



*Eryngium ovatum*

# Indigenotes

Vol. 16, No. 1

April 2005

# President's Letter

Recently, I had the opportunity to speak to the Field Naturalists about restoration of grassland forbs. As I had given similar talks to other groups, I thought it best to make this talk extra special and in particular highlight the works of others. To my surprise, it was amazing how much work had actually been done in the past 15 years or so. There is nothing like having to speak in public to force you to review a position!

So what turned up in the review? The most striking point was the wide variety of work and study that was being carried out and how all of this work was focused on how we encourage the native plants and animals to thrive. These studies ranged from biomass reduction using fire, grazing or slashing, weed control, understanding the ecology of the plants and animals, various planting techniques including direct seeding, genetic studies, population biology studies through to community/koorie involvement and personal/community perceptions of native plant communities.

While some of us are intimately involved in some of these studies we may be too close to see the overall picture sometimes. This prompted me to pose the question: How much information was actually making it to the hardworking people on-the-ground who are actually carrying out active management? My second thought was: Hang on a minute, that is what IFFA is about: Sharing information between all of the various aspects of our 'field'.

This brings us back to one of our original aims:

*'IFFA believes that the conservation of plants, animals and their communities must be based on a sound knowledge of their biology, ecology, status and management requirements. To achieve this, we endorse a multidisciplinary approach, bringing together expertise from a wide range of professions.'*

To achieve this end, we as a group would be well served by hearing from you about your personal experiences, studies or other work, so that we can include it in the Indigenotes.

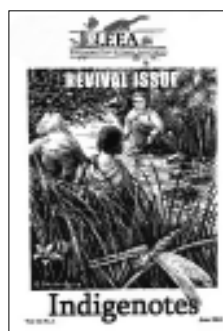
This is at present our best means of getting information out to all of our membership. No item is too small. We encourage discussion and as can be seen from past publications, we are not afraid of a bit of controversy. So 'BRING IT ON', send something, anything to our editor, Tony as he would love to hear from you.

## New VROTS list

DSE (Vic) has released a new "Advisory list of Rare or Threatened Plants in Victoria". It is available for download on the web: Go to the DSE home page [www.dse.vic.gov.au](http://www.dse.vic.gov.au) and select "Plants and animals" from the menu on the left, then "Native plants and animals" then "Threatened species advisory lists". The new list of rare or threatened plants is available there, as well as the 2003 list of threatened vertebrate fauna.

## Cover Artists

This Issue's cover artist is Jo Ferguson who has provided work for Indigenotes in the past, and who is enjoying life bringing up a family in Merricks.



Artwork for the revival issue of June 2004 was provided by Brian Bainbridge created specially for the issue, on scraperboard.

Artwork for the September 2004 issue was provided by Dr Bronwen Scott.



Thankyou to the Artists.

# IFFA

## Annual General Meeting

### AGENDA

Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2005

**Edinburgh Gardens Community Room**

(Enter off Brunswick St Fitzroy North, adjacent to Edinburgh Gardens Grandstand  
Melways reference 44B1)

*All members are invited*

**1. Minutes of Previous Meeting** Michele Arundell (Secretary)

**2. Treasurer's Report** Caroline Dunn (Treasurer)

**3. IFFA Report on Achievements 2004 - 2005**

- Meetings
- Indigenotes
- Web Site
- Activities / Sponsorship / Submissions
- Membership
- SPIFFA
- Indigenous Nurseries Network

**Committee 2004 - 2005**

<b>President</b>	Randall Robinson
<b>Vice President</b>	Ken Duxbury
<b>Secretary</b>	Michele Arundell
<b>Treasurer</b>	Caroline Dunn
<b>Editor</b>	Tony Faithfull
<b>Membership Sec.</b>	Dimi Bouzalas
<b>Public Officer</b>	Peter Wlodarczyk
<b>IFFA Committee</b>	John Greening & Liz Henry

**4. Election of Office Bearers 2005 - 2006**

(Nominations for office-bearer positions should be in writing, signed by the nominee and a mover and seconder, and forwarded to the Secretary prior to the meeting)

**5. General Business**

*Members are invited to stay for coffee and informal discussion afterwards.*

# Saw-Sedges are more than cutting grasses

From Phil Watson

The saw-sedges (*Gahnia sp.*) are well known to the bush walker and children for the vicious cuts they leave on exposed legs and arms. In particular the large cutting grass *Gahnia grandis* has proven a nightmare to many Tasmanian children endeavouring to bush bash their way through thick scrub, which contains many large clumps, interwoven into a dense understorey. However, let me give you something else to think about, when diving into your first aid kit for a bandaid to stem the flow of blood oozing from your finger after your latest encounter with a saw sedge. The saw-sedges have a fascinating set of attributes, which this article will reveal. Hopefully this may help redirect your painful thoughts next time you are doing a skin patch up job.

Firstly the saw-sedges belong to the *Cyperaceae* family and are hardier representatives than most other members of the family. The papyrus sedge, biblically referred to for its use in Egyptian papermaking, and the bulbous rooted water chestnut, used as a tasty and crunchy additive in Chinese cooking, are well known members of this family.

## Cutting grass feeds currawongs

In Tasmania the best-known member of the saw-sedge genus is the large cutting grass *Gahnia grandis*. Typical of the saw-sedges, they have thin weeping leaves with distinctive sharp saw-like leaf edges, formed from tiny granules of silica incorporated into the leaf surface. Many an unsuspecting child's limbs have been deeply gashed as a consequence of these sharp leaves brushing across their unprotected skin. Fingers often suffer deep wounds when trekkers grab its foliage.

Interestingly, cutting grass relies on birds such as the currawong for germinating its seed, more correctly referred to as small nuts. The currawong eats and regurgitates the red flesh covered seed, with the aid of a gullet full of water. This helps purge out a reddish bolus of partially digested fruits. The currawong's stomach acid etches these seeds weakening their tough seed coats to allow ease of germination. This is an intriguing example of how co-evolution between native plants and wildlife ensures mutual benefits for both.

As understorey in wet sclerophyll forests, these

large tussocks are notorious habitat for the white-lipped and black tiger snakes. These snakes flattened their bodies when disturbed by children, while basking between tussocks or preying on skinks, frogs or small mammals.

For the gardeners, cutting grass *Gahnia grandis* along with the red fruit saw-sedge *Gahnia sieberiana* can take pride of place as feature plants. Fringed by their 2 metre strap-like leaves, their long plume-like flowering heads and bright red fruits, they present wonderful landscaping potential.

## Thatch saw-sedge supplies bush tucker and attracts butterflies

Although common in the drier woodlands, the thatch saw-sedge (*Gahnia radula*) with its characteristic thin leaves that droop markedly at their tips are not noticed unless walkers' bare legs begin to feel as though they are being sandpapered.

The rapidly browning landscapes of summer are punctuated with drifts of dark brown flowers, dashed with the cream colour of their thread-like anthers. These supply pollen to the delicate chaostola skipper butterfly whose larvae (caterpillar) occupy cylindrical shelters constructed from 2 or 3 leaves drawn together and bound with silk. The mottled brown and yellow butterflies remain in close flying distance to the flowers during the October to December period.

Both the flame skipper and donnysa skipper butterfly also rely on either the thatched saw-sedge or large cutting grass for their survival. The male donnysa skipper is very territorial, engaging other males in spiralling flights as it endeavours to defend its patch and attract females. Once mated, tiny yellowish green eggs are laid under the leaves, hatching into caterpillars with distinctive dark streaks along their green bodies. This camouflage only partially protects them from the native birds, which successfully scavenge large numbers to feed their young nestlings. However, they are rarely missed by the greater and lesser long-eared bats, which feed slowly close to the ground and, at times, amongst these tussocks.

By late summer, the thatch saw -sedge flower

heads ripen to form hundreds of small nuts. Once harvested, these nuts can be pounded and ground into flour for making flat breads. The young leaf bases can provide a tasty pea-like snack when harvested from plants grown with sufficient soil moisture. The waist high leaves can be woven into traditional items such as baskets and dillies. Traditionally they are split, left to dry for a few days and stored for later use. To render them pliable for weaving they require dampening for a day.

#### **Chaffy saw-sedge helps clean the wetlands**

Frequently, families on strolls who enjoy either coastal or estuarine tracks encounter wide expanses of the chaffy saw-sedge (*Gahnia filum*) often in association with coastal tussock and spear grasses. This sedge land occupies the margins of brackish estuarine marshes and saline water bodies. Common in the Lauderdale and Pittwater inter-tidal wetland flats near Hobart, these sedges form part of the crucial habitat for many of our migratory birds such as the pied oystercatcher and hooded plover.

Their roots also act as one of the hosts for the microbes that filter the detritus from the nutrient laden tides. Hence it performs a fundamental role in the food web for these wetland communities. Children would also tune into the banjo-like “bong....bong...” of the eastern banjo frog and/or the lamb-like quavering bleat “baa-aa-aaaa” of the Tasmanian froglet, which both survive happily under the dense canopy of these insect rich sedge lands.

Along with the coast saw-sedge (*Gahnia trifida*) they host the erratic flying chrysotricha skipper butterfly. Their larvae have the unusual habit of twisting adjacent leaves together in a spiral fashion to form their characteristic shelter.

#### **The Rodway’s saw-sedge is a rarity but a challenge**

Only the most observant walker would discover amongst the dry woodland ground layer the insignificant *Gahnia rodwayi*. It is uncommon, small and compact saw-sedge growing in dry sclerophyll understorey on dolerite soils. Since it is listed as a rare plant, increasing its rapidly diminishing populations by adding it to your native garden

should be contemplated. The ‘do it yourself’ gardener may even consider gathering the easily collectable seed. Although like *Gahnia radula* it can be slow to germinate, the commitment to successfully growing it’s seedlings is a worthy challenge.

#### **Planning a drought tolerant garden**

With the above information budding gardeners may feel inspired enough to use the saw sedges as part of a drought tolerant garden patch. This requires establishing a well-mulched framework of hardy native grasses, sedges and rushes including the saw sedges. The saw sedges, like our native grasses and other sedges such as the sagg and native flax and native iris are adapted to survive drought periods without supplementary watering.

Within the inter-tussock spaces, which they form, delicate herbaceous natives can be planted such as everlasting daisies, billy buttons, chocolate and leek lilies and native cranberries. These drought adapted herbs, with their lush green leaves and colourful spring flowers will generally die back to their underground rootstocks by the onset of our dry summer and autumn. However they reappear in all their splendour by early spring.

Finally, next time you inadvertently walk into the sharp realities of saw sedges, rather than cursing their presence, reflect on of the many natural values they possess and nature’s services they perform.

Phil Watson, Mt. Rumney, Tasmania

Phil is Parks and Natural Areas Officer for Clarence City Council

# Coming Events

## April

- 23 Sat. 1.30 pm. Friends of Sherbrooke Forest. Paddy Track Site (lower). Meet at Nation Road entrance (Melways map 75 K10). Bring drilling and filling gear, pliers, secateurs and hand saws. Phone Vivien 9754 3093.

## May

- 1 Sun. Craigieburn Grassland Woody Weed (RCIP - Merri Creek Management Committee), 10am- 1pm BBQ, Melway map 180 F6. MCMC 9380 8199
- 1 FoMerri Creek Litter Cleanup. Paul 9489 5062
- 2 SPIFFA meeting. See box.
- 3 **IFFA AGM.** See page 3.
- 8 Sun. Imaroo St Fawkner Planting (Spicers - MCMC)10am -1pm BBQ, Melway map 17 K6. 93808199
- 11 Wed. 9.30 am. Friends of Sherbrooke Forest. Wattle Track Site. (Melways map 75 F1) Vivien 9754 3093
- 15 **IFFA Habitat Assessment workshop.** See page 12
- 15 Sun. Laffan Reserve Craigieburn. planting (MCMC-Hume CC) 10am-1pm BBQ Melway map 367 F6. 93808199
- 22 Sun. Parker Reserve Coburg Planting (RCIP - MCMC)10am -1pm BBQ, Melway map 17 J7. 93808199

## Jun

- 5 Sun. FoMc Site at Strettle Plant'g, weeding, litter (FoMC & Darebin CC) Melway map 30 B3 Contact: Robin Merrick 0418 475 238.
- 6 SPIFA meeting. Se box.
- 19 Sun. Imaroo St Fawkner Woody weed, planting (FoMC Envirofund), 10am-1pm BBQ, Melway map 17 K6, Contact: Ruth Shiel 9489 5259.
- 26 Sun. Central CK Reservoir Planting (FoMC Envirofund) 10am-1pm BBQ Melway map 8 B11 Contact: Paul Prentice 9489 5062.

### SPIFFA

Southern Peninsula Indigenous Flora and Fauna Association (SPIFFA) is incorporated in its own right and affiliated with IFFA.

SPIFFA meets at 7:30pm on the first Monday of each month at the Parks Vic. offices, Hinton St. ROSEBUD. There is a guest speaker each month plus an I.D. table. Membership is open to everyone. Annual Subscription is \$15 Contact the Secretary PO Box 480 ROSEBUD 3939, or Gidga Walker 0418 416 182.

## Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne 2005 lecture series

Cost is \$10 per lecture for Friends RBGC & RBG Melbourne Members. Non-members are \$12. Bookings can be made by phoning 59902200 on Weekdays 9am - 5pm

### **Lecture Series 1: Sunday May 1, 1:45 pm for 2 pm**

To be held at Cranbourne Public Hall: South Gippsland Hwy, Cranbourne, Melways Map Ref 133 J4

**Dr Terry Coates**, the down-to-earth and very likeable Ecologist at RBG Cranbourne will talk on the fascinating animals, which inhabit the Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne and many other intriguing aspects of wildlife including some of the animals, which are now no longer present in the RBG Cranbourne. Terry is responsible for developing guidelines for management of the bush areas at the RBGC.

**Dr Michael Looker, Director of Trust for Nature**, will follow Terry with the topic: **Connecting the Fragments; landscape scale conservation through private action.** Trust for Nature is Australia's oldest Land Trust and has been to the forefront with many exciting conservation projects in recent years. Come and learn more about these and future projects. Before taking up his present position Michael was a Lecturer at Burnley College and Superintendent at Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne

### **Lecture Series 2: Sunday June 26, 1:45 pm for 2 pm**

To be held at City of Casey Offices: Patrick North-east Drive, Narre Warren. Melways Map Ref 110 D4. The popular and inspirational **John Arnott**, who as **Director of Geelong Botanic Gardens** has been leading those gardens into an exciting new era of development, will talk on the subject **Beyond the Gardens Gates**<sup>1</sup>. Come and learn about some challenging things happening in the Geelong region, which should also be relevant wherever you live! **Gwen Elliot** the second Speaker, is a well-known Friends of RBG Cranbourne member. Gwen is author of 10 books on Australian plants and is heard each Sunday on the popular 3CR Garden Show radio program. Gwen keeps up to date with what is happening in the Australian plant world by working a couple of days a week at a leading retail Australian Plant nursery. She has chosen as her talk subject **Native Gardens - Sensible and Sensual.**

# Digest

## Parkwatch Dec 2004

*Victorian Catchment Management - A New Focus:* VNPA's campaign for a major national park at Barmah-Millewa. p6.

*Chiltern-Mount Pilot National Park— recovering from the 2003 fires.* Issues with flora and fauna recovery. p8

*Friends and partners help build farmer's 40 year biolink dream.* Establishment of a biolink between Werribee Gorge State Park and White Elephant Reserve. p10

*Linking Biodiversity and the Budget.* VNPA's proposals for state budget increases for biodiversity p12.

## Parkwatch Mar 2005

*Parks Victoria's Annual Report 2003-2004.* An examination of performance and budget. p6

*The impact of channel deepening on fish in the Yarra.* Major works would be needed on the lower Yarra and significant impacts would be expected on native fish. VNPA submission at [www.portofmelbourne.com.au/channeldeep](http://www.portofmelbourne.com.au/channeldeep) under third party documents. p8

*Controlling English Broom in the Alps.* PV's integrated control program p12

*Recovery time for the alps.* Cattle grazing is the urgent issue. p14



Dianella sp. by Jo Ferguson

## OPPORTUNITY

How would you like to.....

- have a fascinating time finding out about indig flora and fauna restoration activities
- meet great people in the field
- contribute tremendously to the growth of IFFA?

Do this from anywhere in Australia, metro or country on about 1 hour per month.

Take on an activity that suits you, such as creating the Coming Events page, networking or helping gather articles.

...Phone or email the Editor.

Comments? — Would an expanded digest be a useful part of Indigenotes?

Could you contribute notes from your browsing of books and journals?

Would anyone like to edit the Digest section of Indigenotes?

... Phone or email the Editor.

## Book Review

# Still Glides the Stream – the natural history of the Yarra from Heidelberg to Yarra Bend

**By Geoff Lacey (Australian Scholarly Publishing, Melbourne)**

For nearly 20 years Geoff Lacey has been an avid recorder and investigator into the natural and general history of the surrounds of the Yarra River. This comprehensive book of about 275 pages, details his records and those of others who have found beauty and interest in these natural areas at the centre of Melbourne cultural life.

His overall review of the events that have shaped what are now viewed as essential parts of our conservation and recreation reserve system is fascinating and provide salient lessons to us all about the need for understanding, appreciation, and persistence in fighting for what we want. It also shows the extremely large number of people who have been willing to stand up for what they thought was valuable and how the actions of a few can make significant differences.

This is more than just a history book or a list of plants and animals of the area. This is a valuable story of how in the midst of high urban development naturally occurring plants and animals can persist and actually re-assert their influence with the help of sound planning decisions and just plain old hard work. It also clearly illustrates what makes Melbourne special and different from other 'international cities' like London, New York or Tokyo

A few of the most useful aspects of the book are the references, the descriptions of vegetation communities and the lists of plant and animal species that occur in the area. Particularly insightful is the way in which Geoff has documented the changes to various areas over time.

This well-timed and written book would be a valuable addition to anyone living and working along the Yarra. The breadth of the topics covered and the personal experiences of the

author are of interest to a wide audience. It will become one of the books that will become a standard text for anyone interested in Melbourne, natural history, general history and those seeking to understand our place in the world.

I hope that Geoff continues his investigations (I have no doubt). This book left me wanting to hear more and see many of the pictures and photographs that could not be included in a book of this format. I am sure that this volume will encourage a publisher to allow Geoff to take his next edition to even greater levels of detail and beauty.

***Reviewed by Randall Robinson, IFFA's President.***

### **Mowing can be better than grazing for grasslands**

A recent study by Frances Verrier and Jamie Kirkpatrick has revealed that in some circumstances frequent mowing with removal of slash provided a better conservation outcome for a tussock grassland than moderate grazing.

See: *Frequent mowing is better than grazing for the conservation value of lowland tussock grassland at Pontville, Tasmania.* Frances J. Verrier and J. B. Kirkpatrick. *Austral Ecology*, Volume 30 Issue 1 Page 74 - February 2005.

# Confessions of a Problem Hand Weeder

## Judy Allen

As obsessions seem to go, mine started out slowly with a glimpse of a small purple flower amongst other plants. I approached and noticed that a single Glycine spike was competing with the mustard weed. This was not a fair match, I thought and pulled out the 5 or 6 germinating weeds to even up the light.

Then I noticed more mustard weed to the left and pulled them out, and then to the right, and I had to remove them as well. I couldn't leave the ones above the Glycine as they would just shower seeds down over the patch I'd just weeded, so they had to go as well. 'Good job' I thought and stood back to admire.

This is when I noticed other patches of Glycine, that weren't in flower. They need my assistance too. And I removed the mustard weed. In fact, the whole site was covered in this single weed, at the 3 leaf stage. Perfect, I thought, I could eradicate this plant from site in an hour or so. If only I had stopped there.

This single hour on a slow Sunday has turned into two on a Saturday morning and another two on Sunday, with occasional dalliances in the afternoon, as I conspired with myself to travel towards the site, or be within the vicinity of the site. This then allowed me to stop at the site, to observe it at different times of the day, in different weather, and to observe more closely, by removing a few more pesky weeds. Just for an hour or so.

As with all obsessions, hiding the evidence of the obsession has become an issue. Pinching out seedlings immediately after germination doesn't leave a waste problem. But with the increase in the number of species of weeds I could identify, and the increase in size of my ambitions, weed biomass became an issue. My rubbish bin, and the rubbish bins of my neighbours, was full every week during autumn and winter but now I feel that things are coming to a head. They're putting locks on their bins. And as the dumping of bags down at the creek is not something that I'd consider, perhaps the answer is to dump around park rubbish bins?

If you considered the answer to the waste issue is simply to make contact with the local council or creek management, consider this option *very* carefully. They will want to know who you are, what your plans are, whether you are incorporated/insured/informed, or worse, offer to turn you into a 'Friends' group. The result is sure to be

meetings, discussions, and reports. I have put in a proposal for flood lighting of the site, for extended hand weeding hours in winter. However government organizations don't tend to be very supportive of innovative and progressive ideas, regardless of their rhetoric about community involvement. I'm thinking that a few active years of lobbying should do the trick.

Are you an obsessive hand weeder? Here is a simple test.

You know you have a problem when;

- time has no meaning when on site, an hour becomes three, and your family suspect you of drinking, gambling or having fun without them
- you construct reasons for going to site. 'I need to see water flow patterns in light *and* heavy rainfall'
- your catchy conversational openers are 'How's your Plantago going?' or 'What has two lateral, glabrous, slightly fleshy looking seed leaves, with the first true leaf elongating...?'
- *and*, you have an amusing anecdote of hand weeding that leaves your friends smiling sadly
- rain during daylight hours is dreaded. Time is filled with looking through weed books trying to identify seeds found in scats. Is it boxthorn? Is it briar rose? A good obsessive has a bag of scats fermenting in the kitchen
- your dashboard has desiccated samples of plants yet to be identified.
- *or*, you have changed sites because the weeds simply didn't grow fast enough for you

If you answered yes to two or more of the above, then yes, you are an obsessive hand weeder, and perhaps the way forward is for all us obsessives to meet, form a ... ha ... I think it has stopped raining. Got to go.

# Products

## Wattle Bradyrhizobium granular

### inoculant *Wattle Grow(tm)*

In their natural environment, wattles — like other legumes — form symbiotic relationships with specific strains of a class of native soil bacteria, called “bradyrhizobia”, which work within root nodules, to convert nitrogen from the air into proteins for vigorous plant growth and development. In partnership with their own special strain of Bradyrhizobium, wattles can not only thrive in poor quality soils but, importantly, they share their precious nitrogen with other natives, including trees such as eucalypts, to stimulate the growth of the entire ecosystem.

Sadly, most soils cleared of native vegetation also lose their natural bradyrhizobia. Under such conditions, wattle seedlings generally fail to thrive. Often, they simply fail to survive.

In a major breakthrough, CSIRO Plant Industry scientists have isolated and reproduced elite strains of bradyrhizobia which are effective in forming effective nitrogen fixing nodules (“nodulating”) on important wattle species native to south eastern Australia. This breakthrough has opened the door to the successful regeneration and revegetation of many of Australia’s most degraded and salinity-threatened soils.

CSIRO trials have shown that wattles effectively nodulated with bradyrhizobia can establish up to five times better and grow significantly faster than those which have not been inoculated.

The research also found that, with inoculation, far less wattle seed - up to three times less - is required to establish viable stands of wattle, even in tough conditions.

Bio-Care Technology is proud to have been chosen by CSIRO to commercialise this important breakthrough and to make Wattle Grow(tm) Granular Acacia Inoculant available to landholders and landcarers across Australia.

What is Wattle Grow (TM Granular Inoculant)? Wattle Grow(tm) Granular inoculant is made from specially prepared, dry clay granules which have been cultured under precisely controlled conditions with four “elite” Bradyrhizobia strains.

Each Bradyrhizobia strain has been proven to form effective nitrogen fixing relationships with one or more of the major wattle species suitable for reclaiming and regenerating land in south eastern Australia .

Wattle grow(tm) is a free flowing granular preparation which is ideally suited to easy application by machine or by hand to furrows prepared from wattle seed placement.”

The product is available from CRT, Landmark and other rural supplies stores in 3kg and 15 kg buckets at about \$7.00 kg. For direct seeding, it is recommended that the granules be applied at 3 kgs/km. The product has a shelf life of about 6 months. For more information, see the Bio-Care website - under products: [www.bio-care.com.au](http://www.bio-care.com.au)

Submitted by Jim Robinson  
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**Please note that IFFA does not endorse the effectiveness of this product and has received no income as a result of publishing this article.**

# Review

## WWF National list of naturalised invasive and potentially invasive garden plants

WWF has released a list of 1036 species it identifies as naturalised garden plant species and taxa that are actual or potential environmental and agricultural weeds.

The list, updated to 19/11/2004 is available at [http://www.wwf.org.au/News\\_and\\_information/Publications/PDF/Conservation\\_guide/ListInvasivePlants.pdf](http://www.wwf.org.au/News_and_information/Publications/PDF/Conservation_guide/ListInvasivePlants.pdf)

The list is used (without the "sleeper" category) as the basis for WWF's more recent report "Jumping the Garden Fence: Invasive Plants in Australia" dated February 2005 and available at : [http://www.wwf.org.au/News\\_and\\_information/Publications/PDF/Report/jumping\\_the\\_garden\\_fence.pdf](http://www.wwf.org.au/News_and_information/Publications/PDF/Report/jumping_the_garden_fence.pdf) The report identifies priority weeds which should no longer be sold by nurseries.

Both lists have some weaknesses, as pointed out by Ian Faithfull in a posting to the envioweeds email discussion group.

Firstly, a number of species on the list are weeds of broad acre farming only incidentally occurring in gardens (e.g. Cocksfoot, *Phalaris*), or indeed agricultural species themselves (e.g wheat, rice, *Pinus* spp.). The inclusion as garden plants is misleading where particular non-garden industries are the main cause of the weed problem.

Secondly the taxonomy needs to be a bit tighter with listing of the same species under several synonyms, use of dated species names, and misidentifications.

Many entries have inadequate naturalisation data - where naturalisation, although recorded in published information such as the Flora of Vic, is not recorded in the table.

Australian native plants are listed where they are thought to be weeds outside of their natural range, however no information is given as to the state/territory to which the species is native, so the data indicating a species is available for sale in a particular state could be misinterpreted. The sale may

be of indigenous plants for revegetation. This is a difficult issue to deal with.

315 species are listed as "Sleeper" weeds in the 2004 list, but this includes tomato and lettuce, cultivated for possibly 150 years. This raises the question of how long does it take for a species to demonstrate that it is not invasive? It is clear however that some of these sleeper species are likely to become weeds. The lack of a clear definition or a clear protocol for identifying which species are sleepers appears to be why they are not included in the analysis for the 2005 report.

Inclusion of many species of commercially important food plant seems to degrade the value of the list, and their inclusion is confusing given some are minimally invasive or considered sleepers, yet other more invasive crop species have been left out. This situation arises partly because of the definition of garden plant used, which is "a species known to have escaped either directly by seed or by other propagules from cultivation".

Finally the "Enviro score" and "Australian rating" given to the species is probably underestimated given the incomplete naturalisation data and limited knowledge of sites where species are being controlled by revegetators. As a result the impact of many species is underestimated.

The recommendations of the 2005 report deal with "garden" species which are sold by nurseries, and the need to control the sale of weeds from nurseries is not disputed. It may be that the severity of a number of the species listed has been understated.

However the role of agriculture in spreading "garden" weeds is all but ignored in the report. Recommendations to deal with the sale of contaminated seed, to make industry responsible for weed invasions they generate, and other recommendations along this line ought be considered in a further report.

# IFFA activities:

## Annual General Meeting

Tuesday 3rd May at 7:30pm at the Edinburgh Gardens Community Hall. See page 3 for details.

## Workshop on Habitat Assessment

Sunday 15 May 9:30am (for 10am) start, to 3pm at the Mark Street Hall, Mark Street North Fitzroy. (Melways Ref Map 30 C12)

James Todd from DSE will speak on bioregions, Ecological Vegetation Classes, EVCs, habitat hectares, gain scoring and how these are being applied under various investment approaches (e.g. BushTender).

Pat Vaughan and Cam Beardsell will speak on the Community/Sub-community approach as used in the NEROC report and the City of Banyule.

\$10 IFFA members payable at the door. Non-members \$15. Enquiries to Michele 98181537 or Tony 93860264.

## Membership

IFFA membership costs  
\$40 for non-profit organizations,  
\$50 for corporations,  
\$25 for individuals and families,  
or \$20 concession.

**Membership includes**  
4 issues of *Indigenotes* per year,  
and discount subscription to

*Ecological Management & Restoration Journal*

*Members should check the mailing label to ascertain the status of their membership. If an invoice is required, please send a purchase order requesting an invoice.*

*Membership applications and renewals should be sent to the membership secretary. A receipt will be attached to the front page of the next issue mailed.*

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Contributions to *Indigenotes* should be sent to the editor — the deadline for the next issue is 12th May 2005. Contributions must be in electronic form, either on PC formatted floppy disk or CD or can be sent to the editor by email.

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