

OXLEY CREEK COMMUNITY NURSERY

The Oxley Creek Community Nursery was established at Nyanda State High School in 2009 in association with Robert Gederts, Groundsperson, who sought help from Beryl Roberts and the Oxley Creek Catchment Association (OCCA) to redevelop the old, abandoned nursery at the school. The nursery became known as the OCCA - Nyanda Community Nursery.

Under the guidance of OCCA's long-time volunteer, Beryl Roberts, both the Conservation Volunteers Green Corps team and OCCA's CreekWatch partner - the Construction Training Centre (CTC) and its *Get Set for Work* program team - helped to re-establish the Nursery. The Green Corps team cleaned up the site, re-laid paths and repaired drainage. The CTC participants, led by David Philp, reinforced the nursery structure and constructed potting bays and a covered potting-up area. Students from the Nyanda State High School Bushcare group, led by Anne McKelvey, also helped with the reconstruction activities.

In August 2009, OCCA hosted a plant propagation workshop to provide Nyanda State High School staff and students, OCCA members, staff and volunteers, and members of the public with basic plant propagation skills to help restock the nursery. Seed collected by the Green Corps team was planted and tended carefully by volunteers who worked at the nursery every Thursday. The Community Nursery provided a venue for ongoing education and learning.

By 2010, the Nursery was well and truly up and running, and was a vibrant place to visit on Thursday mornings. A team of at least eight regular volunteers, including members of OCCA's CreekCare team, kept the nursery running by planting seed, and pricking out and potting-on seedlings, providing a variety of native plants for OCCA members and revegetation activities.

The Nursery continued to develop. With the assistance of Robert Gederts and the Construction Training Centre (CTC) *Get Set For Work* team led by David Philp, the covered potting area was completed, a new storage shed erected, and a rainwater tank installed – all made possible through Community Grant Funding from the Brisbane City Council.

OCCA's then Education and Partnership's Manager, Miriam Nyrene, conducted a number of workshops at the nursery during the addressing Plant Identification, Plant Propagation and growing native plants from cuttings, as well as an Open Day during the Peaks to Points Festival. Nyanda State High School students came from time to time to work with their teachers on the school's hydroponic system, and more than 30 students assisted with nursery tasks during the year. Both the OCCA - Nyanda Community Nursery and the adjacent Nyanda Community Garden provided wonderful opportunities for education to the community enabling them to turn their aspirations into reality. Worm farming, 'no dig' gardens, pricking out, seed sorting, vegetable gardening, and bush tucker trails were all workshop topics of great interest. Groups which have appreciated and benefited from this exposure included the Australian Islamic School at Durack, the Brookside Retirement Village at Robertson, the Moorooka Garden Group and the Acacia Ridge Garden Group, as well as Mount Gravatt Lions, Yeronga Creche and Kindergarten plus visitors from Albury (Victoria) and Bellingen (NSW).

The Karawatha Forest Protection Society donated some spades, a wheelbarrow and gleanings from a Weldmesh shadehouse. These most welcome donations were used by the Nyanda Community Garden that was established alongside the OCCA - Nyanda Community Nursery.

In 2011, over 4,650 plants left the Nursery to be planted in Oxley Creek catchment and in schools that asked for tube stock.



In 2012 two seed-gathering events were held with OCCA volunteers in Dan Stiller Reserve at Pallara. The collected seeds were successfully propagated in the nursery, and the resulting seedlings were pricked out and planted in tube stock, to be held in the nursery in preparation for planting out.

Regular nursery volunteers including Jill Ridgway, Richard Thompson, Cam McPhee, Karla Henry, Sam Franklin and Lois Greensill led by Beryl Roberts gave over 700 volunteer hours in 2012. A team from Conservation Volunteers Australia also helped out in the nursery during the year. The variety of nursery tasks enabled volunteers to continuously maintain and increase the tube stock held in the nursery.

During 2012 over 6000 tube-stock were given out to the community and Bushcare groups for planting at Bushcare and CreekCare sites within the Oxley Creek catchment, an increase of almost 15% on 2011. OCCA's Biodiversity Services also took nursery tube-stock as required and when available. A number of local schools that required tube-stock also used our stock. Schools often donated money to OCCA for these plants so through this and a couple of small stall sales of plants at \$1 a tube, a nursery income of around \$200 a year has been generated, which is used to buy soil and sand.

Nyanda State High School embraced the learning resources available within the Nursery and the adjoining Nyanda Community Garden. Year 9 students began helping out in the Nursery every week. They learned how to propagate plants, and then planted them on the banks of Rocky Water Holes.



The Nursery continued to grow in 2012. Recycled roofing sheets were placed over the pricking-out area to provide protection for nursery users during sunny weather and rain events. Galvanised steel nursery tables were recycled from the Allan Fletcher Research Centre in Sherwood. One section of the interior mesh walls was removed to enhance access within the nursery. Shade cloth was placed over sections of the nursery to protect the seedlings. The watering system was also upgraded by school staff. All of these improvements enabled more extensive use of the nursery space.

OCCA continued to run its native seed propagation and seedling tube-stock production in the nursery in 2013 thanks to a strong and very cooperative partnership with Nyanda State High School. All school staff members involved have been very supportive. In particular, the Head of Science and Maths, Peter Cooper actively supported the Nursery, and enabled it to continue working efficiently. Nothing has ever been a problem for Peter Cooper and OCCA and its volunteers were very grateful for his tremendous efforts over many years.

Throughout 2013 the OCCA volunteer numbers remained fairly constant – with Richard Thomson, Cam McPhee, Jill Ridgway, Karla Henry, Trevor Scott, Lise Andersen, Lois Greensill, Margery Jeffers, Sam Franklin, Greg Lawrence, Dorothy Watson, and Bronwyn Willmott providing regular assistance.

In February, Centacare began to use the Nursery with their active clients. Their small groups of mobile but limited-skill clients gain greatly from the pleasant and gentle environment of the Nursery.

Unfortunately, the Nursery was not immune from vandalism, with some seedlings lost when trays were deliberately overturned.

At the end of September, the Nursery and Community Garden sites welcomed 150 visitors from all over the world who were attending the River Symposium.

Throughout 2013 several activities were undertaken as part of the Corporate Volunteering program with Telstra. However, in mid-2013 the Queensland Government announced the sale of Nyanda State High School. The school closed in December 2013 and the future of the Nursery was uncertain.

2014 was a really disrupted year for the OCCA Community Nursery. In May, after having functioned cooperatively with Nyanda State High School for six years, OCCA was told to remove the Nursery and vacate the site by the end of June. Needless to say, this resulted

in some frantic activity to deconstruct the Nursery and move it into storage until another site could be found. As usual, OCCA's partners, volunteers and friends mobilised and with their help and some trucks, we were able to move plants, pots and trays, water tanks, sheds, shadecloth, pavers, tables, chairs, a fridge, tools, and assorted bits and pieces to various storage locations in the area. Several thousand native plants were given to the Norman Creek Catchment's nursery and several trays of plants were stored at the homes of nursery volunteers. OCCA was particularly grateful to our partner, Brisbane Boys College, which allowed us to store the main items on their land at Corinda. Our thanks also to Sims Metal Management which provided a truck and driver, and to our hardy volunteers – Beryl Roberts, Noel Standfast, Jill Ridgway, Sarah Choudray, Sam Franklin, Trevor Armstrong, Kevin Mar Fan, Lynn and Richard Whitfield, Phil Gunasekara, Dave Kent, Richard Thomson, Bronwyn Willmott - and a number of other people and their various vehicles, who helped in the move.



During this time of closure of the OCCA Community Nursery, we scoured the catchment to find a suitable site to re-establish the facility. Discussions were held with a number of schools with available land, but because OCCA was also seeking a suitable location to house all OCCA's functions, nothing was really suitable.

However, in March 2015 OCCA signed an agreement with Consolidated Properties Group for the use of a house in the Cornerstone development at Coopers Plains for three years, and the nursery finally had a home.

In May, Telstra Volunteers energised our OCCA Nursery Volunteers by helping to put up the shade house in the back yard of the 'new' OCCA Catchment Centre at 9 Macdevitt Street, Coopers Plains. In reality, they linked together three weldmesh shade houses from available materials. Double rows of shelving were installed throughout the internal length of the shade house, pavers were placed down the centre and gravel was shovelled in to cover the remaining floor space.

The Telstra volunteers returned later to undertake a range of activities such as setting up the compost bays and a bathtub worm farm, stacking black plastic trays of plastic tubes, digging out weed species and generally getting the yard space tidy and functioning.

In September, Beryl Roberts continued her educational activities, this time taking about 20 Griffith University students, supervised by Conservation Volunteers Australia, on a seed gathering expedition in Toohey Forest Park. These seeds have been sorted, identified and propagated in the OCCA Nursery, with the help of a newly installed water sprinkler system.



OCCA now has a great nursery facility ready to begin the next task of filling it with heaps of native plants for the massive revegetation efforts that are going on throughout the Oxley Creek catchment.

In 2016 the Nursery continued to grow, with the reconstruction of a shed and the installation of a drip watering system. When the rainwater tanks are connected, the nursery will be in better shape to build up its stocks of plants.

A Plant Propagation Guide is being developed, drawing from OCCA's, and in particular Beryl's knowledge and experience with propagating the native plants in the catchment. OCCA is also developing a seed collection strategy which will enable us to refine our selection and propagation of species to local, rare or less readily available species.

OCCA's Nursery continues to grow, mainly due to the foresight and skills of Beryl Roberts and the enthusiastic support of the volunteers, who come every week to help OCCA continue its work to protect and enhance the Oxley Creek catchment.



Beryl Roberts – OCCA Community Nursery Coordinator