

HELLO ONE AND ALL TO THE OTWAY GREENING NEWSLETTER

My how the year has zipped by and it's already November. And we're still planting trees!

This winter has been the perfect example of a season where the weather beat many of us in the pre planting preparation- fencing, ripping, spraying or a combination of the lot. If it wasn't raining it was blowing a gale. Once the ground was saturated many farmers found they couldn't even get to the tree planting site and even by the end of October the soil is still very boggy in many districts. Those of you who fenced and sprayed early (or took advantage of the rare fine day) may have planted at the usual time of year (Sept). Those trees have certainly received enough moisture to get settled. They really need some warm weather to kick start the growth of the plant. In southern Victoria, cold, wet and blustery conditions do more damage to young seedlings than hot dry weather so let's hope we can take our jumpers off sooner than later!

In our agroforestry/ seed production area that was planted one year ago, the many species planted survived last summer virtually unscathed. However, some species have succumbed to having their roots inundated in water for 3 months. Some gums have just fallen over while a couple of understorey species have rotted off at ground level. Having had dry years previously may give us a false sense of what is a "normal" winter. I think this winter has been normal. (I am replacing these dead plants with species suited to wetter conditions. We'll see how they do over the summer when the ground dries out like concrete!).

Would love to hear from you on how your trees/shrubs are going. We all have site specific conditions that may help/hinder certain species.

Your feedback is important in helping us grow the best plants for your land.



Welcome to Otway Greening from Mikala, Mike, Wendy and Ruby

LANDCARE NEWS

This year we have been kept busy growing plants for the Upper Barwon Landcare Network (UBLN) as well as the Southern Otways Landcare Network (SOLN). Many of you have been recipients of plants purchased through these groups. The UBLN plantings have been concentrating on the Matthews Ck (Murroon) and Retreat Ck (Bambra) this year. Both have had major works completed in the last 2 years such as weed control and willow removal, fencing and stock crossings erected, streamflow stabilisation and flood control works. So this spring the indigenous trees, shrubs and sedges have been planted to replace the willows and blackberries. A total of 35 different species are being planted along these creeks with approximately 1/3 tall trees, 1/3 medium trees and shrubs, and 1/3 small shrubs and sedges. The sad news is that the Landcar coordinator, Darren Wilkie, is leaving the UBLN after 5 years on the job. Darren has been instrumental in ensuring a high standard of revegetation works in our region. And with his friendly, easy going manner has been very successful in attracting new members and furthering the Landcare cause. Both Wendy and I would like to wish Darren all the best for the future.

One of the major difficulties with the Landcare "Industry" is, in my opinion, a funding issue. Not necessarily a lack of funds but a lack of a long term plan on how and when to spend the money that is there. As a plant grower, I need 18-24 months lead time to collect and sow seed, propagate it and nurture it to have it ready for the customers in the spring of any given year.

The funding bodies demand local seed, indigenous species, and a whole suite of plant varieties as the basis for the revegetation goals they are pursuing. To achieve this, we need to be allowed time to meet this criteria for successful outcomes for all involved.

. We send this newsletter/discount offer out in November to give us time to collect seed and germinate it before Christmas. Sometimes funding issues are unresolved in various government agencies and thus specific orders can be way behind schedule. Lack of forward planning can have a detrimental effect on the quality and quantity of the plants needed for a particular planting. It can also make it very difficult on us as a business not being able to plan for the next year. Landcare plays such an important role in conservation on private land and we all want to see the best outcomes for all concerned.

IN THE NURSERY

Over the past winter we sowed the seed of over 30 indigenous plant species. These plants will only germinate during the colder months. The bursaria is one of these and so far the plants are growing well. Collecting viable seed is vital when it comes to the winter germinants. If they have poor viability you won't get a second chance to propagate them until the next year. The majority of plants on our species list are summer germinants and will be sown in December or January. For those of you hoping to try your luck with myrtle beech this coming season, I'm afraid you'll be out of luck. There was no seed produced last year and thus no plants will be available in 2004. On a positive note, the local gums look as if they are coming out of the seed drought they have been in for the past few years. Manna gum has mature seed on it at the moment and swamp gum and blue gum are looking like they will have large crops in the next 12 months or so.

Please note the price rise in the enclosed plant list. Unfortunately our suppliers' costs have continued to rise over the past 3 years and we have found that we can no longer absorb these. The rise does vary depending on how many plants you buy. Please note that you will still be receiving a discount of at least 15% if you order by 1 December 2003 and you will still be able to find plants that are unavailable anywhere else and of a very high standard.

MOTHER NATURE

Sometime in August I started noticing many wattle seedlings in the nursery dropping leaves (phyllodes). After testing, it was found that immature slugs of the native Fireblight Beetle were enjoying their way through the plants. It was also found to be defoliating almost 100% of the black wattle growing in the bush surrounding our farm. This happens every year but with varying degrees of damage. We were able to halt the spread of the slugs in the nursery using pyrethrum but only after quite a bit of damage had already occurred. These critters actually suck the sap from the plants. The leaves drop off leaving only sticks. Once the insect is under control, the plants that have survived begin to reshoot usually from the growing tip which in some instances make the plants top heavy as the new shoots grow into larger leaves. Needless to say I'll be on the lookout for these pests next year.

WHO DONE IT?



I have seen this on a couple of occasions when walking through the bush. The young messmate (*E. obliqua*) tree has been decimated by something. An answer came after an inquiry with the wonderful people at the Land for Wildlife magazine. Apparently a yellow tailed black cockatoo is the culprit. I knew that cockatoos had very strong bills but I couldn't fathom just how strong. My next thought was how did the cockie know which tree had grubs inside and which didn't (seeing that the neighbouring tree is untouched). There are three ways in which the cockie works it out:

- Visual cues on the surface of the tree ie sawdust or holes;
- The bird places itself in a position where it can listen to movements and feeding of the larvae inside the tree;
- And possibly by using its bill and tongue as sensory organs to detect movement.

...o shreds! I've seen another tree where the bird had chewed
...ee climbing beaver was at work!

Hope all you folk have a great summer and give yourselves plenty of time for walks in the bush.

Yours,

Mike, Wendy and Mikala

PS : For those of you with Lannen trays still out from this year. Could you please return them NOW so we can sterilise them for use for this upcoming season. Much