Tool Topics.

Yet another of Euan's bushcare inventions

This tool with sliding hammer action was developed to help dig the deep root system of the Cat's Claw Creeper vine.

We are still looking for someone with drafting or CAD experience to help draw up this and other designs to help with the production of equipment. If you can help please contact Euan.

Euan (Ian) McLean (FEP)
4630 1535

Could you identify this? - Try a wheel barrow for this wheel or even a hand pushed or drawn cart.

Most wheelbarrows of old design had metal wheels with a hard rubber tyre. The wheel would have been made by a wheelwright or blacksmith in the days before they had made advances in pressing machines (manufactured probably 1870 to 1910).

Blacksmiths are very artful particularly when steel was in short supply. There was not the abundance of metal during that period or the technology working with metals that we have today. ***Colin (FEP)***

Did you know ...?

Of all of the rubbish that makes it to the ocean, 15% floats on the surface, 15% remains near the shore and the other 70% sinks to the floor.

Parkcare Groups.

Parkcare groups are volunteers doing rehabilitation work on these Sundays each month.

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 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 –

Kristie Jenkinson
4688 6514 or 0408 714 215
kristie.jenkinson@toowoombaRC.qld.gov.au

FEP News.

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year

From January we are starting a ***Saturday*** morning volunteer group each week at Echo Valley South Park. EVSP is at the southern end of Ramsay Street, Toowoomba from 9:30-12. Volunteers are always welcome to join the crew. For more information contact Greg, 0428 288 077.

Monday FEP group are at either Bundarra next to the Waterbird Habitat or at EVSP each week.

You can check out the work completed.

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 ($10/Family)

Friends of the Escarpment Parks Toowoomba Inc.

Toowoomba Regional Council

FEP, Caring for Toowoomba's Bushlands

The
Escarpment Park Friend
Jan – Feb 2010
Hugh Krenske 4635 1758
info@fep.org.au
www.fep.org.au

In this issue-

Bundarra.

Bundarra, McKenzie Street

Bundarra is a privately owned block of land next to the Bicentennial Waterbird Habitat (WBH) on McKenzie Street in Toowoomba. It is in the process of being handed over the Toowoomba Regional Council in trust, to be managed as shrubby wooded bushland as an adjunct to the WBH with little public visitation. It is already well planted up with local and other Australian trees and shrubs, but we would like to increase its attractiveness to local birds and butterflies by more planting. Bird, bat and possibly possum boxes could be made and attached to the trees, and the long chain-link fence separating Bundarra from the WBH will provide an excellent site for a range of native vines.

The area was probably Chinese market gardens in the late 1800s and early 1900s, and market garden and horse paddock more recently until 1983. As a result of it's history and little management over recent years it is fairly weedy and the ground is cluttered with fallen timber, and FEP is cleaning it up.

Our object is to remove the weeds and make it safe, but not to make it too tidy! The main weeds present are white-flowered wandering jew (which has to be heaped out of contact with ground and may need to be bagged and taken away), pavonia (pull or cut and poison), moth vine and corky passion vine (pull up), celtis, broadleaved privet and camphor laurel seedlings, sapling and shrubs (cut and poison), ochna (Mickey Mouse plant), basket and climbing asparagus and Flora's paintbrush (dig out). There is also a lot of kikuyu grass – scattered runners are being pulled to reduce biomass and encourage new shoots which can be carefully spot sprayed with Roundup (to which it is very sensitive), but the large open area of kikuyu at the bottom of the block will need to be managed later.

The FEP team has spent three Monday mornings there so far and is getting on very well with the cleanup. We should be through before the Christmas, and look forward to planting in January and February 2010.

John Swarbrick (FEP)

While working in Bundarra we had the pleasure of listening to a grey butcher bird in the trees.

From its appearance, the grey butcher bird may not look very special, but wait until you hear it sing. It has one of the most fantastic melodic whistles of all Australian birds.

Greg Lukes (FEP)

Image Peter Bray
http://www.pbase.com/peterbray/image/84104881
Butcher Bird sounds, noises & whistles
http://www.sydneynature.com/birds/butcher.html

Weed Watch.

Climbing Asparagus
Asparagus africanus

Climbing asparagus is a garden plant that can escape into bushland and causes serious environmental problems. It is a climber that can easily scale surrounding plants to reach heights of 12-15 meters. It has the potential to smother trees and damage vine scrubs, rainforests and riparian vegetation. Climbing asparagus is a declared class 3 plant under the Land Protection Act 2002.

Asparagus africanus leaves

This African native has narrow leaves and a prickly stem that helps it to scale up and over other plants or structures. It has clusters of small white flowers during spring that are followed by green berries that ripen to orange/red. These berries are eaten and dispersed by birds. In the absence of a host plant to climb this weed can grow as a scrambling low shrub.

This plant has a root and tuber system, and this adds to the difficulties of controlling it. When small out breaks occur the underground root system can be carefully removed and hooked up where the tubers cannot re-root. Take care to remove the entire crown or underground stem of the plant. This method requires digging underneath the central growing point and lifting it out of the ground. The swollen lateral root tubers can be left in the ground since they do not regenerate. These tubers are only for water storage by the plant. Any regrowth that occurs can be kept under control by regular mowing or digging out. Larger infestations can be controlled by basal barking or the cut and paint method.

(All herbicides must be applied strictly in accordance with the directions on the label)

Toowoomba Regional Council Bushcare
www.toowoombaRC.qld.gov.au/bushcare
Toowoomba Bushcare Facebook Site

Asparagus africanus leaves are used by the women in South Africa in an ointment. (Walter H. Lewis et al Medical Botany)

The asparagus spears grow very quickly in the spring and in summer, around 30cm a day in some circumstances. The tips of the spears are deliciously sweet and crunchy, and no ill has befallen any of the volunteers who have eaten them. Being the same genus as commercial asparagus it is reasonable to assume they are edible. (They are listed in various places among food plants.)

Asparagus africanus spear
(Photograph Mark Crocker)

This plant while not forming large tubers can suck the moisture from a rainfall with great efficiency, starving local native plants.

In a mulched site you may see many regrowing climbing asparagus appearing from crowns that have not been killed. These can be lifted with a mattock, or kicked out with steel caps. The resulting hole is a good place to plant substitutes, like Richmond Birdwing Vine.

Robert Whyte ***(SOWN)***
Save Our Waterways Now Inc
www.sown.com.au

Species Watch.

Look at Lichens (Part 4)

LICHEN ECOLOGY

Like all photosynthesising plants lichens require sunlight, water and nutrients and a stable substrate for growth, but because of their generally very slow growth rates they cannot compete with the more efficient flowering plants and ferns. They have however one very important competitive advantage over the other plants in that they can dry right back to air dryness without being killed, recovering very quickly when moistened to resume photosynthesis and growth. This allows lichens to occupy exposed positions such as rocks and bark which are regularly wetted and dried, and since they do not have any roots (the fungal component clings to the substrate with long, branching filamentous cells called hyphae) they do not require any soil either. Their relatively inefficient photosynthesis largely confines them to well lit areas such as bare rocks, tree canopies, the exposed trunks of well-spaced trees, deciduous woodlands and forests and stable soil surfaces which are too dry for other forms of plant growth. They generally do rather poorly in dense shade such as the lower layers of rain forest.

Before European settlement lichens are thought to have covered and stabilised much of the ground surface of arid and semi-arid inland Australia. Their low growth, low nutritional value and leathery nature allowed them to tolerate the feeding and movement of macropods such as kangaroos, but the introduction of sheep and cattle with their cutting hooves and high ground pressure rapidly destroyed the lichenous ground cover, exposing the soil surface to wind and water erosion.

Lichens have evolved to colonise and tolerate a very wide range of harsh environments that are generally inhibitory to higher plants. Yellow crustose *Xanthoria* lichens are common on seaside rocks exposed to salt spray and fertilised by guano. Parts of the Atacama Desert along the east coast of South America are densely covered with fruticose lichens whose only source of moisture is the fogs that blow in from the sea. Tombstones, stone buildings and drystone walls are often covered with lichens, and areas of bare soil between stands of conifers in the northern boreal forests of Siberia and Canada are often carpeted by *Cladina*, a genus of lichens known as reindeer moss since they are a principal food of these ungulates during the winter. Some lichens tolerate high concentrations of toxic metals and are indicators of their presence in rocks and in spoil heaps. Two species of lichens were sent into space in a Soyuz rocket and exposed to its vacuum and widely fluctuating temperatures for 15 days before being returned to earth, when they were found to be in full health and with no discernible damage.

Lichen growing on Toowoomba's park trees

There is a general rule in biology that wherever an energy source exists something will have evolved to take advantage of it, and this is so with lichens as well. Not only are they eaten by reindeer and other winter-hardy grazers in the arctic, but many if not all are eaten by the larvae of insects, snails and other creatures. As mentioned before grazing and subsequent defaecation are one of the means by which they are spread around.

The best growth of lichens occurs where there is ample sunlight and moisture, a temperate climate and a substrate that is not colonisable by other plants. We see them best on tree trunks and canopies in moist areas with cool to warm climates. Just look at the trunks of the trees beside the path by the lake and fountain in the park on the corner of Margaret and Kitchener Streets in Toowoomba. (Illustrated above)

John Swarbrick (FEP)