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Green PEACE

gardens

**GARDEN
RELIEF
WEEKEND**
April 9-10

Green guru: Karen Moad on her farm at Arthurs Creek.

PICTURES
BRENDA FRANCIS

This garden guru knows how to create a work-life balance, writes **CLAIRE MARTIN**

FORTY hectares of relaxation. Business director, gardener, mother-to-be and all-round super woman Karen Moad has designed a perfectly sustainable farm hidden in the hills of Arthurs Creek. "Gardening was instilled into me at a very young age," Moad explains. "As a really young kid I was encouraged to grow and propagate my own plants

and then I would actually sell them to my parents for pocket money."

Walking into the farm she created with partner Matt Brennan is like stepping back into the Victorian era — you enter a formal garden with box hedges lining the paths, a large water feature at its centre and manicured iceberg roses lining the veranda.

"It was purely paddock when we started.

"There was nothing here — no water, no electricity, it was just a paddock, it was a clean slate for us to



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work with.”

Moad laughs as she explains how they developed the gardens before they even built the house.

“We knew we wanted to get the gardens going straight away — we would use hoses and things like that to mark them out,” she says

“We wanted the front to be quite formal but we also wanted to have loads of veggie gardens and fruit trees.”

Around the back of the house is where you find the boxed veggie gardens — filled with zucchinis, tomatoes and eggplants.

“We’re now starting to get a few autumn plantings that will then go through to winter. Prolific at the moment are the herbs, there’s so much basil, there’s tomatoes and the pumpkins are still growing too.”

On a large wooden picnic table close to the house there are dozens of jars of honey and baskets of produce, freshly picked from the garden.

“This is all my honey that I extracted last week,” she says. “This is only part of it actually — I ended up extracting 30kg of honey out of our two hives.”

Moad learnt the art of bee keeping from her grandfather before he passed away aged 96.

“He asked whether I would take over all his equipment and put them in my garden — it’s such an amazing thing to have bees in your garden.

“I did a bee keeping course and I was the only woman there — I joined the bee club, too. I had a great time and I’ve just been looking after them ever since.”

Bee keeping is just one of Moad’s many talents — she is director of the family-owned business Rivers of Yarrambat, president of the Garden Centres Association of Australia and board member of the International Garden Centre Association.

Even with her first child on the way and a book set to be released soon, Moad still knows how to keep the work-life balance in check.

“I practise meditation quite a lot. I do that every morning out in the garden — always on the side of house where the sun comes up. Taking that time and space is really important — you need balance, living such a busy lifestyle and knowing I can have that time each day is really important to me.”

As president of the Garden Centres Association of Australia, Moad is helping to co-ordinate this year’s Garden RELEAF program.

“The whole idea is to encourage people into their gardens,” she explains. “Being in a garden or green space has a massive effect on de stressing and reducing anxiety in a lot of people.”

Moad says the program encourages families to get into their local garden centres, get into their gardens and have a few moments that are stress free.

“It also raises funds for beyondblue which is another fantastic part of the program,” she says.

You can visit Moad at her lifestyle centre, Rivers of Yarrambat in Yarrambat, Victoria.

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GARDEN RELEAF WEEKEND

April 9-10

Independent garden centres around Australia will be holding fun and informative events to get people gardening. The event raises funds for beyondblue and “Something Blue” is the theme, with a wide range of blue plants available in stores.
gardenreleaf.com.au

