



MEDIA RELEASE – EMBARGOED UNTIL 10 AM ON THURSDAY 10TH SEPTEMBER

PANDEMIC GARDENERS’ HARVEST OF HOPE

NATIONAL PANDEMIC GARDENING SURVEY RESULTS RELEASED – 9,140 RESPONSES

Thousands of Australians are finding solace, satisfaction, delicious produce and connection to nature by growing their own food under the duress of COVID-19.

This is the overwhelming message delivered by over 9000 respondents to the inaugural Pandemic Gardening survey, conducted by Sustain: The Australian Food Network during June-July 2020.

“As Melbourne enters the next phase of its COVID-19 lockdown and concerns about the mental health impacts of prolonged isolation increase, this survey very clearly shows that edible gardening makes a huge difference for thousands of Australians”, said Dr Nick Rose, Sustain’s Executive Director.

Over 70 percent of the survey respondents said growing food had significantly or greatly improved their mental health, while over 80 percent said gardening during the COVID-19 period had been very important to them.

Growing their own food was therapeutic for respondents living with or recovering from cancer, those suffering PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) and various other physical and psychological health challenges.

Respondents also said edible gardening was important to food security during the increasingly tough economic conditions, providing access to fresh fruit and vegetables without the need to go to the shops.

Gardeners benefited from the social connection of chatting with neighbours over the fence or with fellow community gardeners, although that has been curtailed in areas locked down by COVID restrictions.

“Edible gardening has massive power to do great good,” Dr Rose said.

“As thousands of respondents commented, COVID-19 has provided us with a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to move Australia in the direction of greater fairness and sustainability – and it can all start with more of us growing more of our own food.

“Respondents put this challenge to our political leaders and representatives at all levels: Will you support us to continue and expand these activities that bring such joy, meaning and health benefits to so many individuals, groups and communities around the country?”

The survey results will be presented in a public webinar on Wednesday 16th September (7.15pm – 9.15pm), with a follow-up webinar on 9th October (11am – 1pm) focusing on recommendations for actions by local, state and federal governments.

Bookings for the 16 September webinar [can be made via Humanitix](#), and will feature Costa Georgiadis of Gardening Australia, Naomi Lacey, President of Community Gardens Australia, and Dr Kelly Donati, Lecturer in Food Studies at William Angliss Institute and Chair of Sustain.

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