



Newsletter

AUTUMN 2004

C.R.I.S.P. NEWS

Community of Ringwood Indigenous Species Plant Nursery

17 Greenwood Avenue, Ringwood 3134

Telephone: 9879 3911 Fax: 98979 1161

News from your Neighbourhood Nursery



A community group of volunteers dedicated to saving and sustaining the indigenous plants of our local environment

Our Sales Area Opening Hours

Wednesday: 9.30 am - 12.30 pm

Friday: 9.30 am - 12.30 pm

Sunday: 1.00 pm - 3.00 pm

VOLUNTEERS STILL NEEDED!

*Do you have any spare time on a Wednesday or Friday morning?
If so, and you have some interest in plants, we would love to see you.*

No experience necessary!!

CRISP MANAGEMENT TEAM 2003-2004

Nursery Manager: Debi Nixon; Nursery Assistants: Graeme Heatherill & Bill Hermon

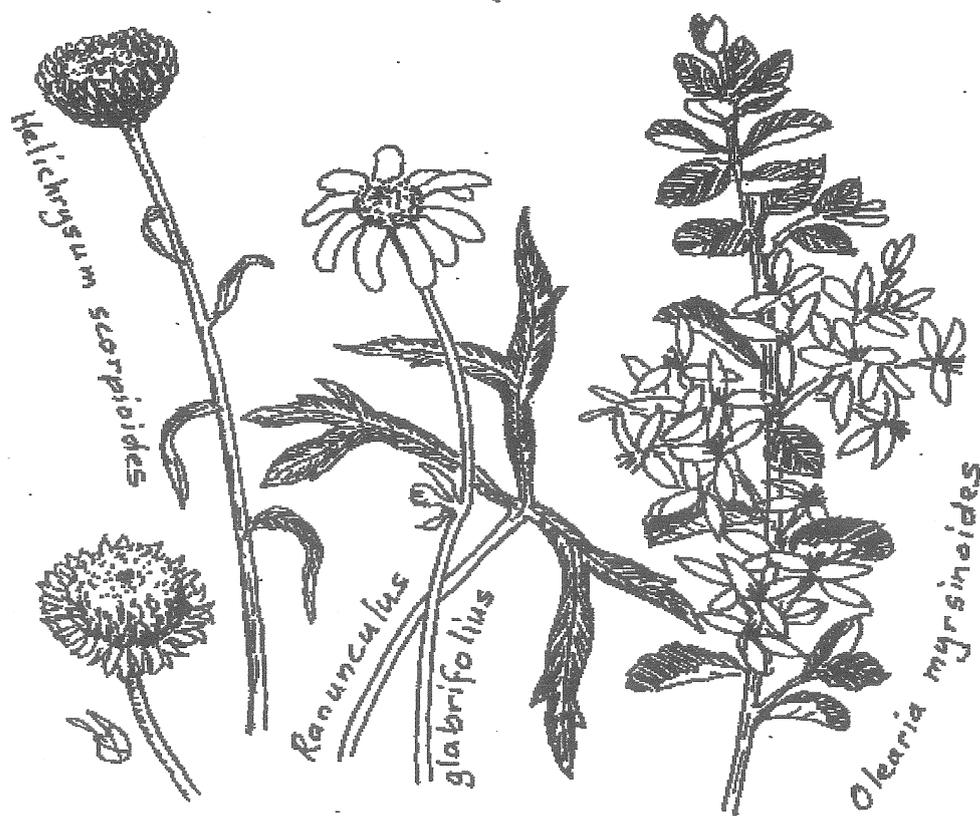
COMMITTEE:

Olwen Jones, President
Annette O'Sullivan, Nursery Co-ordinator
John Beeston
Greg Jacobs

Carmel Koesasi, Vice President
Pam Catling, Treasurer
Paul Chenery
Joyce Jones

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Message from our President:

In this issue, I'm afraid that I have two resignations to report. It was with regret that the committee accepted the resignation of Marian Aiken-Petersen, our Newsletter Editor and Secretary and, although we don't expect to measure up to Marian's high standards, we shall do our best to continue issuing a newsletter. However, we do need a new Editor for CRISP News... Is there anyone, both willing and computer-literate, who might like to help with the production of our Newsletter?

The other resignation is of our Nursery Manager, Jo Middlehurst. We knew that this was a possibility as Jo completed her Diploma at the end of 2003 and was looking for full time employment. We are certainly grateful for all the work that Jo has done for CRISP, and wish her all the very best for her future life in Central Victoria.

However, we are fortunate that another graduate of the Natural Resource Management Diploma at Swinburne TAFE has agreed to take over from Jo, and it is with pleasure that we welcome our new Manager, Debi Nixon.

Farewell from Jo Middlehurst:

During late summer and early autumn the nursery was a hive of activity. A lot of projects were completed around the work area and as a result the nursery is looking great and ready for the autumn rush on plants!!

Fantastic work by some of our regular volunteers has cleaned up many areas around the nursery buildings and compounds. Ivy removal, mulching, garden bed weeding, trimming and tidying up of larger shrubs and creating new garden beds around the morning tea tables are some of these great projects. Also, a possum box has been built to house a little ringtail friend found nesting in a deciduous tree.

The glasshouse has been revamped and looks great. It will work more efficiently now being warmer and temperatures regulated easily.

Autumn is time to pack orders ready for plantings when the rain finally arrives. The stock area is getting full and looking healthy. Maroondah Council has orders for five of its reserves and some of the Friends' Groups. Also, we have orders for some private landholders and landscapers who have projects in the local area.

Sunday sales have started up again and the new sales area is bursting with a large variety of species to choose from.

We have a new group of Year 11 students from Aquinas College visiting us for four sessions over the term. They are studying the environment and are learning about plant propagation techniques with us.

Finally, I have decided to move on from CRISP and have resigned from the manager's position. I am moving to northern Victoria to pursue my interests in Landcare and rural environmental management. I do so with mixed feelings of sadness and excitement, having thoroughly enjoyed my time at CRISP both as volunteer and employee, and have learnt a lot. I will miss the friendly atmosphere at the nursery and the yummy morning teas.

Hello from Debi Nixon:

I feel extremely fortunate to have been offered the position of Nursery Manager at CRISP. Over the past three years I was an infrequently seen volunteer whilst studying for my Diploma at Lilydale and some of you may have noticed me from September to November in 2003 mysteriously measuring and re-measuring the gardens in front of our stock area. With Jo's encouragement I have redesigned the garden beds to display a wider variety of our local provenance. As part of the final year of my course, this major project gave me the opportunity to develop an insight into landscaping native gardens, and I would like to thank Jo, Annette and Graham for their valuable assistance.

There have been a few changes around the gardens at CRISP, which I hope that everyone will enjoy. Graham, Annette and I have each taken on a garden as a pet project - Graham has planted microlaena grass and with Bill's help has redesigned and planted out the border gardens around our picnic tables. It looks fantastic.

Annette has taken on the mammoth task of weeding out and redesigning the front car park garden area, which contained many rescued and seed stock plants.

I have weeded out part of the gardens in front of the stock area and, with the help of staff and volunteers we have sprayed weeds, trimmed larger bushes and removed several plants. In the coming weeks we will be planting out these beds with more diverse species, to show off our wonderfully prolific native provenance.

We have completed many orders over the past month, including several large Council orders for the local parks and reserves, as well as Friends' Groups, Melbourne Water grants and to private members.

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY - JUNE 5th, 2004:

The Ringwood Library has organized a celebration of World Environment Day on Saturday, June 5th 2004 and has asked the Nursery to be involved. So CRISP Nursery is to have a Display at the Library on that day. For further information, please contact the Ringwood Library direct on 9870.0177

REGENERATION - GETTING STARTED by Trevor Blake

We seem to have learnt a little in this business of regeneration - some of it the hard way - the very hard way. So, if I may pass on to anybody contemplating regeneration a few points that may assist, then I can assure you the rewards are significant.

Let's look down at our feet first because this is where the action is. Number 1 problem is weed control. Weed seed is lying waiting for you to do anything that will allow it to germinate, they are opportunistic and as we all know can outgrow any plants just placed in the ground.

The first thing to do is check out the site carefully to see if there is anything that may be indigenous. If it's a bare block there will probably be a greater chance of having some remnant flora. If there is, treasure it, weed around it and try to strengthen the patch. Existing houses will probably have none at all. If you have doubts, bring a sample to an indigenous nursery or native plant specialist nursery. Don't waste your time anywhere else as the knowledge is generally not there.

If you have rampant grasses as lawn, such as couch, kikuyu or buffalo grass then it may be best to spray it, leave it and if it reshoots hit it again. Or if there is only a little left I would dig it out, but be sure to get the lot. This bare ground now needs to be covered. Use anything that is biodegradable, layers of newspaper, old fibre underfelt, cardboard, carpet (not synthetic) and moisten the ground first before applying this layer. Buy and apply a layer of mulch, a truckload from the street tree prunings is fine. Don't worry if you can't use it all, it will improve with age as it weathers. Now you have time on your side, as the weeds are not growing as you read these notes.

If you have weeds pouring in from an adjoining property the above is the technique I would use - you are creating a barrier. If you are in a place where there is an existing garden that requires a total rework, leave any indigenous trees, no matter how tatty they look - it's remarkable what a little TLC can do. Big trees are gobblers of food and moisture, deciduous ones even more so. Rip out the shockers, cotoneasters, prunus, privet and pittosporum. Poison the stumps immediately with 'Roundup' solution painted on or, if you want to remove the roots, cut a few and hook your car on for added grunt. If the branches need removing, leave as much trunk as possible to act as leverage. By clearing an area or bed you have let in the light, aerated the soil and growth will be rewarding; and the weeds will also be in on the picnic, so mulch for sanity.

A good maxim is to proceed slowly with a small area, this will allow you to work out a few techniques. The areas you have tackled must be maintained so that weeds are removed before they seed. Into these mulched areas plants can now be allocated - make sure mulch is not up around the stems. A good technique here is to cut the bottom out of a 15-cm. pot and place it around the plant, this prevents mulch problems, blackbirds scratching everything out and it's a good way of giving the plant a little extra water in the first year.

On a property in East Ringwood we are removing big pittosporums, and to overcome the weed problem I am adamant that the light will be let in gradually, so I ringbark them with a single cut from a bush saw, about blade depth. The trees die slowly over 18 months, shed their leaves gradually and let light in slowly, allowing me to plant and control weeds, regrowth below the cut is broken off and once the tree is ready for removal it is virtually dead. Under no circumstance will I let light in quickly by clearing, it's a recipe for heartbreak.

We have a couple of areas on a gravel drive that we use as seed beds for the good guy grasses such as Danthonia, Microlaena and Poas. These we transplant all over the place where we require grasses. Mown areas are predominantly native grasses that require much less cutting, no watering, are very hardy, will stand up to rigorous treatment and remain green for most of the year. A fair quantity of this grassed area was the result of transplanting.

Now, the advantages have been profound because we have created habitat, and the wildlife has become abundant. Frogs have found the water areas and bred prolifically, creating a cacophony of sound. Butterflies drip out of the vegetation in the warmer months and we have recorded 27 species; the grasses, rushes, reeds provide the breeding sites and a range of vegetation the food. Ducks are breeding and bringing up their chicks here, and a huge range of birds is listed. Bats, lizards, sugar gliders, dragonflies and mayflies are all helping to establish an ecological balance.

A rich environment not only will give a great sense of satisfaction, but it can provide an untold source of interest for children. If we can turn on the inquisitiveness of children and get them exploring and discovering the natural world, we may get them away from the TV and some will develop a life-long fascination with their environment.



Men at Work -

THE GLASSHOUSE STORY by Paul Chenery

So many people at the Nursery are commenting on how wonderful the refitted glasshouse is functioning.

The seedlings are jumping for joy and developing at a much faster rate than they were before. "It's fantastic to see this glasshouse finally working as a glasshouse should!" said Jo.

Back in June 2002 it all began. Glasshouses don't last forever!

The glasshouse had some problems - cracking panes falling out on windy days, maintenance difficulties. Just ask Charlie. He'll tell you how difficult it was to fix a broken pane. All in all it was a safety hazard.

We tossed around a few ideas, laser light on top of the frame, pull the whole thing down and put up a polyhouse. Meetings with Tim Cox from the Maroondah Council and a structural engineer gave the all clear on the frame. So, all that was to be done was to replace the glass. With the Council allocating \$10,000, we were set to go. We had a working bee on the Saturday to remove everything in preparation for the work to commence in February.

In the meantime, someone suggested that it would be a good idea to install new shade-cloth on a winch system. So the boys set out to investigate, and ended up at the Nunawading Community Gardens. It turned out to be a dam good idea, so one was ordered and installed before the glass was fitted. The installation of the glass was soon complete with a little help from Graeme. With some minor adjustments, extra fittings, white-washing the walls and cleaning up the job was done.

A big thank-you to all who participated in the project - especially Tim Cox from the Council.



Celebrating the "NEW" Glasshouse!

GO ON, SHOW OFF THOSE INDIGENOUS PLANTS! - by Annette O'Sullivan

Many may think that indigenous plants would not do well in pots. But, what a good way to show off those special plants - especially the ones that are hard to grow! And, you can put them in a prominent position when they are at their best, so you and others can enjoy them.

At the Nursery, we use a soil mix that contains larger bark pieces to give good drainage, and coconut fibre to help retain moisture. So, nothing mysterious about it, now get to and try a few of our local lovelies in pots!

I like to keep my chocolate lilies in a hanging basket, mainly so that I can keep an eye on them, and they are a bit closer to my nose when I want to get a whiff of that beautiful chocolate aroma.

Other suggestions? Well, I guess some of the small herbaceous plants, climbers, any of the small daisies, some of the smaller shrubs, lilies, orchids and some of the grasses. In fact, just about anything - just don't let your pots dry out, and in Spring give them a little slow release fertilizer, suitable for natives, and your plants will thrive.

Here are a few combinations that have worked well for us at the nursery:

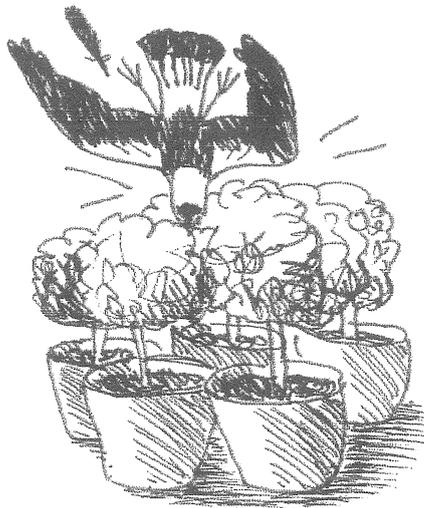
Platylobium obtusangulum, *Eragrostis brownii*, *Bulbine bulbosa*, *Viola hederacea* and *Acrotiche serrulata*.

Tetraloche ciliata seems to do much better in a pot than in the ground.

Poa labillardiera makes a nice display on its own, as do *Dianella revoluta*, *Epacris impressa*, *Stylidium graminifolium* and *Viola hederacea*.

Or, you could just have a huge pot full of those lovely *Bulbine* lilies - that would make a stunning display in Spring!

We have a few display pots at the nursery, so have a look next time you're there. And try a few combinations of your own.



PROFILE OF A VOLUNTEER: Interview and Story by Carmel Koesasi

Bill Hermon sees himself as having a typical Australian childhood. It was lived mostly in Lilydale and then Heathmont and is remarkable, perhaps, mainly because of his boyhood recollection of "the bush" as being a pretty foreign place. It was a place to muck around in, but warily! If he never felt at home in the bush it wasn't for lack of opportunity. His grandparents lived in a tiny hamlet near Big Pats Creek east of Warburton and he visited often. In this wilderness his grandparents had grown a magnificent exotic garden, buttressing their home and, perhaps, their psyche against the strange loneliness of Australia. There was no-one among his family circle that fostered any sense that he was an Australian kid in the process of forming an intimate relationship with or understanding of his country. Rather he was imbued with the impression of the bush as an alien place, unknown and unknowable.

When he was fifteen his family bought an old orchard block at Heathmont. Again his aesthetic appreciation and practical knowledge of gardening was entirely influenced by an anglo-european sensibility. Bill's Dad was a great gardener, creating a lovely place, bursting with azaleas, camellias, rhododendrons and the odd fruit tree or two. These are "the usual delightful suspects" that, unfortunately, have come to be viewed by many as the "natural" plantings for the colder, wetter, hilly areas around Melbourne.

When he wasn't at school or helping his father in the garden, Bill spent a lot of time and had a lot of fun swimming, fishing and dreaming along the bends and billabongs of the Dandenong Creek when it was still a naturally meandering waterway. Sadly its subsequent straightening, economically convenient but ultimately deleterious, did not impinge at all on his consciousness---nor, seemingly, on that of his parents or neighbours. Bill supposes it was accepted as part of the inevitability of progress. Notwithstanding, Bill was quite dismayed when, after a gap of several decades, he returned to Dandenong Creek and found his boyhood haunt so wantonly degraded.

After he married Joy, they bought a relatively unspoiled block in East Ringwood ---probably part of remnant bushland along the southern edge of the Wicklow Hills ridge of which Tintern, Wombolano Park and Harper's bushland are manifestations still. The area around was quite lovely, open woodland with stands of old eucalypts, an understory of acacias, kunzeas, cassinias and ground cover of gahnia and microlaena. Flora Street was aptly named indeed! But Bill had learned his lessons well. "Too many trees were cut down, too many plants uprooted"---all to protect his home and family from the dangerous unpredictability of the Australian bush. Then with characteristic vigorous enthusiasm Bill and Joy set about filling the now empty spaces with beautiful plants from truly foreign places. Luckily not all his neighbours had learnt the same lessons---and there are many of the old trees around still.

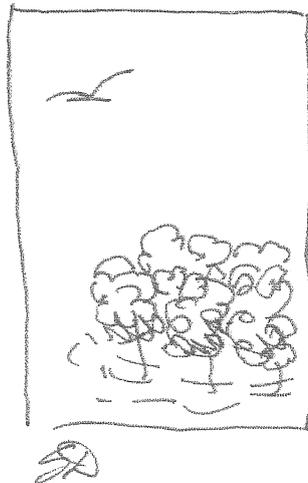
During the busy years of work {Victorian Public Service} and rearing a family, one of Bill's greatest relaxations was documentary watching. Gradually, imperceptibly the great Australian environmental issues---the Franklin, uranium, water salinity and, particularly, the fate of the Murray River began to assume an important place in his thinking. He longed to get out there and DO something. Bill is by nature a doer rather than a theoriser, but he had to subdue this yearning until he had retired from full time work. It was while working part time that he finally had time enough at weekends to help at Greening Australia, then Conservation Volunteers Australia.

By one of those happy coincidences that sometimes occur in life, a local paper published an article about CRISP just as Bill began retirement proper. It was an attractive article outlining the nursery's ethos and structure and calling for volunteers---he was attracted, and the rest is history! Bill has been at the nursery now for almost five years and says that "it is now an integral part of my life and will continue to be so". Bill has also been working with an

energetic zeal at home. Flora Street now glories in a garden that is 80% native. It hosts about 60 different species of which correas, pultenaeas and dillwynias are his favourite shrubs, while he's pretty partial to diannellas, patersonias and tetrathecas. Australia, it seems, is striking back!

But Bill hasn't forgotten or forsaken what is his deepest and most enduring environmental passion---the restoration of the Murray River. It is a task he is now so much better prepared for because of his CRISP experience. Before he had energy and enthusiasm a-plenty but now he has real knowledge of native vegetation---thanks, in large part, to CRISP's many expert and generous volunteers! He longs for the chance to make a significant personal contribution to the river effort and is really disappointed that the urgency of the task does not seem to be fully appreciated by the authorities. Meantime to assuage his desire for waterway amelioration he works, whenever possible, with Dale and the Mullum Mullum Creek Bushcare group.

In addition to his river dreaming, Bill has another, somewhat more anarchic, dream. Jubilee Park has been transformed into an open woodland; the subtle, sweet fragrance of the bush fills the air, wind rustles through the danthonia and poa, a skink slips under the microlaena, while a kookaburra laughs at the wonder of all. And the most wonderful thing is that there isn't a foreign grass anywhere to be seen! Now that's a pretty radical thought! And it seems entirely appropriate that it should have come from a man who, for most of his life, would have described himself as a conservative. He seems to have made a successful metamorphosis into a dinky-di radical---and CRISP is the lucky beneficiary!



NOTICEBOARD

TALKS AT THE NURSERY:

CRISP is keen to provide opportunity for members as well as for volunteers and staff to learn more about our indigenous plants and our local bushland. Firstly, on Wednesday, 19th April at 10.00 am. John Reid, from the Melbourne Herbarium, has kindly agreed to help us make sense of all those Botanical terms, which will help us to identify indigenous plants. All welcome.

There will be further sessions on identification of plants. Anyone interested, please contact the Nursery.

SUNDAY SALES:

Sunday sales have proved a successful venture that we wish to continue. However, it always falls to the same few people to assist. We are only open for 2 hours on a Sunday, and to give the few regular helpers a little time off, aren't there some other people out there who could give up just a couple of hours on a Sunday afternoon once in a while? It would certainly be appreciated.

If you can help, please call the Nursery on Wednesday or Friday morning.

THANK YOU, GWYN!! We would like to thank Gwyn Davies for her special Artwork. Gwyn has always been most obliging and generous in providing us with original drawings and we are extremely grateful.

LOCAL FRIENDS GROUPS

Heathmont Bushlink

Working bees held 1st Sunday
of each month
Contact Roger 88801 5230

Loughies Bushland

Working bees held 1st Saturday
of each month
Contact Carol 9870 8126

First Friends of Dandenong Creek

Contact Barry 9801 1628

FJC Rogers Reserve

Contact Gwen 9879 1427

Mullum Mullum Creek Bushcare

Contact Dale 9870 1060

Friends of Wombolano Park

Contact Andy 9729 2346

C.R.I.S.P. Membership Subscriptions - due on July 1st each year.

[For Members joining after March, their next subscription falls due the following year.]

Membership Fees:

SINGLE \$10 per annum
FAMILY \$15 per annum
GROUP \$20 per annum

What does membership mean for you? All plants are then available at reduced rates - e.g. tube stock will cost \$1.00 instead of \$1.50 and 150 mm pots cost \$3.00 instead of \$4.00.

Please forward payment to:

The Treasurer
CRISP Nursery Inc.
PO Box 706
Heathmont 3135

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