

SOUTHERN TABLELANDS ECOSYSTEMS PARK – A REGIONAL

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

NEWSLETTER: June 2014.

PO Box 440, Jamison Centre, 2614.

www.step.asn.au

Winter comes on at STEP



From the President

Despite the wintery photo above, autumn has proved to be a mild, sunny and delightful time in Forest 20. Gentle falls of rain have kept the trees and understorey plants growing well. It is pleasing to see recruits of *hardenbergia* and *indigofera* popping up. We were delighted to harvest a large volume of seed from our spectacular blue devils. If you would like some seed to raise some for STEP (or your own garden) help yourself to some seed, currently stored in the STEP shed.

The big change to the site has been the construction of rock seating and a gravel surrounding area to form the Education Space. Thanks to Bill Handke as the Convenor for directing a team of willing volunteers, and the contractors. We are now working, in collaboration with the Arboretum's Education Officer, on developing some suitable materials for use by primary school groups.

You will see below how you can now make a tax deductible donation to support STEP generally, or to contribute to the cost of the Education Space, and being the end of the financial year in the matter of a few weeks, I would encourage you to consider making a donation.

Forest 20 is constantly changing and if you haven't visited for a while, please come and inspect!

Margie Bourke

Donations to STEP

As we get to the end of the financial year we are pleased to announce that **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!!!

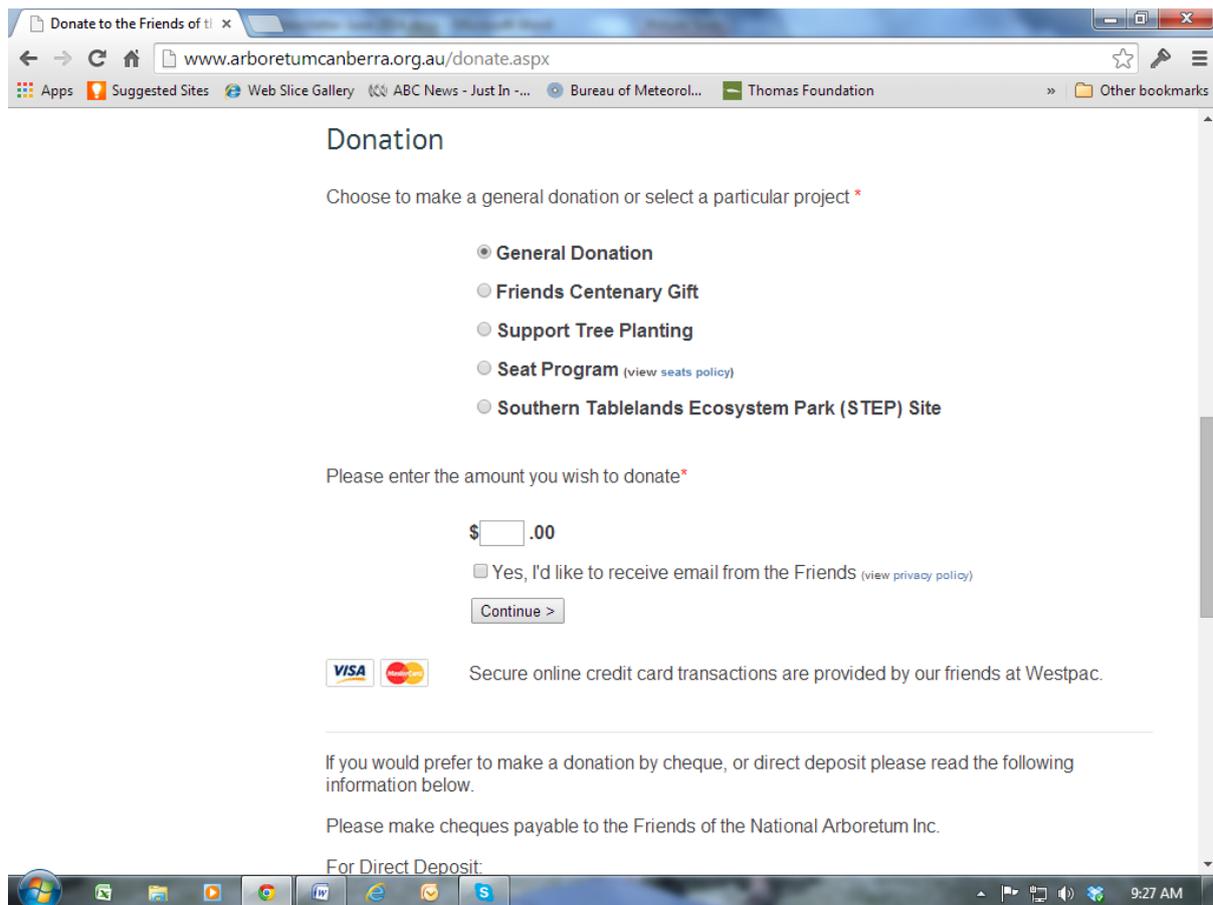
With your credit card in your hand go to:

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

Then:

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the address bar displaying www.arboretumcanberra.org.au/donate.aspx. The page content includes a navigation menu on the left with links like 'How to support us', 'Make a donation', and 'Become a member'. The main heading is 'Donate to the National Arboretum Canberra Public Trust Fund'. Below this is a paragraph: 'The Friends of the National Arboretum Canberra Inc. invite you to make a donation to our Fund to support the development of the wonderful, new Arboretum. Donations over \$2 are tax deductible.' The 'Your details' form contains the following fields: Title (dropdown menu), First Name, Last Name, Gender (radio buttons for male and female), Street Address, Suburb, City, State (dropdown menu), Postcode, and Country (dropdown menu). A red asterisk is placed to the right of the form, indicating that fields marked with an asterisk are required. The browser's taskbar at the bottom shows various application icons and the system clock displaying 9:25 AM.

Then scroll down to:



Easy to do but do it now, please.

Understorey News

David Shorthouse

While our eucalypts continue to grow and now, some to flower and produce seed capsules, so our understorey plantings expand in both number of species and coverage. This summer we have again been lucky with the weather despite a few dry periods. Going into winter the ground is nicely moist.

At the end of May, 84 understorey species have been planted and the vast majority have taken well and are thriving. A small number each of three non-eucalypt tree species have also been planted to demonstrate common associates of eucalypts.

An exciting development over the past year has been the assistance of growers from the Australian Native Plants Association. STEP wishes to particularly acknowledge the fantastic contribution from Alison McInnes who has propagated seed generously donated by Rainer Rehwinkel and grown on the young plants to the point where they have been planted out. We are also very grateful to Masumi and John Robertson for the plants they have grown. Other plantings have been possible with the financial support from ANPS.



David and Lainie amongst the daisies early in the season.

Species planted out over the last six months include:

Acaena ovina, Ammobium alatum, Calocephalus citreus, Calotis glandulosa, Clematis microphylla, Cynoglossum austral, Goodenia pinnatifida, Linum marginale, Oreomyrrhis eriopoda, Plantago varia, Prostanthera cuneata, Sorghum leiocladum, Xerochrysum bracteatum, Dichondra sp, Neopaxa australasica, Ranunculus amphitrichus

Another feature of the last few months has been the growing number of species that have flowered, including *Hardenbergia violacea, Grevillea iaspicula, Wahlenbergia stricta* and *Viola hederacea*, with some establishing the next generation of plants. We have some unsolved mysteries: a wonderful flowering of *Acacia genistifolia* alongside another which is dead! And some of the usually tough *Acacia rubida* have also died, maybe as a result of wet feet. Outside the central garden, native grasses are prominent and a few species of native herb can be found flowering. We have a major infestation of St Johns Wort which we are endeavouring to control, and we hope the native grasses will gradually dominate the exotic grasses present.

Forest 20 is well worth visiting on a regular basis to observe the changing display. The STEP site is making major advances with its growing tree cover, expanding inventory of understory species, and the development of infrastructure. STEP members are encouraged to visit us on any Thursday morning (if you come about 10.00 a.m. please join us for morning tea). If this is inconvenient and you would like a guided tour, please let us know by emailing:

Forthcoming events

1. David Shorthouse and Barbara Payne will be speaking on STEP to Friends of the National Arboretum on Monday 23 June at 6.30 pm in the Margaret Whitlam Pavilion. Donation of \$10 for Friends and \$15 for non-members.

2. On 24 June the Friends of the NAC will be launching the long awaited and definitive book on the trees of the arboretum, including a chapter written by David Shorthouse on STEP. It will be \$35 to members of Friends of the NAC.
3. Thursday 26 June at 1230 Bill Handke will be presenting to the Friends of the ANBG in the Gardens Theatre on "Indian Mynahs", Gold Coin donation.

Education Site works and more...

First users, Barbara Payne speaks to a visiting group of Alumni from UWA.



Before any of that could happen here is the fearless leader Bill Handke in full flight whacking away:



But wait there is more, now the main path is well on the way to being made stroller and walker friendly with hammered gravel, Bill again:



At this stage we really need more funds to finish the work on the education space, you can now see its potential and we are certain it will become a very much used space within the arboretum. But

most importantly it is a space that we can promote the work of STEP to a wide public as well as school groups. Please dig deep to support.

New Members

Welcome to:

1. Double R Heavy Equipment Repairs of Mudgee, Karratha & Leinster
2. Margaret Streamer & David Herald
3. Raymond Knight

Great to have you as members of STEP!

Grasses of Forest 20

Bothriochloa macra, family Poaceae

This perennial grass commonly known as Red Grass or Redleg Grass is a prominent volunteer on Forest 20. Distinctive features of this grass are its red stems and narrow elongated reddish seed heads which are normally produced between December and February

PlantNET, the NSW Flora online site lists this grass as occurring from the coast to the slopes and western plains of NSW and also occurring from Queensland through to South Australia the latter where it is considered to be rare. It seems to be quite a survivor probably due to the fact that it is not particularly palatable to livestock except for its early growth and it copes with mowing quite well. However in higher rainfall areas the use of fertilizer has probably brought about its decline. The photo on the left illustrates that a lot of the plant is stem and it is not considered to produce much leaf. It can be a useful species for conservation purposes on degraded and disturbed areas. It is found on Canberra nature strips in various locations.

At Forest 20 there is quite a dense patch growing to the east of the main path about half way down the slope. It was listed in a survey of the native plants on our site before any work had commenced.

Text and Photos by Andy Russell



Left, Forest 20, **right** a seed head on Bandjalong Street Aranda.

Forest Litter

Jens Svensson is about to start the Annual tree measuring program. Many of our trees are now getting near the top of our measuring poles and we will need to use clinometers in future.

The STEP crew have been assisting, and pleased to work with Soakai Afeaki over the last few months who has been providing us with voluntary assistance while working with the Education Officer of the NAC on an educational program. He is assisting in developing curriculum materials for student visitors to the NAC.

We had a visit from Bill Willis of the ANPS to set up a walk by members of ANPS for June which we welcome.

Sadly we lost Jenny, one of most indefatigable Thursday walkers and Keith our webmaster for a few months as they set out to add to the already impressive 8,200kms of walking in France. But if you want to keep up with them, at least on line, have a look at: <http://walkinginfrance.info/>

Margie and Max Bourke were honoured recently at the AGM of the Friends of the National Arboretum by being made life members for services rendered.

Max Bourke has agreed to go back on the Board of Friends for another year. This gives us strong representation on that Board with Tony Lawson our official representative.

But Thursday morning teas are still welcome after a few hours (or even before a few more!) of work. We enjoy visitors dropping in for a cuppa too.



Understory plants of Forest 20

***Wahlenbergia stricta* family Campanulaceae Text and photos Andy Russell**

The genus *Wahlenbergia* was named for the Swedish botanist and professor of medicine and botany Goran Wahlenberg 1780-1851.

Wahlenbergia stricta is known as the Tall Bluebell. It is described as being densely hairy with an open flower. It is common in the ACT and in southern and eastern Australia and Tasmania in wooded and grassy locations at lower altitudes and some mountain slopes. At Forest 20 we have a small planting beside our recently gravelled path where it is currently flowering (May-June). It is known to flower throughout the year. In our Aranda garden it has become well established.

There are a number of other *Wahlenbergia* species found in the ACT. These include *W communis* the Tufted Bluebell, *W luteola* the Yellowish Bluebell (backs of the petals are yellow to brown) *W gracilentia* the Annual Bluebell and *W gloriosa* the Royal Bluebell (the ACT floral emblem which is found in sub-alpine areas). PlantNET (the NSW flora online) lists 14 species or sub-species of *Wahlenbergia* for the Southern Tablelands.



Next Newsletter

Thanks to all the contributors this time you make my job easy!

The next edition will be produced in September as the editor is going to be closely inspecting both culture and nature in Singapore and Europe until then.

Items with the Editor by September 6 please.