

THE VALUE OF SEED STORE AND TOP SOIL

Revegetating the Denmark Shire tip was not an easy task, as the Denmark Shire Nursery Officer, Mark Parre, explained to Sylvia Leighton:

“When I first assessed the site it was full of garden rubbish with lots of nasty weeds like tagasaste, Victorian teatree, watsonia, gladioli, dolichos pea, arum, black nightshade and feral wattles. The first attempt at replanting the site to native plant species didn’t work, as the weed species were too aggressive, no matter what pre-planting weed control was carried out. The soils were also extremely nutrient-rich making them almost hostile to native plants and favouring the weed species. It was recognised that weeds do have a positive function in taking up excess nutrients - but then they need to be harvested from the site to remove these nutrients, and that requires a lot of labour.

“For the second attempt, we scalped the site, taking all the weedy material and weed seed store away. Top soil full of native plant seed was brought in from a comparable vegetation community adapted to the original soil types of the site. I also collected suitable seed and direct seeded it onto the site. As well, we planted suitable native plant seedlings one pace apart. Because one of my goals was to have a closed canopy within three years to assist with weed control, I deliberately chose lots of Myrtaceae and wattles as they are quick to establish. We also ripped up the clayey

parts of the site in several directions so that roots could expand out. In areas where I felt the soil was still too nutrient rich, I spread inert soil under the new top soil.”

This has been very successful and the tip site really looks fabulous! However, Mark also had to battle with fellow Shire workers who took some of his precious top soil to put under a road surface. Mark informed them (in very strong words!) that Kings Park and Botanic Gardens actually sells seeded top soil at \$45,000/ha!

Sylvia Leighton

