



WORKING BEE REPORT April 6-8, 2018

FRIDAY, April 6

Chris and Peter were already hard at work on the Friday, when Carolyn and then Liz arrived mid-morning. Carolyn had to detour to Aldinga, on her way to Cape Jervis to pick up a brush cutter with a blade, which we had hired for the Saturday. Our working bee plan involved some heavy duty weeding: chopping back scabiosa stalks. We knew from past experience the cord brush cutter wouldn't cope hence the heavy duty artillery was called in!

Meanwhile, Chris had been busy giving the *Atriplex* (saltbushes) in the display garden a good prune. These plants have done well in the past two years, but were getting a bit leggy, despite earlier "haircuts". The results were pretty amazing...Chris has a good eye for shaping. Peter, meanwhile, was busy watering and weeding. He seems to have adopted the patch near the picnic table and oversees its attentions.



Once Carolyn and Liz actually pitched in, they worked pretty hard too. In February, we had hosted a workshop on direct seeding, an idea we wanted to trial on site. The idea behind this is method to sow a mix of seeds (colonisers, grasses and shrubs) in an area, rather than plant out tubestock; the colonisers will sprout first, followed by the grasses then the acacias etc, over a period of time. See the February working bee report for more detail. For our trial site, we had selected a degraded patch of land at the base of the "knoll", near the coastal display garden.



The only problem was the area was covered in scabiosa.

All those dead-looking brown stalks in the photo on the left are scabiosa plants after flowering. That's Carolyn hard at work chopping them back with the brushcutter.



After several hours of brushcutting and hoeing, the area we plan to use was a good bit clearer. There are quite a few unopened seed pods on the plants, so we needed to ensure we bagged them up and removed as many as possible, to minimize future germinations. We had taken along a variety of tools to see which were effective.

Liz also had a go at brush cutting the scabiosa, and while we had the equipment there we decided to give the kangaroo grass (*Themeda triandra*) a hair cut too. Good thing Liz spotted our resident bearded dragon sunning itself on the kangaroo grass before she started! Nice to see the beardy using a plant instead of the constructed structures (cages/stakes) we usually find it on.



By the time we left the site in the afternoon, we had filled three wool sacks with the debris, and more waiting to be bagged. A community meeting, however, meant we had to curtail our activities on that part of the site until Saturday. The weed bags were picked up after the meeting so that they could be filled again on Saturday 😊.

SATURDAY, April 7

A beautiful morning! Sun shining, very little wind, and dolphins swimming past. What a good start to the day. And so it continued.

We were joined by several “old hands”: Amanda, Claire and Jess early on in the day. The patch brushcut on the Friday was scoured by the team with rakes, hands, etc until we had collected as many scabiosa seed pods as possible.



Over morning tea we discussed the merits of picking up the round seed heads of scabiosa and also burr prickles (*Medicago truncatula*). A little experimentation later showed us that the scabiosa seed didn't fall out of the seed heads, infact they are protected inside a capsule on the inside of the ball. And each burr prickle can contain 10 or more seed, and they are viable for 10 + years. So not only did we pick up the scabiosa seed heads, but we also picked up big handfuls of burr prickle.



Middle top: Scabiosa seed heads. Left bottom: Scabiosa seed capsule. Above: one of many burr prickle seed.

After a well-deserved morning tea break, Jess and Claire had switched to seed collecting for the direct seeding trial. The cushion bush (*Leucophyta brownii*) were a good source, as were bluebush (*Maireana rohrlachii*). We really wanted some ruby saltbush (*Enchylaena*) but that just wasn't going to happen this weekend. The fruits just weren't ripe enough.



Getting those bags of weeds in Carolyn's car later in the day was an exercise in pushing power...3 wool sacks and about 10 chaff bags.



Amanda, Claire and Carolyn checking for seeds on the *Enchylaena tormentosa*



Jess and Claire cleaning seed

Even lunch break can become work time. Jess and Claire had helped collect *Goodenia amplexans* (clasping goodenia) seeds last working bee, so after a bit of lunch, they had a lesson in how to clean it, now that it has been dried. This will go into the direct seeding mix, as it is a good natural recruiter.

Vince and Suz had joined us later in the morning, and assisted by watering and weeding. After lunch, Vince removed heaps of a weedy *Euphorbia* that was infesting the Sorata St site. This was part of our continued effort to link the two remnant patches on Sorata St. Liz and Carolyn worked on removing *Acacia cyclops*, a continuing pest plant, from the remnant patch along Sorata St. Suz was put to work refilling the water containers she had emptied earlier on!!



SUNDAY, April 8

A more blustery day, so it was not going to be a good day for seed collecting! Weeding though is always needing to be done, so back to Sorata St, and to the *Euphorbia*, *cyclops* and pinning olives. We never have time to drill and fill the olives at the working bees, but we hand pull the really small ones, and the *cyclops* as we patrol the remnant patch along Sorata St before the rains bring out all the small pretties in that area. A keen eye, and sun in just the right direction can help find most of the hidden *cyclops* and olives. See photo on the next page of a *cyclops* that has germinated in the shade of *Acrotriche patula* (shiny ground-berry).



Julie joined us to remove cotton bush (*Gomphocarpus cancellatus*) from the remnant patch. We never used to worry about this weed too much, but it does seem to be spreading in areas where we would rather it didn't, so we were very happy to see it go! This will give our native butterflies more of a chance to breed, with less competition from the very successful monarch butterfly. Julie also tackled some "small" (< 2 m) *Acacia saligna* which had popped up in the same area.



After clearing out more *Euphorbia*, Suz was able to use those containers of water she had filled the previous day, to give the Sorata St plantings a much needed drink. It has been such a dry summer, many of the plants are showing signs of stress. Hopefully this watering will see them through to the winter rains!



One last task to be completed before the end of the weekend. Take photos at our 6 photopoints. We did a divide and conquer after making sure our Olympus Tough cameras were set to use the same aspect ratio. Liz did 4 in the morning and Carolyn did the last 2 as she left in the afternoon. We really must find time to get these onto the website, but there always seems to be more pressing things to do - like weeding or having a glass of wine!

