive listing of current activities. If you have a correction to a listing or would like to suggest we include other local projects, please email [localfood@boroondara.vic.gov.au](mailto:localfood@boroondara.vic.gov.au).**

## 2. Home-based productive gardens

Many Boroondara residents have a veggie patch in their garden (or on their balcony). Nearly 500 residents have attended one of Council's free 'how to' Living for our Future workshops.

Local resident Natasha Kuperman has a large vegetable patch surrounded by fruit trees, a berry patch and a collection of herbs and other edible plants. During the warmer months she grows tomatoes and basil, cucumbers and zucchini along with strawberries, raspberries and blueberries, asparagus and rhubarb. As the weather cools, she stores them alongside onions and garlic and the tomato sauces and basil pesto preserved during the summer peak. In the cooler weather she grows broccoli and cauliflower, kale, silverbeet and peas.

What's not grown at home is sourced locally where possible or from 'food swaps'. Natasha's online Blog [My Home Harvest](http://myhomeharvest.com.au) ([myhomeharvest.com.au](http://myhomeharvest.com.au)) encourages information sharing between backyard food producers.



Natasha Kuperman's prolific garden provides a bounty of fresh produce throughout the year

### Benefits:

- Provides a ready source of cheap, fresh food (almost) year round
- Opportunities to share excess produce with friends and neighbours and at food swaps
- Veggie gardens can be scaled to fit needs and space. Dwarf and espaliered fruit trees mean fruit can be grown in small spaces.



**Constraints:**

- Requires ongoing effort, some know-how and time to manage garden beds/planting choice and weeds etc.
- To minimise use of mains water to irrigate a large productive garden, its recommended to install rainwater tank(s).
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**How much food can a backyard produce?**

15 households took part in a research project in 2012/13<sup>1</sup> that explored urban food production within a 70km radius of Melbourne. Each household contributed 12 weeks of data.

The result was impressive. The collective plot size was 1,096 square metres with a total yield of 388.73 kg worth of fruits, vegetables, nuts, honey and meat. A total of 1,015 eggs were also recorded. In total, 101 different types of nuts, fruits, vegetables were generated during the study period. One exemplary backyard was established in 2008 using permaculture principle. Measuring 80 square metres, this particular backyard featured more than 30 fruit trees in addition to over 70 varieties of medicinal plants and herbs. The total yield from this backyard over the 12-week period was 50.23 kg.

**Backyard bee hives and hive hosts**

Hosting bee hives in suburban backyards is becoming increasingly popular. Local apiarist Peter Dyer from *Backyard Honey* has hives in approximately 50 Boroondara gardens. For an annual fee, hive hosts receive the first 10kg of honey from their hives, and the remainder is sold in local shops. The [Apiary Code of Practice](#) sets the number of hives allowed per household. House blocks of 500sq m or less can host one beehive, and land between 501sq m and 1000 sq m can host two hives.

**Benefits:**

- Abundant local raw honey
- Bees pollinate flowers and can increase the yield of fruit and veggie crops. Anyone within a kilometre of a hive benefits from extra bee activity.
- No specialist skills needed to be a 'hive host'.

**Constraints:**

- May not be suitable if a householder or near neighbour is allergic to bee stings.

**Backyard chooks**

Chickens make entertaining pets. They can free range in fenced backyards during the day, but need to be in a fox proof enclosure overnight. Boroondara residents can keep up to six chickens (but no roosters) at home. A specified number of pheasants, turkeys, ducks and geese can also be kept in suburban gardens without a permit.

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<sup>1</sup> Viewed at <http://www.foodalliance.org.au/urban-backyard-food-production-in-melbourne/> on 10/2/2015. Original article was posted on <http://www.foodalliance.org.au/urban-backyard-food-production-in-melbourne/>

**Benefits:**

- Fresh eggs most days and excess eggs can be shared.
- Chickens eat leftover food scraps and make manure for gardens.
- Chickens are inexpensive to buy and keep, and coops can be easily made at home.

**Constraints:**

- Chicken owners need to learn about health and welfare aspects.
- Like other pets, chickens need to be cared for during holidays.



Maria Ciavarella (right) with a local resident and her chickens.  
Maria presents at Council workshops on backyard chooks.

### 3. Traditional community gardens

Boroondara has six allotment-based community gardens: two in Hawthorn and others in Ashburton, Balwyn and Canterbury. All gardens are fenced and locked and offer a total of 200 plots which can be leased for an annual fee that varies from \$25 to \$110. The gardens are very popular and most have lengthy waiting lists. Ashburton and Canterbury community gardens allocate a small number of shared plots to community groups. Some gardens encourage members to donate excess produce to community organisations.

#### **Benefits:**

- Provides opportunities for those with limited space at home to grow food at low cost
- Encourages sharing of produce, resources and knowledge
- Promotes a sense of community and reduces social isolation.

#### **Constraints:**

- Limited opportunities for new members to join due to long waiting lists
- Members need to participate in regular working bees and annual general meetings.
- Reliant on Council resources, permissions and land allocation.



Balwyn Community Garden at the rear of Balwyn Community Centre provides 24 individual plots for local residents.

Table 1: Traditional community gardens in Boroondara

Name and location	Number of plots	Cost (2014/15)	Contact details
<b>Ashburton Community Gardens</b> <b>Markham Reserve, Ashburton</b> <b>Mel Ref 60 E12</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 46 plots</li> <li>• Most are 4m x 3 m</li> <li>• 15 plots leased to community groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initial joining fee of \$15.</li> <li>• Annual cost \$40 per year.</li> <li>• Reduced fee for public housing</li> </ul>	Secretary: Geoff McQualter <a href="mailto:ashburtongarden@gmail.com">ashburtongarden@gmail.com</a>
<b>Riversdale Road Community Gardens, Hawthorn</b> <b>Mel Ref 45G12</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 62 plots</li> <li>• Small medium and large</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joining fee of \$100</li> <li>• Annual fee depends on plot size</li> </ul>	Gavan Woodruff <a href="mailto:woodruff539@bigpond.com">woodruff539@bigpond.com</a>
<b>Linda Crescent Community Gardens Hawthorn</b> <b>Mel Ref 45 C10</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 22 plots (Current Grace Park Masterplan has option to double the number of plots)</li> <li>• Small medium and large</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joining fee of \$100</li> <li>• Annual fee depends on plot size</li> </ul>	Gavan Woodruff <a href="mailto:woodruff539@bigpond.com">woodruff539@bigpond.com</a>
<b>Balwyn Community Gardens</b> <b>Balwyn Community Centre, Whitehorse Road Balwyn</b> <b>Mel Ref 46F8</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 24 plots</li> <li>• 18 - 6m by 4m</li> <li>• 6 are 3m x 5m</li> <li>• One shared plot</li> <li>• 2 plots outside the garden for general community use and for 3 year old kinder program.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full plot: \$110 per annum + \$10 Centre membership</li> <li>• Half plot : \$65 per annum + \$10 Centre membership Half Plot</li> </ul>	Programs co-ordinator <a href="mailto:programs@balwyncc.org.au">programs@balwyncc.org.au</a> , ph: 9836 7942
<b>Canterbury Community Gardens</b> <b>2 Kendall st, Canterbury</b> <b>Mel Ref 46D11</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 31 plots</li> <li>• Some raised and some lower</li> <li>• One double plot used by Burke and Beyond clients</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$65 per annum</li> </ul>	Secretary, Monika Kirchner <a href="mailto:monikaikirchner3@gmail.com">monikaikirchner3@gmail.com</a>
<b>Alamein Neighbour Centre Community Gardens</b> <b>Mel Ref 60 D11</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 15 plots - 2 sizes</li> <li>• One plot is used by the centre</li> <li>• One plot by disability groups</li> </ul>	\$25 for large plots \$15 for small plots	Manager, Rob Read <a href="mailto:comprograms@alameinnlc.com.au">comprograms@alameinnlc.com.au</a> Ph: 9885 9401



### ***Craig Family Centre Kitchen Garden***

A small kitchen garden was established in the grounds of the Craig Family Centre grounds in 2012 with assistance from a City of Boroondara Community Strengthening Grant. The gardens have been used by various groups that meet at the Centre including a disability group and Afghan Women's Group. The Centre leases 10 plots at the nearby Ashburton Community Garden for low income residents and employs a community garden support worker to provide hands-on assistance.

### ***Camcare kitchen garden***

Camcare is a community based, not-for-profit organization which focuses on supporting people in Boroondara through times of adversity and hardship, including homelessness and food security issues. Camcare has constructed an extensive plot-based community garden on land leased from Council.

The garden is locked (within the Camcare 'backgarden') but plots are shared and managed by staff, community volunteers and clients and the food grown in the garden is shared at a weekly market (see page 12) and weekly BBQ. One of Camcare's clients was inspired to complete a horticulture degree after helping in the garden.



**The Camcare garden makes good use of land at the rear of the offices, and provides a focus for activities with clients and a source of fresh food for a weekly market and BBQ.**



## 4. Open communal gardens - Winton Road Food Forest

The [Winton Road Food Forest](#) (Stage 1) has a variety of fruit and nut trees within a permaculture garden. The site is managed without chemicals and its plantings are designed to attract beneficial insects and reduce weeds. The Craig Family Centre and the resident group that developed the concept worked with Council to identify potential sites, commission soil testing, develop the site plan and undertake community consultation. Council approved plans and then removed turf, built paths, provided mulch, and dug holes ready for tree planting. The Food Forest operates under a (non-exclusive use) licence agreement between the Craig Family Centre (as auspice) and Council.

### Benefits:

- The Food Forest is open to the public (and there are no 'individual plots'). Anyone can wander through the Food Forest and sample produce.
- Volunteers are mentored by more experienced gardeners in permaculture principles.
- The Food Forest provides a successful model for replicating elsewhere.

### Constraints:

- Because the site is maintained by an active group of residents, it depends on their ongoing energy, enthusiasm and available time.
- Being unfenced, there is a risk of theft or vandalism.
- Only a legally incorporated organisation or group can enter into a licence agreement with Council.
- The licence agreement ensures risk and liability are appropriately addressed.



Volunteers hard at work at the Winton Road Food Forest



The healthy Mulberry tree at Winton Road Food Forest

## 5. Planter boxes on public land - Ashburton Shopping Centre

Herb and vegetable planter boxes were installed on High Street Ashburton in 2013 by Council at the instigation of the Ashburton Traders Association. The planter boxes promote local food production and provide a point of interest for shoppers who are encouraged to *Pick, Wash and Eat*. Local resident Mariette Tuohey, who co-ordinates [Ashwood College Permaculture](#)



[Garden](#), has maintained the planter boxes and has run some mini workshops on site.

**Benefits:**

- Planter boxes ‘green the streets’ and demonstrate easy to grow produce.
- The boxes provide opportunities for informal and formal education.
- Plants provide tasty herbs and greens that can be picked, (washed) and eaten ‘on the go’.

**Constraints:**

- Planter boxes need a local person/group to look after them (watering, replanting, weeding, mulching and removal of litter and cigarette butts).
- Edible plants grown on busy roads risk contamination from pollutants. Broad leaf vegetables are not suitable.

## 6. Communal gardening on private land

### *3000acres at Kew*

The [3000acres website](#) provides tools for the public to map vacant land that could be used for temporary community gardens. The website enables individuals and groups to connect with one another, and their toolkit assists community groups to get gardens started by providing guidance around negotiating with land holders/managers, becoming incorporated, getting insurance, finding funding and so on.

A group of keen residents developed a temporary community garden site on private land in Fenwick St, Kew (see photos below). The group worked through the steps of incorporating, getting insurance, developing a memorandum of understanding with the landowner and finally installing their temporary garden. The site is now being developed, so the garden was dismantled and the planters donated to another budding garden: Yarra Grove Garden in Hawthorn. To get involved with this garden, go to their facebook page: [facebook.com/Yarra-Grove-Garden-1615552072052551/](https://www.facebook.com/Yarra-Grove-Garden-1615552072052551/)

Other potential community gardening sites in Boroondara are marked on the [3000 acres map](#)



[3000acres volunteers planting at the Fenwick St. property](#)

**Benefits:**

- Provides a mechanism for transforming vacant private land across cities, some of it neglected, into temporary gardening (and community) spaces
- Provides temporary public open space, especially in areas where open space is limited.

**Constraints:**

- Land may only be available for one to two years. There needs to be enough time to organise, set-up and grow a garden before the temporary garden is dismantled.
- Requires a dedicated group of people to run with the project.
- Groups may need to form an incorporated association to negotiate with landowners and obtain insurance cover. A council planning permit may be necessary.
- Access to services, especially water, need to be available.

***Corner Deli garden, Ashburton Shopping Centre***

The Corner Deli has a garden at the rear of the block which for many years was used as plant nursery. When the nursery closed, the land sat idle for around 12 months. Some local gardeners approached the owners and asked to use the space for growing herbs and vegetables. Much of the produce has been grown from donated cuttings.

The communal kitchen garden has beautified a neglected space, which is clear view of local shoppers. It provides produce for the gardeners and fresh herbs for deli owners to use in food produced on site. The gardeners also enjoy the social benefits of gardening together.

***The St Columbs' Community Garden***

This small unfenced community garden was established in 2014 by a small group of parishioners. The plots are fabulously well situated with a northerly aspect and adjoin the brick wall of one of the church properties which reflects warmth in winter, and provides potential for growing espaliered fruit trees.

St Columbs is working with service providers at the Hawthorn Community Hub to expand participation of various community groups. These include the St Columbs' playgroup, The Green cafe located in the church garden, and the Inner East Community House which will incorporate productive gardening into their "Cooking Small Eating Well" program. The garden is also open to people in the neighbourhood.

If you are interested in finding out more about the veggie garden, come along on the first Saturday of the month between 10.00am and 1.00pm.



***The community garden at St Columbs***



### *Tooronga Village Resident's Community Village*

Developing a produce garden on the podium level rooftop at Tooronga Village has played an important role in bringing the Tooronga Village community together.

The main philosophy of the garden is for residents to enjoy a range of perennial and seasonal crops of vegetables and herbs that are grown organically. Some plantings have been more successful than others, and getting used to the aspect, wind, amount of sunlight etc. has helped make more informed decisions on what to plant each year.

Many members of the community have enjoyed the garden and its harvest. Others enjoy taking their friends and family for a visit. A volunteer committee works in conjunction with the building manager and head gardener of the property on its maintenance and plantings.

For more information please visit <http://www.otvc.com.au/our-place-community-gardens.htm>



Funding to establish the community garden at Tooronga Village was provided by the managing agent and the residents' social fund.

### *The Green at St Columbs, Hawthorn*

St Columbs Church hosts 'The Green' café in its leafy and expansive church grounds. The café is operated by Jesuit Social Services and is part of the Ignite Hospitality Training Program, providing hands on training for long-term unemployed people. Much of the fresh produce used in the café is sourced from a vacant house lot owned by a local architect. The land owner advertised the block of land on 'Gumtree' inviting interested people to 'pitch an idea' for its use. A group of beginner permaculturists presented a business plan and were offered the garden for use on a temporary basis.



The garden manager, Fay Loveland maintains the garden. Produce is grown in raised beds and garden beds and a large water tank located nearby captures irrigation water from a neighbouring roof. Organic waste from the Ignite café is brought back to the site where it is composted and then added to garden beds creating a 'closed loop' system.

## 7. School and kindergarten food gardens

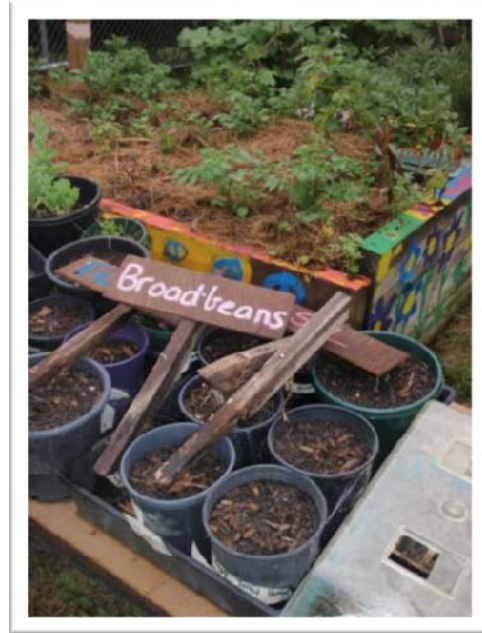
An increasing number of local schools and kindergartens have vegetable and herb gardens. Some such as Auburn South Primary School and Erasmus College are a part of the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program (SAKGP) where food growing, composting and weekly cooking classes are part of the curriculum. Other local schools and kindergartens have productive gardens that are less formally integrated.

### Benefits:

- Provides children with access to fresh and healthy fruit and veggies and learning opportunities
- Children's growing and cooking skills and enthusiasm can be shared with their families
- Can provide fruit and vegetables to sell to the school community and make produce (and revenue) for school fairs.

### Constraints:

- Needs adults to support/guide children in maintaining the gardens (weeding, planting, harvesting etc.)
- Requires willing volunteers to look after chooks, worm farms and gardens during the holidays
- Participation in integrated programs such as the SAKGP is expensive. Requirements include a large teaching kitchen and dining area, a veggie garden plus gardening and cooking teachers.



### ***Fresh eggs at Chatham Primary School***

*'Produce and eggs are used if classes are cooking but it's not a regular weekly activity. Our canteen uses the fresh eggs for egg sandwiches and each week, eggs are sold to staff and parents. We even have a waiting list! A very small number of parents help out - mainly over the holidays.'*

*Sue Doherty, teacher.*

## 8. Local food sharing and distribution activities

### *Local 'Food Swaps'*

Food swaps bring people together to share excess produce that they've grown at home.

Two food swaps operate in Boroondara:

- The Hartwell-Burwood Food Swap operates from the Burwood Neighbourhood House on the first Saturday of the month.
- The Surrey Hills/Balwyn Swap operates out of Balwyn Community Centre on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of the month.

As well as fresh produce, the food swaps encourage people to bring preserved fruit and vegetables, seeds, cuttings, honey, eggs, baked items, cook books, bottles, garden tools, jars and magazines.

#### **Benefits:**

- Enables food growers to share excess produce and source other produce
- Brings like-minded people together
- Facilitates the sharing of information as well as food and related items.

#### **Constraints:**

- Requires a venue for groups to meet
- Needs someone to co-ordinate meetings and promote swap events.

### *Food co-operatives and collectives (Community supported agriculture)*

Community supported agriculture (CSA) refers to community groups and organisations who source fresh produce boxes and sometimes meat directly from local farmers. Boxes are delivered and distributed amongst members. [Damper Creek Collective](#) operates in Ashwood and offers a weekly 'seasonal box' sourced from [Trehwella Farm](#). Bulk dry goods (nuts, flour and seeds) are ordered several times during the year and from time to time, the group visits the farm to learn more about its operation. [Green Gully Organics](#) (farm) also delivers seasonal boxes to food co-ops operating out of Surrey Hills and Kew Neighbourhood and Learning Centre.

#### **Benefits:**

- Provides farm fresh produce (often picked the day prior to delivery)
- Provides a direct link to regional farmers so co-op members have an understanding of farming methods
- Provides income for regional farmers.

#### **Constraints:**

- Content of produce boxes depends on what's seasonal and growing at the time and this may not suit everyone



A food swap table ready to go!



- Members are encouraged to assist with activities e.g. joining committee or helping out in another capacity.

### ***Boroondara Farmers Market and 'Our Grub Hub'***

Boroondara's Farmers Market is held on the third and fifth Saturday of the month at Patterson Reserve Hawthorn. Regional farmers and food producers sell fresh fruit and vegetables, meat, fish, poultry and food products such as relishes and jams, tarts, cakes and wine. Ninety percent of Farmers who sell their produce at the market must be accredited with the Victorian Farmers Market Association (VFMA). Accreditation is based on the produce or ingredients being sold being Victorian grown or produced. The market is managed by Council and supported by the Rotary Club of Glenferrie. Rotary uses the 'gold coin donation on entry' for community projects.

**Our Grub Hub** is a new 'Buy Local' initiative encouraging local cafés, restaurants and food businesses to source their produce from Boroondara Farmers Market, thereby encouraging further participation within a local (Victorian) food economy. Participating businesses are rewarded with increased promotional and marketing opportunities.

#### **Benefits:**

- Food, veggies and fruit are delivered fresh - from 'paddock/kitchen to plate'
- The farmers are on hand to answer questions about the produce - how and where produce and animal products are grown/processed
- Provides a relaxed atmosphere for shopping and socialising.

#### **Constraints:**

- Some of the produce is geared toward the gourmet end of the food market and is relatively expensive
- As the market is only held once or twice a month, residents need to supplement food buying in between visits.

### ***Camcare weekly food market***

**Camcare** is a community based, not-for-profit organisation which focuses on supporting people in Boroondara through times of adversity and hardship, including homelessness and food security issues. CamCare organises a weekly market for clients. Food comes from a range of sources include fresh produce from the Camcare community garden as well as donations from **FareShare**, **Second Bite**, and local businesses.

#### **Benefits:**

- Demonstrates a model for similar service organisations to replicate
- Provides fresh and healthy food to people who may not normally be able to access it.



**Boroondara Farmers Market provides fresh farm produce direct for local residents**

**Constraints:**

- Relies on public donations of food which may at times be difficult to source
- Food availability may vary from week to week
- Requires dedicated team of volunteers to assist the staff member running the market and the community garden.

***Kew Fruit Squad***

Kew Fruit Squad is a new community group based out of Kew Neighbourhood and Learning Centre. Trained Fruit Squad volunteers harvest excess fruit (and vegetables) from local private gardens, provide advice on pruning and maintenance of fruit trees, and distribute produce to local boarding houses and charities that offer food relief. The group was a recipient of a 2014 Community Strengthening Grant with funding used to buy tools and help promote its activities. The Squad is modelled on the [Darebin Fruit Squad](#).

**Benefits:**

- Restores neglected fruit trees and minimises the wastage that occurs with overladen trees
- Builds capacity of the local community in tree pruning
- Provides a model for replicating in other parts of the municipality.

**Constraints:**

- Requires a team of volunteers and a co-ordinator to promote and deliver services
- Needs to be auspiced by a community centre or have 'incorporated association' status in order to take out insurances and secure significant grant funding.



**Joh Fordham, co-ordinator of the Kew Fruit Squad, would like to hear from volunteers interested in joining her team**

**Further information**

For further information on local food growing and sharing activities along with a list of resources and contact information, please visit: [www.boroondara.vic.gov.au/growing-sharing-local-food](http://www.boroondara.vic.gov.au/growing-sharing-local-food). To update or add your group's details to our Snapshot document, please contact Andrea Lomdahl at [andrea.lomdahl@boroondara.vic.gov.au](mailto:andrea.lomdahl@boroondara.vic.gov.au)

A Food Access Network has been established in Boroondara to facilitate sharing of information across the municipality and capacity building. For further information on joining this network please contact Nicole White, Health and Wellbeing Planning and Policy Officer [nicole.white@boroondara.vic.gov.au](mailto:nicole.white@boroondara.vic.gov.au).