

Bend of Islands Conservation Association Newsletter

No. 5 April 1982

What Native's Flowering?



Botanical Name: Amyena miquelii
Common Name: Box mistletoe
Family: Loranthaceae

Mistletoes are parasites on trees and in some cases can almost kill the host trees. Generally, under natural conditions the host seems unaffected, as the growth of the parasite is kept in check by natural controls such as insects and birds.

The mistletoe fruits, often carried by birds, are sticky and germinate on the branches of trees. This mistletoe is most commonly seen on Eucalypts (in this case on a Red Box on Woiwod's block). It is quite conspicuous because of its numerous long hanging leaves, which are yellowish or greenish-brown and stand out as being quite different in colour and shape to the Eucalypt or host leaves. The whole mistletoe plant hangs in a heavy cluster about 1-3 metres long.

The flowers are bright red and yellow and have slender curled-back petals and grow in clusters of several groups of three flowers each. In the Box Mistletoe (Amyena miquelii) these three flowers are stalked, whereas in the Drooping Mistletoe (Amyena pendula), which is the commonest one, each central flower of the three is stalkless. Also, the Box Mistletoe has blunter or more rounded leaves than the Drooping Mistletoe.

The berries of the mistletoe are the favourite food of the Mistletoe-bird.

Cric Henry

Building in the Environmental Living Zone

Most home-owners in the E.L.Z. have been involved to a significant extent in the construction of their houses. Most new-comers probably will be too. The following notes have been written by Bend of Islands residents who are either professionally involved in building or owner-builders. They are offered to those who are planning to build homes, extensions, or outbuildings or are wondering how to revegetate their building site.

Building of course is subject to the Shire of Healesville's provisions. Major planning regulations concern the distance of the buildings from the road, the 'location and character' of both principal and out-buildings, and waste disposal. 'Home occupation' is a land usage subject to consent throughout the Shire, and there are quite specific provisions regarding the size and construction of incidental buildings and the types of activities that can be conducted in them. Concerning construction, the most important regulations to bear in mind are those requiring the external fabric of a house to be fire-resistant and in 'muted tonings', the integration of out-buildings and principal building, and the preservation of the 'aesthetic amenity' of the area. Landscaping too requires some foresight, for the Shire requires minimal disturbance of existing vegetation, planting of indigenous vegetation only, and landscaping and maintenance to avoid 'prejudicially affect[ing] the visual amenity of the area'.

The Committee of the Bend of Islands Conservation Association plays no formal role in the granting of building permits. Nevertheless, members of the Committee will be happy to assist potential builders in understanding the Shire's building provisions with respect to the E.L.Z.

Building Design in the E.L.Z.

Ross Henry

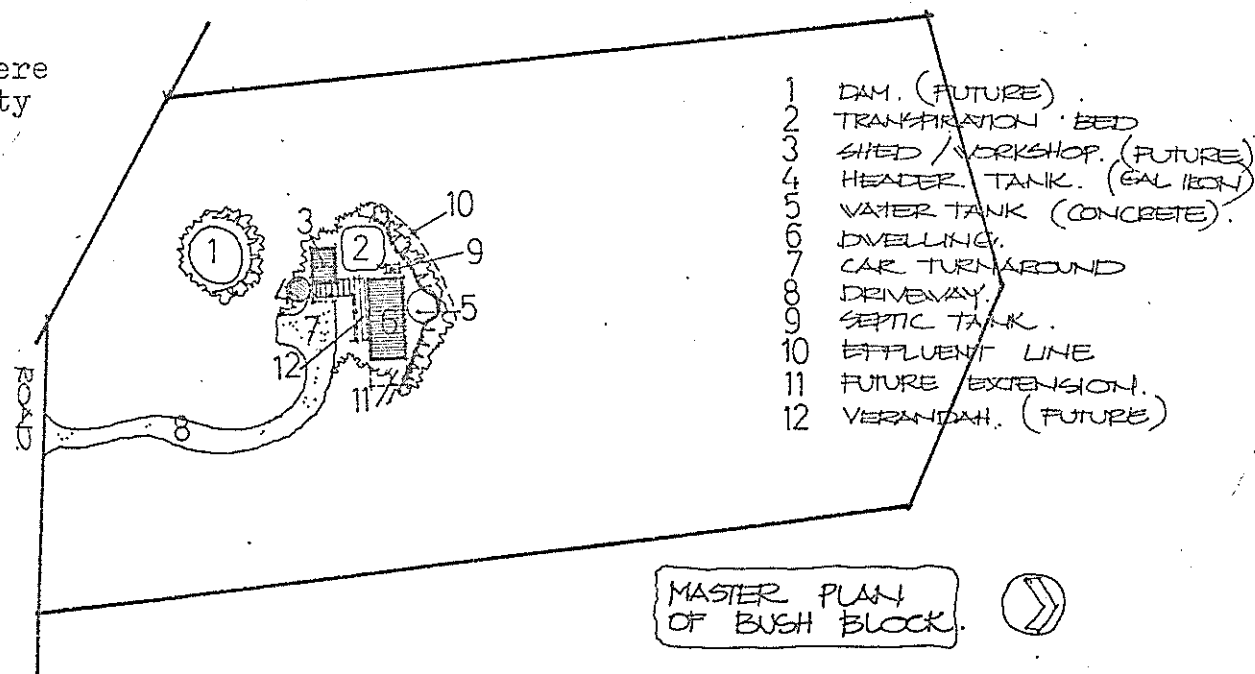
If you're contemplating an extension, a new house, even a shed on your block, perhaps some of these pointers may be of interest.

Before you get tied down in design planning and figuring out on which wall to put which Picasso, it's worth obtaining a copy of the Shire of Healesville's provisions regarding the E.L.Z., for building permits are granted by Council on the basis of these provisions. Members of the B.I.C.A. Committee will be happy to assist in interpreting the material contained in the Shire's conditions.

Selecting a Site

The intention of the zoning is to minimize our disturbance to the flora and fauna, so in contemplating the location of the building we should take this into account. It would be advantageous to study the whole block and its natural features and determine where best all the development should go, both present and future. This includes a house, its future extension, gardens, effluent lines, etc. If you can, sketch up a master plan of your block locating everything. How you build now will most likely save money and bush later on.

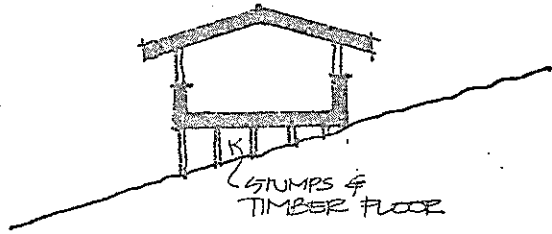
In locating the building there is a bit to consider. Visibility from the road and neighbours, slope, orientation, provision of services to the building, vegetation type, fauna habitats, fire risk, etc. It may be worthwhile talking to others in the area about their relative importance on your block. The general principle of keeping your disturbance as close to the road as possible, so keeping the majority of your block intact, has the added benefit of lessening the cost of providing services to your building.



Slope

The steeper the slope of the land, the more difficult it is to build (i.e. extra cost) and the greater the problem with run-off, weeds, etc. The accompanying driveway and other earth works can cause similar problems.

There are several ways of building on slopes.



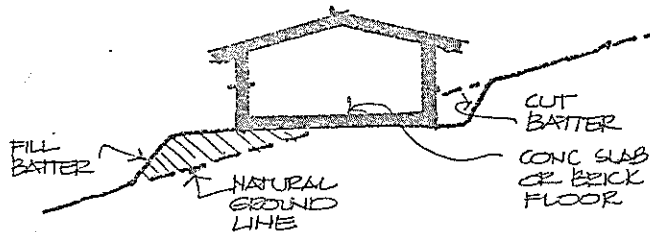
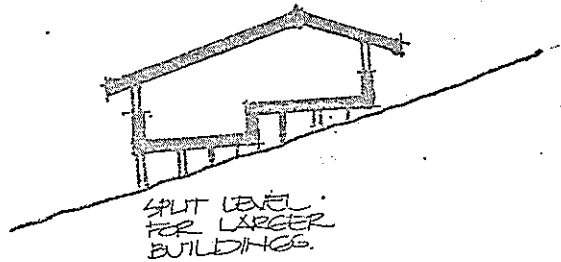
Timber floor construction

Advantages

- * Low disturbance
- * Least expensive
- * Storage under floor

Disadvantages

- * Bush fire risk
- * Link with outdoor living difficult
- * Timber construction or high masonry walls
- * Conspicuous building (high)
- * Comfort conditions inside harder to maintain



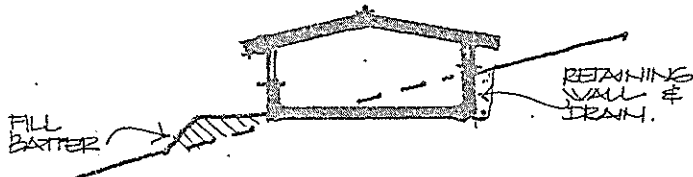
Masonry floor construction

Advantages

- * Simple to build masonry walls
- * Building visually low to ground
- * More stable comfort conditions
- * Low disturbance outside building envelope
- * Snug into ground
- * Bush fire risk lessened

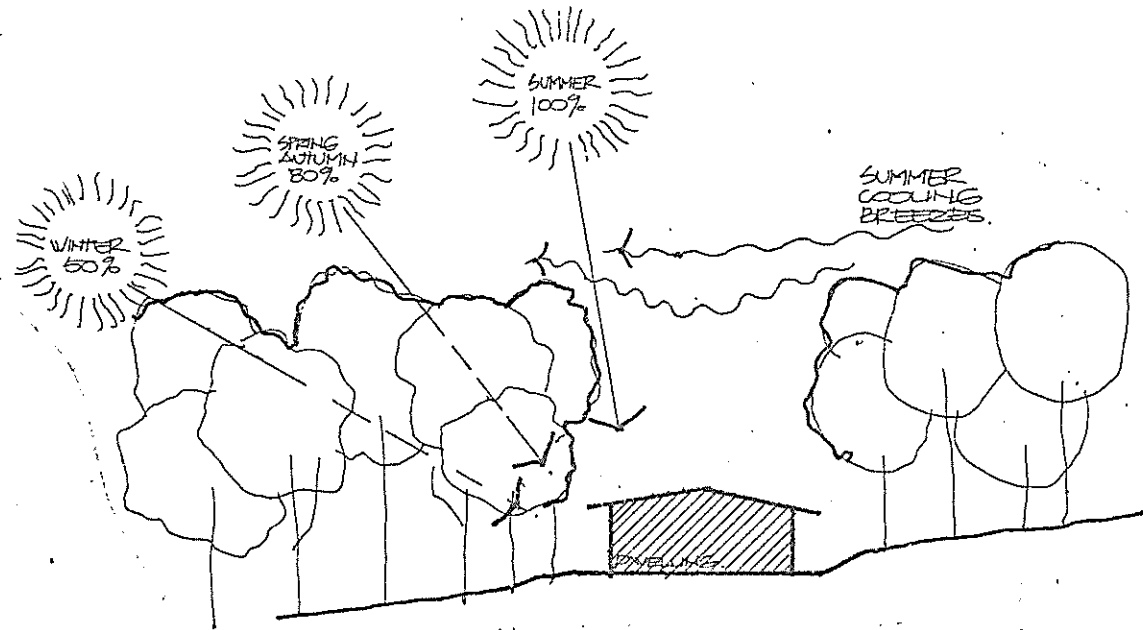
Disadvantages

- * Considerable excavation
- * Problem of re-establishing embankments
- * Involves professional to design retaining wall and drainage



Orientation

There is plenty of literature on how best to locate a building for sun and wind control, so we won't go into it here. In the E.L.Z. on many blocks there is a continuous tree cover. This means that the lower the sun is in winter, the more trees obstruct the solar energy. Also many a cooling summer breeze passes over, above your building. So the importance of passive solar systems in your design may not be that great.



Services

If septic and effluent lines are required, they can tear a site to shreds, so their extent and location need careful thought. Perhaps consider a transpiration bed or other more compact systems of disposal.

Large water tanks can involve large excavation, especially concrete ones. Instead, they can be buried and their concrete tops used as outdoor living areas. Perhaps consider a few smaller galvanized iron tanks to total the same water storage. The rippled surface of a weathered or painted galvanized iron tank can look less obtrusive when viewed through the bush.

Driveway and carparks can be very conspicuous. Try meandering, even if it means slightly raising and dipping the drive. This can also help in distributing the water runoff at several points to ease dispersal problems.

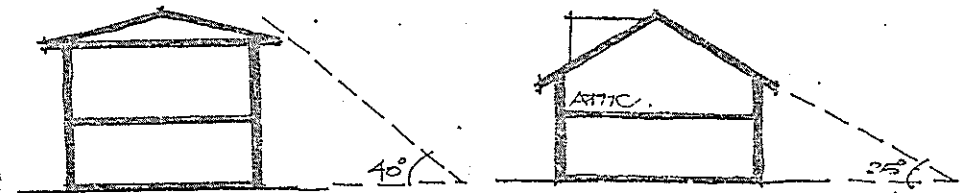


Functional Design

When the site development is all determined you could begin internal planning, satisfying the links between the spaces required and their relationships with the outside including sun, views, outdoor living, services, and other parameters like available funds, type of construction, energy conservation, life style. Future extensions should be thrown about too.

Externally we should try to make our building meld with the bush as much as possible, so colours and textures and materials are important as is the mass of the building. If possible, avoid large roof and wall planes that are visible from the ground, especially if they will catch the sun. It helps if the building can be broken up into a series of lumps, recesses, variety of roof angles, verandahs, bay windows, and allow the bush to re-establish itself right up to the walls.

If two stories are required, it may be both practically and aesthetically advisable to treat the upper level as an attic, so reducing external wall height.



If it is possible to semi-bury the building in its excavation, this can also reduce its visual mass.

Curved walls and/or roofs may also help to soften lines by reducing the number of sharp light and dark changes on the building.

So when the design has been settled on, the building drawings need to be produced and a permit obtained, all before you can dig your first hole.

Construction

When building commences, the organization of the site is very important, whether it's an owner-builder or a contracted builder project.

- * Generally it is worthwhile making a bore of yourself and explaining to any workman, truck driver, etc. on the site what the E.L.Z. is all about and asking for his cooperation. If possible, select an excavator who has done work in the area before and, either way, watch him like a hawk.
- * Put a rope barrier around the building site to indicate to anybody the extent of disturbance you intend tolerating.
- * Stockpile materials compactly. Not all materials need to go outside the building line, but when they do, if possible, dump on areas that will later be disturbed for carpark, tanks, garden, etc.
- * Whilst building, ask around about other people's experiences. It will make the whole job less traumatic and keep your bush bushy.

Building Notes

Jeph Neale

The following points are offered for potential owner-builders to consider while they design their house and plan construction of it.

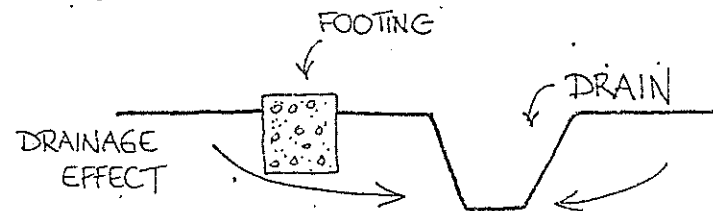
A. Siting

Think beyond 'where the best view is'.

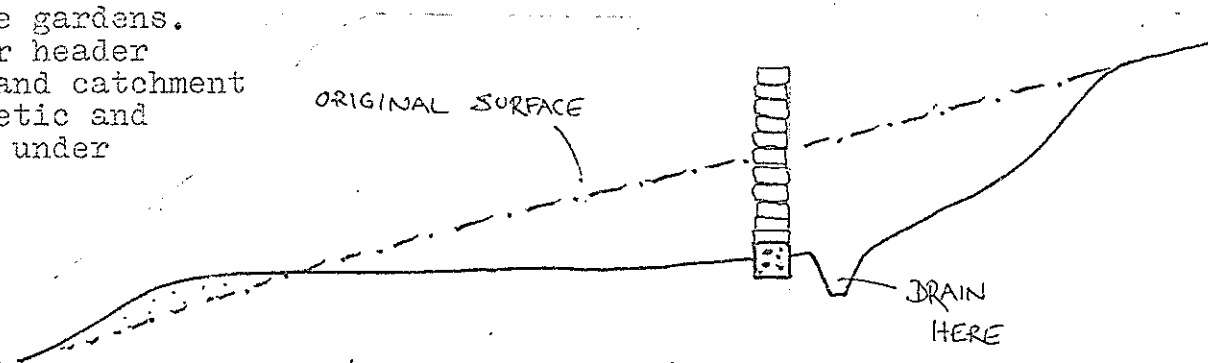
1. Access (driveways) should be on the gentlest possible gradient to minimise erosion.
2. Avoid a driveway or path that acts as a storm water drain right down to your front door.
3. Think about vehicle access. How close do you need to get a car to your house? Where can you fit a shelter for your car (if you want one)?
4. Revegetation of disturbed ground is difficult in our area, so consider structural retaining walls in favour of batters.
5. Think about the location of your kitchen and washhouses. They should be convenient to the effluent disposal area (septic tank, etc.).
6. Think about proximity of shade trees to solar collectors and vegetable gardens.
7. Think about suitable sites for header tank and other water storage and catchment tanks. This is both an aesthetic and plumbing question. (See also under 'Plumbing'.)

B. Drainage

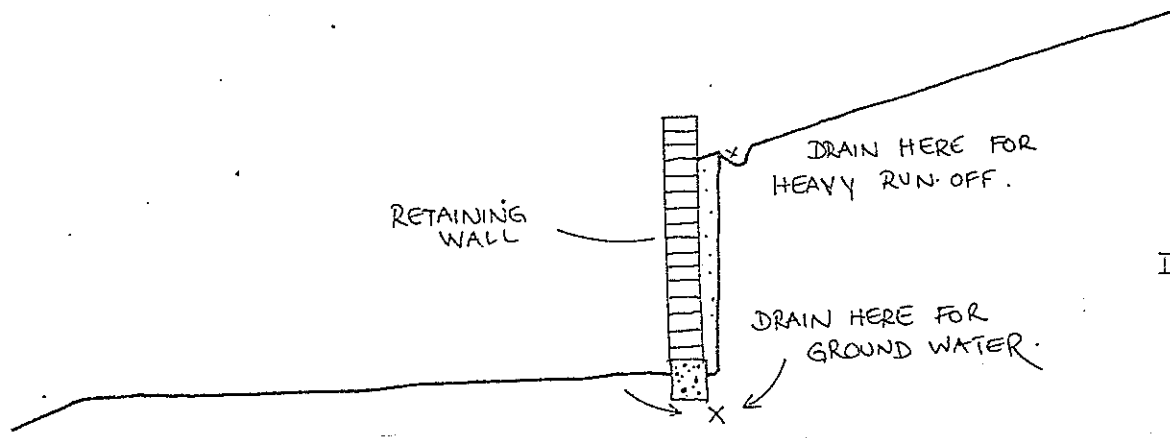
1. Drains should be planned and constructed at the same time as your excavation.
2. MOST IMPORTANT: All drains should be lower than the bottom of the adjacent footing and should be 300 mm wide or wider.



3. Ideally there should be a drain at the top of a batter as well as the bottom.
4. The longevity of a building depends on all walls being free from ground moisture. White ants (termites) and wool-rotting fungi need water. Termites have seriously invaded at least three houses in our area shortly after construction.
5. All walls that begin 'below the original ground level' should have an adjacent drain.

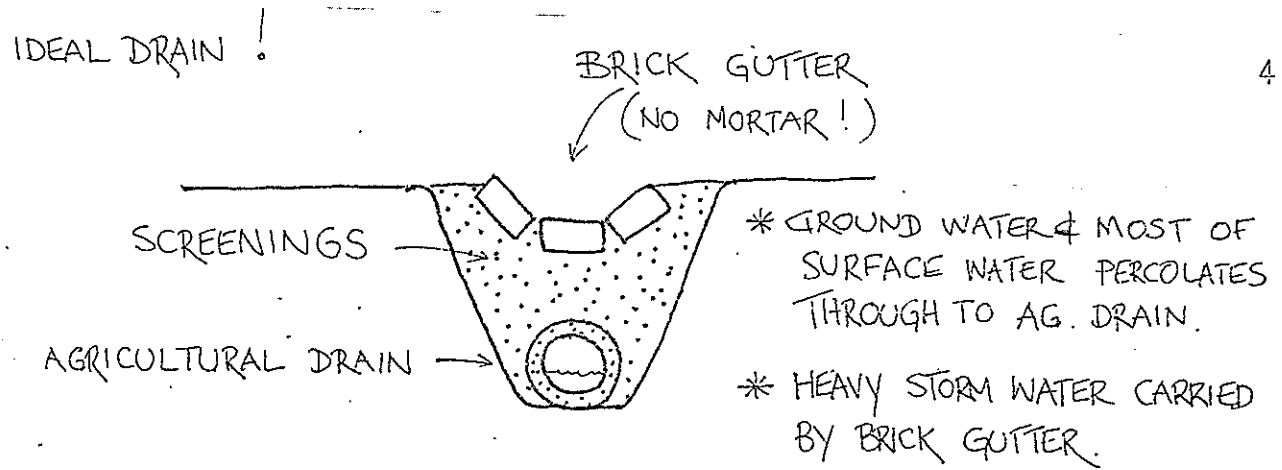


7. Retaining walls need to be drained.



8. All drains should be filled with 19 mm. screenings.

9. Ideal drain --



C. Services

1. Know that with careful planning, Telecom and S.E.C. supply can go in the same trench provided that the conduits are separated by sufficient fill.
2. Above-ground lines require perpetual servicing and clearing. They are the owner's responsibility (not the S.E.C.'s).

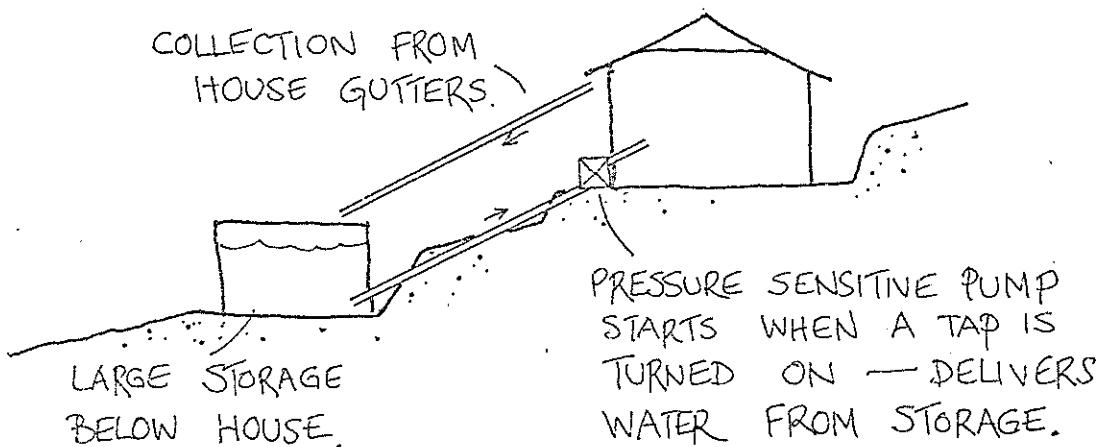
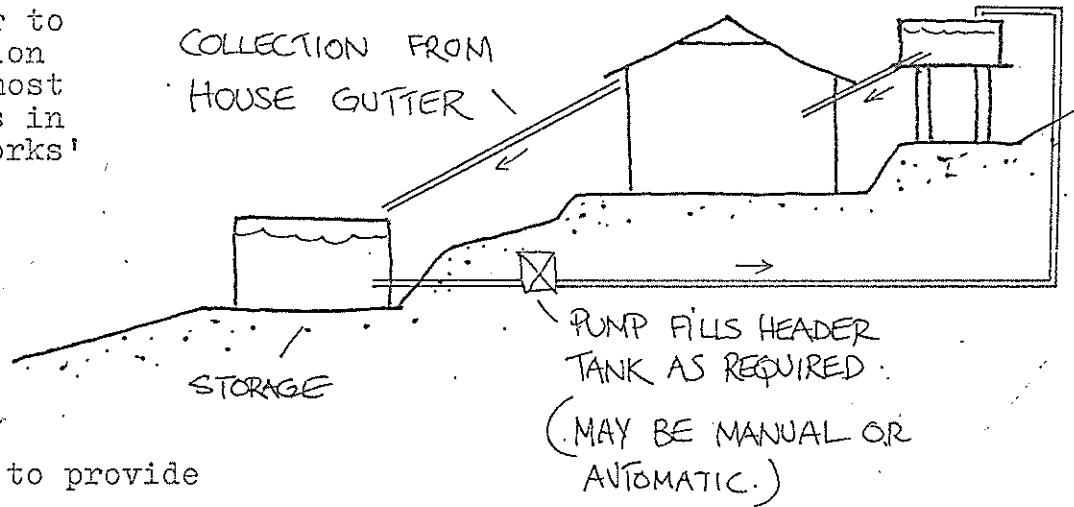
D. Floors

1. Consider ease of cleaning, i.e. a smooth, flat surface free of cavities and crevices may be desirable.
2. Dark floors, e.g. slate, absorb heat (especially sunlight through a window). You may wish to exploit or avoid this.
3. Bricks are expensive and represent a high energy-intensive production method. They are not easy to lay straight and flat.
4. Matte surfaces or brick and slate are preferable to highly polished or waxed ones. In our clay soil, summer footprints are dusty and winter ones are muddy. These show up far more on a highly finished stone floor.
5. Experience has shown that on wooden floors, matte polyurethane 'polishes' up to a satin finish with wear, resulting in shiny 'tracks' on a flat background. It might therefore be better to avoid a matte finish on wood floors; go straight for high quality, satin finish polyurethane.

E. Plumbing

1. There are problems particular to low pressure water reticulation that are not appreciated by most plumbers. Advice from locals in houses where the plumbing 'works' should be sought;
2. Pipes often need to be of larger diameter; the percentage of friction loss in flow is therefore reduced.
3. Mains pressure of water systems are o.k., as long as you have a head of 6 metres or more.
4. Two main systems can be used to provide household water:

SMALLER HEADER TANK (IN ROOF OR OUTSIDE) DELIVERS WATER TO THE HOUSE BY GRAVITY.



A variation on B. above has a large storage tank where the header tank is and a smaller 5-6,000 litre collection tank below the house. Pump up whenever it rains.

5. There can be problems with pressure pumps (see alternative A. to the left); they are noisy, prone to failure, and may not provide constant temperature showers because of their intermittent operation. Furthermore, if you are totally dependent on a pressure system, you are completely without water (including W.C.) when there is a power failure.

6. Thought should be given to water collection during roof design. Where is your collection tank to be? Minimise storm water drainage footage.
7. Make sure your collection system can cope with the rain that falls on your roof. The old rule of thumb for the number of down pipes was "one square inch of down-pipe area for each 100 square feet of roof area".
8. Make sure all stormwater drains are possum-proof. Bitter experience in at least one household on the Co-op has shown that Ringtail Possums can travel for considerable distances through 90 mm. downpipe in search of a drink. Unfortunately they can't get back out, and they die in your tank water, with predictable side effects.
9. Thought should be given to sprinkler systems to protect your house against fire. Although unproven (as yet, luckily), sprinklers mounted on the corners of your roof should provide some protection.
10. Fire protection systems should be planned during the building stage rather than 'tacked on' after you move in. Materials and work can be saved because the fire protection system can often be incorporated into the general water reticulation.
11. If you have a separate fire-fighting pump, consider locating it below the water source (tank or dam). It then will not need priming. Consider enclosing it in a fire-proof box. Make sure that your fire protection system is easy (uncomplicated) to use..

12. If your main water storage is accessible to vehicles, have a 2" male outlet on it for Fire Brigade use.
13. Consider transpiration beds as a septic outfall system. They do save water for your vegetable garden.

F. Heating

1. Open fireplaces, although aesthetically pleasing, are grossly inefficient and cannot be significantly improved by patent devices (for most heat goes up the flue). Furthermore, a fireplace and chimney are enormously expensive to build.
2. The local supply of firewood is fast becoming depleted, so in planning for years ahead, don't depend on collecting firewood in our area. Moreover, dead wood provides habitats for local wildlife and therefore plays an important role in our ecology.
3. Few modern solid-fuel heating stoves ('pot-belly' types, etc.) are designed to last more than a few years. Furthermore, few types even vaguely resemble a thermally efficient chamber (cracks, warps, etc.). However, there are exceptions, so seek advice.
4. Underfloor heating is pleasant and may be economical if gas or oil is used. Electricity is expensive.
5. Regarding storage of gas bottles, consult the C.F.A.

G. Lighting

This is the most difficult thing of all to plan, but consider the following:

1. Interior wall colour is important. Lighter tones result in lower energy consumption, i.e. you can use lower wattage globes.
2. Consider pull-cord switches as an alternative way of activating your lights. This saves on wiring (it all stays in the roof!).
3. Plan all lighting so as to be out of the eyes of seated people.
4. For exterior lights, consider ground lights. They are less offensive to neighbors and road users. They are aesthetically pleasing. They don't shine in your eyes if properly located (fascia-mounted spot-lights are often a real hindrance because of this problem).
5. Consider the balance between natural and artificial lighting as well as the implications of natural lighting on the thermal efficiency of your house. More windows mean greater potential for heat transfer through walls by conduction. Location of windows is an important point to consider. South facing, for example, gives light without direct sunlight, therefore no direct radiant heat.

H. Construction

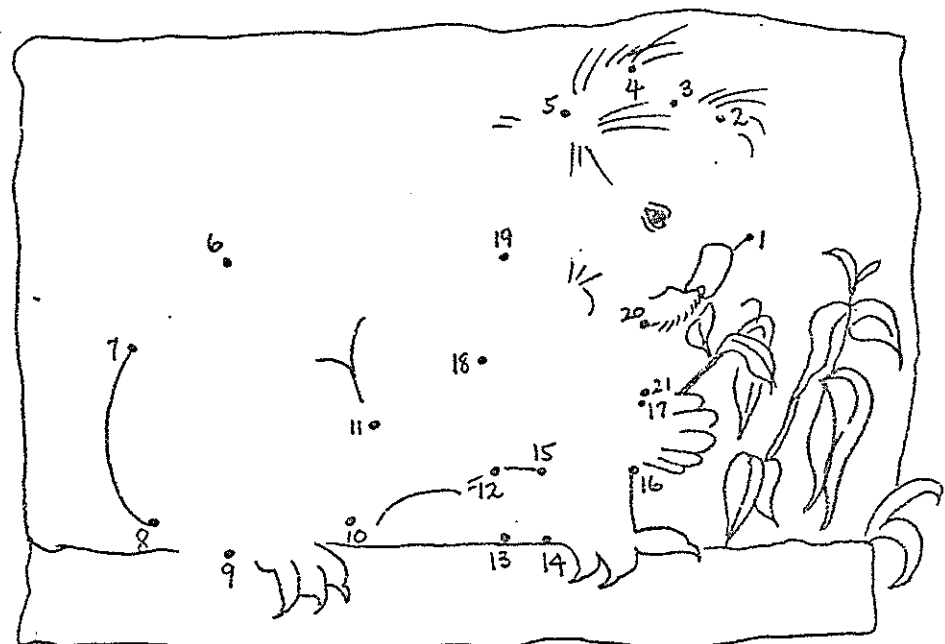
1. Think about slab vs. strip footings. A slab is more convenient, particularly if you are going to be building over a fair period. Strip footings are less expensive in concrete, but later work may outweigh this advantage. Note that concrete, like fired brick, is a very high energy-intensive material to produce.
2. To avoid the need to spray under slab floors, consider selecting your timber carefully (termites love oregon). Good species include murray pine, western red cedar, treated radiata pine, red box, ironbark, and some good red gum.
3. Consider the time factor if planning to use second-hand timber in scantling (small section) sizes. It often is not cost-effective to do so.
4. Not all soil in the area is suitable for making mudbricks. Often there is too much sand or too many large stones.
5. In a mudbrick wall, door jambs need to be bigger than in other types of construction. Because their fixing is less secure they tend to flex (and become loose) when the door is slammed.
6. Cupboards should be vermin-proof from the outside -- anticipate the invasion of mice into your house; they will turn up eventually.
7. Ceiling space should be rat-proof. Rats chew through plastic flex and can start fires.

I. Finishes

1. Don't use linseed oil as an exterior finish. Fungi thrive on it, and it goes black. Further, it oxidizes and becomes useless fairly quickly.
2. Clear finishing oils eventually break down in ultraviolet light and become ineffective. Exterior timber is best protected with a heavy oil-based timber stain.
3. You don't have to render mudbrick walls -- if you don't, you should however be more careful in laying, plugging up, parging, etc.
4. Wide eaves are generally sufficient weather protection, but where a wall gets rain on it, treatment with one of the proprietary silicone finishes is ideal. They are easy to apply and completely invisible. They make the wall completely water-resistant, but not dust-free.
5. Various treatments can be given to inside mud walls. Each has its various functional and aesthetic qualities.
 - a. P.V.A. ('Bondcrete') tends to 'yellow' the wall; it also imparts a slight shine to the surface.
 - b. Casein is a good dust-proofer.
 - c. Wallpaper paste (methyl cellulose) is very economical. It slightly darkens the wall and is a little shiny. Silverfish may feed on it.
 - d. Neat cow dung used green ('steaming') provides a good waterproof, durable, dust-free surface.

6. For kitchen benches, etc., oiled and waxed surfaces eventually fail and the timber moves. Polyurethane (good quality) is the only thing.

For the Kids



I am a k_____.

I eat g_____.

I get w_____ from the leaves.







Landscaping in the E.L.Z.

Cric Henry

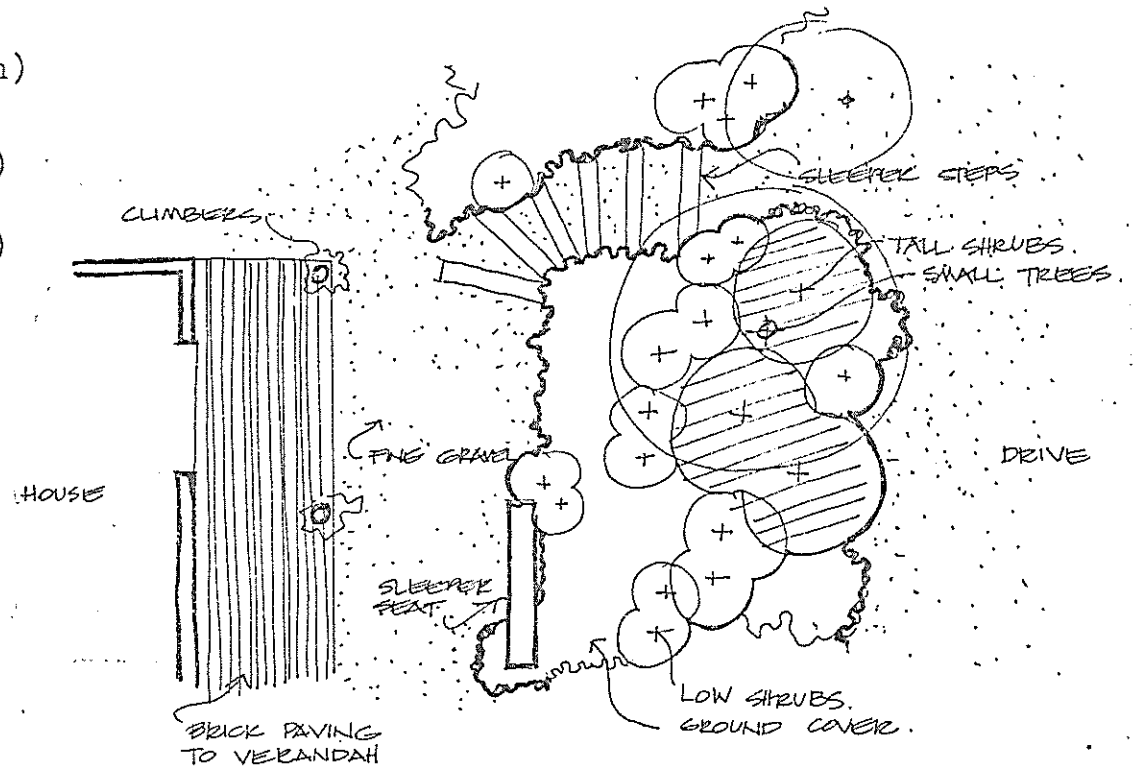
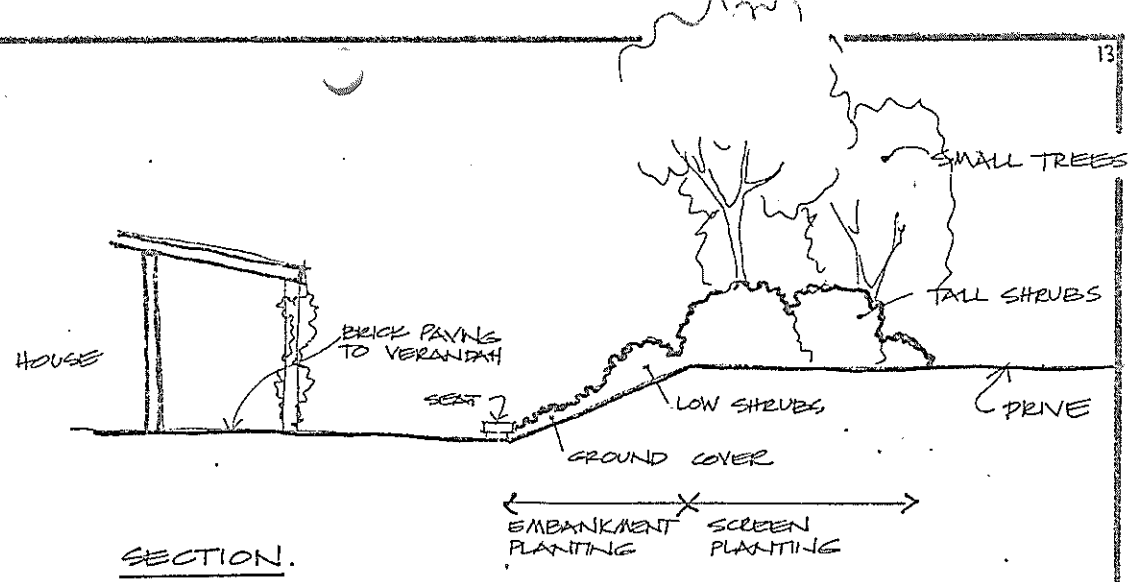
Before you start buying or laying paving, it's probably a good idea to draw up a plan of your site to scale (1:500, 1:200, or 1:1000) showing the existing conditions, buildings, accessways and any future buildings, so that you can develop a Landscape Development Plan for the whole site.

The Landscape Plan could include:

1. The Planting Types

-  Large trees (more than 10 m. high)
-  Small trees (less than 6 m. high)
-  Tall shrubs (more than 2 m. high)
-  Low shrubs (less than 2 m. high)
-  Ground cover/prostrate cover
-  Climbers

2. The Landscape Materials, such as paving, brick, sleepers, gravel or toppings, mulching, rocks
3. The Landscape Details, such as steps, seats, tables, retaining work, etc.
4. The Species Selection



DETAIL OF LANDSCAPE PLAN SHOWING SCREEN PLANTING TO DRIVE, EMBANKMENT PLANTING, PATHS & MATERIALS.

Some Landscape Design Considerations include:

- Screening with trees and shrubs to soften roads, buildings, cars and water tanks
- Defining outdoor spaces with trees and shrubs
- Softening the edges of outdoor spaces with ground covers and low shrubs
- Using ground covers, such as Dichondra repens (Kidney-weed), to get the effect of a lawn
- Using climbers and creepers to soften stumps, logs, walls and posts of buildings
- Using trees and shrubs for sunshading inside the building or in outdoor areas
- Covering bare clay embankments with ground covers, creepers or mulching materials
- Choosing paving materials that blend with the colour and texture of the bush
- When designing the landscape details, such as seats, steps, etc., consider them in relation to the scale of the bush and use plants to nestle them into the bush.
- Locating service areas in relationship to the house and the bush. Such areas include the clothes drying, wood storage and cutting, vegetable garden and composting.
- Considering the fire fighting system, e.g. a sprinkler system, location of 44-gal. drums or tanks for water storage, buckets, taps, hoses, backpacks

Some Species Selection Design Considerations are:

- The choice of plants that are growing naturally on your block. These plants have adapted to the existing soil and climatic conditions and are more likely to survive without additional watering or fertiliser.
- The provisions of the E.L.Z. specify that "the site shall be landscaped with vegetation indigenous to the Yarra Valley". This gives quite a wide choice of plants.

Refer to -

The MMBW Yarra Brae-Sugarloaf Environmental Study

Bend of Islands Conservation Association 'Newsletter' (un-numbered, 1980?)

Flowers and Plants of Victoria by Cochrane Fuhrer, Rotherham and Willis

By planting species not native to the Yarra Valley we are more likely to have problems with native and exotic weeds, hybridization of plants, introduction of exotic birds.

- Avoid planting species from the Myrtaceae family close to buildings as they are more inflammable. Such species include Eucalypts, Leptospermum (Tea-tree), Callistemons (Bottle-brush) and Melaleucas (Paperbarks).
- Consider planting legumes such as the Acacias (Wattles) and members of the pea family. These plants thrive particularly well on clay soils. They have a quality known as 'nitrogen fixing', i.e. they can synthesize free nitrogen into nitrogenous compounds.

* Incorporate gypsum, compost, topsoil (sterilized or from site) with broken-up clay. Gypsum and compost helps to improve the quality of clay soils by providing better drainage and aeration. Sterilized soil cuts down the risk of weed seeds in imported soils.

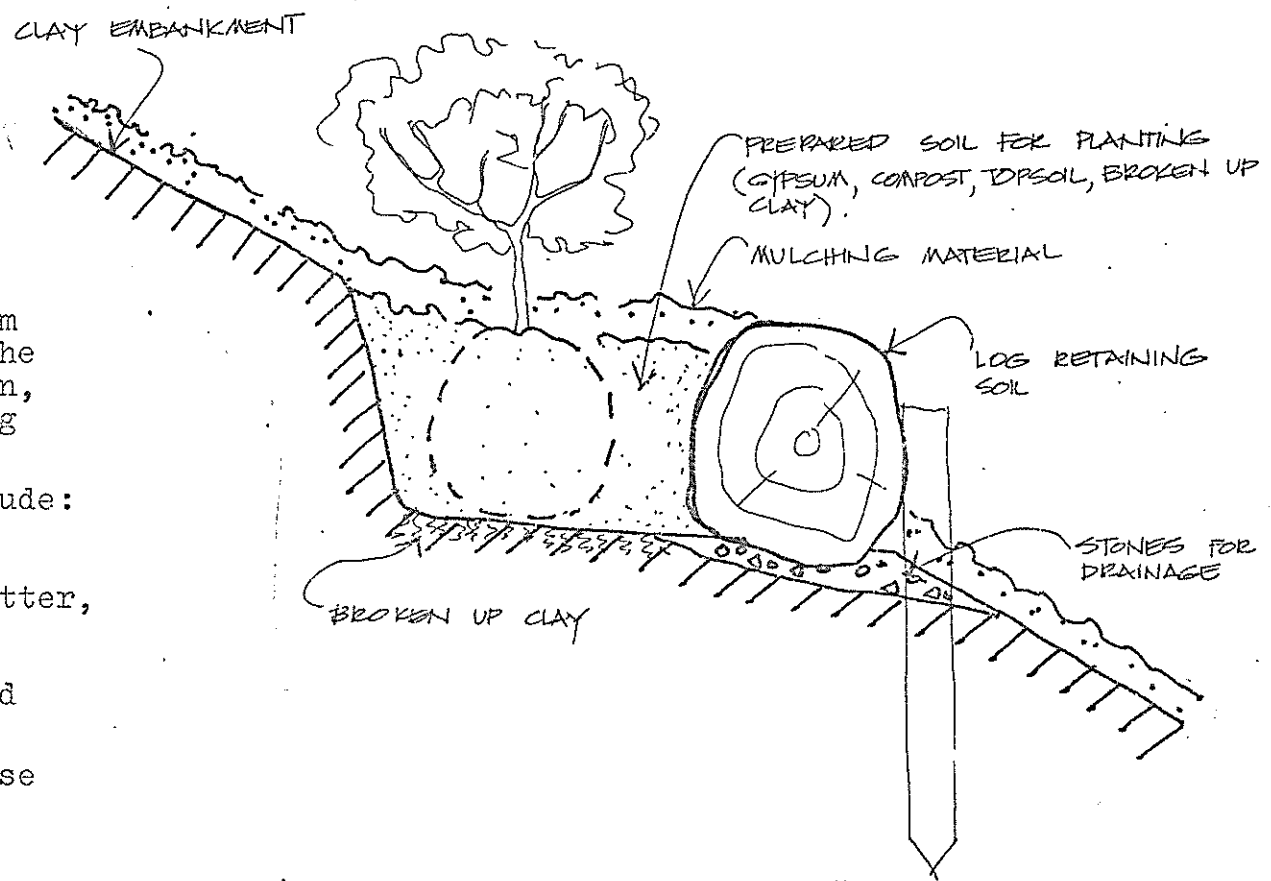
* When planting on embankments, terracing the clay slope with logs can help to provide sufficient topsoil for planting. The terracing also helps prevent the topsoil from being washed down the slope. The logs trap leaf litter, encouraging humus and moisture buildup providing suitable habitats for native seedlings to grow.

* Mulch helps protect the soil from being washed away and prevents the clay surface from compacting down, preventing moisture from reaching the roots of the plant.

Suitable mulching materials include:

- Ground covers or mat plants
- Organic material†, i.e. leaf litter, hardwood chips or shavings (make sure hardwood is well-cured and hasn't been treated with preservatives)
- Inorganic materials, i.e. coarse river sand, gravel, crushed rock

† Due to the bushfire risk, care should be taken when using organic materials. Perhaps cover the organic material with a layer of sand or plant ground cover which will eventually take over as the living mulch.



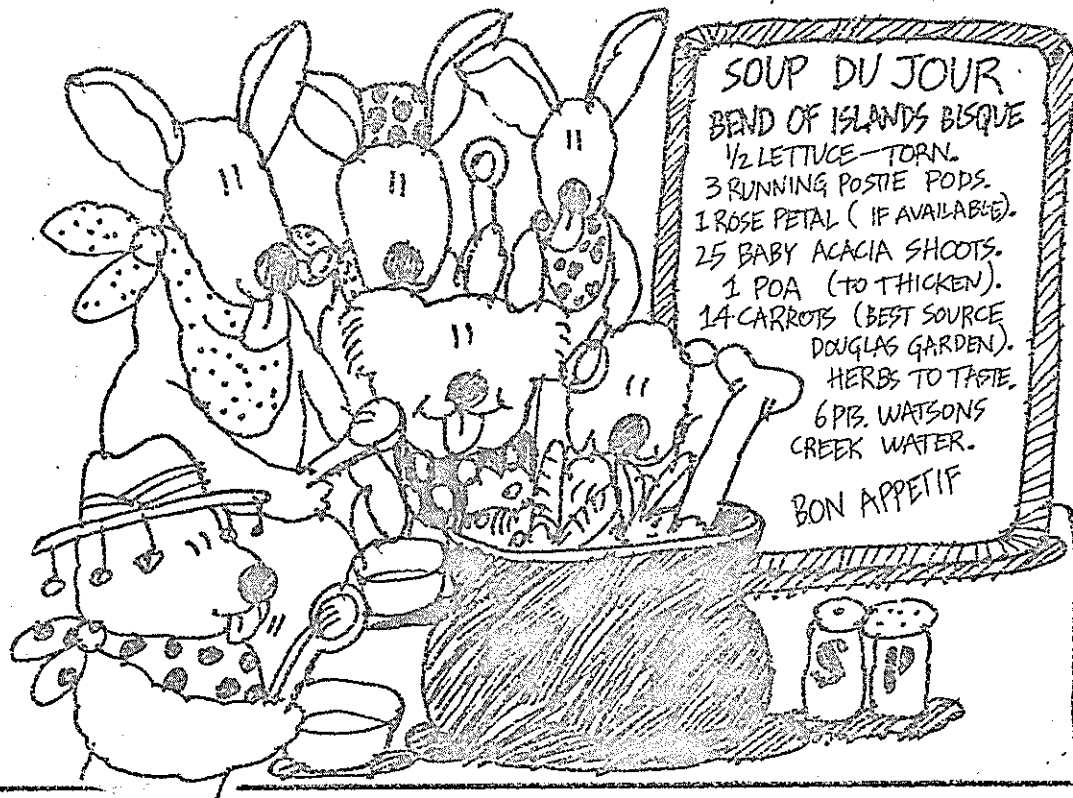
LANDSCAPE DETAIL OF TERRACING FOR PLANTING ON EMBANKMENTS.

- When choosing the combination of plants, consider the plants that occur naturally together in the bush. Cluster plants of the same species as they occur in the bush. The overall effect may be more pleasing and natural.
- Check the flowering times of the plants so that you get the colour effect you want.
- Take into account the leaf texture of the plants and how they can complement each other when used together.
- Protect the plants from the rabbits and wallabies so that you don't get disappointed.

Another provision of the E.L.Z. relating to landscaping specifies, "No indigenous vegetation shall be destroyed or removed except on actual site of buildings and accessways". Once building work has started, disturbance to the site occurs with excavation work, resulting in clay embankments devoid of topsoil, leaf litter and plants. Disturbance occurs also with digging of service trenches, machinery access and the storage of building materials. The amount of disturbance can be minimized by restricting machinery access and storing materials in areas that will be used for future building or accessways.

A few points to help recreate or re-establish the natural bush include:

- * Conserve and stockpile the site topsoil.
- * Plant plants indigenous to the Yarra Valley.
- * If any clearing of vegetation is necessary to make way for building, etc., transplant the plants into pots for planting out later.
- * Propagate the native plants in the area by cuttings from shoots of new growth or seeds. Collect seed pods from wattles and peas when they have changed colour from green to brown and have dried out, i.e. just before the seeds are ready to be dispersed. (Refer to 'Newsletter' un-numbered, 1980?)
- * Prepare the soil well before planting by digging holes at least twice the width of the plant container. Break up the clay soil so that the soil is crumbly and loose; especially at the base of the pot.



Thoughts from an Owner-Builder

Michael Pelling

1. Talk to as many people as possible who have recently built; they will always tell you what not to do, what costs escalated, who gave the best deal...
2. Concepts are great but usually mean divergence from convention. Building convention has been established not necessarily by dull minds, but by the need to meet economic reality. Owner-builders are in this situation usually unless they have lots of time.
3. With mud brick house building in particular, structure is very simple. Mistakes can be easily fixed, plans can be changed -- they are honest structures in the sense that there is no facade.
4. Shop around, at least 4 quotes for supplies. Squeeze building suppliers for your rightful discount. There should be competition for your custom.
5. If you employ sub-contractors, ensure they have adequate insurance cover. Take out your own builders'-contractors' policy and public liability.
6. As a learning experience and as a meaningful accomplishment, become involved in as much direct activity as possible. Modern man has become bluffed into accepting that this supposedly complex activity is beyond most.

2 YEARS LATER...
"ONLY ANOTHER
3,001 BRICKS
TO GO!"



7. Certain services, mainly electrical installation, must ultimately have S.E.C. approval if you intend to connect; and this must meet their regulations. This can at the least be "written off" by a suitably qualified electrician.
8. Define what you want done by others, try to get fixed price quotes, and establish the fact that any changes must be approved.
9. As an owner-builder, you will be liable for the standard of construction as defined in Victorian legislation should you sell your house within 6 years after gaining you certificate of occupancy.
10. Try to see previous work done by potential sub-contractors; don't rely on legends. Work must be to your liking and standards -- building a house, particularly if it is being tackled on a day by day basis, is riskier and after all is probably the greatest expenditure, and hopefully asset, you will be involved with.
11. Complement the natural insulation effectiveness of mud brick with adequate roof insulation, particularly if coloured roofing is to be used. Keep hot summer sun off the walls with adequate eaves. Make sure eaves are wide enough to prevent rain impinging on the walls.

For the Kids

Unjumble my name
beside my picture

- 12. Install a header tank system -- pressure without the need for pumping and a constant one at that.
- 13. Excavate all your holes at once: septic, transpiration, footings, tank, dam, pipe trenches, etc.
- 14. You will have to erect an "aviary"-like structure over a transpiration bed or equivalent to keep possums, etc., away.
- 15. If sewerage and sullage are to enter the septic tank, check that the septic tank will "do its duty". The volume of water involved and the constituents (use biodegradables) may be too much for "the soup to ferment".
- 16. Consider heat output from such devices as refrigerators and hot water services - you can use this in winter, but would want to exit it in summer.
- 17. Locate open fireplaces on internal walls to utilise the heat absorbed by the structure after the fire has been extinguished.
- 18. Keep toilet close to septic tank; after a certain distance a full flush of at least 2 gallons will be required, wasting much water. A new toilet system is on the market which has an adjustable flush.
- 19. In mudbrick houses lighting is paramount, considering the relatively dark colour of the mudbrick. Clerestory windows often help.



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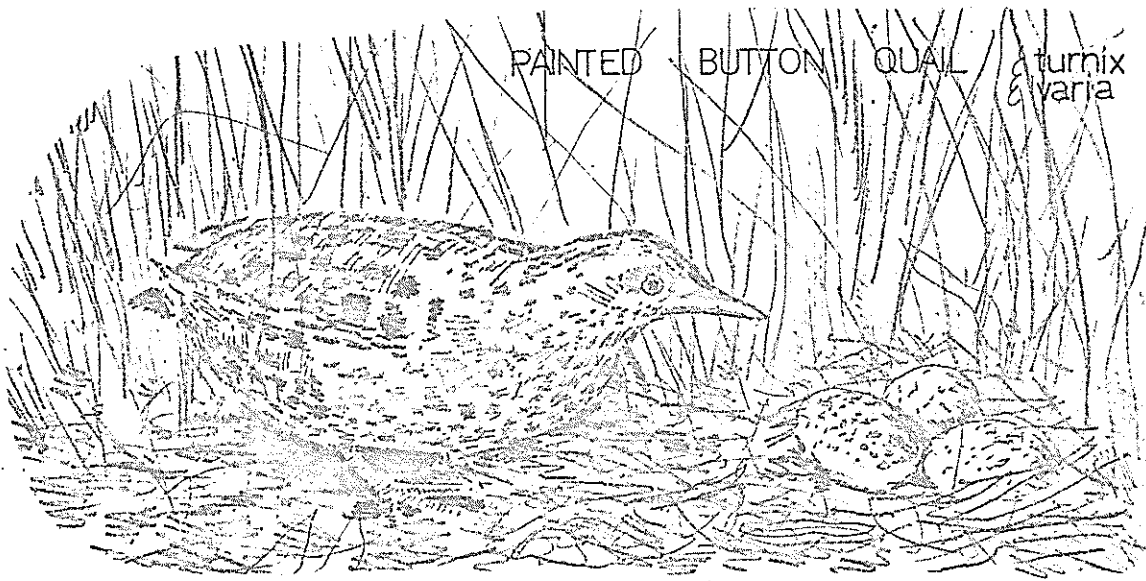
Bend of Islands Bird Group

Jim Mattiske

The Bird Group is still finding new birds in the E.L.Z. The total species now stands at 123, with 50 species confirmed breeding in the area. The more information we gather about our birds, the more likely we are to be able to ensure that they will survive here.

Our Group holds monthly meetings to collate information that has been obtained by nine families. 'Official' bird walks are held irregularly at the moment because mud brick houses tend not to go up by themselves. However, bird observation can be done every day, and members are encouraged to make notes of changes in bird numbers and interesting or unusual behaviour.

We have recently identified two species of button-quail, ground-frequenting and ground-nesting birds. It is worthwhile noting that we have now recorded at least 6 species of bird that nest on the ground and approximately the same number that nest very close to the ground. These birds are definitely threatened by the presence of dogs, as well as by cats. Someone recently argues with me that dogs don't do any harm in the bush, but the fact that we have ground dwelling and nesting birds would appear to me to soundly squash that argument.



- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>The ground-nesting birds we have are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spotted quail thrush Brown quail Stubble quail Painted button quail Little button quail Pardalote | <p>Those that nest close to the ground (grass tussocks, etc.):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blue wren Rufous song lark White browed scrub-wren Buff-rumped thornbill Brown thornbill Grey shrike thrush |
|---|---|

The chough banding has begun! Look out for choughs with coloured bands on their legs. If you see any, please note 1) the band colour, 2) the location, 3) size of flock, 4) any interesting behaviour. Relay this info to Jim, John, or Digby.

Recent General Meetings

At the General Meeting of 13 Sept. 1981, Dr. Geoff Marks, a research officer with the Forests Commission, gave a very interesting summary of the problem of Eucalypt Diebacks in Victoria. He talked about the major organisms that cause dieback, namely the fungi Phytophthora cinnamomi and Armillaria luteobubalina, and the defoliating insect Aidymurria violescens. The spread of the former two he related to past and present forestry practices. P. cinnamomi has been spread extensively in earth moving machinery used for logging, and A. luteobubalina is encouraged by selective logging.

The principal forest areas currently affected by dieback occur in dry sclerophyll forests located in coastal East Gippsland and South Gippsland (mostly Phytopthera), in the Dandenong Ranges (defoliating insects), in the Wombat and Mt. Cole forests in west-central Victoria, (Armillaria and Phytopthera), and in the Grampians (Phytopthera).

There has been much concern about the presence and/or effect of Phytopthera in the Bend of Islands region; and Geoff Marks was able to present us with some valuable and encouraging guidelines. Firstly the vast majority of the soils within our region are unsuitable for the spread of this soil-born fungus. Phytopthera favours friable loams or sandy soils that are poorly drained and low in organic matter. Many gullies within our area have friable loamy soils, but they are generally well drained and rich in organic matter. They also largely support Eucalypt species that are resistant to the fungus: Swamp Gum, Manna Gum, Candlebark and River Red Gum.

Within the area we have species that are very susceptible to Phytopthera: Red Stringybark, Messmate, Narrow Leaf Peppermint and Broad Leaf Peppermint. These species however occur in the shallow, clayey soils that are the areas' major soil type, and these are unsuitable for the growth and spread of Phytopthera. Also occurring on these soils are a number of Eucalypt species that are resistant: Long Leaf Box, Red Box, Yellow Box and Yellow Stringybark and Ironbark.

Briefly, it appears that we have a native bushland that is quite resistant to the growth and spread of Phytopthera. This should however not lead to complacency, and care should still be taken to see that it is not introduced into the region from such sources as gravel or topsoil brought in from infected areas.

Andy McMahon

*'Phytophthora' is spelled 'Phytopthera'.

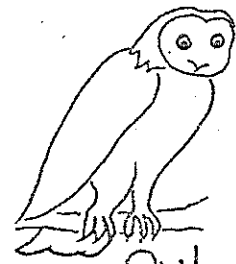
At the following General Meeting, held on Nov. 22, we heard comments delivered by Reg Johnson, former Executive Officer of the Conservation Council of Victoria. Although he focussed on the management of the Yarra River, his emphasis was on citizen participation in conservation in general. He pointed out that public bodies with specific briefs, like the River Improvement Trust, often are not required to pay attention to conservation issues. It is only when ordinary citizen groups bring pressures to bear on them that they may be responsive to such concerns. Local conservation organizations, he pointed out, are generally more involved with parochial issues and usually lack a sustained interest in wider problems. He specifically challenged B.I.C.A. to demonstrate to the public the value of what we are trying to do.

For our Annual General Meeting on 7 March 1982, Graham Pizzey gave a slide presentation about his work at 'Coolart', an historic property near Westernport, where he is Warden. Coolart presents an Australian environment consciously modified by its early owners to attain the atmosphere of a European garden. Still, Pizzey argued, it provides much needed relief to the Melbourne city-dweller as well as a number of different habitats attracting a variety of flora and fauna. Well known as the author of A Field Guide to the Birds of Australia, he illustrated his talk with a number of striking slides of the bird life now on the property.

Tom Fisher

Kids' Stuff

Which one doesn't belong in each row?



Owl



Robin



Mouse



Kookaburra



Snake



Kangaroo



Wombat



Possum

Annual General Meeting

The A.G.M. on March 7 was held at McMahons' house in Christmas Hills. Despite the long weekend and the perhaps unfamiliar territory, the meeting was well attended. Visitors included the guest speaker Graham Pizzey, an account of whose talk appears elsewhere in this Newsletter. Graham's wife Sue and councillor Peter Gompertz from the Shire of Healesville were also made welcome.

Resignations from the Committee were those of Gavin McCormack, Rod Shield and Felicity Faris. No new members were nominated so the Committee stands now as follows:

| | |
|--------------|-----------------|
| Eilish Cooke | John McCallum |
| Neil Douglas | Andy McMahon |
| Tom Fisher | Janet Mattiske |
| Neil Harvey | Michael Pelling |
| Cric Henry | |

John McCallum and Janet Mattiske were nominated for President and Vice-president respectively and were elected unopposed.

In recognition of Felicity's untiring work for the Bend of Islands over the past 6 years, a vote of recognition was passed, life membership granted and a presentation made to her.

The incoming Committee looks forward to another busy year and hopes to continue to further the future well-being of the Bend of Islands. Meetings are open to all Association members and are held monthly. For further information, contact the Secretary, Cric Henry, on 712-0547.



Work Party

On Sunday morning a work party was held to deal with the fallen branches which had lain along Henley Road (beyond Skyline Road) since the storm the previous summer. There was a good attendance of adults and children, and most of the material was stacked into heaps which could be safely burned.

This operation was carried out in conjunction with the Fire Brigade, who later burned the heaps. Henley Road, which generally runs in an east-west direction through the Bend of Islands, is the line that the Brigade has selected as a firebreak. This means that it should be maintained in a relatively safe condition both as an access road for fire fighting vehicles and as a potential line of defence when fire threatens. Consequently, from time to time the Brigade will be burning parts of this line to reduce litter on the ground. Whilst this renders the roadside unsightly for awhile, it is part of the compromise we have to reach as part of safe environmental living. It is also worth noting that animal and plant mortality in a controlled burn is very low.

John McCallum

Calendar of Community Activities

There is something for everybody in the Bend of Islands. Listed below are some of the activities local people are involved in at present. If you are interested in joining you would be most welcome. Just ring the contact person and come along to the next meeting of the group that appeals to you.

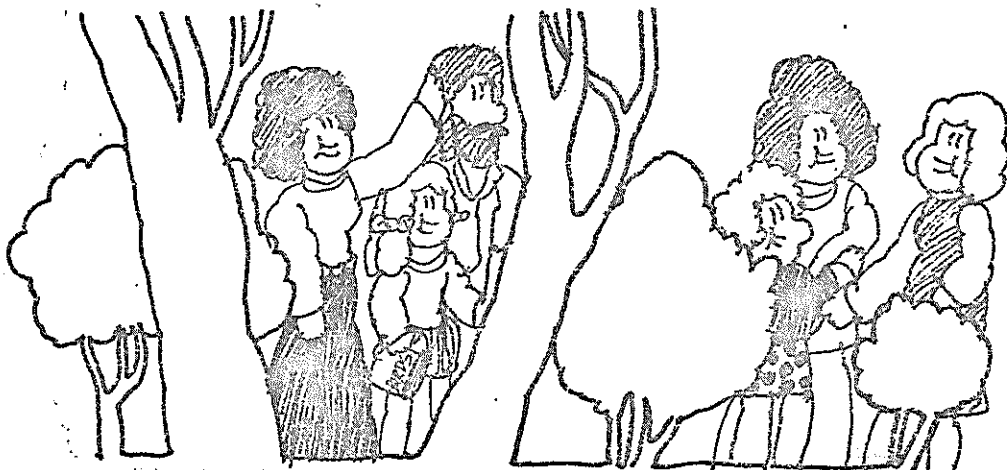
KIDS

Babysitting club: Contact Dee Pelling, 7120286.

Play group: Meets every Tuesday morning in different homes; contact Cric Henry, 7120547.

WOMEN

Ladies Walk: Every Saturday morning from different homes; contact Abbie Heathcote, 7120352.



FOOD

Food Co-op: Bulk buys dry foods three times a year; contact Eilish Cooke, 7120435.

FIRE BRIGADE

Men and women are welcome every Sunday morning at the C.H.F.B. hall. Contact Jeph Neale, 7120458, or John McCallum, 7120319.

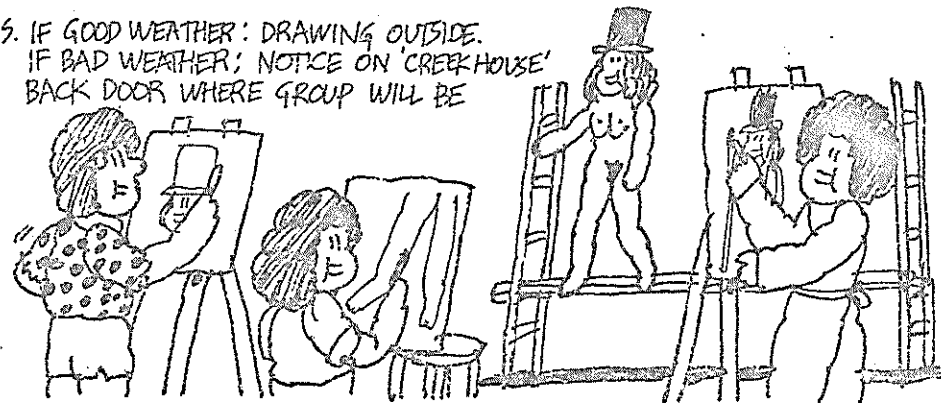
WILDLIFE

Bird Observers Group: Meets first Thursday of the month at different homes; arranges regular Sunday morning walks; contact Jim Mattiske, 7197492.

ART

Life Drawing Group: Meets 12:30 every Tuesday at the Creek House, Henley Road; contact Wendi Henderson, 7120393.

P.S. IF GOOD WEATHER: DRAWING OUTSIDE.
IF BAD WEATHER: NOTICE ON 'CREEK HOUSE'
BACK DOOR WHERE GROUP WILL BE



Our Committee at Work

Felicity Paris

BISSETT-JOHNSON SUB-DIVISION: The culmination of the work of many groups and individuals, including the B.I.C.A., was State Government purchase of the riverside areas of this property. The land now becomes an extension of the Warrandyte State Park from Jumping Creek Reserve to Whittens Reserve and will be managed by the National Parks Service. Our special thanks to Mr. Vasey Houghton for his effort.

GONGFLERS PENINSULA WILDLIFE REFERENCE ZONE: A Tribunal Hearing was attended by members of the Committee, which had formally objected to the MMBW sale of this area prior to a decision by State Government as to its future. The matter was adjourned pending that decision.

CATANI RESERVE: This small area off Catani Boulevard on the river was worked on recently by members to eradicate blackberries. Negotiations are proceeding with the Shire to set up a committee of management for what is hoped will be a public reserve.

STRATEGY PLAN OF UPPER YARRA AND DANDENONG RANGES AUTHORITY: A submission was prepared and argued before the Review Panel of the Strategy Plan, mainly requesting the tidying-up of various categories and seeking greater protection for the Yarra banks.

LAND SALES: There are many blocks for sale in the zone. The Committee welcomes any assistance in finding sympathetic buyers.

SCHOOL BUS: Negotiations were successful, and the school bus now comes to the corner of Skyline and Henley Roads.

BOTANICAL SURVEY: The Committee has begun an ongoing survey of flora in the zone. The object is to locate and identify any 'special' pockets of vegetation and thus enable landowners to avoid their destruction. If you have any plants you think are special or special micro-ecologies, we'd be happy to look.



Fire Brigade

Bob Shackleton, treasurer of the Christmas Hills Fire Brigade, reminds us that annual donations are payable at any time. The Brigade constantly needs funds to continue purchase and maintenance of equipment. The C.F.A. does reimburse us for some things but a lot remains for us to finance ourselves. Donations can be forwarded to Bob, c/-P.O., Kangaroo Ground 3097, or through any officer or member of the Brigade.

Hessian

A quantity of hessian has been made available to our community by Lance Glassby. It is in rolls twelve feet wide. Anyone who wants some should contact John McCallum on 712-0319. It is an essential for the manufacture and storage of mud bricks -- no doubt there are many other uses.

Mud House for Rent

Modern mudbrick, 2 bedrooms, huge living/dining area; on Co-op; \$70 per week. Ring Lou Hill or Eilish Cooke on 712-0435.

Newsletter Working Group

Eilish Cooke, Felicity Paris, Cric Henry, Tom Fisher (convenor), Syd Tunn; with help from Barbara Cargill, Carol Ann Fisher, Ross Henry, John McCallum, Janet Mattiske, and Wendi Henderson.

Subscription

If your subscription for the 1982-83 year is overdue, a red spot appears on this page! Membership is \$6.00 per person and cheques should be made payable to B.I.C.A. and forwarded to:

Michael Pelling
c/- P.O.
Kangaroo Ground 3097

There are many Association activities and issues that require more expertise and/or manpower. Some are:

1. Planning issues and the E.L.Z.
2. Identifying special plants and protecting them
3. Monitoring the kangaroo population (and possibly that of other mammals)
4. Helping find buyers for land in the area and informing buyers about the E.L.Z.
5. Assisting with the Newsletter
6. Typing, copying, mailing, etc., and other clerical tasks
7. Other (please specify)

If you would like to become involved in any of these (or any other area in which you think you can make a contribution), say so on your subscription renewal below.



I/We _____
of _____ pn. _____

wish to be members of the Bend of Islands Conservation Association. Enclosed is \$ _____ for membership for 1982.
I/We would like to become involved in _____

