

## Our Special Guests

Lucky us! In mid-April we had the pleasure of strolling the nursery with the Minister for Agriculture, David Littleproud, and the Federal Member for the Wide Bay region, Llew O'Brien. They stopped by to congratulate us on our successful Volunteer Grant application, and now we are able to provide our volunteers with further facilities and technologies to assist them in their tasks! We even gave David a Rough-Leafed Elm to take home! Our volunteers are looking forward to a new fridge, seating and tablets to assist them in their stocktaking duties.



## Permaculture Principle 3 – Obtain A Yield

A key goal of any Permaculture system is to design for abundance. It is about seeing results for the fruits of your labour. A well-designed Permaculture system will obtain a maximum yield in the smallest amount of space for the least amount of effort, always ensuring that there is an adherence to the ethics of earth care, people care and fair share. Some of the methods used to obtain an abundant yield are selecting elements that perform more than one function, companion planting, composting, natural pest control and eco-villages to mention but a few.





An example of using elements that perform more than one function is to plant comfrey with your fruit trees. Comfrey is a bio-accumulator that has a deep taproot that brings up minerals in the soil for other plants to use. Comfrey can also be used to activate your compost, feed animals and an indicator that your fruit trees might need water when the comfrey leaves droop. Composting instead of chemical fertiliser is a way to deal with food waste, it builds healthy soil teeming with microbes and healthy soil holds water and carbon. Companion planting ensures that plants' requirements are met by other plants. The 3-sister garden is where corn, beans, and squash are planted together. The beans fix nitrogen in the soil to feed both the corn and the squash. The beans also get to use the corn stalk to climb up on. Natural pest control would be to mix up seedlings of different vegetables so that if

insects find one of your plants, they cannot find the other as they are mixed in with flowers and other vegetables. Planting flowers in between your vegetables attract beneficial insects that predate on the insects that damage your vegetables. Flowers also attract pollinators which are much needed in any garden. If you use strong smelling flowers, they can mask the smell of the bugs favourite vegetables. Chickens in a system provide food, manure, cleaning up of unwanted of insects, eating of scraps and the turning of compost piles. Moving on to the community side of Permaculture. Permaculture eco-villages are springing up all over the world. These villages share spaces, food, knowledge, and resources ensuring that each resident gets maximum value for their investment.

These are just a few methods that help create abundance and maximum yields in a Permaculture designed system. To learn more about Permaculture book into the 'Introduction to Permaculture' workshop to be held at Gympie Landcare on 20 & 21 July 2019



## The Trials of Manipulating Nature

Ah, the trials of manipulating nature! We are a stubborn species, us humans.

There seems no end of things to complain about in the very controlled, manipulated setting of a commercial tubestock nursery. Wind back the clock a month or so, and you would have found me complaining about the extended hot and dry weather leaving patches of dead or wilting plants in all sorts of places about the nursery. Now that it has cooled down and nature has delivered a run of steady rain, I'm complaining about plants dying from *too much* water.

Isolating a germinating plant from the vast soil resource that we commonly refer to as the surface of the planet, then attempting to grow it in a very very small sample of a very particular form of a soil substitute, often seems to me to shout volumes about our arrogant approach to controlling nature and our obsession to live apart from nature, rather than acknowledging we are a part of it.

You see, in a commercial nursery setting, we're not just finding a plant in its natural setting, in its natural soil, then trying to get it growing bigger and healthier than if it were left to its own devices. No, a commercial nursery makes such a straightforward process a whole lot more complicated. First, we ditch the notion that growing a plant in its natural soil is a good thing. Instead, we decide to be an accessory to employing heavy machinery to pulverise bark from exotic pine plantation harvests (the plantations and harvests themselves employing vast amounts of machinery and landscape in their own right) into a fine blend of bark chips and particles. Then it is piled up in a





very particular way, given a very strict timeframe and temperature regime to partially compost it to a neutral pH. Tested, sieved and graded, almost ready to stick into a plastic pot to grow a plant. Except that composted pine bark is about as nutritious for a seedling as an 'edible' ricepaper or banana-leaf takeaway plate would be nutritious for you. Composted pine bark is also about as good at holding moisture as a sieve is. If you pour the water in fast enough, sure, you can fill the sieve, but don't expect there to be much of that water remaining when you come back after lunch. So humans, still dissatisfied with this proto-soil concoction, decide to add more goodies to it in an effort to mimic nature. Perhaps coconut fibre or vermiculite will help the water stay in the mixture longer? But what if it keeps too much water in? Perhaps we should add some sand or perlite to get the mix swinging back towards being the open sieve it was in the first place? Then what if our tinkering has bugged up the pH? We could always chuck in some lime or dolomite or gypsum.



Hopefully, it doesn't turn the mix to a mild form of cement. Then let us not forget about some kind of sustenance for the plants we hope to grow in this concoction. How about a 'Goldilocks' of nutrient serves? Delivered steadily to the plant for months at a time? Crikey, we're gonna need a whole new laboratory to design something called 'controlled release fertiliser'.

And *voilà!* There you have it. A truly cosmopolitan, multicultural, transcontinental substitute for real soil. With ingredients hailing from almost everywhere except where your cherished little seedling came from. An obscene amount of embodied energy; an ecological footprint that is

far too big a shoe for your little seedling to ever grow into. Perfectly blended to give the best combination of food, air, and water.

Except when there's not enough water. Or too much.

It's a tough gig, wandering around a nursery having to find things to complain about when they're not 'just right'!

So what to do, what to do? I could try turning off the sprinklers on the rainy and cloudy days so the little Lomandras and Acacias don't drown to death. But then what if it doesn't rain enough to keep the bigger, thirstier plants satisfied? Or, horror of horrors, what if it isn't just death by drowning?



This round-a-bout bedtime-story-esque rambling has a point to it, of sorts. The Gympie Landcare nursery might have 100 or more different species in production at any given time; any of those species could be present in the nursery from just-germinated seedlings, through several batches and sizes of tubestock, to advanced plants in larger pots or bags. Each of those species and each of their ages will have a preference for optimal growing conditions. The idea of a highly manufactured potting media is but one of the approaches to try and find a happy medium (pardon the horticultural pun) for as many of the variables as possible. Moisture retention and porosity (the gaps in between the particles in the potting media) are two of those factors, and a run of rainy weather will bring those parameters to the fore, perhaps as I initially noted, by causing plant morbidity or mortality. Not that the nursery is a graveyard of plants. But the difference

between green and dead is where 'artform' and 'science' meet. Humans have built a lot of tools to monitor and control environments for growing plants; some of those tools would be well beyond the budget or suitability of your humble Landcare nursery. But no matter the technology, nature will still deliver more variables than our technology can cover for, and that is where human observation and response remains a key ingredient.

In a nursery of thousands of plants, noticing a few with wilted leaves is akin to noticing the proverbial gate to the horse paddock is open – but thankfully the horses still seem content in the paddock. A few wilted plants in the nursery is a visual sign that there is change afoot; over the past few weeks of rainy weather, that change would at first seem to be related to moisture in the

pot. When those wilted plants start to number in the few percent for a given batch of tubestock, the questions arise. The horses could be nudging that gate open again.

At one extreme, it could be an outbreak of soil pathogens – thankfully this is the rare circumstance. Most commonly it is simply a case of enough water being held in the potting media to fill up most of the breathing spaces for the plant's roots, then it's either death by drowning or associated root-rot. But even then, if it is still not affecting a large variety of plants, there could be other variables to investigate. Was loss limited to a particular species or batch? If so, perhaps there were variables in the propagation and potting stages; with many different hands involved in the task, each with their own approaches to propagation, it could be slightly more soil-compaction in a pot that causes a batch to hold more moisture, or slightly deeper potting of the seedling which results in moisture held around the fragile shoot-growth zone. Beyond that, it could even be an aspect of the species or seeds themselves – if the seed came from a parent plant that was accustomed to drier conditions, or particular soil chemistry, or simply had 'runt' traits, then perhaps the loss we see in the pots is somewhat inevitable and ideally could have been avoided earlier in the process with more stringent grading of the seedlings themselves.



For me, it seems when working with nature, accepting we are a *part* of it and not *apart* from it, that no matter how much planning one puts in place, it is *responding* to the vagaries of nature that is key. That *responding* is where the art and the science combine, each willing to concede to the other for the greater good. A nursery, despite all efforts by humans to manipulate nature, still has at its core the vagaries of nature. It definitely makes for an interesting workplace!

So, am I really complaining? Call it poetic license. It is never a pleasure to find some of one's own, or someone else's, devoted propagation efforts have keeled over. But it is part of the process and always a chance to learn and improve. And through the last month, the nursery has still done a good job of producing thousands more healthy vibrant tubestock and has seen thousands more go to good homes out and about the Gympie region.

One hundred plant species. A hundred gates, to a hundred paddocks. With 30,000 horses. Here's to hoping none of them get the idea of bolting. Unless they're bolting upwards (just couldn't resist one last abstracted horticultural pun).

Shane Litherland | Nursery Manager

## Containers for Change

As a state, we're great at many things. However, when it comes to recycling, Queensland can do a lot better. In fact, we have one of the lowest recycling rates in Australia, at around 44%.

Each year, approximately three billion beverage containers are generated in our state alone and are the second most littered item.

So, to help us all improve our recycling efforts and keep our beautiful environment litter-free, Gympie Landcare have registered for the Containers for Change scheme.

Now when you drop off your recycling containers to a drop off point, you can elect Gympie Landcare as the beneficiary of your refund amount! Not only are you helping the environment, you're now donating to Gympie Landcare and helping us continue to do what we do best.

All you need to do is provide our code: C10161523

For more information, please visit [www.containersforchange.com.au](http://www.containersforchange.com.au)





## Caring for Your Rural Block Course A Great Success

This is what the participants had to say about our course.

“Lots of information and experienced people”

“Field trips enabled us to see what other people are doing to improve their properties”

“Found the subjects to be very relevant to what we are doing on our land”

“The course is well rounded with enough information for further study resources if needed”

“Fantastic range of topics, recommending it to everyone (raving!)”

The participants also indicated they would like more workshops on the following topics:

- Propagation
- Revegetation, erosion, trees, dams
- New ventures and ways in agriculture and horticulture
- Caring for waterways
- Grafting

Thanks to Lavina and Louise Fraser for organising this excellent course.



## Volunteering at Gympie Landcare

Thinking about volunteering with us? Our volunteers are the lifeblood of our organisation bringing lots of different and much-needed skill, experience, and knowledge to our organisation.

To assist with managing incoming volunteers, we are now holding volunteer induction days on the first Friday of every month from 9.00am. Volunteers are able to attend the induction in the morning, have some lunch with our current volunteers (please bring your own) and then continue to volunteer some hours in the afternoon. Alternatively, you can come for the induction to just to see if it is right for you and we can work with you to arrange which days you would like to volunteer.

When people think of volunteering with us, most people assume the only area they can volunteer in is our nursery, but that's not true! We have many areas and departments that require volunteers, from administration, marketing and education to bio-control and events. Whatever your background is, we're sure we can fit you into an area that works for both of us.

If you intend on attending one of our volunteer induction days, please RSVP by the Wednesday before (the first week of each month) to ensure we are prepared for your arrival.

To enable us to find the right area for you to volunteer in please visit our website and complete a registration form or pop into our office.



## Nursery Manager's Plant of The Month – *Syzygium Australe*, Brush Cherry

Roll up, roll up! Get 'em while they're hot!



The group of plants commonly known as Lilly-pillies are popular and well-known for both landscaping and revegetation. Without bombarding you with the back-story of taxonomic jousting and re-arranging, 'Lilly-pilly' generally encompasses native trees of the genus *Acmena* and *Syzygium*. There have been several successful varieties, cultivars or hybrids taken from native species and customised for the landscaping industry. On the whole, those cultivars have been chosen for suitable backyard attributes, most notably 'dwarf' or small-form growth. In the wild, many of the native Lilly-pillies can grow

into quite tall trees; though, for most of us who choose to plant one in a landscape setting, we would never live long enough to see them tower over us. That, and we often plant lilly-pillies in locations far from ideal for their optimal growth.

The latter aspect is one great selling point of this month's plant, *Syzygium Australe*, or Brush Cherry. Specimens of this species can be found in the broader Gympie region; like most Lilly-pillies, they tend to live near water. The Brush Cherry though is somewhat hardier than several of its cousins – it will comfortably exist in some hard, rocky soils and in many of our ephemeral gullies. Which means, whilst it likes water, it can handle some fairly prolonged dry spells. Suits Gympie to a tee! Just be mindful when it comes to planting in the proximity of water supplies (e.g. mains plumbing, tank overflows) – being a tree that likes water, most of the Lilly-pillies are considered as potential root-problems in seeking out water-sources.

The growth form (at least in our lifetime) of *S. Australe* is suited more for a hedge or screening tree rather than shade, but like most Lilly-pillies can handle pruning to suit your landscaping preferences. It is reasonably fast growing too as far as Lilly-pillies go – just don't expect any of them to perform as fast as good ol' gum trees! If you're planting one (or several) with a long-term plan in mind, then you will be able to get more canopy spread for shade.

Being more of a 'rainforest' (technically littoral or dry rainforest) plant, you can give them a modest amount of 'food'. In a landscaping setting, seasonal fertilising will keep a vibrant and thick foliage cover; if you're using them for revegetation, a 'feed' in their earlier stages will help them get up and over grasses and similar weedy annuals that bit sooner.

The flowers of *S. Australe* will typically be borne as a profusion of spring-summer bloom, with edible fruits ripening through December, but they may respond to good conditions at any time of the year with a scattering of flowers.

The nursery had a plentiful supply of seed late last year, so now we have hundreds of vibrant young tubestock available. Take advantage of this good autumn planting weather and give these lush specimens a new home today! Or perhaps on your next spare weekend, at least.





## Bio-Control – Saunders' Case Moth Caterpillar (*Metura Elongatus*)



Often, we find unwanted insects in our tunnel houses like scale and aphids, but the most interesting creature we discovered recently is the Saunders' Case Moth Caterpillar. The caterpillar builds a mobile bag covered with silk, leaves and short twigs. When threatened, they retreat, sealing the front of the opening of the bag until it is safe to emerge. The bag has two openings, the top to pop its armoured

head out to crawl around and feed and the bottom to mate and to excrete waste. As the caterpillar grows, it adds sticks attached with silk to extend the length of the bag.



When the caterpillar rests, it attaches its mobile bag to a stick and secures it with silk to hang vertically.

Male moths have a wingspan between 4 5 cm, while the females remain wingless and soon dies after laying its eggs.

Yvonne Hennell Bio-control Manager



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## Fundraising for Gympie Landcare – Drakes Key Tags

Did you know that when you shop at Drakes in the old "IGA complex" and show them one of our Gympie & District Landcare Group key tags, 1% of your total bill is donated towards our organisation?

By using your tag every time, you shop, you're actually fundraising for our organisation!

If you do not have a Drakes key tag currently, please contact our office on (07)5483 8866 or email [admin-assistant@gympielandcare.org.au](mailto:admin-assistant@gympielandcare.org.au) and we will provide one for you to pick up from our office.



## Find Us on Facebook!

Here at Gympie & District Landcare Group Incorporated, we recognise that social media is becoming one of the most effective sources of communication and a fantastic way to get our name out there and increase our exposure! Not only is it a means for communication, but it creates an additional platform to keep our community aware of upcoming events and provides further opportunity to provide the community with helpful tips in relation to land care.

We would love to see our Facebook follower base increase and encourage all of our members to "follow us" on Facebook.

If you have a Facebook account, go to our Facebook page and hit the "like" button to follow our posts.

Don't forget to like and share our posts on our page to assist us in gaining further exposure in our local area!



## Expression of Interest – CLS Team Member

We are seeking expressions of interest from enthusiastic, career-minded people to join our Contract Landcare Services (CLS) team.

### Our Organisation

Gympie and District Landcare Group is a community-based organisation active in the Gympie.

Region, Queensland. The Group is an incorporated organisation and a registered charity. Members elect an Executive (Management Committee) each year that is responsible for management oversight. Members and volunteers are integrally involved in the group's main activities: operating a local native plant nursery; raising biocontrol insects for invasive plant species control; providing land care services, fostering local land caring activities; and community education.



### Purpose of Position

To provide the best environmental outcomes for our clients through a range of specialist landcare services.

### Person

This person will be able to implement project objectives as directed. Work well with others in a team environment. Have a passion for land caring activities as it pertains to revegetation, clearing and caring for the environment. This person will have initiative and be open to sharing their practical skills and experiences with a broad range of people and be committed to working safely.

To read the full job description, please visit our website.

Expressions of Interest are to include a cover letter and resume with three references and are to be emailed to [admin@gympielandcare.org.au](mailto:admin@gympielandcare.org.au). Expressions of Interest that do not meet this requirement will not be considered.

## Annual General Meeting

Our Annual General meeting will be held at 10.00am, Saturday 15 May 2019.

Respectively, if you wish to attend the meeting, please RSVP by 5.00pm Monday 13<sup>th</sup> May 2019 to [admin@gympielandcare.org.au](mailto:admin@gympielandcare.org.au) to ensure we cater for all attendees.



## Management Committee Meeting

Our next Management Committee (MC) meeting will be held at 9.00am, Friday 24<sup>th</sup> May 2019.

Members are invited to observe and take part in the discussions in the meetings. If you would like to add any items to the agenda in addition to the usual business of the meeting, please email [admin@gympielandcare.org.au](mailto:admin@gympielandcare.org.au) by the Friday before.



Respectively, if you wish to attend the MC meeting, please RSVP by 5.00pm Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2019 to [admin@gympielandcare.org.au](mailto:admin@gympielandcare.org.au) to ensure we cater for all attendees.



## Summary of April's Management Committee Meeting

Overview of MC meeting held at GDLC on April 26th.

We are happy to report that given the rain our contract services work is back on track with Carl and his team working hard to catch up on the work that was delayed due to the drought. Some renovations are required for our current offices to enable people with disabilities to use our facilities. We contacted the Council, our landowners, for support to fund the renovations. We received a letter from the Gympie Council that renovation of our bathroom facility is GDLC's responsibility and we have to fund this ourselves. Lavina has applied for a planning grant to get the ball rolling.

The Kingaroy Landcare branch generously donated \$3000.- as they closed down, with the request that these funds would be directed to our bio-control activities. Yvonne, our bio-control manager is currently also commencing the sharing of knowledge, free of charge, to other organisations who want to set up bio-control facilities. She hopes that this will result in increased bio-control activity throughout Queensland.

Karen Jarling, one of our members, attended our meeting and has offered to share her very valuable insights from a workshop she attended with Dr Nicole Masters a social ecologist. Nicole talks and consults on the link between human and soil health and how soil can be regenerated. Karen will write a summary for our newsletter, but she made the point that she learned how chemicals if they have to be used, can be applied more efficiently and sparingly. On the subject of chemicals, Darryl Ebenezer from Qld Water and Land Care, who was present at our meeting, suggested that the use of chemicals will be regulated further in the coming years and that organisations, like ours should start exploring other strategic options so that we are prepared.

Our head of the financial sub-committee, Barry Lambooy reported a healthy cash flow, with income from the nursery, CLS, and BioControl, all on track.

Due to high demand, Shane at the nursery is having to review how propagation of plants can be increased to fulfill the retail demand and that of CLS for the contracts that it is contracted to. He is spreading himself thin in the time available and has requested a review of all nursery resources. This request has been delegated to the HR sub-committee to come up with a proposal.

Carl at CLS reported issues with one of the older vehicles, it probably needs replacing, so he is looking at the best options available. An inefficient vehicle hampers contract work. Both Carl and Barry will look into cost-effective and viable options for vehicle replacement.

Darryl Ebenezer's from Qwalc attended our meeting and we availed ourselves of his advice and knowledge

Landcare is currently building its education stream as part of our vision to leave a legacy of sustainable land care practices in the Gympie region. We are currently trying to find our way with regard to the correct pricing for workshops. The intention is to attract good workshop presenters who will assist landowners to find solutions for their various challenges or simply to give them ideas on how to improve their practices. The workshop cost needs to cover the costs of the presenter and if possible, fund a part-time education coordinator position. We welcome any comment from our members on this.

See you at the AGM,

Antoinette Augustinus Secretary

## Save the Date – Members Meetings 2019

The Committee hopes you can join us for the quarterly Member's meetings in 2019. This will be your opportunity to keep up to date with what is happening at Landcare and share your thoughts with the Committee and other Members.



The dates for the meetings are as follows:

**Saturday 3 August at 9am**

**Wednesday 27 November at 6pm**

There will be a call for agenda items 2 weeks prior to the meeting.

If you have an item for the agenda, please submit it in writing to [admin@gympielandcare.org.au](mailto:admin@gympielandcare.org.au) for consideration prior to the deadline.

We look forward to seeing you.

## Free Bee Keeping Sessions

The Valley Bees group hold free beekeeping sessions at Gympie Landcare on the first Saturday of every month. Come along and learn how to work with bees on your own property. Oh, and don't forget to bring a plate to share for morning tea!

Sessions start at 9am, however, from June to August 2019, sessions will start at 10.00am.

For more information and how to RSVP, please contact Vic Finney on 0429 826 461 or via email to

[vicfinney43@gmail.com](mailto:vicfinney43@gmail.com)



## Would you like to become a member?

Gympie Landcare values your involvement and support. Members receive discounts on nursery plants, newsletters, and email notices.

Title \_\_\_\_\_ Surname \_\_\_\_\_ GivenName/S \_\_\_\_\_

Residential Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Address: \_\_\_\_\_

(If Different from above)

Home

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Work: \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature:.....

Date:...../...../.....

Membership Price Table	1 Year	2 Years	3 Years
Individual	\$25.00	\$45.00	\$60.00
Family	\$37.50	\$67.50	\$90.00
Community Group/ Organisation	\$50.00	\$90.00	\$120.00

Life Membership: \$220.00

Method of Payment: Cash / Cheque/ Direct Deposit/ Other: \_\_\_\_\_