



Greenlink NEWS

Newsletter of Greenlink Box Hill Inc. Reg No. A0018547D

April 2015

In this issue

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| Propagations | 1 |
| Committee Meeting | 2 |
| NOG | 2 |
| President's Report | 2 |
| Talks and Walks | 3 |
| On the Lookout..... | 3 |
| Wild Grasses Course..... | 4 |
| Field Report..... | 5 |
| Upcoming Events | 5 |
| Saturday Sale Days..... | 6 |
| Plant of the month | 6 |

Propagations

Autumn is here after a very strange summer. According to the BOM, temperatures were below average for Melbourne. Our nearest weather station at Scoresby recorded its lowest mean daily minimum temperature for March in 47 years with 10.9°C, 1.6°C below average. March rainfall at Scoresby was 68% of average with some very heavy rains at the beginning of the month. For Greenlink, as for most of us, this has meant extra hand watering, a high water bill, plus some loss of plants.

Propagation and plant care continues in earnest as we try to keep up with higher weekly sales, as well as orders including Melbourne Water Stream Frontage programs, local parklands, schools and City of Boroondara and Whitehorse in conjunction with Bungalook, and our own Saturday sale days.

We welcome new volunteers, who are enjoying themselves. We are still considering the nursery layout, inextricably linked to a possible upgrade to our watering system as we also begin to work with our new software system. There have been community talks and walks and even a sponsorship at the Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show.

There is always a lot to do!

Nicky

Committee Meeting

A committee meeting was held on April 1st. For a copy of the minutes, contact the secretary. In attendance were Robert, Trevor, Helen, Brian, Heather, Karin, Nicky and Margaret Witherspoon from WICCP. Here is a synopsis:

There were brief discussions again on the watering system, and nursery layout, both complex topics.

There have been some great analyses of sales and the Treasurer reported that our sales are considerably higher than this time last year.

We will have nearly 700 understorey plants for Kilmore, many more than last year – our challenge will be to get as many in the ground on our annual winter visit. The lunch will be well earned this year.

Our next Saturday sale mornings are on April 18th and May 16th. As usual there will be some giveaways and specials.

We look forward to Suzette easing carefully back into the nursery after shoulder surgery.

NOG

Robert has been holding the fort in Suzette's absence, writing the NOGs and assisting the volunteers. Weeding is always waiting for us; however it is much more under control now after a concerted effort. We have 4 new regular volunteers join us; Graeme, Janette, Rita and David and all are settling in well and making a difference in the nursery. They are keen to expand their skills beyond weeding and consolidating the plants.

ParksWide has a large order for nearly 6000 plants for a wetland development. Bungalook and Greenlink are working together to supply the plants for later in the year.

Shade cloth came down in March and autumn sun is streaming through. We look forward to some good rains, however in the meantime continue to hand water and soak dry plants.

The NOGs arrangement is working well with one and all involved in nursery life gaining an understanding of plants, orders and nursery cycles.

President's Report

Congratulations to Nicky for her huge success at the Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show! We have the Achievable Gardens Lysaght Landscaper of the Year in our midst and mighty proud we are too. The garden was a stand-out with clever choices of plants and use of clear space to enhance the impressive design.



(Photo from Holmesglen TAFE)

Crowds of people wanted to talk to Nicky about

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Credits: Background illustrations adapted from the Endeavour Botanical Collection courtesy the Trustees of the Natural History Museum. Photo on front page is of Microseris sp.3, taken by Suzette Hosken.

the garden design and how to use water from a downpipe in their own gardens.

The plants from Greenlink and ParksWide looked lovely as did all of the plants and the fabulous pipe water feature. A spectacular effort!

The City of Boroondara has purchased 75 gift-vouchers which have been offered to schools and the Backyard Biodiversity Project group.

The Project group will be visiting Greenlink on Saturday 9th of May at 2pm. They will have a quick tour of the nursery and then will be picking up their plants.

I've started work on a Flickr photo-sharing page for Greenlink plants and it's looking good: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/greenlinkboxhill/>

This has been keeping me busy while I recover from shoulder surgery. Thank you to everyone for your support and I look forward to easing back into the nursery.

Suzette

Talks and Walks

Heather Eadon gave an illustrated talk on the 'Use of Indigenous Plants' to 25 participants at Yarran Dheran Reserve Information Centre. This workshop was part of Whitehorse Council's Sustainability Week.

Brian Pell visited Wattle Park Primary School and spoke to 54 Year 4 students on 'The Importance of Indigenous Plants'. He explained to the children that the early settlers almost completely cleared Box Hill for farming, and that they were fortunate as their school is next to a small area of original bushland which contains a range of indigenous plants. He then assisted the students with planting Patersonia and Poa plants in their extensive school garden, where

students grow a wide range of vegetables as well as extensive indigenous plantings.

Brian also conducted a walk and talk for 15 Bungalook Nursery members at Gardiners Creek, between Station St and Burwood Highway. Greenlink has been involved in planting this area since 1988 and continues to assist Kingswood College students with regular planting and maintenance.

On the Lookout

While out seed-collecting recently, our ever observant Heather spotted a plant which worried her. She carefully took a sample, noted her



location and contacted the City of Whitehorse with her concern. She was correct in her suspicion that the plant was *Nassella neesiana*, Chilean Spear Grass, named for obvious reasons. Council took appropriate actions.

This grass is a weed of National Significance, regarded as one of the worst weeds in Australia because of its invasiveness, potential for spread and economic and environmental impacts. As an environmental weed, it reduces biodiversity in native grasslands, where it out-competes indigenous species.

Plant Sales and Volunteering

The nursery is open for sales and volunteering from 9.00-12.00 Tuesday and Wednesday. We also open on some Saturdays. We are closed on fire ban days and when the temperature reaches 35°C. Tubes are \$2.00 & \$2.50.

We also supply to schools and other organisations. Please call or email to discuss your planting requirements. You can find our plant lists and lots of other helpful information on our website. If you would like to try volunteering with us, telephone, email or visit.



<http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/invasive/weeds/publications/guidelines/wons/pubs/neesiana.pdf>

Speaking of Weeds

In autumn, the Sweet Pittosporum also known as native daphne, *Pittosporum undulatum* becomes laden with orange-tan berries, 1cm in diameter, which persist for several months. The berries are attractive to birds, especially blackbirds, possums and also foxes and can be carried far from the parent plant. It has become an environmental weed as the species is very invasive in bushland, colonising moist areas such as gullies and areas of disturbed soil. It



grows rapidly and shades out other plants. According to the Australian Native Plant Society, growing this

plant anywhere near bushland cannot be recommended due to the grave environmental risk that it poses. <http://anpsa.org.au/p-und.html>

City of Whitehorse 'Weeds in Whitehorse', City of Manningham 'Weeds' 2010

Wild Grasses Course

In December, I had the pleasure of spending three Mondays with Dr Graeme Lorimer and a large group of enthusiastic students. Our topic: Wild Grasses of South-eastern Australia.

We spent the mornings inside learning about theory and the afternoons out on location, getting down and dirty and covered in seeds. I loved it all.

Graeme's comprehensive notes covered a huge amount including identification, detailed anatomy

Greenlink News

of the grasses and their inflorescences, ecology, using local grasses in horticulture, provenance, seed collection (and knowing when they are ripe), revegetation, management and much, much more.

The group of students was made up of volunteers, council workers and private company employees. I was delighted to discover that Mary and John from Blackburn Creeklands were also doing the course, as was Mark who I first met when I did Greening Australia's Habitat Conservation and Management Course in 2011. It is always terrific to meet up with like-minded people and compare ideas and theories.



One of the biggest issues that seemed to unite us all was being able to accurately identify grasses. Graeme spent a lot of time on this part, encouraging us to develop logical ways of observing grasses and then being able to go one step further and key out some specimens. Following a key is hugely challenging, but also a lot of fun. There are no two ways around it – you have to know your grass anatomy. You need to know your glumes from your lemmas, your ligules from your sheaths and your awns from your lobes. Knowing your rhizomes from your stolons is helpful too. For those of us without a botany background, that means a fair bit of study, but it does all make sense eventually.

As noted earlier in this newsletter, it is important to be able to identify grasses, especially when some weed species are very similar to local grasses. In our case, the spear grasses, *Austrostipa sp.*, can look very similar to the *Nassella neesiana*, the Chilean needle-grass. Knowing the difference between the seeds means that a noxious weed can be contained before it's too late. It also means that, heaven forbid, we don't collect the wrong seed and grow the wrong plant to sell.

In order to see some of these differences a magnifying glass or microscope is needed to ensure you don't go cross-eyed. The features to note are often very tiny. Graeme showed us many grasses from under the microscope, including my favourites, the wallaby-grasses. Graeme describes their seeds as being like a unicorn's head where the unicorn may have snout hairs, bushy eyebrows or a hairy back. It



is a great way to describe them.

I particularly enjoyed watching a group of wet *Austrostipa* seeds under the microscope. As these seeds dried out, they twisted and wiggled, demonstrating how they drill themselves into

the ground. We certainly see this in the nursery after sowing grass seeds: everything is very orderly until they get under the sprayers, then they all have a party and dance all over the place. But seeing this under the microscope reveals just how they do it with their twisting awns and one-directional hairs – it's amazing.

After three weeks of immersing myself in grasses study, I found I was dreaming of grasses. I woke one morning feeling like I had been reciting *anthoxanthum odoratum*, *anthoxanthum odoratum*, antho... all night; a very odd feeling!

Learning from Graeme Lorimer is an absolute delight. He is a brilliant speaker and has an amazing ability to share his knowledge in an easy-to-understand manner, even when the topic is complex. I can't recommend this course highly enough.

Suzette

Field Report

We have not had to be so constant with the watering over the cooler summer. In fact if we look under the mulch the ground is damp. So, hurrah for mulch. Now it is autumn, we are pruning the grasses and snipping at anything which looks untidy. The *Lythrum* which we pruned after its wonderful display of colour over summer is already sprouting. The orchids in the bed beside the nursery fence are poking through the ground. Always there is something to do out there, at the back of the nursery.

Helen

Upcoming Events

Yarran Dheran Events

Bird Walk

Yarran Dheran Reserve is home to at least 50 different species of birds. Some are frequently seen and others call in at different times of the year. Early morning is the best time for seeing some of these birds. Ian Moodie, knowledgeable birdwatcher and local environmentalist will lead the walk. We will meet in the Centre after the walk to compile our bird list and have a cuppa. Sunday 3rd May 8am-10am at Yarran Dheran Information Centre. Bring binoculars if you have them. Booking essential. gay.gallagher@bigpond.com by 25th April 2015. Children are welcome but must be accompanied by a responsible adult. Not suitable for very young children.

Fungi Walk

Cecily Falkingham, noted local environmentalist, will guide a walk through the reserve to discover some of the mysterious and colourful treasures of the world of fungi. Children are welcome. Sunday 17th May 10am – 12 noon. Bring a magnifying glass.

Enter at the Ashburton Drive entrance, Mitcham 3132 (Melways Ref 49, B6).

Blackburn Lake Sanctuary Events

Possum Prowl

Join in for a night walk in the sanctuary for possums and other critters. Bring a torch, wear enclosed shoes. Children must be accompanied by a responsible adult. No need to book. All welcome. Friday 17th April 6.30-9pm

World Environment Day

Adriana, from Human Seeds, will share her amazing stories and tips about keeping our native fauna safe, followed by a walk around the sanctuary to spot some creatures of the night. Friday 5th June.

lucy.menzies@whitehorse.vic.gov.au

All activities will commence at the Visitor Centre (next to Central Road car park)

Saturday Sale Days

Our next Saturday sale day is **this week**, April 18th closely followed by May 16th. We will have some price reductions and some giveaways. Autumn is the time to get plants in the ground and if recent sales are any guidedon't leave your purchases too late.

Featured in Plant of the Month is *Acacia leprosa*. Another wattle, similar in size is *Acacia stricta* or Hop Wattle. Like Cinnamon wattle, Hop Wattle is bird attracting. It grows 2-5m x 2-4mm, is an open upright shrub with prominent sticky yellowish ribs on branchlets. It has 2-4 pale yellow ball-shaped flower-heads per axil from

May to October. It is reliable in most clay soils often in moist areas, full sun to full shade. We have plenty of both in stock.

Doodia



We also have some Doodia ready for sale. *Doodia australis*, previously known as *D. media* ssp. *australis* is Common Rasp-fern. This is an erect tufted fern in clumps along short rhizomes. New growth can have purplish-pink to bronze colours. It requires humus rich, moist well drained soils semi-shade to full shade although it is a variable species and may tolerate sunshine in protected situations. Image from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doodia_media

Used Tubes

To all our customers, please recycle your forest tubes. Bring them back in on your next visit.

We look forward to seeing you in the nursery.

Next Greenlink News, it will be winter!

Plant of the month



Acacia leprosa, Cinnamon Wattle

Also known as *Acacia stictophylla*, Dandenong Ranges Cinnamon Wattle

Size: 2-4m x 2-4m. Fast growing medium shrub or small tree with open to dense weeping habit, branchlets finely ribbed and sticky. Foliage is aromatic and bright green. Flowers are abundant scented lemon to yellow ball shaped, in Aug to November. Requirements: Moist to well drained soils, semi-shade to full shade. Excellent medium, screening plant.