



INTRODUCTION

What is Bushcare?

Bushcare can be described as an initiative working to conserve and restore habitat for Australia's native flora and fauna, so that all Australians can continue to enjoy our unique environment for future generations. This work initiative is called Bushland Regeneration and is the practise of restoring bushland by focusing on reinstating and reinforcing the environments ongoing natural regeneration processes.

Georges River Council manages over 50ha of bushland with 24 Bushcare sites throughout the LGA, Be sure to check where and when so you can become involved

<https://www.georgesriver.nsw.gov.au/Council/Volunteering>

AIMS & PURPOSE

Georges River Councils recognises the importance of community participation in protecting and conserving biodiversity within council's natural environments. Restoration through bush regeneration practices is vital to ensure the long-term conservation of local flora and fauna in the Georges River Council local government area

Council's Bushcare program is designed to encourage understanding, education, and participation in the management of bushland areas of Georges River Council.

These guidelines will provide an overview of Bushcare which has been developed to support and manage volunteers who would like to be involved with the Georges River Council's Bushcare program

These guidelines apply to

- All Georges River Council Bushcare program workplaces and activities
- All Bushcare volunteers working for, or on behalf of Georges River Council
- All Georges River Council Bushcare staff and contracted staff involved in the management of the Bushcare program

Please read these guidelines carefully as they provide guidance of the Bushcare program and is used to ensure a safe effective and consistent working environment using best working practices for council staff and volunteers within the Bushcare program.

OBJECTIVES

A key objective of the Bushcare programs success is the environmental interpretation and educational initiatives that Bushcare can provide. By making the community aware of actions that can be harmful and degrade the health of bushland and waterways, as well as those that improve the diversity of flora and fauna species that can increase bushland sustainability. In addition, members of the community can significantly contribute to the long-term survival of these ecosystems, strengthen community participation, and become knowledgeable and gain a better understanding of natural areas.

Other Objectives that form councils Bushcare Guidelines

- To create and maintain self-sustaining native plant communities and increase biodiversity
- To work in natural areas under the direction of Council's Bushcare Program, in accordance with recognised best practice bush regeneration techniques, to control and eradicate priority and environmental weed species, stabilise the soil by providing adequate erosion techniques, protect watercourses, provide adequate tracks where necessary, and revegetate the site with indigenous native plant species when necessary.
- To participate in activities such as seed collection, flora and fauna surveys which complement the works component of Bushcare.
- To encourage and promote community awareness of the Georges River Council Bushcare Program.



Georges River Bushcare Volunteers working hard to protect native groundcovers

BUSHCARE VOLUNTEERS

All residents of Georges River Council between the ages of 18 and 90, and other interested people, may register with the Georges River Council Bushcare Program. Ages under 18 years require parental/guardian supervision on Bushcare sites and the parent must register to become a Bushcare volunteer. All volunteers are required by council's policy to be COVID 19 double vaccinated to work on council Bushcare sites. All Bushcare Volunteers shall be bound by the provisions of these guidelines.

There are several benefits of becoming a Bushcare volunteer that stem from the Bushcare Program. These include the reversal of bushland degradation, the development of community spirit, a sense of pride and achievement, the conservation of biodiversity, raising community awareness, education and the improvement of aesthetic values related to natural bushland.

It is the responsibility of each Bushcare Volunteer to report to the Bushcare Officer, any accidents, or incidents immediately which may lead to an injury, or any safety hazard that may be observed at the work site, and to follow Bushcare officer directives for safety.

- All volunteers need to operate in accordance with Council's Bushcare staff and this policy, to comply with the Work, Health and Safety Policy and all relevant legislation which include the Work Health Safety Act 2011, Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 and the Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995
- Please read council's Safe Work Method Statement for Bushcare that was sent along with these guidelines

Bushcare sites can be found by following the link before to see which sites and times suits you the best.

<https://www.georgesriver.nsw.gov.au/Council/Volunteering>



"Milk maids" *Burchardia umbellata* at Kyle Williams Reserve

Responsibilities of a Bushcare Volunteer and Site Safety

It is requested that Volunteers notify the site supervisor prior to first attending a site, and at any time they may be unable to attend a regular group visit. Notify any change in their status about being a volunteer. A Council Bushcare Officer shall supervise the work of all volunteers. All volunteers must return council tools at the end of each Bushcare session.

The following activities are prohibited by Bushcare volunteers

- The use of power tools such as chainsaws or brush cutters
- The use herbicides, application or spraying
- Planting of plants not specific to the local area
- Working alone on a Council Bushcare site

All Bushcare volunteers are to adhere to the WHS act 2011 and council's WHS policy regarding safe work practices. It is council responsibilities to provide and ensure a safe working environment. The ruling of the Bushcare Officer shall be final in relation to any matter regarding the work carried out on the site. The Bushcare supervisor has the discretion to exclude volunteers from participation in volunteer activities on behavioural or health and safety grounds. If a Bushcare Volunteer does not adhere to the aim and objectives of these guidelines, registration as a Bushcare Volunteer may be terminated.

Safety on Site: When working in any Bushcare program safety comes first, this includes safety for yourself and looking out for others within your group.

Manual Handling: To prevent physical injury, soreness and tiredness when working on site, be sure to change your positions when working and try not to do any single activity for long periods of time. Never lift heavy objects alone, be sure to ask for help and bend your legs and keep your back straight.

Working Alone: For safety, insurance and environmental reasons volunteers are not permitted to work in Council's bushland reserves without a Bushcare Supervisor on site.



"Bootlace Orchid" *Erythrorchis cassythoides* Oatley Point Reserve.



Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Bushcare volunteers have the responsibilities of making sure correct footwear is worn on all sites, long sleeve shirts and long pants to provide protection from biting insects and a hat, for protection against the sun. Georges River Council will provide SPF 30+ sunscreen. Volunteers are also encouraged to bring their own water, at least 1.5 litres and to drink at regular intervals, especially during the summer months to prevent fatigue and dehydration.

When a volunteer becomes a regular participant, they will be issued with a Georges River Bushcare Volunteers long sleeve shirt and a wide brim hat, which will be at the discretion of the Bushcare supervisor.



Poulton Park Bushcare Volunteers enjoying morning tea.

Becoming a Bushcare Volunteer will bring some rewarding benefits, such as

- Enjoying a great outdoor working environment
- Being active and healthy
- Reverse bushland degradation
- Help conserve native biodiversity
- Attend social events
- Meet new people and make new friends

Training

All Bushcare Volunteers are encouraged to enrol in an appropriate in Bush Regeneration Course, AABR workshops (Australian Associated Bush Regenerators), Council's Bushcare events or appropriate on-site training. Check this Link for AABR's work book on Bush regeneration techniques used to treat weeds. [BBM1_ParticipantsWorkbook.pdf \(aabr.org.au\)](http://aabr.org.au)

It is required that at least one Volunteer on each site has undergone appropriate training, or a Council Bushcare Officer shall supervise the work.



Woody Pear (*Xylomelum pyriforme*) in Oatley Park

Responsibilities of the Bushcare Officer

It is the responsibility of the Bushcare Officer to ensure a safe working environment. It is the responsibility of the Bushcare Officer to keep the Bushcare Program advised of all changes in registration.

Council's Bushcare Program will keep a computer database of all Bushcare Volunteers.

The Bushcare Officer shall maintain a current record of names, dates and work duration times of each Volunteer's work periods and a summary of any work carried out. The collection, storage, use and retention of your information will be managed in accordance with council policies and applicable legislation. This information is retained in accordance with council's Records and Information Management Policy.

Bushcare supervisors will provide onsite training and inductions to new volunteers. The training will be specific to the tasks performed by the volunteers on sites. Training will be made available for all Bushcare Volunteers in bush regeneration techniques.

Instruction will be provided in the safe use and handling of hand tools. Bushcare supervisors will provide native plant material, mulch, weed mats, rubbish bags, gloves etc. for use by the Bushcare Volunteers. Council will assist with weed and rubbish removal where accessible. Council will prepare and distribute a Bushcare newsletter

Larger Bushcare Groups may be sub divided into smaller groups at the discretion of Council's Bushcare Program and named appropriately. Smaller groups may be integrated into larger groups at the discretion of the Bushcare Program.

Council's Commitment

Council has the responsibility as the LGA environment manager. Council also provides personal accident and public liability insurance policies that cover the activities of volunteers working on an approved Bushcare project or site.

Public Liability

The Legal Liability of the Voluntary Workers actions/activities is covered under the Public Liability policy. If a third party was injured by the actions of a volunteer it will likely be a Public Liability matter, whereas injuries sustained by the Volunteers themselves in the course of their duties is a personal accident matter.

There are age limitations applicable under the Personal Accident Policy. Compensation is limited for covered persons aged 90 years or over and in respect of each dependent child or children aged 18 years or under as per the general provisions and conditions applicable to the policy noted in the policy wording.

Variation of the Guidelines

These guidelines may be added to, repealed, or amended by resolution of the Council in consultation with, or upon the recommendation of, the appropriate Council Committee.

Grant Funding

Any Bushcare Group or Bushcare Volunteer who has received external funding shall lodge these funds with Council, as an incorporated body, to coordinate and manage the funds for each Bushcare site.

Thank You

On behalf of Georges River Council we welcome you to our Bushcare program and we thank you for helping us protect and preserve Council's Bushland reserves for future generations.



Eastern Dwarf Tree Frog (*Litoria fallax*) at Moore Reserve