



Friends of Ferguson Park



Newsletter No. 121 January 2018

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Park Working Bees
First Sunday of
month 10am, Main
Gate, Hallett Road
Stoneyfell

Park Working Bee
Dates 2018

7 January
4 February
4 March
1 April
6 May
3 June
1 July
5 August
2 September
7 October
4 November
2 December

Working Bees Update

November 2017

- The Sparaxis Trial was started in three 20m² areas:
 - Area 1 – Zero wand applied to each individual plant
 - Area 2 – Individual plants physically removed
 - Area 3 – Foliage removed from each bulb
- Spent Cape Tulips were removed in the 'Triangle' in an attempt to prevent seed spreading, however there is still plenty to be done and it was agreed that an earlier start in 2018 would be good!

December 2017

- The weather over the past 2 years has been good for the Park and there are new Native Pine, Acacia and Eucalypt seedlings emerging.
- It was noted that there has not been much action on the removal of the rubble driveway (temporarily laid by St Peters Girls' for access to their building project). There is concern that the longer this remains in place, the more difficult it will be to remove without causing long-term impacts.
- Removed Pentaschistis. Plantain and Cape Tulip seed and worked on Native Apricots.

January 2018

- Cut and swab of Ash seedlings in creekline adjacent Stoneyfell Road. This is an ongoing task given that Ash seeds are continually being transported from upstream areas outside the Park.
- Patrol for Pentaschistis and Plantain.
- Gerhard removed approximately 12 African Furze (*Muraltia heisteria*) seedlings from the 'Triangle'.
- James did some watering of revegetation.
- Colin patrolled creeklines for Kikuyu (to be 'hit' in February if still actively growing).

Annual General Meeting

The 2018 Annual General Meeting of the Friends of Ferguson Park will be held on Monday 12th February at Wendy and Martin's house.

16 Neville Avenue
Clarence Gardens 5039

Please arrive at 6.30 pm with a plate of food to share, and a chair. The meeting will commence at 7.

Our Park signs

Friends of Ferguson Conservation Park have installed two signs near the Hallett Road entrance to the Park.

The first sign proclaims the Friends' role in caring for the Park and incorporates the native pine logo designed by Ilze Tomanis, a year 11 student at St Peter's Girls, as part of a logo design 'competition'. The sign was unveiled by Dene Cordes (DEH) and John Sorrell, the group's first Contact Ranger, in December 1992 at a lunch to mark the 10th anniversary of the Friends group. In October 1999 the sign was installed in its present position atop a perma-pine post. Doug Nicholas recalls helping Ken Preiss dig the hole and attach the sign.



Unveiling the sign – (L-R) John Sorrell, Ken Preiss, Dene Cordes, Agnes Jackson

The second sign meets a long-felt need for a sign giving visitors to Ferguson information about the Park's origins and the flora and fauna it conserves. The design of the sign and its wording were provided by Geoffrey Bishop, and James Swanson designed the structure. The sign was erected in a joint effort by members at the Christmas meeting in 2012. The plywood backing for the sign deteriorated in the weather over the next few years and so Doug Nicholas remounted the sign on fibro board late last year (2016). Colin Harris has applied several coats of green paint.

James Swanson



Native Apricot stand

We have been fortunate to have in Ferguson Park a remnant stand of the Native Apricot, *Pittosporum angustifolium* (*P. phillyreoides* until a 2000 revision of the genus), an attractive small tree once widespread over the Adelaide Plains, and the drier regions of southern Australia more generally.

Relatively slow-growing, it is a hardy plant which can persist in inland locations with average rainfall

totals as low as 150 mm per annum. Its height range is usually between two to six metres, although in favourable situations it can grow taller than this. The dense, pendulous foliage is complemented by small, cream/yellow flowers and unusual heart-shaped fruits which ripen to an orange colour before splitting. The interior is bright orange with several hard seeds embedded in a sticky matrix. Birds find the seeds attractive and play an important role in spreading the species. In Ferguson Park its only occurrence is in the extreme north-west corner of the Park fronting Hallett Road where it grows on hard-setting red brown earth soils. The annual average rainfall at this locality is around 650 mm.

Until a few years ago, around half a dozen or so mature or near-mature specimens occurred at the site. When fencing works for the adjacent school destroyed or damaged these trees it was feared that the stand had been lost and in the recriminations which followed the school offered to source local provenance tube stock from the City of Burnside's native plant nursery as replacements. Before this could be done, however, it was noticed that small *P. angustifolium* plants were emerging in the locality and the tube stock plan was put on hold. Recruitment has continued over several years and there are now around fifty individual plants, ranging in height from a few centimetres to well over a metre. Several larger specimens (up to three metres high) also occur and these are probably survivors from the fencing damage/destruction.

Although the species germinates readily from seed, it is believed that most, if not all, of the emergent plants are suckers from the roots of the trees that were disturbed or destroyed. For plants capable of suckering, physical damage to the parent tree will often trigger a response of this kind and where it has been possible to non-destructively investigate the sub-surface character of the emergent plants at the site they have been suckers. This may not be conclusive of course – for obvious reasons we do not want to risk the health of the trees by intensive disturbance of their root zones. Additionally, some of the emergents are up to ten metres away from where the closest adult plants would have been located before the destruction and that seems a long way for the root run of a small tree.

In addition to bamboo-staking the location of each plant, close monitoring of the recruiting stand is being undertaken, especially as *P. angustifolium* is prone to attack from *Pseudapines geminata*, the sap-sucking Pittosporum Bug. Infestations of this small black bug cause a mottling of the leaves and if attacks continue over several seasons even well-established trees can weaken and die. Infestations have occurred amongst our recruiting stand and when the number of bugs has been low they have been sprayed with the knock-down insecticide Pyrethrum. This provides only short term protection (the bugs can fly and readily reinfest treated plants) and when numbers have been higher the management response has been to spray all the plants with the systemic insecticide Confidor®. The active constituent of this product is Imidacloprid and, if applied at the recommended rate of one gram per litre of water, it provides good short to medium term control. The most effective long term control (up to eight months of protection) would come from slow-release Confidor® tablets which can be buried in the root zone of the plants, but at a retail price of almost \$3 per tablet their cost is prohibitive.

It is too early to be certain that our recruiting stand will persist, but so far the signs are good. With regular monitoring and management interventions when necessary we will hopefully regain our mature stand of native apricots, a very elegant tree and a true survivor from the pre-European environment of the Adelaide Plains.

Colin Harris



A stand of small P. angustifolium plants in the extreme north-west corner of the Park fronting Hallett Road