

Amber Scott with her 11-year-old daughter Sarala heading out with some of the flock. "We look to mirror natural patterns — so intensive grazing followed by long recovery periods," Amber says.

## FULL CIRCLE

TIM AND AMBER SCOTT OPENED KANDANGA FARM IN QUEENSLAND'S MARY VALLEY TO PROVIDE THEIR COMMUNITY WITH A FARM-TO-FORK DESTINATION.

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ENCOURAGING CUSTOMERS to buy fewer products might seem bad for business, but for Tim and Amber Scott, a 'less is best' approach is what drives their farm in Mary Valley in south-east Queensland. "Sometimes we wonder whether opening a chemical-free rural supplies store was a smart decision!" says Tim, 44, who moved to 100-hectare Kandanga Farm from nearby Amamoor in 2014 with Amber, 42, and their two children, Sarala, 11, and eight-year-old Harley. However, it was one that proved fruitful with the support of a community who care about where their food comes from.

Tim and Amber share a passion for organic farming and they have spent the past four years regenerating the land at Kandanga Farm using holistic management principles — all the while producing organic grass-fed beef and running BOS Rural Supplies, which is housed onsite in the Kandanga Farm Store building. The working cattle property is also currently in conversion to full organic status. "We were told it was impossible to go completely organic when we first arrived," Amber says. "It has definitely been a challenge but we're getting there."

Amber grew up in Brisbane, but she always knew that city life wasn't for her; so after high school, she headed west to Gatton to study agriculture. Tim, on the other hand, was born and raised on a cattle property in Roma and found rural management was a natural progression. After meeting at university and spending a few years in the city, the couple moved to Augathella in western Queensland in 2004 where they ran a more traditional rural supplies store. "I loved it out there, it was a great community," says Amber. "I threatened divorce when Tim said we were moving!"

It didn't take long though for the couple to feel at home in the Mary Valley; and after spending eight years in Amamoor, while Tim worked on various agricultural businesses and Amber raised their two young children, they found an ideal location 10 minutes down the road in Kandanga to put their passion and skills into practice.

While going chemical-free on the farm meant finding natural solutions on a daily basis, doing so in the store came with its own challenges. "We realised in the first year that, of every 10 people who came in, seven were looking for



**CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT** A large white cross Devon black piglet; fresh produce can be purchased at the store; Harley with one of the chickens and Lamby, who the Scott family fostered after he was rejected by his mother. "He doesn't think he's a sheep now," says Amber; Tim, Sarala, Amber and Harley. **FACING PAGE** These sunflowers were planted to attract bees and cover the soil. The Scotts aim for 100 per cent soil coverage.



chemicals, two for jobs and one actually wanted to buy something," says Amber. "We did sell chemicals for a while but it just didn't feel right to us."

Since opening BOS Rural Supplies in late 2014, Tim and Amber have grown Kandanga Farm Store into a destination for all things farm to fork. In October 2017, Kandanga Kitchen, the community-focused café run by local couple Bec Edmonds and Trent Kirkwood, opened next door. "Bec and Trent have a passion for food sovereignty, the two businesses have a real synergy." Bec says the operation is full circle "where we supply the café, along with other farmers who buy their inputs from us and whose produce we then sell at the farm shop".

Kandanga's annual potluck luncheon — now in its fifth year — sees local farmers and suppliers come together to share their produce and meet other growers from the area. The store also hosts events and workshops on everything from organic farming and natural weed control to fermentation and cheesemaking. "We want to show that regenerative agriculture can be doable and profitable," says Amber. "It's about creating something that gives back." > *Kandanga Farm Store is at 93 Main Street, Kandanga. (07) 5484 3771; kandangafarmstore.com.au*

Amber in the market garden, which is managed by the local primary school.  
FACING PAGE Harley and Sarala.



**AMBER** Growing up in Brisbane, my vision of what it meant to be a farmer was this — pigs, chickens and veggies. It wasn't the big, enormous property. We had horses and I loved watching *The Good Life*; I knew from an early age that I didn't want to live in the city. My dad took me to a biodynamic farm in Tasmania when I was 16 and when we walked through the front gate, there was this whole different energy. I remember feeling a sense of really wanting to be a part of nature — that was it for me. I've always wanted to be as close to food production as possible, to know where my food comes from and make sure that my animals have the best possible life.

Tim and I met in 1997 at university in Gatton when I was studying agricultural business. Wool has always been my first love, and after graduating, I worked in Brisbane at the wool stores, learning how to class and roustabout. After that, I went into a sales rep job for animal husbandry gear. Tim and I got together around that time. He was working in recruitment and I needed to employ someone — I thought he'd give me a good deal. We married a few years

later and left Brisbane for Roma, where Tim's family is from, until we found our feet and headed to Augathella.

The farm supplies store in Augathella was very different to what we're doing now, it catered to much larger properties. When someone was buying fencing, they would be buying kilometres, whereas here it's metres. Everything at Kandanga is very small-scale. For me, it's much easier for the consumer to engage with. We supply the café Kandanga Kitchen with seasonal produce, including garlic, pumpkin, beetroot, sugar snap peas and herbs — whatever is growing. The Mary Valley is a really special place when it comes to food, you can eat completely locally here and there is massive diversity.

Tim and I both did a course as part of our studies called holistic management where they asked us questions about the kind of life we wanted to live. How do you want to feel on a day-to-day basis? What sort of community do you want to be a part of? When we thought about the life we wanted, we just started taking steps to get us to where we are now. >





**CLOCKWISE, FROM ABOVE** Tim on the farm with the family's jack russell Flossy; regenerating the land has been a priority since moving to Kandanga; the Kandanga Farm Store building houses BOS Rural Supplies and the café Kandanga Kitchen; Valentina, who is also known as Creampuff, is an Argentinean criollo horse; Tim and Amber use lots of different types of animals in their rotations, including sheep, cattle, pigs, horses and chickens. **FACING PAGE** The farm has a small lagoon.

**TIM** I grew up in Roma where my family had a cattle property, and went to school in Ipswich. Contract mustering around the area kept me busy for a while before I left for Gatton to study rural management. After working as a groom on the polo circuit between Australia, New Zealand and America for a few years, I came back to run the family property. I didn't know anything about regenerative agriculture at the time, I just went into that area because it was what I had grown up with and what I knew.

Amber and I both have a passion for organic ag, and we always wanted our own place. After we got married, we left Brisbane and ran the rural supplies store out west. A few years later we bought a 20-hectare property at Amamoor, which we still have, and where some of our cattle remain. We produce organic grass-fed beef at the farm, and we supply the café, as well as two co-ops on the coast. We also sell through the farm shop, and the plan is to add organic pork and lamb down the track as we work towards getting fully certified organic status. When we came to the Mary Valley, we knew it was a great site for organic ag. There is enormous diversity here and you can grow just about anything. We've been slowly regenerating the land using animals rather than machinery and chemicals.

People often talk about sustainable agriculture but I think it's not enough to just be sustainable. You need to be regenerative to fix things up. I was at a talk once where everyone was sitting around in the shade under a tree, yet for some reason we expected the animals to stand out in the sun. It struck me that you need to create a landscape you want to be in to make it one that animals want to be in as well.

We had ambitions to buy another property, but I think we have enough on our plate at the moment. There can be a mindset that buying more land means increased production, but it's important to focus on the potential of what you already have. This place was really run down when we arrived, overgrazed and full of weeds. I look around now and while I do think we've got a way to go, I also think about how far we've come. *CS*

