



Greenlink NEWS

Newsletter of Greenlink Box Hill Inc. Reg No. A0018547D

December 2015

In this issue

Propagations	1
Committe Meeting	2
NOG	2
President's Report	2
Seed collecting	2
Indigenous Gardening in Whitehorse	3
Watering System	3
Calendar 2015-2016	3
<i>Clematis microphylla</i> and <i>Clematis aristata</i>	4
Potting Mix ain't Dirt	4
A Volunteer's Musings:	5
Planting out a Nature-strip	5
Plant of the month	7
Out and About	7
What's On	7
Christmas	8

Propagations

Crazy temperature oscillations, high winds and a sprinkling of glorious Spring, but our plants are growing - benches are filling up again. Our new watering system is installed and there will be a commissioning period, as we adapt. Our swinging magpies will have to drink elsewhere, as the new sprays have automatic cut offs; water will not run on, after the irrigation has finished. In 2016, we will



look at some new projects including repair of our poly-houses and new signage - and perhaps we will need a bird bath for our feathered visitors.

We have prepared several orders, one of which is for a primary school, unfortunately one of those caught up in the discovery of asbestos on campus, so we will endeavour to care for the stock until the school is ready.

A few Greenlink shopping days till Christmas - avoid the crowds; consider a gift of some pretty indigenous plants!

Best wishes for Christmas and the holiday period.

Nicky

Committe Meeting

A committee meeting was held on November 11th. For a copy of the minutes, contact the secretary. In attendance were Robert, Trevor, Helen, Heather, Suzette, Emi and Nicky.

The nursery continues to do well with strong sales and orders. Trevor is doing some analysis of our water bill and is working with Yarra Valley water on this. Suzette presented us with an up-to-date document of all our seed collection, and provenance data. We have formed a wish-list and have a number of ideas for projects next year, including some more field work in remnant bush, repair and upgrade of polyhouses, shade cloth and new hoses as well as more consistency in all our documentation, including style and logo. We are also looking at improved labels for customers.

We made plans for our Christmas party and shutdown period.

NOG

Over the last period, we have been skilling up our old and new volunteers on how to prick out seedlings, sometimes resulting in at least 15 trays being pricked out in a morning. This is supporting us in rebuilding the stock after our big orders earlier in the year. We had a working bee to assist Ben Harris, landscaper and partner of one of our members, to install some new overhead stainless steel wires, ready for our new watering system.

Several new volunteers have joined us, and their enthusiasm and enjoyment keeps the rest of us

on our toes. They are keen to learn and do whatever is required. We have been able to spend more time out the back, removing weeds and spreading mulch, assisting Ted and Helen in their work. Overall the nursery is looking good and with the new watering system in place as well as on-going tidying, it will look even better.

Robert

President's Report

Since August, we've had three Saturday Sales Days, been to Kilmore, been to the Whitehorse Spring Festival, the Parklands Forum and the Combined Nurseries Meeting. In the nursery, focus has been on returning stock to decent levels and on the watering system upgrade. I've pulled together data from the old IPMS and combined it with our seed collection information to create an easy-to-access document where anyone can look up the original provenance of a species. The nursery is a happy place to be at the moment. Well done all.

Suzette

Seed collecting

It is coming up to peak seed collection time again. We collect from our own seed stock in the nursery, nearby parkland and further afield. Some of our volunteers hold a 'Permit to take/keep/ trade in Protected Flora', issued by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning. The permit is issued under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988. It means that for the purposes of 'propagation and re-vegetation and commercial sale', we can take

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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.

seed and propagation material from up to 10% of reproductive material from any one plant. There are a number of other conditions to be met such as: no collection permitted if the population is small, if there has been a fire within the last 2 years, or if the plant appears to be in poor health.

Once seeds are collected, they must be labelled, catalogued and carefully stored. Ultimately, Mother Nature will have her way, however there are many factors to get right, before we are rewarded with a new plant, as follows:

- seed viability, affected by adverse weather conditions, insect attack, immature seed, aging seed, damage to seed during collection, storage or handling.
- seed dormancy – adaptations by the seed to ensure conditions really are perfect for its germination. Seed dormancy can be broken using various tricks, to resemble what might happen in Nature – from passing through the gut of a bird, to bushfire, flood and a cold winter. We may soak, smoke, chill, or heat seeds to name a few.

Heather and Karin do most of this work, but we have others keen to be involved and we liaise and share ideas with Council’s nursery, ParksWide, on this core activity.

Indigenous Gardening in Whitehorse

There is a new booklet ‘Indigenous Gardening in Whitehorse’ that is now on-line on the Council’s website. It can be found under the tabs: Get

Involved / Sustainable Community or at this address:

<http://www.whitehorse.vic.gov.au/Indigenous-Plants.html>

Greenlink has contributed to the booklet and Suzette has provided some of her beautiful photos. It is a lovely guide to assist gardeners and landscapers adopt sustainable gardening principles by using indigenous plants found in Whitehorse. There is a lot of information on designing and on 94 indigenous species as well as a guide to weeds.

For more inspiration, be sure to check out more of Suzette’s photos on Facebook and Flickr at www.flickr.com/photos/greenlinkboxhill.

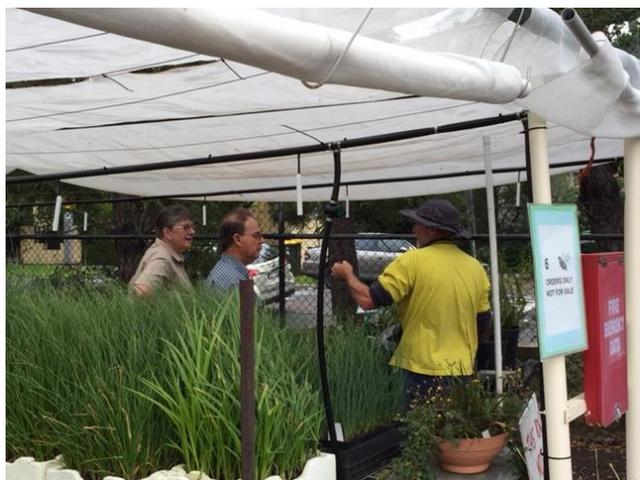
Watering System

This week, SmartWater installed new pipework and sprinkler heads at Greenlink. After many years of service, and maintenance by dedicated volunteers, Brian Pell in particular, the overhead sprinkler system will be replaced with modern ‘Dan’ spray emitters. The current infrastructure which includes a large underground tank, pump, underground pipework and several solenoids all programmed with a controller will be maintained. The shiny new stainless steel wires will support the replacement pipework and emitters. We hope that the newer technology sprayers will deliver a consistent spray pattern to our plants.



Calendar 2015-2016

December	Wednesday	23	Nursery closes for Christmas break
January	Tuesday	5	Nursery reopens for 2016
April	Saturday	16	Nursery Open Day
May	Saturday	21	Nursery Open Day
September	Saturday	10	Nursery Open Day
October	Saturday	8	Nursery Open Day
November	Saturday	5	Nursery Open Day



Considerations such as sprinkler spacing, spray diameter, droplet size, prevailing wind and plant canopy height are taken into account. Unlike larger commercial nurseries, we have many species of different heights growing and being displayed together in a small space. This may mean that we will re-arrange our plants again so that species of similar heights as well as water needs are stored together. Your patience while we get this done is appreciated. New signage will be created to assist customers in their plant selection.



These days, large commercial nurseries collect, treat and recycle their water via treatment dams, UV filtration, and chemical treatments. However

water lost from our irrigation flows to sustain the wetland at the rear of the nursery.

Clematis microphylla* and *Clematis aristata

Clematis microphylla (synn *C. decipiens*), (Small-leaved Clematis) and *Clematis aristata* (Austral Clematis or Old Man's Beard) are climbers with finely divided green leaves and tangled stems. They are dioecious, meaning that there is a male plant and a female plant, each with flowers with a slightly different appearance. The *C. microphylla* (*decipiens*) flowers in winter, and the female flower is followed by seed heads with fluffy silvery 'beards'. The *C. aristata* flowers in spring. They are both showy, hardy and great for nest-builders, but are extremely vigorous and if left un-checked, can quickly smother other plants and become difficult to manage. Clematis may be prevalent in parks and can be seen along roadways scrambling over large trees. We have both available in the nursery but don't turn your back on them.

Potting Mix ain't Dirt

Ever wondered about potting mix? Our potting mix is supplied by Wayne and staff at Council's ParksWide Nursery. It is a mixture of Council's composted arboricultural prunings, palm peat, wetting agent and some added plant nutrients. The simple recipe has been made and supplied to us for years and has supported the first months of many hundreds of thousands of plants! However, just like potting mix that you can purchase in large bags from your local hardware store, it is not 'soil'. These mixes are otherwise known as 'growing media'. In brief, the plant must be provided with nutrients, water,

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 – see the calendar below. 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.

oxygen, anchorage and space to grow and without disease. For the technically minded, growing media can get pretty...technical. Words to describe the properties of growing media (as well as true soil) include colour, structure, pore space, texture, particle size, pH, Cation Exchange Capacity, Bulk Density, Air Filled Porosity... and much more. The ParksWide mix certainly does the job for our range of species, from small wetland plants to large trees more tolerant of drier conditions and is a great demonstration of recycling.

A Volunteer's Musings:

A Good Place to Grow

I have been a Wednesday volunteer at Greenlink Nursery for about 18 months now and I love it! In my short time at the Nursery I have already lost track of the number of plants I have helped to propagate. I have been so grateful for the amazing willingness of others at the Nursery to share their considerable knowledge and skill with newbies like me. Although the botanical names continue to confound me still!

In a time when our media is full of news about unspeakable deeds happening both here and overseas, Greenlink is the antithesis, providing those of us fortunate to work there with a chance to make a small difference in our local area.

Michael Leunig usually has something very wise to say about almost everything. These words seem to sum up what happens for me at Greenlink.

Anne

You go into the garden.

It's a good place to grow.

You pull out a little weed;

and some nasty little worry leaves your mind.

How fascinating!

(Michael Leunig: A New Penguin Leunig 2005)

Planting out a Nature-strip

Our nature-strip has always been ugly. Grass never really took to it, but the weeds certainly did. On the rare occasion when our nature-strip was entirely green it was with a multitude of weed species and the occasional tuft of kikuyu or runner of couch. Our street tree, a *Lophostemon confertus*, sheds mountains of woody seeds that inhibit the grass growth, if you leave them there.

For years I've wanted to plant indigenous wildflowers and grasses in my nature-strip, having been inspired by a visit to Diana Snape's stunning garden (author of The Australian Garden). It was in the too-hard basket until this year when I joined the Boroondara Backyard Biodiversity Program.

Through the program we attended lectures by soil and landscaping experts from Sustainable Gardening Australia, Brian Bainbridge from Indigenous Flora and Fauna Association and Dr Graeme Lorimer, Ecologist, Botanist and all-round Guru.

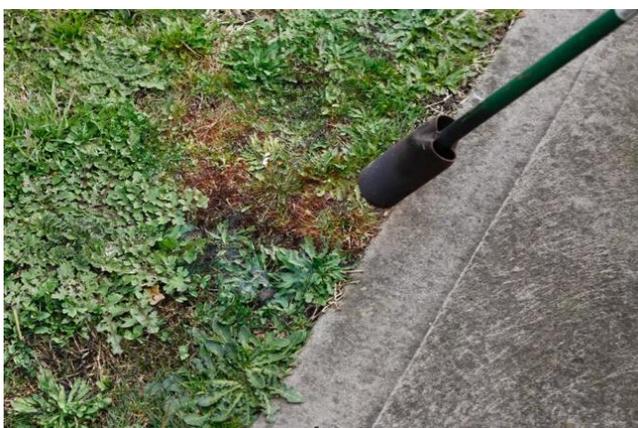
Armed with plenty of tips, I took the next step – to get a permit from Council. Each Council has their own rules for planting out nature-strips, so it's very important to contact them before doing any planting. I live in Boroondara and thankfully their requirements were fairly straightforward and easy to understand.

The first step was to contact Dial Before You Dig (DBYD) to confirm the presence of underground services. It's easy to forget what might be underneath a nature-strip if there's nothing on top, but in our case there is everything under there: water, sewerage, power, phone lines and gas. Each individual authority was contacted by DBYD and they all sent back statements and maps within a couple of days. It's a great service. None of those services prevented the planting of grasses and wildflowers, so I sketched out a plan and was given a permit by Council.





The next step was to prepare the nature-strip by killing the weeds. We wanted to avoid using a herbicide so we borrowed a weed-burner from Greenlink and burnt the living daylight out of the greenery.



We did this mid-winter when the nature-strip was very damp and very green. Within two weeks everything had grown back with interest. We burnt it again with the same result. The third time we thought we must have killed everything under there to a depth of about a metre given the roaring of the flame and the general appearance of having fire-bombed the area. Throughout this process, the magpies kept picking over the area with glee. I wondered if they enjoyed the treat of barbecued worms.



After the third burning, we loosened the compacted soil with forks, dumped a heap of mulch on it and let it be for a few weeks to see what weeds had survived the onslaught. Plenty

had – amazing. So ultimately we did resort to a few sprays of herbicide. I had to admit defeat on that front.



With preparation done as well as we could manage, it was on to the planting which was much more fun. We put in around 100 tubes, keeping back from the curb and leaving some space around the Telstra pit. The planted area is about one third of the entire nature-strip. Species we put in were Copper-awned Wallaby-grass, Bristly-wallaby-grass, Bulbine and Chocolate lilies, Shiny everlastings, Rough spear-grass, Common everlastings, New Holland daisy, Button everlastings, and Tufted and Tadgell's bluebells. I wanted a mix of interesting seed heads amongst the yellow and blue/purple flowers. The result looked pretty good straight away.



I forgot to mention my secret weapon – my neighbours. We are two to the block and share the nature-strip, so I spoke to them about the project before getting the permit. They not only gave it their blessing, but also said they would help with watering. So since then they have been spraying the plants whenever they water their front garden. They are the best neighbours.

A month on and the plants have all grown enormously along with some of the weeds. But that's okay, I'm happy to pull them out and have committed to keeping it looking good. As the lilies die back, I'll pop in a few more plants to fill in the gaps and just keep adapting as need be. With a bit of luck there might be a bit of natural recruitment of the grasses, we'll see what evolves.

Suzette

Out and About

We attended the Whitehorse Spring Festival in October which was a very nice family day and we plan to attend next year.

Parkland Forum

The several hundred Whitehorse volunteers who work in parks and nurseries are invited each year to a large gathering up at the Civic Center. We enjoyed a pleasant evening and heard from council staff on issues relevant to our efforts as well as a wonderful and informative talk from Dr Graeme Lorimer. Dr Lorimer has made some fascinating observations over many years and spoke to the large group about the lessons we must take from history.

ParksWide Combined Nursery Meeting

Each year, in November, along with Bungalook volunteers, we are invited to council's ParksWide Nursery. Each nursery gives a brief

report on the events of the year. Discussion points include numbers of plants grown, species grown, species that we should try to grow, trees planted by council, opportunities to work together, eg on Eucalyptus seed collection, plans for the coming year. A number of our committee members and regular volunteers attended and found it to be very interesting and enjoyable.

What's On

There is a community **Frog Census** underway through Melbourne Water. It would be a great family activity to do with kids - they will need a recording device such as a mobile phone and a notebook. The work will help manage our frog populations and raise awareness of waterway health issues. There are templates and guidelines to follow to get started. Check it out at <http://www.melbournewater.com.au/frogcensus>.



Photo from <http://www.melbournewater.com.au/frogcensus>

City of Whitehorse holds a **Farmers Market** on the second Sunday of each month from 8am till

Plant of the month



The Wahlenbergias – our Bluebells

We have *W.communis*, (Tufted) *W.gracilis*, (Sprawling), *W.multicaulis*, (Tadgell's) and *W.stricta* (Tall). They are all dainty and in flower now, lasting through spring and summer, annual or perennial, and beautiful planted en masse in drifts through the garden. Perennial species often die back in dry conditions and begin again in winter. Pruning the new growth will encourage a stronger longer lived plant.

1pm. Information can be found at:

<http://www.whitehorse.vic.gov.au/Whitehorse-Farmers-Market.html>

Yarran Dheran Nature Reserve has an updated brochure of walks. There is a working bee on Sunday December 5th from 10am till 12noon.

Details at

<https://yarrandherannaturereserve.wordpress.com/>

Christmas

A lovely Christmas gift idea could be a pot of indigenous wildflowers or a selection of indigenous tube stock. For the receiver of the gift, include some information on each species by referring to the new Indigenous Plants guide mentioned above. While our plant stock is tough and suited to our local conditions, over the long hot summer that is forecast, we recommend that you keep the water up to them.

Our Christmas closure will be from Noon Wednesday 23rd December and reopen on Tuesday 5th January.

Our Christmas party for volunteers and members will be on Wednesday 16th December. RSVP by Friday 11th December to greenlinkboxhill@gmail.com

Our very best wishes from Greenlink Committee and our Volunteers for Christmas and New Year period.