

UnderStories

Autumn 2009
No. 45

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Visit our website and Plant Propagation Database at:

www.understorey-network.org.au

Coordinators News

As the days get shorter, there is less incentive to pop out into the garden after work and do some planting or weeding. However as I have a new garden, I have put in a late box of native seeds, and some of them have appeared already. Many of our native species will germinate in Autumn, to take advantage of the last bit of warm sun before the winter rain.

This edition has an article about the Understorey Network exhibition 'Art from the Understorey'. If you live in an area that will feature our exhibition, it is well worth a visit plus all works are for sale with a percentage of the proceeds going towards the Understorey Network.

At present the exhibition is on display at the Cultural Centre in Currie, King Island. This fits in nicely with one of our projects to grow forage plants for the Orange Bellied Parrot.

'OBP's as they are fondly referred to, stop over on King Island for a rest as they migrate to winter mainland feeding grounds.

I recently held several propagating sessions on the island with community members and the school. Together we propagated 500 plants from cuttings and seeds, of coastal daisies, reeds, ground covers and saltmarsh samphires. Once these have grown they will be planted at two coastal sites on the island along with larger roosting plants the OBP's with a well furnished stopover site!

I have been holding school propagating sessions with several schools in the NorthWest as part of a larger Coastcare project. The students have really enjoyed the hands-on activity, and learnt about their local coastal vegetation in the process. I have learnt that it is essential to be organised when supervising 24 students planting out several hundred tubes!

The Understorey Network would like to acknowledge the support of NRM South, the Tasmanian Government and the Australian Government.



Australian Government

Message from the President

Great planting conditions! Those of you who are receiving plants from your growers should have picked up (or at least have arrangements in place for) the plants by now. With the wonderful rain we've had (and as I write are still having) the planting of this year's tubestock should be well underway. With some luck the rain will continue and we may not have to keep up the watering as much as we have had to do during the last few years, but do remember that these little plants still need TLC, which includes adequate water, a relatively weed-free environment, and protection from predation.

Our apologies must go to those growers who were given the wrong advice for the germination of *Lomandra longifolia* (Sagg). Sagg needs no pre-germination treatment, but does need patience on the part of the grower, as it can take some weeks or even months to appear.

As our government funding for this past year has been non-existent we may be forced to increase levies for the Growers' Scheme. While we are very optimistic of receiving funding in the next round of grants this money may not be available till October or even November. Meanwhile we are relying on smaller grants which we have been very successful in obtaining. However for the continuation of the growers scheme we unfortunately need some financial support from those members receiving plants or kits.

I hope that those of you who attended the many workshops and field days run through the summer and autumn have enjoyed and found them useful. There are many more planned for around the state over the next 12 months, so there are still plenty of opportunities to learn from the USN.

Meanwhile...Happy Planting!

GROWERS' COMMENTS 2007-2008

(Due to unforeseen circumstances we were unable to print this article in the summer edition. However by printing it in this edition it may serve to remind growers to return their Growers' Feedback forms 2008-2009. If you have mislaid your form do not worry, simply record the species grown, pre sowing treatment, date sown, number of pots sown, date of first germination, total number germinated, number of plants that survived and any comments and post to Understorey Network PO Box 4535 Bathurst Street Hobart 7000) Ed

Firstly, thank you to those growers who returned their growers' feedback forms with comments

about the success (or otherwise) of their sowings. This information is collated and will be used in future advice given to members. The more experiences, successful and otherwise, we have the better we can help everyone.

Generally germination and survival rates were excellent, with high survival rates of most species sown. There were however, as usual, some spectacular failures, some of which can be attributed to the impatience of the grower! Time taken to germination is quite variable, even with the same species, between different growers and so it is often difficult to know the reasons for failure. Apart from depth of sowing and regularity of water application, weather conditions such as a cold snap or a really hot day may be all that is needed to start, or stop, germination. Slugs can quietly and surreptitiously do terrible and permanent damage to the young plants. Sometimes you may even be unaware that the seeds have germinated before the slugs have wiped the tiny seedlings out.

Most plants germinated in 2-6 weeks, some up to 3 months (e.g. *Bossiaea*, *Banksia*, *Bedfordia*, *Eleocarpus*, and *Patersonia*) others such as *Gahnia* longer than 6 months. This is why it is so important to be patient. Clematis and *Helichrysum* need fresh seed, whereas some of the grasses (among others) require an 'after-ripening' period. *Banksia* seed is best freshly extracted from the cone just prior to planting.

Although the bulk of our sowings are done in spring, autumn sowing is best for some species, such as *Banksia marginata*, *Bursaria spinosa*, *Arthropodium strictum* and *Diplarrena moraea*. Summer seemed to be best for *Bedfordia* and *Themeda* species. Heat treatment was a pre-requisite for *Acacia*, *Indigophera*, *Pomaderris*, *Dodonea* and *Oxylobium*. Some growers used smoke water for *Bedfordia* and *Diplarrena* with very variable results.

If you would like more specific details of the results of individual species, please contact the USN office. As well as the USN handbook another wonderful text is "Growing Australian Native Plants from Seed" by Murray Ralph.

The main points to remember are:-

- (i) Keep up the watering
- (ii) Be patient

I hope you all enjoyed the growing and will be happy to grow again.

Anne Griffiths

Bush Tucker Plants #2

By Anna Povey

Here are some more of my favourite bush tucker plants.

Coast Beard Heath, or *Leucopogon parviflorus*,



is a very common shrub at the coast. My photo shows the lovely bearded flowers, but I don't have a photo of the delicious small fruit. In summer these shrubs are covered with small creamy-white berries (about 4mm across), which taste tangy-sweet. There is a small seed inside, which I just swallow. Small fruits, are but one of the tastiest bush tucker, abundant and easily collected.

The shrubs are tough, being found in the dry environment of coastal dunes. They prefer good drainage, and moist, light soil/sand with some sun. Being in the heath family (Epacridaceae), they tend to be difficult to grow from seed, so are usually grown from firm tip cuttings.

Green Appleberries, or *Billardiera mutabilis*



(was *B.scandens*), are well-named. When ripe, they taste of stewed apple, and were a favourite with Aboriginal and European children. They are ripe when soft and khaki-green (my photo shows them under-ripe), usually after they have fallen to the ground. The prettier Purple Appleberry, *Billardiera longiflora*, has purple berries but these don't taste any good.

CAUTION! (again)

You should always be very careful tasting any new foodplant. Be absolutely sure of its identification and use as a food. Find out if any special preparation is necessary first to remove toxins (best to avoid such plants). Taste only small quantities. Don't take too much from the bush. Be conscious of food allergies and intolerances, which are increasingly common in our children. I recommend the book listed below.

They are found in drier forests, and I find this small climber quite hardy in the garden, even self-seeding. It is listed as difficult (to propagate) from seed, but I have had no trouble using our Understorey Network method. I usually wash the seeds from the fruits, dry them out, then sow them sometime. They just take a long time to germinate! After waiting many months, you will suddenly find you have heaps growing.

You can't go past having a **Banksia** in the garden!

Banksia marginata is a tremendously versatile small tree, which can handle most situations. If you are on the ball, you can also get some of the nectar that the birds and insects are after! In the morning is the best time, before the birds have eaten it all. Look for young but open flowers, which smell good and probably already have some bees around them. (The flowers in my photo are a bit young yet, but nearly ready.) These will be sticky with nectar. If you part the flowers to get at the nectar, you can suck some of this juice-of-the-gods! Apparently Aborigines also soaked the flowers in water to make a sweet drink.



An excellent book (which I again used for this article) is:

Wild Food Plants of Australia, by Tim Low (1991). Australian Nature Fieldguide. Angus & Robertson


Art from the Understorey

A botanical exhibition

Touring Exhibition Calendar

Exhibition

Art from the Understorey



28 Framed works by 6 artists

This is a mixed media botanical exhibition, depicting the beauty and intricacies of our Tasmanian flora through the eyes of 6 local artists, *Annick Ansselin, Kris Schaffer, Oliver Strutt, Margaret Vandenberg, Deborah Wace and James Wood*.

The exhibition is curated by Annick Ansselin (artist and member of the Understorey Network) and Ruth Mollison (Coordinator - Understorey Network).

The artists come from a variety of backgrounds and all are keen observers of the environment, interpreting and presenting Tasmanian plants in their distinctive and very individual styles.

The works range from traditional botanical style to contemporary, and includes:

1. Traditional botanical Graphite drawings and etchings - *Annick Ansselin*
2. Pen and ink, graphite & coloured drawings - *Kris Schaffer*
3. Jewellery made from carved Tasmanian Wood depicting Tasmanian native plants – *Oliver Strutt*,
4. Watercolour - *Margaret Vandenberg*
5. Native flower pressings, mandala wreath and etchings - *Deborah Wace*
6. Photography - *James Wood*

Artists' background

1. **Annick Ansselin** - a retired research neuroscientist, moved to Tasmania in 2001, setting up a studio at her home in Kettering. Her passion for fine detail and interest in native Australian plants can be seen in the traditional graphite botanical drawings displayed in this exhibition along with two small relief prints. Annick also does traditional botanical watercolours and artist books, using her own handmade paper from native grasses.

Contact: (H) 6267 4852, (M): 0409 441 610, www.annick.id.au

2. **Kris Schaffer** - Artist and horticulturist. Currently a specialist consultant in indigenous garden design and bushfoods in the Tasman Peninsula region. Kris's work in this exhibition consists of graphite, coloured pencil and pen & ink drawings of flowers, stems, roots, seeds and pollen flag pods and grasses. She is currently focusing on the theme of bush

Sheffield/TRAKentish	Mar/April 09	Working Art Space
King Island/Cultural Centre	April 09	Cultural Centre with workshop on 21/4
Swansea/Great Oyster Bay Regional Arts	May 09	Swansea Heritage Festival 15/16 May in Town Hall
Burnie	May/June 09	The Gallery, Creative Paper
Smithton/Circular Head ARTS	July 09	Rural Health Services, Emmett St
Wynyard	August 09	Artscape.com gallery
George Town/Lighthouse	September 09	George Town Watch House
	October 09 tbc	
New Norfolk/Derwent Valley	November 09	In conjunction with garden show, last week of Nov
Kempton/Greater Green Ponds	December 09	Blue Place, Kempton
Ulverstone/Leven	January/Feb 2010 tbc	Ulverstone Visitors Centre

essences and the healing power of Australian plants.

Contact: 0421 042 135

3. **Oliver Strutt** - A graduate of UTas in Plant Science, Geography and Environmental studies. Oliver has a deep interest in the diversity of native flora and is inspired to carve representations of wildflowers from wood, choosing little known species such as native orchids. He has attempted to capture the ephemeral beauty of rare flowers often overlooked. Oliver's exquisitely carved jewellery in this exhibition combines native wood such as sassafras, Huon pine, myrtle, native cherry, horizontal scrub, she oak, Banksia & leatherwood with silver.

Contact: 0407 784 945

4. **Margaret Vandenberg** - A very experienced Art teacher (UTas, adults & high school), Margaret retired in 2006 and set a studio on Bruny Island where she lives. Margaret works in a variety of media including painting, print making, collage, drawing, and papermaking. She is also a book artist. Her recent work is specifically related to living in the dry sclerophyll landscape of Barnes Bay, Bruny Island. In this exhibition, Margaret combines pen and ink with watercolour for her representation of dry sclerophyll flora.

Contact: 6260 6235

5. **Deborah Wace** - Artist with a deep interest in the conservation of Tasmanian native plants, particularly native orchids. Deborah uses pressed plants material sourced from and illustrating the diverse flora of the Button grass communities of Lune River where she lives. In this exhibition Deborah has etchings, pressed plant arrangements and a mandala wreath.

Contact: 0458 176 239

6. **James Wood** is the co-ordinator of the Tasmanian Seed Conservation Centre at the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens. James has a passion for natural history and enjoys exploring and capturing the extraordinary biodiversity of Tasmania with his camera.

Contact: (W) 6236 3079, (H) 6273 3441

Annick Ansselin

For details of exhibition dates and times please contact Teresa Beck-Swindale (Tas Regional Arts Touring Officer) Ph 64262344 0439262377



Wedding Bells

Understorey Network plants have featured at the wedding of USN members, Phillip England and Asta Audzijonyte. Phillip and Asta were married recently at their Runnymede property on the East Coast. The plants grown by USN member Grace Nieuwenhuizen for regenerating the block were used as part of the ceremony. As Grace said *'its made growing plants this year all the more special'*



Phillip and Asta with young helpers at their recent wedding.



Some serious planting of Understorey Network plants the following day.

Winifred Curtis Reserve, Scamander

Visit by the North East Understorey Network Branch.

In May 2003 the Protected Areas on Private Land Program reserved a property near Scamander on Tasmania's East Coast. Through this covenant 75 hectares of coastal vegetation is now permanently protected by the 'Winifred Curtis Trust'. This land is now a privately owned nature reserve, the first of its type in the Break O'Day Municipality.

On 1st February 2009 the North East Understorey Network Branch met with Paul Fratter a member of the Winifred Curtis Trust and a local horticulturalist with great knowledge of the reserve, and Tim Rudman who is an expert in the field of managing Phytopthera* at the Winifred Curtis Reserve.

The group arrived mid morning and thoroughly enjoyed learning much about the vegetation in the Reserve from Paul Fratter.



Members of the North East USN Branch

Paul was most happy to answer questions about the plants that were seen there and had a wonderful depth and breadth of knowledge to share with us all.

Secondly, but in no way any less important, Tim Rudman took us through the Reserve and in particular to a Phytopthera front to show the group the healthy vegetation, the front moving

through and the trail of dead plants left in the wake of the Phytopthera disease taking hold. Tim discussed management techniques and spoke of the work being done in many areas in an attempt to learn as much as possible about this disease. He illustrated to us, plants that would survive the Phytopthera and plants that could not survive the Phytopthera.

Phytopthera Front



In all about one dozen members greatly enjoyed this very educational morning and took away much information of importance with them that will assist in managing their own properties and also in increasing our knowledge about the disease of Phytopthera.



Members of the North East USN Branch

The North East Understorey Network Branch would like to take this chance to again thank both Tim and Paul for a really enjoyable and educational morning.

Report by Janet Drummond

**Eds note: Phytothera is a soil born plant disease also known as cinnamon fungus.*

Seed collecting at Lune River

On Sunday 15 February a combined group of members from the Huon Valley Landcare Group and the Understorey Network met at Lune River, on a property owned by artist Deborah Wace. The USN had been commissioned by Landcare to run a seed collecting day and USN members were invited to participate. Members who have attended previous workshops run by Ollie will know that the day was well organised and informational, but if they have not previously spent a day in Button Grass land they will not realise that it was also a day spent discovering the very, very small!



Here are some of the orchids found at Lune River in November.

Although the property is at sea level a large part comprises peaty heath land that provides a home to Button Grass and associate plants. The day started with a seed collecting walk across this terrain and at first sight everything was a green mass. However, aided by Deborah's children who put me to shame because they know and can say the Latin names for the plants we saw, we soon got our

eye in and could see the large number of very small (only mm in size) flowers hiding down at ground level. I will confess that I cannot list them as botanical names, because I was too intent on trying to discover more flowers to really listen when names were provided. However, I was inspired to buy some of Deborah's cards, which show very detailed drawings of the small plants, and return home to look them up in a plant guide book. Unfortunately, the pictures in the book do not provide a good idea of size as both the very, very small and the very large look the same in a photograph. I recommend that next time anyone visits the Button Grass areas they need to take a magnifying glass and the plant guide, with a waterproof mat, so that they can sit down and really inspect what is growing.

After lunch we moved to relatively large plants as another part of the property lies over granite and this area is home to orange Christmas Bells (*Blandfordia punicea*), which were up to 1 m tall. These plants provided both flowers and seeds and we had magnificent views over the Lune River itself.

Joan Rodrigues
Vice President USN

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What's Happening

Native Plant Sale

Tolosa Community Nursery

Tolosa Recreation Park, Glenorchy

Date: Saturday, 13th of June

10am - 12:30pm

*A range of tubestock and
larger native plants for sale,
for a gold con donation.*

If undeliverable return to

Understorey Network
PO Box 4535
Bathurst Street
HOBART TAS 7000

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