

Tucoerah

The Newsletter of the Georges River Bushcare Volunteers

Bushcare Stall at Lugarno Lions Spring Festival

Last year the Bushcare stall at the Lugarno Lions Spring Festival was a dismal affair. It was cold, wet and the crowds were down so there was lots of standing around drinking too much coffee and putting a positive spin on the rain being 'good for the garden'. What a contrast this year! The perfect Spring day: massive crowds; lots of interest in what we get up to in the bush and hardly time to catch our breath. And the major topic of conversation? The bush badly needs rain!

The theme this year, and one that will continue at the Oatley Lions Festival, was about Trees as Habitat for Wildlife. There was also the ever-popular weed identification display and Bushcare Officer Vicki Willes had brought along some stunning Australian Natives in full flower to show that a colourful garden does not need to rely on exotic plants. We also displayed our new banners for the first time and the Bushcare trailer had new logos reflecting the council amalgamation.



Vicki and fellow Bushcare Officer Jason Cockayne provided the Bushcare expertise and fielded the usual barrage of questions about anything and everything to do with local councils. Both have the patience of Saints: it probably comes with managing Bushcare volunteers for all these years! The Bushcare stall at the Oatley Lions Spring Festival is on Saturday 21 October. If you would like to volunteer to help run the stall contact Heather Stolle or John Kensett.



20 yrs of Bushcare at Poulton Park

The 31st August marked 20 years of Bushcare at Poulton Park.

Bushcare in the Park was an initiative of the now defunct Kogarah Council and Sue Nolan was the council officer charged with its organisation. She introduced bushcare at several sites within the municipality of which Poulton Park and Moore Reserve are the only two remaining.

On 25 August a morning tea was held to celebrate the occasion. Poulton Park Bush-carers past and present were invited as well as ex-Kogarah Council staff who supported them over the years.

In addition it was seen as an opportunity to meet other people involved in Bushcare in the recently formed Georges River Council including those working in other bushland areas and the Georges River staff supporting them.

More than 20 people attended. It was a pleasant occasion with good weather, good food and excellent company; surrounded by the beautiful almost pristine bush which the group has spent the last 20 years conserving.

Let's hope that in 20 years time we can mark another anniversary of bushland care in this never ending labour of love.

Tony Matthews, Bushcare Volunteer



Find us on
Facebook

If you have access to Facebook, take a look at the videos posted on the Georges River Bushcare Volunteers page. One shows the step-by-step process of creating habitat hollows in dead trees and the other is about the Bushcare Major Day out in Poulton Park back in September 2016.

Hip! Hip! Hori Hori

Is the Hori Hori, the Japanese gardening tool, the perfect piece of Bushcare kit? A cross between a knife and a trowel, it can dig weeds, scrape stems, cut vines and with its serrated edge even remove the crown of asparagus fern. On the downside it has a wood handle that means it will be easy to lose in the bush and the top-of-the-range versions are expensive at about \$45.

Well you can try them for yourself. GRBV has bought 30 less expensive knives and these will be distributed amongst the Bushcare Officers. The handles have been painted in bright colours and most have a sheath that can be attached to your belt for added safety. A few of us have been trialling these knives for a couple of years and would never go back to the old trowel.



Bushcare Team Leader Recruitment

Georges River Bushcare Volunteers (GRBV) has long held the view that our local council Bushcare scheme would benefit greatly by employing a Bushcare coordinator. Most councils have one: an experienced Bush Regenerator who is responsible for the overall direction and planning of Bushcare within the area. Someone who has a grasp of the 'big picture' and can work with management to ensure that Bushcare has a voice when it comes to decisions about conservation and land management.

Well it seems that Georges River Council agree! And a position as Bushcare Team Leader has been created. Of course we are not privy to the recruitment process however we are confident it will not be long before there is someone within council who will be the 'go-to' person for all things Bushcare. This should take the pressure off the existing Bushcare Officers and allow them to concentrate on the front line battle, rehabilitating our bushland.



THREE BANNERS PROMOTING BUSHCARE WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR SETTING UP AT WORK SITES SO PASSERSBY KNOW WHO WE ARE! HOPEFULLY WE WILL GET SOME NEW RECRUITS.

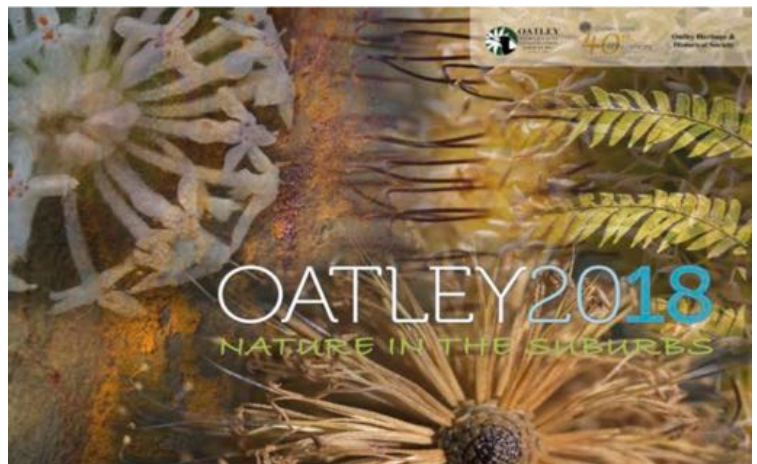
Briefly speaking

🎄 The Georges River Council Bushcare Christmas party will be held at the Castle in Oatley Park on Wednesday, 29 November 2017. Bushcare Officer, Heather Stolle will send out further details nearer the date.

🦉 If you are interested in birds you should find a copy of Jim Robbins - *The Wonder of Birds*. It is a fascinating book full of insights into the world of birds and how they have inspired humankind. Robbins' quote from a Senegalese Forester sets one thinking "In the end we will only conserve what we love, we will love what we understand, and we will understand what we are taught". Go out and hug an educator today!

And speaking of birds, the Australasian Bird Fair and Wildlife Expo is on over the weekend of 3 - 5 November at the Newington Armoury Site at Sydney Olympic Park, Homebush. Go to <http://birdfair.com.au> for more details

📅 The *Oatley 2018 Nature in the Suburbs Calendar* will go on sale at the Oatley Lions Spring Festival on Saturday, 21 October. All proceeds will go to local community organisations - Oatley Lions, Oatley Flora and Fauna Conservation Society (OFF) and Oatley Heritage and Historical Society (see front cover below). Price \$10.00 (OFF Members \$8:00).



👷 The GRC plans to knock down and rebuild much of the Roberts Road Works Depot in coming years. As the Bushcare nursery is also located on the site GRBVs is relieved to be assured that a new nursery will be built. The final site for the nursery has not been settled but GRBVs would like it to be separate from the new works depot and more accessible to suitably qualified volunteers outside of normal work sessions.

👕 If you ordered a Bushcare work-shirt earlier in the month, they should be available for distribution at the Bushcare Christmas Party. Please try and be there to collect your shirt as this will make it easier for everyone.

📍 Capertee Valley, 135 Kms north-west of Sydney is renowned as an area rich in birdlife and one of the few areas where you can get to see the rare and endangered Regent Honeyeater in the wild. You can stay in well-appointed cottages located in the Capertee National Park for a minimum of two nights. During your stay you can walk the many tracks in the park, go bird watching or simply relax and enjoy the quiet of the bush away from TV, traffic and the noise of chain saws and building construction! Go to <https://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/visit-a-park/parks/capertee->

Due to the vigilance of the Riverkeeper, Tony Wales and the team from the GRCCC Aboriginal River-keeper Project 'dieback' in an area of Myles Dunphy Reserve has been confirmed by scientific analysis as being caused by phytophthora, a soil borne water mould. While there is no way of eradicating the disease, Heather Stolle, Bushcare Officer for the Reserve is taking steps to reduce the risk of it spreading.

So it is timely to set out some of the facts about this plant disease that can devastate bushland and list the 'best practice' protocols for Bushcare Volunteers when working in the bush. These articles have been reproduced from materials put out by the Royal Botanic Gardens and Hornsby Shire Council.

Facts about Phytophthora

Phytophthora cinnamomi (Phytophthora) is a microscopic, soil borne, water-mould that has been implicated in the death of remnant trees and other plants in Australian bushland. Phytophthora is not native to Australia. It is believed to have been introduced sometime after European settlement. Phytophthora is a national problem and is listed as a key threatening process under the Commonwealth's Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999.

Symptoms including Dieback

"Dieback" simply means dying or dead plants. There are many causes of dieback, Phytophthora is just one of them. Often dieback is the result of a combination of factors such as; changed drainage patterns and nutrient loads (eg: increased stormwater run-off) or changed soil conditions (eg: dumped fill or excavation of/near root zone). Plants that are stressed are more vulnerable to Phytophthora.

Initial symptoms of Phytophthora include; wilting, yellowing and retention of dried foliage, loss of canopy and dieback. Infected roots blacken and rot and are therefore unable to take-up water and nutrients. Severely infected plants will eventually die. Symptoms can be more obvious in summer when plants may be stressed by drought. If you suspect that Phytophthora is on your site, please contact the Bushcare team to collect a soil sample to be lab tested. This is usually done in the warmer months where conditions are optimum for the disease.

Infection

There is no way of visually telling if Phytophthora is present in the soil as its structures and spores are microscopic (invisible to the naked eye). Phytophthora requires moist soil conditions and warm temperatures for infection, growth and reproduction. Spores travel through moist soil and attach to plant roots. Once Phytophthora has infected a host plant it can grow inside plant root tissue independent of external soil moisture conditions. After infection, Phytophthora grows through the root destroying the tissue which is then unable to absorb water and nutrients.

Spread


Large numbers of zoospores (asexual spores) are produced and released when the soil is moist and warm. Consequently, spore numbers can build up in the soil surrounding an infected plant quite rapidly. They are easily transported in water and can rapidly move to and infect neighbouring plants, especially those down slope. They survive for short periods.


However, Phytophthora can also produce thick-walled, resistant, survival structures known as chlamydospores. These spores are produced when conditions become unfavourable such as when a food source is exhausted or in periods of low temperature or drought. Chlamydospores can survive in soil for long periods and are the major mechanism for long-term survival in infected sites. They can also be involved in long-distance disease spread in transported soil. When conditions become favourable, chlamydospores germinate and renew the Phytophthora life cycle by infecting new host plants.

All spores can easily be transported by water and contaminated soil. Human activities, including earthworks, bush regeneration and bushwalking, that move soil or root material, can easily spread the disease.


For further information on Phytophthora cinnamomi http://www.rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/plant_info/pests_diseases/phytophthora_dieback


Bushland Hygiene Protocols for Phytophthora


 Always assume that the area you are about to work in is free of the disease and therefore needs to be protected against infection.


 Always assume that the activity you are about to undertake has the potential to introduce the disease.


 Arrive at site with clean shoes, ie: no dirt encrusted on them.

 If you arrive with shoes that are encrusted with dirt, they will have to be completely soaked in metho or disinfectant and allow a few minutes to completely soak in. NEVER scrape untreated dirt off your shoes onto the ground.


 Before you move onto the site spray the bottom of your shoes with 70% metho. Bleach solution (1% strength) or household/commercial disinfectant (as per label) are also suitable.

 Check all tools and equipment that comes in contact with soil are clean before entering the area (they should have been cleaned on site at the end of the previous work session). If there is any dirt on them, spray them with 70% metho.


 Clean all tools at the end of each work session while still on site ensuring this is done away from drainage lines and adjacent work areas. Knock or brush off encrusted dirt and completely spray with 70 % metho. Replace in storage/transport containers.


 Preferably compost all weed material on site.


 Never drag vegetation with exposed roots and soil through bushland.


 When removing weeds from site, remove as much soil as possible from them in the immediate work area and carefully place vegetative material into plastic bags.

 Try not to get the bag itself dirty, don't put it on/in a muddy area.

 Always work from the lower part of a slope to the upper part.

 Always work in areas known to be free of the pathogen before working in infected areas.

 Minimise activities wherever possible when the soil is very wet.

 Vehicles should not be driven off track or into reserves (unless vehicle decontamination is carried out before and after entering a single work site)

 Only accredited supplies of plants/mulch to be used.

New Bushcare Site Signs

This is a photo of the new Georges River Council Bushcare Volunteer Site sign at Marine Drive, Oatley West. Sensibly, it avoids giving any site-specific information, only providing the council's main telephone number as a point of contact but this means Bushcare needs to make sure Council staff who field calls about the program can provide accurate and precise information. They especially need to be able to suggest other nearby sites if a particular site time does not suit the caller or at least be able to make the appropriate referral to the Bushcare Officers.

Bushcare volunteers might like to discuss the number of signs and their placement at each site with their bushcare site supervisors. Things to consider are the best location(s) to maximise impact, taking into account future growth of vegetation which could lead to signs being covered up, the potential for vandalism - choose locations which have good external visibility - and the number of signs - for larger sites, more than one sign may be appropriate, but we should avoid cluttering up the area

Brian Dale, Bushcare Volunteer



Nominate a Significant Tree

Georges River Council doesn't have a Significant Tree register for all valuable trees, it only records ones of heritage interest. If there is no record of our significant trees we may well lose most of our old trees planted when the suburbs were first established. A Significant Tree Register is being established by Oatley Flora & Fauna Conservation Society to identify and hopefully protect trees on public land. This may be extended as the project develops. Generally, trees are assessed to evaluate their importance in relation to:

The tree's historic &/or natural value

The tree's social, cultural & commemorative values

Visual & aesthetic value

Whether the tree is particularly old or vulnerable

Whether it is a rare species of tree

It has horticultural or genetic value

Whether it has natural significance

A form has been created so that you can nominate trees that you think are significant & should be protected by a Significant Tree Register. Your personal details will not be published. If you would like to nominate a tree in the area go to https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScqdK6KbfJBu-mw6oq-oSEisDc5eFL8bNsiZTZAady9nc_4yw/viewform



Tucoerah is a wholly independent newsletter published by Georges River Bushcare Volunteers. If you would like to comment on an article, submit your own or if you have any other query, email Shaun at shuhorns@icloud.com.



Working bee at Wattamolla Lagoon

Back in March this year, I was involved in making a short documentary promoting the case for the Royal National Park to be listed as a World Heritage Site. For me this was essentially a learning process: how to put together a short video supporting a worthwhile cause for virtually no cost using the RNP case as a 'template'. I had no real understanding of the rationale for World Heritage listing. Anyway after meeting some of the dedicated people involved in the campaign, I soon learnt why it was so important and subsequent events - the possible carving off of a slice of the RNP for the F6, and the likely impact of the so-called 'eco-tourist' development at Spring Gully - added weight to their arguments.

Anyway, the production company provided a link to a fantastic documentary about the park suggesting this as an example of what we could achieve. There were brilliant shots of the ocean cliffs, time-lapse sunsets, drone footage and towards the end - a long pan of Wattamolla lagoon with *Mother of Millions in full bloom in the foreground*. I am not going to insult your Bushcaring intelligence by telling you about this plant. Simply stated it is a terrible weed that will grow in the harshest environment and can propagate from a tiny segment.

After a number of phone calls to the RNP I arranged for a 'hit-squad' of bushcare volunteers to hold a working-bee at Wattamolla and fifteen of us turned up to a warm welcome from National Parks ranger, Patsy Nagle. Over a couple of hours, in glorious weather, we collected eight large Sulo bins of Mother of Millions from the picnic area surrounding the lagoon. Although it stands out when in flower it is a different story at other times and despite our best efforts I am sure we missed some of the tiny 'offspring' so a return visit might be on the cards. Patsy seemed open to the idea and it makes a welcome change to our usual sites.

Work was followed by a picnic lunch under a huge fig tree. Afterwards some of the volunteers ventured off on the surrounding walking tracks.

Finally, an interesting tidbit of information about the area where we were working: Patsy Nagle told us that 40 acres of ocean frontage at Wattamolla was privately owned by Mr J Coote of Angus and Coote fame, until he presented the land to the National Park Trust in 1933.

Shaun Keays-Byrne, Bushcare Volunteer

