

PERMACULTURE

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GARDEN GUIDELINES

DRYLAND
COASTAL
REGIONS

JULIE FIRTH

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NATURAL PLANT SYSTEMS

In a Permaculture system, our aim is to duplicate natural sustainable systems. Local vegetation in mid Western Australia has adapted over thousands of years to cope with extreme heat, prolonged dry periods and a low rainfall.

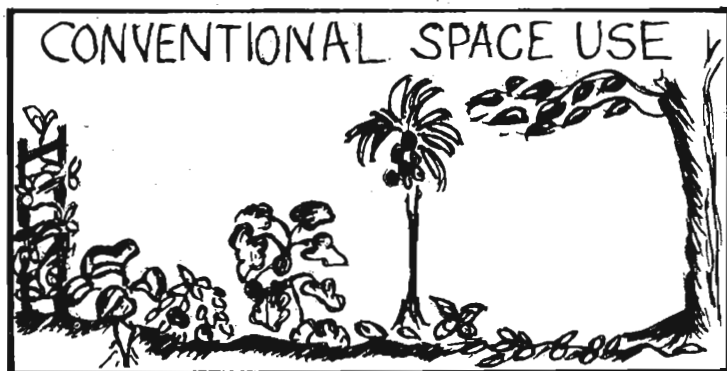
These conditions are not conducive to vegetable and fruit production. Hence, to create these new systems, we need to add human design and management. Water systems are also crucial and usually need ongoing people management to provide food production suitable for western diets.

In local systems, many native plant species cannot establish themselves unless located beneath the canopy of older plants. This natural occurrence can be replicated in the garden by using vertical space strategies.

VERTICAL SPACE MANAGEMENT

The ground space available does not need to limit the quantity of species we can grow, provided it is carefully designed. There are many space dimensions to grow in. The following list puts seven plant types under the one tree canopy.

1. Deciduous high tree layer.
2. Low tree layer (semi-shade tolerant).
3. Shrub layer.
4. Herbaceous layer.
5. Ground cover.
6. Root and tuber layer.
7. Vertical and horizontal layer of vines and climbers

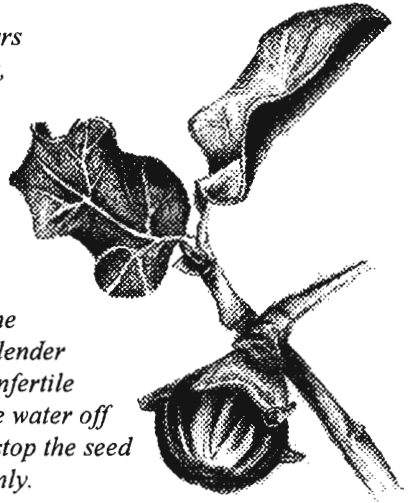


EGGPLANT

Eggplant will live and produce for several years in frost-free areas. When established in spring, they will tolerate hot summers. Some of the larger bushes provide good shade for other plants to grow beneath.

SEED SAVING.

Eggplants will cross with other varieties of the same species, but not between species. A good way to process the fruit and remove the seeds is to grate or blend fruit in an electric blender with water. Rinse the mush and scoop off the infertile seeds as they will float to the surface. Pour the water off and dry on cloth or paper, stir twice a day to stop the seed sticking together as this helps them to dry evenly.



Laos Green Tiger Stripe - *Solanum melongena*

Sow spring (In Geraldton, - sow all year).

Small round very attractive fruit 50mm in dia. Cream-coloured fruit overlaid with green "tiger stripes" on upper half of fruit. When fruit is picked at this stage no pre-processing is needed. Cook entire fruit with skin. A non-bitter eggplant with a pleasant flavour. Bears prolifically over 3-4 yrs. Will tolerate a light frost. Plant stands 1.5m high. Heirloom from Laos.

Pea Eggplant - *Solanum torvum*

Sow spring (In Geraldton - sow all year).

The pea eggplant is a very popular part of Thai cooking.

It is also known as Makena & Phnang.

Pea Eggplant is a perennial bush that grows up to 8 ft tall and likes to be grown in part shade during summer.

When fruiting, it produces prolific clusters of grape-like eggplant fruit that can be eaten, raw or cooked, when slightly soft and green. Firm fruit can be boiled and eaten with fish, cooked and served with rice or used in stews, curries and chilli sauces. 135 days to maturity.