BushCare Mates is a youth conservation volunteering program that uses practical bushcare activities to educate and inspire students to connect with their local environment while fostering a sense of community.

Your school or youth group can join our 1,200+ volunteers annually planting 20,000 native trees and removing 550 wheelie bins of environmental weeds restoring over 140 hectares of wildlife habitat.

What activities do we offer?

Bushcare

Your school/class/group will assist with natural regeneration in our bushland reserves through the control of weeds to encourage natural recruitment of native species and provide in-fill planting when required.

* **Hand weeding**

Using small hand tools to extract weeds and placing in bags and/or leaving in situ.

* **In-fill planting**

If required, native plants will be planted in the weeded area. Small hand tools will be used for making a hole. A fertiliser/wetting agent, weed mat and tree guard may be added, followed with watering from buckets.

Native tree planting

Your school/class/group will plant native trees, shrubs and/or ground covers to restore a degraded area where the soil seed bank is insufficient to allow natural regeneration.

Small hand tools will be used to remove loose soil from a hole. A fertiliser/wetting agent, weed mat and tree guard may be added, followed with watering from buckets.

In most circumstances the holes will be pre-dug prior to the day.

What is provided?

* **Planning & preparation of a suitable bushcare/tree planting activity**

Where possible, we will select a location close to your school/base and choose an activity suitable for your age and size of group.

* **Supervision by one of our qualified Community Conservation Officers**

Our Officers are skilled in bush regeneration and working with volunteers and children and in possession of Blue Card and Provide First Aid Certificate.

* **All plants, materials, tools and first aid kit**
* **Safety induction & skills demonstration**
* **Information about the site and how their activity links to other local projects**
* **Upon request we can:**
	+ invite our local bushcare volunteers to talk about their volunteering, projects and work alongside the students (*NB: A majority of our bushcare volunteers do not hold a Blue Card)*
	+ assist with the cost of transport to and from site
	+ recommend (possibly assist with) additional educational activities (*NB: activities are usually best suited for groups of 10-15 students*)
	+ provide a portable toilet if the site is not within walking distance of a public toilet and activity exceeds 2 hours.

What is the school responsible for?

* **Adequate staff/guardian supervision**

This includes monitoring behaviour, head counts at start and end of activity and ensuring volunteers bring any relevant allergy medication.

* **Ensure volunteers are sun safe and wear appropriate clothing/equipment**

This includes hat, sunscreen and closed shoes.

* **Volunteers bring along their own water bottle and any other refreshments or snacks**

We discourage the use of single-use plastic.

* **An understanding that we are working outdoors and activities may need to be re-scheduled due to weather conditions.**

What commitment is expected?

We aim to create long term partnerships and encourage activities to develop into annual/regular events. This will enable your school/class/group to re-visit sites and monitor changes overtime.

However, we welcome schools/classes/groups that can only commitment to a once off activity.

To assist with our scheduling and budgeting we prefer to lock in dates at the beginning of a calendar year. A minimum of 3 months’ notice is required to enable us to select and prepare a site.

We recommend the school/class/group plan a contingency day as activities may need to be cancelled due to weather conditions.

If you have individuals wanting to gain conservation experience and/or give back to their community. They are welcome to attend one of our regular bushcare working bees. Contact us for more information.

Safety

1. Sunshine Coast Council is committed to providing a safe working environment for all our volunteers. All volunteers will be provided with a briefing and safety induction prior to commencement of any activities.
2. We recommend activities to be scheduled earlier in the day and for no longer than 3 hours.
3. See table 1 for general safety considerations.

Contact

For more information and/or to make an enquiry please contact Senior Community Conservation Officer
[e] bushcare@sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au
[p] 07 5499 5178



Table 1: General safety considerations

| Possible safety & environmental hazards | Control measures to reduce risks |
| --- | --- |
| Students not familiar with the site and conditions  Students not familiar or competent to complete the task |          Conduct a site pre-start briefing to communicate information about the activity.         Clarify tasks, roles, PPE, materials, plant etc.         Clarify any site hazards, risks and controls, site rules etc. identified          PPE must be worn eg sun safe clothing, hat, safety footwear, gloves, eyewear etc.          Practice good housekeeping to eliminate or minimise potential for slips, trips and falls eg keep the job site tidy and clear of obstacles.         Rotate and share work tasks to minimise worker fatigue. Avoid heavy exertion during the most intense heat of the day. |
| Exposure to site specific hazards eg uneven surfaces and footpaths that may result in:         Slips, trips, falls         Muscular strains and sprains         Spikes, lacerations and abrasions         Bites, stings and irritations         Chemical exposure         Fatigue and dehydration         Eye injuryDisturbance of unexploded ordnance (UXO) lying on or just under the surface |          Demonstrate correct planting technique at start of activity.         Wear suitable PPE for the task. Gloves are essential.         Wash hands with soap and water before eating, drinking, going to the toilet or smoking.         Ensure students bring any relevant allergy medication.         Ensure students stay out of long grass and wear enclosed shoes.        Be careful of litter items or piles that might be a refuge for snakes or spiders.        Never put unprotected hands into enclosed or overgrown places.         All areas zoned as possible risk (or higher) of UXO presence will be professionally scanned and cleared prior to activity. |
| Hazards associated with working near water (ocean, river or creek)         Immersion         Drowning  |        Maintain a safe distance between team members and water that is deemed dangerous because of depth, current, murkiness, turbulence, difficulty of escape, steepness of banks, etc.       Refrain from working on steep, slippery or unstable banks.       Maintain a safe distance from water body.       Designate any no-go zones in briefing. |