

# Vegucation

## SPEAKERS

Jeremy Melder, Samantha Jones

### **Jeremy Melder** 00:00

Hello, my name is Jeremy Melder. And I'm the presenter from Beaming Green. Before we start, I would like to acknowledge that this podcast is being held on the traditional lands of the Bundjalung people, and paying our respects to elders both past, present and emerging. The beaming green podcast is a weekly pod, which will help you to take out some of the stress and confusion about how to live your life more sustainable. And we do this by introducing you to people that have first hand experience and expertise in all aspects of sustainability. So you can get some amazing insights on how you can implement simple and practical solutions to enhance your life and the lives of your family. Now, I just wanted to make you aware that this is the final way to go into the draw. To win that beeswax wraps kindly sponsored and supported by Beefolk. So please go on to the beaming green website and do yourself a favor and register your name and email address to go into the drawer, which will be a lovely prize for you to win. And it also is saving the environment. Today in Episode 12, I'd like to welcome Samantha Jones, who's the winner of this year's Pitch for Change that was supported by It Takes a Town that Samantha has started with this project called VEGUCATION. And I'd love you to welcome her to the program today. Samantha Jones, welcome to beaming green.

### **Samantha Jones** 01:51

Thank you, Jeremy, thank you for having me.

### **Jeremy Melder** 01:54

It's so wonderful to have you. You really inspire me because I first met you when you were talking about your project Vegucation. And you were just about to do your presentation on it takes a town. Yeah. Can you tell us a little bit about how you got started with education?

### **Samantha Jones** 02:17

Well, one year ago, I actually attended a short course called backyard food production in Mullumbimby. And so when I went along to this course, I was sitting there listening to the woman talk about the content of the course and I just thought I can actually do this. Like I can teach people this, because I already have such a wealth of knowledge on gardening and growing vegetables. So that's when I got the idea and really thought I really want to teach people how to do this. And then when I saw the advertisement for the Pitch for Change workshops, I thought, Oh, here's my opportunity. Because that was after lockdown. Yeah. And so during lockdown, it became very obvious to me then that what I had to offer in terms of teaching people how to grow vegetables was very valid. Hmm, like really valid? Yeah, yeah. So I participated in those workshops. And for me, I just felt very validated then, with my idea of Vegucation. Yeah. So I kind of got that really positive support and encouragement to bring this forth. Yeah. And so,

**Jeremy Melder** 03:40

so you, you have you've done gardening, you say you've done gardening from, from what I hear, yeah. How did that start off in your life? Where, who, who taught you? Or was it you that sort of just started offering? I'm going to plant some veggies? Or, what was the catalyst? Well,

**Samantha Jones** 03:57

when I moved here to the Northern Rivers Murwillumbah when I was 19, I went for a walk through a friend's garden. Her mum took me for a walk, and they were beetroots growing and they will lakes. And there was silverbeet. And my jaw just fell to the ground. And I was just in heaven seeing all these vegetables growing. And I was just like, I want to grow vegetables. Like this is so beautiful. So she kind of planted a seed then yeah. And then I moved into my own little apartment home. And the woman who lived next door to who had a beautiful garden. It was just stunning. She had flowers and vegetables growing everywhere. And so I started my own little veggie garden then at 19. And she kind of guided me a little bit. And then I lived in Indonesia when I was 20 and 21. Wow. Yeah. Yeah.

**Jeremy Melder** 04:54

Whereabouts in Indonesia did you live?

**Samantha Jones** 04:56

in a place called Bukit Lawang. Okay, which is in North Sumatra. Yeah, it's on the border of the jungle there where the orangutangs are. Okay. Yeah. And I was just in love with the place and I could see papaya trees growing everywhere. banana trees, eggplants, tomatoes. And then the community members like it was something that really brought them together. And it gave them an income and it gave them purpose. Yeah. And it provided them with really healthy food. Yeah. And I was just so drawn to it. Like my heart was just so connected to that. Yeah. And me and my daughter's Father, we bought a little patch of land over there. And I started growing some vegetables on it. And so I got to practice growing veggies there and listening to the advice from the locals. Yeah. had a really positive. Yeah, really positive experience and a really immersed experience in that. Yeah. And then, when I was 22, and moved back to Australia, from Indonesia with my husband at the time, my Indonesian husband,

**Jeremy Melder** 06:02

Gees you move quickly don't you?

**Samantha Jones** 06:04

Yeah. If I want something, I'll do it. Yeah, go for it. Yeah. And I've achieved a lot. I really changed a lot. Yeah. So then, at 22, I moved back here to Australia with him. And I was pregnant with a baby girl. Yeah. And I actually only had \$30 a week for food. Yeah. And I didn't want to compromise on my health at all. Because health is really important to me. And so I started a vegetable garden. Wow. Yeah. And then it was kind of out of desperation, then.

**Jeremy Melder** 06:44

Yeah, yeah. So you had to learn up a lot.

**Samantha Jones** 06:47

Yes,

**Jeremy Melder** 06:48

I did get what you wanted to watch could grow seasonality ease, soil, all that kind of stuff. Yeah.

**Samantha Jones** 06:54

Yeah. Yeah. A lot of it is self taught. But I would watch gardening Australia. Yeah, that's my favorite show to watch. Me too. Isn't it? Great. It's

**Jeremy Melder** 07:04

wonderful. I love it. Costa is wonderful.

**Samantha Jones** 07:06

I know he's gonna come to my garden one day. Yeah, no, it. So yeah, a lot was self taught. Ali, my husband at the time, he would teach me a lot as well, because he grew up growing. Yeah, he taped, he would teach me about growing and different plants. And I really just learned through observation too. And I think I'm destined to be a gardener. So it just sinks right in. And it I don't know, I just know this stuff. It's not hard for me. It'll,

**Jeremy Melder** 07:41

it's sort of like, you know, intuitively.

**Samantha Jones** 07:43

Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. I'm really connected with nature as well. And I learned through observation. So it's just Yeah, a knowing I did do a certificate three in horticulture. About four years ago. Yeah. So that taught me quite a bit too. Yeah. But I am just really self taught and very passionate about it.

**Jeremy Melder** 08:05

So yeah, so you've started up vegetation. Yeah. Tell us about that. What What's it What are you aspiring to do?

**Samantha Jones** 08:13

So the education is starting off as workshops at the Muhlenberg community garden. They've been very generous to allow me to have space there and help me facilitate workshops there. Yeah. So I did one workshop. Yeah. And it was lots of fun.

**Jeremy Melder** 08:33

Did you have a good turnout? Did you feel inspired? Did you Yeah. Did people that came feel inspired? Yes. Great, isn't it?

**Samantha Jones** 08:41

There was one we gave the community one weeks notice of the workshop, which kind of happens with me about Okay, now this is happening, and it just happens. And so there was one week notice. And we

had about 20 people come? And they all learn quite a bit. Yeah. It was really fun. We laughed a lot. And we had hands on experience as well. We planted out spring garden bed. So we planted beans, tumeric, ginger, eggplants, flowers, basil, and warrigal, greens, all of these seedlings that I'd propagated at home previously. And yeah, you know, it was an opportunity for me to really get up in front of people and talk about plants and growing food and how empowering that is for them. Yeah. So I feel like I planted some seeds within them. Yes, you know, that they could then take home and they felt very inspired and empowered to just try in the garden because that's, that's how we learn as well. Like there's no right or wrong when you're gardening. Like, if you get it wrong, you learn.

**Jeremy Melder** 09:51

Yeah. And it's all about observing, as you were talking about earlier, you know, it's like, yeah, you can make mistakes. I think I was also talking About You know, you can buy, you know, if you can gardening is not just, you know, you plant a seed and walk away This is quite as observing the cycles and, and and also weeding and all those things that you need to do out there. Yeah, you know, so it's not just you know, by the plant planting and then you get your tomatoes are you get your corn, you have to look after it and you can't. Yeah, it's a whole cycle of life.

**Samantha Jones** 10:24

Absolutely

**Jeremy Melder** 10:25

We kind of seem to miss that way. Because we, you know, go to a market or we go to the supermarket, and we don't see the whole cycle of growth. And it's a wonderful thing to say that, don't you think?

**Samantha Jones** 10:38

Absolutely is the most amazing thing in the whole world like to walk out and notice a new leaf that's grown on one of your plants? It's like, it's so beautiful. Yeah, yeah, I think it gives people a lot as well and allows them to feel really connected to nature and enables them to feel that they're doing something really good for the earth and for themselves. And you know, if you can plant flowers in the garden as well, and then see bees buzzing around your flowers. No, that's, that makes my heart and

**Jeremy Melder** 11:08

makes my heart sing. Because I see my I've got a bee hive here. And I see my bees running around, like, I've got to mow the lawn, but I shouldn't because all these you know, flowers are here. And it makes me think maybe I stop for a moment. And all the nutrition. So that makes you observe those things, right? Yeah. So we are part of nature, not separated from nature. So really, like what you're actually trying to do here is you're trying to get people to see that they are part of nature. Yeah. So in terms of the garden experience, yeah. Do people then go back to this garden and see what how their work is? You know, you know, moved on one or two weeks later, or a month later, or? Yeah. Is that something you're planning to do with this community garden?

**Samantha Jones** 11:55

Well, they're welcome to do that. Yep. Every Sunday afternoon at the murwillumbah community garden. You know, members of the community and the gardens get together. So they can go and check in on

the plants and see how it's all going. Yeah, that I haven't got quite a plan set in place with it. Yeah. Because there is so much that I could plan. Yes. And I really believe in just setting a strong foundation. First, I'm going slow with something short as well. So my next workshop that I want to facilitate there will be establishing a garden bed. Mm hmm. So based on no dig gardening, which is the easiest, and it's cost effective. Yes. It's a quick way to establish a garden bed. So I'm hoping that I do that workshop with the participants who want to come and then they go home and do that at home. Yeah, yeah. And so then the next workshop will be like seed propagation, and then they can go home and do their seed propagation. Yeah. And then by the time autumn starts, they'll have their seedlings in their garden bed when they can plant into it. Oh, beautiful.

**Jeremy Melder** 13:05

Yeah, if he got anything planned in terms of courses that you're you're wanting to do?

**Samantha Jones** 13:11

I haven't got a set date for the next one. All right. Yeah, I'm still like working out a plan for that. Yep. And I'm also i, it's actually a little bit hard to work out a plan, because I'll just get an idea and want to really share it. Yeah, I also want to just have like vegetation conversation at the gardens as well, where people can come with their questions. And I can be there to answer them for them. Yeah. Because gardening, it's so diverse. And there's so many different levels and aspects and ways of doing it. So yeah. But I do put a little bit on social media, and I am planning to do YouTube videos as well. Yeah. As another way to get across to other people. Because the main thing that I really want to convey to people is that they really can try, just start like give it a go. If you if you have a keen interest for it. Just try and give it a go because you just you learn as you go as well. And so I really just want to inspire them and power them and motivate them to get started.

**Jeremy Melder** 14:19

Yeah. So in the month of November, coming up to Christmas and so on. If people are looking at Malone to start planting something now if you've got any sort of ideas in this Northern Rivers area that they could start planting. Yeah, now that you could share.

**Samantha Jones** 14:34

Yeah, sure. So ginger tumeric Wow, I

**Jeremy Melder** 14:39

love those. Yeah,

**Samantha Jones** 14:40

they're great to plant. They're really good to plant now because they don't need any care except some water. Yeah. And it gets very hot here. Yeah, so for me personally, like now I've stopped planting into the garden because it does get so hot. Yeah. I actually don't want to be out there in the hate gardening because I want to be looking after myself because that's really important as well. And so summer is for me, like kind of a time to surrender a little bit to the garden and allow it to just grow. Yeah. So ginger garlic, pumpkins. Yeah. Egg plants. Egg plants have just one of the most wonderful vegetables to grow. Yeah. I love the heat. beans that you can plant up a trellis or bush beans. Yeah, cherry tomatoes and

cucumbers. And that's, you know, what I would recommend based on my personal experience with gardening and basil. Yeah, there are a whole lot of other things that you could grow

**Jeremy Melder** 15:49

like salad stuff, right?

15:50

Well, not really salad stuff. So yeah, surprisingly lettuces. You can plant wild rocket now that likes the heat, but like lettuces and normal rocket prefer cooler weather. Okay, so they're the things that you'd be planting at the beginning of autumn? Yeah. up because their leaves will just burn. Yeah. And the sun is so tender. Yeah. There are certain Asian greens that you can be planting next. They like the heat. Yeah, I think the thing to be mindful with is just how much you have to water in summer.

**Jeremy Melder** 16:22

See what heavy on water isn't in the garden?

**Samantha Jones** 16:24

Yeah,

**Jeremy Melder** 16:25

especially at summertime. We'll be back in a moment. Hello, everyone.

**Advertising Bee Folk** 16:32

My name is Mariana from beef erg. And it is great to be joining Jeremy here on the beaming green podcast, helping us all to live more sustainably. Be folk produces beeswax wrap kits to make your own beeswax wraps at home. Be folk Glen bar is made from natural beeswax, tree resin, organic coconut and hobo oil. Make your own great looking, reusable, eco friendly reps to cover your food and keep it fresh and natural alternative to plastic wrap. And to support the good message of beaming green, and help reduce single use plastic waste, we are giving away a free B folk wax rep kit. Just go to the website, Beaming Green.com and subscribe to be in the drawer in the second week of November.

**Jeremy Melder** 17:25

Welcome back. So ismulching something that's quite important. Absolutely. Did you learn some things about what we could do in terms of mulching? Yeah, this area particularly,

**Samantha Jones** 17:38

there's the sugar cane mulch that we can use as mulch. Bark, wood chip is a great mulch as well, what one thing that is really good for your soil to retain moisture is having really good soil as well. So meaning having a lot of organic matter in the soil. Yeah. So as you go along with your gardening, you can just chop and drop everything that's in the garden. So the leaves from say, a broccoli plant, they've already harvested the broccoli from you chop all of that up and just drop that on to the soil and just continue doing that over time with everything that's growing. And that will feed the soil and encourage will create more organic matter in the soil. So then it will hold its moisture more. Yeah. And then you can put like a thick layer of sugar cane mulch or the wood chip on top. Yeah. And that helps to prevent

the, the moisture in the soil evaporating. Yeah. And it is very, very effective. Like if you are going to grow food. You want to mulch.

**Jeremy Melder 18:38**

Yeah, definitely want to be more what would you say is a good way of doing composting? Is that something you're experienced in?

**Samantha Jones 18:44**

I love composting, okay, I love it so much. Not so much right now though, because a friend did see a brown snake next to my arm was I know what, what gave me an excuse to buy some gum boots. So I bought gum boots now, but I love conversing and shopping. So with your compost bins, what I recommend based on my experience with gardening is buying one of the compost bins that you sit directly on top of the soil. Yeah. So that has that big round hole, it's cut out in the bottom. And you can place that near fruit trees or in the middle of a garden bed, because then the worms are coming to the bottom of that compost bin. So they're going all through the garden and enriching the soil. And then you know the nutrients there's just this exchange going on. So I would have a compost bin like that with a pile of sugarcane mulch next to it, or a pile of carbon material which is dried organic matter, which is usually Brown, having that next to it. And so you'd put your kitchen scraps into the compost. Yeah, and they can be Yeah, all of your kitchen scraps, ripped up egg containers. ripped up old male bits of cardboard toilet rolls, all of that sort of stuff. So you chuck that in and then you chuck a handful of your sugar cane mulch or your other carbon material in. Yeah. And just doing that all the time to prevent your compost from getting smelly. Right. Yeah. And keeping it balanced on the inside. Yeah.

**Jeremy Melder 20:23**

Yeah. To try. And I guess it's trying to create heat, isn't it so that it does? It breaks down?

**Samantha Jones 20:29**

Yeah. So I get like, now's a great time to do the compost. Yeah, so you just keep adding to it. And you can get these compost Turner's that come from Bunnings. And they're like, \$16. And you kind of stab it into compost and turn it around and then lift it up. It's got a coil thing. Yeah. So that's the air rate the compost, to encourage it to break down. And so if you're doing that now, like summer is a great time to do it. At the end of summer, you lift up your compost bin, and you've got this amazing compost and you you just spread it out all across the garden beds and then plant into it. Yeah,

**Jeremy Melder 21:07**

yeah. That's a good way, rather than sending it out to a landfill or whatever. It's Yeah. Yeah. Keep it in your own garden.

**Samantha Jones 21:14**

Absolutely. Absolutely.

**Jeremy Melder 21:17**

Yeah, I would imagine this type of thing would be also fun for kids, wouldn't it? Yeah. You know, like gardening, I, you know, used to like playing in the garden. I know that a lot of kids these days like to

play on computers. But gardening is also a great connector for the earth and you don't have to plant veggies. But you know, just getting your hands in dirt and so on. is also part of that fun and connecting. Absolutely. Great family good family interaction, isn't it?

**Samantha Jones** 21:48

Yeah. Like you can get the kids excited about the garden by digging up an earthworm? Yeah. and showing them an earthworm? Yeah, or growing beans and getting them, you know, eating the bean or growing carrots and harvesting carrots together. And like developing that relationship for the children with Earth? Yeah. Sometimes kids on is like, interested in growing the vegetables, like they just want to chop them up and create potions. Yeah, but I believe like, monkey see monkey do. So if the children see their parents growing food in the garden, that's going to have a really good influence on them later in life. I used to see my mom like digging holes in the backyard and putting out scraps into the hole. So she had a really positive influence on me in terms of growing food. So yeah, I think it's a really positive thing that you can do. Yeah. influence your children that way by growing food. Yeah, yeah. And it's really empowering. It's so empowering. And I think we need to really feel empowered as humans and realize that we've got a lot of potential within us.

**Jeremy Melder** 22:57

Yeah, absolutely. I think that's a really important thing to share. Because I don't know about you, you've probably obviously noticed this, but you know, since COVID-19, I know that a lot of the people that are providing seedlings in this area ran out of seedlings, because everyone decided to I can grow in my garden. And I just hope that that continues. Yeah. You know, because it's so beneficial for our own psyche, I think, absolutely. We are growing our own vegetables and have that connection.

**Samantha Jones** 23:34

Yeah, absolutely. I think I think during COVID time, it was a, it was an opportunity for us all to really go within. And, you know, a lot of people did create change based on that time that they got to have within themselves. And I got to reflect on their lives. Yeah. And, you know, I was just over the moon to see so many people starting vegetable gardens, like it truly brought me so much joy. And I really hope for them that it also brought them so much joy. And that it is something that they do continue on doing. Yeah, even it's just a side thing in their life. Like, even if they're just growing herbs, or they grow some garlic one year or if they have just a flower patch. Or if they you know, it completely changes what they're doing in life. Yeah. But yeah, people became very aware of how important it is to have that food security. So when the lockdown started, I just stood out the gun knows that I've got nothing to worry about because my whole backyard is full of vegetables. And I have the knowledge of how to grow food and look after myself. And so I felt very secure. Yeah,

**Jeremy Melder** 24:44

yeah. And I think that's what you're offering. You're giving people an opportunity to learn how to you know, grow in their own garden. And if they don't have a, you know, a garden bed but they can still put it into pots and grow you There's there's many ways to do this isn't it's not just that you need to have acreage to run a farm, or I think you can just grow in, you know, one meter by one meter.

**Samantha Jones** 25:09

Perfect. Perfect for most people. Yeah. Yeah.

**Jeremy Melder 25:13**

And and you can teach them that. Yeah. If they want to find out more from you, can I put down your email address you might want, they might want to enlist for your next cost. And you know, if they can email you can I share that information with with the people that are listening to Beaming Green? Great, absolutely, yeah. Yeah. because it'd be great to start off the new year, wouldn't it for people if you start a course Yeah, you've got a list of people that are interested in starting. You're getting ready for the next season? Yeah. And that's a perfect thing for them to be planning. Yeah. And getting some juices flowing. Yeah. After you. That's exactly right. So yeah, I'm happy to share all of that. And look, I really want to say, Good on you. All, you know, pulling out all stops and doing and I can see that you're a bit of what I would call a go getter. Yeah, in life. And we like having people like that in our community. Yeah, you know, and showing the way that you can do these things for yourself and be more self sustainable. So thank you.

**Samantha Jones 26:16**

Thank you. I

**Jeremy Melder 26:17**

really enjoyed having you on Beaming Green, Samantha Jones,

**Samantha Jones 26:21**

thank you for having me. It's been a pleasure. I could really just talk forever and ever about the garden.

**Jeremy Melder 26:27**

So good. I.

**Samantha Jones 26:29**

So if anyone wants to hear me talk forever and ever come along to a workshop.

**Jeremy Melder 26:32**

Great. So please do so. And yeah, thanks, man. Yeah, appreciate it. Thank you. So watch out Vegetation. Thank you for being part of the beaming green podcast. The music for this podcast is produced by Dave Weir. Now we need more people to get on board and raise awareness about sustainability and climate change. The more of us that are shining the light on these issues, the more government and business leaders will listen. We would love you to subscribe to our podcast, and share and engage in social media so that we can get some traction. Let's support one another and envision a broader future. Thanks for listening. See you next week