



WORKING BEE REPORT December 2-4, 2022

FRIDAY, December 2

The Yankalilla Community Nursery has become a huge asset to local landcare groups, providing lots of facilities to propagate plants, learn different potting techniques, and mix with other like-minded people. These are nearly all volunteers from other landcare groups, but Corey from Yankalilla Council provides a backbone to it all. Carolyn and Liz have used the facilities at the nursery on several occasions. The benches and overhead watering system have proved useful when our own at-home growing spaces have run out of room. This growing season, we have used the nursery's facilities to grow some plants from cuttings. These had been potted up in October, and many of the cuttings now had roots, so it was time to pot them up. Liz 'dug' the new plants out of the potting medium (with a plant tag...only something small was needed), then Carolyn planted them into potting mix. We are pleased to report that the fan flowers (*Scaevola albida*) did well...we have a deep blue one on site we are very interested in propagating. We also managed to get a few *Pimelea glauca*.



Another few weeks in the hothouse, and the tray of plants would be ready to go out into the normal environment.

Later that afternoon, Carolyn and Liz bypassed the usual site inspection, in order to walk further along the Heysen Trail to the location of a locally rare plant Carolyn had sighted on the rocks, *Wilsonia humilis*. silky wilsonia (KAN02 Vulnerable), common name, Sea Box. Carolyn stumbled across this plant one beautiful afternoon on a meander back along the rocks. Carolyn & Michael had just lopped a she-oak that was blocking the path at one of the gully crossing along the Heysen Trail.



Later still in the day, we had the pleasure of attending the inaugural Carols by the Sea, organized by Carmel and others from the Cape Jervis Progress Association. It was so lovely to walk down the track from Sorata St, come to the crest overlooking 'our' lower loop, and see so many people milling around the picnic table area...rugs out, chairs in place, children running around... everyone getting ready to sing their hearts out. The Rapid Bay Primary School children and the Second Valley Choir provided our leads, with everyone else joining in from Moira and Carmel's beautifully produced song book. What a lovely time! The Rapid Bay kids did their magic again: weather was perfect!! Backstairs Passage was a millpond.



At the end of the proceedings, Carmel announced there was a surprise for the kids, hidden in the plantings they had done in 2021. It was a real delight to see the children running between all 'their' plants looking for little candy canes. Congratulations to all who made the event such a great little community event. See you there next year!!

To think that 10 years ago this area was only veldt grass and wild oats, and now it is a great community resource. How heartening for all who volunteer on this site. To cap off the day, there was a brilliant sunset over Kangaroo Island – sorry no photo.

SATURDAY, December 3

The lovely weather of the day before continued...the sea was like a mirror. It started out a bit warm, but at least there was no wind to contend with. We thought this was going to be a really quiet day, with next to no volunteers. Many of our regulars weren't able to come: Suz, Vince and family were all isolating with Covid (thankfully, all are now fine), Julie and Philippe were showing an overseas visitor around the state, and Chrissy and Pedro were just subsumed by impending holidays and the preparations they entail.

We were pleasantly surprised though by our new cohort from this year...Sal and Trevor, Jane, Sue and Greg. These people all volunteer for 4-5 different sites around the Fleurieu that we know of. In fact, they had been on other sites on the Thursday and Friday, our site on the Saturday or Sunday, and were planning to be at the Community Nursery on Monday. Whew!! Great effort, guys!



The morning and afternoon followed the same pattern, just in different locations: weed and water! Liz and Carolyn looked after the watering, while Sal and Trevor took care of the weeding. Different groups have different approaches to watering their plantings. We try to water new plantings for at least one summer, and for vulnerable plants, that is extended to 2 or 3 summers. We have no water on site. So watering involves filling 10 litre containers from Carolyn's tanks, driving them to the site, then driving/lugging them all over the site and watering by hand. We don't have a long hose or watering truck etc. But we have figured out that 3 loads of 15, 10L containers will ensure the most vulnerable plants all get a drink. That's about 450L, at about half a litre per plant...900 plants. We have often debated amongst ourselves how much each plant should get. A thorough watering or a dribble? But with our limited resources and time, that 450L is the best we can do. It is amazing how quickly the soil has dried out, given how good a winter/spring (i.e. how wet) it was.

Trevor had a great idea of tying all the empty tubs together so we didn't have to do multiple trips up the hill to collect them all.





Meanwhile, sacks were being filled with scabiosa, sea spurge and other weeds by Sal and Trevor. Once the watering was done, Carolyn did those niggly chores that never seem to get done: removing a last remaining hybrid *Carpobrotus*; removing the mesh tree guards that were added as “rabbit protection” two years ago. We are pleased to report that since an intensive effort by council / government to control the rabbits at the ferry terminal in late 2021 early 2022 the lower loop has been relatively free of rabbit – pity we can’t say that about Sorata Street! It’s so nice to see the plants near the interpretive sign again without the mesh guards. We were also excited to find a patch of self-seed running postman plants. Can you find the 5 (below right)?



After lunch, we all continued with the same tasks...but at the Sorata Street section rather than on the lower loop. There was again quite a tally of weed bags by the end of the afternoon. By the time knock-off was called after 4pm, it was really quite warm. Everyone was glad to call it quits for the day. Hard work, but rewarding.



SUNDAY, December 4

The soil type varies around our site. In the Sorata Street section, sandy soils and wind mean the small dams we have people build around new plantings don't necessarily stay intact all year long (they blow away!), whereas across the track, the clay soils hold the dams well. This means the plants on one part are far easier to water than on the other! Those where the dam has disappeared take longer to water because you need to ensure the water isn't just escaping and running down the hill, rather than getting to the plant's root zone! A slow job! So there was still watering to do in the shady grove on the Sunday.

Jane, Sue and Greg were all on site by 9, so it was straight to work. Again, tasks were weeding and watering in that shady grove section.



Carolyn disturbed the peace early in the day with a scream, followed by "it's all OK". No it wasn't a snake, she had just trodden through a pile of dead olive branches and one of the side twigs punctured through her boot and into her foot! She hopped back to her car, and sure enough, blood on the sock, puncture wound in the foot. You can see the hole in the sole of the boot. Quick first aid, band-aid, and back to work!



Just as we were about to stop for morning tea, Carolyn noticed one of our beautiful boobiallas (*Myoporum insulare*) seemed to have a huge dead section. When we looked more closely, we found a section of trunk had broken, and that a big branch had died as a result. Too heavy to support itself? Damage by an animal (e.g. a roo?) or wind? Whatever the cause, the lovely hemispherical shrub is now looking very lopsided!!



By the way, see our bee hotel at the base of the shrub in the first photo? Another sign of a good growing year...that bee hotel was nowhere near as obscured by the *Myoporum* as it is now! We need to prune the tree back a bit!

Morning tea break on a hot morning in the shade of the she-oaks (*Allocasaurina verticillata*), with a slight breeze moving them and making that characteristic whistle. How good is that? Our trusty gorilla platform ladders make a great table too. Sue had a lightweight wet towel around her neck, which looked like it provided some welcome relief from the heat. Flies were a bit of a nuisance, but no mozzies at least. And look at the view and the beautiful blue sea.



Back to weeding. Scabiosa the main target. We can't weed everything, but are trying to clear the areas close to the paths. This corner near the Shady Grove has been planted out with yakkas (*Xanthorrhoea semiplana*) and other "wow" plants. Give it another 5 years and this patch will be looking really great.



Did we mention rabbits and Sorata Street? Here are two examples of the damage they are causing: 1. Our half tree guards seem to stop them digging up roots, but they don't stop them snipping off the tops of the she-oaks. You can tell it's rabbits by the angled cut their teeth make. 2. Rabbits seem to love *Olearia* roots. Our three-year-old unguarded twiggy daisy bushes (*Olearia ramulosa*) are under attack. No time to protect the roots so hopefully this plant will survive till we find some time to re-guard, or add some rocks to the holes. And then of course, there is the snail problem... a story for another day!



Did you know that butterflies like to suck water through damp sandy patches?

This blue butterfly was taking advantage of our watering. You can see it has landed on the wet patch just outside a tree guard.

If you want to know more about creating a butterfly friendly garden visit <https://www.greenadelaide.sa.gov.au/news/2021-butterfly-friendly-garden>



Another great working bee, with amazing people and amazing weather. Thank you everyone for your efforts!

Merry Christmas to everyone. Have a great holiday season, and we look forward to seeing you all in 2023!



A red jewel bug (*Choerocoris paganus*)

What a pretty beetle for Christmas!

Are you wondering what plant it was on?

They love hop bushes, and there is a lovely patch of *Dodonea viscosa* nearby.