



Brisbane Ranges Landcare Group

Newsletter

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Landcare, COVID-19 and social isolation



Would this be a legitimate social interaction or bending the rules? Read on to learn what's been happening in our district in the face of the restrictions, and find out about opportunities to keep connected

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For feedback, comments and letters to the editor: newsletter.brlg@gmail.com

How are COVID-19 Restrictions Affecting Us?

Our virtual roving reporter has been traversing the Internet superhighway, microphone in hand, interviewing a few locals...



Mark Trengove, Ecological Consultant, Landcare Secretary

Q: How is your life different under the Covid-19 restrictions?

MT: All the social distancing requirements have changed life quite a bit, but at this stage I can still work, so life feels both the same and weirdly different. I feel like I've got more time to catch up on things. Going out for supplies, it is like everybody is holding their breath.

Q: What, if any, differences have you noticed in our area?

MT: It is definitely quieter, no planes going overhead, little of the usual easter traffic, none of the motor bike groups that usually roar through. The Scarlet Robins came back on time though, seemingly unconcerned.

Q: What will be your major challenges if the restrictions are still in place in 3 months time?

MT: I don't know what to expect, I imagine I will still have work, though I expect there will be less of it. Not seeing friends and family will be difficult. I doubt we will run out of food. Until there is sufficient testing and/or a vaccine, life will continue to be different. There will also be significant long-term behavioural changes, hopefully good ones.



Jacki Staude, Metalwork Artist, Landcare Committee

Q: How is your life different under the Covid-19 restrictions?

JS: Even before the restrictions, my weekly Chinese Dancing had stopped. (Some members of our group have family in Wuhan and so our group was well aware of the potential danger ahead!) So that was a big part of my social and exercise routine gone. The restrictions could not come soon enough for me as I was keen that we protect our health workers and avoid what we saw (and continue to see) overseas.

My work has been postponed but Alistair can work from home and we can use our workshop in Geelong.

Restriction have made me refocus efforts around the growing of vegetables and hoping that our broody hen is going to bring forth chickens, for eggs and meat.

The aim in developing a garden when we moved here was to hide the little house, provide shade and shelter. Self-sufficiency was idealistic but our introduction to the area with the 06 fires, and the limits of water and hot hard summers tempered ideas somewhat! However thanks to a fabulous wet few months are enjoying eating mostly from our garden. I am limiting shopping (supermarket maybe once every 4..6 weeks?) and driving has almost stopped.

Not physically seeing, family and friends is hard but life here on the Ranges is fabulous. Being restricted works for me. Many gardening, landscaping and building projects are getting attended to. Excess food is being letterboxed here and there. Books are being read. Other creative pursuits, painting, writing even just contemplating are possible. If not today, tomorrow.

Q: What, if any, differences have you noticed in our area?

JS: There are very few jets. The general traffic on the roads is greatly reduced. Sunny weekend days..we used to hear swarms of motorbikes. So it is quieter .. even for the country.

Q: What will be your major challenges if the restrictions are still in place in 3 months time?

JS: So 3 months, 3 years... ? I find it is helpful not to think of an end date. This is how it is. So the no 1 challenge is to maintain whatever is required to contain the Virus. Prior to February, climate change was in the forefront of my thoughts (especially after the recent fire season) so another challenge is to see that this remains "out"...or returns to the media and politics/decision making. Staying connected is also another challenge and yes we have great tools to keep in touch with family and friends but I reckon we may need some innovation when it comes to the broader community interests and groups.. like Landcare..Balliang Hall and my Chinese dance Group. Masks and Gloves may just be the no 1 fashion item! Stay positive and keep up the good work everyone. Hopefully things won't be the same but better.



James Bufton, Local Farmer, Landcare President

Q: How is your life different under the Covid-19 restrictions?

Like everyone else with school age children, I am developing new skills as a teacher's aid with Internet data consumption increasing massively! From a farm production point of view however, there has been no change, aside from some temporary difficulties with chemical supply. An interesting observation is that there are often global factors affecting farming, such as drought, daily or annual weather patterns, commodity prices, about which the rest of the community is largely oblivious. However, the coronavirus has affected everyone but has not affected farming. It is interesting having the situation in reverse.

Q: What, if any, differences have you noticed in our area?

A lot more people walking and pushing prams on the local roads. I'm enjoying the large reduction in traffic. I'm not getting my usual 530am wake-up alarm: the red-eye flight from Perth.

Q: What will be your major challenges if the restrictions are still in place in 3 months time?

I am expecting a major impact on worldwide commodity prices. For example, lamb sale prices will drop as a result from a reduction in high-end consumption (premium restaurant product that lifts the average sale price) and people's budgets being generally tighter and purchasing less at the household level. China is also starting to play some agricultural politics, and this may have an impact on Australia commodity prices.

I am expecting the upheaval may well go on until the end of the year. I'm against opening schools as kids are carriers and generally asymptomatic which increases the risk level for grandparents. It won't surprise me if we see a second or third wave of infections. I am very worried about it personally.

A Short Survey – your views of coronavirus

Please complete our very short survey. We would like to know about your experience under COVID-19 restrictions and what the Landcare group can do during this time.

Click on the link below to complete the survey. All responses are of course anonymous.





<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/VC3JYXZ>

Staughton Vale and Balliang Community on Facebook

In these peculiar times, don't forget to check out the [Staughton Vale and Balliang Community Facebook page](#). We recommend you follow this page to get up to date information on what is going on in our area. You can post directly to the page if you want to advise the community about an event or other activity or offer. Please use it!

Spare time on your hands? Landcare jobs to do right now!

More time on your hands because you're working from home? Weeds are loving the rainfall we have had in recent months and are celebrating release from their weather driven lockdown. Take some time to have a look around your property and put a stop to any of these villains taking unauthorised possession of your property.

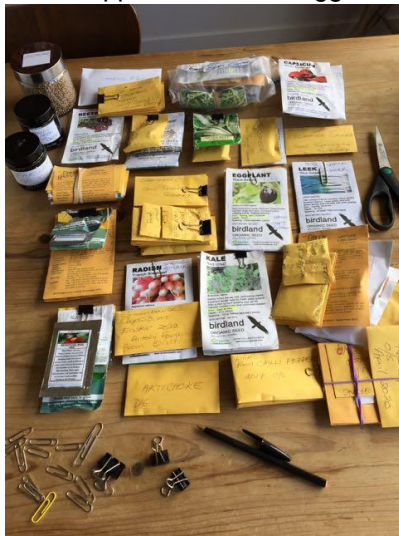
Weed	Most Effective Control Methods	When	More info
Boxthorn 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cut main stem and paint with undiluted glyphosate (Roundup) within 30 seconds ensuring the entire cut face and edges of cut receive ample herbicide 2. Remove mechanically with a grab and then complete step 1 on all exposed roots. 	Anytime	Click here
Galenia, blanket weed 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pull or chip it out ensuring you get the tap root. 2. Cut it off at the tap root and immediately paint the exposed root end with Roundup (glyphosate) 3. Spray plant with grazon or grazon extra. 	Now, whilst it is actively growing	Click here
Gorse 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cut it off at the tap root and immediately paint the exposed root end with Roundup (glyphosate) 2. Spray when plant is actively growing but not in flower with herbicide ensuring thorough coverage of all foliage to the point of run-off 3. Slashing or mulching must be followed with spraying of regrowth when it is knee high for effective control 4. Persistence. Gorse seed can remain viable for 50+ years 	Anytime (but depends on control method)	Click here
Serrated Tussock 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Spray with a glyphosate (knockdown of existing plant) or fluproprate (kills plant and prevent germination of seeds) based herbicide 2. Cultivation 3. Physical removal (chip out) 	From now to October	Click here

Toilet Paper and Packets of Seeds

Toilet paper and seeds. Who knew these would be the must have items of the current plague? Interestingly there are substitutes for the former, but none for the latter. Seed suppliers have run out of seeds, so I thought I'd share a little on seed saving.

As a very small food farmer I grow sufficient food for a family, and a clutch of reptilian, avian and multi legged seasonal critters. For most of this troubled century I have been saving a selection of seeds – grandpa lettuce and grandpa tomatoes, a variety of heritage tomatoes, lettuce, coriander, parsley, peas beans and regretting that I did not save seed from the superb pumpkin that Mark purchased at the Kingscote farmers market. I grow potatoes in bags and propagate some herbs from cuttings and this year grew sweet potato from slips grown in the greenhouse.

Experienced gardeners have been an invaluable support and short cut to good gardening and seed saving results. Several local gardeners have shared tips, seedlings, cuttings, produce, meals from the garden, and most valuable of all, their failures and disappointments. Seed suppliers such as Diggers, Birdland, Green Harvest, Boondie and so on help with advice and quality organic heritage seed stock, fundamental to producing reliable seed stock at home. Seed selection has something in common with editing text. You have to be prepared to let the inferior stuff go or the next generation of plants will disappoint everyone in the ecosystem.



Storage is fundamental to looking after seeds in between seasonal isolation. They don't work if they were put to bed with bugs. I let selected pea and bean pods dry on the plant, and spread them on trays to fully dry in a sunny spot indoors. When dry I transfer them to dark glass jars. I then give peas and beans a few days with the ice cream in dark glass jars to put uninvited bugs out of action. An early disappointment was opening a seed envelope of sugar snap peas and watching an army of little black bugs march out having left every pea drilled. Currently I store peas and beans in dark glass jars, recycled from a cosmetic company, and less bug prone seeds in seed grade small brown envelopes.

Volunteer and self seeding plants are very welcome in the garden. They grow where they are happiest. Among the reliable volunteers is a dark leaf lettuce, cherry tomato, rouge de marmande tomato, potatoes and overlooked garlic. This year a plant with a light green mustard flavoured leaf sprung up enthusiastically and we added leaves to salads until it finally revealed itself as a huge mauve topped turnip.

Garlic, while not exactly a seed is one of the most rewarding plants. It is not very demanding, so long as you weed it occasionally and plant into a well prepared bed. I plant as soon as the green shoot starts to pop out, and continue to plant as more cloves announce their readiness.



Seed saving, even with a comparatively small range of vegetables, along with composting and home grown liquid fertilizers – like comfrey - enables some food production at home and the signs are that this will be a handy skill to develop.

Thanks to Trish Edwards for supplying this article and pics.



Lockdown Photography Competition

Has being in “iso” given you a new appreciation of how lucky we are to live in this area? If so, get out there and take some photos! Email them to newsletter.brlg@gmail.com and when restrictions are relaxed back to stage 2, the best photo (as judged by the Landcare calendar curator) will win a celebratory bottle of wine, delivered to your letterbox. If we get enough photos we might even consider a 2021 calendar ... so get snapping!!

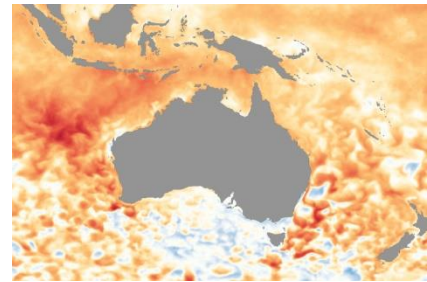


News and Views

“Really strong odds” for wet winter.

"I think it's a little better than rumours now, which feels like a good thing to say," said Andrew Watkins, head of long-range forecasting at the Bureau of Meteorology.

Click on the picture to the right for more info:



Ghost mushroom hunters photograph glowing poisonous fungi

Head into the dark, damp woods in search of ghosts and who knows what you might find. Even ghosts that glow in the dark but no-one knows why.

Ghost mushrooms, that is. The fungi — *omphalotus nidiformis* — are bioluminescent, meaning they emit light.

This recently captured image of the luminous mushrooms was recorded at the Inverleigh Flora Fauna Park. They have also been sighted at Steiglitz.

Click the pic for more info and let us know if you have seen them too. Send in a pic of these ghosts or any others!



How climate change is affecting what we grow and eat

Farmers and scientists are finding new ways to keep food on the table as rainfall patterns move and heatwaves increase.

Click on the image to the right to read the article.

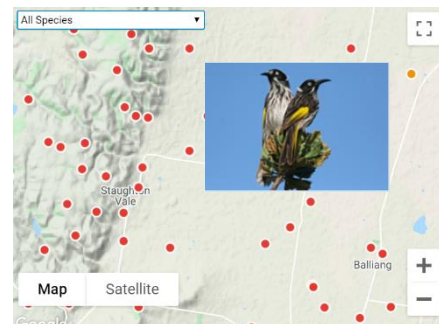


Bird spotting and citizen science

Help BirdLife Australia scientifically collect data to gain insight and protect Australia's birds by becoming part of a national bird monitoring community and making your birding count.

The focus for the 2020 survey is unusual or unexpected birds that turn up in your backyard. The recent fire season has seen many bird communities lose refuge and resources, pushing them into new and unexpected places.

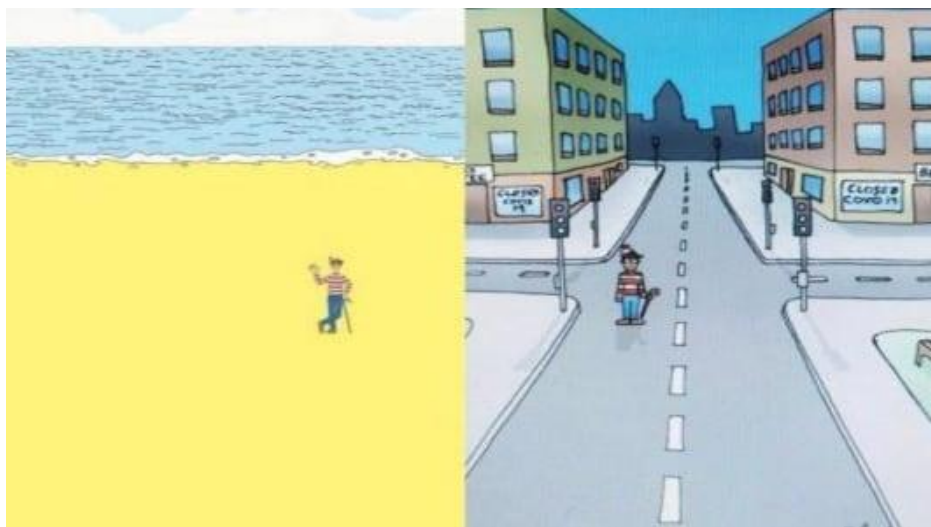
Click on the image to sign up and access BirdLife Australia's Birdata web portal or download the app.



Landcare Resources

I want to know about...	Here is a good place to start...
Aboriginal cultural heritage location mapping	https://www.vic.gov.au/aboriginalvictoria/heritage/heritage-tools-and-publications/heritage-tools.html then select "online map tool"
Biodiversity mapping and recording	http://maps.biodiversity.vic.gov.au/viewer/?viewer=NatureKit http://natureshare.org.au/ http://avh.chah.org.au/
Boxthorn	http://weeds.ala.org.au/WoNS/africanboxthorn/docs/African_boxthorn-national_best_practice_manual.pdf
Chilean needle grass	https://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/invasive/weeds/publications/guidelines/wons/pubs/n-neesiana.pdf
Feral goat control	https://www.pestsmart.org.au/pest-animal-species/feral-goat/
Fox control	https://www.pestsmart.org.au/pest-animal-species/european-fox/
Gorse	https://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/invasive/weeds/publications/guidelines/wons/pubs/u-europaeus.pdf
Landcare networks	Moorabool Landcare Network Geelong Landcare Network
Melbourne Water Stream Frontage Grants	https://www.melbournewater.com.au/community-and-education/apply-funding/stream-frontage-management-program
Rabbit management	http://www.mln.org.au/images/PDFS/rabbitactionguide.pdf https://www.pestsmart.org.au/pest-animal-species/european-rabbit/
Serrated tussock	https://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/invasive/weeds/publications/guidelines/wons/pubs/n-trichotoma.pdf
Weeds - identification and control	http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/agriculture/pests-diseases-and-weeds/weeds/a-z-of-weeds
Weed status in Victoria	http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/agriculture/pests-diseases-and-weeds/weeds/invasive-plant-classifications http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/agriculture/pests-diseases-and-weeds/protecting-victoria-from-pest-animals-and-weeds/legislation-policy-and-permits/declared-noxious-weeds-and-pest-animals-in-victoria

Last Laugh



Where's Wally Coronavirus Edition