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Visit our website and Plant Propagation Database

www.understorey-network.org.au

Coordinators News

October and November are the busy months in the office and outdoors. This is the month for events, with the Sustainable Living Expo display and depot day where growers collect their growing materials from various places around the state. Thankyou to those volunteers who help out every year in hosting and running depot day – it is a huge effort from everyone, to get the potting mix, tubes and seeds distributed to growers around the state, and your efforts are very much appreciated.

It should be a good growing season this year, with no extra watering required at present with all the rain we are receiving.

I am running a series of workshops in schools for the Kids Care project plus the Derwent Estuary Penguin project. A recent workshop at St Helens District School was very successful with Conservation Volunteer Australia team members from all over the world assisting students to grow seeds of bush tucker plants for the school garden. Participants adjourned for a bush tucker dinner of local oysters after an enjoyable cultural exchange with the local children.

Oliver Strutt is again assisting with field days and the Caring for our Country project 'Linking Farm Biodiversity and Management'. Workshops are now a substantial contribution to our income base, and consequently the work schedule is becoming quite busy.

The Community native nursery at Tolosa Street is in need of more volunteers to assist with propagating seeds and general maintenance – if you are available to help, please let me know. (Email is best at present as I may be out of the office running workshops).

Happy Planting!

Ruth

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President's Report

In the world-wide scheme of things the Understorey Network is rather miniscule, as are other organisations such as ours. But it is groups like these that can change the way individuals think and behave, and so ultimately can influence the way governments act. We therefore as a whole have tremendous power. For me, on a personal level, membership of the USN, with its workshops, field days and participation in the Growers' Scheme, has strengthened my appreciation of the beauty and importance of our Tasmanian bush. The downside is the increased number of obsessions I now have...identification of plants, collection of seed, landscaping with Tasmanian natives...the list goes on. I'm sure I'm not the only person affected in this way.

Perhaps above all the best spin-off is meeting and working with so many like-minded people; dedication and perseverance are qualities needed to fight for the preservation of the environment of our beautiful state. The small but continual wins of organisations like the USN give me hope that in the long run we will be successful.

I hope you feel the same. If you don't, please let us know how we can do things better?

I would like to welcome Martin O'Bryan, who was elected to the Understorey Network Committee at our recent AGM. I hope you

Meanwhile for those of you who are growing plants this year I hope that all goes well. Please remember to keep track of your successes and failures and send in your completed "Growers' Chart" so that we can update our records.

Annie Griffiths



Susan Friend, Mary Jolly, Christine Bateman and Annie Griffiths loaded 17..... tubes into the container at the RTBG for sterilising, prior to Depot Day.

And they had time to count them!!!

Flourish

Seeds bring the hope of new life

The Flourish Project was initiated and funded by the Bushfire Recovery Program with support from the Break O'Day Council, NRM north and the Understorey Network.

The aim of Flourish was to engage school students in a practical project to assist the community in the recovery process after the devastating 2006 Bushfires.

Students from Fingal, St Mary's and St Helen's schools attended excursions, where local seed was collected and the importance of collecting local providence seed highlighted. The students then spent a session sorting and cleaning the seed for storage.

In Spring 08 the students set about propagating the seeds. This involved pre-treatment of some species such as soaking acacia species in boiling water. The species included; *Acacia melanoxylon* (Blackwood), *Leptospermum scorparium* (tea-tree), *Diplarrena moraea* (Flag Iris), *Eucalyptus globulus* (Bluegum), *Poa labillardierei* (Silver tussock grass) and *Kunzea ambigua* (Tick bush).

In total the students from the three schools successfully sowed approximately 1500 seedlings. The students then committed to ensuring they were well watered and cared for in preparation for planting in winter 2009. Each school is now in the process of giving away their beautifully grown plants to landholders affected by the fires. This has included each school visiting a landholder and individually planting out species as a gift of recovery.



St Helen's School students assist landholder Valerie Legge plant Poa on her Scamander property.

Fingal Primary School students assist Peter Power plant natives at his Rainbow Retreat property.



Alison Hugo

New methods for planting trees in tree decline areas!

By Anna Povey

We have watched despairingly the decline and loss of trees in the Midlands and other areas of Tasmania for many years now. Despite the efforts of landcare groups and individuals, the areas affected seem to be increasing, with the Tamar region also suffering "tree decline" more and more. Even more worryingly, there seems to be poor seedling recruitment in many places as well as the decline in mature trees.

However people are trying to improve things; by fencing off bush, removing stock and planting tree and understorey seedlings. But the plantings are not always successful, as difficult conditions lead to death of many seedlings.

Two separate groups – Rowella Landcare Group (with the assistance of the CRC for Forestry, University of Tasmania and consultant Scott Livingston) and Launceston City Council (with leadership from arborist Gordon Paul) - have tried some novel ways of improving the seedling success (and hopefully ultimately reversing the tree decline), with some fantastic initial results.

This newsletter we will look at Rowella's trees. Launceston next issue...

Trees grow near logs!



Rowella Landcare Group Eucalypt Regeneration Project

The most notable success in Rowella Landcare Group's project was using log heaps and burning. Where previous plantings into a declining remnant had been unsuccessful, this method resulted in outstanding establishment, rapid growth, healthiness of plants and control of competition from weeds.

Log heaps were constructed and then burnt – a hot fire was needed to really scorch the site. Then more logs were placed around three sides of the burnt area in a sort of corral. Plants were planted into this ashbed after autumn rains and guarded with plastic guards.

Of course the remnant had already been fenced from stock, as this is essential for good regeneration. Previous plantings had been done the conventional way, with good weed control, planting and guarding techniques, but most had failed. This new method stands out for its success in a very dry period.

Mike McCausland, of Rowella Landcare Group, believes the method has worked because of the removal of weed competition, the microclimate provided by the logs, and the water directing provided by the burnt soil crust (which meant most rainfall was directed towards the plants).

This trial was built on research done by Tanya Bailey of University of Tasmania, who found that most eucalypt seedlings in natural dry forest could be found near logs, stumps or fallen branches, and most were in ashbeds. Neil Davidson of the CRC for Sustainable Production Forestry has done a lot of work on best planting techniques for the Midlands and other areas (with other useful findings, like the benefits of diligent weed control and planting on the lee side of mounds). Scott Livingston co-ordinated the project and provided detailed plans.

For more information on this trial, contact Mike McCausland mmccausl@yahoo.com

References:

Tanya Bailey, Neil Davidson and Dugald Close (2008), *Use of fire, cultivation and coarse woody debris as restoration techniques in Tasmanian dry forests*. Poster at ESA 2008, the Ecological Society of Australia Conference on 1 - 5 December 2008 at the University of Sydney.

http://www.aff.org.au/AFF2_Tanya_Bailey_ESA_Prize.htm

Planning a Native Plant Garden

Warner Wait has established native gardens in several states during his lifetime and is about to embark on yet another. These are just some of his thoughts on aspects you might consider if you are starting a new garden or are about to redevelop an area

Planning your garden needs a lot of thought as to what type of garden you're looking to create and the size of the area you want to establish and this really applies to all gardens.

Firstly, check out where your views are so as to keep them but maybe enhance them by framing the views by planting a tree near by, especially a Eucalypt, where you use the tree trunk as your frame to highlight your view. They are wonderful for doing things like that. At the same time don't choose a Eucalypt that is going to grow too large and this happens so often in small areas. This tree needs to be more of an open foliage type tree, so as you can see through the branches that are protruding into your view- this gives you a foreground to go with your more distant view. Having everything in its right perspective is so important.

Secondly, look at areas you want to hide so that you can work in something that is quite dense for that area. Check that you are not planting some large tree over any septic drains or any other object that may need some protection under ground. Don't plant anything too large too close to pathways

Thirdly, work out where north is as you don't want too much shade in areas where you want a nice sunny veranda or even your clothes line and also remember your next door neighbor as they will want the same treatment.



A Native garden developed over 10 years in the Western Tiers. The view of Mother Cummings Peak is enhanced by the garden layout.

Once you have taken these things into consideration then look at getting your perspective right as when looking towards your views it's nice to see several different perspectives.

Always start with smaller plants near your house getting into larger plants as you move away with maybe the odd larger one on the side of your view so that it doesn't become too symmetrical. In some built up areas your main view could be just your distant trees in your own garden.

The next thing is garden preparation and this depends a lot on your soil type in the area you want to plant.

Firstly you should spray all your grass and weeds and there is now a wonderful herbicide recognized by the organic association that your local agents could recommend. Next thing if you can for larger areas get a machine in to deep rip, say 50 centimetres, then rough it all up making ridges and gullies about 30 to 40 centimetres deep so that when you plant your plants you plant on the ridges and when you get rain the gullies hold back the water. For smaller areas this is probably not practical and your only choice is to spray and then just dig with a shovel. Don't do any digging until all the grass and weeds have died off. All this preparation is better done while the area is on the drier side in the summer. After selecting your plants and all the preparation is done wait for some rain to settle the soil down then get on with the planting.

Now there are a couple of times when best to plant. I prefer spring planting, say September-October, after any heavy mid winter rain and most of the frosts have gone. With heavy winter rain plants tend to just sit there with wet roots and also the bandicoots love digging around the freshly planted plants and any frost sensitive plants may be affected by a heavy frost.

The other time to plant is probably April while the ground is still warm and the plants have time to settle in a bit before winter really hits hard. All native plants are best if they are watered in when you plant and don't be afraid to tease the roots out a little as you are planting. I have never used any fertilizer on any of my native plants. After all the planting you are still not finished. You really must do some mulching and I have found that the best mulch is gum bark. It binds well, lasts a long time and the black birds can't scratch it around.

When selecting your plants be very aware of the mature size of the plant. This can vary a lot depending on soil type and rain fall. So many plants become too

large for gardens and are very expensive to get removed if they have to be.

While planting out shelter belts in larger areas I probably like to keep to local plants but a garden has a very personal approach to it and I think it's quite nice to include some mainland species, but be very careful not to plant anything that can escape and become a problem and there are a few that will do that - your nursery person should be able to help you there.

Try and include some winter flowering plants as our honey eaters are searching for food through the winter months and there are plenty of our plants that will do just that, such as some of our Epacris, Acacias, Croweas, Correas, Banksias. Also some of our Grevilleas and Hakeas flower through the winter and our honey eaters love them. This is only naming a few but I would suggest that you always ask your nursery person if you are in doubt as to what to plant or someone that knows their plants.



Establishing the garden layout

Unfortunately Tassie doesn't have many small growing Eucalypts apart from Eucalyptus barberi, which grows to about 8 metres and grows naturally on the east coast, north of Swansea, and is quite suited for growing in your garden. There is another small Eucalypt which grows in very cold and exposed areas on the western slopes at reasonably high altitudes and is only suited to gardens in colder areas and that is Eucalyptus vernicosa which grows from 2 to 4 metres. Quite a few of our Tasmanian Eucalypts will grow to 20 metres but that is really getting too large for smaller areas and of course there are the tall giants that can grow up to 100 metres and more.

One of my most favorite Eucalypts is Eucalyptus gregsoniana. It is a sub alpine Eucalypt that grows high up on the Blue Mountains west of Sydney. It has a lovely white grey trunk; it flowers profusely and only grows to about 8 metres.

There are some nice Western Australian Eucalypts that grow naturally in the South West and would grow well here. One of the very popular Western Australian

Eucalypts that is grown a lot in Tassie is Eucalyptus ficifolia but it does grow up to 15-20 metres.

There are many smaller Eucalypts and too many to name but a couple of my favorites are Eucalyptus erythrocorys and Eucalyptus erythronema, both fairly frost sensitive for the first 2 years.

It is always good to remember when placing your plants out try and mix your Acacias and pea flowering plants in amongst your general planting. Being a legume plant they supply nitrogen to the soil - this is why our natural forests are so well balanced and totally sustainable.

Planting out shelter belts has much the same principle but first deep rip in the summer time, when the soil is dry, as it shatters up much better then. Spray your grass and weeds late autumn ready for planting around September, providing the soil is not too wet.

Being out in the open they will probably need small plastic tree guards mainly to keep off any rabbits or wallabies that may be around. With good preparation and some weed matting around the base these plants should survive without any watering providing they are watered in when planting. I'm sure forestry doesn't water all the trees that they plant.

Warner Wait



Acacia verticillata – great for insects and small birds.

Youngtown Primary School

The Outdoor Classroom

Students at Youngtown Primary School have written descriptive accounts of their Rowella Landcare initiative. The initiative forms part of the school's Outdoor Classroom project. The programmes are underpinned by the philosophy of Environmental Sustainability. Mario Bergamin, the school's assistant principal, teaches the program, available to all students from K to 6, one day a week.

Enormous thanks to Mario and his students for the following contributions.

Editor



Let's plant a tree!

Youngtown Primary students went to Rowella to plant trees on Peter Cameron's property. We planted eucalyptus, acacias and many more. We had a really good time planting over 200 trees for Peter Cameron and Jenny Baird. This is a picture of some students planting with our teacher Mr Bergamin.

By Ahazrelle



Instructions



This photo is the sustainability group from Youngtown Primary School. We work in the Outdoor Classroom at our school each week. Recently we went to Rowella to plant trees on Peter Cameron's property. This photo is of Mr McCausland explaining what we are going to do.

First we were supplied with trees and weed mats. Then we planted trees and put weed mats around the trees. After that we had lunch, of soup and bread.

Next we received the bags and bamboo sticks. We bagged all the trees with Mrs. Shegog and Mr. Bergamin, our teachers. We planted over 200 trees.

By Harri

Demonstrating tree planting

Mr McCausland is demonstrating how to put a weed mat around the tree. This group is the sustainability group from Youngtown Primary School. We work in the outdoor classroom weekly. Mr McCausland gave us trees and weed mats. The trees were planted and the weed mats were placed around the base of the tree. Then we had lunch by the Tamar River. We had soup and a bun. We played and had lollies. Before going back to work we were given bags and bamboo to finish the job. We planted over 200 trees.

By Harri



Planting at Rowella.

When we finished planting the trees we put three bamboo canes in the ground so we could put a bag over them. The bag helps the trees by catching the water. We planted in different spots on Peter Cameron and Jenny Baird's property. There were a variety of tree types that we planted. We planted over 200 trees. Mr Bergamin and Mrs Shegog travelled with us to Rowella.

By Taylor

Tree Planting at Rowella

This is a picture of Darien from Youngtown Primary school planting trees at Rowella.



First Mr Cameron and Mr McCausland supplied us with trees, weed mats and bamboo posts. Mr Bergamin put the sustainability team into groups of two or three and sent us off to different parts of the paddock to plant a variety of trees. After we planted all the trees we were taken to the lake to eat lunch.

Mrs Shegog brought some soup for a treat and some buns for dipping. After we finished lunch we got some free time to stretch our legs before we went back to work. When we went back to the paddock Mr Cameron and Mr McCausland had placed out some plastic bags to put around the bamboo posts. We had to fold the bag at the ends

and slip them over the bamboo posts and pull out the folds so the folds could collect water. We counted the trees and we discovered that we had planted over 200 trees. We all had a great day.

By Darien

Protect the Tree



This picture shows Yvette and Darien from Youngtown Primary school at Rowella protecting the tree with a weed mat. We were given a tree and a weed mat. First we dug a hole. After that we placed weed mat over the top. This is one of many trees we planted.

By Yvette

Bagging Trees



This picture shows Taylor, Ahazrelle, Darien and Yvette planting trees at Rowella.

Mr McCausland demonstrated the bagging of trees. We completed this by folding the end of the bags inside & then placing two bamboo canes in the ground. Finally we put the bag over the top of the two canes. When we had done that we put the third cane in. This keeps the tree protected and helps collect water.

By Yvette

Clarence Summer Workshops Program

Plant Identification

A walk and talk introduction to the fundamentals of plant identification and taxonomy covering prominent Tasmanian families

- Sunday 15th November 2009, 10am – 1pm, Calverts Lagoon Nature Reserve, South Arm (Meet at car park opposite 2235 South Arm Road)
- Wednesday 18th November 2009, 10am – 1pm, Waverley Flora Park, Mornington (Meet at the end of Mercedes Place)

Seed Collecting

A walk and talk collecting seed from a variety of native species to be used to grow plants for local revegetation projects

- Wednesday 13th January 2010, 10am – 1pm, Waverley Flora Park, Mornington (TBC)
- Sunday 24th January, 10am – 1pm, End of Dorans Rd, Sandford (TBC)

Plant Propagation

A practical step by step introduction to propagating and growing native plants from seeds and cuttings

- Wednesday 10th March 2010, 10am – 2pm, Hobart City Council Nursery, Mornington (TBC)
- Sunday 14th March 2010, 10am – 2pm, Sandford Hall, Sandford (TBC)

Morning Tea provided at all workshops. Please bring hat, sunscreen, sturdy footwear, gloves and secateurs (seed collecting and propagation workshops), and your own lunch.

Please RSVP to: understorey@gmail.com or 6234 4286

Cradle Coast NRM Coastal Garden Competition

The competition aims to showcase large and small North West Tasmanian native coastal gardens in the Cradle Coast region that preserve coastal biodiversity and provide habitat for wildlife. There are some great prizes up for grabs! Enquiries contact Anna Wind on 6431 6285 or email awind@cradlecoast.com.

Entries close on Monday, 16 November 2009.

Entry details can be downloaded from the website at:

<http://www.nrmtas.org/regions/cradle/vision.shtml>

under the 'what's new' tab.