



Inika - Saving rare Coorong plants from extinction

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

What was your goal and what did you achieve?

Revegetating and planting some native plants from the Coorong area so that we can help to increase their numbers to stop them from going extinct - *Senecio macrocarpus* and *Spyridium fontis-woodii*. I worked with my science teacher, Dr Knobs, who got the seeds from the Botanic Garden through the SEEDS program which stands for Stewardship of Endemic Endangered Species and also with a group of six people to work with the *Spyridium*, plant them and collect their flowers. I worked with a partner to plant the *Senecio*. Our biggest success has been the results we've got of the *Spyridium* growing a lot. There was only 11 left in the wild when it was started and now we've got between 100 and 200 to germinate

at school which is pretty awesome, because it hopefully won't be able to go extinct so quickly this way. There's a bit of a backup population and hopefully we can plant them down at the Coorong eventually.

What challenges did you face?

COVID was a bit of a challenge but we've been working in a small group to work with the plants so it hasn't been such a big deal. It's also been kind of challenging to spread it with the school community. Since we're only working with a small group, not many people know that it's happening, and our plant bed where we've got this pretty implanted is behind our school's boarding house so people don't really see it if they're just at the school. We overcame this by putting articles

in the school magazine and school yearbook and we also got filmed by BTN (*Behind the News*) so we were able to spread it with the community that way.

What will happen now?

All of the seeds and the plants we grew of the *Senecio* have died, so we'll hopefully be able to get some more of them from the Botanic Gardens in the future to try that project again. But the *Spyridium* we're still working with because we planted some of them up in July and planted some more in the recent holidays, and we're hoping to plant the ones that we planted in July into the Coorong next July when they're older.

Advice for other students?

Get your information from other people so you don't go in blind. We sort of did because the plant was so rare, but we found out a lot from the Botanic Gardens. Talk to people who are experts in that field so that you can find out more information to help it have a higher success rate (*your germination*). Work with people and spread awareness of what you're doing because once

you tell people, then people are generally pretty interested and happy to support you, but if they don't know what you're doing, they can't help.

What have you enjoyed most?

I really enjoyed seeing the results of the plants growing because it's just so cool to see you've got the plants sitting there and you know that that's more than what's in the entire world in the wild, because they're endemic to the Coorong so there's none anywhere else. Also working with the group because it's such a small group then it's been fun to grow with them throughout the year, working with them with the plants. We got two *Senecio* to germinate though we probably planted around a hundred and only two germinated but both of them have died since, but the *Spyridium* so far have survived so we'll have to see what happens with them.

