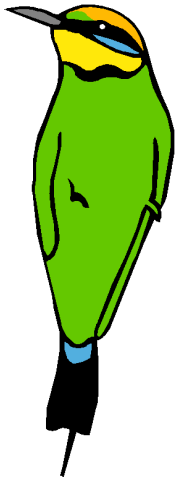
GARDEN FOR WILDLIFE



Planning Transformation

This month's newsletter outlines the process one Garden for Wildlife block underwent to create a healthy, flourishing and very unique native garden. Upon moving in in March 2003, Amiuus and Anna Lennie were faced with a couch infested and poorly designed garden, directing water toward the back veranda of the house.

The garden is now couch and buffel free, with water harvesting dispersing water throughout the block. Species have naturally regenerated and many planted seedlings are germinating and providing dense groundcover.

Originally, the back area, which is now covered by a variety of trees, shrubs and grasses at different stages of growth, was relatively bare. The gradient and levels sloped toward the house and gravel mulch was used to conceal termite entry points around the dwelling. Buffel grass covered the hill behind the house, dispersing seeds into the garden.

Essential to the development of the space was an original masterplan, outlining the aesthetic and landscape aspirations for the garden. This was created using Amiuus' experience and consultation with a surveyor-friend. Although plans such as this are usually modified as time progresses, they provide structure and a goal. Photo points are also useful to monitor the changes occurring in your garden over time.

One of the first tasks the Lennie's wanted to undertake was to eradicate the Couch and Buffel grass. The rain received during this period made the task much easier, softening the ground and allowing germinated weeds to be removed before they seeded. The Lennie's chose not to use any chemicals in their weed-battle, as Amiuus had found spraying couch ineffective in the past. All weeds were removed by hand, or bobcat. Buffel was removed from the hill behind the house, preventing the spread of seed further down the slope into the yard. However the primary weed to tackle was the ever-persistent couch.

In order to determine the depth of the couch, Amiuus dug eight different holes in different locations to a depth of 800mm. Upon the discovery that the couch didn't reach deeper than 200mm, a bobcat was brought in to rip up this layer of soil, and removed it from site. Couch around the large Ironwood was removed by hand to avoid unnecessarily disturbing the root system of the tree. This was done very innovatively! A hose was used to follow the rhizomes, moistening the root system. In addition to washing away soil to reveal the roots, the moisture prevented the excessive breakage that occurs when

chasing the rhizomes of dry couch. Couch reappearance has been close to nothing, with a number of species quickly regenerating to stabilise the soil, including Ruby Saltbush *Enchylaena tomentosa,* Peppercress *Lepidium muelleri-ferdinandi* and Annual Saltbush *Atriplex elachophylla.*
Finally, the rain allowed the seeds of the Bogan Flea and Three Corner Jack to germinate profusely. Deciding these were undesirable species, unsuitable for small barefooted children (or adults), these were promptly removed.

The Lennie's strongly believe that in a landscape as dry as Central Australia, we need to use water available in the landscape to our best advantage. The water is now directed to disperse down the side of the house, and into a drainage pit in the front yard. The formations in place have withstood the heavy rain received the past few months.

A noticeable feature of the garden is the abundance of native grasses present. Some, such as the Kangaroo Grass *Themeda triandra,* pictured above, have been planted. Although only one *Themeda* was planted, it has self seeded in copious proportions throughout the garden. The Lennie's have transplanted a number of very small seedlings into pots to distribute elsewhere in the garden. Also present was Purple Plumegrass *Triraphis mollis* and Curly Windmill Grass *Enteropogon acicularis.*

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The increased quantity of water flowing down the side of the house has allowed many species atypical to Central Australian Gardens to thrive. Cyperus sedges, *Diptericanthus australasicus,* Pituri *Duboisia hopwoodii*, Sticky Blue Rod *Stemodia viscosa*, Fruit Salad Plant *Pterocaulon sphacelatum* , Yellow Billy Buttons *Calocephalus knappii* , Golden Everlasting *Xerochrusym bracteatum* and Bluebells *Wahlenbergia sp.* are present, healthy, and provide a fantastic contrast to the front and back gardens. The photo to the left shows the different species the water-rich side passage supports, compared to the base of the Quartz hill commencing in the backyard.

Amiuus has provided a species list which is provided at the bottom of this article.

A variety of birds feed on flowers and seeds on the block, including a wide variety of honeyeaters and Diamond Doves, which have made a nest perched atop the Long Leaved Corkwood.

The large logs the Lennie's have left also provide habitat for reptiles and invertebrates of all kinds.

Burning is a management technique Amiuus has experimented with with great success on grass species on the block. Fire was used on individual grass clumps in order to control it closely. Burning encourages seed germination in many Central Australia species, breaking dormancy by smoking the seed to break chemical dormancy or cracking hard seed coats with the heat of the fire. A mature clump of Kangaroo Grass was burnt and died immediately, however seeds germinated soon after.

Arid land gardens provide countless opportunities for experimentation, there is no formula! They needn't mimic the natural landscape if you're interested in creating something a bit different. Amiuus and Anna are happy to answer any questions you have about techniques they've utilised. Please email your Garden for Wildlife coordinator on lfw@lowecol.com.au and I can pass on any queries.

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Species List

Abutilon cryptopetalum	
Abutilon leucopetalum	Desert Lantern Flower
Abutilon otocarpum	Desert Chinese Lantern
Acacia aneura	Mulga
Acacia cyperophylla	Red mulga
Acacia estrophiolata	Ironwood
Acacia kempeana	Witchetty Bush
Acacia murrayana	Colony Wattle
Acacia tetragonophylla	Dead Finish
Atalaya hemiglauca	Whitewood
Atriplex nummularia	Old Man Saltbush
Boerhavia coccinea	Tar Vine
Brachycome cilliaris	Variable Daisy
Callitris glaucophylla	White Cypress Pine
Calocephalus knappii	
Calocephalus platycephalus	Yellow Billy Buttons
Dysphania kalpari	Kalpari
Einadia nutans	Climbing Saltbush
Erodium cygnorum	
Euphorbia tannensis	Caustic Bush
Glycine canescens	Silky Glycine
Gnephosis (now Triachanthodium) skirrophora	*Yellow Buttons*
Hakea lorea	Long-leaved Corkwood
Helichrysum (now Lawrencella) davenportii	Sticky Everlasting
Helipterum (now Leucochrysum) stipitatum	Gray Sunray
Helipterum(now Rhodanthe) tietkinsii	Sand Sunray
Hybanthus aurantiacus	Orange Spade Flower
Hydrocotyle trachycarpa	
Indigofera laucotricha	White Indigo
Lepidium muelleri-ferdinandi	Peppercress
Nicotiana gossei	Rock Tobacco/ Pituri
Nicotiana ingulba	A Bush Tobacco
Pittosporum phylliradiodes	Native Apricot
Plectranthus intraterraneus	Purple Mintbush
Polycalymma stuartii	Poached Egg Daisy
Portulaca oleracea	Pigweed
Senna art. ssp. Helmsii	Blunt-leaved Cassia
Sida filiformis	Fine Sida
Sida petrophila	
Stemodia viscosa	Sticky Blue Rod
Ventilago viminalis	Supplejack
Wahlenbergia sp.	Bluebells

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