

Waterwise Council Case Study



Title: City of Mandurah Waterwise Verge Makeover Program

Synopsis

Since 2004 the City of Mandurah's ongoing partnership with the Great Gardens community education program has resulted in 16 workshops attracting over 1700 people. So when the Council was approached by Great Garden's Garry Heady in 2010 to partner with the Water Corporation and Great Gardens to offer a free Waterwise Verge Makeover program to the Mandurah community, it seemed an exciting opportunity. The aim of the program is to offer free waterwise verge makeovers to residents in order to encourage community support for the need to change streetscapes from high water using turf to Waterwise gardens and in doing so put the nature back into the nature strip. To be eligible for a free makeover participants are required attend a Great Gardens workshop and apply. The project has proven to be extremely popular and continues to grow beyond expectations.

Motivation

The City of Mandurah (the City) has been committed to reducing water consumption and improving water quality since joining the ICLEI Water Campaign in 2002. In response to the growing water shortage, the City has incorporated water efficiency principles into planning, building, maintenance and administrative procedures and is always striving to improve current practices. The City encourages this same practice with the development industry and the wider community.

The City considered the Waterwise Verge Makeover Program to be a fantastic tool to help achieve not only reductions in water and fertiliser use in the garden, but also to provide the City with great opportunities to encourage community behaviour change through promotion and demonstration of the practical actions everyone can take in their own homes to help reduce water and fertiliser use.

Process/Approach

Initial project funding was provided by the Water Corporation and coordinated by Garry Heady in collaboration with the City. Thanks to additional support from the City the number of free verge makeovers offered at the Great Gardens workshop was increased from one to 10. This offer was central to an advertising campaign for the program (see attached).

Makeover applications by workshop participants proved to be oversubscribed 4 to 1 which forced the need for a rating system to be utilised with scheme irrigated turf in close proximity to the Estuary receiving the highest priority in a sliding scale.

The success of this first offer strengthened our resolve to again offer another 10 free makeovers at the next workshop. Our decision was further enhanced by the subsequent support of the South West Catchment Council who recognised the programs potential to reduce nutrient laden runoff from entering the Peel Harvey Estuarine system.

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Monitoring

One of the requirements placed on successful Verge Makeover recipients was to allow the monitoring of scheme water use before and after installation. It is anticipated that close to 50,000 litres of water will be saved per makeover conversion. This will be assessed over time.

In addition, thanks to support from the Peel Harvey Catchment Council (the peak NRM group in the region) negotiations with Murdoch University have been initiated to offer Masters and Honours students discrete research projects associated with this program.

Savings/Benefits

Reducing water use, nutrient leaching and a host of other local environmental issues will require ongoing community support for change. These Waterwise Verge Makeovers have already proven popular, with the lucky recipients of a makeover reporting considerable interest from friends and neighbours, many of whom have indicated a clear desire to change their verge from turf to a Waterwise garden. This project seeks to provide a growing network of innovative garden designs that challenge the stereotypical view that Waterwise native gardens are tall and scrappy. Such a network will provide a valuable community resource on which future low water use street scapes can be based.

Costs

The City has committed \$5000 plus in-house marketing and Officer time to this project to date. The City is committed to a further 10 Verge makeovers to be offered at the March 2011 Great Gardens workshop with the intention to continue this program into the 2011/12 financial year.

Lessons Learnt

- The ongoing support of community education programs such as the Great Gardens program provides a valuable community linkage through which programs such as the Waterwise Verge makeover program can be offered. The rapport developed by the Great Gardens team over the years, and in particular their non-commercial stance, has the effect of breaking down community barriers to adoption.
- Through water sensitive design multiple environmental benefits are achievable enabling support from diverse organisations each seeking different outcomes from the same project.
- If it is practical, requires less watering, less fertiliser, less mowing, less work and money there are more than enough people ready to make the change now. They just need a little one on one help and encouragement to do so.

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Further Information/References

An online information resource for the Waterwise Verge makeover program is currently being developed on www.beyondgardens.com.au

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Article in the Mandurah Mail community newspaper

Bid for a garden makeover



Helping hand: Bonnie Beal (City of Mandurah), Garry Heady (Great Gardens), verge makeover winners Ron and Maureen Bennett and Mandurah mayor Paddi Creevey.

TEN lucky Mandurah residents will have the verge outside their homes revamped as part of the Great Gardens Verge Makeover program.

Mandurah Mail article (pg 14) 10/3/2011

The City of Mandurah was approached by Great Gardens last year to fund the waterwise makeover of 10 verges in the area.

Given the success another 10 verges will be revamped this financial year with more next year.

Mandurah mayor Paddi Creevey said there was a huge community response to reduce water use in the garden and improve water quality by reducing the use of fertilisers.

"These makeovers also align with the City's commitment to Water Sensitive Urban Design practices so the City is delighted to be part of the program," she said.

The program was first announced at a Great Gardens workshop in November last year where 27 householders signed up to be considered a makeover.

Another workshop will be held at the Fishtrap Theatre inside the Mandurah Performing Arts Centre on March 25 from 6.30-9.30pm.

The program is a joint venture between the City and the Water Corporation with support from the South West Catchments Council.

To register for a makeover go to greatgardens.info and for the workshop call 1300 369 833.

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