



WORKING BEE REPORT May 31-June 2, 2019

Hurrah for those Autumn rains! All around SA, landcare volunteers were eagerly awaiting them, after a very long, very dry summer. The majority of new plantings are done after the first soaking rains of Autumn, through to late Winter. In places like Cape Jervis, the hot, dry, windy summers preclude planting out new stock after September, so we always plan our June working bee around any new plantings we hope to do for the year, and most years we still have 100s of plants for August.

In late 2018, we had made the decision, not lightly, to plant very few plants in 2019. Instead, we planned to consolidate our existing work by spending more time on other essential tasks such as weeding and watering. We were not fortunate enough to get a state government grant this year, so we have fewer opportunities to employ weeding contractors. Thus more work for our small group of faithful volunteers.

Consequently, our workload this June was much lighter than in past years, with only 400 grasses, trees and shrubs to go in the ground, rather than the close to 1000 we have had in some years. Quite frankly, this made for a much more enjoyable weekend for everyone!!!

FRIDAY, May 31

Prep day. Carolyn and Liz were at Cape Jervis mid-morning. Carolyn had ferried all the tube stock down, plus the ones Corey and Yankalilla Council had provided. Thanks again Corey and council for your support. Thanks also to Rachel Godoy, our volunteer support coordinator, from Natural Resources – AMLR (state government) for providing us with stakes that were already in the shed.

Carolyn was busily sorting plants into groups when Liz showed up. We always plan ahead, determining how many plants of what kind will go where on the site. This year, our objectives for the lower loop (coastal display garden) included

- adding to the still-young windbreak through the middle section;
 - *in the hope that we can provide shelter for small pretties including orchids*
- putting more grasses and some small pretties in the grassland section;
 - *this grassland provides food for small birds such as the diamond firetail*
- providing some ground covers to fall over the embankment edge along the Heysen Trail;
- in-filling around the picnic table, and the edges of the direct seeding area.
 - *to make the entrance more attractive and inviting*

We had other lists for the shady grove/Sorata St sections, and Flinders Drive. Carolyn's trusty Excel spreadsheet provides a record for her to work from, of the species, approximate positions and numbers. Then her technique of attaching labels of yellow tape to trays, with annotations such as "Lower Loop, edge" or "Sorata St, East" means that we can ensure plants go where we want, for the purpose we have in mind. How organised is that?!?! Just have to remember to read the tape before moving the boxes!



Carolyn sorting plants into their respective trays. Her dog Bear obviously thought a nap was a better idea!



Quick stop for a catch-up and coffee, then back to work: Carolyn on the plants, Liz on sorting other requisites: tools, gloves, water crystals etc. This was when we discovered the newly purchased bag of water crystals, labelled "granules" were not the white ones we were expecting but brown fibre/coco peat! Whoops. Quick call to Pedro and Chrissy: "Where are you now?" "At Yankalilla." "Good. Call into a store and buy some water crystals...make sure it is the crystalline form, doesn't say granules!" Whew! Problem sorted. Thank you, Pedro and Chrissy! Less than an hour later we had these new water crystals busily at work, in tubs absorbing heaps of water. These go in the bottom of the hole we dig for each plant, to give that plant some readily accessible water for its start in the ground.

Soon all four of "the core" were up and running. Liz and Carolyn started ferrying stakes and guards to the lower loop / display garden, and preparing "scrapes" ready for the first plantings on Saturday. Chrissy and Pedro were removing the stakes from the centre section of the site, planted out in June 2017. The ground was too hard to do this in April when we removed the guards. These plants have done amazingly well through two tough summers with NO watering!



Of course, there is always a bit of time to look around and just enjoy the site on the Friday. Some of our "whoo hoo" moments this time were the sights of yam daisies popping up, and *Nicotiana maritima* self-seeding again! Liz had been very

disappointed in April to see no sign of it, so it was great to see some really healthy seedlings around. (We made a barrier of stakes around them on Saturday morning to ensure no-one walked on them by mistake!) And still more *Atriplex* are coming up in the direct seeding area.



Of course, the direct seeding was our major “planting” exercise for 2018. There has not been as much germination in that area as we had hoped for over the past 12 months. Carolyn’s experiments off-site proved the seed mix itself was viable; in fact, those germination trials provided many of the grasses we planted this time around! However, we believe the exceptionally dry summer and weed competition have not helped on site. Still, we live in hope that more will germinate!

SATURDAY, June 1



This day always begins at the crack of dawn. A last check of the trays by Carolyn then plants need a final soaking in seaweed solution, then they are ready for loading in the car. Containers of those now beautifully swelled-up water crystals are loaded as well as other last minute things such as fuel for the auger and containers of water. (including morning tea...very important!).

Liz arrived at 9.45 to unlock the gate into the site, for a start time of 10am ... only to find some of our friends from the COOTS group, (Conservation of our Threatened Species / Australia Plant Society, SA Branch), waiting at the gate for us. Jeff, Jenny and Tom were a very welcome sight.



We were also soon joined by Giles, who has also been a very valued supporter since the group's first planting day. Greetings all round, then off to work. All of the crew were experienced at planting on sites at Cape Jervis, so little introduction to our methods were needed. We dig "scrapes" to remove a layer of weeds, make a dam wall on the downhill side, to catch rainfall, then dig a centred hole for the plant, insert water crystal/fertiliser mix, stir in, then plant the plant. Tree guard is doubly staked, name tag stapled to stake (to help when we are weeding!), then you are ready to move onto the next one.



Give Giles a tray of plants and some water crystals and fertiliser mix, point him in the requisite direction, then he is off like the Energiser bunny! Meanwhile, does it look like a little lying around on the job is going on here?? Mmmm....



Ha, ha...hardly. Those guys worked hard all day too. Sometimes you just need to be right down at the level of the plant to get the little ones in right. And sometimes, it's just nice to take a break! Enjoy the view, watch the ferry come and go, look for dolphins... There are also insects to track.



Thanks to SA Natureteers members for identifying this spider for us, as an **ant spider**. From the family **Zodariidae**:
Habronestes sp.





Morning tea break always provides a good chance for a catch-up. Everyone knows others working on various other landcare sites, and tea breaks give us a good opportunity not only to swap stories of successes and failures on sites, techniques being applied elsewhere, efforts to attract volunteers etc, but also those funny little stories and interactions that make up our daily lives. Getting to know other like-minded people over a cup of coffee and cake is one of the many joys of volunteering.



The second photo above shows the location of the picnic table used for the tea break...not a bad spot for a break, eh?



Here are some other shots of the vollies at work. Each contributed so much to the day, whether it was digging, planting, making tree guards up, photographing the action, watering new plantings (and old), tidying up!



VOLLIES AT WORK!



The group efforts meant the day passed quickly, and the day's quota of plants were in the ground by 2pm. No lunch break til then, everyone chose to just work through for an "early minute". Here are Jen and Jeff having a well-earned rest before heading back to Adelaide. They had another day of tree planting elsewhere on Sunday, so were pleased to end early.



Jenny took lots of the other photos, so we think it is only fair one was taken of her relaxing!

Those heading back to Adelaide departed and the core four, headed back to Carolyn's place for lunch and a celebratory drink. First time in seven years that we have finished the allocated planting early on Saturday. This called for bubbles!



After a quick lunch, work continued for those still around, along Flinders Drive. A very small area had been surrounded with a temporary mesh fence some time ago, and *Xanthorrhoea* and some “small pretties” planted. The rest of the afternoon was devoted to cleaning up that area, removing the mesh fence, and re-planting where appropriate. We were pleased to see spur velleia seedlings starting to colonise the area. It’s just a pity scabiosa seedlings are doing the same! And surprisingly hard to tell the difference. The photo on the right shows both scabiosa (round tipped seed leaves (cotyledons)), and spur velleia seedlings (pointed shaped cotyledons, and the leaves are thicker and more fleshy). Wait a few months and the velleias will be easy to spot with their stunning yellow, goodenia-like flowers!



Definitely a hands and knees job. Cross your fingers that the spur velleias win!!! Our weeding effort will help the fight.



SUNDAY, June 2

More plant soaking and packing at the start of the day, but not far to take everything...just to the western end of Sorata St, near our shady grove undertaking.





In the morning we were joined by members of Friends of the Heysen Trail: Neil, Anne and Rosalind. Having already participated in tree plantings near Georgetown, and with plans to head to Mt Robinson near Inman Valley on Sunday afternoon for a third planting session, these three are certainly doing their bit for the Heysen Trail and the environment. We felt very lucky to have them and their experience! We weren't quite as lucky with the weather, unfortunately, as we were on Saturday. A few showers meant rain coats had to be donned, and shelter found on one occasion. Still, work progressed smoothly and quickly. Many of the plants going in this day were in-fill on Sorata St, while others were to help join the shady grove portion to the Sorata St edge sections.



No photos of morning tea from Sunday...we got caught in the rain!! Luckily the cake tins had lids, or they would have been soaked, like we all were.

By noon, the majority of the plants were in, and we said farewell to our vollies. We hope they had a drier session in the afternoon!

Carolyn and Liz finished the last few little jobs remaining, emptied the water containers on the latest plants then restacked everything in the cars and hand cart.



Time to pack up...and Carolyn is having trouble with her beanie! Will she be able to see to drive home??

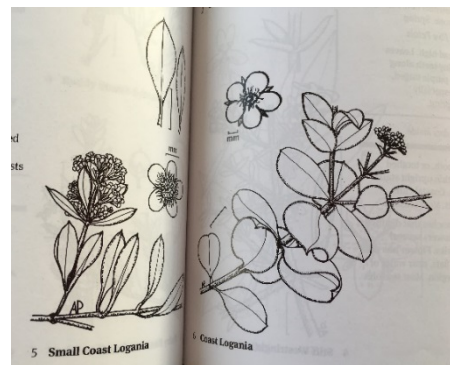


Of course, more than another hour was spent getting all the gear back in its rightful spots in the shed. Broken stakes needed to be separated from good'uns; broken tree guards separated from good'uns; chaff bags repacked; gear cleaned and stacked... lunch? Another late one.

Of course if one grows plants from seeds one collects, one needs more seeds for the next year's plantings. So after that late lunch, it was down to the Trig Point to look for *Banksia marginata* seed. We did manage to find a few potential cones with seeds. These are now drying out in a brown paper bag to see what falls out! Meanwhile, we also checked out some logania plants nearby.

Yet another plant ID uncertainty – case study – *Logania* spp

We have successfully propagated a *Logania* spp from seed collected at Lands End but have never been sure whether it is coast logania, *L. crassifolia* or small coast logania (also known as spoon-leaf logania, *L. minor*). *L. minor* is listed as endangered for KAN02 region, whereas *L. crassifolia* is only "rare". Both need protecting and building up numbers. Liz and Carolyn managed to convince themselves that there were two different species based on leaf differences, but on checking *It's Blue with Five Petals* it is likely that both plants were the rare *L. crassifolia*, the one we now have growing in the coastal display garden. To be sure, we will need to get a specimen for the Herbarium when they are flowering or in fruit – always something else to do!



Thanks to everyone who contributed to a great weekend! We personally had a great time. We really appreciated all the help we received, and the enthusiasm and energy of the entire team. What a great bunch to work with!! See you next year!

PLANT ID question from last working bee report solved

Thanks to Karen Collins for sending in her suggestion, *Chenopodium album*, which was indeed correct. Karen sent us a fact sheet from Wombat's SA's web site, <http://nhssa.com.au/projects/weed-eradication/#weed-sheets>.

A real team effort to get the ID confirmed. Thanks to Kerrie Bartley (Coast and Estuary Technical Officer, City of Onkaparinga) for sending a photo to the weed expert, Chris Brodie at the State Herbarium.

Next Working Bee

Sat 3rd Aug, 10 – 4

Sun 4th Aug, 9 – 3

To finish – a photo of one of Carolyn's favourite plants, an **Autumn/Winter stunner**

Astroloma humifusum, common names *Native cranberry*, *cranberry heath*.

