

# TREES FOR BADGINGARRA



The approach to Badgingarra, 208km north of Perth, is notable for its silence, space, dryness and lack of trees. On both sides of the Brand Highway stretches the coastal heath country, hilly undulations covered with stunted species of Proteaceae and Myrtaceae competing in a continuous dense thicket for what little nutrients are there. The soils are mainly of lateritic origin and low fertility, and are sandy and dry. Trees are not a common feature of the natural environment here. However, along the sandy gullies and seasonal water courses such as the Hill River, York gums, river gums, powderbark wandoo and marri grow, providing some relief to the treeless heath.

The area's potential for cereal cropping and sheep farming was first realized in the late 1940s, and the Badgingarra district has gradually been cleared and settled since. Approximately 2300 square kilometres at present supports a farming population of four to five hundred

people. Despite the infertile soil agriculture is assured in this region by the annual winter rainfall of 500-600mm.

Because of the lack of trees it's not surprising that the people of Badgingarra are very tree conscious, realizing the benefit of shade trees to stock, and the district's potential for the top soil to erode once the scrub has been cleared. The small townsite is the focal point of the district and features a garage, tavern, general store, well developed community centre and primary school - all these facilities surrounded by hand-planted trees. Amid the low, shadeless heath, the township provides an oasis - trees are flourishing and enthusiasm growing, providing trees for Badgingarra.

## Nursery

In November 1981 a project was commenced at the local primary school in co-operation with local

farmers, the Parents & Citizens' Association and the Forests Department to provide suitable trees for planting, not only in the townsite but throughout the area. A nursery was established at the school starting with over 3000 trees grown from seed. The children participated in the project and the arduous task of continued watering through the very hot summer school holidays was carried out by enthusiastic farmers in the district.

The fruits of the combined community labour have recently been realized, as six months later the first plants were sold to farmers in the area for amenity planting. Community projects like this not only create the awareness of the need for trees, but they actually provide good tree stock suited to the area. The 65 pupils at the school are becoming well educated on the botany and cultivation of our native trees as well as benefiting from the sales. All profits are used to improve



▲ When *Eucalyptus todtiana* is released from competing shrub in the heath country it grows into a well formed mallee, highly suitable for sheltering stock. It offers palatable leaves but is protected by a prickly bark that resists any ringbarking by grazing sheep.



▲ The nursery at the school provides seedlings for planting throughout the Badgingarra district. Proceeds from the sale of the seedlings are used by the community and the school.

▼ People in the Badgingarra district are very tree conscious. This property has been planted for some years with exotic tree species along the creek line and up on the slopes, providing shelter and wind breaks, and assisting in the prevention of erosion.



community life in Badgingarra, the first project being a paid tour of the Goldfields for children at the school. This spring will see the expansion of the nursery and improvements in nursery methods and techniques.

To realize the full benefit of the initial efforts in cultivation, maintenance and protection of the seedlings from stock when planted out on the farms is essential for successful maturation of the trees. But there's little doubt that Badgingarra has made a great start to being a green and pleasant place to live.

Helen Bradbury  
Photography by Cliff Winfield



Local flora of Badgingarra -

TOP: *Banksia prionotes*

CENTRE: *Verticordia grandis*

BOTTOM: *Banksia menziesii*



#### Tree species currently grown at the Badgingarra School Nursery

<i>Eucalyptus camaldulensis</i>	— river red gum
<i>E. todtiana</i>	— coastal blackbutt
<i>E. gomphocephala</i>	— tuart
<i>E. rudis</i>	— flooded gum
<i>E. platypus heterophylla</i>	— coastal moort
<i>E. lehmannii</i>	— bald island marlock
<i>E. sargentii</i>	— salt river gum
<i>E. caldocalyx nana</i>	— dwarf sugar gum
<i>E. wandoo</i>	— wandoo
<i>E. accedens</i>	— powderbark wandoo
<i>E. caesia</i>	— gungarru
<i>E. spathulata</i>	— swamp mallet

Special vegetative features of the area include:

<i>Eucalyptus johnsoniana</i>	— recently discovered and specific to the area.
<i>E. pendens</i>	— recently discovered and specific to the area.
<i>E. lane-poolei</i>	— recently discovered in this area. The only other known occurrence of this species is in the moister area at Pinjarra close to the Darling Escarpment.