

Off-the-Grid

Bathroom window after a cold night

Ray of Sunshine

Here's a ray of sunshine, to counteract the COVID gloom. Yesterday I bought some petrol and diesel at the FIGS bowser. I put my card on top of the machine so it would be quick to get the receipts, but after filling the tank, and loading jerry cans in the car, I just jumped in and drove off... without the card.

There was a guy in the shop, apparently from the Cat Eradication program. He found my card and handed it in. Sounds simple and the obvious, but it's these little acts of kindness that make this world a wonderful place. Made my day.

Thanks man. I hope to pass the favour on.
What goes around, comes around.

Welcome to Off-the-Grid.

No room for mud

We're getting sick of all the dirt tramped into our house, on dirty boots and shoes. Our "Mudroom" isn't so much a barrier, as a distribution centre for filth. Dirt just sits there waiting to hitch a ride into the clean zone. (And sometimes I don't take off my shoes. And there's the ducks, with all their gooey poo in strategic locations... don't get me started!)

It was with great interest that I heard about a mudroom floor solution that actually helps. It was designed and built by Dave Visser. Basically, there are three panels of removable decking (i.e. boards with gaps in between). These are set in a shallow recess, so levels match the existing floor.

The dirt falls through or is swept between the gaps. It is easy to maintain a clean mudroom, without too much tedious work... and dirt is not carried into the rest of the house. Every 3-6 months you lift the panels and clean out accumulated sand and grime. Easy!



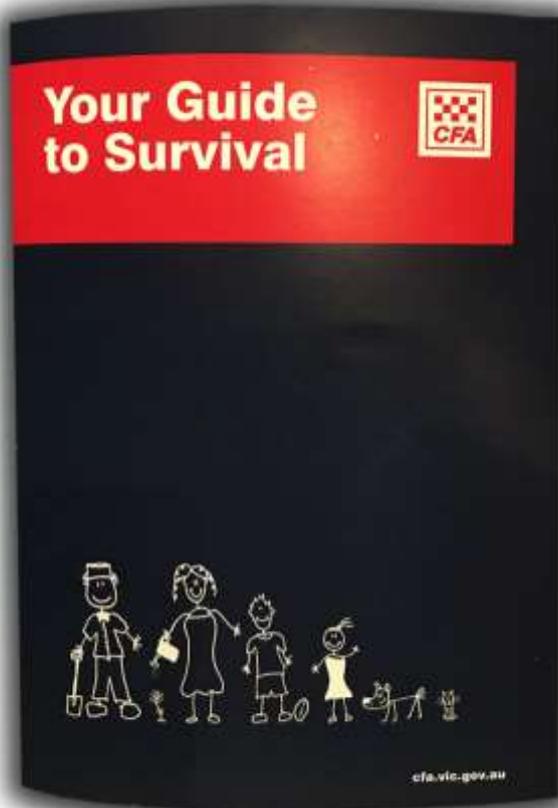
N.B. This project is now definitely, officially on my To-Do list.

A Hot Topic

Living with bushfires is never going to be easy. We saw that in Oz last summer, then it played out in the northern hemisphere. And they seem to be getting worse. We've already had a fire on Mosquito Creek Road, last week. In that case it seems likely a carelessly tossed cigarette was the cause. Luckily the wind was low. Please keep your butts in the car.

French Island is fortunate, compared to many places. We are surrounded by water, without powerlines to cause sparking, and everyone keeps an eye out. The downside is our large and highly flammable National Park, where lightning strikes are a significant risk.

What can we do? Support the CFA, prepare and rehearse our fire plans, install sprinklers, have multiple escape routes available, the list goes on. To define the best approach for your property, contact our Fire Chief Keith Airs. He is willing to visit and provide guidance.



The online [CFA Survival Guide](#) is a source of much valuable information, which is clear and easy to digest. This includes simple tips to make our properties safer:

- Keep grass cut to less than 10cm
- Keep woodpiles away from the house.
- Store flammable liquids away from the house
- Prune lower branches of shrubs to separate them from surface fuels below
- Prune shrubs well away from tree branches
- Cut back overhanging branches – no branches within 10m of buildings
- Remove flammable items from decks and verandas, such as boxes, furniture and doormats
- Do not have large shrubs next to or near windows
- Keep gutters clear of leaf litter
- Use pebbles or rocks as mulch, rather than flammable woodchips or pine bark.

It is also worth considering what plants you grow in the vicinity of your house. Some plants catch fire much faster than others. One test is to gather samples of different plants, put them on a fire, and watch how they behave.

For example, gum trees (eucalypts), paperbark (melaleucas), and ti-trees (leptospermum) are fast burners. Species with aromatic oils, like peppermint gums can explode into flames. Black wattles may resist burning when they are young, but not when they get older and accumulate dead branches. There is a lot to consider.



Saltbush (*atriplex cinerea*)

Here's a range of indigenous island plants (many available from Landcare), which are said to have some "fire resistant" qualities. Of course, everything will burn on an extreme fire day, but these may help reduce the impact of ember attack and approaching fire in milder circumstances:

- Black Anther Flax Lily (*Dianella revoluta*)
- Boobiala (*Myoporum insulare*)
- Coast Banksia (*Banksia integrifolia*)
- Hakeas (*Hakea* - various)
- Hop Goodenia (*Goodenia ovata*)
- Kangaroo Apple (*Solanum aviculare*)
- Native Violet (*Viola hederacea*)
- Paroo Lily (*Dianella caerulea*)
- Pigface (*Carpobrotus*)
- Woolly Pomaderris (*Pomaderris lanigerum*)
- Saltbush (*Atriplex cinerea*)
- Seaberry Salt Bush (*Rhagodia candolleana*)
- Snowy Daisy Bush (*Oleria lirata*)
- Spiny Headed Rush Mat (*Lomandria longifolia*)
- Sticky Hop Bush (*Dodonaea viscosa*)
- Sheoaks (*Allocasuarina* - various)
- Wonga Vine (*Pandorea pandorana*)

Whatever you do, stay safe this summer. Remember on an extreme fire day, the best advice is stay informed of conditions and be ready to evacuate if necessary.

Flexi-time Driving

Flexi-time is the way of life
On this Isle of mine.
We rarely watch the clock
Unless our boat is due -
Check the time
And get a shock to
Race out the door,
Hoping no farmer to meet
Driving his cattle
Down unmade "street"
Causing much delay
As they bolt the other way.

Times when no boat is due,
There is no road rage
As found in city streets
This day and age.
By chance we meet
That busy worker
Whose phone rarely replies
As he works long days
Under sweeping skies.
We stop in the "street"
To communicate all we need to say
Even though going our opposite way.
Drivers three and four
Blockade the way and stop
To have their say,
And part, wreathed in smiles
We continue our country mile.

Paula Seymour 10.4.21



Let's keep Persevering

This was going to be a story about some good things happening at Perseverance Primary School, but due to COVID restrictions I wasn't able to visit them. So that story will have to wait, till we can do it properly, hopefully in the not-too-distant future. In the meantime, we can all do our bit to reduce lockdowns. It's the same thing we've always done to reduce outbreaks of dangerous disease, get vaccinated and consider others.



In the meantime, here's a shot of Perseverance PS from earlier days. Tennis was a big thing!

One More Thing

Off-the-Grid is produced on the traditional lands of the Bunurong people.
We acknowledge their connection to this land
and pay respect to their elders past, present and future.

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