



# UnderStories

Spring 2010 No. 51

.....**promoting, preserving, protecting and rehabilitating native vegetation**

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## Committee Members

*President:* Anne Griffiths  
*Vice President:* Joan Rodrigues  
*Secretary:* Mary Jolly  
*Treasurer:* Rupert Manners  
*Committee members:*

Brian Griffiths  
Warner Wait  
Amanda Cole  
Susan Friend  
De Deegan  
Martin O'Bryan  
Gillian Shannon

*Editor:*

Visit our website and the  
Plant Propagation Database:  
[www.understorey-network.org.au](http://www.understorey-network.org.au)

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## Coordinators' Report

With a very dry start to this winter, it hasn't been a great year for revegetation and several projects have already suffered casualties. At the Understorey Network we are always interested to hear how your plants go once in the ground, and any stories, photos or tips are always appreciated. We are also happy to provide advice on site preparation and after care for your plantings.

Thank you for sending in your membership renewal forms, please keep them coming in if you are yet to do so, or let us know if you require any additional forms sent out. The 2010/2011 Growers Scheme is also nearly upon us and it is not too late to register to grow or receive plants if you contact the office ASAP. There will be some great projects to grow for this year, including the endangered Morrisby's Gum (*Eucalyptus morrisbii*) as well as Waverly Flora Park and the swift parrot and forty-spotted pardalote habitats.

Find out about the Depot Days, where you can collect your materials, in this newsletter. Thank you to the volunteers who host and assist at Depot Day, making it possible to distribute pots, potting mix etc; to our growers around the State.

There are lots of other events coming up this Spring as well, including propagation and coastal gardening workshops, the Botanical Gardens Spring Festival, the Wildflower Spectacular, the Bruny Island Bird Festival and the Sustainable Living Festival. See the 'what's happening' section for all the details. Our AGM is also in there as well, and we will be having a guest speaker presentation on lowland native grasslands. The AGM is also a great opportunity to meet other members and get more involved in the Network, please come along if you can.

Good luck with your propagating!

**Oliver and Natalie**

## MESSAGE FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT

Why a message from the vice and not the actual president? That is because Anne Griffiths has been overseas since May and we really hope that she has been able to relax and recover from the incredible efforts that she has put into maintaining and improving the position of the Understorey Network over the past two years. Without her dedication and willingness to promote the USN at every opportunity it is doubtful that the organisation would be in its current position. It may not even be in existence. Anne has suggested that she does not want to be President for another year so we need to identify someone with an equal amount of enthusiasm to replace her, which will be very hard to do. (Please read 'Do you Like Quiche?' And join the USN team)

As I sat to write this, two thoughts came to mind, both "truisms" but very relevant to life today for the majority of understorey networkers. They were "what a difference a year makes" and "be careful what you wish for". Last year most of us were heartily sick of rain, mud and flood alerts. Understorey plants, or indeed any plants, planted out to benefit from anticipated autumn rains were either drowning or battling massive weed competition and only the very keen amongst us were donning rain gear to try to assist them. This year, in the south at least, I suspect that many of the new autumn plants will not survive unless they have been provided with some supplementary watering. But more positively, those that do will be very hardy

and drought resistant.

On the positive side, a year has seen an improvement to the Understorey Network finances and your committee has been able to review the fees imposed on the Growers' Scheme last year and reduce the costs for those members who grow for themselves. I hope that as many of you as possible will take advantage of this and set about repairing the damage to new growth that a dry southern and wet northern autumn and winter may have caused. Recently we were awarded a grant from Aurora to manage their Grow Wild project. The project provides an opportunity for Aurora staff to participate in revegetation projects and will be worth about \$90,000 over three years. I will leave it to our coordinators to provide more details as the project develops.

Before I finish I would like to let everyone know that the USN annual general meeting for 2010 will be held at the Royal Botanical Gardens on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> October at the earlier time of 10.00 am. We urge as many of you as possible to put this event in the diary and come along to express your views on where your organisation ought to be going.

(We have chosen this day, because it coincides with the Australian Plant Society's event, the Wildflower Spectacular. Come to the meeting, followed by morning tea and then take a trip to check out the USN display at Wildflower Spectacular at the City Hall)

*Joan Rodrigues*

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## DO YOU LIKE QUICHE?

Each month your Understorey Network Committee meets and over cups of tea and coffee and of course quiche we have an early evening meeting, discussing USN matters.

We are looking for *willing contributors* when ideas are required and *eager participants* when action is required.

Is this you?

If you answered *maybe, possibly, perhaps*, then we cordially invite you to nominate yourself for a position on the executive or on the committee at the forthcoming Annual General Meeting.

**Where:** Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens

**Date:** Saturday October 9<sup>th</sup> 2010

**Time:** 10.00am

Please contact Natalie or Oliver at the USN office for more information or to express your interest.  
Phone: 62 344286 or 0407 352 479



# ECHOING NATURE

by Paulette Whitney

Plants are ever evolving all manner of natty tricks to out-compete their neighbours. All things being equal, you'd think that the wattle could beat all comers in the germination race. Its cunning plan is to produce masses of seed with a hard coat designed to crack during fire, and germinate when all the competition is dead. It'll then coerce a friendly little bacterium to grow on its roots and fix precious nitrogen in the fire ravaged soil for its private consumption. This gives it a source of food its neighbours can only dream of! It can then grow fast, tolerate drought, and shade out the competition. What a winner! Some species of acacia have even evolved protein rich arils (a specialised out-growth from the attachment point of the seed) to entice ants to carry the seeds safely underground, where they are protected from adverse conditions outside. They will emerge when the time is right. But forests are smarter than that. There are no constant winners. The wattle is sometimes destined to die. Their quickly thrown together wood can be light and weak, prone to attack from wattle grubs and other borers, sometimes rotting in wet conditions and blowing over for no obvious reason. This is what they're meant to do. It is part of a process called 'succession' where one plant prepares the way for the next. The little, delicious (if you're a plant!) nodules of nitrogen, fixed by that helpful little bacteria, are left behind in the soil, along with the biomass of the acacia roots (and the copious amounts of seed produced during the wattle's life awaiting the next fire!). This is a nutrient rich spot for succeeding plants to establish.

After a fire, eucalypt seeds would be released from their protective woody capsules. The sap from the giant parent tree stopped flowing to the branches that held them, so the seed capsules dried and opened, and the tiny seeds rained to the ground. They would grow among the wattles, with other woody capsuled, fire evolved species such as, tea-trees, paperbarks, hakeas, banksias and other species that have evolved to survive or germinate after fire. They are often tall, thin, whippy plants waiting for their time in the sun. The demise of the wattles represents a chance for the framework of the damaged forest to leap ahead. These longer lived plants create niches for other species to occupy. The opened forest floor can host the return of ephemeral species from surrounding areas. The branches of the maturing trees shelter birds, who deposit the seeds of fruit they have previously

feasted upon. These berry seeds have been through the abrasive crops of birds, macerated in digestive juices and left on the soil awaiting their time. The fruits of many Tasmanian native plants take a long time to germinate. They seem to need the trigger of a cold Winter, or the lengthening days of Spring to stimulate germination. Other brave pioneers are the daisies—woody shrubs, creeping groundcovers and pretty rosettes, the literal blow-ins of the forest. They like to settle on exposed soils and germinate quickly where they land.

So, what does this teach us about growing plants with human hands during times when Nature needs help to do her thing? The best way is to mimic the processes that these seeds undergo in the wild. With eucalypts and other Myrtaceae, such as paperbarks and teatrees, often no treatment is required. They will cooperate with us and store successfully in a seed cupboard until we're ready for them, then germinate within a few weeks, and grow to plantable size within a few months. Some sub-alpine and alpine species can benefit from cold treatment to enhance germination.

Acacias and other hard coated leguminous seeds need that burst of heat for good germination. The simplest way to do this is to put the required amount of seed into a coffee cup and pour water from a just boiled kettle on them. Leave them to soak overnight and sow the next day. The same result can be achieved by nicking the coat of each seed, but this is time consuming.



There is a seed eater that is quite fond of leguminous plants, I've mostly seen it on *Daviesia* spp, *Oxylobium* spp and *Aotus*. The little beastie will eat the seed then bore holes out of the seed capsule when its appetite is sated and it will even drill its way through a paper bag. So check inside a few capsules on collection to ensure you've collected enough viable seed.

Fleshy fruited seeds are best fermented to try and

mimic the digestive process, and this is also the easiest way to remove the flesh from the fruit. I squish the ripe fruit in a ziplock bag, or a little bowl until it's good and pulpy, seal or cover it, and leave in a warm spot for a few days. When it's looking really rotten, rinse the flesh away, a sieve and a running tap works well for this and sow as soon as possible (I think this is the best option), or dry well on paper before storing. Even with all this extra attention, these seeds are often slow and erratic to germinate, with most species germinating the Spring following sowing. I find it best to sow them in a punnet of seed raising mix and prick out when they're big enough to handle. It also pays to consider where your seed has come from. Alpine species like *Trochocarpa thymifolia* and *Leucopogon montanus* could benefit from stratification, or cold treatment to enhance germination. And it is rumoured to be of benefit to soak the fermented, cleaned seed of *Leucopogon parviflorus* in a bleach or lime solution. I've done this (but unfortunately) in an unscientific manner with no control sample, and had a great germination.

Daisies, or Asteraceae often germinate better when exposed to light. These seeds usually germinate quickly, and are best used within a year or two of collection. Sow them and cover thinly, just enough to stop the seed from blowing away, so that they are still exposed to light. Something to look out for is a little grub that makes it's way into the centre of the floret and grows fat munching immature seeds from underneath. When you go to collect the remains of his feast it will look like any other ripe seed head, but you will notice the awns



*Helichrysum scorpioides*

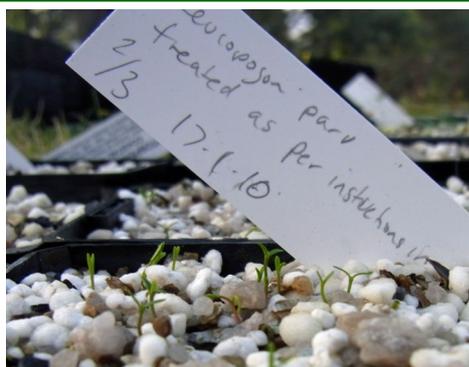
**The seed in the top left of the picture is what it should look like. The fat brown blob on the base of the floret is the cocoon of the seed eater that can ruin you daisies**

are stuck together and there will either be a plump little white grub, or a hard brown cocoon in place of the seeds you were seeking. Sometimes there will be a few viable seeds amongst this mess but it

pays to check for this when collecting rather than letting our wriggly friend get fatter eating away in your collection bag.

Slower germinating species, such as rainforest and alpine species, and those found in fleshy fruits may be best sown in punnets of seed raising, or unfertilised mix. If they are sown into mix with fertiliser the nutrients can be leached from the mix before the plants are big enough to enjoy it. Liverworts, mosses and weeds can also colonise the tubes, making for many hours of weeding as well as competing with the germinating seedlings.

Cold treatment, or stratification can be achieved by sowing seeds in Autumn and leaving them outside to undergo natural cold weather and then sowing them in punnets, wrapping in plastic and putting in



**The *Leucopogon parviflorus* were sown in January and popped their heads up on August 12th.**

the fridge for a few weeks. You can also simply put the seed packet in the fridge for a period before sowing.

These are just a few of the techniques I've been taught or experienced in 10 years of growing Tasie plants, and every propagator has their own tricks and methods that work for them. These are just my thoughts and experiences and I would encourage everyone to experiment and share their results, and keep records! Every batch of seed can yield different results, depending on how fresh it is, the provenance of the seed, the season the parent plant went through while the seed was ripening or what we, the propagators, put them through. There are a multitude of treatments I haven't touched on here like smoke treatment, soapy water, gibberellins (plant hormones) and leaching. If you've not had success with something look at how Nature treats the seed in the wild, have a play and see what you can learn. Remember, be patient, don't throw away that punnet too soon, you never know what little treasure is about to poke its head out!



## TOLOSA TALK AND NURSERY NEWS

*Tolosa Community Garden and Native Plant Nursery  
Tolosa Park—Western End*

Recently your USN has been engaged in growing 9000 plus plants for the Glenorchy City Council for autumn planting in 2011. Three volunteers, Bridget Hutchinson, Susan Friend and Amanda Cole, working together each Monday have so far propagated 8000 plants for creek revegetation and parkland planting within the Glenorchy Municipality. This is the first time the USN has undertaken growing such a large number of plants at the Tolosa Street Nursery since 3000 salt bush plants (*Atriplex cinerea*) were established from cuttings several years ago. Although some seeds prefer autumn and winter sowing, others that would normally be sown in spring have germinated successfully. This could be in part due to the milder weather we have had over the autumn or to the green fingers of the volunteers! The catch cry is "Grow little plants, grow!" To be on the safe side we are keeping records of propagation and germination dates to help us with our sowing calendar for the following year.

Greening Australia asked for our assistance to grow some of their stock prior to them being planted along the Northern Outlet and surrounding revegetation sites in the Glenorchy Municipality. One of Greening Australia's Green Team members, Michael, had been working at the nursery as part of his employment, but when it finished he liked it so much he now volunteers each Monday. Together with Bill and Steve they have been extremely busy erecting a vegetable garden enclosure. Following the concept of sustainability, they have been 'reusing' as many materials as possible in the new enclosure. Four to five old large wooden crates will provide raised vegetable plots and competition has been fierce as to who will be allocated a 'crate' plot. Hopefully there will be enough for everyone who visits from Life Without Barriers to be involved. Many thanks to Bill, who regularly brings his power tools to the nursery, along with his expertise.



**Susan Friend and Bridget Hutchinson**

The native garden has not been taking a back seat during the autumn and winter. Plants are growing well and much additional clearing has been done at the northern end of the garden following the removal of an ugly wire fence. Because there are many well established Eucalypts in this part of the garden we have had to build up a garden bed to give new plants a better chance of getting established. Fortunately we had a large amount of composted material that could be used for this purpose. Greening Australia provided a green team work crew and you know the saying 'many hands .....'. Well it didn't matter that the pile of material and the garden bed were some distance apart as the ten guys moved many, many wheelbarrows of soil in no time at all. We were all most thankful.

New 'old' gates now grace the entrance and the fence is partly completed on either side. New drainage has been undertaken and the nursery now has power connected. This has been an exciting happening, especially for the diversified lunch menu we can now enjoy, and for other more practical matters such as lighting and power tool operation.

As part of the USN's 'Grow Wild' contract with Aurora, twenty eight Aurora workers held a team building day at the nursery and gardens organised by Natalie and Oliver. They were involved in three activities during their half day with us; planting the bare embankment outside the western boundary with native plants, planting *Eucalyptus pulchella* which will grow to form a hedge to separate the garden from the nursery workings and undertaking a workshop using seeds and cuttings to propagate native plants. It was a great day and we are thrilled to have achieved so much in such a short time.



Steve surveying the sandstone volunteers collected from Bothwell

We welcome visitors Monday to Thursday between 9.00am and 2.00pm. If you want to visit the nursery just ask for Steve, (but not in school holidays). The garden is available to any park visitor during normal park hours.

If you have any spare time that you would like to donate to the nursery or garden please contact Natalie or Oliver and they will organise the best time for you to volunteer. Your assistance would be most appreciated. The next large project in the spring is a curved sandstone wall.

Amanda Cole

<b>Propagation Pointers</b>	
<b>Family Name</b> IRIDACEAE	
<b>Species Name</b> <i>Diplarrena moraea</i>	
<b>Common Name</b> White Flag Iris	
<p>There are only two species of <i>Diplarrena</i>. <i>The species moraea</i> grows in NSW, Vic and Tas. The other <i>latifolia</i> is endemic to Tasmania. Both have an iris type flower that flowers from September to December. Seed is best collected November through to March. <i>Diplarrena</i> germinates readily if sown during spring, but with my experience I find autumn sowing better as seed does need a winter stratification in nature. This allows the harder coating of the seed to break down. Both species grow over most areas of Tasmania and like well drained soil.</p>	
Seed treatment	Prefers winter dormancy for best results
Propagation notes	Plants can be divided late autumn
Seed sowing months	Best say April-May but some quite good results have been achieved with spring sowing
<p>Growers, if you have propagated this species and can further add to the information provided we would very much appreciate hearing from you. Please email <a href="mailto:understorey@gmail.com">understorey@gmail.com</a></p>	
<b>Warner Wait</b>	



## HOW FAR HAVE WE COME AND WHERE TO FROM HERE?

Our members are our most valuable asset and you are invited to HAVE YOUR SAY on plans for the Network into the future.

The USN Coordinators and Committee are currently reviewing our Strategic Business Plan which sets out our principal achievements over the past five years and will define our goals and aspirations for the next five years.

Members' input will be invaluable – what would you like for the Network and from the Network?

The Draft Plan will be available on the website from the end of September. Check out the Draft and email us with your comments, ideas or wish list for consideration in the final Plan.

If you would prefer to receive a hard copy of the Draft just let us know.

Website: [www.understorey-network.org.au](http://www.understorey-network.org.au)

Email: [understorey@gmail.com](mailto:understorey@gmail.com)

Phone: (03) 62 344286



### WANTED Photographs

Have you used the Understorey Network's database on our website?

[www.understoreynetwork.org.au](http://www.understoreynetwork.org.au)

The database is one of the most comprehensive databases of Tasmanian native plants in use in the State, with over 1900 plants listed. However, there are only slightly more than 300 that have an accompanying photograph. We would like to be able to complement the information already on the database by including photographs for those plants where one is not available.

The Understorey Network invites its members to begin taking photographs of Tasmanian native plants, send them to us and we will begin uploading them onto our database.

Please send your digital photographs as JPEG files. The photographs best suited to this purpose are those where the plant is in flower. Please include the name of the plant photographed and send your name so we are able to acknowledge you as the photographer. Start photographing now and continue through the spring, summer and autumn, so capturing the full range of our beautiful Tasmanian plants.

Email your photographs to:

[secretary@understorey-network.org.au](mailto:secretary@understorey-network.org.au)

### *Native Plants of the Cataract Gorge*

Are you interested in growing native plants in your garden in the Launceston area and would like to know more about the plants in your region? A 20 page brochure has been produced by the Parks and Recreation Branch of the Launceston City Council. The brochure displays beautiful colour photographs of easy to grow and attractive plants that are native to the Launceston area and are presented according to where you might find them in the landscape i.e. ground layer, shrub layer and tree. Biodiversity traits such as good butterfly attractor, bird food or habitat plant make this a wonderful resource for people interested in garden design for attracting wildlife.

If you would like a copy of the booklet they are available at the Cataract Gorge Basin Cottage Volunteer Centre and Launceston City Council customer service centre or by contacting Launceston City Council on 63 233000.

You might also like to join us on Wednesday October 6 at 10am at the Basin Cottage Volunteer Centre (located behind the chairlift station at the Basin) for a Native Plant Discovery Walk with Roy Skabo. Roy and friends will take us for a walk at the Basin to introduce us to some of the beautiful plants (a lot will be in flower at this time). Roy is a member of the Australian Plant Society and loves to share his passion for Native Plants and knowledge of how to grow them in your garden.

A BBQ lunch will be provided following the walk, with a short workshop on collecting seed and propagating native plants planned for the afternoon. If you are keen to come along please leave a message at the USN office on 62 344286 to assist us with planning the day.

We look forward to seeing you there!

*Jo Dean, USN volunteers, NORTH*

## WHAT'S HAPPENING

### **USN Committee Meeting Dates**

148B Elizabeth Street

USN Office

All welcome

Usually the 2nd of each month but dates can change, so please phone first to confirm date.

October 4th at 5.00

November 8th at 5.00

December Committee Xmas function

January 10th at 5.00

### **Plant Propagation Workshop**

When : Friday Sept 3rd

Where: NORTH Punchbowl Reserve

What to bring:

RSVP: Samantha Rayner 63233310

### **Soft Green and Alive**

When: Thursday Sept 9th

Where: Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery  
Commissariat Store

Time: 11am - 2pm: no booking required

### **The Importance of Being Smallest**

When: Wednesday Sept 15th

Where: Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery  
Islands to Ice Gallery

Time: 11am - 2pm: no booking required

### **Tamar NRM Plant Propagation Workshop**

When: Friday Sept 17th

Where: Tresca Community Centre  
Main Rd Exeter

Time: 10.00 to 3.00 Lunch Provided

RSVP: amanda.bruce@launceston.tas.gov.au  
Limited number of places 63233310

### **Cataract Gorge Walk, Seed Collection & Plant Propagation Workshop When: Wednesday October 6th**

Where: Launceston - Basin Cottage Volunteer Centre located behind the chair lift at the Basin

Time: From 10.00 BBQ lunch provided

RSVP: secretary@understorey-network.org.au  
62344386 or 0407 352 479

### **Understorey Network at the Australian Plant Society Wildflower Spectacular**

When: Friday Oct 8th to Sunday October 10th

Where: City Hall Hobart

Time: 10am – 4pm

### **USN Annual General Meeting**

When: Saturday October 9th

Where: Riverview Room Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens

Time: 10.00 followed by mornign tea

Guest Speaker: Louise Gilfedder

RSVP: Natalie or Oliver on 6234 4286

### **Depot Day**

When: Saturday October 16th

Time: Various - please check personal advice later this month for directions and your allocated time.

#### **SOUTH**

Royal Tasmanian Botanic Gardens, Hobart

Contact: Understorey Network, 6234 4286

#### **NORTH WEST**

Wildlife Rescue Centre at Forthside

Contact: Julia Butler Ross, 0417 383 928

#### **NORTH EAST**

NELS: North East Landscaping Supplies:

120 Tully St St Helens

Contact: Cathy and Dave, 6376 2656

#### **NORTH**

19 Gorge Rd, Trevallyn Between 1-4 pm

Steep driveway - can park in the doctor's carpark opposite.

Contact: Anna Povey, 6334 6633

### **Bruny Island Bird Festival**

When: October 23rd 24th

Where: SOUTH

For more information visit

[www.bien.org.au](http://www.bien.org.au)

### **Plant Propagation**

When: Saturday November 27th

Where: NORTH-WEST Sulphur Creek

RSVP: Hannah Saddler 64316285

**APOLOGIES:** We apologise for the fact many USN Members received a black and white copy of the 'Winter' Newsletter. There was a misunderstanding with the Printer. You should receive copies in full colour in future unless anything else untoward happens!