Since the leaf-roller moth is specific to bitou bush, it needs bitou bush plants to feed on in order to reproduce. Therefore, you will need to grow a stock of potted bitou bush plants to conduct your Weed Warriors program.

As a guide, for a seven to eight week rearing program approximately 20 plants will be required to feed the larvae of the leaf-roller moth. You will need to start growing the bitou bush plants ten to twelve weeks before you start rearing. It is suggested that 30 plants be grown to allow for stunted growth or plant mortalities.

**Materials required to grow bitou bush**
- Bitou bush plants collected from the field
- Pots of eight inches in diameter
- Pot saucers
- Free draining potting mix containing coarse river sand and/or perlite
- Liquid fertiliser
- Water

**Collecting bitou bush plants**
You will need to locate a healthy infestation of bitou bush so that you can collect bitou bush plants. Once you have selected a site, make sure you seek the appropriate approval of the land manager before you dig up any plants.

When at the site, choose young healthy, leafy bitou bush plants within their first year of growth up to 20cm high. These plants will have a relatively shallow root system making for easy removal.

Avoid collecting large woody bitou bush plants, as the root mass is much larger and removal will be more difficult. Also these plants will not regenerate as well when potted.

When you have found suitable bitou bush plants, pull the main stem as close to ground level as possible, taking care not to cut the roots.

Once you have removed the bitou bush plants, tap or shake the soil from the roots and wrap a bunch in wet newspaper to keep the roots and foliage moist and out of the sun. The plants should be potted up as soon as possible. Sprinkle the wrapped plants with water if potting is postponed for a day and store in a cool, shady area.

**Potting up the collected bitou bush**

**Step 1:**
Remove four or five leaves from the lower stem of the bitou bush plant so that there is some clear stem at the base.

**Step 2:**
Fill 1/3 of a pot with potting mix. A potting mix that contains coarse river sand with a slow release fertiliser is recommended.

**Step 3:**
Place the cut back bitou bush plant in the pot and hold it straight. Fill the remainder of the pot with potting mix, making sure that all the roots are covered. The soil level should match the ground level of the plant. Be sure to leave a couple of centimetres between the potting mix and the lip of the pot for watering the plant. Tap the pot on the ground or bench to settle the potting mix and press down firmly around the base of the plant.
Step 4:
The bitou bush plants should ideally be grown in a glasshouse, however if one is not available grow the plants on an elevated bench outside in a sunny position, sheltered from the wind to avoid the pots being blown over.

Step 5:
Water the pots of bitou bush by filling the pot to the top with water. It is best not to sit the pots in saucers, so that the water can drain from the pot. It is not necessary to wet the plants foliage.

Maintaining the bitou bush plants

It is very important that you maintain healthy plants to feed the leaf-roller moths. The newly potted bitou bush plants will need to be watered as in Step 5 above every two days.

As more foliage appears and the weather warms up they will need watering every day. Ensure the soil does not become too wet or waterlogged as this encourages pest attack and can cause the roots to rot.

On weekends place the plants in saucers and fill the pot to the top and let water drain into the saucer. If the plants become wilted sit the pots in water until no more bubbles appear. Remove the pots from water and continue watering as normal.

It may be a good idea to set up a roster, and have the students take turns at watering the potted bitou bush.

If any pest insects such as aphids and white fly begin to attack the bitou bush plants, spray them with a safe, gentle insecticide such as pyrethrum. Teachers or the Key Contact should apply the insecticide and follow the directions on the label of the chemical container. Be sure to cease applications at least 1 week before the plants will be used for the leaf-roller moth rearing.

Aphids can also be treated by cradling the infected leaves in your hand and spraying them heavily with water.

It will take nearly three months to have healthy, leafy bitou bush plants for rearing the leaf-roller moth so plan well ahead! As a guide if a rearing program is to be conducted during the optimum time (October to December), then plants would need to be collected from the field and potted mid Term Three (early August).