

Inspiration in our paddocks

Hi! “What will happen in 2015?” Something new for me – exciting, and a bit daunting! – this article for “*In my paddock*”!

Do you make New Year’s Resolutions? I don’t, but January seems to be a time to review the recent past, plan to improve things or start something new. Doesn’t something new go better with inspiration? What inspiring news is there from our paddocks this week?

Flash flood clean up.



Since the nearly 2 inches of rain here on Tuesday, big and small ants have been bringing soil particles up, one by one, to the surface, creating a landscape of mini ‘volcanic’ cones. (These constructions always astound me!)

Not what you expected? Ok, ‘*In my paddock*’ could be from life in general. So, news from my paddock of life?

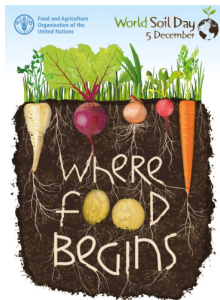
Family farming

Were you inspired by the slogan *Feeding the World, Caring for the Earth* in 2014? I was. It belongs to the International Year of Family Farming, and brings together two parts of my life - farm and environmental education. Family farmers grow food they eat, and sell or share their excess. Many backyard gardeners do not realise it includes them.

I created the website <http://familyfarms.enviroed4all.com.au/> to collect first hand accounts (snapshots) of family farming and backyard gardeners to show their diversity: tubs, backyard plots, broad-acres; rural, urban; full-time, recreational; methods of production; challenges in environments; sustainability actions for soils, water, landscape, biodiversity, breeds and Nature. From the Wimmera, I have reached out to places in Australia, Canada, Samoa and France, so far. These ‘paddock’ stories are so inspiring that I am continuing this project, seeking more diversity to grow the collection this year.

Soils

Did you see the “*Where Food Begins*” poster in December? I loved its simplicity, brightly showing land connected with foods – another inspiring paddock concept! It was used for World Soils Day (December 5), when the 2015 International Year of Soils (IYS) was launched. Does soil (think dirt) inspire you?



International Years have aims and objectives, the first always being raising awareness globally. The IYS “*aims to increase awareness and understanding of the **importance of soil for food security and essential ecosystem functions** [and, in its first objective] the profound importance of soil for human life.*” (<http://www.fao.org/soils-2015/en/>) An inspiring way to think about soil? You probably already acknowledge food security, but what else does soil contribute to your life and how? Our dog would say ‘comfort’- as he digs holes in the soil to curl up and snooze in!

What is your ‘paddock’? Take a look at the roles of soils there, e.g:

- plant forms growing from the soil, e.g. trees, mosses
- other life forms living in soil, e.g. obviously worms, less noticed frogs
- other things in soil, e.g. water, air, nutrients
- structures supported by soil, e.g. houses, channels where water runs
- structures supporting soils, e.g. tubs, retaining walls
- things we make from soils, e.g. bricks, rubbish tips
- recreational uses of soils, e.g. bike jumps, ochres for paints



Do you take soil for granted? Take a careful look at the IYS logo and see what its parts are saying for your paddock. Can the IYS aims and logo inspire you to support this global event in some way? This is the year to be part of a global focus to change that, one person, one paddock at a time!

The Wimmera is our regional paddock, with fantastic food production and natural beauty - all supported by our soils. May you be inspired to encourage others, especially children, and appreciate what soils do for us – the IYS first aim!

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