

Tool Topics.

Development of the Root Blade

In 2001, I joined FEP at Hartmann's Reserve in Toowoomba. I found some of the physical aspects of weed removal that involved bending were difficult. At the time we had the use of an old shovel which previously had mixed so much concrete that its mouth was worn to a convex, mouth shape at the tip. As we were removing lantana I noticed that the convex shape of the shovel tip actually seemed to focus the force of the thrust against the roots slicing them easily. I then went on to develop a tool that could be easily and effectively used in an upright position. I also included in the design a foot plate that would increase the size of the shoulder of the blade to provide an effective platform to applying force with the foot, added edge stiffeners to the blade sides for strength, a smart colour scheme and eventually produced a ROOT BLADE.



The blade is now robust and effective enough to be used to cut the roots of problem weeds including both lantana and privet (up to 75mm dia. stem) from soil that does not contain rocks. It allows the operator to carefully position the cutting edge precisely where it is required to cut through the roots and also to lift out the main stem of the plant. Larger plants may require approaches from different sides to get to the main root systems. Once removed the remaining plant roots die and eventually compost away to help improve the condition of the soil.

The Root Blade was featured on the ABC TV New Inventors show on 16th November 2005 and later on Chanel 7 Better Homes and Gardens 2nd November 2007. For more information on Root Blades please contact me.

Euan (Ian) McLean (FEP)
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Parkcare Groups.

Parkcare groups are volunteers doing rehabilitation work on these Sundays each month starting again in February. Would you like to get involved?

Nielsen Park (1st Sunday)
Prince Henry Heights (3rd Sunday)
Waterbird Habitat (4th Sunday)

Nielsen Park

This park is located at the eastern end of Tarlington Street or can be accessed via Rowbotham Street and/or Nielsen Court.

Prince Henry Heights

This group is still working along Prince Henry Drive.

The Waterbird Habitat

This group is very active on the 4th Sunday each month on the main land and the islands.

Rehabilitation may include weed removal, propagating and planting native species as well as monitoring plants and wildlife.

For more information on parkcare groups, please contact –

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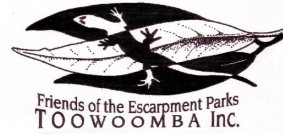
FEP News.

FEP has now acquired a high pressure water blaster which will provide a quick and effective method to dig and prepare the soil for planting trees, shrubs and vines. This will be especially handy for National Tree Day plantings coming up 2nd August this year.

**Friends of the Escarpment Parks
Toowoomba Inc.**

FEP Membership is only \$5 per year

Would you like to support FEP? Membership is only \$5 per year



FEP, Caring for Toowoomba's Bushlands

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Species Watch.

Tawny Frogmouth *Podargus strigoides*

Tawny Frogmouths are found throughout Australia, including Tasmania. They can be seen in almost any habitat type except the denser rainforests and treeless deserts.



'Two Tawnies at Echo Valley'

Photo Jesslyn Wormington (Greencorp)

The general plumage of the Tawny Frogmouth is silver-grey, slightly paler below, streaked and mottled with black and rufous. A second plumage phase also occurs, with birds being russet-red. The eye is yellow in both forms, and the wide, heavy bill is olive-grey to blackish. The

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body length ranges from 35 - 50 cm, with south-eastern birds being larger than birds from the north.

With their nocturnal habit and owl-like appearance, Tawny Frogmouths are often confused with owls, but are actually more closely related to the nightjars.

During the day, the Tawny Frogmouth perches on a tree branch, often low down, camouflaged as part of the tree.

The bulk of the Tawny Frogmouth's diet is made up of nocturnal insects, worms, slugs and snails. Small mammals, reptiles, frogs and birds are also eaten. Most food is obtained by pouncing to the ground from a tree or other elevated perch. Some prey items, such as moths, are caught in flight, which has led to many unfortunate instances of birds being hit by cars while chasing insects illuminated in the beam of the headlights.

Tawny Frogmouths breed mainly from August to December, although birds in more arid areas may breed in response to heavy rains. Both sexes incubate the two or three eggs. The male sits during the day, but both sexes share sitting at night. The nest is a loose platform of sticks, which is usually placed on a horizontal forked tree branch. Normally only one brood is raised in a season, but birds from the south may have two.

We had these two watching us (Greencorps and FEP) at Echo Valley in May. The crew from Greencorps have also been assisting in the park.

If you would like to get involved we are there 9 – 12 Monday and Tuesday mornings each week. (0428 288 077)

Where are they now?.

"Gone but not forgotten"

Veronica Newbury has moved to Perth and joined the WA Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority as the Environmental Manager for Bold Park.

Bold Park is a coastal bushland reserve located about 10 Km west of the Perth CBD. The park is managed by the Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority.

In 1936 Bold Park was established as a place '...for the people of Perth' (Perth City Council, 1936).

The vision for Bold Park is 'to be identified as a world-class urban wilderness enjoyed, studied and managed with the community'.

Bold Park was declared an A-class reserve on 10 August 1998 for its high conservation, landscape and recreation values. It is one of the largest remaining bushland remnants in the urban area of the Swan Coastal Plain, covering 437 hectares.

The Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority is working towards restoring resilient ecological communities in Bold Park through effective bushland management involving research, restoration and weed control. Many of the weed species are adapted to extremely dry conditions with the main offenders being veldt grass (*Erharta longifolia*), pelargonium (*Pelargonium capitatum*), bridal creeper (*Asparagus asparagoides*) and Geraldton Carnation (*Euphorbia terracina*). Thankfully, a number of native plants that have been introduced into cultivation occur naturally within the park. They include *Calothamnus quadrifidus* (one sided bottlebrush), *Agonis flexuosa* (peppermint), *Templetonia retusa* (cockies tongue), *Hardenbergia comptoniana* (native wisteria) and many, many, more.

Friends of Bold Park Bushland

The Friends of Bold Park Bushland is a community group with a history of commitment to protecting Bold Park. Their goal is to work with the Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority to help create a world

class urban wilderness. They are currently involved in both regeneration projects aimed at maintaining and improving the quality of the bushland, and in protecting the integrity of the Park, for example by lobbying to prevent roads and urban developments from encroaching on its boundaries. A recent plan by the State Government to extend the Stephenson Highway, would mean that a significant patch of bush could disappear. The Friends have been contacting and writing to the government promoting the value of protecting the bush. To date there has been no decision made regarding the highway.

Members of the Friends of Bold Park Bushland have the opportunity to participate in bushwalks led by well known experts, attend informative talks, receive quarterly newsletters, get involved in projects and much more.

A message just in from Veronica

"Life is improving in Perth and I'm back to looking after rescued wildlife. Percy Possum was found on Friday on the road



'Percy'

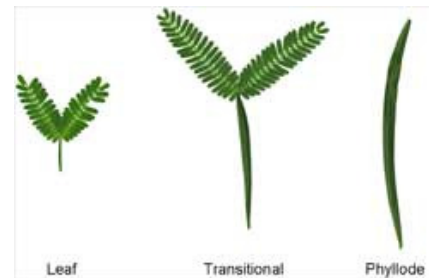
outside Bold Park and was brought in by our Community Liaison Officer. Looking very thin and miserable, I foolishly jumped at the chance to look after another possum. So I have him for the next 6 months! The advantage is that it will give staff here an opportunity to watch him growing up at close quarters and then to be involved in his release at the park. Being an organisation focusing only on flora for the most part, he will be a great ambassador to encourage us to monitor the wildlife as well..." **Thanks V**

Acacias or Wattles and Bush Revegetation

Wattles which are seen everywhere in the bush are as Australian a symbol as the kangaroo. A species of wattle is featured on our coat of arms. They were given that common name when Europeans first settled because the branches of wattle trees were used as wattles in making "wattle and daub" huts, a type of mud building using sticks in the walls common in the English countryside at the time and used in the early colony when huts were needed. Wattles now are not often used for building. The most common use of wattle logs is in wood turning. For while the wattle log is very hard wattles do not live very long and are badly infested with borers after ten years. The logs never get very big nor are wattles generally long lived.

To the bush regenerator, wattles are a must if you want to revegetate areas that have been heavily disturbed by logging or bulldozing. They are easy to propagate and grow fast soon providing a much needed canopy that helps to prevent weed growth and encourage other slower growing natives.

Acacia seeds are collected from the nearest bush land. This is called sourcing seed from 'local provenance.' The seeds are then placed in boiling water and allowed to cool. This breaks the heavy waxy coating and allows the seed to germinate. In nature this is done by fire. I prefer to place them into native tubes one seed to a tube with a potting mix suitable for native plants. Provided the seeds are fresh results are usually good.



Acacia implexa leaf transitions

Seedlings will first appear and the first leaves are fine bipinnate leaves which are the acacias true leaves. A few acacias keep these to adulthood but most Australian acacias lose their true leaves early on and replace them with enlarged flattened leaf stalks or phyllodes. It is thought that Acacias do this as an adaptation to Australia's harsh climate.

Two very common Acacias that grow around Toowoomba are *Acacia maidenii* or Maiden's Wattle and *Acacia implexa* or Hickory Wattle. Scientific names are used because they describe plants precisely. (Common names are also good but can lead to ambiguity). The first word *Acacia* is the genus name it comes from Gk 'acantha' meaning thorn because many African and Asian acacias have thorns. This is the word for the genus and it lumps the plant into a group named Acacia. Australian acacias will look similar because most will have phyllodes instead of leaves and a pod splitting open with several hard black seeds. The second word is the species name. In this case it is 'maidenii' meaning the plant has been named after Maiden the botanist who first found it. In the case of *Acacia implexa* the species name means tangled referring to the seedpods that are tangled together. Superficially both these species look similar and care must be taken not to mistake them.

Another Acacia common to the Toowoomba area is *Acacia decurrens*. Although this acacia is not native to Toowoomba it has been naturalised in the area possibly introduced because its bark was once a very good source of tannin for tanning leather. One of its common names is Green Wattle probably named because of its green trunk. Unlike the other two acacias described above, this plant still has true leaves and the leaf stalk or petiole of this small tree has the appearance of flowing down (why it has been called *decurrens*). This tree is also called Sydney Wattle and Black Wattle and a host of other names.

Colin Walpole (FEP)