

“The Habitat”

Ryde Community Native Plant Nursery
and
Community Veggie Garden
at
Santa Rosa Park, Ryde

Business Plan

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Contents

Contents.....	2
Community Native Plant Nursery and Community Garden.....	3
Business Plan.....	3
Mission Statement.....	3
Long-term vision	3
Objectives.....	3
Background	4
Business Operation	5
Community and Networking	5
Insurance	6
Management committee.....	6
Staff or volunteer co-ordinator	8
Preliminary Draft Budget.....	9
Accountability, banking and use of funds.....	11
Promotion.....	11
References	11

“The Habitat”

Ryde Community Native Plant Nursery and Community Garden

Business Plan

Mission Statement

Through a community native plant nursery and community garden network provide opportunities for the residents of Ryde and Hunter’s Hill to share knowledge, grow plants and improve the function of our local environment.

Long-term vision

- To grow a vibrant community nursery and garden, supported by the local council and community, for the benefit of the community and the environment.

Objectives

- To grow local provenance native plants in the nursery for the community and bushcare.
- To grow food plants in open garden beds for all to share.
- To provide native flora and fauna oriented education.
- To build a happy and friendly growing community.
- To increase awareness of the role of the natural environment in our lives.
- To improve the function of the local natural environment.
- To extend the Habitat Network (started in 2008 by IEWF in partnership with City of Ryde (CofR), Hunter’s Hill Council (HHC), Ryde – Hunter’s Hill Flora and Fauna Preservation Society (RHFFPS), Field of Mars Environmental Education Centre (FOM Env Ed)) by providing an on-going source of local indigenous native plants to the residents of Ryde and Hunter’s Hill to plant in their gardens and at bushcare and volunteer sites.
- To create native corridor connections between bushland areas.

- To actively demonstrate principles of sustainability such as restoration, reuse and recycle.
- To seek to fund all nursery and garden needs through donations, sponsorship, grants, fees and plant sales as necessary.
- To network with all aspects of the community including: community garden groups, Permaculture groups, Mars Inc, FOM Environmental Education Centre, Jimmy Shaw's schools vegetable garden project, community development and bushland management sections of both Ryde and Hunter's Hill Councils, Rotary, business groups, schools, health groups and other community nursery and garden projects.
- To run the community nursery and garden as a not-for-profit project with all funds from the distribution of plants and other sources feeding back into developing the nursery, or if there are surpluses, into other complementary community volunteer activities.

Background

Urban consolidation is a reality. We have bigger houses, more apartments and townhouses (all with bigger footprints) and less open space for flower gardens, vegetable gardens, habitat for our birds, frogs, lizards and other animals, and less space in which our children may play and learn about the natural environment.

There are many health benefits (physical and emotional) to be gained from making available outdoor garden related activities. Many people are too busy to even look after their own bit of green space. However, many of these people want to learn better ways to look after their gardens.

From talking to existing bushcare volunteers and others in the community and from discussions at the "RNC Habitat Network" Workshops there is a demand for a community nursery, a native and sustainable garden demonstration area and for community vegetable/sustainable gardens.

There is a growing desire by residents of our area to help care for the local environment. Many undertake bushcare. But bushcare is not for everyone and so other avenues need to be provided. These alternative environmental activities suit a broader cross section of the community including people from overseas (who are not comfortable in our bushland), less-abled people, children, retirees and even busy business people. Many people are looking to find ways to contribute to the wellbeing of our environment and community and for ways to interact socially with like-minded people. Also business groups and social groups look for a variety of activities to enrich their staffs' or members' lives.

The Habitat Network project was started last year (2008). There is no resource to feed suitable plants into this project and to grow habitat corridors on private land after the grant funding is finished (December 2009). Local provenance native plants need to be available to residents to incorporate into their gardens. The commercial nurseries do not carry local provenance native plants. Mars Inc (a not-for-profit local nursery) grows these plants for bushland projects and can provide a limited number of plants to residents but they are not set up for providing plants to the wider community on a one-to-one basis. Mars Inc is happy to support a community nursery project as they see it can complement their activities. This project can benefit both Mars Inc and the community. The community nursery will be able to grow selected plants from cuttings to complement the offerings of Mars Inc. Mars Inc is also happy to provide seed to the community nursery and to take any surplus plants.

Business Operation

Community and Networking

The basis of this project is community.

The initial activity will be to build community interest in this project through networking:

- Talk to local people, Councillors and groups, for example, Jimmy Shaw (schools' vegetable gardens), permaculture, gardening, Rotary, business groups, Riding for the Disabled, and other community nursery and garden projects. This is well underway through the Habitat Network.
- Design and print an introductory brochure to distribute when talking to those mentioned above, and to libraries, shopping centres, etc.
- Write articles for the press and for the Councils to include in their publications.
- Promote the nursery to members of the Habitat Network, bushcare and other environmental and community groups.
- Run a public meeting with surrounding residents to introduce concept and seek their input, acceptance and support and address any concerns and include a tour to other community nurseries.

Utilise this interest and support to develop plans for the establishment of the community nursery.

After the establishment of the community nursery activities will focus on environmental education by:

- Encouraging the community to volunteer at the nursery
- Making the community nursery available for use by FOM Environmental Education Centre, City of Ryde and Hunter's Hill Councils for community education sessions.
- Co-ordinating and running community education sessions at the nursery.

Insurance

International Environmental Weed Foundation and/or City of Ryde will be the umbrella organisation/s for the nursery. IEWF will provide \$20 million public liability insurance and volunteers insurance and the ability to seek grants.

For insurance cover all volunteers working at the nursery and garden will sign on and off in the book provided. This will also provide a record of hours volunteered and activities undertaken for use when seeking and reporting on grants and other activities.

A nominated regular volunteer (or paid person if the nursery grows) will need to be present when other volunteers are present for the purpose of security and safety, to provide guidelines for activities, and to ensure these guidelines are followed.

Management committee

Initially a management committee would be setup to oversee the establishment of the project (Bev, Pam, a representative of City of Ryde and other nursery volunteers as invited)). Once the nursery is firmly established this committee may become an elected body. A representative of IEWF will need to stay on the management committee (as it's an umbrella organisation). The management committee would report regularly to council and would consult to ensure all developments are in accordance with council requirements and legislation.

This management committee will:

- Create a detailed site plan which takes into account issues related to the selected site such as whether the area is a flood and bushfire prone area.
- Create and manage a detailed budget (see preliminary budget within this document.)

- Seek funding, equipment and supplies through grants, donations, sponsorship etc, and manage the funds. All funds will be kept in an account specifically opened and managed for the community nursery and garden.
- Ensure the insurance cover and procedures are in place.
- Promote the nursery / garden and the opportunities offered with the objectives of increasing environmental knowledge and attracting volunteers to the nursery.
- Create detailed operational and volunteer guidelines as to how the nursery will operate within the broad guidelines set out within this document. These should include
 - How to attract new volunteers, how to register new volunteers, status of volunteers, communications with volunteers, training of volunteers, community education, conflict resolution, Work, Health and Safety (including risk assessment and minimisation), child protection, standards, recognition of volunteers for training or exceptional effort (e.g., certificates of recognition or attainment), etc.
 - Provenance, mix and types of plants to be grown to ensure useful species are grown and that species are suitable for urban gardens. For example, only a limited number of Eucalyptus trees will be required. Liaison with Mars Inc. in the formulation of this list as they have requirements for species grown from cuttings which they have not the time to grow. Mars Inc will provide all seed or seed collection activities may be co-ordinated with appropriate CofR staff. This will ensure volunteers are not indiscriminately collecting seed and will ensure collection area is correctly identified.
 - Define what sustainability measures are to be included and demonstrated. For example, biodiversity, water saving, reuse, recycling, composting, worm farms, mulching, habitat, energy efficiency, etc.
 - Define policies appropriate to the nursery's location, for example, should it be 100% organic, where and how to store potting media, what to do about runoff and recycling, sanitation measures, etc.
 - Decide how to demonstrate how habitat can be included in people's yards to create corridors and networks through urban areas for our birds and animals.
 - Develop procedures to protect life and assets in the event of fire or flood.

- Assist with or implement education activities, such as, running training sessions and workshops, co-ordinating with City of Ryde and Hunter's Hill Councils environmental education staff, creating signs and interpretive materials, etc.
- Advertise, interview and appoint a co-ordinator/s for the daily running of the nursery, as required.
- Liaise with City of Ryde and FOM Environmental Education Centre.
- The management committee should initially meet face to face a minimum of 3 times per year. Email will constitute a meeting at all other times.
- Create a five year action plan with input from initial volunteers.

Staff or volunteer co-ordinator

One person initially 2 half days per week (or two people doing a half day each) could run this project.

The co-ordinator/s will:

- Oversee access to the nursery and garden.
- Monitor resources and request supplies and equipment from the management committee.
- Oversee the activities of the volunteers and ensure volunteers sign on and off (for insurance purposes and tracking volunteer hours)
- Participate in all nursery activities, demonstrate correct methods and run short education sessions.
- Ensure plants are watered and maintained.
- Schedule, co-ordinate and promote plant give-away days (with the assistance of the management committee and volunteers).
- Meet, greet, discuss such topics as the roll of the nursery and environmental issues, and offer refreshments.
- Manage a schedule for group access, including use by FOM Environmental Education Centre.

Preliminary Draft Budget (2008-9)

(Note: This has been superseded by a detailed budget included in our grant applications.)

This project will aim to demonstrate sustainability and specifically reuse and recycle. All materials for construction of plant houses, potting benches, and pots etc. where possible will be sourced from the community via gifts or donations. Where there is a specific safety issue, accessibility issue, a lack of donations or a need for more extensive funds then grants will be sort and/or fund-raising activities run.

Community Nursery initial requirements:

Equipment & supplies	Estimated cost	Comment
Nursery Co-ordinator	n/c or \$10,400 per year	Volunteer/s or \$25 per hour 8 hours per week x 52 weeks – casual employed through City of Ryde
Enclosure	?	Required for Santa Rosa Park
Shade House or tunnel house or shade cloth across enclosure	n/c n/c	Seek donation, through orchid and plant societies and other community groups Seek council assistance to level ground for foundations
Glasshouse with benches	Donated \$?	Construct footings – concrete, brick, sand and labour
Storage shed, potting bench and some tools		Tools donated
Tubes, trays and pots		Mars Inc may be able to supply and donations from community

Potting mix	\$	Ask Mars Inc where they get their supplies
Potting mix storage area	\$	3 or 4 sided storage areas, use railway sleepers and star pickets so won't wash away if heavy rain
Rainwater tank/s, pump, timer and watering system	\$5,000 or \$10,000 for bigger storage tank or 2 stream line tanks	Seek sponsors who wish to demonstrate their equipment.
Hoses		Donations
Water collection and filtration pond		Not required
Crushed sandstone or granite or use weed matting dug in and secured	\$2,000?	Lay crushed sandstone or granite to allow less-abled access. Donations can be sort or sponsorship.
Gloves and tools		Community grant Some tools already available
Seed storage	n/c	Seed can be stored in the existing refrigerator
Additional security light		
Brochures and promotions	\$600	Including introductory meeting and trip to other community nurseries
Interpretive signage		Use income from donations or grant funding or other fund raising activities

Accountability, banking and use of funds

All funds are to be managed through an account specifically opened and managed for the community nursery.

All payments must be authorised by the management committee and each cheque is to be signed by 2 members of the management committee or if the account is a designated Council account a request by the committee will be made for payment by Council (exact procedure to be determined by the management committee).

All income and expenditure is to be recorded and these accounts are to be audited (formerly or informally) annually.

Promotion

- Brochures/invitations to be produced and to include open times and directions for getting to the community nursery (bus routes, parking, etc), contact details for co-ordinators.
- Press releases for launch and lead up – invite dignitaries, press, council representatives, councillors and wider audience.

References

- City of Sydney Community Garden website and their document “Getting Started in Community Gardening – a guide to planning, design and implementation of community gardens”
<http://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/Environment/documents/CommunityGardens.pdf>
- Australian City Farms and Community Gardens Network
<http://www.communitygarden.org.au/index.html>
- Personal experience from working with the Greening Australia Nurragingy Community Nursery in 1995-96.