

Being Organic at Buronga!



Elizabeth Bragg, Luke Dowell,
Michelle Rabey and Ella Ricketts

Cootamundra Public School



Creative Catchment Kids

Creative Catchment Kids is an initiative of Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre. It aims to improve engagement between our funding partners 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.

www.wirraminna.org/creative-catchment-kids/

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

Enviro-Stories

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

Being Organic at Buronga!

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School: Cootamundra Public School

Local Land Heroes - Securing Our Region

In 2015, students involved in the Creative Catchment Kids program researched and wrote stories about their 'Local Land Heroes' who are involved in pest management in the Murray and Murrumbidgee regions. These heroes are local individuals, couples, a business or industries that have made a difference in their local community by contributing to the management of pest animals and plants. The program was generously funded by Murray Local Land Services and Riverina Local Land Services.

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



Local Land
Services



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Buronga Organics is an organic farm owned by David and Mary Booth. Their farm is located between Cootamundra and Bethungra in southern New South Wales. The Booths have lived at Buronga for thirteen years on their 2060 hectare property where they have raised their children Anna, Andrew, Henry, Louisa, Richard, Charlie and Isobella. They all still contribute to the farming enterprise. The property has 460 hectares set aside as a reserve for native vegetation.





What is Organic Farming?

Organic farming means that you rely on natural and not artificial chemical products. At Buronga lime and organic compost are used as fertilisers. Insecticides and weed sprays are not used! David and Mary chose to farm organically because they feel it is a healthier lifestyle and they get a premium price for their product.

It took three years for the organic conversion. Testing of the soil is carried out each year to meet the requirements of organic certification.



The Booth's grow a wide range of organic crops that include cereal rye, wheat and spelt. Spelt is an ancient grain and is a sub species of wheat. The spelt variety selected at Buronga Organics does not clog the combine and is therefore easier to sow and harvest. David was introduced to spelt by the owner of the Junee Licorice Factory Neil Druce. Spelt is the main component in their organic licorice and it's used by many bakers because of its reduced gluten content.



Why buy organic?

There is a demand for organic produce because it is free from artificial and toxic chemicals and it is produced naturally without damaging the environment. According to Mary, many people prefer organic food because of its more natural and cleaner taste.

Spelt Bread

Spelt bread is similar to bread made with normal bread flour but has a sweet, nutty flavour. This recipe makes a 750g loaf.

INGREDIENTS

500g white spelt flour
1 1/2 teaspoons instant yeast
10g (2 teaspoons) bread improver
10g (2 teaspoons) salt
5g (2 teaspoons) sugar
20ml (1 tablespoon) of oil
300ml of water

METHOD

Place all ingredients except water into a bowl. Beat with mixer while slowly adding water. Beat for about 10 minutes until dough becomes firm. If dough is sticky add some more flour till firm. Cover bowl with a tea towel or plastic wrap and leave in a warm place until dough doubles in size, usually about 20-30 minutes. Punch dough down to remove all air pockets. Shape and place in suitable loaf tin. Allow to rise again. Cook in a hot oven (200°C) until brown.

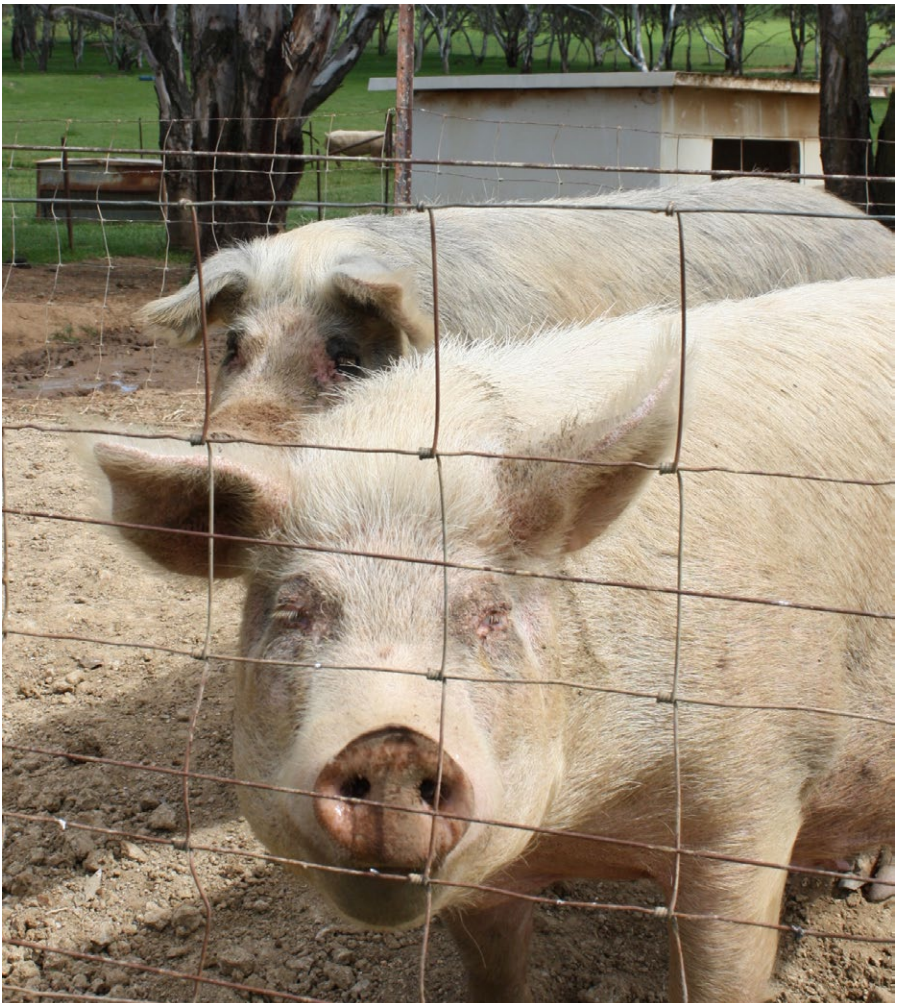
Hint: Loaf is cooked if it sounds hollow when tapped.



Pest control on an organic farm is important. On an organic farm you cannot use chemicals so David and Mary have had to be creative to reduce weeds, flies and pests. Maremma dogs are used to keep away foxes and wild dogs. They protect the poultry and sheep.

The Booth's use Dorper sheep instead of the more usual Merino sheep. Dorper sheep do not attract fly strike like other breeds. They don't need shearing because they are hairy and shed their covering. Rotational grazing is used to reduce the build-up of internal parasites in the sheep.

Free range pigs are fed organic cereal crops from the farm.



Weed Control

To keep weeds under control paddocks are ploughed twice before planting crops. Sometimes Boer goats are used to eat the weeds. If rye grass takes over a crop it will be used as feed for livestock. Rye grass is not resistant to chemicals on the Booth property and therefore other farmers in the district are interested in obtaining seed.





The Booths raise a range of poultry that include chickens, turkeys and geese for eggs and meat. The poultry is protected from hungry foxes by a couple of Maremma dogs who stay in a nearby shed.

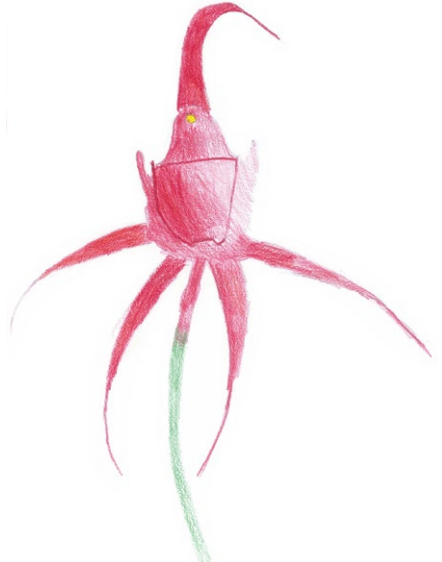
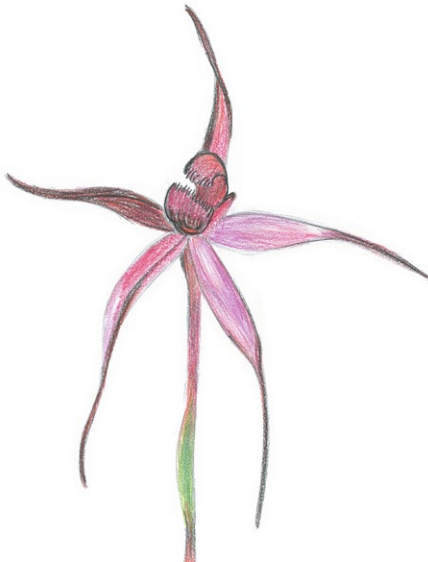
Dung beetles

Dung beetles are a good sign of an organic farm. Dung beetles clean up dung left by animals by digging down into the soil taking the dung with them. This provides fertiliser for the crops and pastures making the nutrients available to the roots. Less dung on the surface means fewer places for pesky flies to breed.



The Crimson Spider Orchid

The Crimson Spider Orchid is a rare ground orchid. A few hundred plants occur in the area the Booths have set aside for native vegetation. It is only found in a few other places. It flowers in September and survives as a tuber under the ground. It does not flower every year.





David and Mary say their future rests on their ability to farm the land in a sustainable way. This means that they can look after the land for future generations.

"We are passionate about farming and we strive to do it in a way that is environmentally sound."



Michelle Rabey, Luke Dowell, Elizabeth Bragg and Ella Ricketts

2015 Year 5 and 6, Cootamundra Public School

CONGRATULATIONS

Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre and the Creative Catchment Kids Program won the 2015 NSW Junior Landcare Team Award and will be competing in the 2016 National Landcare Awards.



Local Land Services

