Drippers are also a very good way of adding trace element minerals. You can grow a nice plant on NPK fertiliser mixtures (Nitrogen/Phosporus/Potassium), but you also need trace element minerals.

A 'balanced' container of 20 litres costs about $90. By adding these trace elements through the drippers annually, the fruit and vegetables have the perfect balance to supplement the cattle manure. This method enables greater take-up efficiency by the plants. It's a quick, relatively inexpensive and an easy way of directly supplying the root systems.

There are areas where there'll be no option but to use 2000 ppm. In the mission days they didn't have drip systems but they used to furrow, not flood, and that is a way of irrigating; so if you have too much trouble with salt you can have a trench or raised beds.

These are useful in the event of flash floods. In some parts you couldn't do it without raised beds where there are heavy soils because stone fruit trees do not live very long as they waterlog easily, and drown.

Vegetables can drown too but with a system of raised beds it can't happen. It takes a lot of labour but it can be necessary. Plant foliage coverage usually provides sufficient shade to avoid evaporation problems and certainly much better than sprinklers which atomise the water. The furrow system, although labour intensive, could be used if cost is a problem or prohibitive.

For small areas like back yards, furrows would be more manageable and practical than a complex drip system, provided there is good natural drainage or there is somewhere to send drainage water to move the salt away from the plants.

Looking into the future we want to establish a poultry farm in conjunction with the garden. While the poultry could be out free-ranging some of the day, where they are most of the day, perhaps on a gently sloping cement floor which could be hosed down, would provide an invaluable source of chicken manure. This would provide ammonia and nitrogen in a safe liquid form as a side dressing alongside the drippers.

Ultimately, recycling of human waste, if managed in a more hygienic way than it is now, will prove most valuable. Methane gas could be provided on a daily basis to help generate power and the sludge could be composted and fed through worm castings. Once anything has been through a worm it is purified. Worm castings have proven to be the best natural manure of all.

FENCING

It is important to fence; if the donkeys get into a vegetable garden they make a real mess. And they know how to open gates!

That is why where we have apricots we try not to have gates but where one is necessary we wire it up. It's better to have people climb through a wire fence rather than use a gate because visitors who come in tend to leave gates open.

One way of avoiding this problem when a gate is essential is to have a chain on it which allows the gate to open wide enough for only a person to squeeze through but too narrow for an animal. (Someone at Ernabella told me this) At one stage I put up a 'PLEASE SHUT THE GATE' notice but I finished up knocking my head on it and have had to go to a chiropractor.

On the subject of fencing, it's costly but more costly if you don't do it. There's all the feral animals to keep out. Horses are easy to keep

out and cattle are relatively easier to keep out. Donkeys are a nuisance; they are too friendly, learn how to undo gates and turn on taps. So we have to be a bit smarter than they are.

One animal that we haven't had trouble with yet but may have one day is the camel which is big and strong.

They have caused a lot of damage further up north; they knocked down every fence! So we've deliberately made our fence nearly 7 foot high with the idea of putting a strut in.

If the strut is belted into the ground on the inside it would be hard to push against. It is a time-consuming, costly program but with our fences, we combed the stations and where we found heaps of twisted droppers we loaded them on trailers and brought them back. Camels are animals which stampede and are very powerful. Fortunately we haven't had a great deal of problems yet but we will eventually need to put the strutting in. We have heard that dogs do keep camels away.

Speaking of dogs, we like to keep them out of the garden as well. When it's hot, a dog will love to go and scratch a hole nice and deep and lay in it. They've done that alongside newly planted orange trees and we've nearly lost them. They go to where the drippers are because it's easier to scratch the hard soil once it's been softened by the water. Dogs, like rabbits, can be a darned pest and we like to keep them out.

As for rabbits, they are mainly a problem with the planting of young trees and vines, particularly stone fruit. They love the bark of a newly planted tree from the nursery.

After planting a hundred new peach trees we had to place little aluminium foil triangles. We've always had to put newspaper around citrus trees; it stops the sand blast and the bunnies. One unexpected consequence of using newspaper, however, was the white ants: the paper created a tunnel which led them to the young citrus trees which were dying so we had to remove the newspaper.

Rabbits are a nuisance particularly with ring-barking. You can put traps in, but only those that encage the rabbit. We did put in netting; you need to go only a metre high right around for rabbit netting which should be turned outwards at the bottom. Rabbits aren't a great problem once the trees have grown past the first year.

PESTS AND DISEASES

Crows are very destructive but they are not hard to deal with if a few dead ones are hung up; the others get the message. If a crow's distress call can be recorded, then replayed with amplification, it could also be effective in keeping these birds away. They are quite clever because they can recognise the difference between an imitation gun compared with the real one. They are smart and they communicate.

The bird problem is not as bad as one might think. There are flock bids like galahs and corellas which are not hard to combat because, firstly, you can keep their water supply limited and, secondly, if you can pop off several of them (which is allowable) and let them see the dead ones, the whole flock will get the message and get going.

Being very low in humidity, there doesn't appear to be any evidence of the various types of mildew. We haven't had to spray anything. The only thing we have had is sooty mould on the citrus trees. Sooty Mould – brown scale which attaches to the leaves of the citrus and secretes a very sticky substance which becomes very sooty and black - is something that ladybirds control but perhaps the heat and the frost has affected them.

A part Aboriginal guy visited us a few months ago. He had degrees from Roseworthy Agricultural College. He asked if we had any insect problems so we told him of the brown scale which we wanted the ladybirds to control. He told us that we'd never have an insect problem again if we planted a row of saltbush right around the boundaries of our garden. Saltbush is the best breeding ground for insects, including the predators. We may need to electrify the top barb to keep out the cattle etc.

We plan to erect another fence right around the garden and drip irrigate the row of saltbush as soon as possible.

We can keep on learning!

When we are doing nursery work, there are many beetles which love eating the shoots and can destroy the stocks. The beetles come out at night and eat the shoots. The way to combat this problem is to have a few silky bantams which are not big scratchers but will eat the bugs in a plant nursery.

Weed control is a big subject; trying to control the weeds used to take up a lot of time when we could have been doing more essential things in the garden. Couch grass, especially, took a lot of effort. We spot sprayed it, mowed it and hand-hoed and managed for the first five years. You can use a weak mixture of glyphosphate which is Roundup and is not an overly expensive solution. A couple of sprays a year will keep the weeds under control.

There are some nasty weeds that need spotting with Roundup of fairly low strength. Among them is Caltrop, with a nasty prickle. It should be pulled out before it seeds. Another is Buffel grass which the cattle will eat when they don't have much else. Large clumps of this grass affect the garden.

Just a teaspoon of sulphate of ammonia (with the Roundup) certainly controls couch but you need to be careful not to miss any because it spreads so quickly.

Even though it would be preferable to avoid using sprays, it wouldn't be possible to physically keep the weeds under control without them. When labour is plentiful it could be managed by hand hoe-ing or mowing. We certainly do not spray the trees and try to be as organic as possible; indeed, the manure comes from cows that have hardly seen a human being so it is less likely to be contaminated.

MEAT AND FARMING

White meat is much better for humans; red meat is more dangerous, being less digestible and may possibly lead to stomach acid.. So, chicken, fish, goanna and rabbit are preferable. By farming rabbits, especially, within six weeks you could have two kilograms of meat. So, to complement the garden, it would be possible to farm animals, and produce eggs which could be our next project. But this would require the availability of more labour.

Therefore, whether it's fruit and vegetables or animal production, the community needs to be committed and have its heart in the projects. If economic circumstances deteriorate people will have to dedicate themselves to such projects, if they are to provide for their families and themselves. Previous generations in the area largely lived off their farms so, in times of hardship, communities will once again need to become more self-sufficient.

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ORCHARD EXPERIENCE

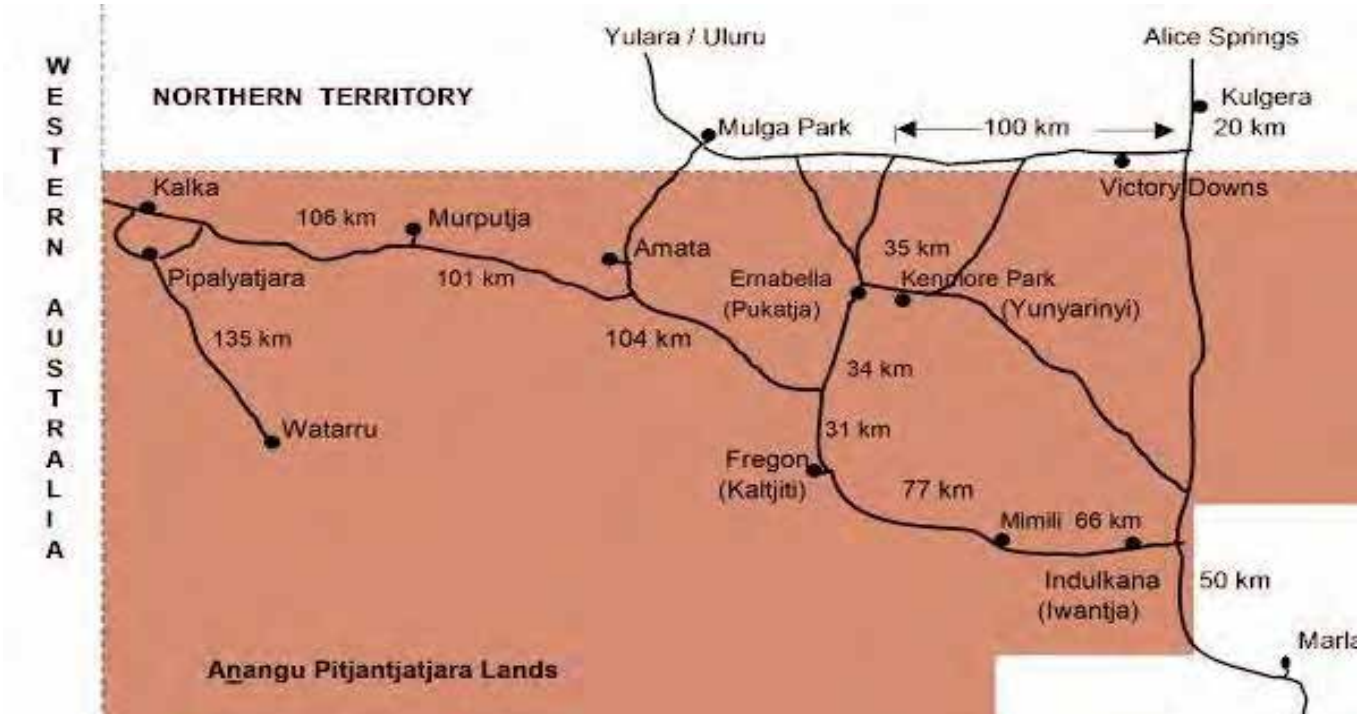
We want to see other gardens in this big circle called Central Australia. There's no point in growing fruit then carting it 1000 km. You want to grow it in the localities where they've got water. Somewhere, not far from Alice Springs, there needs to be another garden like ours and another one near the Warburton area over the border in Western Australia.

The vegetable side of it is different; we'd like to see vegetables in every back yard because it is labour intensive. People used to do it a lot more back in the old Ernabella days. Our vision is for all of Central Australia but the working model, the pilot scheme, is the one at Kenmore. It should be noted that you can't grow fruit trees overnight – vegetables can be grown fairly quickly – but fruit, which is an

essential part of our diet, without proper irrigation will not come. We go to a nurseryman who prepares traditional trees; we find they're good enough and we can propagate from them and get our own buds for nothing.

Donald Fraser tells me that as kids they were raised on goats' milk. He longs for the return to goats' milk one day. It is much more digestible than the traditional milk from cows.

This plan is intended to help make Central Australia locally sufficient. While solar panels are not the only consideration, if the electricity supply is not affordable and you can't buy diesel, it would be difficult to access water. We see the gas producer, as described earlier, being run with wood, petrol and LPG, along with a generator. Using this method, the eight large communities in The APY Lands can fill their large water tanks. If they've got water they can stay; without water they would have to migrate. It goes without saying that water is everything! And a generator might also provide enough for lights for houses.



IN APPRECIATION

In June 2005 at Indulkana, in South Australia, we met Donald Fraser at a funeral. Margaret and I had just set up a vegetable garden and poultry run for Alec Henry. Donald walked up and said, 'This is what I want at Kenmore.'

We accepted his invitation and went to Kenmore and selected a site at the western end of the community. By July, 2005, we arrived with citrus and stone fruit trees to plant about ¼ of an acre of orchard. We fenced it off from the wild donkeys, cattle and horses. As Donald planted the first tree, we said, 'The produce of this orchard is for the people of The APY Lands.'

We are most thankful to Donald and his community for the help with the clearing and grading of the land, erection of fencing, and carting in the many dozens of loads of cattle manure over the last eight years to maturity. The community also supplied us with a small house as well as the use of electricity and water.

We also say thank you for the help from the school staff and particularly over the past few months in our absence through Margaret's health.

A 'thank you' must go to Alec Maschkowsky, former teacher/marathon runner from Ernabella, and also to George Sumner who carted and spread hundreds of barrow loads of manure.

We'd also like to thank Don Perry who has been our right hand helper over the past three years. And to Dudley Dagg, thanks for always being around when we needed help and also for advice from Mike Last and his mission garden experience at Ernabella. We see this garden like the continuation of the old Ernabella garden vision. Allan Fraser calls it 'God's Garden'.

There are many more who come up from Adelaide, Coober Pedy and Alice Springs to offer help in pruning and/or harvesting.

Our next trip up to Kenmore will be number 68 over just eight years.

With Sincere thanks,

Brenton & Margaret Pope.

HOW IT BEGAN

In 1987/88, we did a trip of over 20,000km around Australia with firewood as our fuel. This is how people managed during WW2 when they were given about 9 litres of petrol a month which wouldn't go very far. We had a gas producer which ran on wood/ charcoal; it was an experience as we had the engine out three times and the gas producer in pieces five times. We were certainly learning but we couldn't know why we were doing it at that time. We had a Ford Transit Van with a 4.1 litre motor. It had the ideal room space which we made into a campervan.

It wasn't until we made a big detour from Tennant Creek right down to Ernabella to see a friend. That was where we were meant to go. When we were crossing the Northern Territory border, which was lovely on one side with birds and mulga scrub but across the border, we could see that it had been eaten out in the old Mission days with sheep. I turned to Margaret and said, 'I know now why we are doing this. It's learning about this machine for a time in the future when there could be a financial crisis for Aboriginal People in desert communities.'

The machine was a gas producer they used in the Great Depression to drive a

vehicle and it ran on firewood; it's called wood/gas or water/gas too. Eventually you'd use the same amount of water, which is converted to steam, as petrol. That supplies hydrogen so your product is C + H_20 which gives CO + H_2. The Hydrogen (H_2) is what is needed but the Carbon Monoxide (CO) does drive you along. With maximum H_2 this can provide up to 80% of the power of LP Gas within two minutes of lighting up.

This method of producing power saved Australia in WW2 and would be very useful if economic circumstances deteriorate in the near future. This could prove critical in the transportation and shifting of food in the Outback where there are plenty of dry sticks to help fuel the motors. It wouldn't be a permanent way of driving but used to take food out to the communities.

It is a vision we have had for some time. We started by becoming involved with ex-prisoners when we set up our charitable organisation. And it wasn't long before our attention was drawn to the Aboriginal Lands; we did quite a few visits to Indulkana and it's there that we met Donald Fraser at a funeral. He'd heard that we were starting a garden in Alec Henry's backyard so he said that he'd been wanting a garden for years. He'd been involved in a garden at Ernabella and asked us if we'd go and have a look at their place at Kenmore so, feeling we were meant to, we jumped in the car and that's where it started. That was in July, 2005.

As one Aboriginal leader said, 'This is like the vision of Joseph; seven years getting ready.' And to be completely honest, it is exactly like that! We do believe we were guided and, whilst we thought we were patient people, we had to learn a kind of patience all over again and we have learnt to love the community, be accepted by them and they have become part of our family. We have a great relationship with that community and we believe what we have created will be a great blessing for the people of The APY. The food will enable better health and the work will provide opportunity for exercise.

That's how it all started and we see it as something ongoing.

Our charitable organisation (Prodigal Trust Inc – Website: www.trumpetcalling .org) is ongoing.