

DAMPER CREEK DOINGS

April 2020

The newsletter of
FRIENDS OF DAMPER CREEK RESERVE INC
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Editorial:

A Tale of Two Grasses

I'm sure you are tired of hearing about Coronavirus so I will attempt to dispel some of the mystery surrounding grasses in Damper Creek. Firstly, grasses get rather bad press. Some may even consider grasses as weeds except when in a neatly manicured lawn. In truth, there are many grasses that are an important part of the native environment and some introduced grasses that threaten to overwhelm native grasses. Damper Creek has many types of grass and the environment is enhanced if the introduced grasses can be suppressed in favour of the native grasses. The correct identification of one "weedy" grass and one "indigenous" grass will allow you to use some of your "exercise" time to improve the Damper Creek environment. Remove weeds from the park, place them in your green waste bin or add them to existing piles of weeds.

Panic veldt vs Weeping grass

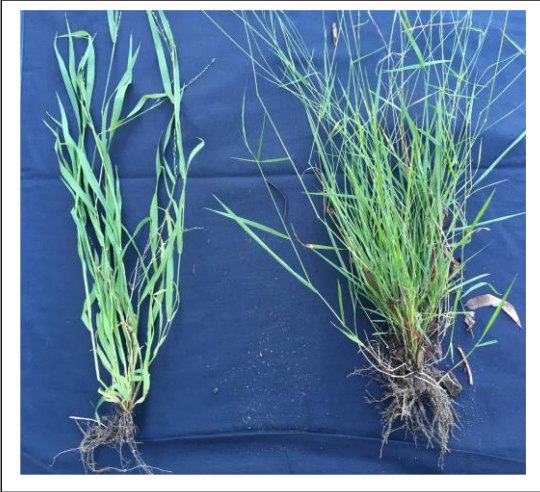


Panic veldt grass pushing its way through a good covering of native Weeping grass. If allowed to propagate, Panic veldt will overwhelm almost all native vegetation at ground level. Note the wider leaves and brighter colour of Panic veldt compared to Weeping grass.

Panic veldt on the left.

Weeping grass on the right

Note that Panic veldt has shallower roots and is less dense than Weeping grass. If allowed to germinate, Panic veldt will grow within a clump of native grass and eventually overwhelm it. Without the competition of Panic veldt Weeping grass will form a dense cover which will exclude most weeds.



Panic veldt seeds. Small seeds which are shed easily. Where Panic veldt is growing amongst other grasses it can be extremely lanky, growing to a metre or more to spread its seeds widely. The seed head betrays its presence and following the stem to ground level can reveal many stems which can be grasped to remove a mature plant.



Seeds of Weeping grass (*Microlaena stipoides*). These seeds are long with an attached awn. The seeds are easily stripped from the stem and can be spread to extend the range of the grass. The seeds will detach from the stem even when green. The seeds have a barb on the end which will catch in socks and other clothing and can lodge in your pet's feet.

Weeping grass makes a wonderful lawn if kept mown and free of weeds.



Enjoy your (permitted for exercise) walk through Damper Creek. You can do your bit to improve the reserve by removing some Panic veldt as you walk. Just be careful not to spread the seeds.

Did you know? April 2020

Did you know that Damper Creek area was the home of the discovery of a most useful natural chemical compound? Reports from the fighting in Europe during 1915-16 indicated that soldiers were suffering from gastro-intestinal problems due to the poor water supplies. Readers will be aware that Furphy Company in Shepparton was supplying the mobile water tanks. The water supplies were found to be contaminated from the fallout of explosives and a method of extracting the fallout was required. A suitable flocculant was considered the best method. But what might be suitable for the field? An eminent government chemist (who lived in the Damper Creek valley) was commissioned by the Australian War Department to develop a flocculant. In discussing the problem with his neighbours Messrs Lirpa and Loof, he learnt that the local indigenous people had been using the crushed petals of the Chocolate Lily (*Dichopogon strictum*) as a water cleanser since the Dreamtime. It so happened that the Chocolate Lily grew in wild profusion throughout the Mulgrave Shire (now our Monash City), with particularly large patches in the Damper Creek Valley.

After some successful trials confirming only a small amount of the lily flowers was needed Lirpa and Loof immediately set about harvesting the Damper Creek and surrounding area for the flowers. These were quickly dried and packed for shipment to the battle fields. The dried flowers were distributed on the battlefield by the Furphy water tanks. The seeds had been collected from the flowers, and following the Aboriginal tradition, they were subject to extreme heat before replanting.

As a result of the success of the Chocolate Lily and Mulgrave Shire in helping the Australian troops in WWI, the Chocolate Lily became the Emblem of the Mulgrave district and now Monash City.

From the *The First April* Files of the Waverley Historical Society.

Friends of Damper Creek Reserve Activities during CoVid-19

Members have been notified that all meetings, guest speakers, working bees and community events have been cancelled until restrictions have been lifted. For non-members, please be aware that we often communicate by email. By becoming a member you will be automatically added to our email list. Please direct membership enquiries to the secretary c/o P.O.Box 2063 Mount Waverley 3149 or via email: secretary.dampercreek@gmail.com General information including past newsletters is available on our website www.friendsofdampercreek.org.

Damper Creek Reserve remains a popular walking destination and this use is permitted for exercise purposes provided users observe appropriate "physical distancing".

Playground Closure

Across Monash all playgrounds have been closed including the Damper Creek playground adjacent to Park Road.

Bushcrew Compound

Plans for the replacement of the aged and unsightly bushcrew facilities are being prepared and the FODCR committee and other members have contributed to the Council discussions. Once things become clearer final decisions will be communicated via noticeboard, email and newsletter.

City of Monash Net Zero Carbon

.Monash has committed to achieving zero carbon emissions by 2026. This is an advance on the previous plan which was to achieve net zero by 2028. Analysis indicated that the cost of achieving this would be largely offset by cost savings. There are many aspects to this programme but residents can expect to see more electric and hybrid vehicles in the Council's fleet, more use of solar panels on Council sites, changeover of street lighting to LED and greater use of recycled materials. More comprehensive information can be found on the Council's website and in the Monash Bulletin for March.

Note that the Council's emissions account for approximately 1% of the emissions for the municipality so it is critical that residents and businesses make changes as well.

Cat curfew

Note that as of 2020 Monash has implemented a cat curfew. Owners are responsible for ensuring that their cats are safely contained at night. Cats are natural predators and any user of Damper creek will be familiar with the frequent evidence of attacks by cats or foxes in the reserve. Please ensure your cat is contained at night and report any evidence of foxes to the Council.

Diary Notes

Unfortunately, we cannot predict when our normal programmes will resume. The FODCR committee will continue to liaise with the City of Monash regarding all issues that affect the reserve. We will also continue to seek out guest speakers for future meetings and would appreciate any suggestions from members for future guest speakers. Please be assured that FODCR continues to be active behind the scenes.