

15 February 2011

Grow a native and enjoy friends

One Sunday each month the Shoalhaven City Council's Community Volunteer Nursery is a hub of activity. Volunteers from many parts of the city come to enjoy a morning of learning to grow Australian native plants and talking with friends who enjoy the same experience.

Council's Nursery Co-ordinator is present to help participants discover the hidden secrets and joys of growing plants.

The nursery facility – near Crookhaven Headland at Culburra Beach, next door to the Shoalhaven Marine Rescue Centre – has expanded with the combined help of Bushcare volunteers and now includes a green house, hot house, heat beds, work shed and gardens. The growing facilities are maintained by a recycled watering system that ensures the use of rainwater is maximised in watering all plant stock. The propagated plants are mainly used for environmental revegetation works undertaken by Bushcare groups throughout the city. Stock consists mainly of beach dune, rainforest, saltmarsh and bushland species.

Director City Services and Operations Bill Paterson said: "Council's Bushcare groups do an amazing job and even growing the native plants for the restoration works they undertake in our public reserves."

Community education is another important focus of the Community Nursery group. Members take every opportunity to encourage home owners in the city to use environmentally safe native species in their own gardens. Many exotic garden plants contribute to the large number of invasive weeds throughout Australia when they escape the garden boundary or are dumped in bushland.

Native plant stalls are held at community events to make people aware of the fabulous variety of native plants that can be substituted for some common exotic garden varieties, such as cassia and asparagus fern, that pose a threat as bushland weeds. Attractive flowering native plants are grown for these events.

"You don't have to be a member of a Council Bushcare group to join the Nursery group," Mr Paterson said. "Everyone is welcome, whether you have a wealth of plant growing experience or none at all. Group members all help each other with knowledge and ideas."

The Community Nursery is located near Crookhaven headland at Culburra Beach, next door to the Shoalhaven Marine Rescue Centre. The gate at the roundabout at the northern end of Prince Edward Ave will be open on the last Sunday of each month at 9am for participants to enter and park.

"If you enjoy the outdoors, or are looking for a new activity to join in the New Year, then I thoroughly recommend you visit the Community Nursery on the last Sunday of each month," Mr Paterson said. "Make a day of it and picnic at one of the beach, river or lakeside parks and reserves in Culburra after a morning of learning how to growing native plants."

For information, ring Kerry Thompson, Nursery Coordinator, on 0434 566 273 or (02) 4429 3422.

Photo caption: Community Nursery member John Goodwin in the hothouse at the nursery at Crookhaven Headland.

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