



COOLEMAN RIDGE PARK CARE GROUP

Newsletter January 2013

Report on Verbascum Vamoose! Wednesday 12th December

This innovative evening weeding event saw a good turnout of members who can't make morning sessions.

The five at Kathner St reckon they removed about 800 Aaron's Rod *Verbascum thapsus* plants. The Darrell Place mob (five members again) report bagging 357 *V. t.*, and also accounting for sixteen assorted deciduous tree seedlings, six *Sweet Briars *Rosa rubiginosa* and five Cootamundra Wattles *Acacia baileyana*. The two toilers in the shade at Mt Arawang enjoyed their share of the campaign, but would appreciate more help next time!

Thanks to all participants.

We hope to repeat the exercise on 5 Feb – see page 2.

Previous Sunday Meeting - Mt Arawang 16th December

Five strong fellows turned out to attack the woody weeds and rampant grasses that infest Group Area South. With no Starane, they left the flourishing *St John's Wort *Hypericum perforatum* for the contractors. Sole female Arminel planted out twenty seedling Forest Mint *Mentha laxiflora* tube-stock plants (see *What's around*, p.2). Thanks to Pat for carting up the water for the plants and the hot water for our splendid morning tea.

Better Dam News

The pH at the Kathner St dam had returned to 6.6 at the end of December.

New PCS Parkcare Co-ordinator

Welcome to Jasmine Foxlee. We look forward to a well-co-ordinated year with her at the helm.

Future programme

**Next Meeting – Sunday 20th January
Nature Trail – Kathner St entry**

Note – in the warmer months, we meet in the mornings!!

- 8 am – 10.30 am
- Plant ID; remove & poison exotic growth
- Wear long sleeves and trousers, enclosed shoes, hat and gloves.

Bushfire Anniversary Walk Cooleman Ridge, Chapman 10.30 – 11.30 am Sunday 20th January 2013

To mark the anniversary of the January 2003 Canberra bushfires, our member, Dr Malcolm Gill, a fire ecologist, will lead a one-hour walk to observe and discuss the effects of the 2003 fires on the local landscape. While the walk will be on tracks - one of which is rather narrow - stout shoes or boots and covered legs are essential. Snakes are a potential problem but are rarely encountered.

If there is a Total Fire Ban, the park will be officially closed. A walk on sealed roads around the loop made by Kathner St and Percy Crescent will take place instead. The conversation then will be more about fires at the urban-rural interface but include the effects of fires on plants.

Malcolm spent many years at CSIRO Plant Industry in Canberra but now has an honorary appointment at ANU's Fenner School of Environment and Society. A Chapman resident, he was personally, socially and professionally involved in the 2003 Canberra fires. He was an expert witness at the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission.

What's around

Mentha laxiflora Common Name: Forest Mint

Drawing from PlantNET

Description: Aromatic perennial herb to 60 cm high; square stems; branches sparsely to densely hairy. Leaves opposite, simple, with lamina ovate or oblong-ovate, 1–4.5 cm long, 5–25 mm wide; apex obtuse to subacute; margins ± shallowly toothed; petiole 1–8 mm long.

Flowers in loose c. 4–8-flowered clusters in axil of a pair of leaves. Calyx c. 15-veined, fused to half its length; lobes subacute to pointed, sparsely to densely hairy. Corolla 4–7 mm long, white, pink, pale blue-mauve to mauve. Anthers exserted. Mericarps probably not developed.

Flowering: Jan.–July.

Distribution and occurrence: Grows in damp or swampy areas, particularly near rivers and creeks, mainly in clay-rich soils; widespread.

Source: PlantNet



Family: Lamiaceae (a large family of aromatic herbs and shrubs having flowers resembling the lips of a mouth and four-lobed ovaries yielding four one-seeded nutlets and including mint; thyme; sage; rosemary. Formerly called Labiaceae, from Lat. *Labia* = lips.)

Lat. *Lamia* = witch, vampire

Mentha = Mint. The name of this well-known herb.

Latin, from Greek.

laxiflora = Loose-flowered (combining form of Lat. *laxus* = loose + Lat. *Flora* = the Goddess of flowers, hence flowers in general.)

Another native mint, *Mentha diemenica*, also grows on Cooleman Ridge and was featured in our newsletter in Feb. 2008

Scan – A Ryan

We found a single specimen of this plant on Mt Arawang. We had it identified by the ANBG. The Ryans collected seed and rootstock last autumn, for propagation (the parent plant is at risk of being overwhelmed by *Blackberry *Rubus fruticosus* and *Periwinkle *Vinca major*, or damaged by herbicide applied to these weeds).

We have begun planting out the seedlings in other locations on Cooleman Ridge.

Website Work

Thanks to Gösta and Rohan, there is a new section on our website devoted to the dams on Cooleman Ridge -

<http://www.coolemanridge.org.au/dam.php>.

The section includes a history of the dams, as well as over 300 photos taken over the last 8 years.

Webmaster Rohan's New Year resolution is to review and update the rest of the site. He will be reviewing each page and potentially including and/or deleting others. Those of you who wish to be involved in the review can send Rohan an email (rohanthomas@bigpond.com) so he makes

sure that you are included in discussion of any changes.

Also, he encourages anyone with useful content (e.g. photos) to make contact to see if it can be included.

Happy web surfing!

Verbascum Down the Track

Anna is organising another evening session for **Wednesday 6 February**. Details will be sent as a separate mail-out, including a flyer. Contact Anna by 5 Feb. if you want to be involved (anna.m.see@gmail.com)

Reet has provided useful notes and photos for the event, which we'll include with the flyer.