

forage care repair
glean imagine make
explore paint shelter
liberate picnic plant
discover busk exchange
observe cycle play
trust grow connect
smile find give
create sing
invite live
germinate
alter
ferment
heal enjoy
preserve
localise squat
construct
embrace
camp sprout
hunt sail
reclaim
soil flower
zeerpot art
persimmon
space
nature
spontaneity
dandelion
mushroom
weeds style
wildfood
possibility
rosehip land zine
hard rubbish compost
technology feijoa nettle
journey water mulch
stories rocket stove
textile awareness
pomegranate skills
symbiosis purslane
neighbourhood forest

How to have an amazingly adventurous life for zero dollars a day.

share garden listen
improvise write feel
express yourself build
love dance
decorate
draw idle
adventure
receive
challenge sew
cook eat
harvest act
design
invent ride
change
gather
nurture
walk mend
hitch-hike
co-operate
interact
resources seeds
pattern
abundance
loofah dumpster
mulberry
quince
roadkill
toilet
ecology lillipilli
emergence
culture
tallbike
amaranth
music ideas
entomophagy
joy fig rickshaw
rainbow loquat
micro-organisms
fish prickly pear tools
health bamboo manure
fun resilience sapote love

This zine is not about being a cheapskate, being frugal, living in poverty or scamming people to get stuff for free. It's about letting go of the belief that money is essential to get anywhere, and being open to the abundance of nature. It's about sharing everything you have, and allowing yourself and others to reach their full potential.

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These stories, as well as a few others, are online at:
storiesofcreativeecology.wordpress.com

March 2010

Words by Kim

Rocket stove instructions by Sophie & Joel

Thanks to Raf, Elise, Cecilia, Ali, Giles, Dianne, and Jasmine for inspiration and assistance.

Disclaimer. Some of the information in the following pages may be unsubstantiated, unattributed, biased or wrong. It may also change your life and set you free. As a precautionary measure, don't believe any of it.

Legal notice.

A number of activities mentioned in this book may be illegal. Such things as riding a bicycle that is wider than 700mm, harvesting fruit from trees on public land without a permit, removing items that have been put out for rubbish collection, living in a shelter that hasn't been approved by some authority, using a toilet that isn't connected to the sewer, planting trees in certain places, even refusing to take medication that has been prescribed to you, are prohibited by law in some states and councils. Some US cities ban the growing of food in backyards. These laws will never change if we don't challenge them and demonstrate that they are impractical in the real world.

Resources.

How to be Free – Tom Hodgkinson. Learn how to throw off the shackles of anxiety, bureaucracy, debt, governments, housework, moaning, pain, poverty, ugliness and waste, and much else besides.

The Gleaners and I – Agnes Varda (film). Stories of people in France who glean food and household goods.

Daniel Suelo in the United States has been living without money since 2000. His website is zerocurrency.blogspot.com

Permaculture: Principles and Pathways Beyond Sustainability – David Holmgren. Ways to live within nature's limits while providing a secure future for our children and justice for everyone.

Living the Good Life – Linda Cockburn. Story of a family in suburban Australia who spent 6 months without spending any money.

As the World Burns: 50 simple things you can do to stay in denial – Derrick Jensen & Stephanie McMillan

Making Stuff and Doing Things – Kyle Bravo. Lots of things to make and do

Raw Family – Victoria Boutenko. Through choosing to take responsibility for their own health, an American family adopts a raw food diet and develops a connection with nature.

Fatu Hiva – Thor Heyerdahl. A Norwegian couple chose to free themselves from civilization, and lived from the land on a remote Pacific Island.

Walden – Henry David Thoreau. Thoreau spent two years living by Walden Pond, observing nature and living self-sufficiently.

Beyond the Brink – Peter Andrews. Learn to understand patterns in the landscape, and how nature can do your work for you.

Steal This Book – Abbie Hoffman. Lots of ideas for getting stuff for free.

Renew Magazine. Ideas and instructions for making your own appropriate technologies.

Community bike cart design – Aaron Weiler (zine). Available at bikecart.pedalpeople.com/. Aaron shows how to make a range of bike trailers easily and cheaply.

Food Not Lawns – Heather Flores. How to turn your yard into a garden and your neighbourhood into a community.

The Humanure Handbook – Joseph Jenkins. A guide to composting human manure.

Wild Food Plants of Australia – Tim Low

The Story of Stuff – online short film. storyofstuff.com. Shows where all our stuff comes from, what happens to it, and where the money goes.

Intersection Repair in Portland, Oregon involves neighbourhoods taking responsibility for an intersection and converting it into a public square, through activities such as painting murals on the road; installing noticeboards, book exchanges, tea and coffee stations, and sculptures; holding events, shared meals and free markets.

Reclaim The Streets is a worldwide movement of closing a busy street to cars for a day to create a space for people to interact on the street without disruption by cars, and create community ownership of public space. Anyone can do it, just get together with a few friends, set a day and a place, get some food, music and games, put the word out, and close the street to cars, which opens it up to people.

Once I was on a train when a couple of teenage boys got on and announced, “hello everyone it’s Smiley Day today, we’ve got a smiley stamp for you all.” They walked through the train with an ink stamp each and offered to stamp everyone’s hand with a smiley, while wishing us all an enjoyable Smiley Day. I thought this was a really lovely and creative thing to do, and would love to make things like this to happen more often.



Portland Oregon Intersection Repair Project. Photo by Clarence Ekerson via Streetfilms.

Nature, economics and the free life

Money is an illusion that only has value because we believe it does. It’s just pieces of paper and numbers on a screen, it doesn’t represent anything in the real world. Since it is imaginary, it can’t control our lives. Money was originally created purely as a means of exchange. The concept of money has since evolved to now being considered to have intrinsic value in itself, not based on a foundation of anything with actual value. This means that it can cease to exist instantly, which it often does. If we all choose not to believe in it, it will be worth nothing and no longer exist.

True wealth is soil, seeds, trees, clean air and water, generosity, caring reciprocal relationships and resilient communities. By nurturing these things we can create shared wealth for everyone, with no need for money.

Owning money or assets gives us a false sense of security, even though we know it could all disappear at any moment. By letting go of our attachment to these things, and creating true security in the form of caring neighbourhoods and healthy ecosystems that can provide for our needs indefinitely, we can create a world where everyone feels safe, and our own sense of security doesn’t require excluding or exploiting others.

It is the fear of not having that causes us to selfishly hoard money or things, and makes us reluctant to share. This comes from our lack of awareness that everything we require to live well is freely available to us, which leads to a lack of trust in other people and the earth to provide. By sharing freely of ourselves we can in turn trust that others will treat us well, so we need never go without. We don’t need to be in control of every situation, as it will always sort itself out in ways that we could never imagine.

By engaging in paid employment we are enslaving ourselves to this money system. Most people in employment don’t enjoy their jobs and find them to be meaningless and unfulfilling. Jobs are the main source of stress in people’s lives and can lead to heart disease, a range of health problems, and suicide. Two million workers a year die of occupational injuries and illnesses. Employment doesn’t lift people out of poverty. Just 5% of the work being done is sufficient to provide for our needs for food, clothing and shelter.

Why work a job? There are much healthier and enjoyable ways to provide for yourself and your family, make use of your skills, and engage with the world. Your life is too valuable to waste on something you don’t enjoy, that will make you stressed, sick and probably kill you, while destroying nature and exploiting others. Create alternatives to employment, that are meaningful, fulfilling and do no harm.

Let the economy die. The economy is totally dependent on its capacity to destroy nature, and this process has now reached its natural conclusion where there is nothing left to plunder. It will inevitably come to a screaming halt. Don't be a statistic, another resource destroyed by economic growth. Create alternatives to this parasitic system and live in a world that you've created for yourself, where you're free to do as you want, rather than in a machine that controls and consumes you.

You can do so much more with your life than just survive. We live in an amazing world with so much possibility, why limit yourself? We are all innately creative, and everything we do is an opportunity to express ourselves creatively. Living a life of meaningless employment, shopping and passive entertainment stifles this to the extent that many of us never become aware of our potential, never think of how we could do things differently.

Take responsibility for your own life, your problems and your future. Blaming other people or The System won't change anything, and only make you miserable. By becoming independent of the structures or entities that you are blaming, you are free of their influence, and they cannot affect you. To blame or complain is to avoid taking on this responsibility.

Traditional cultures don't expect governments, jobs and money to provide for them. The people are only dependent on, and responsible to, each other and the land that supports them.

School prepares us for a life of employment, but gives us no life skills, no preparation for living with unemployment. We are taught that we are not free to do as we choose, and not responsible for how we live our life. We need to learn skills so we can be effective and fulfilled through unemployment. Spending your unemployment searching for jobs just leads to despondency, which can become even worse on starting an unfulfilling job. The idea that a person needs to change themselves to suit a job role means that to be part of the employment system you need to behave like you are part of a machine. You are not respected as a human being with intrinsic value, or allowed to live true to your values. You don't owe anything to the economy. All it has ever done for you is to exploit your labour and make life difficult. Create a life where the economy is of no value to you, and let it become despondent.

By choosing unemployment, you are demonstrating not laziness but responsibility. You are responsible to yourself, your community and the land that you live on. A free-living unemployed person, who acts with love and makes full use of their talents and skills, contributes so much more to the world than someone who works for the money. I could never have written this book if my attention was focussed on a full-time job.

Not buying and not working is liberating rather than restricting. When you stop using money you find that we have more, not less. More time, fun, adventures, friends, skills, health, awareness, understanding, and a full life. You discover that giving is more satisfying than getting. Your ability to support your family and friends is enhanced, as you find that spending time with them is more valuable than

Culture.

Culture doesn't just exist in art galleries and theatres. It is something we participate in and create for ourselves in everything we do. We can choose to live in an individualistic culture of consumerism and passivity, or we can create a culture that is diverse, expressive and convivial.

Big business with products to sell doesn't have exclusive rights to express itself in the public realm. Express yourself with paint, musical instruments, your voice, chalk, flowers, free food, bright clothes, gardens and anything you can think of to make the world more beautiful. Create opportunities for people to interact with each other and the space they are in, and have fun.

Here's a few of my ideas for going about this. Come up with some of your own.

- Point out rainbows, sunsets, the rising moon and interesting clouds to strangers.
- Give people flowers.
- Sing, dance, and play on the streets.
- Draw with chalk on roads, paths and walls.
- Stick up your artwork or poetry on walls in toilet cubicles.
- Leave a book you've enjoyed on a park bench for someone else to read.
- Rearrange items on the street for hard rubbish into something more creative. Maybe an outdoor lounge room, or a magical furniture monster.
- Busk, and have a few extra percussion instruments available for people to join you.
- Decorate street trees.
- Plant trees.
- Create gardens.
- Paint murals on bus shelters and stobie poles.
- Throw seed bombs. Make a ball of clay, compost and seeds and throw it onto an empty block to grow flowers, vegetables or trees.
- Hold a picnic or formal dinner in an unlikely place, such as a shopping mall, railway station, or median strip.
- Use the powerpoints on suburban trains to do something interesting. Maybe take a toaster and kettle and offer breakfast to commuters.
- Make boring things fun.
- Install artworks in public places.
- Invite people to join you in these activities.

A friend and I once had the idea to get on a morning commuter train dressed as flight attendants. We would show everyone the exits, and how to put on a life-jacket, and then walk along the aisle with a trolley full of dumpster fruit and offer everyone breakfast. We never actually did it.

Menstrual cups (such as The Keeper and Mooncup) are made of rubber or silicone and they only need to be rinsed after use. This is something I can't imagine how you could make for yourself or get for free, but you only need one and it lasts for 10 years.

Toilet paper. There is a native tree in New Zealand that is commonly known as toilet paper tree, as it has large soft leaves. There are plenty of other leaves that could serve the same purpose. In much of Asia people don't use toilet paper at all, and wash themselves with water instead.

Loofahs can be grown at home, and can be used as a dishcloth or bath sponge. They last quite a while and can be returned to the soil when they disintegrate.

Soap. Leaves of soapwort herb form a lather when they are rubbed with water, and this was commonly used before commercial soap production began in the 1800s. Guava leaves have a similar effect, as does a tropical shrub called soapnut.

Laundry detergent. If clothes aren't stained or oily, washing them in hot water without any products can clean them effectively.

Plastic washing balls and discs. These supposedly clean clothes without detergent. I don't know if there is a way to make something like this yourself, or how much these cost. According to Wikipedia the science of how they work is dubious, and they are connected with a conspiracy involving Scientologists and pyramid marketing schemes. I found one in a dumpster once (a laundry ball, not a conspiracy). I think that's what this green plastic spiky thing is, I'm not sure. It might be a dog toy. It seems to work. My clothes don't come out any dirtier anyway.

Do you really need to wash your clothes, your bedsheets and your body as often as you do? Or do you just do it because it's habit or your mum and the ads on TV say you should? If it's not dirty or smelly, what's the point in washing it? Haven't you got better things to do?

Sunscreen and moisturiser. Most commercial sunscreens contain lots of toxic ingredients, and are just as likely to cause skin cancer as protect you from it. Better off wearing long sleeves and a wide hat. Aloe vera, a plant that is easy to grow, contains a gel that is effective moisturiser, a mild sunscreen, and good first aid for burns. Coconut and olive oils are also good as skin moisturiser and mild sunscreen. There are some commercial sunscreens available that are made from natural oils and minerals.

Household cleaning products. Much of the paranoia around household germs is counterproductive to keeping us healthy. Young animals and children naturally eat dirt to introduce the beneficial bacteria into their gut that will give them a balanced internal ecology, which gives them immunity to germs. Preventing this from happening will cause illness rather than prevent it. The products marketed to kill these germs are poisonous substances that do us more harm than good.

A healthy household ecology can evolve by encouraging frogs, geckos and (some) spiders that make their home indoors to stay, as they are controlling the pesky mosquitos and flies, and not causing any harm. By using poisonous cleaning products you are harming these helpful critters, and well as your children, yourself and polluting our waterways, which causes plenty more damage to plants and animals downstream.

I find a sponge and scrubbing brush to be sufficient for most cleaning jobs. Dish liquid is the only chemical product in the house, and even that is only necessary for greasy dishes.

spending time making money to buy them things. You gain access to things you will never get in the shops. You become more involved in what goes on in the real world. You feel comfortable in the knowledge that no harm is being done to support your lifestyle. You generate less waste, in terms of wasted time, food, water, energy, packaging, money, and your own potential. If a free-living project doesn't yield tangible results, you've still gained a lot of skills and enjoyment through the process of exploring the idea. This is unlike trying to work with The System, which makes a point of wasting everyone's time and resources, with nothing to be gained.

When you live free, all your time is free time. *Don't allow yourself to be bought. If you sell your time away for money, you are selling your life away. What could you possibly buy with the money that would be worth the life you have lost?* Days of War, Nights of Love – CrimethInc collective.

When you do what you love, nothing needs to be thought of as work. Leave the work ethic behind and embrace an ethic of sharing and taking responsibility for your beliefs and actions.

Consumption is a disease. You can choose to be a disease on the Earth organism, or you can choose to have a healthy symbiosis, and be a co-creator of nature.

Work and consumption cause anxiety and depression, and stimulate fear and greed. Life should be lived with spontaneity, joy, and love, not strategic plans, budgets, and stress.

Challenge your beliefs. Ask questions about everything. Just because an idea is commonly accepted doesn't mean that it is the best way of doing things. There is always an infinite number of options. Never limit your choices.

Spread the word. Share your skills and knowledge, your stories and ideas. Share homegrown and gleaned food, and demonstrate the possibilities to others. Listen to others' stories and ideas, and new possibilities will emerge.

Raise your children and treat your friends and family in a way that gives them maximum freedom. Choose not to judge anyone based on society's expectations.

Relate to other people as human beings, rather than as economic entities to trade with. This way we can form meaningful connections, and remove the fear of being ripped off or badly treated, and the guilt about treating others this way. Create a gift economy. Give freely without expecting anything in return. You'll find that what does come back to you is worth so much more than money or things.

Don't contribute to the global economy. Boycott money completely. Be free!

Tune in to your feelings. Be fully present in every sensation, even if it seems unpleasant. There is great satisfaction to be gained from being totally in the present moment. The joy of discovering something new, of seeing others practice a skill

that you have taught them, of seeing things grow, of sharing, can't be beaten by a life lived through TV, books or other people.

As I become more attuned to nature, I find that the things I need will come to me at the right time. Sometimes I'll be out walking or cycling, and feel a craving for a particular food: an apple, a block of chocolate, a leafy salad. Always within minutes exactly that thing will appear in front of me. Really. I found a sealed package of fresh salad on a roadside. It's always exactly the food I was thinking of, never something else. A few days after it occurred to me that I need a printer, there was a printer with spare cartridges in my next-door-neighbour's hard rubbish pile, with a sign on it saying "working, please take". When I think of someone I need to talk to, I'll run into that person on the street soon afterwards. With one friend I experience this quite often, and always in places that neither of us visit regularly.

I start to take notice of the spaces between – the empty blocks, abandoned houses, road verges, dumping sites, patches of native vegetation, and wild places. To our culture these places are considered eyesores, or are invisible. As I move away from this paradigm I discover that these are places to explore and cherish, and the things intended to attract my attention and money – the billboards, shopping malls, bright lights and television screens– become invisible to me.

We are part of nature, not separate from it. Talking about "the environment" as if it is something far away that we never come in contact with is ridiculous. No-one really knows what this Environment is, but every schoolchild know that we need to be friendly to it. And this friendliness tends to take the form of such activities as recycling cans, reading from the screen, and buying new lightbulbs and whitegoods when the ones we already have are perfectly fine. These activities are about as far removed from our natural surroundings, and the meaning of friendliness, as I can imagine.

Let's kill this idea of The Environment and start nurturing our world by living within it, rather than imposing ourselves on top of it, destroying it for our own ends. We are all animals. We can't live in the illusion that the processes and cycles of nature don't apply to us. To truly care about our environment we need to care for ourselves, everyone around us, and all living and non-living things. We must take only as much as we need, produce no waste, and share everything. We need to attune ourselves to the patterns and cycles of nature, and become dependent only on the resources that exist in our immediate surroundings.



Hygiene.

Most of what is considered to be good hygiene these days stems from the marketing of products: convincing you that you need to buy things by creating a sense of insecurity.

I don't use deodorant, shampoo, or skincare products and rarely use soap. I feel perfectly clean and healthy, and never smell. Our skin contains natural oils that protect it from drying, and every time we use soap we are removing this protective layer.

I find that swimming in the ocean, or an occasional hot shower without soap, is effective to keep clean. Hot water can wash away dirt without removing the protective layer of oil, so soap isn't necessary.

Hair doesn't need to be washed, it contains natural oils that keep it clean. I haven't washed my hair for years, just rinse it occasionally, and I don't experience dirty or greasy hair. If you are accustomed to washing hair regularly, it takes a few weeks of not washing for your hair to find its natural balance and during this time it becomes incredibly greasy and disgusting. It took me a few attempts to get through this stage, but after four weeks it feels clean and I haven't had any need to wash it since.

I feel a lot cleaner since I've stopped using hygiene products. It sounds counter-intuitive, I know, but by stepping away from the belief that chemicals are necessary for cleanliness it makes perfect sense. Nothing in nature needs cleaning, unless it has been contaminated with chemicals.

Eating food that is difficult for the body to assimilate creates toxins that need to leave the body somehow, and often this is through the skin, creating body odours. I find that when I don't eat refined sugar, I feel healthier, don't need to use soap or deodorant and don't need to brush my teeth so often. For other people it might be meat, alcohol, caffeine or food additives that create smells or health problems.

Most of the hygiene products on the market are poisonous to our bodies and our surroundings. You wouldn't eat this stuff, why would you put it on your skin? Skin absorbs poisons more readily than stomach lining. Underarm deodorants are well known to cause breast cancer, and yet most women still use them. Salt, bicarb soda and ti-tree oil are more natural alternatives to these products, but a person with a reasonably healthy diet really doesn't need it at all.

People having been leading healthy lives for thousands of years without needing hygiene products, there's no reason we should use them now.

Here are some alternatives to common hygiene products.

Sanitary pads and tampons. Rad pads are reusable sanitary pads made from absorbent fabric. They are much more comfortable to wear than adhesive plastic. They don't smell or leak, and are easy to wash out. I wash them in a bucket and use the blood as garden fertiliser. They last for years, and are easy to make from scraps of fabric.

Other options are sea sponge tampons. They need to be boiled after every use, and last about 8 months. I guess you could make them yourself.

that, it would be stinky).

Drill a hole in the side of the bin, as close to the base as possible. This is for liquids to be drained out.

Attach a tap or plumbing bit into the hole. There are bits available for this purpose, that seal in place with plastic washers. Otherwise use silicon sealant to prevent leaks.

Attach the hose to the tap, and bury the other end of the hose in the ground, surrounded by gravel, so that the liquids can drain. This should be away from where vegetables are growing. This liquid contains pathogens so should not be left on the soil surface. If urine is kept separate most of the time the amount of liquid should be minimal.

Place a layer of bulking matter in the bin, small twigs or straw or something airy, and you're ready to go!

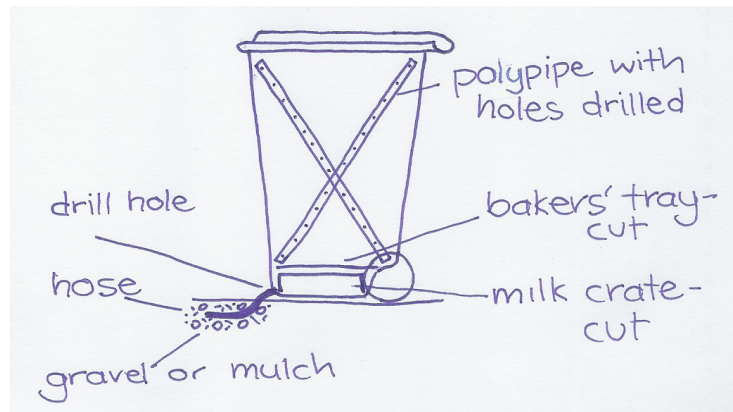
You have a few options for the next bit. You could build an outhouse around the bin, or put it in a shed or outdoor laundry with a squatting platform, and deposit directly into it.

Otherwise you could put a bucket in your bathroom and build a commode around it, or place a toilet seat directly on the bucket. Some go even more low tech and simply squat over the bucket.

Add a handful of carbon material every time you go, enough to cover it.

When a bin is full, leave it to break down for 6 months to a year. Adding compost worms can help with the composting process. Unlike most people, worms like nothing better than living in a pile of poo. They tend to die during heatwaves though, unless they are kept cool.

After a few months of composting in the bin, the contents can be buried under the ground. It may still contain pathogens so it's best not to leave it on the soil surface. Burying it near fruit trees, or as new trees are planted, makes the best use of the stuff.



Forage.

Food is all around you. Most of us are so accustomed to the practice of paying for food at shops and markets that it doesn't occur to us to look for it anywhere else. Foraging and gleaning is so much more fun than shopping, you never know what tasty and unusual treats you might find around the corner. And you're reducing the amount of food going to waste too.

Fruit trees.

Adelaide has a great climate to grow a wide range of fruit trees, and there is always something in season. It's legal and acceptable to pick fruit from branches hanging over the fence from a tree that is on private land. Generally fruit is ripest (therefore tastiest and most nutritious) when it falls, so fruit that has just fallen or comes off easily in your hand. Alleyways in the inner suburbs are great sources of delicious overhanging fruit.

Also if you see a fruit tree on private land that looks as though it's not being harvested, the owner is often okay about people taking it, even appreciative that someone will make use of the fruit that is either too much for one household, or not to their liking. I quite often knock on doors of houses that have overloaded trees or lots of fallen fruit. I've even seen a sign on a front fence saying "please come in and help yourself to nectarines" there was even a crate to stand on to reach the higher branches, and boxes to take.

Some fruits that I have gleaned in Adelaide suburbs are persimmon, citrus (orange, lemon, grapefruit, mandarin, kumquat and others), avocado, grape, feijoa, cherry guava, lillipilli, pear, fig, mulberry, loquat, carob, pepino, huckleberry, passionfruit, apricot, peach, nectarine, almond, monstera, quince, olive, pomegranate, rosehip, Irish strawberry, jelly palm (the big bunches of small orange fruit on palm trees).

And in the hills: apple, plum, cape gooseberry, walnut, chestnut, blackberry. Others that grow well: Jujube, sapote, pistachio.

My favourite fruit gleaning experience takes place at a fig tree that overhangs the drive-thru at my local McDonalds. I ride through on my way into town, and feast on figs as a breakfast stop. I watch as people go by, shut off inside their vehicles, in a queue, to talk to a machine, so they can pay money that they've had to work for, to get food that's not nourishing, and doesn't even taste good. Mostly they are so preoccupied with this task that they don't even notice me there, eating amazing fresh sweet figs direct from the tree, enjoying being outdoors and in no rush to get anywhere. I've never seen anyone else pick fruit there.

Another source of free food is **reclaimed waste**. Huge amounts of perfectly good food get sent to landfill, from farms, supermarkets, markets, restaurants, caterers, and households.

Supermarkets throw out enough perfectly good food every day to feed about 20 households. I obtain a large proportion of my food from dumpsters. They are often locked, but for every lock there is a key, and conveniently the same key opens nearly every dumpster lock in the metro area.

For a **restaurant** meal, move in on a table as people are leaving and help yourself to their unfinished meal. Restaurants tend to serve over-large portions, which creates a great deal of waste of high-quality food. Restaurant staff might be okay with this, or they may ask you to leave. At food courts it's much easier, no-one pays any attention.

Chain-operated **bakeries** throw out almost as much stock as they sell, as they want their display racks to look full all the time. Often if you ask at closing time, they will give away excess stock. Or if you go by a bit later, you'll find their dumpster by the smell of fresh bread wafting from it. There is always more excess than any soup kitchen can take, so if you're into bread and cake, you need never go short.

Fruit and veg shops may also be prepared to give away food that doesn't look perfect, especially if you say it is to feed animals. Closing time at **markets** is a good place to get free food too.

Farms and orchards can be good gleaning grounds. Fallen fruit doesn't get used, late ripening fruit can be uneconomical to harvest, potatoes with odd sizes or shapes get left on the ground, bunches of grapes get missed. If you're interested in making wine or cider, vineyards and apple orchards can help make it happen. Always ask before taking anything from private land. *The Gleaners and I* is a French documentary about people who live on gleaned food.

There's plenty of wild food around too, even in urban areas. You don't need to travel to distant jungles to have a go at hunting and gathering. **Edible weeds** in southern Australia include:

Fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*)

Amaranth (*Amaranthus retroflexus*)

Nettle (*Urtica dioica*)

Purslane (*Portulaca oleracea*)

Plantain (*Plantago* spp.)

Chickweed (*Stellaria media*)

Fat hen (*Chenopodium album*) also known as lambsquarters

Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*)

Sow thistle (*Sonchus oleraceus*)

Prickly lettuce (*Lactuca scariola*)

Mallow (*Malva* spp)

Dock (*Rumex* spp)

Nasturtium (*Tropaeolum majus*)

Chicory (*Cichorium intybus*)

Good King Henry (*Chenopodium bonus-henricus*)

Watercress (*Rorippa nasturtium-officinale*)

Blackberry nightshade fruit (*Solanum nigrum*)

Make your own waterless toilet

I found everything I needed to make a composting toilet in one day of hard rubbish collection at Brighton. The only thing I paid for is the silicon sealant. Here's a recipe to make your own.

Ingredients

- 2 wheelie bins, pickle barrels or plastic drums. I found two wheelie bins on the street in hard rubbish, and no I didn't just steal people's bins, they had cracks in them and a notice saying please take the bin. You need two because when one is full and the material is composting, you need another one to be adding to.
- Milk crate, bakery tray and a piece of screen or plastic mesh (or anything you can find that will serve the same purpose). This is to make a raised platform in the base of the bin so that liquids can drain through, so the compost pile doesn't get wet and smelly.
- A piece of plastic plumbing (technical name) to attach a hose to the hole drilled at the base of the bin. I used a tap from a broken water container in hard rubbish.
- Hose to drain liquid waste from the bin.
- Two pieces of irrigation pipe.
- Silicon sealant
- Small amount of gravel
- Bucket with lid – if you want to have an indoor toilet and empty the bucket about once a week. This doesn't smell or attract flies at all if the contents are kept covered with organic matter and the lid is on when it's not in use.
- Toilet seat
- Coarse organic material to add carbon and aeration to the composting system. This could be wood shavings, dry grass clippings, autumn leaves, shredded paper, rose petals, compost or whatever else is available. A friend was using lavender flowers for a while.

Utensils

Hacksaw

Drill

Method

Cut the milk crate and bakery tray with a hacksaw to make a raised platform about 5cm above the base of the bin. Alternatively place bricks in the base and lay the tray on top. cover with screen or mesh to prevent solids falling through the platform.

Cut the irrigation pipe to a length to fit diagonally inside the bin. Drill small holes along the length of the pipe, plenty of them. This is to allow air to flow through the pile as it is composting, to prevent it from putrefying (no-one wants

There are a number of ways to go about making a composting toilet. The waste can be composted in a regular compost bin or bay, if you feel confident that no animals will get in to it. Using an enclosed composting bin, such as a wheelie bin or pickle barrel, eliminates the possibility of contamination. Instructions for making this type of toilet are on the following page. A worm farm can be used, and possibly bokashi composting, although I've never heard of anyone using this method. One outhouse I've visited was crawling with what appeared to be mealworms, which I found somewhat disturbing.

For my household of three people and a reasonable sized garden, our last water bill showed that our usage is one third the average amount used by a single person household with no garden. Since there is nothing else in our household that would indicate the discrepancy, I put this down to the single factor that the flush toilet is rarely used.

Urine can go directly on the garden. It is great fertiliser, it's high in nitrogen and contains all the nutrients that plants need. By peeing in a flush toilet, we are not only wasting water, but a valuable resource. Urine is sterile, so won't introduce any pathogens to the garden, and unless it is concentrated in one place, doesn't create any smells. Diluting it in water is recommended, as the high nitrogen content can damage plant roots.

Scientist James Lovelock hypothesises that urine is a result of a symbiotic evolution with plants, as we actually expend otherwise unnecessary energy to expel our wastes in a form that is readily available to them. Joe Jenkins, in *The Humanure Handbook*, says "it's estimated that one person's annual urine output contains enough soil nutrients to grow grain to feed that person for a year. Therefore it's ... important to recycle urine..."

If your garden is too exposed for you to pee in it directly, a bucket can be used as an intermediary. I find that peeing outside gives me opportunities to observe nature closely, discover insects and leaf patterns close up, which I wouldn't do otherwise. And I feel a sense of connection with my garden, that I am part of it and helping it grow. By using a composting toilet, and growing food at home, I become integral to the land I live on. I eat from it and return nutrients to it, so that natural cycles can continue indefinitely.



Mushrooms and seaweed should be properly identified before eating. Some are good to eat, and some less so.

Prickly pear fruits (tuna) and pads (nopales) are edible. The fruit tastes amazing, a mixture of papaya, persimmon and melon. The nopales takes a bit of getting used to, it's quite slimy. Harvest with tongs into a bucket, and cut the spines off before eating. Obviously.

Lots of **native plants** have edible fruit, flowers, leaves or tubers. People have been living on this stuff for 40 000 years, so it must be alright.

Meat. If you want to eat meat, might as well do it in a way that connects you directly with your food sources, reduces waste, and controls feral animals. Considering the alternative way to eat meat involves enormous amounts of destruction, suffering and exploitation and isn't fun or adventurous at all.

Roadkill. Recently dead kangaroos, rabbits, and emus can be good eating. Just leave out the bruised bit. I recently picked up a rabbit while out cycling, threw it in my pannier and took it home. Unfortunately it was all bruised so I didn't get to eat it, but it made great compost.

Hunting. A slingshot or bow and arrow can get you some wild meat. There's plenty of feral goats around, as well as kangaroos, rabbits, possums, and pigeons. Butchering is a useful skill to learn, and a unique way to impress (or repel) your friends at parties.

Fishing. Spend a fun day hanging out with friends by the beach or river, with a hook and a line, and you might even get some dinner out of it.

Entomophagy is the practice of eating insects. Try snails, bogong moths, crickets or witchetty grubs. Marsh flies are full of sugar. I eat the sugar but not the fly itself.

Check out the British TV series *The Wild Gourmets* to see some wild food foraging adventures.

With all these options to choose from, you need never go to the supermarket again.

Stuff.

There are nomadic tribes who pity those who possess large amounts, as they need to expend more time and energy to transport them. He who owns least is considered free. Linda Cockburn – Living the Good Life

Take an item of clothing, or any manufactured item, and hold it in your hands. Have a good look at it. Feel the textures, notice the details. What is it made out of? Where did these things come from? Who grew the plants, or extracted the minerals from the earth that became this item? How did they do this? How and where was it manufactured? Who made it? How did it get to you? What process of packaging, transporting, marketing, wholesaling, and retailing has it been through? And what's the story of the money that paid for this item? Where did that go? What will happen to this item when you're done with it?

Try this next time you sit down to dinner: before you start eating, tell the story of the meal. Go through all of the above questions for every ingredient. You'll probably discover that your dinner has led a much more well-travelled and adventurous life than you ever have.

Looking at all the Things in our lives in this way can change the way we relate to possessions and food. We start to realise that our decisions have a direct impact on a large number of people and places, both near and far. We become aware of our dependence on the global infrastructure of commerce to provide for even our most basic needs.

There is an alternative to this exploitative and depressing way of being, and of course it is heaps easier and more fun. When you make, find, fix and grow things that have character rather than buy soulless mass-produced disposable Things from far away, it's you who has the adventures, and you write your own story of your Stuff.

A lot of the stuff that we think we need, we really don't, and probably would be happier without. I know that I already have everything I could ever want.

Lots of the stuff you use regularly around the house can be got for free if you know where to look and who to ask. Household goods, like furniture, electrical appliances, clothes, sporting equipment, building materials, books...

Hard rubbish collection day (which I have renamed Neighbourhood Resource Exchange Day) is a great source of useful stuff. I really enjoy seeing people walking around their neighbourhoods, looking at what is on offer, talking to each other about how to fix or use the things on the street. And I like that people put things out not just because they are too big to fit in a wheelie bin, but because they are things that other people might have a use for. On one day of wombling in Brighton I gathered tree loppers, flippers, frame of a café umbrella, fabric of another café umbrella

Toilet.

Toilet waste can be composted at home, with minimal effort and infrastructure involved. It doesn't smell, doesn't attract vermin, and it's not difficult to do. The neighbours need never know, if that's how you prefer it.

Some benefits of composting toilets over flush toilets are:

- waste is dealt with on site, and doesn't pollute waterways or get treated with chemicals in sewage plants
- No water is used. It's ridiculous to waste one resource (clean drinking water) to dispose of another (fertilizer)
- organic matter is returned to the soil, with improves soil structure and nutrition
- no chemicals used
- no cleaning products required
- no waste products
- no greenhouse gas emissions
- no electricity
- no smells
- minimal infrastructure, no pipes or transport required
- minimal cost, or totally free.

Flushing a toilet causes a mist of contaminated water to adhere to the walls and ceiling of the room, which can still be floating around hours later. This sounds incredibly unhygienic to me, not to mention the smells that result. Composting toilets have no such effects. The waste is immediately covered, so is not in contact with water or air. Because it is undergoing a composting process, no cleaning products are required. Micro-organisms do the cleaning for you. Chemical products actually hinder this process, so you'll find it's a lot more effective and less smelly if you don't use them.

Composting is an aerobic process, which means it produces only carbon dioxide. The anaerobic process that occurs to sewage waste produces the pollutants methane, ammonia and hydrogen sulfide.

Sewage is a large scale system that requires lots of resources to maintain. Sludge is dumped to landfill. Dams are built, while wildlife habitat and rivers are destroyed, purely so we can flush away valuable resources. And now we are squandering more resources building desalination plants, while we buy fertiliser in plastic packaging from corporate-owned hardware stores, so we can feed the soil in our gardens and dispose of the packaging.

The long term sustainability of urban settlements is dependent on our ability to recycle human waste, and return it to the soil that produces our food.

Refrigeration.

You can make your own refrigerator for free, from stuff that you find in the rubbish, and it doesn't need any electricity to run, just water. It's called a zeer pot, or a pot-in-pot refrigerator. And it really works! All you need is two clay pots, some sand, and a way to plug the hole in the base of the pot.

Here's how to make it:

Get two terracotta pots, one needs to fit inside the other with about 1cm gap between. They could be the same size with one slightly raised. They need to be unglazed, unsealed terracotta, as the cooling happens by evaporation through the porous clay. Pots can sometimes be found in hard rubbish, or by asking around. If you're really keen you could get hold of some clay and make them yourself. Or if you're not, try secondhand from a garage sale, flea market, salvage yard or tip shop. They're about \$10 each from hardware stores. Imported from Italy.

Next step: plug the holes in the base of the pots, so that water doesn't drain out. I did this with the lid of a PET bottle and sealed the edges with waterproof silicon sealant, but I'm sure there are other ways that are equally effective. I tried to go low-tech and use clay, but it got soggy and fell apart.

Line the inside of the larger pot with sand, and place the smaller one inside. Placing the pot in a tray is a good idea, as on hot days the cool water condenses on the outside of the pot and runs down the side. This water is great to cool yourself in hot weather.

Top up the water in the sand layer every day so it stays damp, and cover the top with a towel. Even when it's over 40 degrees outside, the inside of the zeer pot is 15 degrees, so food keeps a lot longer than it would without refrigeration. One catch: the evaporative process needs a dry climate to work effectively. It wouldn't do so well in a humid place.

Some more refrigeration tips.

Lots of things that are often kept in a refrigerator really don't need to be. Sauces, jams, miso, eggs and fruit keep perfectly well out of a refrigerator. Many vegetables keep better in a dish of water. This way they continue to be alive so are much more nutritious. Celery, broccoli, leafy greens and beetroot keep really well this way. Tomatoes, cucumber, zucchini are generally fine out of the refrigerator.

Of course all these things are much tastier and higher in nutrients if they are eaten directly from the plant. I read somewhere that leafy greens lose 90% of their nutritional value within hours of being picked. A great reason to eat weeds and grow your own food!



(and made a complete umbrella out of the two), several chairs, framed paintings, side table, rug, textbook about the water cycle, stuffed toy alligator, pepper grinder, electric kettle, a sofa which was stolen later that evening from our front verandah, meditation stool, broom, transparent lid of a storage box for making a mini-greenhouse to raise seedlings, a wire trolley for storing fruit and veg, two bike helmets, candles, salad bowl, laundry basket, bowls and plates, sewing machine, pillow, doona, doormat, compost bin, cupboard, sketchbook, plastic pots, star picket, shade cloth, mirror, curtains, pinboard, watering can, and all the parts needed for making a composting toilet.

Dumpsters behind department stores, op-shops and pawnbrokers can yield all manner of useful and not so useful things. Often these things are perfectly functional, or slightly damaged in a way that is easy to fix. Op shops get far more donations than they can make use of, and large quantities of clothes and other household items are thrown out.

Op shops and clothing donation bins are also treated as dumping grounds. To leave anything outside of a shop or donation bin is illegal dumping, so by taking anything from these illegal "donations" you are cleaning up litter.

Government departments frequently dispose of furniture, computers, office equipment and carpets because they have a budget to spend within the financial year, so will replace items that don't need replacing purely so they can spend the money that has been allocated. Universities, schools, councils and other large organizations may also do this. Personal contact with someone who works in one of these places would be the most effective way to get your hands on this stuff.

Check **building sites**, demolition sites and town dumps for building materials. 40% of waste sent to landfill comes from the construction industry. Timber, irrigation pipe, insulation, windows and doors, cables, paint and other such miscellany can be found.

Being able to fix things and improvise, to make new things from old, is a useful skill for anyone wanting to live free of The System, and for anyone really. It's an opportunity to be creative, and discover abilities you didn't know you had.

Shelter.

There are infinite possibilities for creating a shelter, a safe place to live. By stepping out of the Rent or Buy? options we can consider:

Housesit or caretake. You could go through life never paying for accommodation, taking care of the houses, gardens and pets of people who are travelling. Housesits can last for days, months, sometimes years. If you enjoy country life and have some farm skills, or are looking to learn, caretaking a farm can be rewarding and give you a chance to get to know an area if you are considering settling there longer term.

Squat. Any unoccupied house can be legally occupied and have the locks changed by anyone. There are plenty of empty houses around. No rent. Always the possibility that you may be evicted if you don't know who the owner is, but you do have some legal rights in this situation. It may be possible to make an arrangement with the owner to stay on and maintain the house. Check out the Squatters' Handbook at squatspace.com/handbook for everything you could want to know about squatting.

Renovations. For those with building skills, fixing up a house while living in it can give you a job and free accommodation. If you don't mind living in a building site.

Build a shelter. I spent a few months sleeping in a humpy made from wax boxes in the backyard of a friend's house. It can be quite easy to build a temporary or permanent shelter, such as a tipi, hut, stardome, yurt, bender, treehouse or shed, in a few hours or days, and build completely out of free recycled materials. It feels great to live in something you have built yourself. Building on a friend's property where you can get access to water and a place to store food makes it easier.

Free camp. I cycled around Tasmania last summer carrying camping gear, and set up camp in parks and patches of woodland, on beaches, clifftops and creekbanks. I've read a story of a man in America who lives in a cave, and there's a guy in Sydney who sleeps in a hammock high up in a Moreton Bay fig tree in a park in the inner city. He has a house but prefers sleeping up in the tree. I know of someone who spent months camping out in a forest on the outskirts of Hobart while maintaining a full time IT job in the city.

Work exchange. The idea of taking in a boarder who looks after the house in exchange for free rent can be quite appealing for busy people. If you enjoy cooking, gardening, babysitting or cleaning this can be quite an effective arrangement. Currently I have an arrangement with two friends who have bought their own house that I live with them, do a fair proportion of the cooking and gardening, provide a reasonable share of the food and pay minimal rent.

Share housing. Not free but cheaper than occupying a house as an individual or couple. It can be lots of fun and has many other benefits: sharing chores, becoming open to other ways of doing things, which is useful for anything you do in life, expanding your social networks and introducing you to new ideas. There's no reason two families with young children couldn't share a house, or older people whose children have left home. Widows and widowers might also benefit from the companionship and reduced expenses of sharing a house.

Every night in Australia there are 17 million spare beds. There is no shortage of housing, just a shortage of creative ways to make use of the space we have.

Technology.

There's lots of old-school technology around that's not any less useful because new hi-tech electrical versions have come along. But since most people think it's not useful, it's probably easy to get hold of for free or cheap. There must be so much of this stuff around, in sheds, attics, cupboards under the stairs and rusting on farms. I'm talking about things like washboards, clothes wringers, chaff cutters, push mowers, scythes, ploughs, mills, wood stoves, carpet sweepers, Coolgardie safes, rowboats, hand pumps, windmills, candles, spinning wheels, foot-pedal sewing machines, crosscut saws, hand drills. Playing and working with these implements can be really fun, and since they don't make noise you can work with other people and carry on a conversation while working, which should be an integral aspect of any manual labour. Through using hand tools you can learn how to use your body with optimal efficiency. You develop physical strength, and can actually enjoy your work. These are tools that we can co-operate with, unlike machinery which seems to have a mind of its own, which can make us feel like we are being controlled. These tools can be fixed without too much equipment or expertise. Some of them you could even make for yourself.

There's plenty of other technologies that can be handmade from natural and recycled materials, without too much effort.

Rocket stove. A cooker made from used tins and fuelled with leaves and twigs. It's super-efficient because it is well insulated. I use scraps of ceiling insulation that I find on building sites. See centrefold for instructions on how to build one.

Zeer pot. A non-electrical refrigerator made from clay pots. Instructions over the page.

Solar cooker. There's a few ways of making this, all of which can be done easily with reclaimed materials. The basic principle is to concentrate sunlight and trap heat. It cooks food in a few hours on a sunny day.



Rocket stove

Solar food dryer.

Biogas digester. Biogas is produced from the fermentation or anaerobic digestion of organic matter. The gas can be used for heating or cooking. The infrastructure required can be home-made, but the process needs tropical temperatures to work, so it's not viable everywhere.

Haybox cooker. This one needs nothing more than a blanket. Wrap it around a pot of dinner that's been brought to boiling point, and it will continue to cook in its own heat insulated by the blanket. A box of hay would serve the same purpose, hence the name.

Cool cupboard. This needs to be built in to a new house, as it requires a tunnel to be dug through the floor. It's a refrigerator that works by drawing cool air up from under the ground, through the cupboard, and out the top. There is an air inlet outside the house.

ill. Since humans have become domesticated animals we've lost this innate knowledge, and don't trust ourselves to direct our own healing, in co-operation with our environment. The substances we need to treat our illnesses are all around us. All it takes is to observe your surroundings, listen, look, taste, smell and feel all of it, and use your intuition to discover what can heal you. The soil, water, air and living things can all be part of our health, and we can be part of theirs.

The practices we need to take on are already known to our bodies, we only need to start listening, sensing the way the body moves and operates, to know instinctively what feels right for us.

People have cured themselves of cancer and AIDS purely by tuning in to the needs of their bodies, and not taking anyone's advice, treatment or medicine. This result has never been achieved by western medicine, and of course never will, because no profits can be made from liberated people in perfect health. Medical researchers would be out of a job, there would be nothing to put all this research funding towards.

Many modern medical conditions and treatments exist only to market products by convincing people that they are ill. HIV (which is not the same as AIDS) has been shown not to be caused by a virus by leading researchers, but of course no-one pays attention to them because it would cut in to profits from their drugs and treatments. Fluoride has never been shown to have any effect on dental health. It is only in our drinking water because it is a convenient dumping ground for this waste product from industry.

Generally the symptoms that pharmaceutical drugs are used to treat are not in fact symptoms of illness, but of the body eliminating the illness. For example a high temperature is a way for the body to make itself inhospitable to disease organisms; coughing and diarrhoea force the disease out of the body; snot is the white blood cells that have died in the process of destroying disease cells. To heal ourselves we need to allow these symptoms to run their natural course. Suppressing the symptoms with medicines only makes the illness worse.

The experience of illness, either physical or mental, can be an opportunity for an amazing journey of self-discovery. Don't look at it as something to be fought against. It's yourself that you're fighting. You may win the battle, but if you haven't learnt from the experience and dealt with the underlying issues, the illness will recur, possibly in another form. There's a lot to be learnt by listening to your body and taking on what it tells you. Check out *The Journey* by Brandon Bays. Brandon cured herself of a tumour by listening to her own body. She describes the process she went through so that readers can apply it in their own lives.

Adding popular nutrients to processed foods (the trendy ones at the moment are iron, folate, omega-3 and niacin) doesn't benefit anyone, as nutrients can't do anything in isolation, only as an element of whole foods. The interactions between nutrients are complex, and they need to be consumed from a living plant to truly nourish our bodies.

There is no one perfect diet to suit everyone. Some tribal cultures eat mainly raw fruit and vegetables, and many Inuit and Mongolian people eat only animal products, yet all are perfectly healthy. Everyone has different needs. Don't let anyone tell you what you should eat, or how to look after your health, and don't assume that what works for you will be suitable for anyone else.

Adventure.

What is adventure? Does it require going to a far away place, and spending lots of money, or can you have an adventure in your own neighbourhood? Can you buy an adventure, or does the fact that you've paid for an Experience, and know exactly what you are going to get, preclude all possibility of adventures occurring?

Here's a few free adventure options.

Wilderness survival. Can you live in the bush, eat bush foods and build a bush shelter, find fresh water and make clothes from animal skins? People have been living on this land for thousands of years doing exactly this. Give it a go. You're guaranteed not to be bored.

Urban exploration. The suburbs can be places to explore and discover. The street directory might show you the streets, parks and shopping malls, but it can't show the mulberry tree with luscious berries in an alley, abandoned buildings, haunted houses, rooftops, and trees to climb.

Down the drain. There's a whole world to explore under the city, the stormwater drains that direct our water away from where it's most needed and send it out to sea. Every city has a community of drain explorers. This one's not for a rainy day.

Talk to people on the street. This could lead to ...who knows what? It'll probably be something interesting, and if it's not, then no great loss.

Try new things. Anything you've never done before has the potential to be an adventure, maybe even life-changing.

Take a different route home.

Change the way you look at the world. Even things you do every day can become exciting and new if you look at them closely, or change your perspective.

Become aware of the spaces between. What else is around you all the time that you've never noticed, just waiting to be discovered?

Leave your wallet at home. Finding something for dinner, a new dress, a place to live, a way to get home, or a birthday present can be fun rather than boring if you expand your options beyond the bought.

Pee outside. Yes, even urinating can be an adventure if you want it to. Finding a spot that looks like it could do with a bit of liquid fertiliser, and isn't exposed to passers by, can lead you to discover places you would never otherwise go. Even in your own backyard.

Wwoof. Volunteer on organic farms in exchange for meals, accommodation, learning and lots of fun.

Couch surf. Stay at people's houses as you're travelling. You'll get to know the area and the culture a lot better than if you stay in a hotel or backpackers.

Invite people to come stay with you. When an American friend came to stay at my house, she took me on an adventure of discovering my local area in a new way, exploring places it would never have occurred to me to go.

Share.

The global economy works by encouraging a culture of individualism, selfishness and greed. It convinces us we are independent and self-reliant if we rely on our money rather than the land and other people to provide for our needs. So to extract ourselves from the money economy, we need to recognise that everything is interdependent, and form these reciprocal relationships with nature and neighbours, with everyone and everything around us. We need to shift our concern away from the health of our bank balance, investments and superannuation, and towards caring for the health of our ecosystems, our communities and ourselves. When we stop concerning ourselves with financial matters and open up to the natural abundance that is all around us, we discover that we have so much to share. I find the abundance overwhelming sometimes.

Sharing is an effective way to make the most of the available resources, and reduce waste. It builds trust between people and reduces social isolation. To return or reclaim borrowed items, or pass on excess produce, is always a good reason to go visiting friends and neighbours. It is an opportunity to get to know your neighbours, and just gives you a good feeling to be able to help someone out by doing something as simple as lending them a shovel.

Stuff that can be shared. Food, books, tools, appliances, cars, land, recipes, cultures (both the bacterial and social kind), friends, skills, stories, your home, child raising, clothes, seeds, plants, labour, experiences, ideas and feelings.

Sharing can happen on an informal basis, but to make the most of its potential, it might be worthwhile to set up or make use of an existing infrastructure. Some of these include swap meets and free markets, fruit and veg exchanges, Food Not Bombs, tool libraries, community shed, clothes swap parties, neighbourhood swap box, book exchanges and a community library. An online infrastructure is The Sharehood (thesharehood.org) which helps neighbourhoods to organise sharing of produce, tools, childcare, skills, and labour and to hold events. Other useful websites are freecycle.org, to give and receive things for free, and The Freeconomy Community (justfortheLoveofit.org) to share skills, tools, space and ideas.

Health.

Healthcare doesn't need to cost anything. Everything we need to heal ourselves is within us and around us. Pharmaceutical companies and doctors don't have exclusive rights to making us well. Which they don't tend to do anyway, because they can make more profits by keeping us sick and buying more of their "healthcare" products and services.

Most of what makes us ill comes directly from buying in to the money culture. Workplace conditions, social expectations, processed foods with no nutritional value, food additives, medicines, the chemicals we use in our homes and apply directly to our skin. The air inside an average house is more polluted than that along a busy highway, as a result of the building materials, paint, cleaning products and air fresheners (which are really air polluters) in the house.

Hospitals contain infections that can't be eradicated without destroying the building. A visit to hospital is more likely to cause illness than to cure it. Around 1 million Americans a year die of iatrogenic conditions, that is illnesses and injuries that are caused by medical treatment. This includes adverse drug reactions, medical errors, infections, bedsores, malnutrition, unnecessary procedures and surgery.

So if you are concerned about your health, steer well away from western medical practices. There are so many more fun and creative ways of looking after ourselves. Has anyone ever had a good time in a hospital or doctor's surgery?

Start by taking responsibility for your own health. Paying a doctor or drug company to take this responsibility on your behalf will never work. Even alternative medicine requires you to place trust in someone else to take control of your health. This is a ridiculous practice, no-one else can ever know how their treatments will affect you. Occasionally a treatment may work, but it's hit-and-miss, and the expense to your health and finances is huge as you go through the process of searching for the most effective treatment. Good health isn't something you find in a consulting room. Your body already knows what it needs. The only medical practitioner who can ever truly heal you is you. Get to know your body and mind, and create your own way of caring for yourself. Trust your instincts, and do what feels right, not what someone else tells you to do.

Tune in to how your body works. Take notice of how particular foods and activities affect you. There are so many theories on what consists good health and nutrition. Everyone experiences things differently, and has unique needs, so none of these theories can be totally correct for any one person. What works best for you is something that you need to discover and create for yourself, no book or magazine can tell you what's right.

Animals instinctively know which plants to eat to heal themselves when they're

Ferment.

There are plenty of ways to keep food for longer than a few days that don't involve refrigeration or chemical preservatives. Ferments, drying and bottling can be done at home. Preserving makes food accessible out of season, and saves gluts from going to waste.

Fermenting is a way to make food more nutritious by adding live cultures that are beneficial to our internal ecology. Fermented food also keeps for a long time without needing refrigeration. Did you know that your food is digested not by your own body, but by the 2 kilograms of bacteria that live in your gut? This is why it is important to eat a range of fermented foods after taking a course of antibiotics, as the drugs have killed off all the bacteria, which needs to be returned to a healthy balance so you can assimilate nutrients from food.

Fermented foods include miso, tempeh, sourdough bread, yoghurt, cheese, sauerkraut, soy sauce, vinegar, wine, beer and cider. All of these things can be made at home fairly easily. For more about fermented foods, check out Bill Mollison's *The Permaculture Book of Ferment and Human Nutrition*, and *Wild Fermentation* by Sandor Ellix Katz.

An easy way to keep fruit for months is to dry it. Dried fruit is sweeter, and easier to carry around than fresh fruit. It's great for cycling and walking, I always keep some in my bag to snack on. A lot more tasty and nutritious than lollies, and all for free of course. In Adelaide summers leaving sliced fruit out in the sun for a few days is all it takes. Placing them under a sheet of glass speeds up the process. In other seasons a solar or electric food dryer is necessary. A solar dryer can be made at home, it's a bit of work but worth the effort. Any fruits or vegetables can be dried. This is a simple way to deal with the summer glut of apricots, peaches, apples, and tomatoes, and the large quantities of bananas that find their way into dumpsters and then into my kitchen.

Pickles, jams, sauces and chutneys take a bit more effort, and generally require salt or sugar to preserve them. Making grapes into wine, and apples into cider, can become a great party with a bunch of people working together on it, and of course leads to another party a little later to enjoy the results.

Clothing.

Making, altering, finding or sharing clothes is so much more of an adventure than walking into a brand-name chain store and handing over your cash. And your clothes will have a story, of friends, fabrics, explorations and decorations. Your clothes can be an expression of your personality, rather than an expression of corporate marketing.

Followers of fashion are boring. Create your own style.

Making your own clothes from scratch can involve shearing, spinning, knitting, weaving, dyeing or tanning a hide.

Otherwise try pattern making, sewing (by hand or machine), elaborating, altering, mending, darning, patching. Convert old clothes into new clothes: sleeves can become leg warmers, ripped jeans can become shorts, a skirt or a bag. Patches, ribbons, sequins, embroidery and fabric paint can be used to make clothes more individual.

Clothes can be found dumped outside op-shops, at both front and back entrances, and outside clothing donation bins. Dumpsters behind op-shops also contain lots of perfectly good clothes that are excess to requirements. And even if they're not perfectly good, they can be mended, altered or cut up to make other things.

Clothes swap parties are a fun way to pass on excess clothes to friends, get some new stuff, and share stories. This can be a great kids party too.

Sewing circle. Invite a bunch of friends around for a shared meal, and an opportunity to do all the mending that you wouldn't otherwise get around to. It's a chance to share skills, fabrics, and sewing machines.

Community wardrobe. A wardrobe on a street corner or in a community centre or school can be a place for anyone to donate unwanted clothes, and discover something new, all with no money changing hands.

Get moving.

So how do you get around without using money? Try these:

Walk. The original. No resources required, and if you're tough you don't even need shoes. It's the best way to observe what's going on around you, be present, and stop and smell the roses. And everything else as well, there's no reason to limit yourself to roses.

Cycle. Bikes can be usually be obtained for free without to much asking around, since buying bikes and then never riding them is fairly common practice in modern Australian culture. Cycling is another great way to be fully present in your surroundings, while getting exercise, an endorphin hit, a tan, fresh air, find useful and not so useful things on the side of the road, opportunities to stop and pick fruit (and reach high up fruit by standing on your bike), and it's so much fun! Beat the traffic, avoid road rage, make new friends while waiting for the lights to change, and experience the satisfaction of getting around completely under your own power. Forget waiting for a taxi, asking people for a lift, or missing the last bus home. Go around the block or around the world. Did I mention it's really fun? I've cycled around New Zealand, Scotland and recently spent a month cycling Tasmania, camping in bushland and eating predominantly wild food that was growing along the road-sides.

With panniers or a trailer you can carry everything you own on a bicycle. Even furniture removal is possible. Check out Bike Moving Co-op on youtube.

Hitch-hike. Open yourself up to all manner of adventures. Like a choose your own adventure story but sometimes the adventure chooses you. Which can be fun or scary depending on how you look at it.

Ride a horse. With a horse-drawn caravan you get even more street cred in the free-adventurer scene.

Hitch a lift on a yacht. Occasionally yachtspeople are looking for extra crew or a cook for a voyage. If you're looking to go somewhere, ask around at a port or marina, and you might find yourself sailing away.

Jump a freight train. I haven't heard of anyone doing this in Australia, but it's fairly common in North America.

Share a ride. Backpackers hostels have noticeboards for people looking to share a car trip, and there are some ride-sharing websites that serve the same purpose.

Relocate campervans or hire cars. Hire companies need vehicles moved between cities, and will give you free hire if you can fit your journey into their time schedule.

Run a diesel vehicle on waste vegetable oil. Free fuel, and you're reducing waste going to landfill. People pay to have this stuff removed. You can choose from fish & chip, donut or dim sum scented exhaust.

Localise. Reduce your need for transport by meeting all your needs in the local area.

nure under bridges, very easy to harvest), cow or horse manure, herbs like comfrey, nettle, yarrow or tansy. Cover with water to fill the bucket and leave it sealed to ferment. It can get stinky while it ferments, but the smell disappears after a few weeks, which is probably a good time to put it out on the garden. Your soil and plants will love it.

Rainwater collection. Wheelie bin (if it's not for drinking) or pickle barrel. Winebarrels sound like a good idea, but because the timber expands and contracts they don't deal with changing water levels.

Pond. how about... the bottom half of a wheelie bin. Or a bathtub. Or use a canvas banner as a lining for an in ground pond. A pond creates a humid microclimate in the garden, is a habitat for fish, birds, insects, frogs and reptiles, and can be used to grow edible water plants.

Cold frame. A mini-greenhouse for raising seedlings in winter and early spring. It consists of nothing more than a sheet of glass or clear plastic above the seedling tray. It can be used as a solar food dryer in the summer.

Shadehouse nursery. There's always plenty of shadecloth to be found around the place, it doesn't take much to make a structure to shade the summer seedlings. Window screens and screen doors can also be adapted to this end.

Chookhouse. Be creative. Use whatever's around. I'm sure you could work a wheelie bin into it somehow.

Wheelie bins aren't the most attractive objects around, but with a bit of paint and inspiration they could become a lot more interesting and individual.



Illustration: Cecilia Macaulay - flickr.com/photos/cecilia_macaulay/

Garden things to make.

Be as creative as you like in designing your garden, and make some interesting and beautiful things to get it growing.

A compost bin from a broken wheelie bin. Turn bin upside down and cut off the base with a hacksaw, which then becomes a lid. A compost bin can be made with a 2m length of chicken wire formed into a circle, and held in place with a couple of stakes, or bays made with pallets and star pickets.

Bamboo tipi for climbing plants. Shove three 2-3m lengths of bamboo or cane in the ground, forming a triangle about a metre wide, and tie them together at the top. For climbing things like tomatoes, beans, cucumbers and ceylon spinach. Cane shouldn't be too hard to find around the neighbourhood, it often grows along creeks. Bamboo is stronger, but not as common around Adelaide. Bamboo can become invasive, so by harvesting from clumps that are growing on public land we can stop it from spreading, but also keep it as a renewable resource for everyone to use.

Worm farm. An insulated polystyrene box with a lid works well. Poke a hole in one corner for the liquid to drain out, and place a container under the hole to collect the liquid fertiliser. A put a couple of rocks inside to stop it from blowing over, and a rock on the lid. Keep in a shady place. At a previous house I've used a broken refrigerator lying on its back, with a hole drilled in a corner. A bathtub is good for large scale wormfarming. Another creative worm farm idea I've seen (in a great book called *Food Not Lawns*) is a chest of drawers with holes drilled in the base of the drawers, for a three storey worm apartment. I've seen wheelie bins made into wormfarms, they could be used for bokashi as well. The infrastructure would be the same as for the composting toilet (see chapter on compost toilet).

Trellises. My garden has bamboo, pruned tree branches, bicycle wheels, and a broken clothesline, leaning against fences and walls for climbing plants. Other options are gates, bedheads, trampoline frame, and probably all manner of other things that can be found on hard rubbish day. We've considered growing melons up a trellis and hanging each melon in a bra for extra support. I grabbed some large bras from an op-shop dumpster for the purpose.

Plant pots. Anything in your recycling bin. Plastic bottles cut in half, milk and juice cartons, tins, or buckets for larger plants. Plant labels can be cut from plastic bottles.

Organic liquid fertiliser can be made from free stuff around the neighbourhood. All you need is a plastic bucket with a lid. Restaurants, bakeries and takeaways are a good source of buckets with lids, as they get products like sauce, yoghurt and mayonnaise in them and don't reuse them. Or if you want to make large batches, green waste bins can be put to good use. Fill the bucket/bin with whatever organic matter you can find: weeds, seaweed, fish, bird manure (there's always piles of pigeon ma-

Human powered.

I am making a trailer for my bicycle out of bamboo, old bike wheels, steel plate and bolts. The only tools needed are a drill and a vice. And a measuring tape and probably a few other things.

I feel a lot more independent being able to carry more stuff around and not be dependent on cars. Lots of large tools and plants can be carried, bales of mulch, children...

I'm using the CarryFreedom design for my trailer (carryfreedom.com), which needs minimal tools, skills and money to build, and can carry quite a bit of weight. I've seen homemade trailers built from wheelchairs, supermarket shelving, roadworks signs. Probably anything with wheels could be converted – a trike, go kart, golf buggy, pram...



Photo: Carry Freedom

I've done pretty well with only a pannier rack and panniers. Keeping occy straps attached to the rack is always useful. I've carried long bamboo poles strapped to the bike frame, pot plants and mulch in the panniers, large boxes of food on the rack, and I've even managed a banana lounge that I found in hard rubbish.



A friend's dad made a trailer to carry two kayaks, which clips to the seat post of a bike. He's better at welding and building than I am.

An easy option for a trailer is to strap a sacktruck or canvas shopping cart to a pannier rack. When I brought home a hard-rubbish wheelie bin to make into a compost toilet, I strapped it to my pannier rack with an occy strap and towed it home. I had fun amusing passers-by, and even had a truck driver inform me "excuse me, you've got a bin tangled up in your bike" as if it had somehow happened by accident and I hadn't noticed.



Photo: Bicycle Victoria

Some other options for human-powered transport

Christiania bikes and cargo bikes are a trike with two wheels at the front, with a large box between the handlebars that can hold several small children and much else besides.

Rickshaws can carry two or three passengers. I'd like to start a rickshaw taxi business in Adelaide, it would be the perfect way to get around the city. It's happening in a few other Australian cities. They could take business people to meetings, children to school, uni students on pub crawls, produce to market, and tourists to see the sights.

Options for cycling with children are a baby seat on the crossbar or rear rack, trailer, tag-along (it's like the back half of a kids bike that attaches behind an adult's bike), and tandem.

Long bikes can carry a passenger on the rear rack, and lots of gear in the panniers. Good for camping or commuting.

A recumbent (it's like an armchair on wheels) can be good for long rides on fairly flat roads. Attaching a motor or battery to your bike can give you a boost up steep hills.

Bikes can be disassembled into parts, and the parts put together as new bikes. With a welder you could invent all manner of human-powered machines. If you want to get creative, try making yourself a tallbike, trike, sidecar, or chariot. Check out *The Fantastic Bicycles Book* by Steven Lindblom for ideas and instructions.

Bike power can be used to drive a front-loading washing machine, a generator to power the TV, or a blender to make smoothies. Gyms could harness the energy expended on exercise bikes and treadmills, and become power plants.

Getting in a car would be way too boring with all these cool options for making getting anywhere an adventure in itself.



pots on the windowsill, and sprouts in a jar on the dishrack. If you're after a bit more space, here's a few options.

Share a backyard with a neighbour. The design of our suburbs creates the problem for many people of a large block of land that they don't have any use for, and it becomes a chore to maintain. Lots of people would love to have someone else make use of their backyard space.

Community gardens. Have your own plot, meet other local people, and learn about all kinds of things. Share your produce, your skills, your tools, and your day while building a self-reliant community.

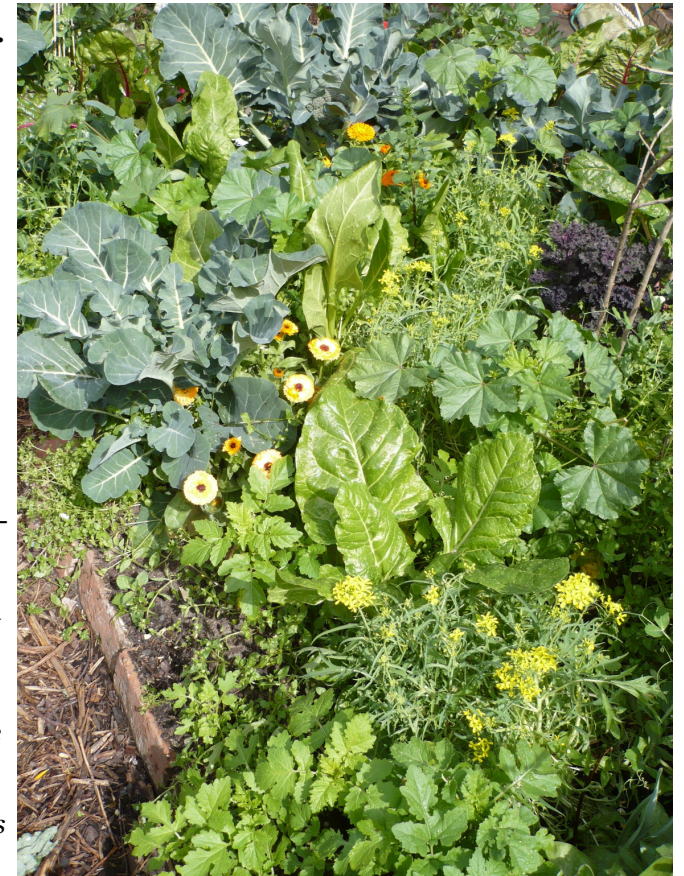
Guerrilla gardening. Plenty of public space is unused – parks, verges, railway corridors, roadsides and those spaces that no-one ever notices. Add some fruit trees, perennial vegetables and herbs that are adapted to the conditions, and let them grow to provide food for everyone.

Guerrilla grafting. There are plenty of ornamental trees around that are similar to fruit-bearing trees, and can be grafted onto.

Forest garden design.

If we observe patterns in nature, and learn how a native forest functions, we can apply these patterns to the design of a food garden. No work needs to be done to maintain a forest, as all the natural systems interact in a way that makes the whole thing self-maintaining. If we choose food-producing plants that are suited to the climate, and design them into a forest ecosystem, we can create a garden that needs minimal human intervention, and can keep producing food for us for years to come.

A garden with a mixture of self-sown vegetables, flowers and edible weeds. The picture looks a lot better in colour.



The recipe can be adapted to whatever is around you, the more diversity the better. When I was living in the desert the only organic matter available was roadkill kangaroos (lots of them), horse manure from the racecourse, and lawn clippings from the school oval. At a house in the suburbs with very little garden, the compost was food scraps, seaweed and long grass that I had raked up from along the railway line, and brought home in my bike panniers. That one needed lots of pee to get it going. Animal manures definitely improve a compost.

Apartment dwellers can use bokashi composting or worm farms, which are both effective if the only organic matter you have is food scraps. The resulting fertiliser can be given to a friend with a garden, who will thank you for it.

Mulch can be found wherever long grass is cut: roadsides, railway reserves, parks, empty blocks. Neighbours can give you lawn clippings and weeds. Extra food scraps can be gathered from produce markets at closing time, fruit and veg shops, and supermarket dumpsters.

Animal manures: dog and cat manures are not recommended for compost that's destined for a veggie garden, as they contain pathogens that can spread disease. See composting toilet page for a way to recycle these manures. Other manures can be found, well, wherever there are animals. Racecourses, stables, shearing sheds, dairy farms, chicken farms. In an urban setting, gather from pet animals such as rabbits and birds, and pigeon manure builds up under bridges. Carcasses of birds, mice, and fish can be thrown in, as can meat scraps.

Potting mix is nothing more than sand and compost mixed together. It's really easy to make it yourself.

Tools are sometimes in hard rubbish, but they tend to be broken. Some can be easily repaired, or might just need cleaning and sharpening. Good quality tools are so much better than bad ones, so this is one thing that might be worth buying. Second-hand tools are often at flea markets, salvage yards, garage sales and rural auctions. Borrowing makes the most sense for tools that you use infrequently. A small garden really only needs a hand trowel, secateurs and a bucket once it is established. A shovel, rake and fork might be useful to build garden beds initially, depending on the condition of the site. Being on good terms with the neighbours can lead to a tool-sharing arrangement, in which everyone has a small number of tools that everyone involved can make use of, so between the group there is a wide range of tools available.

Planting containers. Plastic pots are easy to find – look around or ask around. Seedling trays are thrown out by nurseries, just ask and they'll give them to you. Other options are polystyrene boxes from fruit and veg shops, recycling crates that have been superseded by wheelie bins, bathtubs, and clam shells (the big green plastic ones that are in almost every backyard serving no useful purpose). If you want to get creative try old boots, handbags, baskets, coconuts...

Land. You don't need a big block of land to grow your own. Food can be grown in

Grow food.

Growing your food gives you a sense of harmony with nature. You become a part of the life cycle, planting seeds, nurturing plants, eating your own produce and saving seeds so the process can continue. Your work yields tangible results, and you can be creative and learn as you go. Your food is right there by the back door, there's no need to go out for food. You have access to a wide range of foods that aren't available in shops. There's no infrastructure required. Anyone can do it.

You don't need to buy anything to grow food. Everything you need is produced freely by nature, just look around.

Seeds.

collect from plants growing in friends and neighbours' gardens, or around the neighbourhood. Plants that grow well nearby are adapted to local conditions, so their seed will do better than from plants far away. Plants give seeds away for free, and they really like it when you take some to plant somewhere else. Local Seedsavers groups share seeds from each others' gardens, and organise seed swap events. If you come across a particularly tasty piece of fruit, grab a seed out and stick it in the ground somewhere. Quite often it will germinate and you'll have lovely shady tree and fruit for many years to come. *The Seed Savers' Handbook* by Michel and Jude Fanton has everything you need to know about harvesting, treating, storing and germinating seed from a large range of food plants.

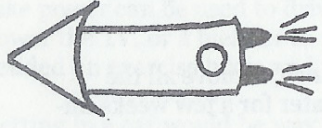
Plants.

Lots of plants grow from cuttings. Just cut of a small branch, remove all the leaves apart from 3-5 at the top, and stick it in a cup of water for a few weeks until it produces a few roots, then stick it in the ground.

Other sources of plants: many fruit trees produce suckers from their roots, which can be dug up and replanted elsewhere. Seedlings sprout up from under plants that have gone to seed, and can be transplanted. Garden centres and nurseries may be prepared to give away plants that have outgrown their pots, and I've found punnets of seedlings in dumpsters.

Mulch and compost.

All plant and animal material can be composted. Composting prevents valuable nutrients from going to landfill where they produce polluting methane gas, it creates amazing organic fertiliser, and connects you with the vital process of dead matter becoming new life. Here's a recipe: collect animal carcasses and manures, weeds, prunings, food scraps, lawn clippings and your own urine, mix together into a pile about a metre high, add water so it's damp but not soaking, cover and leave for a couple of weeks. Spread it around your garden beds, and add a bit when planting new seedlings and trees. By doing this you are literally saving the earth.



ROCKET / STONE!

How to make a...

Based on the design by Aprovecho (US appropriate technology organisation) → www.aprovecho.org

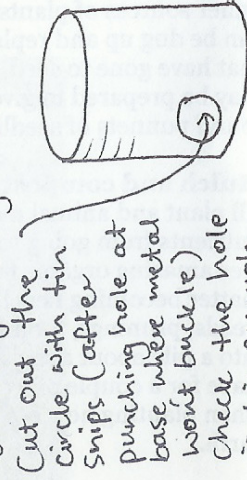
AS taught to... Joel Catchlove + Sophie Green

YOU WILL NEED:

- 1 x 2950g (1 gallon) Can (base still attached, lid kept)
- 3 x 400g cans, can opener, spare can
- pair of tin/aviation snips
- hex tra
- insulating material (ie perlite, sawdust, wood ash, dry soil, aluminium foil, clay/straw mix etc)

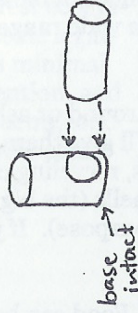
① Remove the top and bottom from 2 of the small cans

② Trace circumference of small can about 1/4 inch (1cm) from bottom of the big can.

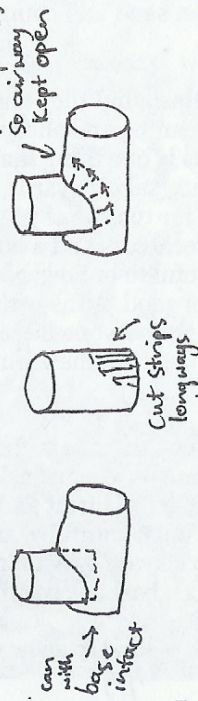


Cut out the circle with tin snips (after punching hole at base where metal won't buckle). Check the hole is big enough for the can!

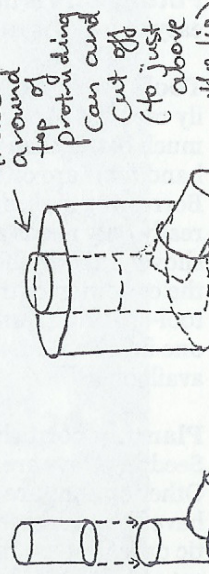
③ Trace same diameter circle again on the small can that still has its base intact — trace as close to the bottom as possible and cut (then insert).



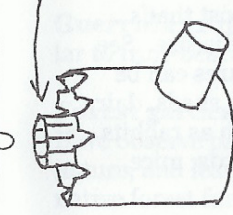
④ When cans are fitted in the elbow, trace the excess metal and cut.



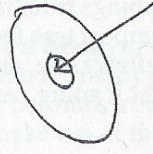
⑤ Fit the third can on the top, connect whole airway in and around the large can. Then trace around top of protruding can and cut off (to just above air line).



⑥ Cut V-cuts (about 2-3 cm depth) around the top of the large can, space out about 4cm intervals (making 8-10 tabs) — these are what your sauce pan will end up sitting on!



Then cut small tabs in the top of the chimney at frequent intervals.



⑦ Remove top part of the flue/chimney, and trace out the circle on the lid of the big can, then cut.

⑧ With small cans in place, fill the large can with insulating material — pack it well.

⑨ Fold down a few of the tabs on the large can, place large lid on top, fold all the small tabs to lock down lid, fold a few other large tabs while leaving 4 for pot to sit on!

⑩ Cut a piece of excess tin from a spare can to use as a divider / stove grate.

⑪ Burn! Load newspaper + small twigs in top, once have good flame, feed bigger sticks from the front.

