EAST YUNA NATIVE SEED ORCHARD

A COMMUNITY PROJECT
FINANCIALLY AIDED BY
THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

THROUGH

THE NATURAL HERITAGE TRUST

PROPONENTS

ACTIVE COMMUNITY
ENVIRONMENTALISTS INC.

ACTIVELY ASSISTED BY

GREENING AUSTRALIA
BUSHCARE
CALM

EAST YUNA NATIVE SEED ORCHARD PROJECT 1999-2000

This is a newsletter designed to inform readers of the existence of the East Yuna Native Seed Orchard, its location and the aims of the work undertaken to establish the orchard.

The East Yuna Native Seed Orchard Project covers some 122ha of land once used for farming and is located in the Chapman Valley Shire on the south side of McGauran Road which runs off the Yuna to Mullewa road south east of Yuna.

This newsletter explains the way in which the East Yuna Native Seed Orchard Project has been brought to the stage that it is at, at the beginning of the year 2001. The Seed Orchard has been planted in stages over a number of years; each stage has been dealt with as a separate project due to rules governing allocation of grants. In this newsletter it would be a pointless exercise to put together a report on activities undertaken solely as a result of the 1999-2000 grant, (as the work performed is an integral part of the overall orchard) and no attempt to do so has been made.

AIM OF THE PROJECT

The aim of the East Yuna Native Seed Orchard project is to provide a source of native seed for revegetation projects in the mid west region of WA. At the same time the project aims to revegetate an area of 122ha thus: preventing erosion of land, controlling of water run off, and providing habitat for native wildlife.

A major aim of this project has also been to fall in line with the original purpose as proposed by the landowner Miss J McGauran. This aim has always been to provide an

educational resource for students of botany and associated sciences, a site where such students can spend time studying various plants and collecting samples of the same to further their knowledge of native flora.

An overall aim has been to achieve the above whilst fulfilling all of the conditions needed to gain approval from bodies providing grant funds or technical and practical assistance throughout the life of the project.

The project is a community driven project funded by: the owner of the land Miss J McGauran, The West Australian Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM), The National Landcare Project funding scheme and currently The Natural Heritage Trust funding scheme. By far the largest single government grant, given for work on this project, has been the grant through the Natural Heritage Trust granted in 1999.

This grant was for the amount of $22,600 which brought the value of this stage of the seed orchard establishment as outlined in the Natural Heritage Trust 1999-2000 application form up to $81,250.

It is only through such grants as The Natural Heritage Trust system that projects such as this seed orchard can be successfully established by volunteer community groups. It is essential that groups with a practical vision for a plot of land be assisted in all ways to put the vision in place. Volunteer community groups, particularly in the environmental field, are quite often the leaders in establishing an overall community ethic that persists for many years after the initial instigators of any given project have moved on to other things. The establishment of an ethical pattern in the way we treat the environment safeguards our community's future and needs all possible support.

ORIGIN OF PROJECT

This project came into being after Miss J McGauran approached a member of Active Community Environmentalists in 1992. Miss McGauran was looking into the possibility of the group assisting with the revegetation of 122ha of farm land which she wanted to be used as a resource for trainee botanists and others with an interest in native vegetation while at the same time adding land to existing reserves. It needs to be mentioned that both Miss Mc Gauran and her brother Duncan McGauran were instrumental in having other land in the area, some adjacent to the family farm, made into the East Yuna Flora and Fauna Reserve as far back as 1964.

Miss McGauran has been a lifelong student of botany and over the years has developed an appreciation of the diversity of our native flora, which she wants to see nurtured in as many members of our younger generation as possible. The establishment of the East Yuna Native Seed Orchard by the community and including students of horticulture in the process has been an introduction to native flora for many since work commenced on the project.

Once the ACE group became fully aware of the McGauran's long term interest in, and love for, the native ecology of the East Yuna region it was realised that the revegetation of the 122ha to the long term benefit of nature exactly fitted in with the ACE constitution as a project worthy of consideration.

After the initial discussion and a field trip ACE took the project on board as part of a group commitment to the decade of tree planting and set about finding a practical way to have the concept of revegetating the block become a reality.

PLANNING OF PROJECT

ACE has always been a diverse group of individuals driven by a desire to protect and promote the enjoyment of the natural environment. To fulfil these aims effective planning has always been essential when major projects have been contemplated.

It was very swiftly realised (in 1992) that the revegetation of the East Yuna block needed expert assistance to plan and bring it to fruition. CALM was contacted, and helped by pointing the group in a direction, which would turn the simple revegetation concept into something matching community and landowner requirements. After round the table conferences the decision to apply for funding to set up a native seed orchard on the block was arrived at and in due course a grant application was sent off to the NLP. That application was successful, as were two successive grant applications through the NLP.

After the demise of the the NLP scheme the Natural Heritage Trust was set up to cater for projects such as the East Yuna Native Seed Orchard Project. Officers from Bushcare and Greening Australia assisted ACE in putting together the successful 1999-2000 grant application.

Although this grant is allowing us to do more on the ground work extending the seed orchard at East Yuna the work enabled by this grant is a separate project in it's own right. It has been important to us, and the providers of funds, that each allocation has been for a stand-alone project. If for some reason our group had folded, the community would not have been left with a project with a stage half completed and lots of loose ends needing tidying up. This way of doing things has made it possible for individuals to pull out of any involvement with the project after their commitment to any given stage has been fulfilled. Voluntary work can and does from time to time take an unwelcome toll on volunteers if they feel trapped into a position of having to see an ongoing project through to the bitter end for year after endless year. A series of smaller short term projects designed to achieve a larger long term aim is a way of allowing a volunteer to walk away when their time is right knowing full well that they have done their bit.

For any grant application to succeed many hours of planning must take place. It is only as the application form is filled out that proponents become fully aware of just what detailed planning must go into any project. Basically a project starts before the application form is even filled in and continues until the final reports are sent off some time after the groundwork is completed.

PROJECT STAGES

This list gives some idea of just how much planning needs to go into any project and what kind of detail needs to be kept in mind.

1. Group meeting to gain tacit approval of project as long-term group commitment.
2. Site inspection by all involved in any way with project activities.
3. Photographic record of site inspection.
4. Putting together of grant application.
5. Advice of project to membership and local agencies via regular newsletter.
6. Seed collection and educational field day advising new seed collectors of methodology for collection.
7. Distribution of seed collected to growers for seedling section of project with balance of seed kept in a seed bank.
8. Contact calls to growers to ascertain success or otherwise of growing program.
9. Organise planting days to tie in with availability of volunteers.
10. Arrange machinery and supplies for planters.
11. Confirm transport of seedling arrangements with growers.
12. Organise labour to load seedlings on to transport, don't forget cheque for payment of transport.

13. Make sure all volunteers know of planting commencement time; but always bear in mind the fact that any given commencement time is not going to see all volunteers on site.

14. Signpost roads to site and entrance to site, don't assume that just because you can drive there blindfolded everyone else can do the same.

15. Assign various tasks to volunteers as they arrive taking note of physical capabilities of volunteers; asking anyone with a dud back to dig holes with a shovel does not make sense. By the same token attempt to be aware of any such problems that volunteers have before the day.

16. Let the planting proceed. If supervising realise before starting that you will never please all of the people all of the time, someone has to take control. Consensus in the field is a lovely thought but not a common reality on large projects.

17. Monitor progress of seedlings over following months.

18. Put together written report, complete with photographs, detailing project progress.

FACTS AND FIGURES

Location : Northern Agricultural Region Western Australia on McGauran Road in the

Shire of Chapman Valley on Location 6835 and 6836.

Area : 122 hectares

Previous use : crop land.

Land type : sandplain with a mixture of red earths, yellow sands and a bit of a stony ridge for good measure.

Project aim : establish native seed orchard

Purpose : supply native seed for revegetation projects

Ancillary benefits: encourage return of wildlife through provision of suitable habitat while stabilising land against erosion and protecting from salt incursion

Year started : 1992 as previous project of ACE

Trees planted: estimates vary from 45 to 90 thousand, closer to 90 than 45

Tree planting rate: much quicker as knock off time approaches and we realise how many trees need to go in before knock off

Tree species : many and varied with local eucalyptus well represented along with a good cross section of other species. Census to be undertaken at future date.

Seed used : 7.039 kilo of seed was used to provide seed to growers and for direct seeding to date; collecting is still in progress.

Machinery : hand tree planters, tractor drawn planters (Nu fab and Chapman), two wheel drive tractors, four wheel drive tractors, tracked dozer, semi trailers, tip tray trucks, flat bed trucks, a dog trailer, buses, passenger cars, utes, 4wds, trailers

Fuel used : no records kept as in the main fuel cost was borne by vehicle owners. This will need to change if project is to be an ongoing community group project, fuel costs are now too high to be continually donated to the project by members.

Photos taken : between 2 and 300

Personnel involved: 50 plus on site with others involved off site with such activities as seed collecting and cleaning

Major lessons learnt:

1. It is much easier to describe aim of project in writing than to achieve in practice.
2. Advertising in local newspapers attracts some very strange volunteers; membership and those known to members are a safer bet as far as volunteer labour goes on tree-planting projects.
3. A group commitment to a decade of any given activity should be accompanied by a pledge from those committing the group to such activity that they would remain with the group for the decade.

PROJECT PROGRESS AT TIME NEWSLETTER WENT TO PRINT, MARCH 2001

At this stage the 20,000 seedlings have been planted and we have a success rate of approximately 75% with the York Gums being the most noticeably successful. Other eucalypts have a good survival rate, as do the melaleucas. The greatest losses appear to have been along the top end or south side, of the plot where kangaroos have wiped out a good 50% of the top two rows. Further down the block, on the western side, roos appear to be prolific with tracks into the orchard in many places. The weaker plants have been thinned out through roos, rabbits and natural attrition. On the inspection of the site particular notice was taken of survival of hand, as against machine planted seedlings and a definitely higher success rate with the machine planted trees is evident.

Some direct seeding took place in strips of land cleared by a dozer in 1999. Approximately 4 kilo of seed was spread in these strips but to date the success rate has been unnoticeable. It was anticipated that the scalping by the dozer would have been sufficient weed control to give the native seed a good head start but that has not been the case. The planned major direct seeding component of this project may have to be rethought, direct seeding may be a success story in less harsh environments but that does not seem to be the case on this site. As the initial direct seeding on the site has been less than successful we are not rushing into that stage of the project.

We would much rather do our site preparation to a standard where seed germination was more likely than is presently the case. We are rethinking the whole plan of attack for direct seeding and may combine direct seeding with a further planting of seedlings in an attempt to maximise seed germination.

Seed collection is continuing so as to have on hand a sufficient quantity of seed for any direct seeding to be carried out on site.

For further information on this project contact any of the following:

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Ann-Maree O'Callaghan Regional Bushcare Facilitator Mid West Region

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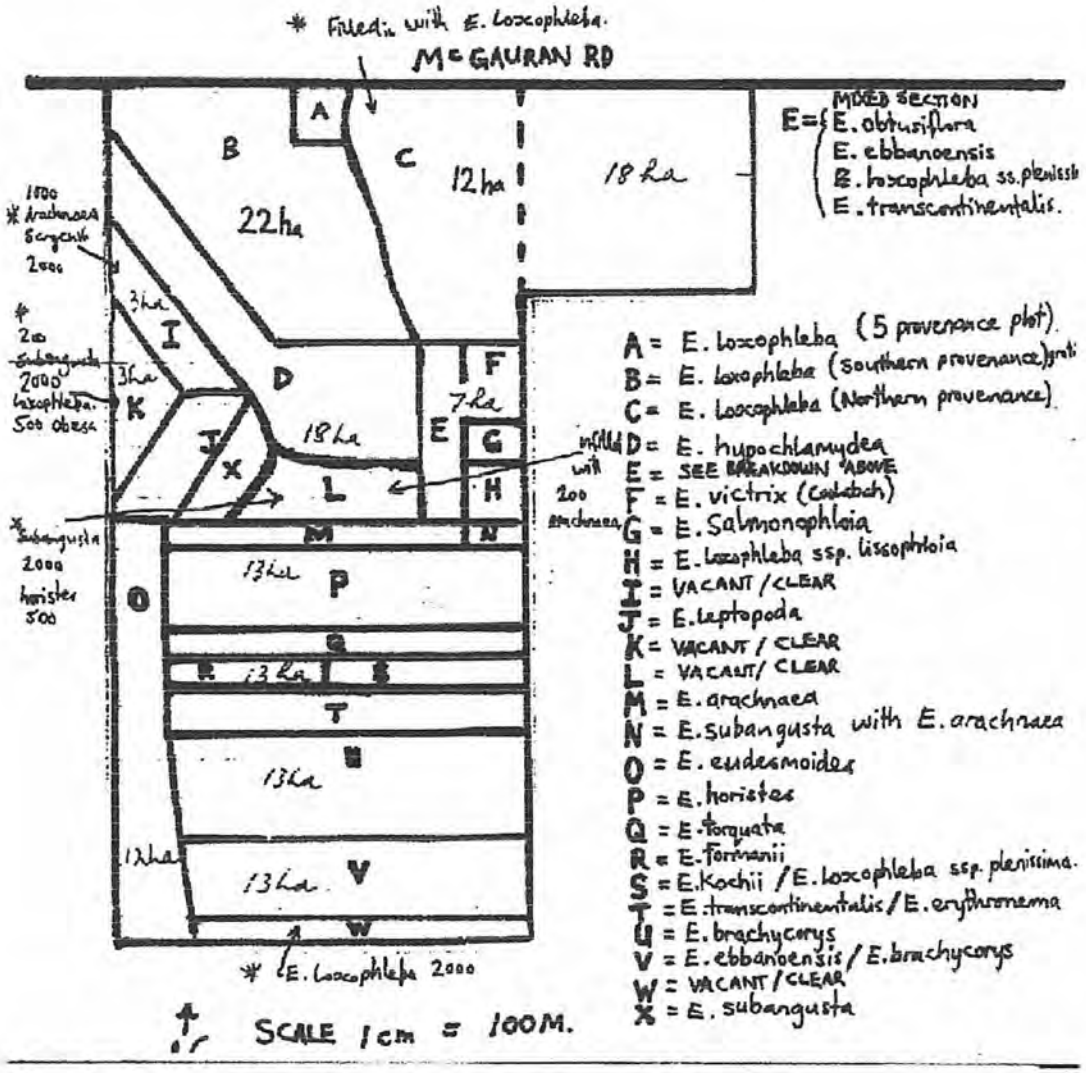
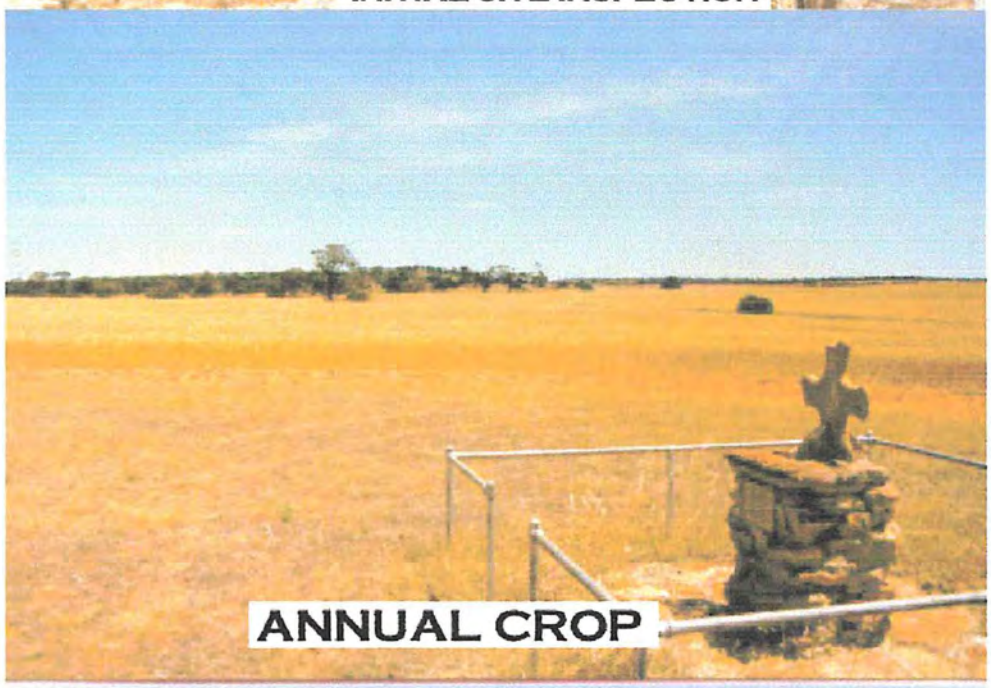
MUD MAP LISTING SPECIES PLANTED BY 1999 AND PLANNED FOR 2000

THIS PLAN WAS NOT STRICTLY ADHERED TO BUT NEARLY 20,000 DID GET PLANTED

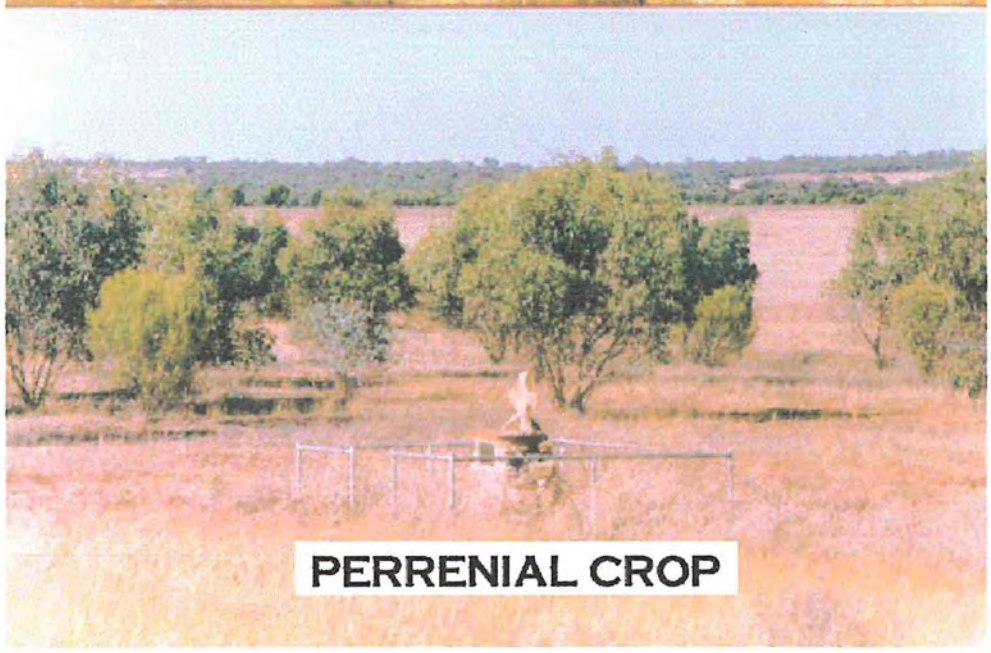
* = 2000 season



INITIAL SITE INSPECTION



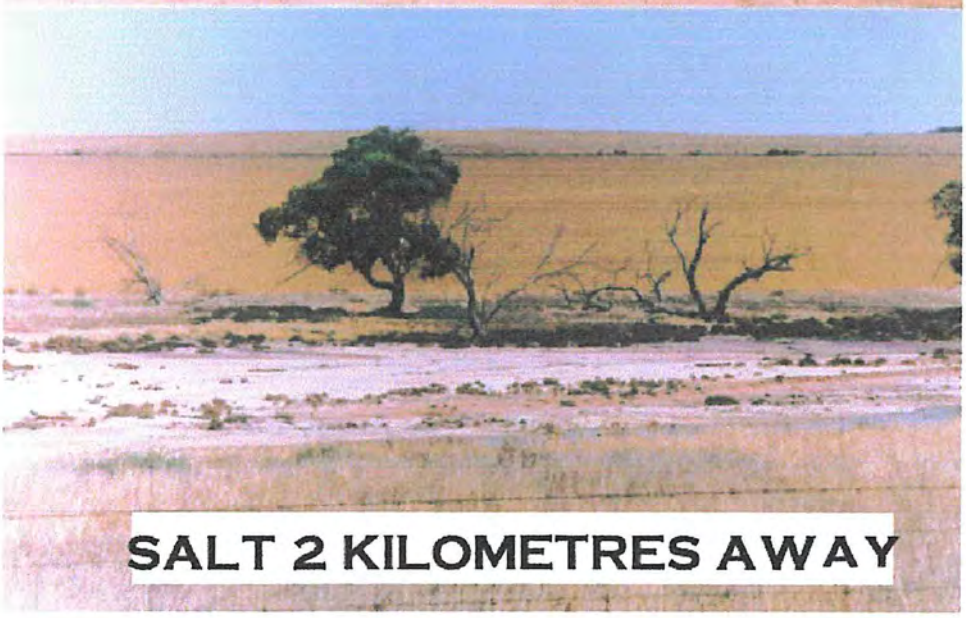
ANNUAL CROP



PERRENIAL CROP

FIRST PLANTING AFTER TEN YEARS

TWO CROPS, ONE PERENNIAL



SALT 2 KILOMETRES AWAY

RIPPING AND SCALPING FOR DIRECT SEEDING

PLANTING BY MACHINE

SEEDLINGS 6 MONTHS LATER