

THE CREEK

Volume 12 No5, October 2008



alcombe Estuary Rehabilitation Group

No A0034645Y ABN 50 224 628 623

MEMBERS ARE INVITED TO BERG'S 12TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

TO BE HELD

ON SATURDAY 11TH OCTOBER AT MT MARTHA HOUSE (ROOM 5)

9.30 am: Registration

10.00 am: Meeting

11.00 am: Guest Speaker, Phil Edwards

Agenda

- Welcome and apologies
- Minutes of the 11th AGM
- Committee reports: President, Keith Wilson; Treasurer, Richard Kirsner; Field Officer, Liz Barraclough
- Election**
 - Office bearers: President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary
 - Ordinary committee members
- Appointment of Auditor

**Nominations for Office Bearers and Committee: Forms available from Mary Stemp, phone 5974 3996. Nominations must be in writing, signed by two BERG members, accompanied by the candidate's written consent, and delivered to the Secretary as soon as possible.

Phil Edwards will speak on *Raingardens for Home and Open Space*

Most of the rain that falls on the hard surfaces of our cities and suburbs goes down the stormwater drain and eventually into creeks, rivers and the bay, collecting pollution as it goes.

In pre-urban Melbourne, only about 20% of stormwater reached the waterways via the bushland's natural filtration system. In built-up Melbourne, it's around 90%. Our rivers are simply not designed to handle this.

Rainwater gardens capture runoff at its source, allowing it to seep slowly through garden beds and into the groundwater system. They enhance private gardens and public spaces, and they make huge environmental sense.



Phil Edwards leads the Stormwater Quality Team at Melbourne Water. He has 20 years' experience as a landscape architect with the development industry and local government, designing city parks and innovative streetscape projects, as well as being principle Landscape Architect on CH2, the City of Melbourne's 6 star green building.

BERG welcomes new members:

Richard & Margaret Clarke
Simone Merrett
Maryann Baxter

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN from Keith Wilson

August with its 100 mm of beautiful rain reminded me of an "old fashioned" Melbourne winter – cold, wet and the butt of much good natured comment from north of the border. Remember when, returning from northern sunshine, the sky became grey and gloomy approaching the border

south of Eden, and we were coming home?

So I was prompted to do some homework which may be of interest.

Melbourne's average annual rainfall is 650 mm, spread fairly evenly over the year, from a low of 45 mm in February to a high of 65 mm in October. Adelaide is a

little drier, averaging 520 mm a year, with 160 mm between November and April, and 360 mm from May to October.

Sydney has more than double this rainfall, 1175 mm, with 470 mm from July to December and 705 mm January to June. Perth, at a similar latitude, averages 790 mm with 70% falling May to August, while Brisbane's average is close to Sydney's, at 1200 mm, of

which two thirds falls between October and March.

Tully, in Queensland, has Australia's highest annual rainfall with 4204 mm.

Canberra has the fewest rain days, 105 per year, and Hobart, with 160, has the most. Sydney has 138 and Melbourne 147.

Darwin tops the sunshine period with 8.5 hours daily, Perth has 8.1,

Canberra 7.6 and Melbourne the least, with 5.7.

Between 1900 and 2007, rainfall over the Murray Darling Basin has increased slightly from about 425 mm to 455 mm. A similar slight increase is recorded for Eastern Australia, from about 600 mm to 630 mm.

Of course over those 100 years our population has exploded, there are parks and gardens to be cared

for, many people have swimming pools, and we shower every day (remember boiling the copper for the family bath? UGH!).

Hope to see you at the AGM, to hear yet another excellent speaker.

Apologies from the Editor
The clematis featured in the August edition of The Creek, was not *Clematis aristata* but *Clematis microphylla* (Short-leaved Clematis).

FIELD NEWS from Field Officer Liz Barraclough

Working bees

All my newsletter reports seem to start with comments on the weather – this need be no exception. Last time it was wet and perfect for planting, but now everything is drying out fast. It is just as well that the September working-bee was our last planting day. We're hoping for enough follow-up rain to get the plants established before summer.



Three Caulfield Grammar boys have been helping BERG as part of their Community Service requirement. They joined the planting brigade at the September working bee.

With a great turn-out at the September working bee, we planted about seven hundred *Poa labillardieri*, to supplement the five hundred or so we planted the previous month along the boardwalk between the Augusta Street and Uralla Road bridges. We also put in some wattles, *Bursaria* and *Rhagodias* on the steep bank between the board walk and Uralla Road, in the hope that they will help to cover the Army detritus that still litters this area.

Weeds vs Contractors

The weeds have enjoyed the recent moisture and kept Jo Thyer and her Naturelinks team busy controlling the Angled Onion, weed grasses, woody weeds and Bridal Creeper. The Naturelinks chainsaw crew also reduced the Mirror Bush infestation clogging Hopetoun Creek at the southern end of Greenfield Way, and the Hopetoun Creek Greenfields Group has been replacing this weed bush with middle and lower storey shrubs and grasses. This will be an on-going and staged process, so as not to remove all the available habitat at once. One possum drey narrowly escaped being felled.

Visiting students

Students from Mt Eliza Secondary School and another group from Deakin University visited the Reserve in August. Many thanks to John Inchley, who met them and explained the ecological processes of Balcombe Creek and its environs, and the work of BERG and its supporting organisations.

Weeds training

I was recently sponsored by Melbourne Water to attend a workshop entitled 'What does your garden grow?', that aimed to 'train the trainers' to instruct people in recognising and controlling weeds, particularly in their own gardens. I'm hoping to impart some of the knowledge gained to help prevent further weed spread from gardens



Ready for the September plantings!

into the Reserve and other local bushland.

Fauna survey

Fauna ecologist Malcolm Legg has just submitted to BERG and the Shire his Fauna Survey and Recommendations for Balcombe Creek Estuary from Nepean Highway to Port Phillip Bay, a follow-up to the survey he did for BERG ten years ago. His recommendations will need serious consideration if there is to be a future for the indigenous fauna in the Reserve. The report will be available to anyone interested and we shall provide further comment in later editions of The Creek.

A Green Wedding!

Congratulations to Jo Thyer, our wonderful Naturelinks contractor, who is marrying Matt Tetteroo on Friday 17th October. Matt is a ranger with Frankston City Council.

GARDENING WITH INDIGENOUS PLANTS

This is the first in a planned series of articles on this topic by *Liz Barraclough* and *Angela Kirsner*. Future articles will look at planning and designing your garden, plant communities and selection, planting for particular purposes (eg hedges), sources of help and plants, weed control, and information on specific plants.

Bush gardens, wildflower gardens, natural gardens – the words suggest relaxing, peaceful places, gardens at home in the local environment, that provide habitat for local fauna – birds, lizards, frogs, insects...

Indigenous plants are the backbone of such gardens – the plants that occur naturally in a particular site or local area, that have grown here in plant communities since before European settlement. Each area has its own suite of indigenous plants that have evolved alongside each other to form complex, interrelated plant communities.

An indigenous garden can include trees, lawns, shrubberies and flower beds. The difference is that these are created using the local flora.

Most indigenous gardens are not 'purist' – most combine indigenous plants effectively with other Australian natives or exotics. But every contribution by gardeners towards using indigenous plants is valuable in restoring habitat and supporting local plant communities.

Mt Martha's indigenous plants are many and varied, ranging from

tall trees – Eucalypts, Casuarinas, Banksias – to grasses, reeds, creepers, and tiny ground hugging wildflowers. They provide great richness for gardeners.

Why plant indigenous?

There are lots of advantages, for both the gardener and the local ecology.

- Planting indigenous helps to restore the plant communities of the area and maintain the genetic diversity of our local plants.
- Because they are 'at home', indigenous plants are generous. They grow well and often seed themselves or spread vegetatively, making the garden come alive and linking it with the broader landscape.
- They have adapted to the local conditions over millennia and are well suited to the soil, topography and climate. They don't need fertilising and, once established, require little watering or maintenance, though they can be shaped and pruned if you wish.
- They provide habitat that is adapted to the needs of the local fauna. Many local birds, mammals, reptiles and insects depend on bushland vegetation for their survival. Indigenous garden plantings extend this habitat and contribute to wildlife 'corridors', providing links between fragmented areas of natural habitat.
- Indigenous plants retain and work with the microorganisms in the soil.
- Indigenous plants have fewer pest outbreaks. They support the balance of species that forms a healthy ecology, and this includes both insects and their natural predators – all vital links in the food chain.



A lush indigenous naturestrip garden between Bay Road and the footpath.

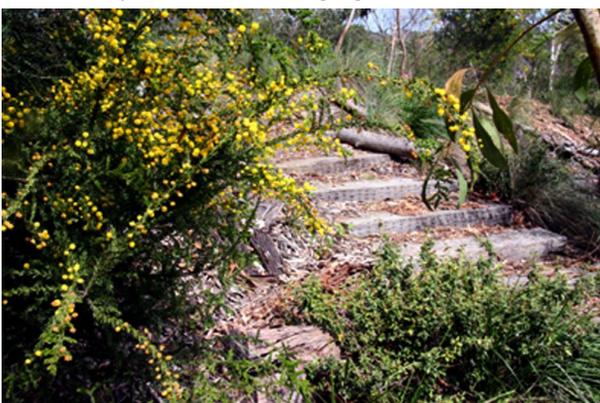
- They won't create problems by invading bush or heathlands and becoming environmental weeds.
- Our indigenous plants are what gives Mt Martha its particular character – the reason so many of us came here in the first place. They help to tie our gardens in with the broader landscape and extend their sense of space and belonging.

How local is 'local'?

The large majority of Mt Martha's indigenous plants are species that are also found in many other areas – some far distant. Each local area, however, has its own unique variant of the species. Maybe the leaves vary in size, or the flowers are a slightly different colour, or the growth habit different. These local variants are genetically adapted to the particular conditions over a few square kilometres or less.

When planting indigenous, it's important, therefore, to use plants grown from locally collected seed. There are a number of local nurseries that provide these plants.

Note that a plant that is indigenous to the area may not occur on all sites – plant communities vary depending on moisture, soil type and prevailing weather. [continued next page]



Hedge Wattle, Correa, Dianella and Poas border rustic steps

Gardening with Indigenous Plants, continued from page 3

Some general principles

- Keep any remnant vegetation on your site, including dead trees where possible – they are wonderful habitat.
- Talk to local enthusiasts, check local reports and vegetation maps and plant lists.
- Visit local bushland remnants to see how and where plants grow and group. Use indigenous plants in numbers and combinations that resemble the structure of local remnants. Where possible

plant different strata, e.g. trees, shrubs, grasses and sedges, ground cover.

- Where possible, encourage remnant vegetation to spread naturally onto your site. Control weeds and watch for indigenous seedlings from seed already stored in your soil (some seed remains in soil for many years). For example, mowing helps to keep weeds controlled – but if you stop mowing and hand weed, local seedlings often appear.
- Transplant indigenous species from sites that are about to be

cleared to nearby safe sites, if they have no chance of survival where they are growing.

- Provide food plants for a range of fauna (including mammals, birds and insects), not just for conspicuous species such as honeyeaters.
- Provide a permanent water source for birds that is safe from cats.
- Don't use poisons to control insect pests – aim to provide habitat to attract birds, insects and spiders that will keep pests in check.

BERG Working Bees	Other Activities	Meetings
<p>❖ Monthly working bee: 3rd Sunday, from 9.00 to 12.00. Next: 19th October and 15th November. Meet at the Rotunda (Mel: 144 K11). If running late, phone Liz (0408 388 430) to find the work site. Coffee and BERG-baked delicacies at 10.30.</p> <p>❖ Tuesdays from 9.30 to 12.00. Coffee break 10.30. Contact Mary Stemp to confirm, on 5974 3996.</p> <p>❖ Hopetoun Creek Greenfield Reserve, first Monday of the month, 9.30 to 12.30. Contact Hazel Athey to confirm, on 5974 3034 or 0419 899 560.</p>	<p>❖ Waterwatch testing: Tuesday 18th November (every 3 months, third Tuesday of the month)</p> <p>❖ Fairbairn Bushland Reserve Friends Group working bees: 26th Oct & 23rd Nov 2008 – contact John Stoker for details on 5974 4726.</p>	<p>❖ BERG Committee meets every 7-8 weeks at Mt Martha House, Saturdays 9.30. Next meetings 22nd November. All members welcome.</p> <p>❖ BERG AGM Saturday 11th October, 9.30</p> <p>❖ SPIFFA (Southern Peninsula Indigenous Flora and Fauna Association) meets 1st Monday of the month, 7.30 pm, at Parks Vic, Hinton St, Rosebud (Mel 170 C4). Contact Jan Dwyer on 5986 6566.</p>
<p>BERG COMMITTEE PRESIDENT KEITH WILSON • VICE PRESIDENT HARRY HARRIS • SECRETARY MARY STEMPE • TREASURER RICHARD KIRSNER FIELD OFFICER LIZ BARRACLOUGH • NEWSLETTER, MEMBERSHIP ANGELA KIRSNER • MINUTES SECRETARY PAM HEARN SCHOOLS LIAISON JENNY SELBY • ROTARY CLUB LIAISON ANDY MCGUIGAN HOPETOUN CREEK GREENFIELDS GROUP HAZEL ATHEY • CENTURY DVE HABITAT LINK GROUP TONY O'CONNOR</p>		
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