

STEP NEWSLETTER SEPTEMBER 2018



From the President

Happy Spring to you all. Some welcome rain has softened the soil and given plants some much needed watering. Overall, it appears that the harsh frosts and dry conditions of Winter have not wreaked too much havoc. It is so uplifting to be at STEP these days as the wattles bring wonderful swathes of yellow to brighten the landscape. Wattle Week began this year with the ceremonial planting of an *Acacia pycnantha* by the Governor General Sir Peter Cosgrove and Lady Cosgrove (see article) and continued with Wattle Walks at STEP conducted by Suzette Searle.

Other activities at STEP have included a Winter wander instead of our usual mid-Winter Seminar (see article), tree measurement (see article), extensive soil testing by students from CIT (see article) and pruning and maintenance. Future projects include the construction of a new shed with undercover space for potting. Plans for this are underway and we hope this will be completed in time for our 10-year celebration in March next year.

A date for your diaries is **Sunday 25 November** – the date for our AGM. Time and venue will be advised closer to the date.

Enjoy the sunshine and visit us at STEP if you can.

Judy Smith

President



Meeting for the Wattle Walk at STEP in the Village Centre.



Suzette Searle from the Wattle Day Association, the walks leader

Different Ways to Plant a Tree

Wattle Week commenced with a right royal flourish as the Governor General Sir Peter Cosgrove and Lady Cosgrove planted an *Acacia pycnantha*. Initial plans were for the tree to be planted in the avenue leading to the Cork Oak forest, but the weather was too inclement. As much as the rain on the day was appreciated, it did provide some challenges for NAC staff. The tree was planted in a wheelbarrow of potting mix while the backdrop of rain completed the story. The Governor General spoke of the significance of our national floral emblem and stressed the importance of this as a symbol of unity for all Australians. Students from the Canberra Islamic school presented Sir Peter and Lady Cosgrove with a basket of wattle and in return they were given a special Governor General's medallion. It was a fitting start to a week celebrating one of our favourite flowers.



Meanwhile, back at STEP, we were preparing for our own *Acacia pycnantha* planting. Working on the principle of “a \$50 hole for a \$5 tree”, Terry Murphy and Bill Handke dug three substantial holes and watered them ready for a planting the following week of three trees given to us by Suzette Searle (ACT Wattle Week Co-ordinator). These were planted Thursday 6 September and look to be very happy as recent additions to our Regional Botanic Garden.



Text & pictures Judy Smith, well dug & watered holes



Mike Smith and the planted *Acacias*

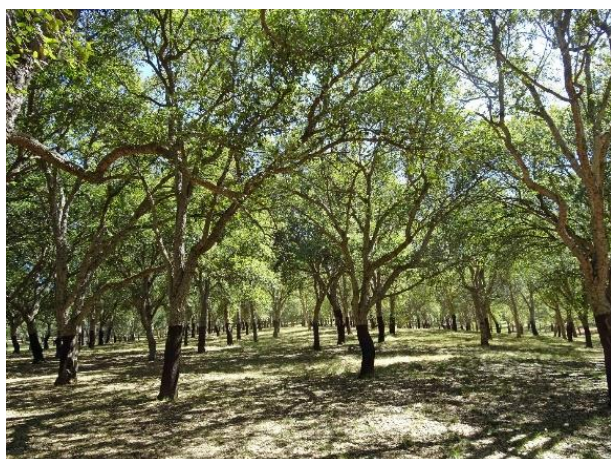
Winter Wandering – STEPping out



Instead of our usual mid-Winter Seminar, this year we went for a ramble around the Arboretum. Led by Max Bourke and Jennie Widdowson, it was a very instructive and enjoyable outing. The group began at the Gallery of Gardens, then proceeded past the top of the Wollemi pines down the valley and up along the edge of the Deodars to look at the Chinese Magnolias (hidden between other magnolias) From there we made our way to the *Acacia pycnantha* patch and into the cork oaks



A. pycnantha planting and Cork Oaks photos below by Jennie Widdowson. Line of walkers photo by Jenny Campbell



After that we climbed the gate and went cross country to a point above STEP. Next stop was coffee at the Village Centre to celebrate a wonderful day out. Thank you to Max and Jennie for their excellent commentary.



Crossing the gate photo by Jenny Campbell

Text by Lainie Shorthouse

The Bush Tucker Trail at STEP

This trail is being established as part of the ACT governments' commitment to the Reconciliation Action Plan made with the Ngunawal people, the caretakers of the region.

The Action Plan 2015-2019 (CMTEDD - Reconciliation Action Plan - ACT Government - http://www.cmd.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/1067501/CMTEDD_Reconciliation_Action_Plan.pdf)

has a vision to recognise the cultural rights and contributions made by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) peoples by making Canberra a place to support their aspirations, cultural identity and connectivity. This Plan focuses on the areas of Relationships, Respect and Opportunities. Within the aspect of Respect is the goal to develop a culture that embraces, values and respects the ATSI people and their culture. By developing a Bush Tucker Trail at STEP, it is hoped to promote the celebration of ATSI culture, heritage, stories and their contributions to the ACT community.

Other areas mentioned in the Action Plan are:

- developing connections with ATSI artists,
- providing training and job opportunities and
- developing tourism experiences.

The Bush Tucker trail could be used to assist with all these areas.

Other local gardens of plants used by the Indigenous people include:

- The Greening Australia Koori bush tucker garden at the Aranda nursery, opened in August 2014 (currently with 9 plant species)
- An Aboriginal plant use walk at the Australian National Botanic Gardens (with 24 plants identified as used by Aboriginal people)
- An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander garden at the Canberra and region Visitor Centre at Regatta Point (partially completed)
- STEP area EE and other parts of Forest 20 containing 36 of the 65 plants identified in the Ngunawal plant use book produced by Greening Australia.) The plants not found at STEP either are difficult to grow or obtain or are not suitable for the site conditions

The Bush Tucker Garden runs north from the edge of the Clearing to the boundary of the STEP block. It consists of 9 raised garden beds with additional rock placements and incorporating the current eucalypt plantings of *E. stellulata* and *E. melliodora*. All the species planted are identified in the Ngunawal Plant Use book.

There will be 24 species planted in the 9 beds. Many of these are already in place having been planted at a public planting when the Bush Tucker garden was officially opened on March 11 2018. Additional plants have been planted by the Friends of the Arboretum during some of their regular work parties. Some additional plantings will be done in the spring including *Wahlenbergia stricta*, *Hardenbergia violacea* and *Linum marginale*. This will complete Stages 1 and 2 of the garden. Later Stage 3 will be planted with strappy leaved plants and will be the weaving area. Final species are still to be confirmed.

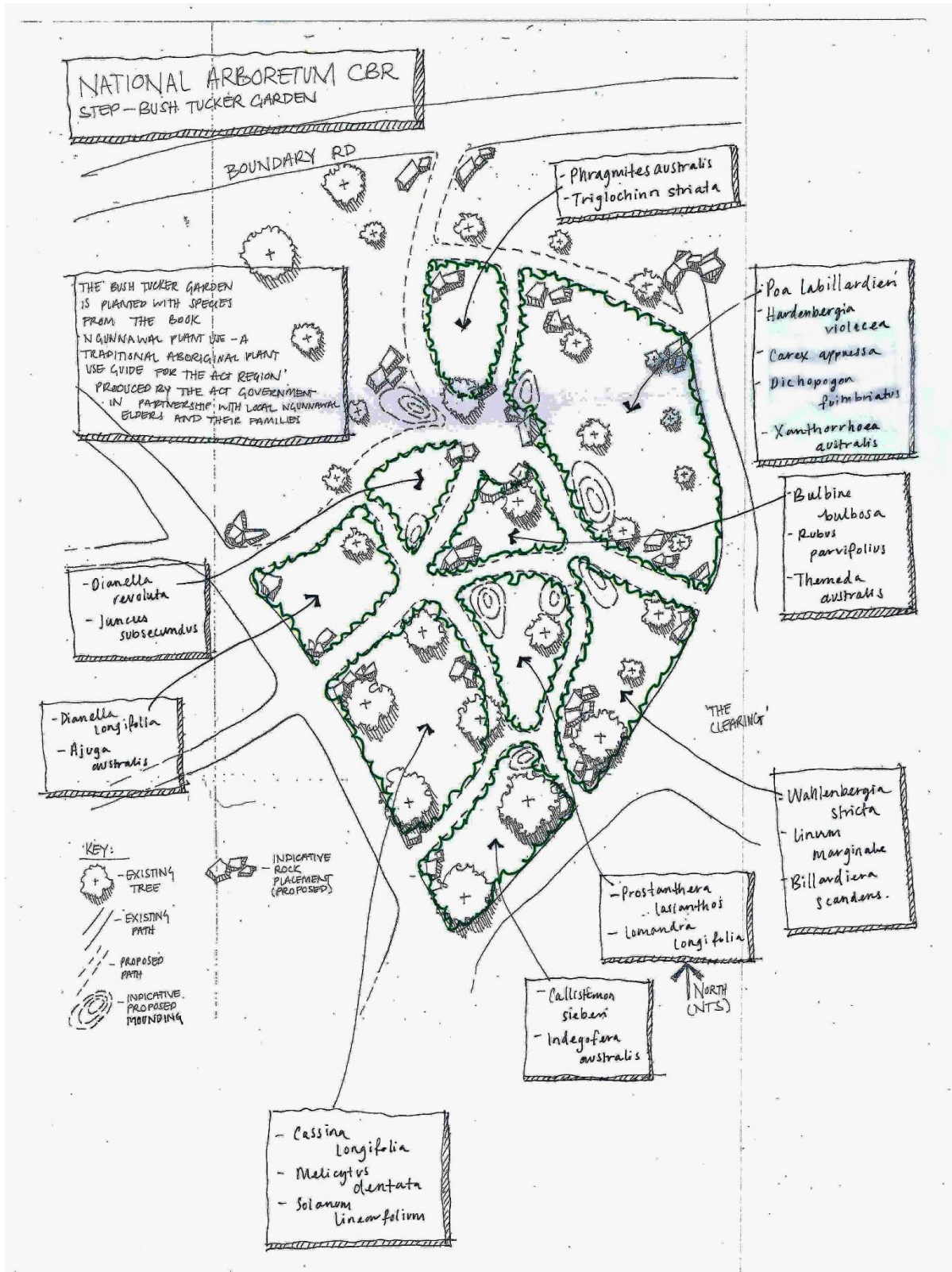
The design for the site was produced by Amalie Shawcross in 2017 and drafted by Brenton Webster, one of the Horticultural Field Officers at the Arboretum, who is of indigenous descent. There was also input from Dean Freeman who works for ACT Parks and Conservation as an Aboriginal Fire Management Officer.

Selection criteria for the plants were that:

- the plants were identified in the Ngunawal Plant Use book
- they grow in the Southern Tablelands region (a requirement as the garden is located within the STEP Forest)

- they would do well in that particular location (i.e. exposed, quite dry except for some certain beds etc).
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Plan of the Bush tucker garden:



The garden beds were created, shaped and mulched by the Friends of the Arboretum over several weeks in conjunction with the Arboretum horticultural team.

Roszanna Madden is the Arboretum's Indigenous Cadet and she has been given responsibility to maintain the garden, including watering, weeding, plant replacement, and path maintenance. Roszanna has also produced the first in a series of seasonal reports that focus on the health of the plants and has documented what maintenance activities are required. These reports will be produced particularly as the plants establish to ensure any issues with the plants and the health of the garden are attended to by Roszanna.

All the plants have identifying labels, but further labelling and information will be provided at some time later in the year.

Comparison of species found in the Bush Tucker garden and the other Indigenous gardens.

Species	Bush tucker	ANBG	STEP	GA Koori	Part used	Use
<i>Callistemon sieberi</i>	y		y	y	flowers	drink, bird attracting
<i>Indigofera australis</i>	y	y	y	y	leaves	fish poison, dye
<i>Wahlenbergia stricta</i>	y		y		flowers	food
<i>Linum marginale</i>	y		y		stems	twine
					seeds	food
<i>Billardiera scandens</i>	y		y		fruits	food
<i>Prostanthera lasianthos</i>	y				leaves	medicinal
					branches	fire lighters
<i>Lomandra longifolia</i>	y	y	y	y	leaf base	food
					leaves	weaving
					roots	medicinal
					seeds	food
<i>Cassinia longifolia</i>	y		y		leaves	ceremonial
					seeds, leaves	food
<i>Melicytus dentatus</i>	y				No information available	
<i>Solanum linearifolium</i>	y		y	y	fruits	food
<i>Dianella longifolia</i>	y	y	y		leaves	weaving
					fruits	food
<i>Ajuga australis</i>	y		y		leaves	medicinal
<i>Dianella revoluta</i>	y	y	y	y	leaves	weaving
					fruits	food
<i>Juncus subsecundus</i>	y				leaves	weaving
<i>Bulbine bulbosa</i>	y		y	y	roots	food
<i>Rubus parvifolius</i>	y	y	y		fruit	food
<i>Themeda triandra</i>	y	y	y		leaves	twine, string
					seeds	food

Poa labillardieri	y		y		leaves	string, weaving
Hardenbergia violacea	y		y	y	leaves	drink, medicinal
					stems	string
					flowers	dye
Carex appressa	y		y		leaves	weaving
Dichopogon fimbriatus	y		y	y	roots	food
Xanthorrhoea glauca	y	y	y		flowers	drink
					leaf base, flower stem	food
					resin	glue
					stem (dried)	firelighter
Phragmites australis	y	y			stems	spears, firelighters
					leaves	weaving
					roots	food
Triglochin striata	y				tubers	food

There are 4 species that will be growing in the Bush Tucker garden that are not found in the STEP plantings. These are the Victorian Christmas bush (*Prostanthera lasianthos*), the tree violet (*Melicytus dentatus*), the common reed (*Phragmites australis*) and the striped arrowgrass (*Triglochin striata*).

The Victorian Christmas bush grows at Tidbinbilla in the Sanctuary. It grows to 4 -5 metres and produces spectacular white/pale pink flowers in December. Photo below.

Notes:



The tree violet is not included in the Ngunnawal plant use book and the striped grass is not a Southern Tablelands species. There is a plant in the same family as the striped grass in the Ngunnawal plant use book, but it is a different species.

Xanthorrhoea australis is named in the garden plan, but Xanthorrhoea glauca is the local species which has been planted.

Themeda australis is named in the garden plan but is a synonym for Themeda triandra the accepted name.

Reference

Ngunnawal Plant Use: a traditional Aboriginal plant use guide for the ACT region. Produced by Greening Australia, published by the ACT government. 2014

This book is available at the Curatorium and the ANBG bookshop

Soil Sampling

We have been fortunate to be able to expand our contact with the CIT. Students under direction of Jamie Barney and Hannah Selmes are in the process of conducting soil sampling across STEP. In discussion with STEP they have set up a grid pattern for sampling sites, testing for pH, electrical conductivity, bulk density and soil moisture. We are hopeful that the results of their work will be useful in determining best places for planting particular species.



Student taking a sample



Student recording results

Text & Photos Judy Smith

STEP acknowledges the support of the following Corporate Members



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Suppliers of promotional banners and flags of Burleigh Heads, Queensland. Flag Central donated the STEP banner that is at the She-oak Nook entrance to Forest 20.

STEP joins joint Parkcare/Landcare display at Jamison Plaza, Macquarie

For the first time STEP was represented at this annual three-day event on September 7-9. The groups represented were Friends of Black Mountain, Friends of Aranda Bushland, Friends of Mt Painter, Friends of the Pinnacle, Friends of Grasslands, STEP and the Canberra Indian Minor Action Group who showed a trap. Except for the latter each group had 5 panels to display information.



Top and right, the STEP display, lower left, a more general view.

Each panel was used on both sides. It was a lot of work to be represented for the 3 days. Thank you to those who gave their time. We had a supply of brochures and general information and had many people interested in what STEP is doing.

Text & photos Andy Russell



Acacia pycnantha, Golden Wattle



Acacia acinacea, Gold-dust Wattle photos Andy Russell

Wild Pollinator Count



Main menu

[Skip to content](#)

- [About the Project](#)
 - [News](#)
 - [How to Count](#)
- [Wild Pollinator Count FAQ](#)
- [Submit Observations](#)
 - [Resources](#)
 - [About Us](#)
 - [Keep in touch](#)

About the Project

The spring 2018 Wild Pollinator Count runs November 11th to 18th.

Australia has lots of wild pollinator insects that are often overlooked. European honey bees get a lot of attention because they are an adaptable, generalist forager, which means they are happy to visit almost any flower, in most climate zones. They are also a social species, so their hives are easy to domesticate and manage.

However, many native insects also contribute to pollination in crops and gardens all around the country. We still need to do a lot of research to identify all our pollinator insect species, understand their ecology and how they are affected by human activities. So far, we know that Australia has around 2,000 native bee species, all of which are important pollinators. We also know there are a couple of thousand butterfly, wasp, fly, moth, beetle, thrips and ant species, some of which are documented pollinators. Unfortunately, we don't have a lot of information on the ecology of many of these insects, what flowers they pollinate, or where they are found.

The Wild Pollinator Count gives you an opportunity to contribute to wild pollinator insect conservation in Australia. **We invite you to count wild pollinators in your local environment and help us build a database on wild pollinator activity.**

You can **join in** by watching any flowering plant for just ten minutes sometime in our count week.

- You don't need to be an insect expert.
- You don't need fancy gear.
- You may be surprised by what you see!

Find out [how to count pollinators](#), identify [the insects](#) you see and [submit your observations](#) through the links at the top of the page. You can also download our [Run Your Own Count kit](#) and organise to count with a group.

If you have any questions or comments about the count, please email us at wildpollinatorcount@gmail.com.

Thank you!

Tree Measuring

As usual, at this time of the year, Jens Svensson has been conducting his tree measuring. This a time-consuming task but height calculations have been made easier with the use of a high-tech infrared measuring instrument. More time consuming is the girth measurement of each tree. For uniformity, the girths are measure at breast height, approximately 1.3m but where trees have multiple trunks, a judgement is required to select which is the thickest. There are approximately 430 trees, so Jens and his helpers are to be congratulated for their efforts. A report on the tree statistics since 2009 is being prepared for our 10-year celebrations next year.



Mike & Jens



Sue & Jenny

Text and photos Judy Smith

New member Information Pack

We are working on an information pack for new members to help them become better informed. The aim is to have this available during October. Bill Handke has been collating material. Some of the items included will be as follows

- General information & plant list
- Brochures
- Planting guide & work safety guide
- Water pump instructions
- Maintenance activities
- Pictorial sheets, 'STEP Our Journey', "3 Seasons at STEP" and "STEP birds 1 & 2"
- Jennie Widdowson's sheet on Wattles at STEP that is currently being worked on.
- STEP insect sheet with photos by Andy Russell & Jennie Widdowson also still in progress.

Travellers Tale

This year we had a Winter escape to Queensland to visit our daughter and her husband. They live on a 3ha block out of Wamuran (west of Caboolture on the D'Aguilar Highway) which is a little village with huge views: mango, banana, pineapple and strawberry farms rolling away to the Glasshouse Mountains.

Their block is bisected by a creek line with rainforest along each bank. The lantana has been cleared allowing the understory to flourish. It is a delight to see the established tree orchids, staghorns, creepers and vines in this patch of forest.



Even greater delight comes from the variety of birds which are residents of the forest: wompoo and wonga pigeons, azure kingfishers, lorikeets, kookaburras, pied butcherbirds, pale headed rosellas, blue-faced honeyeaters, noisy friarbirds, figbirds, the ubiquitous noisy miners, whistling ducks, Pacific black ducks, waterhens, purple swamphens and most intriguing of all, Buff-banded Rails.



Top right Buff-banded Rail, Gallirallus philippensis, above Carpet Python, Morelia sp. and right Eastern Sedgefrog Litoria fallax.

The Rails are small shy birds who venture out from the undergrowth morning and evening to feed. Their markings are distinctive with bands of russet brown and under tail feathers are white. The rails breed and raise 2-3 young each year.

The garden is also home to a variety of frogs, lizards, insects and pythons.



Plumed Whistling Ducks, Dendrocygna eytoni.



Cuckoo Wasp, Stilbum cyanurum.

Apart from the enjoyment of visiting family, we enjoy the tropical setting which is their home.

Text & photos Judy Smith

Contacts for STEP, By Mail The Secretary, PO Box 440, Jamison Centre ACT 2614 By email secretary@step.asn.au