



Local Aboriginal women travelled to Eden to share knowledge about yam cultivation to feed into a Greening Australia Living Culture initiative being developed in East Gippsland. (PS)

## Community shares knowledge

Helping to arrest the decline of the Red Gum Plains grasslands, Greening Australia is undertaking a project that involves 50 hectares of grasslands with works to revegetate the area over five years.

The project is funded by the Australian Government's National Landcare Program and is coordinated through the East Gippsland Catchment Authority.

The Red Gum Plains were once dominated by extensive grasslands, which are now endangered with less than five per cent remaining.

Bush foods have long represented knowledge and connection of indigenous people to culture. An innovative Living Culture project involves partnering with local Aboriginal women and aims to reinstate yam fields on a section of

Gippsland grasslands, as both a Gunaikurnai cultural initiative and National Landcare project.

The plains originally included fields of wildflowers that supported the tubers or 'yams', which were a staple food for Gunaikurnai people.

Greening Australia's Gippsland project manager, Martin Potts, said that the partnership with local Aboriginal community members is a vital part of the Living Culture project.

"By recognising that these grasslands were once important yam fields, we can see the sites as not just ecologically important, but also culturally important places where women can once again grow and harvest the yams that were so crucial to the wellbeing of the community," Mr Potts said.

Last week a group travelled to Eden Land Council's Jigamy

Farm, just outside of Eden, in New South Wales, where there is a similar initiative involving looking after, and connecting Aboriginal people to, yam fields.

A group of 20 Aboriginal women met with local elders and women from the Eden project, who shared their knowledge of yam cultivation and use.

The group was also presented with the Bundian Way story. The women made connections, providing support for those who want to take this initiative further in the Gippsland project.

"This is the start of engaging the community that will not only see these important grasslands restored in Gippsland, but in time will also become places of living culture for the local Aboriginal community," Mr Potts said.



The group learned about how to dig for yams at the Eden Land Council's Jigamy Farm project. (PS)