



SPRING 2012 OG NEWS & CATALOGUE

WELCOME TO THE OG and the sun is shining, there's a bit of warmth in the air and the grass is up to our necks! But who's complaining? Maybe we should be clapping our hands. The rain fell when it was supposed to and continued into October which hasn't happened for quite a while. Soil moisture was through the profile which will really help plants survive the upcoming summer. On the flipside, grass and weed growth has been strong and will be challenging trees and shrubs for moisture and sun- another lesson in the importance of weed control. Many projects rely on herbicide for pre-planting weed control but don't forget that there are other ways to control weeds – weed mat squares and rolls are available in many sizes and shapes, some pre-cut for easy planting.

Another tree crop is looming around the corner here at OG. The winter germinating species have done their thing and are jumping out of their seed trays. We've begun sowing the summer germinants but we must wait for your orders to come through so we know which species to transplant into the cells and tubes. That's how it works.

Order your plants before 7th December and receive 15% off the normal price. You get your plants, we get the order!!



AFRICAN MASTER TREE GROWERS VISIT.

Landcare leaders from 5 African countries came to the Otways to participate in the Master Tree Grower Course which was run in part by the Otway Agroforestry Network. During their week long visit, these African community leaders experienced our version of landcare, agroforestry and community we have down this way. They saw small uneconomic logs being used for growing shiitake mushrooms; they walked amongst high pruned and managed trees where we all compared tree growing between their own part of the world and ours; and they were impressed by the large bank of knowledge held by the locals they met. When they visited Otway Greening (see above photo) they were treated to a hands-on experience in plant growing. They found our practical methods readily transferable to growing plants in their own countries where local knowledge is valued and labour is readily available (and high tech, high cost, high maintenance equipment is not necessarily the answer to their revegetation problems).

An issue that kept cropping up in our discussions was trying to get farmers to value trees and perennial food crops for being more than just forage for their cattle and goats- that the trees could provide soil nitrogen, control erosion, shelter humans and stock and even supply food or a commercial product.

These sessions were a real sharing of ideas and knowledge, where we all learned much about each other's experiences. A visit to Uganda next autumn is planned where we can continue the discussion and get some first hand knowledge of the issues on the ground.

THE DIRT FROM THE NURSERY

MIKALA'S HANDIWORK updating our Otway Greening website took place this past year. And what handiwork it is too, I'm sure you'll agree. It has a totally new design and even photos of Mike with grey hair! However, the best thing is the plant descriptions with photos and lots of information. You are able to type in your locality and your indigenous plant list will pop up. We wanted the website to actually be useful- not just a collection of photos and platitudes- and we wanted the visitor to be able to help themselves navigate through the botanical minefield of "what plants do I need for my project". I think we've come close to achieving that and we've had nothing but positive comments from customers throughout the year. If you haven't checked out the site you'll find it here: www.otwaygreening.com.au.



MYRTLE RUST CREEPS EVER CLOSER to our neck of the woods with over 70 outbreaks in Victoria, mostly in Melbourne retail nurseries but also in a private garden in Lorne. MR has the potential to be very harmful to all members of the Myrtaceae family which includes gums, bottlebrush, melaleuca, tea tree etc, which could have the flow on effect to seriously damage many rural industries including forestry, cut flowers, nurseries, etc. Please keep up to date by attending local information sessions and also see the website: www.dpi.vic.gov.au/forestry/pests-diseases-weeds/diseases/myrtle-rust

AND SPEAKING OF DIRT, Wendy and I plus our world famous prickettes will be getting stuck into those little seedlings very soon. Yes, the relaxing (yeah right) month of November slides into December too quickly 'round here. Potting mix is delivered, trays are washed and sterilised, seed is sown and orders are taken...hopefully!

On the right is a nice little picture of just some of the winter germinants ready for pricking out soon. banksia, flax lily, lomandra, hazel, bulbine lily, sweet bursaria, chocolate lily, myrtle beech, tree violet, christmas bush, banyalla, balm mint bush, prickly currant, clematis and the list goes on. All of these plants will only germinate in the winter months so we sow them prior to getting orders. That's right, we're taking a punt on orders coming in over the next few weeks. We take pride in growing these more obscure plants. Obscure because they are more challenging to grow than the usual suspects (gums, wattles etc). Of course the gums and wattles are important for just about



Readying purple appleberry seed for sowing

every rural planting, however without these understorey species, many plantings lack **QUALITY** and **DIVERSITY**.

In 2012 we grew:

170 different plant species from 89 different plant genera from 32 different plant families.

We grow this diverse plant range for our diverse customer base- which includes you!

WEEDS WEEDS AND MORE WEEDS have been a challenge this year with the wet winter we've just had. If you plan on planting trees/shrubs in the spring on rural land, you have to be ready for that narrow window of opportunity when soil moisture and warmth are at their optimum. If you have to fence off the area- do it early. Don't wait too late or the tractor might not be able to get to the site to do the fencing until the window has shut.

If you have to control weed competitors (and almost every job needs weed control) and whether you are controlling weeds with or without chemicals, try to think about what weeds you need to control. Here's a couple scenario's for you to ponder:

1. Well drained eroded creek side. Even with heavy clay soil, the site is well drained because the water level is metres down the steeply incised creek bank. Summer growing kikuyu grass with underground runners needs to be controlled in the autumn before it goes dormant or it will start to grow again in spring after you have planted your trees making weed control difficult. But, onion weed in the same site needs controlling in late winter when it starts to go to flower. If you only do one application of weed control you might miss one of these competitors.
2. High rainfall Otway ridge. If you use glyphosphate for your weed control you may only kill grasses, leaving broadleaf weeds like dandelion, buttercup and yarrow to compete with your plantings.



Of course if you are using mulch or weed mats and/or rolls, you will be able to use one application of these weed suppressants, however your labour and material costs will be higher than using chemicals. Organic growers have no choice.

Once stock is removed from any eroded site, weeds jump at the chance to colonise. Landowners have to be ready. Fortunately, removing stock also slows the stream side erosion helping to clear sedimentation downstream- the healing begins...

Not sure what plants to order??

Not sure when to plant your trees and shrubs?

Not sure when weed control should take place?

Got too many questions!?!?

We'll check out the website. You'll have hours of enjoyment clicking on things. But, if you're like me and would rather talk to a human,

we'll pick up the phone.

Customer service is what we do...

TREE PLANTERS WANTED

Local tree planting contractors tell us they are struggling to find young energetic workers in the tree planting industry. What a great way to see the countryside while earning a living. Know anybody? Let us know.



WE'RE GETTING MORE AND MORE ENQUIRIES for plants suited to the garden.

Some customers are looking for the native grass swale look using poa lab, flax lily or lomandra with the occasional banksia or bursaria poking through. Others are looking for the wild, unkempt look that might require very little watering. Here in this garden bed is a selection of Otway and Western Plains plants including native elderberry, everlasting daisy, the rare netted daisy bush and bootlace bush. Many of the landscaping plants are available in large numbers especially the bulk plants-grasses, sedges, lilies while other, more finicky plants may be limited by how much seed we've collected and the germination successes. Please enquire though as we hate to grow plants without a home to go to!



VISITS AND VISITORS. It's great to get out and about where we can check out the neighbourhood. Not only do we get to see what grows where and why but we get to talk to knowledgeable people about their life, property, country. You never stop learning. Sometimes I get the opportunity to speak with groups who visit or I might speak at a meeting. Recently I spoke to the Eliminyt Primary School Gardening Club about indigenous food plants. We tasted all sorts of tasty (and maybe not so tasty to some!) native foods-murnong, water ribbons, greenhood orchid tubers and mountain pepper. We made shoelaces out of the fibre of the bootlace bush. We smelled the chocolate lily. The kids enjoyed it. So did I. I also had my head swell with knowledge when I was a student in an Angair two day workshop in identifying native grasses, sedges and rushes. I'm still trying to work it all out in my head. Sure am glad I took lots of notes and photos. Now I just need to fit the right note with the right photo!

Beside our African visitors, we also hosted another Master Tree Grower group from the local area. A fantastic crew of enthusiastic participants. If you have more than a passing interest in tree growing I would highly recommend doing this wonderful 6-8 day course (over 6-8 wks) put on by the Otway Agroforestry Network. There will be another course in the Otways next autumn so if you are interested in more info drop us a line.

We hosted a German agroforestry student last summer. Jakob was a great asset to the community as well as to us at OG. He immersed himself in anything pertaining to trees and the environment. I'm sure he'll be back after a very positive few months being shared around the traps and learning about triple bottom lines.

We also had a visit from a small group of people from the Wathaurong community near Geelong. Knowledge was shared- again I learned as much as our visitors. The list could go on but I've reached the end of another OG- our 18th year!!!

Look forward to hearing from you in the next few weeks!

Regards,

Mike and Wendy Robinson-Koss

Otway Greening

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