

Editorial : (or How Green is your Garden? continuation")

Last month I wrote in general terms about planting "Native" or, rather, "Indigenous" plants in a suburban garden. Unless you are fortunate enough to have remnants in your garden you will probably want to retain existing plants which will provide a framework for your garden. Indeed, Damper Creek and surrounding areas are in a "Vegetation Protection Overlay" (VPO) area and you may be fined by the Council for removing significant trees. (It seems, though, that you are allowed to completely clear a block for building a new house, a situation which seems at odds with equal application of the law). In any case it is worth contacting the Council regarding the removal of any significant trees. I will arbitrarily divide the garden into (a) Upper Storey (b) Middle Storey and (c) Lower Storey.

Upper Storey

We are talking here about trees. Careful thought is necessary here as they need to be selected for size, shade requirements, growth rate and possible impact on house foundations. Water and nutriment requirements are also likely to dominate an area, possibly to the exclusion of other plants. The Eucalypts are an obvious choice, who would not be seduced by paintings such as Tom Robert's "The Drovers". However, extreme care is needed with the Eucalypts as many grow to be extremely large trees unsuited to a suburban block. Sadly, there are no guarantees as to the ultimate size of trees that are indigenous to Monash. Most can eventually exceed 20m though the final height will be influenced by the particulars of

the site and the genetics of the individual plant. Suggestions are; Silver Stringybark, Long-leaved Box and Swamp Gum, but do your homework first. Amongst the wattles, the Silver Wattle and Black Wattle tend to grow too large and be susceptible to insect attack. The pick of the bunch for wattles would be *Acacia implexa* (Lightwood) or *Acacia melanoxylon* (Blackwood), the latter being a slow growing, often handsome tree, well known as a source of furniture timber. For a change of texture you could try the *Allocasuarina littoralis* (Black Sheoak) which will carpet the ground with its soft needles.

Middle Storey

These plants are the key to creating an environment for birds and animals, they can be pruned to keep them under control and are the means of screening your indigenous garden from neighbouring properties. Some are prickly and provide a refuge for small birds. Try *Bursaria spinosa*, the Sweet Bursaria, which can be a handsome small tree or controlled by pruning to be a dense shrub. The smaller wattles, particularly *Acacia Paradoxa* and *Acacia Verticillata*, are also very prickly and put on a good show of flowers but will quickly succumb to insect attack. If prickly plants are not your thing, the *Correa reflexa* is perfect for attracting honeyeaters. Other good (non prickly) screening plants are *Olearia lirata* (Daisy bush), *Kunzea ericoides* and the *Davesias* (Bitter-pea). Plants to fill up the odd spaces include the *Spyridium parvifolium* (Dusty Miller), *Indigofera australis* (Austral Indigo) and *Goodenia ovata* (Hop Goodenia).

The Lower Storey provides the greatest variety and the best floral displays. The large

tufted plants help to control weeds and are a critical part of the garden framework. The *Lomandra longifolia* almost dominates the groundcover in Damper Creek and provides a great background for more delicate plants. Not far behind are the *Dianellas* (*longifolia* and *admixta*) which have the bonus of lovely blue and yellow flowers. Some of the grasses are a rival for the tufties, notably the *Poa*s (*ensiformis*, *labillardieri* and *morrisii*). Other grasses are more delicate, particularly the *Austrodanthonias* (Wallaby grasses). *Austrodanthonia geniculata* will provide a delicate fine leaved lawn but you may have to persist for many years to ensure it is not overrun by weeds. Similarly *Microlaena stipoides* (weeping grass) is capable of providing a very traditional type of lawn but you will need to keep control of exotic grasses to get the effect. There are also many plants capable of providing a "front row" floral display. Many of these plants are short lived and you may have to reinforce the planting after the first year or two. I suggest the lilies (*Arthropodium*, *Bulbine*), the Bush peas (*Platylobium*, *Pultanea*, *Kennedia*, *Hardenbergia*) and many others such as *Brachyscome*, *Wahlenbergia*, *Viola* and *Epacris*.

I wish you the best of luck with your indigenous garden. There is plenty of variety out there but you may have to put in a bit of legwork to track down sources of plants indigenous to your area.

Local indigenous nurseries are Bungalook (Blackburn South), Greenlink (Box Hill), Knox Environment Society (Ferntree gully) and CRISP (Ringwood). Check their websites for opening times.

Our April Guest Speaker, Dr Ian Nicholls, spoke on the subject of “**Granites, Our Bedrock**”

The turbulent processes that have formed the granite outcrops in South – East Australia were outlined by Dr Nicholls. Granites are ancient rocks, formed between 500 and 350 million years ago in the magma zone of the Earth's mantle. Formed at temperatures of 800 to 1000°C at depths greater than 25kms below the surface and crystallised between 2km and 10km below the surface Granites are characteristically coarse grained.

Although surface rocks in S-E Australia are predominantly sedimentary, there is over 92,000 square kms of exposed granites in this region. A number of spectacular instances of granites showing non-uniform appearance were shown and Dr Nicholls went on to explain that a hotter magma (over 1000°C) was injected into the base of a body of cooling granite (under 800°C), creating a convection that resulted in “globules” of fine grained, biotite rich rock, becoming dispersed throughout the Granite body.

Subterranean bodies of granite are being studied as sources of geothermal energy. In contrast to the extreme age of the granites, the volcanoes and lava flows of the Western district of Victoria are recent events, with active volcanoes in the area as recently as 20,000years ago.

Special Notes for May Working Bee

May 30 will be a “Community Planting Day” and the general community will be invited to the event. Participation by local community groups such as Scouts and Guides is expected and FODCR is providing a BBQ and refreshments.

Friends of Damper Creek Important dates to remember:

	May	Notes
Meeting:	Wed 26th - 7.30 pm	Alvie Hall
W-Bee	Community Planting Day	Middle Bridge
	Sun May 30th 10.00am to 12.30pm	
	June	
Meeting:	Wed 23rd- 7.30 pm	Alvie Hall
W-Bee	Sun Jun27th 10.00am to 12.30pm	To be advised

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DAMPER CREEK DOINGS

May 2010

