

DAMPER CREEK DOINGS

April 2019

The newsletter of
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During our March meeting, Dr Greg Moore entertained and informed us on the topic of the "Economic Effects of Trees."

I need hardly say that as members of the Friends of Damper Creek we should all be advocates for the planting and retention of trees. Trees are a single element of an ecosystem. We know their importance in providing wildlife habitat and forming symbiotic relationships with other plants and fungi, however, Dr Moore gave us many, more pragmatic reasons why trees are of positive economic benefit.

Nature's air conditioner!

The most obvious benefit involves the reduced costs of air conditioning when the walls and roof are shaded by trees. The benefit extends beyond simply shading a building as the transpiration from the leaves drops the temperature of the surrounding air. This is particularly demonstrated by plotting temperatures across Melbourne during a heatwave. The western suburbs are several degrees hotter than the eastern suburbs, a direct effect of the lower level of tree cover in the western suburbs. During the 2009 Black Saturday heat wave, more people died from heat stress than from the devastating bushfires. Predictably, those deaths were predominantly in the western suburbs, though socio-economic factors are involved as well as local temperatures. City centres, with vast amounts of concrete and roads, demonstrate a "heat island" effect when there are few trees. The City of Melbourne, as well as other municipalities, aims to achieve a 30% canopy cover to control the heat island and this has been adopted as a world standard. London claims to have achieved 30% canopy cover, qualifying it as an "urban forest". Monash, at last count, was sitting at 23% but this is rapidly dropping. This objective is not achievable without cooperation or control of private land as there is insufficient public land to give this level of cover.

Healthy trees, healthy people!

The availability of parks, particularly those with tree cover, is a significant factor contributing to an active lifestyle. Consider walking to school, walking the dog or simply walking to control stress levels. Walking where there is shade is far more pleasant than walking in the open, particularly when the sun is beating down. Shady streets are just as beneficial. Those who walk for exercise will readily identify those streets which provide good shade at various times of the day. Children who develop healthy habits grow into healthy adults.

Unintended consequences.

We may be concerned about the damage that trees can do, but little attention is given to the damage an absence of trees can do. Dr Moore related the case of a swimming pool owner who insisted that a neighbour cut down a tree that dropped leaves into his pool. The tree was removed and the pool owner, deprived of the shade, found the pool was unusable during hot summer days. Eventually the pool cracked as the tree had been controlling ground moisture. Road maintenance suffers if trees are removed as the volatiles in asphalt evaporate more readily. Good tree cover greatly extends the life of asphalt. The removal of trees greatly increases stormwater runoff, resulting in costs to upgrade drainage and to disruption of traffic when roads are blocked due to inadequate drainage. In extreme cases flooding is a direct consequence of tree removal. Trees control erosion in vulnerable areas. Removal of trees results in increased wind speeds which can strip roofing from buildings.

C-125 update

On April 9th members of the Friends of Damper Creek as well as members of the Friends of Scotchman's Creek and Valley Reserve met with the CEO of the City of Monash and other senior members of staff. There was obvious sympathy for the environmental agendas of the two "friends" groups as well as recognition of the efforts from within the council staff and management to improve the environmental credentials of the city. However, there are several sources of frustration which prevent such initiatives as C-125 from being fully implemented. In order to progress from the (distressing) situation of 31 Bengal Crescent, it will be necessary to become more active in influencing councillors who are not currently sympathetic to environmental agendas. On the state level we need to voice our concerns regarding obsolete regulations which do little to prevent overdevelopment. The best hope for the future is for the Monash Urban Landscape Character and Canopy Vegetation Strategy to include overlays which are enforceable. The use of overlays has been successfully applied in other municipalities.

We must keep a close eye on the agenda of council meetings. When a critical vote is coming up it will be necessary to have a strong presence at the meeting and to lobby councillors prior to the meeting. Your committee needs your help.

As part of the agenda at the next meeting we will be discussing strategies for upcoming council meetings.

Our Guest Speaker Programme

For our May meeting (May 22nd) we will be hosting a workshop on "Gardens for Wildlife", presented by Anna Mezzetti, programme coordinator with the City of Monash, assisted by Daniel from the Bushcrew.

On July 24th we will be hosting Dr Lindy Lumsden of the Arthur Rylah Institute for Environmental Research. Her topic will be "Bats, Fascinating Creatures of the Night". She is an honorary life member of the Australasian Bat Society. The Northern free-tailed bat—*Ozimops lumsdenae*—was named after her.

On Wed 25th September Lukas Skelton from Horticulture at Monash City Council will be our guest speaker. He will be talking about the City of Monash "Green Shoots" programme focussing on Community Education on plants and gardening . This will compliment their "Gardens for Wildlife" program.

April working bee.

Following the disastrous loss of a large tree at the rear of 24 Park road last year, the council has been working to rehabilitate the area. The huge stump and several large logs have been removed and placed in a nearby planting area and the area at the property boundary levelled to facilitate mowing. The stump and logs will make a significant feature as well as providing great habitat. Mulch has been placed in the planting area and the April working bee will involve spreading the mulch and preparing the area for planting at the May working bee.

May working bee

This has been designated as the "Melbourne Water Planting Day" and a sausage sizzle will be held on the day. Melbourne Water has donated \$100 for our group and this will be used to purchase a (council supplied) tree. The tree will be an indigenous Eucalyptus melliodora, semi mature, similar to those planted around the playground and it will be planted in a feature position in the area we are planting out on the day.

For your diary:

Wednesday April 24th 7-30pm. Business Meeting.

Sunday 28 April **working bee** from 10am - 12.30 meet in Damper Creek at rear of Park Rd houses, parking in the car park opposite the playground in Park road and walk through the reserve to the worksite. We will be spreading mulch and/or weeding in preparation for May planting working bee.

Wednesday May 22nd Gardens for Wildlife workshop / guest speaker

2. Sunday 26 May –**Working bee**. Planting at the above site. There will be a sausage sizzle.

Note for working bees: Please help the environment and the friends group be bringing your own water bottles and coffee / tea cups to working bees. We will fill them up for free!

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