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WICCNews

WICC Newsletter October - November 2020



Kambarang

Second spring October - November
Season of birth, longer dry periods



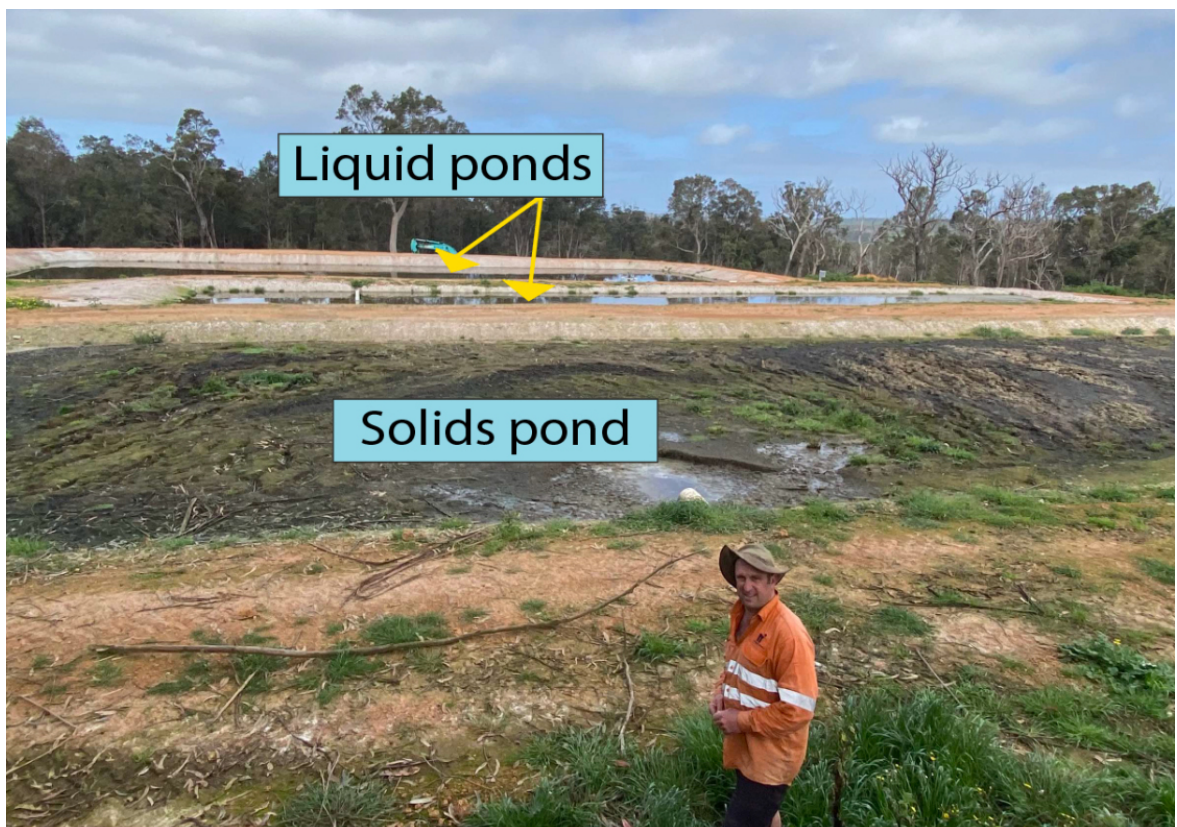
Photograph by Chris Hoare

Farmer in focus



Dairy Farmer, Andrew Jenkins

Andrew and Claire Jenkins operate a highly productive dairy farm in the Hay sub catchment. Keen to minimise their off-site impacts, the Jenkins are implementing some innovative techniques to maximise their nutrient efficiency. From composting to cropping to carrying out a large upgrade of their effluent management system, the Jenkins are committed to squeezing every ounce of nutrient from their operation. WICC recently caught up with Andrew to discuss what they are doing to maximise their nutrient efficiency.



Effluent Ponds at Jenkins Dairy

Typical dairy effluent systems work by putting solids wastes from the milking shed into a series of cascading interconnected 'ponds' which separate the dry and liquid matter. The liquid matter can then be used in nutrient

deficient portions of the farm instead of applying conventional fertiliser.

WICC: Tell us a bit about you effluent upgrade?

Andrew: We inherited an old system which was not meeting our needs. With some funding assistance from the Department of Water we have constructed these three ponds. The first receives the solids from the milking shed, the liquids are separated out and go into the second pond. From there they are further separated into the third and final pond. The water is fairly clean by then. From there we pump it up to a tank near the milking shed. This saves us about 25,000 litres a day in wash down water alone.

WICC: I know you care about minimising your nutrient export from the farm but you also strike me as quite business minded. Does this make sense financially?

Andrew: The effluent won't just be used for wash down. You can see the poly pipe there which we are going to connect to the system. This will allow us to recycle the effluent to irrigate a 50 hectare paddock 1.6 kms distant from the effluent ponds. This will help to minimise our use of conventional fertilisers. The idea is you spread these liquids over the drier months. This will result in a costs savings in our fertiliser budget.

WICC: I haven't come across many dairy farmers that find the time to do composting. What is your motivation there?

Andrew: We do a rough job of composting the farm waste. We don't make a commercial grade product. We look to compost any feedlot waste, solids out of the effluent pond as well as the wood chips we put around the laneways. All of that waste gets collected at the end of winter and put in our composting pits. So you are trying to combine some carbon sources along with nitrogen sources. We also bring in a commercial grade compost which we spread every autumn. We often top up any necessary trace elements and add in a bit of burnt lime. We are trying to balance the biology in the soil to help look after our pH rather than spreading traditional lime. There is also a composted phosphorus product which goes into that which works as a slow release phosphorus.

WICC: You showed me a few pics a while back where you were cropping around the perimeter of your more nutrient rich areas. What is the story with that?

Andrew: We are trying to match the plant variety and density to the nutrient availability. We try to maximise the dry matter production off of those nutrient rich areas to utilise the nutrients that are there. From memory, those photos were of rye grass, oats and leafy turnip.

Report a Pig





Feral pigs are a declared pest in WA, but have well established populations in forest areas from the Darling Scarp to the South Coast. Feral pigs pose a threat to agriculture and the natural environment and are a particularly damaging pest due to their destructive habits of digging, wallowing and rubbing, their highly adaptable omnivorous diet, mobility, ability to reproduce quickly and as carriers of exotic diseases.

The Lake Muir Denbarker Community Feral Pig Eradication Group (LMDCFPEG) was established in 2001 as farmers became concerned about the increasing incidence of feral pig incursions. From humble beginnings the LMDCFPEG manages a collaborative, cross land tenure feral pig control program across the Shires of Denmark, Plantagenet, Cranbrook and Manjimup. The group is managed by a network of volunteers from across the project area committed to the eradication of feral pigs from farmland and has forged strong partnerships with a range of stakeholders including government departments, landcare groups and industry and has helped develop many of the practices and procedures used by other feral pig control groups across WA.

The LMDCFPEG aims to eradicate feral pigs from agricultural land and establish a low pig density buffer zone on the public interface area. The group cannot claim to have eradicated the feral pigs from the area, but has been very successful in reducing the direct impact on agriculture and has significantly slowed the spread of the population away from the south and west coast. The group has long been aware of the potential of feral pigs to be carriers of exotic diseases, and the potential risk this could pose to commercial pig producers. This concern is heightened by the discovery of African Swine Fever (ASF), a highly contagious viral disease affecting both domestic and wild pigs, in countries close to our border and popular with travellers. If ASF were to enter Australia it could have a very damaging effect on our pig meat and associated industries and this risk has increased the focus on feral pigs as a pest to agriculture.





Feral pig damage

The LMDCFPEG and WICC are partnering to launch the 'report a pig' page which provides a quick and easy means for landholders, land managers and members of the public to report feral pig activity. Information collected will be collated by the LMDCFPEG, treated confidentially, and used to plan future control programs. The group has a team of accredited, experienced feral pig trappers who are authorised to undertake control work on some DBCA land, and can provide assistance or advice to land managers wanting to undertake their own control work.

The LMDCFPEG welcomes new members and is keen to expand the network of land managers that form part of the management committee. The management committee meets three to four times a year to plan control programs and discuss opportunities to improve feral pig management across the project area. We do not support recreational hunting and do not provide an avenue for those wishing to hunt pigs to access DBCA estate.

The Lake Muir Denbarker Community Feral Pig Eradication Group on ground work is supported by funding from the Western Australian Governments State Natural Resource Management Program.

[Click HERE](#) to check out 'Report a pig'

Inlet Update



View the 2020 Wilson Inlet sandbar opening [here](#) (courtesy DWER)

With the recent bar opening we thought it was timely to check in with the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation how the water quality has been impacted. Environmental Officer, Dr. Elke Reichwaldt says...

"Now that the sandbar is open and Wilson Inlet is once again connected to the ocean, we are observing some typical water quality patterns as sea water enters the inlet. When we did our routine water quality sampling two weeks after the bar was opened saltwater had already intruded far into the Inlet causing the denser salty water to form a layer below the fresher water (known as stratification) and low oxygen levels in the waters above the sediment. This creates conditions where nutrients can be released from the sediment into the water, triggering microalgae growth. At the same time, the decent rainfall that we have had since the opening is still causing the rivers to flow strongly, transporting nutrients to the Inlet and further fuelling microalgae growth. This is a normal response to the opening of the bar and consistent with previous bar openings where an increase in microalgae is seen in the weeks following the opening. This high microalgal activity combined with the tannin and sediment-rich river water is what is giving the Inlet the current murky look. The good news is that Prawn Rock Channel is well connected to the ocean and is filled with nice blue ocean water on the incoming tide."

See the latest Inlet monitoring data [HERE](#)

Wilson Inlet Estuary Forum 2020

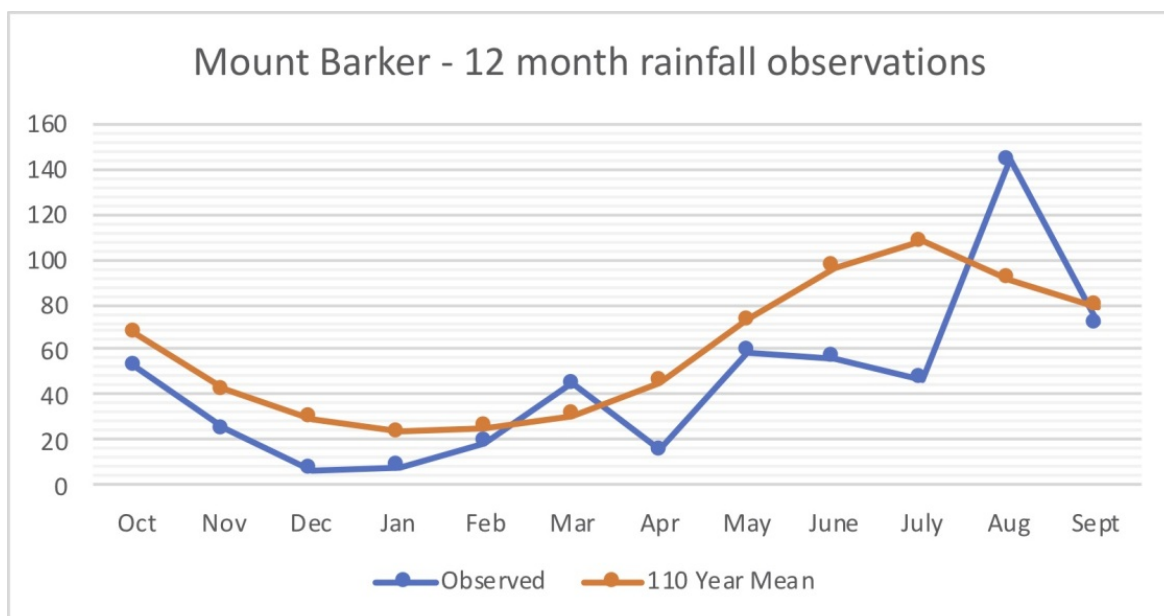
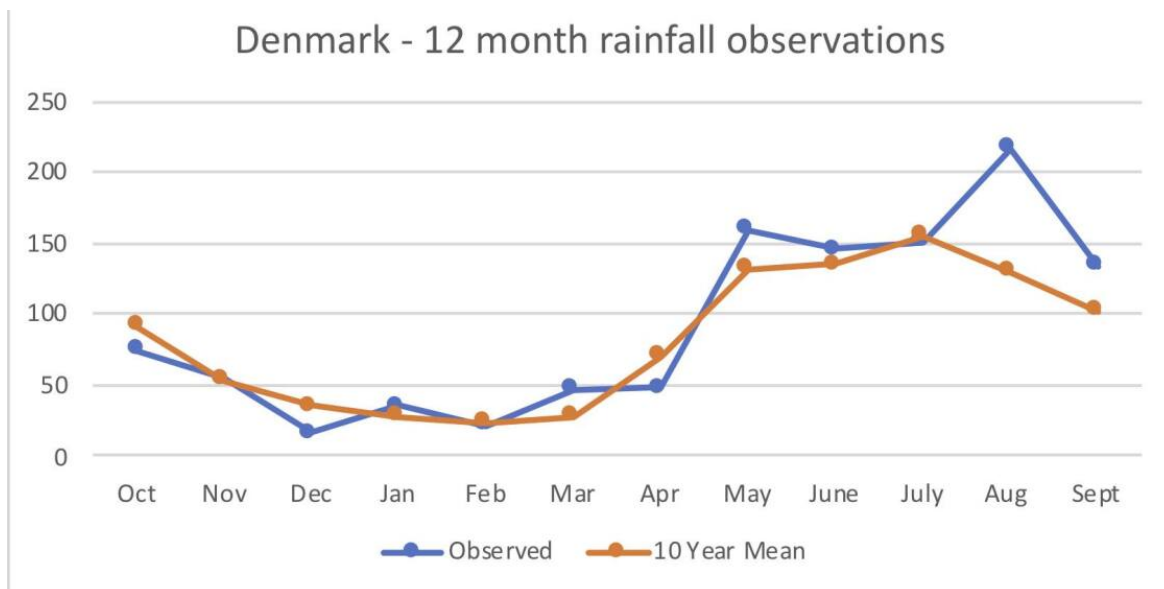
Want to know what is happening in your local waterways?



26th Nov at the Denmark Boating & Angling Club
details will be announced soon

Rainfall Update

Denmark, Mount Barker and everything in between had a cracker of an August. While Mount Barker fell short of the 173 mm record set back in 1920, most growers were happy with what they received. With the good rainfall continuing into September most farmers are expecting a great hay crop. Looking ahead, BoM is expecting a return to a negative Indian Ocean Dipole which increases the likelihood of a wetter than normal Spring. Southern WA will be relatively unaffected by the forming La Nina, however the eastern states will hopefully benefit with increased rainfall.



A message from our Elders





Pibbulman Wadandi Elder Wayne 'Wonitji' Webb

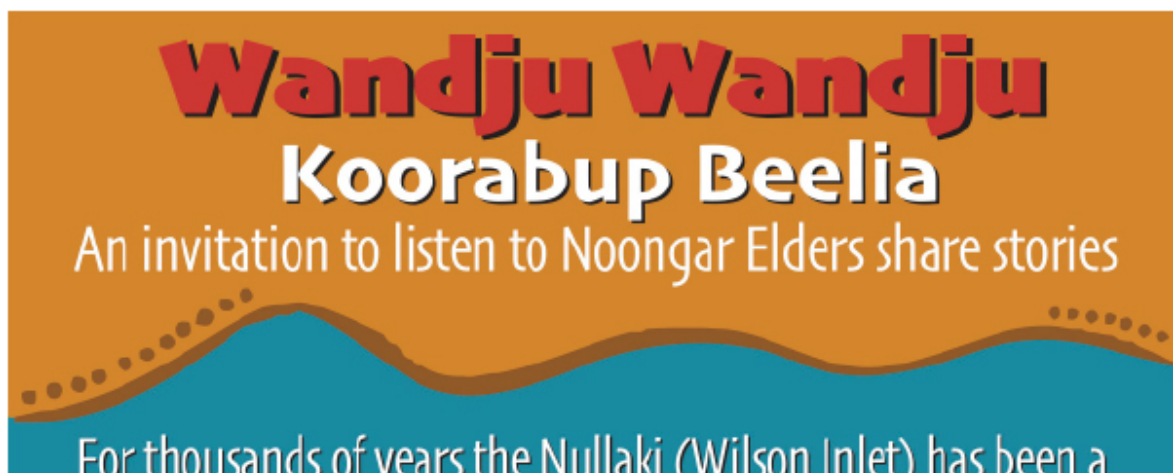
Wayne 'Wonitji' Webb is a Pibbulman Wadandi Elder whom has a unique and valued insight into looking after our waterways. Wayne's connection to Pibbulman Wadandi culture and practices comes directly from those whom were not removed from country during the stolen generation. Wayne's knowledge was not learned from books, as such, he is our best connection to first nation culture and knowledge in our region. WICC spoke with Wayne to discuss how we can make the most efficient use of our limited resources when it comes to looking after the Wilson Inlet...

WICC: What do you see as the highest priority when it comes to looking after Wilson Inlet?

Wayne: You got to look after the outside. You need to look after all of the reeds and the paperbarks... as a filter. If you peel back a layer from the paperbarks you will see little blisters there. If you do this in winter it is just a little bit salty cause of the fresh water about from the rains. If you do it again in summer it is really strong and salty cause they are taking the salt out of the ground and surrounding environment. They help to maintain the salinity balance in the environment which the surrounding birds and animals need to stay healthy.

To me I feel that there should be more revegetation around the inlet. Putting paperbarks and reeds back. They operate like a sieve. That sustains the balance in the inlet and helps to buffer if from all of the practices in the catchment. When people look at the inlet they say, "we got to do something about that inlet"... but you gotta look at it from the inlet and see what is sitting behind (the catchment). You need to follow the waterways up to where they start and work there, so you sort the problems before they get to the inlet.

You've got to do everything you can now to look after that balance in the inlet and waterways cause once that balance is gone, everything is gone. If you take one thing out of that cycle it all breaks down. Because the more the inlet is tainted, the fish won't come no more. I've seen it up that way in Busselton with the wetland up there, they (the fish) use to come to the Rivermouth and wait for it to break. They don't do it anymore. They did it right up until the seventies and then stopped.



traditional meeting place between the
Pibbulman Wadandi and the Minang Noongar tribes



Elders will share stories of Nullaki, the Beelia (rivers) & Boodja (land)
special guests, Wayne 'Wonitji' Webb (Pibbulman Wadandi)
and Vernice Gillies (Minang)

Where: The Sanctuary Denmark
When: 25th Nov. 2020, 11am - 1pm





This project is supported by funding from the
Western Australian Government's State NRM Program
and Dept. Water and Environmental Regulation



natural resource
management program



A brief history of farming around Mount Barker

This is part 2 of a 2 part series on the History of Farming in Wilson Inlet Catchment. Click [HERE](#) to see Part 1.





Lake Muir Bullock Wagon

by Archivist Camille Inifer

Plantagenet Historical Society Mt Barker Police

Albany's first farmer, Sir Richard Spencer had established his Strawberry Hill farm, however in 1835 with the "coastal disease", a mineral deficiency causing heavy stock losses, he moved his flock inland up the Hay River. They thrived. With his success others followed. The key produce in those days were oats, barley, wheat and also a variety of quality livestock. Wool was being exported to London, prize cattle were being bred and in 1838 the first equine stud was established in the Hay district.

The Spencer family Hay Farm estate continued expanding and with further land grants their "Langton" and "Ongerup" properties were established.



St Werburghs Homestead c.1910

By 1842 Sir Richard's daughter Augusta and son-in-law Lieutenant George Egerton-Warburton established a farm eight kilometres further along the Hay River which was to be named St Werburghs Homestead. They continued the same farming practices as Sir Richard and with the fertile river soil, also growing fruit trees. A mill was built on the Hay River to grind the grain into flour which, along with the meat, was sold to Hotelkeepers and Merchants in the growing town of ...

Albany.



St Werburghs Homestead 1901

The message was spreading that farming in the inland Plantagenet region was proving successful. In the early 1840's John Herbert, James Arber, and Andrew Muir arrived with their families to take up new lands further west at what is now Forest Hill and Lake Muir and John Hassell north to Kendenup, believed to be a local Indigenous word used to describe the area.

As new settlers arrived, there were only a few places of interest where events and business took place. By the 1860's there was Cooper's Old Bush Inn, the Police Station, Hick's Blacksmith shop and Sounness's property Abbeyhome. These were the early signs of a town developing and which would later be named Mount Barker

Traditional farming continued to prove successful, however with the developing fruit industry it was evident this was the way to go in those fertile soils along the Hay River, in the region of Mount Barker Hill and further east to the Porongurup Ranges. More and more were planting stone fruit and apples, with a few planting vineyards.

Andrew Muir is said to have planted the first apple trees in the district at his Forest Hill property. William Sounness had purchased his property in 1860 naming it "Merryup".

With a small population, sales were low initially, however, over time the market grew, particularly with the growth in the European market by the early 1900's. William Sounness can lay claim to having developed the apple-growing industry in the Mt Barker district, from 40 acres in 1860 to several thousands of acres by the 1900's. It was reputed to be the largest fruit growing proposition in the State.





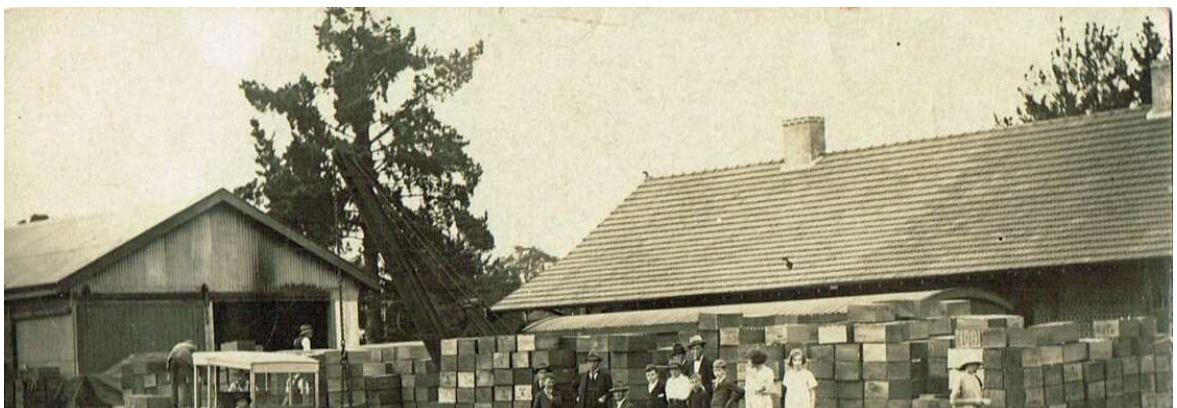
Merryup Apple Orchard Sounness family c.1910

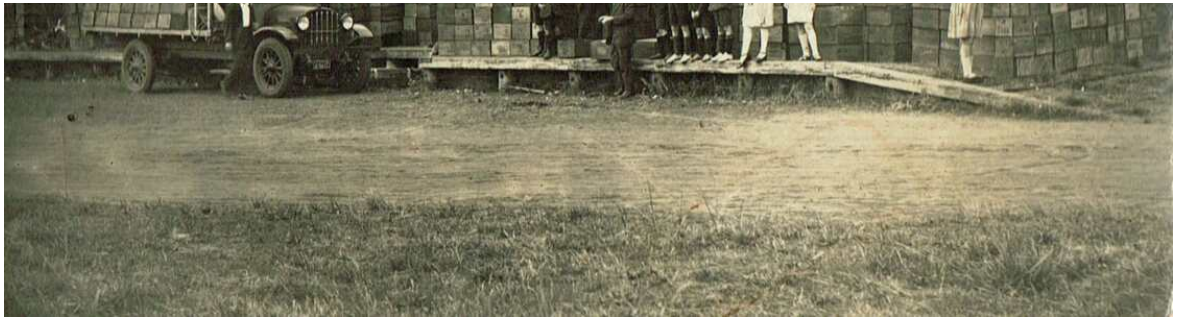


Audrey Hambley loading fruit Mt Barker CoOp c. 1956

With the increasing number of commercial orchardists, it had become evident that a Fruit Growers Association needed to be formed and this was achieved in 1910. Mt Barker's export apples were in demand due in the main to the quality of fruit and large orders were coming from European countries and Singapore.

However, demand slowed during the First World War but by 1917 the focus was back on export and with that, the need for cool storage so in that year it was decided the town establish its own Co-operative. The Mount Barker Co-operative has proven a great success for more than one hundred years, all started by a group of forward thinking fruit growers.





Fruit export at Mount Barker Railway Station c. 1930

By the late 1960's the wine growing industry was developing with Tony Smith establishing the first Great Southern vineyards. By then the apple industry had come to a halt with just a few orchards still producing apples. Many farmers by now were focussing on cattle, sheep and a variety of crops. However with mixed farming, there were still a few with small orchards and producing apples and stone fruit.

Farming has been a great success in the Plantagenet region, all started by a few hard working settlers looking to the future in their new home.

Weeds in focus



Arum Lily, Zantedeschia aethiopica

The Arum Lily was introduced to WA from South Africa more than 100 years ago as a garden plant. It is now a widespread and well-established weed, and the sale or propagation of this declared pest has been prohibited since 2006. It thrives in the moist conditions of the Southwest, where it chokes out native vegetation and invades pastures. Contact with Arum Lily can cause eczema in humans, and ingestion is toxic to animals, with stock losses documented. It spreads by growth of underground tubers, and by seed dispersal via birds.

TIP: In WA, landowners are required to control Arum Lily on their property.

Mechanical removal (multiple rotary hoeing over several years) may be effective, but only if all the root fragments are removed. Control is usually achieved through herbicide application. Metsulfuron (0.2g in a 10L backpack sprayer, or 20g/hectare) is applied, with a wetting agent (Pulse, others) added at 1:400 dilution. Glyphosate is not effective against Arum Lily.

TIP: Add a red dye to the mix; the pink blossoms will mark your progress.

Optimal time to spray is June-October, when the flowers are in bloom. Metsulfuron is effective in very dilute concentrations, and degrades rapidly in the environment. The wetting agent can be harmful to amphibians however, so steer clear of frog habitats while spraying.

TIP: The bad news is that the spraying needs to be repeated several years in a row to be effective.

On a recent Sunday, 3 Nullaki Conservation Initiative volunteers assisted Nullaki landowner Tom Wang in spraying 155L of herbicide on 3 large infestations in the bush, along a road verge, and in a paddock. We hope to treat even more areas as our window of opportunity fades.

TIP: If you can't get to that last patch, cut off and destroy the flowers to prevent seed dispersal.

For more information go to <https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/declared-plants/arum-lily-declared-pest>

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