# Heritage Trail: Design notes

## Overview of the project and process

On the north side of Mount Molloy there is an existing track that connects the Rifle Creek Campground with Spear Creek pedestrian crossing. Our vision is to develop a "food forest" master plan for this trail.

Food forests are a type of intentional design approach that combines permaculture ideas with the pragmatic goal of minimised maintenance. When they succeed, food forests tend to be resilient, hardy, self-managing assemblies of complementary plants that produce something "useful" for a minimum of effort.

The design for a food forest must harmonise three main questions:

1. What is it that the community most values and aspire to for this project?
2. What are the existing biophysical and climatic realities of the site?
3. What would be the most suitable plant species and combinations to use to develop the food forest to connect 1 and 2?

The process begins with a community consultation (ie, to clarify aspirations...."what do we want?") and a survey of the area of focus (ie, to determine a baseline reality...."what are we working with?").

These two factors are brought together through a lot of enthusiastic conversation, big sheets of paper, a species list, and notions of succession and companion planting appropriate to our landscape....and voila, and a "map" of the food forest is developed.

In terms of species, we are aiming to include a broad palette of plants with the idea that the Trail will celebrate the cultural heritage of this area. We will showcase native species that are favourites of our birds and butterflies; medicinal, food, and story plants from the Muluridji people;  and the food, fibre, and pharma plants from the layers of colonising cultures of Chinese, Irish, English, etc.

# Basic principles

01. At core, the community want to improve the amenity for visitors and locals alike. The existing trail forms a connective link between the two creeks and is ideally situated as a recreational walk.

02. The project offers respect to all cultures who have shaped this landscape, beginning with the traditional owners. No single culture will "own" the heritage that is being celebrated in the trail: the project is an open invitation to all cultures to create a living community growing into the future.

03. The project should not cause harm or nuisance to locals or visitors, within reasonable expectations.

04. The project should not add to the fire hazard of the region, nor should it introduce or encourage feral animals (or insects) or invasive plants and plants targeted for control under government legislation.

05. The ongoing management of the Trail is vested with JAMARR, which in turn is open to all members of the community to get involved with the Trail's management.

06. This is Crown land, held by Council: it is subject to alternative management at anytime.

Grow Your Roots: An Edible Heritage Food Forest Trail

Trail: 0.75km

Rifle Creek

Spear Creek

# Design challenges and opportunities

A range of comments and concerns have been raised and should be addressed by the management plan:

01. There is no existing irrigation: getting young saplings and seedlings started will require regular irrigation.

02. The area is open to the public: any plantings, signage, or lighting must consider vandalism and theft.

03. The area is large and already home to a range of species: development of the Trail should happen in a series of small, concentrated areas to minimise broad disruption and make it easier to manage.

04. An abundance of fruit and nectar plants will attract pest species including: flying foxes, sulphur-crested cockatoos, rainbow lorikeets, and blue-faced honey-eaters. Nut trees are likely to attract white-tailed rats. Although we don't mind these species feeding on the Trail, the problem is they will breed and migrate to people's gardens.

05. The area is frequented by feral pigs: intensive plantings will need fencing at least during establishment.

The permaculture strategy is to convert major challenges into major opportunities. The above challenges need to be handled by the Trail's design and management plan.