

SUMMER 1997-98 NEWSLETTER

Somewhere around early October many people, including myself, were wondering if our little trees were going to survive the extremely dry Spring we were experiencing. Those people that planted in early Spring (late August- early September) got their trees off to a good start. Those who waited till late September- early October (usually the prime tree planting time because of the warming soil and high soil moisture content) got caught out badly this year. I'm just looking at the calendar and in the second week of October we received 38mm of rain (scattered over 6 days). Unfortunately, when the wind wasn't blowing a gale from the west it was blowing a gale from the east! The misty rain was all to no avail, and many people out on the plains received very little, if any, rain- just the gales! Some people waited till mid October to plant their trees. It's possible these trees might do very well because of these scattered but substantial rains we've received since late October.

It certainly has been a fickle tree planting season. Some customers are prepared to hold on to their trees till Autumn '98 and try their luck then. Well, let's discuss this a bit further. Don't expect all your trees to survive. These seedlings were sown last January and usually can last for 9-12 months in the tube (or cell) before they need to be planted. In tubes especially, the roots will start to become pot bound. The Lannen cells, because of their air pruning slots cannot become root bound- the roots continue to be "burned" off by the air preventing root binding. However, in both containers the roots take up a substantial portion of the available pot space thus making it very difficult to keep water up to the seedlings. Also, after 9 months, the "time release" fertiliser used in the potting mix will be used up. Thus the trees will be going backward. So a couple of hints for those of you with trees left over:

- 1) When watering, immerse your trays in water for about ½ hour to an hour. This will ensure complete saturation of the root system. Watering with a hose is useless unless you use a sprinkler and are willing to use a lot of valuable water. Simple ways to immerse your trees- use an old bathtub, child's wading pool (always remember to remove child first!) or plastic boxes- anything that will hold water- and depends how many trees you've got.
- 2) Any of the trees that are quite tall, you may want to cut these back. Remove no more than 1/3 of the plant. Don't be too concerned if you cut back timber species, you may get double leaders sprouting but one of these will become dominant and take over as a single leader eventually. If your really worried about double leaders just snip off any unwanted shoots .
- 3) Don't forget you'll need to feed your trees with a weak solution of liquid fertiliser ie., Maxicrop, Aquasol, etc.. Fertiliser can be added to the container used for immersing the trees in.

Of course we can't predict what the summer will bring, but for those of us with newly planted seedlings in the ground, the preparation we did before planting is all important in keeping these young trees alive during hot dry weather. You probably sick of me saying this but WEED CONTROL is number one. Whether you use herbicides or mulch or burn your weeds, the moisture retained in the soil is vital to your young trees. And don't forget about those pesky critters with long ears. The Calici Virus seems to have done absolutely nothing in our district. You may have a different story in your area- I hope so.

I recently visited a customers' property and found the plantation (planted 10-96) surviving well under trying conditions (wet, saline) but hares were causing havoc. As soon as the seedlings got above the guards (milk cartons) the young shoots were continuously being nibbled. Later, the landowner said that 13 hares were shot in one night! Of course, hares love the tall weed growth in plantations as cover. These year old trees will obviously have a much better chance without the browsing. If these trees can recover quickly before more hares move in, they should be above the browsing line in a very short time. Don't forget the weeds are even worse competitors than the browsers.

And as for OTWAY GREENING, Wendy and I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your past valued custom and look forward to assisting you with your tree planting program in the future. Of course there are many farm tree nurseries out there so why is OTWAY GREENING any different? Well, I can think of quite a few good reasons!:

- 1) We collect all the seed we use to grow your trees- we have an extensive knowledge of species growing in the region and thus an understanding of the how, what, where, and why of successful tree growing in the region.
- 2) We sow seed directly into the tubes/cells. No transplanting shock or root distortion from pricking out from seed trays.
- 3) We grow everything outside- from start to finish- ensuring well hardened off plants.
- 4) All our Lannen cells are grown on benches which provide maximum ventilation and healthy vigorous plants.
- 5) We specialise. We're not a supermarket nursery. We grow about 70 species of trees/shrubs that, through experience we feel confident growing for you and our local environmental conditions.
- 6) We grow many of the local understorey shrubs/trees indigenous to our region. Some of these can be quite difficult to germinate/grow/collect seed from. However, they are nonetheless extremely valuable (not commercially) in restoring and/or maintaining an ecological balance on your land.

I've enclosed the 1997 OTWAY GREENING Tree List for your perusal, as well as the "Discount Offer". If you'd like to take us up on the discount, give us a ring before January 1st, 1998. (My phone rang very hot last December 31st!) The only things we require from you will be a list of species you want grown and numbers, an approximate pick up date and a 20% deposit. We hope you have a peaceful holiday period and new year.

Naturally,

Wendy and Mike