



UnderStories

Summer 2012

Number 60

Promoting, preserving, protecting and rehabilitating native vegetation

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Coordinator's Report

Summer is upon us again and for the Understorey Network that means time to restock our seed bank. Over the past few months we have had some workshops covering native plant identification and seed collection and these have been a good opportunity for people to get more familiar with our local flora. We have more workshops coming up and also encourage members to collect seed from their own properties around the state and send it in. If you would like more information or advice on seed collecting please contact me.

The Understorey Network is also continuing to coordinate a number of grant funded projects. Our "Grow Wild" sponsorship project with Aurora Energy continues with weed control and site preparation work being undertaken at the different sites in readiness for another planting season next year.

The white gum regeneration trial that was established nearly a year ago with NRM South and Kingborough Council is being expanded with an additional part of the trial being set up looking at regeneration potential around isolated paddock trees and the construction of swales to capture water runoff and improve seedling recruitment. We also were able to use controlled burns before it got too hot and dry to test this treatment as well. Now it will be a matter of going back every year and counting and measuring the seedlings to see what is working.

The growers scheme is also in full swing and I hope that all the growers have had good germination of your seeds this year. If you are concerned about lack of germination please do not hesitate to contact me to talk through troubleshooting problems or replacement seed. I would like to wish everyone all the best with their plants and say a big thank you to those of you who are growing plants for projects or other members.

Propagation at the Tolosa nursery is also going well with a late order for some more plants for next year bringing the total number to over 20,000. So the volunteers have been very busy keeping up with a tight schedule of sowing and pricking out the seedlings, and I think everyone is due a well-earned break. Thank you everyone for your hard work!

I wish you all a merry Christmas and a prosperous new year,

Oliver Strutt

Propagation of *Lomatia tasmanica* at RTBG

The genus *Lomatia* of the family Proteaceae, has a southern hemisphere distribution with nine species occurring in Australia and three in South America. Of the Australian species, three are endemic to Tasmania, two of which are widespread throughout the state, and one, *Lomatia tasmanica*, restricted to a single population of less than 500 stems in the southwest. At the state level, it is listed as endangered under the Tasmanian Threatened Species Protection Act 1995 and federally as critically endangered under the Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999.

Its common name, King's *Lomatia* is derived from tin miner and local naturalist, Deny King, who first found the species growing in 1934. It was only formally described by Dr Winifred Curtis of the Tasmanian Herbarium in 1967, two years after the King family collected a flower from the wild. It occurs along creek lines in mixed forest with a canopy of *Eucalyptus nitida* (Smithton Peppermint) over rainforest elements such as *Nothofagus cunninghamii* (myrtle) and *Phyllocladus aspleniifolius* (celery top pine) with an understorey of sclerophyllous shrubs, ferns and mosses.

Lomatia tasmanica grows as a shrub or small tree of 5 to 8 metres in height with broad leathery divided leaves and produces clusters (racemes) of waxy burgundy flowers at the ends of the branches. In cultivation at the RTBG, flowering generally takes place in December, plants take up to seven years to bloom and do not produce flowers every year. In the wild, mature plants are leggy; some with long thin stems with an umbrella-like clump of leaves at the apex, due to the lack of light under the canopy, but those at the Gardens are multi-branched due to repeated cutting for propagation material.

Mature fruit and seed have never been found in cultivation or the wild and this is most likely due to the triploid nature of the clone, making it sterile. Fossil leaves of *Lomatia tasmanica* found in southwest Tasmania were dated at 43,600 years old and given that the plant is a clone and has only been able to reproduce vegetatively by rhizome, it is possibly the oldest living plant in the world.

Nature is not kind to *Lomatia tasmanica*. It is susceptible to *Phytophthora cinnamomi* root rot and bush fire may not allow the population to re-establish between fire events, even resulting in the death of all stems. A further threat to the future survival of *Lomatia tasmanica* is climate change. The experience in cultivation at the RTBG has shown that *Lomatia tasmanica* is extremely susceptible to changes in

moisture and humidity, with rapid death following display indoors.

The RTBG has worked to secure a conservation collection of 50 plants. Propagation, given the failure of the species to produce seed, was from cuttings, and this continues to be the method for producing new plants. Cuttings can take up to 12 months to root and have a strike rate of between 60% and 80%. Whilst the strike rate is reasonably good, *Lomatia tasmanica* resents root disturbance, and major losses occur when potting on. To overcome this, the cuttings are originally placed in individual potting cells, rather than punnets. As well as being tricky in pot culture, *Lomatia tasmanica* has also proven even more difficult to maintain in the ground. Only specimens that have been grafted on to a rootstock of another Tasmanian species, *Lomatia tinctoria*, have survived in the ground. A major problem in securing an ex-situ conservation collection of *Lomatia tasmanica* has been the paucity of material for propagation. As the species is a clone it is an ideal candidate for proliferation in tissue culture propagation. One advantage of this is that large numbers of plants can be produced from small amounts of material once a species has been successfully established *in vitro*.

Plants of the genus *Lomatia* produce a leathery follicle but no fruit has ever been recorded in *Lomatia tasmanica* in cultivation or in the wild. The flowers of *Lomatia* species are protandrous, the pollen is released from the anthers before the stigma becomes receptive, and this promotes out crossing between individuals.

The RTBG holds plants of *Lomatia tasmanica* in an ex-situ conservation collection and will continue to build on this but the threats facing the species in the wild are very real. The lack of material for propagation continues to be a problem and the annual nursery propagation cycle will be ongoing to ensure that the target number is maintained. The survival of explants *in vitro* has been increased from a few days to over 8 months and research will continue with this difficult clone in the hope of mass producing it to help secure its survival into the future.

N. Tapson

Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens

Edited by Sue Sagewood



Cressy Students Get Going For the Environment

In early August the Agricultural students from Cressy District High School participated in two days of workshops and activities learning about the natural environment and ways to care and maintain water ways and natural resources in our community.

The first day workshop facilitated by Oliver Strutt from the Understorey Network involved students learning how to propagate native plants from seeds and cuttings. Students learned how to grow a range of plants from native saggas and grasses to tea trees and blackwood trees. Students planted several hundred seeds and cuttings and they are hoping to replant these next year in sensitive areas in our community.



Nick Spencer, Sam Luttrell, Matthew Barnett, Oliver Strutt and Breanna Hampton planting seedlings

Day two involved a mass planting of native plants on the river banks at the Mill Dam Reserve at Longford. This day was led by Mr Hugh McKinnon from the Mill Dam Action Group and supported by NRM North and the Northern Midlands Council with assistance from Monique Case and Michael Black from these organisations.

The students planted several hundred plants ranging from native grasses and shrubs close to the river edge to tea trees and bottle brushes further away from the bank.



Dean Quarry, Kelsey Prichard, Jessie Mattarozzi & Hugh Mackinnon from the Mill Dam Action Group.



Breanna Hampton, Jesse Glover and Kelsey Prichard.

Many thanks goes to all those people involved over the two days, especially the students who worked for several hours ensuring the plants were planted appropriately in this sensitive area. Students were most impressed that they had made a real difference to the Mill Dam environment and they are especially looking forward to watching their small commitment blossom for many years in to the future.



Monique Case from NRM/North Midlands Council, Tempany Thomas, Josh Newall and Will Gibbons

**Richard Goss
Agricultural Studies Teacher.
Cressy District High School**

Birthday Celebrations at Tolosa Nursery and Gardens

October 15th dawned still, calm and quite overcast, but it was the opposite at the Tolosa Street Native Plant Nursery and Garden, where there was lots of activity. There were a few worried moments that it would rain but finally rays of sunshine appeared and the fifth birthday celebrations got underway.

The gardens were spruced, paths newly compacted with Tolosa gold gravel, the pulchella hedge neatly trimmed and the new pale sandstone wall-seat gleamed in the sunshine.



Andrew Wilkie with our guests

Federal, state and local political representatives arrived at midday along with founding members of the Tolosa Nursery and Garden, Ruth Mollison (USN), Annette Souter (Life Without Barriers) and Margaret Steadman (Sustainability Tas), USN members, LWB staff and their charges, friends and relatives.



Lesley Mackay from LWB

had made his home indoors.



Volunteers had been on site since early morning, moving the last of the gravel and mulch piles, cleaning seats, setting up tables and chairs, cooking the barbecue and catching a wayward possum that

After many unsuccessful attempts at trying to keep 'poss' outdoors but failing, our nursery manager spotted the gap above a

door where 'poss' was obviously entering nightly. A hastily made possum catching device allowed 'poss' to be caught carefully and released at the base of the large trees at the bottom of the garden, where we hope it will eventually think of as home.



Annette, Margaret & Ruth

The three visionary women initially responsible for establishing the nursery/garden, Ruth Mollison (USN), Annette Souter (LWB), Margaret Steadman (Sustainability Tas) all of whom are no longer with these organisations, were in attendance to see how far their ideas had evolved – the photographs speak for themselves.



Amanda is presented with a gift from USN

Following the formalities, guests enjoyed a barbecue, drinks and a slice of birthday cake before touring the garden and nursery.



Jen & De working the BBQ



Our new wall and garden

Men and women and their carers, from Life Without Barriers use the site daily; engaging with the community; working in the nursery and garden and thus providing valuable support in the propagation of native plants; and caring for their community vegetable garden.



The beautiful stone wall

“What a man needs in gardening is a cast-iron back, with a hinge in it” (Charles Dudley Warner 1871) or more bodies assisting with the work. There are now eleven volunteers who regularly assist at the site, but there are always more jobs to be done. Some propagate native plants and tend to the nursery tasks and others carry out structural improvements to the premises.



Home grown—Oliver’s children Sophie & Henry

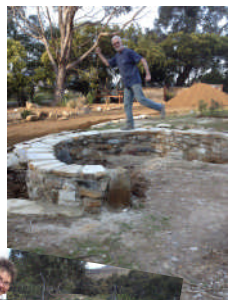
So from a derelict nursery site a beautiful garden and productive nursery has risen. The sound of frogs and birds ring out, skinks slink away as people pass by, the echidna burrows into the ground, possums and wallabies keep watch in the night and eat a little and sometimes a lot of foliage – and the place is a lovely community in which to ‘work’.

Next time you are planning a picnic or barbecue, a cycle or training run or a bush walk down the north south track, allow some time to visit the garden. Call in to take a look.

Amanda Cole

The Great Wall of Tolosa

There are many great walls in the world and I have seen quite a few of them in my travels. They keep countries separated, keep people in and keep animals out, but none quite compare to the Great Wall of Tolosa Nursery. This is an impressive piece of stonework whose very existence is to support the many backsides of the people who will come to admire its beauty. Built by our own local expert, Gordon Strutt and ably assisted by Amanda and yours truly with Ian on cement mixer duties, this wall will become renowned as a local site of significant interest. If you have not yet made the journey, may I suggest you do. Bring your flask, wander the garden and rest your butt on our wall as you ponder its magnificence and admire the newly edged garden beds thanks to the hard work by volunteers from CVA .



Sue Sagewood

Presidents Report Summer 2012

I think we are really lucky this season, with good rain getting our spring seed sowing off to a great start and all the autumn plantings will have benefited too. With good ground preparation and a little mulch there shouldn't have to be too much watering unless the summer turns extremely dry. It is the first summer after planting that is the most important for the new plants, as far as watering goes.

Seeds planted this spring will need tender loving care. They must be kept damp at all times with watering every morning. They only have to totally dry out for one day and you can loose them. Watering in the late evening means the new germinating leaves stay damp all night and this can create 'damping off' of the plants.

The Understory Network has had a wonderful year, with our coordinator managing the nursery, organising work shops and displays, doing seed collecting trials on Bruny as well as establishing new areas with plants. Our Fifth Birthday celebrations of the Tolosa Nursery and Garden went extremely well. Our information stall at the Sustainable Living Expo received interest from many people.

I hope every one has a wonderful growing season and good germination with their seeds as well as having a very happy Christmas.

Warner Wait
President

Propagation Pointers

Family Name. Proteaceae
Species Name Lomatia tinctoria

Common Name Guitar Plant

There are 3 species growing in Tasmania,
Lomatia polymorpha, which grows at higher altitude
Lomatia tasmanica grows in the south west
Lomatia tinctoria which grows over a large area of Tasmania from the east coast to 1000 m and will grow in poor soils, in shade or sunny situations.

This plant is very closely related to Grevillias and has a very similar flower and seed type.

Seed treatment	Most Proteaceae plants have quite a hard seed coat but if sown fresh you should get a good germination but don't be in a hurry to throw them out if you don't get a germination after sowing as I have experienced some good germination 12 months later. Seed ripens very quickly; it can be ready to collect one week but a week later it may have dropped. Best collected December to February
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Propagation notes	Plants can be grown from cuttings taken February to May. The potting mix should be 2 parts composted pine bark and 1 part sand with no fertilizer mixed with it. They are also a rhizome plant and shoots coming up from the roots can be dug up and planted generally with good success.
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Seed sowing months	After seed collection January-February. Seed can also be sown September-October but may take longer to germinate
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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 understorey@gmail.com





South East Tasmanian Aboriginal Corporation gets a boost to help conserve cultural heritage

The South East Tasmanian Aboriginal Corporation (SETAC) has received funding to assist in a series of site maintenance projects for the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Sites they care for on the coastal zones of the Huon Valley and Kingborough Council areas. The funding is from the Australian Government through Caring for Our Country.

'SETAC is developing a program of activities over the coming year and encouraging the community participation in planned working bees to clean up sites, remove weeds and replant native flora where the sites are suitable' Faye Tatnell (SETAC General Manager) said. The Program will be run in conjunction with the Parks and Wildlife Service and both local councils as well as close collaboration with Understorey Network and Landcare Tasmania. SETAC's main functions are Primary Health Care and Aged Care Services, it also has a strong commitment to Aboriginal Site rehabilitation and will be hosting working bees as Extra Hands activities.

SETAC is a member of the network and is planning to host USN workshops on plant propagation and local provenance seed collection activities in the new year (*Page 8 for details*). Participants will receive a presentation on Aboriginal Cultural awareness during the working bee in recognition of their contributions to caring for the sites.

We will be keeping everyone informed of progress in planning the working bees through the USN Newsletter and Landcare Tasmania e-newsletter and associated networks. Members of the public interested in participating in working bee activities can contact Alan Barton (0449 039 110)

This project is supported by South East Tasmanian Aboriginal Corporation, through funding from the Australian Government's Caring for our Country initiative

Alan Barton

Native Gardens Booklet

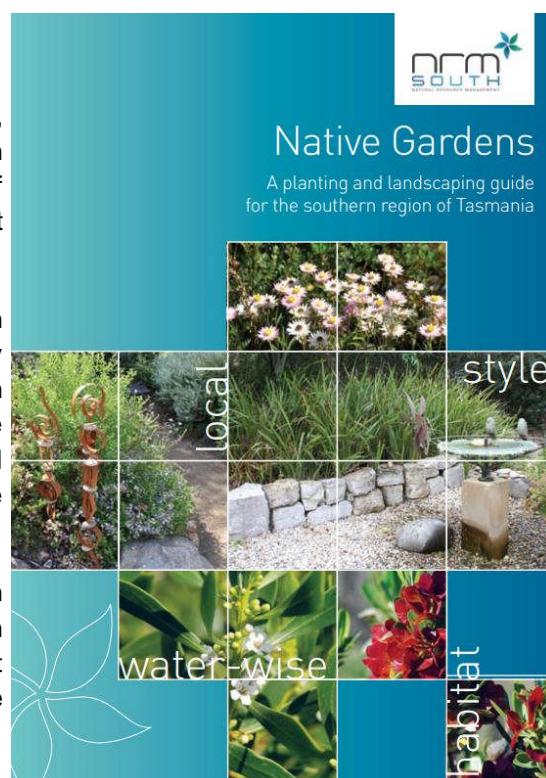
A new guide to planting and landscaping with local native plants has just been released for southern Tasmania. The booklet provides simple but inspiring advice for gardeners about local native plants that work well in a landscaped garden setting. The selected natives make perfect replacements for many of the weed species often found in gardens which commonly become escapees.

Five simple but attractive landscape designs, including Japanese, formal, cottage, contemporary and naturalistic feature in the guide, highlighting the various styles and functions local native plants can fulfil as well as the varied colours and shapes they offer. Many of the species selected for the guide also attract and provide habitat for native animals such as butterflies, frogs and birds.

The booklets have been produced in partnership with the Australian Plants Society, Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens, Understorey Network, Gardens for Wildlife Program and Kris Schaffer from Bush Foods Garden Designs. Free copies are available through those organisations as well as Councils and nurseries that stock local native plants. The guide can also be found on NRM South website www.nrmsouth.org.au

NRM South would like to acknowledge the Australian Government's Caring for Our Country Program and the Australian Plant Society for funding support, and the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges NRM Board for allowing their Coastal Gardens Guide to be adapted for southern Tasmania.

Jill Pearson



Calvert's Hill project

'Floppy-top' fencing boosts survival chances for last stronghold of Morrisbys Gum near Cremorne

Eucalyptus morrisbyi, commonly known as Morrisbys Gum, is a eucalypt endemic to south eastern Tasmania and is known from only two natural populations. Volunteers from the Understorey Network, Friends of Calverts Hill and the Pipe Clay Coastcare group planted the trees one year ago but the saplings were struggling against browsing pressure.



Weronika Leszczynski & Sebastian Szyja of CVA

This year the Understorey Network, with the help of Conservation Volunteers Australia and the Parks and Wildlife Service and funding from NRM South, went back and erected a possum-proof floppy-top fence around the planting to protect the struggling trees.

What's Happening

Please call the office on 6234 4286 or email oliver@understorey-network.org.au for more information. Also check the website for the latest Calendar of Events.

Please note that RSVPs are required for all events

Seed Collecting Workshop (South)

Collect seed for a local revegetation project and learn about local Aboriginal heritage with the South East Tasmanian Aboriginal Corporation (SETAC)
When: Saturday 19th January
Where: Rocky Bay, near Cygnet

Seed Collecting Workshop (South)

Learn techniques to identify Tasmanian native species and collect seed to be used in local revegetation projects
When: Saturday 2nd February
Where: Snug Tiers Nature Recreation Area

Plant Identification and Seed Collecting Workshop (East)

Learn techniques to identify Tasmanian native species and collect seed and cuttings to be used in local revegetation projects (Funded by NRM South)
When: Tuesday 26th February
Where: Bicheno

Revegetation Techniques Field Day (South)

Learn about different techniques and the latest products available for maximising the success of revegetation plantings
When: Friday 15th March
Where: Calverts Hill Reserve, Sandford

Seed Collecting Workshop (North)

Learn techniques to identify Tasmanian native species and collect seed to be used in local revegetation projects
When: Saturday 16th March
Where: Kate Reed Reserve, Launceston

Seed Collecting and Native Plant Propagation Workshop (North)

How to propagate Tasmanian native plants from seed or cuttings, including a walk to collect seed and cuttings material
When: Sunday 17th March
Where: Lilydale

SeaFest – Display and Native Plant Workshop (South East)

The Understorey Network will be having a display, seed collecting and propagation workshop
When: Saturday 23rd March
Where: Triabunna

Sustainable Living in Kingborough (SLIK) Love your local landscape expo (South)

The Understorey Network will be having a display and propagation workshop
When: Sunday 7th April
Where: Kingborough Council Chambers, Kingston

Seed Collecting and Native Plant Propagation Workshop (North West)

How to propagate Tasmanian native plants from seed or cuttings, including a walk to collect seed and cuttings material
When: Saturday 13th April
Where: Ulverstone

Seed Collecting and Native Plant Propagation Workshop (North West)

How to propagate Tasmanian native plants from seed or cuttings, including a short coastal walk to collect seed and cuttings material
When: Sunday 14th April
Where: Heybridge Hall, Blythe Heads

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