



Tungkillo Landcare Group

Newsletter No. 103 – July 2011

Welcome to winter!!

After a beautiful spring-like week recently we are now firmly entrenched in winter. A busy time of the year in many ways, not the least in planting seedlings out, getting new fencing in and for us we are busy harvesting olives.

The committee has decided that this year our Annual General Meeting (**6.30 pm, Friday 9 September, Tungkillo hall**) will be **'a night to remember'**. We have a great guest speaker: the SA Rural Woman of the Year, Kim Blenkiron. Kim grew up on a farm in the Mallee and for 20 years has farmed with her husband – first on Kangaroo Island and now on at Strathalbyn. Kim will be sharing with us her considerable (and successful) experience in motivating and sustaining community groups. Plenty to think about there!

And what about that **'night to remember'**?

We are inviting all you wonderful landcarers to remind us what your place used to look like and show off the great things you have done since - for some it will cover decades, for others it will be much less. We want to put you (and perhaps your neighbours) up on the big screen with some your favourite 'before' and 'after' shots ([see below](#)). They might be revegetated areas, a productive perennial pasture, a rescued watercourse, even your house garden; they can be before and after shots of just about anything that show what you have achieved on your property. Your hard work is sure to inspire the rest of us who will be itching to go home and have a go at something similar.

So, come along and catch up with neighbours you see often or those you haven't seen for a while, hear an inspiring speaker, share with us what you have done and enjoy a good meal by the Tungkillo Progress Association.

Stay warm!

Cheers

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A Night to Remember

This is how it works:

1. Get your digital photo(s) to Bruce (bruce.m42@bigpond.com) by Wed 31 August - maximum of 2 'before' and 2 'after' shots.
2. If you don't have digital (probably the 'before' shots) we will scan them.
3. No 'before' shots? You might find there is an old timer in the landcare group who has an early pic of what is now your property.
3. All photos will be put on PowerPoint.
4. During presentation you will have 1 minute to tell your story and as long as it takes to answer questions. No pressure!

Watercourses and grazing

Sherie Bain, final year Masters student studying Environmental Management at Flinders Uni has commenced her project looking at the biodiversity outcomes of crash-grazing watercourses that have been fenced off for conservation. This first stage involved reading what work has been done elsewhere and working out how best to measure the actual biodiversity value along watercourses.



Next stage is to get out in the field and see what story it tells. Basically Sherie will compare the biodiversity along creeks that have been fenced off for some years and compare that with other parts of the same creek unfenced. Added to this will be sections of creek fenced but to which stock

have had access for short periods (say a couple of weeks per year) generally to reduce fuel loads.

The rationale is that some landholders might be more enthusiastic about fencing off a creek if they knew they could graze it occasionally. If this action doesn't degrade the environment, then it could be a good option where public (i.e. tax payer) money is offered as an incentive to protect watercourses.

It starts with a seed

Back in March a team of TLG members collected a good swag of pink gum (*E fasciculosa*) and drooping sheoak (*Allocasuarina verticillata*) seed. The former from Karrawirra and Roskhill and the latter from Brinkworth's Road.



Peter, Michael and Greg on pink gum

Over the next few days we also collected quite a bit of SA blue gum (*E leucoxydon*), native pine (*Callitris gracillis*), slaty sheoak (*A muelleriana*), yacca (*Xanthorrhoea semiplanar*) and New Holland daisy (*Vittadinia*). Ria Roberts has also collected a wide range of seed from less common small plants in Roskhill. Neil has already sown some of this in his nursery and will do a second sowing in Spring.



Sheoak seed



Morry with wallaby grass seed

So, we have a fair bit of seed for Neil's nursery and a reasonable amount of bulk seed (but no wattles or tea tree) for direct seeding.

Plant propagation - watching the pros do it

A week later a group of us went to State Flora at Murray Bridge where Phil Collins and his team showed us how they propagate many thousands of native plants each year.

Phil turned on a terrific show – it was interesting to see the propagation media they use, the way it is set up, the attention to hygiene, and all the little tricks that are

important when you run a commercial operation.



Phil (gingernut) sharing trade secrets

I had a go at some cuttings when I got home and also sowed some yacca seed in vermiculite which is supposed to increase the efficiency of the process – it sure does!



Bruce's baby yaccas

What's in Roskhill scrub?

Caroline Crawford has completed the herbarium for Roskhill scrub – and what a great piece of work it is. Over 150 indigenous plants including 5 of Conservation Significance and 18 for the Southern Lofty Region. Not only is it good to at last know just what is in this 16 ha of scrub, but also to have a baseline from which to track its conservation status.

More on woody weeds

The saga of the roadside woody weeds continues. The SA MDB NRM Board has now sprayed most of the furze, briar rose, blackberry and broom north of the Mt Torrens-Tungkillo road. The Landcare group is grateful to the Board for this, free of charge except for herbicide that we provided.

After 4 days spraying there is still a bit to do. Parts of McGorman's Rd, Memorial Dve, Ross Smith Rd to name a few.

The TLG committee decided at its June meeting to complete the job at our own expense. EnviroGroup who did the first stage of this project has been contracted to complete the job **in October**, along with follow-up on plants that might have been missed first time round.

Four things:

1. Firstly, thanks to the SAMDB NRM Board (particularly Kym Haebich) for helping us with a large part of this job. Free of charge!
2. If you see any of these woody weeds that have been missed (furze is flowering now) let someone on the committee know.
3. Want to tackle the woody weeds inside your own boundary fence? The recipe is Garlon® @ 34ml + non-ionic wetter @ 12.5ml per 10L water in Spring. Its true that furze provides habitat for small birds, but so do many native shrubs which they (the weeds) have displaced. Large infestations of furze probably need to be burned (in winter before the birds nest) and the regrowth sprayed. **TLG has a 250 litre ute pack which members are welcome to borrow for large spray jobs.**
4. Let Bruce know if you do **not** want your roadside woody weeds (yes, they are yours!) sprayed, but bear in mind that you do have a legal obligation to control them. One day it might be enforced.

Those other weeds

The crown weevil (*Mogulones larvatus*) continues to do its job so that the **Jane**, whilst still around, is greatly reduced in quantity and vigour (Newsletter #99). Try to give Mogulones every chance by minimising the use of pesticides (such as LeMat).

Out of sight is out of mind, but soon many paddocks will brown off with **Guilford grass** (Newsletter #101). The window of opportunity for spraying this stuff is the last half of July through the first half of August. Ally® at 6 grams per 100 litres is all it takes.

The other point to note is that Guilford grass is generally a sign of poor fertility, so it will likely return if the soil is not looked after.

The Landcare group can provide Ally for anyone wishing to attend to this. Note that it will kill your clover, but is not residual.

The 3rd one is **South African weed orchid**. This has been spreading for over a decade and popping up everywhere. Most seriously it is in Roskhill scrub where Caroline has already mapped and sprayed a lot of it. But the task is too big even for Caroline, so we have applied for a small community grant to get some professional assistance.



South African weed orchid

Next 'project'

Brinkworth's Range Road is a bit like you're your favourite 'country lane'. Up high so you can see around (great view of ElectraNet's switching station!), a reasonable amount of remnant veg, and the remains of a nice old stone wall. Until you get to the eastern end where it looks a bit like a desert. There used to be a forest of furze, but Cavenetts got rid of most of that and the recent spray program has cleaned up the rest. There is also a good amount of native grass - spear grass (*Austrostipa*) and windmill grass (*Chloris truncata*).



Windmill grass

This year we are going to revegetate this using a combination of seedlings raised by Neil and Ria along with direct seeding and taking care not to damage the native grasses.

Anyone who would like to help should report for duty at the site at **10am on Saturday 6 August**. As usual we will finish with a BBQ.

Natural regeneration

The season being what it has, this has been an amazing time for natural regeneration.

You can see it along all the roadsides, particularly with sheoak and redgums. But there has also been a lot of native grass. It seems that most years the native vegetation just sort of ticks over. In drought years it just hangs on (or not), but then given a good year

it goes crazy. I don't know why I am surprised, but I guess its just that years like the one we have just had are so 'out of the box'.

Early in May the male sheoaks were golden with pollen. One of the biggest flowerings I can recall.



Sheoak boys covered with pollen



Sheoak girls with 2 gens of fruit

Native grasses

The kangaroo grass (*Themeda*) trial site on the Tungkillo-Harrogate road shaped up pretty well, but then so did the natural sites on (for example) Brinkworth's Road. So maybe our trial site was just a fluke blessed by a good year. We will see.

The other site featuring spear grass has been sprayed with a low rate of glyphosate (10ml/L) to control the annual grasses. It will get a hit of Ally at the end of July for the Guilford grass and overall progress will be monitored.

Fishy business

Those little Murray hardyheads that sought drought refuge a couple of years ago (Newsletter #99) are proving hardy indeed. Mike Hammer and his team returned to monitor progress in Bruce & Kristin's dam and found not only are they (the fish) healthy, they are multiplying!



Mike Hammer fishing

While there is no shortage of water now, it won't always be thus, so it's good to know there is a safe haven for these little fellas.



Female with fat belly and eggs dripping

ElectraNet

Jeremy Tiller tells me that another 4000 plants have gone in on the ElectraNet site. Overall this is now looking very healthy boosted by the last couple of good years. Thanks to Jeremy for excellent oversight of this project.

Seedlings

About 1000 seedlings from Neil's nursery went out in May. Unfortunately the rain seemed to stop then, but lets hope everyone had success with the planting.

As usual, thanks to Neil for this resource and to Bev for all her good plant husbandry.

Marie's Open Garden Day

Fendler's Garden at Pine Park; **Saturday 27th August, Noon - 5pm**, 9 km along the Mt Torrens-Tepko Rd

Guest speaker & gardening guru Sophie Thomson will be speaking at 2pm. Refreshments & afternoon tea will be available. (The garden will also be open on the Sunday for those who can't make it on the Saturday)

\$5 per adult (which includes a free raffle ticket) with all proceeds to the Mt Torrens & District Community Association Inc and Mt Torrens & Harrogate Halls.

New members

If you know of people new to the area who might like to be part of the Landcare group, or at least get this newsletter (preferably by email), put them onto Bruce (8538 7075 bruce.m42@bigpond.com)

Events calendar	
July	Spray reveg sites
6 Aug	Reveg Brinkworths Range Rd
27 Aug	Fendler's Open Garden
Aug	Plant reveg seedlings
Aug	Direct seeding
9 Sep	AGM (6.30pm at Tungki hall)
? Oct	Field day at John del Fabro's. Exact date tbc
Oct/Nov	Spray woody weeds

Comments to bruce.m42@bigpond.com
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