

# Werribee/Point Cook Banner

[1800s orchard to come back to life](#)

BY CAMERON TAIT

26 May, 2010 12:00 AM

TUCKED away in a corner near Werribee Park Mansion is one of Victoria's best kept secrets.

A small but dedicated group of people has joined forces to re-establish the old heritage orchard which dates back to the late 1800s.

It was rediscovered when Parks Victoria consulted with some of the Wyndham's leading environmentalists after the state government provided it with funding to establish a community garden in the city.

The Friends of the Werribee Park Community Heritage Orchard has been established to work with Parks Victoria to preserve the orchard's existing trees and bring it back to life through propagation of original stock and the addition of species which complement its history.

Among the activities the group plans in the near future are workshops to enable people to learn about the propagation of stock, orchard tours, and a range of educational and recreational activities. Project manager Simon Branson said the orchard was a living treasure.

"It dates back to the late 19th and early 20th century - some trees have been there for more than 70 years. It was fully operational when the mansion was a seminary from the 1920s onwards, but probably reached its peak in the late 1930s."

Going back to the days of the Chirside family in the 1870s and right through to the time of the seminary from the 1920s, there had to be a level of self-sufficiency and the



"We want this to be a community resource where people can come to learn the basics of things like fruit trees pruning and take those ideas and put them into practice at home.

"The aim is to develop sustainability practices, permaculture, beehives and even heirloom vegetables. Eventually, there could even be a fruit festival with seasonal pickings - there are plenty of opportunities."

Mr Branson hoped an open day would be held at the orchard soon, with ground work expected to start in July.

Werribee Park manager Rocky Barca said Parks Victoria was proud to be involved in the orchard's revitalisation.

Residents are encouraged to express their interest in joining the group at an information evening tomorrow from 7pm at The Pavilion, Werribee Park Mansion, K

orchard was the source of fresh fruit.  
"Historically, the orchard is a fascinating place, with the old ruins of park's original property still in the middle of it."

Mr Branson said although it had occasionally been flooded by the Werribee River, more than a decade of drought had made the orchard a sorry sight in comparison to its golden days.

Over the years, apples, pears, quinces and stone fruits such as apricots and peaches have all been grown at the orchard.

However, with many of these old trees in a poor state, the plans are to graft many of the remaining trees onto new root stock.

"This will be done to maintain their heritage value and to demonstrate to the public how orchards work," he said.

Road, Werribee South.

Details: Adam Smith, 131963.

Copyright (c) Werribee/Point Cook Banner.  
Reproduced with their kind permission.