



204 Peachester Road
Peachester 4519
Qld
July 2022

Buckets of Hope project

The Peachester Garden Club initiated a project in response to the extreme devastation of people's gardens in the Northern Rivers area of NSW as a result of the 2022 floods.

We decided to make wicking beds in recycled 20 and 15 litre buckets, and deliver them to Lismore and other support hubs ready to take home and be enjoyed. We called the project "Buckets of Hope", as our intention was to bring hope and joy to our fellow gardeners' bleak world – where their soils were polluted at worst, and compressed, saturated and anaerobic at best.

We decided from the start that we would make the project plans available to other garden clubs for their potential use in other disasters, such as the current floods in NSW (July 2022).



What are wicking buckets? They are self-watering gardens built using buckets. They are portable, so can be relocated when people are living in changeable circumstances, such as temporary accommodation. They are compact and easy to move. They are suitable for communities affected by flood, drought and fire.

One bucket is placed inside another slightly larger bucket. The space between the two buckets is filled with water. So that the soil in the top bucket is watered, a column is inserted and filled with a wicking material, such as coconut coir. An overflow hole is drilled so that there is an air space between the maximum water level and the soil. A pipe is inserted to allow filling with a hose.

We tried several versions, but have agreed that the last model was the best – using a 15-litre bucket inserted into a 20-litre bucket, incorporating the requirements of a wicking bed. You'll find the instructions for building this model here – ¹[Buckets of Hope - DIY](https://www.facebook.com/groups/161370884384945/permalink/1395865720935449/). Click the link or find the web address in footnotes at the bottom of the page.

Stages of the project

1. Seeking agreement of the executive and the club
2. Estimating quantities
3. Pricing materials
4. Fundraising

¹ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/161370884384945/permalink/1395865720935449/>



5. Seeking donations for materials
6. Promotion
7. Working bees
8. Delivery

1. Seeking agreement

The idea came from one individual, so it was important to gain agreement from the executive and the club. There was some disagreement about supporting an interstate community when there were local communities who had also been affected. We agreed that the extent of the devastation in the Northern Rivers warranted our support, but decided to document our process so that other garden clubs could replicate our project for local communities.

2. Estimating quantities

The president used social media (the Facebook group, ²[Resilient Lismore](https://www.facebook.com/groups/161370884384945)) to gauge the Lismore community's need for a project such as wicking buckets, starting in April 2022. She received 122 comments, universally enthusiastic, and 368 "Likes". Based on those statistics, we decided to make 100 buckets.

We estimated quantities:

- Buckets: 2 per wicking bucket
- PVC inserts: approximately 20cm per wicking bucket
- Coir: enough to fill a 20cm length of 90mm PVC pipe, approximately 1 litre.
- Potting mix: a 60-litre bag would fill 4 buckets
- Seedlings: 3 seedlings per bucket, consisting of 1 herb, one small flower and one main plant (tomato, broccoli, cabbage etc).

3. Pricing materials

a. Buckets

- 20-litre buckets are roughly \$5 via Facebook Marketplace.
- 15-litre buckets, ex-paint, go for \$2-3.

b. PVC 90mm pipe

- 20cm per bucket, 6m lengths cost \$24 from Bunnings

c. Coconut coir

- \$28 for 90 litres (once soaked)
- About 1 litre per bucket.

d. Potting mix

- 65 litre bags from Searles cost \$21 from Bunnings

e. Seedlings

- A local seedling nursery agreed to supply us at wholesale rates, \$2.20 per punnet of 6 seedlings

² <https://www.facebook.com/groups/161370884384945>



- Bunnings seedlings cost about \$3.75 for 6.

f. Printing expenses

a. Care instruction cards

- \$115 for 100 cards, pierced top and bottom so they could be placed in the buckets using a bamboo skewer.
- These proved to be very expensive printed locally. We would suggest using Office Works instead, but to plan ahead, as there is a waiting time for delivery.

b. Instruction posters for assembling

- These were laminated in multiples so that on the day we could have 3 work stations where our team helped the community members to build their own wicking buckets.
- A3 back-to-back colour prints, laminated were \$5 each. Again – we would suggest finding a cheaper source.

g. Petrol expenses

Sadly, petrol has become very expensive, so we decided to use the remainder of the funds we'd raised to contribute to the travelling costs of the 3 cars and trailers.

4. Fundraising to meet the expenses

We had already passed the hat around in our meeting for the flood victims. We only have 20 members. We agreed to round off the donations from our bank account to bring the amount to \$1000.

The meeting decided to spend that money on funding the project. Individual members donated in addition to this amount, so we had \$1150.

5. Seeking donations for materials

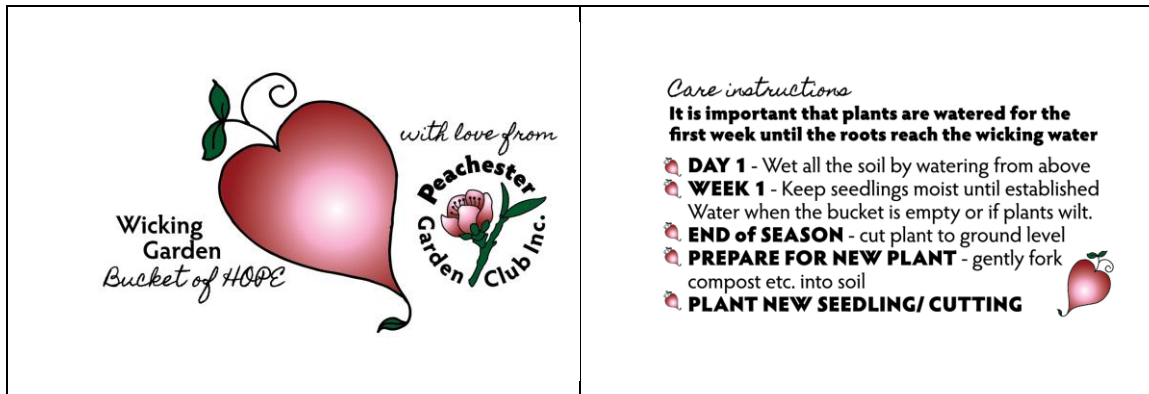
We approached the following for discounts or donations:

- Bunnings, who donated a \$100 voucher
- Our local fruit growers' coop, who donated a pallet of Searles potting mix
- Bucket sellers, who agreed to reduce the prices. We were able to get 20 litre buckets for \$3 and 15 litre buckets for \$1.
- Our seedling supplier provided one batch of seedlings as a donation. We had decided to also use the Bunnings voucher for seedlings.
- Another tradesman donated 20 x 20 litre buckets.



6. Promotion

a. Care instruction cards



We decided to print cards with care instructions on the back to promote the buckets themselves. Our artist, a club ex-member, prepared these card for us, and we had them printed locally. This was an expensive element of the project.

b. Local newspaper

Our local paper was great at promoting our project after our publicity officer alerted them to what we were planning. They came to a working bee and published an article about it then, and promised to follow up with a report at the time of delivery or after.

c. Radio

- The Northern Rivers ABC Radio contacted us after reading our original post to the Resilient Lismore Facebook group. Subsequently, Angela Catterns and Phil Dudman ³[interviewed our president](#) on their Saturday gardening program.
- Phil advised us to contact ABC again before we arrived at Lismore, and we were interviewed again on the Friday breakfast program the day we were delivering the buckets.
- Phil Dudman personally visited the Lismore hub on the day of delivery, and posted ⁴[a live video of our activity](#) to the Facebook page, which resulted in more local people coming in.

d. Facebook

- The Lismore Resilience hub created a ⁵[Facebook event](#) to inform and invite people to attend.
- We made a video, ⁶[Buckets of Hope](#), (using Microsoft Moviemaker backed with an audio track of a song we'd recorded for the project) to promote interest on the Facebook site.

³ <https://drive.google.com/file/d/18HjUxrcSh0jkERM-AY7uPYoSSIT7rc2T/view?usp=sharing>

⁴ <https://fb.watch/ebsohD42pW/>

⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/events/1130031774486002/?ref=newsfeed>

⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/626914745/videos/731022864769210/>



e. Instructions – DIY

We posted a pdf document of instructions for making the wicking buckets after we returned home – [Buckets of Hope – DIY](#) (footnote 1 above).

7. Working bees

We held several working bees. Had we settled on the easier model that we arrived at finally, the hours spent on building the buckets would have been considerably less.

8. Delivery

6 members took 3 trailers, each loaded with 12 x 65 litre bags of potting mix and about 50 buckets each (we'd managed to make 150 buckets due to extra donations of buckets).

We decided to set 1 car's contents aside to take to Wardell, another flood area, where the Wardell CORE hub publicised our visit the following day.

Conclusion

We spent \$1150 on building 150 Buckets of Hope and delivering them to the Norther Rivers flooded towns of Lismore and Wardell. This means we spent approximately \$8 per bucket. We believe we delivered many times that value in:

- Monetary value. 20 litre pots planted with vegetables would cost at least \$30, possibly up to \$50 each.
- Hope – we won't be able to calculate the value of the hope we left in the hearts of those who claimed each bucket.
- Social capital – the experience of dreaming, planning and fulfilling this project deepened the bonds between the members of our club.

We can recommend such a project for other garden clubs when confronted with the various natural disasters our country is experiencing. We have a ⁷[Peachester Garden Club Public Information](#) Facebook page if anyone would like more information.

Peachester Garden Club Inc

July 2022

⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/PeachesterGardenClubPublic>

