



FRIENDS OF MOUNT PAINTER NEWS

JANUARY 2014

JANUARY'S WORK PARTY

WEEDING

When: 8.30am – 12 noon, Sunday, 19 January

Where: Northern Slopes

To get there: Enter reserve entrance between 20 and 22 Booth Crescent, Cook. Follow red markers uphill along track to the right to the tanks

The task: Weeding: digging out and cutting back herbaceous weeds and cutting and dabbing woody weeds. Some young trees also need to be given bigger tree guards to protect them from kangaroo damage

Wear: Hat, long-sleeved shirt, long pants and sturdy footwear.

Bring: Drinking water, a mug and some food to share for morning tea. Friends of Mount Painter will provide tea, coffee and juice.

February's work party will be held on Sunday, 16 February. We will be weeding in the Old Road Reserve, the strip of eucalypts adjacent to the southern boundary of the Community Garden on Bindubi Street.

DID YOU KNOW THAT MANY OF THE WEEDS ON MOUNT PAINTER ARE EDIBLE?

Among Mount Painter's edible weeds are Amaranth, Blackberry Nightshade, Fat Hen, Goatsbeard, Mallows, Plantains and Prickly Lettuce. You can find out more about them in *The Weed Forager's Handbook: A Guide to Edible and Medicinal Weeds in Australia* by Adam Grubb and Annie Raser-Rowland (<http://www.eatthatweed.com/edible-weeds-book/>).



Photos of Goatsbeard and Mallow from Adam Grubb's website

RARE AND PROTECTED PLANT SURVEY

In early November 2013, five FOMP members helped Michael Mulvaney from the ACT Government's Conservation, Planning and Research Unit with his survey for rare and protected plants on the reserve. It was generally encouraging to learn that:

- The survey had added 62 records for 10 rare plant species to the list that was compiled for the reserve in 2002-03.
- Large Tick Trefoil (*Desmodium brachypodum*) and Bristly Rock Fern (*Cheilanthes distans*) were not recorded in 2002-03 but are present now. Yellow Burr Daisies (*Calotis lappulacea*) are now found over a much wider area than ten years ago, and Yam Daisies (*Microseris lanceolata*) are now common in the Wildflower Triangle.
- But no Blue Grass Lily plants (*Caesia calliantha*) were sighted in 2013; there were three on the north-western slopes in 2002-03.

Michael also assessed the condition of the reserve's vegetation, finding that in the last 10 years around 10% has substantially improved. He suggested this change is largely due to FOMP's hard work. Interestingly, the northern slopes behind the houses have markedly improved in condition while the southern part of the Wildflower Triangle has deteriorated, even though we have worked extensively in both these areas for a number of years. Michael wondered if the difference between them could be attributed to the northern slopes having been subject to controlled burns over the last 10 years whereas the Wildflower Triangle has not.

WHAT FRIENDS OF MOUNT PAINTER DID IN 2013

Each year the Parks and Conservation Service produces *Scribbly Gum*, in which the ACT's Parkcare, Landcare and environmental NGOs report on the year's activities. What follows is Friends of Mount Painter's contribution to the 2013 *Scribbly Gum*. The full contents of *Scribbly Gum* is available at http://www.tams.act.gov.au/about-us/volunteers/scribbly_gum_newsletter.

REHABILITATING MOUNT PAINTER

Controlling erosion. Our major project for 2013, guided by landscape ecologist, David Tongway, has built on earlier efforts to control erosion under mature eucalypts that are growing on steep slopes. The erosion has resulted from a dearth of large, shady trees on most of the hill slopes and a substantial population of kangaroos that congregate under the trees, damage the little vegetation there, and expose and loosen soil that is readily washed away in heavy falls of rain. In the past we have laid wood logs along the contours on these sites to slow the water flow and trap sediment, but many logs have now reached their trapping capacity. We need to augment the older logs, and have been fortunate in sourcing coir ones with assistance from



Von Harrington and Dick Roe laying coir logs

Greening Australia, the ACT Parks and Conservation Service (PCS) and a Landcare Australia Spicers' grant. Volunteers from Friends of Mount Painter, Greening Australia's Green Team, and Conservation Volunteers have laid out the logs in two of the reserve's gullies and piled acacia brush on top of them to protect them from kangaroo damage. We have been debating whether this damage is due to kangaroos grazing the logs or lazy footwork as they hop over.



Lines of coir logs covered with brush that have been laid on an eroding steep slope under a yellow box tree (centre of photo) in Horse Paddock Gully

Weeding. Faced with very extensive infestations in many parts of the reserve, which are beyond our ability to control, we have continued to focus our efforts on a few areas of diverse native vegetation and others where we have recently planted out tubestock. We are very encouraged that the northern slopes behind the houses in Cook and, in particular, the Wildflower Triangle are now conspicuously less weedy. For this, we can thank the more continuous ground cover for outcompeting the weeds, as well as our weeding efforts. We are also pleased with our progress with woody weed removal that has occupied several of our work parties. We have targeted woody weeds across the whole reserve and, with chain sawing support from PCS, have now removed virtually all the large individuals. That leaves us now with the easier task of keeping on top of the seedlings that appear. The main exception to the rosy picture in our focus areas is the more frequent occurrence during last summer of African lovegrass plants along tracks and paths, despite our efforts to control it on the reserve and many hours spent spraying it at the reserve entrances.

Caring for plantings and tracking their success. Over the 2012-13 summer, we watered the previous winter's plantings of ground cover species in the Wildflower Triangle and along the Summit Path. Eighty-one per cent of the Wildflower Triangle plants are still alive a year after planting, and we look forward to seeing how well they survive their second summer without watering, and whether they produce offspring. We are also tracking the survival of about a quarter of the 2,080 trees and shrubs planted on the hill slopes by PCS in 2011. Three quarters of them are still alive two years after planting, an excellent result when compared

with the survival to two years old of only a third of the tubestock planted by FOMP during the drought.

Other highlights. One of these concerns the enclosure erected in 2009 round three mature yellow box trees; it has excluded kangaroos from the start and, from 2011, rabbits too. We wanted to see if protection from nibbling rabbits and camping kangaroos would enable regeneration of trees and shrubs which was not evident in this part of the reserve before. Since 2011, one shrub and four tree seedlings have appeared. Another piece of good news is the evidence of improved soil health across the reserve since 2010 when measures of nutrient recycling, infiltration and soil stability were first made by Sarah Sharp. This year, with David Tongway's assistance, we repeated these Landscape Function Analysis measurements and found that, at all five sites in different vegetation types and at different altitudes, nearly all measures were better than three years ago.

And other activities. Other activities with which we have been involved included:

- Helping Don Fletcher in February and August with sweep counts of the kangaroos on the reserve and in the surrounding paddocks.
- Contributing to a Parkcare display at Jamison Plaza in September with four other Belconnen Parkcare/Landcare groups and the Canberra Indian Myna Action Group.



Mixed trees and shrubs planted in the SW corner of the reserve in 2006. *Acacia pravissima*, *A. buxifolia* and *Hardenbergia violacea* flowering in September 2013

We thank the staff of PCS and Ginninderra Catchment Group for their continuing support and the people of Cook and surrounding suburbs who work on and enjoy Mount Painter.

For more information about anything in this newsletter, contact Sarah Hnatiuk on 0424 263 565 or at sarahhnatiuk@yahoo.com.au.