



FRIENDS OF MOUNT PAINTER NEWS

MAY 2014

MAY'S WORK PARTY

Supersedes previous notice about a Wildflower Triangle event

Parks has given us permission to carry out a planting that we had hoped to do this month but had been told we could not because of the impending kangaroo cull – as the cull has now been delayed we can go ahead with the planting.

Date: Sunday 18 May

Time: 9am – 12.30pm

Location: Western slopes of the hill

To get there: Park on William Hovell Drive, eastbound lane, 800m from the intersection with Coulter Drive at end of metal guard rail. Walk on to reserve following red markers

Tasks: Planting shrub tubestock to replace ones planted in 2011 that have died

Wear: Warm clothes, hat and sturdy footwear

Bring: Some drinking water, a mug and some food to share for morning tea. Warm drinks and juice will be provided.

No experience needed, all tools provided

June's work party. On Sunday, 15 June Friends of Mount Painter expect to be spending the day helping the ACT Government's ecologists conduct a count of the reserve's kangaroos - to be confirmed in early June.

LOCAL BUSH TUCKER

A Koori bush tucker garden has been established at Greening Australia, Kubara Place, Aranda, where you can see some of the local plants that were used by the Ngunnawal people of this region. Information about the plants and their uses can be found at http://gallery.mailchimp.com/1cb12e14a4be1fde91846e2c7/files/Koori_Bush_Tucker_Garden_Book.pdf

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

HAZARD REDUCTION BURN IN THE WILDFLOWER TRIANGLE

by Cath Busby

On 15 April, as part of their bushfire fuel management program, the Parks and Conservation Service conducted a prescribed burn in the area of the Wildflower Triangle behind Wybalena Grove, between the bike path and Bindubi Street.



The burn as seen from below the bike path.

On 22 March, FOMP members met with Craig Wainwright from PCS to map areas containing vulnerable plants so that these could be excluded from the planned burn. This information was passed to the Fire Management Unit, and several areas were staked and marked with flagging tape.

Rain intervened, but the burn finally went ahead on 15 April, starting at about midday behind Wybalena Grove and working towards the underpass, where work finished up as darkness fell.

The open grassy areas were only patchily burnt – the fire didn't seem to catch or spread readily in these areas. The main target of the burn appeared to be areas with dense tussocks of *Rytidosperma pallidum* (Redanther Wallaby Grass). The areas that had been marked out were protected by 'wet lines'. Water from backpack units was sprayed along the margins of these areas and then fire was directed outwards from these one-metre-wide lines. This was done very carefully and there was minimal disturbance to the vegetation inside the protected areas.



The next day it was clear that the burn was very light, and the soil was still damp immediately beneath the burnt litter when this was scratched away. Plants immediately adjacent to burnt areas appeared unharmed. A week later, green shoots had appeared in the tussocks and mushrooms had pushed up through burnt ground.

We plan to monitor the recovery of the vegetation over coming seasons, and it should be particularly valuable to be able to compare burnt and unburnt areas. We also hope to be able to feed back some of this information to the PCS to help them plan future burns.

PLANTING IN THE WILDFLOWER TRIANGLE

In the grassy area just south of the bike path there are patches of the introduced pasture grass, Phalaris, which Friends of Mount Painter would like to gradually eliminate and replace with native grasses. We started this process with a small planting of Kangaroo Grass and Plume Grass seedlings on 13 April. We put the seedlings into the holes left after we had dug out clumps of Phalaris. We found that the Phalaris had extensive root systems, no doubt the reason why it is so hardy a plant and so valued by graziers. As this is the first time we have attempted this approach to replacing introduced plants with natives, we do not know how successful it will be. Will the Phalaris resprout from roots left behind in the soil and outcompete the seedlings? Or will the natives flourish?



The seedlings were grown for us by Greening Australia from seed we collected in December 2012 from the grasses growing

100-150 metres further north in the Wildflower Triangle. Thanks to Greening Australia for growing these plants for us. Thanks are also due to the Lonsdale family for growing the grasses planted in March along the Summit Path, and to the staff of the Parks and Conservation Service for moving and filling the water cube for us.

COLLECTING WEEDS ON MOUNT PAINTER FOR A MEAL

Here we see Fat Hen (*Chenopodium album*) being collected from the Mount Painter reserve by two Karen women who were planning to cook and eat the stalks and leaves.



If you are interested in trying some yourselves, Friends of Mount Painter would be delighted to see Fat Hen plants removed from the reserve. It would lessen our weeding effort. Contact Sarah if you need help identifying the plants. Some recipes from old English sources are available at <http://www.celtnet.org.uk/recipes/ancient/wild-food-entry.php?term=Fat%20Hen>.

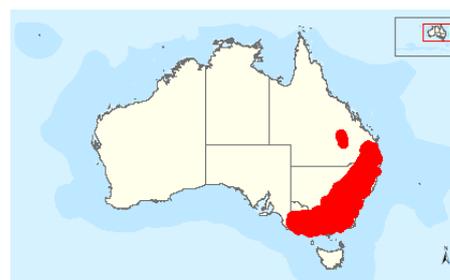
SPECIAL AREAS OF VEGETATION ON MOUNT PAINTER

This map shows areas on Mount Painter Nature Reserve and nearby which have significant vegetation. The yellow hatching relates to a critically endangered ecological community that has been identified by the Commonwealth Government under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. It is known as 'White Box-Yellow Box-Blakely's Red Gum Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland' (grassland from which the trees have been removed).



Box-Gum Grassy Woodlands and Derived Grasslands were once widespread along the western slopes and tablelands of the Great Dividing Range. Now less than 5% remains in good condition and much of this is in small, isolated patches. Remaining patches are still being lost to clearing, weed invasion, and overgrazing. For more information, see

<http://www.environment.gov.au/system/files/resources/be2ff840-7e59-48b0-9eb5-4ad003d01481/files/box-gum.pdf>.



In the case of Mount Painter, we have a number of Yellow Box, for example the large mature trees near the gate on the path to the summit, and a few Blakely's Red Gum. In addition, in the unhatched 'island' in the middle of the hatched area behind the houses are Drooping Sheoaks, an important food plant for the Glossy Black Cockatoo. This cockatoo is regarded as 'vulnerable' in the ACT and NSW. The hatched areas in the Wildflower Triangle and in the northern part of the reserve are where Friends of Mount Painter focus their attention, principally by controlling weeds.

Compiled by Sarah Hnatiuk