

Media Release

15 March 2011

Better gardens for our schools

NQ Dry Tropics is making school gardens better.

Schools are a vital hub of the community and their grounds are under foot all the time.

Native landscaping is not an area that schools may have expertise or resources, but the need is there.

NQ Dry Tropics are launching the Healthy Habitat for Schools initiative across schools of the dry tropics in 2011.

Healthy Habitat for Schools will include workshops for staff and support for grounds assessment and planning. The program will start in Term 2.

Aside from providing somewhere to sit while students unpack a squashed sandwich, the school environment must be safe, preferably aesthetic, include wildlife habitat and provide education outside the classroom.

Schools are increasingly required to show they are reducing their ecological footprint but some teachers do not know how to do that.

Healthy Habitat for Schools will help schools create better landscapes.

School communities will have the information to confidently choose plants for their property that are resilient, climate appropriate and cyclone resistant.

Judy Warner from NQ Dry Tropics said, "A planned approach will help schools make the best decisions about what to plant to attract and protect native wildlife and how best to be weed free.

With this knowledge they can lead community awareness on the importance of biodiversity and land management."

Since 2009 Healthy Habitat has had a great track record in helping residents of Townsville's semi-urban areas of Alligator Creek and Black River look after their land.

It is a program that draws together the best expert advice with practical workshops. During property visits staff has even discovered endangered native plants.

For Healthy Habitat the next obvious step was to extend the free service to schools.

NQ Dry Tropics is working with Education Queensland, Townsville City Council, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and local community organisations to ensure schools

have the best available information and resources to make decisions for the improvement of their land.

For more information contact Paul Wuth at NQ Dry Tropics on 4724 3544.

Our region includes the local government areas of Townsville, Charters Towers, Burdekin, Isaac, Barcaldine, Etheridge, Hinchinbrook, Palm Island and the Whitsundays. **Media contact:** For further information contact Carla Hutchinson-Reade on (07) 4722 5729/0409 121 221 or email carla.hutchinson-reafe@nqdrytropics.com.