

Revitalising Landcare and bushcare groups...

“If not,  
then  
what?”



...with the magic of Passion Mashin’



# Landcare and bushcare groups are reinventing their volunteer experience with zest and enthusiasm.

Here is a cornucopia of creative volunteer ideas from all over Australia, as collected in the [Passion Mashin'](#) workshops.

**What if revitalising a volunteer group was less about persuasion and more about reinvention?**

**Reinvention means changing the 'recipe' of a group to make it more like one that new people would love to join - and which gives a fresh experience for existing members.**

**An easy way to start reinventing the volunteer experience is to consider each ingredient of a group's 'recipe' and ask: "If not that, then what?"**



These ideas were sprouted in Les Robinson's [Passion Mashin' workshops](#) with hundreds of Landcare and bushcare members since 2011.

The ideas in brackets () are already in practice.

For more on the Passion Mashin' workshops see: [www.enablingchange.com.au/passionmashing.html](http://www.enablingchange.com.au/passionmashing.html)

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## What is "If not, then what?"

It's a reinvention exercise we do in the Passion Mashin' workshop.

**Step 1:** Separate a group's 'recipe' into its tangible ingredients (for example: where we meet, when we meet, what we do there, what we eat/drink, how we communicate, how we welcome new members, how we celebrate).

**Step 2:** For each ingredient, brainstorm: "If that was *impossible*, what could we do instead?" List every idea. Encourage 'crazy thinking'.

**Step 3:** Review the ideas and decide which ones to experiment with.

# If not [the usual name], then what

**A group's name tells a story about the group.**

It's often the first thing a potential volunteer notices. Does it suggest the experience would be satisfying and enjoyable? When it comes to choosing a name remember that quirky names travel fastest and farthest.

**Mudcrabs** (Cooks River, Sydney)

**Fish and Chippers** (Berowra Waters, Sydney)

**Willow Warriors** (Nepean River, Sydney)

**Saturday Afternoon Tea Group** (Lane Cove Valley, Sydney)

**Beer Makers Bush Club**

**Big Bitou Bash**

**Le Bushcare** (practice your French)

**Coffee and Chocolate Lovers Bushcare group** (where do I sign up?)



# If not [the usual suspects], then who?



**Green nomads** (Upper Thompson Landcare, Old)

**A local buddhist church**  
(Friends of Daniel Ck)

**Bored US Marines**(Warrabinda Youth Camp, Darwin)

**Corporate team-building groups** (Landcare Illawarra)

**Visitors** (South West Rocks Dune Care)

**Singles** (Landcare for Singles: Yarra Valley Landcare (and single parents), ACT Landcare, Illawarra Youth Landcare, CVA Darwin, Coastcare for Singles Fremantle)



**Nature lovers everywhere:** a “friend of” membership for anyone who picks weeds.

**Retirement villagers:** “The Regenerators”



**Children** (Bushkids, Lane Cove Valley)

**Youth who like to party**  
(DancePlant, TrancePlant)

## When making invitations

the place to start is with people in our own social networks. Then, to reach out to different groups, ask: what experiences might they be on the lookout for, then build those experiences into the group and frame your communications around the experiences. Remember that young men are on the lookout for hard exercise, parents are on the lookout for interesting things to do with their children, older people are looking for low impact exercise. Practically everyone is on the lookout for friendly conversation, time in nature and de-stressing.



# If not [the usual location], then where?

**A beautiful site** that just needs a touch-up      **A frog habitat**

**A roadside nature strip.** A wildlife corridor in every street!

**Roving hands,** helping out on a different site every month

**A different spot every time** ([Barung Roving Restorers, Malem](#))

**A wildcard site** you only find out about the night before

**A riverbank** you can only get to by canoe ([Willow Warriors](#))

**Half way down a cliff** ([Jenolan Caves Landcare Group's Sycamore War](#),  
[Sydney Rockclimbers Mountain Goat Bushcare Group](#))

**Somewhere wild and remote** ([Victorian Mobile Landcare Group](#),  
[Friends of the Colo](#))



**Maybe not to work the same 'weed-pit' every month.**

Consider having a few sites and shifting between them. Some sites could be almost pristine so volunteers get inspired by (and learn about) the richness of nature. Others could be in a mix of habitats to create variety and inspiration. Some groups spread the love by helping out a sister group every few months.



# If not [the usual time], then when?



**Sunrise breakfast**



**Full moon nights**

**Twilight evenings**

**Daylight saving afternoons**

**A different day and time every month**



**Different people have different rhythms.**

Older people often wake early and appreciate a social breakfast and some physical activity to start the day. Busy people also enjoy a power breakfast. Mums with young kids like later morning activities. Everyone loves long warm daylight evenings. Twilight is for romance. Moonlight is for magic.

# If not [the usual refreshments], then?

**Freshly brewed coffee and Fair Trade chocolate**



**Tea flavoured with native plant leaves**

**Bacon and eggs**

**A Chocolate cake baking competition**

**Sunset drinks**



**Bunny Boiler Challenge** (Bass Coast Landcare Network)

**Wine tasting**

**Edible weeds**

**Gourmet food tasting**

**A Big Brew and Bake-off** (Barker Creek Landcare Group, Vic)

**Marshter Chef CookOff** (Macquarie Marshes Landcare Group, NSW)



**Fine Feast of Foraged Food** (Neerim & District Landcare Group)

**Food is the world's best connector.**

Interesting and unusual foods give people something to get excited about and the buzz with their friends. Successful volunteer groups always pay attention to the social side of their activities and food is the key! If you already have a cake competition, tell everyone about it: why not call your next working bee the "Aunty Jacquie's Unique Blood Orange Sponge Cake field day"?



# If not [the usual activities], then what?



## **Classical Music**

(Four Seasons prog, Gosford City Council)

## **A Fire Fly BBQ**

**A cellar door meeting**  
(Great Eastern Ranges)

## **A Mad Hatters Tea Party**

**A walk and talk for new members** (Middle Yarra Landcare Network)

## **Bee Rescue**

(Richmond Landcare)

## **Spotlighting**

## **Weaving with Weeds**

## **Making nestboxes**

## **A singing class**

**Puppetry** (Puppetry for Landcare, Mornington Pen)

## **Yam Daisy Harvest** (Friends of Merri Creek)

## **A Teddy Bears picnic**

## **Outsourcing a nursery to a school class**

(Bambara Roselea Bushcare Group, Sydney)

**An Easter Egg Hunt**



## **A week-long camp out** (Fraser Is Defenders Org)

## **Guerilla knitting**



## **Breaking the routine**

with interesting, buzz-worthy activities is the secret to attracting new volunteers and reawakening “sleeper” members. It’s also the key to spreading the word and getting media attention. Out-of-the-ordinary activities can attract entirely new members who wouldn’t be drawn to just weeding and planting on a particular block of land. Young people, especially, are looking for activities with variety, sociability and excitement.



# More unusual activities

**A school education day** ([Buckwaroon Landcare Group](#), Cobar)

**Partner with a heritage group and start a Heritage Walk** (Bambara Roselea Bushcare Group)

**Do a dung beetle survey.**

**Focus on just one species** (Capertee Valley Regent Honeyeater Recovery Group)

**Tree Triathlon.** Swim to the tool collection point, bike to the plant collection point, run to the tree planting site, then we all collapse!

**Turf and Surf Day.** A surf class and bitou bush weeding morning.

**Landcare Olympics.** How many plants can you plant in 5 minutes?

**Billy Tea and Poetry** (Woodford Glen Landcare Group)

**Have a birthday party for your group each year** (Cooks River Mudcrabs)

**Bushcare with Tai Chi, Yoga, meditation.** Perfect!

**A loyalty program.** Rewards for the most weeds pulled.

**Weed Jam.** At the end of a weeding session invite a local band for a sunset session of music and people bring their own instruments.

**WavePlant Surfing Contest.** The winner plants 20 trees, the second place 10 trees etc

**Coastcare Campout.** Dune regeneration and campout for young people.

**Bushcare Bike Crawl.** Biking from one group's site to another, doing work and enjoying a snack at each place.

**Sand sculpture and Coastcare**

**Biggest Weed Competition.** A school holiday activity.

**A plant ID competition.**

**Bushcare Stick Up.** Make stick sculptures on your site.



**Reinvention** is an idea from The Diffusion of Innovations (the science of how ideas, practices and products spread through societies.)



According to diffusion scholars, what spreads an idea is not persuading more people to do it, but rather the way the idea itself changes to fit the needs of more and more people. Ideas spread when they become easier, cheaper, faster, more useful and more fun.

Reinventing a Landcare or bushcare group might involve small changes like a new name (“Chocolate Lovers BushCare”) or adding a new activity (a moonlight picnic). Or it might involve transforming the group’s purpose, for example changing from a Landcare Group to a Regent Honeyeater Restoration Group. Or it might involve organising an buzzworthy new initiative like Landcare for Singles or BushCare for Kids.

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