

## PRACTICALITIES

### Regenerating Woodlands – Similar to Growing a Crop!

by Avril Baxter

**S**O, you've got a nice patch of woodland on your place, but there doesn't seem to be many young trees or shrubs. If you think back to last season, you will realise that regenerating your patch of woodland is similar to growing a crop.

To get a good crop you kept the sheep out of the paddock, controlled weeds, created a seed bed and planted seeds, manipulated fertility and pest species, you may even have introduced pollinators and finally prayed for perfect winter rains.

Treat yourself for a walk through your bushland. Have a look around and see if any of the following elements are missing. Changing them could be the start of this year's bushland management programme.

◆ **Grazing control**

Fence to exclude stock, control rabbits. Monitor and, if necessary, control kangaroos.

◆ **Weed control**

Prevent weeds and excess nutrients from entering the site. If necessary, control weeds within the site and replace immediately with seedlings or by direct seeding.

◆ **Seed source**

Are there enough parent plants to reseed the area? Hard seeded wattles and peas can remain in the soil for up to 50 years – others have a short life. Has soil erosion on slopes removed most of the soil seed bank? Can the seeds reach the area you want to regenerate eg. do prevailing winds blow them the wrong way? Do the plants need fire to open the fruits and release seeds?

◆ **Seed germination**

Many native plant seeds need a specific trigger to stimulate germination, this may be heat, or smoke. If direct seeding, make

sure the seeds have been treated before you sow.

◆ **Seed bed**

Compacted surface, or niche for seed to fall into? Consider raking, or cultivation. Do not disturb the surface near the edges as this will create a seedbed for weeds blown from the paddock. Do not seed under the canopy of existing trees – it will have little effect.

◆ **Good rains**

Do not treat the whole area at once. Water erosion could occur or there may be inadequate follow-up rains.

◆ **Pollination and pest control**

Maximise plant diversity to encourage insect and bird populations. Control foxes.

Finally, give it time. New plants will continue to appear several years after you started the regeneration process.