

Editorial :

Changing community attitudes: the Vegetation Protection Overlay

Those who follow debates of community interest in the Waverley Leader will have noted that many City of Monash residents have taken objection to the City's unwavering stance on tree removal in areas designated as "Vegetation Protection Overlay" areas. Council regulations provide for severe penalties for landowners removing trees above a certain size without first consulting the council. This regulation allows for the preservation of the green and leafy character of the suburb, certainly a worthy objective which members of the Friends of Damper Creek would wholeheartedly endorse.

Unwavering adherence to the VPO guidelines has, unfortunately, led to a confrontation with some local residents who feel they have been unfairly treated. The issue is a complicated one which is compounded by such issues as:

- 1/Inappropriate species planted by both council and residents.
- 2/ Trees planted too close to homes, footpaths and services
- 3/Inconsistent application of the guidelines to residents and developers

Reports in the Leader suggest that the council is backing down on the VPO but there is no indication of this on the council's website (which has not been updated since January 2009 on this topic). Council regulations require a permit to remove or destroy a tree which has a trunk

circumference greater than 500mm at a height 1200mm above the ground and has a height greater than 10metres. There are exemptions for a number of exotic tree species and trees which represent an immediate danger to life or property.

This all sounds very sane and sensible, but there are problems. There is no indication of native species which may be totally inappropriate for the suburban building block. Such species as the Lemon Scented gum, a beautiful tree which, after twenty years will be far too large to be any closer than twenty metres to a suburban house but wonderful in parks and avenues. Also consider the Eucalyptus Leucoxylon, widely promoted as a small to medium eucalypt in the 1970's. Forty years later it is obvious that there are compact (and not so compact) forms of this tree. Many have grown to such a size that they are a danger to house foundations and footpaths.

Homeowners do have a tendency to get angry when confronted with an intransigent attitude from council officials who have a responsibility to act with intelligence and a knowledge of the environment, both natural and urban. Also homeowners may sense duplicity when confronted with a property developer who removes every scrap of vegetation prior to erecting a new house.

The "Vegetation Protection Overlay" exists for good reasons and should not be diminished in its power. However it must be applied in a way that acknowledges the mistakes of the past and works towards a future which preserves and enhances the green nature of our suburb, a difficult task when our urban density is increasing.

In Memoriam

"The Friends of Damper Creek Reserve Inc record with great regret the death of an important member of the Damper Creek Conservation and Development Group responsible for the protection of the Mount Waverley bushland known as Damper Creek Reserve. The initial meetings of the Damper Creek Conservation and Development Group were held at the home of Barry and Beverley Counsel in 1968. Barry Counsel remained an active member of the Friends of Damper Creek Reserve until his death in 2011."

We also note the passing of Gavin Nisbet who was the first treasurer of the Damper Creek Conservation and Development Group.

Guest Speakers

June: Dr Meg Ralph "Environmental Sustainability at Monash University"

August: Ron Lewis "Native Fish"

November: Dr Gavin Mudd "The Paradox of Sustainable Mining"

Fencing Adjacent to Damper Creek

It has come to our attention that any property owner seeking to replace fencing adjacent to Damper Creek can opt to have paling fencing replaced with cyclone wire fencing at no additional cost. If you wish to take advantage of this, please contact Heather Cornwell (Heatherc@monash.vic.gov.au). The use of cyclone wire fencing will allow integration of your private garden with the Damper Creek reserve, improving the amenity of both. If you have doubts, I suggest you walk the boundary of the reserve to observe properties where this has already been done.

Planning a New Garden

I was contacted by a landscaper Diana Zerrillo, working on the garden design at 1 Gillian Rd, adjacent to the reserve.

The home is 3 years old and was designed with the surrounding environment in mind. Windows are positioned to capture views of the reserve. With most of the living areas upstairs, the family enjoys a tree-top view.

As the house is new, with no pre-existing garden, the project represents an unusual opportunity to develop a garden from scratch in sympathy with the reserve.

The main hard-landscaping feature will be the slightly elevated 'board-walk' which will run down around the side of the house. This will span a dry creek bed, lined with rocks already on site.

The plant list was designed with reference to the indigenous plants of the area and Diana visited Bungalook nursery to determine which plants could be readily sourced. Indigenous plants include Sweet Bursaria, Correa Reflexa, Dianellas revoluta, longifolia and tasmanica, Poa ensiformis, Poa labillardieri, Microlaena stipoides and Hardenbergia violacea. There are a number of non indigenous natives including the spectacular Doryanthes palmeri (the giant Queensland Spear Lily), Agonis, Eremophila, Leucadendron Banksia and Correa species.

We wish the owner, Wendy and Diana all the best with this project.

Friends of Damper Creek Important dates to remember:

| | May | Notes |
|--------------------|--|-------------------------|
| Meeting: | Wed 25th - 7:30 pm | Alvie Hall |
| Working Bee | Sun May 29th 10-00am to 12-30pm | At the Park rd car park |
| | Jun | |
| Meeting: | Wed Jun 22nd 7:30 pm | Alvie Hall |
| Working Bee | Sun Jun 26 th 10-00am to 12-30pm | TBA |

Contacts

| | | |
|-------------------|--|-------------------|
| President: | Helen Clements helencleme@gmail.com | 0401813502 |
| Secretary: | Campbell Miles | 98037707 |
| Treasurer: | Griff Young | |
| Editor: | Doug Scott Please email material for the newsletter to dougscott3@bigpond.com. | 0417300866 |

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Damper Creek Reserve Inc. is a member of 'Landcare'
and 'Land for Wildlife' Volunteer Nature
Conservation.

***Damper Creek Bushland Reserve: part of the Yarra
Catchment.***

Please address all mail to:
The Secretary: PO Box 2063,
Mount Waverley 3149

The Newsletter of

**FRIENDS OF
DAMPER CREEK RESERVE INC.**

Reg No. A0029531G

www.vicnet.net.au/~damper

P.O. Box 2063 Mount Waverley

DAMPER CREEK DOINGS

May 2011

