

Case study

Langhorne Creek Wine Region



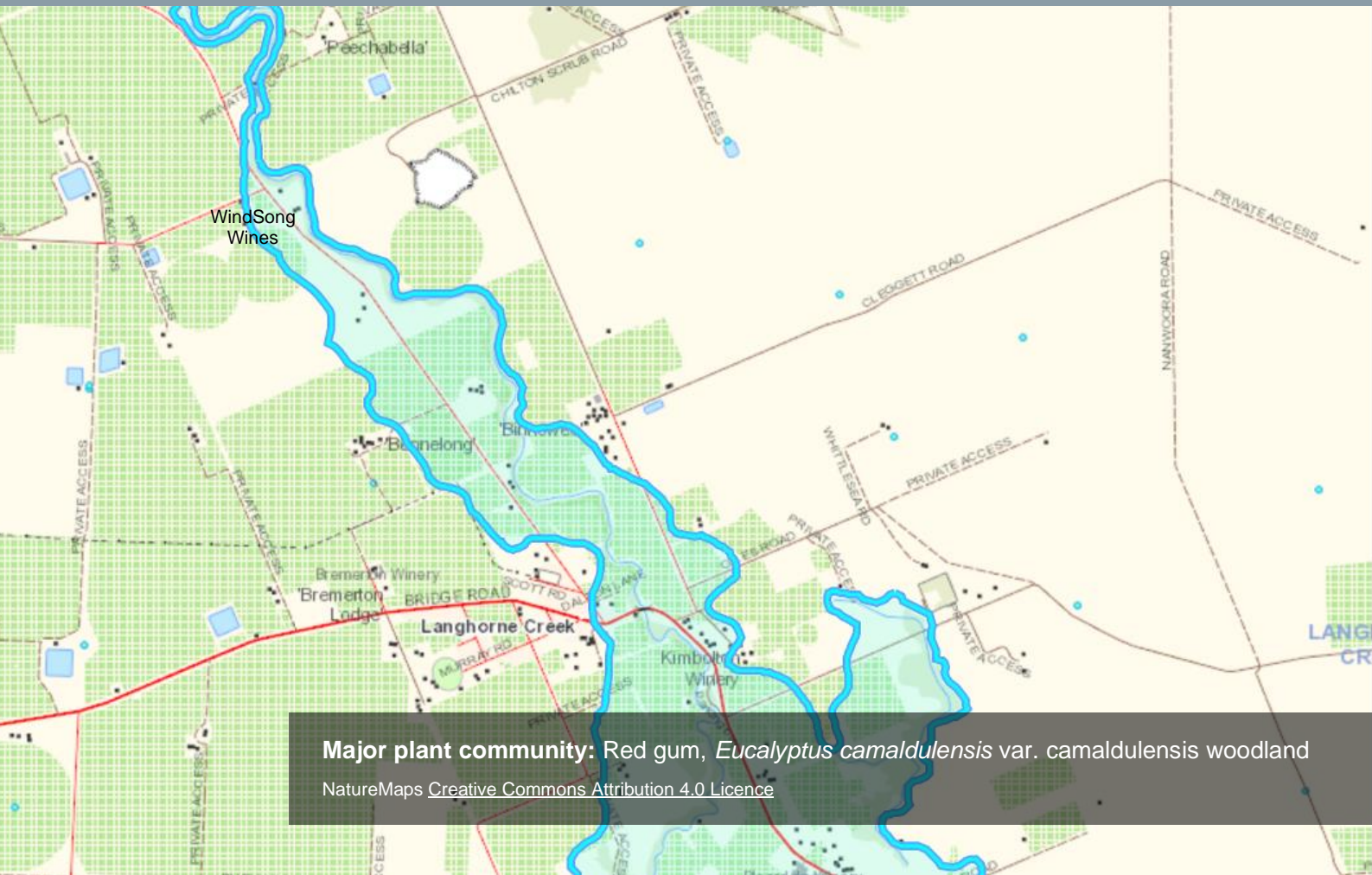
WindSong Wines, Langhorne Creek

EcoGrowers: Heather Webster, Barry Featherston and Nick Woods

“The EcoVineyards program provided a focus and relevant supporting information for us to transition to more sustainable soil management practices in our vineyard. It also provided a wealth of practical information in an easy to access form to share with our customers – many of whom are supportive of and interested in improving the environment.”



October 2023



Major plant community: Red gum, *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* var. *camaldulensis* woodland

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EcoGrower: Heather Webster, WindSong Wines

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Pitfalls to avoid?

We learned that seedling protection was vital, especially to shield the young plants from rabbits which was our greatest problem.

It remains a difficult issue and we have found a way to put recycled plastic on the ground around the stems, which discourages them from burrowing near then biting off the stems.

This was a particular problem with the climbing vines (*Hardenbergia*, *Billarderei*, *Clematis*) which we planned to cover the chain wire fence around the dam.

Progress (June 2021 to 2023):

What were you hoping to achieve and why?

Our project began with road frontage plantings of Australian native flowering plants in association with our vines and around the edge of our property (about 500).

We staked them all with scavenged white plastic pipe and triangular tree guards. These have grown beautifully and added not only soil health and ground cover but a better look and feel to the property.

We also conducted soil tests and adjusted our soil management to encourage more ground cover, namely no herbicide use and less vehicle passes to minimise soil compaction.

What did you do and when?

Plant, protect, water, repeat. We started in May 2021 and went through to October 2021. Timing of planting was important not just the time of the year to ensure sufficient soil moisture (and easier digging) but time between buying the plants and getting them in the ground. We learned to buy only the number of plants you can get in over the next couple of weeks.

We trenched to provide irrigation lines because the soil was degraded and very compacted in many places.

Where to from here?

Almost all the species recommended in Mary's species lists that we could source grew well. Some which looked very delicate proved to be really tough!

We will continue the recommended plantings around the rest of the property. We will have a special focus on local sandalwoods which we are growing in association with the mainly *Melaleuca* shelterbelt. We have planted many seeds and are also propagating sandalwoods but as they as semi-root parasites minimising root disturbance is critical.

I would like to plant sheltered tree rooms at the back of the property where people can relax and read or just watch the birds. I am working on the idea of passive barriers which encourage people to walk around but not enter the vineyard.



Photo above: Nick Woods and Heather Webster installing a photo point (Photo: Mary Retallack).

Photo left: Insectary plants growing adjacent to strainer posts (Photo: Heather Webster).



Inset: Irrigation trenches and deep ripping to establish native insectary plants (Photos: Heather Webster).
Main photo: Insectary plants growing and projected from rabbit damage by coreflute guards and reclaimed plastic pipe (stakes) (Photo: Heather Webster).

Clockwise: Barry Featherston and Heather Webster in front of a crimson bottlebrush which is growing adjacent to the strainer post; native climbers growing up the chain link fence around the dam with the predator perch in the background, more native insectary plants establishing adjacent to the strainer posts (Photos: Mary Retallack).





Clockwise: Attendees at an EcoVineyards soil health event, Nick Woods demonstrating the use of the penetrometer, water infiltrometer measurements and earthworm counts (Photos: Mary Retallack).





Inset: Piles of nitrogen and carbon rich source materials, mixing the piles and compacting the layers
Main photo: A completed, thermal, and fungal dominated compost tea round (Photos: Mary Retallack).

EcoGrower: Heather Webster, WindSong Wines

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Insights

Has your level of knowledge increased significantly since you became an EcoGrower?

Yes, but it has also highlighted the gaps. I would like to know more about native aromatics. Our knowledge of endemic flowering plants has increased significantly, and visitors love seeing them.

We have planted to establish a vineyard walk around the property, which we hope will add a point of difference and attraction to our Art and Celebration space. This allows us to use native plants as a barrier around the vines while looking attractive.

We would like to know more about the microbats which are here and any risks they might pose.

We need more educational signs about the EcoVineyards program and its many interlinking elements at our place— people really like them.

We believe it provides us with – if not a marketing edge, then a genuine feel-good factor for our grape and wine buyers.

What has been the most valuable aspect of the program for you personally?

I became very aware of the birds in our property. So many were insectivores and hence friends. I have written a book of poems and prose about the birds.

I have seen over 50 species that feature in Words of a Feather. So, few bird species that are here are damaging to the vines.

At a time when the grape industry is suffering, the project brings a sense of hope for a better, in-balance future, not just for big export markets but for locals to buy local.

I think it encourages flexibility of thinking so we can explore new more diverse ways of earning from our property too.

Native plant list:

- *Acacia hakeoides*, hakea wattle
- *Acacia euthycarpa*, wallowa
- *Acacia paradoxa*, kangaroo thorn
- *Acacia myrtifolia*, myrtle wattle
- *Acacia pycnantha*, golden wattle
- *Acacia spinescens*, spiny wattle
- *Billardiera cymosa*, sweet apple-berry (climber)
- *Bursaria spinosa*, sweet bursaria
- *Callistimon sieberi*, river bottlebrush
- *Clematis microphylla*, old man's beard (climber)
- *Cullen australasicum*, tall scurf-pea
- *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*, river red gum
- *Goodenia amplexans*, clasping goodenia
- *Goodenia pinnatifida*, cut-leaf goodenia
- *Hakea rostrata*, beaked hakea
- *Hardenbergia violacea*, native lilac (climber)
- *Leptospermum continentale*, prickly tea-tree
- *Melaleuca uncinata*, broom honeymyrtle
- *Melaleuca lanceolata*, dryland tea-tree
- *Myoporum parvifolium*, creeping boobialla
- *Oleria ramulosa*, twiggy daisy bush
- *Pultenaea largiflorens*, twiggy bush pea
- *Santalum spicatum*, Australian sandalwood
- *Senecio pinnatifolius*, coast groundsel
- *Wahlenbergia stricta*, Australian bluebell



Expenses (cash and in-kind)

Name: Heather Webster			Region: Langhorne Creek		
Date	Activity	Number of plants	Grant cash expenses	Additional cash co-contribution	In-kind time captured
27/07/21	Purchase of irrigation equipment, pipe, drippers		\$ 2,096		Heather's many hundreds of hours planting, weeding tree guards and installation of recycled posts.
25/06/21	Plants (Alexandrina Nursery)	125	\$ 125		
02/07/21	Plants (State Flora)	110	\$ 450		
13/06/21	Hire of Trencher (Kennards)		\$ 250		
06/06/21	Plants and tree guards (Trees for Life sale)	80	\$ 367		
19/7/21	Plants (Alexandrina Nursery)	100	\$ 160		
15/10/21	Plants (Alexandrina Nursery)	15	\$ 30		
01/06/21	Contractor hours installation of irrigation, predator perch, and planting		\$ 1,568		
28/10/2021	Purchase tube stock (100 plants x \$2.50 ea)	100	\$ 227		
	Windsong's payment			\$ 1,500	
TOTAL		530	\$ 5,272	\$ 1,500	

ECO VINEYARDS

GROWING RESILIENCE NATURALLY

Program partners



This project is supported by the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, through funding from Australian Government's National Landcare Program.

Acknowledgement of country

The EcoVineyards program acknowledges Aboriginal people as the First Peoples and Nations of the lands and waters we live and work upon and we pay our respects to their Elders past, present, and emerging. We acknowledge and respect the deep spiritual connection and the relationship that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have to Country.

Disclaimer

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For more info about the National EcoVineyards Program see <https://www.ecovineyards.com.au>

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