EcoVineyards Geelong – open call

Four EcoGrowers will be selected in the Geelong wine region (Surf Coast, Moorabool Valley and Bellarine Peninsula) and each will receive the following benefits, up to the value of $14,450 for a $3,000 upfront investment

Growers do not need to have a fully developed project idea before applying

Background

Winegrape growers throughout Australia are being supported in their actions to improve soil health, ground cover management, functional biodiversity, grapevine nutrient integrity, vineyard resilience and commercial performance through practical, flexible and regionally relevant approaches.

Growers will have access to new region-specific resources, events, and the establishment of four demonstration sites in the Geelong wine region. Over the next two years, there will be many learning opportunities and strong regional collaboration to help support fruit quality, productivity and the resilience of local vineyards.

All growers will benefit through the information-sharing activities associated with the EcoVineyards program including grower events and resources (fact sheets, social media posts etc.) and field walks associated with each demonstration site.

EcoVineyards Geelong will launch in November as part of Corangamite Catchment Management Authority's (CMA) Diverse Farms Resilient Catchments project, which supports farmers to improve biodiversity and strengthen resilience across farms, communities and landscapes through tailored education programs.

It is supported by the Australian Government through funding from the Natural Heritage Trust under the Climate Smart Agriculture Program. EcoVineyards is delivered by Retallack Viticulture Pty Ltd with significant support from regional communities.

For more information about EcoVineyards see www.ecovineyards.com.au and we invite you to join our online community:

- Facebook https://www.facebook.com/ecovineyards
- Instagram https://www.instagram.com/ecovineyards/

For more information about the open call please visit https://ecovineyards.com.au/ecogrowers-open-call/

Focus areas

The focus areas include:

- soil health
- ground covers, and
- functional biodiversity.

We wish to partner with innovative and self-motivated winegrowers who are willing to establish a demonstration site on their property to showcase the use of soil health practices, ground covers and/or functional biodiversity.

Corangamite CMA's Diverse Farms Resilient Catchments project is supported by the Australian Government through funding from the Natural Heritage Trust under the Climate Smart Agriculture Program. EcoVineyards is delivered by Retallack Viticulture Pty Ltd with significant support from regional communities.

EcoGrower cost–benefit and return on investment (ROI)

Four commercial vineyards in the Geelong wine region will be selected through an open call - Expression of Interest (EOI) process to establish EcoGrower demonstration sites. These vineyards will serve as regional learning hubs, showcasing practical regenerative and ecological vineyard management under commercial conditions.

The selected demonstration sites will also act as hosts for EcoVineyards events and vineyard walks during the program.

Participating EcoGrowers will play a pivotal role in demonstrating innovative approaches to improving soil health, the incorporation of ground covers, enhancing functional biodiversity and strengthening vineyard resilience.

Their experiences, successes and lessons learned will be shared with the broader wine community through workshops, field walks, fact sheets, case studies and practical extension resources, ensuring the benefits of the program extend well beyond the participating vineyards.

To secure a place in the program, each selected EcoGrower will be invited to contribute **$3,000 (ex GST)** together with an in-kind commitment of approximately **two to four days** over the next two years to support the establishment, maintenance, monitoring and promotion of their demonstration site located within a commercial vineyard setting.

In return, each EcoGrower will receive a support package valued at approximately **$14,450 (ex GST)**, representing a **return on investment (ROI) of 4.8:1**, before considering the longer-term productivity, environmental and business benefits generated through participation.

Benefits for Participating EcoGrowers

Each EcoGrower will receive:

- **Demonstration site establishment funding** valued at **$4,000 (ex GST)**, with the final **$500** released following completion of the EcoGrower case study and project reporting.
- **Dedicated technical support and mentoring** from Retallack Viticulture (up to **48 hours**), valued at **$6,000**.
- Development of a **Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP)** tailored to their vineyard, valued at **$1,250**.
- **Baseline soil health benchmarking**, including chemical and biological soil analysis, valued at **$1,100**.
- Preparation of an **EcoGrower case study** documenting outcomes and lessons learned, valued at **$1,250**.
- An **EcoVineyards promotional and monitoring package**, valued at **$850**, comprising:
  - Demonstration site signage
  - Permanent photo monitoring point
  - EcoVineyards branded bucket hat
  - Calico monitoring strips
  - Set of EcoVineyards Best Practice Management Guides (BPMGs) x 4
  - Bird and native grass reference books
  - EcoVineyards educational posters x 3
  - Optional supply of up to two microbat boxes, where appropriate
  - Nutriscope nutritional sampling report x1 (facilitated by Retallack Viticulture)
  - BirdWeather app monitoring x1 (facilitated by Retallack Viticulture)

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Table 1. EcoGrower Support Package and Return on Investment (ROI)

EcoGrower support package	Value (ex GST)
Demonstration site establishment funding	$4,000
Dedicated technical support and mentoring	$6,000
Biodiversity Action Plan	$1,250
Baseline soil health benchmarking	$1,100
EcoGrower case study	$1,250
EcoVineyards promotional and monitoring package*	$850
Total Value	**$14,450**
EcoGrower contribution	**$3,000**
ROI	**4.8:1**

* The EcoVineyards promotional and monitoring package includes demonstration site signage, a permanent photo monitoring point, EcoVineyards educational resources, technical reference materials, a Nutriscope nutritional sampling report, a BirdWise monitoring visit and, where appropriate, the option to install up to two microbat boxes.

Value for selected EcoGrowers

For an investment of **$3,000 (ex GST)**, participating EcoGrowers receive a support package valued at **$14,450 (ex GST)**, delivering an immediate **4.8:1 return on investment**.

Beyond this direct financial value, participants gain access to specialist technical expertise, personalised ecological planning in the form of a Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP), soil health benchmarking, ongoing mentoring, recognition and promotion as leaders in regenerative and ecological viticulture.

They also join a nationally recognised network of EcoGrowers committed to demonstrating innovation, sharing practical knowledge and helping build more resilient, productive and nature-positive vineyard ecosystems across Australia.

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Project ideas

Potential demonstration site ideas include, but are not limited to, the following examples. They are intended to stimulate ideas rather than limit the scope of proposals. EcoGrowers are encouraged to identify a practical project that reflects an opportunity, challenge or area of interest within their own vineyard and has potential to generate useful learnings more broadly.

Some examples are presented in existing EcoVineyards case studies and resources.

Soil health

- Exploring ways to shift soil biology from bacterial- to fungal-dominant.
- Trialling compost tea, soil microbiology and plant health inputs, including rock dust, fish hydrolysate, fulvic acid, molasses, seaweed extract, amorphous silica and chitin etc. to objectively assess changes in soil and vine health using complementary measures such as the EcoVineyards soil health indicators for Australian vineyards and leaf Brix and/or Nutriscope™ by Senseen measurements.
- Trialling different compost formulations to improve soil health and/or insectary plant establishment.
- Quantifying the benefits of soil remediation practices on soil and plant health, including high-fungal compost, compost tea and worm vermicast solutions.

Ground covers

- Trialling regionally specific ground cover species selected for soil health and/or functional biodiversity benefits.
- Establishing diverse mixes of native grasses, forbs and/or botanicals in the mid-row and/or undervine area.
- Establishing ground cover species with the capacity to produce and collect seed for on-sowing and, potentially, supplementary income.
- Trialling woody prostrate groundcover species and/or low-growing shrubs in and around vineyards to create woody meadows.
- Using hydroseeding technology to apply insectary plant seed using liquid mulch formulations.
- Assessing the benefits of plant cover compared with bare earth across different soil types.
- Understanding the role of weedy species as early successional, pioneer or indicator plants and exploring non-chemical approaches to their management.
- Incorporating beetle banks into vineyards.
- Establishing bio-hedges that provide both biodiversity and biosecurity benefits, including improving biocontrol of insect pests and creating passive barriers to restrict visitor access to vineyard areas.

Functional biodiversity

- Enhancing functional biodiversity outcomes and associated ecosystem services within and around vineyards.
- Developing biodiversity trails adjacent to cellar door facilities.
- Assessing predatory arthropods and/or insectivorous birds associated with different insectary plant communities.
- Assessing microbat communities associated with vineyards.
- Assessing raptor bird species associated with vineyards.
- Assessing different exclusion fencing and plant-guard options to protect insectary plants from rabbits, hares, deer, kangaroos and other browsing animals.
- Trialling insectary plants in mobile wicking beds prior to incorporation into the vineyard.

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Developing regionally relevant solutions

We welcome projects that apply existing EcoVineyards knowledge in new regions, soil types, vineyard systems or climatic conditions. We do not want to duplicate effort where useful insights have already been gained; rather, we encourage EcoGrowers to build on existing knowledge and demonstrate how proven approaches can be adapted to Geelong wine region's conditions.

The EcoVineyards Geelong program will also develop native plant community lists and supporting resources for each region to assist EcoGrowers with plant selection and decision-making.

EcoGrowers do not need to have a fully developed project design at the time of application. The final project scope can be developed collaboratively following selection, considering the grower's interests, site characteristics, practical feasibility and potential value to the broader wine community.

One or more ideas can be incorporated into a demonstration site if they can be accommodated within the specified budget and timeframe. Selected EcoGrowers may supplement the available funding via their own contributions if desired.

Eligibility

We will select four EcoGrowers on merit through this competitive open call from the Geelong wine region.

Retallack Viticulture and representatives from the Corangamite CMA will assess applications to select the four EcoGrowers and demonstration sites, taking into consideration the diversity of project ideas and vineyard contexts. Once selected, EcoGrowers will be invited to sign an EcoGrower Agreement.

Timeline

- **Applications open:** 22 October 2026
- **Applications close:** 14 December 2026

For more information about the open call see https://ecovineyards.com.au/ecogrowers-open-call/

Next steps

- **Application** template below (submit your application via the separate 'EcoGrower demonstration site application' word file).
- Please send your application to the EcoVineyards team admin@ecovineyards.com.au by COB **Monday 14 December 2026**. Late applications will not be accepted.
- Successful applicants will be notified by **21 December 2026**, with on-ground works to commence after vintage 2027 (or earlier).

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Geelong EcoGrower application

Complete your application using the Word version (via https://ecovineyards.com.au/ecogrowers-open-call/).

Include your name when you save the word application: Geelong EcoGrowers Application - Name.docx

Details		
Legal entity name		
ABN		
Postal address		
Business name		
Contact Person and role		
Phone number		
Email address		
Vineyard location (street address) or attach a site map		
Longitude and latitude (see https://www.latlong.net)		
Demonstration site ideas (outline your interest in a few paragraphs or dot points)		
Do you have a project in mind and/or have you been engaged in biodiversity enhancement and/or soil health projects? Please detail your project ideas in dot points or a few short paragraphs. **Complete your application using the Word version of this document.**		
My project aligns with one or more of the following deliverables (tick):	• Functional biodiversity • Ground covers • Soil health	☐ ☐ ☐
What is unique about your project and how will it create new knowledge?		
Commitment (mandatory questions)		**Yes**
Are you able to commit to the deliverables by 30 June 2028 (tick)?	• Upfront cash ($3,000) and in-kind time contribution (2 to 4 days), plus time to plan, establish and maintain your demonstration site • Development of a Biodiversity Action Plan with ROC support and ground works commencing after vintage 2027 (or sooner). • Hosting and/or attendance at EcoVineyards events (spring and autumn) and completion of a case study together with assistance from the ROC by 30 June 2028.	☐ ☐ ☐

Please send your application to the EcoVineyards team at admin@ecovineyards.com.au by COB **Monday 14 December 2026**. Late applications will not be accepted.

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