

TreeProject

A woman with blonde hair tied back, wearing a grey t-shirt and a watch, is smiling and holding a white tray filled with green seedlings. She is standing in a nursery or greenhouse setting with other trays of plants in the background. The text 'TreeProject' is at the top, and several article titles are on the left. The date 'March 2012' is at the bottom right.

Atlas of Living Australia
How to choose the right species

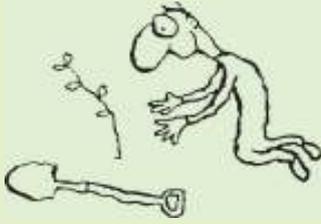
**Connecting people,
connecting landscapes**

**Seedbanks fall casualty to
changing government priorities**

**Shop online with EthicalBuying
and donate to TreeProject**

March 2012

TreeProject



Sowing the Seeds of a Sustainable Future

Dreams are the seeds of change. Nothing ever grows without a seed, and nothing ever changes without a dream. - Debby Boone



TreeProject, is joining groups all over the world who are making a difference to biodiversity, locally, regionally and globally as part of the Decade on Biodiversity. The contribution TreeProject makes is vitally important, and we are looking forward to spending the next decade supporting our volunteers and landholders to propagate provenance-based seedlings to improve Victoria's biodiversity.

Volunteers needed

TreeProject depends on volunteers to continue its important work. Administrative volunteers help to keep things going day to day, including working on the database, packing seed, maintaining the TreeProject website, and other general administrative duties. We also have roles for people that want to help enter content into our new 'Grower Manual' web page, take photos to illustrate the content and research information for the species table. We would also love help writing funding submissions. If you'd like to help contact the TreeProject office for more details: info@treeproject.asn.au or 9650 4385.

TreeProject

3/247 Flinders La Melbourne Vic 3000
Ph: 03 9650 9477 Fax: 03 9650 4385
info@treeproject.asn.au
www.treeproject.asn.au

'Cover' Liz Cole, Volunteer Grower

Thank you InpactDigital for sponsorship in the printing of this Newsletter

Connecting people, connecting landscapes

Over 2.2 million indigenous trees, shrubs and grasses have been grown and planted by TreeProject across Victoria since 1988. By putting indigenous trees and plants back on the land, TreeProject has contributed towards the native revegetation of Victorian landscapes, creating habitat for wildlife, contributing to erosion control and the improved health of waterways.

TreeProject's major revegetation project, the Re-Tree Scheme, connects between 180 and 250 volunteer growers from Melbourne and regional centres each year with Victoria's rural landholders and Landcare groups. Volunteers grow native, provenance seeds that are sourced by landholders or Regional Seedbanks. TreeProject provides support, training and materials to our growers. TreeProject has 8 dedicated volunteer trainers who trained 50 new growers this year. With new growers being trained every year we have a comfortable reserve of skilled growers who rotate volunteering through the years.

As well as growing seedlings, committed volunteers clean used forestry tubes, pack seed, enter seedling orders and growers into the database, attend plantings and help in the office. In the 2010/2011 financial year, over 48,000 hours were recorded by TreeProject in contributing towards its goal of revegetating the Victorian landscape.

Sarah Day, a landholder from the Macedon Ranges, explains how TreeProject helped them. 'TreeProject helped us source seeds indigenous to the area, told us where to buy tree guards, arranged and trained volunteers to grow our seedlings and loaned us tools for the planting day'. Since participating in the Re-Tree Scheme three years ago and increasing native vegetation, Sarah has seen more wildlife appear on the land, including breeding sugar-gliders (pictured).



As a community not-for-profit NGO, TreeProject relies on the generous contributions of its members, sponsors and volunteers to ensure the Re-Tree Scheme is available to give the support the community needs to accomplish this essential restoration work .

Thanks from to all from TreeProject

Thanks to the wonderful contributions of our volunteers, staff and sponsors for 2011/12 season. De and our office volunteers have kept Re-Tree Scheme landholders, growers and coordinators informed. Special thanks to Ben Hodson from Pearl Film Company who filmed and edited our new training DVD to support our growers. See them on YouTube. <http://www.youtube.com/user/TreeProjectAU/featured>.

Our members and supporters have also been kept informed through the TreeProject newsletter thanks to Tess Toumbourou's coordination and our newsletter contributors.

We thank our sponsors Dahl Trust, for funding the redevelopment of our web site to include the first online indigenous propagation training tool for the community. The Lord Mayors Charitable Foundation has provided funding to support the online service. Thanks to Wendy Probesti and Lily Weinberg for editing content for our new webpage (to be launched in August) and Yvonne Earnshaw for being a great all-rounder.

Thanks to the ongoing support of our sponsor the Garry White Foundation, to Lex or



nursery manager, Andrew McKenzie and other volunteers who keep the nursery thriving. Lex is growing 3,000 seedlings for a large revegetation project in central Victoria as well as 1,000 seedlings for growers whose germination rates are lower than planned. Thanks to the Helen McPherson Smith Trust for funding the new potting shed (pictured) and James Crawford for the design and construction. Planting tools and shelving for transporting seedlings also provided by HMST funding. TreeProject also recognises the City of Melbourne for our depot and Interact for the nursery site.

Thanks to our committee members Maggie Mcleod, Lyn Grocke, Roger Blackut, Ian Wilson, Jenny Chivers, Nicky Moffat, Tess Toumbourou and Jenny Kaye for your time, ideas and enthusiasm. To Daria Utrobina for your impeccable attention to detail.

A special thanks to our financial members and regular donors, without your essential and continual support we would not be here to say thanks to anyone.

Volunteer Appreciation Picnic and Annual General Meeting

The TreeProject Annual General Meeting (AGM) was held on Sunday, 30 October, in the Yarra Bend Park (an award winning location!). This was the first time that TreeProject has had an opportunity - outside of working bees - to meet each other, and see who the other growers are.

Three long-time growers from Shepparton, who work with the Soroptimist club, collected the new TreeProject training DVD as well as a certificate of appreciation for their contribution to training growers in their area.

The AGM was attended by 35 members who braved the cold Melbourne weather. Copies of the annual report are available by contacting the TreeProject office.

Following the AGM, an awards ceremony recognised volunteers who have made important contribution to TreeProject. The awards ceremony was followed by a barbecue lunch. This lunch gathering will be an annual event to recognise the volunteers who for many years have been contributing to the restoration of Victoria's vital ecosystems.

To De and the coordinators who organise and liaise, Lex, our nursery coordinator, and all the growers who have turned dormant seeds into thriving seedlings, who have daily tended these plants over many months, I would like to thank you and say that we very much appreciate all that you do. Be assured that we landowners will honour our part of this joint commitment to get these plants safely in the ground and to the best of our ability, help them to reach their potential to perform the tasks for which they evolved.



TreeProject volunteers recognised for their contribution

Shop online and donate to TreeProject

Hate driving to busy supermarkets? Looking for an easy way to buy ethical food and products? Avoid the headache of pushing a wonky trolley, save time energy and petrol while shopping for groceries and donating to TreeProject.



Ethical Buying is an online store that sells range of products for ethically aware consumers. Their range includes everything from noodles to skin care, from pet to cleaning products. EthicalBuying products are environmentally friendly, have the welfare of animals in mind, and are sourced from fair trade and organic practices..

Nominate TreeProject as your charity of choice at the checkout stage of your purchase and Ethical Buying will make a donation equal to two per cent of the value of your purchases.

Spread the word to help support TreeProject. www.ethicalbuying.com.au

TreeProject awarded for environmental work



TreeProject was awarded a Parks Victoria 'Kookaburra Award' for its significant involvement in the development and conservation work at Yarra Bend Park.

Geelong grower Linda Foster and her daughter Kathleen represented TreeProject at the awards ceremony on the 5 November 2011.

The award commemorate individuals and groups who have made an outstanding contribution to Victoria's parks, and raise awareness of the extent and importance of community involvement in the Victorian park system.

Congratulations and thank you to all the volunteers, growers and members who contributed to TreeProject's successful work.

TreeProject has a new Facebook page

Checkout our Facebook page to hear about TreeProject news and upcoming events, including tree planting events and growers dates. TreeProject is in need of volunteers to maintain the TreeProject Facebook profile, including updating with links and images. Send us photos of your Growing or planting activities so we can share the action with others. Find TreeProject at: facebook.com/treeproject

Improving the Black Hill Nature Reserve

Extending the bio-link in the Macedon Ranges

Langley Landcare group and Friends of Black Hill Nature Reserve have teamed together to revegetate a nature reserve near Kyneton in Victoria's Macedon Ranges. TreeProject is pleased to participate in this project by growing 2,500 seedlings to revegetate the area.

The project has received funding to revegetate the riparian area of a creek in Black Hill Reserve, which feeds into the Campaspe River. Although the creek is only a small watercourse, it is critical to the catchment's biodiversity and the health of the Campaspe River.

The revegetation will provide a bio-link between Black Hill and the Campaspe River, linking up previously isolated habitat. The area includes three ecological vegetation classes - Plains Grassy Woodland, Grassy Woodland and Granitic Hills Woodland.

The first step of the revegetation project, already near completion, is to remove a substantial amount of weeds that have infested the area, including gorse bush, willow, briar rose, blackberry and hawthorn.



This dam will be planted with riparian vegetation



Native species will replace willow and hawthorn at creek line

Removing weeds will discourage vermin, such as rabbits and foxes, increase biodiversity, and improve the flow of clean water into the Campaspe River.

Local landholders will be involved to fence off the creek line, reducing damage to the plantings by grazing stock.

Graham Connell, President of the Langley Landcare group, hopes that the revegetation project will educate local landholders in 'the value of a rich biodiversity along creek lines and noxious weed control generally'.

This project forms a northern leg to the Campaspe-Maribyrnong Biolink' which creates a continuous network of native vegetation in the watershed catchment linking Macedon Regional Park with Cobaw State Forest via the Hanging Rock Reserve. TreeProject has been involved in Bio-link projects for the past 10 years and is pleased to continue our involvement in this northern extension.

Atlas of Living Australia

Australian flora and fauna recorded online



The Atlas of Living Australia is an online database of Australian flora and fauna. It is a national initiative focused on making Australia's biodiversity information more accessible and useable online. While still under development, already on the site you can access information for each Australian plant, animal and fungus with photos, descriptions, maps and observations.

Find the location your looking to plant in, and explore the flora and fauna native to the site. Learn about what was grown there prior to European arrival, and plan your next planting.

Find the Atlas of Living Australia here: <http://www.ala.org.au/>

The following steps explain how to use the Atlas when deciding the most appropriate species to plant in your area.

1. Find your area:

http://www.dpi.vic.gov.au/dpi/vro/vrosite.nsf/pages/biodiversity_bioregions_vic

2. Then choose your most relevant Ecological Vegetation Class:

http://www.dpi.vic.gov.au/dpi/vro/vrosite.nsf/pages/veg_managemt_highlands_southern_fall

3. To find a list of the bioregions in your area follow the link:

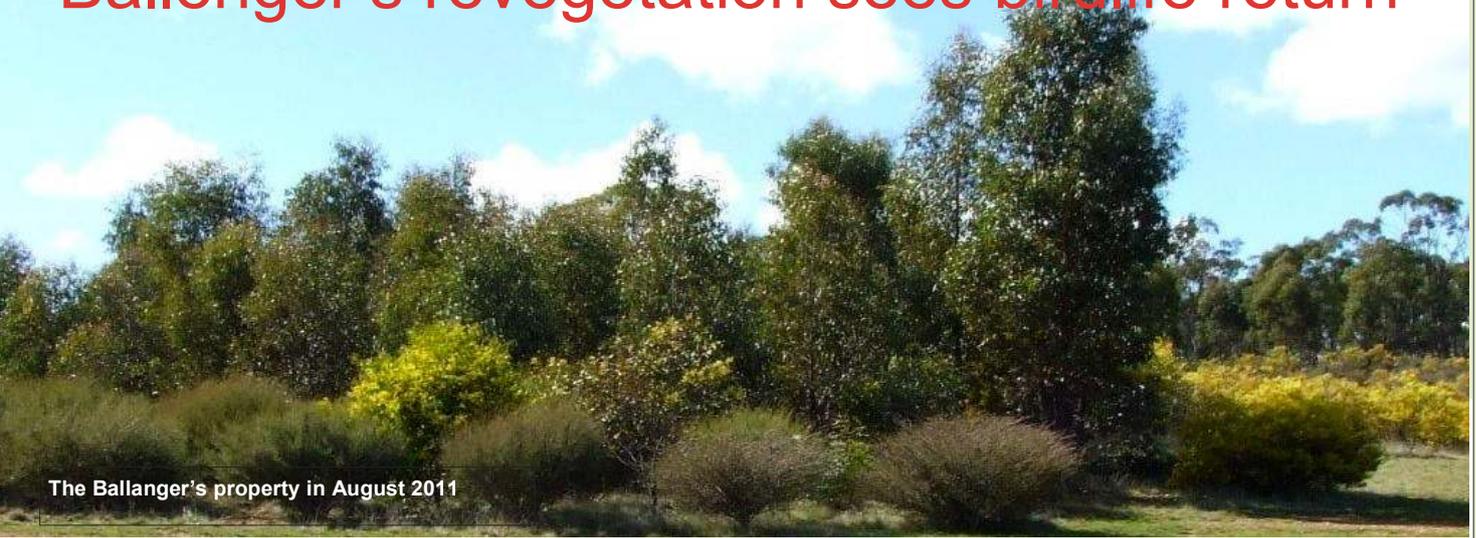
<http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/conservation-and-environment/evc-benchmarks-highlands-southern-fall-bioregion>

4. Then choose the description that is most aligned with the planting site:

http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/___data/assets/pdf_file/0003/98571/HSF_0003.pdf

5. And finally this will list the species in the area.

Ballenger's revegetation sees birdlife return



The Ballenger's property in August 2011

When Bruce Ballenger and his partner Jo-Anne moved to their 42-hectare (105 acre) property near Wedderburn eleven years ago, only one third of the property was virgin bush. The rest of the land had been cleared for farming, but had not been used for many years. In 2004, the Ballenger's started to revegetate.

A number of different plant species were planted, including: Yellow Gum, Grey Box, Wedge Leaf Hop Bush, Gold Dust Wattle, Totem Poles, Salty She-oak, Red Box, Red Ironbark, Common Fringe Myrtle, Drooping Cassinia, Spreading Wattle, Golden Wattle, Umbrella Wattle, Drooping She-oak, Moonah and Desert Cassia.

A number of Crimson Bottlebrush was also planted to add colour and attract birdlife.

'We must give full credit and a hearty round of applause to the TreeProject volunteer growers. Without the marvellous effort by these dedicated people, we would have achieved a lot less' says Bruce Ballenger.

For the time being, the Ballenger's have achieved their revegetation goals and planting has finished. In future, however, with support from Parks Victoria, they plan to establish a wetland area.

The Ballenger's invite any growers or TreeProject members interested in seeing the property to get in contact with TreeProject.



The Ballenger's property in 2008, after four years of planting

It was drought time and the rocky ground – a heavy concentration of white quartz and ironstone – required ripping to capture as much moisture as possible for the plants. In the process, a large number of rabbit warrens were eliminated.

The Ballenger's hand planted approximately 12,000 plants, with assistance from TreeProject volunteers from Bendigo, as well as friends and family. The local college and the Wedderburn Football Club committee members and associates also volunteered their help.

Parks Victoria supplied wooden stakes and plastic covers for 2,000 plants, which have been recycled and re-used many times on the property. Since planting began, birdlife has increased in quantity and variety.

The Ballenger's also arranged and financed two separate direct seeding operations, with approximately 13,000 seeds each time.

A year passing showed that direct seeding had only a 50 % success rate, while hand planting TreeProject seedlings had a 90 % success rate.



The Ballenger's property in August 2011

Seedbanks fall casualty to changing government priorities

Changing government priorities for funding environmental programs is impacting community indigenous seedbanks across Victoria. Sourcing native seed is becoming increasingly difficult for nurseries, land managers and anyone involved in growing and planting trees. De Grebner at TreeProject is noticing that, community seedbanks are under going major changes due to funding limitations. This is having flow-on implications for propagation work.

Bronwyn Johnson, Seedbank Officer at the Yarram Seedbank, says that seedbanks play a vitally important role in revegetation. 'We are the zooplankton of the food chain', she says. 'Without the dedication of community seedbanks to learn about storing and supplying good quality provenance seed, very little of the revegetation outcomes people are enjoying today would have been possible.'

The important role of community seedbanks is outlined in *Native seed in Australia: a community perspective* by Warren Mortlock, coordinator of FloraBank. According to Mortlock, community seedbanks not only supply seed, but also provide

information about plant identification and training to develop local community capacity for wider use of native seed. Seedbanks supply seed to a wide range of users for revegetation projects .

Providing local seed is in itself challenging, being one of the hardest natural resources to define, locate, quantify, harvest and use. Why then, do seedbanks increasingly face financial viability challenges?



Seedbanks falling off the funding agenda

Yarram Seedbank is one of the many seedbanks to find themselves in a tenuous position at the moment. 'In the past five years our seedbank has gone from a two day a week position where the seedbank held collection permits, collected seed and ran many workshops to a one day a week purely administrative position. We no longer hold collection permits or collect seed' Johnson says.

Now the Yarram Seedbank operates almost entirely to facilitate the selling of local provenance indigenous seed that is collected through contracts by commercial collectors. 'We really don't consider ourselves a community seedbank anymore, but more of a project-driven seed storage facility.'

Driving these funding issues are changing government priorities. Federal government priorities have shifted from restoring or revegetating neglected land to preservation of remnant vegetation. While this is a critical function, it occurs to the detriment of community seedbanks across Victoria. The changes to federal government funding for projects also implicates landholders, who are ordering less seed from community seedbanks.

Yarram Seedbank is feeling the changes. 'Traditionally, funding was sourced entirely through seed sales generated by revegetation projects, both government and privately financed.

However, changes in funding priorities from small scale widespread projects to large-scale regionally targeted projects quickly saw funds dry up in our area [South Gippsland] for a number of years.'

The lack of funding – cumulated by the impact of the drought of the last decade has resulted in a downscaling of staffing positions, so that revegetation works through Landcare, has become deprioritised. 'The impact has been less time available for public engagement, more office time and for me personally, not enough time to get out in the bush to learn as much as I would like about the species' says Johnson. This has also resulted in a loss of volunteer participation, and a reduced public profile.

What are the future prospects for Victoria's community seedbanks?

Johnson is concerned for the future. 'The lack of recognition and support of this work is disheartening and comes at a cost. In the past few years the number of private revegetation companies has grown and I fear they have the capacity to take over the role of community seedbanks.'

Caroline Gully, at the West Gippsland Seedbank, sees the need for indigenous seed will always exist, but like all community organisations, seedbanks will increasingly depend on volunteers to run. Reduced funding is having cyclical effects on community seedbanks.

According to Liz Evans, at the Goulburn-Broken Seedbank, 'The future for community seedbanks should be ranked as a high priority for the genetic preservation of a diverse range of species.' Losing indigenous plants has implications also for indigenous animal species and entire ecosystems, which are already vulnerable in a changing climate. Evans is aware that many seedbanks are closing down or are left unsupported, undervalued and constantly struggling.

Climate change mitigation implicated by seed shortages

For Evans, the emerging carbon market will be implicated by the challenges with sourcing native seed. 'For carbon sequestration purposes, it will be increasingly important to have ample supplies of healthy seed available. We should be preparing for this now if there is going to be a market for this', says Evans.

In order to protect the bush from overharvesting, the Goulburn-Broken seedbank uses seed from established Seed Production Areas, set up strategically throughout the Goulburn-Broken catchment area to provide genetically healthy seed. Seed Production Areas provide a diverse range of seed including rare and endangered species and are an ongoing operation. 'In the scheme of things it would not take that much money to support the operations of seedbanks in reflection to the importance of the protection and supply of plant species that can be made available', says Evans.



Image: Goulburn Broken Seedbank

Kangaroo Apple

TreeProject is experimenting with propagating a new species —Kangaroo Apple (*Solanum lacina-tum*). Kangaroo Apple is a widespread shrub species found throughout the southern and central areas of Victoria, with dark-green leaves shaped like a kangaroo's paw print.

It is a fast-growing, frost resilient shrub that flowers from January to April. Kangaroo Apple grows well as an understory of a windbreak, or for bank and erosion stabilisation. Solanum species are early colonisers of cleared or disturbed areas, which is why you often see them on roadsides.

Despite its name, the fruit from a Kangaroo Apple resemble cherry tomatoes more than they do apples, and are bright yellowish orange in colour. The fruit can be eaten when completely ripe, but not before—an unripe fruit is poisonous. The plant, particularly the young foliage, contain a series of steroids which are of commercial value as raw material for the manufacture of contraceptives.



Image: Friends of Waurn Ponds Creek

Kangaroo Apple can be propagated from seeds, or from cuttings. Seed can be collected by waiting for the old fruit to wither dry on the bush, while cuttings are best taken from spring to autumn. Kangaroo Apple are short-lived shrubs, with a life expectancy of 5 to 6 years.

Ask Wendy - Watering

It might seem simple but watering is something that is very important to do well. The most important step to master when growing seedlings is watering. Plants will not thrive without the correct technique.



This is a shower setting on your spray gun—mist is much finer

It is vital that seedlings are kept moist, but not wet. This requires correct watering and adequate drainage. The best watering tool is a spray gun which has several spray option settings so you can change the strength of the water flow as the seedling matures and require a different watering regime. A nozzle fitting will not give you the mist spray you need. The attachment must fit tightly to the end of your garden hose, no leaks or drips.

Set the spray gun on mist for just sown seed. **Until your seed germinates a mist watering twice a day is required**, which dampens the seed and the surface of the potting mix without flooding the tube, this ensures the seed does not float right out of the pot!

Once germination has been achieved, you will change you spray gun setting to *shower*, a **deeper watering once a day** is necessary. Some growers continue to water twice a day, this causes seedlings to grow too fast and become too spindly with an underdeveloped root system. Additionally, inadequate watering will cause the roots to stay in the top half of the tube. The plant may look good but it will not have the required stem strength and root system to survive once planted out.

There is the risk that it will fall over, split at the base or die of thirst because the roots are not developed enough.

Roots need to grow down through the tube forming an anchor for the plant once it matures. Moisture (water) must pass all the way through the potting mix to encourage the roots downwards. Make sure to check that there is water draining from the base of the tubes so that there is no doubt that the potting mix is moist all the way through.

Algae growing on the top of the tube is a definite sign of too much water, as is rotting or wilting of the seedling stem at the surface of the potting mix. You can always add water to a dry plant but you can't take away so it is better to lightly water thoroughly than drown the plants.

Seedlings in full sun on very hot days will require more water because there will be a greater evaporation rate. In summer months make sure hot water in the hose is flushed out before watering the tender seedlings. A hose lying in the sun will hold very hot water and this will burn the plants beyond repair.

If you have put your seedlings in the shade to slow down their growth they will still need moisture but make sure they do not sit wet or moulds and mildews may occur. Watering in the morning is always best to prevent diseases. If you can only water later in the day then make sure that there is adequate ventilation.

Getting the watering right will ensure healthy, good quality plants that create the basis for a thriving ecosystem.



TreeProject

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247 Flinders Lane
Melbourne Vic 3000

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