



## SOUTHERN TABLELANDS ECOSYSTEMS PARK – A REGIONAL

BOTANIC GARDEN, EDUCATION AND ECOSYSTEMS RECOVERY FOR THE SOUTHERN TABLELANDS.

**NEWSLETTER:** December 2014.

**PO Box 440, Jamison Centre, 2614.**

**[www.step.asn.au](http://www.step.asn.au)**

### **OUR SPONSORS.**

***The Bjarne Dahl Trust thank you for support for our brochures. And all our individual donors . As well a big thank you to the Australian Native Plant Society support for plant purchases and propagation by Alison McInness, Ingrid Adler, Masumi and John Robertson, and also to Damian De Marco of the ACT and Southern Tablelands Native Plant Tubestock Nursery, Geoff Butler and Warren Saunders.***

### **From the President**

Well, here we are rapidly approaching the end of 2014. Our STEP achievements for this year continue to demonstrate what a dedicated band of volunteers can collectively produce. Most noticeable is the completion of the Education Space, which is a tribute to the tenacious drive of Bill Handke in acting as Project Manager in the construction of the rock seating and gravel paths and surrounds. David Shorthouse has done a superb job in directing our Thursday working bees, which have seen the number of understorey plantings increase by approximately twenty species this year. We have also commenced planting an indigenous garden close to the Education Space. In addition to planting, Thursday volunteers have also assisted as weeders, sprayers, mowers, irrigation engineers, tree measurers and general labourers. Thanks to you all for your truly transformative efforts!

I would also like to thank our behind-the-scenes supporters: the STEP Committee, Keith Pantlin, who is our Webmaster, and Max Bourke our Newsletter Editor. After seven years as Treasurer, Andy Russell has decided to stand down from the position, but has agreed to continue on the Committee with the mission of growing our membership. Thank you Andy for your continuing dedication to STEP.

We had been looking forward to holding our AGM on 22<sup>nd</sup> November at the Education Space. Unfortunately, it turned into a rainy, cold day and we adjourned to the warmth of the Green Room in the Village Centre. What a difference a week makes ! We had invited the Friends of the Arboretum to hold their End of Year Party on the STEP site, on what turned out to be a scorcher of 38C. While the participants enjoyed the event, and were interested in touring Forest 20, the lack of shade presented a problem as our trees are not yet mature enough to give this comfort – in five more years it will be different.

Wishing you all a very happy Christmas, and please come and enjoy Forest 20 in 2015

Margie Bourke

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The STEP Annual General meeting was held on 30 November. The cool and windy weather prevented us from holding this in Forest 20, so we met in the Green Room in the Village Centre. It was good to see the continued interest of STEP members in our progress in establishing a regional botanic garden for the Southern Tablelands.

The required business was transacted swiftly and a new committee elected. For 2014-15 our committee comprises: President Margie Bourke, Vice- President David Shorthouse, Secretary Tony Lawson, Treasurer Ross Dalton, Public Officer and Membership Secretary Andy Russell, Committee Members Bill Handke, Judy Smith, Lainie Shorthouse and Jens Svensson. A quick inspection of Forest 20 was followed by a picnic lunch back in the Green room.



AGM in the Green Room at the Arboretum.



Deciding that a picnic in the Education Space as the rain began to fall was not such a great idea so back to the Green Room!

## FOREST 20

*David Shorthouse*

With the completion of work around the education space and associated paths, we have added a small area to our central garden, which will be planted entirely with plants used by Aboriginal people for food and fibre. Plant selection will be guided by an excellent book recently published 'Ngunnawal Plant Use – a traditional Aboriginal plant use guide for the ACT Region (available from Greening Australia and at the National Arboretum shop – The Curatorium). The book is beautifully presented, with a practical spiral binding, plenty of photos to assist identification, and lots of useful information about Ngunnawal use, propagation and distribution.

Development of the central garden in Forest 20 continues apace with large sections now filled with plantings, organised around the main vegetation types for example dry sclerophyll forest, woodland and grassland. The planting pattern in 3 X 3 metre squares is now very evident and as each species grows and flowers the garden is in continuous change – and well worth regular visits!

We have been disappointed by the presence of a pig that rooted amongst some of the planting, but the Arboretum staff have worked with Parks and Conservation staff to deal with that source of damage. Repair work was quickly undertaken and damage largely repaired.



Pig damage to *Dichopogon fimbriatus* – Chocolate lily.



Dusty daisy-bush - *Olearia phlogopappa*



Planting pattern demonstrated by *Plantago varia* - Variable Plantain, *Cynoglossum australe* - Australian forget-me-not and *Linum marginale* - Native Flax.

## RECENT VISITORS

### 1.

*FNAC Xmas Party* Friends of the National Arboretum held their Xmas Party on our site at the invitation of our President. A sparkling 38 deg day! Some 60 people came and at least 30 took part in guided walks around the site to gain a better knowledge of our work.



Margie Bourke welcomes the FNAC people.



The team assembles for lunch.



The reason we need shade cloth at The

Clearing!

2.

*Exeirus lateritius*



This wasp, the Cicada Killer Wasp is about 3-4 cm long and was pulling a Huntsman Spider about 6 cm long! Seen in central planting.

**MOST IMPORTANT!**

## Time for Membership Renewal

Members and supporters are reminded that renewal of membership is now due. Our year runs from 1 July to June 30. The membership fee is \$20.00 for family or individual. If possible please use the membership form on our website (<http://www.step.asn.au>) to provide your details. Payment directly to the STEP bank account is an easy option with the account details on the membership form. We have changed bank to Bankmecu so use the up to date form as shown on the website. A number of members have already paid (thank you)so if you are in doubt as to your status please contact Andy Russell on 6251 8949 or by email at [membership@step.asn.au](mailto:membership@step.asn.au) .

## **Donations to STEP**

Don't forget **it is now easy to make tax deductible gifts to STEP.** You do this through the Friends of the National Arboretum Canberra and an on-line facility has been set up to enable you to do this easily.

**SO PLEASE CONSIDER STEP NOW AS WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT TO COMPLETE WORK ON THE EDUCATION SITE AND OTHER PROJECTS. NO MATTER HOW LARGE OR SMALL ANYTHING OVER \$2 IS TAX DEDUCTIBLE!!!**

**With your credit card in your hand go to:**

**<http://www.arboretumcanberra.org.au/donate.aspx>**

Step 2: Click on the 'Support Us' page (or use the following log on address)

<http://www.arboretumcanberra.org.au/donate.aspx>

Step 3: Complete the details of the donation and REMEMBER to click the button labelled **Southern Tablelands Ecosystem Park (STEP) Site**

## **UNDERSTOREY NEWS**

Barbara Payne our wonderful Landscape Architect and Thursday worker recently reminded us of the raison d' être of the Mosaic pattern in our understory plantings:

"THE MOSAIC

A mosaic of 3x3 m planting 'tiles' for the understory echoes the Arboretum's mosaic of forests. Its high visual impact will help visitors to become familiar with individual species as they move through the site. Over time the plants will naturalise and the strict borders between the tiles will soften as the site establishes its 'own' ecosystem."

Worth remembering when you are guiding visitors through our space.

## **Special Appeal for funds**

In order to speed up our understory plantings we are appealing to members of STEP to 'sponsor a square or species' by making a donation for the purchase of plants. This can be a tax-deductible donation via the official tax-deduction facility operated by the Friends of the Arboretum. To do so see the instructions above.

## **EDUCATION SITE**

Efforts to settle on a name for The Education Space are firming on "The Clearing", which was the name our landscape architect, Barbara Payne originally envisaged! We are still searching for a sympathetic name for the small circle of rocks in the Casuarinas, working title "the Reflective Space".

Comments welcome from all members and readers.

## **FOREST LITTER**

1. Spot spraying of St John's Wort this year to clean up those plants emerging after our blitz last year seems to be working, we now have the population on site down very low.
2. Max Bourke is attending a Fire Management briefing on 16 December on behalf of Friends and STEP.

## POETRY CORNER

### Blue Devils (for Margie)

Wicked by name  
With naked stems  
Aloof  
Rising above the green of the commonplace  
Aristocratic  
Heraldic  
Regally blue

J E Smith



## HAPPY XMAS TO ALL STEPPERS!

**NEXT NEWSLETTER** Due in March 2015 so please submit ideas and material by April 30. Thanks to all the contributors you make my job easy! [max@mehourke.com](mailto:max@mehourke.com)