

## SOUTHERN TABLELANDS ECOSYSTEMS PARK – A REGIONAL

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

NEWSLETTER: March 2015.

PO Box 440, Jamison Centre, 2614.

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

**Support us any time by (tax deductible) donating at:**

<https://www.arboretumcanberra.org.au/support-us/donate>

ΩΩΩΩΩ

### **Sometimes a great notion**

Recently we had a visit from Greening Australia about working with them on the neighbouring woodlands (see later), but in the course of that visit our resident “engineer” Bill Handke came up with a great epithet for what we are trying to do and explain, he suggested:

***“Imagine that the Arboretum is the world, the Australian National Botanic Garden is the continent, STEP is the region and the woodland is Canberra.”***

ΩΩΩΩΩ

### **From the President**

Welcome to the first Newsletter for 2015, even if it feels that the year is already well advanced. As you will read further in this issue, the opening of The Clearing, our education space, by the Minister for Territories and Municipal Services, Shane Rattenbury, has been a highlight of the year so far. We were fortunate that it was a perfect summer morning, and Forest 20 looked at its best. It was wonderful that so many of our supporters were able to attend, including Alison Roach, President of the Australian Native Plant Society Canberra, and Sarah Sharp, President of Friends of Grasslands, who as representatives of the “parent” bodies of STEP, joined Minister Rattenbury in planting trees to mark the occasion. Amongst the 70 attendees were Jon Stanhope, who as Chief Minister was instrumental in securing a place for STEP at the NAC, and Cathy Robertson, who during her Presidency of STEP was awarded the ACT Environmental Grant which made it possible to begin the construction of an education space. We were delighted that staff of the Arboretum, and Council members of the Friends of the National Arboretum Canberra, with whom we have a very close relationship, were present to celebrate this milestone, along with contractors who worked on The Clearing, and representatives of the media. Our next goal is to instigate the use of the space by both school groups and the general public so that they can learn about the trees and plants which surround them in the southern tablelands.

Margie Bourke

ΩΩΩΩΩ

**Let us all rejoice, the Clearing Opens.**

A great piece by Tracey Bool in the Canberra Weekly for 12 March, summed up the event well.



The Clearing at its beautiful best before visitors arrived on a superb day, 20 February 2015.



President Margie Bourke welcomes the Minister Shane Rattenbury and visitors.



Minister Shane Rattenbury performs the opening.



Carefully supervised by David Shorthouse, the Minister plants a *Callitris endlicheri*, (two others were planted by reps from our “founders”, Friends of the Grasslands and Australian Native Plants Society).

**The Muse moved our resident Poet Laureate:**

### **The Clearing**

Let us walk  
 Through the forests of our minds  
 In dappled shade  
 And dark hollows  
 In tangles of forbs, creepers, climbers  
 Which snatch at our imagination  
 Past shrubs which disguise the nearer view  
 Enticing us to look beyond  
 To think beyond  
 We revel in the colour, the texture, the scents  
 The paths never fully defined  
 Secrets not yet unlocked  
 Till we reach the clearing  
 Where air and space  
 And the longer view  
 Bring us to the centre of ourselves  
 Where clarity and sharp vision  
 Exuberance and truth  
 Are found.

J E Smith 1/15

## Forest 20 news.

2015 is shaping up to be a big year for Forest 20. After celebrating the opening of The Clearing, we are moving to complete the central garden and the paths associated with it. This means that the garden will be completely mulched and, as far as possible, each 3 X 3m square planted (subject to availability of plants and funding).

Over the autumn/winter period we also hope to improve definition and functioning of the drainage pattern through the central garden and to progress work on the ephemeral wetland, an area rather neglected as we have been so focused on the central area.

Recent plantings have included 3 White Cypress Pine (*Callitris endlicheri*) and 3 Buloke (*Allocasuarina leuhmannii*) at the rear and edge respectively of The Clearing and a start has been made to a section that features traditional Aboriginal food and fibre plants. The latter include Spreading Flax-lily (*Dianella revoluta*) and Pale Flax-lily (*D. longifolia*), Native Raspberry (*Rubus parvifolius*), Native Sorghum (*Sorghum leiocladum*) and Kangaroo Apple (*Solanum linearifolium*) are now growing well, and Grass Tree (*Xanthorrhoea australis*) has been recently planted (courtesy John Carter, The Plant People). Plantings in other parts of Forest 20 are also listed as being of traditional use.

In the central garden we now have 4 species of Sedge in the genus *Carex*: Tall Sedge (*C. appressa*), Tassel Sedge (*C. fascicularis*), *C. inversa* and one yet to be positively identified. As its common name implies, Tassel Sedge is distinctive of the sedges as its inflorescence (flower head) is like a tassel, whereas in the other species this is a more rigid, erect structure. The addition of the Tassel Sedge comes thanks to STEPper Jennie Widdowson's garden and also to Iris Philp (IDP nursery).

## David Shorthouse



## A "Greener" STEP

On 26 February we were pleased to have a visit from Bindi Vanzella, from Greening Australia. It was her first visit to STEP and she was impressed by the progress made to establish so many species of understory plants

After morning tea she accompanied some STEP members to the 44 hectare "GG" block. (We really have to do something about that name!) Bindi put forward ideas about making the restoration and recovery of the yellow box woodland a focus for the Green Army. She outlined some of the administrative requirements and has a very positive outlook for this to be a wonderful community-focussed project. The asset of the woodland block is its proximity for Canberra residents.

Most STEP members who accompanied her had not been onto this newly acquired site. It was heartening to see that despite the sheep grazing activity, many native species were flourishing. Among these were *Glycine tabacina* (glycine), *Einadia nutens* (native saltbush), *Geranium solanderi*, (native geranium) and *Convolvulus angustissimus* (native bindweed).

While some of the boxthorn had been poisoned, some had been retained as habitat for the small birds. Many standing dead trees had significant hollows, no doubt well-used as nests for larger birds. Among the birds observed were Superb Fairy wrens, Crested pigeons, Magpies, Eastern Rosellas, Crimson Rosellas and Sulphur-crested Cockatoos. Tony Lawson's bird walks have discovered many more species.

STEP members were enthusiastic about the implications of Bindi's visit and we look forward to future developments.

### **Judy Smith**



The woodlands adjacent to the STEP site now part of the National Arboretum. Photo Jennie Widdowson.



One of the native species on the block *Convolvulus angustissimus*. Photo Jennie Widdowson.

ΩΩΩΩΩ



## Vale Gael Howell



A wet day in August 2012 sees Gael, David Shorthouse and a NZ friend of Gael's securing weed mat and covering it in mulch for paths at Southern Tablelands Ecosystems Park at the National Arboretum Canberra. Later we all huddled in the tiny shed with others for morning tea while it rained and we giggled.

Gael joined us at STEP for the two years she and Robert were in Canberra. She was a most capable, reliable and dependable volunteer. She was always cheerful, willing, and she took initiative and was eminently sensible in her approach. If you needed a job done and independently then Gael was the person to do it with her no nonsense approach.

Gael was amazingly adaptable as she learnt quickly of our local flora (including weeds) after spending most of her adult life in New Zealand. Her Tassie upbringing must have helped! She also took a permaculture course in Canberra and brought her course mates to STEP to have a look.

She added greatly to our Thursday morning working bees, and we miss her presence. She and Robert left Canberra a little early in December 2013 to have treatment at home in Auckland NZ, and we were all saddened by the news of her death in January, 2015. Mardi Naulty was able to be at her very well attended funeral on Saturday 24 th January 2015

## Lainie Shorthouse

ΩΩΩΩΩ

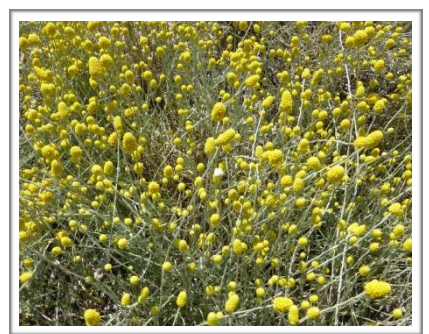
## Daisies at Forest 20 (Part One)

The Asteraceae family in Australia is particularly diverse with over 200 genera and nearly 1000 native species. They are generally herbs or woody shrubs though some may be small trees. They are annual, biennial or perennial.

At Forest 20 we have fifteen daisy species planted. The largest group of these are in the grassy woodland area (section H where there are 9 species) at the northern end of the understory plantings. Here *Ammobium alatum*, Winged Everlasting features with its silver- green foliage, yellow flowers and white bracts. Beside these is *Xerochrysum bracteatum*, Golden Everlasting which was replanted not so long ago. This species generally exists as an annual but puts on a good display of flowers which can vary in colour from a bronze to golden, silver or white, and flowers for a good length of time. This species is particularly attractive to butterflies. Away from the paths is a related species *Xerochrysum viscosum* Sticky Everlasting which is flowering well at present. This is a perennial species and can be seen in local grassy woodlands.



On the corner of the paths are *Vittadinia muelleri*, a low perennial herb which are currently displaying their fluffy seed heads. The small ray florets are a bluish purple colour. Adjacent is *Calocephalus citreus*, Lemon Beauty-heads. These were planted in two tranches so they flowered at different times and are now drying off. *Leucochrysum albicans*, Hoary Sunray is another species fronting the main path. Light gravel mulch has been laid for this species and there has been good recruitment. The flowers have a yellow centre and the surrounding bracts may be white or yellow. Flowering time is usually spring and summer.



Text and photos by Andy Russell. In the next newsletter I will write about other daisy species at Forest 20.

**Recently noticed at the STEP site:**



A Brown Spotted Grass Frog during our February

'wet' , photo Judy Smith

**And the morning teas...ahhh the morning teas or should that be tease?**



Photo Judy Smith

**And thank you once again to our sponsors.**

DFK Everalls, Accountants and Business Advisers of Hughes.

Double R Heavy Equipment Repairs of Mudgee, Karratha & Leinster

Toms Superfruits of Belconnen Markets, Belconnen

Dr Paul Miniter, Calvary Clinic, Bruce

Morgans in alliance with CIMB, Stockbrokers and Financial Advisers of Hughes

Franco of Canberra, Hair Services of Civic

**New members during the 2014/2015 year:**

H & K Anderson, A Bishop, I Falconer, R Gill & E McGrath, M Mallard, B Lodwick, P Miniter, H Rowcliffe, J Widdowson, C Watson, Franco of Canberra

**Deadline for next edition June 15. And before June 30 don't forget you can make a tax deductible donation any time on the Friends of the National Arboretum Web Site:**

<https://www.arboretumcanberra.org.au/support-us/donate>