

History of the Kurna Garden

Written by Jenny Graetz in 2009

**Marni na budni means
WELCOME to Kurna Land.**

I would like to acknowledge that we are meeting on the traditional country of the Kurna people of the Adelaide Plains.

We recognise and respect their cultural heritage, beliefs and relationship with the land. We acknowledge that they are of continuing importance to the Kurna people living today.

In the late 1970's a principal decided to build a hill built on this land.

The hill remained for over 25 years, then was lowered in height so neighbours could keep an eye on the school buildings. The mound remained unused and covered in weeds, small shrubs and self-sown trees.

In 2006 I was given the role of Aboriginal Education teacher and thought about planting out a bush tucker garden on this vacant mound.

We had talks with leadership at school

Our Aboriginal Education Worker at the time drew up a rough sketch of what the garden could look like.

The school received information from the Playford Council about the Buffers to Bushland scheme and we had 400 plants donated for the Kurna garden.

It was suggested we start slowly and do the garden in stages.

We were given a list of plants suitable for the plains and information about wild food and traditional usage

People from Playford and Salisbury Councils helped us with advice, site visits, encouragement and grants

The school leadership was keen for the job to be done in one hit,

Greg Donovan, a person experienced in local native gardens was contracted to start the project

We visited other schools which had native gardens to see how they set up their garden, the process involved and how it was maintained.

Our school ACEO and I visited with Auntie Cherie Watkins from Kurna Plains School where we discussed our garden ideas and were given the 'greenlight' to go ahead with the project.

During the winter of 2006 plans were being made for the garden. All that time we were waiting for a good rain to soften the ground ready for the big dig.

Donovans Earthcare worked on spraying, clearing the land, preparing paths, testing soil etc,

The job was expected to take one month to complete.

Donovans provided 450 bush tucker plants

They prepared the holes and planned to assist the students in doing the planting.

Due to hold ups and personnel we started planting the 400 plants from the council ourselves at the end of October - they'd been sitting in our back yard for nearly 5 months.

Donovans workers finished off the pond and planting by early December.

We had to adhere to DECS guidelines re water safety and had mesh installed over the top of pond.

Watering was the big challenge especially over the hot Christmas holidays.

I took on that job doing early morning watering with my husband once or twice a week as we had very little rain that summer. It took more than an hour to water the 850 plants. The groundsman helped out as well.

Even with the watering we lost a lot of plants, so applied to Buffers to Bushlands for 100 more plants in 2007.

Received ongoing support from Councils who were keen to see the Kurna Garden grow and represent what the area looked like before white settlement

400 more plants available through the Grow a Great School program, herbicide spraying, helping with the planting and general garden advice as I'm not a gardener, I just thought a Kurna Garden would be a good idea.

Our second big planting was in June 2007

With any new planting WATERING becomes priority one again.

Once the plants were growing and the students interested in the garden,

labelling plants was a challenge.

I used plastic knives with laminated plant names sticky taped on. That was successful for a while until garden clean-up, and students pulled them out.

Started with A3 laminated sheets with photographs and names underneath

Now we have plant identification boards which are located at 6 spots around the garden

In 2007 watering continued to be time consuming + weeding was another extra job to add to the mix.

With water restrictions in 2008 we started bucket watering the plants. Every class watered once a term as part of their fitness program. I set up hoses, tubs and buckets at the start of the day.

Minimal planting due to drought, we needed to maintain what we had.

Again some plants died over the holidays.

Garden awards for classes who helped with watering or individuals who came to Garden Club. These were given out at assembly and greatly received.

With a water grant in 2008 a rainwater tank was installed to provide rainwater for the garden.

It was connected to a watering system so that drippers could water the garden- only problem is it takes 1/5 of tank to water the garden for 30 minutes and you need rain to get rainwater.

More council support with plant identification, tips on pruning etc.

Mulch was given to us so the drippers were covered by mulch by a HS student working on an alternative placement.

Support and training from Natural Resource Management Education in 2008

Wipe Out Waste to support school with recycling and sustainable projects

The Garden was available to be used by teachers for SOSE, Science, and Aboriginal Studies

We have used it for Reconciliation Week activities, with storytelling, music and art workshops. I have shown each class the plants that have bush tucker growing so that students can have a taste.

I have made laminated photo cards with plant names, so students can locate the plants as well as plant identification boards

Our Aboriginal families have met out in the garden over a meal

An outdoor classroom made by Para Worklinks to encourage classes to be outside in the Kurna Garden more

Propagating compound to plant seeds collected from the garden.

Our hope is that through the Kurna Garden students will have an understanding of how the land existed here at Elizabeth Grove before European settlement.

We hope the Kurna Garden becomes a nice peaceful place for the school and community and a positive learning environment around Aboriginal culture past, present and future. We are on a great journey and I am learning much along the way.

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From 2009-2020 so much has changed in the Kurna Garden. It is now also a yard play area, so the students are still learning how to combine play and respect/care for the plants.

The Kitchen Garden program began in 2014, but the first small gardens were planted out by Lisa Linnell and her students in 2010. These gardens have grown over these 10 years to become a sustainable, ongoing resource used to supplement the Kitchen Garden cooking and teaching gardening skills linked to environmental sustainability.