

## **Parks & Reserves – Flinders Island**

*Future management of verges, road reserves, nature strips, community gardens, Council garden beds and planters, community-managed public sites (eg the Museum), near-shore areas where municipal reserves abut coastal reserves and the miscellaneous public/private vegetated interface zones (for instance where shops, houses, rural holdings and various business premises front or meet road/walkways) taking into account the control of noxious weeds, maintenance of existing civic amenity, enhancement of same, successional planning to keep ahead of the natural senescence of windbreaks; avoiding deleterious consequences for public safety, of road pavement integrity, for the driving public; and working within the constraints of available human and budgetary resources.*

It's a big task. Best tackled via partnerships and co-operative arrangements with interested community members, the relevant landholders, lessees and property owners.

Jan Lees undertook a successful gardening program focused on a subset of the above – establishing and maintaining a number of gardens around Whitemark, a couple of roadside beds in Lady Barron, and conducting an ad hoc roadside rubbish run in transit between the 2 townships. She also cleaned the toilets on the Whitemark foreshore, at the library, in the depot office and (at some time in the past) at the Lady Barron tennis courts as well as doing the general cleaning of the depot office building. An annotated list of the status of the garden areas she focused on is detailed at the end of this short report.

Weed control is one very important aspect of Parks and Reserves management. Priority weeds for Flinders have been identified in the document “Weeds of Flinders Island – June 2013” and costings for control of the main roadside weeds in the “Flinders Island Roadside Weed Management Plan 2013”. Many municipal Parks and Reserve areas fall within the roadside zone covered and are therefore covered by the Roadside Weed Management Plan and its costings. An exception to this is the Whitemark foreshore reserve and southern approach to the Bluff Rd walking track. Also the reserve around the Lady Barron tennis courts/toilets. Cost/time to manage will be worked out for these as soon as possible. Other reserve areas such as the playground next door to the Duckpond, the area around the Emita Hall, and Holloway park can be considered separately later if/as required.

The development and maintenance of windbreaks is another significant aspect of Parks & Reserves management given our island geography and location at the notoriously windy 40<sup>th</sup> parallel. The line of *Agonis flexuosa* planted on the road side of the pine windbreak in Whitemark will not survive the full blast of salt-laden westerlies when exposed to it by senescence of the mature pines. A number of the pines are already dead or partially so and getting suitably hardy plants like coastal wattles established between the pines and *Agonis* is something that needs to happen very soon. An archival aerial photo taken c1940 shows that there was no shrubby vegetation present here before the pines were

planted. Living conditions in Whitemark will be negatively impacted if this vegetated windbreak is not appropriately maintained.

Street trees are not presently a feature of the Flinders landscape but there is significant scope and opportunity to develop these strategically. The following are some suggested species, a mix of local natives and non-weedy exotics, the list far from exhaustive :-

*Corymbia ficifolia* Red Flowering Gum  
*Banksia serrata* Saw Banksia  
*B. marginata* Silver Banksia  
*B. integrifolia* Coast Banksia



*Metrosideros excelsa* Pohutakowa  
*Melaleuca armillaris* Bracelet Honey Myrtle  
*Araucaria heterophylla* Norfolk Island Pine  
*Araucaria cunninghamii* Hoop Pine  
*Araucaria columnaris* Cook/New Caledonia Pine



*Phoenix canariensis* Canary island Date Palm  
*Allocasuarina verticillata* Sheoak



*Eucalyptus anceps* Kangaroo Island Mallee  
*Hakea laurina* Pincushion Hakea)



*Schinus sp.* Peppercorn



*Morus sp.* Mulberry

*Cydonia oblonga* Quince

*Ficus sp.* Fig

*Ficus macrophylla* Moreton Bay Fig

*E. lehmannii* Warty Yate

*Agonis flexuosa* Heath Myrtle



*Angophora spp*

*Eucalyptus globulus globulus* (Furneaux/Gippsland Bluegum)

Street trees for Flinders need to be resistant to and tolerant of salt-laden winds, prolonged droughts, roaring 40s winds. Trees as well as shrubs, groundcovers, creepers, climbers and tussocks selected for Flinders Island roadside plantings should not be problematically weedy nor create conditions contrary to Council's roadside policy which stipulates unimpeded line-of-sight for road users, particularly near bends and intersections, as a primary consideration in management of roadside reserves generally.

Keeping down the vegetation alongside rural roads is another significant management task. The reasons for this are set out in the Flinders Council Policy Manual 2009 – "Roadside Vegetation Management Policy". The objectives of this policy were summarized in the Roadside Weed Management Plan as follows:

"for the island's vegetated verges to be maintained -

- with a low vegetative profile so that native animals can be clearly spotted at distance to minimize accidents involving them
- with minimal flammable component to assist in wildfire management by acting as ready-made firebreaks
- without any vegetative abundance that would impede safe sight lines for motorists
- so as not to impede drying by sunlight and free drainage of the road surfaces
- with exotic weeds suitably controlled so that they do not invade adjoining private properties from road verges.

These objectives to be met utilizing as little herbicide spraying as is feasible and spraying of any herbicide only be undertaken "after all economic, environmental and health and safety factors to operator and public have been considered".

A couple of the other objectives in the policy document may warrant reconsideration if a more co-operative approach is to be effectively adopted whereby landholders take on some/greater responsibility for sections of verge adjoining their properties. Clauses 6&7 state that "*land owners are not to plant trees within 15 metres of road reservation boundaries, or may plant only small*

*shrubs not exceeding 1 metres (sic) in height for the first 10 metres from the boundaries. Plantings to be at least 75 metres back from intersections... Planting of any species of tree or shrub on roadsides not to be carried out without first obtaining the written permission of Council, and any trimming or removal of approved plantings will be done at the cost of the land owner."*

The thinking behind these regulations is focused on public safety but some relaxation in their strictures would be possible without compromising that objective. Indeed, instances contrary to these rules may be seen in all parts of the island already. Such rules are presumably also deliberately relaxed in townships where block sizes would render these setbacks absurd. Ideally, people could be allowed some autonomy and scope for creativity within workable safety guidelines, with or without other inducements to landholder adoption of (their) sections of road verges including rate rebates or annual cash rewards for classes of 'good' verge management or, in some cases, the more immediate benefits of exemption from slasher-borne *Sporobolus* seed (for instance). To facilitate this sort of decision making, the provision of accessible information concerning the pros and cons of the various roadside management options, regimes and approaches with regard to Parramatta Grass control/spread is considered a priority.

The de-weeding of paved areas (footpaths and tennis courts in particular), the scraping out of gutters and periodic clearing of culverts are some other prosaic but important elements of local municipal parks and reserves management.

Pruning's ongoing, weeding a constant, the refurbishment of plantings either by growing suitable species from seed/cuttings or the selection and purchase of advanced plants can't be neglected for more than a season without noticeable negative impacts... More creatively though, we have the opportunity to develop areas of edible streetscape, install/facilitate/allow public art, and generally enhance visual and public amenity through strategic, clever and co-operative approaches to vegetation establishment and maintenance on our public lands.

### **Parks and Reserve areas inherited from Jan Lees (Sept 2012)**

#### Council Depot

Jan gardened round the depot office building and mowed the lawn there with a push mower. Ronald Wise has since installed a macrocarpa paling fence. I've planted some local native shrub species into gaps in the garden beds and will continue to do this. Weeding of beds and pruning of the trees and shrubs is done as needed. The lawn has been mown either by me with the push mower (before breaking my wrist) or by one of the other crew using the ride-on mower. The ride-on is quicker. I've also begun to prune the roadside plantings between which we park our cars as these are full of dead and salt-burnt branches. The main depot area and wash-down zone urgently require substantial weed control work.

#### Patrick St brickwork

Jan struggled to get any plantings established on the western side of Patrick St apparently because Les had the whole area sprayed with herbicide from time to time. There are some plants establishing slowly now that the area's not sprayed. I have some vigorous local coastal groundcovering plants ready to go in there up at the TAG nursery. The succulent cover growing on the eastern side is quite well established and an effective planting. I generally handweed all the brickwork areas as required (though all weeding has gotten behind during the last 8 weeks).

#### Front of Hall

Jan's plantings of blue ceonothus mixed with red-flowering ice-plant makes an attractive floral display in Spring-Summer though it was marred last year by an attack on the ice-plant by huge numbers of ice-plant scale. Once identified, this was eventually brought under control through repeated applications of white oil and pyrethrum. Only one ice-plant died. The dry weather during the fortnight I was on stress leave led to the loss of 3 non-native hebes which I've yet to replace with anything else. The provision of a specific planting budget will assist in the timely acquisition of plants for particular purposes and areas such as this. In response to the brief note Jana inserted in the Island News calling for donations of plants, Peter Corbauld offered some yuccas. I've planted one already and intend to plant 3 more at strategic intervals to prevent pedestrians cutting across the garden to the detriment of the ice-plant in particular. The rough grassed area is mown either by me with the push-mower (as Jan did) or by one of the crew with the ride-on. It is never used as a sitting area and would be better redeveloped in some way, possibly with an inorganic mulch surface of gravel or rocks. The 3 small planters are particularly unattractive and I'd like to remove them altogether and replace them with a row of native grass tussocks.

#### Rose Garden

The rose garden is probably the most loved bit of civic garden on Flinders. It's generally very successful and boasts a floral display much longer than comparable gardens in many other geographic locations. There were issues with drainage on the Northern side and with the watering system in general which have been largely resolved via the installation of a small pump drawing on the underground tanks and providing low-pressure supply to the drippers. This was an idea I took to Butch and that he put into effect very quickly on my raising it. Maintaining the rose garden in a weeded, pruned, de-thrippped, anti-fungused, attractive state is a job that really relies on the input of some committed community volunteers in addition to time available to Parks and Reserves staff. Spraying to control fungus has occasionally been done by other works crew staff if I have had a need for assistance. Jan continues to be actively involved in this garden, as does Judy Walker. Being a community-initiated garden, it has its own small independent sources of funds, drawn on to purchase new roses from time to time. Once the Council's Volunteer Strategy is completed (about the formulation of which I've had a discussion with Jana), it would be great to get a re-animated Friends of the Rose Garden happening. My intention to underplant the roses with herbs and groundcovers to reduce weeding and provide interest when the roses aren't in flower came to little because Jan really doesn't like it as

a horticultural idea. We are however in agreement about using less weedy forms of mulch and so moving away from hay to seagrass, sheoak needles and old pine needles. I've recently done some research into the effect of pine needles of various ages and degrees of decomposition on soil pH and their suitability for use under roses. Looks to be ok as long as the needles aren't too fresh off the tree. The next job is to collect and apply these.

### Council Offices

The mix of plants Jan used in the beds in front of and around the side of the main Council offices works very well. I have added few new plants to these at all so far although there are a couple of parts of the main bed which would benefit from rejuvenation with suitable new plantings. I was undertaking regular light prunings which had the dual advantage of being quick to do and restricting light getting to the soil to stimulate weedseed germination so that not much weedy growth occurred. The more dramatic pruning done by Jana has benefits for some of the plantings, especially the daisies, but has increased the growth of weeds somewhat. There's scope to introduce for instance ornamental kale, native spinach, parsley and other edible plants to these gardens. A number of the office staff, including Jana, have expressed a willingness to do the watering of these gardens and be involved to some extent in maintenance. There is a problem with the drip irrigation in that no flow gets through to the western or side beds, with the break or blockage seeming to be under the concrete path. During the summer months I was having to water with a hose dragged through from behind the library.

### Duckpond

The shrubby garden that screens the entrance to the Duckpond from the street had been very long unpruned. Some plants now require ladders to work on. I have partially cut back a kunzea which I'd like to prune harder if I had plants to put into the gap it will leave. There is a very small grassed area around in the play area which is currently mown by petrol-powered push mower (by Jan in the past and more recently by me) but which could easily be managed by a simple quiet non-mechanised push mower if any of the Duckpond staff would be prepared to take that task on. Some zincalume planters have recently been installed by Duckpond staff and planted with sunflowers. The edges of the play area are now managed by use of the steamweeder. This had been treated in the past with herbicides but the practice was discontinued for obvious health and safety reasons. Some of the other parts of the play area need refurbishment as they currently have sharp edges and minimal plant cover. I've suggested to a member of Duckpond staff they plant up these areas with pigface. I've occasionally weeded the whole play area when it looks messy but the property is actually leased from Council I believe. While I'm happy to advise and help, I don't have time to take on the entire gardening load for Duckpond so it offers a perfect case for co-operative management.

### Patrick St planters

These planters work very well. The plants in the ones on the Eastern side of the road are very hardy and require minimal attention to look good. The painted planters could benefit from repainting at some stage. The half barrels in

the main street and at Bakery Park have now been planted with hardy perennial natives rather than the annual pansies etc they had before.

#### Bakery Park

This is a pretty low-maintenance garden area and reasonably well-used. The mature blue gum at the back gives it a great feel and sets off the flowering climbers and smaller shrubs. No new plants have been introduced to the mix as yet. The mowing is done by another works crew member using a ride-on mower. I just trim the edges where the mower misses, turn the watering on weekly during the drier times of year, pick up the sticks and branches dropped by the gum, weed as needed and prune about once/season or 4x annually.

#### Corner of pub car park opposite P.O.

I believe this is technically Leedham Walker's land but he's quite happy to have municipal gardens on it and for it to be used by the public as a carpark. To the rather eclectic mix of plants in the bed on the corner opposite the post office I've added a couple of local tree species in the hope they'll thrive and eventually provide a shady spot as shade trees is something people often say they'd like more of round town. This garden bed is currently looking very weedy as it gets readily overrun by grasses and I've been unable to weed it for 2 months now.

#### Between the footpath and Vari's house

Jan was of the opinion that the bare area between the footpath and house was municipal land. Vari, I think, believes it's part of her property and thanked me for weeding and watering it for her. I planted saltbush here that failed to thrive after being stood on. A number of other plants died when not watered while I was on stress leave. It's a hard site with a lot of broken glass in the soil. The mix of plants in this garden is not what I'd call totally successful at present. Vari has added some semi-succulents and I would like to mulch if I can think of a way to stop the mulching material just blowing out all over the footpath. Mulching would reduce the weediness and also keep plants from dying as much as they do in hot, dry times. The area to the south of the house, adjacent to the roundabout could also be planted to render this a more attractive spot in the centre of town. There's currently a fairly scrappy line of succulents along the house's south wall and then just grass to the kerb.

#### Between Steve Cole's shop and Freckles

There's a very weedy area outside Steve Cole's shop which I don't actually think Jan ever tackled. I've weeded it a few times but as Steve uses it as a spot to stockpile building materials from time to time, there's no real opportunity to 'garden' this. The strip between the footpath and the Freckles outdoor eating area is to be revamped shortly. June Klug will do most of the work with a bit of input from me. Anything that can be redeployed elsewhere will be saved and moved. The South African Euryops daisybushes will go.

#### The front of Wheatley's Killiecrankie Enterprises

Jan took on the maintenance of the garden bed in front of the Wheatley's shop because they had health issues that precluded them doing the weeding. I've weeded as required just to maintain it in a tidy state but it needs a make-over.

I've talked to Alan and Margaret about the future of this garden and the fact it's definitely private land rather than the public-private interface of many of the other gardens covered in this list. There's not much work involved in simple planting and weeding if they're prepared to purchase plants.

Agonis flexuosa planting behind the Whitemark foreshore

Jan planted Agonis all over the place. It's a quick-growing and pretty hardy small tree as well as being attractive when covered in small white flowers in Spring-Summer. It's not hardy enough to take the brunt of salt-laden westerly winds off Bass Strait though and will not survive if dying parts of the old pine windbreak are not interplanted with salt/wind-hardier species as soon as possible. There is also a developing issue of weediness as the non-Flinders-native Agonis is beginning to self-seed fairly prolifically.

Roadside bed above the Lady Barron tennis courts

This garden bed is dominated by a single species of grevillea. While not a particularly lovely plant or planting, it is an effective bit of roadside garden delineating the slip road from the main road. I've pruned it a number of times and pulled out metres of invading kikuyu but the main management issue is the Asparagus Fern that comes up in various parts of it and requires me to work my way into it to get to the roots and dig it out.

Roadside bed at road junction immediately South of Lady Barron Hall

This is a pretty easy-care roadside planting. It could be rejuvenated with some new, more interesting or diverse species but it's ok as is for now. I prune and weed episodically, only as it looks to be in need of attention.

**Other areas tackled and/or planned for works in addition to the above:-**

Government Offices, Whitemark

I wondered for a long time why the gardens around the Government Offices looked so rundown and neglected. When I asked, it turned out nobody was maintaining them at all. I believe Jan had at some time in the past but had ceased to do so. I've pruned and weeded and arranged for John and Bridget to bring in cuttings and plant up the southern edge of the carpark between the stumps of the removed pines. I'd like to strip the tired old marguerite daisies out of the front and replace this with something a bit more colourful and attractive but have yet to have the time or hands to do this.

Road reserve opposite Dawn Zelman's in Robert St, Whitemark

This is a spectacularly weedy bit of municipal land that's clearly gone untended for many many years. Dawn has complained to me about the numbers of boxthorn seedlings that come up in her garden from the large bushes here. I'm happy to get in and cut&paint stems but removal of the plants will require the assistance of other crew and a truck.





Roadsides between airport and Whitemark

It would be great to plant attractive street trees along this stretch of road. *Corymbia ficifolia*, the Western Australian red flowering gum, would look magnificent along the Southern side of the road past the Sportsground. Appropriate plantings for the entrance to Whitemark would also improve the aesthetics of this.

Lady Barron tennis court surrounds and adjacent parkland

I've sprayed Roundup on all the cracks in the tennis courts a few times, as did Jan, and left one to be treated by the steamweeder when it first arrived but Butch had it sprayed with herbicide so I can't compare the duration of effectiveness of the 2 treatments yet. I'd anticipate steaming would be equally effective and I'd prefer to treat them this way. The screening vegetation around the courts is weedy and while I've already removed some Tagasaste, I need someone with a chainsaw to take out the hacked-about, coppicing old *Coprosma repens* Laurel (aka Mirrorbush). There's also some other large weedy shrubs which need removing. It would be unfortunate to make too many gaps in the vegetative screening as it's currently quite effective. The courts do only seem to be used in Summer at present. There's a scrappy-looking bed near the sign on the road verge at the corner above the courts which I was last working to renovate the afternoon of the day I broke my wrist. As with the Whitemark Government Offices, this is a weedy bed of Marguerite daisy and would best be completely replaced by new, more interesting and attractive plantings.

Whitemark foreshore, wharf and entry to Bluff Rd walking track

Maintenance of this zone spans the triple jurisdiction of Council, the Port authority and Parks. There has clearly been no will or momentum to remediate the weedy messiness of these areas for many years. Removing boxthorn seedlings from the road side of the pines is something that falls pretty logically into the realm of a Council Parks and Reserves officer's duties but for the rest a

more co-ordinated, better resourced effort will be required. I've mentioned before that I think the area behind the beach, North of the wharf would make a fantastic 'driftwood park' with furniture and sculptural installations possibly made as part of a public competition or exhibition.

### **Budget**

Elements: Time, plants, seeds, mulches, fertilizers and plant food, herbicide/s, fungicide/s, pesticide/s, steamweeding, tools, garden edging materials, hoses and watering equipment..

Costs: A minimum of 1 person day a week (as at present); steamweeding has been costed per hour per weed in the Roadside Weed Management Plan; for the rest, how long is a piece of string? With a budget of nothing, new plantings will happen very slowly as I'll have to collect seed and grow each plant from scratch. Money's not necessarily the answer to every problem as it's sometimes just time and resources eg to locate and collect appropriate non-weedy mulching materials.

As a rough guide to the cost of plants, from the community run TAG nursery here on Flinders, local natives in 6" bags are \$1 each, non'-local natives are \$2. At Tasmania's best indigenous nursery, Plants of Tasmania at Ridgeway just out of Hobart, tubestock is \$3.25-8.95 each and 10cm pots \$9.95-16.50 each. Bare-rooted fruit trees tend to be around \$30 each.