



# Ashbourne Landcare Group

## SPRING 2022

### Committee Meetings for 2022

**Next meeting: Friday 8 December @ 7:00pm**  
**28 Casey Road Ashbourne**

President: Matthew Grant-Allen  
Vice President: Lisa Fowler

Secretary: Sarah Biggs  
Treasurer: Millie Gellatly

### President's Update

Ashbourne Landcare held its AGM on July 10, 2022. A new committee was elected headed up by Matthew Grant Allen as our new President.

We sadly accepted the resignation of President by Michael Peck who has worked tirelessly for Land Care for 25 years. We wish Michael and Libby the very best of luck in their new found freedom but of course we will see them at Landcare functions and overseeing their legacy of the magnificent Jocks Gully Bioink, and their continued major involvement in VGT and Weed Action Group.

We thank all retiring committee members and recognize with gratitude every effort that they have made toward Landcare in the Ashbourne region.

Welcome to our new committee and hoping for a successful and action-packed year ahead.

Matthew Grant-Allen President  
[mattga@bigpond.com](mailto:mattga@bigpond.com) Ph: 5220 4196

### Coming Events

- **Working Bee Ashbourne Reserve**  
**13th November 9.30am Contact**  
**Jane Holth 0400 191 404**
- **New Year Function: January 15<sup>th</sup> - Save the Date.**  
**Venue and Activity to be announced soon.**



### Bio-link Work Group

#### Jocks Gully Restoration Biolink Grant



This large Biolink planting project is almost completed and looks terrific running along 2 kms of the Jocks Gully landscape. You can see it from Ashbourne Road, a Sea of turquoise guards protecting the plants. Hopefully, this current flooding won't diminish our good work.

Three planting days were held during May. Detailed planning made these days successful, a lot of fun, and informative. Environment speakers, Woodend Primary School and Knox Camp students, local and city volunteers, picnic lunches, a Smoking Ceremony - all added to the project's objectives. Over 100 community volunteers contributed to planting 3000 native plants, all guarded and staked. The three landholders, Mark Duggan, Mark Iliff and Julian Myers, whose properties the biolink runs through, are very pleased, and appreciative of this hard work.

Some grant money has been saved by contracting the fencing of the sites, to the Landmate crew, from Lodden prison - a satisfactory arrangement for both ALG and Landmate. This enables a fourth participant, Daniel Bramich at 121 Jocks Gully Road to revegetate his 400m site (1.76 ha) at the source of Jocks Gully. Daniel's spring-fed site is already fenced. Plants, stakes and guards, are now purchased and we plan a working bee with ALG members, for mid-November.

This final biolink component ensures that the entire length of Jocks Gully is stock free. Quite an ALG achievement.

The **DELWP** project will be acquitted by end of December. Mark Lamble has taken excellent images of the project's journey which will form a record for ALG and future projects to refer to.

## Ashbourne Natural Connections Grant

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**Karl Just, Ecologist**, has completed all 12 participating site **Ecological Surveys**. A Presentation to ALG and participants by Karl Just was planned for Sunday 9th October followed by lunch and walk through Beatrice Schlabowsky's property. Due to heavy rainfalls, and flooding along the Campaspe River riparian zones, and a low response from members, this event is now postponed until mid-January 2023. We will look forward to a most informative and well supported ALG event then.

Mark Lamble, cinematographer and ALG member continues his work on producing a **Video** to tell the ALG story and present a masterplan for future projects. Also still in preparation is a **document** describing ALG past and future projects, to be accessed on the ALG website, or in hard copy.

This grant is funded by the **Victorian Landcare Grants 2021 and the NCCMA** (North Central Catchment Management Authority).

Libby Peck  
Convenor, Biolink Work Group  
ALG Group members: Alan Denehey, Ian Temby, Ralf Thesing, Linda Healy

## Weed Action Group



At this time of the year the thoughts of Ashbourne Landcare Group members reluctantly turns to weeds.

Boringly, to the species that give no pleasure, are prolific, difficult to control and will keep coming back unless you do something to control them.

The country side is once again bright with the yellow of gorse flowers and blackberry is getting up a head of steam in a verdant wet season.

Tackling this challenge individually is daunting and often expensive, so the proposition is that we invite members to work together by organising work B's, using ALG equipment such as high pressure trailed spray units and back pack sprays. The detail of the work B's needs to be agreed by all those that wish to participate to ensure that it is equitable, enjoyable and effective. For example some landholders may not be able to participate physically but will be able to contribute to organization and grant seeking in return for having weed control works undertaken on their property.

So over to you – if you wish to do something about your weed problem register an intent to be involved by emailing [mpeck2@telstra.com](mailto:mpeck2@telstra.com)

## Weed Focus

Blue Periwinkle (*Vinca major* L.)



When we first came to Ashbourne I had no idea what Blue Periwinkle was. It had a lovely flower and I simply assumed it 'belonged,' as it seemed so well adapted. I took great delight when my mother-in-law showed our children the 'fairies' paintbrush' hidden inside each flower. It did well in our garden no matter how little attention it received, and I didn't mind when it took over a garden bed - less weeding for me.

When it started to spread into the lawn and it became a haven for rats hunting for snails, I was much less impressed.

So began my battle with Blue Periwinkle.

Blue Periwinkle is a hardy trailing ground cover originating from the Mediterranean region. Though it tolerates most soil types and doesn't mind dry spells, it prefers damp shaded areas where it thrives. It is rhizomatous, spreading via underground stems that send out roots and shoots from nodes. Above ground, stems take root where ever they touch the ground. Its seeds are rarely viable and it commonly spreads via soil and through disposal of garden waste. Even small pieces of stem/root will regenerate. It is particularly vigorous from October to January.

Once it has a foothold, it lives up to its scientific name (*Vinca* means 'I conquer'). It's ability to completely dominate can be seen along roadsides in the Macedon Ranges - the verge opposite Spring Hill Nursery is a good example.

It can withstand many common herbicides due to its waxy leaves and is generally toxic to livestock. It can

recover quite well from low intensity fire and frost. It is almost impossible to completely remove by hand once established. The rootstock is back-breakingly thick - anyone who has tried digging out mint will know what to expect. Smothering it with layers of cardboard/newspaper and mulch will suppress it for a while, but without follow up treatment it comes back vigorously.



This area has twice had layers of cardboard and mulch - not that you can tell.



This infestation started with a couple of stems about 7 years ago. I have sprayed it with glyphosate and covered it with cardboard and mulch 2 yrs ago. It is thriving and now heading towards the Campaspe pictured in the background.

The recommended treatment I am now embarking on involves a combination of mechanical removal (slashing; brush-cutting or manual removal) to thin density and then spray regrowth with a mix of 10mg Metribuzin; 150ml Glyphosate to 1l of water when it is actively growing. Follow up treatments will likely be required in 6 months and eradication may take 2-3 years.

And here I thought blackberry and gorse were tough...

## Foot and Mouth Disease Update

At the time of writing, Australia is still free of Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD). FMD is a highly contagious virus disease affecting all cloven-hoofed animals. It is easily transmissible between animals (breath, mucus, saliva, milk and faeces) as well as goods (clothing, shoes) and vehicles. Symptoms include fever, long strings of sticky saliva (cattle) and painful blisters/ulcers that can cause lameness (foot) and prevent eating (mouth) causing suffering and loss of condition. Adult animals usually recover, though for young stock it can be fatal.

In the event of detection in Australia, a national livestock standstill will be declared preventing movement of all animals susceptible to infection for at least 72 hours. All export markets would be closed to Australia imposing massive costs that would flow through regional economies. But it is not just about protecting Australia's export markets and avoiding massive financial costs.

I was working on a farm in the UK in 2001 during the outbreak of FMD. It took authorities several weeks to isolate the source of the outbreak, by which time it had already spread extensively. It would be months before the virus was effectively contained and longer still before it was eliminated. It is easy to imagine the impact of closing down the country post-COVID. It is much harder to imagine the mass slaughter of animals, huge pyres of burning carcasses and farming districts devoid of animals and eerily silent.

The speed and seeming ease with which it spread and the lack of information kept all rural families on edge. We were besieged by an enemy we couldn't see, waiting for news updates for the latest outbreaks, praying our district wasn't listed. Then we heard the horror stories from farms suspected to have FMD. Families stuck on farm in quarantine with all their livestock including pets (if cloven-hoofed) lying dead in yards and sheds not far from the house, suddenly with nothing to do but wait for days for authorities to remove the animals and disinfect the farm. The mental anguish for many was compounded when test samples from their animals came back negative for FMD. There is only so much relief that financial compensation for lost livestock can provide.

Maintaining Australia's status as FMD free requires a whole-of-community effort. Being prepared and vigilant is our best chance to safeguard animal welfare and preserve rural communities. Agriculture Victoria is a very helpful source for information on FMD,

Australia's response if it is detected and advice on how to implement a biosecurity plan for your property. For further information see Agriculture Victoria <https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/biosecurity/animal-diseases/foot-and-mouth-disease>

## Is your farm dam a sink or a chimney?

New research has found that among all freshwater ecosystems, farm dams are the biggest emitters of methane. Low oxygen levels associated with nutrient runoff and manure from cattle causes higher levels of methane emission from the the breakdown of organic material in unfenced farm dams.

Blue Carbon Labs at Deakin University have been at the forefront of studying the impact farm dams have on climate change and how different management techniques can significantly reduce methane emissions.

Recent studies undertaken in partnership with ANU's Sustainable Farms have found that fencing off farm dams from livestock and improving vegetation cover can significantly reduce methane emissions. With the right management techniques, the process can be reversed so that dams actually absorb greenhouse gases.

The results are promising. Blue Carbon Labs are working with the Clean Energy Regulator to develop plans for farmers to be offered incentives to fence-off and revegetate farm dams and develop a methodology for calculating carbon credits.

There is still much more research to be done. But for those of us wanting to farm/manage our land more sustainably, restricting livestock access to dams has measurable environmental benefits as well as improving amenity and biodiversity.

For more information see Blue Carbon Labs <https://www.bluecarbonlab.org/farm-dams/> Webinar <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=oxZyKGLJaM>

## ALG FACEBOOK PAGE

The ALG Facebook page is constantly being updated with interesting information, videos and photos. To access ALG Facebook, type in Ashbourne Landcare Facebook in your Web browser.



## ASHBOURNE LANDCARE DETAILS AND FURTHER INFORMATION

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