

Indigenous gardens come to life

THE RECENT discovery of a rare butterfly in a Jan Juc Garden demonstrates how indigenous flora has the power to bring Surf Coast gardens to life.

Jan Juc residents, Ian and Roma Edwards, were delighted to discover their indigenous garden was home to a rare Bright Copper Butterfly (*Paralucia aurifera*).

"We also have the endangered Rufous Bristle Bird in the garden, which is now extinct in Western Australia, and we often see an echidna," said Ian.

The garden features rare local flora and is an impressive example of the beauty and benefits of indigenous plants.

Great Ocean Road Coast Committee conservation supervisor, Georgina Beale, encouraged others to follow in the footsteps of the passionate pair.

"Indigenous plants are not only a haven for wildlife, but are easy to grow and care for, being perfectly suited to coastal climates," she said.

"You don't need to water indigenous plants as often and there is much less maintenance involved."

Ian and Roma's garden was established quickly,

and now, at the age of 10, is an impressive sight to behold.

"All the plants that we have used are particularly suitable to the area. Once they are established you can almost forget about them," said Ian.

Graeme Stockton from West Coast Indigenous Nursery said an indigenous garden also assists in battling environmental weeds.

"Seventy per cent of all indigenous plants are threatened and weed invasion plays a big part. Weeds invade indigenous plants and degrade habitats," he said.

The Great Ocean Road Coast Committee actively works to preserve and protect coastal habitats and raise environmental awareness in the community, and battling weeds is one of the organisation's major priorities.

"At the moment we are working with various groups to maintain the integrity and beauty of our coastal environment. We are removing weeds, mulching, and preparing sites ready for spring planting," said Georgina.

"Having a completely indigenous garden is ideal, but you can make small changes and still reap the benefits. A great step is simply identifying and removing environmental weeds from your garden."

Jeff Clarke from Otways Indigenous Nursery said the best time of year to plant is March to September/October and that there were a large variety of beautiful and interesting indigenous plants available.

"For a start there is approximately 100 species of orchids as well as a huge range of wildflowers, shrubs and trees," he said.

Georgina encouraged everyone to discover the wonderful world of indigenous plants.

"Many Australians know so little about Australian indigenous plants and yet they can name hundreds of exotic species," she said.

For more information contact your local indigenous nursery or local environmental volunteer group. More details can be found on the Great Ocean Road Coast Committee website, visit www.gorcc.com.au



The striking indigenous garden of Ian and Roma Edwards.