



## FRIENDS OF MOUNT PAINTER NEWS OCTOBER 2022

**This is the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, 2021-2030:  
to prevent, halt and reverse the degradation of ecosystems on  
every continent and in every ocean.**

### **PLANTING, PLANTING, PLANTING!**

**Planting 2022 – on the hill.** Over the last three months Friends of Mount Painter have been capitalising on the current ideal planting conditions to put in tree seedlings on the west side of the hill and on the high, steep south-east slopes. With soft, damp soil, digging holes is easy and there is no need to water in the seedlings as we usually do. We appreciated not having to carry water up the steep slopes where we were planting. There are now more kurrajongs and eucalypts (Apple Box, Brittle Gums, Scribbly Gums, Yellow Box) on the hill. That almost completes the tree planting planned for the reserve at present.



The pink tree guards stand out against the green of the south-eastern hillside.



Planting on the hill



A tree guard on the move

**Planting 2022 – in the enclosure.** We have also been planting in the enclosure on the western slope of the hill where we are using the protection provided by the fence to trial planting some of the smaller elements of the flora, namely several daisy species and a small shrub, Heathy Bush-pea. An earlier attempt to establish lilies in the enclosure failed, but limited success with Blue Devils and spectacular results with Hardenbergia have encouraged us to try again with other species.

The enclosure was erected in 2009 with a grant from the ACT Government. We wanted to see if, by fencing off the three mature Yellow Box there and preventing kangaroos from camping beneath them, young trees would establish. There were no tree seedlings stemming from any of the few old Yellow Box in this area. In the 13 years since, only two Yellow Box seedlings have appeared, each of them at the end of a drought. An Apple Box and two Kurrajongs have also popped up to which, a couple of years ago, we added by planting two more Yellow Box and some Red-stemmed Wattle.



Planting in the enclosure

**Planting 2022 – in the Wildflower Triangle.** A very special planting in the Wildflower Triangle was of Aromatic or Basalt Peppercross, an endangered species. Eighteen months ago, Rainer Rehwinkel gave us some plants from which we collected seed that Greening Australia germinated for us. The six resulting plants are now growing in the Wildflower Triangle. We look forward to seeing if they like their new home, in which case we may try to get some more.

**Past plantings – caring for them.** Looking after past plantings has involved putting guards round earlier plantings that need protection from passing kangaroos and removing those no longer needed while we can still easily walk on the hill slopes before the grass and thistles grow. With wet soil, pulling out stakes is much easier than usual.

We removed several mesh guards from well-grown shrubs on the western slopes and left them beside the perimeter track for later pick up. We were shocked and saddened to find that all the metal pickets, some 60 of them, and many of the guards had been stolen. It is the first time we have suffered a major theft.

Installing a mesh guard

**Past plantings – monitoring them.** We have been tracking the survival of many of the trees and shrubs that we and the ACT Parks and Conservation Service (PCS) have planted since 2006. Just over half the 1,054 of the trees and shrubs that we have been following have survived to 10 years of age. The six eucalypt species along with the kurrajongs and sheoaks have done better





(71%) than the seven wattle species (52%) which in turn have done better than six other shrubby species (35%). Some species have started to regenerate, especially the acacias. This information has been useful in guiding the suggestions we make to PCS about future plantings and helping us understand the process of rehabilitating a degraded ecosystem.

We have also measured the trunk diameters of trees planted by PCS in 2011 to get an idea of how they were growing. Apple Box, Brittle Gum and Broad-leaved Peppermint had grown the most vigorously of the eucalypt species; their diameters were nearly twice as large as those of the Yellow Box and Blakelyi's Red Gum.

### SLASHING THE GRASSLAND



Raking the slash into piles used some of it as mulch round the trees we have planted; slash is much lighter to carry than bark chips for mulching on the upper hill slopes.

Grasslands dominated by Kangaroo grass, such as the two grassland patches in the Wildflower Triangle, thrive best if burnt at least every five years. Fire removes dead leaf matter and frees up the spaces between the tussocks for smaller grassland species to flourish.

The upper Wildflower Triangle patch was last burnt in 2014 and the lower one in 2018. PCS advised that a burn would not be possible this year and offered the next best alternative of slashing and removing the slash. The slashing was done by Ranger Kel in July, and much of the slash has now been removed. We have

### ENGAGING WITH THE COMMUNITY



**Mount Painter: past to present.** Ranger Craig Wainwright led a history walk on Mount Painter at the end of September. He concentrated on the period from the first visit by Europeans to the area in 1820 up to Federation. He took us through the time of massive estates belonging to absent owners and minded by overseers and far scattered shepherds, a 'wild west' of a time. After the NSW Government passed the Robertson Act

in 1861, the large estates were split into smaller land holdings that saw families with names familiar to us now establish farms. Craig pointed out where the Shumacks and MacDonalds lived on the land surrounding Mount Painter and where the Tullys still live.



**Parkcare display at Jamison Plaza.** Also in September, we took part in the annual display by Parkcare and other environment groups at Jamison Plaza

**UPCOMING on Sunday, 30 October - a geology walk with Associate Professor Duanne White.**



**THE CONSEQUENCES OF SO MUCH RAIN**  
**The rare sight of water in ACTEW Gully dam**



**Trees down, fences damaged and gates that no longer open**



In the Old Road Reserve



By the water tanks

**Top-heavy wattles have collapsed, splitting their stems**

Box-leaved Wattle with crushed guards that were stored beneath it

