



Abby - Creating a nature play space with recycled materials

What was your goal and what did you achieve?

I was hoping to do a stall at the local market but it was the wrong time to plant the plants and things like that, so with native plants I was going to sell but it was just the wrong time of year. My next project was a nature play area and what I wanted to achieve out of that was to spread awareness about how nature can be used instead of always being inside on electronics and to raise awareness in the school community about that.

It took me a while to develop a project to choose what I wanted to do but after I got it up and running it was pretty easy. So I started off with research and I researched nature play areas and then I went into like brainstorming and planning. Then after I had a set design of what I wanted to do, I came to the student executive at our school. I am a school captain so I ran a meeting and I spoke to them, got their ideas and everything about that, so they said what they would like to have in there and I said why I was doing it.

The actual area is 770cm by 280cm and 470cm so it's quite big. Our first step was removing these plants and rocks. It's in area one which is the first place when you visit the school that you walk into. It's the most used place for the junior primary and the guests and stuff.

I had to ask the Grounds Committee and get their support, but I recycled all these materials so I didn't actually have to spend any money on it. The rocks we had in our school already, the planks of wood my uncle had, the kangaroo paw bush was there and we kept that there because it was a native to Western Australia. We had the pole and then the pavers we'd used at the school and also tree stumps.

Where did you do your research?

At home. One of the teachers when I was doing planning gave me a website it was Nature Play SA and I got photos from there. I got some photos from another school that had done one and I also got some off the Internet, so pretty much a variety of resources. Then after I had my meeting we decided that because Sports Day is taking up a lot of the term we'd need to do a working bee, so we planned a working bee and then we did a model to scale so that's exactly what it'll look like.

What is happening at the working bee?

That's coming up, in week 7 after sports day. We're making posters to put up around the school and then the working bee will be Monday, Wednesday and Friday, and after we get volunteers we'll get them to say their preferred day and we'll try and organize that to what we're going to do.

How did other students take the idea?

They all were quite excited for it because we've all been asking to have something to do because the netball courts sometimes get crowded and we haven't got as many options in the summer so they all thought that that would be a great idea, especially when they're waiting in the morning to go to class.

Who else helped you with the project?

We have an SSO at the school - Dave - I had meetings and things with him, as he had a few ideas as well. We sort of worked together to get everything resourced and stuff but it was mostly me. I tried to get the school community involved as much as I could which is why we're doing a working bee and why I do meetings and things like that.

Did you talk to the Principal as well?

Yes, she was really excited about the idea, she's been asking me how I'm going with it and the progress and obviously we're planning the working bee together and things like that so she's been helping out too.

How many students are at your school?

Almost 400 so this is going to be really well used.

Biggest success?

Well, I guess the biggest success is managing to get all the resources, like recycling them all - I was really passionate about that. I think that there's no point using up nature's resources when you can recycle them, so I thought if we recycled all the resources then it wouldn't go to waste.

Next steps?

Just the working bee and obviously the construction of the project. So we've got to rake off all the loose bark, dig the holes and then we've just got to put it in now that we've gotten rid of these bushes. I would love to do more spaces

because, for me, this is something that I enjoy doing, especially planning stuff and having an outcome is what I like. I'm heading to high school next year and they've already got quite a few things, they've got a pond and things like that so I'm not sure what my plan is for next year.

What did you enjoy most?

The creativity I loved, doing a project of being creative and designing something knowing that everyone's going to love it, knowing that people are going to enjoy it. I feel like knowing that people can just enjoy the project and have fun with it, so we're raising awareness because people are enjoying it and maybe that's going to inspire them to get outdoors and things.

When Chris Daniels had his speech this morning (*at the final YEC event for the year*) he said about the people not knowing these things are out there, so I think this is really going to spread some initiative.

Your advice to other students?

Persistence, definitely it takes a lot of that. I think doing research is always good and normally if you go to your peers like I did, they've got a lot of really amazing ideas that you feed from because that's where I think I got most of the greatest ideas.

What did you learn about yourself?

Doing this type of project, it really tested my resilience and grit, because there were many times when I was stuck and my plan hadn't worked and I couldn't think of another one to do. But because I kept pushing, here I am now with a successful project that will last quite a long time and I think that I figured out that I am more resilient than I thought, and I'm more persistent.

This case study was transcribed from an interview. These are Abby's words and opinions.

