



SOUTHERN TABLELANDS ECOSYSTEMS PARK – A REGIONAL

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

NEWSLETTER: September 2014.

PO Box 440, Jamison Centre, 2614.

www.step.asn.au

OUR SPONSORS.

The Bjarne Dahl Trust thank you for support for our brochures.

And a very big thank you to the following financial donors to STEP projects:

Lloyd Jones Consulting, WA and JR Handke, J Smith, L Lodwick, D and L Shorthouse, M Lindenmayer, R Dalton, M and M Bourke, A Russell, B Payne, S Rowcliffe, I Fuller.

So far these donors have contributed **\$5,540** to the work of STEP!

From the President

Welcome to our Spring Edition. With the weather starting to warm up, and spring flowers starting to appear, those of us who regularly volunteer in Forest 20 have a parents' pride in how beautiful our particular Forest looks after only five years of planting. Unlike the other Forests in the National Arboretum which are monocultures, we showcase 16 of the Southern Tablelands eucalypts, and associated plants, which add patches of colour to our sloping site.

Our AGM will be held on Sunday 16th November at 11 am in our new Education Space. It will be followed by a picnic and tour of the site. We would very much like to see you all there, so please put the date in your diary. By the way, we are also searching for a suitable name for the Education Space, so please email me at marg@mebourke.com any ideas that you might have. There will be a prize for the name which the committee considers the most appropriate.

Margie Bourke

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.

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

David Shorthouse

It is now 5 years since March 2009 when we planted our first trees and three years since we started to plant the understorey. What a transformation!

Some recent herb and shrub plantings are thriving, and this spring there will be new flowerings for visitors to see. The native plantains (*Plantago varia*) have budded up and their flower is quite different to the exotic weed plantain. Small-leaf clematis (*Clematis microphylla*) is just coming into flower and native flax (*Linum marginale*) and native forget-me-not (*Cynoglossum austral*) will flower soon.



We are now learning about which species, although selected as being found in the southern tablelands region, are also susceptible to frosts. Species such as native sarsaparilla (*Hardenbergia violacea*), native violet (*Viola hederacea*) and (*Goodenia ovata*) have been very heavily affected by frost, however green shoots at the base of the plants indicate they will recover this spring. As many of us find in our Canberra gardens, native sarsaparilla (*Hardenbergia violacea*) is very variable with

some of our plants unaffected by frost and others are more severely affected. This all adds to a key aim of STEP – education of us as well as our visitors!

A new area for understorey plantings has been identified as a result of the construction of the Education Space. It will be planted with species that indigenous people used for food and fibre.

Special Appeal for funds

In order to speed up our understorey 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-deductable donation via the official tax-deduction facility operated by the Friends of the Arboretum. To do so see the instructions above.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

1. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF STEP. Sunday 16 November at 1100, to be held in the Green Room of the Visitor Centre unless otherwise notified, to be followed by a picnic on the STEP site and tour of the new Education facility.
2. South Coast Tour by Friends of the National Arboretum. A two day event on 27 and 28 November will include visits to private arboreta at Cobargo and Tilba (Marg and Max Bourke, largely native spp) as well as Eurobodalla Botanic Gardens, with an overnight stop in Narooma. A convivial bus trip with other plant lovers. Book through the Friends of the National Arboretum.

EDUCATION SITE WORKS

Bill Handke:

"Our work on constructing the STEP Education Space, the sealing of the main path and cross paths with crushed granite, together with the construction of a couple of "pods" at two cross path intersections has now been completed.

And the result, as the enclosed photos attest, is spectacular. The colour and texture of the crushed granite paths lift the look of our Forest and help to better define our plantings, while walking (and wheelbarrow) access within Forest 20 is now much easier. We have begun to plant around that area with southern tableland shrubs and understorey species that were used by indigenous peoples: so come a proposed "informal" opening of the Education Space in a few months' time, the area will look established."



The Education Space and first plantings in the Indigenous Plant area. Contrast with the pix in the March Newsletter if you kept it!



Cross path from the main site towards the Education Space.

A truly great achievement so massive thanks to Bill and his changing band of volunteers and contractors.

NEW MEMBERS

A VERY BIG WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS: Dennis Warne, Ray Knight, Sheila and Willie Singleton, great to have you on the STEP team!

FOREST LITTER

Recently your Editor was lucky enough to visit the Trauttmansdorf Gardens near Bolzano in Northern Italy. These are most famous because they were beloved of the Hapsburg Empress Elisabeth of Hungary better known as “Sissi”. The tallest *Wollemia nobilis* in captivity ever seen is there. However the real interest lay in part of the grounds, > 10 ha, devoted to a “STEP-like function”. In other words they have “developed/enhanced/replanted” the species that go to make up the ecosystem of this part of Italian Alpine region known as Alto Adige. The forest, because it is now quite substantial, and I could not get a planting date, consists of an overstorey of Downy Oak, *Quercus pubescens*, and its attendant understorey species, such as the Hackberry and the Hop Hornbeam. They grow in the rocky limestone steep hills/mountains of the Dolomites. They have also commissioned an artist to design a beautiful shelter made from this species and using the gabion cages that the NAC uses for stone retaining walls, see photo below:



UNDERSTOREY PLANTS OF FOREST 20

Text and photo Andy Russell.

***Indigofera australis*, Austral indigo of the Fabaceae family**

Indigofera referring to bearing indigo, *australis* southern

This attractive flowered shrub is currently in full flower at Forest 20 it is spreading variable shrub that will grow to a height of up to 2 metres.

Indigofera is widespread in all regions of NSW though generally found in woodland and forest, it is also found in other states though not the Northern Territory. A sub species *hesperia* is found in Western South Australia and Western Australia.

It is sometimes used in gardens and does quite well in Canberra being tolerant to frosts. It responds well to a hard prune after flowering.

The aboriginal people used the crushed leaves when added to water to stun or kill fish and eels
Reference Wikipedia



POETRY CORNER With Christmas not too far down the track it is good to include another witty piece from our Poet Laureate, Judy Smith:

Callitris (Cypress Pine) – the Christmas Understudy

It is not my fault
I look a close approximation
Of the real thing.
I am ever green
With pine needles,
Cones (though small)
And the resinous scent
Evocative of foreign forests
Dark and deep.

But
I have not known
December snow,
Drops of blood on holly,
Yule logs, Smoke of warming fires
And ragged undressed oaks and elms.
All I know is
The stillness of summer heat,
Gum tree fumes
Tinging blue distant hills,
And leaves lolling loosely
Casting shade.
But they seem content
To cut me,
Drape me,
Dress me,
Light me,
Crown me with star and angel.
Unsure of my part
In this transforming drama,
I step into the role
And await,
Branches outstretched,
For the next act to unfold.
(3 x small Callitris are planted on Forest 20 – Ed)

NEXT NEWSLETTER

Due in December so please submit ideas and material by November 30. Thanks to all the contributors you make my job easy! max@mebourke.com