



## Tooworra Farm

Tooworra Farm is located in the Central Tablelands of New South Wales, Australia. This land is the traditional land of the Wiradjuri people, and we see ourselves as caretakers of this beautiful land.

Being on the western side of the Great Dividing Range, and at a higher altitude than the Sydney coast to the east, seasons are distinctive with short hot summers and longer, cold and frosty winters. The harvests from the farm reflect these seasonal patterns. The bounty of each season is highly dependent on varying rainfall, temperatures, frosts, and length of sunshine each day.

Tooworra Farm is nestled under Mount Ilford with Cunninghams Creek running through the farm on its westerly journey from the Mount Vincent Range. The landscape is often coloured by dry light browns and greys rather than the moist greens of the Blue Mountains to the east.

The small farm contains a number of gardens for growing fresh food. The gardens include a quince, pear and apple orchard, food forest, hazelnut grove and guild gardens of vegetables and flowers. We also keep Warré bee hives, free range chickens and the occasional fat lamb all managed using organic practices.



## Food philosophy – slow garden food

When the farm gardens provide more than our needs require, we share the excess for sale locally or make our farm house “Goldin” branded fruit jellies, and chocolate hazelnuts.

The preserves are like summer sunshine in a jar reminding us of the year we spent nurturing, picking and preserving the fruit. We look forward to opening a jar of exquisite tasting quince jelly rather than opening one bought from the store that may contain substitutes instead of quince, or preservatives or chemicals.

At Tooworra, we look forward to eating a small amount of the awesome fresh food that each day provides, supplemented with our farm house made preserves or stored vegetables from the root cellar rather than making meals with an endless supply of store packets. By understanding where our food comes from connects us to nature and enriches our life.

Similar to the views of Milkwood Permaculture, we do not support the current, privileged access to ‘whatever you want’ in the supermarkets. We too believe that eating fresh seasonal fruit, vegetables and preserves from the previous summer will make us value the food in our larder highly – and this in turn will influence our thinking, our decisions and choices.

## Small is Beautiful Management Style

Tooworra Farm’s slow food management style is grounded in the desire to ‘tread softly on the earth’ by utilising environmentally sustainable and organic practices. The management techniques used on the farm are based on the Permaculture Principles of Care for the Earth, Care for People and Share the Excess.

We are mindful to nurture the long term resilience of the environment; we do not use chemicals or pesticides; and our intent is to give back to the environment more than we take, particularly through composting and soil creation.

We use small scale techniques and natural gardening methods such as companion planting, composting, mulching and seed saving on the farm, and organic and rotation principles are adopted. Free range chickens, which live at night in a cob built chook house, are integrated into all the farm gardens, particularly the vegetable guild garden. These methods produce healthy chemical free and organically grown food on an ongoing basis.

Tooworra Farm is planting wildlife Yellow Box vegetation corridors, and creek habitats. These corridors provide ‘steppingstones’ for bird and animal species. Like frogs hopping between lily pads, birds and native

animals move along the bushland corridors to reach safe havens as they move from one habitat to another. Yellow Box is an iconic Australian native tree and as its botanical name suggests (*Eucalyptus melliodora*) it means honey scented and is a main source of nectar for our bees, together with wildflower herbs and orchard blossoms. The tree is an essential habitat for many endangered species and Yellow Box eucalypt woodland is now recognised as critically endangered and protected under both Australian Commonwealth and NSW State legislation.

## Food, Renewable Energy, Glasshouse & Climate Battery

Although it might sound that we have shunned technology at the farm, we actually embrace its good facets. We need modern technology for our watering systems, and we need our vehicles. We are dependent on the renewable energy from our solar battery system and wind turbine. We use computers and we have developed a computer program that assists us to determine how many and of what type of vegetable will be available for harvesting and when to plant. We also use old technologies as they can be super good. We use slow combustion wood stoves for cooking. These stoves contain wetbacks that both heat our water and also provide heated panel radiator heating throughout the house. We have built an underground root cellar to store the farm’s produce. It maintains a cool even temperature throughout the year and also uses an air circulation system.

We have lengthened the growing season at Tooworra Farm by building a glasshouse that also incorporates a climate battery system specially engineered for our needs. The climate battery has the effect of moderating temperature extremes in the glasshouse. It consists of tubing and fans and slowly circulates all of the hot, moist daytime air of the glasshouse down underground where it heats the soil. At nighttime, fans then circulate air from the glasshouse through the tubing in the soil adding warmth and moisture back to the glasshouse.

The glasshouse also has a bank of water containers to store heat during the day along its southern wall to release at night. The southern wall is made of mud bricks which provides thermal mass to the glasshouse. Seedlings from the glasshouse are transplanted into the guided vegetable garden when hardy.

We value these technologies as they help us to grow good food. We value good food because we know that valuing– its growing, its preparation, its sustenance – this is key to our collective futures. We support the view that good food empowers us so that we can use that energy and our time on earth to do meaningful things.