

Tool Topics.

Friends of the Escarpment Parks (Toowoomba) Inc. is a community volunteer organisation started in the early 1990s to help the City Council manage our extensive public bushland parks.

To date we have regenerated most of the smaller parks on the upper flatter parts of the escarpment. This has been done entirely by controlling exotic woody weeds - mainly broadleaved privet, lantana, ochna and pavonia – with very little replanting.

Control is by uprooting with the Root Blade or by cut stump and/or stem injection treatment with glyphosate. Very few weeds survive this treatment, but we find that we need to return to each park after several years to control seedlings and the few plants that have regenerated from stumps. We have done little weed control in the larger and steeper parks along the steep slopes of the escarpment; this is better left to Council who mainly use large scale mechanical methods. These parks are also infested with cat's-claw-creeper and Madeira vine which are harder to control.

It is amazing how much area can be cleared by two septuagenarians and an octogenarian working for one morning each week. It keeps us fit, provides good outdoor exercise and is socially and environmentally beneficial. We need more volunteers.

The Root Blade was invented and developed by Euan McLean and has proved to be the easiest and most useful way of uprooting broadleaved privet, lantana and other woody weeds. Nothing survives the Root Blade!

Euan continues to develop tools to fit the job.

To hear the story and see the results when the Brothers Grimm use the Root Blade check out the Landcare web site-

<http://landcareqld.placestories.com/story?id=2700122&p=2700024>

Euan (Ian) McLean (FEP)
4630 1535

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 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 –

Kristie Jenkinson

4688 6514 or 0408 714 215

kristie.jenkinson@toowoombaRC.qld.gov.au

FEP News.

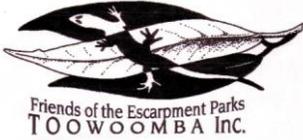
FEP Volunteers required to help with National Tree Day

Tasks may include Signing on people as they arrive, Looking after a group of people mulching or planting, Cooking BBQ etc. Please contact Hugh or Kristie by 24th of July.

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



The
**Escarpment
Park Friend**

Jul – Aug 2009

Hugh Krenske 4635 1758

info@fep.org.au

www.fep.org.au

FEP, Caring for Toowoomba's Bushlands

In this issue-

- *National Tree Day Toowoomba*
- *Eucalypts Friend or Foe?*
- *Species Watch – Lichens*
- *Tool Topics – Landcare Article*
- *Parkcare Groups*
- *FEP News – Volunteers Required*

National Tree Day.

**National Tree Day
Toowoomba
Sunday 2nd August
2009**

Picnic Point

You are invited to join the
Friends of the Escarpment Parks
and Toowoomba Regional
Council for National Tree Day
planting and mulching activities.

National Tree Day

at

**Tobruk Memorial Drive
Picnic Point**

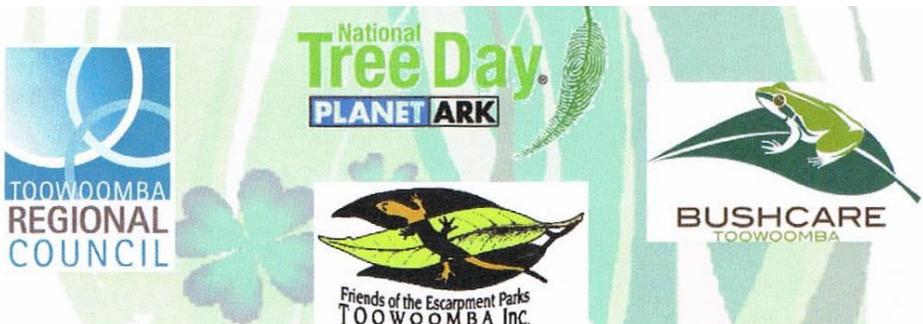
Sunday 2nd August 2009

Start: 9.00am Finish: 1.00pm

Please wear appropriate
clothing, closed in shoes and
bring a hat, gloves, sunscreen
and water

Free BBQ lunch will be provided
Please RSVP for catering
purposes by 24th July

For further information
or to rsvp, contact
Toowoomba Regional Council
Acting Bushcare Facilitator on
4688 6514 or
bushcare@toowoombarc.qld.gov.au



Eucalypts – Friend or Foe?.

On February 7th, the day of Victoria's bushfire holocaust, air temperatures broke all records reaching 48°C.

Humidity dropped below 10% and created conditions for unstoppable fires. Alloy wheels of cars melted confirming temperatures reached 1200°C, demonstrating the eucalypt's destructive capacity.

Oblivious to this disaster, Penny and I were with a party of friends walking through beech forests (*Nothofagus*) in Tasmania where it was only 24°C.

Unlike flammable eucalypt forests, a rainforest dominated by *Nothofagus* has tiny dark green leaves that block the sun reaching the forest floor as effectively as an umbrella. The soil was damp and moss covered the branches creating exquisite textures of green disturbed only by the roar of nearby waterfalls. Dotted throughout these cool and idyllic shady forests were patches of light provided invariably by the hanging leaves of sporadic eucalypts where the undergrowth was dry.

Before the pastoralists burned or bulldozed our coastal rainforests there was an uninterrupted 3,500 mile or more lush green coastal strip of virgin forest reaching from Tasmania all the way to Darwin. But once the eucalypt becomes the dominant species and replaces the rain forest it completely alters the ecology to create conditions in which it thrives.



Eucalypt leaves

The leaves of eucalypts hang vertically to reduce evaporation letting through light that raises soil temperatures and reduces soil moisture which destroys shade loving ferns and mosses. The eucalypt also produces chemicals to prevent plant competition which assists it to become the dominant species. Its leaves are inflammable so its litter of leaves will ignite destroying all living things – soil carbon, soil biota (the organisms living within the soil), animals, plants and, of course, us.

The release of carbon into the atmosphere from the ignition of trees and soils was massive. Because it adapts and recovers from fires which destroy its competition it destroys diversity and changes our climate. Eucalypts have demonstrated Darwin's "Survival of the Fittest" strategy so successfully they have become the predator plant species in Australia, and they are making this continent uninhabitable for humans.

By raising soil temperatures they destroy soil carbon and reduce soil fertility. But worst of all they reduce the fall of rain that has become so precious to our existence.

The eucalypt may be our most cherished plant, but now we must learn to understand its destructive potential.

They do more damage to our ecology than noxious weeds like blackberries, or introduced animals such as foxes.

If we allow the Tasmanian forest exploiter Gunns to have their way we will replace these cool diverse forests with dry inflammable mono-cultures of eucalypts just to provide cardboard boxes to increase their bottom line.

Most gardeners realise that planting eucalypts near houses is like putting an LPG gas bottle near the barbecue – but be aware the eucalypt is a predator that has the capacity to turn our fertile lands into a desert just like the Middle East.

Editorial by Clive Blazey

Digger's Club Garden Magazine

www.diggers.com.au

<http://www.diggers.com.au/articleEucalyptus.shtml>

Species Watch.

Look at Lichens (Part 1)

Lichens are one of the undiscovered and unobserved beauties of our bushland. I should know, since I've been botanizing for sixty years and must have walked straight past thousands of them in my time. On a recent trip to Dwyer's Scrub with another botanist who was collecting lichens for the Queensland Herbarium I realized how little I knew about them, and have been collecting and studying them since.



Lichen growing on the bark of a tree

I am sure that all Escarpment Park Friends can recognize a lichen when they pass one on a tree trunk or a rock, but probably few of us have ever stopped to look at one closely. They are generally small, grey, crusty and immobile, but like so many Australian wildflowers lichens often reward the close observer. All of them are intricate little things, and some are beautiful, like little jewels. They grow on almost all permanent surfaces, but mainly on tree trunks, branches and twigs and on exposed rocks. They seem to grow very slowly, perhaps a few millimetres a year, so you will not find them on eucalypts and on other trees that shed their bark nor, of course, on poles that have been treated with copper-chrome-arsenic to prevent fungal attack, since the main body of every lichen is a fungus.

Lichens are superb examples of symbiosis (a close and often long-term interaction between different biological species), since each consists of a

specialised fungus which hosts and encloses a simple (usually single-celled or simple chain) alga. Most of these algae are green Chlorophytes, giving the lichen a greenish tint when it is wet but becoming grey-green when dry. These lichens are generally leathery in texture. A few lichens consist of a fungus and a blue-green alga (a Cyanophyte), making them blackish when both wet and dry and giving them a rather gelatinous consistency when wet.

There are several thousand different lichens in Australia, many of which are indigenous. They take up three volumes of the Flora of Australia, and many more are expected to be discovered, especially in northern and arid Australia. Around Toowoomba there are of course very many less, but neither their species nor their distribution are at all well known. The Queensland Herbarium has 47 species from Toowoomba – many more must await collection and identification. Fortunately Dr Rod Rogers, one of Australia's top lichenologists lives and works in Brisbane, and I have started to send local material to him for identification.



Ramalina

One of the most common lichens found around Toowoomba is a species of Ramalina. It mainly grows on branches and twigs, attached by a small central holdfast from which develop rather ragged looking flattened grey-green branches several centimetres long which carry prominent small discs – the apothecia or fruiting bodies of the fungal partner.

John Swarbrick (FEP)