MAINTENANCE OF ROAD-VERGE SHRUBBERY

A.B. SELKIRK

To study the effect of prunings on native shrubs a pruning trial was laid down in March 1976 in a roadside planting (of about 8 years of age) at Mundaring Weir H.Q.

Planting species with a capacity for regeneration under a certain amount of competition were selected, bearing in mind that little maintenance could ever be applied on such areas.

The original planting included kangaroo paws, which died out after flowering well for 2-3 years. No watering was done after the first year of establishment.

The resultant data sheets show that considerable improvement can be expected from the right type of pruning.

With the careful selection of species known to be adaptable to different soil types and aspects of road-verge environment, it could be expected that such management need not be expensive. Mechanical slashing could quite easily be used in conjunction with rotational prescribed autumn burning to favour these species requiring heavy prunings, and to obtain a recycling from seed of those destroyed by heavy slashing and fire.

Thorough preparation of the planting site is essential for initial establishment. Grouping of species according to their degree of vigour is necessary to reduce the possibility of site domination by a vigorous form.

Such species as Grevillea endlicherana, Grevillea drummondii and Grevillea bipinnatifida, could be included in a group of vigorous growers capable of regeneration after heavy pruning, slashing and burning, either from coppice shoots or seedlings. It may be desirable to develop stretches of monotonous verge of one species to accentuate the effect of a variety of colourful flowering species, e.g. Verticordia or Lechenaultia.

Perpetual maintenance of native flora on median-strip and road-verge environments is something fairly simple to manage, as shown by the data sheets, provided selection of species and soil types are given due consideration.

RESULTS AND COMMENTS ON PRUNING TRIALS

ON 8 YEAR OLD NATIVE SHRUBS AT MUNDARING WEIR 1976

SPECIES	TYPE OF PRUNING	GROWTH RESULTS	FLOWERING RESULTS	COMMENTS
Sollya fusiformis	Very heavy cutting to base stems	Very vigorous growth	Delayed at least 12 months	A regeneration of the complete shrub.
	Moderate clipping to shape	Good uniform growth	Very good	Can be nicely shaped by this method.
	Unpruned	Straggly form	Sparse	Old material shows poor colour etc. from insect attack.
Grevillea drummondii	Moderate clipping to reduce size of shrub	Good uniform growth	Very good	Confined flowering to inner section of the shrub.
	Unpruned	Straggly and untidy with extended time	Very good	Unpruned shrub tends to carry more flowers on the extremeties. Regenerates from seed on mineral soil without influence from fire.
Kunzea baxteri	Leaders cut back, laterals thinned	Good vigorous growth	Good	Control by this method is desirable.
	Unpruned	Good	Good	Shrub becomes very woody and straggly form with age.

SPECIES	TYPE OF PRUNING	GROWTH RESULTS	FLOWERING RESULTS	COMMENTS
Verticordia plumosa	Heavy clipping	Moderate growth	Very poor	Late March does not appear to be the time to use this type of pruning on this species. Late December after seeding may be O.K.
	Thinning of leaders	Good growth	Very good	Autumn pruning seems to be the thing for this method of crown reduction and flower heads are improved in form.
	Unpruned	Moderate	Good	Shrub has a long life, approx. 30 years and becomes straggly and extremely woody if left unpruned.
Adenanthos ieges	Unpruned	Good prostrate form	Good	Most of this specimen's growth is made in summer. Apart from control of size no pruning is necessary. Seeds in March.
Adenanthos cygnorum	Moderate pruning of leaders and thinning of laterals	Good	Good	A good method to maintain form and flower production.
	Unpruned	Moderate	Good	Shrub develops a straggly habit and large woody leaders.

SPECIES	TYPE OF PRUNING	GROWTH RESULTS	FLOWERING RESULTS	COMMENTS
Callistemon phoeniceus	Very heavy	Vigorous lush growth	Nil	Flowering set back up 2 years.
	Leaders cut back, laterals thinned	Good overall growth	Good	A good method of control with this shrub.
	Unpruned	Woody main stems and straggly leaders	Good	Unpruned specimens become unshapely. This shrub has a very long life approx. 40 years.
Cassia eremophila	Very heavy to base stems	Vigorous lush growth	Moderate to light	Shrub needs to be well established before very heavy pruning.
	Moderate clipping	Good growth	Very heavy	A good method of pruning for flowers and shape.
Acacia fauntleroyi	Very heavy	Nil	Nil	Heavy pruning responsible for death of tree.
	Moderate cutting of leaders	Very good	Very good	This shrub needs annual shaping and crown reduction for control.

SPECIES	TYPE OF PRUNING	GROWTH RESULTS	FLOWERING RESULTS	COMMENTS
Grevillea bipinnatifida	Heavily pruned to stem base	Very vigorous lush growth	Very poor Retarded for 12 months	Shrub is completely regenerated. Good expectations.
	Heavy thinning of leaders	Good	Very good	A good method to maintain form and flowers.
	Unpruned	Moderate	Good	Very straggly form develops with age and size of shrub.
Darwinia citriodora	Heavy clipping	Good and vigorous growth	Retarded light	Method O.K. for shaping better flowering in 2nd year.
	Leaders and laterals thinned	Good growth	Good	Good number of full coloured bracts
	Unpruned	Straggly and average	Good	Untidy straggly condition develops after 4 years. Pruning is necessary.

SPECIES	TYPE OF PRUNING	GROWTH RESULTS	FLOWERING RESULTS	COMMENTS
Chamelaucium uncinatum	Moderate thinning of leaders	Very good	Good	Plant becomes woody with age. This seems to be the best method on maintenance.
	Heavy cutting of major limbs	Rather vigorous	Rather poor	Better flower could be expected in the second year.
Calytrix angulata	Light cutting of crown, thinning of woody sections	Good	Good	Heavy pruning can kill. Regeneration after burn is good from seed fall.
	Unpruned	Short growth	Good	Eventually becomes straggly.
Grevillea endlicherana	Clipping of extended crown shoots plus thinning of woody sections	Good vigorous growth of flower shoots	Good	Regenerated from seed on mineral soil without influence from fire.
	Unpruned	Straggly, untidy	Good	Becomes tall and less attractive, but can be O.K. for a considerable number of years.