



WORKING BEE REPORT April 30-May 2, 2021

FRIDAY, April 30

That's right, April 30...the end of an even month, not the start. Those who follow our activities on a regular basis would know our times for working bees are the first weekends in each "even" month, with allowances made for public holidays. This year, the first weekend of April was Easter, so no go. The second weekend was the native plant sale for the Australian Plant Society (SA Branch) at Wayville. The third weekend? Well, Carolyn just had to go to a wedding and then "holiday" interstate. That brings us to the last weekend of April, and of course, that is COOTS' working bee... no way would we interfere with that! So, first weekend of May it was. Earlier in the year when the dates were being decided on, we thought this would be great. Hopefully, the weather would have broken, and autumn rains already soaking the soil. We had extra plants to get in this year, with no money to pay for CVA etc, so we thought an extra working bee spent planting in May would be terrific. Just one fly in the ointment... it didn't rain. Darn. Did that stop us though? Of course not. It just meant more preparation, more water and watering, and lots of fingers crossed for the promised rain in the following week. So the scene is now set...

Carolyn had transported her trays of seedlings from Adelaide to Cape Jervis on Thursday, then doubled back to the Yankalilla Community Nursery. The kind folk there had been babysitting some of our tubestock over recent weeks after we ran out of room at our respective homes, and those trays needed to be picked up. With Liz's trays arriving Friday.



Carolyn then had the huge job of sorting them into trays ready for our different sites. We always plant a diverse range of tubestock, this year concentrating on the smaller shrubs, grasses, groundcovers, etc. We have long been troubled by a particularly weedy patch between some remnant patches and our previous plantings. We have

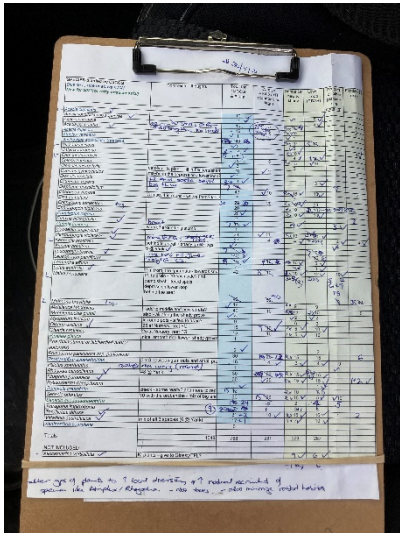
been battling against melianthus, brassicas, scabiosa, olives and soursobs in this area for about 6 years. We have made a huge difference, with help from the Yankalilla Council and DEW early on. The melianthus has gone, olive populations are dwindling (but certainly not gone!). We have been slashing and removing the scabiosa and brassicas on a regular basis ... see our February working bee report! Carolyn's thinking for this year was to plant out this area densely with the lower growing natives, to provide a thick covering that would suppress the weeds that we would normally expect to sprout each winter. With halo spraying until our plantings are more established, maybe we can get the weeds more controlled.

So there is Carolyn, working in her CJ backyard, sorting tubestock into many groups. The black trays get labelled with yellow electrical tape... shady grove, lower loop, small pretties corner...



We were very pleased with the health of our tubestock this year. Some plants such as the *Carpobrotus* (pigface) looked a bit mothy, but the majority were excellent. We were pleased in the following days too that root development seemed good, with very, very few rootbound pots.

Liz meanwhile was organizing tools and other equipment ready for delivery to the site. We have commented in the past on the time all this prep takes, but it is worthwhile getting everything ready the day before, so our volunteers can find everything ready for them to get started straight away.



This year, as well as trialling close planting, we were trialling half-height tree guards. The rabbit problem and weather conditions mean yes, we tree guard everything. However, we get some problems in the tree guards such as snails, aphids and mould. With the height of the tree guards reduced, there should not be as much humidity in the guard, and so hopefully, a reduced risk of some of these problems. While still getting the benefits of wind protection and summer shade (cooler soil temperatures). But where do you source these shorter tree guards? Well, this is where Chrissy and Pedro have been worth their weight in gold. Last working bee, and again this weekend, they spent their time going through all our bags of tree guards, sorting “good” ones from “not so good” ones, that is, the ones where the slits have become so large the tree guard just flops around the stake. So, take one pair of scissors / or sharp knife, one poor tree guard, and cut it across the middle. Then make two more slots, thread a stake through all 3 slits, and *Voila!* A shorter but very suitable tree guard. See our February report for pictures of them in use at the CJ town entry.



The first 100 tree guards were “threaded” in Carolyn’s shed, and packed in to 3 of our large wool bale bags. Two of these then were transported to the site, along with our many 10 L containers of water. Here is what the site looks like before we start.



Carolyn powered the auger up, then while Liz drilled the holes, Carolyn filled each with water. A tree guard was placed with each hole, for two reasons: firstly, the tree guard would be needed Saturday, and secondly, the soil was dry and sandy, which meant the holes were starting to fill back in almost straight away so the tree guard helped us know where the holes were!! The water helped with that too, as well as making sure there would be damp soil for the new plant the next day.

Of course, at Cape Jervis there is always the risk of high winds, so we were more than a tad worried whether the tree guards would stay where they were placed until the next day. Another set of crossed fingers!!!

SATURDAY, May 1

The day started with a spectacular sunrise. (Yes, we really were up before dawn ready to start!!) Look at those cloud formations. Pretty amazing, eh.



First hard decision: work/breakfast/work, or breakfast/work,work...Carolyn opts for the first, the rest of us for the second, with all of us opting for multiple coffees!! Either way, everything gets done and we are on site well before the advertised start time of 10am. So how did we fill those hours between sunrise and 10am? Well, there were

still plants to be sorted, and all the plants being delivered to the site had to be soaked in a seaweed solution then drained. Lunches to be packed, morning tea to be prepared and packed, etc, etc. More packing into cars, more drops on site. It always feels funny driving to the site (which is really just a very short walk from Carolyn's place). However, when you have to lug mattocks, cans of fuel for the auger, trays of plants etc, you DEFINITELY do not walk it!

OK, so we are now on site, other vollies due soon, what is the first task? Put back all the tree guards near their respective holes (if we can find them!) now that the wind has moved them around overnight!! It wasn't as bad as it could have been, and at least we didn't have to put out ALL the tree guards in one go, but it would be nice if the weather gods could take pity on us once at least, and not have us double up on jobs! We do always take heart from the fact that we had a baptism by fire (or cyclonic wind and rain) in our first planting season; everything else since has seemed mild in comparison! A bit of wind...huh!



Philippe was the next vollie to arrive on site, followed by his wife Julie. Philippe and Julie have volunteered for us a few times now. They have moved semi-permanently to Cape Jervis since the covid pandemic, and have been a wonderful addition to our group. Always helpful, always cheerful, and such hard workers. Philippe and Julie had a quick lesson on how we plant on site, then equipped with their containers of soil wetter and fertilizer, off they went!



Liz and Carolyn finished drilling holes and putting out tree guards, then started planting as well.



Morning tea time arrived quickly, and was delivered by Chrissy and Pedro, who had been working on tree guards back in the shed. So we all stopped for a quick cuppa and nibble. This is always a good opportunity for a chat, a catch up on what is happening in people's lives and in the township, and a good way to connect.



Suz, Vince, Camellia and Ginkgo arrived after morning tea. Suz and Vince have planted on site on many occasions now, so hopped straight into it. The two girls had come with their own spades, so were all set to dig their own holes! Ginkgo became Carolyn's shadow for quite a while, following her around and choosing plants for her.

Later, this two year old was delivering plants to all of us, then taking empty tubes back to the “depot”! Camellia, meanwhile, was busy advising her mother Suz. What troupers and what a delight those two girls were.



Our “shady grove” is now just starting to live up to its name! 5 years after its planting, we now have a casuarina big enough to provide shade near our log seats. So this was where we had our lunch break. We are so pleased with how it’s turning out. A great place to sit, watch the birds flit around in the living and dead trees, and with a view of the water and the light house to add to the ambience. Check it out!



By late afternoon, there were about 320 plants in the ground. Densely planted, they filled much of our designated patch but to our surprise, not all of it. Don’t the half-guards look cute?



By knocking off time, we were all pooped, but pleased with our efforts. Philippe had us all laughing when he pointed out to Carolyn that her face was black...this was so true! A mix of moisturizer, sunscreen, and dust kicked up by the auger???

At least she had a chance to wash it off before a well-earned drink and a relaxing break on her deck!



The day began with a spectacular sunrise, and ended with a beautiful sunset.



SUNDAY, May 2

This was looking like being a “cruise-y” day. We only had another 70ish plants to get in the ground, plus a watering of everything new. It took us all morning though, to get this done. New holes to be dug, new guards to be made, ... the same jobs as the previous day so everyone just got to it! Some small pretties had been sorted by Carolyn ready for positioning near our log seats in the shady grove, and this accounted for about half of the plantings on Sunday.

Philippe and Julie joined us again, and it was a pleasure having their company and assistance. Pedro delivered water and more tree guards, replenishing those containers already emptied.



Thanks again to Chrissy and Pedro for delivering morning tea. We really are enjoying this new place to take a break and enjoy nature and good company.



The site at the end of the working bee was a sea of tree guards...densely packed as we had planned? Well perhaps a little more densely planted than planned, but should pay off with better weed suppression. They say you learn by your mistakes (or miscalculations). Compare the picture below with the earlier one (P.3) also showing our standing log.



Thank you to all our volunteers at the working bee, they cheerily put in a great effort, and did it all with a smile and a laugh.



While in the shady grove – check out some of the olive stumps, that bear the chain saw cuts from for getting the poison into the huge stumps. This olive also has a long surface root, that was cut along its length to get more poison in. See a size 8.5 boot for scale in the second photo!



We didn't photograph much wildlife this weekend – not sure if too busy or just too dry. The inch ants had wings and were looking for new homes (scary!) and *Olearia ramulosa* (twiggy daisy-bush) was flowering. Not the most impressive of our flowering natives but providing pollen for insects when there is not much else around. It was sad to see, one week later, that half of the roots of this plant we eaten by rabbits! Hopefully it will still survive!



Thank you also to the volunteers who help out at other times...those who water our plants and tubestock for us, the volunteers at the community nursery, those who deliver organic waste to the dump for us, or who weed their adopted patch, or make us a coffee. We appreciate ALL your efforts!

STOP PRESS

Not much rain – but enough!

Several mm of rain fell on Monday (3rd May) at Cape Jervis. Fingers are not yet uncrossed but every mm helps.

A few of us checked the early May plantings (4 weeks later, Sat 29th) and we can report that they are all doing well, with no supplemental watering (thanks Julie and Suzie). We did give some water to a few “new” species that we guessed might struggle – so these will get red pegs this year, and we will see how they do. Grown from seed that was collected at the top of the hill where there is more rainfall – so time will tell if they can survive with the lower rainfalls near the coast.

Rapid Bay Primary School – tree planting day – Friday May 21

We were thrilled to have perfect weather for our first tree planting day with the Rapid Bay Primary School. Proof that many hands make light work. We had to go and get more plants because the students were so efficient. Approximately 380 seedlings planted in 3 hours! To make the day even more special for us, the kids loved the Nature Play activities, and they want to come back again next year. No promising on being able to deliver perfect weather though! Not a white cap in sight.

If you are wondering what the students are holding in the air in the second photo – it's all the empty pots – made into one very long snake!



Check out the school's post on Facebook for lots of great photos of they day. Thanks to everyone who helped make the day a success. Special thanks to Julianne Rilstone, Council's Outreach Program Officer for organising the day and for Corey Jackson for helping us auger holes and bringing 400 L of water on the back of his ute both Thurs and Friday.

<https://www.facebook.com/media/set?vanity=rapidbayprimaryschool&set=a.2040727406081400>