



# UnderStories

## **Promoting, Preserving, Protecting & Rehabilitating Native Vegetation**

**Autumn 2014, No 65**

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Visit our website and Plant Propagation  
Database: [www.understorey-network.org.au](http://www.understorey-network.org.au)

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### **Coordinator's Report**

What a typically odd Tasmanian summer it has been, with hot, cold, wet, dry and everything in between. It seems many of our native plants have been struggling to keep up with these conditions too, with peculiar timing of seed setting, germination etc. Most of the revegetation sites that we have worked on last year are fairing well though, with greater than 90% success rate so far.

We would be very interested in hearing how your plants are going too. If you have used plants that you have grown yourself or obtained through the growers scheme, it would be great if you could send in some photos (before and after if possible) and a description. We will be compiling collection of these for people to look at, at the 20 year anniversary celebrations.

If you are gearing up to do some planting this year with Understorey Network plants, I'd also be happy to have a chat about it. We may be able to assist with materials and advice on site preparation and protection of your plants.

The Understorey Network will be involved in some big planting projects this year, including the coordination of planting 8,000 plants on North Bruny Island, as part of NRM South's project to connect and restore threatened species habitat. A major focus of this has been planting white gum (*Eucalyptus viminalis*) to provide habitat for the forty-spotted pardalote. We have undertaken a process to prioritise sites to revegetate based on the current population of colonies and the condition of the bush there. Another action that is proving to be of value for restoring pardalote habitat is the provision of nest boxes.

To get all these plants in the ground there will be some working bees this winter. There are also some upcoming workshops and we will be having displays at events, so hopefully see you around at one of them.

**Oliver Strutt**

## Propagation Pointers

<b>Family Name</b>	<i>Fabaceae</i> subfamily <i>Faboideae</i>
<b>Species Name</b>	<i>Dillwynia glaberrima</i>
<b>Common Name</b>	Smooth Parrot Pea
<b>Description</b>	<i>Dillwynia glaberrima</i> is a small shrub to about 1.5 metres high by 1 metre wide. The small, linear leaves are about 5-20 mm long and rounded in cross - section (terete). The flowers, which appear in spring are about 10 mm in diameter and are yellow with an orange throat. They occur in masses and provide a colourful display. After flowering, the hard seeds develop in small pods.
<b>Seed Treatment</b>	Pre treatment of the seed is necessary, either abrasion or immersion in boiling water.
<b>Propagation Notes</b>	<i>D.glaberrima</i> is occasionally grown by enthusiasts but is not in wide cultivation. It is suited to well drained soils in a sunny or semi - shaded position and will tolerate heavy pruning. It is tolerant of at least moderate frost. The seed retains viability for many years
<b>Seed Sowing Months</b>	Year round excluding June and July

Growers, if you have propagated this plant and can contribute any further info, please email [secretary@understorey-network.org.au](mailto:secretary@understorey-network.org.au)

Rebecca Taylor



## President's Report

At its last meeting the Committee spent time looking forwards and backwards. In preparation for the 20<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations on the 12<sup>th</sup> of April we compiled an invitation list to include people who have played an important part in the history of the Understorey Network; that is founding members, previous co-ordinators and representatives from organisations that we have partnered with. If even half of them are able to accept the invitation to join us we will form quite a crowd at Oatlands.

Once the birthday had been addressed we were able to look forward to see how we can continue to offer services to members and the community over the next few years. This involved reviewing material that the federal government has published relating to carbon sequestration and its proposed "20 million tree" initiative.

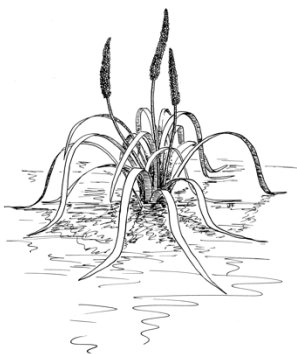
You will be aware that the Understorey Network relies heavily on volunteers who are supported by a paid coordinator. Unfortunately, we also rely on project funding to pay the salary of the coordinator because membership fees and fundraising only provide a very small contribution towards our overall expenses. Given this reliance on funding a change of government always gives rise to a period of uncertainty because funding programs change direction or cease to operate in accordance with the new government's priorities.

At the present time it is not clear how the Network will be able to fit into the new priorities which appear to be focused on the provision of limited funding to large organisations able to undertake cost efficient projects to quickly reduce measurable amounts of carbon. However, our reading of the available material indicates that there will be a need for such organisations to access expert consultancy services and we feel that this is one area where we would be able to offer a valuable service. There will also be a need for the provision of a large number of native plants to support some of the initiatives. This is a task that we are well equipped to undertake utilising the skills of our members who volunteer to grow plants at home and the skills of our nursery volunteers.

Now we need to look to the present and specifically our current growing season and program of events. I hope that the unusual weather has not proved to be an impediment to plant growth especially for plants being grown for the regeneration of bushfire affected areas. With respect to other activities, we have a number of events and activities planned for the coming months that you will be invited to attend as volunteers or participants. Specific details will be provided elsewhere in this newsletter and by email and we always appreciate feedback and suggestions from our members. Are there any specific activities that you would like us to organise? Do you have any suggestions to help us double our membership base as suggested in my last report?

While you think about these questions please ensure that you have 12 April marked in your calendar as a day to be in Oatlands as I, and the whole committee, look forward to meeting you there.

Joan Rodrigues USN President



## Forty-spotted Pardalote nest box project

Forty-spotted pardalotes and other hollow-nesting birds use tree holes with small entrances and deep chambers to protect them from predators and weather. Ancient, dying trees produce the most tree hollows. However, in eastern Tasmania almost all white gum woodland habitat is second growth forest, which lacks these trees. Thanks to nest box sponsors, there are now more than 200 new nest hollows available for forty-spotted pardalotes at Bruny Island, Tinder-box Peninsula, and Maria Island. This year, forty-spots used nearly ten per cent of new boxes and fifty per cent of boxes placed in trees four years ago. Three forty-spot pairs moved into a patch on Bruny Island that was vacant last year and used newly installed nest boxes. In an earlier trial of nest boxes, most forty-spotted pardalotes moved in after at least two years, so I think we can expect even greater success in the future.

Each pair produced an average of one nestling this season. Forty-spotted pardalotes may live to be 12 to 15 years old, and could produce up to 15 offspring at this rate.

Late summer is a good time to watch for forty-spotted pardalotes in areas where you wouldn't normally spot them. Young birds are searching for unoccupied foraging territories and wrestling for available nest hollows.

Amanda Edworthy





## Plant Profile: Native Cherry

The botanical name for the native cherry is *Exocarpos cupressiformis*. Exocarpos is latin for “seed outside the fruit”. Cupressiformis refers to the cypress family of conifers, which this plant superficially resembles. The family of this plant is Santalaceae, other well known members of this family are mistletoe and sandalwood. This plant has dense, fluffy bright green foliage, which is unusual in Australian bushland and makes the plant easy to identify, the true leaves are reduced to tiny scales, while the drooping green stems perform most of the photosynthetic process that the plant uses to turn sunshine into sugar. The plant can reach 2m-9m tall forming a bush or a tree and has small inconspicuous cream coloured flowers which appear in Spring and Summer. The edible berries start off green, bitter and hard, turning orange to deep red as they ripen and sweeten, if they come off easily in your hand then they are at a good level of ripeness.

The native cherry is a hemiparasite, it has tiny hooks on its roots and can tap into a nearby host plant's root system and drain its life juices. A healthy host plant, usually Eucalypt (gum) or Acacia (wattle) is especially important when the plant is young. Because this plant is toxic to stock, most of it has been cleared from agricultural land but it can be found throughout temperate Australia in dry, rocky, shallow soiled, open woodland. The aboriginal name for this plant in the Monaro region is mummadya. Aboriginal people used this plant as a food source as well as constructing bullroarers and spear throwers from the timber. You can make your own noisy bullroarer at home with a hefty wooden ruler threaded onto a metre or two of strong string or cord, taken outside and swung in circles around your head.

The branches were often used by early Australian settlers as Christmas trees and potted plants are still used for this purpose. Please don't hack down whole native trees for a week of December, only to be discarded along with so much other wasteful Christmas detritus. The plants are probably older and arguably wiser than you and there are plenty of weedy Radiata pine saplings around for this purpose. The berries also begin to ripen around Christmas time and I hear that they go well in or on top of a Christmas cake once seeds are removed. The timber is known for striking colour variation and is commonly shaped into tool handles, gunstocks and furniture.

If you are a Sambar deer living in Australia who has learnt to read, firstly, well done! You probably already know this plant well, the berries and foliage provide you with food, the rough bark is good for develveting fresh antlers, the trunk is a good spot to scent mark to scare off other males and attract lady deer. Finally, upon the soft fallen leaves under the plant is a comfortable sleeping spot after a hard day of pronking and stotting.

The smoke from the burning foliage is supposedly an insect repellent and there is a less believable rumours of the sap being a snake antivenom, don't try this at home kids, stick to the bullroarer.

By pushing through the boredom and reading this far, I imagine you are thinking “I must grow myself several specimens of this phenomenal plant!” well hold your horticultural horses because this plant is notoriously challenging to propagate. Cuttings from stem tips can be taken but strike rates are often low, cuttings of fresh epicormic regrowth following a bushfire are said to have a better chance at success. You could buy or collect seed but this method is complicated by the native cherry's hemiparasitism. Various grasses, shrubs and trees have been trialled as suitable companions.

The fruit of all plants function as a bribe to encourage animals, in this case birds, to eat the seeds, transport them far away from the parent plant and poo them out somewhere new to start a new life. To mimic the effect of a bird's digestive tract in breaking the dormancy of the seed by dissolving the hard nutlike seed casing you can soak the seeds in a mild acid before sowing, usually diluted vinegar or tomato soup are used. Or you could try feeding berries to your chickens and collect their prepared seed! Here is a closeup pic of the fruit.

This plant is also known to have a relationship with fungal micro-organisms, you can try to inoculate your seeds or seedlings with some rotting vegetable matter from under an adult native cherry to encourage this relationship to prosper. Even using these methods, the seed has been known to take 6-18 months to germinate, transplanting an older plant is another option but is also challenging.

I hope you have been entertained and informed by this article, happy cherry-ing!

Sam Beattie

## A Bushwalking Trip

I have been treasurer of the Understorey Network for a few years now. I got involved because we have a large garden and we had a creek which was full of blackberries and old cars and bottles and needed a bit of sorting out. I don't profess to know much about native plants but the USN helped me out by recommending what to plant on the banks of the cleaned out creek. The creek has largely been revegetated and I now pursue my other interest in bushwalking. And going out bush I certainly see some wonderful examples of our native vegetation.

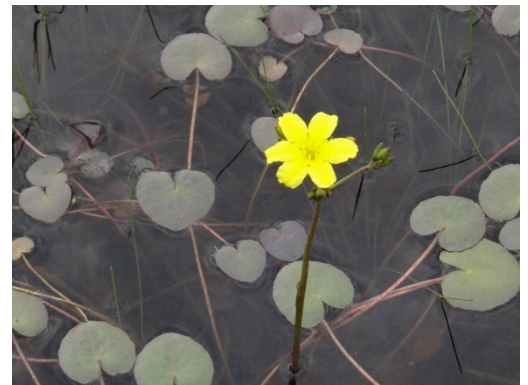
I have just returned from a four day trip to Chinaman's Plains. Chinaman's Plains is a remote high altitude plateau (about 1100metres) to the South West of the Walls of Jerusalem. We started at Lake Ada near Liawenee and spent our first night at Lake Silver, then crossed through to Lake Rotuli and Three Arm Lake and headed to Lake Toorah and then to Lake Ball at the edge of the Walls before heading back down the Bernes valley and thence to Lake Ada. Every camp site was at a magnificent lake and the weather was warm enough to swim.

The whole area is teeming with hundreds of lakes and tarns, and is sometimes called the land of 4000 tarns. There are no tracks so navigation skills are essential.

We walked up long open valleys following wombat and wallaby leads through low coral fern. It was January and the bush was flowering magnificently. The valleys were full of fields of flowering pink and white scoparia, flowering native mountain peppers, cushion plants, tea tree and pencil pines. The shallow tarns had some form of flowering yellow lillies growing in them. (I am sure Oliver can identify this plant for us!)

As always in the Tasmanian bush it was an exhilarating experience. Some Tasmanian bush is best avoided. There is not much fun pushing through a tangled web of bauera, tea tree and cutting grass but the high alpine plateaus are less vegetated and are a joy to walk through and admire.

Rupert Manners



Yellow Flowering Lilly



Mystery Plant

## Annual Plant Sale

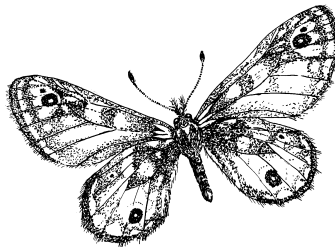
Tasmanian Native Plants in tube stock and plants in 3" and 6" pots  
A wide variety available, including groundcovers, shrubs and trees

**Where:** Tolosa Street Plant Nursery (western end of Tolosa Park)

**When:** Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> May from 10.30 – 2.00  
Monday 12<sup>th</sup> May from 10.30—2.00

***Come along and bring family and friends to purchase our lovingly grown plants and to support the Understorey Network in promoting, preserving, protecting and rehabilitating native vegetation***

For further information contact **Oliver** on 6234 4286 or 0407352479



## Understorey Network is 20 next month!!

On April 12<sup>th</sup> 2014

The UnderStorey Network will be celebrating its  
**20<sup>th</sup> Birthday**

We are planning to visit Oatlands, the shores of Lake Dulverton to be precise, where the USN was involved in one of its first projects, planting Tasmanian native plants.

We plan to meet at Oatlands at 10.00 for a seed collection / plant ID walk between Parattah and Oatlands.

Lunch will be provided and a cake to mark the occasion will be cut to accompany tea and coffee.

Previous coordinators will be asked to mark the occasion with an official planting ceremony on Lake Dulverton's shoreline.

Mark this date in your diary as we would love you to be able to help us celebrate this special anniversary.

If you think you will be able to attend please let us know asap. Ph 62344286 or email [understorey@gmail.com](mailto:understorey@gmail.com) so we are able to continue our planning with some idea of the numbers involved.

## WHAT'S HAPPENING

### **Seed Collecting and Native Plant Propagation Workshop (North East)**

How to collect seed and propagate Tasmanian native plants from seed or cuttings

When: Friday 4<sup>th</sup> April

Where: St Marys

### **Seed Collecting and Native Plant Propagation Workshop (North East)**

How to collect seed and propagate Tasmanian native plants from seed or cuttings

When: Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> April

Where: Bridport

### **Harvest Festival (South)**

The Understorey Network will be sharing a stall with NRM South at this festival

When: Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> April

Where: Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens, Hobart

### **Understorey Network 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations**

Come and help celebrate this significant milestone with a walk, BBQ and planting event

When: Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> April

Where: Oatlands

### **Agfest (North)**

The Understorey Network will be sharing a stall with Landcare Tasmania at this festival

When: Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> May to Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> May

Where: Carrick

### **Plant Sale Fundraiser (South)**

A wide variety of Tasmanian natives grown by Understorey Network volunteers will be available for sale

When: Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> May and Monday 12<sup>th</sup> May – 10:30am to 2pm each day

Where: Tolosa Nursery, Tolosa Park, Glenorchy

### **Understorey Network Committee Meetings**

When: 5:15pm – 11<sup>th</sup> March, 7<sup>th</sup> April, 12<sup>th</sup> May

Where: USN office, Level 1, 148 Elizabeth Street Hobart

All members are welcome to come to our regular meetings – please RSVP for catering purposes

Please call the office on 6234 4286 or email [oliver@understorey-network.org.au](mailto:oliver@understorey-network.org.au) for more information or to RSVP for any of the workshops.

Also check the website for the latest Calendar of Events.