

Trees for Country Areas *by Frank Batini*

Although most of the Forests Department's activity has centred around the State forests in the higher rainfall region of the State, the department has, for many years, taken active steps to stimulate and maintain interest in the planting and conservation of trees throughout the farming areas.

This involvement commenced when the Hamel nursery was established in 1896 to supply trees for farmers and other residents of country areas. The interest and enthusiasm of Mr. G. E. E. Brockway, then

officer-in-charge of the Kalgoorlie Forest Division, in raising seedlings of the hardy but fast-growing inland trees, led to the establishment of an additional tree nursery in Kalgoorlie in 1946. From this nursery came the plants which have made Kalgoorlie and Boulder so well known for its street planting programme.

Before the nursery was transferred to Dryandra in 1955, and finally to Narrogin in 1967, an arboretum was established in Kalgoorlie and this has become a focal point for tree-lovers throughout Australia and overseas.

By 1916 the annual distribution of seedlings had already exceeded the 90,000 mark, and during 1969 a peak of over 274,000 were sold. Previously free, the trees were sold at cost from 1917 onwards. (Current cost 35 cents each or \$25 a hundred.)

Over 200 species are grown at the two forest nurseries; the most popular eucalypts being: river gum (*E. camaldulensis*), tuart (*E. gomphocephala*), dwarf sugar gum (*E. cladocalyx* var. *nana*), bald island marlock (*E. lehmannii*), salt river gum (*E. sargentii*), coral flowered gum (*E.*

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Above: Trays of young seedlings raised at Hamel Forest Nursery, soon to be despatched to buyers in country districts.

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torquata), sugar gum (*E. cladocalyx*), Tasmanian blue gum (*E. globulus*).

In order to test the suitability of various species for the arid and semi-arid regions of the State, and to demonstrate the real value of tree

planting in these areas, the Forests Department has, since 1949, maintained a programme of arboreta establishment throughout the farming areas.

Over 60 arboreta have been established and these comprise some 9,000

Below: Farmers inspected this arboretum near Badgingarra during an agricultural field day earlier in the year.



trees of different species. These arboreta cover a wide area ranging from Yuna in the north to Kalgoorlie in the east and Esperance and Boxwood Hills in the south. This work has enabled assessment of the most suitable species for different localities, and investigation of the most suitable spacing and establishment techniques.

The arboreta have proved to be an invaluable aid to the department's advisory service.

The severe drought to which the trees were subjected during 1969/70 provided a real test of their drought resistance. Results of a recent assessment have been very encouraging in that, almost without exception, well established trees have survived.

The performance of various species in these arboreta has influenced the revision of the list of trees recommended for planting in the agricultural areas of Western Australia.

In recent months, at the request of the Wheat and Sheep Division of the Department of Agriculture, officers of the Forests Department have attended agricultural field days at the Badgingarra and Wongan Hills Research Stations. On each occasion the advantages of tree planting were discussed, the arboretum was inspected and questions were answered. On these field days, a great deal of interest was shown by the attending farmers.

Few would question the desirability of establishing trees within the agricultural zone, particularly on the largely treeless heaths which have figured so prominently in recent agricultural development schemes.

A recent publication *Catalogue of trees for growing under Western Australian conditions* lists the trees recommended for specific areas and needs, and a brief description of each tree is given. Advice on tree planting techniques and the care of trees in general is also provided. Copies are available free of charge from the Forests Department, Perth, or either of the two nurseries.