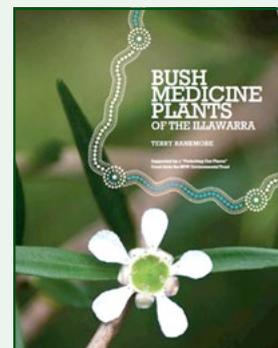


BUSH MEDICINES OF THE ILLAWARRA

overview of the project

Much of the knowledge about traditional bush medicines in south-east Australia has been lost over the past 200 years. Illawarra Aboriginal Corporation wanted to document the traditional medical uses of common plants in the Illawarra region and educate the community and school students about the value of these plants to indigenous Australians. An additional aim of their Protecting our Places grant was to work in partnership with Shellharbour City Council and Blackbutt Bushcare volunteers to revegetate an area of vacant Council-owned land to enhance biodiversity in Shellharbour.



Bush Medicine Plants of the Illawarra

how the project was carried out

In consultation with Shellharbour City Council, an area of vacant grassy land at Oak Flats was selected for revegetation. Council's bush regeneration team poisoned the grass and laid down thick mulch in preparation for three community planting days in August 2011. The planting was organised as part of Shellharbour Council's National Tree Days, an annual three day event involving volunteers and local schools in tree planting activities. The first event in 2011 involved 128 students and 15 teachers from six schools who planted 1,000 native trees, shrubs, herbs and grasses at the site. Further planting of the site occurred during similar National Tree Day events in August 2012 and August 2013. At all of these events the students were supported by Council's bush regeneration team and Bushcare volunteers.

Development of the book on bush medicines involved much cooperation between the book's author Terry Rankmore and other significant contributors such as the project manager at Illawarra Aboriginal Corporation, a local Dharawal language expert, local botanist, photographers and a graphic artist. The book was officially launched in March 2013.

Once the book had been launched planning began for a series of workshops to introduce teachers to the Bush Medicine Plants of the Illawarra. An accompanying Teachers Guide was designed to introduce teachers to the complexities of medical ethno-botany and help them to engage their students with the content of the book. Three workshops were organised with the assistance of the Illawarra Environmental Education Centre with a total of 84 teachers and administrators attending.

outcomes now and in the future

The National Tree Day events and other supplementary planting activities have added a total of 5,450 plants to a previously barren area, well exceeding the 2,000 plants originally proposed. Survival rate has been very high due to a number of factors including good site preparation, the use of water retaining crystals in each planting hole, and careful follow-up watering and weed control by council bush regeneration staff.

One thousand copies of the beautifully illustrated *Bush Medicine Plants of the Illawarra* have been printed and distributed to local schools, libraries and community groups. A PDF version of the book is available for download from the Shellharbour City Council website.

As a result of his work with this grant project, the author was approached by Shellharbour City Council to use his bush tucker and bush medicine knowledge to provide a new direction for the Barrack Heights Community Garden. An outdoor classroom was established at the gardens with Council and Landcare funding, and a new garden demonstrating bush tucker, bush usage and bush medicine, many of which feature in the book, was launched in January 2013.

benefits, challenges & lessons learned

The greatest challenge in putting together the book was the fine attention to detail required. As the book progressed there was much revision back and forth as the text and accompanying photographs took shape. Language and spelling had to be checked several times, especially the botanical and family names of plants as well as the Dharawal spelling. The grantee consulted closely with a Dharawal language expert to ensure that the book upheld the integrity of the language and reflected both cultural and scientific knowledge. This careful approach to research and documentation was an important step in representing the depth of Aboriginal understanding and traditional usage of bush medicine plants.

Use of a printing company recommended by the graphic artist saved the project nearly \$8,000 compared to the original quote supplied by a local printer. This allowed the project to print extra copies and to produce a longer (136 pages) higher quality book than originally planned.