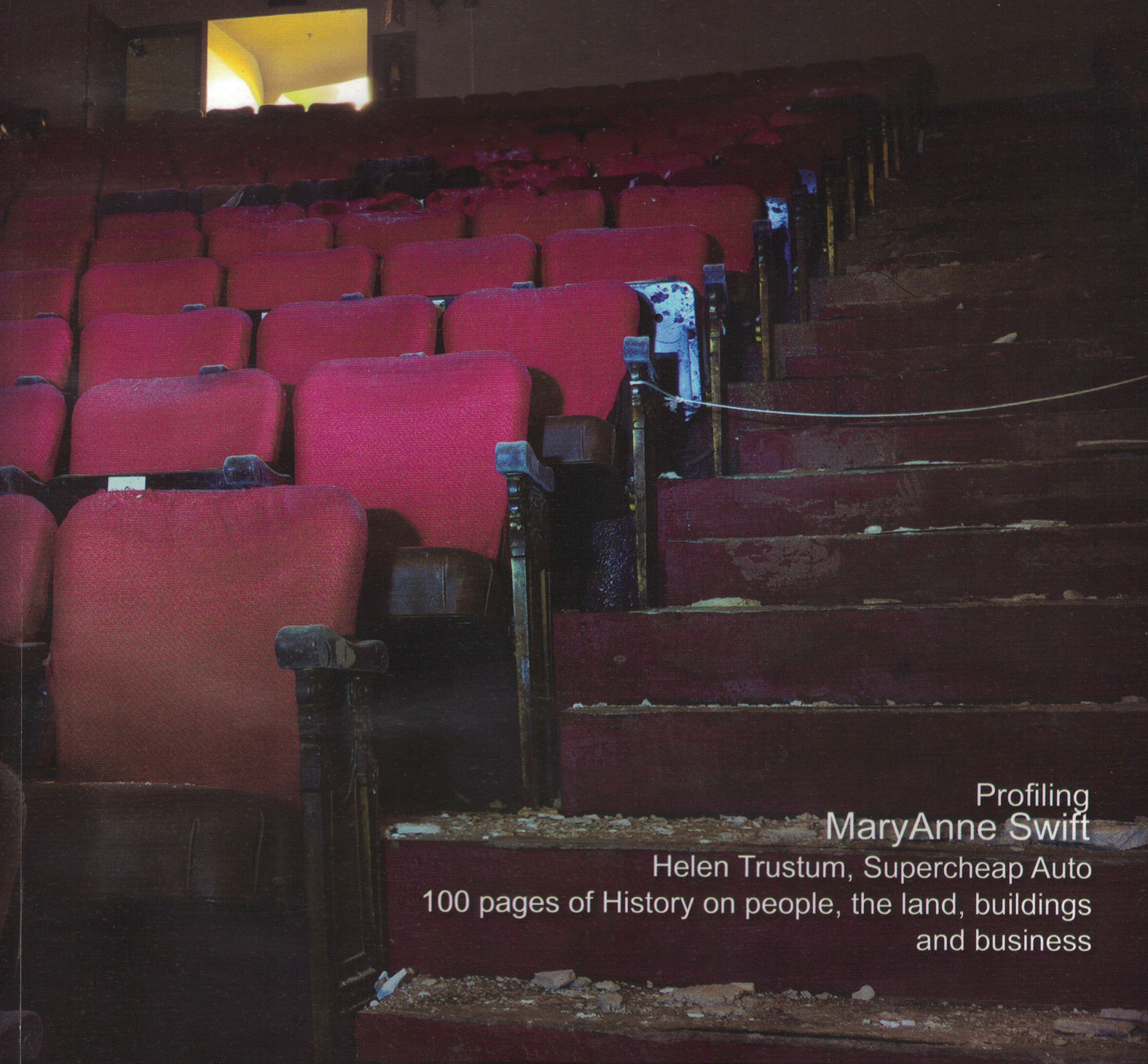


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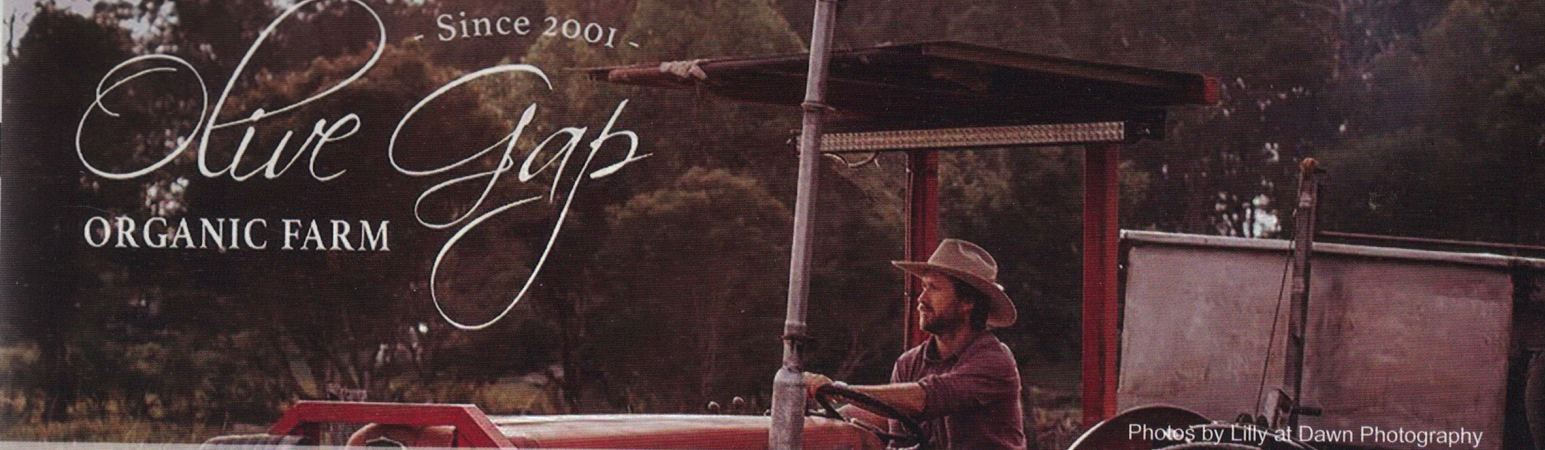
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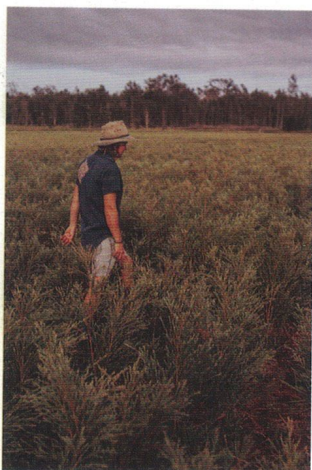
Olive Gap

ORGANIC FARM



Photos by Lilly at Dawn Photography

Olive Gap Organic Farm is a family farming collective with brother and sister Alex and Tess O'Reilly and their partners Tara Luca and Nina Tazatziki. They bought the farm in 2016 from Arthur Brown, an 80 year old marathon runner who had been working the farm alone, totally off grid for the past 30 years. Alex and Tess grew up just down the road and have fond memories of buying Tea tree oil off him while they were growing up. Arthur had always farmed organically but in 2001 became officially certified with Australian Certified Organic at a time when the organics industry was still in its relative infancy. Now, almost 20 years later, organics and Tea tree oil are both hot topics and Olive Gap Organic Farm decided to pay tribute to Arthurs hard work and foresight by adding 'Since 2001' to the new farm logo.



"We talked about what year to use a lot but in the end, we just wanted to choose something that included Arthur in some small way, so we chose the year that he got the land officially certified" says Alex.

Alex and Tess decided to buy the farm together after hearing that Arthur was

gearing up to retire and sell the place on. Both of them had grown up on a nearby intentional community with organic food production and self-sufficiency as a huge focus and both were keen for a career change and to work outdoors. Arthur offered to stay on for 12 months as mentor so that the organic certification could carry over and basically taught them all he knew about the process of Tea tree farming the old-fashioned way.

Arthurs passion for slow, wood-fired, steam distilled essential oils has carried on with the new farmers at Olive Gap Organic Farm, who are all now in their 30s.

"We did a lot of research when we first bought the farm and looked at lots of different methods to modernize things and make things work faster. The more we looked into it, the more convinced we were that Arthur was really onto something by keeping things simple and limiting the need for extra resources. We really feel that every step in the farming process makes a difference and in whole, contributes to making a much more potent and sustainable final product." Alex

says.

The farm grows and distills all their oil onsite and until recently have been selling all of it in bulk to larger farms or essential oil companies. Tea tree is rising in popularity again as many people the world over are learning more about its benefits and healing qualities and discovering it as a low waste DIY option. With this in mind Olive Gap Organic Farm decided this year to brand their oil themselves and sell it online and through selected stores.

"Offering single origin provenance based organic Tea tree oil is quite uncommon, and we feel that this is important to people who care about where their product is coming from and the story behind it" says Tara.

Tara joined the farming journey alongside Alex and Tess in 2016 but got slightly side tracked when she started studying Organic Farming at Wollongbar TAFE and got hooked on growing flowers. Nina joined them in 2018.

"I went to TAFE to gain more skills and to look into diversification. We were really interested in market gardening and I loved working in the TAFE veggie plot, but I couldn't stop asking questions about flowers and after some months, realised that I was totally obsessed". Tara says

It didn't take long before Tara began planning a ¼ acre plot around their house to begin a micro-flower farm.

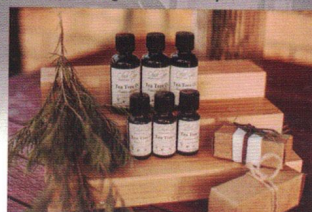
"It just sort of happened", Tara says "I started growing and then selling, which inspired me to grow some more and soon I was connecting with other local flower growers and discovering a whole movement of sustainable flower farming".

The Slow Flower movement is a collective of flower farmers world-wide that are passionate about providing an alternative to large commercial flower farming that can often be very toxic and damaging to the environment.

"I had never thought about how flowers were grown like I had thought about food. I became shocked and also inspired even more to be able to offer people local, seasonal blooms that still have fragrance and look like they are just freshly picked with love from a lavish garden, which of course they are".

The combination of the two crops merged quite nicely and the flower plot was soon added to the farms certification and registered as a sister site to the main farm. Planting has now also begun on the main farm, 5 minutes up the road with the Tea tree and the team hopes to start growing more flowers and foliage down there in the near future. Olive Gap Organic Farm now offers flowers to local

café's, florists and Weddings, for couples that are wanting something beautiful, unique and sustainable.



Tara and Alex both met whilst studying music at Southern Cross University and worked as professional musicians before deciding to move onto land and raise a family in their mid 20's. They now have three daughters Olive, April and Cedar, who are all passionate little farmers and musicians in their own right and the family love to play music together.

"When we decided to shoot "A Day in the Life" film clip for our website, a friend encouraged us to go and record a song as a family and get the kids involved" Tara says. "We figured that music is such a big part of our lives, it would be fun to incorporate it into our farm journey somehow. Even if we aim record a new tune once a month or something, with a folk/ country feel for our YouTube channel, it will encourage us all to keep playing together and be a cool way to connect with people."

"Our plan for the future is to get the retail side of things off the ground and then we'd like to begin to diversify into some other native essential oils, starting with melaleuca ericafolia, also known as Lavender Tea tree and some other local hard to find varieties that people might not be so familiar with. We are very passionate about the benefits of Tea tree and want to encourage people to learn all it's wonderful uses for natural beauty, eco cleaning and health remedies. We don't necessarily need loads of essential oils from around the world, our local environment is rich with native wonders and we look forward to going on this journey with people and discovering more ourselves".



The launch of Olive Gap Organic Farm's website is August 15th where the team will press the 'publish' button with a little toast around 6pm.

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