

LFW NEWS

SECRETS AND MYSTERIES OF SEED COLLECTION

EVERY seed collector seems to have their own tricks and hints learned over many years of trial and error out in the bush. At a workshop run on the 27th March by *Land For Wildlife* in conjunction with *Green Skills*, twenty eight of us had the pleasure of learning more about some of the secrets and mysteries of seed collection from native plants in the south coast region from local nurseryman, Mark Parre.

Mark hosted us at his native plant nursery at the Denmark Shire Depot. He showed us through the tunnel used for seed drying and then had many practical techniques for more 'tricky' seed like sieving, scarifying, burning and imbibing/soaking. Mark uses an old broken down walk-in freezer donated by the local 'Co-Op' to moderate temperature fluctuations for seed storage. To stop rats getting into the seed Mark promotes the use of glass jars with metal lids for storage. Rats will even chew through plastic jar lids to get to the delicious-smelling seed!

There were some amusing stories about 'exploding' seed pods especially when people have used the dash boards of their cars as the perfect drying place. Brown paper bags or calico fabric sheets should be used to stop the seeds flying in all directions.

Mark emphasised the need for collectors to be ever watchful of weather conditions and ripening. With some wattles and pea plants there is only a matter of a few hours from when the pod ripens to when it cracks open and flings the seed out in all directions. He had stories of being in the bush near pod plants just as they all begin to open. The air becomes alive with cracking sounds and seed flies everywhere. He often has to shake out his beard into the seed collection bins at the end of the day!

Mark emphasised the need for people to be ethical about their seed collection. Everyone should make sure they don't collect more than 10% of the fruit and no

more than 20% of the foliage off an individual adult plant and to make sure they have the correct licences and permits (contact the Department on 9334 0422 for advice). He said that there are some native species like the Brown Boronia which are rapidly disappearing out of the bush due to overharvesting. The flower pickers are harvesting the flowers from the plant and then the seed collectors are taking the seed and so the adult plants do not have enough fruit material left to replenish the populations.

Mark's hints:

- ▶ use black plastic instead of tarpaulins to lie under fruit laden branches. The tarpaulins deteriorate in about two years and the black plastic lasts for up to seven or eight years.
- ▶ When collecting seed from Kangaroo Paws full protective clothing needs to be worn. The seed has tiny barbs which can cause extreme irritation to people's eyes and skin. Kangaroo Paw seed only appears to remain viable for nine years.
- ▶ If storing seed for quite some time, it is important to try and remove as much of the twig and chaff matter as possible (sieves help with this process). This is where insect eggs and fungi spores are often found and they can cause a lot of damage to the stored seed. A small piece of pesticide strip added to the jar also stops insect attack.
- ▶ If a banksia cone is hairy then it is inclined to be excited by fire and this is when you can use heat to assist in opening up the cone, eg: *B. quercifolia*, *B. seminuda* and *B. littoralis*.
- ▶ 'Regen 200' now have available vermiculite with infused smoke. It seems to give better germination results than using the liquid form of smoked water which possibly gets leached down through the soil too quickly.

Sylvia Leighton is LFW Officer at Albany.



Mark Parre demonstrating seed collection techniques at the Denmark Shire Nursery.

SPECIAL OFFER - LFWERS IN DENMARK SHIRE!

Denmark High School has offered to grow your own local provenance seeds in their school nursery for free! To take advantage of this fabulous offer, contact Jenny Findlay on ph. (08) 9848 0100