

Ron Richardson - Protea Perfection



Jed Ansell, Crystal Bateman,
Maxwell Bradbury, Jypsie Beagley,
Logan Kerr and Taylah Macartney

Oaklands Central 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 PeekKdesigns, 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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School: Oaklands Central School

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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Victor Ronald Richardson (Ron) is one of Oaklands Local Land Heroes. Ron was born on the 25th November, in 1941, in Corowa. Ron has lived with family, in Oaklands, for around 45 years. Ron with his late wife Mary have five boys who are now all grown up and have their own careers. Ron attended school at South Corowa Public and Corowa High School.



Ron started growing proteas in 1997. Ron's goal is to keep growing proteas until he turns 80. Ron was previously a brick layer but was hurt in an accident. As a result he bought some land and started to grow proteas. This passion has continued with Ron still growing proteas and now selling them in a number of locations in the local area.





Ron has over one thousand protea plants on his property, consisting of around 15 different species. Some of the varieties are Possum Magic, Frosted Fire, Cream Mink and Pink Mink.

He also grows *Banksias* and *Leucadendrons* to use in his arrangements at markets. Ron has his plants in an orchard property at the back of his house.





He doesn't use all of his plants for harvesting. Ron lets some of them grow wild as a protective wind break. He has a colony of honeyeaters who also use these larger plants as a food source. To maintain the quality of his plants he regularly trims branches to encourage straight stems. He only picks around 50 flowers from one plant which allows the plant to put effort into bigger, better flowers.



Ron uses a lawnmower and a makeshift trailer to harvest his proteas. Once he has collected his proteas he takes them back to his shed where he has buckets all lined up. He then separates the harvest depending on species and length of stem. These will all then be ready for market as individual stems or in bunches.





Ron also has a concreting business. This is another career that he loves. He has been involved in building many of the houses around Oaklands. It is amazing that a 73 year old can still be concreting and doing such a great job. Ron said that he enjoys having two very different careers as it keeps him happy.



Ron is a very important Oaklands community member. He is involved in many local Oaklands organisations like the Men's Shed. Ron is one of the main people instigating the Oaklands Men's Shed for the community. Ron thinks that it is important that people in the community get access to a place to build skills and share stories.



Ron has had a lot of special moments and memories in his life while growing proteas. At the end of a market day, if he has any leftover arrangements, Ron will look around for people who look like they need a touch of happiness. He gives them the arrangements to make their day.



Ron told the story of a local lady who was in hospital, and Ron gave her an arrangement. Unfortunately she passed away. It turned out the bunch of proteas Ron gave her was the first ever flowers she had received. She made the request that she was to be buried with the bunch of proteas Ron gave her. He really makes a difference.



Ron sells his proteas to florists, hospitals and individuals. He sells them individually, in bunches and also arrangements. His best seller is a three flower posy, he calls it the 'Pensioner Posy'. One of his greatest achievements is the regular buyers that come back because of the quality of his flowers. Keep your eyes open if you are ever at the Sunday Markets in Albury!



Protea Facts

- Protea is a member of the Proteaceae Family.
- They originate from South Africa.
- The flower is actually a group of individual flowers that are grouped on a rounded base.
- Pink, white, yellow, green, orange and red are the most common colours.
- Proteas can be used for making cough syrup and curing stomach ulcers and diarrhoea.





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