



# ACT STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT REPORT 2011

## SUSTAINABILITY STORIES

### Community gardens: growing sustainably



Dickson Community garden  
(Photos courtesy of COGS)

The *Canberra Organic Growers Society Inc* (COGS) is a non profit organisation that aims to provide a forum for sharing information and promoting organic growing methods. Since it began in 1977, the society has grown and now manages 11 gardens in the ACT. Anyone in the community can join COGS and get a plot at one of the community gardens.

The Dickson community garden, which includes a successful aquaculture project, is a good example of the work COGS is doing. The garden was developed jointly between COGS and Dickson College and is run by a garden convener and committee. It aims to involve students in organic food production and sustainable practices. COGS hopes to develop a teaching facility at the garden in the future.

The Dickson garden is located beside a popular cycle/footpath that runs towards the city. This high visibility helps spread community awareness of the garden and promote the value of the organic food production. When the garden is a lush green and rich with produce it attracts passers-by, who often inquire about getting a garden plot.

COGS is creating a movement away from industrial food production where vast amounts of energy and natural resources are consumed in the production, processing, packaging and transport of the food we eat. These food production methods are commonly associated with high carbon emissions, excess waste disposal to landfill, over-packaging, water pollution, soil depletion and erosion.

Small scale organic growing on the other hand reduces the environmental impact of our food supply. At the COGS Dickson community garden, food is grown using organic methods without artificial pesticides, herbicides and fertilisers. This helps to build soil fertility and save water while producing abundant crops. Since the food is consumed directly by the grower, the waste produced by transport, processing and packaging in the industrial system is drastically reduced.

The Dickson community garden has been very successful, especially in the support it has received from Dickson College and associated facilities. The challenge for the future is how to expand the garden sufficiently to satisfy the high demand for plots.

For more information on community gardens in Canberra see the COGS website, <http://www.cogs.asn.au>

