

KERANG COMMUNITY GARDEN BEATING FRUIT FLY



Dave Randell, Kerang Community Garden Caretaker and Tricia Witney, Greater Sunraysia Pest Free Area field officer in front of a nectarine tree covered with insect netting. Credit: GSPFA

NURTURING A FIGHTING SPIRIT

"God that's good!" Dave Randell, caretaker of the Kerang Community Garden, is 'over the moon' about his stone fruit this year. These trees were destined to be bull-dozed, when our field officer Tricia Witney paid a visit to the garden in June 2018. "I couldn't have done it without Tricia."

The community garden had been growing the trees for many years but in the past couple of years they struggled to keep Queensland fruit fly out of the fruit. "All that water and fertiliser was all for nothing. You'd get beautiful fruit but when you opened it up...you couldn't eat it." Reported Dave Randell. "If the fruit fly didn't get them, then the birds would!" it was very dishearten and the trees were ready to be bulldozed.

It's was a very different story this year when we visited the garden in March 2019, with insect nets protecting the nectarines from both fruit fly and the birds. Unveiling the nectarines Dave was so happy with the results of his efforts, they picked over 450 pieces of fruit weighing in at over 40kg. The fruit was shared with the members of the Kerang Community Garden, the neighbouring Men's Shed, donated to charity and some was sold to earn some money to help maintain the garden.





Dave Randell takes a bite of the first pickings from the nectarine... "God that's good!" Credit: GSPFA

Dave doesn't claim to be a gardener, in fact he prefers to be called a 'handy man'. But he's in the garden most days of the week and keeps an eye on things. It doesn't take long to realise that gardening might be more than a past-time for him...it's more of a challenge. "I just throw things in the ground and put water on it. I can improve on what I did next year...I'll keep learning."

The Kerang Community Garden is located in Burgoyne Street behind the high school and near the Men's Shed. It is funded through the Kerang District Health and they are always looking for new members to help share the load and the fruits of their labour. If you are interested, please ring Brett Sambrooks (03) 54 521 198.

How Dave did it:

- In July he pruned the trees hard to reduce the height of the trees and so he could reach all the fruit and the net would fit nicely over the tree. This also helped to reduce the amount of fruit on each tree so they weren't overloaded.
- Dave made some frames out of bits and pieces around the place. With the Men's Shed right next door he had plenty of materials to work with.
- He was able to purchase one net for each tree (6 x 6m) with a grant from the local Sporties Bowling Club. He waited until just after flowering had finished before he covered them. A couple of cable ties and securing the net at the base of the tree with some rope helps to protect the developing fruit from fruit fly and stops the birds getting in.
- With help from the Men's Shed the garden is kept clean of any fruit that might drop during the season.



Dave is over the moon with the nice clean fruit produced this year...no bird marks and no fruit fly and delicious. Credit: GSPFA.

FURTHER INFORMATION
www.pestfreearea.com.au
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