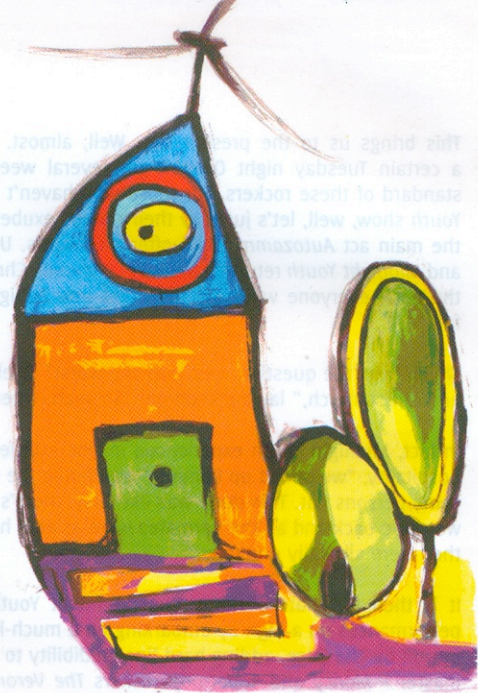


# ECO-MY -FLAT COMPETITION

BY SHARON MCIVER



## FINDERS KEEPERS

There's something particularly satisfying about hunting and gathering. Whether it's an atavistic memory of spending entire days foraging for food, or the bonus of beating consumerism and scoring produce for free, the thrill of finding something useful that would otherwise go to waste is bound to increase your serotonin levels – naturally.

So, inspired by 'eco-my-flat', tonight I'm going to make a crumble out of foraged green apples (thanks to a tree found on the way home from I-Nation), bartered rhubarb (thanks to Chaplain Tom) and locally grown passion-fruit (bought from a roadside stall, shortly after the discovery of the apple tree).

Before there is dessert however, there is a *Canta* deadline, so in the spirit of hunting and gathering, here's some (abridged) excerpts from the excellent 'eco-my-flat' blogs, which can be linked to via [www.sustain.canterbury.ac.nz/ecomyflat](http://www.sustain.canterbury.ac.nz/ecomyflat).

For the guys at **The Stables** experimenting with 'freeganism' is having a great effect on their normal "cheap mince and rice" diet: "thanks to a family friend we have a giant leg of lamb for free and we are going to cook that up with free beetroot from last night's workshops, free potatoes from a friend's garden, along with some pumpkins we did a run for to get off the Uni compost heap!"

Using foraged food as currency has proved a popular alternative to cash for the eco-flatters, as **Across the Pacific** discovered after a couple of pear-poaching missions in public parks: "We made pear ginger jam, which we canned, and stewed pears for dessert. Then we traded jars of the jam for homemade honey at last week's meeting".

The **Beveridge Street** flat took freeganism one step further by also gathering the knowledge of the gardener: "In the spirit of sharing produce and tapping in on old people knowledge (ha!), as we talked about in the first workshop, I tagged along with my mum to visit a friend with a fabulous garden. We scored black boy peaches, tomatoes, courgettes, spring onions, strange sweet pumpkin things whose name escapes me, green cooking apples (for cider) and homegrown-homemade raspberry jam. Fabulous! Also lots of gardening advice and recipes."

At **De Hare Green Veges**, the flatters are making the most of a landlord with serious gardening know-how: "he is totally awesome, he has really encouraged our gardening and gave us free compost he had left over on the section, and allowed us to dig up an area of lawn to make the garden a lot bigger than it was. His background as a fruit and vegetable grower has been invaluable as he dishes out tips to us budding gardeners." Eat your heart out tenants with Whittle, Knight & Boatwood!

Over at the **Dingle** flat, the dedication to food production is having a colonising effect: "Now, with most of our small section's arable land converted to raised beds, and amid fears for the future of the rapidly shrinking lawn, we have made plans to build a potted garden on the roof."

Out at Lincoln, part of the lawn at the **Pri-uta** abode out has been dedicated to housing chickens, all of whom are called Gary Chen: "Chen comes from chicken + hen and Gary is just a cool name." The four Garys live in a very cool chook house called Chateau de Chen or te Whare Gary, made from pallets, deer fencing and trellis: "All of which cost us nothing, as we picked it up on the side of the road, or it was given to us. The ivy and grape vine covering the house provide shade for the chooks."

How land is used is also of concern for **The White House**: "All our flat meals are vegetarian. This is because we are conscious that producing vegetarian food makes better use of land resources and is therefore generally better for the environment."

Over in **The Lotus Garden**, meat-free Sunday's are having a civilising effect: "We set up the vegan dinner party in the lounge and everyone had to get dressed up, and as Sunday's are our no electricity nights we dined by candle light. The boys have upped their communal cooking skills in the last week and the meals have been more eco-friendly (less meat) and to higher quality standard than previously seen."

Also eating to a higher standard is the **Cass Bay Hideaway** who have ditched the supermarket in favour of shopping locally and buying organic: "At the Lyttelton Farmers' Market we were spoilt for choice. We bought all our fruit and veggies there; it was a really enjoyable experience and actually made me feel quite connected to the community and, in a strange way, to the land too."

At **The Burrow** the "green girls" have been "experimenting with alternatives to face-washes and conditioners. Vinegar, honey and oats have all been regularly applied, instead of goodness-knows-what-I-don't-want-to-know supermarket products."

The magic properties of vinegar have also contributed to the recent loo makeover at **Winkle's Lair**: "Loo-cleaner - re-using an old bottle of store-bought cleaner (it's a handy shape for getting stuff under the rim!) full of distilled white vinegar. We also use distilled white vinegar in a spray bottle to clean the toilet seat and other surfaces, and half a cup in a bucket of warm water to mop the floors. Vinegar is awesome."

As you can see, 'eco-my-flat' blogs are also awesome, and next week, there'll be more great ideas from all the flats that I've missed out. In the meantime, hunt out the goodness at [www.carboncreditcollector.com/category/eco-my-flat](http://www.carboncreditcollector.com/category/eco-my-flat) and start gathering all those free ideas. It's got to be good for you.