



## Spring Edition

Newsletter issue 51 - September 2022

### Nursery potting area cools off

MRL is finalising the improvements to the nursery work areas, thanks to a grant from the Tucker Foundation. There are more stools for volunteers and staff, a shade sail has been installed on the western side of the work area to protect volunteers, staff and plants from prevailing heat, and insulation has been installed above the potting and propagation benches to make a more comfortable work environment for staff and volunteers. The improvements are ongoing, with shade curtains still to be installed in the all-important volunteer and staff morning tea area.

Staff and volunteers are doing lots of tidying and rearranging of the nursery site to support these works and improve the work environment and retail space. MRL has received lots of compliments from members, volunteers and customers - thank you for your support.



Leesa & Jess potting up under the new insulation & shade sail sourced through a Tucker Foundation grant



MRL welcomes our new part-time nursery assistant Ally (generally Saturday mornings)

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*Plant of the season—Archirhodomyrtus beckleri (Rose Myrtle)*



**Nursery opening:** Wednesday—8.00am to 4.00pm Saturday—9.00am to 1.00pm

**Volunteer days:** Monday & Tuesday **MRL phone:** (07) 5494 5074

**Nursery email:** nursery@mrwl.org.au **General email:** coordinator@mrwl.org.au



## Coordinators corner

While our focus at MRL is an environmental one—to empower people to protect and restore the Mooloolah River Catchment— I’m proud that MRL also provides these additional side-benefits.

Social: Our hub provides a lively social outlet for like-minded people to come together and help the environment. We have a core group of regular volunteers who enjoy the interacting with one-another while being able to learn and contribute to the environment.

Representation: We are increasingly providing representation on community group meetings, Taskforce (Council's Weeds Taskforce), Advisory Groups and at community events, where we provide local insights to issues in our catchment and offer our expertise and knowledge to events.

Educational: MRL regularly holds a diverse range of educational activities which are usually interactive and practical. Walks, talks, citizen science sessions and field trips, aimed at empowering people to become stewards of the land.

I’d like to thank our dedicated volunteers, staff and members for helping MRL expand to provide these new services for our catchment.

## Nursery musings

Cold weather slowed down production over winter but we’re starting to see germination of various species now in the propagation tunnel. So excited to be installing a heat mat system on one of the benches, to enable propagation throughout next winter. We welcome the warmer evenings - with more spring-like conditions for propagating plants! Wildflower season is upon us.

MRL continues to work with Cert. I and Cert. III in Conservation and Land Management trainees from ECOllaboration. The next round of Cert. I trainees have commenced, 1 day/fortnight, as part of their traineeship.

*Backhousia myrtifolia* and *Endiandra sieberi* tubestock are now in stock. Get in early to secure yours.

*Endiandra sieberi* have a LONG germination period and are now just ready for sale. A medium size tree to 15m with striking bark and white flowers in late winter/early spring. Suitable for part-shade-part-sun and sandy, poor soils near coast. Shiny black/purple fruit attract large, fruit-eating birds.



### Fast Facts:

- ◆ MRL's growth into new areas is often organic, depending on the skills, interests and availability of volunteers and staff.
- ◆ While volunteers mostly assist in nursery and biocontrol, volunteer roles can vary and adapt to your skills. Let us know if you’d like to contribute in other ways! Project-based work, event organisation, mechanical repairs and maintenance are all valuable skills at MRL right now!



- ◆ Future koala food! *Eucalyptus* spp. germinating in abundance in the propagation tunnel.

### Plant Fast Facts:

- ◆ *Backhousia myrtifolia* is a popular bush food plant
- ◆ hard to source in local nurseries
- ◆ small tree to about 12m with rough, fissured bark and white flowers in winter
- ◆ leaves give off cinnamon fragrance when rubbed or crushed
- ◆ used for flavouring foods, tea etc



## In other news

MRL is always looking for volunteers to assist in our nursery. Volunteer days are Mondays and Tuesdays. If you'd like to know more contact Gemma at [nursery@mrwl.org.au](mailto:nursery@mrwl.org.au)

**Did you know** the nursery can help you put together a plant list and order for your bush regeneration, restoration or garden project? If you have a project in mind get in touch with us at [nursery@mrwl.org.au](mailto:nursery@mrwl.org.au) and we will be happy to help.

**Butterfly Gardening Series #1** by Jim Jeffries, MRL Volunteer, Pollinator Protector & Plant Propagator!

How do you feel when you see a colourful butterfly go skipping across your path? Are butterflies of any real importance in our local environment? You may also wonder, "Are butterfly numbers rising or falling?" or "Where does a butterfly lay her small eggs?"

Butterflies are an important indicator of habitat health, like frogs & platypus around the Sunshine Coast. Environmental scientists tell us that a species of butterflies has its own specific native plant upon which she lays her eggs, called a 'butterfly host plant'. When areas are cleared for housing and agriculture this can result in a loss of local native plants for wildlife, including butterflies.

The warm weather is coming and we will see them out there actively pollinating, or being someone's meal. The MRL Nursery has a wide range of butterfly host plants in stock, as well as some great books for sale to help you learn more about these important pollinators.

### MRL iNaturalist Workshops

iNaturalist is an app to record and share observations of plants and animals! The Biocontrol team started using the app as a tool for identifying interesting finds. It soon became apparent how important and useful this app is for citizen science. iNaturalist allows anyone with a camera to collect important data on all living things.

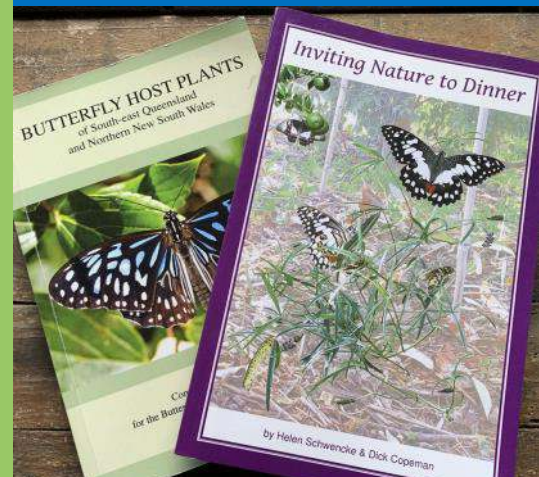
MRL staff are integrating the app into activities, while hosting training workshops to get more people comfortable with using this technology. Stay tuned or contact Jess or Leesa to find out about the next training session.



Leesa presenting on iNaturalist at Mary Cairncross

### Volunteer Fast Facts:

- ◆ volunteers can commit to as little as a couple of hours a week
- ◆ nursery volunteers assist with:
  - making potting mix
  - propagation/potting up seedlings
  - nursery maintenance
  - washing pots



### Books available at MRL include:

- ◆ "Butterfly Host Plants of South-east Queensland and Northern New South Wales" compiled by John T. Moss
- ◆ "Inviting Nature to Dinner" by Helen Schwencke and Dick Copeman

### Butterfly Fast Facts:

- ◆ Butterflies are major pollinators of flowering garden/bushland plants, and fruit trees
- ◆ Butterflies provide 'dinner' for birds like butcher birds; and are often found hanging in spider's webs
- ◆ Caterpillars are hunted by birds, wasps and even some ants

## Biocontrol news

### Biocontrol Update

Winter is a quieter time in the biocontrol facility as, like us, our beetles prefer to stay in their leafy beds when it is cold outside. Our focus at this time of year is preparing for the summer season: dumping old plant stock, planting fresh food plants, cleaning and repairing beetle cages.

Last summer's beetle production was 5,720 more than the previous summer and increases our efforts to control Madeira and Cats Claw Creeper. If you are interested in learning about rearing insects to help fight weeds or getting involved in our citizen science programs we could always use a couple of extra volunteer hands!

### Bug Club

In April, MRL started an exciting new citizen science program—BUG CLUB! Bug Club is a field based activity designed to spark curiosity and encourage exploration.

It is open to all ages (but children must be accompanied by an adult). Our aim is to nurture a connection with the natural world and inspire a new generation of scientists and insect ambassadors. Not only is it fun to get out and explore in the bush, our club's citizen scientists are collecting data on insect populations.

The Club meets fortnightly on Wednesday afternoons (during the school term) at various locations, keep an eye on our fb page or connect with MRL's biocontrol team (email: [projects@mrwl.org.au](mailto:projects@mrwl.org.au)) to find out more.



Bug Club is an exciting addition to our Bugs to the Rescue and Rescuing Bugs Program which is proudly supported by the Queensland Government's Engaging Science Grants.



### Fast Facts:

- ◆ Last summer biocontrol reared and released 2,400 Madeira beetles and 39,220 Jewel Beetles
- ◆ We hope to produce even more next season!
- ◆ Our aim is to maximise our beetle bioagents into the environment, slowing down the spread of these destructive environmental weeds



### Since April:

- ◆ 8 Bug Clubs have been organised
- ◆ 87 observations have been logged
- ◆ 67 different species of invertebrate have been identified
- ◆ Bug Club groups are purposely small but 80 participants have been engaged
- ◆ A core group of Bug Clubbers is emerging





## Photo Gallery—2022—The 2nd Bug Day Out





## The Bug Day Out (the 2nd!)

On Saturday 18th of June, MRL hosted The Bug Day Out for the 2nd year running! Thank you to everyone who came (245+ people) and made this day so epic! MRL holds The Bug Day Out at the Biocontrol Facility as an opportunity for the public to have a look at what we do in a fun and interactive way.



The Bug Day Out is proud to be part The Sunshine Coast Environment Council's World Environment Day festival. It is also one of our big community events for our Bugs to the Rescue and Rescuing Bugs program which aims to connect our community with scientists and field experts, creating meaningful citizen science opportunities and inspiring students into futures in STEM—this program is proudly supported by a Queensland Government Engaging Science Grant.

## Wicked Weeds

The year-long Wicked Weeds program has come to an end. A big thank you to our awesome group of Weed Warriors, staff and community participants who helped make the Wicked Weeds program such a success.

The engine room of Wicked Weeds was eight 'Weed Warriors' who worked with MRL creating and implementing activities to connect the community and engage other young people in weed management.

The Weed Warrior Youth Leaders were also tasked with researching and writing 'Wednesday Wicked Weed of the Week' social media posts. The posts were a great learning and research experience and formed a basis for a weed database with printable PDFs that were added to MRL's website, along with links to some useful weed resources. Make sure to check out our website to see their work.

The Wicked Weed program was supported by Seqwater.

## Macroinvertebrate Monitoring

So far this year MRL has brought this activity to more than 120 people through: Kids in Action Environment Day, Aura Environment Day, a school holidays macroinvertebrate monitoring day, and as part of an outdoor classroom for a local home school group. Let us know if you have a school or group who would like to come catch water bugs for science!



THE BUG DAY OUT is a celebration of:

- ◆ our little insect neighbours
- ◆ the way we work with them to fight environmental problems and
- ◆ the scientists (entomologists) who study them

The day's activities included:

- ◆ tours of the biocontrol facility and butterfly garden,
- ◆ many insect related activity stations and displays and
- ◆ an opportunity to meet and chat with 4 amazing entomologists: Michelle Gleeson, Vivian Sandoval, Kit Prendergast & Jessa Thurman!

Wicked Weeds project goals were:

- ◆ advancing waterway health
- ◆ raising awareness and increasing knowledge and
- ◆ providing positive community actions to restore and sustainably manage our waterways

Weed Warriors organised:

- ◆ a collaborative weed management day with Petrie Creek Catchment
- ◆ 3 community weed walks and
- ◆ a weaving with weeds workshop



## Plant of the season

### *Archirhodomomyrtus beckleri*

*Archirhodomomyrtus*...from Greek archi, first; rhodo, a rose and the genus Myrtus, referring to the appearance of the flowers

*beckleri*...after Dr. Herman Beckler, the German botanist with the ill-fated Burke and Wills expedition

Ideal to plant on edges of rainforest areas as it is sun tolerant— very hardy and adaptable to a range of conditions.



#### Fast Facts:

- ◆ large shrub or small tree to 3m
- ◆ pale pink flowers to about 1cm
- ◆ similarly dense and lush to its distant lillypilly relatives
- ◆ excellent habitat for bees in full bloom over spring and summer
- ◆ small orange fruit popular with birds



#### The Sustainability Showcase

MRL had a display at the amazing Qld Museum’s Sustainability and Science Showcase on Sunday, 19th June.

The event highlighted latest research, actions and ideas to help Queenslanders do their bit to protect the planet.

It was great to connect with keen participants, while a highlight was catching up with the dynamic Queensland Office of Chief Scientist team, the Australian Citizen Science Association and meeting Jutta Godwin, founder of the Brisbane Big Butterfly Count.

#### The MRL stall showcased :

- ◆ Making a difference e.g. planting native pollinator gardens or by rehabilitating and protecting habitat by controlling invasive weeds
- ◆ Promoted active involvement in science e.g. Bug Club, Sunny Coast Big Butterfly Count , iNaturalist app
- ◆ Visitors wrote petal pledges for direct actions they could take

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