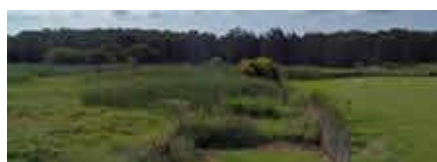


Holy Family School Landcare

Holy Family School at Skennars Head officially became a Landcare Group early in 2006 as the first step in lifting the profile of Environmental Education at the school. The families of our children settled in our area, specifically, to pursue coastal lifestyles. For our children, enjoying the benefits of, and respecting coastal environments are attitudes with which they come to school and so it is appropriate that these positive environmental attitudes be reinforced through the school's curriculum.

At the School, there is a large wetland adjacent to the school oval which was seriously disturbed and degraded when the school building site was excavated. When we sought advice regarding possible environmental regeneration activities at the school, from Wetlandcare consultants in Ballina, they recommended that we embark on a wetland plant species propagation project to create sufficient stock to help rehabilitate this wetland area.



Holy Family Wetland Project

Our wetland advisors suggested that the scope for planting wetland species on the site is substantial enough to warrant the establishment of a small shade house nursery in the school grounds. We were encouraged by this advice to seek funding for a small nursery and we were very fortunate to receive two small Landcare grants from Richmond Landcare Inc. and Mitre 10 in Term Three 2006. These grants contributed considerably towards financing Holy Family's shade house which was erected in Term Four 2006.



Students in front of shade house



Students with propagated plants



At the beginning of Term Four 2006 Years 3/4 children at Holy Family began the 'Wetland Unit' which was an Environmental Education unit designed to raise the children's awareness of the importance of wetlands, generally, and the importance of our coastal freshwater wetland, in particular. The unit included lessons on wetland plant and wildlife identification. However, the main theme of the unit was the propagation of three wetland tree species; *Eucalyptus Robusta* (Swamp Mahogany), *Melaleuca Quinquenervia* (Broad-leaved Paperbark) and *Allocasuarina Glauca* (Swamp Oak). Seedling trays of the three species were raised at school. As well, a number of children took home seedling trays to be nurtured as homework projects. Towards the end of Term Four 2006 the Year 3/4 children were involved in the process of transplanting seedlings into tubes. Most of the students who undertook seedling production, as homework projects, brought their trays in during the last week of term and helped with transplanting the seedlings to tubes. Hundreds of tubes of the three species were stored in the shade house by the end of the term.



Propagated plants



Transplanting



Trees ready for planting



Students & Mitre 10 donated tools

2007

After ten summery weeks in the shade house the tubes of *Broad-leaved Paperbark*, *Swamp Mahogany* and *Swamp Oak* had grown large enough to be re-potted into 15cm pots. In early March 2007, every class from Year 3 to Year 6 took part in this process and each child re-potted a wetland plant and placed it where he/she could find it in the shade house. As well as the three species mentioned, a number of Bangalow Palms (another swamp tolerant local species) were re-potted from a seedling tray grown by Mr Sullivan, a Holy Family teacher. As a result of this work the shade house was filled and we had four hundred healthy wetland seedlings growing into saplings.

The plants stayed in the shade house until they were ready for planting out in the school's wetland in Term Three and Four.

Early in Term Four 2007 our school received Landcare funding from two sources. Firstly, Richmond Landcare Inc provided the funds for the school to purchase pots and potting mix to propagate 500 Lomandra seedlings for the border of the wetland. Secondly, in October, Mitre 10 sponsored our Wetland Project with a \$500 donation to purchase gardening equipment

Our planting site was sprayed for weeds early in Term Three 2007 and the planting out of Swamp Mahoganys, Broad leafed Paperbarks and Swamp Oaks began one month later. Mr Bill Madigan very generously assisted with digging holes and this made the task of planting trees much easier for the children. When the trees were planted and watered, mulch was applied to control the weeds and to reduce moisture loss. The children in every Holy Family primary class had planted a tree in our wetland by the end of Term Four 2007.

2008

The wet summer of 2007-8 ensured that the hundreds of trees recently planted in our wetland were happily established when school reopened at the end of January 2008. Even though some of the trees were semi-submerged, mostly they were very happy in their moist environment.

A small number of Lomandra Hystrix specimens were planted out, on the periphery of the wetland, early in the year. A few of the seedlings from the late 2007 planting needed replacing and this was done during Term One. Regular maintenance of the young trees ensured spectacular growth rates throughout the year. Children were rapidly overtaken, in height, by their vigorously growing, adopted saplings and, by year's end, many Swamp Mahogany specimens were well over two metres in height.

Because the 2007 propagation program had been so successful, there was a considerable surplus of saplings in the shade house available for our 2008 planting program. Propagation was scaled down and it was necessary to grow only a few Swamp Mahoganys, Broad leafed



Students planting - Oct 07



Lomandra Hystrix



Year 3 planting Nov 08

Paperbarks and Swamp Oaks during the year for our Term Four planting program. These seedlings, as well as the Bangalow Palms propagated by Mr Sullivan, were ready for planting out by Term Four 2008.

Sixty Year Three children each planted a specimen of one of the four species mentioned above during November 2008. This planting extended the arc of wetland trees which is creating a border between our school oval and the wetland. Eventually, this border of aesthetically pleasing plants will serve the dual purpose of camouflaging our oval, boundary fence and re-establishing native vegetation.

During 2008 we received a NSW Government Eco - Schools Grant for \$2500. With the grant we built a secure nursery yard, complete with its own watering system, in November. As well, during the year Mr Deeps, our principal, received funding to purchase a water tank which now supplies water to our shade house and nursery yard.

2009

Fortunately, it was unnecessary to replace any of the seedlings planted by the Year Three children late in 2008.

Holy Family's environmental agenda for 2009 includes:

- Completing the Lomandra Hystrix planting program during Terms' One and Two.
- Propagating at least one hundred each of :
 - Swamp Mahogany
 - Broad leafed Paperbark
 - Swamp Oak
- Each Year Three child planting out one of these trees.



Vigorously growing Swamp Mahoganys from Nov 07 planting

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