

SPRING NEWSLETTER 99

Hello to all,

I'm trying to be organised this year and get a newsletter typed up so most customers will be able to receive it when picking up their orders. If you haven't ordered trees for this year you'll be receiving this via the post. Along with our 1999 tree list, our annual discount offer is enclosed. Please note the change of deadline. For the past four years the deadline has always been New Year's Day, however, this year I've had to move the date forward one month to the 1st of December. (No it has nothing to do with the Y2K bug!). This is for three reasons. The first being that some slower growing species need more time to grow and thus reach a good size come spring pick up time.

The second reason has to do with seed germination times/rates. This past January we had, if you remember, quite mild weather conditions- maximum temperatures only in the low to mid 20's. Many of our native tree and shrub species need fairly warm temperatures to germinate. The year before (with hot temps) seed was germinating in days, whereas this past January it was more like weeks (and for some species, months!). By sowing your seed a month earlier in this upcoming year, we can get the germination happening at the right time. And along the same lines, many species, especially those from high altitude zones, actually need stratifying (a period of cold temperatures) before they will germinate. So when I get your order for, say, Shining Gum or Mountain Ash, I then place that seed in the fridge (yes, right next to the lettuce) for 4-6 weeks and then sow it.

The last reason for changing the deadline is the weather. Ah yes, the weather. I used to be able to say with 99% certainty that planting time was September in the drier areas and into October (sometimes even November) down in the bush. However, some of us are getting itchy feet and wanting to plant their trees earlier because of the recent dry over the past three years. So, some people are picking their orders up in early to mid August this year, especially those in the rain shadow area west of Geelong. What does this have to do with the deadline I hear you ask? The seedlings grow very fast during the summer but once April/May comes around the growth of the trees will slow down and then stop during winter. It's not until late July/early August that the trees start to grow again. Now do you see the problem. I know that means organising your tree planting plans even earlier but please be understanding. We are trying very hard to grow many of the local understorey (and local overstorey) species. Seed can be difficult to collect on many of these species, but we feel it is vital that these species be included in farm tree plantations. There are many farm tree nurseries to choose from, some even with lower prices than Otway Greening, but very few grow species such as:

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|---------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| 1) Variable sallow wattle | 6) Yarra gum | 11) Scented paperbark |
| 2) Black she oak | 7) Hop goodenia | 12) Myrtle beech |
| 3) Blanket leaf | 8) Native hemp bush | 13) Musk daisy |
| 4) Mountain swamp gum | 9) Austral indigo | 14) Satinbox |
| 5) Mountain grey gum | 10) River tea tree | 15) Golden spray |

If there are any other species that we can grow for you, feel free to enquire- we love a challenge! By the way, we've had good germination rates with our bursaria recently so next spring we should have plenty to sell. (we'll have 3 varieties- coastal, Deans Marsh, and Winchelsea). Some of you may have been disappointed with not getting any golden wattle, hedge wattle and very few black she oak- we've had an ongoing battle with wallabies grazing these tasty plants- our apologies! (the razor wire is going in soon!) We're looking forward to your continued custom in the upcoming year.

Naturally,

Mike and Wendy