

Welcome to Term 2! NENA is growing strong!

NENA is growing! We have expanded from our quarterly newsletter and are now on Facebook as “Nature Educators Network Australia”. Log in and “like” our page to keep up to date with current events, links to activities and current trends in research.

Our newsletter mail out list is also continually expanding. Please let anyone who may be interested know that it is free to join the network and be connected to like-minded professionals. All they need to do is send an email to nature.educators.network@gmail.com.

This newsletter is overflowing with stories offered by our members. Each one is a different take on getting kids into the outdoors for fun, educational

and environmental activities. There really is something for everyone here.

Centennial Parklands shares its story of offering both community and school programs in the Eastern Suburbs of Sydney. We have the first of many installments of the St Mary’s Primary School Landscaping project That aims to transform their playground into an outdoor learning space. Lane Cove Bush Kids shows how a project can empower a community to get outside and enjoy local surrounds. Then there is a professional development bus tour in South Australia and we finish this newsletter off with some research from Plant Ark and some handy links for nature educators.

Thank you for all the generous contributions!

For anyone wanting to join the Australian Association of Environmental Education (AAEE) please go to <http://www.aaee.org.au> for more information.

Happy reading everyone!

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Centennial Parklands

Rhiannon Harris Centennial Parklands Education Ranger

Centennial Parklands

Centennial Parklands is Sydney's biggest outdoor classroom. It delivers a variety of exciting education excursions and programs that are educator-led, outcomes-driven and encourage hands-on learning to give children, young people and adults an opportunity to connect with nature and their local environment – something that can be hard to find in the surrounding urban sprawl of Sydney.

Centennial Park itself has 189 hectares of open space, ecologically diverse landscapes (including wetlands, grasslands and woodlands) alongside pockets of the endangered Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub for people of all ages to learn, explore and connect with nature.

Through this direct contact with nature, Centennial Parklands provides a learning experience as far removed from the everyday classroom experience as possible. We offer real-world learning and opportunities to deliver outcomes that can make a positive impact on a learner for years to come.

Our diverse landscapes provide the perfect location to experience 'hands on nature'. Our sessions are planned to include all learning

styles, providing excellent learning and value for both the students and teachers. When students finish their sessions in the Parklands they take away a deeper understanding of the natural rhythms of the environment and a sense of care for their natural environment around them and in turn wish to protect it.

Centennial Parklands Education Programs

Thousands of people of all ages and abilities visit Centennial Parklands every year to participate in our school excursions programs. We cater from the early years and foundation stages through to Year 12, and community groups

Thoughts from an Education Ranger at Centennial Parklands...

"As an environmental educator at Centennial Parklands I have great confidence in the ability of our programs to connect learners to their environment and foster a love of nature. I am a great believer in the notion that an individual who has had direct and positive experiences with nature as a child will grow up to value and want to protect nature as an adult. Centennial Parklands' learning

programs offers these experiences and, as such, the work we do is very important. As someone who is passionate about nature and the role of education in fostering care for the environment, I am very pleased to be a part of the education team. Where else can learners be awestruck by a colony of flying foxes or feel the excitement of catching and viewing a praying mantis in its natural environment? Nowhere but Centennial Parklands and that is why I have the best job in the world." - Rhiannon Harris



For more information on education in Centennial Parklands visit www.centennialparklands.com.au/education or call the Parklands Office on (02) 9339 6699.



Creating a Sensory Outdoor Learning Space

Antonina Fieni St Mary's Primary School Georges Hall

It's been a couple of years now since the Building the Educational Revolution grant allowed our six old demountables to be replaced by eight new contemporary classrooms. Once the demountables were finally off site, we were left with extra playground space but an ugly degraded area where students were reluctant to hang out.

After much discussion on how we could transform this area into a space where

children could relax, learn and be engaged, we now have a masterplan to create a sensory outdoor learning space. It's an impressive plan - comprising of a dry creek bed; an outdoor classroom; a visually appealing veggie garden in the shape of a Pirate ship; a mediterranean garden with various fruit trees; a tree house hang out and a Japanese garden.

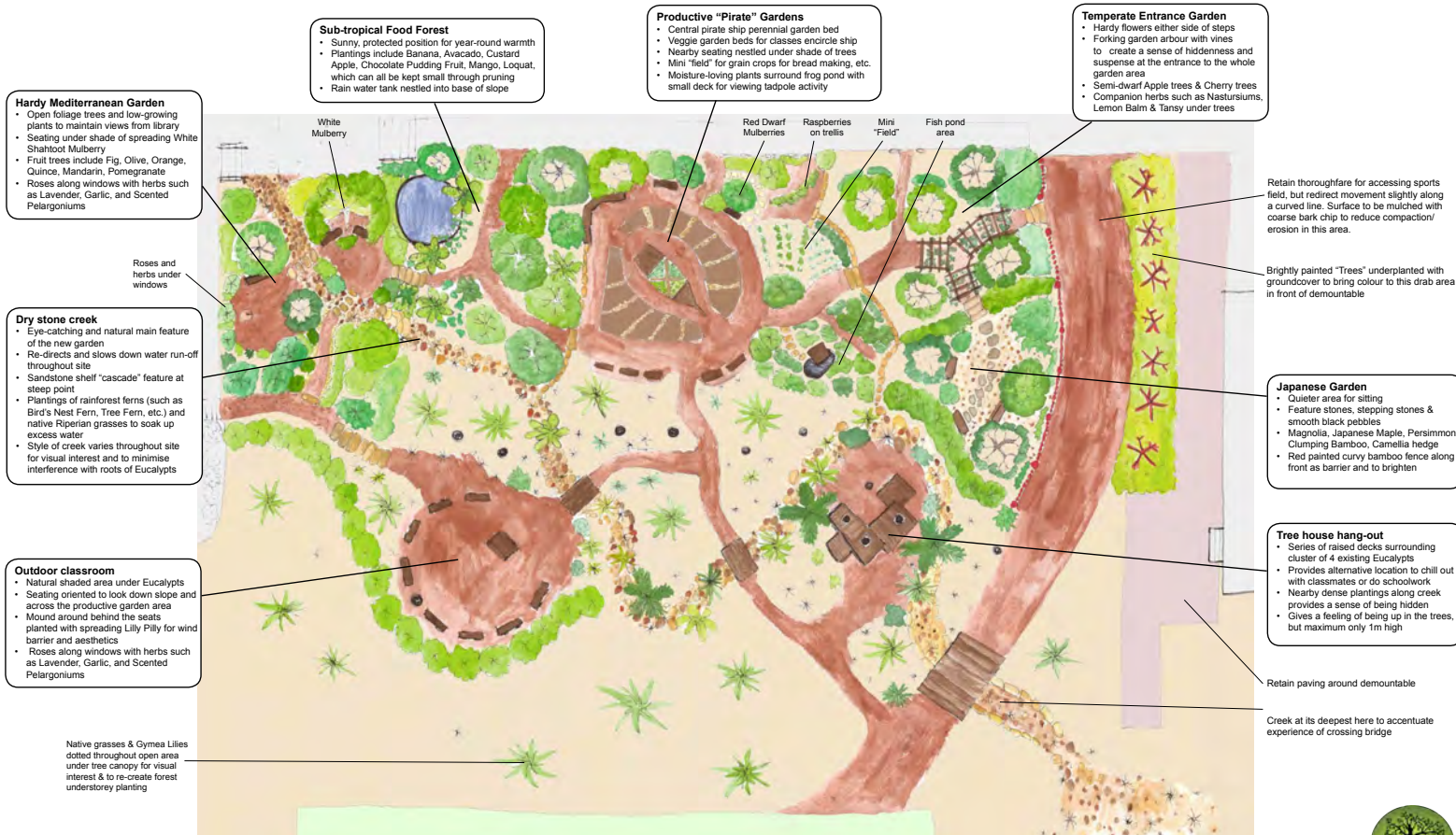
The first stage - the dry creek bed has been completed and is promising to be a

relaxing area for students to explore. A variety of rainforest plants have been planted along the creek bed - various fern species, cabbage tree palms and Davidson's plum trees. Several bridges have been installed across the creek bed for easy access to the soccer field.

The next stage - the Pirate ship veggie garden - has just begun and is taking shape. More details in the next newsletter.

LANDSCAPE MASTERPLAN

St Mary's Primary School, Georges Hall



Scale 1:100 @ A1



Edible Kids' Gardens
www.ediblekidsgardens.com.au





Lane Cove Bush Kids

Corrine Fischer co founder with Alyson Hayes and Ann Proudfoot



In mid-2010, three young mums in Lane Cove, a suburb located 10 kms north of Sydney, had an idea...and the rest is history. LANE COVE BUSH KIDS: A community-led program to nurture young children's love and connection with urban bushland

How it all started: The problem was this- Like many organisations of its type, the mighty Lane Cove Bushland & Conservation Society, founded in 1971 to protect and advocate for bushland in Lane Cove, was getting old. Its members were dwindling and there was an urgent need for new, younger members to contribute. But how would the Society encourage the many young families moving into Lane Cove to get involved? How would it ensure that these families felt connected to local bushland in a way that would ensure its protection for generations to come? The idea for Lane Cove Bush Kids (LCBK) was born: a program of fun activities in the bush to encourage young children and their parents to discover and love Lane Cove bushland.

Our first activity: Our first activity was conducted in October 2010 in partnership with children and teachers from a local preschool. It was called *Bug Spot*: a story, a bushwalk with magnifying glasses and some crafts to finish off. All of it in local bushland, simple and delightful, children's natural curiosity and joy making it all so easy and enjoyable. We decided to do more and to focus on families with children aged 2-5 because they're naturally the ones looking for things to do during the day. Why not tap into this need?

Lane Cove Council comes to the party: By 2011, we had launched our first full

term of activities: 6 activities (one every 2 weeks), during the week (school term only), in bushland, for children aged 2-5 and their families. But what about our own children? Experience had proven that it was not possible for any of us to lead an activity with our kids present. Luckily, Lane Cove Council came to the rescue with- would you believe it? - a volunteer baby-sitting grant! This made all the difference and sustained our fledging program through its first year.

Growing fast: The word was spreading quickly: fun activities for kids in local bushland! Lots of families started coming along and we had regular participants as well, a growing Lane Cove Bush Kids community and an increasing number of members for the Society. This was encouraging but we also realised that to continue, the program had to go beyond just us. We needed to involve others too. Otherwise we were likely to run out of puff.



Funding: Luckily for us, we had applied for 3-year funding under the NSW Environmental Trust Environmental Education Grants, and in December 2011, a little more than one year after our first activity, we were advised that our bid was successful.

Where we're at now: We are now almost half way through our grant and these are some of our achievements over the last 12 months:

- 23 children's activities conducted in local bushland
- 15 active LCBK volunteers

- 276 families registered on our database
- Our LCBK Advisory Committee established
- Our LCBK website launched (www.lanecovebushkids.com.au)
- Our LCBK parents bush regeneration team set-up and coordinated by Lane Cove Council.



Where next?: We want to keep building up the number of LCBK volunteers and equipping them with the skills and knowledge they need to develop and lead LCBK activities. The wonderful thing about LCBK is that everyone can have a go- you don't need to be a qualified environmental educator to design wonderful activities (although it certainly helps!). We are also planning to conduct a 'Bush Kids into the Future Visioning Workshop' later on this year. Finally we are looking at options for sustaining the program after our funding stops.

For more information about Lane Cove Bush Kids, visit www.lanecovebushkids.com.au or contact us at lanecovebushkids@gmail.com.



Connecting Students with Nature Tour

Marianne White, NRM Education Officer Adelaide SA

The first Monday of the school holidays saw 45 teachers from across Adelaide, steady themselves for yet another day at school. A full-day bus tour, provided by NRM Education on the theme of *Connecting Students with Nature*, was a means for educators to visit a series of sites currently harnessing their natural spaces for greater student engagement. The itinerary included a kindergarten, a high school and two primary schools and provided a range of approaches and settings catering to different needs, ages and learning outcomes.

Gilles Plains Primary School

Set in Adelaide's north-eastern suburbs in a low socio-economic area, Gilles Plains Primary School Principal Tina Treffers and Teacher Sandy Lea inspired the group with their positive stories following the introduction of loose parts and play materials into their recess and lunch times. Through the use of logs, milk crates, sticks, branches, bark and old pots and pans, Gilles Plains students brought their Principal to tears when observing their altered behaviours during play times. By building towers, obstacle courses, cubbies and brewing 'bark tea', Gilles Plains students were demonstrating greater use of their sharing, cooperation and teamwork skills than previously seen in the classroom. With conflicts regularly arising between students during class time, teachers were astonished to see a play-time culture develop of students employing their manners, showing care and helping one-another.



Para Vista Primary School

As a model of outdoor learning, student driven initiatives and community involvement, Para Vista Primary School hosts a series of natural spaces including native and veggie gardens, chickens and a bush tucker trail. Following morning tea, participants were shown a range of approaches to utilising natural spaces for student learning as well as ways to connect with the community. Amongst its many initiatives, Sue Moroney from the school's Resource Centre spoke of the school's bush tucker trail originally developed by the school's indigenous students. As a mentoring project with a local high school, the students were responsible for researching and selecting locally indigenous plants, designing and planting out the garden and fundraising for the interpretive signage. Whilst also organising an official opening and Kurna blessing, the student group also developed an educational booklet to complement the trail, which is now used by current teachers and students when using the space for learning.

Woodville High School

Woodville High School was an excellent example what an extensive vegetable garden can bring to student learning. What started out as an outdoor space to send time-out students, the garden is now fully incorporated into learning programs for students with special needs, disengaged teenage boys, students at risk and indigenous and immigrant groups. Woodville High's Principal Meredith Edwards emphasised the garden's value through providing hands on and physical work for students; "I think from a school perspective there's that therapeutic

aspect for the kids at risk so they come out here for some respite and mentoring... Most of you know teenage boys aren't that great at opening up about emotions but if they're doing something with their hands then conversation can open up around that.."

Barbara Kiker Memorial Kindergarten

Natureplay was alive and kicking at Barbara Kiker Memorial Kindergarten, involving privacy screening, log seats, spare tyres and materials for making cubbies. Despite this however, it was their natural playscapes that received the most attention. With a native garden trail recently established, the children are encouraged to play within the garden, touch and smell the flowers, and take themselves on a garden tour by following the trail that meanders through it, allowing the plants to grow. A series of hills, rocks and mounds incorporated into the landscape allow children different heights and opportunities to climb and slide, whilst an old water tap and dry creek bed (emptying into their sand pit) becomes a waterway for students to experiment with damming and floating leaves and twigs.

For more information please visit www.nrmeducation.net.au or contact Marianne White from NRM Education, mwhite@salisbury.sa.gov.au.



From the Murray River

Youtube Clips of the Murray River from Joanne Pedler, Senior Visitor Services Officer for NSW National Parks and Wildlife at the Moama.

Keith Ward on the Barmah Millewa forest

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9oRPSrhRoS0&feature=youtu.be>

Fish of the Murray River

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B2TUyZigx7U>

Mile Markers of the Murray

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BVrrx9fwMBU>

The Cadell Fault

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mLBV45c7mNY>

Coal Burners

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UpbcgDVLhjU>

The Introduction of Rabbits

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yehRwtf18pk>

Musical Notes - Pru Clarke

Songs from a Children's Garden holds musical adventures in nature.

WWW.pruesmusic.com

<http://youtu.be/OZV2pyPU4nU>



Planting Trees – Just What the Doctor Ordered

Brad Gray -Planet Ark

Although 89% of parents and teachers agree that contact with nature has many benefits for kids' wellbeing they don't appear to know what those benefits are. Research released for Planet Ark's National Tree Day 2012 titled *Planting Trees – Just What The Doctor Ordered* shows contact with nature can have a wide range of positive health and wellbeing benefits for kids.

Some of these benefits include:

- Positive mental health outcomes, such as reduced symptoms and severity of ADHD, reduced stress levels, reduced depression, and increased confidence and self esteem;
- Physical health benefits, such as reduced risks of obesity and myopia, and improved recovery from certain medical conditions;
- Enhanced intellectual development, such as improved creativity and imagination, and improved academic performance;
- A stronger sense of concern and care for the environment in

The report brings together commissioned research about the attitudes of carers as well as research from around the world, and shows that just 30 minutes of green time a day can help deliver benefits. One Sydney study shows that time spent outdoors helps reduce myopia in kids while others show a relationship between time outdoors and weight. Furthermore, there is emerging evidence that time outdoors has significant benefits for learning and behavioural outcomes.

Increasingly, teachers, principles and some parents are seeing the value of contact with nature, often based on intuition as much as research. *Planting Trees – Just What The Doctor Ordered* is important for anyone who looks after children. It provides valuable information on ways to structure green time and get the benefits of contact with nature while recognising that the modern world is a fast changing place.

To view the Key Findings or to find out how to get involved in Schools Tree Day or National Tree Day visit treeday.planetark.org or call 1300 55 8000.

PLANET ARK