



“My Landcare Site is my grocery store, relaxation centre and gym!”

Garry from Lakeside Drive Landcare and LMLN representative

My love for the bush started when I was 5 years of age. My Father, sister and I used to go out every Sunday into the bush at Wallsend to trap birds (back when this was allowed and the impacts weren't known) and to shoot rabbits for Sunday dinner. These experiences with my Dad taught me survival skills in the bush and the love and respect for nature that comes with that.

My love of the bush extended through my work with Parks and Gardens with Newcastle City Council, starting at age 15. My first role in the nursery really developed my love of plants. Other work involved experiences such as assisting in the establishment of Black Butt Reserve, putting identification plaques on trees and pulling out lantana with a tractor. Removing Bitou at King Edward Park (hanging off side of cliffs without ropes!) was another experience.

My introduction to Landcare was an unusual one – in 2000, before I started Landcare, I used to sneak (barefooted) into Galgabba Landcare site and ‘assist’ by cutting down unsafe coral trees. In 2001, I officially joined Galgabba Landcare Group which then consisted of five people.

In 2002 I joined Coon Island Landcare group as the chair person of the current board invited me to work on the site with him due to my plant knowledge. Two years later I was approached by John Adams to start Lakeside Drive Landcare so we could extend the benefits occurring at nearby Coon Island to a larger area. I've been regularly working on this site since 2005. In 2007 I extended my knowledge with assistance of Workways and Sharon from Galgabba who taught the Cert II Bush regeneration. Completing this course allowed me to apply my knowledge to Landcare activities on site.

My Lakeside Landcare site is just 100m from my home. I visit it every day to see what birds are around and to look for bush tucker. Sometimes I fish when we are working on the site – I throw the rods in and come back in half an hour and then I get some Bream or Sand Whiting for tea! My Landcare activities also help me to keep fit but, as I'm in control of what I do on site I don't need to push myself or strain my body. My Landcare site will always be a special place to me – especially at sunset!