

CAMBRIDGE COASTCARE

Your Community Coastcare Group

www.cambridgecoastcare.com.au

AUTUMN 2012 NEWSLETTER



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2011- A VERY SUCCESSFUL YEAR

After the extremely dry summer of 2010, much of Perth's vegetation was left singed and desperate for water. This included many of our plantings for the year, and the onset of winter rain was a welcome relief. Cambridge Coastcare took advantage of the perfect planting conditions the season afforded, and with excellent follow-up rain to ensure the survival of the plantings experienced one of our most successful years to date.

The last twelve months have seen record numbers of volunteers turning up to assist in plantings, seed collection and weeding days, and we have welcomed several new members. Plantings focussed on the Fred Burton dunes and the recently reclaimed northern car park area, and some 4,000 natives were planted over five separate days. Seed collection days were equally successful later in the year, providing large numbers of seed from a number of species, from which we have propagated much of the 2012 greenstock.

Weeding programs throughout the dunes have continued, focussing on White Broom in particular, with thousands of weed seedlings removed from the Fred Burton dune by volunteers after early winter rains. A handful of sites now remain with large numbers of woody weeds, and these will be targeted over the coming months for treatment and removal. Though seemingly a never-ending task, the eradication of invasive weed species is crucial to enable biodiversity enrichment and improving the ecosystem function of our coastline.

With a number of exciting projects planned over the coming season, 2012 promises to be another fantastic year for Cambridge Coastcare!

UPCOMING EVENTS

PLANTINGS: There will be four community plantings this winter, commencing **20th May**. Check the website for further details.

MONTHLY MEETINGS: Meetings are held the first Monday of the month at 7pm, at the Boulevard Centre, Floreat. All welcome

AGM: 6th August 2012

PLANTING PROGRAMS

With a number of the important framework species now well established in several restoration sites, we can now focus on returning some of the more uncommon and unique native species to the Cambridge dunes. While this year's plantings will also cover some bare areas of existing sites, our focal point will be enriching the biodiversity of Fred Burton Dune and Dunes 1 and 2 (South City Beach) by sourcing and planting species that we have not previously worked on.

While we will continue to include the framework or dominant species, in addition we have many new species that are less common but which represent important elements of coastal biodiversity. Of a total of 20 species to be planted over the coming months, eclipsing our previous years' planting diversity, around half have never (or very rarely) been included in Cambridge Coastcare work before. In total, nearly 10,000 plants are planned for 2012, with the enrichment focus continuing into the future with new species targeted each year. Keep reading for one of this year's key species!



SPINIFEX LONGIFOLIUS

One project that Cambridge Coastcare, in partnership with The Town of Cambridge, will be undertaking this winter is planting the front dunes near the northern end of the boardwalk. The plants that form at the very front of a dune system are termed **pioneer plants** as they have adapted to grow in strong winds, shifting sand and salty conditions. One such plant is *Spinifex longifolius*, commonly called beach spinifex. Below is some useful information about beach spinifex.

Flowering period: July–January.

Description: Rhizomatous, tussock to spreading perennial grass to 1 m high, clonal for many m in eroding situations. In sand burial situations the rhizome spreads with emergent vertical stems that bear flowers; in stabilised dunes lacking sand burial, the plant becomes tufted and non-creeping. Leaves narrow, 15–30 cm long, 1.5–3 mm wide, rigid yet flexible, grooved on translucent upper surface, lower surface rounded and green. Flowers either male, female or bisexual; male heads 10–16 cm across producing brown stamens, female heads spherical, large and conspicuous to 20 cm across with female flowers concealed at the base of elongated, stout hairs (awns) covered in bristles. Seeds produced in the spherical heads that break off and can be wind blown for hundreds of m till stopped by an obstacle or lodged in a wind-protected area. Germination occurs in heads that become partially buried by accreting sand.

Pollination: Wind pollinated.

Distribution: Widespread and very common throughout the west coast from the Kimberley region to Margaret River. On the Perth coast found in highly exposed frontal dunes to stabilised secondary dunes often mixed with low *Acacia* species and *Olearia axillaris*.

Propagation: Using seed heads planted directly into dune areas in late summer to early autumn. Rhizome divisions comprising 15–20 cm long vertical shoots taken from actively growing plants can be planted directly into moist soil or struck in pots containing standard potting mix. Plant deeply to ensure good root development and production of lateral rhizomes. Cuttings taken at any time of the year strike well if planted into a free-draining potting mix. At planting-out time, ensure plants are buried deeply leaving only the green shoots exposed to encourage root development from the buried nodes.

Uses in restoration: One of the best primary stabilising species of the Perth coast that thrives under high wind, salt spray and sand eroding conditions. Particularly useful for replacing the weedy marram grass in dune stabilisation programs.

Notes: It is important to ensure that nursery stock is hardened prior to planting into wind exposed locations. A fast growing species under sand accreting situations.



Photos and wording courtesy “Coastal Plants: A guide to the identification and restoration of plants of the Perth region”, by Kingsley Dixon

Thank you for your ongoing support, particularly the volunteers who assisted in the planting and seed collecting days last year. We hope you continue to enjoy the work of Coastcare and the Cambridge coastline, and look forward to seeing you at our upcoming events. Please contact us at cambridgecoastcare@gmail.com.