

# STEP NEWSLETTER SEPTEMBER 2020



*Acacia paradoxa, Kangaroo Thorn. Photo by Andy Russell taken On 31 August 2020*

## From the President

At the time of writing I am in Queensland where we have been staying with our daughter since August 6. We entered the state just prior to the lockout applying to all ACT and NSW residents and I am most grateful that our return will be similarly without isolation requirements.

STEP has been fortunate to be able to continue the good work despite the Covid-19 restrictions. Some major events have been the Wattle propagation workshop at The Shed, walks for Wattle Week and our annual STEP into Plein Air. Special thanks must go to STEPpers Terry Murphy, Wal Kelman, Heather Green, and all helpers for making these events such a success. Spring rain was most welcome, and much planting has been achieved. Of note is the very recent planting of *Wurmbea dioica* (Early Nancy), a quite common grassland species but difficult to source for planting. Thank you to Digby Gascoine for providing these plants for us. They are special to STEP as they are the floral emblem on our logo.

At last we have signs in place alerting cyclists and horse riders that Forest 20 paths are for pedestrians only. We hope that these signs are heeded.

The new entry from the newly completed lower carpark is under way. STEP is now much more accessible to visitors along the concrete path that connects the upper and lower carparks. This entrance is marked with the STEP flag

I hope this newsletter finds you safe and well. We look forward to seeing more visitors at Forest 20 as the days get warmer.

Regards

Judy Smith (President)

## The return of the STEP flag!!

With the final location of the new entrance to Forest 20 settled, and construction of a concrete path along the northern edge of the lower carpark in place, we have been able to 'fly the flag' again. The flag at its new location can be seen from the top carpark at the visitor centre and will enable clear directions to be given to new visitors – “just go straight out of the visitor centre and follow the footpath to the yellow flag”.

With this new and easy access route visitors also approach Forest 20 from an elevated position giving a new perspective of the tree canopy and edge plantings.



*The new entrance to Forest 20 with the concreted ramp from the renovated car park. Work is still to be done to connect this to our path system.*

## Ephemeral wetland

In recent weeks STEPPers have been working on the entrance to the ephemeral wetland, identifying a 'creek'-like channel with small stones and edge plantings. New areas for other plantings have been prepared. Even with recent rains there has not been sufficient water to sustain any frog breeding. We live in hope!



*Ephemeral wetland taken 24.9.20 while our working bee was in progress. Photo Andy Russell*



## Wattle Day celebrations

Once again STEP has combined with the Wattle Day Committee to present wattle walks through Forest 20. Fortunately some early flowering of a few Acacia species provided a focus. When our new wattle plantings along the edges of Forest 20 are more mature there will be a very attractive walk amongst 20 or so species.

An innovation this year was an offering of two Wattle Propagation Workshops offered as a joint program by the Arboretum, Wattle Day Committee and STEP. A total of 18 participants learnt about the need for boiling water treatment of wattle seeds, different propagation mediums, and they took home 5 tubes each planted with treated seed, plus a recently germinated plant.

It was refreshing to note that participants were nearly all under 30. This innovative tri-party delivery of the workshop may provide a basis for more workshops involving other expert partners and a diversity of subject matter, using Forest 20 as an attractive and educational location.



*Photo: Terry Murphy (STEPper) and Suzette Searle (Wattle Day Committee) leading a workshop.*

## **Strategic Plan for our second decade (2020-2030) at Forest 20, National Arboretum Canberra**

Drafting work on a Strategic Plan that build on the first Master Plan for Forest 20 (Telling the Understorey) started earlier this year and has recently been finalised. The Plan sets out seven key objectives covering issues such as future development of the regional botanic garden, relationships with Arboretum management and staff, care for STEPpers, and enriching the experience of visitors to Forest 20. Other parts of the Strategic Plan cover the main elements of Forest 20, from the Central Garden, The Clearing and She-oak Nook to the gravel paths, signage and maintaining our Shed.

It is hoped that an illustrated version of the 2020-2030 Strategic Plan will be formally adopted by STEP at the end of the year, and that it will inform preparation of an updated Memorandum of Understanding between STEP and the National Arboretum's management team.

### **Data Management project**

Since we started to plant the understorey in Forest 20 STEPpers have kept paper records of what was planted and where. Over the years this has become laborious and making updates cumbersome.

So it was with some relief that in June, the Arboretum's new GIS and Data Systems Officer (Kirsten Anderson) contacted STEP and announced that Forest 20 was to be included in the Arboretum's new database. Several STEPpers have been trained to enter our 'paper-based' data into the Arboretum's GIS database.

Eventually the database will allow location and descriptions of our plantings to be accessed by smartphone, locations updated by VGIs referencing, and maps of where this or that species is growing to be produced.

Watch this space! – More in later newsletters!



*An example of how of how our plantings could be shown. This shows part of section H.*

## **Follow us on Instagram!!!**

With help from our son I (Lainie Shorthouse) have set up an Instagram account for STEP. For a couple of years, we have talked about this and at our recent workshop the subject was raised again.

I am hoping to post photos with minimal text showing general landscape views, working bees (from a distance) and developments, like seating areas etc. Close ups of individuals will not be included. If anyone has objections to their photo being included even from a distance, please let me know.

These photos will complement Andy's beautiful monthly 'Of interest at STEP' sheets. I cannot do close ups well!

To avoid duplication and to space photos out in time, one person should manage the account. I can do this for now. So, if you have something suitable send it to me. It has to be nice and sharp so perhaps send one at a time.

The account name is step\_\_canberra Please like some of the pics!

## Welcome to the following new STEP Members

G Mills      L Viccars      L Spinaze      P Thomas      L & N Page  
R Bedding      C Henderson      G McAllister      K & G Ramsay

## STEP acknowledges the support of the following Corporate Members



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FlagCentral.com.au E-mail [sales@flagcentral.com.au](mailto:sales@flagcentral.com.au) Phone 1300 788 891 Suppliers of promotional banners and flags of Burleigh Heads, Queensland. Flag Central donated the flag at STEP



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## Women's International Club visit STEP

Lainie explaining the *Muehlenbeckia Tuggeranong* to members of the Women's International Club on their second annual visit to Forest 20 (STEP) on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> of June. Georgie Till of STEP is on the left. Their leader is Lorraine Nicholls, a NAC volunteer guide takes the group into some part of the Arboretum every month.



## Explosive matter from Forest 20

Some time back I collected some seed pods from the STEP *Glycine tabacina*. Needing some heat to ripen them I left them in an enamel bowl on a sunny windowsill. Two days later I found the contents of the bowl all over the place. Seed cases and seeds had scattered some as far as 1.5 metres away. Then I had the wisdom to confine them in a paper bag. I hope the seeds that I couldn't find in the carpet don't germinate! I will try to germinate the others.



## Thanks

Thanks to Kitncaboodle from Sydney who gave us a discount when we purchased these gorgeous new trugs. All ready to be put to work.

*Three sets of words and photos by Lainie Shorthouse*



## Jamison Plaza Parkcare Display

For the third year in succession STEP was represented at this annual verge of spring display which ran from Friday 11<sup>th</sup> to Sunday the 13<sup>th</sup> of September in the Jamison Shopping Plaza. Local groups present included Friends of Black Mountain, Friends Aranda Bushland, Friends of Mount Painter, Friends of the Pinnacle, Friends of Grassland, STEP and the Ginninderra Catchment Group.

Each group had the use of 5 display panels to show photos of their respective areas. ACT Parks and Conservation Service provided these panels for which we are most grateful. Thanks also go to the management of the Jamison Shopping Plaza for making the space available.

My thanks go to the STEP members who assisted with this display.

*Displaying the new Black Mountain book is Shane Rattenbury MLA Minister in the ACT Government who came to visit the STEP display. Photos and text Andy Russell*



*Three of the five panels of the STEP display, the other two panels were on the reverse side.*



## STEP Into Plein Air – 2nd of September 2020

STEP Into Plein Air became a Spring event this year after having to cancel it in April due to Covid-19. It was therefore part of the Arboretum's Wattle Week activities.

The point of interest for the morning was a visit by Valentyna Crane who demonstrated her style of painting with acrylic paints. This drew interest from those who attended as many said that they usually painted with either oils or watercolour.

The visiting artists then dispersed throughout the STEP site, some venturing into the Bush Tucker Garden, to paint. It was noticeable this time, that with the growth of the trees and shrubs, some of the artists could be quite well hidden and had no trouble finding a secluded spot.

Everyone enjoyed a good morning tea before going home.



*Words by Heather Green, Photos Andy Russell*



## Some plants that are currently flowering



*Pomaderris betulina ssp. Actensis* Birch Pomaderris



*Dillwynia phyllicoides* perhaps?



*Crowea exalata* Ginninderra Falls



*Allocasuarina nana* Dwarf Casuarina



A view of the recently modified small dam beside Forest 20 showing the changed overflow. Photo Andy Russell

Contact details for STEP are by post, STEP President, PO Box 440, Jamison Centre ACT 2614.  
For newsletter or membership matters email contact is [membership@step.asn.au](mailto:membership@step.asn.au)  
For further information on STEP please visit the STEP website at [www.step.asn.au](http://www.step.asn.au)