

Berry This, Berry That



Azura Sunandar, Angus Crelley,
Casey Pratt and Ada Crain

Tumbarumba Public School



Creative Catchment Kids

Creative Catchment Kids is an initiative of the Murray Darling Association and Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre. It aims to improve engagement between the Local Land Services and school students by providing opportunities for positive and authentic ventures that encourage students to develop creative solutions to agriculture and natural resource management issues.

Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre

The Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre is located in Burrumbuttock, north of Albury in southern NSW. Since 1995, the centre, which is adjacent to Burrumbuttock Public School, has provided opportunities for discovery and learning about the natural environment, the ecology of the local woodlands and the beauty of native plants. www.wirraminna.org

Murray Darling Association

The Murray Darling Association has membership of over 100 Local Government councils in the Murray-Darling Basin, as well as community groups, businesses and individuals with an interest in ensuring that the Basin continues as a valuable asset for all Australians. Since 1950, the Association has initiated various school and community education programs on managing the Basin's land and water resources. www.mda.asn.au



Enviro-Stories is an innovative literacy education program that inspires learning about natural resource and catchment management issues. Developed by PeeKdesigns, this program provides students with an opportunity to publish their own stories that have been written for other kids to support learning about their local area. www.envirostories.com.au

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Local Land Heroes

In 2014, students involved in the **Creative Catchment Kids** program researched and wrote stories about 'Local Land Heroes' - people, businesses or industries who contribute to productive agriculture and healthy environments along the Murray and Murrumbidgee rivers. The program was generously funded by Murray Local Land Services and Riverina Local Land Services.

Local Land Heroes acknowledges the United Nations 2014 International Year of Family Farming.
www.fao.org/family-farming-2014/en/

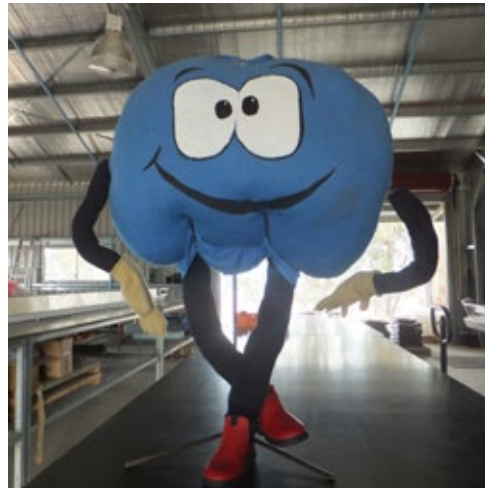


Local Land Heroes is part of Enviro-Stories, a Peekdesigns education program.



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The Jolly Berries farm is a local industry that was created by Molly and James Crozier. The farm is set in a picturesque landscape near Tumbarumba, surrounded by 900 acres of cattle farm run by Molly's husband, James.

Jolly Berries is a blueberry farm. When Molly bought the very run down farm, they were going to rip all the berries out and use the land for cattle.



Molly kept two blocks of berries and so began Jolly Berries. Molly worked fifteen hour days, seven days a week and drove three thousand kilometers for the summer. Molly “nearly died!” A year’s work in three months! The choice she had to make was to do it properly or don’t do it at all. She decided to make a go of it.



The six year drought broke, the dam filled up and the berry season began. Molly had to prune, pick and used an old existing shed to pack in. From this small beginning the business has grown.

They have built an enormous new shed. Inside the shed there is a packing line, a wet line for frozen berries, and three very large cool rooms.



Outside they have built a nursery so that they can grow their own blueberries. This means that the old, unproductive berry bushes and varieties that don't produce very well can be replaced by plants she has grown herself. The berry bushes that are pulled out are mulched and put back onto the more productive bushes.



These bushes take a lot of looking after. They need pruning which involves Molly and her crew working together using the pruning trailer. The pruning trailer runs the air operated pruners so that the employees are able to prune the bushes more efficiently.

As they are pruning, they cut out all the diseased branches and burn them.

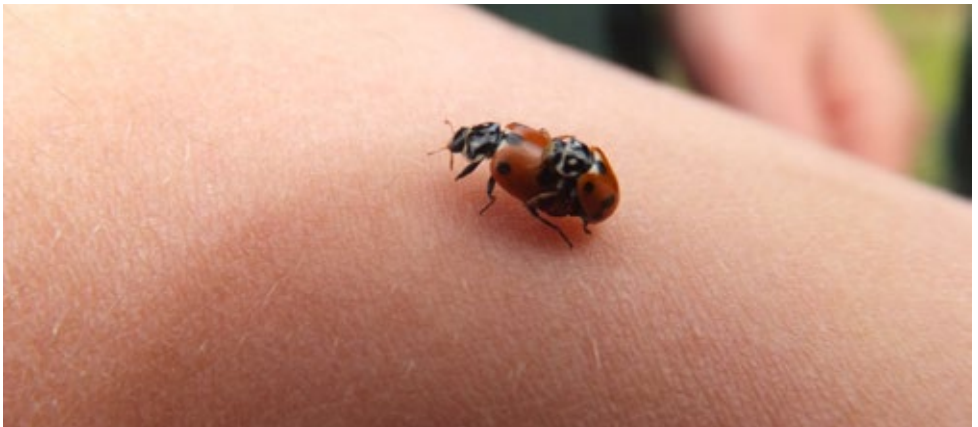


The mulching machine comes through and shoots all the mulch back onto the bushes. Mulching the bushes reduces the amount of water evaporation, therefore there is less need for watering. Molly and James have a backup plan in case of drought. They have an irrigation system throughout the farm that utilises the spring fed dam or they are able to use their irrigation license.

The blueberry bushes attract some nasty bugs. Molly hates sprays so she bought ladybirds to help fix the problem.

She also bought bees to increase the pollination rate. When there are no flowers for the bees, Molly and her crew feed them sugar so they don't leave or die.

To help the bushes fight the bugs and grow more vigorously, they use worm casting tea made from worm poo and water.



While they are pruning they choose cuttings from the good bushes to plant in the nursery. The nursery has a miniature hot house and watering system to maximise the success rate of new plants. These plants are used to replace the non-producing bushes and also expand the berry farm.

Blueberry flowers are susceptible to frosts, so Molly and James installed a frost fan to help prevent frost damage.



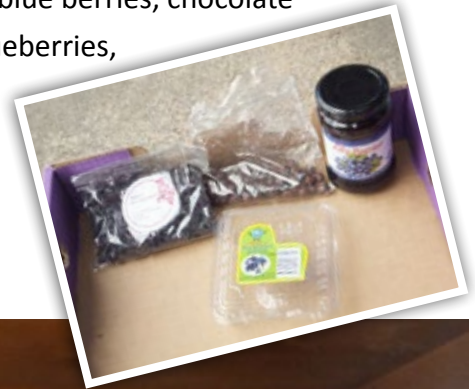


The frost fan stops the flowers from freezing. If they freeze they don't produce berries. "No flowers, no berries!"

Another problem they have is the birds eating the berries. They have chopped down some trees but don't want to chop them all down. Their plan is to cover the berries with bird netting. This will also enable them to install water misters that will keep the berries moist.

Molly employs backpackers to pick and pack the berries. This brings business to our community. Her 'crew' are local people. She has an agent who sells the berries in Sydney and she uses local transport to get the berries to market.

Molly goes to local farmers markets to sell her products. These products include dried blueberries, chocolate coated blueberries, frozen blueberries, muffins, pies, jams, wines and sauces. This list is constantly changing to suit consumer demand.





Molly and James are always looking for innovative ways of improving the business. They have become part of the Tumbarumba tourism trade with their cellar door and the 'pick your own berries'.

Molly and James are an important part of our community. They are willing to take chances and work hard to make them successful.



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2014 Year 5, Tumbarumba Public School

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designs 



Local Land
Services
Murray



Local Land
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Riverina



Australian Government