



VETIVER COMMUNITY PROJECT

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<https://vetivercom.blogspot.com>



LOCATION

We are situated on a sand bar at the mouth of the Caboolture River. Offshore are three of the largest sand islands in the world -- Bribie, Moreton and Stradbroke..

Beachmere is a suburb of Brisbane -- 55.0 km or a 47 minute drive from the CBD -- off the main highway connecting Brisbane to the Sunshine Coast. The township is accessed through rural land occupied by beef fattening and hobby farms -- especially horses.

The 'nursery' area takes up part of the backyard in two residential properties owned by the partners. That means that any overheads are incorporated into the day to day running of our homes and garden.

The yard space is extensive and we still have a lot of space left to plant out.

Since we are in the Brisbane suburbs we are conveniently located and accessible for pick up.





BACKGROUND

After experimenting with Vetiver divisions for planting out hedges in our kitchen garden, we laid out and planted a Vetiver maze with children at the local primary school.

Our next challenge was using Vetiver on the coastline here and at a cattle property in Chinchilla (on marginal farming land, almost 4 hours drive due west).

it was these successful engagements that encouraged us to establish the nursery as an ongoing enterprise.





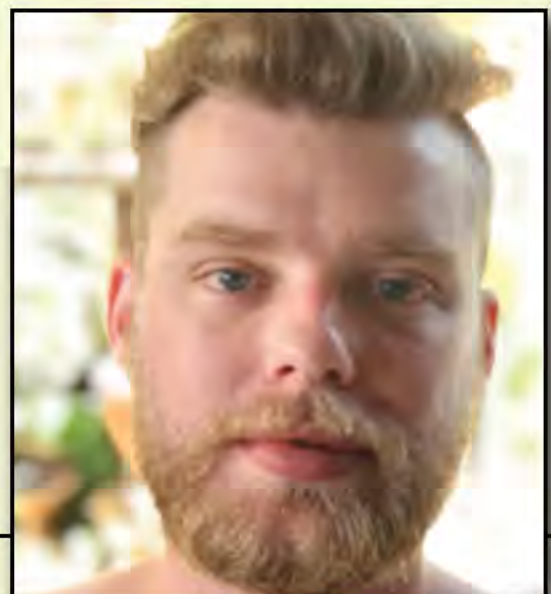
Dave Riley

PEOPLE

The Vetiver Community Project is owned and operated by father and son team, Dave and Keir Riley.

As well as serving as coordinator of the local primary school garden for the past 5 years, Dave has worked with the Big P Community Farm in Deagon after a history of community arts and activism. He is committed to regenerative agriculture and is active in Brisbane Local Food. He also coordinates the Soil Alliance -- a pro farmer online community and website.

Keir supplies the muscle for the project as he negotiates the Vetiver learning curve. He works as a nurse and takes on gardening jobs in our local community. He hopes to soon tackle a Diploma of Conservation and Land Management.



Keir Riley

ANOTHER VETIVER HARVEST



MY TRUSTY HARVEST CART CARRIES TOOLS AND BOUNTY.



NOW THE WORK OF DIVISION BEGINS.



- After digging up the clumps, we divide the plants into slips of 2 tillers or more.
- The roots of each slip is dipped in a composted cow manure/ water mix and inserted into 40 cell hiko-style trays.
- These trays are then positioned inside tarp-covered bread trays (195 plants per tray) to which water and manures are added.
- The slips are brought on to first flush in this water over the next 4 weeks.
- This process creates more reliable planting stock than division and immediate replant.
- It is also a lot cheaper and less labour intensive than potting up the divisions in soil mixes...and there is no waste like you get with plastic bags
- For large jobs, these trays are simply drained of water and the trays transported to the planting site, stacked ontop of one another.
- This means that we can offer separated Vetiver slips ready to plant for a low price-- \$0.75 each — while maintaining an on-call reserve stock to fill orders as they come in.



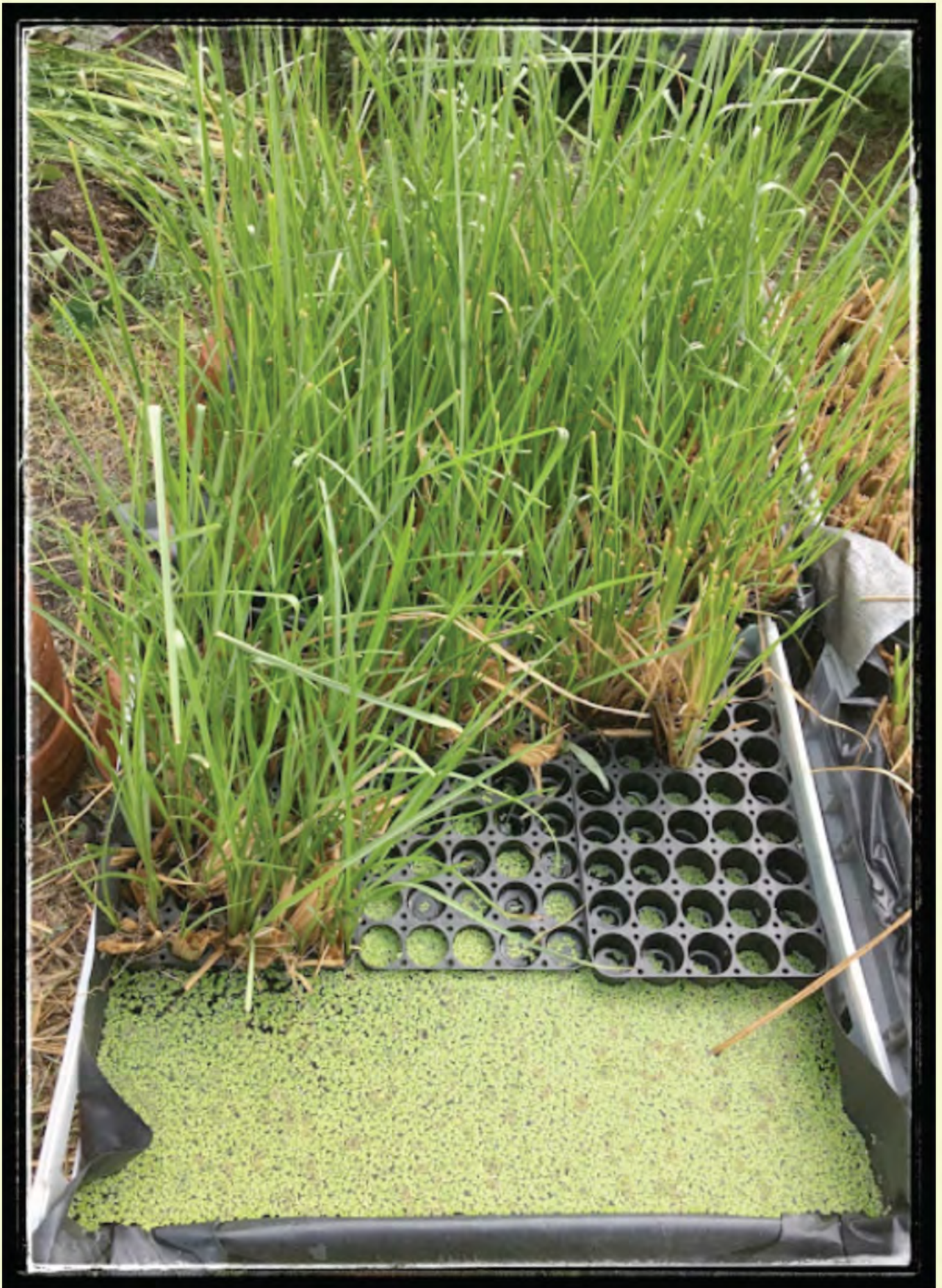
Keir dividing Vetiver



Growing trays : over 700 slips



Nursery trays in foreground



Our current protocol includes growing Vetiver with Azolla to keep mosquito numbers down(while producing mulch and poultry food).



After 4 weeks in the cells we are getting new root and tiller growth like this.



The cell trays we use.



We are experimenting with 90mm Squat Plant Pots for more developed slips.

PROJECTS AND PARTNERSHIPS

Coastal

Our initial venture was to supply Vetiver for 4 properties on the shoreline. With storm tide, King Tides and changing currents, the sandy shoreline in Beachmere is being washed away. A process worsened by rising sea levels. Dealing with this challenge in partnership with our neighbours was our primary impetus.



So far, we have planted Vetiver hedges in three properties successfully along the shoreline while we are still working on the immense challenges presented by the forth(as indicated by the images above)



Site A

Planted September 2019

Site B

Planted May 2019

Coastal restoration project along foreshore facing prevailing winds, storm and king tides.

These images display the context of our current project along the foreshore. If the planting can survive in a position facing east — directly into the prevailing weather and any storm surge — it will be a very useful test of Vetiver's resilience. Plants have been planted down the slope but there is still the prospect of growing a barrier hedge on the beach sand itself. That is, *IF* the Vetiver survives this initial hedging.



As the weather cools, Vetiver's growth rate will slow down. As well, there is less rainfall until next Summer. These plants, fortunately, are being irrigated and have been mulched while Beach Morning Glory (*Ipomoea pes-caprae*) and Coastal Rosemary (*Westringia fruticosa*) are serving as ground cover.



Photographs: April, 2019



Storm surge height from most recent cyclone event, TC Oma (late February, 2019)

If we can prove that Vetiver can hold the foreshore in place against the prevailing winds, salt, storms and tides — then we would have proven its efficacy for all the properties along the beach front and maybe get the local municipal council to take note.

Otherwise, one by one, people will be paying up to \$20,000 each for hard landscaping with brought-in rocks — engineering that will ensure that our sandy beach will definitely be washed away.

The ramifications of this are important as coastal erosion is a major challenge for our region.

In some locations we'd hope that Vetiver could foster the renewal of mangroves forests and seagrass meadows -- habitats which are under threat and in decline.



Close to the sea this Vetiver hedge is grown amongst an accumulation mix of plants and branches. The hedge runs the width of the block.



While we are primarily a nursery, working with others drives our passion and enriches our experience, encouraging better plant raising protocols and efficiencies.

The school maze was laid and planted out in 2017 as part of the gardening program at the local elementary school. For us and the children this was great learning exercise.

Navigating the Vetiver Maze at the School Garden



School children planting out the maze with Vetiver slips in early 2018. The pathway leads to a frog pond.



The grass clumps are high enough now to start losing a class in. The yellow vertical line is a tape measure the children use to monitor Vetiver growth rate. The pupils negotiating the maze are five year olds being guided by students in higher grades.



The Vetiver Maze at the school garden is a hedgerow of twists and turns...



...with a hidden frog pond.

In school breaks the hedges are cut for mulch to cover the vegetable beds





WE RAN THE HEDGE ACROSS THE CORNER OF THE Paddock SO THAT THE VETIVER COULD BE IRRIGATED FROM BOTH ENDS: A WATER TRUCK ON THE DRIVEWAY, OR THE FARMHOUSE'S GREY WATER.

THIS AREA IS IN SEVERE DROUGHT AND ALL THE DAMS ARE DRYING UP. THERE IS VERY LITTLE EDIBLE GRASS LEFT & THE CATTLE ARE BEING SUSTAINED ON BOUGHT HAY.



FEED ME VETIVER

DROUGHT



THE ONLY GREEN PATCH IS AROUND THE SEPTIC TANK., SO WE PLANTED A VETIVER NURSERY THERE.

IF THE VETIVER ESTABLISHES — AND IT RAINS! — WE'LL PLANT MORE HEDGES IN JANUARY OR FEBRUARY NEXT YEAR..

VETIVER



Despite the physical challenges of trying to establish Vetiver in marginal farming land during drought, the exercise near Chinchilla has been important in motivating us to produce quality reliable slips at the cheapest price. Otherwise, Vetiver will not survive as an agricultural tool and be too expensive for farmers to plant.

Some of the Vetiver we planted on this property is currently under water as the catchment has flooded.

The intention was to plant Vetiver for fodder and forage and explore its use against erosion of the farm's dams.

This partnership is ongoing.



Before the rain came >

PROJECTS AND PARTNERSHIPS

Kitchen Garden

Our original use of Vetiver was as a design adjunct to our kitchen garden. it was this usage that enabled us to build up our initial nursery stock for distribution.



After the harvest of Vetiver for mulch, a quick trim with the brush cutter adds 'neatness' to the hedgerows.



It seems that 'ordered woods and gardens' can run in our suburban veins.

The beds are narrow rectangles averaging 1.5 metres wide.

In a very short time the hedgerows that border each bed will supply the mulch for the land they enclose.

Now the garden is being developed to demonstrate the domestic use of Vetiver. This project we log and report on in online forums like Brisbane Local Food where Dave's posts advocating Vetiver are popular.

The older section of these hedgerows have consolidated like a handwoven and knotted narrow carpet . This section of hedge is only six months old.



PROMOTION AND DISTRIBUTION

Introduction Packs



20 plants \$15

40 plants \$30

Vetiver Community Project
Brisbane

Since we listed our stock on the online classified advertisement and community website, **Gumtree**, we have been busy supplying slips and taking orders for up to 700 plants at a time. We definitely did not expect to be as popular as we are.

We offer introductory packs and a delivery option for up to 50 plants (via Australia Post).

Since we can supply Vetiver slips very cheaply (@\$0.75 each) and still have absolute confidence in the quality of the plants we distribute, we have been supplying orders from interstate, urban and rural locations, such that we are now distributing around 1500 plants per month.

Soon we will be running a Vetiver workshop on the beach here and holding a stall at the local Caboolture Community Markets which are the busiest in Brisbane.

The Vetiver Community Project also runs a website and facebook page advocating and explaining the many uses of Vetiver:

<https://vetivercom.blogspot.com>

Posts to the site log our Vetiver adventures and we try to be open and frank about our experiences with the plant.



VETIVER SLIPS READY TO SHARE

PROJECTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Once we run out of domestic space for our nursery, we'll rent land locally and plant that out as an expanded nursery. The river flats here have a very high water table and occasionally flood. The land is ideal for Vetiver grass and we hope to make Beachmere a hub for Vetiver — not only for supply but as a rich shared community experience.

With a larger area under cultivation we will also explore harvesting Vetiver for distribution as hay and mulch.

We may also establish a community run Vetiver nursery if shoreline planting takes off as a volunteer Landcare/Coastcare* engagement.

***LandCare**: a national community not-for-profit organisation which involves local groups of volunteers repairing the natural environment.

Vetiver Community Project website:

<https://vetivercom.blogspot.com/>

Vetiver Community Project on facebook.

<https://www.facebook.com/vetivercom>

Dave Riley's Vetiver contributions: Brisbane Local Food

<https://brisbanelocalfood.ning.com/>

[Search: "Vetiver"]

The Soil Alliance

<http://soilalliance.blogspot.com.au>

Nursery listing on Gumtree

<https://www.gumtree.com.au/s-plants/brisbane/vetiver+grass/kOc2010213005721>