

The Role Of Understory Species In Agroforestry- Otway Region

1. Nurse Crop- Trees or shrubs used to protect the more valuable commercial species. Usually planted in the outside rows they will help inner tree rows to grow straight without substantial lateral growth and “butt sweep”(curving of trunk close to the ground due to too quick growth and no wind protection). Nurse crop species need to be very quick growing

Suitable species:

Acacia dealbata- silver wattle

Acacia mearnsii- black wattle

Acacia mucronata- sallow wattle

Acacia verniciflua- varnish wattle

2. Soil Nutrient Improvers- All of the trees and shrubs belonging to the Legume family provide nitrogen for themselves, and when their roots die off nitrogen is released in the rotting process to other trees nearby.

Suitable genera:

Acacia- wattles

Daviesia- bitter peas

Goodia- golden tip

Pultanaea- bush peas

Dillwynia- parrot peas

Indigofera- Austral indigo

Platylobium- flat peas

Viminaria- golden spray

3. Weed Control- plants that mulch the soil either by dropping of plant material to the ground or by shading of soil deterring weed growth.

Suitable species:

Acacia paradoxa- hedge wattle

Bedfordia arborescens-blanket leaf

Allocas. Littoralis- black sheoak

Cassinia aculeate- dogwood

Goodenia ovata- hop goodenia

Leptospermum continentale- prickly tea tree

Solanum laciniatum- kangaroo apple

4. Wildlife Habitat- any indigenous plant species provides something for indigenous faunal species whether it be a tall tree or a ground hugging herb. Some species, however, are very important in attracting wildlife to your property and your agroforestry plantation. These species may attract predatory birds or insects that eat the insects that are eating your timber trees. This is a highly complex topic but summarise it by saying the closer your property is to being in tune with the ecology of the region your trees and animals will be more healthy and happy.

Suitable species:

Acacia verticillata- prickly moses
Acacia mearnsii- black wattle
Bursaria spinosa- sweet bursaria
Gynatrix pulchella- native hemp
Hakea ulicina- dagger hakea
Leptospermum continentale- prickly tea tree
Melaleuca squarrosa- scented paperbark

5. Water quality and erosion control- strong root systems that bind the soil and ground hugging, clumping plants filter soil surface run off.

Suitable species:

Acacia melanoxyton-blackwood
Allocas. littoralis-black she oak
Poa species- silver tussock
Goodenia ovata- hop goodenia
Lomandra longifolia- matrush
Dianella revoluta- flax lily