

Blue Mountains City Council

Bushcare Annual Report



2010 - 2011



Introduction

Welcome to the Bushcare Annual Report for the 2010-2011 year.

During the year 70 Bushcare and Landcare Groups worked regularly across the whole of the Blue Mountains local government area.

Gains have been made steadily over the years on sites across the mountains, with groups being active stewards of their sites, pursuing issues and planning coordinated efforts with others. This year the Bushcare team acknowledges the sustained efforts of all volunteers across a range of activities, especially the valuable education of other community members.

This year the training guide on Bushland Restoration was overhauled. This guide outlines the rationale for bushcare activities and the range of strategies and techniques available. Hopefully it will contribute to maintaining the high standard of bushregeneration work being carried out on sites throughout the mountains.

Our bushcare website www.weedsbluemountains.org.au continues to be popular with over with 13,000 visits during the year.

This report records our achievements in each of the key areas of the program.

Lyndal Sullivan

Bushcare Team Leader

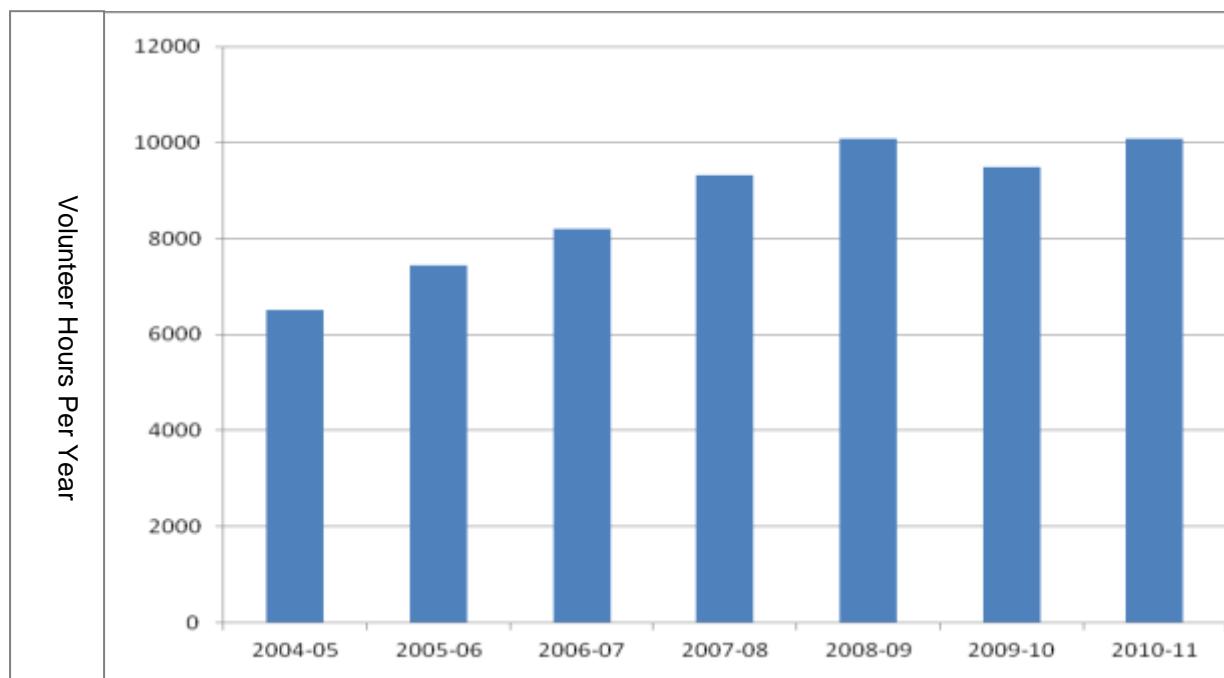


Kath and Mark Wilkinson from Medlow Bath Bushcare group moving a mountain of mulch

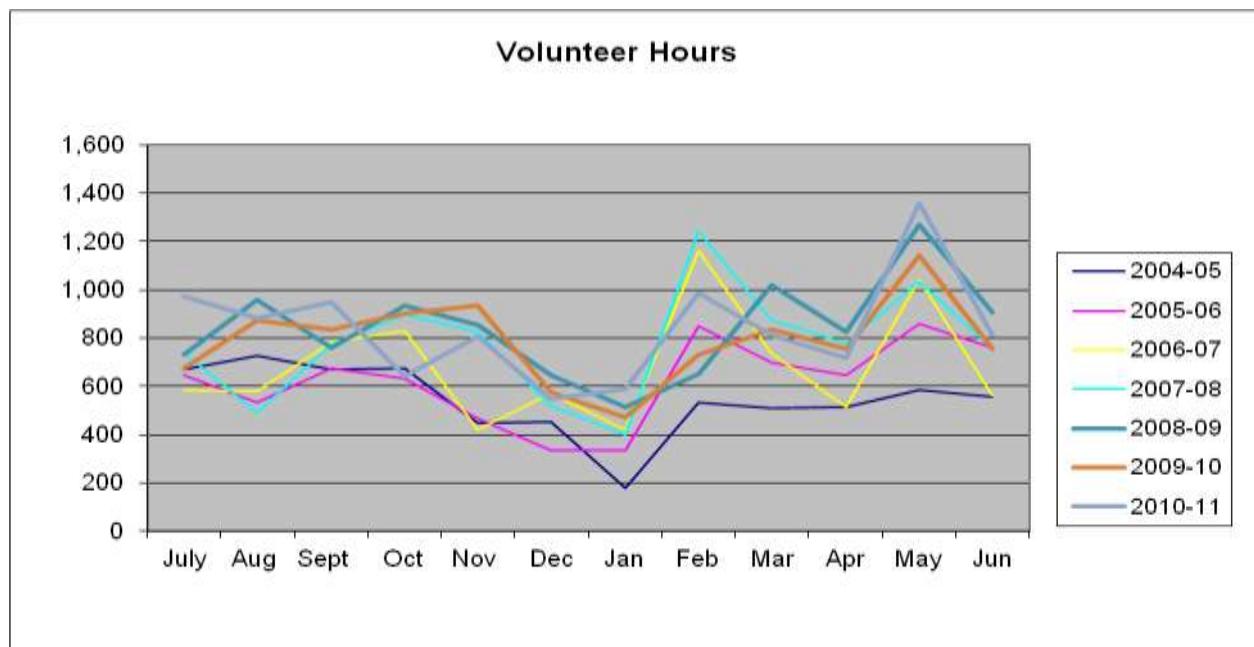
TOTAL VOLUNTEER PARTICIPATION

During the 20010/2011 year 10,082 volunteer hours were contributed through the program. Most contributions (8471 hours) were through regular monthly group workdays, with additional volunteer hours spent in workshops, special events and program support activities.

Two areas of growing interest are the Landcare program and the remote area program, both of which have steadily increasing participation rates.



The graph below shows total volunteer hours each month over the last 7 years, indicating seasonal changes, some of which are due to the weather and others to traditional holiday periods.



These figures do not include the additional 427 hours of support from TAFE classes on Bushcare sites (additional detail on p 8)

A list of all groups at end June 2011 is included as an attachment to this report. Current lists of all groups are available on the website http://weedsbluemountains.org.au/locate_bushcare_group.asp

Data Base Of Volunteers, Training & Work Records

Records of volunteer attendances and work undertaken are recorded for each site. These are compiled at the end of each month across all sites.

The volunteer database is regularly updated, incorporating records of on-site training. The current database system was developed early in 2008 with entries maintained to remain current.

BUSHCARE GROUPS

At the end of June 2011, there were 50 active bushcare groups working one session each month on council managed public land, supported by a bushcare officer with on-the-ground supervision and training as required. Some groups work an additional day each month - Wentworth Falls Lake, Glenbrook Lagoon and Katoomba Creek, with a mid week group to supplement the weekend group. The Vale St Katoomba group works every week, when weather permits.

Participation in monthly bushcare groups is the main activity of the program, with 8471 volunteer hours involving 2505 site hours by Bushcare officers. During the year 9 special events were held on Bushcare days which gave an additional dimension to the normal group's activities.



Marmion Swamp volunteers at the special planting event in April 2010

Other group based events were held during the year inviting local residents to join in special activities on their site -

- 7 Tree Planting events were held with responses from new volunteers - Frogs Hollow (Blackheath) Wilsons Glen(Woodford), Lone Pine(Leura), Leura Cascades, Rawson Pde (Leura), Marmion Swamp (Leura), Horseshoe falls

- Spotlighting - the 2 Warrimoo Groups, Cross Street and Long Angle combined for a spotlighting evening in November.
- Training day at Gloria Park - local residents were invited to come along and see what bushcare was all about

One group, Sutton Park expanded its activities to take on an adjacent Crown Reserve which included a significant area of swamp, and held a special Swampcare day.

Support from other BMCC Bushland Operational Teams

Council Bushregeneration, Noxious Weeds and Fire Mitigation teams all contribute to the support of the works undertaken by Bushcare groups.

51 hours of tree felling and weed spraying works were done on Bushcare sites by the Noxious Weeds or Fire Mitigation teams.

290 hours of bushregeneration works have been undertaken by the Bush Regeneration team during the year over 20 sites. The bushregeneration team has provided specialist skills such as chainsawing, erosion control works, spraying and other tasks that may be beyond the group's capacity. Often this has helped to get over an obstacle preventing progress on a site.

LANDCARE GROUPS

20 Landcare groups operated during the year working on private land or public land owned by Schools or the Crown. 10 of the 20 Landcare groups also work on public land managed by Council, and another 3 on public land owned by other agencies. This year showed a growth in the participation within Landcare groups. Volunteers contributed a total of 2396 hours to the program, with 512 on site council support hours. All groups have been provided with monthly on site support for most months of the year and also training and tools from the Bushcare program.

Changes to groups were:

- Katoomba Golf Club commenced a Landcare group in January 2011
- Leura Public School Landcare which had commenced as a grant funded project supported by a contractor, was incorporated into the program in July 2010.
- Pulpit Hill Landcare Group went into recess at the end of June 2011.
- Vipassana Landcare Group went into recess at the end of June 2011.
- The Cumberland Walkway Bushcare Group has expanded its area of concern to work a creekline on private property, becoming a Landcare group also.

Whilst most groups work once a month, the Three Gullies group in Glenbrook has been working every week, weather permitting, on public land managed by Dept Lands, and State Rail.

Other activities supporting private landholders have included workshops and Bushcare days. On occasions, residents attend bushcare or landcare groups specifically to learn more about how to manage their own land.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Educational Activities

Six educational events were held across the mountains including talks and field based workshops. These proved to be popular, not only for existing volunteers but also other residents.



Introduction to Bushcare workshop with Jill Rattray

Workshops organised by Bushcare :

Local Seasons

An evening presentation and discussion was held on the subject of local seasons, in Springwood in October. A video presentation by David Ryan of Shiney Pictures prompted an interesting discussion on what seasons do we have in the Blue Mountains, and local observations amongst the 14 people present.

Soft Engineering

Workshops were conducted at the Popes Glen Bushcare site at Blackheath in November, and Tortoise Creek Landcare site at Faulconbridge in June, to learn about soft engineering techniques, and construct structures to deal with stormwater issues.

Introduction to Eucalypts

A Eucalyptus Workshop presented by Jill Dark, local flora and fauna expert, was held in February in Springwood. It attracted 25 participants learning about basic eucalyptus identification. Jill gave a highly informative presentation and talk, followed by a walk around the location to identify trees.

Introduction to Bushcare

This introductory workshop covered basic bushregeneration techniques and 12 weeds from the upper mountains. It was run in March by Jill Rattray and Erin Hall and attended by 9 people.

Shale Based Forest Communities

Eric Mahony conducted an afternoon in the Springwood/Winmalee area to introduce volunteers to these fascinating and endangered communities. Participants learned how to identify key tree species, and also about the subtle changes in different forests due to the influence of different soil types. Different approaches to help in their recovery were also discussed.

Two workshops organised by other agencies were also promoted amongst volunteer groups on:

- Phytophthora workshops (Botanic Gardens)
- Fire in the Lower mountains (Nature Conservation Council of NSW)

Remote Bushcare Events

Remote Bushcare activities continued to grow with 10 events over the year involving 85 volunteer days and 548 hours. The popularity of some trips exceeds our ability to cater for all volunteers, either because of the constraints of the site or the need for more supervisors. Trips were conducted in the following locations:

- Grose River upper catchment, Mt Victoria
- Long Angle Creek, Warrimoo/Yellow Rock
- Katoomba Creek, North Katoomba
- Leura Cascades
- Sassafras Creek, Springwood
- Glenbrook & Zora's Creeks, Glenbrook
- Wilsons Glen Woodford
- Popes Glen, Blackheath



John Walker treating a Ginger Lily on Sassafras Creek. May 2010

Eight of these events were planned with a Bushcare or Landcare Group to enable them to work in more remote parts of their sites (downstream of their normal work areas). These provided an

opportunity for group members to gain a better understanding of their sub catchments, and to benefit from experienced volunteers from other sites.

Five events were held in conjunction with NPWS as part of the Great Grose Weed Walk program and another two events in conjunction with the lower mountains area of NPWS.

Swampcare events

Bushcare supported the Threatened Species program, through 3 Swampcare events by providing the technical support and logistics in Bushregeneration training and equipment.

There was a total of 66 volunteer hours spent in the field supported by 25 Bushcare hours.

These activities were held in:

Clydebank Swamp North Leura
Wentworth Creek Swamp
Maple Grove, Katoomba

CONTRACTS

Bushcare groups and officers have provided assistance to other environmental staff in developing grant applications, and also in coordinating plans on the following sites:

Central Park, Wentworth Falls
Cox's Reserve, Lapstone
Katoomba Creek, Nth Katoomba
Govetts Creek - Brahma Kumaris Landcare
Rawson Parade, Leura
Nth Katoomba Landcare
RSPCA Landcare

COORDINATION WITH OTHER AGENCIES

Facilitation of Catchment wide approaches to Bushcare

The Bushcare program endeavours to support groups who wish to take a catchment wide approach.

A **Leura Cascades Catchment** event held in January successfully brought together the 4 groups working in the catchment to work above the Cascades and some extra support from other 'remote area volunteers' and NPWS. The morning enabled groups to meet each other, discover that their efforts were not isolated and gain a better understanding of the catchment.

The support for the catchment coordination of **Katoomba/Govetts and Yosemite Creeks** has continued this year. Coordination meetings held 6 monthly brought together Bushcare groups, Landcare, NPWS and various sections of Council involved in the sub catchment of these creeks in the North Katoomba/North Leura areas.

National Parks and Wildlife Service

Promotions and activities are coordinated with the NPWS volunteer program to avoid clashes of events and plan joint events, such as the Katoomba Creek remote trips in the Great Grose Weed

Walk. This year coordination extended to the Hawkesbury office of NPWS enabling some joint remote area events to take place in the lower mountains. Coordination with NPWS has allowed Landcare volunteers to work further into their catchments and gain a greater understanding of their contributions.

TAFE

Wentworth Falls TAFE bush regeneration students and teachers contributed 427 hours over the year on 14 sites. Bushcare Officers are involved in site planning with TAFE teachers for these activities.

Bush Regeneration work was undertaken by students on the following sites:

- Knapsack Park
- Pippas Pass, Blaxland
- Mt Riverview
- Sun Valley Reserve
- Summerhayes park
- Benoit Park, Valley Heights
- Nth Lawson Park
- Central Park, Wentworth Falls
- Everglades, Leura
- Seventh Avenue, Katoomba
- Twynam St , Katoomba
- Bureau Park, Katoomba
- Medlow Bath Reserve
- Frogs Hollow
- Old Ford Reserve Megalong Valley

SCHOOLS

Parents at Leura Public school have been participating in a Landcare group, working in the bushland at the back of the school which also contains a swamp. The swamp is monitored monthly in order to gain an insight into the level of water and how this varies throughout the year. The group has been working on removing a weed plume from the drainage line which consists of holly and privet. The result has been a success with native grasses and shrubs emerging to replace the weeds, which has been an encouragement to the volunteers that their hard work has been worthwhile

The site is also used by the school as an education facility, to learn about the flora and fauna found in the area. This year children from Mount Druitt Public School came to see the beauty of the area as well as to learn about the effects urban runoff has on bushland by viewing the weed plume and the rubbish carried down from the school.



Katoomba Public School environment group

19 students from the environmental group at Katoomba Public School years 5-6 came to help Leura Cascades Bushcare group plant 200 tubestock to make an edge at Peter Carroll field. The group accompanied by two teachers learnt about bushland weeds and how to remove them correctly and made connections to impacts within the catchment.

PROMOTION

Recognition Of Existing Volunteers

Bushcare on the Big screen

In September a screening was held of around 5000 images shown on four screens with Amanda Hunt sharing her impressions of the program and its importance. This was installed as an exhibition for a month at Braemar Gallery.

A volunteer “Thank You” BBQ was held on 30th April 2011 with approx 90 volunteers attending in spite of the wet conditions. Awards were given in recognition of the milestones reached by groups, and achievement awards to individuals. This year 3 groups were acknowledged for reaching 15 years - Jamison Creek, South Lawson and Tree Fern Gully and 3 groups reaching 10 years. This brings the total of groups operating for at least 10 years or more to 34 and 5 groups of 20 years or more.

The Annual Lower Mountains Bushcare dinner was held before Christmas with volunteers enjoying the opportunity to meet each other socially.



Peter Ardill receiving his Bushcare Legend Award

Promotional Activities

Four specifically promotional activities were undertaken during the year

- Love Lawson Festival - Bushcare volunteers staffed a display and with a Bushcare officer guided a short walk around the site for 5 interested people.
- National Tree Day - Five bushcare groups held tree planting events under the NTD banner as a promotional exercise during August/September - Frogs Hollow (Blackheath) Wilsons Glen(Woodford), Lone Pine(Leura), Leura Cascades, Rawson Pde(Leura),
- Warm and Fuzzy Festival, Nth Katoomba
A Bushcare stall allowed us to talk to local residents. Most were interested in weed control on their own properties and some in joining groups.

The Braemar Gallery exhibition, mentioned above, also promoted the Bushcare program

During the year display boards have been designed and completed to provide information for passers-by at each site whilst groups are working



National Tree Day at Frogs Hollow Blackheath.
16 people planted shrubs, grasses and ferns, then enjoyed morning tea in the winter sun

Nursery Educational Program

The nursery educational program has continued with 12 nurseries visited approximately 2-3 times each (33 total visits), involving discussions with 27 owners/workers, with a total of 24 face to face hours between these individuals and a BMCC officer. The aim of the visits is to check stock for weed species, to encourage nursery owners to replace these with more environmentally friendly plant species and also to encourage them to display and distribute copies of the weeds booklet. Recently the visits have included discussions about the threat of Myrtle Rust, a fungal disease which has spread to a large area of the NSW and Qld coasts. The concern is to prevent spread in the Blue Mountains from plants bought from affected areas by local nurseries.

VOLUNTEER COMMUNICATIONS WITH COUNCIL

Support is provided for meetings of the Bushcare Network by arranging the venue, refreshments, minutes and agendas. These meeting allow council to discuss issues of concern with the Bushcare community, seeking feedback on ideas and responding to issues experienced by groups.

Bushcare officers routinely contact various sections of council on behalf of Bushcare groups to resolve problems affecting their sites, eg stormwater issues, dumped rubbish, encroachments, weed sources on adjacent lands etc.

VOLUNTEER CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE BUSHCARE PROGRAM AS A WHOLE

In addition to contributions to specific groups and sites, over 260 hours has been contributed by volunteers on broader issues, which has assisted the program significantly, including:

Review of documents and newsletters

Tool maintenance and sharpening

Office and filing system assistance

Website support

Participation on Bushcare Network Meetings and following up issues such as -

- BMCC Weed Management Strategy;
- changes to Tree Preservation order to encourage residents to remove weeds;
- sale of weeds at local markets;
- Integral's vegetation clearing practices;
- Street Tree Masterplan;
- NSW government funding promise for bushcare;
- funding for weed spread following fire;
- Bushcare promotions;
- notification of Bushcare Groups of adjacent proposed developments

PUBLICATIONS & COMMUNICATIONS

Newsletters

Four "Gecko" newsletters were produced; in Winter (Issue #44), Spring (Issue #45), Summer (Issue #46) and Autumn (Issue # 47). Circulation is approx 560 hard copies and 400 by email notification. An additional 160 copies of each edition are distributed at Council officers, through libraries or promotional events.

The newsletters have included coming events and a range of articles on topics such as Pittosporum undulatum, snakes, Phytophthora, myrtle rust, fungi, shale forests, scotch broom and weedy wattles.

Electronic bulletins

A short email bulletin is sent to over 390 people each month to update volunteers on events between Geckos.

Email bulletins are also sent to targeted audiences using the preferences indicated by volunteers on the database- eg. notices of remote bushcare events, information about Bushcare Network meetings and issues, and specific group notices.

Promotional materials

Further Bushcare/Landcare leaflets have been printed distributed to 6 Neighbourhood Centres, 6 libraries, 2 council offices and displays. Supplies of these leaflets as well as weed booklets have been checked and re-stocked regularly at these distribution points.

News from the Hill - the Council newsletter which goes to ratepayers carried articles on Bushcare events in all 4 of the 4 editions over the year.

- July - promotion of 5 Tree Planting events during Aug/Sept
- Oct - stormwater solutions workshop.
- Jan - Introductory Bushcare course for new volunteers
- April - Remote area Bushcare and joint events with NPWS

Community newsletters have been used to promote bushcare groups and activities. The Mid Mountains newsletter has carried one notice about the local groups covering the Woodford to Bullaburra area.

A series of advertisement in Upper Mountains editions of The Echo listed all groups with their meeting times from Wentworth falls to Blackheath.

BUSHLAND WEEDS WEBSITE

The website continues to be a useful communication mechanism with 13,008 visits and 21,570 pageviews during the 12 month period. On average, visitors looked at 1.66 pages on a visit (21,570 / 13,008). 512 visits were referrals from the BMCC site.



The website (www.weedsbluemountains.org.au) is now in its seventh year of operation. It is updated on a regular basis with news items and group details. During the year, a number of requests for permission to use material have come from community organizations, governments departments and other councils.

Developments on the website during the year included:

- The Gecko Archive goes back to Summer 2006 with listings of articles for quick reference
- New bushcare groups have been added and 17 groups have their own site pages
- More documents have been added - Training Guide, Weed Strategy etc

COMMUNITY REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

In addition to phone calls and emails from volunteers about their sites, every week requests are responded to from the general community. These range from inquiries about how to join a group, to weed control information and also to a range of broader environmental concerns.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The Blue Mountains City Council Bushcare Program continues to show strong growth from within the community at both regular and special events. The strong commitment from the community is evident in that 34 groups have now having been working continuously for 10 years or more with 5 of these groups for 20 years. The benefits to the environment are also evident.

The standard of bush regeneration work on Bushcare sites continues to be important, with continual emphasis on ongoing training in techniques as well as site strategies.

Areas for development over the next 12 months are:

- Further training opportunities provided to volunteers - plant identification, bush regeneration techniques etc
- Review and updating of the Bushcare Policy and Procedures Manual - some ideas for changes have been received from a number of groups and require compilation into a draft of the revised manual.
- Review and updating of Volunteer training material to cover OH&S and organisational issues
- Continue development of more cross-agency partnerships- particularly with NPWS in the lower Blue Mountains

The End



Blue Mountains City Council

Bushcare/Landcare Directory

Township	Reserve/Group	Day of Month	Time	Bushcare Officer
Lapstone	❖ Explorers Reserve (Grover St) ❖ Cox Reserve (& Gregory Tce)	1 st Sat 1 st Sat	9:30 - 12:30 9:00 - 12:00	PC TW
Glenbrook	❖ Alexandra Crescent Landcare ❖ Glenbrook Lagoon ❖ Bellata Court ❖ Darks Common ❖ Zora's Creek Landcare ❖ Three Gullies	1st Sat 3 rd Sun/1st Wed 1 st Sat 3 rd Sat 4 th Thurs Every Thurs	1.00 - 4.00 2-4/8-11 1:30 - 4.30 9:00 - 12:00 9:00 - 12:00 8.30 - 12.30	PC KH PC JR LS PC
Blaxland	❖ Pippa's Pass	1 st Sat	1:00 - 4:00	TW
Mt Riverview	❖ Mt Riverview	4 th Sat	1:30 - 4:30	MN
Warrimoo	❖ Cross St ❖ Long Angle Gully Landcare	4 th Sat 1 st Sat	2:00 - 6:00 1:00 - 4:00	TW EH
Valley Heights	❖ Benoit Park	4 th Sat	9:30 - 12:30	JR
Springwood	❖ Birdwood Gully ❖ Deanei Reserve ❖ Else Mitchell Park ❖ Fairy Dell ❖ Beefarm Rd	3 rd Sat 4 th Sat 3 rd Sat 3 rd Sun 4 th Sat	9.00 - 12.00 9:30 - 12:30 9:30 - 12:30 9:00 - 12:00 2:00 - 4:00	TW MN KH TW JR
Winmalee	❖ Summerhayes Park ❖ Linksview Landcare	1 st Sat 3 rd Sat	9:00 - 12:00 1.00 - 4.00	MN TW
Faulconbridge	❖ Jackson Park ❖ Tortoise Creek Landcare	3 rd Sun 3 rd Sat	1:00 - 4:00 2:00 - 4.30	PC JR
Woodford	❖ Wilsons Glen ❖ Woodford Glen Landcare	2nd Sat 1 st Tues	2:00 - 5:00 9:30 - 12:30	EH LS
Hazelbrook	❖ Horseshoe Falls & Gloria Park ❖ Coates Park ❖ Burgess Falls	3 rd Sun 1 st Sat 4 th Sun	2:00 - 4:30 1:30 - 4:30 2:00 - 4:00	TW KH JR
Lawson	❖ South Lawson ❖ North Lawson ❖ Kihilla Landcare	3 rd Sun 4 th Sat 1st Fri	9.30 - 12:00 1:30 - 4:30 9:00 - 12:00	KH EH JR
Bullaburra	❖ Red Gum Park	4 th Sun	9:30 - 12:30	JR
Wentworth	❖ Wentworth Falls Lake ❖ Jamison Creek	3 rd Sat/2 nd Tue 3 rd Sat	1-4pm/3-5pm	PC PC

Falls	❖ Jamieson Street ❖ Central Park ❖ Water Nymphs Dell ❖ Valley of the Waters ❖ Pitt Park ❖ Franki Creek	1 st Sat 4 th Thurs 3 rd Sat 2 nd Sat 4 th Sat 4 th Sun	9:00 - 12:00 1:30-4:30 9:00 - 11:00 9.00 -12.00 2.00 - 5.00 1:30 - 4:00	MN TW KH NPWS* PC EH
Leura	❖ Brahma Kumaris Landcare ❖ Sublime Point ❖ Tree Fern Gully (Lindeman Rd) ❖ Leura Cascades ❖ Everglades Landcare ❖ Marmion Swamp ❖ Rawson Parade Landcare ❖ Lone Pine ❖ Govett St ❖ Hester Creek Landcare ❖ Leura School Landcare	1 st Fri 2 nd Mon 1 st Sat 2 nd Fri 3 rd Wed 4 th Wed 4 th Sat 2 nd Fri 4 th Sat 3 rd Fri 3 rd Thurs	9:30 - 12:30 9:00 -12:00 9:00 -12:00 9:30 - 12:30 9:00 - 12.00 2.00 - 5.00 9:30 - 12:30 1:30 - 4.30 9:00 - 12:00 9:00 - 12:00 3:00-5:00	EH LS KH EH KH KH EH EH TW PC JF
Katoomba	❖ Katoomba Falls Creek Valley ❖ Minne-Ha-Ha Falls ❖ Katoomba Creek ❖ Kedumba Creek ❖ Upper Kedumba Creek ❖ Vale St ❖ Cumberland Walkway ❖ Banksia Park ❖ RSPCA Landcare ❖ North Katoomba Landcare ❖ Pulpit Hill Landcare (2 mthly) ❖ Katoomba Golf Club	2 nd Sat 4 th Sun 3 rd Sun 4 th Fri 4 th Sun 4 th Sat 2 nd Thurs 2 nd Sat 4 th Wed 3 rd Mon 3 rd Sun 3 rd Mon	9.00 - 1.00 9:30 - 12:30 9:30 - 1:00 9:30-12:30 1:30-4:30 9:00 - 12:00 9:00 - 12:00 2:00 - 5:00 9.30 - 12.30 9.00 - 12.00 9.30 - 12.30 1:30 - 4:30	MN MN LS PC MN KH LS MN LS MN PC MN
Medlow Bath	❖ Medlow Bath Park	1 st Sat	2:00 - 4:00	JR
Blackheath	❖ Centenary Reserve ❖ Popes Glen ❖ Sutton Park ❖ Blackheath Glen ❖ Frogs Hollow ❖ Braeside (NPWS)	2 rd Fri 4 th Sat 1 st Thurs 4 th Sat 2 nd Sat 3 rd Fri &4 th Sun	9:00 - 12:00 9:00 - 1:00 9.00 - 12.00 2:00 - 4:00 9:30 - 12:30 9:00 - 1:00	KH PC LS KH EH NPWS*
Mount Victoria	❖ Mt Victoria Bushcare/Landcare	4th Sun	9.30 - 12.00	EH
Mount Irvine	❖ Mt Irvine Landcare	3 rd Fri	9:00 - 12.00	LT
Mount Wilson	❖ Mount Wilson Bushcare	2 nd Fri	9:00 - 12.00	TW

All groups are supported by BMCC Bushcare except those marked NPWS *