

FRIENDS OF BRAESIDE PARK NEWSLETTER

January 2008, no. 1



BRAESIDE PARK

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The Rabbit-proof Fence



Grasslands area, indicated by circle. From an aerial photo of Braeside Park

Not the Australian film, but our very own fence that protects the Park's Grassland area. On December the 12th, the 'Community Project/Wednesday Workers' completed rabbit-proofing this fence. Rangers Ernie and Lisa led the team. It being a warm morning, the work was strenuous. But what a satisfying feeling when we reached the last corner and knew that this project was complete.

In the late 1980's, when a patch of endangered indigenous vegetation was discovered in the Park, Staff and Friends knew they had to protect this treasure. Now known as the Grasslands, this 2 hectare area has been fenced, weeded, revegetated, and monitored as part of the overall aim of regenerating the Park's original, pre-European settlement vegetation. This work would not

have been possible without a series of grants to the Friends group, totalling close to \$19,000 to date. Friends and staff have developed a 10-year plan to improve and consolidate the work so far and to investigate less labour-intensive methods. (The circle on the map shows the approximate location of the Grassland area, i.e. near the Park's centre.)

A major benefit of all this work is the natural regeneration which has occurred. Some species observed in the area include local Eucalypts and many understorey plants such as native grasses.

You too could help make a lasting contribution to Braeside Park by joining the Community Project team on Wednesdays starting in February. (Please see Activities on page 3 for details.)

Note: since Grassland is a regeneration area it is not open to public access.



On the home stretch—the Wednesday Workers

Wedge-tailed Eagle returns

On January 17th, Rangers Lisa and Digger spotted a Wedge-tailed Eagle roosting in the Park. Then on the following week-end, regular bird-surveyor Steve McDonald observed the Eagle feeding on a rabbit, which presumably the bird captured in the Park.

Let's hope that Eagles take up permanent residence and regularly feast on our bunnies.

Thanks To The Helpers
Those who helped produce the newsletter:

Elsie Anderson
Bev Bancroft
Ian Parsons
Park Rangers

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Friends of Braeside Park**ACTIVITIES CALENDAR**

Activity	Time/Day	Feb	March	April
Committee Meeting	4th Monday, 1:30pm at the Visitor Centre	25	24	28
Community Projects Weekday	9:00 - 12:00 noon Wednesday at the Park Office	6 13 20 27	5 12 19 26	2 9 16 23 30
Plant Propagation Nursery Facility	10:00 - 12:00 noon 1st Sat & Mon 3rd Wed & Sun	2 4 17 20	1 3 16 19	5 7 16 20
Seed & Cutting Collection Meet at Robin Car park	10:00 - 12:00 noon The Fri. before the 1st Sat. of the month	1	29 Feb	4
Water Quality Monitoring Meet at the Park Office	9:00 - 12:00 noon 3rd Tues	19	18	15
Community Projects Weekends	9:00 - 12:00 noon, follow the signs			Community Planting Sun 26th (Autumn rain permitting)
Special Activities		Westernport Trip on Tidemaster Thurs. 7th 8am at Park Office for car pooling	Astronomy Night Thurs. 6th 8:15 pm Visitors' Centre	French Island Trip Sat. 12th

Two Trips to Consider

Tidemaster's Cruise from Tooradin: Book *now* for this trip, which had rave reviews when Friends went in 2006.

When: Thursday 7th of February

Cost: \$20 (BYO lunch)

Time: 8am at the Park Office for car pooling, or 8.45 at Tooradin Jetty for departure at 9am

Trip lasts about 2 hours, with bird-watching afterwards if conditions allow.

To book, please ring **Bev Bancroft** on **9551 4578**

French Island: Travel the Stony Point Ferry to this historic natural refuge. Expressions of interest are sought for this trip, which is planned for Saturday 12th of April. The cost will be between \$20 to \$30. A bus would leave from the Park Office at about 8am, returning about 6pm. Please ring **Margaret Hunter** on **0417 323 460** if you'd like to come.

Indigenous Gardening, part two—Plant Selection

By Kaye Proudley.

Take a walk through Braeside Park or other local reserves with an eye to what would suit your garden or simply what you would like to have at your place. Try to select a few plants from each level to cover all habitat types, not just all small shrubs or trees. I'm assuming that people will want to try to attract fauna, such as invertebrates and birds, and that you'll be "doing the right thing" in trying to preserve the local genetic diversity and pre-European landscape character. You can do all this and have a lovely garden which if set up with forethought and care, can require less maintenance.

Give yourself a well-earned pat on the back if my assumptions are correct!

Trees

Unless you have an extremely large garden, you'll have to exclude the extremely large gum trees like River Red Gum (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) and Manna Gum (*E. viminalis*); choose smaller species like Snow Gum/White Sallee (*E. pauciflora*) which will attain a maximum height of 10m and half that wide, or Silver-leaf Stringybark (*E. cephalocarpa*): 8-12m high x 6-10m wide.

Other small to medium sized tree species to consider could be Wattles (Acacias) – both Lightwood (*A. implexa*) and Blackwood (*A. melanoxylon*) are long-lived, and the shorter-living Black Wattle (*A. mearnsii*) which survive about 15 years. These will provide you with witchetty grubs, a native food source. If you don't fancy the grubs, the birds will love them!

Black She-oak (*Allocasuarina littoralis*) is a fine, erect tree; Drooping She-oak (*A. verticillata*) a worthwhile addition to any garden just to hear the wind sighing through its leaves! Sweet Bursaria (*Bursaria spinosa*) is a tree that attracts lots of insects, smells great and has showy white flowers followed by bronze seedpods.

The Coast Tea Tree (*Leptospermum laevigatum*) is a fisherman's warning - as its white flowers bloom, Schnapper are moving into the bay, just waiting to be caught. Swamp Paperbark (*Melaleuca ericifolia*) has lemon flowers and will sucker to provide you with more free plants. Simply mow or pull up if you don't want the extras.

Shrubs

A list of medium to large shrubs could include about four different Wattles : Coast (*Acacia sophorae*), Spike (*A. oxycedrus*), Hedge (*A. paradoxa*) and Prickly Moses (*A. verticillata*). The last three are prickly but make excellent cover for small birds to rest and nest in, away from their predators.

Sea Box (*Alyxia buxifolia*) is a particularly attractive white-flowered shrub with orange berries and is very hardy when established. Silver Banksia (*B. marginata*) is a food plant (soak the lemon-coloured flowers in water and drink the sweet nectar) or prune the foliage to encourage the woolly, brown, new leaves and create a good screen plant at the same time.



Sea Box at Black Rock. Photo: VL

Drooping Cassinia or Chinese Scrub (*Cassinia arcuata*) is a very pretty plant when in flower as the heads droop in a most attractive fashion. It is not long lived but self sows quite readily (free plants!) and the bonus is the curry scent of its foliage. There are two Hakeas in this section - Yellow (*H. nodosa*) and Furze (*H. ulicina*) the latter being more interesting if planted in groups.

There are two small Tea Trees - Prickly (*Leptospermum continentale*) and Woolly (*L. lanigerum*), the last having hairy, grey-green leaves and both having white flowers. Coast Everlasting (*Ozothamnus turbinatus*) is descriptive of where it belongs and is a shrub in short supply in our region; this makes it a good reason to have it in your garden, apart from the fact that it has attractive white flowers.

Here is a selection of small shrubs: Heath Wattle (*A. brownii*) that tolerates quite dry soils; the similar Juniper Wattle (*A. ulicifolia*) but requiring moister soils; and my favourite, Sweet Wattle (*A. suaveolens*) with its lovely silvery bloom on the fat pods. This is another plant that looks best planted in twos or threes. Green (also called Dwarf) She-oak (*Allocasuarina paradoxa*) flowers in two ways as all she-oaks do. The male plants have flowers that are brownish red and cover the tips of the 'leaves-which-aren't-really-leaves', whilst the female plants have little balls of reddish brown flowers along the stems and branches. Pretty with the sun behind the bush.

Indigenous Gardening, part two—Plant Selection, continued

Common Aotus (*A. ericoides*) is a showy little “eggs ‘n bacon” type flower, best planted in drifts to get full effect. The equally showy, if not more so, Showy Bossiaea (when pronouncing Bossiaea, ignore the ‘ea’ on the end) (*B. cinerea*) can be short lived and is fairly drought-hardy.

White Correa (*C. alba*) is one of the toughest plants around; has a good floral display; can be pruned into a hedge or screen and also comes in a variety found growing naturally at Mt. Eliza called Pink Blush. Then there is Common Correa (*C. reflexa*), which also comes in a few varieties, one having red tubular flowers tipped green or yellow, and another having all greenish-yellow flowers. Both are a valuable honeyeater winter food source and are also shade-loving plants that still flower well in that shade.

Hop Bitter-pea (*Daviesia latifolia*) has showy clusters of red and yellow flowers.

Common Heath (*Epacris impressa*) comes in three colour forms, white, pink and red and is this state’s floral emblem. Sometimes hard to get established.

For those who like a challenge, the Guinea-flowers present a very bright splash of yellow in the bush but can also be hard to establish. Once established they are long lived and worth the effort. Try Bundled Guinea-flower (*Hibbertia fasciculata*), Erect (*H. riparia*) or Silky (*H. sericea*).



Common Heath, Braeside Park . Photo: Bill Jackson

Austral Indigo (*Indigofera australis*) is a shade lover but will also grow in full sun, its lovely mauve/purple flowers can be used to make fabric dyes. Plant two or three in a clump. Cushion Bush (*Leucophyta brownii*) is the familiar silver seaside plant but needs regular pruning where it lacks the salt winds to do the compacting job for you!

Coast Daisy-bush (*Olearia axillaris*) has yellow flowers and silver coloured aromatic foliage. A tough customer. The Twiggy Daisy Bush (*O. ramulosa*) is a stunning sight in full bloom, just covered in white. Tip prune as the flowers fade to get another flush. Common Flat-pea (*Platylobium obtusangulam*) is another stunner with red and yellow pea flowers, which does not like over-watering. Wish there were more like that!



Black Duck. Photo: VL

Waddle I Do?

By Jill Dawson

The sun is out and the sky is blue,
I'm in the mood to waddle and woo;
it's now or never, waddle I do?

If you see me on the track, it's true,
I'll probably make a quack at you;
I do believe that's waddle do.

I'll savour my low and subtle seat view,
while resting my aching webbed feet too;
it's on the cards, that's waddle do.

Once I've seen enough when I am through,
I'll fly away for a paddle or two;
I guess that's waddle want to do.

Published with permission from **Portraits of Braeside Park**, by Jill Dawson.

Nursery News—zeroing in on weeds

By Marj Seaton

Community Garden: We had several visits from a group of people eager to help us in recruiting volunteers for the community garden project. They were shown most of the techniques we use to propagate our plants and had a good chat as well.

Weeds: We have had a wondrous collection of weeds, both in the tubes and on the floors of the igloos. Zero is great stuff isn't it? The hardening off areas too have gone mad, particularly after the good rains which now seem so long ago. At least we don't (yet?) have grubs.



Purple Flag (*Pattersonia occidentalis*). Photo: Marj Seaton

Seed Collecting: The Friday group collected lots of *Lomandra longifolia* in early January after a lean season last year. Some of the grasses in the igloos have seeded so we have collected those, particularly *Danthonia racemosa* for which we have quite a large order for the coming planting year. Patersonias have been good producers too – did you see them flowering near car park 4 in the spring? They looked spectacular.

Plugs: We have 'direct seeded' several plug trays of *Danthonia racemosa* for this season. Plugs don't use as much potting mix and are easier to plant in the field so we're trying to use them more than in the past. Germination so far has been a little erratic.

Summer Wash: The two igloos have been washed with 'Parasoline', a chalky mix which helps cut down the amount of sunshine getting through and reduces the heat load on hot days. The wash lasts for quite a long time, and will eventually come off in heavy rain.

We are now seeing some of the seedlings developing nicely and the shadehouse is filling up fast. Hopefully we will be able to move quite a few into the hardening off area at the end of February to make room for plants coming on.

Happy new year to all plant enthusiasts.

Park Report—Another rainwater tank to come

From Acting Ranger in Charge Ernie De Marchi's report

Summer Ranger

Lisa Freeman, the Summer Ranger, finishes her stay in the Park at the end of the second week of February. Lisa has accomplished a great deal in her time here.

Revegetation Program

The final total for planting in 2007 was 13,468 plants put into the Park. This year's planting will be reduced due to water restrictions and continuing harsh conditions.

Grants

Parks Victoria has approved grants for ongoing Burgan and woody weed removal and for the Salinity Revegetation Project. Fencing material is being ordered and assembled.

Pest Animal Program—Rabbits

Rabbits are breeding very well in the Park, unfortunately; this is evident from the regular monitoring of their population. Some myxomatosis is in a few areas, but not enough to adequately control numbers.

Rainwater Tank

The Federal Government has awarded our Friends group a Commonwealth Community Water Grant. This will help to pay for a 25,000 litre tank, which will be installed in the Works Yard.

Fire-fighting

Some Park staff have already been involved in work controlling the East Gippsland fires.

Help is at hand for injured wildlife: call **AWARE** (Patterson Lakes Branch) on **0412 433 727**