

Dry gardening a hot topic

By MATT MALONEY

TASMANIAN gardening author Steve Solomon believes innovation and careful management will aid the survival of domestic vegetation through the current drought on the East Coast.

Mr Solomon spoke about growing vegetables in southern Australia and the importance of making the most from limited water resources during a dry gardening information day last Saturday at Triabunna.

He said gardens on the East Coast are at a disadvantage because the sandy soil only holds 32mm of water per 929sq m, where a moister soil or clay would hold over twice as much.

He said most of the houses in the area had a total roof catchment area of around 200sq m. With two 50,000 litre water tanks worth \$6000 and 250mm of winter rain, 62,500l of rain could potentially be stored.

"I think everybody here has the reserves to grow a 100sq m garden and I'm sure that for some people \$6000 is beyond possibility — this is where the Government should help," Mr Solomon said.

Lyons Labor MHA Heather Butler said she was only too aware of the drought issues faced by those in her electorate.

"We've been given the opportunity on November 17 to forward ideas into the budget process, and I will be advocating for a variety of water

storage options for drought-affected areas and the need for improved water audits," she said.

She said that over the past few months she and Lyons Labor MHA Michael Polley had met with farmers that had felt left out of the Governments plans to drought-proof the State.

Out of the 11 priority projects identified by the Tasmanian Irrigation Development Board, none were situated in the East Coast region.

"And I know the minister (David Llewellyn) has been working on a twelfth option for the East Coast," she said.

Glamorgan Spring Bay Council general manager David Metcalf yesterday described the Triabunna water situation as desperate and said that neighbouring Orford was not faring any better.

He said Triabunna is back to being serviced by the Orford water source to allow for its town dam to fill, which is currently only a third full.

From July to September this year, 102mm of rain fell in neighbouring Orford — 42.5mm below last year's total — and August received the year's highest rainfall at 47.4mm.