

TreeProject



May 2013

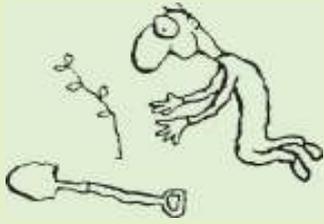
TreeProject Celebrates 25 years of Growing

Exciting new growing techniques

Interview with a living legend

Capillary watering

TreeProject



Sowing the seeds for a sustainable future

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Our good friends at EthicalBuying.com.au donate a percentage of every purchase to TreeProject, so you can buy good-for-the-Earth products and support us at the same time.

Newsletter contributions welcome

This newsletter is the main medium through which we communicate to our members and supporters. You may have noted its absence in the last couple of months. But don't despair— we are back with fresh volunteers and expectations of exciting changes. If you have suggestions for news topics or research that would be of value to landholders or growers, or if you'd like to send a letter or photograph to be published please email

info@treeproject.asn.au with Newsletter in the subject.

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Cover Rachael Ferguson
image by her mother Heather

Thank you **Impact Digital** for sponsorship in the printing of this newsletter

TreeProject's 25th Birthday

TreeProject is now in its 25th year! 2013 has kicked off an interesting and active season. Thank you to all the people that make TreeProject such a thriving organisation – please take the time to reflect with us, recognise our achievements and the exciting new areas in development.

Big growing effort underway

This growing season is well under way, with our dedicated depot volunteers assembling 182 growing kits, with 1,274 boxes of potting mix, packets of fertiliser and bags of sand for 150 volunteer growers to propagate 61,152 seedlings for landholders and Landcare groups across Victoria.

Landcare partnerships going strong

As we have for the past ten years, we continue to grow seedlings for the Newham,



Enthusiastic volunteer and newsletter editor, Nicky Moffat, on a mountain of potting soil during a working bee

Deep Creek, Upper Maribyrnong and Nulla Vale Pyalong West Landcare groups for extensions of the Campaspe-Maribyrnong headwaters Biolink creating a network of vegetation that improves the biodiversity between the Cobaw-Tooborack State Forest to the Maribyrnong headwaters.

A huge thank you to our growers, landholders, members and supporters

Thank you to everyone involved: the committed and enthusiastic volunteers that give their time and energy; to our landholders and Landcare partners that give us the opportunity to share our passion and to our patrons and financial donors that support the TreeProject community to achieve our aim to revegetate and repair Victoria's delicate ecosystems. Please take a look at the back page of this newsletter to see our amazing corporate and philanthropic partners who give their skills, time and funding to help TreeProject. A great BIG Thank You!!

Farming Expo – TreeProject stall draws crowds

We attended the Seymour Alternative Farming Expo again this year and gained inspiration from the enthusiasm and encouragement of people we met. Long term landholders are telling us to keep up the good work and newcomers to the land are delighted to be able to purchase native seedlings at affordable prices, grown by our volunteers. Please get in touch if you know an event where the TreeProject message can be spread- *De Grebner, Project Manager and Lyn Grocke, President*

The Man Who Planted Trees

On the 10th to the 14th of April, TreeProject volunteers took part in a multi-sensory theatrical adaptation of Jean Giono's environmental classic *The Man Who Planted Trees*.

The story is of a man called Elzéard Bouffier, and his dog, who plants a magnificent forest in a desolate and misused valley in the French Alps in the first half of the 20th century. It is a tale of the difference one person can make to



Lyn Grocke, Dog, Elzerad, Rick and Richard

the regeneration of a landscape told with sparkling wit and sentiment.

5 volunteers at each of the 5 shows handed out seed packets (Chocolate Lily and Ruby Saltbush) to children coming out of the performance inspired to plant their own 'forest'. A total of 1200 packets of seed with growing instructions and information on TreeProject were distributed.

TreeProject is proud to be invited to enhance the audience's experience of this wonderful production with themes of sustainability and the environment close to our hearts. We would like to thank all the staff at the Arts Centre, and the members of the Edinburgh Puppet State Theatre Co, Richard Medrington and Rick Conte.

Special Projects keep Lex busy

Thanks to support from Garry White Foundation, who fund our nursery in Fairfield, TreeProject is able to conduct special projects to expand our growing native plant propagation practices and knowledge. This year we are running two special projects: a trial of the long stem tube stock technique and our first attempt at growing mangrove seedlings.

Growing Mangrove seedlings

TreeProject is running an experiment in growing mangrove seedlings for Hugh Sarjeant, the coordinator of a re-vegetation project on the eastern side of Wilson's Promontory National Park's Corner Inlet.

Mangrove ecosystems have been degraded and removed since European settlement in the name of economic progress. Mangroves were used to feed cattle, make soap and cleared to make way for ocean views. However these trees play an important ecological role:



Lex and Hugh with a tray of mangrove seedlings

they are a source of food for small sea creatures, provide shelter and sustenance for fish and shorebirds, and slow water movement to prevent coastal erosion.

One such species is the White Mangrove (*Avicinnia marina*), which produces seeds all year round - but prolifically in early December. Dr Tim Ealey revives mangrove colonies and his efforts encouraged local schoolchildren to help. If mangroves are native to where you live, you can also help by growing seedlings.

How to grow a mangrove from seed

If you want to collect mangrove seeds for propagation, pick fat and yellow ones as they will produce bigger trees. Store them in your fridge (but do not freeze). To mimic their natural environment, soak seeds in water (fresh is fine) for 24 hours until their furry coats split. Mangrove seeds germinate best in wet seagrass so have trays of that medium ready. The seeds will have scars where they were attached to the tree, so place them downwards and bury seeds 5cm apart and 5cm deep.

After germination, it's best to grow them in 600ml cartons and potting mix. Remove seedlings and seagrass from trays carefully as the roots are brittle. Insert roots into a hole made into the middle of the compressed potting mix at the bottom of the carton. Add potting mix to the top of the carton.

Cartons should stand in 5-10cm of water so seedlings remain moist. When the plants develop six leaves, they can be planted on the coastline. Do not disturb the mud where the plants will sit, as they must be anchored to improve survival chances. Keep them in the cartons to protect them from being blown or washed away. Staple the carton tops around the trees' stems for further support.

- Silvia Wan

Seedling database needs your photos

Most of you have heard talk about the amazing new web page and Seedling Database we are developing. Thank you to Blick Creative for giving their time and expertise in developing the database wireframe, to Equity Trustees for supporting the image management of the database. Having a way to identify seedlings at different stages is going to be a unique, useful and important resource for growers, land holders and the wider public. Thanks to those that have provided some images for the database already.

However, we are in need of more photos of seedlings at 4 stages of growth: germination, 2 months, 4 months and 6 months (mature seedling).

Germination should be taken from a top looking down perspective, for example the image on the left

The next 3 stages should be taken similar to a passport photo – straight on with a plain, flat contrasting colour background, for example the image on the right.



Example of seedling photos at germination (left) and all other stages (right)

Please:

- Send the images in as large a format (file size) as you can manage.
 - Write the name and stage of the species in the body of the email.
 - Take the photo in the shade – too much sunlight causes overexposure and some spots become white.
 - Do not put the name tag in the tube as this interferes with the image of the seedlings picture. Put the tag at the bottom of the tube if you like, but not in the tube.
- We really appreciate your help on this project, and thank you to everyone in advance. - De Grebner

Longstem tubestock for growing seedlings



Bill Hicks with a longstem seedling

In the Longstem Tubestock trial, seedlings have been nurtured to a more mature stage than usual and will be planted deep in the soil on Pete French's property in Faraday, near Bendigo in central Victoria.

The Longstem Tubestock technique has an 18 month propagation season that produces 1-1.5 metre high seedlings which are then planted up to a metre deep. This method is similar to that used to plant willows. A tree or shrub is grown in a 50mm square tube used for standard tubestock, and encouraged to grow tall with small roots and no side branches. When planting in the field, three quarters of the plant's stem is placed beneath the soil, the hole is backfilled and air pockets are closed off with water.

This method ensures the roots are protected from the hot, dry layer on the immediate surface in hot months and the frost line in cold months. At that depth, there is also little weed competition. This challenges two tenets of conventional planting wisdom: that a seedling cannot be grown to that length in a 50mm tube without terminal root distortion, and that plants will not tolerate being planted to that depth without considerable degrees of collar rot and fungal attack.

As many of our readers will know, willows were used to revegetate stream environments since the 1950s because they grow rapidly and establish wide mats of roots that stabilise eroding banks. Grown from cuttings, willows were planted along streams and rivers throughout Australia but are now known to damage aquatic ecology by inhibiting and diverting river flow, displacing native vegetation and impacting biodiversity. Their removal restores aquatic ecosystems, but replacement with native plants using conventional propagation and planting techniques is slow and costly as tubestock trees wash away in big rain events and dry out easily.

A variety of plants over the world have been planted using a deep planting technique as they have greater chances of survival (up to 50%) and experience accelerated growth.

Bill Hicks has pioneered the development of the method in Australia. Based near the Hunter Valley in New South Wales, Bill advocates the technique for riparian revegetation projects in particular. Bill has provided assistance for TreeProject landholder Pete French, who is keen to give some Longstem Tubestock a go on his property in Faraday, Central Victoria.

- Silvia Wan

More information at www.norkhiltechnologies.com

A TreeProject Landholder perspective

Trees are pro-actively and strategically established on cleared land for many reasons. In my case, the initial reasons are to revegetate former sheep pasture and, further down the track, to source seed from the locally-grown flora. Other reasons might include offering shade and shelter to stock and wildlife, developing sustainable agro-forestry, nurturing wildlife habitats, controlling erosion and salinity, and improving the aesthetic living environment.

I have had a long interest in putting things in the ground and growing them. Since planting my first veggie garden at age 7 I've now moved plots to seriously consider the benefits and value that regenerating native forests and carefully considered land care practices can offer. My current holding in the Victoria's Box/Ironbark forest region offers approximately 25 acres for replanting with indigenous hardwoods such as Red Gum, Yellow Gum, Grey Box, River Red Gum, and several species of ironbark. Added to this is the prospect of including several hundred small shrubs and flowering natives (for example the Callistemon and Grevillea families) to whet the appetites of the broad diversity of local nectar-seeking fauna.

Longstem Tubestock have recorded much faster growth rates, at least initially, than conventionally planted tubestock. By the time they are planted out they are from twelve to twenty months old, and have been hardened off in the environment where they are to reside. Their survival rates are also statistically much higher due to the above-mentioned benefits of maturity and deep planting.

I am particularly interested in running a small trial comparing and contrasting the development and maturation of conventionally grown and/or planted tubestock with the same species when raised using the Longstem Tubestock method. I don't have erosion and salinity issues on my property at Faraday, 30km south of Bendigo. However, I am in a frost hollow and one point of interest is in contrasting planting techniques to assess frost damage and subsequent regrowth.

TreeProject has been very generous in agreeing to nurture some diverse species of eucalypt seedlings in the Garry White / TreeProject nursery to a later stage of maturation using the Longstem Tubestock technique. I look forward to sharing with readers the outcomes of this journey as I believe that this seedling growing method has the potential to make profound inroads into land care maintenance and interventions, and responses to salinity and erosion. -Pete French -



A home-made roo guard

Successful Roo Guards

We're proud to say our group has just clicked over 1000 man hours in 2012- equivalent to 25 weeks work. I hope the summer is a little kinder to us than it has started off, we are watering now and dare say will continue watering for the next 4-5 months.

I've included a picture of our solution to kangaroo and wallaby problem we were having on our regeneration planting. The tetra cartons work a treat! We have even allowed cattle in to clean up the grass with no detrimental effects. Assemble by driving 2 old star posts in with 1100mm long piece of either 900mm or 1050mm wire netting stapled to make a 300mm diameter cylinder to protect the young plants. You may have the need for this idea in the future - if you have any trouble from bouncy marsupials!

-Graham Connell and all at Langley Landcare

Interview with a legend: Roger Blachut

After the raging success that was our Valentines Day movie fundraiser at Cinema Nova in Carlton, the word on the street is that Roger Blachut, TreeProject's marketing manager and the man behind the scenes for this event, is a LEGEND!! I caught up with Roger a few days after the event, when he'd had time to count the coffers and have a bit of a rest.

Roger, what led you to come up with the movie fundraiser idea?

"It came from our former newsletter editor, Tessa Toumbourou. TreeProject relies on all kinds of revenue sources to keep us going, as we are not funded by government. The movie night that Tessa organized saw 97 tickets sold – so it was a success and we thought we'd do it again!

"The movie night I organized sold 142 tickets – this is for a cinema that seats 143! I was really pleased with the outcome. Most people who attended were volunteer seedling growers, landholders, and their friends and family. It was a real community event - a bit of a TreeProject reunion! In total we raised over \$1400.

What made you decide on a Tolstoy classic?

"The Movie Show's David Stratton gave this flick 4 stars. It is an epic love story suited to drawing a crowd, and Thursday 14 February 2013 was its first release. Also, because the Tolstoy book is tedious in places a movie has great appeal to those of us who never got through it!

Did you enjoy the experience of organising a community event?

"Yes, I was surprised at how different this was to organising corporate events, which I coordinated a lot of until I retired. The main difference is that when you are making a corporate event happen, you have money to spend – you can pay for keynote speakers, catering and advertising.

"A fundraising event for a not-for-profit is really a different scene. It was quite daunting for me, because I felt a kind of pressure to succeed that I hadn't felt before. I cared about it in a personal way. Also, TreeProject members were being invited and I was aware how important they are to TreeProject – so I really wanted to ensure TreeProject came across well.

"I was nervous in the first week because only 19 tickets had sold – that left 124 to sell in three weeks! But you know what's amazing for me is that pure people power made the event a success. It was almost entirely word-of-mouth that sold the tickets. Also the enthusiasm of a few key members such as Jenny Chivers, TreeProject's Vice President, who bought a stack of tickets and sold them to her friends. In the end the event was so nice - we had a whole cinema to ourselves and it was packed with TreeProject people. I gave a short speech about TreeProject's achievements, and there was lots of laughter and applause. It was really great and such a buzz – a very memorable night for me."

TreeProject will be running movie nights at Cinema Nova in Carlton twice every year. The next one will likely be in October 2013. Make sure your membership is paid up, and your email address is up to date on our system, and we'll send you an invite later in the year.

- Nicky Moffat



Roger Blachut



TreeProject extends a special thank you to Cassandra and Brendan at Cinema Nova for helping make this event such a success.

Seeking volunteers - Marketing & Promotion

Roger has set up a very precise and effective system for organising a movie nights – and is now looking for a volunteer - or volunteers - to help with the one in October. The work would involve preparing promotional communications, updating a contacts database, and helping with logistics in the lead up to the event.

Creative input would also be welcome, and the hours are flexible. If you are interested please contact Roger at roger.blachut@bigpond.com or send an email to info@treeproject.asn.au



Acacia seedlings in metamorphosis - Weird!

Months of careful watering and aggressive caterpillar hunting have been rewarded this week, with the first of my *Acacia pycnantha* flattening out its stems into broad leaves.

It is mesmerizing to watch as the plant changes from a fluffy bipinnate wattle to a broad leaf one. The littlies are growing up! I'll be sure to follow Wendy's advice and not pamper them now so they will get strong.

Transforming Acacia

www.treeproject.asn.au

The Tree Team: Paul Gleeson and Gerard Noonan

Paul Gleeson has been growing trees as a TreeProject volunteer for landholder Gerard Noonan for over ten years. Catch them both here as they tell the story of a friendship and an inspirational project that was sparked by their involvement in TreeProject's Re-Tree Scheme.

Paul:

When I began growing native plant seedlings with Tree Project I was excited as each tiny seedling pushed up through the earth and with hundreds of others showed promise of becoming a mighty eucalypt. I had great satisfaction later in passing on boxes of healthy seedlings to my coordinator. One year I was asked to grow plants for a farmer in Malmsbury. I offered to transport plants up to the farm and help plant them. So I met Gerard, and we planted together and became great friends.

Now 10 years on and the planting partnership offers more than our friendship. Each year children from the school where I work fill tubes and plant the seed. Then on a very exciting day in September, 25 children converge on Gerard's sheep farm and plant 300 trees in two hours. For the kids it's a hands-in-the-earth experience. They contribute to the work on the farm and they love it. This is not an "answers on paper excursion" this is a real life experience. Teachers and students tell me "this is the best"! Gerard and Jan give the children a great lunch and supply lambs for bottle feeding. The children come from many places and cultures - from Iraq, Vietnam, Timor, and Lebanon. On that day each child becomes a little more Australian through contributing to the health of the Australian landscape.

Gerard:

I've always preferred treed landscapes to open plains, so began planting trees the first spring after buying the farm in Malmsbury - in 1997. Apart from the aesthetics, trees and revegetation on the high rocky outcrops would fight salinity recharge. This was a major problem before the drought years.

By fencing off drainage lines and low areas, I could prevent pugging by the cattle in winter. Replanting provided shelter from cold southerly winds in the winter and hot northerlies in summer. As I developed the farm plan, I split paddocks to smaller sizes to allow for rotational and strip grazing, and

constructed double fences in-filled with plantings so each paddock would have shelter. I was able to use electric fences to simplify construction and reduce costs but I also needed a supply of suitable seedlings.

Fortunately I came across TreeProject. I needed to supply local seed and their volunteers would propagate the seedlings. This system was cheaper than purchasing trees from nurseries. I knew the provenance of the trees as I'd collected the seed locally myself and I got to meet the volunteer seedling growers - who were as keen on indigenous trees as myself. Even better, some volunteers even came up to the farm to help plant. Over the years we've made some



Some of Paul's dedicated students planting on Gerard's land

great friends while planting trees together. A great example is Paul from Coburg. For over ten years he has grown trees and delivered a "team of primary students for a day of planting- regardless of weather, season or terrain." A bit of preparation, a class of students, some helpers and we've planted 300 stems in just over an hour. We then have a barbeque at the farm and Jan always has a bottle fed lamb and some chooks for the kids to hold.

It's great to see some of the students again the next year and they all love seeing how "their" trees are growing.

Tree guard selection process



Standard plastic sleeve

Sure Gro is a Melbourne-based wholesale supplier of land management products to government agencies, Landcare networks, nurseries and individual landholders. They sent us an informative guide to choosing the right tree guard. For more information see their website at suregro.com

The selection of the correct tree guard is integral to the performance of plants involved in your project. The following factors should be considered:

- The need for a microclimate to establish the plant
- Site conditions such as prevailing winds or susceptibility to frosts
- Is the site in riparian, marine, boggy or compacted locations?
- The risk of browsing animals affecting the plant
- Product costs, reusability and ease of use

The major types are plastic sleeves, milk cartons, plastic mesh and core fluted. Most are available in a variety of sizes.

Plastic sleeves are not biodegradable as technology isn't good enough (yet) for use on site. A revisit to the site is necessary to remove the sleeves, and they are moderately reusable. Sleeves provide a favourable microclimate, frost and moderate browsing protection. High performance sleeves are available for particularly windy sites.



Milk carton with recycled paper weed mat

Ask Wendy: capillary watering

Roots of plants can absorb moisture from the soil against the force of gravity. How clever is that? This force is called capillary action. Stems use this same force to pull water to the leaves. This action can be used to advantage in germinating species of native plants that would normally grow in swamps, wetlands or low-lying areas.

This capillary set up can be created using a plastic tray (cat tray) or foam box, a 125ml (larger depending on the size of the set-up) plastic bottle, a layer of material (carpet underlay, sand or matting) to hold the moisture and the tubes containing potting mix.

A small hole in the side of the tray will allow water to flow out if the level is too high. No more than 2 to 3 cm of the tube should be emerged in water. Plants engorged with water will over-saturate the soil and cause the seed to drown or damping off, which is the rotting of the stems of seedlings at soil level.

It is very important to maintain a constant level of water (just covering the base of the tubes) so that the soil does not dry out. Once dry, the friction which drags the moisture up will be broken resulting in death for the seedlings because it is impossible to re-wet the roots.

This technique is excellent as a time and water-saving method because it only needs topping up, rather than a constant flow of water or daily overhead watering.

Prior to sowing the seeds, it is vital to thoroughly moisten the mix in the tubes so the capillary action (absorption of moisture through the soil) can occur.

After sowing, the seed bed needs to be kept moist, protected from drying winds and rain which may splash the seeds out of the tubes or cause deep pockets in the surface. Sunlight is required but does not need to be direct. Do not cook the seed before it has a chance to germinate!

An alternate capillary watering technique is to use a bed of sand, carpet underlay or commercial capillary matting to create a thin base for the tubes to sit on.

1Lt milk cartons are reused scrap from milk producers, biodegradable and economical. They are recommended for use with two bamboo stakes for stability and provide less microclimate, frost and pest protection than plastic sleeves.

Mesh tree guards only provide browsing protection, but allow plants to set roots correctly for stability on high wind sites and are highly reusable. They are an aesthetically pleasing option as they allow passers-by to see the plants, and are therefore recommended for high-traffic sites. The mesh material is available in large rolls that you can cut to size for your project.



Heavy duty mesh guard

SureFlute rigid guards are a relatively new technology but are increasingly popular due to ease of installation and overall performance. They come pre-assembled and only require one stake, are made of a UV-resistant plastic that is hardy and reusable, but require removal from the site.

Sure Gro also supply stakes, weed matting and all sorts of other horticultural and revegetation paraphernalia. Weed mats are recommended with all tree guards to decrease competition with weeds and increase soil water retention to give your seedling the best chance of survival.



SureFlute rigid guard



Example of a capillary watering setup

This material will hold moisture against the bottoms of the tubes so that a pressure is created which draws the water up into the potting mix.

Once the seedlings are established— approximately 3cm high with a root system- they must be removed from this setting and grown as per the usual methods for other native seedlings.

If the plant tubes are not removed once the germination process has reached the juvenile stage the growth will become weak and the root system will become a tangled brown mess escaping from the base of the tubes. These will rot and smell. The seedlings will be weak and leggy. The root system is damaged being ripped out of the overgrown tray.

Do not pamper the seedlings once they are established. It is important that seedlings for revegetation are strong with a full root system so they may be planted out in the harsh conditions.

TreeProject aims to provide healthy, sturdy plants which will achieve the outcome that landholders expect.

-Wendy Proebstl



TreeProject

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