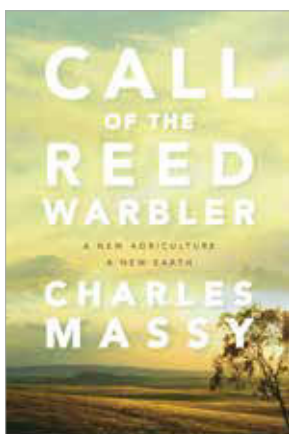


# For the bookshelf

Charles Massy (2017) *Call of the reed warbler: a new agriculture, a new earth*

University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 569 pp, \$39.95

Charles Massy's book holds immense gifts for our uncertain age. A grazier from the high Monaro in southern New South Wales, Massy deftly charts a hopeful way forward into a hotter, unstable world,



where ecological farming systems draw carbon from the atmosphere and land regenerates into life and nourishing abundance. Massy visited many regenerative farmers across Australia, and ruminated on the wisdom of their ways. Common to all these innovative men and women, he realised, was a conscious abandonment of the 'mechanical mind' of the industrial revolution and colonisation, the adoption of an ecological worldview that valued and nurtured connectivity, and a willingness to allow the self-

organising capacities of the natural world to function and flow. Massy sorts and integrates the various approaches of regenerative farmers to identify five key 'landscape functions' that the emerging philosophy and practice of regenerative agriculture renew and revitalise: the solar energy function, the water cycle, the soil–mineral cycle, dynamic ecosystems, and the human-social dimension. He reveals a poignant personal journey, from his youth as a farmer guided only by mechanical thinking, towards his conversion into a champion for ecological methods of imagining and engaging with our nourishing terrains, for returning life and wellbeing to country wounded by colonisation, and for challenging and discarding the industrial worldview that continues to threaten our future.

Dr George Main works as a curator and environmental historian at the National Museum of Australia.

Timothy Beatley (2016) *Handbook of biophilic city planning and design*

Island Press, Washington USA, 312 pp, paperback \$54.99

Do you ever, just slightly, feel a guilty pleasure or pain that wandering around looking at historic gardens might be a tad precious or even a teensy weensy bit effete?

If so this is the book for you. It is hard-nosed, like, say *The Economist* or *BRW* – about 'real world' things with practical outcomes that flow from gardens and trees, plants and waterways in cities.

For those of us who had the pleasure of attending the Melbourne conference of the Society, the excellent papers by Ian Shears of Melbourne City Council and John Rayner of the University of Melbourne's Burnley Campus reflected the arguments Timothy Beatley makes in this book.

Beatley sets out the case for gardens and treescapes in cities, and their powerful benefits in health and economic outcomes. He uses case studies from cities as diverse as Singapore, Oslo, Milwaukee, Birmingham, Chengdu ... and Melbourne.

The term 'biophilic planning' sounds a bit off, I know, but you get used to it. The most exciting example of it is Khoo Tek Puat Hospital in Singapore. Here all the rooms including those in intensive care face on to gardens, while a roof vegetable garden not only provides food for the kitchens but also activity and space for ambulant patients. The hospital's director is quoted as saying the healing concept of the design is reflected by good results: 'When you come in here your blood pressure and your heart rate go down, not up'. Students and members of the community come into the hospital to study and for sheer pleasure.

Beatley gives many other and quite specific examples of the efficacy of greening and managing green spaces in cities, along with degraded waterways throughout the world.

At a time when urban blocks are becoming smaller and building footprints are becoming larger, this book should be waved in front of every urban manager you come across, and especially every public and private property developer. It certainly gives you good arguments for preserving gardens and streetscapes.

Max Bourke is a former deputy chair of AGHS with agricultural science training and a career in the arts and heritage.

