



Produce and passion

Julia Gibb and Martin Born

Tiandi is an old Sanskrit word that means 'heaven on earth' which is why the farm is called Tiandi. We have been here for 13 years. We are a permaculture-based farm.

The property used to be owned by Danny King's family, and it was a sheep area, a sheep farm, so they had

subdivided it into various-size blocks. I came down from Sydney and bought my little piece of paradise here and that was really for a childhood dream. From quite a young age all I really wanted to do was to have a little farm, grow my own vegies, have a few animals. That was my beginning and then I met Martin a few years ago.

WHAT'S ...

Martin: I have been a Sydneyite all my life and ran my own business. I was a high school teacher for about five years, I served my time, but I'm a painter by trade.

I have always been interested in growing things but that was only in residential Sydney. I dared to plant fruit trees on the footpath, twenty years ago before it became fashionable, so I guess there has always been that kind of alternative streak in me. Then I met Julia about five years ago and it just took off from there.

I've been able to experiment and try different things. Within the first year I dug up a quarter of an acre for a market garden. The first year was beginner's luck and then every pest in the district discovered us — and then it became bigger than Ben Hur.

You've got to learn from your mistakes, you have got to net it and fence it and so on. I think the story of this place is that you can never take things for granted. It will always throw obstacles in your face, so ...

Julia: But the passion drives us.

Martin: Yes, I think sometimes it's the anger that drives you onwards from the disasters. You know, within two months of building a poly house then we had a massive hail storm. [Julia laughs]. You know it's stuff like that turns a whole market garden into chop suey, so you have to start all over again.

I think that's hard to adjust to, coming from Sydney where you know there are certain knowns, if you get my gist? You don't have these constant random disasters, you have the ordinary everyday things, but in Sydney it's not like your vegetable crop is suddenly wiped out by pests or the weather.

I think that's the hard adjustment coming from that environment into this environment where you can get up in the morning thinking you want to do a specific thing like tend to your beehives or go to the market garden, yet within five minutes something will distract you or something will break and needs fixing, or animals have died or are sick, and by the end of the day you are miles away from where you wanted to start. That takes quite a while to get used to.

[BWD: I think that's a difference between city people and country people, the most obvious difference being that in the city there is still that thing about, "oh drat, it's raining". The news report may tell you that tomorrow you'll get a perfect day without a drop of rain in sight.]

Martin: Yes, it's the opposite here. As

... GREEN AND GROWS?

we discovered, we are only 8-12 weeks away from drought, ever. If you don't get rain for two months things just turn their toes up.

But we have freedom here to try different things, you don't have neighbours who are going to complain or object like in the city. That's why it appeals to me. And you can experiment. I never had beehives until I came here. We started with one hive and now we are up to about thirty-five. It's obviously a passion that was there that I didn't know about and it just took something to start it. It's the same with growing things and animals, I have never had ducks or geese or even chickens in Sydney, but here it's possible.

That brings a satisfaction you don't get from everyday urban life; you grow things and take them to the supermarket.

Then you walk in there and you see your own produce on sale. You cannot put a price on that, it's a feeling that you cannot qualify in dollars terms.

Yes it's a satisfaction I think, to see your produce being sold.

Julia: After years of trials and tribulations and falling over but getting back up each time we are proud to say that now we are non-certified organic producers. We harvest up to maybe 700-800 kilos of honey per year which is raw honey, raw-processed, cold-processed. We now have that selling at the IGA and Dojo and it looks like we are also going into the Canberra market.

We do a raw honey, we do a creamed honey and we also do honeycomb, which is a beautiful product from the beehives. When Martin extracts the honey we take the beeswax and I have developed a range of beeswax skin products which are 100% natural. They are made from beeswax and pure essential oils and grape seed oils. We make a lip balm, a body balm, a perfume balm and we also do a mist spray — that's a range we are very very proud of and it sells very very well and we are looking to branch out further with those sales.

Martin: I wouldn't say it is simple-stupid, but it does show you what, if you have got imagination or ideas, you can put into production. We have



come to the conclusion that we don't have to sell big-ticket items. Small or little sales like seedlings work for us. With a small punnet you don't have to try to sell things for hundreds or thousands of dollars.

Julia: I think what we have done is taken our individual passions and done it for ourselves, for our own lifestyle, for our own way of life. We have taken that and turned it into something that is successful without looking to spend a whole lot of money and do things in a big way. We have

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