

ARMIDALE TREE GROUP NEWSLETTER

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Trees for Koalas - Round 2 Grant



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Cover Photo: Stage 2 Koala Grant - A successful Community Planting Day - 'Mirranook' Property of James Nye. Photo: David Steller

From the Editor

There is no doubt that we live in challenging times. This is especially true not just for us but for the biodiverse communities we live with. Over the last three years the ATG has focused on one particularly challenged group. Koala research indicates that the Northern Tablelands will continue to play a key role in their conservation as climate change pressures compound population decline and habitat loss in other areas. As the **Koala Community Grant Program** concludes we will continue to seek opportunities and to use what we have learned to support them. Thank you to all who have contributed to the success of this project. We look forward to your continuing support.

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- Another successful ATG Open Day
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- That time of Year (EOFY)



Photo: Enjoying a set at the ATG Open Day 2025. Image: David Steller

Completion of the Koala Community Grant Project

Rounds 1 and 2 of the Koala Community Grant have been successfully completed! This is a truly significant achievement. Thank you to the skilled and committed staff, the ATG members, and members of the broader Armidale community who volunteered their time over the last three years and in particular to the landowners, Naomi Hooper at the '**Kindly Animal Sanctuary**' and James Nye at '**Mirranook**' for their generous support of the project.

The project started in 2022 when Alicia Cooper, the ATG Manager at the time worked with committee members to submit a winning grant application. This can be a hard and often thankless task. To all our grant writers past and present we are truly grateful for taking this on.

The aim of the project has been to revegetate 40 hectares of koala habitat in the Armidale region, which has been identified by the NSW Government as an Area of Regional Koala Significance (ARKS) in their Koala Strategy. The project was divided into two planting stages to allow time for propagation and delivery of the target species and was guided by the most current knowledge of tablelands revegetation including a recent report at the time - "**Revegetation and regeneration in a changing climate: Lessons from New England**".



Photo: Committee members Garry Slocombe and Lorna Dickson helping out on the first community planting day at 'Mirranook' - Image: Dave Steller



Photo: Mirranook Planting Day two The Zonta team. Image Cathryn McFarland.

The focus of the project was on species selection and planting. Vegetation communities were surveyed to inform species selection. Site aspect and topography were recorded to account for the fact that certain species are more suited to lower slopes/depressions etc. While most of Eucalypts in the Armidale region are listed as koala use trees, the focus was on planting the dominant feed trees of the area.



Three years on and the project has been completed with two community planting days at James Nye's property, 'Mirranook'. On the February 22nd 50 volunteers planted 1200 trees and on the 22nd March the final 800 trees were planted in conjunction with Zonta to promote International Women's Day (8th March) to promote Climate Action. There are now 22,000 more Koala habitat trees in the Boorolong area.

Photo: A sea of tree guards at Mirranook. Image: David Steller

Nursery - News Kim Kneebone

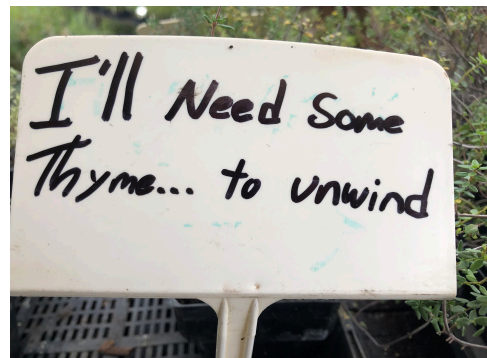
- The Tree Group was not spared from the force of the devastating hailstorm that hit Armidale in February this year. The hoop house, euphemistically called Xanadu was left in literal tatters. However 'it's an ill wind that blows nobody any good.' The insurance claim has enabled Xanadu (meaning an exotic, luxurious place) to be restored.



Photo: Xanadu reskinned and just awaiting new shelving.

Image David Steller

If you would like to contribute to Kim's growing collection of 'Herb Puns' all contributions are welcome. Consider the following as inspiration!



PADDOCK SALE

The very popular Paddock Sale will return from Thursday 29th May 9am until Saturday 31st May at the Nursery with incredible bargains while stocks last. Full trays of Hiko tube stock i.e. 40 trees will be discounted to half price or less and many other plants at half price or less.

Small Eucalypts for Local Gardens - Richard Bell

When serving our wonderful customers in the Nursery we frequently notice trends in what members of the community fancy for their gardens. For example, one repeated request is for native shrubs suitable for Cottage Gardens—a brilliant idea, but 2024 saw us meet another fervent desire in the propagation of small, cold-hardy Eucalypts. This idea is suitable for smaller spaces or indeed those gardeners with larger spaces who seek to create interest with something a little different. There is a growing need for variation in this ubiquitous Australian genus and it shows no sign of abating. We delved into the ATG seedbank and found a folder marked "Misc. Euc. Seed." The treasures found here were supplemented with some kind gifts from the amazing Claire Mullin (who is always helping out in myriad ways). Last Winter we sowed the following:

***Eucalyptus stoatei* — Scarlet Pear Gum**

***Eucalyptus neglecta* — Omeo Gum**

***Eucalyptus parvula* — Small-leaved Gum**

***Eucalyptus urnigera* — Urn Tree**

***Eucalyptus cladocalyx nana* — Dwarf Sugar Gum**

All of the above have proven good sellers for the nursery with the Scarlet Pear Gum and Omeo Gum being the most popular in tube sizes; the former for the promise of its dazzling fruit and the latter for its frost-hardiness and beautiful green-grey leaves (see pics). The Urn Trees potted onto larger sizes have been irresistible due to their stunning blue foliage. Kim is keen to continue giving customers more options in a similar vein and has already planned the sowing of some lovely surprises for Springtime.

Our recent Open Day saw an opportunity to offer these trees for free to attendees, a contribution that is testament to the support from our generous members and guidance of our extraordinary Committee. We were also able to include Yellow Cassinia, Crimson Bottlebrush, Box-leaf Wattle and Swamp Paperbark in this act of community engagement with many of these shrubs also finding their way into local gardens.



Above: *Eucalyptus neglecta* - Omeo gum
Right: A 'plaited' version of Omeo gum.



ARMIDALE TREE GROUP OPEN DAY 6th April 2025

Members and the wider Armidale Community once again showed their interest and support for the Tree Group at the second Open Day held on Sunday 6th April. Thank you to all who volunteered at working bees prior to the event to support our great staff to prepare the nursery.

Although the opening of the Bridge in the Mike O’Keeffe Woodland needed to be postponed pending the completion of the approaches there were many activities and workshops including:

- **Diversity in the Woodland and Plants for birds** – Peter Metcalfe
- **Seed Propagation** – Sam Arandale-Bioletti
- **Propagation from cuttings** – Kim Kneebone
- **Pollen** – Dr Andrew Thornhill
- **Young Nature Lovers** – Anita Brown
- **Conserving the Bells Turtle** – Dr Lou Streeting
- **Koalas** - Matt Elsley

Anita Brown, an experienced theatre-maker and passionate educator, having spent five years on the road with *UNE Discovery* guided budding conservationists in:

- soil pH testing
- potting up *Baeckea omissa* for children to take home
- examining specimens under the microscope
- plant identification with helpful Latin



Photo: Young Nature Lovers with Anita Brown - guiding budding conservationists. Image David Steller

DR ANDREW THORNHILL - *Pollen*

Dr Andrew Thornhill, a botany lecturer at the University of New England in Armidale, explained everything you need to know about pollen shape and evolution while at the same time giving a hands-on experience of the world of pollen. Through his work with the State Herbarium of South Australia and the University of Adelaide Andrew created 3D pollen models that were then printed in Armidale. Each 3D model is enlarged 1000 times its actual size and each shape gives a hint as to how the plant is pollinated.



Photo: *The story of Pollen with Dr Andrew Thornhill.* Image David Steller

DR LOUISE STREETING - *Conserving the Bell's Turtle*

Dr Lou Streeting is a zoologist and conservationist dedicated to protecting Australia's endangered freshwater turtles. Her research focuses on the western saw-shelled turtle (*Myuchelys bellii*), also known as Bell's turtle, a unique species found only in the high-altitude rivers of the New England Tablelands. Lou's work evaluates conservation strategies such as nest protection, artificial incubation, and hatchling release to reinforce wild populations. Her research journey began with the discovery of the first recorded live Bell's turtle nest, and she has since protected or released more than 6,000 hatchlings into the wild.

Beyond research, Lou is passionate about science communication and education, using storytelling and art to inspire conservation action. She is the author and illustrator of '***Where Are All the Baby Turtles?***', a children's book that introduces young readers to the challenges faced by freshwater turtles and the importance of protecting our wildlife. Through science, outreach, and hands-on conservation, Lou connects people with nature and encourages action to safeguard threatened species.



Photo: Dr Louise Streeting explains her conservation work. Image: David Steller

DR ROSE ANDREW - *Trees on the Tablelands - Eucalypts of our region and beyond*

This presentation provided a unique opportunity to get to know your local eucalypts a little better by introducing the major groups of eucalypts in our region and some tools for identifying them. Some of the challenges facing our tree populations and the ecosystems that rely on them, as well as what is being done to address those challenges in the ***Trees on the Tablelands project*** was also discussed in this valuable presentation.



Photo: Dr Rose Andrews discusses our local trees on the tablelands. Image David Steller



Photo: Staff member Sabu giving out free trees, a very popular regular feature of our open days. Image David Steller



Photo: The Armidale Cello Choir performed, led by Sue Metcalfe. Image David Steller

Thank you to all those who generously shared their time and expertise. Your contributions were essential to the success of this the second of many more Armidale Tree Group Open Days. A special thanks to our other musicians, Mark Cooper and the Firebirds Choir for adding joy to the event and thank you also to all those who took advantage of what the day offered to increase your understanding of the amazing environment we share.

World Bee Day

The 20th of May is World Bee Day!! The day was proclaimed as an initiative of the Slovenian Beekeepers Association. Members worked tirelessly through the complex formal procedures necessary to facilitate proposing the date of 20th May to the United Nations in 2017. The day was first celebrated in 2018 and is considered a great diplomatic achievement for Slovenia.

World Bee Day celebrates the importance of bees and other pollinators to economies and ecosystems globally. Approximately a third of every spoonful of food we eat depends on pollinators. Bee Day also aims to raise awareness of the negative impacts to the health of world bee populations from pesticides and other chemicals. So why did the Slovenian beekeepers choose the 29th May? It is the birth date of the pioneer of Slovenian bee keeping - Anton Jansa in 1734.

The following article by Peter Metcalfe is the Tree Group's contribution to the global celebration of the importance of bees and other pollinators and a thank you to the bee-keepers of Slovenia for their efforts to raise global awareness. If you have been inspired to act locally while thinking globally the Tree Group has amazing bee packs.

**Armidale Tree Group
sells our popular bee
pack - 40 seedlings for
\$80.**



Native Bees and Honey Bees and Native Plants

Dr Peter Metcalfe

Native bees are not often seen in the bush these days because the larger and more socially organised European bees have become common enough to compete with and displace the more primitive native bees. Native bees are much smaller than European honey bees. They look rather like a bush fly in size and colour. They do not have a sting like the honey bee. Their colonies are quite small compared to the hive of the honey bee, containing just hundreds of individuals rather than the thousands found in a honey beehive.

For millions of years the wild honey bees of Europe evolved along with the European flora and are matched to meet the needs of European flowers. The honey bee has been domesticated for thousands of years and has been selected for their efficiency in terms of honey production. This efficiency is a function of the foraging ability of the individual bee in the field and the efficiency of the hive as a social system. Neither of these factors is tied to the efficiency of pollination of plants, especially those plants away from their native land. European honey bees have evolved to be the right size and have appropriate patterns of behaviour to pollinate the European flowers with which they evolved.

For millions of years the many species of native bees have evolved along with the Australian flora. Each "successful" plant/bee combination is mutually beneficial in that the bee collects nectar or pollen, ensuring the next generation of bees while the flowers of the plant are cross-pollinated ensuring the next generation of plants. This co-evolution of native insects and native plants ensured a balance between the basic needs of both parties. In general terms the small, relatively weak native bees match closely the small, soft native flowers.

Upon this balanced scene just two hundred years ago Europeans arrived, complete with hives of honey bees from Europe. The European bees found the diverse Australian flora, with its year round flowering a very exploitable resource. The flowers that evolved with birds as pollinators, as many Australian plants are, produce copious amounts of nectar and pollen for their large pollinators. Such a bounty allowed the European bees to flourish and today Australia is an exporter of honey and, as well as all the commercial bee hives to be found around the bush, there are many feral bee hives in hollow trees. All these European bees compete with the native bees and native birds for nectar, pollen and nest cavities. Overall there must be some negative impact on the Australian flora as some species are pollinated less as the native bee population declines.

All Bees are "Honey" Bees

If you watch honey-bees in the flowers of your garden you may be able to see them efficiently collecting nectar and pollen from the European flowers and in the process pollinating them. Watch the bees in the flowers of native Australian plants and you may see that they often get to the nectar supply without touching the anthers or the stigmas of the flower; reaping the benefits without giving the reward of pollination. You might not think of feral bees as being in the same league as feral pigs, cats and the cane toad but European bees too have a negative impact on our ancient ecosystems.

The entry of Varroa Mite more recently has had a huge impact on commercial honey production and pollination services provided by commercial apiarists. This parasite will surely wreak havoc on feral honey beehives in the Australian bush. Fortunately native bees are not susceptible to Varroa Mite so there may be a revival of these native bees as competition from honey bees is reduced.

Membership Renewal is now due 30th June

Tax Deductible donations are also welcome

The true strength of the ATG is our members. You show up, you plant trees and support us in so many ways. The fact that we have a strong membership base locally, and beyond is essential when applying for grants like the recently completed Community Koala Grant, which many of you volunteered your time to support. Now is the time to renew your membership.

As the **End of Financial Year** approaches some of you may also be considering the benefits of making tax-deductible donations to deserving not-for-profit enterprises of which we are one. Please consider the following options:

- **Make a tax deductible Donation** via the ATG website at <https://armidaletreegroup.org.au/donate-or-volunteer/>
- **Renew your membership** and or gift ATG membership to friends and/or family. Get a form from the nursery or just go to the ATG website follow the links to the **Get Involved** Option and follow the links to the updated **Membership/Renewal Form**. Your renewal will be invaluable in helping us to update our membership database and improve communication.
- If you are a new member, having joined since January 2025 you do not have to renew until June 2026! Life members also are not required to renew.
Sadly membership is NOT tax deductible as you receive the benefit of membership, which included this Newsletter.
- There is an **easy no cost** way to contribute financially to ATG. If you bank with the Regional Australia Bank please consider participating in the **Regional Australia Bank Community Partnership Program**. The Program is an option on the everyday banking account – Community Partnership Account. It is as simple as visiting the branch and changing the name of your everyday account to a Community Partnership Account (from S1 to S3). When you nominate ATG the bank will calculate your average balance and donate 1.00% p.a. for the period from 1 July 2025 at no cost to you. In the previous financial year ATG was well supported by this program receiving over \$7000. Thank you to all of our members who are currently participating. This is an excellent program that supports so many local not-for-profit organisations. Please consider it!



Membership Application/Renewal

Period: 01/07/2025 - 30/06/2026
Name: _____
Telephone: _____
***Email (Required):** _____

The annual Membership fee is \$10.

Membership \$ ___10_____
Donation \$ _____ (donations over \$2 are tax deductible, a receipt will be emailed)
Total Payment\$ _____

Payment methods

In store: EFTPOS / Cash
Mail/email: Credit Card (below) / Direct Credit
(Send a copy of this form: Email to office [@armidaletreegroup.org.au](mailto:office@armidaletreegroup.org.au); Mail to Armidale Tree Group, 80 Mann Street, Armidale NSW 2350)

Credit Card -	Card type:	Visa / Mastercard only
	Card number:	
	Expiry date:	
	CCV number:	
	Name on card	
	Signature	
Direct Credit -	Please remit payment to BSB: 932000 Account No: 100016306 Detail: "Subs <Name>"	