



# UnderStories

Summer 2011

Number 56

Promoting, preserving, protecting and rehabilitating native vegetation

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

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## Coordinator's Report

It has been a very busy spring, with more than a dozen workshops on propagating native plants around the state as well as our growers scheme depot days. Thank you to everyone who has helped out with these events.

The growers scheme is progressing well and as we have been getting a few warmer days, the seedlings are really starting to take off. Thank you to our 46 growers this year. If you are concerned that you have inadequate germination, contact the office to discuss getting more seed or replacements for your project. Please also keep in touch with your receiver and let them know how the plants are growing.

Propagation is also full steam ahead at the Tolosa Nursery, with a target of 3,000 plants for the Forty-spotted Pardalote Habitat Project and 6,000 plants for Glenorchy City Council having just about been met. Plants are also being grown for Aurora Grow Wild project sites, the Derwent Estuary Program Little Penguin Project, and for a nursery fundraiser. There will be a plant sale in Autumn/Winter, with details to be advised in the next newsletter. If you have a few hours per week to spare and would like to volunteer at the nursery, please let me know, as we are always looking for more pairs of hands.

Summer is also seed collecting time, so whilst you are out and about please keep an eye out for ripe seed and send it in to the office to replenish our seed bank for next year. Be sure to record the species name, location and date.

Wishing you a Merry Christmas and all the best for 2012!

### Oliver Strutt

Photo  
Maura O'Connor



Oliver at work in Launceston.

## Congratulations!

At the Community Achievement Awards Gala Presentation Dinner it was announced that the Understorey Network was the winner of the 2011 Nyrstar Environment and Sustainability Award!

The Nyrstar Environment and Sustainability Award acknowledges proven passion and dedication to improving the Tasmanian environment.

It seeks to reward individuals or groups who work to overcome the challenges facing our natural world and to overcome the barriers to change that are usually encountered. Environmental improvements can come in many forms, for example, changing behaviours and patterns of consumption, restoring impacted areas, establishing sustainable business practices, and the protection of threatened species and habitat.

Well done to everyone involved, past and present for this worthy achievement and public recognition of the work we do!



Deputy General Manager Rachid Ait Mar presents winner to Anne Griffiths

## President's Report Summer 2011 / 2012

This is my first report as president and I must warn you report writing is not my cup of tea, however I will try and do my best. I must be honest it is a pleasure to report on so many good things that have been happening with the Understorey Network since its inception back in 1995.

Firstly, I want to congratulate the Understorey Network on coming first in the Community Achievement Awards and thank Annie and Brian Griffiths for representing the USN at the presentation dinner in Launceston. A big thank you must go to the many volunteers for all the work they do that makes us so successful and of course thanks to our past and present coordinators for without them we wouldn't be where we are today.

This spring has been packed with things happening, firstly our state-wide depot days distributing materials to growers to propagate seeds, with the potential to grow over 10000 plants to be used in projects around the state. The little penguins, the forty-spotted pardalotes, Aurora, MONA, NRM south, coast care groups, land care groups and also the Tolosa Nursery will benefit from plants grown by our growers this year. I would like to wish everyone success in their growing and to be patient while waiting for germination as with some plants it can take up to 12 months for them to germinate, but thankfully most will germinate in a few weeks. The most important thing is not to over water, but they must be kept damp at all times.

Oliver our coordinator has been kept very busy and is doing a wonderful job organising work shops, attending the Land Care Conference at Stanley, working on projects with councils, NRM South and North, Aurora, as well as many other things too many to mention.

The Tolosa Nursery and Native Plant Garden is looking great, thanks to our volunteers that do the work there. We would appreciate any offers of extra volunteer assistance as at this time of the year propagation is the main focus and the garden of course is finding itself a little neglected. So if you have a spare two hours please or more contact Oliver at the office to let him know or drop out to the nursery at Tolosa Park on a Monday.

We are always looking for photos and articles for our newsletters, so if any one has anything of interest don't be afraid to send it into our Understorey Office.

Once again I would like to give a big thank you to our coordinator Oliver and also our past coordinators that have worked so hard in setting up everything for the USN and of course to all the volunteers that do so much in helping with everything.

I love going to our meetings as they only last for about 2 hours, with a 'quiche break' before general business making it quite a friendly social occasion. Any member wishing to attend our meetings is made very welcome providing they let our coordinator know before the meeting. Our meetings start at 5.15pm and finish about 7.30 on the second Monday of the month—hope to see you there.

**Warner Wait**

## LACS .....(Looking After Connewarre Shoreline)

Pride of Australia Medal 2010, Environmental Medal Finalist

LACS was founded in 2007 by a group of concerned residents of the Connewarre Bay area in response to a persistent odour rising from the foreshore and the erosion of the immediate river embankment. The executive committee set about investigating best practices to restore the erosion problem and the long term effect that it could pose, at the same time remaining conscious of the importance of protecting wildlife and bird habitat.

After consultation with state and local government departments, it was resolved to progress with planning to construct a stone wall 1.5 metres high the length of the bay - about 120 metres. LACS was fortunate enough to secure \$30,000 funding from the Tasmanian Community Fund to rectify the embankment problem, provide 200 cubic metres of beach sand and to construct a boat ramp. The outcome was an enormous success, much to the delight of local residents and Berriedale as a whole.

In more recent times LACS, in conjunction with the Glenorchy City Council, decided to improve the walking track on the southern side of the bay to McCarthy's Point. Over the years the tide had taken its toll on the track so much so that it had become quite dangerous, causing many senior citizens, particularly those who were members of walking clubs, to cease utilising the area. Another concern was the overgrowth of blackberry and briar bushes that posed an obstacle for people who regularly used the reserve area. The removal of noxious weeds and shrubs and the restoration of the walking track were going to be a major challenge. To achieve our expectations, funding was of prime importance as machinery was a necessary component of the proposed walking track project.



Planting out Connewarre Bay

LACS applied to Glenorchy's iconic business leader Nyrstar, and under its Community Grants Program was successful in obtaining funds to facilitate the project costs. Nyrstar's vision is community based for initiatives that support sustainable community development and LACS encourages other community organisations to seriously consider approaching Nyrstar when it advertises its next funding round. Following the completion of the project, Glenorchy City Council's Natural-Areas co-ordinator, Alli Coombe was fully supportive and most co-operative in providing wooden stakes, plant protectors and an array of Tasmanian native plants, shrubs and trees for the rehabilitation of the newly cleared area. LACS invited several members of the area to assist with the planting and watering of the new vegetation, which consisted of Prostrate *Correas*, *Lomandras*, *Lomatias*, everlasting native daisies,

*Melaleucas*, native grasses, flowering gums and bottle brushes.

We are conscious of the fact that the bay area cannot be taken back to its original state. With the spread of urbanisation, many exotic species have been introduced into gardens along the foreshore, and because there is no natural boundary between these gardens and the reserve, traditionally people living in this strip have extended their gardens onto the reserve in order to beautify an otherwise barren piece of land.

It is not our purpose to dictate that gardens that have been established many years ago be removed. However, by re-introducing native plants around the foreshore, we aim to provide a natural feel to the walking track and that part of the reserve fronting the water. Beyond this, the Australian species can happily blend in with the introduced species, as they do in most Australian gardens.

The first stage of planting has covered the southern section of the bay on the bottom side of the track, where most of the declared weeds had been removed. It is envisaged that the second stage of planting will take place later in November on the high embankment of the northern section of the bay. The third phase of planting will be in 2012, when a new range of native plants becomes available.

Graham Kelly



Connewarre Bay (Berriedale) looking north

## The Journey of Our Coastal Garden

In 2006 my family, (Dave, Ashleigh, Will and Sam) and I made the sea change to a beautiful coastal block on the East Coast of Tasmania, not far from the iconic Bay of Fires Conservation Area.

We engaged a building designer to assist us create a sustainable, family friendly, passive solar design home with all the modern conveniences including a reed bed/frog pond system to manage our grey water and a composting toilet. We moved into our new home as proud as can be but looking out into the bush from our magnificent double glazed windows all we could see was a scarred and tortured landscape. A friendly visitor commented on what a "horror show" it really was?!!!

With little money in the budget to even think about landscaping we soon realized how large and overwhelming the task at hand was. We were very committed to creating a space that blended with the existing bush, incorporated bushfire management, had drought tolerant plants, was low maintenance and enabled space for children to play *and* utilised endemic natives wherever possible.



By some stroke of luck the following year the local NRM Facilitator arranged a series of coastal garden workshops ran by the inspiring duo; Ruth Mollison, the previous USN Coordinator and Kris Schaffer, a well respected horticulturalist and landscape designer. So that was all the motivation I needed to sign up with the Understorey Network and start the journey of our coastal garden.....



Although in the beginning we were frustrated not having the resources to spend establishing a quick landscape fix it has turned out to be one of the benefits of the process.

By creating your own space very gradually it enables you to monitor what specific species grow well at the site, you can experiment with what best techniques to suit the conditions and the site, you can adapt and change the landscape as conditions or needs change.

You also get fit from manually transferring trailer and wheelbarrow loads of dirt and rock from one location to the next.

We used materials from the block for landscaping such as granite rocks and soil to avoid bringing in contaminated material. The other benefit from using existing soil was that the native seed in the soil germinated and became part of the garden.



Your very first growing season can possibly be compared to how you approach the arrival of your first child. You eagerly read the manual and follow the instructions as stated word by word. You worry endlessly and tirelessly that you watered them too much, not enough, did I soak the seeds long enough in hot water, maybe the water was too hot, how will they adapt to the proposed site, who will look after them if I need to go away and worst of all.....what if I don't succeed!????

Then finally after days of nurturing and tending to the plastic pots filled with dirt a tiny seedling will poke his head up and out of the soil and you feel so ecstatic that you want to grab a stranger from down the street and embrace them with the news that your trigger plant is going to make it! But we will keep that secret to ourselves as we don't want the *non-growers* to think we are a little strange, if you know what I mean!

After four years of growing with the Understorey Network Scheme our garden beds are now scattered with a mix of native plants. Some of the species that I have had the greatest success with growing and incorporating into the garden include; *Indigofera australis*, *Kunzea ambigua*, *Banksia marginata*, *Stylidium graminifolium* and the *Pomaderris elliptica*. Some of the key lessons learnt include: once the plants are established they set and drop seed and **nature takes over and becomes the landscaper**, collecting seed from the species in your surrounding bush and then direct seeding into areas you wish it to grow can also be effective.

Five years on our "horror show" is still in development stage but we have met many of the objectives set out from the beginning. We can now look out our double glazed windows and enjoy watching the superb fairy-wrens tottering on the deck, hear the welcoming song of grey shrike thrush, smell the intoxicating scent of the heady *Kunzea* and see the children climbing trees and digging in the dirt pile.



**Alison Hugo**

Ashleigh, Will & Sam

## Understorey Network Native Seed & Cuttings Workshop

Trevallyn Primary School, Launceston 22 October 2011

A fine, sunny, mid spring day in the pleasant surroundings of Trevallyn Primary School, provided the perfect day for thirteen of us, including Understorey Network members, to learn the skills necessary for native plant propagation. The day was convened by Oliver Strutt and assisted by Anna Povey who helped organise the event. Funding was sourced from the Australian Government through the Caring for our Country program to conduct native plant propagation workshops for the public using Understorey Network methods

Oliver began the workshop with propagation from seeds which is the preferred option.

Using a good quality potting mix either sow seeds direct into forestry tubes to produce strong, hardy seedlings or into seed trays. This allows all viable seeds to grow but can have a high loss rate, requiring careful handling of delicate plants. Transplanted seedlings are not so successful and it is important to keep roots straight.

Polystyrene boxes act as insulators. If possible, obtain boxes with taller sides which are better in providing wind and sun protection

Spring is the best time to sow, with autumn to plant.

Do not allow tubes to dry out. Water each morning with a fine rose spray and grow outside, not in shade houses or glasshouses. Best location is on the east side of a building where pots receive morning sun. Place boxes on either a bench or bricks so they are off the ground.



Next was propagating from Cuttings.

Fill either punnets or seed raising trays with the same mix as for seeds to which perlite has been added. Perlite allows more moisture to be held which is critical for the success of this method. Vermiculite and coco blocks can be used in place of perlite. Use a mix ratio 3 parts native potting mix:1 part sand: 1 perlite. Fertiliser is not needed as cuttings do not need nutrients. Trays need to be extra full with a mounded top, providing depth for the cuttings.

Take cuttings in the morning, during autumn. Semi-hardwood is required for successful results, from 5-10cms in length. Keep moist. Do not allow to dry out. Keep wrapped in damp newspaper or spray regularly. Avoid cuttings from unhealthy plants. Spray secateurs blades with methylated spirits between using on each new plant. Put cuttings into a bucket with 10% bleach which kills pathogens.



For heel cuttings remove most of the leaves, leaving one or two leaves.

For tip cuttings, cut below a node. If very woody, scrape down the side of stem near the base exposing the cambium as new roots will grow from here. Cut base at an angle.

Dip in rooting hormone and plant cuttings close together in punnet, creating a microclimate.



Aftercare is critical. Keep leaves in a moist environment and soil moist - not dry or waterlogged. Place punnets in an ice cream container with a layer of wet sand and sit punnets on top. Moisture will wicker up from sand. Put the whole container in a plastic bag and open occasionally to spray with misted water. If some cuttings brown off, remove and leave the rest. Some species may take up to a year.

### References:

Notes on propagation of different species can be found on the Understorey Network plant database [www.understorey-network.org.au](http://www.understorey-network.org.au).

Ralph, Murray. Growing Australian native plants from seed. Fitzroy: Murray Ralph/Bushland Horticulture, 2003. 2 ed.

Thorp, Veronica. Guide to growing native plants in Tasmania. [Hobart] : Understorey Network, n.d.

Maura O'Connor

## Propagation Pointers

**Family Name** Pittosporaceae  
**Species Name** Billardiera longiflora

**Common Name** Climbing blueberry

A slender understory shrub with stems twining through taller shrubs.

Flowers tubular green to yellow that are quite showy.

Fruit is a blue berry or drupe.

Very wide spread through Tasmania, Victoria and NSW. Probably in the more cooler areas, frost hardy and will grow in shaded areas also. Will tolerate most types of soil that is well drained.

There are 6 spp. endemic to Australia

Seed treatment	Flowers September through to early December.  Collect berries summer to autumn.  Squash the seed in with the fruit or berry then put the contents in a glass jar and leave it at room temperature in the shade for a couple of weeks letting it ferment in its own juices. Then wash all of the squashed fruit from the seed and plant. Place container in a shady cool place to stratify over winter. In September place planted seeds in a nice sunny position and keep damp. Seeds will germinate usually in about 8 to 10 weeks but sometimes not until the following year.
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Propagation notes	Billardiera can also be grown from cuttings taken during April-May and planted into a seed mix with no fertilizer added. Roots usually start to develop about September
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Seed sowing months	May-June
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*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 [Oliver@understorey-network.org.au](mailto:Oliver@understorey-network.org.au)*

**Warner Wait**



## This Growers Scheme Malarkey

I don't know about you but I am thinking of putting in a complaint to management about the "dud" seeds I have been given. As a first year grower and absolute novice I was dead excited to receive my 200 pots, compost and little bags of potential plants. I duly followed the rules to the tee—treating some seeds differently from others, not sowing too deep, laying one grain depth of that gravel stuff (and how long did that take using my best eye brow tweezers?). I even found nice polystyrene boxes to house the pots to shelter them from the wind (huh, they would have to GROW first to see that!). I water them every morning and evening with my special watering can AND I spray them in between with my newly acquired spray bottle should they look a little dry. They have a nice position on the deck (to keep them safe from the critters who eat everything down in the garden) in a sunny position (to keep them warm) and I talk to them frequently offering up incentives as to where they might like to live in the future. And what do I have after 5 weeks? One little banksia! *One* out of 200! Hey, what else do they need? I sowed some rocket and bok choy seeds in the veggie patch last week and they are threatening to take over the whole garden and I have NEVER offered any encouragement to them! When I complained to one of my colleagues at Tolosa Nursery she was equally despondent and has even given up talking to hers she is so cross. It's all well and good us following Warner's advice but come on you seeds, you have some part to play in this too you know! Meanwhile, anyone for rocket?

**Sue Sagewood**

## News Around & About Tasmania

### Still Gardening Program

**Still Gardening** is a program that assists older people and people with disabilities to manage and maintain their gardens. The program recruits volunteer 'Garden Mates' to work one-on-one with clients in their gardens.

The client is supported to actively garden so they can continue to get some physical activity, sunshine and companionship. Occasionally the program does 'Garden Conversions' such as the ones pictured, if it enables the client to continue to garden. This conversion has made the client's garden easier to maintain. The plants were provided by the Understorey Network and grown at the Tolosa Nursery. The client was so pleased with the result and has had to do very, very little with this garden to date.



Before the make over



After the work

The Still Gardening Program has moved to Hobart City Council on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, 24 Davey Street. With a new part-time Project Officer Jenny Newton and Lena Pickering as Program Coordinator.

To contact the program call Lena or Jenny.

**Lena** Phone: 6238 2422 Mobile: 0437 585 665  
email: [pickeringl@hobartcity.com.au](mailto:pickeringl@hobartcity.com.au)  
**Jenny** Phone: 6238 2421 Mobile: 0409 191 553  
email: [newtonj@hobartcity.com.au](mailto:newtonj@hobartcity.com.au)



21 months later

### Forty-Spotted Pardalote Habitat Regeneration Trial

The forty-spotted pardalote (*Pardalotus quadragintus*) is one of Tasmania's most endangered birds, with the total population having declined to approximately 1,000 individuals. Survival of the Forty-spotted Pardalote depends on access to mature stands of white gum (*Eucalyptus viminalis*) for food and shelter.

The Understorey Network, NRM South and Kingborough Council are working together in undertaking a number of experiments to shed some light on the factors that may be preventing recruitment of white gums in the forty-spotted pardalote's range.

The Understorey Network is seeking to engage volunteers to help with the establishment and ongoing monitoring of the trial. This is a unique volunteer opportunity to have a meaningful association with a scientific field trial from establishment to results. Training will be provided and volunteers will work alongside the project team. The trial will be conducted on North Bruny Island.

If you are interested in participating in the project contact USN Coordinator, Oliver Strutt (6234 4286) to discuss the project further.

**Oliver Strutt**



Planting *E viminalis* on N Bruny

### USN Display

USN committee member De Deegan offers advice & information at the USN display at the recent Adult Learners Week Expo, Hobart



## WHAT'S HAPPENING

**The Understorey Network organises many of its workshops with support from the Australian Government's Caring for our Country program and other organisations.**

### **Forty-Spotted Pardalote Habitat Regeneration Trial**

Volunteers required to help with the establishment and ongoing monitoring of the trial. This is a unique opportunity to have a meaningful association with a scientific field trial from establishment to results. Training will be provided and volunteers will work alongside the project team.

**Contact Oliver for more information & application**

### **Plant Identification Walk (South)**

NRM South presented walk and talk about Tasmania's native flora

When: Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> December 2011

Where: Fort Chimo, Oyster Cove

### **Seed Collecting Workshop (North East)**

Learn how to collect seed from different species and help restock the USN seed bank

When: Saturday 21st January 2012

Where: Near St Helens (Location TBC)

### **Seed Collecting Workshop (South)**

Collecting seed to grow plants for Forty-spotted pardalote habitat

When: Sunday 12th February 2012

Where: Peter Murrell Reserve, Kingston

### **Seed Collecting Workshop (North)**

Collecting seed to grow plants for West Tamar Project

When: Saturday 18th February 2012

Where: Holwell Gorge State Reserve, Beaconsfield

### **Propagation Workshop (North)**

Propagating native plants from cuttings and seed

When: Saturday 18th February 2012

Where: Exeter

### **Propagation Workshop (North West)**

Propagating native plants from cuttings and seed

When: Saturday 3rd March 2012

Where: Ulverstone

### **Seed Collecting Workshop (South)**

Collecting seed to grow plants for Forty-spotted pardalote habitat

When: Saturday 17th March 2012

Where: Bruny Island (Location TBC)

### **Understorey Network Committee Meetings**

When: The second Monday of every month, 5:15pm

Where: USN office, Level 1, 148 Elizabeth Street Hobart

All members are welcome to come to our regular meetings – please RSVP for catering purposes

**Please call the office on 6234 4286 or email**

**[oliver@understorey-network.org.au](mailto:oliver@understorey-network.org.au) for more**

**information or to RSVP for any of the workshops.**

**Also check the website for the latest Calendar of Events.**

## 2012 Events

The Understorey Network is planning on having stalls at several expos, shows and markets next year to raise awareness and recruit new members. If you know of a good event in your area that we should be at and you can help with, please let us know.

Once we have a calendar of events confirmed, keep an eye out for an email inviting you to help out.

## T-SHIRTS



White T-Shirts with the USN logo on the front and *'it's not the full story without the understorey'* on the back are for sale from the office. In sizes S, M, L and XL they are well priced at \$22.00. Contact the office to order.



**Ideal Christmas Present—for yourself!**