



MEDIA RELEASE

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Fruit fly success a sweet inspiration to Kerang community

Kerang's Community Garden is being hailed as a local success story in the fight against Queensland Fruit Fly – and local residents have a chance this Friday to find out more on how they can reap the rewards of managing their gardens successfully.

Greater Sunraysia Pest Free Area (GS PFA) and Kerang Community Garden have been working together on managing fruit fly – and the community garden has been rewarded with kilograms of fresh, clean fruit.

GSPFA Regional Field Officer for Kerang area Patricia Witney said although managing fruit trees against fruit fly can be difficult, the community garden's experience was evidence that it can be done.

"Kerang residents are working hard to manage fruit fly in their gardens, but the community garden's success is a great inspiration for people to keep up their efforts," Ms Witney said.

"Knowledge is power and GSPFA is here to help with all the information people need to succeed," she said.

Kerang Community Garden caretaker Dave Randall was shattered when he believed the group could no longer justify having fruit trees.

"We were literally at the point of bulldozing the fruit trees after 2017-18 season, but of course that wasn't what we wanted to do," Mr Randall said.

"But all that water and fertiliser for nothing – you'd get beautiful fruit, but when you opened it, you couldn't eat it."

GSPFA worked with community garden members providing advice, education and moral support – Ms Witney counselled Mr Randall to prune all the trees hard, reducing their height so insect netting would fit comfortably over the tree.

Then with help from a local grant from the Sporties Bowling Club, the group was able to purchase an insect net for each tree, keeping fruit fly away.

Last year the first nectarines were picked in March 2019 and, as a result of a range of management practices, the result was more than 450 nectarines, weighing in at over 40kg!

The beautiful fruit was then shared with members of the Kerang Community Garden, the neighbouring Men's Shed and donated to charity.

Ms Witney is locally based and available to provide support to the community with up to date information and to demonstrate how to use traps or nets.

“Over the past three years I’ve seen huge improvements in the Kerang community’s understanding about how to live with, and manage fruit fly and with a community-wide effort this year, we can make a huge difference,” Ms Witney said.

Following a great turn out at last month’s information stand, where Ms Witney spoke to over 70 locals, she will again be at Victoria Square this Friday February 28 from 9.30am to 3.30pm.

“There’s a lot of stigma, misinformation and misunderstanding about fruit fly, so I’d love people to come along, ask questions and get some information so they can be part of the solution,” she said.

Ms Witney can also refill or replace old fruit fly traps for people on the day.

“The time and energy needed to battle fruit fly isn’t for everyone, though, so I can also give people information about the free tree removal program for those who can’t or don’t want to manage their fruit trees,” she said.

The tree removal program is available for Victorian residents within the GSPFA that live in town or on a residential block. Trees will be removed by professional arborists at no cost to the householder.

*Conditions apply

Ms Witney will be at Victoria Square on Friday February 28 from 9.30am to 3.00pm.

For more information, or to register for the free tree removal contact the GS PFA on (03) 5022 0327 or visit www.pestfreearea.com.au.

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