



November 2019

## Alice Springs Field Naturalists Club Newsletter



View from the top of the Arumbera Range looking north towards Heavitree Gap. Foreground is possibly *Senna artemisioides* ssp. *concave leaflets*. (Not yet confirmed) See more on page 8. Photo: Connie Spencer

Meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month (except December & January) at 7:00 PM. Meetings are held at the Olive Pink Botanic Garden Visitors Centre.

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## NEWSLETTER

The next newsletter will be February 2020  
unless we are inundated with enough contributions to publish a December edition.  
The deadline for the February newsletter will be 23rd January.  
**Please send your contributions to Barb Gilfedder: [bjfedders@gmail.com](mailto:bjfedders@gmail.com)**

### ALICE SPRINGS FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

#### **PERMANENT CHANGE OF MEETING VENUE.**

**All general meetings are now held in Olive Pink Botanic Garden Visitors Centre**

#### Wednesday 13 November

**ASFNC Monthly get-together** at 7.00pm at the Visitors Centre at Olive Pink Botanic Garden.

Speaker will be **Dr Margaret Friedel** sharing a recent trip to the Cocos (Keeling) and Christmas Islands. She will take us through the settlement history and natural history of both islands, showing images of water, plants, crabs, birds and lots more.

#### Friday 15 November

**Camp at Serpentine chalet** and morning walk to dam – Contact Connie Spencer on 0429966592 or [constans@bigpond.net.au](mailto:constans@bigpond.net.au).

#### Saturday 30 November

**ASFNC Christmas Breakfast** at Alice Springs Telegraph Station. Bring a plate of finger food to share, your own drinks, possibly a chair or rug to sit on. Gate opens at 8.30am.

### AUSTRALIAN PLANT SOCIETY ALICE SPRINGS

[apsalicesprings@yahoo.com.au](mailto:apsalicesprings@yahoo.com.au)

#### Wednesday 6 November

**APS AS Monthly Meeting – Speaker: Peter Jobson - Flora of Arizona**

Join Peter Jobson as he takes us through the grasslands and mountain ranges of Arizona. With similar yearly rainfall and seasonal temperatures to central Australia, the Sonoran Desert is the most diverse of all the North American deserts including a plethora of prickly, iconic species in their native environment. Light supper to follow.

**Evening of Wednesday 4th December SAVE THE DATE! APS AS Christmas Dinner.**

#### Alice Springs Field Naturalists Club Committee Members

<b>President</b>	Barbara Gilfedder	8955 5452
<b>Vice-President</b>	Lee Ryall	0417 401 237
<b>Secretary</b>	Kimberley Morgan	0402 527 195
<b>Treasurer</b>	Neil Woolcock	8955 1021
<b>Property Officer</b>	Rosalie Breen	8952 3409
<b>Public Officer</b>	Anne Pye	0438 388 012

#### **Committee Members:**

Anne Pye	0438 388 012
Margaret Friedel	0417 849 743

#### **Other Club Responsibilities:**

Newsletter – Barb Gilfedder [bjfedders@gmail.com](mailto:bjfedders@gmail.com)  
Facebook Organiser – Position vacant.  
Website - Robyn Grey-Gardner 8952 2207



*The Alice Springs Field Naturalists  
Club Committee  
wish all Members and Friends a  
Happy and Safe Festive Season.*

# Doing the Reverse Bradley Native Plant Revegetation in Spencer Valley 2009 - 2019

Presentation by Sue Morrish, report by Rosalie Breen

Spencer Valley in Old Eastside has been a special area for recreation, walking, running, dog walking and bird watching for the community for many years.

Residents were decrying the deteriorating land with the encroachment of Buffel Grass, which smothered native plants, and many Ironwood trees were lost or damaged by fire.



Above; A map of Spencer Valley showing the Todd River over to the left, the orange patch is Spencer Hill and the area called the big triangle of Spencer Valley shows the existing tracks.



Left: the monoculture of Buffel Grass and dead trees at the beginning.

### So Action...

Alice Springs Landcare, with Tim Collins as the first co-ordinator, initiated action. Before this could be officially begun, a mountain of red tape and paperwork had to be completed. Landcare had to be incorporated in order to attain public liability insurance; land tenure needed to be secured because Spencer Valley was Crown land; sacred site and heritage clearances were required. Landcare acknowledges that this is Aranda land. All this took so much time and frustration. Our thanks go especially to Jo Boniface for her ability to negotiate.



The first officially legal recovery action in the valley was to create firebreaks around "The Big Triangle", by spraying with Roundup alongside existing old road tracks. A spray trailer was inherited from another Landcare group. Later backpack sprays allowed for spot spraying after the initial blanket spraying. The group concentrated on this delineated area as they envisaged that it could be maintained.

This view from Spencer Hill was taken after the initial spraying to create a firebreak around "The Big Triangle".

The next step was to clear Buffel Grass clumps from around big, slow-growing trees like Ironwoods and Corkwoods within the triangle. This was done mainly using mattocks, but also spot spraying when the Buffel was green and actively growing. This work then extended to include smaller trees, shrubs and special plants. Circles could be gradually widened and then joined up over the seasons. Now, "The Big Triangle" can be enjoyed almost Buffel-free. Ten years work!

The Bradley Method has been in use for many years as a guide for reclaiming bushland, but Sue likened our methods for revegetation to "Reverse Bradley". The Bradley Method recommends working from relatively good areas towards the weeds, but the group was unable to do that. Better areas, such as Spencer Hill, is a sacred site and prohibited from disturbance, so work could not be done on the slopes. The group worked from extensive weed growth among existing trees, outwards. Clearing hill slopes would also have encouraged erosion and the spray would have endangered ferns. Clearing around trees revitalized the seed bank and minimized erosion.

The next aim of the Bradley Method is minimal disturbance. With spraying, the grass clumps remain in the ground holding the soil until better plants emerge, while mattock clearing disturbs the soil, so it needs to be limited if possible. Volunteers need to be trained in minimizing disturbance. Dug clumps could be left in situ as ground cover, but if they were actively seeding it was better to collect the whole plant. These were taken to the Community Garden for compost making or were put in already eroded gullies. As gradually there are less Buffel plants, their seeds could be collected and removed promptly before spreading. The Bradley Method also says that it is important not to over-clear. Hopefully that has been achieved.

#### Threats to regeneration success

- **Fires**, such as in early 2012, which killed Ironwoods that were shooting from a previous fire.
- That the seed bank may not be up to the task of regeneration.

In Spencer Valley we tend to see plants regenerate in a particular order:

Initially **annuals**: Billy Buttons, Golden Everlastings, Bluebells (after winter rain)

and also: Caltrop, Bindii, Button Grass and Tar Vine (after summer rain)

Over time we get more **perennials**: Oat grasses, Kangaroo grasses, Kerosene Grasses, Five Minute Grass and Golden Beard Grass. **Prickles and more prickles**. The idea that they do have some benefits got a laugh. They do keep bikes to the paths and masses of Galahs and the iconic Red-tailed Black Cockatoos have visited to feast on them, to the delight of everyone.

- **Visitor impact** such as rubbish from picnickers, drinkers, camping, erosion, compaction, widening paths, duplicating paths, eroded paths, new paths. (bikes and even cars have caused damage)
- **Natural erosion** from heavy rain, runoff from hills, removal of too much ground cover from not enough rain or perhaps over-clearing, digging and over grazing from Rabbits, Euros and Rock Wallabies is a worry.
- Creating too big a **maintenance** workload from enthusiastically expanding the treated area in easy times and not having the manpower to keep up. Volunteer turnover can also be a problem.
- The ongoing issues of **Glyphosate**, "Round Up". This herbicide is a probable carcinogen so care is taken with personal protective clothing and training of volunteers. Its use is limited where possible. After the initial onslaught, Landcare has reduced the volumes needed and use backpacks to spot-spray as most of the new growth is small and sporadic. Verbal abuse of people spraying by passers-by is rare but it does exist and can be hard to cope with.



Before and after photos of Buffel removal around this beautiful Corkwood. Photos taken August 2013 and October 2014.



Perennial grasses looking lush after good rain. Photo taken January 2016

**Benefits of Buffel control**

- It brings back some of the original plants to increase biodiversity creating a little pocket of “original “ bushland for locals and visitors and other animals.
- Fire risks are reduced so our older trees are protected.
- The work is “very therapeutic” – a feeling of empowerment for the volunteers, changing the environment for the better, and at times a feeling of power and release of frustrations with mattock work. It creates a great friendship group, with our helpers, enthusiastic volunteers, jail work crew, guidance from other Buffel workers’ experiences, especially Andy Vinter and his invaluable book ‘Alice Springs Bush Regeneration’, and Peter Latz.

*It is a continuing delight to find new plants popping up, a joy to see the creek lines awash with Kangaroo Grass, an area bathed in sunlight shining on a field of waving Aristida, a wave of raucous Red-tailed Black Cockatoos, a sleepy Bearded Dragon, hopefully Yipirinya caterpillars and the many birds enjoying the habitat. Personally I am addicted. Sue Morrish similarly, can’t seem to stop either. Rosalie.*

All we need now is more rain to see the full results of this wonderful Landcare work!

Golden Everlastings, Kerosene Grass (*Aristida contorta*) and Bluebush (*Maireana scleroptera*), Sue and Rosalie celebrating 10 years work.





### Visit to Alice Springs Community Garden - 11 October 2019

Visiting Alice Springs Community Garden makes me think of the late Clarry and Frances Smith and their part in its beginnings. Clarry was Curator at Olive Pink Botanic Garden for many years and Frances spent countless hours at OPBG, volunteering. They lived in a house on Burke Street, which was then the last street in the East Side of Alice Springs. They appreciated and valued having the bush at their back door, as both were avid native plant enthusiasts. Their children along with Peter and Margaret Latz's children (who lived a couple of houses down) and others in the neighbourhood, played there. When 'New Eastside' was planned in 1973, they were keen to keep the bit of bush and play area behind them as a green belt. They continued planting and watering many local native trees. They gained community support and eventually persuaded the Council that this strip of land should become a neighbourhood park, which it still is today. Originally called Undoolya Park, it was renamed the Frances Smith Memorial Park in 2003.

In 2007 it was decided to turn the northern end of the park into a community garden. I am sure Clarry and Frances would have approved and be very proud of this garden and its development to date.

It is a wonderful garden, divided into about fifty community and private plots, an orchard with mature fruit trees, a composting area, straw and cow manure stock piles, a fruit drying machine, a bush food and medicine garden, fish ponds, a picnic area, play areas for children and the latest addition - a new solidly built kitchen and toilet ([pictured below](#)).



The Community Garden area has been leased from the Alice Springs Town Council by the Arid Lands Environment Centre (ALEC) since 2007. The garden is run by a volunteer committee, with ALEC providing organisational support.

A group of ten Field Naturalists visited on Friday 11 October. The outing was organised by Wendy and Ian Mann. Wendy is on the Community Garden Committee. Kim McKay, the only paid worker (one day a week) showed us around. This certainly made for an interesting and informative visit.

Most of the community beds have low walls around them, often with whimsical decorations, with one in the shape of a mandala. The walls are at a nice sit-on-able height. Some are raised even more and the soil built up to accommodate wheelchair gardeners. They are no-dig beds, originally made using layers of Buffel Grass, Lucerne straw, cow manure and compost. Volunteers can plant seeds and seedlings of vegetables, herbs and flowers. The level of these beds drops over the year, so each year they are replenished with additional layers. Regular working bees are held twice a month but volunteers are always welcome. I noticed a whiteboard near the gate with a list of jobs that needed doing. Anyone can become a member by joining ALEC.



The individual plots are more varied with a wide range of vegetables, herbs and flowers being grown. It was a bit in between seasons and many still had winter vegies – lettuce, broad beans, celery and so on, while some were bare and others had new Spring plantings. A range of different fencings, plants and shade covers showed each gardener’s individuality. These plots can be rented for approximately \$20 a month and must be wonderful for land-deprived flat-dwellers. This amount covers the compost, straw, manure, water and reticulation. The water to the vegetable plots is on for a short period three times a day, and for the fruit trees twice a week for a longer period in the evening. Renters can provide their own fertilizers.



The orchard had a great range of mature citrus trees and a row of Mulberry trees with the mulberries, just ripening and delicious.

Our wander around the garden finished with a chat in the picnic area with yummy nibbles provided by Wendy and Ian. Many thanks to them and to Kim McKay who showed us around and provided a host of great gardening information and tips.



*Photos: Making use of the low walls around the community plots - Kim in hi-vis shirt. Individual plots. This one still with winter veges and an improvised retractable shade-cloth cover. Sampling the delicious mulberries.*

# Arumbera Wander - Saturday 19 October 2019

By Connie Spencer.

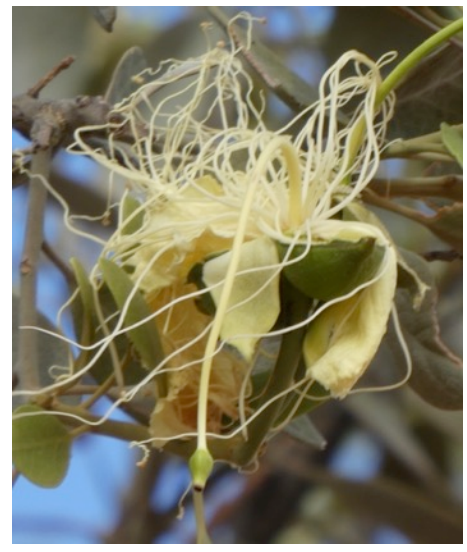
Photos by Connie and Rosalie

I was apprehensive about this walk considering the 40° temperatures we had earlier in the week but no need as the morning was cloudy, cool and breezy. Unfortunately, or fortunately whichever way you look at it, only Rosalie turned up to accompany me. As we had already done a test walk a couple of days before, we decided on something different from the planned ridge walk.

We drove along the base of the ridge, climbed up and walked along the top for a kilometre or so before descending and wandering back to the car. The 360° views of the surrounding country were brilliant. Even got a glimpse of the white domes of Pine Gap!



Rosalie advises me that the ridge is Arumbera Sandstone like the rocky ridges of Ross River area. I was taken with the bright lime green lichen on the southern side of the ridge as well as the interesting rock formations.



Above: This *Capparis mitchellii* (Wild Orange) intrigued Rosalie because the flowers appeared orange. Then she thought the buds were the fruit because they looked tough and dark green. Probably the flowers were from the previous day that had faded to orangey-yellow from creamy white.

Left: *Ptilotus whitei*



Despite the very dry conditions we were surprised and impressed with what was flowering. A *Capparis mitchellii* (Wild Orange) took Rosalie's fancy and so we trudged up a rocky slope (which was steeper than it looked) for closer inspection. *Ptilotus whitei* (sorry, no common name) was abundant on the rocky slopes and lush in drainage lines. This small shrub is a perennial, rather than the many more common annual *Ptilotus*.



Another shrub doing well in drainage areas was *Cynanchum viminalis* subsp. *australe* (Caustic Vine). If that botanical name doesn't sound familiar to you that is because it used to be *Sarcostemma viminalis*!

Some years ago, whilst camped on Argadargada Station to the NE of Alice Springs, Barb and I collected seeds and a specimen of an unusual *Senna*. Dave Albrecht the herbarium botanist at the time was pleased with our collection as he felt it was a separate subspecies of *Senna artemisioides* and the collection added to his data. Although eflora.nt.gov.au does not show a collection of *Senna artemisioides* subsp. *concave leaflets* from the Arumbera area, it certainly looked like it - most notable features being red stems, and paired blue-green concave leaflets. (Below left and front cover)



And just to finish off our botanical odyssey we came across a stunning *Hakea divaricata* (Forked leaved Corkwood) dressed to the nines in bright yellow flowers (Right) and an *Eremophila sturtii* (Turpentine Bush) showy with small white flowers. (Above right.)

There are always plenty of activities going on in Alice Springs. So, if you chose something other than a FNC bush walk that's fine but if you just rolled over in bed and decided on a sleep-in then you missed a very pleasant couple of hours wandering and enjoying nature. After all, that's what we are all about, isn't it?



The stunning photo below of the rising full moon was taken on the walk that Rosalie led up Spencer Hill on 14 September.





**ALICE SPRINGS FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB INCORPORATED**  
**Minutes of the general meeting held in the Visitors Centre**  
**Olive Pink Botanic Garden – Wednesday 9 October 2019**

**Open: 8.30pm**

After talk from Sue Morrish – Buffel Grass control and native plant regeneration in Spencer Valley 2009-2019.  
Thank you to scribe Rosalie Breen. Thank you to Sue O'Callaghan for supper.

**Present**

16 Members, 8 Visitors and 5 Apologies as per attendance book

**Minutes** of the September General Meeting attached to the last newsletter. Accepted.

**Treasurer's Report**

Compiled by Neil Woolcock.

**Balance** of all funds (including petty cash) end of August 2019 \$2,139.58

**Income** for September 2019

Membership 250.00

Interest .19

**Expenses** for September 2019

Nil

(Petty Cash - \$39.85)

**Total of all funds (including petty cash) end of September 2019** **\$2,389.77**

The meeting accepted the Treasurer's report.

**Correspondence**

- FNC of Victoria – Invitation to presentation of Australian Natural History Medallion, 11 November at Blackburn Vic..
- Various emails addressed to ASFNC have been forwarded to membership.

**General Business**

- Books belonging to ASFNC currently in a box held by Rosalie Breen, Property Officer. Johannes Ammerschlaeger has offered to list them. He also donated a book on Mammals. Ian Coleman and Doug MacDougall searched APS/OPBG library index and found there is one bird book in there already marked as belonging to ASFNC. Meeting agreed to place ASFNC Books in this library after list made, if they are of any value.

**Past Events:**

- 14 September - Walk to greet the sun and say goodbye to the full moon, from Spencer Hill. Met at Gosse St Playground, Old Eastside, at 6.00am. Early but rewarding, Rosalie Breen and a couple of others admired the beautiful sky colours and lots of Wallabies.

**Future Events:**

- Friday 11 October, 5:00 pm - Community Garden with Bruce Simmons - Wendy and Ian Mann
- Saturday 19 October, 7:00 am - Walk from Old Ghan along ridge – Connie
- Thursday 24 October 3:00 pm - Talk at Geological/ Geophysical Centre on Schwartz Crescent - Ian Mann (to be confirmed)
- Friday 15 November - Camp at Serpentine Chalet and morning walk to the dam - Connie
- Saturday 30 November - Christmas Breakfast at Telegraph Station. Bring plate of finger food to share/own drinks and chairs.

Next ASFNC Meeting 13/10/19. Speaker - Margaret Friedel will talk about her Cocos (Keeling) and Christmas Islands trip.

Scribe: (no Volunteer) Supper: (no Volunteer)

**Sightings:**

- Corkwoods and Eucalypts flowering
- Big mobs of Galahs around town – Sue O'Callaghan
- Butcher Bird singing around 2am – Connie Spencer