

SPRING 2003 NEWSLETTER

Hello one and all,

We hope your spring is going well and all your farm trees are all planted and growing well. So far this spring is fairly moist and mild. At this stage the pastures are looking lush and healthy. Let's hope the taps turn off for the coming hay season. Many farmers were having trouble just getting access into the boggy paddock last year let alone getting the hay cut, dried and stacked! There was a silver lining in last year's wet spring/early summer- the trees and shrubs that went in last spring had one of the best starts in many years. Growth rates were exceptional where landowners had the weeds under control. Phalaris was a real competitor with the trees for soil moisture in some areas. If phalaris is a dominant grass species on your property you may want to seriously consider beginning your weed control program NOW for next year's trees. Your trees will appreciate it next spring. Please don't forget the blackberries, gorse and ragwort control as well. If you take stock out of a paddock and plant trees, these noxious weeds (which may have been kept in check by the stock) now have the chance to really fire. It is very difficult to spray weeds in amongst young tree seedlings. If you are a member of the East Otway Landcare Group you can hire a spray unit for controlling weeds (contact Ashley McInnes 5236 3254).

******* PLEASE DON'T FORGET TO MAKE ARRANGEMENTS WITH US NOW *****
ABOUT RETURNING LAST YEAR'S CELL TRAYS- WE NEED THEM BACK**

If you are a recipient of a Landcare grant from the Corangamite Catchment Management Authority (they dispense grants through the Natural Heritage Trust and National Action Plan on Water Quality and Salinity) then you are required to adhere to a few regulations regarding the plants that you receive.

- The plants must all be indigenous (local) to your site unless the site has been altered so much that non-locals must be used, ie., saline discharge area.
- The seed used to grow these plants must be from local provenance sources.
- A maximum of 1/3 of the total number of plants to be overstorey species (tall trees ie. Gums).
- A minimum of 2/3 of the total number of plants to be of the middle, lower, and understorey. Examples: Middle: black wattle; Lower: sweet bursaria; understorey: goodenia, poa grass or sedges.
- A minimum of 10 species to be supplied for the project.

Even if you are not a grant recipient, these guidelines are important to follow for various reasons:

- Various height levels improve stock protection as well as attract a more varied bird, insect and mammal population.
- Attracting more birds, insects and mammals increases the natural control of insect pests that are harming your trees and pastures.
- Local plant species grow better in their local environmental conditions- they are genetically well adapted to withstanding local plant diseases and insect pests.
- The health and longevity of the trees and shrubs you are planting is improved because you are (hopefully) recreating a natural system and not just planting a group of individuals that have no ecological connection to one another.

The above regulations put a bit of
We are required to grow the plants

pressure on nurseries as well.
following these guidelines.

We are still in the throes of experimenting with the propagation of a number of plant species. These plants are mostly high rainfall understorey species although some grow out on the western plains as well. These plants have extremely complex germination requirements and thus, in the past, have only been grown by cuttings. Some have never been commercially available at all. Growing these plants with seed helps maintain a high genetic pool within the seedlings so seed collected from them will be a viable, high quality seed source in the future. Revegetating rural land requires millions of plants. If the plants are grown from cuttings, the subsequent costs would be so prohibitive that most plantings would leave out valuable understorey species. The effort that we are putting in towards these difficult species means an affordable plant of sound genetic stock. Two examples are worth looking at:

<p><u>Pittosporum bicolor- Banyalla</u> Seed is bright red and sticky when ripe. Stickyness needs to be removed before seed will germinate. Soak, then rub, seed in hand degreaser for no more or less that 70 minutes. Rinse seed with water and sand. Sow the seed straight away and bury deeply. The seed, if viable, will germinate in 3-12 months. Fungal diseases a winter problem.</p>	<p><u>Leucopogon parviflorus- Coastal Beard Heath</u> Best to collect seed that has already been processed through a bird's gut where digestive juices have removed chemical inhibitors in seed. Squash fresh seed</p>
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Compare these species (and many others) with the propagation methods of members of the myrtaceae family (gums, melaleuca, tea tree, bottlebrush, etc). Almost all of the myrtaceae need no seed preparation. Just sow the seed and within a couple weeks up they come.

For your information, we have compiled some data from the 2002 year which you may be interested in:

- We grew 143,000 plants in Lannen 81f cells last year.
- Of these, 140,000 were indigenous to the region.
- 75 plant species were grown, and out of these, 120 different seed lots were sown.
- The breakdown is:
 - 45,000 over storey trees (33%); 57,000 lower storey (41%);
 - 34,000 middle storey (23%); 4000 grasses/sedges (3%)
- The popular species this year were: blackwood, manna gum, prickly tea tree, snowy daisy bush, black wattle.
- The average number of species per landcare order was 30.
- 74% of our stock was ordered before December 1st 2002.

AND NOW FOR THE ADVERTISEMENT: WHY GO ANYWHERE ELSE?!

Please feel free to contact Otway Greening about the specifics concerning your order. We collect almost all our seed to be as site specific as possible. This is just one reason why we ask you to order well in advance. In other words, prepare for next year's plants now by ordering before the first of December and we will try our hardest to meet your requirements.

Thank you for using Otway Greening for your revegetation program and have a great summer.

Yours, Wendy and Mike