

THE GECKO



Edition 6
January 2015

Welcome to the January 2015 edition of the Gecko.

This quarter was all about the plants – weeding, repotting, watering and propagating. Plus we had our end of year breakfast. Read all about it here.

We need your input. Have you taken a photo or seen something in the bush that you'd like to share with the group? Perhaps you have a question to ask. Send it in to fqpbushland@gmail.com and we'll include it in the next newsletter.

October to December 2014

12 October 2014

Ten people met on a cool and cloudy day to cut the flower and seed heads off pink gladioli. As noted in the last edition of this newsletter, pink gladioli have reduced in number in recent years. This meant we had to travel far and wide to find those ones that were still alive and kicking.

While we had to walk further than before, we also got to see more of the bushland at the same time. The kangaroo paws were spectacular and mentioned more than once. Being away from the paths, these are rarely seen.

However, there is a down side to spreading out. When morning tea time came around, only eight of our party returned. Over a cup of tea and a biscuit we contemplated our rescue strategy. We then had another cuppa and more biscuits to prepare the search party – you don't want to rush these things.

We even had a couple of locals turn up to help.



Mrs and Mrs Wood Duck volunteer for the search party.

We rang Rose to tell her that she was missing out on morning tea, but there was no answer. This really was becoming a rescue mission – requiring more tea and biscuits, of course.

Fortunately Debbie and Rose were able to tear themselves away from the weeds and made their own way back to the cars. Rose said that she was so engrossed in weeding she didn't even hear us ringing.

We were all relieved to have the whole party back together and celebrated with more tea and biscuits.



Ash prepares himself for the search and rescue mission.

26 October 2014

Next year we will be dredging some of the lakes to remove the sediment and Typha. As Typha has weed-like tendencies, and is not a desired species, we'll need to revegetate the lakes to minimise its regrowth.

Knowing what species we were going to need, Sian was able to obtain 450 seedlings that were being given away. These had been grown for Perth Airport, but weren't required, and were being given away to Friends groups. The only problem was that the seedlings were in tiny little cells and needed to be transplanted into larger pots if they were to survive another year.

Six of us met to pot up the seedlings and we had them all done in 90 minutes. The sedges were being wielded like swords, but we quickly learnt to avoid people working on the other side of the table - and nobody lost an eye.

The seedlings are already tall but will make a lot of growth in the next six months and will be tall enough to be planted in the deep areas after the first rains.



Teamwork made the job easy and fun.

23 November 2014

This day had a bit of everything in it. Nine volunteers and a guest met to water seedlings and collect seed for next year's planting sessions. Our guest, Julia Cullity, from Dept of Parks and Wildlife (DPaW), came along to see how we were going with our DPaW grant and to offer assistance and advice where needed.

We started by examining the Phyto fighter that has been installed near the noticeboard.



Phyto fighter boot cleaning station.

This contraption allows walkers to clean their shoes before entering or leaving the bushland to help reduce the spread of *Phytophthora cinnamomi*

(dieback). The disease can be spread through contaminated soil, so cleaning your shoes is a good first step in fighting it. The machine has been donated by the Dieback Working Group and was installed by the City of Canning.

As we made our way to water the seedlings we saw several dieback signs and markers purchased with the DPaW grant. These were also installed by the City of Canning. The signs help walkers know when they are entering a section of land infected with dieback disease. It is hoped that everyone will take extra care in sticking to the paths and ensure they are not spreading contaminated soil.



Dieback information sign and trail marker.

Our seedlings are surrounded by logs which help protect them from people straying off the path. The logs came from another part of our bushland that neighbours businesses in Welshpool. There was a row of large eucalypts growing along the fenceline that were becoming dangerous. As the trees were starting to drop branches on the fence, and were introduced species, it was decided to remove them.



Watering the seedlings. Note the log barrier on the right.

The resulting logs now line some of the paths and are becoming habitat for all sorts of critters. We saw this western bearded dragon (below) amongst our seedlings. No doubt it felt more comfortable with the logs close by and offering some shelter.



Western bearded dragon.

We then started collecting seeds but were cut short by news that some of our cars had been broken into. Back at the carpark we found that Brett had waved down a passing police car and the police were already taking details of the damage (who says there's never a policeman around when you want one?). Four cars had side windows broken and some items had been stolen.

When the police had finished taking details one of the neighbours kindly offered their vacuum cleaner to help clean out some of the glass from our cars.

Those of us not preoccupied with our cars continued seed collecting. We collected in an area that had topsoil and woodchips brought in a few years ago. The topsoil came from an area of bushland in Welshpool that was being cleared for development. Growing from the topsoil was a plant not previously found in our bushland – *Euchilopsis linearis*. We collected some seed from it and hope they germinate.



Collecting seed from *Euchilopsis linearis*.

7 December 2014

Six members met to propagate *Lechenaultia floribunda* and *Dampiera linearis*. In one hour we were able to trim and pot 280 cuttings.

We now have to wait and see if any of them take. However, based on previous results, it is likely that the majority will do well enough to be planted out next winter.



Admiring their handiwork of 280 cuttings struck in 1 hour.

28 December 2014

We finished the year with a breakfast at Sue's house when 10 of us met to enjoy the beautiful surrounds. The food was plentiful and delicious thanks to the cooking skills of Sue and Peter. And the company couldn't be beaten.

The weather was fine and warm but we stayed cool in the shade of some large trees. The conversation was entertaining and several interesting photos were shown around. It was certainly something we should do again.



Enjoying the company of like-minded souls.

A big THANK YOU goes to Ash, Banita, Barbara M, Brett, Cameron, Collette, Debbie, Florian, Jelena, Julia, Karen, Merise, Ronnie, Rose, Rosemary, Sara, Sian, Stephanie, Sue and the City of Canning Bush Crew for helping out with these activities.

Upcoming events

25 January – Night stalk

22 February – AGM

21 March – Night stalk

Also this quarter

There were a couple of fires in the vacant land on Gibbs Street on 22 November. Fortunately the fires were spotted by neighbours and the fire brigade responded promptly. However, not before a large pile of illegally dumped rubbish threatened to send embers towards nearby homes.

Police looked at the ashes the following day and called the fire brigade again as the grass was still smouldering. Unfortunately there were no witnesses to see how the fires began.



The remains of *Kunzia glabrescens*.

Spraying for weedy grasses, primarily couch grass, around the lakes was done in November. This was paid for with our 2013 State NRM grant.

Seedlings were ordered ready for revegetating around the lakes next winter. This is also part of the 2013 State NRM grant.

Plans have been made for excess storm water run-off from the new development along Whitlock Rd to be diverted into the bushland. The corner of bushland near the Neighbourhood Centre used to be seasonally wet, but with the drying climate and development it no longer holds any water at all. It is hoped that with the run-off from the development the area will receive a new lease on life.

Some contouring of the land will take place early in 2015 and it will be ready to receive water by the time of the first rains. We'll then revegetate the area in winter.

Cat trapping occurred in the bushland during December. Our bushland is designated a cat prohibited area by the City of Canning. As such, any cat in the area is there without permission and can legally be trapped by the City.

There were seven traps set for four nights each and two cats were caught. Neither cat had a collar or registration tags – a requirement of the Cat Act. The first one caught appeared feral while the second acted more like a pet. Both were taken to the Cat Haven and will either be claimed by their owners, rehomed or destroyed.



The first cat trapped in a cat prohibited area.



The second cat trapped in a cat prohibited area.

We had soil tested from areas where nothing wants to grow. We also had a sample from an undisturbed area of bush for comparison. The results show that the nutrients available in the poor areas were significantly lower than those in the undisturbed area. This suggests we need to include some fertiliser and organic matter when we plant in these areas.

The 2014 State NRM grants were announced on Christmas Eve and we were successful in securing a grant of \$40,000. This will be used for dieback treatment, grass spraying, feral animal control and to purchase remote cameras and binoculars.

Help wanted – remote cameras

If you have any experience with remote cameras your advice on which brand or model to buy would be most appreciated. They will primarily be used to capture fox activity, but we'd like to see what else is wandering through the bush too. Something that can pick up small animals would be ideal. Send us an email with your recommended cameras.

Help wanted – shag-pile carpet

Do you have any shag-pile carpet stowed away somewhere just waiting for a good idea to come along? We need shag-pile carpet to line the ceilings of our bird boxes.

Apparently bees don't like shag-pile carpet and it does a good job of keeping them out. As we have three of our five bird boxes out of action because of

bees we thought we'd give it a go. Send us an email if you have any carpet or a rug to spare.

Help wanted - catering

We're looking to set up a catering group to provide morning tea at our activities. This is an ideal job for those who want to help but aren't able to participate in the actual activities.

As part of the catering group it will be your task to prepare and deliver the morning tea to the participants in our regular activities. You will then clean and store the cups, spoons, etc, until next time.

You won't necessarily be responsible for the whole task but will share the jobs within your team – e.g. one person may prepare/buy a cake while another delivers it and a third does the washing up. It will be up to your team to work out how best to allocate jobs. You will be reimbursed for amounts spent on the morning tea. Send us an email if you would like to be a part of the catering team.

Help wanted - watering

We have found that watering our seedlings over their first summer in the ground improves survival rates. But there are only so many plants that can be watered with one boot-load of water. Joining the watering team will help us water more plants more often.

As part of the watering group it will be your task to fill containers with water, transport that water to the seedlings, water the seedlings and store the containers. Or you may want to job-share with someone else where one of you stores and fills the containers and the other transports them and waters the seedlings.

Being available for a regular weekly timeslot would be ideal but you may also volunteer to fill in when a regular waterer can't make it. Send us an email if you would like to be part of the watering team.

European wasps

It is European wasp season again and some of our members have placed surveillance traps in the bushland and in our gardens. We are part of a dedicated state-wide team who inspect and rebait traps on a weekly basis from December until May each year.

European wasps are, as the name suggests, native to Europe. Their numbers are kept in check there by cold winters that kill off a large proportion of each nest. Here, with our warmer climate, nests get bigger each year and every new queen has a very good chance of establishing a new nest.

The wasps cause problems to humans due to their taste for protein. They are attracted to the meat on barbecues and pet food, making it impossible to have these things outside. They also cause problems for the horticulture, viticulture and apiculture industries.

European wasps are primarily brought into WA via freight and cargo. Nests are often found in industrial areas. However, some of our members have reported sightings of wasps from nests have been found in residential areas.



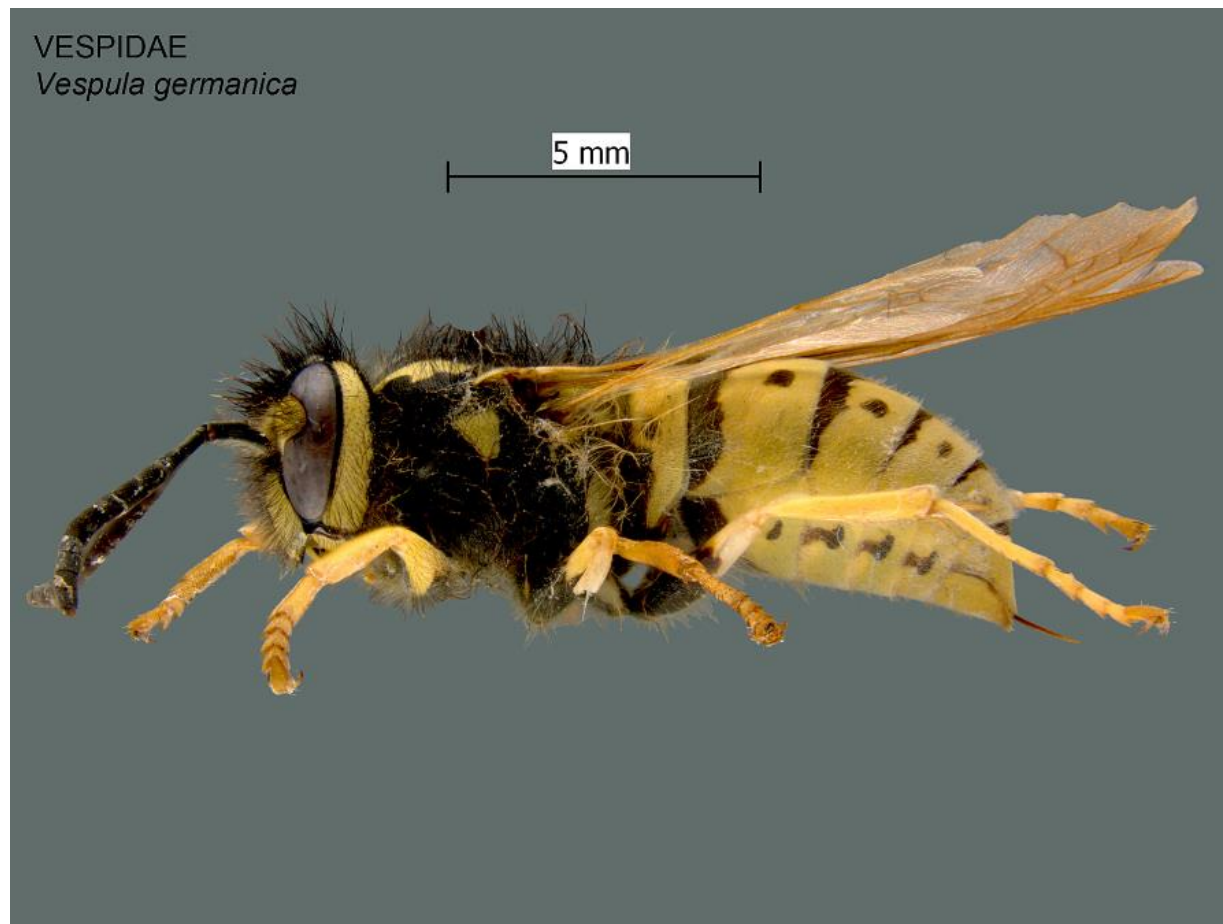
European wasp monitoring trap.

We have not yet found any nests in our bushland but they have been found very close by.

Photographs of wasps are included on the next page to help you identify any suspicious wasp you come across. The behaviour of the European wasp is noticeably different to that of our native wasps. European wasps have a direct flight – they fly straight to their target, land, drink or eat and fly off again. Our native wasps, on the other hand, tend to fly back and forth, and appear indecisive, before they land. Also, European wasps fly with their legs tucked in close to their body, while our native wasps usually dangle theirs.

You can help in the fight against European wasps by reporting any suspicious wasps you see to the Department of Agriculture and Food on 1800 084 881. Or you could adopt a surveillance trap. The Department will post a trap to you and instructions on what to do can be found at <https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/fruit/european-wasps-western->

[australia](#) . Your only expense will be to buy fish with which to bait the trap. However, we get fish offcuts from our nearest fish & chip shop who are only too willing to give them away for free.



European wasp. Images courtesy of DAFWA.