

Dean and Melanie's Food Forest at Stonyfell

October 2014



Most of October was spent renovating Dean and Melanie's huge back yard property at Stonyfell and what a dream job it was.

We installed 8 large eco-wood garden beds and renovated some existing garden areas, planted a fruit orchard with 20 different trees, installed a berry garden, a water garden, a chook house and 4 compost areas.

Dean and Melanie were keen to have everything done properly right from the start to give their huge food garden the best chance of thriving. A water conditioning device has been installed to ensure all their water, for home and garden, is of exceptional quality; the garden soil was replaced with Vital Veggies super soil; organic seeds and seedlings were planted; permaculture design principles were followed; soil tonics administered and lots of love went into the planting.

Dean and Melanie do a lot of entertaining and their Personal Assistant, Joanna enjoys serving up a wide variety of foods. This meant we got to plant some veggies not normally found in home gardens including:
horseradish, yakon, daikon radishes, water spinach, kang kong, stevia, bacopa monnier (traditionally used as a memory improving herb), asparagus, goji berries and purple carrots. We think the back yard garden is a fantastic place to experiment with growing unusual fruit and veggies that you don't normally find in the shops.

Dean and Melanie will be able to feed their entire family (and guests) with the produce from their food forest. To make sure it gets off to a fantastic start, we're servicing and caring for their garden weekly.

Dean and Melanie's Extended Garden

November 2014

Not only did we install a food forest in Dean and Melanie's property at Stonyfell in October, during November we were given the opportunity to renovate another large area of their property.

Although they originally wanted trees along their side fence to increase their privacy, Vital Veggies were on the lookout for places to plant more food as well.

So we did both!

- We installed a trellis along the fence and planted 3 varieties of passionfruit vines, with some pretty creepers called Mandevilla planted along the fenceline closer to the street.
- 21 pencil pines were planted half a metre apart to cover a section of the fenceline where the neighbours' new swimming pool will be installed
- We planted a row of 6 magnolia trees which are a favourite of Dean's
- A row of irrigated mounds have been prepared in between the fenceline and the magnolia trees for planting blueberry bushes, potatoes, sweet potatoes and pumpkins

The pencil pines and magnolia trees were supplied by Anthony from Amazon Plant Growers, a wholesale nursery.

Here are the before and after photos:



Below is the row of baby pencil pines. In the foreground is one of the irrigated mounds where we'll plant a blueberry bush, potatoes and sweet potatoes. The sweet potatoes will spread out to cover the ground with their pretty creepers.

Did you know that potatoes were originally used for their decorative flowers before they were used as food?



...and what would we do without our digger?

This little machine is not only capable of digging a 0.5 x 0.5m round hole in less than a minute with the auger fitting, it also has a front end loader, a cement mixer, a set of forks, a crane jib, ripping tynes and a tow ball.

Below, Roger is changing the auger fitting so he can dig some bigger holes.



Dean and Melanie's pumpkins

March 2015

We're as thrilled with the abundance of luscious food in Dean and Mel's food forest as they are.

During our servicing visits in March, we harvested their pumpkins and a surprisingly large sweet potato.

Here's the evolution of the pumpkin patch in pictures:



1. Digging up grass to prepare the area for planting



2. Area planted and covered with compost



3. Pumpkin plants growing



4. Pumpkins in full bloom



5. Withered plants after harvesting the pumpkins



6. Harvested pumpkins ready for storing



And let's not forget Dean and Mel's phenomenal sweet potato...



Dean and Melanie's Chicken Management System

April 2015

Dean and Mel's chooks are hilarious, we could watch their antics for hours. There are 7 chooks now, but two of them are new so they haven't started laying yet.

Towards the end of April we removed the old temporary chook fencing in the fruit orchard and installed a more 'people friendly' Chicken Management System. This clever combination of fences and magnetic gates allows us to direct the chooks into a particular section of the fruit orchard for a period a time. We've constructed 5 fenced sections and will rotate the chooks into a new section weekly, allowing each area 4 weeks to recover from the chooks' fossicking, digging and trampling. The system also provides easy access in and out of each section, so that Dean and Mel can readily pick all the ripening fruit and veggies from their orchard.



The CMS, under construction with weed control matting and compost laid

Two surprises in Dean and Melanie's Food Forest

April 2015

Last week Roger removed the first water chestnuts from the water garden we installed at Dean and Melanie's place in Stonyfell. Water chestnuts need to dry out for 3 weeks before they can be harvested.



Removing a pot full of water chestnuts from the pond

Planting soybeans around tomato plants helps to fix nitrogen back into the soil and when we pulled up a couple of the soybean plants at Dean and Mel's last week we were amazed to see the nitrogen nodules so clearly attached to the plant's roots!

