

International Women's Day:

Celebration, reflection and social change
Robin Tennant-Wood

It is generally assumed that International Women's Day evolved from the Women's Liberation Movement of the 1960s and '70s. While this period gave it a high public profile, IWD itself has a much longer and braver history. The first women's day of any description was in 1908, when the Socialist Party of America declared National Women's Day on 28th February coinciding with a strike by women garment makers for better working conditions. In 1910, an International Women's Day was declared by the Socialist International meeting in Copenhagen to provide impetus to the women's suffrage campaign in most democracies in the world. Australian and New Zealand women had already been granted that right in 1901 and 1893 respectively, but it would be decades before many women in the world gained voting rights. On 8th March, 1917, Russian women protested for "Bread and Peace". Russia at this time had not only undergone the devastation of World War I, but the Russian Revolution was adding to the privations they suffered. Four days after the Bread and Peace protest, the tsar abdicated, the Revolution was won and Russian women were

subsequently granted the right to vote. The date for IWD stuck.

In 1975, as part of International Women's Year, the UN declared 8th March as IWD, and it has been marked and celebrated ever since.

In my university teaching career, I frequently heard young women making comments such as, "Oh, I'm not a feminist. Our mothers and grandmothers did all that, but we've got equality now ...".

Really? Really?

Women currently occupy just 29% of the seats in our federal parliament, a figure well short of true representation of the female population. I once heard Amanda Vanstone make a hilarious speech on this subject. Regardless of how you feel about her politics, former Senator Vanstone was a great champion of women in politics! The global average for women in parliaments is just over 23% and the best performers in terms of female representation are probably not the countries you may think: Rwanda has 64% (all the more remarkable because Rwandan women didn't get the vote until 1961); Bolivia has 53%; Cuba 49%, Iceland 48%, Sweden 44%.

While parliaments continue to be dominated by men, women will continue to be categorised as a 'minority group' (hello? 52% of the population?) and 'women's issues' given a low priority.

The average starting salary for female graduates in this country is \$52,000, while male grads can expect an average starting salary of \$55,000. This is despite the facts that girls consistently score higher than boys in HSC and equivalents, every single university in Australia has more female undergraduates than male, and in all but six universities female postgrad students outnumber male.

In Australia women are five times more likely than men to require medical attention or hospitalisation as a result of violence at the hands of an intimate partner, and five times more likely to report fearing for their lives in such cases. In 2016, 71 Australian women were killed as a result of violence against women: that's about one woman killed every five days.

Certainly, we've come a long way since the 1970s. When I started teaching in Queensland in 1979, women were required to resign from their position when they married and reapply under their married name (none of that feminist-keeping-your-own-name stuff in Joh Bjelke-Petersen's Queensland). When a woman became pregnant she was required to resign no later than six weeks prior to her due date and had to reapply for her job no sooner than one year after the birth of the baby, with no guarantee that she would get her job back.



Yes, things have changed and continue to change.

IWD gives us all, women and men alike, the opportunity to reflect on social change and how it enriches us as a society. It is a chance to celebrate those positive changes and highlight the areas where change still needs to happen.

In a perfect world there would be no need, but I think we're all becoming increasingly aware that this world is far from perfect.

BRONWYN'S GARDEN IN



AUTUMN

Bronwyn Richards gives us her seasonal garden tips

So, autumn again reminded me that the first page I did for BWD was autumn 2013. Well, that's a long time ago. It's been a hot summer and we are still experiencing some high temperatures and the garden requires lots of water at this time of year.

I know that's an issue for some people, but one of the things I think we need to keep in perspective is that what you are growing is food.

I think it is quite justifiable to use our precious water on growing food.

Our garden is using a lot of water at this time. We have tank water that we are using and on some really hot days we are putting about 500 litres on the beds. That's just to give you an idea of how much water your produce garden might consume.

Hopefully, by the end of this month we'll start moving into some milder weather and have less intensive heat.

It is in March that you need to be thinking about some of the root crops you might want to put in for winter. You'd be looking at planting carrots, parsnips, beetroots, turnips; all of those things do very well if you plant in late summer or early autumn. They'll survive in the ground very well right through very cold, frosty winters so they are very good staples to have

in your garden and are not that complicated to grow.

There is one trick with carrots and two tricks with parsnips. The first trick with carrots is that while the seed is in the ground it must stay constantly moist. The worst thing you can have for carrot germination is letting your seed bed dry completely out, then moistening it again. The seed needs to be constantly moist until germination. In this hot weather it might mean you need to cover your seed bed with some shade cloth. Some people use timber over their row of plants, or carpet underlay — anything to keep the moisture. You have to lift it to water of course, but keep the moisture staying around your seeds.

Once your carrot seed germinates it is not a problem, just water as you would water any other thing. That also applies for parsnips, so they need to be kept well moist until germination.

The second key trick with parsnips is that you need very fresh seed. Parsnip germination is not good if the seed is old, so if you have had parsnip seed from last year and you think you might sow it again this year, even though the use-by date will say that it is fine and might be fine until April 2017, you'll probably find that you won't get very good germination.

I'd recommend buying new seed. They're my little tips for parsnips and carrots.

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Learn how from Bronwyn and Helen, Braidwood's most successful commercial market gardeners and table poultry producers at any of the following workshops:

All season cool climate vegetable growing

Dates: **Sunday 19th March, 2017** and offered again on **Sunday 23rd July 2017**, 10.00am to 3.00pm (lunch included).

Details: The course will be held in Braidwood, NSW

Learn about successful vegetable production in areas where overnight winter temperatures are often below zero, with regular frosts. The workshop covers:

- understanding your climate zone
- growing in all seasons
- bed preparation
- when and what to plant
- frost protection
- weeding and weeding tools
- intensive planting and other garden practices

We will explore the various organic approaches: permaculture, bio-dynamic, biological and gain a basic understanding of these different philosophies. The course aims to provide you with the practical knowledge and skills to produce food all year, from a small backyard plot to a large market garden.

Growing Organic Animals

Date: **Sunday, 9th July, 2017**, 10.00am to 3.00pm (lunch included)

Details: The course will be held in Braidwood, NSW

The day focuses on how to care for and manage poultry, sheep, pigs and other livestock so that they provide you and your family with the most delicious meat, eggs, milk and fibre. The workshop is designed to introduce you to basic animal husbandry practices particularly humane handling, animal welfare and feeding practices. The course covers:


- Housing and hygiene
- Feeding and nutrition
- Basic healthcare
- Handling and welfare
- Legislative requirements for keeping, transporting and slaughtering
- Manure management

Issues around the slaughter of livestock will be discussed including to slaughter on the farm or not. The course aims to provide you with practical knowledge and skills to manage livestock on a small scale. This practical knowledge is applicable to any farming philosophy.

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